

Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Limited

HINCKLEY NATIONAL RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

The Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange Development Consent Order

Project reference TR050007

Environmental Statement Volume 2: Appendices

Appendix 11.1: Landscape and Visual Baseline Assessment

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Planning Act 2008

The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009
Regulation 5(2)(a)

The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017
Regulation 14

This document forms a part of the Environmental Statement for the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange project.

Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Limited (TSH) has applied to the Secretary of State for Transport for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (HNRFI).

To help inform the determination of the DCO application, TSH has undertaken an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of its proposals. EIA is a process that aims to improve the environmental design of a development proposal, and to provide the decision maker with sufficient information about the environmental effects of the project to make a decision.

The findings of an EIA are described in a written report known as an Environmental Statement (ES). An ES provides environmental information about the scheme, including a description of the development, its predicted environmental effects and the measures proposed to ameliorate any adverse effects.

Further details about the proposed Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange are available on the project website:



The DCO application and documents relating to the examination of the proposed development can be viewed on the Planning Inspectorate's National Infrastructure Planning website:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/east-midlands/hinckley-national-rail-freight-interchange/>

Appendix 11.1 ◆ Landscape and Visual Baseline Assessment

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Baseline Assessment (LVB) has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP), on behalf of Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Limited (TSH), to inform a proposed National Rail Freight Interchange on land north-east of Hinckley (hereafter referred to as ‘the site’), which is the subject of a Development Consent Order (DCO) application.
- 1.2 EDP is an independent environmental planning consultancy with offices in Cirencester, Cardiff and Cheltenham. The practice provides advice to private and public sector clients throughout the UK in the fields of landscape, ecology, archaeology, cultural heritage, arboriculture, rights of way and masterplanning. Details of the practice can be obtained at our website (www.edp-uk.co.uk).
- 1.3 This Appendix should be read in conjunction with the following Annexes:
- Annex 1 – Assessment Methodology;
 - Annex 2 – Relevant Extracts from Policy;
 - Annex 3 – Relevant Extracts from Landscape Assessments;
 - Annex 4 – GLVIA Glossary of Terms; and
 - Annex 5 – Photomontage Methodology.
- 1.4 Figure 11.1: Site Location and Site Boundaries (document reference 6.3.11.1) illustrates the extents of the Order Limits. The Proposed Development comprises the following main components and is described in full within Chapter 3: Project description (document reference 6.1.3).

Main HNRFI Site and M69 Junction 2 Works

- 1.5 The Main Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange Site (hereafter referred to as the ‘Main HNRFI Site’) is located approximately 5km to the north-east of Hinckley town centre, in a level area of mixed farmland to the north-west of M69 Junction 2. The Main HNRFI Site falls between the Leicester to Hinckley railway to the north-west and the M69 motorway defining the south-eastern edge. To the south-west of the Main HNRFI Site are blocks of deciduous woodland, including Burbage Wood, Aston Firs and Freeholt Wood. To the north-east lies the village of Elmesthorpe, a linear settlement on the B581 Station Road. The Main HNRFI Site lies wholly within Blaby District, Leicestershire.

- 1.6 The Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) would contain the following main elements:
- New rail infrastructure including points off the existing Leicester to Hinckley railway providing access to a series of parallel sidings at the SRFI, in which trains would be unloaded, marshalled and loaded. This railway forms part of Network Rail's strategic freight network, linking the west coast and east coast main lines and forming a primary link between Felixstowe and the Midlands and North. Network Rail has already undertaken substantial capacity enhancements under its Felixstowe to Nuneaton freight capacity scheme (F2N);
 - An intermodal freight terminal or 'Railport' capable of accommodating up to 16 trains up to 775m in length per day, with hard-surfaced areas for container storage and HGV parking and cranes for the loading and unloading of shipping containers from trains and lorries;
 - Up to 850,000 m² (gross internal area or GIA) of warehousing and ancillary buildings with a total footprint of up to 650,000 m² and up to 200,000 m² of mezzanine floorspace. These buildings might incorporate ancillary data centres to support the requirements of HNRFI occupiers and operators;
 - A lorry park with a fuel filling station;
 - An energy centre containing centralised infrastructure and plant as well as some components that will be distributed at the units;
 - Terrain remodelling, hard and soft landscape works, amenity water features and planting inside the SRFI;
 - Noise attenuation measures, including acoustic barriers up to six metres in height; and
 - Pedestrian, equestrian and cycle access routes and infrastructure inside the SRFI.
- 1.7 Connected to the Main HNRFI Site is a new access road from Junction 2 of the M69 motorway connecting to an internal road network serving the SRFI and continuing north-westwards over a new road bridge spanning proposed railway sidings and the existing Leicester to Hinckley railway to the A47 Link discussed below.
- 1.8 Works to Junction 2 of the M69 motorway comprise the reconfiguration of the existing roundabout and its approach and exit lanes, the addition of a southbound slip road for traffic joining the M69 and the addition of a northbound slip road for traffic leaving the motorway at Junction 2.

A47 Link Road

- 1.9 The A47 Link Road element of the Order Limits is a corridor of land located to the north-west of the Main HNRFI Site, extending north-west to the B4668. Its intention is to provide a link through the Main HNRFI Site and the internal road network, to a bridge over the railway and onwards to the B4668 and A47 to the north-west. This corridor comprises

enclosed, low-lying arable farmland, which is bounded by a mature hedgerow on its southern edge with Burbage Common Road, whilst the northern edge is partially open.

1.10 The proposals comprise the following:

- creation of a Link Road, from the Main HNRFI Site to the A47/B4668 road junctions including associated infrastructure such as signage, pedestrian footways and crossing points;
- creation of embankments along the Link Road; and
- conversion of agricultural land south of the Link Road to provide an extension to the Burbage Common and Woods Country Park to the south.

Offsite Highway Works

1.11 Within the wider Order Limits are a number of generally minor highways modifications proposed which are set out within Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1: Offsite Highway Works.

No.	Location and site description	Highway Authority
Blaby DC		
B1	Junction of B581 Station Road/New Road and Hinckley Road, Stoney Stanton	Leicestershire County Council (LCC)
B2	Junction of B4669 Hinckley Road and Stanton Lane, west of Sapcote	LCC
B3	Stanton Lane/Hinckley Road, south-west of Stoney Stanton	LCC
B4	B4669 Hinckley Road/ Leicester Road, Sapcote	LCC
B5	Junction of B4114 Coventry Road and B581 Broughton Road at Soar Mill, south-east of Stoney Stanton	LCC
B6	Junction of B4114 Coventry Road and Croft Road, south-west of Narborough	LCC

No.	Location and site description	Highway Authority
Hinckley and Bosworth BC		
HB1	Junction of A47 Normandy Way and A447 Ashby Road, Hinckley	LCC
HB2	Junction of A47 Normandy Way/Leicester Road, the B4668 Leicester Road and The Common, south-east of Barwell	LCC
HB3	Junction of B4668 and New A47 Link Road, north east of the site access (Access Infrastructure)	LCC
Harborough DC/Rugby BC		
HR1	Cross in Hand roundabout at the junction of the A5 Watling Street, A4303 Coventry Road, B4428 Lutterworth Road and Coal Pit Lane, west of Lutterworth	National Highways

Railway Works

1.12 The existing Leicester to Hinckley railway features a series of uncontrolled gated pedestrian level crossings serving local Public Right of Way (PRoW) routes. There is the potential for freight trains to be held at signals on their approaches to the HNRFI. Where this happens, trains might temporarily obstruct level crossings or block views along the line, creating a risk that pedestrians might attempt to walk along the railway to get around the end of the train, climb under the couplings of stationary freight wagons or cross when it is not safe to do so because their view of an approaching train is blocked. Following discussions with Network Rail, to maintain public safety, the following measures are proposed at five crossings set out in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2: Railway Works

No.	Location and site description	Works Proposed
P1	Thorney Fields Farm No 2: Grid Ref: SP480959 Footpath No. XU17/2 1 km NW of Sapcote	The level crossing would be closed and the existing PRow diverted with pedestrians rerouted to an existing bridge over the railway south of Thorney Fields Farm.
P2	Elmesthorpe: Grid Ref: SP471958 Footpath No. T89/1 between Bostock Close and the B581 Station Road, opposite the Wentworth Arms public house	Permanent closure. Pedestrians would instead be able to cross the railway using the existing Station Road bridge, 75 metres to the south-west.
P3	Billington Rough: Grid Ref: SP460954 Footpath No: U50/3-U50/4 from Elmesthorpe	Permanent closure. The footpath to the east of this level crossing is proposed to be stopped up, meaning that the level crossing would have no future purpose. Pedestrian traffic wishing to cross the railway would be diverted to the railway bridge proposed for the A47 Link Road, c.750 metres to the south-west.
P4	East of Bridge Farm: Grid Ref: SP457952 Footpath No. V23/1 from Barwell	Permanent closure. The footpath to the east of this level crossing is proposed to be stopped up, meaning that the level crossing would have no future purpose. Pedestrian traffic wishing to cross the railway would be diverted to the railway bridge proposed for the A47 Link Road, c. 400 metres to the south-west.
P5	The Outwoods: Grid Ref: SP442941 Footpath no. U8/1-U52/1, connecting Burbage and the Hinckley Academy and John Cleveland Sixth Form Centre in Hinckley	Replacement of the level crossing with a pedestrian footbridge.

Purpose

- 1.13 The purpose of this document is to identify the landscape and visual baseline conditions of the DCO Site and its surrounding area, to inform the design and layout of the Proposed Development and to establish an appropriate scope of work to facilitate an assessment of the effects predicted to arise from the Proposed Development as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process.
- 1.14 In compiling the assessment, EDP has undertaken the following key tasks:
- Reviewed the planning policy context;
 - Undertaken a desktop study and web search of relevant background documents and maps. EDP's study included reviews of aerial photographs, web searches, Local Planning Authority (LPA) publications and landscape character assessments. EDP has also obtained, where possible, information about relevant landscape and other designations such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), conservation areas and gardens and parks listed on Historic England's 'Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England' (RPG);
 - Undertaken a field assessment of local site circumstances, including a photographic survey of the character and fabric of the DCO Site and its surroundings, using photography from a number of representative viewpoints. The field assessment was undertaken by qualified landscape architects; and
 - Provided an analysis of the likely landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development, which is determined by combining the magnitude of the predicted change with the assessed sensitivity of the identified receptors. The nature of any predicted effects is also identified (i.e. positive/negative, permanent/reversible).

Methodology Adopted for the Assessment

- 1.15 Landscape and visual assessment is comprised of a study of two separate but inter-linked issues:
- Landscape character is the physical make up and condition of the landscape itself, and arises from a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of physical and social elements, aesthetic factors and perceptual aspects; and
 - Visual amenity is the way in which the site is seen (views to and from the site, their direction, character and sensitivity to change).
- 1.16 Baseline landscape character issues and visual amenity issues are addressed below.
- 1.17 The LVIA has been undertaken in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (LI/IEEMA, 2013)' (GLVIA3). The criteria referred to, but not defined within the guidelines, has been defined by EDP and set out in an Assessment Methodology contained at Annex 1.

Study Area

- 1.18 To establish the baseline and potential limit of material effects, the study area has been considered at two geographical scales.
- 1.19 A broad study area of 5km was adopted from the Main Order Limits (excluding the separate redlines of the M69 signage works to the south), as shown on Figure 11.1 (document reference 6.3.11.1), enabling the geographical scope of the assessment to be defined and to provide the wider geographical context of the study. The search focussed on the local planning policy context, on identifying national and local landscape and other associated designations (e.g. AONB and RPG) and providing a general geographical understanding of the site and its broader context (for example, in relation to landform, transport routes and the distribution and nature of settlement).
- 1.20 Following initial analysis and subsequent field work, and having an appreciation of the Proposed Development, a refinement of the study area has been undertaken that focuses on those areas and features that are likely to be affected by the Proposed Development. A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) for the proposal was produced across the 5km study area to aid understanding of the potential geographical extent of visual effects and help define a more detailed study area. The extent of this detailed study area is 2km from the Main Order Limits, although occasional reference may be made to features beyond this area where appropriate. This detailed study area is also illustrated on Figure 11.1. (document reference 6.3.11.1).

LANDSCAPE PLANNING POLICY AND DESIGNATIONS

- 1.21 An appreciation of the ‘weight’ to be attributed to any landscape or visual effects arising from development starts with an understanding of the planning context within which any such development is to be tested for its acceptability. This section appraises the relevant statutory policy context and guidance with regard to landscape and visual effects.

European Landscape Convention (2007)

- 1.22 The European Landscape Convention (ELC), which was signed by the UK in February 2006 and became binding in 2007, is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape issues and aims to protect and manage landscapes in Europe and to plan positively for change within them. The ELC highlights the importance of developing landscape polices dedicated to protection, management and creation of landscapes, and establishing procedures for the general public and other stakeholders to participate in policy creation and implementation. The ELC, which was signed by the UK in February 2006 and became binding in 2007, is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape issues and aims to protect and manage landscapes in Europe and to plan positively for change within them. As set out by the Landscape Institute, ‘Brexit’ refers to the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union (EU). The ELC is a convention of the Council of Europe, not the EU. Therefore, Brexit does not affect the

status of this convention, and as of 31 January 2020, the UK remains a signatory¹”.

- 1.23 The ELC defines landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (Council of Europe, 2004).

National Policy Statement for National Networks (2014)

- 1.24 The National Policy Statement (NPS) for National Networks sets out the need for, and Government’s policies to deliver, development of nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) on the national road and rail networks in England. It provides planning guidance for promoters of nationally significant infrastructure projects on the road and rail networks, and the basis for the examination by the Examining Authority and decisions by the Secretary of State.
- 1.25 The NPS includes a section titled “Criteria for “good design” for national network infrastructure” which sets out the need for consideration of matters such as visual appearance, sustainability, good aesthetics, functionality and the role of technology in design. Critically in relation to landscape and visual matters the NPS states at paragraphs 4.31 and 4.32:

“A good design should meet the principal objectives of the scheme by eliminating or substantially mitigating the identified problems by improving operational conditions and simultaneously minimising adverse impacts. It should also mitigate any existing adverse impacts wherever possible, for example, in relation to safety or the environment.

Scheme design will be a material consideration in decision making. The Secretary of State needs to be satisfied that national networks infrastructure projects are sustainable and as aesthetically sensitive, durable, adaptable and resilient as they can reasonably be (having regard to regulatory and other constraints and including accounting for natural hazards such as flooding).”

- 1.26 Also of note at paragraphs 4.34 and 4.35:

“Whilst the applicant may only have limited choice in the physical appearance of some national networks infrastructure, there may be opportunities for the applicant to demonstrate good design in terms of siting and design measures relative to existing landscape and historical character and function, landscape permeability, landform and vegetation.

Applicants should be able to demonstrate in their application how the design process was conducted and how the proposed design evolved. Where a number of different designs were considered, applicants should set out the reasons why the favoured choice has been selected. The Examining Authority and Secretary of State should take into account the ultimate purpose of the infrastructure and bear in mind the operational, safety and security

¹ [REDACTED]

requirements which the design has to satisfy.”

- 1.27 In terms of NPS guidance on Landscape and Visual impacts, the NPS states at paragraphs 5.144 - 5.146:

“The landscape and visual assessment should include reference to any landscape character assessment and associated studies, as a means of assessing landscape impacts relevant to the proposed project. The applicant’s assessment should also take account of any relevant policies based on these assessments in local development documents in England.

The applicant’s assessment should include any significant effects during construction of the project and/or the significant effects of the completed development and its operation on landscape components and landscape character (including historic landscape characterisation).

The assessment should include the visibility and conspicuousness of the project during construction and of the presence and operation of the project and potential impacts on views and visual amenity. This should include any noise and light pollution effects, including on local amenity, tranquillity and nature conservation.”

- 1.28 In terms of development in areas that are not subject to a national landscape designation, such as AONB’s and National Parks, the NPS states at paragraphs 5.156 and 5.157:

“Outside nationally designated areas, there are local landscapes that may be highly valued locally and protected by local designation. Where a local development document in England has policies based on landscape character assessment, these should be given particular consideration. However, local landscape designations should not be used in themselves as reasons to refuse consent, as this may unduly restrict acceptable development.

In taking decisions, the Secretary of State should consider whether the project has been designed carefully, taking account of environmental effects on the landscape and siting, operational and other relevant constraints, to avoid adverse effects on landscape or to minimise harm to the landscape, including by reasonable mitigation.”

- 1.29 Guidance relating to mitigation is set out in paragraphs 5.159 - 5.161:

“Reducing the scale of a project or making changes to its operation can help to avoid or mitigate the visual and landscape effects of a proposed project. However, reducing the scale or otherwise amending the design or changing the operation of a proposed development may result in a significant operational constraint and reduction in function. There may, be exceptional circumstances, where mitigation could have a very significant benefit and warrant a small reduction in scale or function. In these circumstances, the Secretary of State may decide that the benefits of the mitigation to reduce the landscape effects outweigh the marginal loss of scale or function.

Adverse landscape and visual effects may be minimised through appropriate siting of infrastructure, design (including choice of materials), and landscaping schemes, depending

on the size and type of proposed project. Materials and designs for infrastructure should always be given careful consideration.

Depending on the topography of the surrounding terrain and areas of population it may be appropriate to undertake landscaping off site, although if such landscaping was proposed to be consented by the development consent order, it would have to be included within the order limits for that application. For example, filling in gaps in existing tree and hedge lines would mitigate the impact when viewed from a more distant vista.”

National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF)

1.30 At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, this being the underlying theme running throughout the policy statement.

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

1.31 For landscape, this means recognising the intrinsic beauty of the countryside and balancing any ‘harm’ to the landscape resource with the benefits of the scheme in other respects. Paragraph 174 goes on to describe ways in which planning policies and decisions should contribute to the natural and local environment:

- a) *“protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) *recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- c) *maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
- d) *minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*
- e) *preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*
- f) *remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.”*

- 1.32 With regards to statutory landscape designations, paragraph 176 states *“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues”* and the *“scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest”*. As such, no part of the DCO Site boundary falls within or adjacent to the above specified statutory landscape designations.
- 1.33 In consideration of landscape and visual impacts of light pollution, paragraph 185 bullet point c) states that new development should *“limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation”*.

Achieving Well-designed Places

- 1.34 In terms of the requirements of good design for development proposals, paragraph 130 seeks to achieve high quality design in development and sets out a number of requirements which are as follows:
- a) *“will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
 - b) *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
 - c) *are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
 - d) *establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
 - e) *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
 - f) *create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future uses; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”*
- 1.35 Paragraph 131 relates to tree provision within schemes and their ability to contribute to the character and quality of urban environments, whilst also helping to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

- 1.36 Furthermore, in terms of design quality, paragraph 132 states, as is generally good planning practice that:

“Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.”

Local Planning Policy

- 1.37 The Order Limits principally fall across two Local Planning Authority (LPA) areas: Blaby District and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC). The relevant adopted local statutory planning documents include:

- Blaby District Local Plan (Core Strategy) (adopted 2013);
- Blaby District Local Plan (Delivery) Development Plan Document (adopted 2019);
- Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Core Strategy (adopted 2009); and
- Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (adopted 2016).

- 1.38 Highways modification HR1 concerning the Magna Park roundabout of the Order Limits falls on the boundary of Rugby Borough Council (RBC) and Harborough District Council (HDC). The relevant adopted local statutory planning documents include:

- Rugby Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (adopted 2019); and
- Harborough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (adopted 2019).

- 1.39 The limited nature of the works required to highways modification HR1 are unlikely to result in the potential for significant landscape or visual effects and as such, no further review of local planning policy in relation to these works has been undertaken.

- 1.40 The following policies are considered relevant to this LVA, with extracts saved in Annex 2.

Blaby District Core Strategy (Adopted February 2013)

- 1.41 Policies within the Blaby District Local Plan Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) (Adopted 2013) of relevance to landscape and visual amenity include the following:

- Policy CS2 – Design of New Development;
- Policy CS14 – Green Infrastructure (GI);

- Policy CS18 – Countryside; and
- Policy CS19 – Biodiversity and Geo-diversity.

Blaby District Local Plan (Delivery) Development Plan (Adopted February 2019)

1.42 Policies within the Blaby District Local (Delivery) DPD (Adopted February 2019) of relevance to landscape and visual amenity includes ‘Policy DM2 – Countryside’.

Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy (Adopted 2009)

1.43 Spatial Objectives (SO) of particular relevance to landscape and visual matters include:

- SO7 – Healthier Active Communities;
- SO9 – Identity, Distinctiveness and Quality of Design; and
- SO10 – Natural Environment and Cultural Assets.

1.44 Policies within the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD of relevance to landscape and visual amenity include the following:

- Policy 6 – Hinckley/Barwell/Earl Shilton/Burbage Green Wedge; and
- Policy 20 – Green Infrastructure.

Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (adopted 2016)

1.45 Policies within the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD of relevance to landscape and visual amenity include the following:

- Policy DM4 – Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation; and
- Policy DM9 – Safeguarding Natural and Semi-Natural Open Spaces.

Supplementary Planning Documents

1.46 The following additional supplementary guidance is relevant in terms of understanding landscape character across both the Blaby and Hinckley and Bosworth LPA areas:

- Blaby District Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2020);
- Hinckley/Barwell/Earl Shilton/Burbage Green Wedge Review April (2020);
- Hinckley and Bosworth Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2017);
- Landscape Character Assessment for Hinckley and Bosworth (2017); and
- Hinckley and Bosworth Green Infrastructure Strategy (2020).

Landscape Designations

- 1.47 No part of the Order Limits lies within a national or regionally designated landscape as illustrated on Figure 11.2: Environmental Planning Considerations (document reference 6.3.11.2).

Other Environmental Considerations

- 1.48 Figure 11.2 (document reference 6.3.11.2) illustrates other environmental considerations within the 5km broad study area. Whilst these may not be specifically landscape designations, features of heritage, ecology, arboricultural and PRoW and access value can influence the landscape or provide a receptor point from which the immediate and wider landscape is experienced.
- 1.49 For example, a nature reserve, local wildlife site or country park open to the public may not be designated for landscape purposes but is likely to be a place that people visit to take in nature, their surrounding including the landscape and seek recreation.

Heritage Matters

- 1.50 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology ES Chapter 13 (document reference 6.1.13) considers the historic character and setting of designated and non-designated heritage assets within the study area. Whilst heritage assets are not landscape designations per se, they do, on occasion, serve to influence the character of the landscape and can inform landscape value, which are considerations within this report. Where this is the case, it is noted within the relevant assessment.
- 1.51 No part of the DCO Site lies within an RPG on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, nor does one fall within the 5km broad study area. Similarly, they do not fall within a World Heritage Site (WHS), nor is one located within the 5km broad study area.
- 1.52 There are a number of conservation areas (CAs) located within the 5km broad study area (10 in total) as illustrated in Figure 11.2: Environmental Planning Considerations. The nearest is 'Aston Flamville' CA located to the south of the Main HNRFI Site. A number of the CAs are contained centrally within urban areas (Barwell A, Barwell B, Hinckley Town Centre, Hinckley Druid Street, Hinckley Hollycroft and Earl Shilton).
- 1.53 Numerous listed buildings are located within the 5km broad study area and 2km detailed study area, most of which are clustered around CAs or centrally within urban areas (see Figure 11.2: Other Environmental Considerations (document reference 6.3.11.2)). No listed buildings lie within any part of the Order Limits, with the nearest being Grade II 'Wentworth Arms and adjoining stable, Elmesthorpe' which is located a short distance from the northern extent of the Main HNRFI Site near the junction of Burbage Common Road and the B581. The nearest Grade I listed building is 'Church of St Mary, Barwell' located c.840m north-west of the Main HNRFI Site, whilst the nearest Grade II* Listed Building 'Church of St Michael, Stoney Stanton' is located c.55m north of the A47 Link near the junction of Hinckley Road and the B581.

1.54 13 scheduled monuments (SM) are located within the broad 5km study area, none of which fall within the DCO Limits. The nearest SM to the Main HNRFI Site is ‘Elmesthorpe church, ruined nave and west tower’ located c.1km north. ‘Sapcote Castle and moat’ SM falls adjacent to the south of a section of the highways modifications B4 passes through Sapcote along the B4669 Hinckley Road.

