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Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

The sensitivity of areas of pressure

Final Report

Prepared by LUC

September 2017

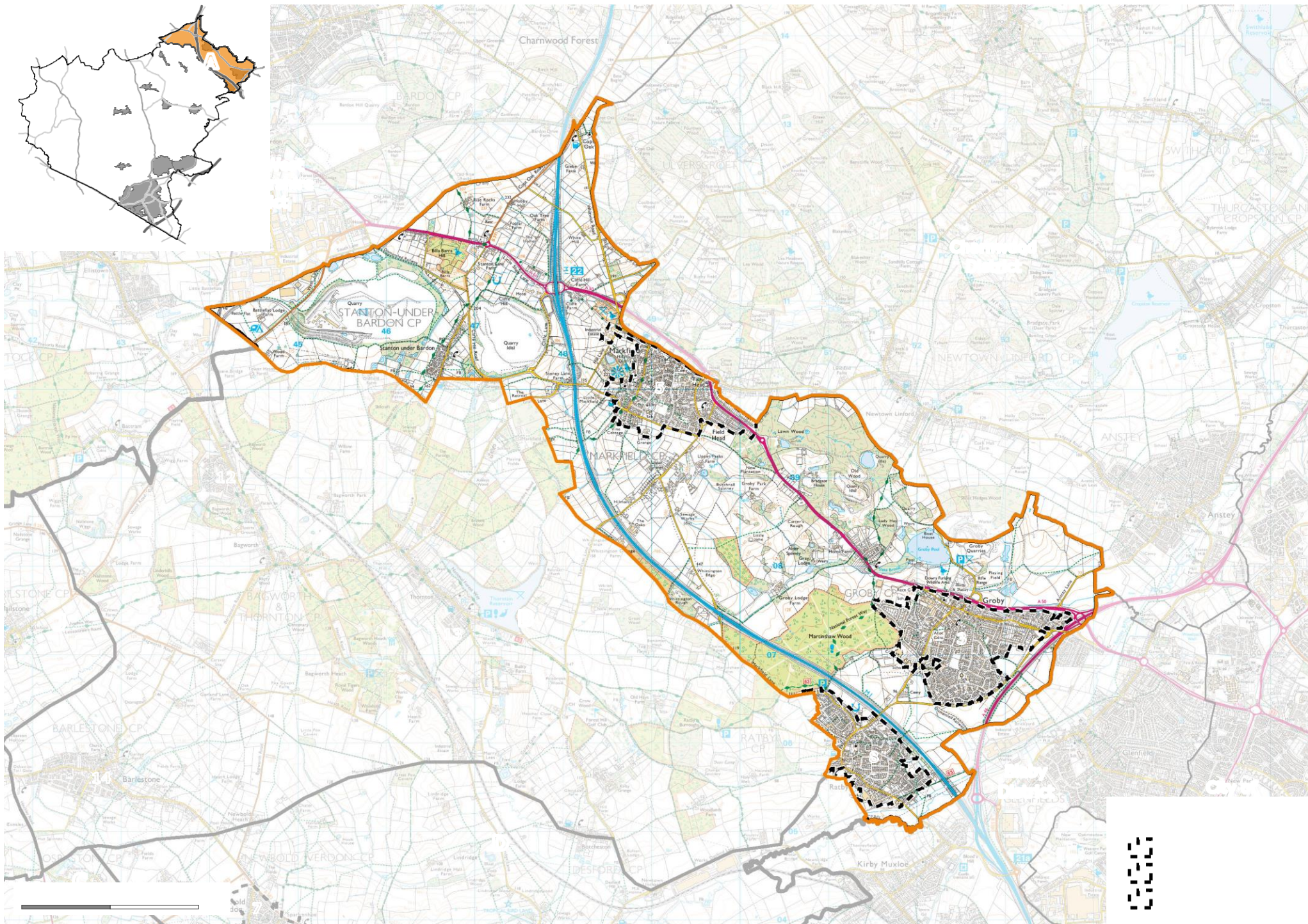
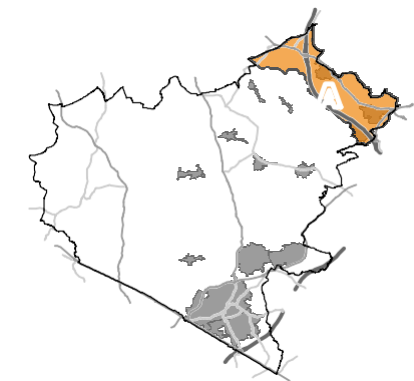


LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA ASSESSMENTS

5) LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA ASSESSMENTS

- 5.1 Section 5 describes the ten Landscape Character Areas which have been identified by the assessment process based on their physical, cultural, natural and perceptual characteristics. In each case the key characteristics which contribute to the Character Area's local distinctiveness and sense of place are set out, together with supporting information.
- 5.2 Whilst using the Landscape Character Assessment to inform decision making, it is important to note that the boundary between one character area and the next is transitional and there is rarely a clear cut change.
- 5.3 Each of the landscape character areas is described in the context of a landscape character type – a more general description of the character of the landscape – as shown in the table below.

Landscape Character Type	Landscape Character Area
Settled Forest Hills: Comprehensive forest cover on elevated landform with large open waterbodies influenced by a rich history in mining.	a) Charnwood Forest b) Charnwood Fringe
Agricultural Parkland: Rolling farmland and estate parkland with scattered trees and woodland around former agricultural villages.	c) Bosworth Parkland d) Gopsall Parkland
Rolling Farmland: A sparsely settled area of undulating mixed farmland with local variations in topography influenced by small streams.	e) Newbold and Desford Rolling Farmland f) Stoke Golding Rolling Farmland g) Burbage Common Rolling Farmland
Lowlands: Flat, low-lying vale landscape that is largely influenced by the River Sence and associated tributaries.	h) Sence Lowlands
Open Farmland: An open area of arable land situated on an elevated plateau with a rural and dispersed settlement pattern of nucleated hilltop villages and isolated farmsteads.	i) Twycross Open Farmland
Village Farmlands: Regular pattern of mixed arable and pasture farmland around small linear hilltop villages which are well-integrated into the landscape by scattered trees and small copses.	j) Barton Village Farmlands



LCA A: CHARNWOOD FOREST



Location and Boundaries

- 5.4 This character area covers the more elevated land in the north eastern part of the Borough, adjacent to Leicester to the south-east. It is defined by the igneous geological outcrops, urban settlements and concentration of infrastructure which makes it distinct from LCA B Charnwood Fringe area to the west.
- 5.5 The district of Charnwood is located beyond the administrative boundary to the north east. The area forms the western part of the Charnwood Forest, an area of similar rugged 'upland' character recognised in local planning policy, and the National Forest which covers almost all of the character area and extends outside the borough to the north.
- 5.6 Towns/ villages within the character area:
- Groby
 - Ratby
 - Markfield
 - Stanton under Bardon.

Key Characteristics

- 1) **Prominent elevated landform - the highest land in the Borough. Localised steep slopes around rocky outcrops.**
- 2) **Distinctive pockets of igneous rock which appear as rocky outcrops. Granite quarries can appear dramatic in the landscape with cliff faces and deep pools.**
- 3) **Diverse land uses which relate to the varied geology. Dominated by pasture and woodland with quarries, pools and outcrops.**
- 4) **Woodland cover of varying age from mature ancient woodland to new National Forest plantations.**
- 5) **Small to medium scale field pattern interspersed with large areas of woodland cover.**
- 6) **Large clustered villages with strong suburban influences.**
- 7) **Distinctive local assets for recreation and biodiversity such as Groby Pool and Billa Barra Hill and network of public footpaths.**
- 8) **Distant views to the urban edges of Leicester and woodland edges of the surrounding National Forest.**
- 9) **Diverse range of woodland habitats due to variable land use types.**
- 10) **Proximity to Leicester City and major transport infrastructure.**
- 11) **Long established aesthetic appeal created by its rugged, 'upland' and wooded character.**



Landscape Character

Distinct to this area are pockets of igneous rock which appear as rocky outcrops and have resulted in the local granite quarries that can appear dramatic in the landscape with cliff faces and deep pools. Elsewhere the geology is Triassic Mercia Mudstone with bands of Quaternary boulder clay and alluvium associated with water courses. The landform is distinctive; upland, rugged and rolling with areas of rocky outcrops. Small streams are incised within folds in the land, and the Rothley Brook forms a distinct river corridor to the east of the area, extending into Blaby district. Soils are mostly fine loamy/clayey soils which are slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged. Reddish, fine loamy, slowly permeable, calcareous clayey soils are also found on the slopes.

The majority of the Borough's woodland is found within this character area with large mature woodlands at Martinshaw Wood and Lawn Wood around Ratby and Groby. Rectilinear agricultural fields make up much of the land cover in the area and these are arranged in an irregular pattern, well-defined by hedgerows and hedgerow trees, which add to the perception of a well-wooded context. Smaller blocks of deciduous woodland plantations also break up the expanse of agricultural fields, as well as frequent historic quarries which are scattered throughout the landscape.

The M1 motorway runs through the area north-south, as well as the A50, another strategically important transport route, resulting in substantial traffic movement through the area. The proximity and ease of access to the urban centre of Leicester to the south-east means that the area becomes busy with people and traffic, particularly during commuting hours, and increasingly influenced by nearby development and development pressures. Wind turbines and solar farms around Groby and Ratby are increasingly common. The concentration

of quarrying and industrial areas around Stanton under Bardon results in urban influences in the north-west of the character area. However, much of the countryside remains hidden, feeling remote and quiet particularly in the east and around Groby Pool where woodland cover is more concentrated.

