

**Harborough Rural Centres  
Landscape Character Assessment and  
Landscape Capacity Study**

for

Harborough District Council

**July 2014**

## Quality control

Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study

of

Harborough Rural Centres

for

Harborough District Council

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The Landscape Partnership is registered with the Landscape Institute, the Royal Town Planning Institute, and is a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment

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## 0 Executive Summary

### *Introduction*

- 0.1 The Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study was commissioned by Harborough District Council in March 2014. The study identifies landscape character sub-areas within the wider 'Upper Soar', 'High Leicestershire', 'Lutterworth Lowlands', 'Welland Valley' and 'Laughton Hills' landscape character areas in the vicinity of six Rural Centres within Harborough District. The six settlements included in the study are; Billesdon, Fleckney, Great Glen, Husbands Bosworth, Kibworth and Ullesthorpe. The study also provides a detailed analysis of the landscape sensitivity and capacity of land around the edges of these settlements, with a view to assessing the potential suitability to accommodate future development with a focus on residential use. The Study will form part of the evidence base for the preparation of the new Local Plan for Harborough District and its findings will be considered alongside other relevant factors to assess the suitability of settlements to accommodate future development.

### *Context*

- 0.2 This study builds on work undertaken at both the national, county and district scale. At a national level Billesdon and Great Glen are located fully within National Character Area 93: High Leicestershire. Fleckney, Kibworth and Ullesthorpe are located within National Character Area 94: Leicestershire Vales. Husbands Bosworth is located predominantly within National Character Area 94, but the study area extends south slightly into National Character Area 95: Northamptonshire Uplands.
- 0.3 At a regional level Billesdon, Fleckney and Great Glen fall entirely within Landscape Character Type 5C: Undulating Mixed Farmlands and Ullesthorpe Astley falls entirely within Landscape Character Type 5A: Village Farmlands. Husbands Bosworth is located partly within Landscape Character type 5C and partly within Landscape Character Type 4A: Unwooded Vales. Kibworth falls mainly within Landscape Character Type 5C and is on the boundary line with Landscape Character Type 3A: Floodplain Valleys.
- 0.4 At a county and district level Billesdon and Great Glen fall within the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area. Fleckney is located within the Lutterworth Lowlands and is close to the Laughton Hills. Husbands Bosworth falls within the Laughton Hills Landscape Character Area and Ullesthorpe is located within The Upper Soar. The main part of Kibworth falls within The Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area and borders with High Leicestershire to the north and the Welland Valley to the south-east. The Laughton Hills are also in the vicinity of Kibworth to the south-west.

### *Landscape Character Assessment*

- 0.5 The methodology used for the Landscape Character Assessment is based on the national guidance found in 'Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland' (2002) and the other associated Topic Papers. The precise approach was also determined to meet the requirements of Harborough District Council in the context of the development of their emerging Local Plan.
- 0.6 The Landscape Character Assessment involved a desk based assessment of the study area using the existing Harborough District Landscape Character Areas together with Landscape Description Units (LDUs), a desk based national data set from Natural England. This was followed by a field survey to refine boundaries, identify key features, record landscape condition and incorporate the visual/aesthetic/perceptual dimension. Urban areas, as currently identified in the saved Policy HS/8 'Limits to Development', were not surveyed but the interface of these urban areas with rural areas has been considered. The field survey was carried out between April and May 2014, visiting all land identified within the study area boundary provided by Harborough District Council.
- 0.7 Landscape Character Assessment work identified ten different Landscape Character Areas as follows:
- 1 Billesdon High Leicestershire
  - 2 Fleckney Lutterworth Lowlands
  - 3 Great Glen Central High Leicestershire

- 4 Great Glen Leicester Fringes
- 5 Husbands Bosworth Laughton Hills
- 6 Kibworth Lutterworth Lowlands
- 7 Kibworth High Leicestershire
- 8 Kibworth-Fleckney Laughton Hills
- 9 Kibworth Welland Valley
- 10 Ullesthorpe Upper Soar

0.8 For each of the identified Landscape Character Areas, a brief description has been prepared and the key characteristics identified. These form the context for the next and more detailed stage of work, relating to Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity. As part of the description of the Character Areas, a 'Condition and Strength of Character Matrix' is included. This can have been used to assess the potential ability of a landscape to adapt to change without losing its intrinsic character, by analysing the condition of the landscape in association with its strength of character. The combined findings derive the general strategy for each Landscape Character Area. For example where a landscape area is assessed overall as in good 'condition' but only moderate 'strength of character' the strategy will be to 'conserve and strengthen'. Once this primary strategy is established, an evaluation of the inherent sensitivity of the landscape can be derived.

0.9 The sensitivity of each of the Landscape Character Areas has been identified as follows:

1	Billesdon High Leicestershire	High Sensitivity
2	Fleckney Lutterworth Lowlands	Moderate Sensitivity
3	Great Glen Central High Leicestershire	High Sensitivity
4	Great Glen Leicester Fringes	Moderate Sensitivity
5	Husbands Bosworth Laughton Hills	Moderate/High Sensitivity
6	Kibworth Lutterworth Lowlands	Moderate/High Sensitivity
7	Kibworth High Leicestershire	Moderate/High Sensitivity
8	Kibworth-Fleckney Laughton Hills	Moderate/High Sensitivity
9	Kibworth Welland Valley	Moderate/High Sensitivity
10	Ullesthorpe Upper Soar	Moderate/High Sensitivity

### ***Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Capacity***

0.10 The methodology to assess the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development, while respecting its character, is developed from the guidance in Topic Paper 6 – 'Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity'. This paper forms part of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Heritage 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland'. Reference has also been made to the approach in the publication 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third edition' 2013.

0.11 The methodology developed for this study adopts the premise that:

*"existing landscape features + visual sensitivity = Overall Landscape Sensitivity"*

0.12 A number of criteria have been selected to evaluate the relative sensitivity of both existing landscape characteristics and visual factors. These criteria reflect both the national guidance in Topic Paper 6 and the particular circumstances for the rural landscape around the selected Rural Centres in Harborough District. The criteria selected to reflect existing landscape characteristics are:

- slope analysis
- vegetation enclosure

- complexity and scale of the landscape
- condition of the landscape.

The criteria selected to reflect visual sensitivity are:

- openness to public view
- openness to private views
- relationship with existing urban built form
- prevention of coalescence
- scope to mitigate development

0.13 The Overall Landscape Sensitivity provides an evaluation of the sensitivity of a Land Parcel in broad strategic terms. In order to assess the Overall Landscape Capacity of a Land Parcel, 'landscape value' was added to the equation, as follows.

*"Overall Landscape Sensitivity + Landscape Value = Overall Landscape Capacity"*

0.14 In the absence of any specific landscape designations at the national or district level the primary designation reflecting landscape value relevant to the Rural Centres within this study has been Conservation Areas and the consideration of any effects on their setting. Previous studies with Harborough District have taken into account the Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside and Green Wedges (Policy EV/2) in the assessment of landscape value. However, the Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside policy has not been saved and hence is not been included in the study. The Green Wedge Policy while saved does not relate to any areas in close proximity to the rural areas assessed.

0.15 To effectively assess the landscape capacity of a site, an assumption is made as to the form that the potential development will take. For the purposes of this study it is assumed that development will include in the main 2 storey residential development. Employment areas will comprise 2-3 storey buildings. It is not anticipated that there will be any taller structures in the assessment unless otherwise stated in the detailed Land Parcel Sheets.

0.16 Each Land Parcel identified during fieldwork was assessed against the criteria noted above, using a 5-point scale. The criteria were then scored, with 5 points being awarded to A's (the most suitable for development) and 1 point to E's (the least suitable for development). The scores were totalled for each Land Parcel to provide both a Landscape Sensitivity Profile and a Landscape Capacity Profile. The total score was then allocated an Overall Capacity value by using the following range, based on the range of scores achieved in the study area.

22 – 25 = Low Landscape Capacity

26 – 29 = Medium-Low Landscape Capacity

30 – 33 = Medium Landscape Capacity

34 – 37 = Medium-High Landscape Capacity

38 – 41 = High Landscape Capacity

0.17 A total of 19 different Land Parcels were assessed in the vicinity of Billesdon, 26 in the vicinity of Fleckney, 19 in the vicinity of Great Glen, 10 in the vicinity of Husbands Bosworth, 32 in the vicinity of Kibworth and 16 in the vicinity of Ullesthorpe. The completed Land Parcel sheets and associated Overall Capacity values identified areas with relatively higher and lower landscape capacity to accommodate new development. Some rural centres indicated relatively more potential to accommodate development than others. These included Parcels immediately to the north-east, north-west and south-east of Fleckney (Parcels 4, 3, 10, 19, 20 and 21) and to the west of Kibworth on the Kibworth Beauchamp side (Parcel 16). In relation to Ullesthorpe these included areas to the south and to the east (Parcels 8 and 11) and at Great Glen this included a small area to the south (Parcel 19). There were other Parcels identified as having a High capacity in Billesdon and Kibworth, but given their current land use development was considered unlikely. In addition

medium-high capacity Land Parcels were identified in all settlements except Husbands Bosworth. Further explanation of this is made in the detailed Land Parcel descriptions in Appendix C.

- 0.18 Areas least suitable for development include an area known as Kates Hill to the south-east of Billesdon (Parcel 8) and a smaller area to the north near the northern approach to the village (Parcel 13). There is a cluster of Parcels to the west of Ullesthorpe in the separating land between the village and Claybrooke Parva (Parcels 1, 2, 3 and 5) that are also considered to have a low capacity to accommodate development. The remaining Parcels considered least suitable for development are surrounding Kibworth. There are two Parcels in the land dividing Kibworth Beauchamp and Smeeton Westerby (Parcels 6 and 5) and two Parcels to the north-east of Kibworth Harcourt (Parcels 25 and 27).

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Landscape Partnership was commissioned in March 2014 to undertake the preparation of an outline Landscape Character Assessment and a Landscape Capacity Study for the rural areas of Harborough District in the vicinity of six rural settlements in the authority's area. These settlements are Billesdon, Fleckney, Great Glen, Husbands Bosworth, Kibworth and Ullesthorpe and will be collectively referred to as the 'Rural Centres' hereafter. The approach followed the format of previous studies undertaken by The Landscape Partnership for Harborough District Council including studies for Market Harborough, the Leicester Principal Urban Area, Lutterworth and Broughton Astley. The brief for the project required the following main outputs, which will be used to inform the Council's emerging Local Plan:
- An assessment of the landscape character and sensitivity of the landscape character around the Rural Centres, building on work undertaken at a county, district and local level; and
  - A detailed analysis of the sensitivity of land around the perimeter of the six Rural Centres to assess its capacity to accommodate future development, particularly residential.
- 1.2 The assessment work has been undertaken in two stages. Stage One involved the identification of Landscape Character Areas within the whole of the study area and the key characteristics present. The areas identified are effectively 'sub areas' of the character areas already established in the Harborough District Council Landscape Character Assessment which in the context of this study include 'High Leicestershire', 'Laughton Hills', 'Lutterworth Lowlands', 'Upper Soar' and 'Welland Valley' Landscape Character Areas. This stage does not constitute a fully detailed Landscape Character Assessment, but was sufficient to provide context, at an appropriate scale, for Stage Two.
- 1.3 Stage Two involves a more detailed consideration of the landscape sensitivity and landscape capacity of the study areas. This was considered at a smaller scale of 'Land Parcels' based around individual fields or aggregation of similar fields or uses and sharing similar characteristics. The assessment used a consistent method that evaluated the Land Parcels against a number of criteria, to test both the sensitivity of a unit and its capacity to accept development in the context of the character of the wider landscape within which they are situated. Stage Two considered areas that were close to the periphery of the existing settlements, as this is where future growth is likely to be targeted. The extent of the study areas was guided by Harborough District Council.

## 2 Context

### *National Context*

- 2.1 The process of landscape characterisation and assessment has been promoted at a national scale in England by the work of Natural England (formerly Countryside Agency). Between 1998 and 1999 the Countryside Agency published the Joint Character Areas (JCAs) and Countryside Character Area descriptions, splitting England into 159 character areas based on the characteristics of their natural and man-made landscape (see Figure 1).
- 2.2 Since this original work in the 1990's and as part of its responsibilities in delivering the Natural Environment White Paper, Biodiversity 2020 and the European Landscape Convention, Natural England has revised and updated the original c. 4 page National Character Area (NCA) descriptions with a much fuller profile for each NCA. These are now all complete within Harborough District and available at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/587130>.

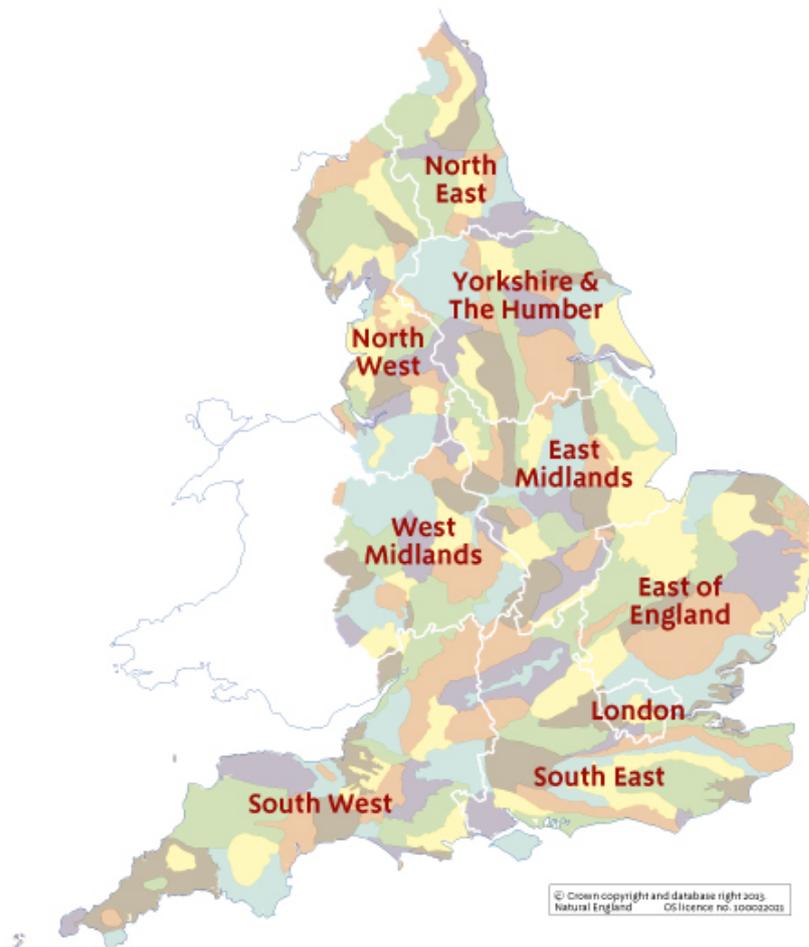


Figure 1 – National Character Areas map – Natural England

- 2.3 This National Character Areas map defines Billesdon and Great Glen as lying with Area 93: High Leicestershire, Fleckney, Kibworth and Ullesthorpe as lying within Area 94: Leicestershire Vales and Husbands Bosworth as lying within predominantly within Area 94. However, part of the southern study area is located within Area 95: Northamptonshire Uplands (See Figure 2 and Drawing 01).



- Well treed character arising from abundant hedgerow trees, copses and woodlands;
- Upland areas mark a major watershed in Middle England and are the source of major rivers;
- Mixed farming regime with mainly arable land uses on hills and ridges and in fertile lowlands; intact hedgerow networks generally associated with pastoral land uses;
- Sparse settlement patterns with limited modern development; widespread use of local limestone and ironstone in vernacular buildings and churches;
- Network of quiet country lanes linking rural communities;
- Remote, rural and sometimes empty character; and
- Frequent and prominent ridge and furrow and evidence of deserted or shrunken medieval settlements.