Ecology Matters

- 1.55 Ecology and Biodiversity Chapter 12 (document reference 6.1.12) considers the ecological assets within the study area. While these are not landscape designations, as for the above referenced heritage assets, they do, on occasion, serve to influence the character of the landscape and can inform landscape value. Where this is the case, it is noted in the relevant assessment.
- 1.56 No part of the Order Limits is covered by any internationally statutory designations and there are no such designations within the broad study area.
- 1.57 No part of the Order Limits is covered by a national or locally important statutory designation. However, within the 5km broad study area there are four Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), with Burbage Wood and Aston Firs SSSI located adjacent to the south-western site boundary, whilst the other three Croft Hill, Croft Pasture and Croft and Huncote Quarry are located in close proximity to one another, c.4km north-east of the site. These are illustrated on Figures 11.2 and 12.2 (document references 6.3.11.2 and 6.3.12.2).
- 1.58 One Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Burbage Common and Woods, is located adjacent to the western site boundary as illustrated on Figure 12.2 (document reference 6.3.12.2).
- 1.59 Four Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are located within 1km of the site. Elmesthorpe Plantation LWS lies within the western area of the site, whilst Burbage Common and Woods overlaps with the LNR mentioned above, as does Field Rose Hedgerow LWS, and lies adjacent to the western boundary. Billington Rough LWS falls just c.100m north of the site boundary.
- 1.60 A number of potential Local Wildlife Sites (pLWS) and one candidate Local Wildlife Sites (cLWS) are located within or in close proximity to the site. These are illustrated in Figure 12.2 (document reference 6.3.12.2).
- 1.61 In terms of pLWS located within the site itself, these include ‘Burbage Common Road Hedgerows’, ‘Junction 2 Grassland’, ‘B4669 Road Verge’, ‘Woodland adj. to Aston Firs’, ‘Freeholt Meadow’, ‘Elmesthorpe Boundary Hedgerow’ and ‘Burbage Common Road railway bridge’. In addition, a number of pLWS falls adjacent to the site boundary which include ‘Freeholt Wood’, ‘Castlewood Grassland’, ‘Home Farm Grassland’ and ‘Station Road Verge 2’.
- 1.62 With regards to the one cLWS Trackside Meadow, this is located adjacent to the northern boundary of the site.

Tree Preservation Orders and Ancient Woodland

- 1.63 There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) within the Order Limits. However, Aston Firs and Freeholt Wood on the southern boundary are the subject of a TPO.
- 1.64 There is no Ancient Woodland within the Order Limits. However, there are several blocks of Ancient Woodland to the south-west of the site, at Burbage Wood, Aston Firs, Freeholt Wood and Sheepy Wood. All except Sheepy Wood share a boundary with the DCO.
- 1.65 EDP has also been commissioned to undertake a BS 5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction compliant survey of the trees within the Order Limits. The details of this survey are contained in Appendix 11.4 (document reference 6.3.11.4). Of the items surveyed, 33 have been identified as category A, of high quality and value and a further 265 items have been identified as category B, of moderate quality and value. Both category A and B items should be prioritised for retention due to their condition, age and retention span.
- 1.66 Three veteran trees are located within the Order Limits, two of which are located within the area of the A47 Link Road, and one within the Main HNRFI Site. A veteran tree is a tree that, by a recognised criterion, shows features of biological, cultural or aesthetical value that are characteristic of, but not exclusive to, individuals surviving beyond the typical age range for the species.

Public Rights of Way

- 1.67 The locations of PRoW have been obtained from LCC Definitive Map and Statement.
- 1.68 There are several PRoWs that pass through the site, as illustrated on Figure 11.3 (document reference 6.3.11.3). Whilst there are a number within the local context of the site, these PRoWs generally provide links between local settlements and scattered farms across the area.
- 1.69 One promoted route, the Leicestershire Round, runs through the study area, passing c.30m west of the Order Limits as it passes through Burbage Common and Woods. No National Trails or European long-distance footpaths pass through the broad study area.
- 1.70 Potential views from nearby PRoW, and others within the wider context of the broad study area, will be considered further in this report, whilst a separate and specific PRoW Assessment and Strategy has been undertaken by EDP (see Appendix 11.2, document reference 6.3.11.2), which has continually advised the on-site provision of PRoW throughout the evolution of the Proposed Development.

National Cycle Routes

- 1.71 Two National Cycle Routes (NCR) pass through the broad 5km study area, however they are both located at the far eastern and far western extents of the study area, with NCR52 located c.6km west of the Main HNRFI Site. NCR is located 9.6km north-east of the Main HNRFI Site.

Open Access Land and Country Parks

- 1.72 Burbage Common and Woods Country Park and area of Open Access Land is located adjacent to the western boundary of the Main HNRFI Site, as illustrated on Figure 11.3 (document 6.3.11.3). Natural England recognises Country Parks as significant places that contribute to England’s accessible natural green space; they are not necessarily created in recognition of, or to protect, landscape quality. However, the attractive, green, informal, accessible character of the Country Park means that it has a high local value.

BASELINE CONDITIONS: LANDSCAPE RESOURCE

- 1.73 As advocated by GLVIA3, this section identifies the range of landscape resources with the potential to experience an effect. The analysis of the baseline also requires consideration of the sensitivity of the receptor, this being a function of the susceptibility to change of the receptor and its value.
- 1.74 EDP has undertaken a review of local landscape character, which included a number of site visits by experienced landscape architects between 2017 and 2022. Where necessary, the relevance of the published character assessments to the local landscape is commented on below. Extracts of key characteristics, to assist with understanding the Council’s accepted baseline position, are contained in Annex 3.

National Character Assessment

- 1.75 At the national level, the site lies in the ‘Leicestershire Vales’ National Character Area (NCA, no. 94). The key characteristics are broadly described as:
- *“An open landscape of gentle clay ridges and valleys underlain by Mercia Mudstone and Lias groups bedrock but with an extensive cover of superficial deposits occasionally giving rise to moderately steep scarp slopes. There is an overall visual uniformity to the landscape and settlement pattern;*
 - *Land use characterised by a mixture of pasture and arable agriculture that has developed on the neutral clay soils;*
 - *Distinctive river valley of the Soar and Swift, with flat flood plains and gravel terraces together with tributaries including the Sence. Riverside meadows and waterside trees and shrubs are common, along with waterbodies resulting from gravel extraction;*
 - *Woodland character derived largely from spinneys and copses on the ridges and the more undulating land and from waterside and hedgerow trees and hedgerows. The density, height and pattern of hedgerows varies throughout;*
 - *Diverse levels of tranquillity associated with contrasts between busy urban areas and some deeply rural parts. Large settlements dominate the open character of the landscape. Leicester, Lutterworth, Hinckley and Market Harborough and related infrastructure, including major roads are often visually dominant;*

- *Frequent small towns and large villages often characterised by red brick buildings and attractive stone buildings in older village centres and eastern towns and villages. Frequent, imposing spired churches are also characteristic, together with fine examples of individual historic buildings; and*
- *Rich and varied historic landscape, with the nationally important Bosworth Battlefield near Sutton Cheney, prominent historic parklands and country houses, ridge-and-furrow earthworks and important medieval settlement remains, for example at Wistow Hall, Gumley, Knaptoft and Peatling Magna.”*

1.76 While the key characteristics of the NCA are broadly representative of the wider landscape, for the scale of the development proposed, it is considered that the description of landscape character undertaken at the sub-regional level is more relevant in establishing the landscape resource baseline. Accordingly, while NCA 94 has been used to inform this LVA baseline, it will not be carried forward to detailed assessment of effects, with the focus being on local landscape character areas.

Local Landscape Character Assessments

1.77 The local landscape character is defined in the Blaby District Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2020), and the Hinckley and Bosworth Landscape Character Assessment (2017). Also of relevance is the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation Study.

Blaby District Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2020)

1.78 A review of the Blaby District Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (BDLSCA) finds that the Order Limits are located within three Landscape Character Areas (LCA). The northern parts of the Order Limits lie in LCA 6: ‘Elmesthorpe Floodplain’ and the southern portions are located within LCA 1: ‘Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland’, the locations of which are illustrated on Figure 11.5. A small part of the eastern area of the Order Limits, which will be primarily for junction improvements (east of the M69) are located within LCA 15: ‘Stoney Stanton Rolling Farmland’. Elsewhere within 2km of the Main HNRFI Site there is one other BDLSCA landscape character area, LCA 14: ‘Soar Meadows’ located east of Sharnford. The key characteristics of the LCAs mentioned above are contained within Annex 3.

1.79 In terms of Settlement Character Areas (SCAs) identified within the BDLSCA, five SCAs are located within 2km of the Order Limits. Those which form part of the Order Limits include Elmesthorpe SCA, Sapcote SCA and Stoney Stanton SCA. The other two relevant SCAs within 2km of the order limits include Aston Flamville and Sharnford.

Hinckley and Bosworth Landscape Character Assessment (2017)

1.80 A review of the Hinckley and Bosworth District Council Landscape Character Assessment (HBLCA) finds that the Main HNRFI Site is located within one LCA: ‘Burbage Common Rolling Farmland’ which covers the north-western end of the A47 Link (as illustrated on Figure 11.5, document reference 6.3.11.5). One other LCA ‘Stoke Golding Rolling

Farmland' is located within 2km of the Main HNRFI Site, west of Barwell and north of Hinckley. The key characteristics of this LCA are contained within Annex 3.

Rugby Landscape Character Assessment (2006)

- 1.81 Within the Rugby Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment (RBCLCA), highways modification H1 falls within the 'High Cross Plateau, Open Plateau'. The key characteristics of this LCA are contained within Annex 3.

Harborough Landscape Character Assessment (2007)

- 1.82 Within the Harborough District Council Landscape Character Assessment (HDCLCA), highways modification H1 falls within the 'Upper Soar' (as illustrated on Figure 11.5, document reference 6.3.11.5). The key characteristics of this LCA are contained within Annex 3.

EDP Site Assessment

- 1.83 Site visits have taken place between 2017 and 2022 in very good to excellent weather conditions. The visits were complemented by a review of aerial photography, mapping and field assessments from publicly accessible locations (e.g., from local roads and PRow).

Main HNRFI Site

Topography

- 1.84 Across the Main HNRFI Site, the topography slopes broadly from north to south from a height of c.85m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the north to a height of c.110m aOD in the south, although there are a number of more localised undulations across the site within this range, as illustrated on Figure 11.6 (document reference 6.3.11.6).

Soil Types

- 1.85 The underlying mudstone bedrock across the Main HNRFI Site has an influence both on soil profiles and drainage with a large part of the Main HNRFI Site comprising 'slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils'², whilst some small areas in the north of the Main HNRFI Site comprise 'slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage', which have impeded to slightly impeded drainage down to the mudstone aquifer below.
- 1.86 The Soils and Agricultural Quality Report (Appendix 11.3, document reference 6.3.11.3) confirms that the Main HNRFI Site is underlain by heavy clay loam topsoils that directly overlie slowly permeable clay subsoils. A small area in the north-east of the Main HNRFI Site has lighter permeable upper layers (see Figure 11.19, document reference 6.3.11.19). The heavy soils provide land of subgrade 3b agricultural quality and the lighter soils

² [REDACTED]

provide subgrade 3a land. All the land is limited by wetness.

Vegetation and Hydrological Features

- 1.87 The current land use of the Main HNRFI Site is predominantly arable farmland, comprising medium to small, enclosed field parcels, typically bounded with mature hedgerows with hedgerow trees. Also included within the Main HNRFI Site are a number of small to medium Improved Grassland fields and a few Poor Semi-improved Grassland fields. Areas of amenity grassland are extremely limited and located adjacent to dwellings only.
- 1.88 Along part of the eastern edge of the Main HNRFI Site to the southern extent of the Main HNRFI Site are limited areas of Semi-improved Neutral Grassland forming the motorway verge. In addition, there is a small strip of Broadleaved Semi-natural Woodland and an area of Broadleaved Plantation Woodland near the footbridge over the M69 (halfway along the eastern boundary of the Main HNRFI) and within the M69 Junction 2 roundabout is an area of Broad-leaved Plantation Woodland.
- 1.89 A description of each of the habitats on site is contained in Ecology Baseline, Appendix 12.1 of the Ecology ES (document reference 6.2.12.1) and the findings of the Extended Phase 1 survey is illustrated in Figure 12.3 (document reference 6.3.12.3). The ecological value of the habitats and features on site is assessed in the Ecology Baseline, Appendix 12.1 of the Ecology ES (document reference 6.2.12.1).
- 1.90 Figure 12.4 (document reference 6.3.12.4) describes the condition of the hedgerows on the Main HNRFI Site. With the exception of those that are designated as LWS and pLWS, the ecology survey assesses the hedgerows within the HNRFI Site to be of local value.
- 1.91 Whilst there is no Ancient Woodland within the Main HNRFI Site, there are several blocks of Ancient Woodland close to the south-western edge of the Main HNRFI Site, at Burbage Wood, Aston Firs, Freeholt Wood and Sheepy Wood.
- 1.92 Small areas of dense scrub are located near Hobbs Hayes and Woodhouse Farm whilst a larger portion is located between the access track to Hobbs Hayes and the M69 Junction 2 roundabout. A thin strip of scattered scrub is present along most of the boundary with the Hinckley to Leicester railway.
- 1.93 Details of the trees, groups of trees, woodland and hedgerows across the Order Limits are described within the Arboricultural Survey in Appendix 11.4 (document reference 6.3.11.4). Within the Main HNFRI Site Mature Category B and C hedgerow trees are throughout the field boundaries with occasional Category A and U specimens. The majority are Ash, Oak and Field Maple. Groups of trees and woodland are principally located around the boundaries and associated with the existing farmsteads. All of the woodland (which is principally mixed broadleaved woodland with Oak and Ash as predominant species) has been assessed as Category A while the groups of trees are principally Category B and C.
- 1.94 Hydrological features comprise nine field ponds scattered over the Main HNRFI Site, one unnamed stream corridor that passes from Freeholt Wood south of the Main HNRFI Site

and travels in a north-eastern direction to the eastern boundary and M69, and a network of ditches, the majority of which are dry.

Historic Landscape and Features

- 1.95 The historic landscape of the Main HNRFI Site was created predominantly as a result of parliamentary enclosure of the 18th century. As can be seen from comparison with the historic mapping in Figure 13.5 (document reference 6.3.13.5), the field pattern remains much as it was 200 years ago, the network of hedgerows with hedgerow trees remaining largely intact. The greatest changes in the landscape came with the arrival of the railway in the mid C19th and the M69 in the 1970's, both of which severed field parcels along their respective routes and required diversions of PRow.
- 1.96 Fields north of Woodhouse Farm and a field to the south of Freeholt Lodge include reduced ridge and furrow earthworks which highlights the long-term agricultural character and land use of the Main HNRFI Site since at least medieval times.
- 1.97 In terms of other historic landscape features one veteran Oak has been identified across the Main HNRFI Site (T486 within the Arboricultural Survey in Appendix 11.4, document reference 6.3.11.4), located near Hobbs Hayes. Ancient Woodland bounds the Main HNRFI Site to the south-west and provides a dense vertical natural feature which forms a backdrop to the agricultural land within the Main HNRFI Site.

Built Features

- 1.98 Major road infrastructure included within the Main HNRFI Site includes the M69 Junction 2 roundabout and slip roads and a footbridge over the M69.
- 1.99 Burbage Common Road is the principal road running through the Main HNRFI Site providing access to properties and farms along its route.
- 1.100 A separate access road off the B4669 provides access to Freeholt Lodge and Hobbs Hayes within the southern portion of the Main HNRFI Site. There is a mobile home park and a separate gypsy and traveller settlement off Smithy Lane to the south of the proposed Main HNRFI, west of M69 Junction 2.
- 1.101 Separating the main body of the Main HNRFI Site and the A47 Link is a section of the Hinckley to Leicester railway and a bridge that allows Burbage Common Road from within the Main HNRFI Site to pass over the railway and link with Burbage Common and Woods Country Park.
- 1.102 Buildings on the Main HNRFI Site itself include the dwellings of Woodhouse Farm, Old Woodhouse Farm, Woodfield, The Weeping Willows, Hobbs Hayes Farm and Freeholt Lodge. In addition to these are a number of ancillary agricultural structures that form farm complexes around Woodhouse Farm and Hobbs Hayes.

Sensory and Perceptual Elements

- 1.103 As noted above, the underlying vale character of land surrounding the Main HNRFI Site

forms an expansive generally flat to gently undulating landscape with layers of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Distant visibility is limited due to subtle variation in topography and woodland and trees within the landscape such that there is limited visual connection with surrounding settlements. The principal sense is therefore of being within open countryside. This diminishes at the boundaries with the motorway and the railway line where the influence of passing traffic and trains and road and rail infrastructure reduces the sense of tranquillity and rurality. From within the Main HNRFI Site, a number of electricity pylons can be seen, appearing in relatively close proximity to the east. These appear as visual detractors within the landscape.

Night-time Considerations

1.104 The Main HNRFI Site is affected by existing light sources in the vicinity of the site, in particular lighting at Junction 2 of the M69 and light spill from the urban area of Hinckley. In addition, the lights of moving vehicles on the M69 and trains on the railway line introduce a visual distraction at night.

Landscape Value of the Main HNRFI

1.105 When considering landscape value, GLVIA3 advocates that the starting point should be a review of existing landscape designations, including those at a local and national level to identify if it is valued sufficiently to warrant a greater level of protection. In this instance, the Main HNRFI Site is not within a designated landscape, as confirmed by the Local Plan Proposals Map and Figure 11.2 (document reference 6.3.11.2).

1.106 It is also relevant to understand to what extent the Main HNRFI Site has value based on its characteristics as described above. GLVIA3 makes it clear that not being located within a designated landscape does not mean the site has no value in a landscape sense. Box 5.1 in Chapter 5 of GLVIA 3 is used to assess a range of factors that are considered to assist in making judgements as to the value of a landscape. The criteria by which these assessments are judged are contained within Table A1.1 in Annex 1.

Landscape Quality

1.107 Landscape quality is a measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of the individual elements.

1.108 The character of the Main HNRFI site and its immediate surroundings (as illustrated in Figure 11.4, document reference 6.3.11.4) is generally consistent with published assessments identified above, particularly in relation to the retention of historic field pattern, woodland and rural character. Whilst the majority of the Main HNRFI Site is intact, at the boundaries, the impact of the railway and motorway has left severed fields and a general sense of disconnect between the landscape on either side of these linear barriers. Hedgerows are generally well managed although it is noted that there is limited active management for the future in terms of new tree planting across the site. In consideration of the above, the landscape quality of the site is considered to be of medium value.



Image 1.1: The site in its current form, gently undulating arable land with agricultural buildings and dwellings.

Scenic Quality

- 1.109 Scenic quality refers to how the landscape appeals to the senses (primarily but not wholly the visual senses).
- 1.110 The landscape of the Main HNRFI Site is a typical agricultural landscape for the area, focussed on arable farming with some equestrian use. Field sizes vary from medium to large. A network of mature field boundary hedgerows with hedgerow trees which punctuate the skyline throughout the site create a layered effect within views. Whilst there is a sense of separation from the surrounding countryside as a result of the Hinckley to Leicester railway line to the north-west and the M69 to the south-east, the distance between these two features is such that much of the land has a sense of rural tranquillity, with only the fields adjacent to these features being heavily influenced by transport infrastructure. To the south, the backdrop of woodland increases the scenic quality, particularly the southern field parcels which benefit from the influence of the woodland edge.
- 1.111 The M69 motorway to the east exerts an urbanising influence over the eastern part of the site. Although it is not visible across much of the land to the west, traffic noise does still carry in certain conditions. The Hinckley to Leicester railway line, which appears in cutting and on embankment due to the gently undulating nature of the topography is located along the north-western edge of the Main HNRFI Site. Passing of trains is infrequent, however, their presence is felt east and west over the Main HNRFI Site area due to the noise they generate, particularly the sounding of the horn at the approach to the two level crossings.

1.112 The Main HNRFI Site is subject to relative visual enclosure by surrounding woodland and tree cover to the south and west, where there is limited visual inter-connectivity between the Main HNFRI site and the wider landscape due to vegetation (Image 1.2). However, the eastern and north-western boundaries are more fragmentary (see Images 1.3 and 1.4) and permit views to higher ground within Barwell to the north-west and Croft Hill to the north-east.



Image 1.2: Taken from M69 motorway footbridge, illustrating Burbage Woods, Aston Firs and Freeholt Wood towards the west and south of the site, limiting far reaching views in those directions.



Image 1.3: Illustrating views from PRoW U52/9 within 1km to the north-west, towards the site's north-western boundary, which also comprises the Hinckley to Leicester railway.



Image 1.4: Illustrating views from the east towards the eastern boundary with the M69.

- 1.113 The scenic quality of the site is considered to be in accordance with that of the host LCAs and is considered to be of a medium value.

Rarity and Representativeness

- 1.114 The Main HNRFI Site does not contain any rare LCAs/Landscape Character Types (LCTs) but it does contain one rare feature – a Veteran Oak which is of note. The site is broadly representative of its host landscape character areas - Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland and Elmesthorpe Floodplain both of which are described as retaining much of their traditional rural character but are impacted by detracting features including pylons and the M69. The Main HNRFI Site is therefore not regarded as rare in character terms. It is therefore considered to be of low value in this regard.

Conservation Interests

- 1.115 A number of hedgerows, areas of grassland and Burbage Common Road Railway Bridge are identified as LWS and potential LWS as illustrated on Figure 12.2 (document reference 6.3.12.2). These designations and potential designations indicate the county to district ecological value of some of the features on site.
- 1.116 There are no TPO trees within the Main HNRFI Site, although Aston Firs and Freeholt Wood on the southern boundary are the subject of a TPO and are of high value. However, the arboricultural survey finds 13 have been identified as category A, of high quality and value, and a further 148 items have been identified as category B, of moderate quality and value. One of the 13 category A items has also been identified as a veteran tree and is located

towards the south of the Main HNRFI Site.

- 1.117 There are no designated heritage assets located on the Main HNRFI Site. There are a number of Historical Environment Record (HER) entries; one relates to an undated cropmark of a possible ditch (MLE68) recorded in the northern portion of the Main HNRFI Site and another to a late 19th century barn (MLE20555) at Hobbs Hayes farm in the southern part of the Main HNRFI Site which are of limited interest.
- 1.118 Two fields containing ridge and furrow earthworks, deriving from medieval agricultural practice, were also identified on the Main HNRFI Site.
- 1.119 In terms of geological assets, none are known to be located on the Main HNRFI Site.
- 1.120 The Main HNRFI Site is considered to comprise a landscape with some notable cultural, geological or nature conservation content, and merits a medium value in this regard.

Recreational Value

- 1.121 There are a number of PRowS that pass through the Main HNFRI Site as defined on the Definitive Map and Statement provided by LCC, with views from some of them illustrated by Photoviewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8. The majority of these PRowS align with existing field boundaries and tracks, exiting the Main HNRFI Site over the railway line or east over the M69. Open views, unsurprisingly, are available over the Main HNFRI Site from the majority of PRowS that run through it.
- 1.122 It is concluded that the Main HNRFI Site provides some contribution to the recreational experience of the landscape and is therefore of medium value.

Perceptual Aspects

- 1.123 The perceptual characteristics of the Main HNFRI Site are influenced by the M69 motorway and Leicester to Hinckley railway on the boundaries. The Main HNRFI Site in general is that of a managed agricultural landscape, primarily used for arable crops and pasture with a number of agricultural buildings located on site, and therefore any sense of 'wildness' is relative and very limited. Whilst there is visual and audible disruption to tranquillity close to the M69 and the Leicester railway and from passing cars on Burbage Common Road, the central fields retain a relative sense of tranquillity. Therefore, the perceptual aspects of the Main HNRFI Site are considered to be of medium value.

Cultural Associations

- 1.124 The Main HNRFI Site is not known to have any cultural associations with particular people such as artists, writers, or events in history that contribute to the perceptions of natural beauty in the area. Although not within the Order Limits, the proximity to the ancient grazing ground of Burbage Common is noted. Therefore, the Main HNFRI Site is considered be of low value in this regard.

1.125 Summary of Factors to be considered in assessment of Landscape Value are set out in Table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3: Summary of Landscape Value Assessment – Main HNRFI Site.

Landscape Quality	Medium
Scenic Quality	Medium
Rarity and Representativeness	Low
Conservation Interests	Medium
Recreation Value	Medium
Perceptual Aspects	Medium
Cultural Associations	Low

1.126 Overall, the landscape of the Main HNRFI Site is assessed as having medium value.

Susceptibility to Change

1.127 Factors to be considered in assessment of the Main HNRFI Site’s susceptibility to change as a result of commercial and transport infrastructure development are set out in Table 1.4 below.

Table 1.4: Susceptibility to Change Assessment – Main HNRFI Site.

Pattern, Complexity and Physical Susceptibility	A landscape with some intact pattern and/or degree of complexity and with features mostly in reasonable condition.	Medium
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Visual Susceptibility	A partially enclosed landscape with some visual containment and filtering, possible limited intervisibility with visual landmarks and designated landscapes.	Medium
Experiential Susceptibility	A partially tranquil landscape with limited visual and/or aural intrusion. Some relationship with built development/ infrastructure may be present. A landscape that contains some light sources.	Medium

1.128 On the basis of the above assessment, the Main HNRFI Site is assessed as having a medium susceptibility to change from Commercial and Transport Infrastructure Development.