- 0 There are a number of local countryside sites including Groby Pool, the Alter Stones and Billa Barra Hill. These are connected via a comprehensive network of public footpaths and bridleways, including the Leicestershire Round and the Ivanhoe Way. There are also elements of changing landscape, with some working quarries, areas of restoration and new planting.

The open dramatic landform creates contrasting areas of elevated openness and strong enclosure, increased by the frequent presence of mature woodland and trees. It is a predominantly peaceful and unified landscape but is sometimes interrupted by infrastructure. Views can be either limited by landform and vegetation or contrastingly panoramic, especially from high vantage points such as at Hill Hole Quarry and Billa Barra Hill. Long distance views of Leicester are also possible from the north. Bardon Hill, the highest point in Charnwood Forest, lies just outside the borough to the north

The main settlements are Groby, Ratby and Markfield, which have recently expanded to accommodate new development. Groby and Ratby are situated on the river corridor of Rothley Brook. These villages still exhibit locally distinctive characteristics, especially as a result of their 'organic' settlement cores and the frequent use of local stone as a building material. The settlements are well integrated in the landscape because of the rolling topography and wooded character and are



well connected by a good road network with links to Leicester via the M1, A46 and A50.

- 5.13 **Groby** is a large clustered settlement characterised by red brick or local granite terraced housing. It is largely influenced by major transport corridors and twentieth century development, mostly of anonymous vernacular. Groby is described in more detail in Urban Character Area 3.
- 5.14 **Markfield** is another large clustered village in the north eastern area of the borough with a historic

core rich in architectural styles. This is described within Urban Character Area 5.

- 5.15 **Ratby** is medium sized village with origins dating back to medieval times. It is situated on rising landform with the church at the top forming a local landmark. Urban Character Area 8 describes the character of the village in more detail.
- 5.16 **Stanton-under-Bardon** is a small linear village in the north of the area near to Cliffe Hill Quarry and is characterised by red brick, terraced housing.



Historical and Cultural Influences

The field systems that characterise the landscape date back to the post-medieval period whereby medieval fields were organised by informal agreements between neighbouring farmers. Some later enclosure is present around Markfield, evident in the geometric and planned appearance. These are defined by hedges and are typically a result of acts of parliament. Small areas of ridge and furrow are also located around the village edges which were created through open-field or strip-cultivation. Woodland of varying scale has also been cleared to accommodate agricultural fields in the form of assarts with irregular and rectilinear boundaries.

- 5.18 Ratby Camp, more commonly known as Bury Camp, comprises an Iron Age hill fort to the west of Ratby. It is formed by a rectangular earthwork consisting of an enclosure formed by a large single rampart bank and outside ditch, with four openings in the middle of each side likely to be the original entrances. Archaeological digs have uncovered Late Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery as well as sherds dating back to the Roman period and the historical importance is recognised through the Scheduled Monument designation.
- 5.19 Old Hays moated site is also located a short distance from the village and includes the remains of a medieval moated enclosure and associated manorial earthworks. The rectilinear enclosure includes the remains of the Grade II listed Old Hays farmhouse and outhouse building and is surrounded by a partially dry moat of varying depth. The importance of this site is greatly increased by the vast historical documentation relating to the manorial complex and its association with Leicester Abbey.

Natural Influences

- 5.20 Deciduous woodland is abundant throughout the Charnwood Fringe and includes considerable areas of Ancient Woodland at Martinshaw Wood and Lawn/Old Woods, situated to the north of Groby and Ratby. The character area is one of the most

biodiverse within the Borough with areas of high ecological and geological importance. This is recognised through the SSSI designations at Groby Pool and Woods as well as Cliffe Hill Quarry.

- 5.21 Groby Pool and Woods comprise examples of alder wood, dry and wet grassland, marsh, reedswamp and open water. Additional interest is provided by the significant numbers of wintering wildfowl using the area, the variety of the breeding bird community and by the diversity of the invertebrate fauna. Cliffe Hill Quarry also represents important geological exposures of markfieldite and the volcanic and sedimentary rocks coming into contact with each other.

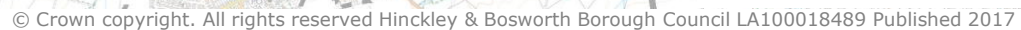
Key Sensitivities and Values

- 1) Rocky outcrops on the elevated land together with past and former quarries provide exposures of great geological interest.
- 2) Late to post medieval enclosure, ridge and furrow as well as some assarts in and around Ancient Woodland contribute to the sense of place and provides continuity to the agricultural past.
- 3) Large mature woodlands and newer woodland plantations interspersed throughout the landscape create a well-wooded context and create relatively tranquil subareas away from the busy roads.
- 4) The distinct historic cores of the villages with an abundance of local building stone provide a strong sense of place and a sense of time depth.
- 5) The long distance and panoramic views to Leicester from the more elevated vantage points combine with contrasting contained views to provide a high scenic quality.
- 6) Bury Camp and the Old Hays moated site have strong cultural associations and provide a sense of historic time depth.
- 7) Groby Pool and Woods and Cliffe Hill Quarry have high biodiversity value and provide areas of ecological and geological importance.
- 8) Valued for recreation, with local attractions including Groby Pool, the Alter Stones and Billa Barra Hill connected via a comprehensive network of public footpaths and bridleways, including the Leicestershire Round and the Ivanhoe Way.

Landscape Strategies

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Conserve and enhance the historic core of village settlements and ensure extensions are well integrated within this wooded landscape. Promote characteristic building forms. 2) Support the vision of the National Forest Strategy by planting native and mixed species woodland, linking areas beyond the National Forest boundary. 3) Conserve the distinct and separate identity of Groby and Ratby, including the rural gap that separate the villages. 4) Locate solar farms and wind turbines in the least sensitive areas. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) Conserve rocky outcrops and semi-natural vegetation in disused quarries. Promote amenity and biodiversity through quarry restoration schemes. 6) Conserve and enhance the well wooded character of the landscape. Promote woodland management such as coppicing and ground flora diversification, as well as hedgerow tree planting. 7) Promote a positive landscape strategy, including woodland planting, around Stanton-under-Bardon to help integrate the industrial units, quarries and development pressures associated with the M1 (junction 22). |
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LCA B: CHARNWOOD FRINGE



Location and Boundaries

- 5.22 The Charnwood Fringe character area is located in the north of the borough between LCA J Barton Village Farmlands and LCA A Charnwood Forest. The western boundary follows the A447 and skirts around Nailstone, broadly following the transition to the higher ground within this area which continues to rise further east into Charnwood Forest. The eastern boundary is drawn to exclude the more industrial/ urban influences of LCA A Charnwood Forest, most notably the M1 motorway and quarries at Stanton under Bardon. The majority of the area apart from the south west extent around Barlestone is within the National Forest. The area to the east is part of Charnwood Forest – a landscape designation recognised in local planning policy.
- 5.23 Towns/ villages within the character area:
- *Barlestone*
 - *Bagworth*
 - *Thornton*

Key Characteristics

- 1) **Gently undulating landform with small plateaus on higher ground and rising to the adjacent Charnwood Forest area to the east.**
- 2) **Contrast between areas which are visually open and enclosed depending on the elevation of the landscape and the presence of woodlands and vegetation.**
- 3) **Large scale irregular field pattern of mainly arable and some pasture, with smaller fields around settlements. Fields enclosed by hedgerows with scattered trees.**
- 4) **Industrial heritage of quarrying and mining resulting in areas of restored land.**
- 5) **Part of the National Forest and Charnwood Forest with areas of new woodland plantations associated with former industrial areas.**
- 6) **Dispersed pattern of former mining villages following a linear pattern on ridgetops, either located close to a colliery or providing housing for mine workers. Good public access and footpath network throughout, especially within National Forest area.**
- 7) **Predominantly rural landscape with arable and rough set-aside, influenced by industrial / urban features such as masts, poles and pylons.**