2.8 Ullesthorpe falls entirely within Landscape Character Type 5A: Village Farmlands. The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are described as:

- Gently undulating lowlands, dissected by stream valleys with localised steep slopes and alluvial floodplains;
- Moderately fertile loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage over extensive till deposits on higher ground and gravel terraces bordering main rivers;
- Mixed agricultural regime, with localised variations but with a predominance of either dairy farming on permanent pastures, or arable cropping;
- Small and moderately sized broadleaved woodlands and copses, often on sloping land; extensive new areas of planting associated with The National Forest;
- Hedgerows and frequent oak and ash trees along hedgelines and streams contribute to well treed character of landscape;
- Moderately sized well maintained hedged fields across rolling landform create patchwork landscape of contrasting colours and textures;
- Extensive ridge and furrow and small historic villages linked by winding lanes contribute to historic and rural character of the landscape; and
- Localised influence of large estates.

2.9 The south-eastern side of Kibworth, associated with the Welland Valley falls within the Landscape Character Type 3A: Floodplain Valleys. The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are described as:

- Deep alluvium and gravel deposits mask underlying bedrock geology to create wide, flat alluvial floodplains surrounded by rising landform of adjacent Landscape Character Types;
- River channels, often along managed courses, bordered by riparian habitat;
- Predominance of pastoral land use, with cereal growing increasing in some areas. 'Warping' areas subject to more intensive cereal growing;
- Limited woodland cover; however, steep riverside bluffs and areas close to settlement or on former gravel extraction sites notable for a higher level of woodland cover;
- Regular pattern of medium to large fields defined by hedgerows or post and wire fencing, breaking down and becoming open in some areas;
- Hedgerow and riverside trees important component of landscape. Alder, Willow and Poplar are typical riverside trees;
- Limited settlement and development in rural areas;
- Sewage Treatment Works and power stations common close to larger settlements that fringe the floodplains;

- Roads and communication routes often define the outer edges of the floodplain; and
- Restoration of sand and gravel extraction sites to open water creates new character across many areas.

2.10 The low-lying land to the north-east of Husbands Bosworth falls within the Landscape Character Type 4A: Unwooded Vales. The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are described as:

- Extensive, low lying rural landscape underlain by Triassic and Jurassic mudstones and clays and widespread superficial deposits;
- Expansive long distance and panoramic views from higher ground at the margin of the vales gives a sense of visual containment;
- Low hills and ridges gain visual prominence in an otherwise gently undulating landscape;
- Complex drainage patterns of watercourses that flow within shallow undulations often flanked by pasture and riparian habitats;
- Limited woodland cover; shelter belts and hedgerow trees gain greater visual significance and habitat value as a result;
- Productive arable and pastoral farmland, with evidence of increasing reversion to arable cropping in recent times;
- Regular pattern of medium sized fields enclosed by low and generally well maintained hedgerows and ditches in low lying areas; large modern fieldscapes evident in areas of arable reversion; and
- Sparsely settled with small villages and dispersed farms linked by quiet rural lanes.

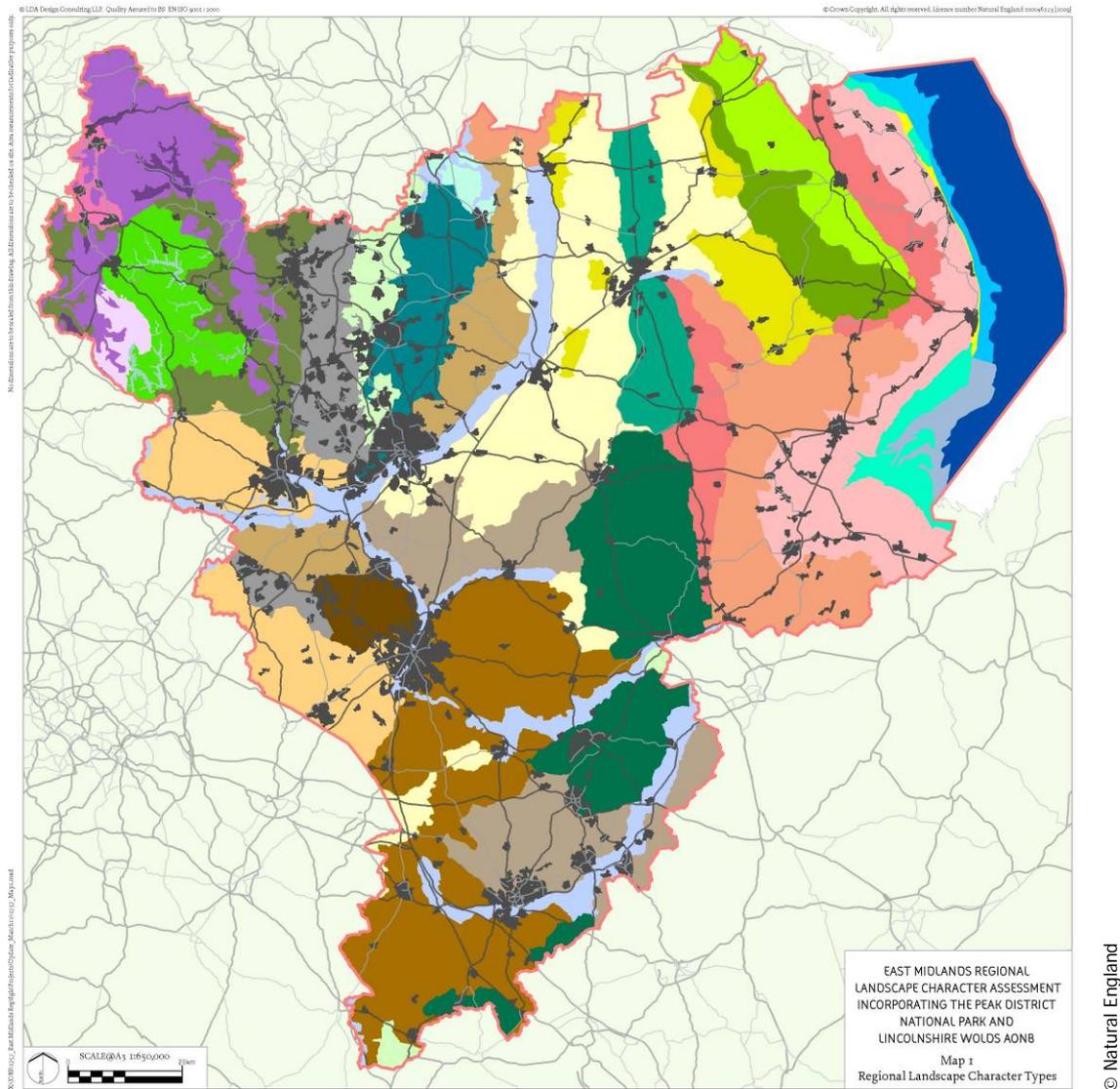


Figure 3 – East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment

**County Council Context**

2.11 The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan 1996 to 2016 (adopted in 2005) embraced the concept of landscape character assessment through Strategy Policy 8 and paragraphs 2.40 - 2.42, with reference to PPS7. The Structure Plan (now expired), made reference to the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy, which was adopted as supplementary planning guidance and essentially defined the current county scale character areas. This Strategy is therefore of relevance to Harborough District. The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy identifies eighteen Landscape Character Areas (see Figure 4) within the whole of Leicestershire and Rutland, of which Fleckney and Husbands Bosworth fall within the Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area, Great Glen and Billesdon fall within the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area, Kibworth falls partly within these two Landscape Character Areas and Ullesthorpe falls within the Upper Soar.

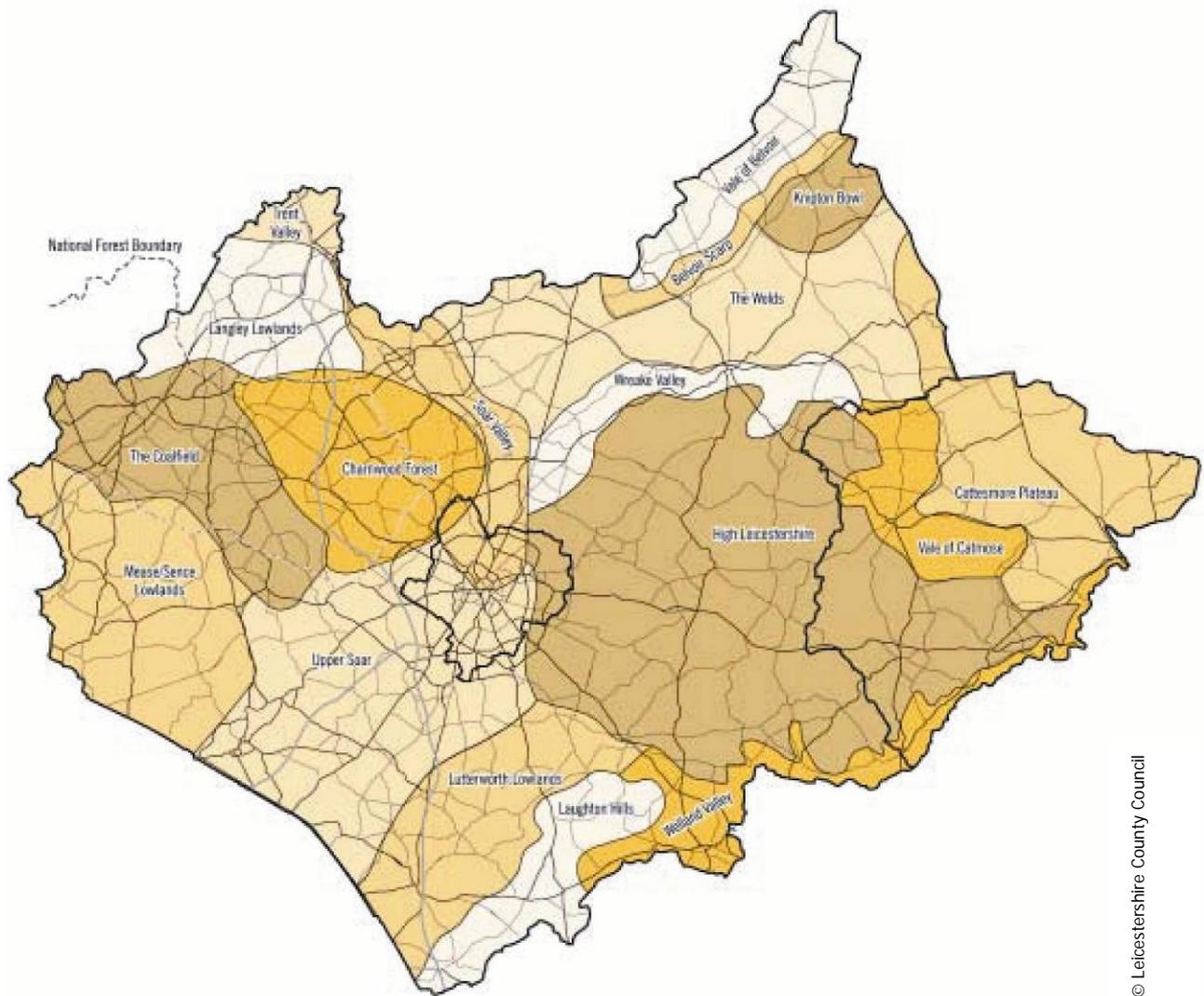


Figure 4 - Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy

**Local Context**

2.12 In order to assist with policy development, Harborough District Council commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment of the whole district, which was completed in September 2007. This study identified five different Landscape Character Areas (see Figure 5 and Drawing 01), based on those defined in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy:

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

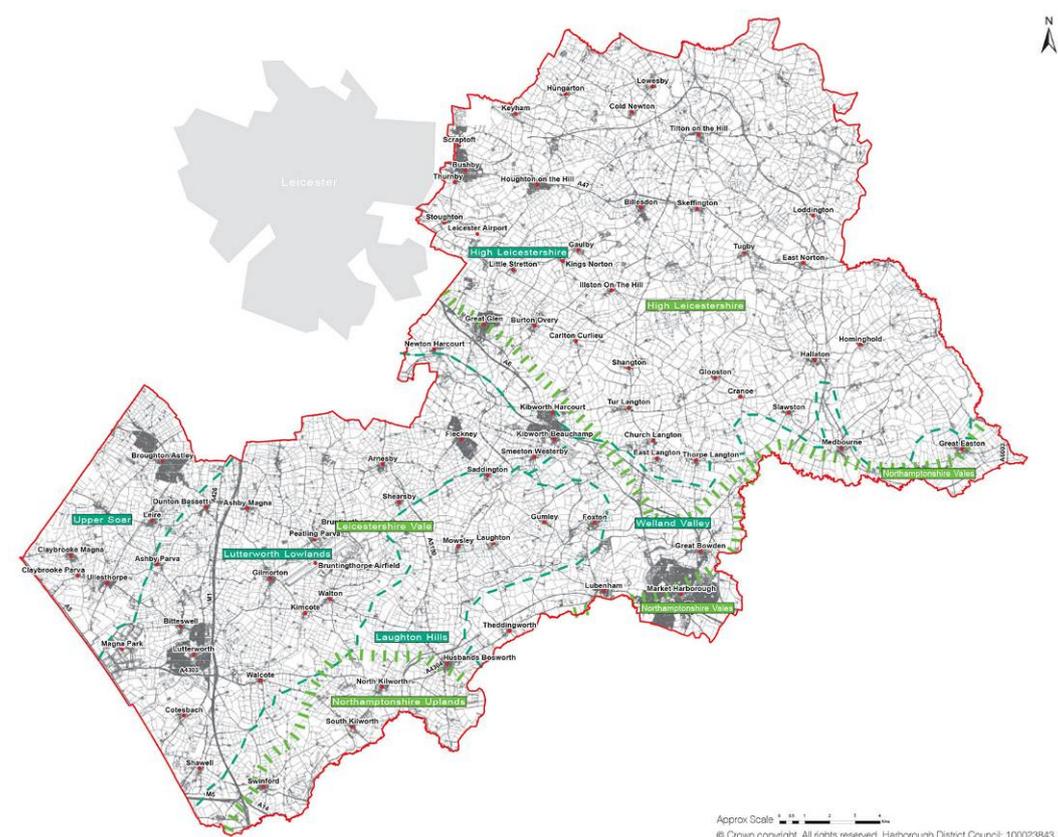


Figure 5 – Harborough District Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.13 Within the District Landscape Character Assessment, each Landscape Character Area is described and Key Characteristics are defined. The capacity of the landscape to accommodate change is then discussed and key issues facing the integrity of the character area are identified. The fringes of the rural centres fall within all five of the Landscape Character Areas (see Appendix A for full Character Area descriptions).
- 2.14 The key characteristics of the Upper Soar Landscape Character Area are described as:
- Large wide river basin with high ridges
  - Forms a small part of larger character area
  - Lack of woodland
  - Predominantly pasture
  - Visible influences from outside character areas
  - Urban influence apparent in particular around Broughton Astley
- 2.15 The key characteristics of the Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area are described as:
- Open and relatively flat, to gently rolling area
  - Lack of large woodland areas
  - Farming is predominantly grazing
  - Scattering of small villages with larger settlements of Kibworth and Fleckney to the north and Lutterworth to the south
  - Contains Bruntingthorpe Airfield
  - The M1 and the A426 run through the area
  - Contains Magna Park Distribution Park to the west of Lutterworth

- 2.16 The key characteristics of the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area are described as:
- Steep undulating hills
  - High concentration of woodland
  - Parkland areas with narrow gated roads
  - Rural areas with a mix of arable farming on lowlands and pasture on hillsides
  - Scattering of traditional villages and hamlets through the area
  - Encroachment of Leicester to the west of the area
- 2.17 The key characteristics of the Loughton Hills Landscape Character Area are described as:
- Distinct ridgeline of rolling hills with steep sides
  - Predominantly rural character with areas of woodland
  - Arable farming predominantly on the flatter areas to the south
  - Pasture on the hillier areas to the north
  - Scattering of small attractive villages and hamlets
- 2.18 The key characteristics of the Welland Valley Landscape Character Area are described as:
- Gently meandering river in wide and shallow valley
  - Little tree cover
  - Pasture on the floodplains
  - Arable farming on the valley sides
  - Market Harborough, operating as a traditional market town, is the dominant urban influence

### ***Surrounding Authorities***

- 2.19 To the north of Ullesthorpe and the west of Fleckney and Kibworth, adjacent to the boundary of Harborough District, is Blaby District Council. Blaby District published a District Character Assessment, considering both landscape and settlement character, in May 2008. The Assessment covers the whole District and divides it into broad landscape character types and more detailed landscape character areas. The Character Assessment identifies eight Landscape Character Areas adjacent to the Harborough District boundary (see Drawing 01), which are:
- Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland
  - Soar Meadows
  - Stoney Stanton Rolling Farmland
  - Croft Hill
  - Cosby Agricultural Parkland
  - Blaby Countesthorpe and Whetstone Fringe
  - Foston Open Farmland
  - Kilby Rural Rolling Farmland
- 2.20 To the south-west of Ullesthorpe, adjacent to the boundary of Harborough District, is Rugby Borough Council. Warwickshire County Council prepared a Landscape Assessment of the Borough in April 2006. This identified 10 different Landscape Character Types across the Borough, which were grouped into four Landscape Character Areas. Of these, only the High Cross Plateau

Landscape Character Area/Open Plateau Landscape Character Type is adjacent to Harborough District (see Drawing 01).