A47 Link Road

1.129 The A47 Link Road comprises a corridor of land extending north-westwards across the railway from the edge of the Main HNRFI Site to the B4668/A47 Leicester Road. In the south of the corridor is an area of agricultural land which is to be the subject of habitat creation and planting as an extension of public open space adjacent to Burbage Common.

Topography

1.130 Across the A47 Link Road, the topography is gently undulating, falling from a high point of 99m by the railway line to around 90m across the remainder of the area.

Soil Types

1.131 The land forming the area within the A47 Link Road is Mercia Mudstone overlain by Bosworth Clay Member (clay and silt). The National Soil Map records this land as within the Salop Association, comprising slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged reddish fine loamy over clayey soils. These soils are typically imperfectly to poorly draining and give land limited by wetness restrictions. This land is likely to be of poorer agricultural quality, subgrade 3b, in line with the land already surveyed.

Vegetation and Hydrological Features

1.132 The current land use of the A47 Link Road is predominantly arable farmland, comprising medium to small, enclosed field parcels, typically bounded with managed low-lying hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees. Field margins are typically scrubby. This area of the A47 Link cuts across four arable fields and hedgerow boundaries, with the southern edge formed by hedgerow aligning Burbage Common Road.

Historic Landscape and Features

- 1.133 The historic landscape of the A47 Link Road is similarly a result of parliamentary enclosure of the 18th century, which has experienced subsequent reorganisation in 19th and 20th centuries and of no more than low sensitivity.
- 1.134 Two veteran trees (T835 and T854) are located centrally, halfway along the A47 Link Road just north of the Burbage Common eastern car park.

Built Features

- 1.135 Built features within the A47 Link Road comprise Burbage Common Road which runs along its southern edge, the B4668 at the north-western end and the bridge over the railway from the Main HNRFI Site to the A47 Link Road. Otherwise, there are no other built features within this part of the Order Limits.

Sensory and Perceptual Elements

- 1.136 Whilst there is some loss of tranquillity from traffic noise which carries from the B4668 and the disruption of passing trains, (particularly the sounding of the train horn as it approaches the level crossings to the east), the area is relatively tranquil with floodplain extending northwards to Elmesthorpe and the Country Park located to the south.

Night-time Considerations

- 1.137 The A47 Link Road is affected by existing light sources in the vicinity of the site, in particular lighting at Junction 2 of the M69 and light spill from the urban area of Hinckley.

Landscape Value of the A47 Link Road

- 1.138 The A47 Link Road is not within a designated landscape, as confirmed by the Local Plan Proposals Map and Figure 11.2 (document reference 6.3.11.2).

Landscape Quality

- 1.139 The character of the A47 Link Road and its immediate surroundings (as illustrated in Figure 11.4, document reference 6.3.11.4) is generally consistent with published assessments identified above, particularly in relation to the retention of historic field pattern and rural character. The majority of the A47 Link Road is intact, at the southern boundary, the impact of the railway has left severed fields and a general sense of disconnect with the landscape to the south. Hedgerows are generally well managed although it is noted that there is limited active management for the future in terms of new tree planting across the site. In consideration of the above, the Landscape quality of the A47 Link Road is considered to be of medium value.

Scenic Quality

- 1.140 The landscape of the A47 Link Road is a typical agricultural landscape for the area, focussed on arable farming with some equestrian use. Field sizes vary from medium to

large. A network of mature field boundary hedgerows with hedgerow trees which punctuate the skyline throughout the site create a layered effect within views. Whilst there is a sense of separation from the surrounding countryside, as a result of the Hinckley to Leicester railway line and the presence of the Leicester Road which is a heavily trafficked route on the northern boundary, the distance between these two features is such that much of the land has lost a sense of rural tranquillity, with the fields adjacent to these features being heavily influenced by transport infrastructure. To the south, the backdrop of woodland increases the scenic quality.

- 1.141 The Hinckley to Leicester railway line, is in cutting along the south-eastern edge of the A47 Link Road although this rises to embankment further to the north-east. Passing of trains is infrequent, however, their presence is felt especially over the southern section of the A47 Link Road Corridor due to the noise they generate, particularly the sounding of the horn at the approach to the two-level crossings to the east.
- 1.142 The A47 Link Road is subject to relative visual enclosure by surrounding woodland and tree cover and there is limited visual inter-connectivity between the site and the wider landscape due to vegetation. However, rising ground to the north-west permits views to Barwell above the treeline. In consideration of the above, the scenic quality of the A47 Link Road is considered to be of medium value.

Rarity and Representativeness

- 1.143 The A47 Link Road does not contain any rare LCAs/LCTs but it does contain two rare features – two Veteran Oaks which are of note. The A47 Link Road Corridor is broadly representative of its principal host landscape character area - Elmesthorpe Floodplain, retaining much of its traditional rural character. The two field parcels that lie within Burbage Common Rolling Farmland whilst having strongly treed field boundaries are influenced by the adjacent busy Leicester Road and traveller site. Given the two veteran oaks within its boundary, the A47 Link Road Corridor therefore has medium value in this regard.

Conservation Interests

- 1.144 There are no ecological designations within the A47 Link Road. However, the landscape contains a number of species rich hedgerows with trees.
- 1.145 There are no TPO trees within the A47 Link Road although as noted above there are two veteran oaks.
- 1.146 There are no designated heritage assets within the A47 Link Road.
- 1.147 The A47 Link Road is considered to comprise a landscape with limited cultural, geological or nature conservation content, and merits a low value in this regard.

Recreational Value

- 1.148 Two PRoW cross or border the A47 Link Road. Bridleway U52/9 crosses the southern

section before connecting to a footpath on the bridge over the railway line. In accordance with the Definitive Map Footpath V22/1 runs along the north-eastern boundary although this is no longer discernible on the ground and has no onward connections to the south.

- 1.149 Whilst the A47 Link Road provides very little direct contribution to the recreational experience of the landscape, it provides an important setting to the adjacent Burbage Common and Woods Country Park and Open Access Land and has an influence on the recreational experience of that area. It is therefore afforded medium recreational value.

Perceptual Aspects

- 1.150 The perceptual characteristics of the A47 Link Road are influenced by the Leicester to Hinckley railway and Leicester Road on its boundaries. The A47 Link Road in general is that of a managed agricultural landscape, primarily used for arable crops and pasture and therefore any sense of 'wildness' is relative and very limited. Whilst there is visual and audible disruption to tranquillity close to the Leicester Road and the railway, the central fields retain a relative sense of tranquillity. Therefore, the perceptual aspects of the A47 Link Road are considered to be of medium value.

Cultural Associations

- 1.151 The A47 Link Road is not known to have any cultural associations with particular people such as artists, writers, or events in history that contribute to the perceptions of natural beauty in the area. Although not within the Order Limits, the proximity to the ancient grazing ground of Burbage Common is noted. Therefore, the A47 Link Road is considered be of low value in this regard.
- 1.152 Summary of Factors to be considered in assessment of Landscape Value set out in Table 1.5 below.

Table 1.5: Summary of Landscape Value Assessment – A47 Link Road

Landscape Quality	Medium
Scenic Quality	Medium
Rarity and Representativeness	Medium
Conservation Interests	Low
Recreation Value	Medium

Perceptual Aspects	Medium
Cultural Associations	Low

1.153 Overall, the landscape of the A47 Link Road Corridor is assessed as having medium landscape value.

Susceptibility to Change

1.154 Factors to be considered in assessment of Susceptibility to Change are set out in Table 1.6 below.

Table 1.6: Susceptibility to Change Assessment– A47 Link Road

Pattern, Complexity and Physical Susceptibility	A landscape with some intact pattern and/or degree of complexity and with features mostly in reasonable condition.	Medium
Visual Susceptibility	A partially enclosed landscape with some visual containment and filtering, possible limited intervisibility with visual landmarks and designated landscapes.	Medium
Experiential Susceptibility	A partially tranquil landscape with limited visual and/or aural intrusion. A relationship with built development/infrastructure may be present. A landscape that contains some light sources.	Medium

1.155 On the basis of the above assessment, the A47 Link Road is assessed as having a medium susceptibility to change from Transport Infrastructure Development.

Landscape Sensitivity of A47 Link Road

1.156 The sensitivity of the A47 Link Road is therefore assessed as medium.

M69 Junction 2 and Other Highways Works within Order Limits

1.157 The areas around Junction 2 of the M69 other highways works locations are either highways land or field edges heavily influenced by the adjacent transport infrastructure. All of the areas relate to existing highways infrastructure, which by their nature are unremarkable including features such as hardstanding, road markings, signage, pavements and verges, with occasional mature vegetation at their edges such as trees, hedgerows and scrub. The areas are broadly of a highways or highways edge character. Whilst it is acknowledged that there are some differences between each of the locations, for the purposes of this assessment, given the broad similarities in the character and features of each of the locations, it is considered reasonable to consider the locations together. It should be noted that the assessment process is designed to consider landscapes at scale and the limited extent of these locations restricts the assessment process to some extent. However, despite some shortcomings in this regard, it was considered a useful exercise to ensure a consistent assessment process across the Main Order Limits.

1.158 Factors to be considered in assessment of Landscape Value are set out in Table 1.7 below.

Table 1.7: Landscape Value Assessment – M69 Junction 2 and Other Highways Works

Landscape Quality	Few areas intact	Low
Scenic Quality	Wooded nature of Junction 2 has some scenic value	Low
Rarity and Representativeness	No rare or important features	Very Low
Conservation Interests	Some conservation interest from wooded habitat at Junction 2	Low
Recreation Value	Junction 2 connects PRow	Low

Perceptual Aspects	Prominent detractors form key characteristics i.e. highways infrastructure.	Very Low
Cultural Associations	None	Very Low

1.159 The Landscape Value of the M69 Junction 2 areas and other highways works locations is therefore assessed as low.

1.160 Factors to be considered in assessment of Susceptibility to Change are set out in Table 1.8 below.

Table 1.8: Susceptibility to Change Assessment – M69 Junction 2 and Other Highways Works

Pattern, Complexity and Physical Susceptibility	A landscape with an occasionally intact pattern and/or with a low degree of complexity and with few features in reasonable condition. Habitat features within M69 Junction 2, warrant a low rather than a very low assessment.	Low
Visual Susceptibility	A partially enclosed landscape with some visual containment and filtering, possible limited intervisibility with visual landmarks and designated landscapes – this acknowledges visibility of M69 Junction 2 and other junctions with light columns from local vantage points.	Medium
Experiential Susceptibility	A landscape with prominent visual and/or aural intrusion and close relationship with large-scale built development/-infrastructure. A landscape that contains many light sources and essentially suffers from widespread light pollution.	Very Low

1.161 On the basis of the above assessment, the M69 Junction 2 and other highway works locations are assessed overall as having a low susceptibility to change from Transport Infrastructure Development.

1.162 The sensitivity of the M69 Junction 2 and other highways works locations is therefore low.

Off-site Rail Crossings

1.163 The three off-site locations where pedestrian level crossings over the railway line are to be stopped up and alternative crossings made available have not been assessed in the same detail as above due to the very limited extent of the locations. In general terms, given the specific railway and railway side character of the locations, together with the associated recreational value of the PRoW, it is considered the overall landscape value of these areas is low and their susceptibility to change from PRoW diversions is low.

BASELINE CONDITIONS: VISUAL AMENITY

Introduction

1.164 This section identifies those visual receptors that may be able to obtain views of the DCO Site, their distribution, character and sensitivity to change.

1.165 Using landform data within a Geographical Information System (GIS), EDP has prepared a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). The ZTVs are generated using terrain data and does not account for other landscape features that may limit the extent of theoretical visibility, such as vegetation and built form. The ZTVs are based on:

- The Main Order Limits in its current form - Figure 11.7 (document reference 6.3.11.7); and
- The Proposed Built Development Parameters of the Main Order Limits - Figure 11.8 (document reference 6.3.11.8).

1.166 The ZTVs illustrate the theoretical visibility based on a digital terrain model (DTM) data (OS Terrain 5), assuming excellent visibility with no atmospheric attenuation.

1.167 For its size, the visual influence of the Main Order Limits in its current form is relatively limited given the extent of varying topography and built form in the local vicinity. As Figure 11.8 (document reference 6.3.11.18) demonstrates, the visual influence of the the Main Order Limits will increase with the Proposed Development. The visual assessment process will determine the extent of the increase in visual influence as well as the magnitude of any visual effects that arise.

1.168 The ZTV was visited by walking and driving (as appropriate) local roads, PRoW and other publicly accessible viewpoints.

Representative Photoviewpoints

- 1.169 The main receptor groups have been identified and described below and are represented by the photoviewpoints presented in Table 1.1. Based on fieldwork observations and the findings of the data trawl, these photoviewpoints have been selected to represent the variety of views available from public vantage points towards the Main Order Limits.
- 1.170 Figure 11.9 (document reference 6.3.11.9) identifies the location of 54 representative viewpoints that have been identified within the ZTV. These viewpoints are at locations where there is a range in sensitivity of visual receptors, including receptors on PRow, on roads and within residential properties. These viewpoints will form the basis of the visual assessment, the significance of any effect being assessed in terms of the magnitude of change in the view and the sensitivity of the visual receptor. The location of these views is set out in the table below. In keeping with good practice, the viewpoint locations for assessment have been agreed with Leicestershire County Council, Blaby District Council and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council.
- 1.171 The existing views from each location are illustrated within Figure 11.10 (document reference 6.3.11.10). It should be noted that the existing views are all taken in winter to demonstrate the 'worst-case' scenario with the exception of Photoviewpoint 53. Photoviewpoint 53 was taken in summer as the request from Historic England in response to the PEIR Consultation was received in spring 2022 once the leaves had already emerged. However, as this view is so close to Photoviewpoint 19, the winter scenario can be understood by comparison with Photoviewpoint 19.

Table 1.9: Summary of Representative Photoviewpoints.
 (Those with the acronyms NV are presented as Night Views as well as Day Views)

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance from DCO Boundary	Approximate Orientation	Borough/District, Parish	Reason(s) for Selection
1	PRoW V35/1	445931, 294327	0m	North	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Users of PRoW V35/1; Elmesthorpe Church Parish (CP).
2	PRoW U50/1	445541, 294322	0m	North	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Users of PRoW U50/1; Elmesthorpe CP.
3	PRoW U52/6	445273, 294532	0m	North-east	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Users of PRoW U52/6; Elmesthorpe CP.
4	PRoW U52/8 Burbage Common Road bridge over railway	445490, 295018	0m	West and south	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Users of PRoW U52/8 and minor road; Elmesthorpe CP.

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance from DCO Boundary	Approximate Orientation	Borough/District, Parish	Reason(s) for Selection
5	PRoW V23/1 over railway	445795, 295229	0m	South	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Users of PRoW V23/1; Boundary views from the north; Indication of potential view from passing trains; Elmesthorpe CP.
6	PRoW U50/3	446049, 295455	0m	South	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Users of PRoW U50/3; Close-range views from the north; Elmesthorpe CP.
7	Burbage Common Road	447000, 295513	0m	South-west	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Users of Burbage Common Road; Close-range views from the north-east; Elmesthorpe CP.
8	PRoW V29/6 footbridge over M69	446831, 294576	0m	West	Blaby, Sapcote	Users of PRoW V29/6; Boundary views from the east; Sapcote CP.

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance from DCO Boundary	Approximate Orientation	Borough/District, Parish	Reason(s) for Selection
9 (NV)	PRoW U53/2	446959, 294270	232m	West	Blaby, Sapcote	Users of PRoW U53/2; Close-range views from the east; Sapcote CP.
10	Hinckley Road	446990, 293816	0m	North-west	Blaby, Sapote	Users of Hinckley Road to the west; Medium-range views from the east.
11	PRoW V29/3	446766, 293563	240m	North-west	Blaby, Sapcote	Users of PRoW V29/3; Close-range views from the south-east.
12 (NV)	M69 overbridge on Aston Lane	445956, 292970	0m	North	Blaby, Aston Flamville	Users of Aston Lane; Boundary views from the south.
13	M69 overbridge on Lychgate Lane	445549, 292368	70m	North	Blaby, Aston Flamville	Users of Lychgate Lane; Medium-range views from the south.

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance from DCO Boundary	Approximate Orientation	Borough/District, Parish	Reason(s) for Selection
14	PRoW U63/1	444775, 292714	758m	North-east	Hinckley and Bosworth, Burbage	Users of PRoW U63/1; Long-range views from the south-west.
15	Burbage Common	444806, 295219	854m	East	Hinckley and Bosworth, No Parish	Users of Open Access Land/Common Land; Medium-range views from the west.
16	Burbage Common Road	445111, 295184	0m	East	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Users of Burbage Common Road; Close range views from the west.
17	PRoW U52/9	445695, 295561	250m	South-east	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Users of PRoW U52/9; Medium range views from the north-west.

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance from DCO Boundary	Approximate Orientation	Borough/District, Parish	Reason(s) for Selection
18	PRoW U52/11	445944, 296096	565m	South-east	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Users of PRoW U52/11; Medium range views from the north.
19 (NV)	Car Park of St Mary's Church, Elmsthorpe	446072, 296493	880m	South-east	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Users of the church; Long range views from the north.
20 (NV)	M69 overbridge on B581	447422, 295559	120m	South-west	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Users of B581; Close-range views from the north-east.
21	Station Road/PRoW V29/10	447795, 295400	390m	South-west	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Users of PRoW V29/10; Users of Station Road; Medium range views from the east.
22 (NV)	PRoW V49/2, Stoney Stanton	448373, 294333	0m	West	Blaby, Stoney Stanton	Users of PRoW V49/2; Long-range views from the east.

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance from DCO Boundary	Approximate Orientation	Borough/District, Parish	Reason(s) for Selection
23	Hinckley Road, west of Sapcote	448150, 293561	0m	North-west	Blaby, Sapcote	Users of Hinckley Road; Long range views from the south east.
24 (NV)	PRoW V34/2	447482, 293450	235m	North-west	Blaby, Sapcote	Users of PRoW V34/2; Medium range views from the south-east.
25 (NV)	PRoW U47/1, Barwell	444419, 296483	630m	South-east	Hinckley and Bosworth, Barwell	PRoW Users; Long range views from the north-west.
26	Shilton Road, Barwell	444976, 296984	743m	South-east	Hinckley and Bosworth, Barwell	Users of Shilton Road; Long range views from the north-west.
27	Thurlaston Lane	448762, 297854	2.4km	South-west	Hinckley and Bosworth, Earl Shilton	Users of Thurlaston Lane; Long range views from the north.

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance from DCO Boundary	Approximate Orientation	Borough/District, Parish	Reason(s) for Selection
28	M69 overbridge on Pingle Lane	449418, 296985	2.2km	South-west	Blaby, Potters Marston	Users of Pingle Lane; Long range views from the north-east.
29	PRoW U18/1	450132, 296404	2km	South-west	Blaby, Potters Marston	Users of PRoW U18/1; Long range views from the north-east.
30	Croft Hill	450996, 296600	2.8km	South-west	Blaby, Croft	Users of Open Access Land; Long range views from an elevated location.
31	Coventry Road	447308, 290682	2.4km	North-west	Blaby, Sharnford	Users of Coventry Road; Long range views from the south.
32 (NV)	Bumblebee Lane, High Cross	447367, 288686	4km	North-west	Blaby, Sharnford	Users of Bumblebee Lane; Long range views from the south.

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance from DCO Boundary	Approximate Orientation	Borough/District, Parish	Reason(s) for Selection
33	B578, Lutterworth Road	445152, 290073	1.7km	North	Hinckley and Bosworth, Burbage	Users of Lutterworth Road; Long range views from the south; Burbage CP.
34	Huit Farm	447471, 447753	1.1km	South-west	Blaby, Earl Shilton	Users of PRoW U18/4; Long range views from the north-east.
35	PRoW V48/2	447471, 294040	268m	North-west	Blaby, Sapcote	Users of PRoW V48/2; Medium range views from the south-east.
36 (NV)	Smenell Field	445210, 294340	165m	North-east	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Requested by HBBC 17/01/19; Users of Country Park. Close range views from the west.
37	Footpath V29/7	446452, 294165	0m	North	Blaby, Sapcote	Requested by LCC 06/02/2019; Users of PRoW. Close range views within the site.

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance from DCO Boundary	Approximate Orientation	Borough/District, Parish	Reason(s) for Selection
38	Mill Lane	447959, 297666	2km	South-west	Hinckley and Bosworth, Earl Shilton	Requested by LCC 06/02/2019; Road and PRow users. Mid distance views from the north.
39	PRow V37/1 at Aston Flamville	446249, 292804	217m	North-west	Blaby, Aston Flamville	Requested by LCC 06/02/2019; Users of PRow. Mid-range views from east.
40	Weaver Springs Sports Park	447106, 297637	1.7km	South-west	Hinckley and Bosworth, Earl Shilton	Requested by LCC 06/02/2019; Users of recreation ground. Residential receptors. Mid-range views from the north.
41	Hinckley Golf Course	444136, 294563	953m	North-east	Hinckley and Bosworth, No Parish	Requested by HBBC 17/01/19. PRow users; golfers. Mid distant views from the west.
42	South of Wood House Farm	444902, 294540	189m	North-east	Hinckley and Bosworth, Burbage	Requested by HBBC 17/01/19; Users of Country Park and PRow users. Close range views from the west; Burbage CP.

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance from DCO Boundary	Approximate Orientation	Borough/District, Parish	Reason(s) for Selection
43	Northern edge of Burbage Common and Woods Country Park	445092, 295136	83m	East	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Requested by HBBC 17/01/19; Users of Country Park. Close range views from the west.
44	Eastern edge of Burbage Common and Woods Country Park	445348, 294976	270m	East	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Requested by HBBC 17/01/19; Users of Country Park. Close range views from the west.
45	B4688 at Junction with Burbage Common Road	444636, 295470	126m	North-east	Hinckley and Bosworth, No Parish	Users of B4688, close range north to A47 link.
46	B4668 near entrance to Leicester Road Football Club	445052, 296062	0m	South-west	Hinckley and Bosworth, Barwell	Users of PRow and B4688, close range views south to A47 link.

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance from DCO Boundary	Approximate Orientation	Borough/District, Parish	Reason(s) for Selection
47	Footpath V23/2 west of Billington Rough	445566, 295688	314m	South	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Requested by Elmesthorpe Parish Council and Planning Inspectorate. Location moved south due to new build development blocking views on B581. Close range views to south and east.
48	B581/The Roundhills	446893, 296030	178m	South-west	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Requested by Elmesthorpe Parish Council and Planning Inspectorate. Residents of Elmesthorpe. Close range views to the south.
49	B581 Bridge, Elmesthorpe	447038, 295862	0m	South-west	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Road network within Elmesthorpe
50	Elmesthorpe Public Open Space	447037, 296258	270m	South-west	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	PRoW network north of Elmesthorpe
51	M69 Junction 2 Bridge	446482, 293877	0m	North-west	Blaby, Sapcote	Pedestrians, road users of M69 Junction 2 bridge

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance from DCO Boundary	Approximate Orientation	Borough/District, Parish	Reason(s) for Selection
52	PRoW U52/1 South East of The Outwoods rail crossing	444222, 294025	78m	North-west	Hinckley and Bosworth, Burbage	PRoW users near proposed pedestrian footbridge
53	Churchyard of St Mary, Elmesthorpe	446021, 296486	880m	South	Blaby, Elmesthorpe	Requested by Historic England to illustrate views from Scheduled Monument
54	A47 at the Leicester Road Roundabout	445375, 296410	1.1km	South-east	Hinckley and Bosworth, Barwell	Requested by HBBC 29/01/21; Users of A47, mid-views south to Main HNRFI Site.

1.172 A summary of the potential visibility of the Proposed Development from within the surrounding landscape is described below:

- North: Views of the Main Order Limits from the north are limited to the B581 (Station Road) and dwellings along it. Beyond, a combination of gently undulating topography, mature vegetation and built form generally combine to limit inter-visibility. There are some areas of potential visibility near Huit Farm (Photoviewpoint 34) and along minor road Thurlaston Lane (Photoviewpoint 27) where although the Main Order Limits in their existing form cannot be seen, there is potential for views of the Proposed Development;
- East: Inter-visibility with the Main Order Limits is limited due to gently undulating topography, coupled with mature vegetation that enclose small to medium field parcels. These combine to screen views from the east, with potential views of the Proposed Development primarily limited to the B4669 (Hinckley Road) (Photoviewpoint 10) and the PRow network within 1km from Bridleways V29/4, V29/5, V29/6, V29/9 and V29/10, as well as Footpaths U53/2 (Photoviewpoints 9 and 35) and V49/1. Further east there are more distant secondary areas of visibility between Stoney Stanton (Photoviewpoint 22) and Fields Farm (Photoviewpoint 24), and also at the elevated geographical outlier of Croft Hill (Photoviewpoint 30);
- South: There are few views of the Main Order Limits from the south due to Aston Firs, Burbage Wood and Freeholt Wood. Views are primarily limited to the M69 Motorway as it approaches Junction 2. Areas of potential secondary visibility are from isolated, elevated locations such as at Lychgate Lane bridge, which passes over the M69 (Photoviewpoint 13), Footpath U63/1 east of Burbage (Photoviewpoint 14), High Cross c.4.5km to the south (Photoviewpoint 32) and the B578 (Lutterworth Road) c.3km to the south (Photoviewpoint 33); and
- West: Views are generally limited by mature vegetation within and on the periphery of Burbage Common Country Park whilst some do afford views towards the Main Order Limits as represented by Photoviewpoints 36, 42, 43 and 44. Similarly, mature vegetation forming field boundaries and alongside roads limits visibility from this direction to Burbage Common Road and the PRow network within 1km to the west. These routes include Bridleway U52/9 and U52/10 and Footpaths V23/1, V23/2, V50/1 and U50/3. Secondary areas of potential visibility include those from elevated positions at the edge of the Settlement of Barwell to the north-west of the site (Photoviewpoints 25 and 26).