Landscape Character

- . This is a rolling landform with small plateaus and gentle ridges rising to the north-east at Bagworth, continuing to rise steadily in the adjacent Charnwood Forest character area. This area is part of the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield national character area which continues outside of the borough to the north-west indicating the influence of the coal measures on the character of the landscape. Within this area the coal measures are concealed beneath Mercia Mudstone and pockets of sandstone, and covered by a layer of glacial till with patches of glaciofluvial sand and gravel. Previous exploitation of the coal seams in the northern part of the area around Bagworth and east of Nailstone has left a legacy of former mine sites which have since been restored as part of landscape initiatives related to the National Forest. Most of the soils across the area are slowly permeable seasonally wet loamy and clayey soils which are of moderate fertility, supporting grassland and arable, grass production for dairying or beef and some cereal production often for feed.
- . Land use is predominantly arable, with occasional pasture farming within irregular fields generally large in size but with smaller irregular fields surrounding settlements (such as Barlestone and Thornton), which create a more intimate and complex pattern. Fields are generally enclosed by hedgerows with hedgerow trees and some scattered individual mature trees. In the north of the character area there are extensive areas of young woodland as a result of National Forest initiatives, which is having an increasing influence on the character of the area, augmenting existing woodland areas and prominent amenity trees around settlements with developing woodland on former colliery sites.
- . Openness and visibility varies with the changing topography and presence of vegetation, with the landscape more enclosed in the lower lying areas and where hedgerows and woodlands successively combine to create a well-vegetated appearance, whilst there are longer distance panoramas possible from the higher levels.
- . 7 This is a predominantly rural landscape but its proximity to the large settlements around Leicester and major transport routes with traffic travelling at speed does make some areas seem busy. This reduces the tranquillity of the area, especially when combined with aircraft noise overhead and urbanising features such as pylons, wind turbines, solar farms and industrial buildings which are occasionally visible. Away from the settlements however, there is little light pollution, indicating dark skies and a stronger sense of rurality – such as around Thornton Reservoir, Bagworth Heath and the landscape between Barlestone, Bagworth Heath and Bagworth.
- . 8 Accessibility is good with a comprehensive network of footpaths and bridleways (especially within the National Forest), including the Leicestershire Round long distance path and the National Forest Way, and a good road network linking the settlements. Thornton Reservoir, Bagworth Heath and the Tropical Bird Land near Desford provide visitor attractions. The National Forest provides a wider recreational resource.
- . 9 Settlement is characterised by small, predominantly linear villages and scattered farms. The villages of Barlestone and Thornton are situated on raised ground of sand and gravels, and the larger village of Bagworth is on a high ridge in the north-east of the character area. Originally agricultural villages, nearby coal mines became the principal source of employment during the 19th century. Prevalent building materials are red brick with occasional use of yellow, orange and blue bricks with clay tiles, with granite setts, cobbles and bricks in internal courtyards.
- .30 **Barlestone** has its origins as a small agricultural village which retains a few historic buildings.



Bagworth has its origins as a small village and Bagworth Colliery operated in the village from 1828.

Thornton is situated on a locally prominent ridgeline and characterised by red brick cottages and terraces and large detached properties.



Historical and Cultural Influences

- 5.33 The legacy of coal mining has a strong influence on local character. There were three collieries in the north and east of the character area: Bagworth Colliery, Desford Colliery (now Bagworth Heath Woods Country Park) and Nailstone Colliery and brickworks. Bagworth colliery is entered in the Guinness Book of Records for its outstanding production per man-shift. The pit closed in 1991; the last pit in Leicestershire. The Leicester to Swannington Railway line which passes along the eastern boundary of the character area, was built in 1832 with Robert Stephenson as engineer, to transport coal from the collieries in West Leicestershire to Leicester and included a direct connection to Bagworth Colliery from Bagworth Station.
- 5.34 There are three Scheduled Monuments: Located to the east of Bagworth, the moat with fishponds at Bagworth is an unusual example of a manorial site with well-documented evidence of the manor and associated fishponds. Another moated site is located at Old Hays Farm and has associated with Leicester Abbey. The former moats would have enclosed islands of dry ground on which stood domestic or religious buildings and remain as status symbols indicating the distribution of wealth in the countryside in the medieval period. Another Scheduled Monument marks an Iron Age hillfort of Bury Camp. Late Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery and Roman pottery sherds have been discovered here.
- 5.35 There are some large areas of piecemeal enclosure around Barlestone indicating survival of post-medieval (late 16th and early 17th century) field systems. These intact areas of small to medium

irregular fields provide historical interest and visual amenity. These are interspersed with planned enclosure fields of a more regular pattern which are more recent but characteristic of the wider area.

Natural Influences

- 5.36 Intensive farming has resulted in only limited remnants of semi natural vegetation and there is limited biodiversity. Manor Farm Local Wildlife Site near Bagworth is designated for its good quality semi-improved grassland. Individual trees including black poplar and ash trees are locally valued and designated as Local Wildlife Site. Small patches of ancient woodland (Nailstone Wiggs in the north of the area) and fragments of deciduous woodland add to the local biodiversity.
- 5.37 There is open access woodland across much of the northern and eastern part of the character area which was planted as part of the National Forest – including Nailstone Wood, Underhills Wood and other woodlands and lakes around Bagworth. These woodlands connect to the wooded areas in Charnwood to the east and outside of the borough to the north at Battran Wood and beyond in the National Forest.
- 5.38 Bagworth Heath Woods Country Park is a 75ha reclaimed colliery site owned by Leicestershire County Council and is part of the National Forest. The area contains woodland, grassland, heathland, lakes and ponds with a network of paths and visitor facilities. It contains a series of subsidence flashes which provide habitats for wildfowl and aquatic plants. A demonstration woodland shows different techniques for woodland establishment and maintenance on the reclaimed colliery spoil.

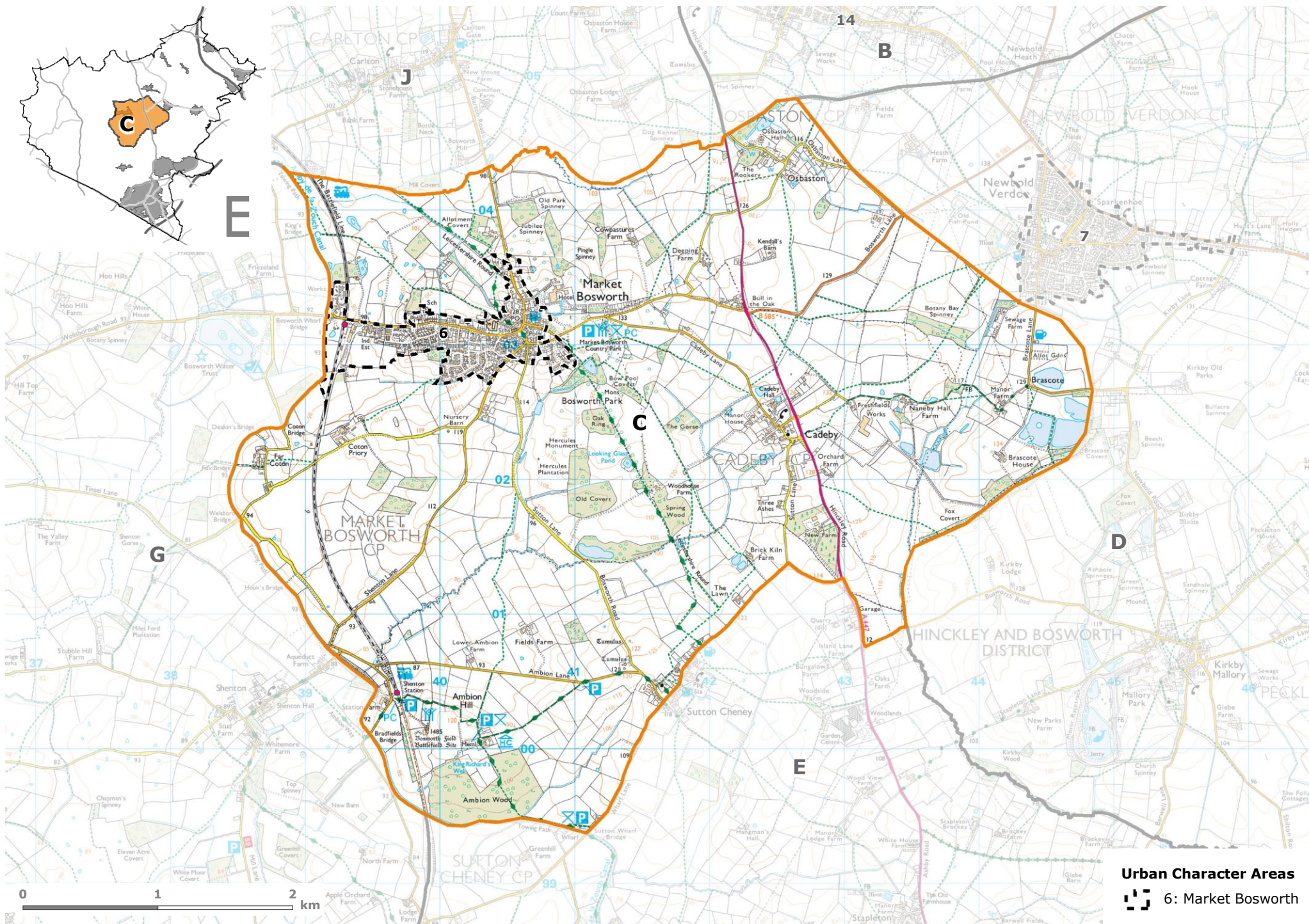
Key Sensitivities and Values

- 1) Woodlands, copses and individual trees are important as areas of connective habitats such as hedgerows and river corridors which link to the nearby woodlands of the National Forest. They are also important for their recreational value for local communities.
- 2) Rural character and the dispersed pattern of villages where the landscape away from the settlements is characterised by dark skies at night and a sense of tranquillity.
- 3) Recreational value of the restored mining sites including Bagworth Heath Woods Country Park as well as the value for leisure and access provided by the network of footpaths and bridleways including the Leicestershire Round.
- 4) Thornton Reservoir which provides a popular recreational facility on the edge of Thornton village.
- 5) The historic and cultural associations with mining in the area related to the former pits.
- 6) The historic character of the landscape evident in the presence of Scheduled Monuments and the pattern of irregular fields of piecemeal enclosure and the small irregular fields surrounding settlements. Hedgerow boundaries and mature trees reinforce this character which also provides visual interest and biodiversity value.
- 7) Semi-improved grasslands and lowland meadow habitats which are particularly valued in the area due to the relative scarcity of biodiversity assets as a result of intensive farming regimes.