2.21 To the west of Great Glen, adjacent to the boundary of Harborough District, is Oadby and Wigston Borough Council. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council published a Landscape Assessment of the Borough in March 2005. The Assessment was split into urban and rural assessments. The rural assessment splits the borough into four broad landscape character types and more detailed landscape character areas. The Character Assessment identifies five Landscape Sub-Areas adjacent to the Harborough District boundary, which are:

- Sence Valley
- Stoughton
- Thurnby & Oadby Green Wedge
- Oadby Grange
- Wigston East

2.22 To the south of Husbands Bosworth, adjacent to the boundary of Harborough District, is Daventry District Council. There is currently no Landscape Character Assessment for the District. However, the district is included within the Northamptonshire County Landscape Character Assessment. The county is split into broad Landscape Character Types and more detailed Landscape Character Areas. The Character Assessment identifies four Landscape Character Areas adjacent to the Harborough District boundary, which are:

- Naseby Plateau
- Hothorpe Hills to Great Oxendon
- Vale of Rugby
- Welland Vale

### 3 Landscape Character Assessment – Methodology

- 3.1 The methodology used is based on the national guidance found in 'Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland' (2002) and the other associated Topic Papers. The precise approach was also determined to meet the requirements of Harborough District Council in the context of the development of their emerging Local Plan.

#### ***Project Administration***

- 3.2 The project was monitored throughout the contract period by officers within the Strategic Planning Team at Harborough District Council. Monitoring included the use of the following:
- liaison by phone
  - work programme
  - correspondence - by letter and e-mail

#### ***Desk Based Stage***

- 3.3 The initial stage of the Landscape Character Assessment involved the assessment of the study area using the existing Harborough District Landscape Character Areas and Level 1 scale Landscape Description Units (LDUs). LDUs are distinct and relatively homogenous units of land, each defined by a series of definitive attributes, so called because they define the extent of each spatial unit. Desk-based information was also gathered from Harborough District Council, neighbouring authorities and through research into landscape and environmental designations. This data was reviewed to begin to identify the pattern of features that would help define the District Landscape Character Areas at a finer grain.

#### ***Field Survey***

- 3.4 The field survey provides the opportunity to undertake a number of key tasks, including:
- incorporating the visual/aesthetic/perceptual dimension
  - recording the condition of the landscape, including both the ecological and cultural aspects
  - identifying and refining Character Areas boundaries
  - assessing any particular qualities, and/or problems in areas of particular pressure or sensitivity
  - noting distinctive features, local materials, plant species etc.
- 3.5 The survey form was developed and designed to ensure that a structured, consistent recording of information was possible. Character and condition information is collected in distinct sections, in a mixture of guided responses as well in sections of free text to provide greater opportunity for description. The study area was systematically appraised by a survey team, who considered the overall landscape character, before looking at the local character around the six settlements. Field survey record sheets were used to record data. A sample of the two-page pro forma used is included as Appendix B. Additional notes and photographic records supplemented the use of forms. Both notes and photographs informed the process of drafting a description of and illustrating each character area in the final report.
- 3.6 Urban areas, as currently identified in the saved Policy HS/8 'Limits to Development', were not surveyed but the interface of these urban areas with rural areas has been considered. The field survey was carried out in April and May 2014, visiting all land identified within the study area boundary provided by Harborough District Council. The survey team consisted of two pairs of Landscape Architects, who were responsible for drafting the text and defining the boundaries of each landscape character area surveyed. A moderation process was built in, to ensure consistency of appraisal across the study area.

#### ***The characterisation process***

- 3.7 Following on from the desk study and fieldwork, coherent Landscape Character Areas were identified, against the wider LDU framework. For most people, landscape is strongly associated

with place and Character Areas can provide an appropriate vehicle for presenting countryside information to a public audience. In this study ten Local Character Areas were identified to form the main units of the landscape in the vicinity of the Rural Centres, subdividing the broader Character Areas identified in the previous District-wide study. Key characteristics and distinctive features of each sub area are reflected in the character areas statements in section 4.

### ***Boundaries***

- 3.8 It should be recognised that although the drawing of boundary lines on a plan is an inevitable part of the process, this does not always mean that landscape character is dramatically different to either side of each and every line. Landscape character can suddenly change, e.g. at the interface of an historic parkland, at the foot of a steep scarp slope or at a settlement edge, but often there is a more gradual transition. In such cases the boundary line marks more a watershed of character, where the balance of the defining elements has shifted from one landscape type to another.
- 3.9 It should also be appreciated when viewing the GIS version of the landscape character areas, that the lines are digitised against a 1:10,000 base and at a scale of accuracy of c.1:2,500. This level of detail can infer that a decision has been made about which side of a road a change in landscape character occurs or whether one particular house is included in an area or not. In practice a reasonable decision has been made on the basis of the available OS data, existing boundary information and the fieldwork data and survey sheets, but will be subject to change over time and cannot in every instance be regarded as definitive, but rather as indicative of a transition.

### ***Landscape Character Areas***

- 3.10 Landscape Character Areas have been defined using the survey data from the fieldwork. The Landscape Character Areas are identified on a series of maps both as hard copy plans and digitally using GIS (ArcView 10). The Landscape Character Areas are as follows (see Drawings B14014.02 to B14014.07):
- 1 Billesdon High Leicestershire
  - 2 Fleckney Lutterworth Lowlands
  - 3 Great Glen Central High Leicestershire
  - 4 Great Glen Leicester Fringes
  - 5 Husbands Bosworth Laughton Hills
  - 6 Kibworth Lutterworth Lowlands
  - 7 Kibworth High Leicestershire
  - 8 Kibworth-Fleckney Laughton Hills
  - 9 Kibworth Welland Valley
  - 10 Ullesthorpe Upper Soar
- 3.11 For each of the identified Landscape Character Areas, a brief description has been prepared and the key characteristics identified (see Section 4). These form the context the next stage of work, relating to Landscape Capacity, as described in Section 5.
- 3.12 As part of the description of the Character Areas, a 'Condition and Strength of Character Matrix' has been included. In order to assess the potential ability of a landscape to adapt to change without losing its intrinsic character, it is necessary to analyse the functional integrity or condition of the landscape and compare this with the strength of character as demonstrated by the more permanent or robust elements of the landscape. Landscape condition is determined from an evaluation of the relative state (poor/moderate/good) of elements within the landscape that are subject to change, such as survival of hedgerows, extent and impact of built development. Strength of character is determined from an evaluation of the impact of relatively stable factors, such as landform, pattern of land cover, the continuity of an historic pattern, the degree of visibility and its rarity.

- 3.13 Six factors were considered for condition and six different factors were considered for strength of character in relation to each area (see matrix for any area). Each factor was evaluated in the field, with a record made on the survey sheet against a three-point scale and entered in the matrix table. Values for the factors on each axis were then aggregated and a majority total applied.
- 3.14 The resulting intersection on the matrix derived the general strategy for each Landscape Character Area. For example where a landscape area is assessed overall as in good 'condition' but only moderate 'strength of character' the strategy will be to 'conserve and strengthen', see Figure 6 below. Once this primary strategy is established, an approximation of the sensitivity of the landscape can also be applied (see Drawings B14014.08 to B14014.13), based on the five colour codings from high to low sensitivity indicated below.

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Strengthen and reinforce</b>	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	<b>Safeguard and manage</b>
	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Improve and reinforce</b>	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	<b>Conserve and restore</b>
	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Reconstruct</b>	<b>Improve and restore</b>	<b>Restore condition to maintain character</b>
		<b>Weak</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Strong</b>
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

Figure 6 - Landscape Strategy Matrix

	=	High Sensitivity
	=	Moderate / High Sensitivity
	=	Moderate Sensitivity
	=	Moderate / Low Sensitivity
	=	Low Sensitivity

## 4 Landscape Character Assessment – Rural Centres Landscape Character Areas

Landscape Character Areas are shown on Drawings B14014.02 to B14014.07.

### 4.1 Billesdon High Leicestershire

#### *Location*

This area is located centrally in the northern part of the District and High Leicestershire and surrounds the village of Billesdon.

#### *Key Characteristics*

- Strongly undulating landform with relatively steep pronounced hills
- Treed farmland with grazed pastures and occasional arable fields to the north and south-west
- Areas of ridge and furrow to grazing pasture within sub-regular field patterns
- Low clipped and laid hedgerows and scattered individual trees
- Small linear belts of woodland with conifers
- Narrow enclosed valleys with tree lined streams
- Public Rights of Way radiate from the settlement
- Variable sense of enclosure to landscape, with parts widely visible from surrounding landscape
- Largely tranquil except in close proximity to the A47
- Localised areas of disturbance by pylons and exposed built edge

#### *Distinctive Features*

- Kates Hill
- St John the Baptist Church with Leicestershire spire
- Billesdon Conservation Area
- Billesdon Coplow
- Billesdon Brook



*View from Kates Hill*

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
S1 Impact of landform*	Insignificant	Apparent	<b>Dominant/Prominent</b>
S2 Impact of landcover*	Insignificant	Apparent	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S3 Historic pattern*	Insignificant	Apparent	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S4 Tranquillity	Discordant	<b>Moderate</b>	Tranquil
S5 Distinctiveness/rarity	<b>Frequent</b>	Unusual	Unique/rare
S6 Visual unity	Incoherent	Coherent	<b>Unified</b>
<b>Totals</b> * Prime character categories if tie	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD
C1 Landcover Change	Widespread	Localised	<b>Insignificant</b>
C2 Age Structure of Tree Cover*	Over mature	<b>Mature or young</b>	Mixed
C3 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival*	Relic	Scattered	Widespread/ <b>Linked</b>
C4 Management of semi-natural habitats	Poor	<b>Not obvious</b>	Good
C5 Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges)	Declining/Relic	Interrupted	<b>Intact</b>
C6 Impact of built development*	High	Moderate	<b>Low</b>
<b>Totals</b> * Prime condition categories if tie	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>

<b>MATRIX</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Good</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	<b>Safeguard and manage</b>
		<b>Moderate</b>	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
		<b>Poor</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
			<b>Weak</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Strong</b>
			<b>Strength of Character</b>		



From Leicester Road, looking south-east towards Billesdon Church

## 4.2 Fleckney Lutterworth Lowlands

### *Location*

This area is located centrally within Harborough District, relatively close to the western district boundary. The character area surrounds the settlement of Fleckney.

### *Key Characteristics*

- Gently undulating landform with relatively elevated plateau to the north west
- Mixed open farmland with arable, sheep grazing and horse paddocks
- Areas of ridge and furrow to grazing pastures
- Limited woodland cover
- Hedgerows generally low and clipped, fragmented in parts with limited hedgerow trees
- Victorian terraces and villas related to 19<sup>th</sup> century hosiery industry
- Areas of mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban residential development
- Built edge of housing visible in the local landscape

### *Distinctive Features*

- Grand Union Canal
- Fleckney Brook and valley
- Saddington Road Industrial Estate
- Fleckney Recreation Ground and Community Centre



*View over ridge and furrow pasture towards north of Arnesby Road looking south-east*

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
S1 Impact of landform*	Insignificant	<b>Apparent</b>	Dominant/Prominent
S2 Impact of landcover*	Insignificant	Apparent	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S3 Historic pattern*	Insignificant	<b>Apparent</b>	Dominant/Prominent
S4 Tranquillity	Discordant	<b>Moderate</b>	Tranquil
S5 Distinctiveness/rarity	<b>Frequent</b>	Unusual	Unique/rare
S6 Visual unity	Incoherent	<b>Coherent</b>	Unified
<b>Totals</b> * Prime character categories if tie	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD
C1 Landcover Change	Widespread	<b>Localised</b>	Insignificant
C2 Age Structure of Tree Cover*	Over mature	Mature or young	<b>Mixed</b>
C3 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival*	Relic	Scattered	Widespread/ <b>Linked</b>
C4 Management of semi-natural habitats	Poor	<b>Not obvious</b>	Good
C5 Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges)	Declining/Relic	<b>Interrupted</b>	Intact
C6 Impact of built development*	<b>High</b>	Moderate	Low
<b>Totals</b> * Prime condition categories if tie	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

**MATRIX**

Condition	<b>Good</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	<b>Moderate</b>	Improve and reinforce	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	Conserve and restore
	<b>Poor</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		<b>Weak</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Strong</b>
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		



*View to Lodge Farm south east of Fleckney*



*View east along Fleckney Brook*

### 4.3 Great Glen Central High Leicestershire

#### *Location*

This area is located to the east of Great Glen forming part of a larger area to the east of the study area.

#### *Key Characteristics*

- Strongly undulating landform with narrow soft ridges and valleys
- Mixed agricultural farmland
- Areas of historic parkland associated with large halls and houses
- Hedgerows medium to low with some hedgerow trees mainly ash and oak
- Streams and rivers, often originating from springs
- Historic buildings generally red brick/white painted with slate/thatch roofs

#### *Distinctive Features*

- Burton Overy village and Conservation Area
- Burton Brook and valley

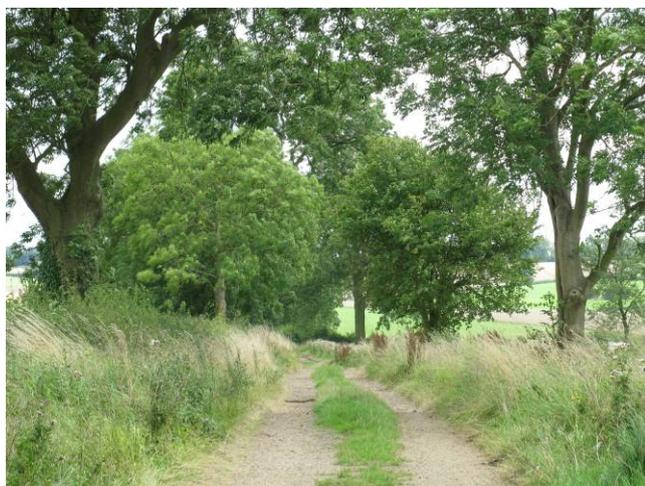


*From road between Burton Overy and Carlton Curlieu, looking north west*

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
S1 Impact of landform*	Insignificant	Apparent	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S2 Impact of landcover*	Insignificant	Apparent	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S3 Historic pattern*	Insignificant	Apparent	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S4 Tranquillity	Discordant	Moderate	<b>Tranquil</b>
S5 Distinctiveness/rarity	<b>Frequent</b>	Unusual	Unique/rare
S6 Visual unity	Incoherent	Coherent	<b>Unified</b>
<b>Totals * Prime character categories if tie</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>
CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD
C1 Landcover Change	Widespread	<b>Localised</b>	Insignificant
C2 Age Structure of Tree Cover*	Over mature	Mature or young	<b>Mixed</b>
C3 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival*	Relic	Scattered	Widespread/ <b>Linked</b>
C4 Management of semi-natural habitats	Poor	Not obvious	<b>Good</b>
C5 Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges)	Declining/Relic	Interrupted	<b>Intact</b>
C6 Impact of built development*	High	Moderate	<b>Low</b>
<b>Totals * Prime condition categories if tie</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

**MATRIX**

Condition	<b>Good</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	<b>Safeguard and manage</b>
	<b>Moderate</b>	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	<b>Poor</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		<b>Weak</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Strong</b>
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		



*From Gartree Road, south east of Little Stretton, looking along route of Roman Road (now byway)*



*Properties and Church on Main Street, Burton Overy*

## 4.4 Great Glen Leicester Fringes

### *Location*

This area is located centrally on the eastern side of the Harborough District. It surrounds Great Glen and extends to the west towards Leicester and slightly to the east where it meets the boundary with the High Leicestershire landscape.