Visual Receptors

PRow, Open Access Land and Country Parks

1.173 The location of PRows surrounding the Main Order Limits are shown on Figure 11.3 (document reference 6.3.11.3). Views of the Main Order Limits from PRows and Open Access Land are generally limited to PRow within the surrounding 2km.

- 1.174 Photoviewpoints 1 to 8 and 37 represent views from the PRoW network within the Main HNRFI Site boundary and have open views over much of the gently undulating agricultural farmland of the site area.
- 1.175 Located to the west of the site is Burbage Common area of Open Access Land, which also forms part of Burbage Common and Woods Country Park and bounds part of the western DCO Site boundary. Views, despite the proximity, are generally well screened by existing mature vegetation within the Country Park (Photoviewpoint 15), however there are limited locations with visibility (Photoviewpoints 42, 43 and 44). Smenell Field (Photoviewpoint 36) is located within the Country Park and north of Burbage Wood and Aston Firs, adjacent to the DCO boundary, and will experience close range views of the proposed development.
- 1.176 Also, to the west and north-west are a number of PRoWs within 2km with the potential to experience visual effects as a result of the proposed development. These routes include Bridleway U52/9 (Photoviewpoint 17) and U52/10 and Footpaths V23/1, V23/2, V50/1 and U50/3. Photoviewpoint 25 illustrates elevated views from Footpath U47/1 at the southern edge of Barwell, c.1.7km to the north-west.
- 1.177 To the north, Bridleway U52/10 transitions into U52/11 (Photoviewpoint 18) and travels north from Billington Rough, climbing in elevation to Elmesthorpe. Views towards the Main HNRFI Site are screened by existing mature vegetation and existing built form around Billington Rough. Moving further away, views become more limited by intervening mature vegetation and subtle variations in topography, which combine to screen and filter views, particularly from the network between the northern boundary of the Main HNRFI Site and the southern and eastern edge of Earl Shilton to the north. Footpath U18/4 near Huit Farm (Photoviewpoint 34) provides potential visibility towards the site from its slightly elevated position and south facing slope.
- 1.178 To the east, visibility is limited due to gently undulating topography, coupled with mature vegetation enclosing small to medium field parcels. Views are primarily obtained from the PRoW network within 1km of the Main HNRFI Site from Bridleway V29/4, V29/5, V29/6, V29/9 and V29/10 as well as Footpaths U53/2 (Photoviewpoints 9 and 35) and V49/1. Further east there will be more distant, secondary areas of visibility on Footpath V49/2 between Stoney Stanton (Photoviewpoint 22) and Fields Farm along Bridleways V29/3 and V34/2 (Photoviewpoint 24). To the far east there is a publicly accessible area of Croft Hill, which provides elevated, panoramic views over the countryside between Leicester and Hinckley.
- 1.179 There are few views of the Main HNRFI Site from PRoW to the south. There are a number of routes contained within Burbage Wood within Burbage Common and Woods Country Park, which screens most views towards the Main HNRFI Site due to intervening mature vegetation. Further south, PRoW similarly have limited visibility due to the large woodland block formed by a combination of Aston Firs, Burbage Wood and Freeholt Wood. There is limited opportunity for distant, glimpsed elevated views from Footpath U63/1 (Photoviewpoint 14) as it leaves Burbage.

1.180 It is considered that, due to the focus on the surrounding landscape and interest in the local area, users of local PRow throughout the study area, although with some desensitisation where views are possible of existing built form and large man-made features, are considered to be high sensitivity receptors.

Road Users

1.181 Although there are a number of minor roads within the study area, with the exception of those immediately adjacent to the site, only a few, if any, afford clear views of the site. Due to a combination of existing built form, mature landscape features and localised changes in topography, views from roads are frequently contained to the immediate setting.

1.182 The M69 Motorway aligns with and passes through part of the eastern extent of the site and allows close range views of the site, particularly the area around Junction 2. Oblique filtered views of the site to the west are available between Elmesthorpe and Aston Flamville.

1.183 Burbage Common Road runs within the site from Elmesthorpe to the north to the central portion of the site (illustrated by Photoviewpoint 7) before turning west and exiting the site over a bridge towards Burbage Common and Wood Country Park. As expected, the road allows open views of the site in all directions with filtered views available from the route as it passes the Country Park, as illustrated by Photoviewpoint 16.

1.184 B581 (Station Road) passes to the north of the Main DCO Site and briefly aligns with parts of the DCO Limits where the construction access travels south down Burbage Common Road. Despite the proximity, views towards the DCO Site would be oblique and well filtered by a combination of existing mature vegetation, built form and gently undulating topography. Photoviewpoint 20 illustrates an elevated and open view of the DCO Site from the bridge over the M69. Further east along the B581, visibility decreases with roadside vegetation and topography limiting views. Photoviewpoint 21 provides filtered views over roadside hedgerows towards the DCO Site.

1.185 The B4669 Hinckley Road connects Sapcote in the east with Burbage in the west, passing through the proposed junction improvements and site access for the completed development. Views upon leaving Sapcote are visually contained by a combination of mature vegetation, built form and undulating topography, as illustrated in Photoviewpoint 23. As the route travels west, visibility of the proposed junction improvements and site access increases as intervening topography, built form and mature vegetation subsides, allowing for western and north-western closer range views towards the site (Photoviewpoint 10).

1.186 Aston Lane connects Aston Flamville and the B4669 Hinckley Road towards Burbage, passing over the M69 on an overbridge. Photoviewpoint 12 illustrates open views along the M69, which will feature improvements as a result of the Proposed Development. Views of the warehouses within the Main HNRFI Site will, however, be limited by the physical and visual screen of Aston Firs, Freeholt Wood and Burbage Wood. Similar views will be afforded by Lychgate Lane just south of this route, which similarly passes over the

M69, and is illustrated by Photoviewpoint 13.

- 1.187 Thurlaston Lane is located to the north of the site, east of Earl Shilton. Views towards the site would be oblique and filtered, if not entirely screened from this slightly elevated route, as illustrated by Photoviewpoint 27.
- 1.188 Smithy Lane is a no-through road off the B4669 (Hinckley Road) providing access to Burbage Common and Woods. The route is mainly contained within woodland and is only expected to experience a change to views as it passes Smenell Field.
- 1.189 Those travelling north on the B578 (Lutterworth Road), illustrated by Photoviewpoint 33, will experience elevated open views towards the DCO Site for a short duration as the route decreases in elevation on the approach to Burbage.
- 1.190 Bumblebee Lane connects the B4114 Coventry Road south of Sharnford with High Cross to the south. As the name suggests, at High Cross there are elevated, far reaching, filtered views to the north, as Photoviewpoint 32 illustrates.

Residential Dwellings/Groups

- 1.191 This assessment has focused on views from publicly accessible locations. Views from private residential properties, although likely to be of very high sensitivity to changes in the view, are not protected by national planning guidance or local planning policy. However, to inform good site masterplanning of the development site and limit unnecessary impacts, the visual amenity of domestic dwellings is considered as part of this assessment. It should be noted that residential properties were not visited to undertake the assessment, but instead the potential for views was assessed from visits to the vicinity of the properties on publicly accessible routes. In some cases, roads and footpaths allow close access whilst in others, judgements need to be made based on what can be seen from publicly accessible viewpoints and an assessment of the property from aerial photography.
- 1.192 From an analysis of the ZTV and an understanding of potential visibility from public vantage points, individual dwellings and groups of dwellings within 2km of the Main HNRFI Site were identified for further assessment. These are summarised below:
1. Aston Firs Caravan Site: This group of dwellings is located adjacent to the proposed access road from the M69 Junction;
 2. Averley House Farm: This dwelling is located opposite the proposed M69 junction improvements;
 3. Bridge Farm: This dwelling is located in close proximity to the western area of the DCO Site, upon slightly elevated ground;
 4. Billington Rough: This group of dwellings with private roads is located north of the DCO Site between the Hinckley to Leicester Railway and Elmesthorpe, upon slightly elevated ground;

5. Wood House Farm: Located within Burbage Common and Woods Country Park;
6. Station Road East: A small group of dwellings on Station Road, east of the M69 and to the north-east of the Main HNRFI Site;
7. Station Road, Elmesthorpe: A linear group of properties to north and south of Station Road, comprising a significant part of the village of Elmesthorpe;
8. Burbage Common Road North: This small group comprises a handful of dwellings that are situated in a linear fashion along Burbage Common Road;
9. Burbage Common Road West: This group comprises dwellings at the northern extent of Burbage Common and Woods Country Park;
10. Shilton Road and Dawson's Lane Barwell: This linear group is located to the north-west of the DCO Site on the elevated ground within Barwell. This area provides far reaching views over the landscape;
11. Dwellings on Church Lane, Dovecote way, St Mary's Close and Barwell Lane, Barwell: This group is located to the north-west of the DCO Site on the elevated area near St Mary's Church within Barwell;
12. Highgate Lodge Farm and Red Hill Farm: Two dwellings within farmsteads to the east of the M69;
13. Properties on and accessed from Stanton Lane including Boundary Farm and Nuttingore Farm;
14. Fields Farm: A dwelling within a farmstead in open countryside to the south east of the Main HRNFI Site;
15. Western edge of Stoney Stanton: Properties on Smithy Farm Drive, Fisher Close, Farndon Drive, St Peter's Close, Tansey Crescent, and George Marriot Close, Hinckley Road and Howe Close.
16. B4668 between Burbage Common Road and A47: This group comprises a handful of dwellings to the south of the B4668 and a Gypsy and Traveller Site;
17. Gypsy and Traveller Settlement on Smithy Lane near the M69 Junction 2;
18. Breach Lane: A handful of dwellings on farmsteads on elevated ground to the north of the Main HNRFI Site;
19. Thorney Fields Farm: A dwelling within a farmstead in open countryside to the north east of the Main HRNFI Site; and
20. Cadle Close: Properties on the north-western edge of Stoney Stanton.

1.193 The susceptibility of residential receptors to change is dependent, to some extent, on the room(s) and the activities of people in those rooms. Residents with visibility from rooms normally occupied in waking hours and outdoor spaces such as gardens will generally have a very high susceptibility to change, with lower susceptibility for users of bedrooms or rooms from which there may be no expected view, for example bathrooms. Susceptibility is also reduced for dwellings on farms where farm buildings, yards and associated activities form part of the existing visual context.

Proposed Photomontage Selection

1.194 43 of the Photoviewpoints have been selected for illustrating the Proposed Development as Photomontages and are illustrated in Figure 11.16 (document reference 6.3.11.16). The number of photomontages has been increased from 10 at the PEIR stage to 43 following comments at public consultation that it was difficult to understand the potential impacts without being able to 'see' the changes in a photomontage.

1.195 Two different levels of Photomontage have been produced:

- Proposed Built Parameters - AVR1 – Illustrates location, extent and visibility of Proposed Built Parameters; and
- Proposed Illustrative Scheme - AVR3 – Photorealistic View including use of materials based on the Illustrative Masterplan (document reference 2.3) and Illustrative Landscape Strategy (Figure 11.20, document reference 6.3.11.20).

1.196 Locations were selected for photomontages based on the following criteria:

- Inclusion of views where it would not otherwise be clear how much of the Proposed Development would be visible. This includes all viewpoint locations beyond 1km of the Order Limits with the exception of two locations to the south-west – Photoviewpoints 14 and 52;
- Inclusion of views from the most sensitive receptors within Burbage Common and Woods Country Park, on PRow within 1km of the Main HNRFI Site boundary and close to residential dwellings within 1km of the Main HNRFI boundary; and
- Inclusion of views on the boundary of the Main HNRFI Site where the impact of mitigation might not otherwise be understood.

1.197 It was not considered appropriate or necessary to provide photomontages from every viewpoint as once it is clear what can be seen from certain locations, it is possible to understand what is likely to be visible from other locations close by. For example, Photoviewpoints 13 and 14 have a similar open view and orientation to Photoviewpoint 12. However, by contrast, although closer, Photoviewpoint 39 has a different visual context and it was felt that a parameter montage would be useful to check for potential visibility above the treeline. Similarly, it was not considered necessary to provide montages of locations where road and rail infrastructure is proposed such as Photoviewpoints 45, 46 and 52 as the introduction of a roundabout or a pedestrian bridge

over a railway line are features that can be readily imagined and understood. Finally, photomontages were not included from Viewpoints which would not exist once development takes place such as Photoviewpoints 4, 5, 6 and 37.

- 1.198 It should be noted that the Proposed Built Parameter Photomontages illustrate the maximum built parameters in which development could theoretically be built out. They do not illustrate the actual built form of the Proposed Development which in reality would comprise a number of separate buildings, varied roofscapes, internal road layouts, landscaping, lighting etc.
- 1.199 In the case of the photorealistic montages, the buildings are shown at 0.5m below the maximum parameter height as that is the most likely height they will be built to, the extra 0.5m in the parameter to allow for any unforeseen changes in ground level. The 13 locations for the photorealistic montages have been selected based on the following criteria:
- Coverage of views from north, south, east and west into the Main HNRFI Site;
 - Coverage of a range of receptors, e.g. walkers on PRow, road users; and
 - Coverage of identified sensitive receptors, e.g. users of listed buildings, PRow and high vantage points.
- 1.200 Given the number of photomontages produced and the nature of the development, it was not considered necessary to provide photorealistic views at Year 1 and Year 15 for every photorealistic montage. Year 1 montages were therefore only produced for those views where there was likely to be a notable difference between the Year 1 and the Year 15 scenario, namely Photoviewpoints 1, 3, 42 and 43.
- 1.201 The growth rates assumed for planting in the Photomontages are described in the Methodology in Annex 5. Growth rates for some of the species selected as part of the planting proposals are set out in Table 1.10 below. This is based on tree growth rates given in Illustrated Tree of Britain and Europe, Second Edition (D Moore and J White 2013). It must be noted in this instance that the majority of the planting depicted in the photomontages would be planted many years before Year 1 during the enabling works phase of the construction period and would have up to 8 additional years of growth once Year 15 is reached. However, given there is not yet a clear phased planting programme at this stage in the design process, the decision was taken to show all planting in the montages as though it had been planted at Year 0 and therefore representing the 'worst-case scenario'.

Table 1.10: Tree Growth Rates for a Range of Trees within Illustrative Landscape Strategy

Tree Species	Scientific Name	Planted height	Estimated Annual growth Rate (m)	Optimal height at Year 15 (m)
Field Maple	Acer campestre	3	0.6	12
Silver Birch	Betula pendula	2	0.8	14
Hazel	Corylus avellana	1	0.5	8.5
Hawthorn	Crataegus monogyna	1	0.5	8.5
Common Walnut	Juglans Regia	2.5	0.6	11.5
Aspen	Populus Tremula	2.5	1.0	17.5
Common Oak	Quercus robur	2.5	0.3	7
White Willow	Salix Alba	2.5	1.0	17.5
Small leaved Lime	Tilia cordata	3	0.4	9

BASELINE CONDITIONS: NIGHT-TIME VISUAL AMENITY

Approach and Methodology

1.202 The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA3) recognises that night-time views may be a consideration, stating that *"it may be important to carry out night-time 'darkness' surveys of the existing conditions in order to assess the potential effects of lighting"* (para 6.12). However, it does not provide a specific methodology for doing so. Reference is made to preparation of 3D models and *"quantitative assessment of lighting levels"*, with inputs from lighting engineers. At present, the level of lighting detail provided in the Lighting Strategy (document reference 6.2.3.2) is sufficient to inform the level of detail required for this DCO application, with further details to follow during the detailed design stages. A lighting illumination model (based on the Lighting Strategy,

document reference 6.2.3.2) has been prepared for the purposes of the night-time photomontages to inform the judgements of the Chartered Landscape Architects undertaking the LVIA.

1.203 In the absence of specific published guidelines for night-time LVIA, the methodology used reflects the day-time approach with adjustments made for night-time conditions as set out in Annex 1.

1.204 Levels of existing light sources in the landscape across England has been prepared by CPRE and the mapping available online³ covers the site and site context. To categorise zones of darkness within the site and its existing context CPRE’s ‘England’s Light Pollution and Dark Skies’ map has been employed. Nine types of brightness levels are presented in CPRE’s mapping as illustrated in Image 1.5 below.

Categories	Brightness values (in nw/cm ² /sr) ¹²
Colour band 1 (Darkest)	<0.25
Colour band 2	0.25-0.5
Colour band 3	0.5-1
Colour band 4	1-2
Colour band 5	2-4
Colour band 6	4-8
Colour band 7	8-16
Colour band 8	16-32
Colour band 9 (Brightest)	>32

Image 1.5: CPRE’s table on how the maps have been split into colour bandings to show levels of brightness.

Classification of Zones of Darkness

1.205 EDP has condensed and classified the data to represent 4 zones in line with CPREs ‘England’s Light Pollution and Dark Skies’ map which are listed below:

- Dark Sky Core (colour bands 1 and 2);
- Rural Darkness and Buffer (colour band 3);
- Transition (colour band 4); and

³ [Redacted]

- Urban (colour bands 5 to 9).

- 1.206 Dark Sky Core Zones – The condition of the night sky within the core are generally considered the best within England with clear views of the nights sky with minimal light pollution.
- 1.207 Rural Darkness and Buffer Zones– still identified as a ‘dark sky’ these areas may not be connected to the main core but still have clear views of the night’s sky.
- 1.208 Transition Zones – This zone lies between dark zones and the urban environment. Conditions in this zone are variable with skies appearing brighter.
- 1.209 Urban Zones– Urban areas have high ambient brightness, effected by light pollution from infrastructure, roads, residential and commercial sources.

Night-time Baseline

- 1.210 Image 1.6 below illustrates the baseline level of light pollution within the vicinity of the Main HNRFI Site.
- 1.211 As can be seen, the vast majority of the Main HNRFI Site is located within Transition Zone 4 with a small area of Zone 3 – Rural Darkness and Buffer and a broader area of Zones 5 and 6 – Urban – centred around Junction 2 of the M69. As such, the baseline light pollution of the Main HNRFI Site indicates that it is already influenced by nearby urban areas and transport routes and is not considered as a ‘Dark Sky Core’.
- 1.212 As also shown in Image 1.6 below the A47 Link Road Corridor and Western Amenity Area predominantly lie in Zones 5 and 6 with some Transition Zone 4 sections north of the common and closer to the railway line – away from urban influences along the Leicester Road.

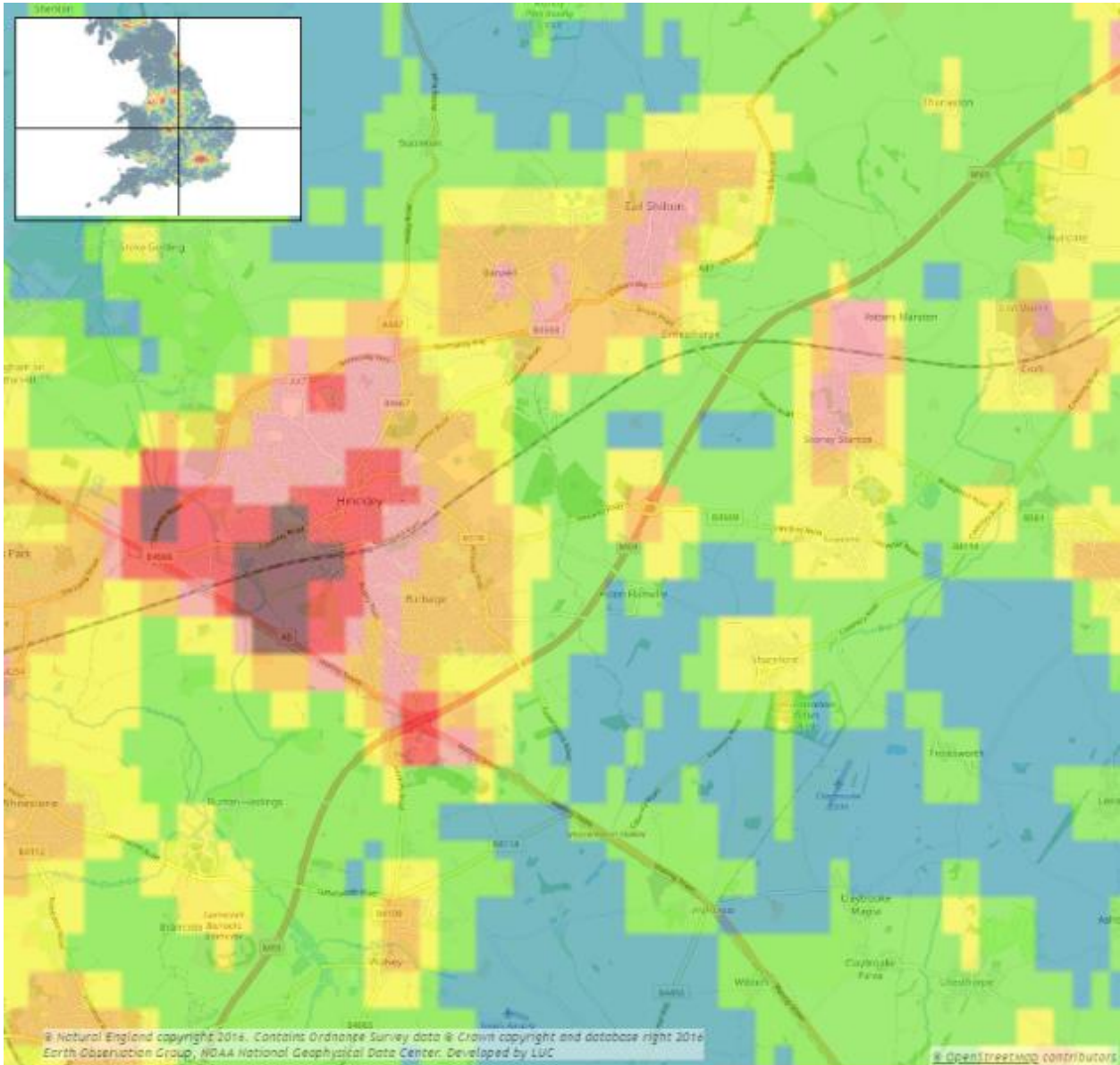


Image 1.6: Baseline levels of light pollution within the vicinity of the Main HNRFI Site (extracted from CPRE’s interactive map of ‘England’s Light Pollution and Dark Skies’)

Night Photoviewpoint Selection

1.213 Nine of the representative photoviewpoints have been selected for night-time views to capture baseline light during dark hours. These locations have been agreed with LCC and HBDC as part of the design development and assessment process. These locations are indicated by a yellow highlight on Figure 11.9 Photoviewpoint Locations (document reference 6.3.11.9). These locations have been selected based on the coverage of views from north, south, east and west into the site and the majority are taken where receptors are likely to be at night (roads, settlements and dwellings).

1.214 Photoviewpoints 9, 12, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25 and 36 were selected to illustrate the site’s context after dark, Photoviewpoint 32 being considered too distant for any accurate effects to be illustrated. It should be noted that with regard to users of PRoW, it is likely

that the majority of receptors are no longer active on these routes after dark, particularly away from urban areas and light sources which provide a sense of security. The existing night views are presented in Figure 11.12 (document reference 6.3.11.12).