Landscape Strategies

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Support the vision of the National Forest Strategy – to unify the forest area by planting native and mixed species woodland– as well as for areas beyond the National Forest boundary, encouraging, connecting and enhancing habitats such as hedgerows, tree planting, farm woodlands and lowland meadows. 2) Conserve and enhance the historic core of village settlements and ensure extensions are well integrated within this wooded landscape. 3) Restore typical zones of woodland types from alder, crack willow, hazel and grey willow in valleys, to oak/birch woodland on higher slopes; developing and managing transitional | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) The siting and design of new development should complement the existing settlement pattern. New developments, extensions or alterations should be of appropriate materials, scale, massing and location within their plot to the rural context of the area. Removal of traditional building features such as crown chimney pots and boundary walls of brick, stone, metal railings and timber fences should be avoided. 5) Conserve the historic features of the landscape including industrial heritage of mining villages, railways. |
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LCA C: Bosworth Parkland



LCA C: BOSWORTH PARKLAND



Location and Boundaries

- 5.39 This area is located in the heart of the borough. It encompasses the estate parkland surrounding the hill on which Market Bosworth is situated, and extends south to include the historic agricultural villages of Cadeby and Sutton Cheney and their surrounding farmland. Part of the site of the Battle of Bosworth including the visitor centre, lies in the south of the character area. The Ashby Canal defines the western boundary of the area.
- 5.40 Towns and villages within the character area:
- *Market Bosworth (the character of this town is also described separately in UCA 6)*
 - *Cadeby*
 - *Sutton Cheney*
 - *Osbaston*

Key Characteristics

- 1) **Rolling farmland and parkland with gentle slopes which rise and fall reaching a high point around the town of Market Bosworth.**
- 2) **Scattered trees, woodlands and smaller fields of pasture around settlements add interest to the regular pattern of enclosure fields divided by low hawthorn hedges.**
- 3) **A rural and peaceful character with development limited to scattered farm buildings and historic settlements well-integrated into the landscape by vegetation and small scale of buildings.**
- 4) **Parkland of Bosworth Park with avenue trees and Bosworth Hall country estate.**
- 5) **Recreation and tourism- Market Bosworth Country Park and a good network of public footpaths and routes popular with cyclists. Destinations include Market Bosworth, the Battlefield Visitor Centre, the Battlefield Line Railway and the Ashby Canal.**
- 6) **Bosworth Battlefield has strong heritage associations.**
- 7) **Historic villages of Cadeby and Sutton Cheney, with attractive red brick buildings and farm cottages, have a strong relationship with the surrounding agricultural landscape.**
- 8) **Market Bosworth provides an important focus within the area and St Peter's church provides a key landmark.**



Landscape Character

- 5.4 The area is underlain by Triassic Mercia Mudstone covered by a complex mixture of glacial deposits creating areas of higher ground at Market Bosworth, Ambion Hill and the ridge under the villages of Cadeby and Sutton Cheney. Streams create areas of lower, flatter ground in between, giving an appearance of gentle slopes and an overall undulating landscape. Soils are reddish fine loamy and clayey, with slowly permeable subsoils resulting in seasonal waterlogging on the lower slopes. The Ashby de la Zouch Canal runs along the western edge of the character area.
- 5.4 Land use is a mixture of farmland, parkland and recreation. Farmland is predominantly arable planned enclosure fields of medium-size and regular pattern divided by low hedgerows (predominantly hawthorn), with smaller fields of pasture surrounding settlements. It is a regular landscape pattern punctuated with hedgerows, hedgerow trees and occasional woodland clumps on higher ground which create an impression of a wooded landscape. Vegetation creates human scale, interest, structure and rhythm to the landscape. Ambion Wood provides a significant area of woodland in the south.
- 5.4 Bosworth Park (part of which is now Market Bosworth Country Park) creates a strong sense of place with the grand red brick Bosworth Hall and nearby folly and church creating a strong gateway to Market Bosworth. The surrounding parkland landscape characterised by scattered mature parkland trees, irregular blocks of plantation woodland and tree-lined avenues along roads and a series of ponds.
- 5.44 The area has a rural and tranquil character, with relatively little light pollution across the area away from the main settlement of Market Bosworth. Settlement is focussed on the market town of Market Bosworth and the small historic agricultural villages of Cadeby, Sutton Cheney and Osbaston, with the remainder of the area characterised by individual farm buildings. Rural roads are lined by grass verges, low hedgerows with hedgerow trees, and ditches. Buildings create features of interest punctuating the farmland, although particularly large brightly coloured units can appear incongruous in the otherwise rural, harmonious pattern.
- 5.45 The area is very accessible with a number of public footpaths focussing on Bosworth Country Park and the Bosworth Battlefield Site, including the Leicestershire Round long distance footpath and Ambion Way recreation route. It is a destination for leisure and recreation, with a concentration of attractions including the Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre and Country Park, the market town of Market Bosworth, Market Bosworth Country Park and nearby Bosworth Water Park.
- 5.46 Long views are possible from occasional high points such as Ambion Hill. The church spire of St Peter's Church, Market Bosworth is a key landmark feature.
- 5.47 **Market Bosworth** is the major settlement in the area and a popular destination. The core of the town is well-integrated in the landscape amongst mature vegetation on high ground. Market Bosworth is described separately as Urban Character Area 6.
- 5.48 **Cadeby** is a small, clustered, red brick village characterised by former and existing farm buildings (many of which are listed) with open views to the countryside between them. It is designated a Conservation Area.
- 5.49 **Sutton Cheney** is also a Conservation Area, and is characterised by red brick cottages. Centred on a large open area of raised ground at the middle of the village, small clusters of farm buildings are located along winding country lanes creating strong local distinctiveness.
- 5.50 **Osbaston** is located in the north of the area and developed to serve Osbaston Hall. It is characterised by widely spread agricultural



buildings along narrow lanes with overgrown verges, all in a harmonious scale, height and style. It has a rich history dating back to 1086 where it is mentioned in the Domesday Book and this is reflected in its Conservation Area designation.



Historical and Cultural Influences

- 5.51 Part of the nationally important Bosworth Battlefield lies within the character area. It is of historic importance as the site of the iconic Battle of Bosworth in 1485 which brought the Tudor dynasty to the throne and saw the last death of an English king in battle. The battlefield remains largely undeveloped and allows understanding of the battle to be appreciated. Sutton Cheney was where King Richard III camped and attended his last service in the church of St James before the battle.
- 5.52 Remains of the deserted medieval village of Ambion, which is believed to be depopulated by the plague in the mid-14th century is designated a Scheduled Monument.
- 5.53 Bosworth Hall (now a hotel), a fine Grade II* listed mansion dates from the 17th century remains surrounded by parkland (some of which is now Market Bosworth Country Park) is a visible reminder of a prosperous past.
- 5.54 The Ashby Canal, built to connect the coal mining areas north of the borough with the Coventry Canal, is designated a Conservation Area and a reminder of the industrial heritage of the area. It opened in 1798, operating between Ashby Wolds and Market Bosworth, and was linked to the Coventry Canal a few years later.
- 5.55 A long history of agricultural land use is evidenced by remaining examples of ridge and furrow overlaid by later phases of enclosure.
- 5.56 A Scheduled Monument to the east of Barton Road north of Market Bosworth marks the location of an Iron Age/ Roman site (possible villa).

Natural Influences

- 5.57 Deciduous woodland is prevalent throughout the character area and is commonly found in small rectilinear plantations. Ancient woodland is present at Ambion Wood and replanted ancient woodland in Bosworth Park.

- 5.58 Manor Farm Meadow Local Wildlife Site near Brascote is noted for its rich neutral and wet grassland.
- 5.59 There are two small areas south of Cadeby likely to be important as traditional orchard habitats, a priority habitat defined in the Biodiversity Action Plan for Leicestershire.
- 5.60 The water and riparian vegetation of the Ashby Canal provides a valuable semi-natural habitat.