### *Key Characteristics*

- Strongly undulating landform with pattern of narrow soft ridges and valleys and localised plateaux
- Mixed agricultural farmland
- Localised areas of historic parkland associated with large halls and houses
- Influence by close proximity to urban Leicester
- Great Glen a traditional settlement on former A6 with village green and extensive mid late 20<sup>th</sup> century housing
- Hedgerows medium to low with some hedgerow trees mainly ash
- Several streams and rivers, often originating from springs on lower slopes in valleys
- Several visually intrusive developments such as Leicester Grammar School

### *Distinctive Features*

- Sence valley and Burton Brook
- Stretton Hall and Chestnut Drive estate
- Stoneygate School, Great Glen House and Great Glen Hall
- Leicester Grammar School
- A6 dual carriageway



*View across Sence valley looking north towards Leicester Grammar School*

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
S1 Impact of landform*	Insignificant	Apparent	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S2 Impact of landcover*	Insignificant	<b>Apparent</b>	Dominant/Prominent
S3 Historic pattern*	Insignificant	<b>Apparent</b>	Dominant/Prominent
S4 Tranquillity	Discordant	<b>Moderate</b>	Tranquil
S5 Distinctiveness/rarity	<b>Frequent</b>	Unusual	Unique/rare
S6 Visual unity	Incoherent	<b>Coherent</b>	Unified
<b>Totals</b> * Prime character categories if tie	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD
C1 Landcover Change	Widespread	<b>Localised</b>	Insignificant
C2 Age Structure of Tree Cover*	Over mature	<b>Mature</b> or young	Mixed
C3 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival*	Relic	Scattered	Widespread/ <b>Linked</b>
C4 Management of semi-natural habitats	Poor	<b>Not obvious</b>	Good
C5 Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges)	Declining/Relic	<b>Interrupted</b>	Intact
C6 Impact of built development*	High	<b>Moderate</b>	Low
<b>Totals</b> * Prime condition categories if tie	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

**MATRIX**

Condition	<b>Good</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	<b>Moderate</b>	Improve and reinforce	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	Conserve and restore
	<b>Poor</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		<b>Weak</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Strong</b>
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		



View into Burton Brook Valley



Great Glen Hall and parkland

## 4.5 Husbands Bosworth Laughton Hills

### *Location*

This area is located in the eastern part of the Laughton Hills LCA and surrounds Husbands Bosworth.

### *Key Characteristics*

- Mixed landform from rolling hills, incised ridgeline, plateau hill tops, broad Upper Welland valley and steeper sloping narrow valleys
- Well defined transport corridors, with Grand Union Canal and dismantled railway forming treed wildlife corridors
- Predominantly pastoral farmland, composed of small geometrical fields grazed by cattle and sheep, and horse paddocks. Gently sloping large arable fields within the south
- Mature hedgerows with trees, with some fenced fields close to settlement
- Evident parkland character, defined by mature individual trees and woodland
- Small settlements, composed of varied built form and style, typically red brick and slate with some rendering. Monk bond with dark glazed headers is also a characteristic feature
- Some long distance views over the plain to the west, but more usually views are contained to a localised context

### *Distinctive Features*

- Bosworth Hall and parkland
- Grand Union Canal
- A3404



*View from public footpath to the east of Husbands Bosworth*

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
S1 Impact of landform*	Insignificant	<b>Apparent</b>	Dominant/Prominent
S2 Impact of landcover*	Insignificant	<b>Apparent</b>	Dominant/Prominent
S3 Historic pattern*	Insignificant	Apparent	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S4 Tranquillity	Discordant	<b>Moderate</b>	Tranquil
S5 Distinctiveness/rarity	Frequent	<b>Unusual</b>	Unique/rare
S6 Visual unity	Incoherent	<b>Coherent</b>	Unified
<b>Totals</b> * Prime character categories if tie	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD
C1 Landcover Change	Widespread	<b>Localised</b>	Insignificant
C2 Age Structure of Tree Cover*	Over mature	Mature or young	<b>Mixed</b>
C3 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival*	Relic	<b>Scattered</b>	Widespread/Linked
C4 Management of semi-natural habitats	Poor	Not obvious	<b>Good</b>
C5 Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges)	Declining/Relic	Interrupted	<b>Intact</b>
C6 Impact of built development*	High	Moderate	<b>Low</b>
<b>Totals</b> * Prime condition categories if tie	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>

<b>MATRIX</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Good</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	Safeguard and manage
		<b>Moderate</b>	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
		<b>Poor</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
			<b>Weak</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Strong</b>
			<b>Strength of Character</b>		



*View from public bridleway to the south of Husbands Bosworth*



*View from recreation ground to the south-west of Husbands Bosworth*

## 4.6 Kibworth Lutterworth Lowlands

### *Location*

This area is located to the south-west of Kibworth with a finger extending around the northern extent of Kibworth.

### *Key Characteristics*

- Gently rolling and sloping valley landform, typically between 105m and 135m AOD
- Pastoral farmland of small to medium scaled fields
- Mature hedgerows define field boundaries, with tall hedgerow trees close to the settlement
- Intimate and tranquil character with a close visual association with the historic parts of Kibworth Harcourt and Smeeton Westerby
- Expanding settlement pattern of Kibworth has strong localised influence, but is often well contained due to the contextual relationship with the local landform
- Physical and visual division created by the East Midlands Trains railway and to a lesser extent by the A6
- Built character of Kibworth Harcourt and Kibworth Beauchamp is varied with limited uniformity
- Historic cores retain identity to the two merged settlements
- Important agricultural land separating Kibworth Beauchamp from Smeeton Westerby

### *Distinctive Features*

- East Midlands Trains railway
- Grand Union Canal
- Views to the Laughton Hills
- Christ Church Smeeton Westerby



*View from public footpath looking east towards Beaufield Farm*

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
S1 Impact of landform*	Insignificant	Apparent	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S2 Impact of landcover*	Insignificant	<b>Apparent</b>	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S3 Historic pattern*	Insignificant	<b>Apparent</b>	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S4 Tranquillity	Discordant	Moderate	<b>Tranquil</b>
S5 Distinctiveness/rarity	Frequent	<b>Unusual</b>	Unique/rare
S6 Visual unity	Incoherent	<b>Coherent</b>	Unified
<b>Totals</b> * Prime character categories if tie	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD
C1 Landcover Change	Widespread	Localised	<b>Insignificant</b>
C2 Age Structure of Tree Cover*	Over mature	Mature or young	<b>Mixed</b>
C3 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival*	Relic	Scattered	<b>Widespread/Linked</b>
C4 Management of semi-natural habitats	Poor	<b>Not obvious</b>	Good
C5 Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges)	Declining/Relic	Interrupted	<b>Intact</b>
C6 Impact of built development*	High	<b>Moderate</b>	Low
<b>Totals</b> * Prime condition categories if tie	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>

**MATRIX**

Condition	<b>Good</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	Safeguard and manage
	<b>Moderate</b>	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	<b>Poor</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		<b>Weak</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Strong</b>
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		



*View from public footpath to the north of Smeeton Westerby looking south-east*

## 4.7 Kibworth High Leicestershire

### *Location*

This area is located to the north of the Kibworth Lutterworth Lowlands LCA and the East Midlands Trains railway. It wraps around the northern edge of Kibworth Harcourt.

### *Key Characteristics*

- Gently undulating, sloping landform with broad valleys
- Large scale open farmland with very limited woodland cover
- Geometrical field enclosures defined by hedgerows and trees, predominantly Ash, Hawthorn and Willow
- Numerous streams and brooks that flow to the River Sence
- Open, relatively wide stretching views over the surrounding landscape
- Tranquillity levels locally interrupted by presence of the A6
- Isolated farms and houses with the small village of Carlton Curlieu to the north-east

### *Distinctive Features*

- Burton Brook
- Kibworth Hall
- Carlton Clump
- A6



*View from the side of the A6 looking north-east*

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
S1 Impact of landform*	Insignificant	Apparent	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S2 Impact of landcover*	Insignificant	<b>Apparent</b>	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S3 Historic pattern*	Insignificant	Apparent	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S4 Tranquillity	Discordant	Moderate	<b>Tranquil</b>
S5 Distinctiveness/rarity	<b>Frequent</b>	Unusual	Unique/rare
S6 Visual unity	Incoherent	<b>Coherent</b>	Unified
<b>Totals</b> * Prime character categories if tie	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD
C1 Landcover Change	Widespread	<b>Localised</b>	Insignificant
C2 Age Structure of Tree Cover*	Over mature	<b>Mature or young</b>	Mixed
C3 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival*	Relic	<b>Scattered</b>	Widespread/Linked
C4 Management of semi-natural habitats	Poor	<b>Not obvious</b>	Good
C5 Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges)	Declining/Relic	Interrupted	<b>Intact</b>
C6 Impact of built development*	High	<b>Moderate</b>	Low
<b>Totals</b> * Prime condition categories if tie	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>MATRIX</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Good</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	Safeguard and manage
		<b>Moderate</b>	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
		<b>Poor</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
			<b>Weak</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Strong</b>
			<b>Strength of Character</b>		



View from Langton Road looking north

## 4.8 Kibworth-Fleckney Laughton Hills

### Location

This area is located centrally within the Harborough District and to the south of Kibworth.

### Key Characteristics

- Strongly undulating landform with narrow valleys and elevated ridge lines
- Predominantly pastoral land on the steeper slopes
- Small clumps of woodland and scattered Spinneys
- Historic village of Saddington and scattered farmsteads located along ridge lines and hill tops – limited modern infill
- Clipped low or medium hedgerows, predominantly Hawthorn with mature hedgerow trees
- Numerous brooks and streams
- Impact of development is discreet in wider views
- No major roads
- Prominent hills in views from nearby Fleckney and Kibworth

### Distinctive Features

- Smeeton Hill
- Grand Union Canal following the base of the hills
- Saddington Brook
- Grade II\* Listed St Helens Church in Saddington
- Red brick walls enclosing gardens in Saddington Conservation Area

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
S1 Impact of landform*	Insignificant	Apparent	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S2 Impact of landcover*	Insignificant	<b>Apparent</b>	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S3 Historic pattern*	Insignificant	<b>Apparent</b>	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b>
S4 Tranquillity	Discordant	Moderate	<b>Tranquil</b>
S5 Distinctiveness/rarity	Frequent	<b>Unusual</b>	Unique/rare
S6 Visual unity	Incoherent	Coherent	<b>Unified</b>
<b>Totals * Prime character categories if tie</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3*</b>	<b>3</b>
CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD
C1 Landcover Change	Widespread	Localised	<b>Insignificant</b>
C2 Age Structure of Tree Cover*	Over mature	<b>Mature</b> or young	Mixed
C3 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival*	Relic	Scattered	Widespread/ <b>Linked</b>
C4 Management of semi-natural habitats	Poor	<b>Not obvious</b>	Good
C5 Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges)	Declining/Relic	Interrupted	<b>Intact</b>
C6 Impact of built development*	High	Moderate	<b>Low</b>
<b>Totals * Prime condition categories if tie</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>

<b>MATRIX</b>	<b>Good</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	Safeguard and manage
	<b>Moderate</b>	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	<b>Poor</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		<b>Weak</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Strong</b>
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

## 4.9 Kibworth Welland Valley

### *Location*

This area is located centrally within the Harborough District and to the south-east of Kibworth Beauchamp

### *Key Characteristics*

- Gently sloping valley landform
- Wide river valley associated with Langton Brook and numerous springs and streams
- Mixed farmland with arable of low lying flat areas and pastoral land on the steeper slopes
- Hedgerows are generally low and clipped with hedgerow trees
- Strong tree belts associated with Kibworth golf course and the railway line and small clumps of plantations
- Views across the valley to the Laughton Hills
- Generally tranquil with slight impact from the East Midlands Trains Railway and A6
- Railway line, scattered farms and pylons illustrate moderate impact of built development

### *Distinctive Features*

- Kibworth Golf Course
- Langton Brook and small associated streams
- Views to the elevated Laughton Hills
- East Midlands Trains Railway



*View from Birdie Close looking south-east*

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
S1 Impact of landform* S2 Impact of landcover* S3 Historic pattern* S4 Tranquillity S5 Distinctiveness/rarity S6 Visual unity	Insignificant Insignificant Discordant Frequent Incoherent	Apparent <b>Apparent</b> <b>Apparent</b> Moderate <b>Unusual</b> <b>Coherent</b>	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b> Dominant/Prominent Dominant/Prominent <b>Tranquil</b> Unique/rare Unified
<b>Totals</b> * Prime character categories if tie	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD
C1 Landcover Change C2 Age Structure of Tree Cover* C3 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival* C4 Management of semi-natural habitats C5 Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges) C6 Impact of built development*	Widespread Over mature Relic Poor Declining/Relic High	Localised Mature or young Scattered <b>Not obvious</b> Interrupted <b>Moderate</b>	<b>Insignificant</b> <b>Mixed</b> Widespread/ <b>Linked</b> Good <b>Intact</b> Low
<b>Totals</b> * Prime condition categories if tie	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>

<b>MATRIX</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Good</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	Safeguard and manage
		<b>Moderate</b>	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
		<b>Poor</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
			<b>Weak</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Strong</b>
			<b>Strength of Character</b>		



*Looking across Kibworth Golf Course with glimpsed views of the Laughton Hills to the south-west*

## 4.10 Ullesthorpe Upper Soar

### *Location*

This area is located in the south-west of the Harborough District. It wraps around the edge of Ullesthorpe and extends north to the Ullesthorpe Court Hotel and Golf Club Complex.

### *Key Characteristics*

- Wide river basin with high ridges and some steep slopes
- Mixed agricultural farmland, predominantly pastoral but with a proportion of arable
- Sub-regular interlocking field pattern with small to medium sized fields
- Variable pattern of hedgerows, with some clipped, some tall and denser tree belts providing stronger enclosure
- Lack of woodland
- Localised areas of ridge and furrow on pastoral slopes
- More recent housing to the eastern side of village, forming an exposed urban edge
- Cross valley views

### *Distinctive Features*

- Ullesthorpe Windmill
- Manor Road green lane and Manorial Earthworks
- Dismantled Railway Line and strong belt of associated vegetation
- Ullesthorpe Golf Course and Ullesthorpe Court Hotel
- Views to Claybrooke Parva church
- Victorian houses within the Conservation Area



*View looking up the valley slopes along Manor Road*

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
S1 Impact of landform* S2 Impact of landcover* S3 Historic pattern* S4 Tranquillity S5 Distinctiveness/rarity S6 Visual unity	Insignificant Insignificant Discordant <b>Frequent</b> Incoherent	Apparent Apparent <b>Apparent</b> Moderate Unusual <b>Coherent</b>	Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b> Dominant/ <b>Prominent</b> <b>Tranquil</b> Unique/rare Unified
<b>Totals</b> * Prime character categories if tie	1	2	3
CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD
C1 Landcover Change C2 Age Structure of Tree Cover* C3 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival* C4 Management of semi-natural habitats C5 Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges) C6 Impact of built development*	Widespread Over mature Relic Poor Declining/Relic <b>High</b>	<b>Localised</b> Mature or young Scattered <b>Not obvious</b> <b>Interrupted</b> Moderate	Insignificant <b>Mixed</b> Widespread/ <b>Linked</b> Good Intact Low
<b>Totals</b> * Prime condition categories if tie	1	3	2

<b>MATRIX</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Good</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
		<b>Moderate</b>	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	<b>Conserve and restore</b>
		<b>Poor</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
			<b>Weak</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Strong</b>
			<b>Strength of Character</b>		



*Approach to Ullesthorpe on Lutterworth Road*



*Looking east across the valley from Manor Road*

## 5 Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Capacity

- 5.1 The methodology to assess the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development, while respecting its character, is based on the guidance in Topic Paper 6 – ‘Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity’. This paper forms part of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Heritage ‘Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland’. Reference has also been made to the thinking in the publication, ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third edition’ 2013.
- 5.2 The methodology developed for this study adopts the following premise that:  
*“existing landscape features + visual sensitivity = Overall Landscape Sensitivity”*
- 5.3 A number of criteria have been selected to identify both existing landscape features and visual sensitivities. These criteria reflect both the national guidance in Topic Paper 6 and the particular circumstances for the rural landscape around Leicester.
- 5.4 The criteria were grouped into primary factors (representing features that are more permanent in the landscape, such as landform) and secondary factors (representing features that are of a more temporary or transient nature). However, no weighting has been given to primary or secondary factors in the numerical scoring of the criteria for each Land Parcel.
- 5.5 The following criteria have been selected to reflect existing landscape features:
- slope analysis (primary)
  - vegetation enclosure (primary)
  - the complexity and scale of the landscape (secondary)
  - the condition of the landscape (secondary)
- 5.6 The following criteria have been selected to reflect visual sensitivity:
- openness to public view (secondary)
  - openness to private views (secondary)
  - relationship with existing urban built form (primary)
  - prevention of coalescence (primary)
  - scope to mitigate the development (primary)
- 5.7 It is recognised that Topic Paper 6 makes reference to a wider range of factors within what is termed Landscape Character Sensitivity. However, in the context of this assessment it is assumed that these topics are covered elsewhere by the District Council e.g. nature conservation and cultural heritage features. It is considered that for the purpose of this assessment the main relevant existing landscape and visual factors are addressed in the above categories.
- 5.8 The Overall Landscape Sensitivity provides an evaluation of the sensitivity of a land parcel in broad strategic terms. In order to assess the Overall Landscape Capacity of a land parcel, landscape value was added to the equation, as follows.  
*“Overall Landscape Sensitivity + Landscape Value = Overall Landscape Capacity”*
- 5.9 In the absence of any specific stakeholder consultation, previous studies have taken into account the Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside (Policy EV/4 - now deleted) and Green Wedges (Policy EV/2) in the assessment of landscape value. However, given that EV/4 no longer exists and that EV/2 does not apply to the landscapes around the Rural Centres this approach was not felt appropriate to be included in the study. Instead Landscape Value now takes into account the landscape’s relationship to designated Conservation Areas and its role in their setting.
- 5.10 To effectively assess the landscape capacity of a site, an assumption is made as to the form that the potential development will take. For the purposes of this study it is assumed that development will include in the main 2-3 storey residential development. Employment areas will comprise 2-3

storey buildings. It is not anticipated that there will be any taller structures in the assessment unless otherwise stated in the detailed Land Parcel Sheets.