- 1.215 Night Photoviewpoint 9 illustrates views from the agricultural fields east of the Main HNRFI Site at night which comprise static light sources associated with Junction 2 of the M69, the sports pitches on the B4668 and settlement at Barwell and Earl Shilton, whilst moving lights from vehicles passing along the M69 are located in the foreground. The silhouette of woodland south of the Main HNRFI Site can be made out against a glowing night sky backdrop, likely provided by the urban light sources within Hinckley and Burbage.
- 1.216 Night Photoviewpoint 12 illustrates views from the M69 overbridge on Aston Lane towards the Main HNRFI Site at night which comprises static light sources associated with Junction 2 of the M69 and the B4669, whilst moving lights from vehicles passing along the M69 are located in the foreground. The silhouette of woodland south of the Main HNRFI Site can be made out against a glowing night sky backdrop, likely provided by the urban light sources within Earl Shilton and Barwell. Similarly, Night Photoviewpoint 20 illustrates views from an M69 overbridge, of which the light sources are similar, with Junction 2 of the M69 and vehicles on the M69 itself visible in the centre of the view. Again, a backdrop of night glow from Hinckley and Burbage creates a silhouette of the blocks of woodland that bound the Main HNRFI Site to the south.
- 1.217 Night Photoviewpoint 19 illustrates views from elevated ground at St Mary's at Elmesthorpe looking south towards the Main HNRFI Site. The foreground is well lit due to static streetlighting within the settlement and from windows of nearby properties. Distant static light sources are visible at Junction 2 of the M69. The silhouette of woodland south of the Main HNRFI Site can be made out against a glowing night sky backdrop, likely provided by the urban light sources within Hinckley and Burbage.
- 1.218 Night views from the edge of Stoney Stanton are illustrated by Night Photoviewpoint 22 of which a number of static light sources appear in the direction of the Main HNRFI Site, particularly towards elevated locations at Barwell and Earl Shilton. A night glow is provided by a combination of urban settlements within the area (such as Hinckley, Burbage, Barwell, Earl Shilton and Elmesthorpe). Similar views are experienced from Bridleway V34/2 (Night Photoviewpoint 24) just south of Hinckley Road, with the light sources at Junction 2 of the M69 a more prominent focus within views.
- 1.219 In terms of views from the elevated ground from the edge of Barwell, the immediate foreground comprises no static light sources, whilst a number of static light sources appear in the middle distance and centre of the view, comprising street lighting associated with the B4668, A47 and beyond.
- 1.220 Distant elevated night-time views are illustrated by Night Photoviewpoint 32 from Bumblebee Lane at High Cross. A considerable number of static light sources appear in the direction of the Main HNRFI Site, as well as concentrations of night glow into the sky around settlements.

1.221 Night Photoviewpoint 36 illustrates close range views from Smenell Field which contains no static light sources within the view in the direction of the Main HNRFI Site.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

1.222 The findings show that in landscape terms:

- The Order Limits are not covered by any statutory landscape designations and will be designed and developed in accordance with national and local landscape planning policy;
- The Order Limits are located across 3 LCAs and 3 SCAs within Blaby District, 1 LCA and 1 UCA within Hinckley and Bosworth District, 1 LCA within Rugby Borough and 1 LCA within the Harborough District; and
- The Main HNRFI Site features a number of other considerations that add some landscape value to it:
 - 1 LWS, Elmesthorpe Plantation Hedgerow;
 - 2 LWSs located adjacent to the site, Field Rose Hedgerow and Burbage Common and Woods;
 - Adjacent Ancient Woodland at Burbage Wood, Aston Firs, Freeholt Wood and Sheepy Wood;
 - 13 category A trees of high quality and value on site including one veteran tree;
 - A number of PRoW that provide access across the site; and
 - Burbage Common and Country Park adjacent to the west of the site.
- The A47 Link Road also has 2 veteran trees which are a notable feature of the landscape.

1.223 In terms of visual amenity:

- The generally flat vale landscape character within which the Main HNRFI Site and A47 Link is contained contributes towards the relative visual containment;
- PRoW that pass through the Main HNRFI Site have open views of it, whilst those in close proximity have open to filtered views;
- Beyond 1km, views from PRoW are generally filtered by the combination of intervening trees, hedgerows and gently undulating topography;

- Views from the local road network are similarly limited to the surrounding 1km;
- Views from the rail network are limited to the stretch of railway that passes the west to north boundary of the Main HNRFI Site; and
- There are a number of individual and groups of dwellings within the visual envelope of the site, primarily within 1km from the site or on more distant, elevated ground to the north and east at the edges of Barwell and Stoney Stanton.

Conclusions

1.224 Whilst the landscape of the DCO Site is not subject to a protective designation, it is crossed by PRowS and contains a number of landscape features that contribute to its landscape value. Detractors such as the noise and movement from the M69 and railway are noted to influence the Main HNRFI Site but are not so significant as to totally 'urbanise' the landscape, which broadly retains its rural agricultural character. In visual terms, the Main HNRFI Site and A47 Link Road are relatively well contained, particularly to the south by existing woodland. The majority of intervisibility occurs within 1km with occasional longer views from areas of higher ground to the west, north and east.

Annex 1 ◆ Assessment Methodology

INTRODUCTION

A1.1 This section provides a methodology for landscape and visual impact assessment as used by EDP.

METHODOLOGY

A1.2 The assessment methodology for assessing landscape and visual effects prepared by EDP is based on the following best practice guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (LI/IEMA, 2013); and
- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, October 2014).

A1.3 Other reference documents used to understand the baseline position in landscape terms comprise published landscape character assessments appropriate to the site's location and the nature of the proposed development.

A1.4 The nature of landscape and visual assessment requires both objective analysis and subjective professional judgement. Accordingly, the following assessment is based on the best practice guidance listed above, information and data analysis technique, it uses quantifiable factors wherever possible and subjective professional judgement where necessary, and is based on clearly defined terms (see Glossary, Annex 4).

Landscape Assessment

A1.5 Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape fabric that may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced. These effects need to be considered in line with changes already occurring within the landscape and which help define the character of it.

A1.6 Effects upon the wider landscape resource, i.e., the landscape surrounding the development, requires an assessment of visibility of the proposals from adjacent landscape character areas, but remains an assessment of landscape character and not visual amenity.

Visual Assessment

A1.7 The assessment of effects on visual amenity draws on the predicted effects of the development, the landscape and visual context, and the visibility and viewpoint analyses, and considers the significance of the overall effects of the proposed development on the visual amenity of the main visual receptor types in the study area.

Identifying Landscape and Visual Receptors

- A1.8 This assessment has sought to identify the key landscape and visual receptors that may be affected by the changes proposed.
- A1.9 The assessment of effects on landscape as a resource in its own right draws on the description of the development, the landscape context and the visibility and viewpoint analysis to identify receptors, which, for the proposed development may include, but not be limited to, the following:
- The landscape fabric of the development site;
 - The key landscape characteristics of the local context;
 - The ‘host’ landscape character area that contains the proposed development;
 - The ‘non-host’ landscape character areas surrounding the host character area and may be affected by the proposals (where relevant); and
 - Landscape designations on a national, regional or local level (where relevant).
- A1.10 The locations and types of visual receptors within the defined study areas are identified from Ordnance Survey maps and other published information (such as walking guides), from fieldwork observations and from local knowledge provided during the consultation process. Examples of visual receptors may include, but not be limited to, the following:
- Settlements and private residences;
 - Users of National Cycle Routes and National Trails;
 - Users of local/regional cycle and walking routes;
 - Those using local rights of way – walkers, horse riders, cyclists;
 - Users of open spaces with public access;
 - People using major (motorways, A and B) roads;
 - People using minor roads; and
 - People using railways.

Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects

- A1.11 The assessment of effects on the landscape resource includes consideration of the potential changes to those key elements and components that contribute towards recognised landscape character or the quality of designated landscape areas; these features are termed landscape receptors. The assessment of visual amenity requires the identification of potential visual receptors that may be affected by the development. As

noted, following the identification of each of these various landscape and visual receptors, the effect of the development on each of them is assessed through consideration of a combination of:

- Their overall sensitivity to the proposed form of development, which includes the susceptibility of the receptor to the change proposed and the value attached to the receptor; and
- The overall magnitude of change that will occur - based on the size and scale of the change, its duration and reversibility.

Defining Receptor Sensitivity

A1.12 A number of factors influence professional judgement when assessing the degree to which a particular landscape or visual receptor can accommodate change arising from a particular development. Sensitivity is made up of judgements about the 'value' attached to the receptor, which is determined at baseline stage, and the 'susceptibility' of the receptor, which is determined at the assessment stage when the nature of the proposals, and therefore the susceptibility of the landscape and visual resource to change, is better understood.

A1.13 Susceptibility indicates "the ability of a defined landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences"⁴. Susceptibility of visual receptors is primarily a function of the expectations and occupation or activity of the receptor. A degree of professional judgement applies in arriving at the susceptibility for both landscape and visual receptors and this is clearly set out in the technical appendices to this assessment.

A1.14 A location may have different levels of sensitivity according to the types of visual receptors at that location and any one receptor type may be accorded different levels of sensitivity at different locations.

A1.15 Table A1.1 provides an indication of the criteria by which the overall value of a landscape receptor is judged within this assessment. Table A1.2 provides an indication of the criteria by which the overall susceptibility of the landscape in relation to the type of development proposed, in this case, Commercial and Transport Infrastructure.

⁴ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition Page 158

Table A1.1: Assessment of Landscape Value.

Landscape Character Area Value				
<i>Very Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Very High</i>
Undesignated countryside and landscape features; absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; despoiled/degraded by the presence of many landscape detractors.	Undesignated countryside and landscape features; few distinctive landscape characteristics; presence of landscape detractors.	Undesignated countryside and landscape features; some distinctive landscape characteristics; few landscape detractors.	Locally designated/valued countryside (e.g. Areas of High Landscape Value, Regional Scenic Areas) and landscape features; many distinctive landscape characteristics; very few landscape detractors.	Nationally/internationally designated/valued countryside and landscape features; strong/distinctive landscape characteristics; absence of landscape detractors.
Consideration of Other Value Criteria				
<i>Condition/Quality</i>				
A landscape with no or few areas intact and/or in poor condition.	A landscape with few areas that are intact and/or in a reasonable condition.	A landscape with some areas that are intact and/or in reasonable condition.	A landscape with many areas that are intact and/or in a reasonable condition.	A landscape with most areas intact and/or in good condition.

Landscape Character Area Value				
<i>Scenic Quality</i>				
A landscape of little or no aesthetic appeal.	A landscape of low aesthetic appeal.	A landscape of some aesthetic appeal.	A landscape of high aesthetic appeal.	A landscape of very high aesthetic appeal.
<i>Rarity and Representativeness</i>				
A landscape that does not contain rare or important landscape character types or features.	A landscape that contains a rare or important landscape feature.	A landscape that contains more than one rare or important landscape feature.	A landscape that contains a rare or important Landscape Character Type and contains one or more rare or important landscape features.	A landscape that contains a rare or important Landscape Character Types and is abundant in rare or important landscape features.
<i>Conservation Interests</i>				
A landscape with no or very limited cultural, geological and/or nature conservation content.	A landscape with low cultural, geological and/or nature conservation content.	A landscape with some cultural, geological and/or nature conservation content.	A landscape with high cultural, geological and/or nature conservation content.	A landscape with abundant cultural, geological and/or nature conservation content.

Landscape Character Area Value				
<i>Recreation Value</i>				
A landscape with no contribution to recreational experience.	A landscape with limited contribution to recreational experience.	A landscape that provides some contribution to recreational experience.	A landscape that provides a good contribution to recreational experience.	A distinct landscape that forms a strong contribution to recreational experience.
<i>Perceptual Aspects</i>				
A landscape with prominent detractors as part of the key characteristics.	A landscape with a number of detractors and limited perceptual values.	A landscape with few detractors that also retains some perceptual values such as relative tranquillity.	A landscape with very few detractors that has a relatively wild, tranquil or unspoilt landscape.	A wild, tranquil or unspoilt landscape without noticeable detractors.
<i>Cultural Associations</i>				
A landscape without recorded associations.	A landscape with few recorded associations.	A landscape with some and/or moderately valued associations.	A landscape with numerous and/or highly valued associations.	A landscape of rich and/or very highly valued associations.

Landscape Character Area Value				
<i>Overall Judgement of Landscape Value</i>				
Very Low value – receptor largely reflects very low value criteria above.	Low value – receptor largely reflects low value criteria above.	Medium value – receptor largely reflects medium value criteria above.	High value – receptor largely reflects high value criteria above	Very High value – receptor largely reflects very high value criteria above.

Table A1.2: Assessment of Landscape Susceptibility to Commercial and Transport Infrastructure Development.

Very Low Susceptibility to Change	Low Susceptibility to Change	Medium Susceptibility to Change	High Susceptibility to Change	Very High Susceptibility to Change
Pattern, Complexity and Physical Susceptibility to Change from Commercial and Transport Infrastructure Development				
A simple, monotonous and/or degraded landscape with common/indistinct features and minimal variation in landscape pattern.	A landscape with an occasionally intact pattern and/or with a low degree of complexity and with few features in reasonable condition.	A landscape with some intact pattern and/or with a degree of complexity and with features mostly in reasonable condition.	A mostly patterned/textured landscape or a simple but distinctive landscape and/or with some high value features predominantly intact.	A strongly patterned/textured landscape or a simple but distinctive landscape and/or with high value features intact.
Visual Susceptibility to Change from Commercial and Transport Infrastructure Development				

Very Low Susceptibility to Change	Low Susceptibility to Change	Medium Susceptibility to Change	High Susceptibility to Change	Very High Susceptibility to Change
<p>A very enclosed landscape that contains or strongly filters views, with an absence of visual landmarks and a lack of intervisibility with designated landscapes.</p>	<p>A predominantly enclosed landscape that contains or filters most views, with very few views of visual landmarks or intervisibility with designated landscapes.</p>	<p>A partially enclosed landscape with some visual containment and filtering, possible limited intervisibility with visual landmarks and designated landscapes.</p>	<p>An open landscape with intervisibility and limited visual filtering or enclosure. Prominent visual landmarks may be present, and/or intervisibility with designated landscapes may occur.</p>	<p>An open or exposed landscape with extensive intervisibility and no or very limited visual filtering or enclosure. Prominent visual landmarks are present, and/or intervisibility with designated landscapes occurs.</p>
<p>Experiential Susceptibility to Change from Commercial and Transport Infrastructure Development</p>				

Very Low Susceptibility to Change	Low Susceptibility to Change	Medium Susceptibility to Change	High Susceptibility to Change	Very High Susceptibility to Change
<p>A landscape with prominent visual and/or aural intrusion and close relationship with large scale built development/-infrastructure.</p> <p>A landscape that contains many light sources and essentially suffers from widespread light pollution.</p>	<p>A busy landscape with frequent visual and/or aural intrusion and nearby relationship with large scale built development/-infrastructure.</p> <p>A landscape that contains frequent light sources and suffers from light pollution.</p>	<p>A partially tranquil landscape with limited visual and/or aural intrusion. A relationship with built development/-infrastructure may be present. A landscape that contains some light sources.</p>	<p>A tranquil landscape with limited visual and/or aural intrusion. A non-intrusive relationship with built development/-infrastructure may be present. A landscape that contains few light sources.</p>	<p>A very tranquil, wild or remote landscape with little or no sense of visual or aural intrusion.</p> <p>A landscape that contains very few light sources and provides dark skies.</p>
Overall Judgement of Susceptibility to Change from Commercial and Transport Infrastructure Development				
<p>Very Low susceptibility – receptor largely reflects very low criteria above.</p>	<p>Low susceptibility – receptor largely reflects low criteria above.</p>	<p>Medium value – receptor largely reflects medium criteria above.</p>	<p>High susceptibility – receptor largely reflects high criteria above.</p>	<p>Very High susceptibility – receptor largely reflects very high criteria above.</p>

A1.16 Table A1.3 provides an indication of the criteria by which the overall sensitivity of the landscape resource is judged within this assessment and considers both value and susceptibility independently.

Table A1.3: Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity.

		Susceptibility of Landscape Receptor				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Receptor Value	Very High	Very High	Very High/High	High	High/Medium	Medium
	High	Very High/High	High	High/Medium	Medium	Medium/Low
	Medium	High	High/Medium	Medium	Medium/Low	Low
	Low	High/Medium	Medium	Medium/Low	Low	Low/Very Low
	Very Low	Medium	Medium/Low	Low	Low/Very Low	Very Low

A1.17 For visual receptors, judgements of susceptibility and value are closely interlinked considerations. For example, the most valued views are those that people go and visit because of the available view, and it is at those viewpoints that their expectations will be highest and thus most susceptible to change.

A1.18 Table A1.4 provides an indication of the criteria by which the overall sensitivity of a visual receptor is judged within this assessment and considers both value and susceptibility independently.

Table A1.4: Visual Receptor Sensitivity.

Category	Visual Receptor Criteria
Very High	<p>Designed view (which may be to or from a recognised heritage asset or other important viewpoint), or where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience. Key promoted viewpoint, e.g. interpretative signs. References in literature and art and/or guidebooks tourist maps. Protected view recognised in planning policy designation.</p> <p>Examples may include views from residential properties, especially from rooms normally occupied in waking or daylight hours or outdoor spaces such as gardens; national PROW, e.g. National Trails and nationally designated countryside/landscape features with public access, which people might visit purely to experience the view; and visitors to heritage assets of national importance.</p>
High	<p>View of clear value but may not be formally recognised, e.g. framed view of high scenic value, or destination hill summits. It may also be inferred that the view is likely to have value, e.g. to local residents.</p> <p>Examples may include views from recreational receptors where there is some appreciation of the landscape, e.g. golf and fishing; local public rights of way, access land and National Trust land, also panoramic viewpoints marked on maps; road routes promoted in tourist guides for their scenic value.</p>
Medium	<p>View is not promoted or recorded in any published sources and may be typical of the views experienced from a given receptor.</p> <p>Examples may include people engaged in outdoor sport other than appreciation of the landscape, e.g. football and rugby, or road users on minor routes passing through rural or scenic areas.</p>
Low	<p>View of clearly lesser value than similar views experienced from nearby visual receptors that may be more accessible.</p> <p>Examples may include road users on main road routes (motorways/A roads) and users of rail routes or people at their place of work (where the place of work may be in a sensitive location). Also views from commercial buildings where views of the surrounding landscape may have some limited importance.</p>

Category	Visual Receptor Criteria
Very Low	View affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued. Examples may include people at their place of work, indoor recreational or leisure facilities or other locations where views of the wider landscape have little or no importance.

A1.19 The tables above offer a template for assessing overall sensitivity of any landscape or visual receptor as determined by combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape as set out at paragraph 5.39 of GLVIA3. However, the narrative in this report may demonstrate that assessment of overall sensitivity can change on a case-by-case basis.

A1.20 For example, a high susceptibility to change and a low value may result in a medium overall sensitivity, unless it can be demonstrated that the receptor is unusually susceptible or is in some particular way more valuable. A degree of professional judgement applies in arriving at the overall sensitivity for both landscape and visual receptors.

Magnitude of Change

A1.21 The magnitude of any landscape or visual change is determined through a range of considerations particular to each receptor. The three attributes considered in defining the magnitude are:

- Scale of change;
- Geographical extent; and
- Duration and reversibility/proportion.

A1.22 Receptor locations from which views of the proposed development are not likely to occur will receive no change and therefore no effect. With reference to the ZTV and site survey, the magnitude of change is defined for receptor locations from where visibility of the proposed development is predicted to occur.


A1.23 Table A1.5 provides an indication of the criteria by which the size/scale of change at a landscape or visual receptor is judged within this assessment.

Table A1.5: Landscape and Visual Receptor Magnitude of Change Criteria.

Category	Landscape Receptor Criteria	Visual Receptor Criteria
Very High	Total loss of or major alteration to key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements which strongly conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.	There would be a substantial change to the baseline, with the proposed development creating a new focus and having a defining influence on the view.
High	Notable loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements that are prominent and may conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.	The proposed development will be clearly noticeable, and the view would be fundamentally altered by its presence.
Medium	Partial loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition. Addition of elements that may be evident but do not necessarily conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.	The proposed development will form a new and recognisable element within the view which is likely to be recognised by the receptor.
Low	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline landscape. Addition of elements that may not be uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.	The proposed development will form a minor constituent of the view being partially visible or at sufficient distance to be a small component.
Very Low	Barely discernible loss or alteration to key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline landscape. Addition of elements not uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.	The proposed development will form a barely noticeable component of the view, and the view whilst slightly altered would be similar to the baseline situation.

A1.24 Table A1.6 provides an indication of the criteria by which the geographical extent of the area affected is judged within this assessment.

Table A1.6: Geographical Extent Criteria.

	Effects on Landscape Receptors	Effects on Visual Receptors
Largest 	Large scale effects influencing several landscape types or character areas.	Direct views at close range with changes over a wide horizontal and vertical extent.
	Effects at the scale of the landscape type or character areas within which the proposal lies.	Direct or oblique views at close range with changes over a notable horizontal and/or vertical extent.
	Effects within the immediate landscape setting of the site.	Direct or oblique views at medium range with a moderate horizontal and/or vertical extent of the view affected.
	Effects at the site level (within the development site itself).	Oblique views at medium or long range with a small horizontal/vertical extent of the view affected.
	Smallest	Effects only experienced on parts of the site at a very localised level.

A1.25 The third, and final, factor, in determining the predicted magnitude of change is duration and reversibility. Duration and reversibility are separate but linked considerations. Duration is judged according to the defined terms set out below, whereas reversibility is a judgement about the prospects and practicality of the particular effect being reversed in, for example, a generation. The categories used in this assessment are set out below:

Duration:

- Long term (20 years+);
- Medium to long term (10 to 20 years);
- Medium term (5 to 10 years);

- Short term (1 year to 5 years); or
- Temporary (less than 12 months).

Reversibility:

- Permanent with unlikely restoration to original state, e.g. major road corridor, power station, urban extension, etc.;
- Permanent with possible conversion to original state, e.g. agricultural buildings, retail units;
- Partially reversible to a different state, e.g. mineral workings;
- Reversible after decommissioning to a similar original state, e.g. wind energy development; or
- Quickly reversible, e.g. temporary structures.

Significance of Effect

- A1.26 The purpose of the EIA process is to identify the significant environmental effects (both beneficial and adverse) of development proposals. Schedule 4 to the EIA Regulations specifies the information to be included in all environmental statements, which should include a description of: *"The likely significant effects of the development on the environment, which should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development"*.
- A1.27 In order to consider the likely significance of any effect, the sensitivity of each receptor is combined with the predicted magnitude of change to determine the significance of effect, with reference also made to the geographical extent, duration and reversibility of the effect within the assessment. Having taken such a wide range of factors into account when assessing sensitivity and magnitude at each receptor, the significance of effect can be derived by combining the sensitivity and magnitude in accordance with the matrix in Table A1.7.

Table A1.7: Level of Effects Matrix.

Overall Sensitivity	Overall Magnitude of Change				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Very High	Substantial	Major	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor
High	Major	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor
Medium	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/- Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/- Negligible	Negligible
Very Low	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/- Negligible	Negligible	Negligible/- None

A1.28 In certain cases, where additional factors may arise, a further degree of professional judgement may be applied when determining whether the overall change in the view will be significant or not and, where this occurs, this is explained in the assessment.

Definition of Effects

A1.29 Taking into account the levels of effect described above, and with regard to effects being either adverse or beneficial, the following table represents a description of the range of effects likely at any one receptor.

Table EDP A1.8: Definition of Effect.

Category	Definition of Adverse Effects	Definition of Beneficial Effects
Substantial	Typically, the landscape or visual receptor is highly sensitive with the proposals representing a high adverse magnitude of change. The changes would be at complete variance with the landscape character and would permanently diminish the integrity of a valued landscape or view.	The removal of substantial existing incongruous landscape or visual elements and the introduction or restoration of highly valued landscape elements or built form which would reinforce local landscape character and substantially improve landscape condition and visual amenity.
Major	Typically, the landscape or visual receptor has a high to medium sensitivity with the proposals representing a high to medium adverse magnitude of change to the view or landscape resource. Changes would result in a fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.	The removal of existing incongruous landscape/visual elements and the introduction or restoration of some valued landscape or visual elements would complement landscape character and improve landscape condition and improve the local visual amenity.
Moderate	Typically, the landscape or visual receptor has a medium to low sensitivity with the proposals representing a high to medium magnitude of change. The proposals would represent a material but non-fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.	The removal of some existing incongruous landscape elements and/or the introduction or restoration of some potentially valued landscape elements which reflect landscape character and result in some improvements to landscape condition and/or visual amenity.

Category	Definition of Adverse Effects	Definition of Beneficial Effects
Minor	Typically, the landscape or visual receptor has a low sensitivity with the proposals representing a medium to low magnitude of change. The proposals would result in a slight but non-material change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.	Some potential removal of incongruous landscape features or visual amenity, although more likely the existing landscape and/or resource is complemented by new landscape features or built features compliant with the local landscape and published landscape character assessments.
Negligible	Typically, the landscape or visual receptor has a low or very low sensitivity with the proposals representing a very low magnitude of change. There would be a detectable but non-material change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.	The proposals would result in minimal positive change to the landscape or visual resource, either through perceptual or physical change, and any change would not be readily apparent but would be coherent with ongoing change and process, and coherent with published landscape character assessments.
None	Typically, the landscape receptor has a very low sensitivity with the proposals resulting in no loss or alteration to the landscape resource or change to the view. There would be no detectable change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.	There would be no detectable positive or negative change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.