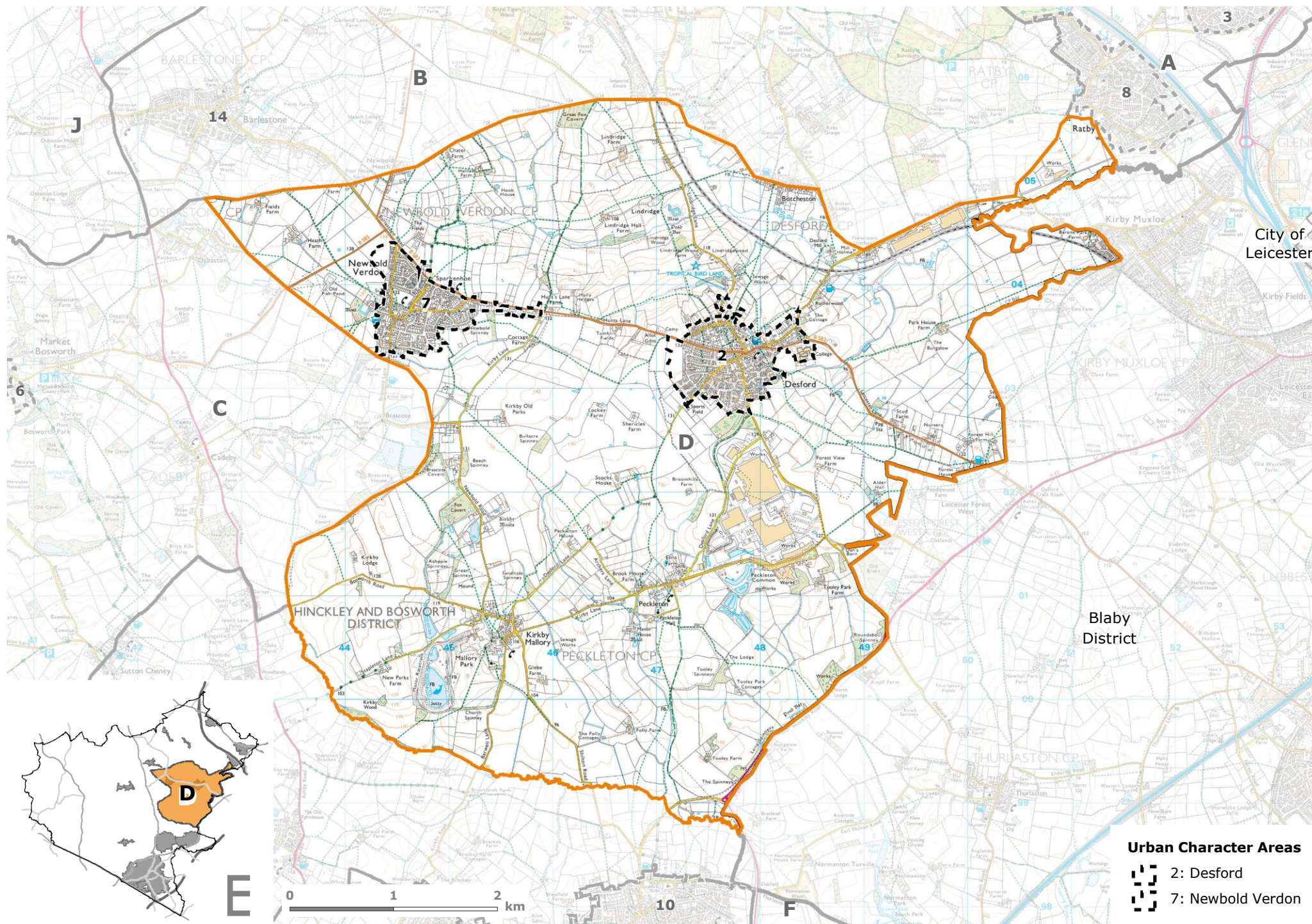
Key Sensitivities and Values

- 1) Historic value and associations with the nearby Bosworth Battlefield.
- 2) Bosworth Hall and Park which has a strong sense of place as a result of the intact parkland and features of historic interest. Bosworth Country Park is a valuable recreational resource.
- 3) Earthworks at the old village of Ambion are a reminder of a much older history.
- 4) The rural character and relative sense of tranquillity. The rural settlement pattern of small linear villages and scattered farmsteads provide continuity with their agricultural origins.
- 5) Mature trees and ancient woodland are an important habitat for many species including bats and birds. Hedgerows and trees are important features, creating structure and pattern to the landscape.
- 6) The Ashby Canal is a valued landscape asset, particularly as a recreation and biodiversity resource as well as a reminder of the areas industrial heritage
- 7) The quintessential East Midlands landscape of mixed farming with pasture, arable and ridge and furrow providing a strong sense of place as well as field patterns, country houses, canals and rivers. The attractive villages and small towns feature many notable older buildings including Market Bosworth and its landscape setting of fields and trees.
- 8) The rural setting and views to the church spire in Market Bosworth.

Landscape Strategies

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Promote the strong historic character and heritage including connections with the Battle of Bosworth and important medieval settlement remains. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) Maintain views to the church spire on the wooded skyline at Market Bosworth and rural views and setting of Market Bosworth. |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Encourage the use of traditional 'Midlands-style' hedgelaying to manage hedgerows, improving their structure and biodiversity value and strengthening landscape character. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6) Maintain and enhance the recreational assets including rights of way network and canal. Maintain positive management of the Ashby Canal and seek opportunities to extend and enhance areas of wetland habitat. |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3) Maintain the rural character of the landscape, ensuring development responds sensitively to the landscape context. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7) Create new and conserve existing notable habitats, in particular lowland wood pasture and parkland, wet woodland and grazing marsh. |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Enhance and manage the diversity of parkland meadows, and retain features such as estate fencing and open roadsides with grass verges. | |

LCA D: Newbold and Desford Rolling Farmland



LCA D: NEWBOLD AND DESFORD ROLLING FARMLAND



Location and Boundaries

- 5.61 The Desford Vales character area lies on gently undulating farmland in the east of the Borough between the Charnwood Fringe to the north and the Stoke Golding Rolling Farmland in the south. The land slopes down to the River Soar in the east and shares its western boundary with the Bosworth Parkland Landscape Character Area.
- 5.62 Villages within the character area:
- *Desford*
 - *Peckleton*
 - *Kirkby Mallory*
 - *Newbold Verdon*

Key Characteristics

- 1) **Gently rolling landform rising to the north from the lower lying land around the River Soar.**
- 2) **Clustered villages of varying size centred on crossroads.**
- 3) **Predominantly arable farmland with clustered areas of industry and recreational facilities near to the village fringes.**
- 4) **Tree cover is limited, with scattered trees and small linear woodland copses.**
- 5) **Large to medium sized field pattern defined by single species hawthorn hedgerows.**
- 6) **Good network of footpaths link settlements.**
- 7) **Few major roads.**
- 8) **Open views where hedgerows have been removed, giving an impression of a large scale landscape.**
- 9) **Electricity pylons and wind turbines are often prominent vertical features in this open landscape.**



Landscape Character

The Desford Vales geology is characterised by Triassic Mercia Mudstone interspersed with some bands of sandstone and overlain by Quaternary diamiction and sand and gravel. Alluvium is found beneath the River Soar tributary. The majority of the area consists of reddish fine loamy clayey soils which are slowly permeable and therefore prone to seasonal waterlogging. A section of more permeable coarse loamy soils affected by groundwater can be found on the middle slopes, forming a band through the area. The landform is gently undulating, rising to the north, whilst the southern part of the area flattens out into a valley which contains a tributary to the River Soar.

Land cover consists of generally open, medium to large scale agricultural fields with a mix of arable and pasture in a regular shaped pattern. Some small scale uses exist, such as the allotments on the edge of Brascote village as well as some industrial influences including active sand and gravel quarrying, warehouses and factories. Small areas of woodland, often linear in form, can be found throughout the area, especially associated with Mallory Park and the Caterpillar works. Hedgerows with hedgerow trees of varying frequency are common, as are scattered trees, although some hedgerows have been removed along road sides.

A number of public footpaths and bridleways serve the area. There are few major roads, with a network of rural lanes and minor roads connecting the villages and the Caterpillar works to the A47 and A447 major transport corridors on the edges of the area. These have localised urban influences and create a strong sense of movement. However, areas of tranquillity can be found away from the settlement concentrations; areas with little light pollution in the north of the character area between Newbold Verdon and Desford indicate dark skies and a rural character.

Long distance panoramic views are possible from the higher ground and more open land in the north. Views from in and around the villages are occasionally restricted by vegetation and landform and punctuated by the pylons and wind turbines which together with quarries have urbanising and industrial influences on the otherwise rural landscape.

- 7 Settlement is characterised by clustered villages of varying sizes, including the larger centres of Desford and Newbold Verdon. Many isolated farmsteads are scattered throughout the farmland and were typically built in response to agricultural enclosure. Several farms are still located in the villages and more recently modern farm complexes and industrial agricultural units have become more apparent.
- 8 **Desford** is the most significant settlement in the area comprising a compact, nucleated village made up of two storey terraced cottages of mixed building materials. Red brick chimneys and small sub-divided windows are a feature whilst rough cast rendering, slate roofing and some timber framed thatched buildings are also present. The character is described in more detail in the Desford Urban Character Area.
- 9 The Caterpillar works form a major developed area to the south of Desford, yet is well-assimilated by woodland and tree planting around its boundary.
- 5.20 **Peckleton** and **Kirkby Mallory** are other small villages with farming origins that occupy the centre of the character area. These consist of a mix of former agricultural two storey cottages made from red brick and slate roofs contrasting with red brick, white render and clay roof tiles of modern infill and expansion.
- 71 **Newbold Verdon** is a compact settlement with a well-defined historic core characterised by two-storey, red brick dwellings with slate roofs. The urban form is made up of a mix of different styles



and is discussed as part of Urban Character Area 7.

Historical and Cultural Influences

5.72 Until the Industrial Revolution, the villages comprised small agricultural communities of farmhouses with associated strip fields, remains of which are evident in the ridge and furrow within fields surrounding some of the settlements such as Desford.

5.7 Mallory Park and the associated estate have Anglo-Saxon origins: Kirkby Moats, located to the north of Kirkby Mallory, consists of a series of rectilinear ditches, resembling a double moated enclosure with adjacent fish ponds. The present day motorcycle track began as a standby landing ground for the Royal Air Force Station during WWII, before it was later sold as part of the estate in 1953 and became a pony trotting circuit. It was less than a decade later that the first motorcycle sidecar racing was first held at Mallory Park when several motorcycle clubs hired the circuit from the previous owners. Since then a number of high profile races have been held at the circuit including the British Superbike Championships and British Touring Cars.