5.11 Each site was assessed against the criteria noted above, using a 5-point scale from A to E (guided by a definitions/descriptions that have been devised for this particular study to reflect local characteristics). These definitions are contained in Table A.

5.12 The criteria were then scored, with 5 points being awarded to A's (the most suitable for development) and 1 point to E's (the least suitable for development). The scores were totalled for each Land Parcel to provide both a Landscape Sensitivity Profile and a Landscape Capacity Profile. Parcels with an overall higher score are considered to be relatively less sensitive to change and to also have a relatively higher capacity. The total score is then allocated an Overall Capacity value by using the following range. The bandings between categories have been defined based on the range of scores achieved in the study area for the Rural Centres and thereby to provide a measure of relative capacity around these six particular settlements. (NB. The range of scores is different from those in the previous Market Harborough, the Leicester Principal Urban Area and the Lutterworth and Broughton Astley studies. For this reason the capacity maps for the Rural Centres should not be directly compared with those for Market Harborough, the Leicester Principal Urban Area and Lutterworth and Broughton Astley).

22 – 25 = Low Landscape Capacity

26 – 29 = Medium Low Landscape Capacity

30 – 33 = Medium Landscape Capacity

34 – 37 = Medium High Landscape Capacity

38 – 41 = High Landscape Capacity

5.13 It should be emphasized that no absolute conclusion should be drawn from the numerical totals. The influence of individual criteria in a given Land Parcel and in the context of the wider Landscape Character should also be given due consideration. There may be individual criteria, particularly where the primary criteria are in the 'E' category, where it is possible that development may be incompatible unless it can be effectively mitigated. It is also important that the overall spread and balance of the profiles is fully considered rather than just the total Landscape Capacity value. In other words, each proposal will still need to be considered on its merits. To aid these considerations a commentary of the key points has been provided for each land parcel.

5.14 A general commentary is provided for each land parcel based on the key characteristics and distinctive features. This is followed by a statement on the suitability for development and overall capacity. For parcels that have medium, medium-high or high capacity for development a further description of mitigation measures is provided to guide the principles for development. An overview of the main findings for each Rural Centre is also provided below.

### ***Summary of findings for each Rural Centre***

#### ***Billesdon***

5.15 A relatively small settlement, set within the attractive, rolling High Leicestershire landscape. It is located centrally within the northern half of the Harborough District. The historic village core centred around the designated Conservation Area and features of the local landscape are considered to be of a relatively high sensitivity. Therefore, there are limited areas considered to have a high capacity to accommodate development.

5.16 The Parcels of land considered most suitable for development are Parcels 3 and 12. Parcel 3 is currently in use as a recycling depot. Parcel 12 is considered to have a Medium-High capacity due to its enclosed nature with good scope to mitigate development proposals. Parcels 5 and parts of 6 adjoin more residential development with existing access points and are considered to be at the higher end of the medium capacity Parcels within Billesdon.

5.17 There are nine Parcels with a Medium-Low capacity and two Parcels with a Low capacity where development is not felt to be appropriate. This includes Parcel 8, an area centred on an elevated

landform known as Kates Hill. The Parcel has steep slopes with limited access opportunities, is prominent in wider views and forms an attractive setting to the Billesdon Conservation Area. The second Parcel with low capacity is 13. The Parcel occupies an elevated position above the existing skyline of the village and currently contains the village cricket ground and an area identified as a Local Heritage Asset within the Neighbourhood Plan (at the time of writing awaiting referendum) that should be conserved or enhanced.

### ***Fleckney***

- 5.18 Fleckney is a medium sized settlement in relation to the other rural centres in the study. It is situated within the gently undulating Lutterworth Lowlands landscape. The village has relatively large areas of 20th century housing developments and does not have a Conservation Area. The central part of the village is slightly more historic with pastoral slopes with ridge and furrow surrounding a stream and Main Street. There are also Victorian terraces reflecting the 19th century industrial heritage. The Parcels to the east and west of the historic core and near Fleckney Brook have been considered less suitable for development.
- 5.19 Areas surrounding Fleckney that are considered to have a High capacity to accommodate development are to the north-east and north-west of the settlement. Parcels 19, 20 and 21 occupy a plateau site, with good quality boundary hedgerows, some small scale enclosed fields and good connections to existing residential areas with potential vehicular routes to proposed development. A recreation ground (Parcel 2) is considered to have a Medium-High capacity to accommodate development, although development would only be suitable should alternative recreation provision be available. To the north and south of this area are Parcels 3 and 4. These are small scale Parcels that would be suitable for a small amount of infill housing associated with existing development on Leicester Road.
- 5.20 To the southern side of the village Parcels 13 and 15 have potential to provide for some residential development, closely associated with existing development extending from Fleckney Road. Parcel 10 is seen as an area that could provide a logical extension to the existing industrial estate with dense boundary vegetation providing screening for commercial scale development. The land surrounding these Parcels have been considered to have a Medium capacity to accommodate development, although there are positive characteristics within the Parcels, the lack of boundary vegetation to the south providing suitable separation from the surrounding open farmland and relative proximity to Saddington becomes a constraint on any proposed development.

### ***Great Glen***

- 5.21 The settlement is a medium sized settlement within close proximity to Leicester but still with a distinct and separate identity. The village is centred on the north-south alignment of the River Sence valley and the east-west route of the former A6 where the majority of the historic buildings are located near the village green. There are also a few country houses to the south east of the settlement around and overlooking the Burton Brook valley. More extensive areas of 20th century and contemporary residential development occupy some of the valley slopes of the River Scene to the north of the A6.
- 5.22 Parcel 19 is considered to be the only area with high capacity for development. The size of the area is relatively small and is located adjacent to the A6. It could be suitable for limited residential or commercial uses subject to providing suitable access. Parcel 5, located between the playing fields and Leicester Grammar School, is considered to have medium-high capacity and this could reflect the similar pattern of development on the southern side of the Scene valley. Development here would link the village with the existing Grammar School site on the higher ground.
- 5.23 Parcels 3, 9 and 11 have medium capacity for development with some areas relating well to existing development most notably Parcel 9. Development on the higher ground including Parcels 8 and 11 would be visually prominent particularly if they break the skyline. Development Parcels between the A6 and London Road (former A6) are typically considered to have medium capacity for development. However, development in this direction would result in a departure from the

existing settlement pattern and would adversely affect the impression of the village being set in a wider rural area by bringing it closer to the current A6.

- 5.24 The Burton Brook Valley to the south west is considered to have a medium-low capacity for development. This valley is currently only marginally affected by built development and retains its attractive rural character.

### ***Husbands Bosworth***

- 5.25 The village lies to the south of the District within an area of predominantly rural character. There is a well-defined historic core and character to the village, with much of the settlement designated as a Conservation Area. This extends to include Bosworth Hall, a large Grade II\* listed Georgian and Victorian house, together with much of the associated gardens and parkland that lies to the south-east of the settlement. The historic part of the village is defined by narrow winding lanes, with houses set close to the road edge, with varying architectural style, typically red brick and slate, with examples of monk brick bond and dark glazed headers. More recent 20th century housing lies both to the north and south of the village. These aspects have an important influence on the capacity and suitability of the village to accommodate future residential development.
- 5.26 The other key factors affecting the landscape capacity around Husbands Bosworth are the variable landform and relative extent of openness to views. The village lies on an elevated area of land partly overlooking the Upper Welland valley. To the west of the village, this is clearly identifiable as steep slopes descending into the valley, with views to and from Theddingworth. Horse paddocks and grazed fields are commonly open, with localised pockets of tall mature hedgerows and trees. This combined with the presence of the Conservation Area, and Bosworth Hall and parkland, makes much of this part of the village edge unsuitable for development. The only potential exception is Parcel 2, which due to its more enclosed nature, provides the potential for a small scale and sensitive development that reflects the historic character of the village and subject to the removal of the modern agricultural buildings.
- 5.27 To the north of the village, the landscape has a moderate suitability due to the separation from the Conservation Area and close association with the recent modern housing. However, the steepness of the valley slopes and openness to public views, makes this a difficult location to develop, without careful planning and design to avoid an intrusive influence. Similarly to the south of the village, the landscape is closely associated with the adjoining more recent modern residential development, that separates it from the Conservation Area. However, the land close to the settlement forms part of much larger and open arable fields, which would require the creation of a copse or tree belts along the southern boundary to ensure integration with the adjoining countryside. The greatest potential for future residential development would be to the west of the village, due to the smaller, more enclosed fields and less variation in landform. Careful consideration would be required, where development is located adjacent or within the Conservation Area. The recreation ground (Parcel 8) and land to the south (Parcel 9) provide two of the most suitable locations, due to the separation from the Conservation Area, relatively flat land and visual containment to the local setting, but would be subject to providing equivalent and appropriate public open space provision elsewhere within the village.
- 5.28 There are no medium-high or high capacity areas around Husbands Bosworth, due to the moderately high sensitivity of the village and surrounding landscape.

### ***Kibworth***

- 5.29 A medium sized settlement comprising Kibworth Beauchamp and Kibworth Harcourt. The surrounding landscape varies in character with a mix of wide river valleys, agricultural lowlands, elevated rising ground and rolling farmland. Within the study area the land to the north of Kibworth Harcourt is generally considered unsuitable for development with close connections to the historic village core of Kibworth Harcourt and the setting of the Conservation Area. The Parcels of land to the south of Kibworth Beauchamp are also considered less suitable for development due to

the important role the landscape plays in maintaining separation between Kibworth Beauchamp and Smeeton Westerby, both of which have Conservation Area status.

- 5.30 Areas that were considered most suitable for development are located to the east and west of the settlement and in close proximity to recent residential and commercial development. To the east is an area of low lying land including Parcels 1, 2 and 3 which have good connections to existing residential and commercial areas and are well screened in the wider landscape by vegetation on the boundaries with the Kibworth Golf course and the East Midlands Trains Railway. However, Parcel 2 is currently in use as a sewage works and despite its suitable conditions within the assessment criteria, would be unlikely to be available for development. The land to the west that is considered relatively suitable for development extends west from existing areas of recent residential development in between the confines of Fleckney Road to the south and Wistow Road to the north. These areas are reasonably enclosed, connected to the settlement and would not impact on the setting of the Kibworth Harcourt and Kibworth Beauchamp Conservation Areas.

### ***Ullesthorpe***

- 5.31 A relatively small settlement in the south-west of Harborough District, set within the river valley, sloping landscape of the Upper Soar. The village is set on a ridge line that slopes down to a stream separating Ullesthorpe from Claybrooke Parva to the west. The historical core of the village is designated as a Conservation Area and is located to the west of a dismantled railway line. To the east there are areas of denser 20th century residential development. As a result, land to the west of the railway line has been considered to have a lower capacity to accommodate development due to its importance in the setting to the Conservation Area and maintaining the separation between the two neighbouring settlements.
- 5.32 The 20th century residential development to the east of the village is relatively prominent on the approach to the village. Parcels 8, 9 and 11 have good access opportunities to these areas, relatively good enclosure and present opportunities to enhance the eastern edge of the village. They have been considered to have a high or medium-high capacity to accommodate development. Within Parcel 11 there has been a small amount of recent development and the Parcel provides appropriate landscape characteristics to extend this further, which would also provide links from the village to the slightly isolated recreation ground. Parcels 6 and 7 provide some opportunities for small scale residential development. However, their location on the edge of the Conservation Area would be a constraint on the design. There is a small Parcel (Parcel 14) to the north of the village, on the edge of the Ullesthorpe golf course that is also considered appropriate for a small amount of residential development leading on from Fairway Meadows.

**Table A – Criteria for assessing landscape sensitivity and capacity**

Criteria group	Criteria	Measurement of criteria	Comments
<b>Existing Landscape Features</b>	Slope analysis	A= Plateau/gently undulating B= Rolling /undulating landform providing some enclosure C= Tributary valleys/lower valley slopes/gentle side slopes D= Elevated landforms, plateau edge, ridges E= Prominent steep slopes on valley sides	
	Enclosure by vegetation	A= Enclosed by mature vegetation – extensive treebelts/woodland B= Semi-enclosed by vegetation - moderate woodland cover, good quality tall hedgerows/ hedgerows with hedgerow trees C= Fragmented vegetation - scattered small woodlands, fragmented shelterbelts and/or clipped hedgerows D= Limited/poor hedges (with no trees) and/or isolated copses E= Largely open with minimal vegetation	
	Complexity/ Scale	A= Extensive simple landscape with single land uses B= Large scale landscape with limited land use and variety C= Large or medium scale landscape with variations in pattern, texture and scale D= Small or medium scale landscape with a variety in pattern, texture and scale E= Intimate and organic landscape with a richness in pattern, texture and scale	
	Landscape Character Quality/ Condition	A= Area of weak character in a poor condition B= Area of weak character in a moderate condition or of a moderate character in a poor condition C= Area of weak character in a good condition or of a moderate character in a moderate condition or of a strong character in a poor condition D= Area of moderate character in a good condition or of a strong character in a moderate condition E= Area of strong character in a good condition	The condition of the landscape partially reflects the active management of the landscape for agriculture, amenity uses or nature conservation.