A1.30 Effects can be adverse (negative), beneficial (positive) or neutral. The landscape effects will be considered against the landscape baseline, which includes published landscape strategies or policies if they exist. Changes involving the addition of large-scale man-made objects are typically considered to be adverse as they are not usually actively promoted as part of published landscape strategies. Accordingly, the assessment of landscape effects as a result of these aspects of the proposed development will be assumed to be adverse, unless otherwise stated within the assessment.

A1.31 Visual effects are more subjective as people’s perception of development varies through the spectrum of negative, neutral and positive attitudes. In the assessment of visual effects, the assessor will exercise objective professional judgement in assessing the level of effects and, unless otherwise stated, will assume that all effects are adverse, thus representing the worst-case scenario.

Cumulative Effects

A1.32 Cumulative effects generally occur where there may be simultaneous or sequential visibility of two or more developments of the same type and scale, or where the consideration of other schemes would increase an effect identified. Where other similar schemes are in the planning system and made known to the applicant, or are under construction, these are considered in conjunction with the proposed scheme.

NIGHT-TIME ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

A1.33 Night-time assessment of lighting on landscape and visual receptors is an emerging area and there is no specific policy or guidance on the subject. The approach and methodology of this assessment follows the same structured approach as the daytime visual assessment set out above, based on the principles set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2013 (GLVIA). The following adjustments have been made to allow for night-time conditions.

Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors at night

A1.34 Susceptibility to lighting is judged based on the degree to which the character area is currently characterised by darkness – informed by satellite mapping of light distribution and site observations and a review of relevant documents including ‘Night Blight: Mapping England’s light pollution and dark skies’⁵ prepared by CPRE.

A1.35 Value is judged the same as for the daytime assessment unless specific factors suggest otherwise. For example, identification as a dark sky site may increase value and the absence of factors at night that contribute to value in daytime may reduce value.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors at night

A1.36 For visual receptors the assessment takes account of the different importance attached to views in the night-time environment: Generally, the value attached to night-time views is considered to be low unless there is a particular feature that can be best appreciated in the hours of darkness. This may include views of stars and the night sky that are only possible in particularly dark areas or views of well-known landmarks that are lit up at night. The susceptibility of receptors also differs at night reflecting the different activities people undertake in the hours of darkness. For example, drivers using roads at night tend to be more focused on the road and the area illuminated by their headlights than during the day and may have oncoming headlights, cats eyes or other reflective signage drawing their

⁵ [REDACTED]

attention, resulting in lower susceptibility. This is particularly the case on unlit rural roads that may be narrow and winding. On the other hand, people taking part in activities requiring darkness, such as stargazing, would be of higher susceptibility. The sensitivity of visual receptors at night is generally rated as follows:

- National value and High susceptibility – visitors to Dark Sky Parks;
- Local value and High susceptibility – visitors to dark sky discovery sites or public observatories;
- Community value and High susceptibility – wild campers, people engaged in night time activity such as bat watching or residents of notably dark areas (i.e. rural locations with no street lighting) in the streets around their homes where dark skies are integral to the amenity;
- National value and Medium susceptibility – visitors to nationally important or well-known public landmarks that are illuminated at night e.g. key public buildings, bridges or sculptural features;
- Local value and Medium susceptibility – visitors to locally important or well-known local landmarks that are illuminated at night e.g. key public buildings, bridges or sculptural features;
- Community value and Medium susceptibility – residents in urban areas or semi-urban/rural areas (where street lighting is present) in the streets around their homes, users of cycle routes and railways;
- Community value and Low susceptibility – drivers using local, unlit roads; and
- Limited value and Low susceptibility – users of main roads and people at their place of work.

Perception of light over distance

A1.37 The physics of lighting tells us that the amount of light reaching any given point reduces with distance. A light source will emit a fixed amount of light, which spreads out in all directions, expanding with distance – like an inflating balloon. The amount of light reaching an area of fixed size, such as a person’s eye, is therefore markedly reduced by distance. Atmospheric conditions also play a role, with lights observably appearing brighter in drier conditions when the light is less scattered and reflected by water droplets in the air. However, human night vision and perception is optimised to gather the available light, and notice contrast – so the perception of the brightness of a light may reduce less with distance than physics would suggest.

Annex 2 ◆ Relevant Extracts from Policy

BLABY DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN 1999 (SAVED POLICIES 2007)

Policy CE22: Landscaping

“Planning permission will only be granted for development which:

- i) takes into account, and retains where appropriate, existing landscape, ecological or geological features.*
- ii) Incorporates general landscaping and planting of an appropriate quality to assimilate the development into its local landscape and ecological context.*
- iii) Provides a well landscape and informal edge where development adjoins the countryside or other areas of open land.”*

Policy CE23: Croft Hill Area of Local Landscape Value

“Planning permission will not be granted for development which would have an adverse effect on the appearance or character of Croft Hill which is identified on the proposals map as an Area of Local Landscape Value.”

BLABY DISTRICT CORE STRATEGY (ADOPTED FEBRUARY 2013)

Policy CS2 – Design of New Development

“In order to secure a high quality environment, all new development should respect distinctive local character and should contribute to creating places of a high and urban design quality, contributing to a better quality of life for the local community.

Design should be appropriate in its context and should take any opportunities available to improve the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. Development proposals should demonstrate that they have taken account of local patterns of development, landscape and other features and views and are sympathetic to their surroundings through urban design, landscaping (including tree planting), architecture and architectural detailing. At the same time, the Council will support innovative design that is appropriate in its context.

High quality places, which are safe and socially inclusive, will be required through the application of good design principles including layout, street design, scale, materials, natural surveillance, orientation, and sustainable construction. New development should create safe environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life.

The design of new development should take account of, and provide opportunities to enhance, the natural and historic environment, including improvements to Green Infrastructure and opportunities to promote biodiversity.

Consideration needs to be given to the access and mobility needs of people (including, but not limited to, elderly people and disabled people) so that barriers to access can be overcome for the benefit of the entire community. This should be considered in the design of new developments from the outset. This will contribute to the creation of mixed communities. In addition, developments should be designed with full consideration of the principles of permeability, legibility and connectivity.

The design of development incorporating the above features will need to be demonstrated through the Design and Access Statement. The Council will use Building for Life 12 (BfL12) as a tool to encourage high quality design across all new housing developments in the District.

Where the design of a new development is not considered of high enough quality, the Council will seek appropriate improvements.”

Policy CS14 – Green Infrastructure (GI)

“Blaby District Council and its partners will seek to protect existing, and provide new, ‘networks of multi-functional green spaces’. This network will comprise public and privately owned land. Green Infrastructure can include formal open spaces for sport and recreation, green areas that can be used for informal recreation, areas that are valuable for their biodiversity (flora and fauna and network links), areas that are of cultural importance (heritage assets and their settings), areas that maintain natural and ecological processes (such as floodplains) and other areas that contribute to the health and quality of life of communities.

The Council will seek to improve and enhance the Green Infrastructure network throughout the District using opportunities identified in available evidence including, but not limited to, exploring with partners improved access to:

- *the River Soar and River Sence corridors and Grand Union Canal;*
- *the Rothley Brook corridor;*
- *the network of Green Wedges that adjoin the urban areas; and*
- *In accordance with the Blaby Town Centre Masterplan opportunities will be explored with partners to improve Bouskell Park (Blaby) as a recreational resource.*

Opportunities to incorporate key landscape features such as woodlands, ponds, rivers and streams and the local topography should be used to create high quality design incorporating a wide range of high quality, functional and useful open spaces and links.

It is important that the subsequent maintenance of GI is considered at the earliest

opportunity and that the bodies and resources responsible for its long term management and maintenance liabilities are identified.”

Policy CS18 – Countryside

“Land will be designated as Countryside where it is outside the limits to built development and outside designated Green Wedges and Areas of Separation.

Within areas designated as Countryside, planning permission will not be granted for built development, or other development which would have a significantly adverse effect on the appearance or character of the landscape.

Planning permission will, however, be granted for limited small scale employment and leisure development (including dwellings essential for these needs) subject to consideration of its impacts.”

Policy CS19 – Bio-diversity and Geo-diversity

“The District of Blaby has a number of sites of ecological and geological importance of national, regional and local level significance, which the Council will seek to safeguard and enhance.

Where a proposed development on land within or outside a SSSI is likely to have an adverse effect on a SSSI (either individually or in combination with other developments), planning permission will not normally be granted. Where an adverse effect on the site’s notified special interest features is likely, an exception will only be made where the benefits of the development, at this site, clearly outweigh both the impacts that it is likely to have on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest and any broader impacts on the network of SSSIs. Conditions and/or planning obligations will be used to mitigate the harmful aspects of the development and where possible, to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the site’s biodiversity or geological interest.

Other sites within the District (including Regionally Important Geological Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites and UK and local (Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland) Bio-diversity Action Plan sites etc), will be protected and enhanced (where appropriate). The Council will seek to resist proposed development on, or affecting such sites, where the development could be alternatively located in less biodiverse/geologically sensitive areas. Where there are no alternative sites available, the designated sites should be retained with appropriate buffering and mitigation measures put in place to avoid/reduce any adverse impacts resulting from the proposal. Where this is not possible, compensatory measures should be sought, including provision of replacement habitats.

The Council will work closely with national and local wildlife organisations, local communities and landowners in order to ensure the creation and designation of new wildlife sites and the identification, restoration, protection and enhancement of existing sites and new priority habitats, where appropriate opportunities arise. The Council will explore the potential for new ‘Local Wildlife Sites’ in association with major development.

The Council will seek to maintain/extend networks of natural habitats to link sites of biodiversity importance by avoiding or repairing the fragmentation and isolation of natural habitats. These networks should be protected from development. Where development in these areas cannot be avoided, the networks of natural habitats should be strengthened by or integrated within the development. The Council recognises that networks cross Local Authority boundaries, so will work with partners to ensure their maintenance and enhancement.

In terms of species protection, the Council will protect those species which do not receive statutory protection under a range of legislative provisions, but have been identified as requiring conservation action as a species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity nationally. Any development proposals should ensure that these species and their habitats are protected from the adverse effects of development through the use of appropriate mitigation measures.

This Council recognises that previously developed land can be of significant biodiversity or geological interest. Where this is the case, the Council will aim to retain this interest and have it incorporated into any development of the site and / or adopt appropriate mitigation measures.

When considering development proposals of an appropriate type and scale, the Council will seek to ensure that opportunities to build in biodiversity or geological features are included as part of the design.”

EMERGING LOCAL PLAN POLICY – BLABY DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN 2029

Policy DM2 – Development in the Countryside

“In areas designated as Countryside on the Policies Map, development proposals consistent with Core Strategy Policy CS18 will be supported where the following criteria are met:

General

- a) *The development is in keeping with the appearance and character of the existing landscape, development form and buildings. Decisions in respect of impact on landscape character and appearance will be informed by the Blaby Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation Study, National Character Areas and any subsequent pieces of evidence; and*
- b) *The development provides a satisfactory relationship with nearby uses that would not be significantly detrimental to the amenities enjoyed by the existing or new occupiers, including but not limited to, consideration of:*
 - i) *overdevelopment of the site due to factors including footprint, scale and mass;*

- ii) *privacy, light, noise, disturbance and overbearing effect; and*
- iii) *vibration, emissions, hours of working, vehicular activity.”*

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH CORE STRATEGY (ADOPTED 2009)

Spatial Objective 7: Healthier Active Communities

“To develop healthier and stronger communities by improving access to, and the provision of, community, sports and cultural facilities, green infrastructure and walking and cycling routes integrated with local public transport. Whilst there are localised areas where additional community, sports and cultural facilities are required, overall, provision is generally sufficient across the borough, but the quality of these facilities needs to be improved.”

Spatial Objective 9: Identity, Distinctiveness and Quality of Design

“To ensure development contributes to the local distinctiveness of the borough, and enhances both settlement identity and the environment through the quality of sustainable design. Design and other measures will be used to develop strong community identities and neighbourhood pride.”

Spatial Objective 10: Natural Environment and Cultural Assets

“To deliver a linked network of green infrastructure, enhancing and protecting the borough’s distinctive landscapes, woodlands, geology, archaeological heritage and biodiversity and encourage its understanding, appreciation, maintenance and development.”

Policy 6 – Hinckley/Barwell/Earl Shilton/Burbage Green Wedge

“Within the Hinckley/Barwell/Earl Shilton/Burbage Green Wedge uses will be encouraged that provide appropriate recreational facilities within easy reach of urban residents and promote the positive management of land to ensure that the Green Wedge remains or is enhanced as an attractive contribution to the quality of life of nearby urban residents.

The following land uses will be acceptable in the Green Wedge, provided the operational development associated with such uses does not damage the function of the Green Wedge:

- a) *Agriculture, including allotments and horticulture not accompanied by retail development;*
- b) *Recreation;*
- c) *Forestry;*
- d) *Footpaths, bridleways and cycleways;*

- e) *Burial grounds; and*
- f) *Use for nature conservation.*
- g) *Any land use or associated development in the Green Wedge should:*
- h) *Retain the function of the Green Wedge;*
- i) *Retain and create green networks between the countryside and open spaces within the urban areas;*
- j) *Retain and enhance public access to the Green Wedge, especially for recreation; and*
- k) *Should retain the visual appearance of the area.”*

Policy 20: Green Infrastructure

“The implementation of the Green Infrastructure Network as outlined on the Key Diagram is a key priority of the council.

To assist delivery of this plan, the following strategic interventions will be supported:

Southern Zone

- *Burbage Common and Woods - Increase the size of the site to increase both the community value and biodiversity holding capacity and improve access to the site, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.”*

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES (ADOPTED 2016)

Policy DM4 – Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation

“To protect its intrinsic value, beauty, open character and landscape character, the countryside will first and foremost be safeguarded from unsustainable development. Development in the countryside will be considered sustainable where:

- a) *It is for outdoor sport or recreation purposes (including ancillary buildings) and it can be demonstrated that the proposed scheme cannot be provided within or adjacent to settlement boundaries;*
- b) *The proposal involves the change of use, re-use or extension of existing buildings which lead to the enhancement of the immediate setting;*
- c) *It significantly contributes to economic growth, job creation and/or diversification of rural businesses;*
- d) *It relates to the provision of stand-alone renewable energy developments in line with Policy DM2: Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Development; or*

- e) *It relates to the provision of accommodation for a rural worker in line with Policy DM5 - Enabling Rural Worker Accommodation.*

and:

- i) *It does not have a significant adverse effect on the intrinsic value, beauty, open character and landscape character of the countryside;*
- ii) *It does not undermine the physical and perceived separation and open character between settlements;*
- iii) *It does not create or exacerbate ribbon development;*
- iv) *If within a Green Wedge, it protects its role and function in line with Core Strategy Policies 6 and 9; and*
- v) *If within the National Forest, it contributes to the delivery of the National Forest Strategy in line with Core Strategy Policy 21.”*

Policy DM9 – Safeguarding Natural and Semi-Natural Open Spaces

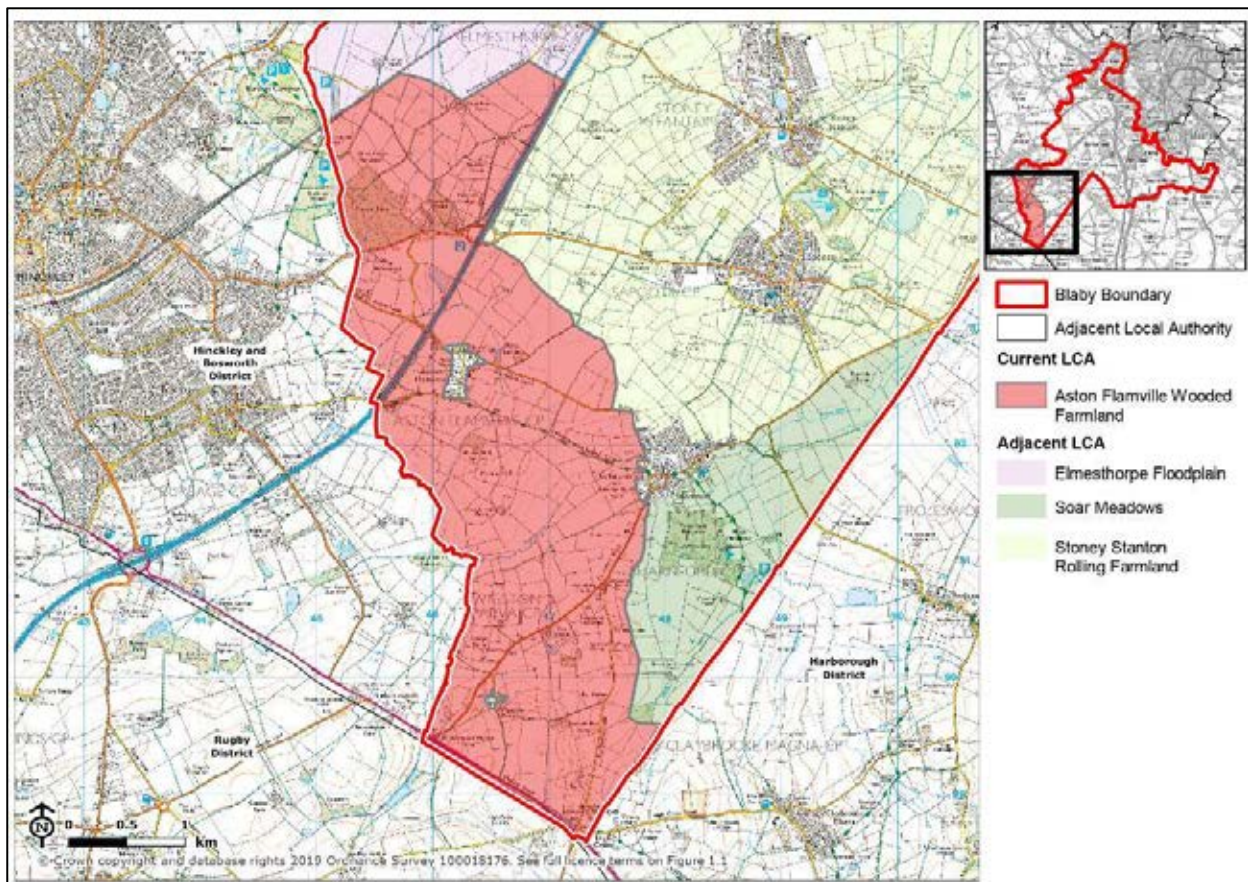
“All developments within or affecting Natural and Semi-Natural Open Spaces should seek to retain and enhance the accessibility of the space and its recreational value whilst ensuring the biodiversity and conservation value is also enhanced.

Development within areas of Natural and Semi-Natural Open Space, as defined on the policies map, will only be considered appropriate where:

- a) *The proposal relates to the enhancement of the area for recreational purposes and only where this does not lead to the loss or damage of the area’s biodiversity value;*
- b) *It relates to the enhancement of the area’s biodiversity or conservation value;*
- c) *It would promote the establishment and enhancement of pedestrian footpaths and cycle ways;*
- d) *If within the National Forest, it contributes to the delivery of the National Forest Strategy in line with Core Strategy Policy 21; and*
- e) *If within a Green Wedge, it protects its role and function in line with Core Strategy policies 6 and 9.”*

Annex 3 ◆ Relevant Extracts from Landscape Character Assessments

Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

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

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

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

Land use and field patterns

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

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

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

Archaeology and cultural heritage

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

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

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

Views and perceptual qualities

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

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

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

Key pressures/forces for change

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

Landscape sensitivity assessment

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

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

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

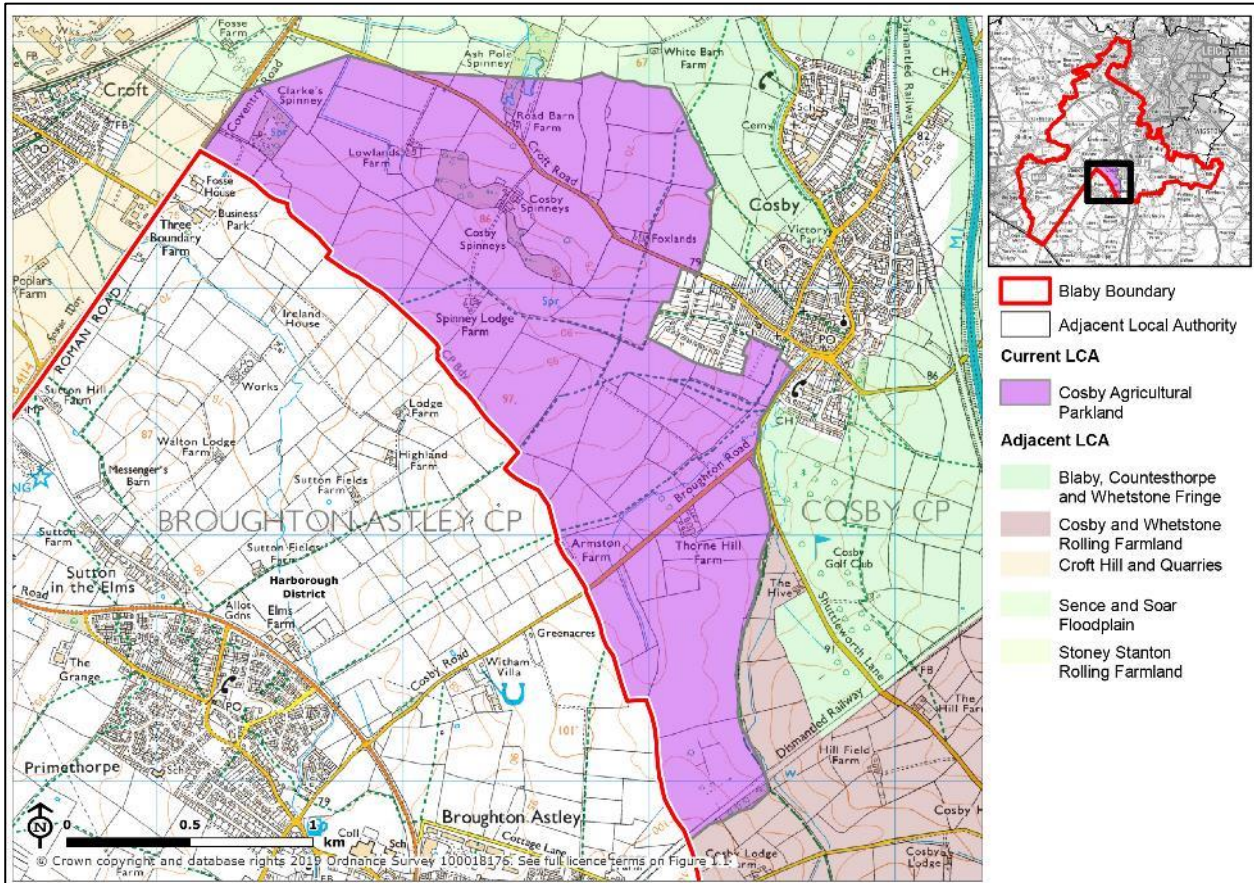
Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

<p>The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important heritage features including the site of the Venonis Roman Settlement and bowl barrows, which are designated as Scheduled Monuments. • Aston Firs SSSI, ancient semi-natural woodland which is one of the more substantial blocks of woodland within the district. • The strong rural qualities of the LCA, with modern intrusions limited to transport routes in the north of the LCA and a pylon route. • Mature oak and ash hedgerow trees are scattered throughout and feature in the skyline. • The two designated Conservation Areas within the LCA – Aston Flamville and Wigston Parva – both have a strong local vernacular. • Numerous public rights of way cross the character area including part of the Leicestershire Round long-distance route • The function of the remaining rural, agricultural land in providing a setting to existing development and their distinct identities.

Guidance and opportunities for future development

<p>Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the integrity and rural setting of nationally important heritage features within the landscape, including the site of the Venonis Roman Settlement. • Protect the rural setting the landscape provides to the existing settlements including the Conservation Areas at Aston Flamville and Wigston Parva. • Respect and enhance the existing settlement character, ensuring new development complements existing context with regards to scale, form, materials and boundary features. • Conserve important woodlands in the character area including the nationally designated Aston Firs SSSI. • Explore opportunities to strengthen and increase the public rights of way network, linking settlements to strategic recreation destinations such as Burbage Common and the Leicestershire Round trail. • Conserve hedgerow trees within the landscape by encouraging natural establishment and planting of new hedgerow trees. Species chosen for planting should reflect those present within the fields immediately surrounding to enhance local distinctiveness within the character area. • Protect the rural working agricultural setting the landscape provides to development. Avoid siting development on the more open, visible slopes and where ridge and furrow is evident.