5.74 A tree in an uncultivated field near to the footpath between Peckleton and Earl Shilton known as the 'oak and ash tree' holds special value in local legend. The tree is two trees that have bonded together, making one which is unusual because they are two different species – oak and ash. Local legend says this unusual tree stems from two seeds being planted decades ago by lovers who were forced apart. The folk tale serves as an important piece of local history that ties Earl Shilton to its surrounding landscape and serves as a reminder of how the settlement used to be.

5.75 Desford Hall is a Grade II listed country house dating from around 1875. The manor of Desford belonged to many Earls of Leicester and was important as it had associations with the royal

hunting forest, Leicester Forest, within which people had important rights of common.

5.76 A moated site to the south west of Lindridge Fields Farm is designated as a Scheduled Monument. Another Scheduled Monument marks a moated site at the edge of Newbold Verdon (see Urban Character Area) which is likely to have housed a previous manor house. The former moats would have enclosed islands of dry ground on which stood domestic or religious buildings and remain as status symbols indicating the distribution of wealth in the countryside in the medieval period. These have been modified through ploughing and are generally buried but are discernible on the ground through slightly raised land and water-filled ditches.

Natural Influences

5.77 The area is predominantly made up of agricultural fields with little ecological value. However a number of rectilinear blocks of deciduous woodland are scattered throughout the landscape, some of which is Ancient Woodland. Charity Fields to the north east of Desford and Manor Farm Meadow on the edge of Brascote Village are also recognised as Local Wildlife Sites for their communities of mesotrophic grassland.

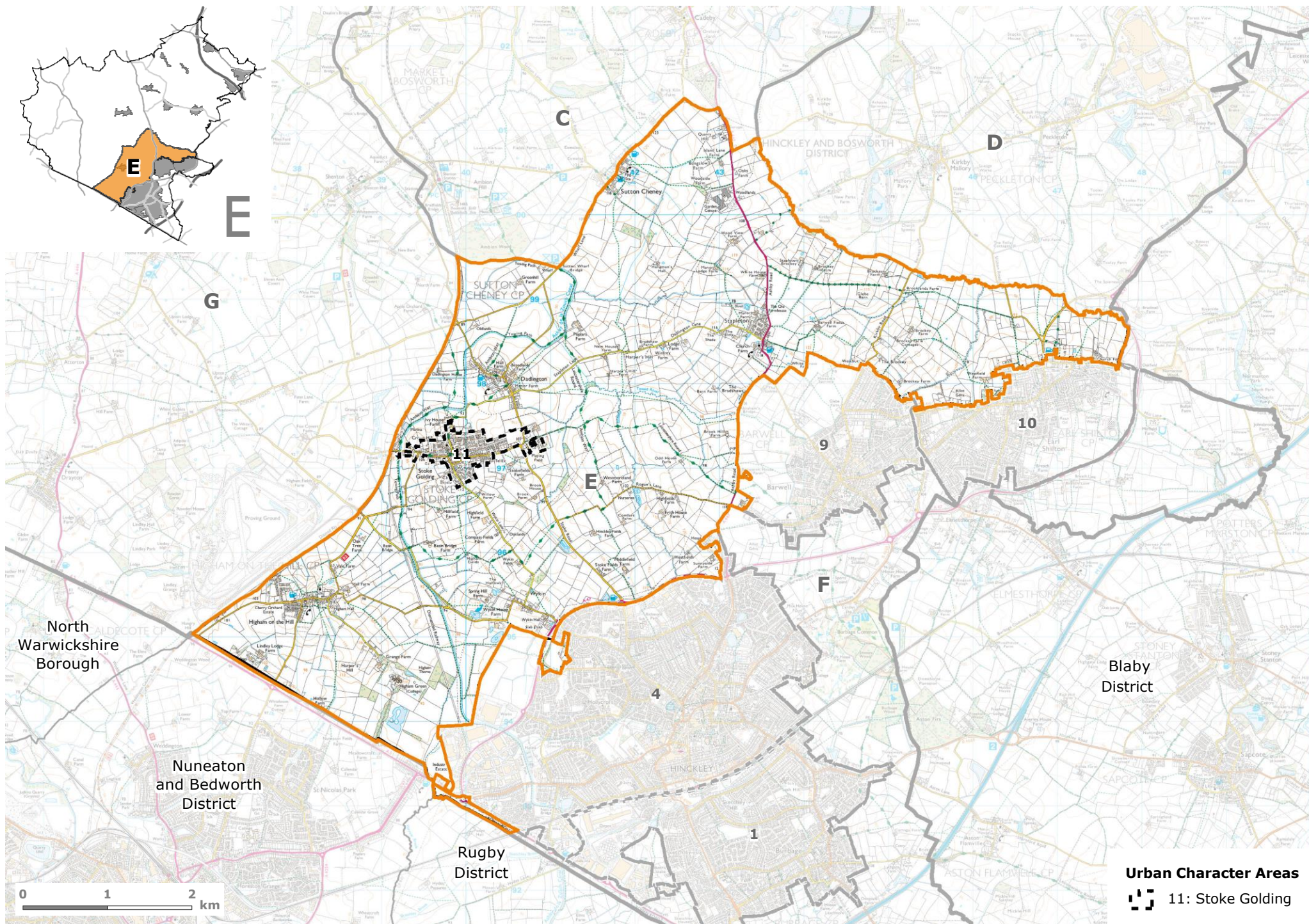
Key Sensitivities and Values

- 1) The remaining areas of ridge and furrow which create a sense of historic time depth.
- 2) The rural settlement pattern of compact and nucleated agricultural settlements connected by a network of rural lanes and minor roads is largely unspoiled. The rural landscape and sense of tranquillity is sensitive to change from further development.
- 3) Isolated farmsteads interspersed throughout the farmland contribute to the historic rural character and provide continuity to the past.
- 4) The estate at Mallory Park has strong historic and cultural associations and provides a nationally-popular attraction.
- 5) Long distance and panoramic views from the elevated land in the north creates a high scenic quality and adds to the visual amenity.
- 6) Relatively small communities of mesotrophic grassland and deciduous woodland provide valuable habitat in a predominantly agricultural landscape.
- 7) The areas which provide a rural setting to the settlements are sensitive to changes as a result of new development, as well as views from the wider landscape to church spires.

Landscape Strategies

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Conserve historic field patterns where possible, and the agricultural setting to isolated farmsteads. 2) Conserve the relatively small-scale villages and ensure any new development contributes positively to the character and built vernacular. 3) Conserve and enhance pedestrian access between adjacent villages including the recreational and ecological corridor of Rotherley Brook. 4) Conserve Mallory Park and its predominantly rural setting. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) Conserve and enhance the long, panoramic views from higher ground of uncluttered skylines and church spires, and consider the visual impact of vertically prominent elements in any new development. 6) Conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the landscape through a mosaic of habitats. 7) Identify opportunities for replacement of hedgerows along roadsides and their future management as landscape features 8) Promote regeneration and enhancement of tree cover through establishment of linear copses and hedgerow trees within field boundaries and around urbanising influences. |
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LCA E: Stoke Golding Rolling Farmland



LCA E: STOKE GOLDING ROLLING FARMLAND



Location and Boundaries

5.78 The character area is located to the north of Hinckley, Burbage, Earl Shilton and Barwell in the south of the Borough. It comprises the undulating farmland between the lower land of LCA G: Sence Lowlands to the west, the more elevated land of LCA D: Newbold and Desford Rolling Farmland to the north east and the parkland of LCA C: Bosworth Parkland to the north.

5.79 Villages within the character area:

- *Stoke Golding*
- *Higham on the Hill*
- *Dadlington*
- *Stapleton*

Key Characteristics

- 1) **Undulating arable and pasture farmland with gentle valleys sloping down to the Ashby Canal, Tweed River and associated tributaries.**
- 2) **Small to medium scale rectilinear field pattern divided by low hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees typical of parliamentary enclosure, with smaller pasture fields around settlements, creating a largely unified field pattern and providing continuity with the agricultural past.**
- 3) **Rural settlement pattern with former agricultural villages typically demonstrating a historic core, modern outskirts and sporadic farmsteads on the outer edges, within a strong rural setting.**
- 4) **Historic villages occupying higher ground with attractive red brick cottages fronting onto the road and connected by rural lanes with grass verges and well-maintained hedgerows.**
- 5) **Church spires and towers within villages in and around the character area form distinctive landmarks on the skyline.**
- 6) **Associations with the Battle of Bosworth, particularly at Crown Hill in Stoke Golding.**
- 7) **Ashby Canal has affiliations with coal mining that has influenced the landscape over the years and is designated as a conservation area. It is now important for biodiversity and tourism.**



Landscape Character

The area is characterised by Triassic Mercia Mudstone overlain by glaciofluvial and glacial deposits on areas of higher ground including at Stoke Golding and other small villages. Alluvium is also found in relation to the Tweed River and its tributaries which flow through the lower, flatter land creating a gently undulating landscape. Soils are made up of mainly slowly permeable, fine loamy soils with some calcareous clayey soils in the east. Reddish fine loamy/clayey soils which are more seasonally waterlogged predominate in the west. The Ashby Canal runs through the character area between Sutton Wharf Bridge near Sutton Cheney and Hinckley.