Criteria group	Criteria	Measurement of criteria	Comments
<b>Visual Factors</b>	Openness to public view	<p>A= Site is well contained from public views</p> <p>B= Site is generally well contained from public views</p> <p>C= Site is partially contained from public views</p> <p>D= Site is moderately open to public views</p> <p>E= Site is very open to public views</p>	Public views will include views from Roads, Rights of Way and public open space. The evaluation considers a summer and winter evaluation. However due to the time of the study the winter evaluation was estimated based on the character of the vegetation. This criterion is also considered in association with 'Scope to mitigate the development' criteria. Score will depend on the extent of the visibility from all the site perimeters and the rights of way through site.
	Openness to private view	<p>A= Site is well contained from private views</p> <p>B= Site is generally well contained from private views</p> <p>C= Site is partially contained from private views</p> <p>D= Site is moderately open to private views</p> <p>E= Site is very open to private views</p>	This relates to private views from residential properties. The evaluation considers a summer and winter evaluation. However due to the time of the study the winter evaluation was estimated based on the character of the vegetation. This criterion is also considered in association with 'Scope to mitigate the development' criteria. The score will depend on the extent of visibility from all the site perimeters and the number of properties with views.
	Relationship with existing urban built form	<p>A= Location where built development will form a natural extension of an adjacent part of urban fabric</p> <p>B= Location where built development will form some close associations with the existing parts of urban fabric</p> <p>C= Location where built development will form some moderate associations with existing urban fabric</p> <p>D= Location where built development will only form some limited associations with the existing urban fabric due to major obstacles</p> <p>E= Location where development will be isolated from and not form any relationship with existing urban fabric</p>	

Criteria group	Criteria	Measurement of criteria	Comments
	Prevention of coalescence	A= Development would not compromise any separation B= Development would have slight impact on separation C= Development would have moderate impact on separation D= Development would significantly compromise separation E= Development would cause complete coalescence	
<b>Potential Landscape Features</b>	Scope to mitigate the development	A= Good scope to provide mitigation in the short to medium term in harmony with existing landscape pattern B= Good scope to provide mitigation in the medium term and in keeping with existing landscape pattern C= Moderate scope to provide mitigation in the medium term broadly in keeping with existing landscape pattern D= Limited scope to provide adequate mitigation in keeping with the existing landscape in the medium term E= Very limited scope to provide adequate mitigation in the medium to long term	This is an assessment based on landscape character, aesthetic factors - scale, enclosure, pattern, movement – overall visibility of site and consideration of existing viewpoints
<b>Landscape Value</b>	Local Landscape Designations	A= Location where built development will have no impact B= Location where built development will have slight impact C= Location where built development will have moderate impact D= Location where built development is adjacent to designated area, and /or will have high impact E= Location fully within a designated area of landscape value	This criteria is used as a proxy for Landscape Value in the absence of specific stakeholder consultation, and includes consideration of local landscape designations (Areas of Particularly Attractive Countryside, Green Wedges)

**APPENDIX A – Extract from Harborough District Council Landscape  
Character Assessment**

## High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area

### Key Characteristics

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

### General Description

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

### Topography

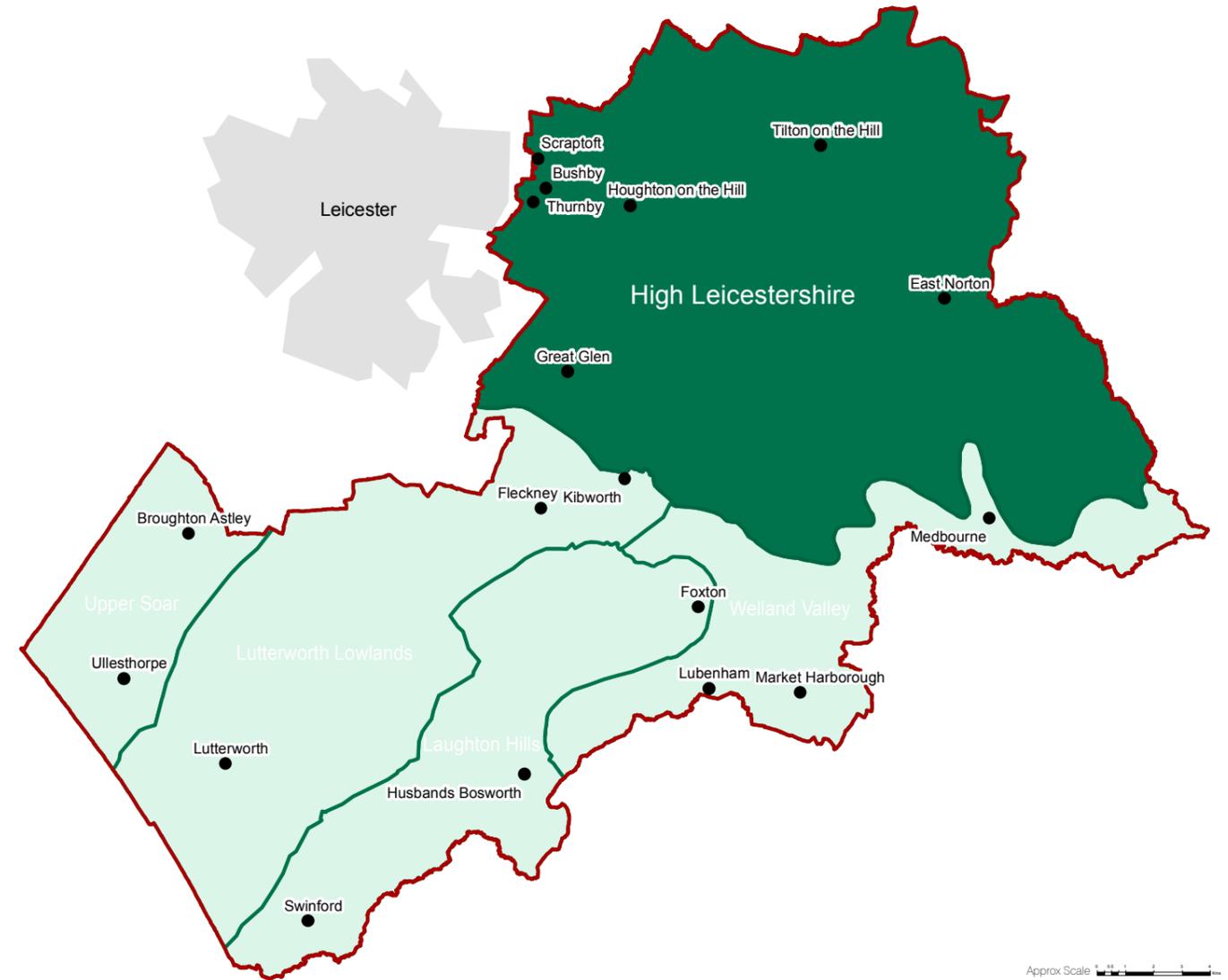
The topography of High Leicestershire is its most defining feature. The steeply sloping valleys and broad ridges were created by fluvio-glacial influences and water courses that flowed across the area. The central area of High Leicestershire reaches 210m AOD beside Tilton on the Hill, and falls to below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

### Geology

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

### Vegetation

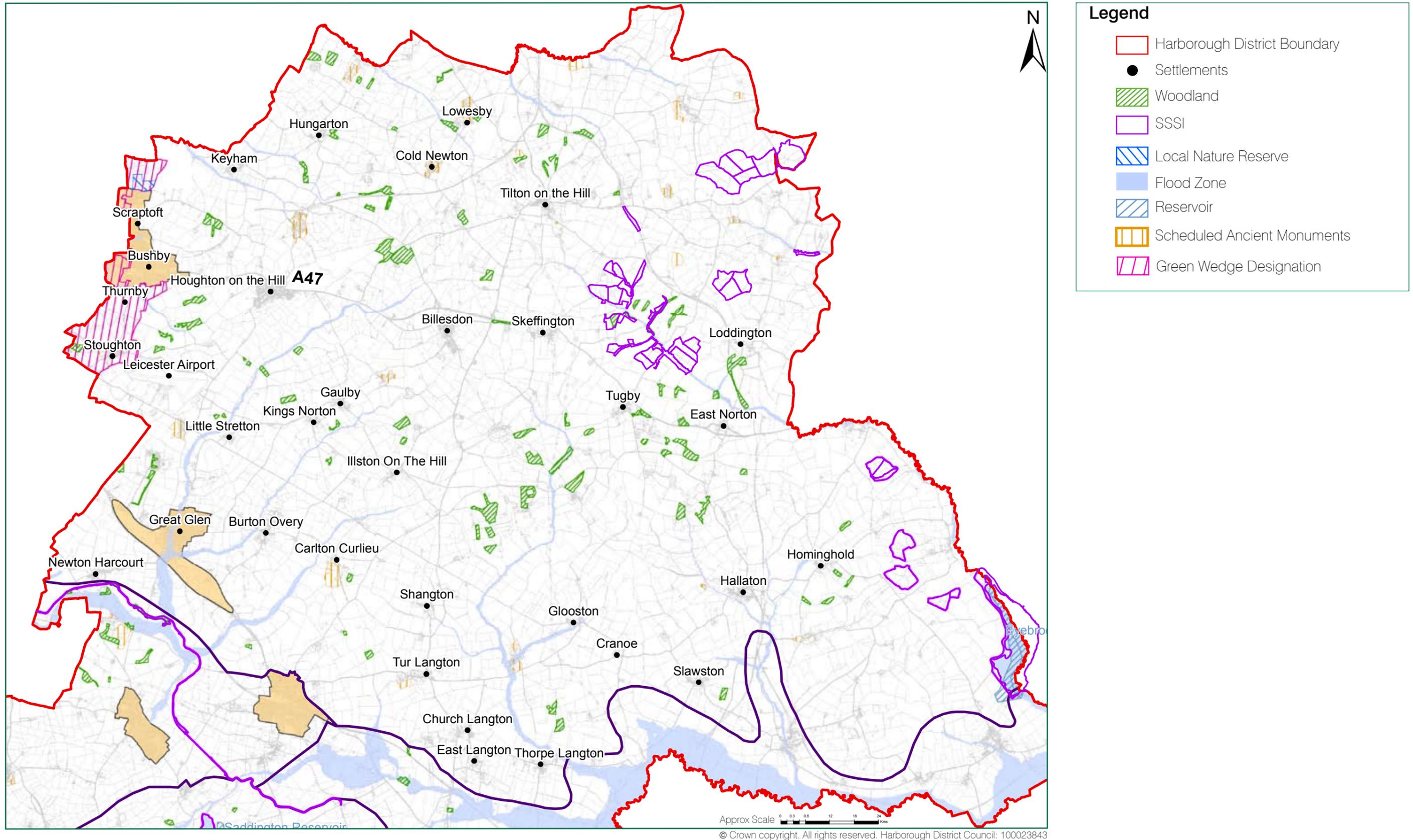
The numerous woodlands which stretch across the hills and valleys of High Leicestershire contribute to the character of the area with larger woodlands and scattered copses prominent across many of the ridges. Owston Woods is the largest of a number of areas of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) to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



Approx Scale 1:10,000  
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Figure 1.5: - High Leicestershire- Landscape Character Plan



**Legend**

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



Typical gated road of High Leicestershire near Lowesby

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

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

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

**Ecology**

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

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

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

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

**Land Use**

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

**Urban Influence / Settlement Pattern**

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

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

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

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

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



Keyham Church





East Norton village

### Heritage

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Capacity: Low to Medium

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

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

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

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

### Key Issues

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



## Laughton Hills Landscape Character Area

### Key Characteristics

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

### General Description

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

### Topography

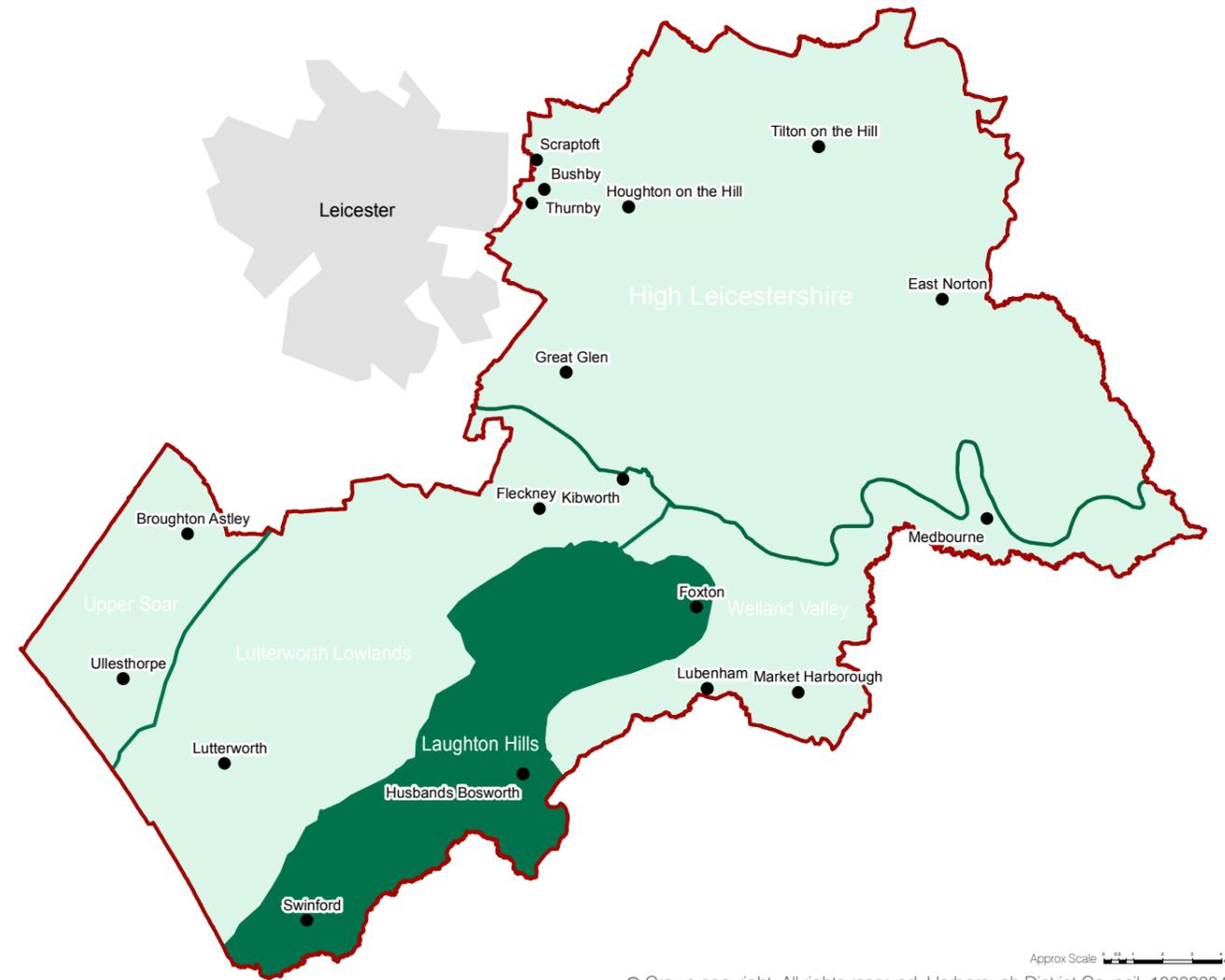
The topography of Laughton Hills follows a distinctive ridge line that adjoins and overlooks the Upper Welland Valley and the Grand Union Canal from the north and west. The area generally becomes lower and flatter towards the south. The ridge line along the Welland Valley border incorporating the Upper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