Cosby Agricultural Parkland



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

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

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

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

Land use and field patterns

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

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

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

Archaeology and cultural heritage

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

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

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

Views and perceptual qualities

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

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

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

Key pressures/forces for change

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

Landscape sensitivity assessment

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

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

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

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

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

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

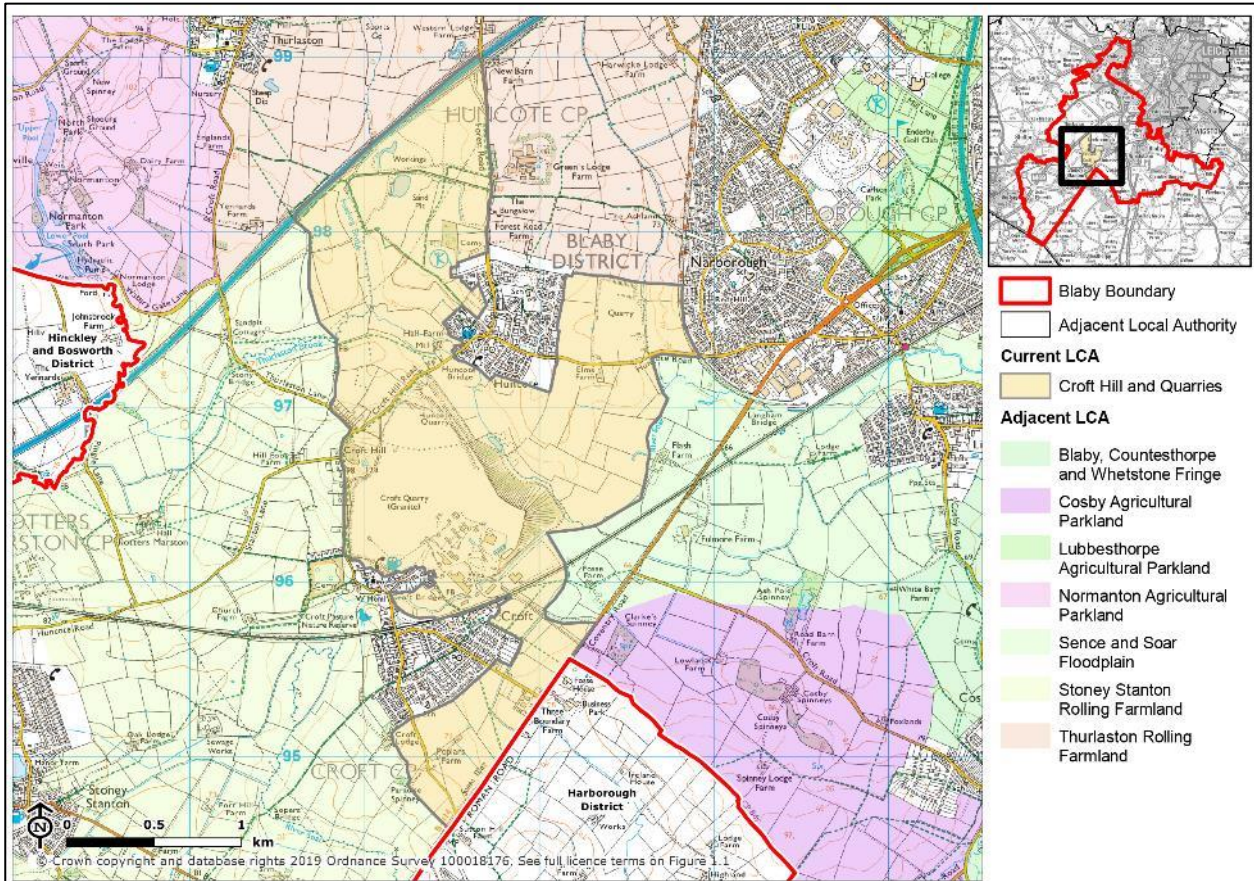
Guidance and opportunities for future development

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

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

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

Croft Hill and Quarries



Representative photographs



View south-east from Croft Hill across Croft Quarry



Pylons cross the LCA to the north-west of Huncote

Location and summary of overall character

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

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

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

Land use and field patterns

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

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

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

Archaeology and cultural heritage

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

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

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

Views and perceptual qualities

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

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

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

Key pressures/forces for change

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

Landscape sensitivity assessment

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

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

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

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

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

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

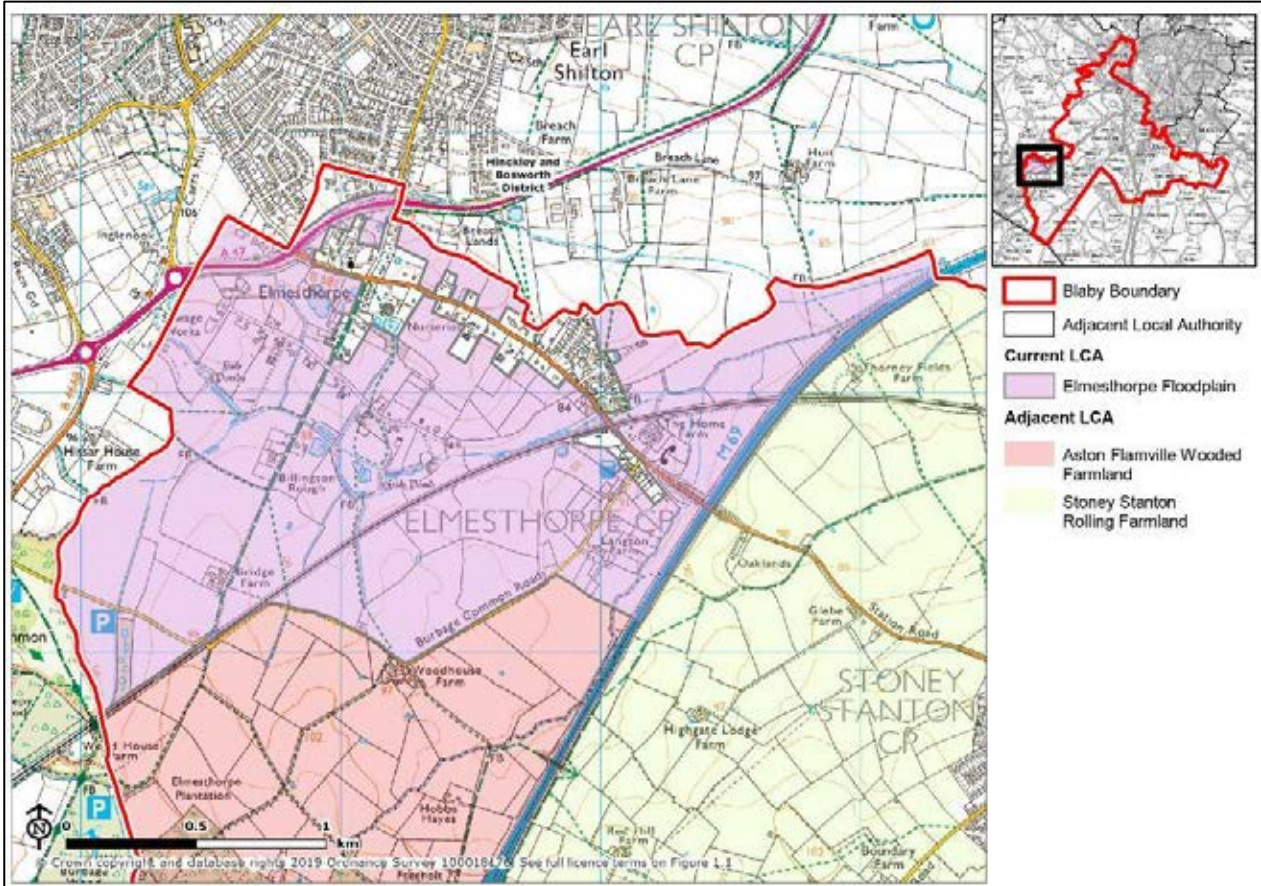
Guidance and opportunities for future development

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

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

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

Elmesthorpe Floodplain



Representative photographs



Flat land on the floodplain, used for grazing horses



View north across the flat floodplain to the ridgetop village of Elmesthorpe

Location and summary of overall character

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

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

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

Land use and field patterns

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

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

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

Archaeology and cultural heritage

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

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

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

Views and perceptual qualities

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

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

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

Key pressures/forces for change

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

Landscape sensitivity assessment

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

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

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

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

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

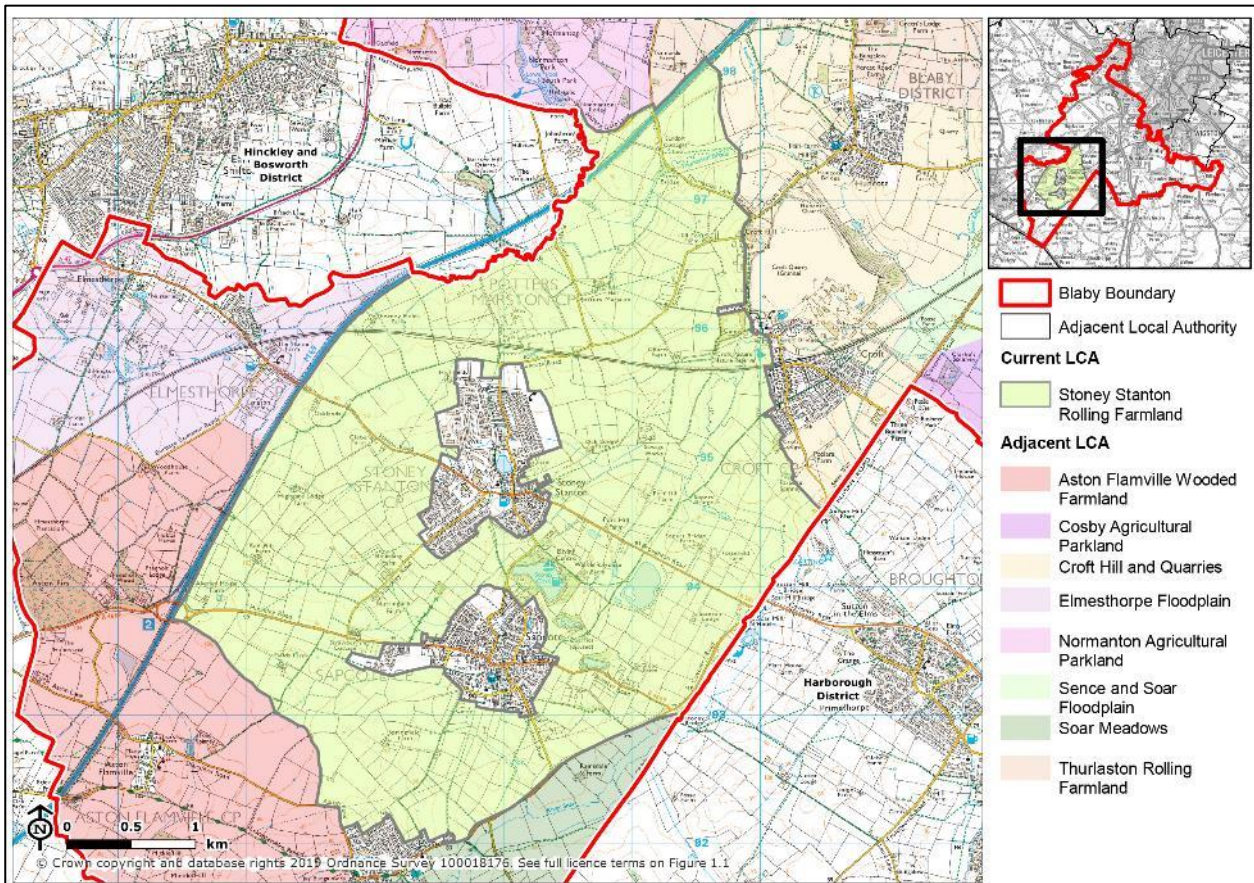
- Valued semi-natural habitats at Burbage Common which are sensitively managed for the benefit of wildlife conservation, including woodland, meadow and wetlands.
- The ridgetop location of the linear settlement of Elmesthorpe, which is well integrated into the landscape by mature vegetation.
- Strong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

Guidance and opportunities for future development

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

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

Stoney Stanton Rolling Farmland



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

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

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

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

Land use and field patterns

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

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

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

Archaeology and cultural heritage

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

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

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

Views and perceptual qualities

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

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

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

Key pressures/forces for change

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

Landscape sensitivity assessment

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

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

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

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

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

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

Guidance and opportunities for future development

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

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

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

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: Elmeathorpe 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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High Cross Plateau

High Cross Plateau is a sparsely populated area characterised by wide rolling ridges and valleys. It actually belongs to the south western section of the Leicestershire Wolds with only part of the area extending into Warwickshire - here it forms the region of high ground between Rugby and Hinkley in the north-eastern corner of the county. This rolling plateau is dissected by a series of streams, forming deep but poorly defined valleys separated by broad, round ridges. Sands and gravels, giving light, freely draining soils, often cap the summits of these ridges but for the most part the area is characterised by heavy soils with impeded drainage. Two major Roman roads cross the area; Watling Street and Fosse Way, which meet at High Cross.

The physical nature of the area and the historical development have both had a strong influence on the character of the landscape. This is reflected in the pattern of large fields, the nucleated settlement pattern and the strong impression of "emptiness" in many areas resulting from the early enclosure of this rather marginal agricultural area. Small rural red brick villages are the dominant settlement type. Like Feldon, the farmed landscape also retains many historic features such as remnants of medieval ridge and furrow, and associated deserted medieval village sites.

The High Cross Plateau is primarily an agricultural area and the most valuable habitats such as neutral grassland are associated with farmland. Streams, rivers and associated areas of marginal vegetation, unimproved meadow and alder/willow carr, as well as secondary woodland, are also important for wildlife.

The High Cross Plateau can be sub-divided into two different landscape types:

- Open Plateau
- Village Farmlands

Open Plateau

This is a remote, large-scale, open, rolling plateau dissected by broad valleys, characterised, for the most part, by wide views and a strong impression of "emptiness" and space. This is reinforced by an absence of roads and settlements, with sparsely populated hamlets and isolated manor farmsteads prevailing. In places there are extensive areas of largely inaccessible countryside, which relates closely to deserted medieval village sites. Field pattern is generally medium to large in scale but is often poorly defined and tends to be a relatively minor element in this landscape, as the eye is naturally drawn to distant skylines rather than to foreground views. In places, however, smaller fields may occur, often associated with pockets of permanent pasture, and ridge and furrow. Shelterbelts may also form prominent features in an otherwise open and featureless landscape.

Sensitivity – Fragility: Whilst the Open Plateau is a planned landscape, the cultural sensitivity varies with the central plateau summit having a more consistent pattern than the rest. Ecological fragility is low across the whole LCT.

Sensitivity – Visibility: The rolling topography gives rise to a moderate sensitivity, but on the plateau summit the more gently rolling landform, together with the presence of very distinctive shelterbelts, results in reduced visibility. The area between Harborough Magna, and Cosford, north of Newbold on Avon, has a high visual sensitivity due to lack of tree cover.

Overall sensitivity: Due to a combination of cultural coherence and rolling topography, the overall sensitivity is rated as moderate. This becomes high to the north of Newbold on Avon where the landscape is rolling but unwooded.

Condition: There is an extensive area to the north of Rugby whose condition is considered to be weak. To the north and west of Newbold on Avon, as too with land around Coton House, condition is strong. Elsewhere it is in decline.

Village Farmlands

This is a small scale, mainly pastoral, hedged landscape, closely associated with nucleated village settlements around the plateau fringe. The clusters of houses and farmsteads, narrow winding lanes, small-hedged fields, and in places, the undulating topography typically associated with small valleys, combine to create a varied, intimate landscape which contrasts strongly with the surrounding large scale Open Plateau. The farmed landscape is characterised by a semi-regular pattern of small fields, enclosed by thorn hedges. Where these are well managed they create a strong sense of scale and visual unity. Scattered hedgerow and roadside ash also emphasise this pattern. Permanent pasture is often associated with ridge and furrow, and field ponds, often fringed by trees and scrub, are also a feature in this landscape type.

Sensitivity – Fragility: Cultural sensitivity is moderate due to the coherent pattern which exists within this historic landscape. Ecological sensitivity is low since the area is intensively farmed.

Sensitivity – Visibility: Visibility is high due to the absence of woodland cover in this rolling landscape. Only at Monks Kirby are there small woods which reduce the visibility rating to moderate.

Overall sensitivity: Overall sensitivity is high except at Monks Kirby, due to high visibility and a coherent small-scale historic cultural pattern.

Mease Lowlands

The Mease Lowlands are a relatively low-lying, rolling, agricultural area lying largely outside Warwickshire. Only a small part of the northern-most tip of Rugby Borough falls within this area. The strongly nucleated settlement pattern is a particularly distinctive feature of this area. Estate Farmlands is the only landscape type occurring in Warwickshire.

Estate Farmlands

This is a well-ordered landscape characterised by: a gentle, rolling topography of low, rounded hills and valleys; a geometric pattern of large-hedged fields, characteristic of parliamentary enclosure; many small, regularly shaped game coverts associated with large country estates; large country houses often set in mature parkland; small hilltop villages often marked by a tall church spire; and a dense network of minor roads and lanes typically bordered by wide grass verges.

It is an intensively farmed arable landscape with permanent pasture largely restricted to small pockets around villages and along river corridors. Field pattern is generally intact but often poorly defined by low cut or gappy hedgerows. In places extensive removal of hedges has resulted in very large arable fields.

Sensitivity – Fragility: This is a planned landscape with a coherent pattern. It has a low cultural rating and a low ecological rating, resulting in a landscape of low fragility.

Sensitivity – Visibility: The area is low-lying with small woods, resulting in a low visibility rating.

Overall sensitivity: Fragility and visibility are both low giving rise to low overall sensitivity.

Conclusion

The methodology used in this report provides a structured and transparent means for using landscape character assessment in the development planning process. The information presented is primarily based on a desktop study supported by fieldwork undertaken during summer 2005. The study has drawn extensively on the work of the Living Landscapes Project, thus ensuring that the resulting GIS database and maps are fully compatible with the emerging West Midlands regional framework.

The study identifies the key characteristic features of the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) within Rugby Borough. It assesses the sensitivity of the Landscape Description Units (LDUs) within these LCTs, and looks more closely at the condition of the smaller Land Cover Parcels (LCPs) around Rugby's urban fringe. It is intended that this information will provide a useful tool for: future development planning; environmental protection; promoting effective land management; and making decisions on development control, mitigation, and enhancement measures.

The following patterns have emerged from the study:

- The north of Rugby is in a particularly weak condition.
- To the south of the town, the importance of the southern escarpment cannot be over-emphasised, being highly sensitive, and in strong condition.
- There are a number of sites of local significance around the urban fringe in a condition of decline, which would benefit from further protection and enhancement measures to ensure their long-term benefit to future generations. These would include; Hillmorton Locks, Newbold, Cosford, Newton, and the River Avon corridor.
- There are large areas to the east and west of the town whose condition is also in decline but which are in less sensitive locations.
- There is nowhere within the urban fringe that is of low sensitivity.



UCA 4: HINCKLEY



Location and Setting

6.57 Hinckley is the main urban area, located in the south-east of the borough. It is separated from Burbage to the south by the Leicester to Nuneaton railway line, and from the nearby urban areas of Barwell and Earl Shilton to the east, by a green 'wedge' of land around the A47. Hinckley is situated on the same ridgeline as the adjacent

urban areas, although more recent development has extended to the lower lying land to the west. Agricultural fields to the north of the A47 provide a rural setting to the town.

6.58 Hinckley lies to the south and east of LCA E: Stoke Golding Rolling Farmland.

Key Characteristics

- 1) **Main settlement of the borough centred on a ridge of higher ground.**
- 2) **Market town character with its focus on the historic core around the Market Place, Castle Street, church and site of the former castle.**
- 3) **Medieval street pattern and historic buildings in and around the historic core.**
- 4) **Site of the Norman castle and open space with scenic views and a sense of history.**
- 5) **Industrial heritage evident in a number of former 19th century brick factory buildings serving as a reminder of the importance of the hosiery and knitting industry to the town.**
- 6) **A unified vernacular of red brick, interesting architectural details and simple Victorian factory buildings.**
- 7) **Green open spaces including Argents Mead and Hollycroft Park, and vegetation provide amenity, texture and interest to the streetscape.**
- 8) **St Mary's Church spire forms a distinctive landmark feature in views across the town.**



Townscape Character

- 6.59 Hinckley is a market town with a relatively compact form centred on the historic core at The Market Place, Castle Street, St Mary's Church and Castle Hill, albeit the town has expanded in recent decades.
- 6.60 The historic core remains the focus for the town, and the moat, war memorial and open space near the church provide high quality open space. The original medieval street pattern persists and many historic buildings remain, set within a mix of much altered old buildings and modern infill development. Castle Street contains terraced buildings of differing heights with low eaves and multi-paned windows. The main uses are retail, and shop fronts tend to be ornate with doorways set back from the street frontage.
- 6.61 Close to the town centre small residential terraces are typical next to Victorian factory buildings which provide a reminder of the importance of the hosiery industry to the development of the town in the 19th century. On the whole the scale of buildings is modest, up to two storeys, with larger scale brick Victorian industrial buildings at three to four storeys.
- 6.6 Further from the town centre buildings are larger terraces or sometimes semi-detached with bay windows and gable ends on the frontages. The town has undergone significant post-war and modern expansion northwards towards the A47 road, west towards the A5 and east towards Barwell. Residential and industrial mixed uses characterise the outer parts of the town.
- 6.63 St Mary's Church spire is a key landmark and can be seen above the roofs of buildings in views throughout the town.
- 6.64 The canal and marina in the west of the town provide features of interest.
- 6.65 The variety of buildings, architectural distinctiveness and integrated areas of trees and green space give a sense of history and strong texture to the Hinckley. The varied roof shapes and generally modest scale create a sense of unity, and the larger buildings are generally simple in style and well-proportioned.
- 6.66 There are some detracting features in the town. Some buildings and areas in the town centre are in a poor state of repair and the unified character is sometimes disrupted by garish signage, dominant road junctions and clutter, extensive areas of car parks and unsympathetic materials on some more modern buildings which do not respect their local context. Replacement with modern shop facades has removed some of the character from buildings. Large modern commercial buildings such as the Nationwide building are out of scale with the surrounding context and fail to adequately address the street frontage resulting in a lack of vitality in the northern end of Regent Street. Unfortunately many of the late 20th century developments show little respect to their context and are typical of the anonymous suburbs found across the country.

Materials and Local vernacular

- 6.67 There is a wide variety of architectural styles, with many interesting buildings in the town centre which have unique and locally distinctive details. The prevailing material is red brick with slate roofs, and stone used on grander buildings and the church, and some facades are rendered and painted.
- 6.68 Victorian factory buildings are usually simple in style and constructed of red brick. The Druid Street area contains a number of surviving industrial buildings including fine gated industrial interior courtyards and jitties (pedestrian footways) associated with the development of the 19th century hosiery industry, outstanding late Victorian, Edwardian and Art Deco factories and a cluster of mid Victorian community buildings.
- 6.69 19th century brick buildings with tall narrow windows, stone lintels and gables fronting the street are characteristic. Curved and circular



windows provide variety to the streetscene. Boundaries are characteristically brick walls or hedges.

- 6.70 The museum on Lower Bond Street is of particular interest because of its prominent position and its historic interest. It dates from the 17th century and was originally a house and knitting shop. It is timber framed with brick infill panels and has a thatched roof with brick chimney stacks.
- 6.71 The Atkins building on Lower Bond Street is of national historic interest and makes an important contribution to the streetscape.
- 6.7 Some early 20th century buildings with Art Deco influences are present including the former High Cross underwear and knitwear factory on Regent Street. These buildings have flat roofs and multi-divided windows with metal frames typical of the period.

Green Spaces

- 6.73 Open spaces in the town provide visual amenity. The most substantial area of open space is located around Argents Mead. There are a number of other green spaces within the town.
- 6.74 Hollycroft Park opened in 1936 as a public park providing for the recreational and sporting needs of the local community. It included a bandstand, pavilion and formal planting which still remain. The park, houses and civic buildings in the surrounding roads which were built around the same time are now designated as a Conservation Area.
- 6.75 The Ashby Canal provides a naturalistic feature within the town and the towing path provides an important recreational asset within the town and with the surrounding countryside. Converted warehouses at Hinckley Wharf provide features of interest.

Historical and Cultural Influences

- 6.76 Archaeological finds indicate that a settlement existed in Hinckley during Roman times. By the 13th century the village had grown into a small town with a market.

- 6.77 The town was a centre for the local wool and knitting industries, with large hosiery factories built in the 19th century, many of which still survive as indicators of the importance of the industry to the growth and prosperity of the town.