- 1 Land cover is characterised by a mix of arable and pasture farmland arranged in small to medium scale fields in a simple regular pattern. Areas containing more irregular (curved or dog-leg) field shapes are likely to be post medieval field systems which add visual and historic interest to the landscape. These are present, for example, north of Stapleton (east of the A447), north of Hinckley around Rogue's Lane and between Stapleton and Barwell. Smaller fields are often found around settlements which can contain species-rich grassland where not given over to agricultural intensification and mature trees valuable for biodiversity. Tree cover in the wider character area is formed of mature trees within low hedgerows frequently define field boundaries, and occasional woodland clumps along small watercourses give the area a relatively wooded appearance.
- 5.8 Despite its proximity to the built up area of Hinckley, the area has a rural character, with little light pollution – particularly in the north of the area away from the main towns.
- 5.8 The landscape is easily accessible with a number of public footpaths linking the settlements and canal including the Leicestershire Round long distance footpath and Ambion Way recreation

route. Electricity pylons transect the landscape and solar farms also occupy two relatively large areas south of Stoke Golding. These are generally well-integrated in the landscape amongst mature vegetation and subtle changes in landform and so have limited influence on the predominantly rural landscape.

- 5.84 Hedgerows with trees and occasional woodland copses add visual interest to an otherwise open landscape. Occasional long distance views can be obtained from the high points across agricultural fields to distant horizons. Church spires form distinctive landmarks, for example the Church of St Margaret of Antioch at Stoke Golding from north of Higham on the Hill.
- 5.85 The settlement pattern is rural: villages occupy higher land, many of which developed from former farming communities and retain agricultural influences. Villages such as Stoke Golding and Higham on the Hill have a strong sense of place and form attractive features in views across the landscape, with red brick farmhouses and cottages and attractive stone buildings in older village centres focussed around spired churches. Working farms, including some modern complexes, are situated around the settlement edge along primary routes in and out of the village. Settlements are connecting by (sometimes winding) country lanes and are lined by grass verges and low hedgerows which provide a rural setting and sense of unity to the landscape.
- 5.86 The settlement edges of Barwell and Earl Shilton are relatively well-integrated along their northern edges. Between Barwell and Hinckley however, the built form of Barwell is prominent occupying the hilltop and slopes.
- 5.87 **Stoke Golding** is the largest of the villages in the area overlooking the undulating countryside and is characterised by former farm buildings. It is designated as a Conservation Area. Stoke Golding



is described further within the separate Urban Character Area.

- 5. **Higham on the Hill** is a small village comprising attractive red brick cottages with blue brick detailing. New development has occurred to the north and appears incongruous to the village core due to the use of modern building materials.
- 5.9 **Dadlington** is a small linear village consisting of large red brick buildings set back from the road and a large farm complex at the centre. It has physical connections with Stoke Golding, being located only a short distance away.
- 5.90 **Stapleton** is characterised by small, red brick bungalows arranged in a grid pattern with farmsteads situated around the outer edges of the village.

Historical and Cultural Influences

- 5.91 Part of the nationally important Bosworth Battlefield lies within the character area. It is of historic importance as the site of the iconic Battle of Bosworth in 1485 which brought the Tudor dynasty to the throne and saw the last death of an English king in battle. The battlefield remains largely undeveloped and allows understanding of the battle to be appreciated.
- 5.9 Stoke Golding has strong connections to the Battle of Bosworth. Crown Hill, to the north-west of Stoke Golding is known as the location where Henry VII was crowned King of England following his victory.
- 5.9 The Ashby Canal, built to connect the coal mining areas north of the borough with the Coventry Canal, is designated a Conservation Area and a reminder of the industrial heritage of the area. It opened in 1798, operating between Ashby Wolds and Market Bosworth, and was linked to the Coventry Canal a few years later.

- 5.94 A square moated site at Stapleton is designated a Scheduled Monument. It forms one of two original moats that were built in the area and survives in relatively good condition.
- 5.95 Earthworks and buried remains of a Saxon burial mound are located adjacent to the medieval farmstead at Park House on the edge of Stoke Golding, also designated a Scheduled Monument.
- 5.96 Higham on the Hill is home to the only complete Norman tower in the south of Leicestershire whilst its peal of bells includes the Armada bell cast by Thomas Newcombe in 1589.
- 5.97 Many isolated farmsteads are scattered throughout the landscape and are likely to have been built in the 18th and 19th century following the enclosing of the previously-open fields.
- 5.9 Tooley Park which was part of Leicester Forest was known as Shilton Park and its estate comprised some 600 acres on which a magnificent mansion stood.

Natural Influences

- 5.99 Sporadic areas of deciduous woodland punctuate the small watercourses flowing through the landscape.
- 5. Hedgerows and other linear features provide valuable linkages to other habitats. Mature trees, both individual trees and as integral part of hedgerows are important for biodiversity in the area in the context of limited woodland cover. There are possible veteran trees around Dadlington and Stoke Golding
- 5.101 Little Fields Farm Meadow and the meadow and pond at Brook Farm contain communities of mesotrophic grassland and are designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

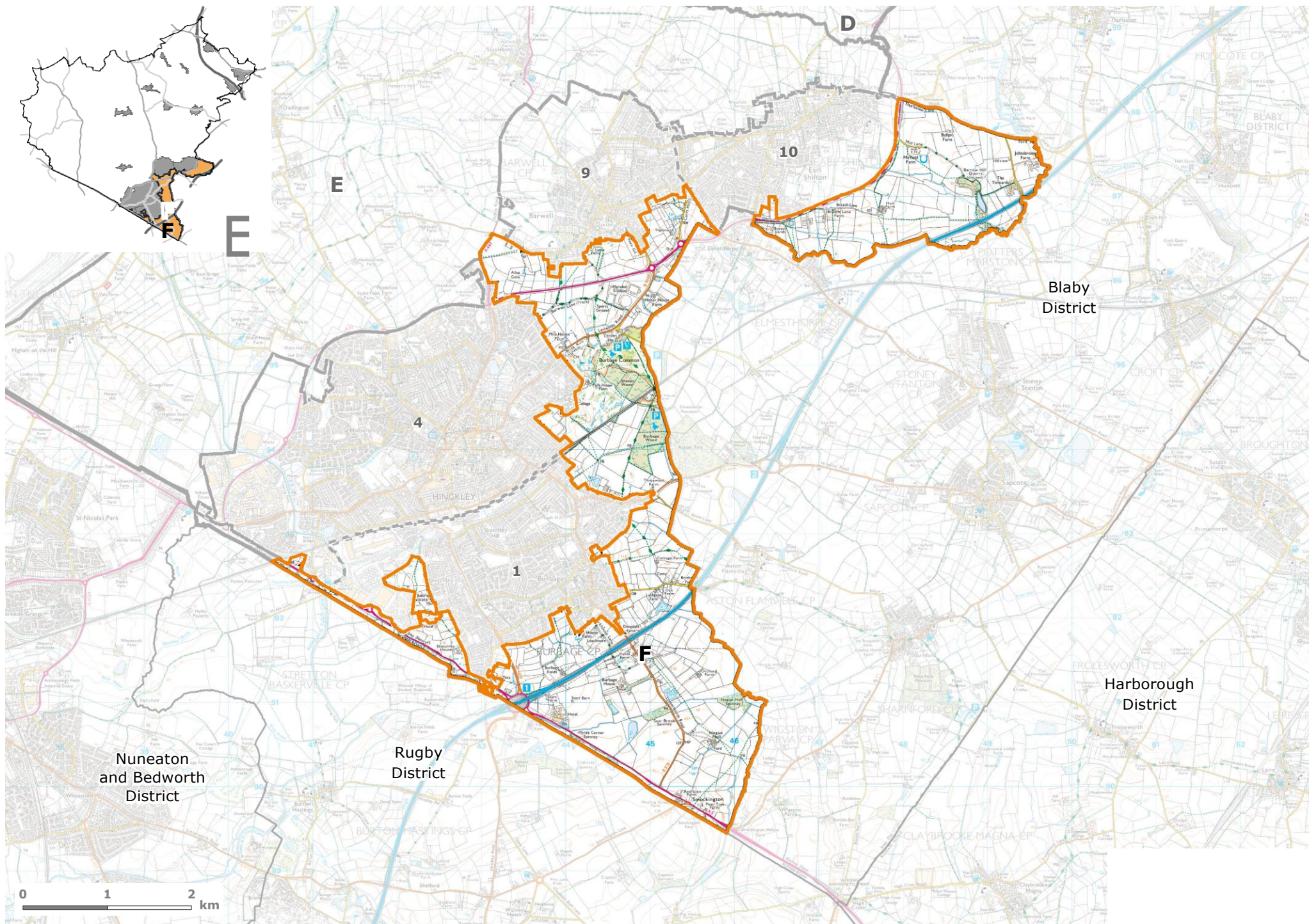
Key Sensitivities and Values

- 1) The rural character of the landscape, despite its proximity to urban areas, and areas with little light pollution – particularly in the north of the area which create a relative sense of tranquillity compared to some other parts of the borough.
- 2) The gap between Stoke Golding and Dadlington is important in retaining the 'village' character and distinctiveness of the settlements.
- 3) Low hedgerows and mature trees are important elements because of the relatively low level of woodland in the landscape and their role in defining historic field patterns.
- 4) Distinctive character and local vernacular of the villages, including red brick and traditional buildings with links to the agricultural history of the settlements. Former farmhouses and landmark buildings contribute to the sense of place and provide historic time depth.
- 5) Historic value and associations with the nearby Bosworth Battlefield.
- 6) The Ashby Canal is a valued landscape asset, particularly as a recreation and biodiversity resource as well as a reminder of the areas industrial heritage
- 7) Footpaths including popular recreational routes provide connections with the wider landscape.
- 8) Uncluttered rural views of church spires are sensitive to change and are valued for the sense of local distinctiveness they provide.