### Geology

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

### Vegetation

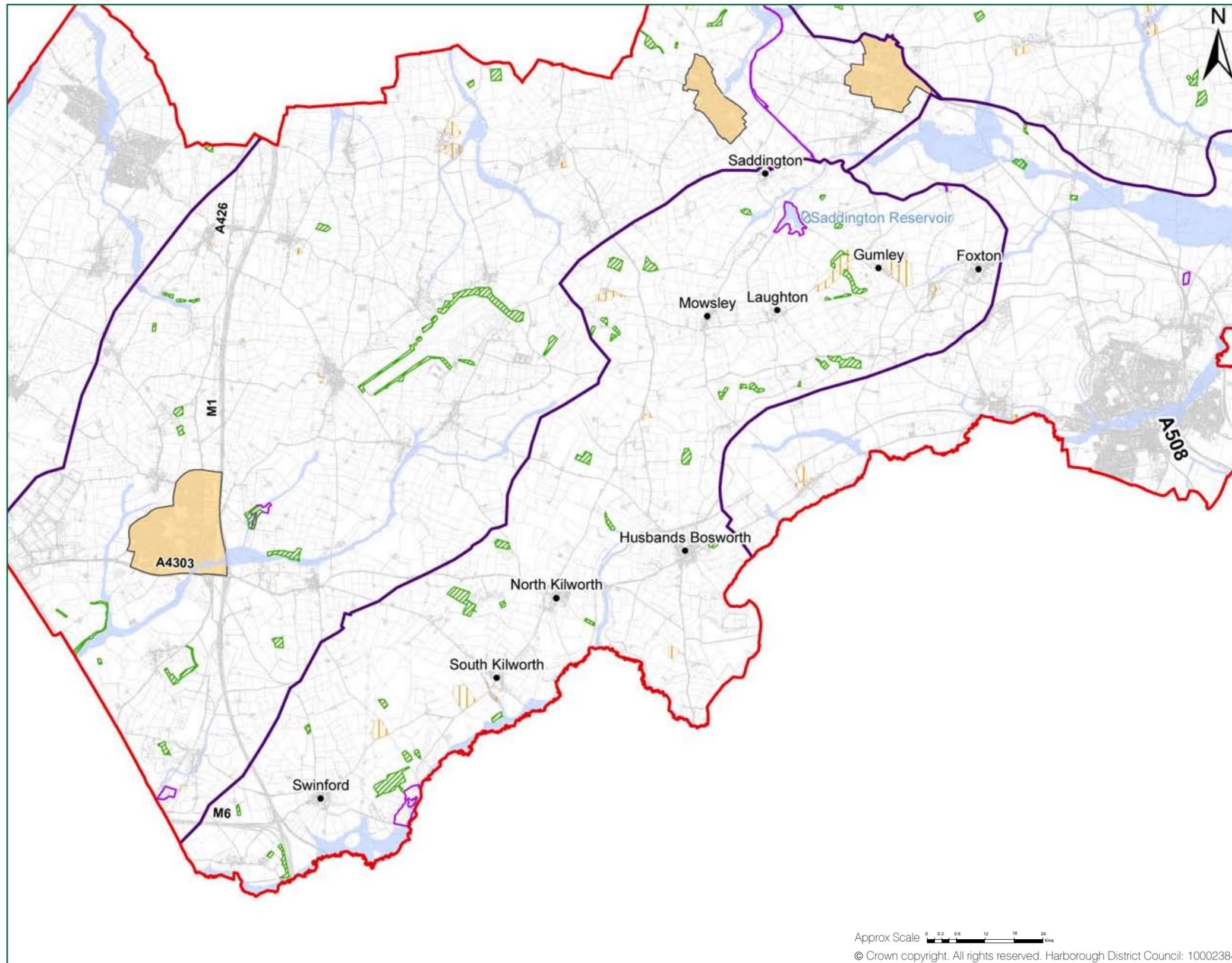
The main wooded areas feature in the north of the character area in particular Gumley Wood beside Gumley and patches along the Laughton Hills' ridge line adjacent to the Grand Union Canal. The woodlands predominantly consist of ash and oak species with ornamental trees such as horse chestnut evident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



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



**Legend**

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

**Ecology**

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

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

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

**Land Use**

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

**Urban Influence/ Settlement Pattern**

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

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

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

**Heritage**

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

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

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

**Capacity: Low to Medium**

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

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



South Kilworth Village





Foxton Church



Typical hedgerow boundary of the Laughton Hills

#### Key Issues

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

## Welland Valley Landscape Character Area

### Key Characteristics

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

### General Description

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

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

### Topography

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

### Geology

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

### Vegetation

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

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

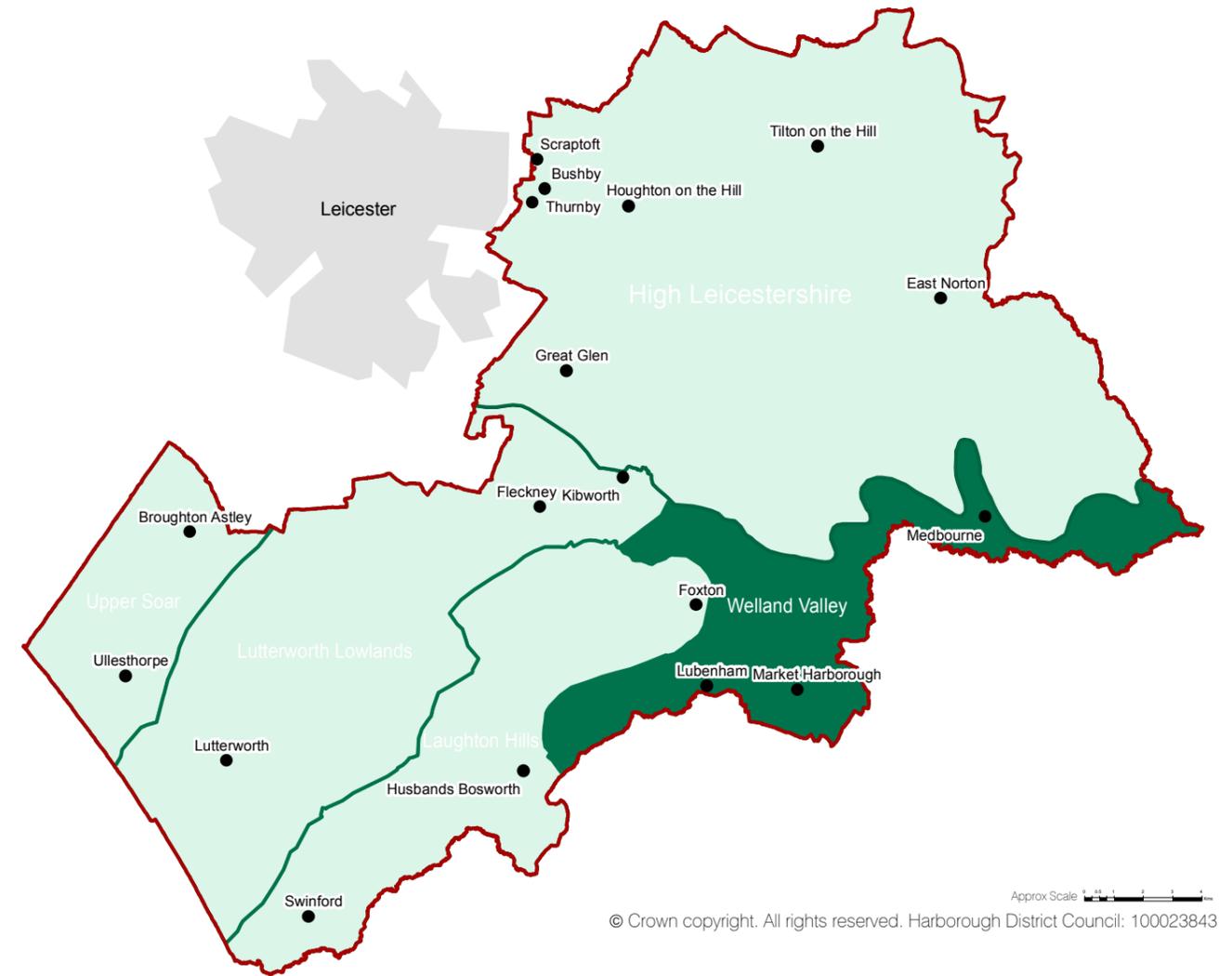
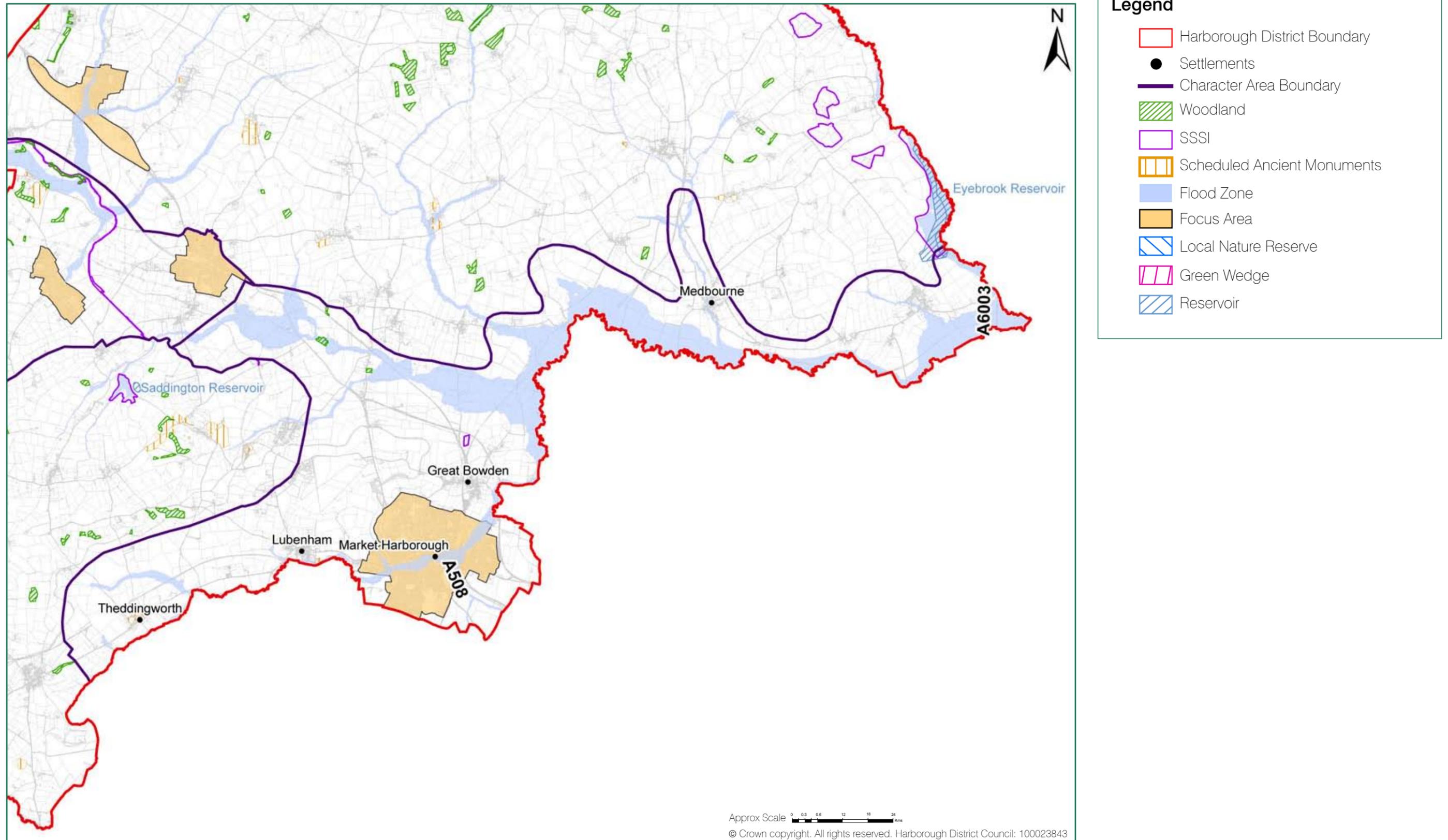


Figure 1.7: - Welland Valley- Landscape Character Plan



**Ecology**

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

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

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

**Land Use**

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

**Urban Influence/ Settlement Pattern**

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

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

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



The Medbourne Brook flowing through Medbourne Village



#### Heritage

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

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

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

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

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

#### Capacity: Medium

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

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

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

#### Key Issues

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



Looking east from Paynes Lane across Medbourne village



Grand Union Canal on western border of Market Harborough

## Upper Soar Landscape Character Area

### Key Characteristics

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

### General Description

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

### Topography

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

### Geology

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

### Vegetation

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

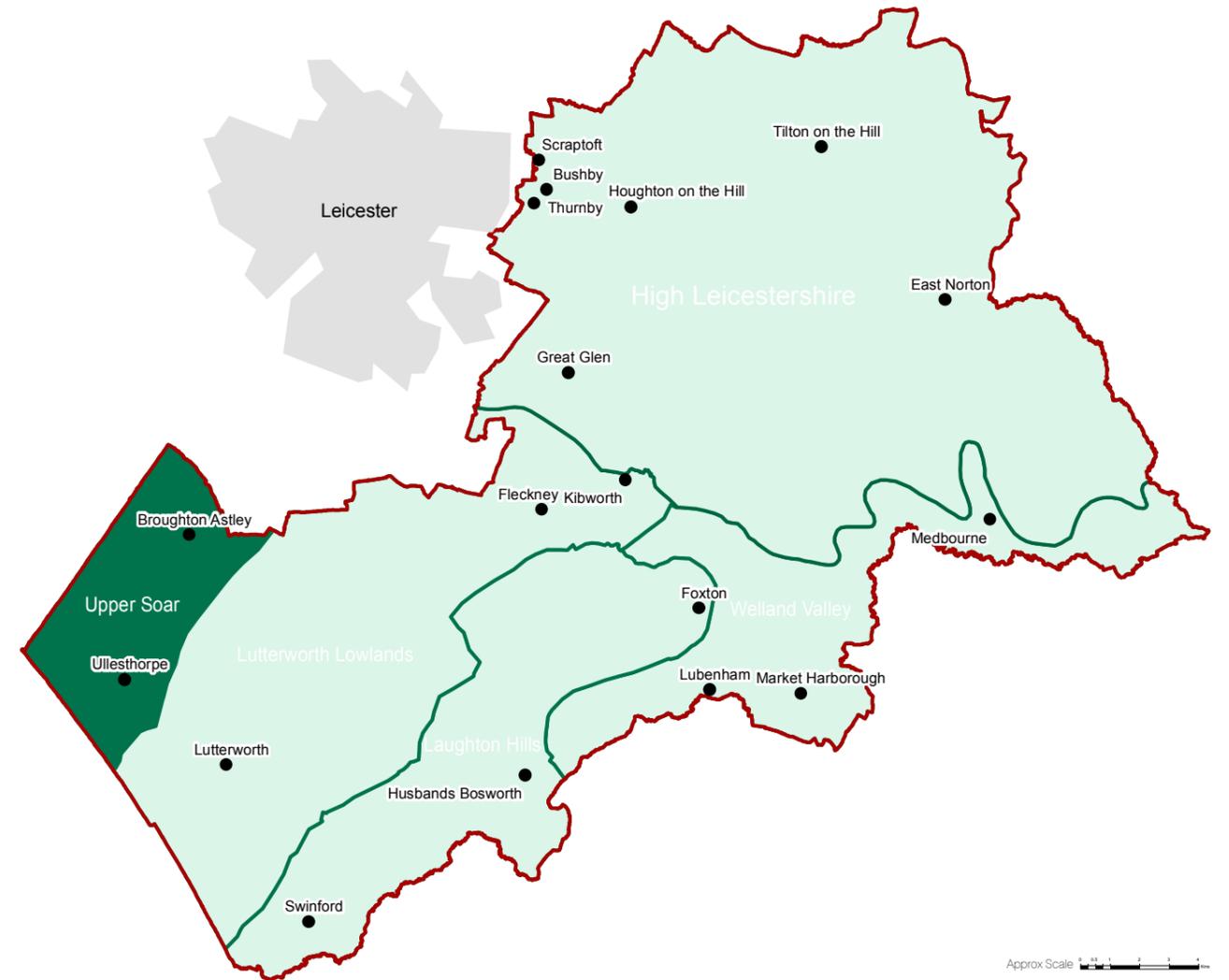
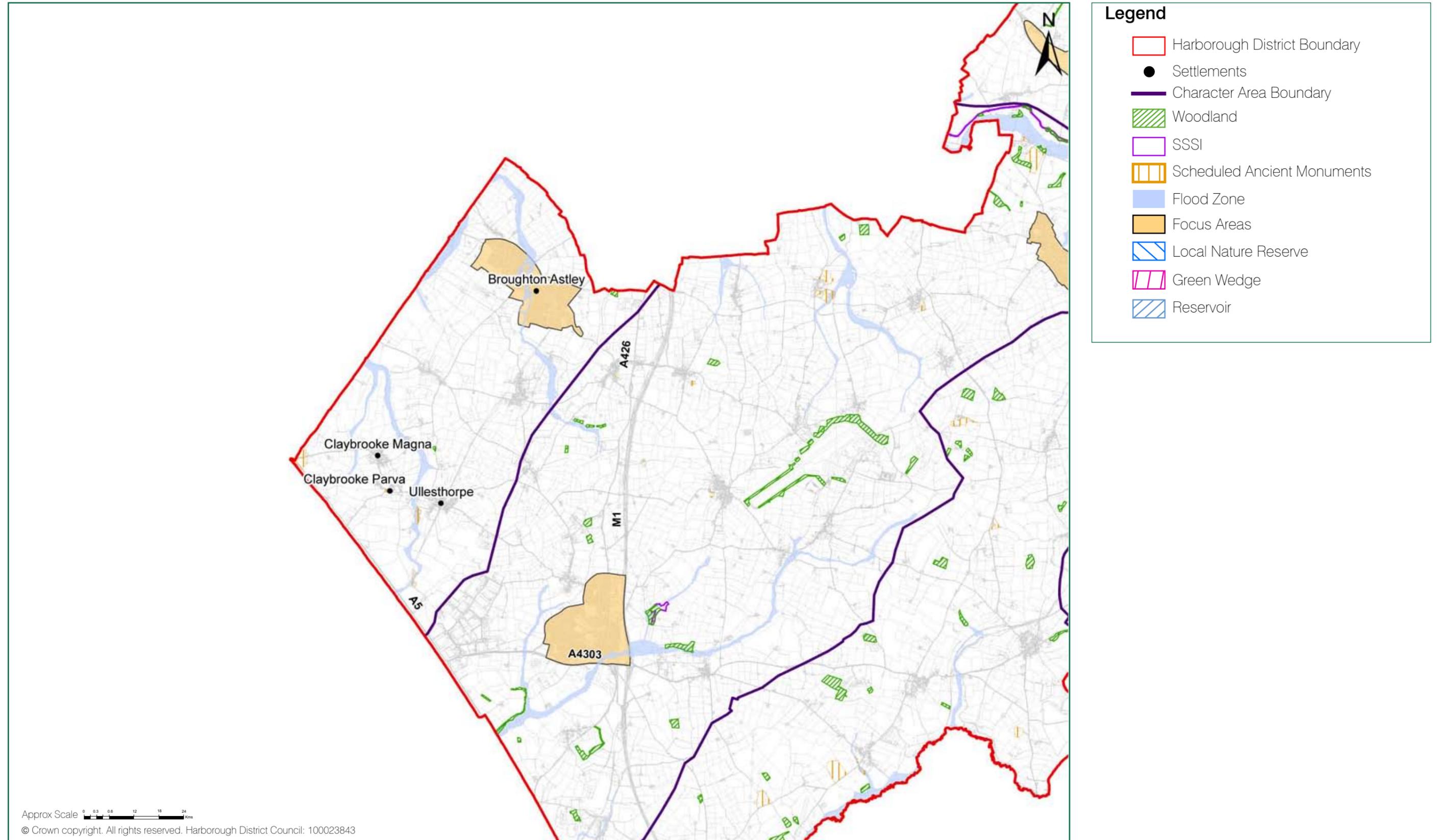