- 6.78 There are three Conservation Areas in Hinckley located in the centre of the town. The town centre Conservation Area is centred on Castle Street, Regent Street and the Market Place, which retains much of its character with many interesting buildings from key periods of its history. The Druid Street Conservation Area highlights the importance of the hosiery industry to Hinckley's heritage; the Druid Street area was the major centre for the town's industrial development during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and is fortunate to have escaped modern development. The Hollycroft Conservation Area is centred on Hollycroft Park. The park and surrounding streets were developed in the 1930s as a public open space with facilities for bowls, tennis and miniature golf. A band stand with a large amphitheatre was also constructed and during the 1930's visiting bands included the Brighthouse and Rastrick Brass Band. These areas and a number of listed buildings, provide a strong sense of historic interest.

- 6.79 The Ashby Canal crosses the western part of Hinckley and is designated a Conservation Area in recognition of its industrial importance. It was built to connect the coal mining areas north of the borough with the Coventry Canal. It opened in 1798, operating between Ashby Wolds and Market Bosworth, and was linked to the Coventry Canal a few years later.

- 6.80 The site of the Norman Castle on Argents Mead is a Scheduled Monument. The motte and bailey castle was built in the 11th century, and although the castle and motte no longer survive, a raised area of ground marks the banks of the former bailey surrounded by a moat. There is considerable potential for archaeological evidence within the earthworks and ditch.

Key Sensitivities and Values

- 1) Hollycroft Park provides green space and recreational amenity, of which the character extends to the surrounding streets.
- 2) Views to St Mary's Church provide a distinctive sense of place.
- 3) Site of the Norman Castle and Argents Mead open space which provides a sense of nature, green space, history and important local distinctiveness.
- 4) The town's association with the hosiery industry evident in a number of surviving 19th century brick factory buildings.
- 5) The narrow gap between Hinckley and Barwell is a key sensitivity as it maintains the sense of separation and individual identity of the two towns.
- 6) The strong character achieved by the use of locally distinctive materials and detailing, unified streetscape and roofscape and vegetation and open spaces.
- 7) Medieval street pattern with long, gently winding main streets with narrow lanes, jitties and yards running off.
- 8) Distinctive buildings, many of which are listed, and local vernacular buildings provide sense of place.
- 9) The Ashby Canal, which provides a naturalistic feature within the town and the towing path provides a valued recreational asset and heritage connection to the surrounding countryside.

Townscape Strategies

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|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Prioritise local distinctiveness in every element of change and future development. 2) Ensure that new development is carefully designed to respect its surroundings and setting, avoiding anonymous suburban style developments. 3) Protect and enhance heritage assets including Hinckley's industrial heritage. 4) Promote green infrastructure links with open spaces, the canal and marina. 5) Enhance streetscape through sensitive refurbishment of historic buildings, and enhancement of public realm. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6) Enhance the quality of the market place as a focus for the town. 7) Consider strategies to reduce the impacts (visual, noise and character) of the roads and junctions through the central part of Hinckley e.g. by rationalising street furniture, guard railings and increasing street trees or planting to screen. 8) Consider rationalising car parks to reduce their visual impact and potentially use as an opportunity to enhance green infrastructure links through the town. 9) Maintaining the separate identity from Burbage to the south. |
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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.

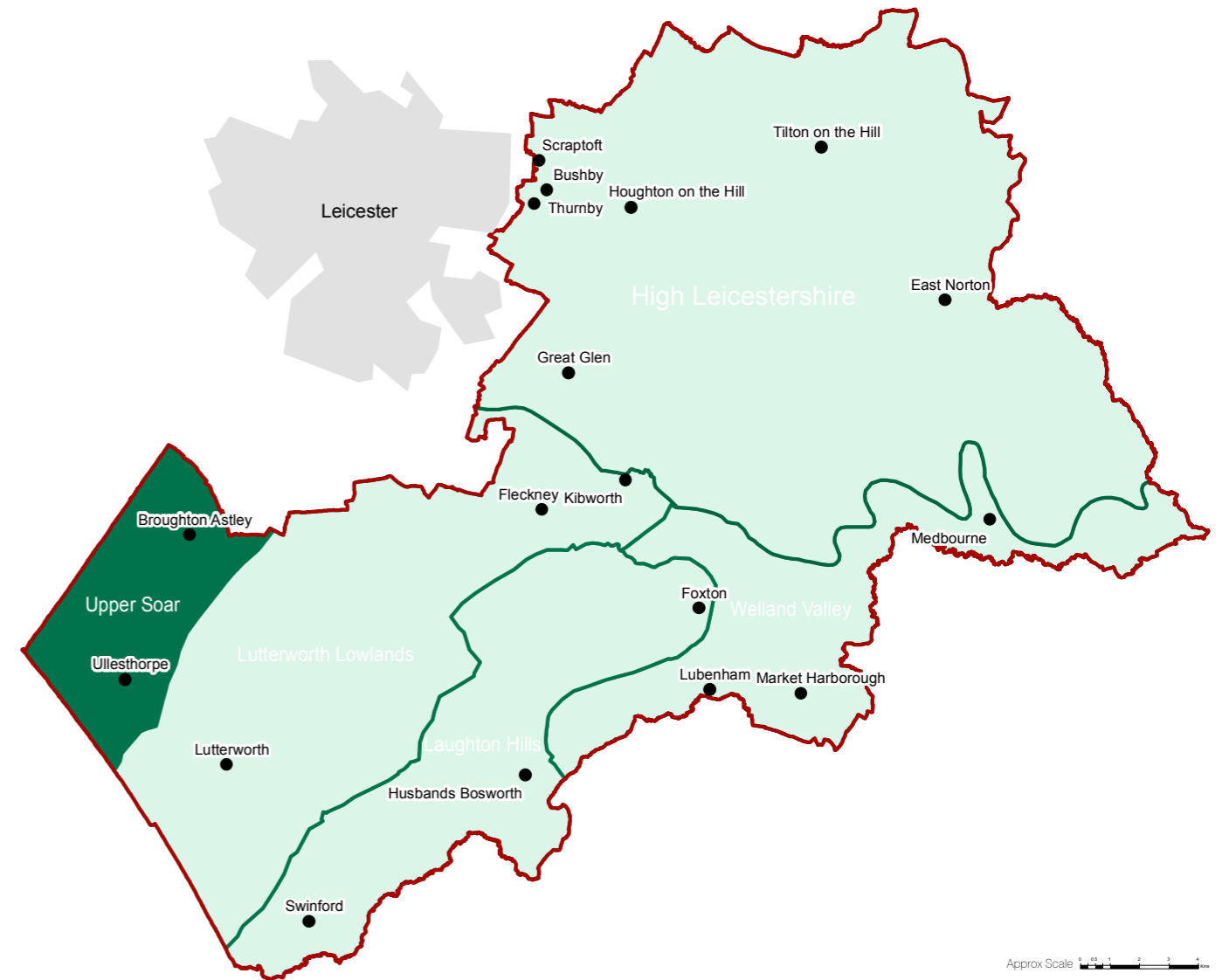
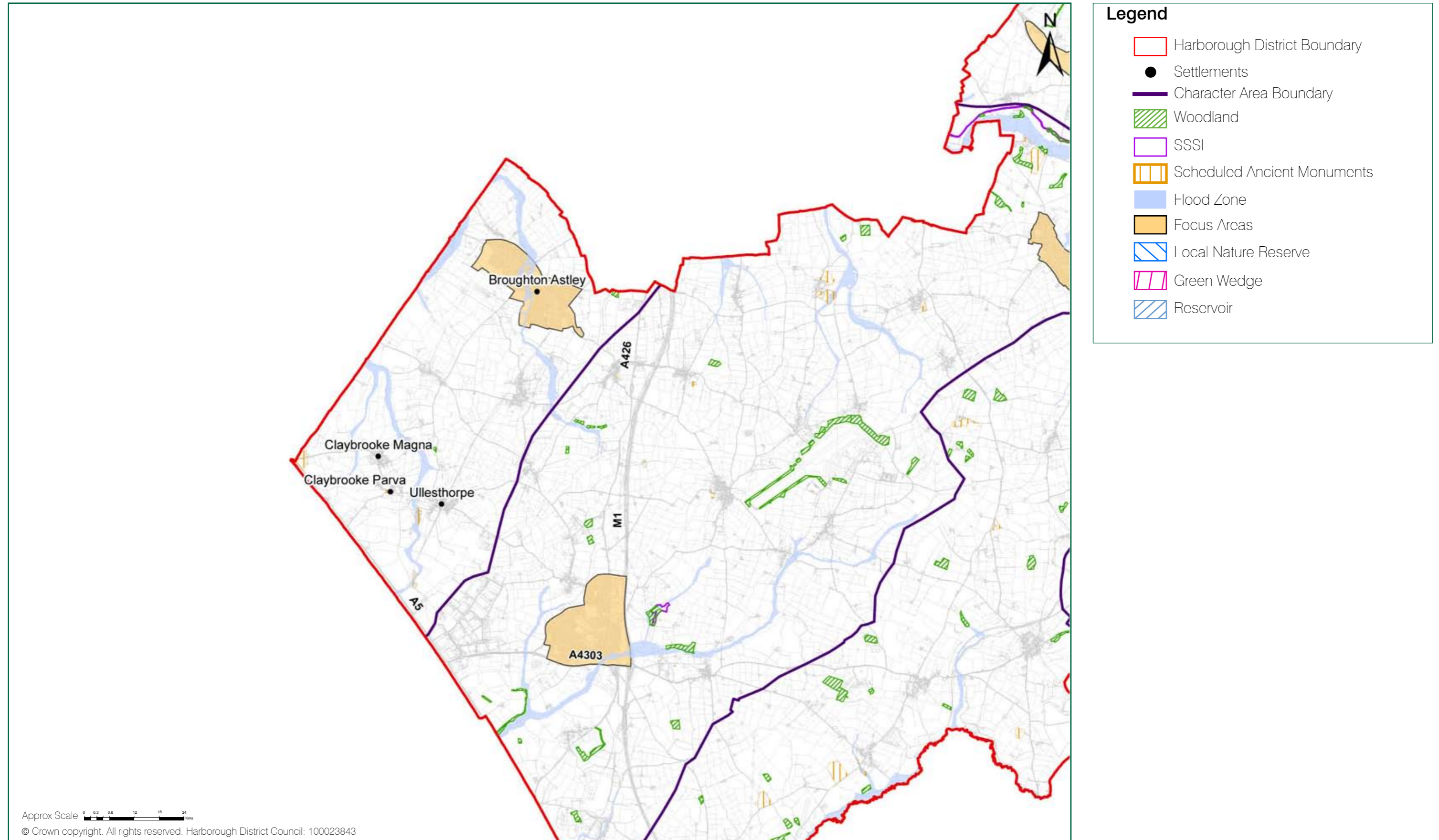


Figure 1.8: - Upper Soar- Landscape Character Plan



Legend

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

Approx Scale 0 0.3 0.6 1.2 1.8 2.4 Kms
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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.

Annex 4 ◆ GLVIA Glossary of Terms

TERM AND DEFINITION
Baseline
<p>The existing (pre-development) landscape and visual context of a study area, including landscape fabric, landscape character and existing views. The landscape baseline is not static and may be changing for various reasons. The landscape baseline can also consider such factors and describe the likely future landscape character of the landscape, without the proposed development.</p>
Effects
<p>A predicted change in the environmental baseline as a result of the proposed development. Effects can be positive or negative.</p>
Field Pattern
<p>The pattern of hedges and walls that define fields in farmed landscapes (LI/IEMA 2002).</p>
Intervisibility
<p>Two points on the ground or two features are described as intervisible when visible from each other.</p>
Landscape
<p>Landscape results from the way that different aspects of our environment (physical, social, aesthetic and perceptual) interact together and are perceived by us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical elements – e.g. geology, landform, soils, flora and fauna;

TERM AND DEFINITION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social elements – e.g. land use, enclosure patterns, and the patterns, form and scale of settlements and other built development; • Aesthetic factors – e.g. colour, form, visual texture and pattern, sounds, smells and touch; and • Perceptual factors – e.g. memories, associations, stimuli and preferences.
Landscape Capacity
<p>The degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed.</p>
Landscape Character
<p>Landscape character arises from a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of physical and social elements, aesthetic factors and perceptual aspects in the landscape.</p>
Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)
<p>Single unique areas that are discrete geographical areas containing one or more landscape types.</p>
Landscape Character Types (LCTs)
<p>Generic units of landscape that display a distinct, consistent and recognisable landscape character.</p>
Landscape Condition
<p>Description of the maintenance and condition of landscape elements and the degree to which landscape elements are representative of the landscape character area.</p>

TERM AND DEFINITION
Landscape Element
A physical component (both natural and manmade) of the landscape.
Landscape Fabric
The elements and features that constitute the physical components of the landscape, including ground vegetation, hedgerows, trees, shrubs, walls, fences and vernacular structures.
Landscape Units
An umbrella term for landscape character areas and landscape character types.
Landscape Value
The importance or value of the landscape to society, usually based on landscape designations or policies as indicators of recognised value.
Mitigation
Measures, including any process, activity or design that will avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for the predicted effects of a development on the environmental baseline.
Public Access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitive rights of way – public footpaths, bridleways, cycle routes, Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATS) and highways. Shown on Definitive Rights of Way maps held by the Local Authority. • Permissive paths and bridleways – routes where there is public access with the permission of the landowner. Such routes are usually closed at least one day a year to prevent establishment of a public right of way;

TERM AND DEFINITION

- **Public open space** – areas designated for specified public uses, usually in the ownership of the Local Authority. Includes parks and recreation grounds. Shown on Local Development Plans;
- **Beaches** – the public have permitted access to much of the foreshore (intertidal zone – between high and low tide marks) owned by the Crown Estate, and on land above high water mark owned by the Local Authority. Some beaches above high tide mark are privately owned and some beaches and foreshore have restricted access for military purposes;
- **Access land** – land where public access is currently permitted with the permission of landowners. Includes land outlined in purple on the OS Explorer (1:25,000) sheets and with:
 - No symbol – land open to public with permission of owners;
 - White oak leaf in purple box – National Trust, always open;
 - Purple oak leaf in white box – National Trust limited access;
 - Tree symbols in purple box – Forestry Commission;
 - Single leaf in purple box – Woodland Trust; and
 - White “AL” in purple box – other access land.
- **Open access land** – areas of mountains, moor, heath, down, common land and coastal foreshore that have been designated under Section 2 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The right of access is for walkers only and does not extend to cycling, horse riding or driving a vehicle, nor does the right of access apply to developed land, gardens or cultivated land. Under the CRow Act 2000, there was a process of consultation that allowed the right of appeal for those with a legal interest in the land, and for sensitive ecological or archaeological sites to be excluded. Conclusive maps showing the areas designated as open access land (Registered Common Land and Open Country) are now available from Natural England (in England) and the Countryside Council for Wales (in Wales).

Viewing Distance

TERM AND DEFINITION
<p>That distance that a viewpoint illustration should be held from the eye in order for the illustration to match the scale of the actual view when used in the field to identify the location and scale of the proposed development.</p>
Visibility
<p>Visibility is a measure of the distance that can be seen by the human eye at any one time. Daylight visibility will depend on several factors, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atmospheric transparency (governed by the solid and liquid particles held in suspension in the atmosphere); • Degree of contrast between an object and the background against which it is observed; • Position of the sun; and • Observer’s visual acuity.
Visual Receptor(s)
<p>An individual observer or group of observers who are capable of experiencing a change in the view.</p>
Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)
<p>The ZTVs consider the ‘bareground’ situation and assume excellent visibility with no atmospheric attenuation. The ZTVs therefore represent the maximum potential, theoretical visibility i.e. the worst-case situation. In reality, other components of the landscape such as forestry, trees, buildings etc. will introduce screening effects which, coupled with the atmospheric conditions, will reduce this visibility, in some instances to a considerable extent.</p>

Annex 5 ◆ Photomontage Methodology

OVERVIEW

- A5.1 A verified photomontage is a visual representation of a proposed development that is as accurate as it is possible to be within the limits of the technology used and the available data. Although it is not possible to achieve 100% perfect accuracy due to minor errors in survey work, environmental variables and photographic distortion, the careful implementation of a best practice method will result in only a negligible error.
- A5.2 The photomontage images represent how the proposed development would be perceived from a number of representative viewpoints. These locations were chosen as the result of a detailed consideration of sensitive viewpoints.
- A5.3 The methods described in this document are based on current best practice and follow recommendations from ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd edition’ (GLVIA3), Landscape Institute and IEMA (2013), alongside the Landscape Institute technical guidance note, ‘Visual Representation of Development Proposals’, (LI 06/19).

METHODOLOGY

Photography

- A5.4 During the field study, a photographic record was made to represent the full range of potential views towards the site from available viewpoints within the study area. These locations are mapped, the visual receptor types recorded, and viewpoint context described. All photographs have been taken from publicly accessible locations. The methodology ensures that the combination of camera and lens recreates as close as possible what can be seen by the human eye.

Equipment

- A5.5 The aim of a photomontage is to illustrate what a proposed development may look like to a person standing at a specified viewpoint. In order to create this effect, all photographs are taken with a camera and lens combination, resulting in a ‘standard’ focal length (equivalent to the cone of human vision). A standard focal length is usually considered to be in the range 45mm to 55mm on a traditional 35mm film camera. On digital cameras, where the image sensor is often smaller than the recorded image on traditional film cameras, the focal length of the lens used must compensate for the effective magnification resulting from the smaller sensor.
- A5.6 A Canon EOS 5D Mark IV full frame sensor (FFS) camera was used for daytime summer views and a Canon EOS 5D Mark II FFS camera was used for the daytime winter views. A Canon 5D Mark II FFS was also used for winter night views in conjunction with a 50mm

prime lens (35mm format equivalent), which is within the 'standard' focal length range. The full frame sensor in all the cameras therefore, results in no magnification. To eliminate the parallax error that occurs when taking panoramic images, a sliding plate on the tripod head was employed allowing the camera to be moved back along the line of sight so that the nodal point of the lens was positioned directly over the axis of rotation.

IMAGE CAPTURE

- A5.7 The camera was mounted on a tripod using a panoramic tripod head at 1.6m above ground level to simulate the view at eye level. The orientation of the camera was adjusted so that the optical axis and the horizontal axis were aligned with the horizon. This is the 'astronomical' horizon as set by a gravity governed bubble level.
- A5.8 Images were captured in the camera's RAW format for maximum quality and control of each view. Camera settings were chosen carefully for each viewpoint; the camera was set to aperture priority mode, a small aperture of f/11 was used and the focus distance selected specifically to render all parts of the scene in focus whilst retaining image quality.
- A5.9 Panoramas were deemed essential to show the maximum extent of the Proposed Development and so frames were taken at 15-degree intervals to allow for overlap (discussed below).

POST PRODUCTION

- A5.10 The panoramas were stitched together using PTGui Pro specialist panorama creation software, with each photograph being cropped to take only the central portion of each image. These precautions minimise the small amount of optical distortion effect caused by the camera lens. Images were imported as jpeg files and minor tonal and colour adjustments were made which aim to replicate the scene as honestly as possible as it was perceived by the photographer at the time of capture. The stitched cylindrical panorama was then cropped to varying fields of view for use as a baseline 'existing' view.

SURVEY

- A5.11 Precise surveying is essential to gain accurate information of the camera and control point positions. GPS readings were taken from the central tripod position that the camera was placed using a GNSS Receiver, which achieved a 25mm degree of tolerance.

CONTROL POINTS

- A5.12 Control points are surveyed points/objects that can clearly be identified on the photograph. Since they are included in the 3D model, they can be visually matched with the corresponding points on the photograph. Control points were identified within each photograph and marked for the survey team to take measurements. A minimum of three

control points were chosen of fixed features such as lampposts, fence posts and sign posts. Occasionally if available, control points taken from another viewpoint were also used for even more accurate positioning of the 3D model within the photograph.

- A5.13 Survey poles were also used as temporary control points where minimal fixed control points were available. These control points were then created within the 3D program in the precise positions.
- A5.14 Control points were taken using the aforementioned GNSS receiver and a Leica Total Station in the case of the winter viewpoints.
- A5.15 All survey measurements were supplied in CAD format for use in the 3D model.

3D MODEL

- A5.16 3D models were created from the design information supplied and were aligned within 3DS Max using the Parameters Plan and Illustrative Masterplan to determine the X and Y position. Finished floor levels were then used to accurately position the 3D model vertically Above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

VEGETATION GROWTH

- A5.17 When developing the model at year 15, judgements need to be made about the growth rate of the planting proposed. Given the species selected as part of the Illustrative Landscape Strategy, woodland vegetation and trees have been illustrated at between 8 and 10m with some fluctuation in size to add an element of realism to the model.

CAMERA MATCHING AND RENDERING

- A5.18 The process of camera matching (i.e. correctly assembling the perspective views within the 3D program to match those photographs taken on site) needs meticulous attention to detail. The details of the Ordnance Survey co-ordinates for each viewpoint, and the angle of each view were also checked as part of the verification process.
- A5.19 The survey information was added into the 3D model and aligned precisely with the OS coordinate system. '3D' Cameras (or perspective views) were then created within 3DS Max at each of the viewpoint locations and raised by 1.6m to match the position at eye-level that was achieved during photography.
- A5.20 3D control points were created to match those visible in each of the panoramas and positioned according to the survey data. Any atmospheric conditions experienced at the time of taking the photograph were added to the model. For example, haze or reflected sunlight.

- A5.21 As an additional aid in the camera matching process, a terrain was created of the site using contours from the Environment Agency 1m LiDAR Digital Surface Model data. This was used to align with the terrain visible in each viewpoint.
- A5.22 Using the '3D' camera each cylindrical panorama was used as a backdrop and rendered using a V-Ray camera option that mirrors the distortion exhibited in a cylindrical panorama. Adjustments were then made to the camera angle and the position of the photograph to align the 3D control points with the real-life equivalents shown in each panorama, thus creating a 'photo-matched' viewpoint with the model aligned at the correct scale and angle.
- A5.23 A daylight system was created within 3DS Max using the geographic location and time Zone and setting the correct time that the viewpoint was captured. This allows for the accurate creation of shadows as at the time of taking the photograph. For viewpoints taken in full cloud, a High Dynamic Range Image (HDRI) was mapped as a 'dome light' within 3DS Max and used as the main light source. A HDRI is an image format that contains a large amount of shadow and highlight information and can be used to illuminate a 3D scene, providing a good representation of conditions on a cloudy day.

POST PRODUCTION

- A5.24 Care was taken in Adobe Photoshop to mask out elements of the 3D model that may be obscured by foreground objects to produce the final visualisations.

Night Photomontages

- A5.25 Night photography causes a number of issues that have a knock-on effect on the creation of photomontages meaning that they must be viewed as a representation of what is likely to be seen rather than a perfectly accurate portrayal of what the eye will see. The white balance must be amended in the post production stage to counteract the colour casts caused by the many light sources within the photographs (i.e. Ambient light, moonlight, tungsten light from the street lamps/houses/artificial lighting).
- A5.26 Long exposure times are necessary with night photography leading to difficulties in getting a shot due to moving light from cars and aeroplanes. Where possible, twilight was chosen to capture night photographs that minimise long exposure times, which cause light trails from cars.
- A5.27 Lens flare is a by-product of night photography. This can be minimised by using a high aperture, though this increases the depth of field thus making the areas of the photograph not in focus blurred. A slightly lower aperture was chosen to keep as much of the proposal in focus as possible allowing the side affect of the lens flare.
- A5.28 To achieve a higher degree of accuracy in the render, photometric lights were used within 3DS Max. Information on the specific lights to be used was supplied in the form of a lighting strategy, and 3D models of the chosen luminaires were sourced, along with the relevant IES files supplied by Holophane. These are files containing accurate information

about the Lux levels cast by the light as well as the spread and can be used within 3D programs. Lights were positioned within the 3D model to the limits of the available information to mirror the proposed lights within the site.

A5.29 Due to the nature of night photomontages, it is not possible to show the effect of the proposed lights on the surrounding existing vegetation, or the effect that other light sources have within the viewpoint (i.e. lights from buildings). Atmospheric conditions also play a part in how light sources are viewed, and have more impact when the viewpoint is further away. These conditions are recreated subjectively based on the night photography.

REFERENCES

All photomontages were created in accordance with recommendations given in the following publications:

Landscape Institute and IEMA (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd edition (GLVIA3).

Landscape Institute:

Note 06/19 - Visual Representation of Development Proposals;

Note 07/19 - Visual Representation of Development Proposals: Glossary and Abbreviations;

Note 08/19 - Visual Representation of Development Proposals: Camera Auto Settings; and

Scottish Natural Heritage (2017) Visual representation of windfarms: good practice guidance. ('SNH 2017').

CAVEATS

i. A photomontage can never be considered as a 100% accurate representation of what would be seen due to the large number of variables affecting the images from the photography to the limitations of the 3D programs. They should be used as an aid to the decision-making process.

ii. The night photography did not include precise Ordnance Survey coordinates, therefore the camera has been positioned using aerial photography and uses the previously mentioned control points to align the view correctly. These should be considered as Landscape Institute 'Type 3' photomontages.