Landscape Strategies

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Encourage the use of traditional 'Midlands-style' hedgelaying to manage hedgerows, improving their structure and biodiversity value and strengthening landscape character. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) Maintain and enhance the recreational assets including rights of way network and canal. |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Maintain the rural character of the landscape. Ensure development is fully integrated into and informed by the landscape with its rural, harmonious pattern of small villages which are well-integrated in the landscape, and local vernacular styles and materials. Conserve the rural gap between Stoke Golding and Dadlington. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6) Maintain positive management of the Ashby Canal and seek opportunities to extend and enhance areas of wetland habitat. |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3) The Sustainable Urban Extension to the north of Barwell should aim to create a distinct new and contemporary identity and character(s) whilst responding to the existing context. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7) Create new and conserve existing notable habitats, in particular deciduous woodland and mesotrophic grassland. |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Maintain views to church spires and towers e.g. on the wooded skyline at Stoke Golding and long distance views to other churches in surrounding villages. Conserve rural views and setting of settlements. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8) Encourage tree planting to regenerate mature/ veteran trees as they come to the end of their lives. 9) Improve the integration of settlement edges such as north of Barwell, e.g. with planting and use of materials appropriate to the rural character. |

LCA F: Burbage Common Rolling Farmland



LCA F: BURBAGE COMMON ROLLING FARMLAND



Location and Boundaries

5.102 The character area is located at the south eastern extent of the Borough adjacent to the district of Blaby, with the administrative boundary wrapping around the northern and eastern perimeter. The Blaby landscape character areas adjacent to the LCA are: Elvesthorpe Floodplain, Stoney Stanton Gently Rolling Farmland, Aston Flamville Wooded

Farmland and Normanton Agricultural Parkland. The area forms an open expanse of gently rolling farmland below the ridgeline of the urban areas of Hinckley, Burbage, Earl Shilton and Barwell to the north and west.

5.103 There are no towns or villages within the character area.

Key Characteristics

- 1) **Large scale, gently rolling arable and pasture farmland with local variations in topography influenced by small streams.**
- 2) **Burbage Common and ancient woodland is of national and local importance as an ecological and recreational resource.**
- 3) **Medium to large scale rectilinear field pattern bounded by low hedgerows and post and wire fencing with smaller scale pasture fields around the settlements. Field boundaries and hedgerows generally follow contours.**
- 4) **Urban fringe influences as a result of exposed settlement edges of Hinckley and Earl Shilton situated on higher ground and recreational uses around Burbage Common.**
- 5) **Sparse settlement within the area, comprising individual buildings and scattered farm complexes.**
- 6) **Major transport corridors dissect the landscape and introduce noise and movement.**
- 7) **Open landform and lack of tree cover allows for expansive and distant views to edge of settlement, often situated on the skyline, and punctuated by major infrastructure.**
- 8) **Public rights of way including the Leicestershire Round, concentrated around Burbage Common and extending outside the borough into Blaby.**
- 9) **Green Wedge providing separation between Hinckley and Barwell and green infrastructure to the cluster of settlements of Burbage, Hinckley, Barwell and Earl Shilton.**



Landscape Character

- 5.104 The Triassic Mudstone is overlain by glacial till deposits and Bosworth Clay within a central 'bowl' centred on Burbage Common and extending east into Blaby District. Soils comprise reddish fine loamy or silty clay soils which are prone to seasonal waterlogging. A number of small streams flow through the landscape and field ponds are also common around farmsteads. Overall this is a relatively large scale, gently rolling landscape.
- 5.105 Land cover comprises large scale, arable farmland with blocks of broadleaved woodland in and around Burbage Common and smaller spinneys and copses in the southern part of the area. Smaller scale pasture fields are common around the settlement edges. The field pattern is typical of parliamentary enclosure, in the form of geometric field boundaries, defined by low hedgerows and post and wire fencing. Field boundaries often follow contours and occasionally contain mature hedgerow trees, although the lack of trees overall creates an open character.
- 5.106 Land use across the area is very mixed, with uses often related to the adjacent urban areas, including recreational facilities between Hinckley and Barwell (Leicester Road Stadium, sports ground and Hinckley Golf Club), public rights of way, paddocks, a cemetery and infrastructure including the A47 bypass and M69 and Junction 1. In the southern part of the area some larger buildings in expansive grounds are present including the Jury's Inn hotel by Junction 1, Hogue Hall and Sketchley House Hotel. Burbage Common is an attractive, natural and popular focus of the character area with several public footpaths converging here, including the Leicestershire Round as well as visitor facilities.
- 5.107 The landscape is influenced by large scale infrastructure such as the M69 and the A47 as well as the Leicester to Nuneaton railway line, which introduce noise and movement into an otherwise rural landscape, and a link to the adjacent urban development. Electricity pylons also punctuate the landscape and can be seen on the skyline in many views.
- 5.108 Extensive views across agricultural fields and successive hedgerows are common as a result of the relatively few trees, and consequently the urban edges of Hinckley, Burbage, Barwell and Earl Shilton are often starkly visible as a result of their elevated ridgeline location and the relatively open settlement edge, particularly the modern red brick residential properties at Earl Shilton. Distant views to the woodland skyline of Normanton Parkland (within Blaby District) and the church spire in Burbage add interest to views from the M69.
- 5.109 The settlement pattern is characterised by isolated farmsteads situated along rural lanes or private access tracks from main roads with grass verges and maintained hedgerows. These were likely to have been built in response to the enclosure of the surrounding farmland and are characterised by red brick farmhouses and large agricultural sheds with low pitched and rounded roofs. Some modern complexes are also present.



Historical and Cultural Influences

- 5.110 The field pattern in this area is largely a result of parliamentary enclosure in the 18th and 19th centuries, producing the traditional geometric fields defined by hedges and roads with wide grass verges. Areas of irregular (curved or dog-leg field shapes) are located throughout the landscape and indicate piecemeal enclosure, in post-medieval times, of the open medieval fields. Many isolated farmsteads are scattered throughout the landscape and are likely to have been built in the 18th and 19th century following the enclosing of the previously-open fields. The medieval open field system that existed prior to enclosure is still visible in part due to surviving ridge and furrow earthworks, particularly noticeable in fields adjacent to Barwell.
- 5.111 Burbage House, now demolished, was once a grand gothic mansion owned by Mr JS Crosland and stood to the south of Burbage. Two cottages remain along Lutterworth Road (both Grade II listed) and were previously a pair of lodges flanking the driveway up to the house. Remnant parkland features including spinneys and small lakes are also discernible in the area.

Natural Influences

- 5.112 Burbage Common and Woods is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Site for semi-natural woodland and unimproved acid grassland. Burbage Wood and Aston Firs is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and contains one of the best remaining examples of ash, oak and maple woodland in Leicestershire. Sheepy Wood, Burbage Wood and Aston Firs (within Blaby District) are ancient semi-natural woodland of importance as an ecological habitat.
- 5.113 The disused quarry and lake at Barrow Hill provides local landscape and biodiversity interest in the north of the area.
- 5.114 Woodland spinneys, streams and small water bodies south of the M69 around Lutterworth Road provide valuable habitats.

Key Sensitivities and Values

- 1) Burbage Common provides natural and recreational interest, of particular value in close proximity to urban areas, as are nearby sports facilities and public rights of way.
- 2) Woodland and mature trees provide biodiversity and visually screen nearby development. Woodland spinneys, streams and small water bodies in and around Lutterworth Road provide naturalistic and recreation interest.
- 3) The generally rural character and undeveloped landscape of the Green Wedge which forms an important gap between Hinckley and Barwell and a green infrastructure link to the wider landscape in the north.
- 4) Low hedgerows and hedgerow trees surrounding fields reflect the parliamentary enclosure field pattern and form part of the overall ecological network connecting with mature woodland planting, some of which is ancient.
- 5) Isolated farmsteads scattered through the farmland landscape reflect the agricultural origins.
- 6) Extensive visibility and long distance views across open expanses of rolling farmland are sensitive as any change/development has the potential to be widely visible.
- 7) The area east and south of Burbage provides a rural setting to the historic settlement.
- 8) Uncluttered views of church spires in the nearby ridge top settlements (e.g. Burbage) provide an important sense of place.

Landscape Strategies

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Encourage the use of traditional 'Midlands-style' hedge laying to manage hedgerows, improving their structure and biodiversity value and strengthening landscape character. Restore hedgerow trees. 2) Respect and enhance the essentially rural character of the landscape. Ensure any new and existing development is integrated into the landscape such as ensuring built form is orientated to provide broken rooflines and integrated with woodland copses. 3) The Sustainable Urban Extension to the south-east of Earl Shilton should aim to create a distinct new and contemporary identity and character(s) whilst responding to the existing context. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Maintain the gap between Hinckley and Barwell as a multifunctional green corridor incorporating recreation. 5) Maintain and enhance the recreational assets including Burbage Common and rights of way. 6) Create new and conserve existing notable habitats, in particular deciduous woodland and unimproved acid grassland. 7) Consider a strategic scale woodland planting initiative (e.g. linked to the National Forest) to help screen nearby urban development. 8) Consider the opportunity for using the historic parkland of the Burbage House estate as a framework for new green infrastructure links across the area and into nearby settlements. |
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