Figure 1.8: - Upper Soar- Landscape Character Plan



**Ecology**

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

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

**Land Use**

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

**Urban Influence/Settlement pattern**

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



The M1 motorway exerts an influence from the adjacent Character Area

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

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

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

**Heritage**

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

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

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



**Capacity: Medium**

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

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

**Key Issues**

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

## Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area

### Key Characteristics

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

### General Description

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

### Topography

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

### Geology

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

### Vegetation

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

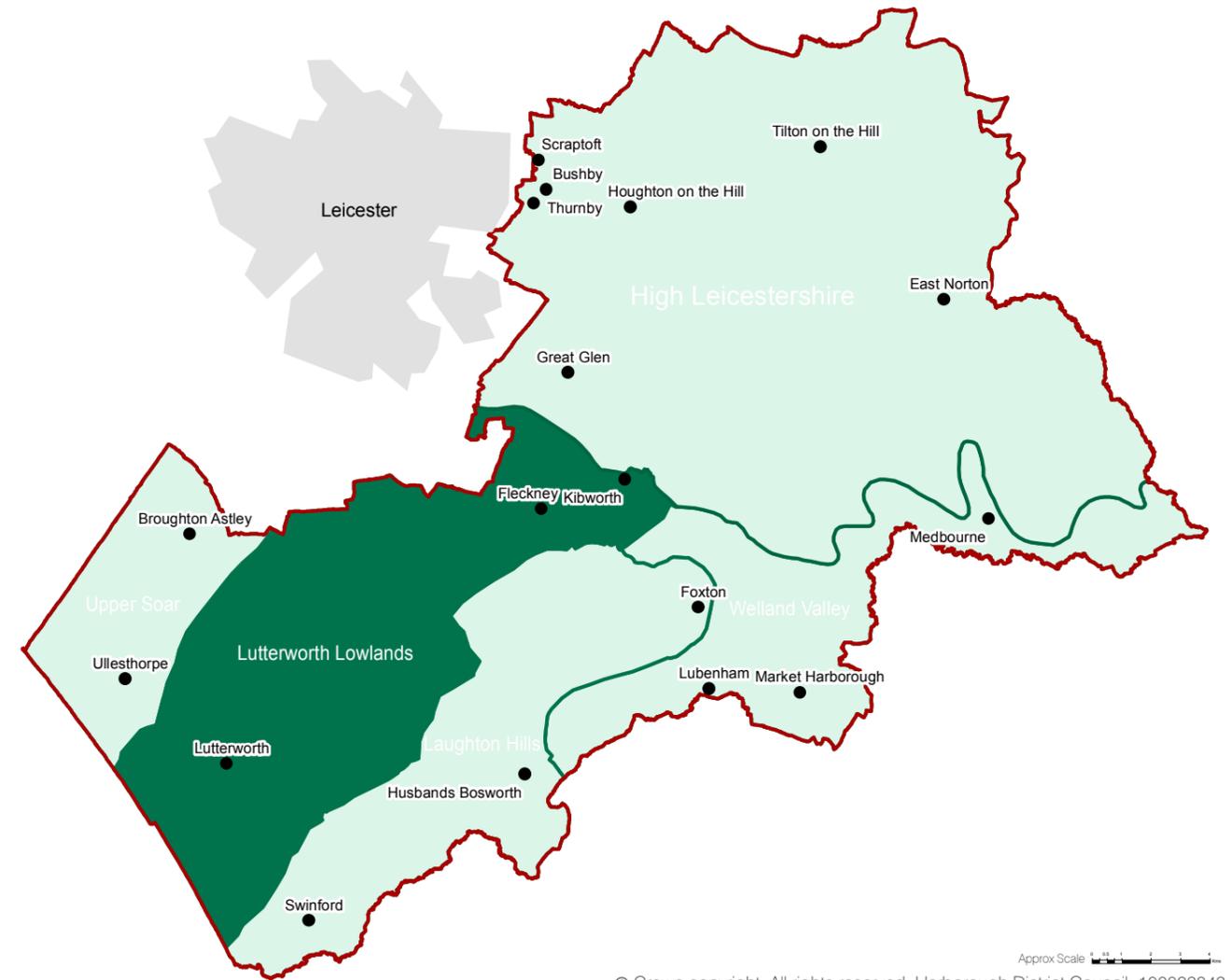
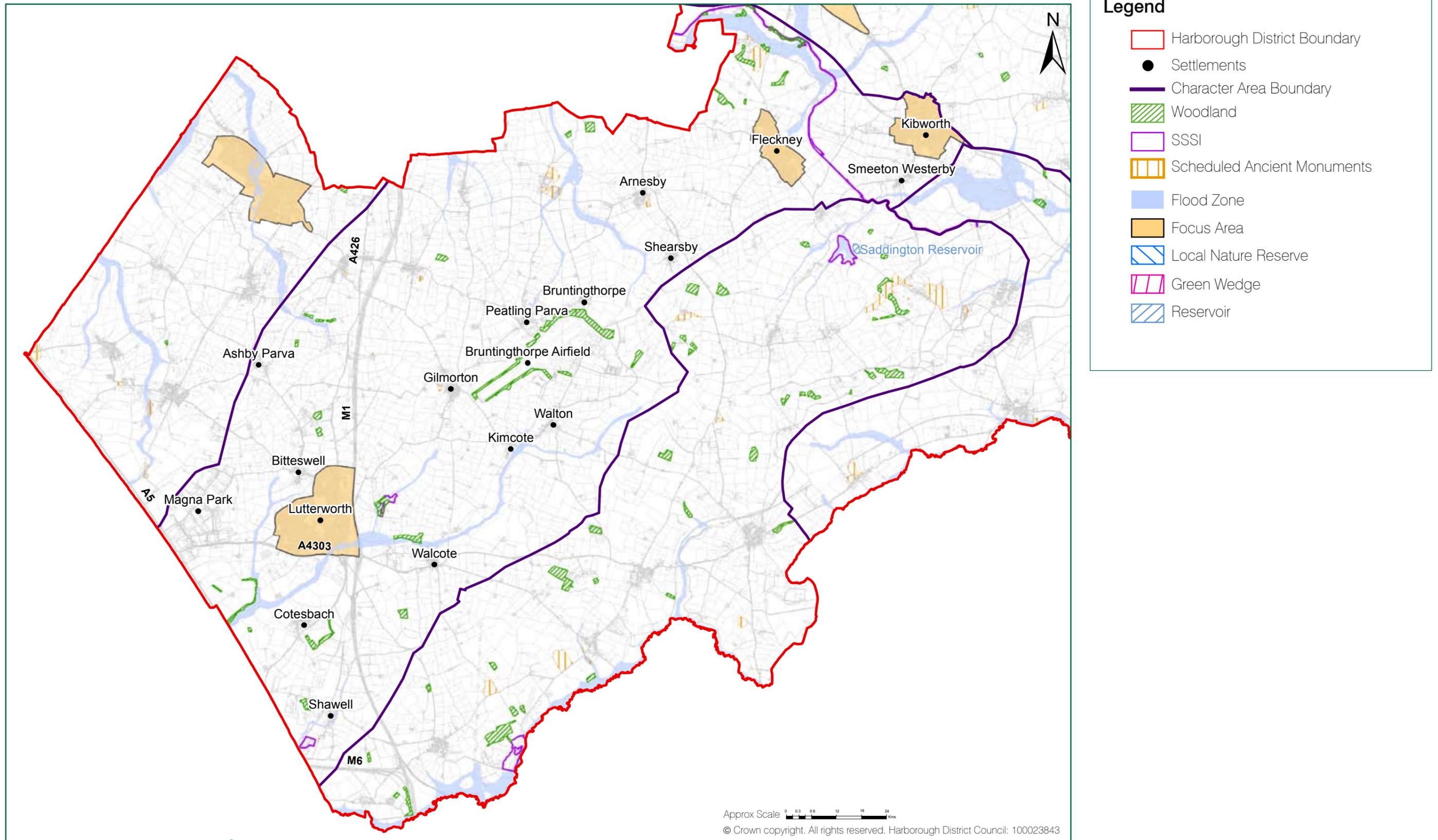


Figure 1.9: - Lutterworth Lowlands- Landscape Character Plan





Looking north along the M1

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

**Ecology**

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

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

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

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

**Land Use**

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

**Urban Influence/ Settlement Pattern**

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

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

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

**Heritage**

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

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



Roundabout on the edge of Lutterworth



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

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

### **Capacity: Medium to High**

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

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

### **Key Issues**

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



Magna Park viewed from southern edge of Lutterworth



## **APPENDIX B – Landscape Character Area Pro-forma**

APPENDIX B		RURAL CENTRES L C A		FIELD SURVEY RECORD		SHEET No.		Page 1 of 2	
<b>Date :</b>		<b>Surveyors' Name/s :</b>			<b>National Typology Code:</b>				
<b>Location :</b> Landscape Character Area : Conditions :					<b>LDU Nos:</b>				
<b>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>									
<b>LANDFORM (S1)                      dominant   prominent   apparent (widespread/localised)   insignificant</b>									
<b>Description:</b> flat gently undulating strongly undulating steep broad valley narrow valley plain plateau upland sloping					<b>Hydrology:</b> river stream ponds lakes reservoir wetlands other				
					<b>Degree of slope:</b>		<b>Altitude:</b>		
<b>LANDCOVER (S2)                      dominant   prominent   apparent (widespread/localised)   insignificant</b>									
<b>Description:</b> open farmland treed farmland wooded farmland parkland woodland grassland / common open water or wetlands					<b>Primary land use:</b> commercial / industrial farmland: arable/pastoral/mixed forestry: broadleaf/conifer/mixed common or green: grassed/treed nursery / allotments / orchard recreation or amenity: type reservoir disturbed : type				
<b>Associated features:</b> e.g. glasshouses/ marina.					<b>Secondary land use</b> (select from above)				
<b>Woodland cover:</b>  extensive interlocking linear discrete fragmented		<b>Species:</b>			<b>Field boundaries (in order of prominence):</b> hedgerow (with/without trees) tree rows hedgebank fence wall/wet ditch other  (high/medium/low)		<b>Species:</b>		
<b>HISTORICAL PATTERN (S3)                      dominant   prominent   apparent (widespread/localised)   insignificant</b>									
<b>Description:</b> organic planned unenclosed									
<b>Field pattern:</b> geometric (ordered) regular (rectilinear) subregular (interlocking – curved boundaries) irregular (organic, winding lanes) discontinuous (no discernable pattern)					<b>Transport pattern:</b> motorway A road B road track / lane canal railway  straight winding sinuous sunken				
<b>Field size:</b> 1- small < 2ha 2- small/medium 3- medium/large 4- large > 8ha					<b>Settlement:</b> Form: village / hamlet / isolated house or farm/ other Building style: vernacular / non-vernacular Age: Tudor/Stuart/Georgian/ Victorian/Edwardian/20thC Materials: walls and roof				
<b>Verges:</b> absent variable uniform wide / medium / narrow ditched					<b>Country houses:</b> Age: Tudor/Stuart/Georgian/Victorian/Edwardian 20thC Materials:				
<b>Other built features (function, age and materials):</b>									
<b>Other comments e.g. cultural features</b>									
<b>VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION</b>									
<b>Views of area from outside:</b> widely visible locally visible concealed					<b>Sense of enclosure:</b> confined contained open exposed				
<b>Tranquillity (S4):</b> tranquil/distant/discordant Source: Level and constancy: :					<b>Rarity (S5):</b> unique rare unusual Frequent				

**CONDITION**

**HISTORICAL INTEGRITY**

<b>Extent and type of landcover change (C1):</b> pasture to arable change in extent of woodland/tree cover on farmland loss of field boundaries parkland to farmland minerals other	widespread localised insignificant	<b>Age structure of tree cover (C2):</b> over mature mature/young mixed	<b>Survival of cultural pattern (C5):</b> intact and well managed intact but poorly managed interrupted ( gen. intact but locally interrupted) declining (boundaries poorly managed) relic
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**Notes:**

**ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY**

<b>Extent of habitat/corridor survival (C3):</b> Widespread Linked Scattered relic	<b>Management of habitats (C4):</b> Good Not obvious Poor
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**Notes:**

**VISUAL IMPACT**

<b>Impact of built development (C6):</b> Urban/Transport corridor/rural housing/ utilities/structures/other	high moderate low	<b>Visual Unity (S6):</b> Unified Coherent Incoherent	high moderate low
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**Notes:**

**Boundary notes:**

**CHARACTER SUMMARY**

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
S1 Impact of landform* S2 Impact of landcover* S3 Historic pattern* S4 Tranquillity S5 Distinctiveness/rarity S6 Visual unity	Insignificant Insignificant Discordant Frequent Incoherent	Apparent Apparent Apparent Moderate Unusual Coherent	Dominant/Prominent Dominant/Prominent Dominant/Prominent Tranquil Unique/rare Unified

**Totals** \* Prime character categories if tie

**CONDITION**

CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD
C1 Landcover Change C2 Age Structure of Tree Cover* C3 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival* C4 Management of semi-natural habitats C5 Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges) C6 Impact of built development*	Widespread Overmature Relic Poor Declining/Relic High	Localised Mature or young Scattered Not obvious Interrupted Moderate	Insignificant Mixed Widespread/Linked Good Intact Low

**Totals** \* Prime condition categories if tie

<b>MATRIX</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Strengthen and reinforce</b>	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	<b>Safeguard and manage</b>
	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Improve and reinforce</b>	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	<b>Conserve and restore</b>
	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Reconstruct</b>	<b>Improve and restore</b>	<b>Restore condition to maintain character</b>

Weak
Moderate
Strong  
**Strength of Character**

**SENSITIVITY CHECK**

Visual					Cultural				
Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High