

Preliminary Landscape Assessment
of
Alternative Strategic Development Areas

on behalf of

Harborough District Council

September 2106

Quality Control

Preliminary Landscape Assessment of Alternative Strategic Development Areas

For

Harborough District Council

Checked by Project Manager:

Approved by:

Signature:



Signature:



Name: Jonathan Billingsley

Name: Jonathan Billingsley

Title: Director

Title: Director

Date: 25th July 2016

Date: 7th September 2016

The Landscape Partnership Ltd is a practice of Chartered Landscape Architects, Chartered Town Planners and Chartered Environmentalists, registered with the Landscape Institute and a member of the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment & the Arboricultural Association

The Landscape Partnership

Registered office
Greenwood House
15a St Cuthbert's Street
Bedford
MK40 3JG

Registered in England No. 2709001

Contents

Report

1	Introduction	4
2	Methodology	6
3	Lutterworth East	11
4	Kibworth Harcourt	26
5	Scraptoft North	43
6	Summary and Comparison of SDAs	59

Appendices

Appendix 1	Summary Comparison Table of Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Criteria for SDA's
Appendix 2	SDA Sub-Area Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Pro Forma
Appendix 3	Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Criteria
Appendix 4	Figures & Viewpoints (separate A3 document)

Lutterworth East

Figure LE01	Location Plan
Figure LE02	Aerial Photograph
Figure LE03	1904 OS Plan
Figure LE04	1965 OS Plan
Figure LE05	Local Viewpoints
Figure LE06	Wider Viewpoints
Figure LE07	Constraints
Figure LE08	Preliminary Landscape Strategy
Lutterworth East Viewpoints	

Kibworth Harcourt

Figure KH01	Location Plan
Figure KH02	Aerial Photograph
Figure KH03	1904 OS Plan
Figure KH04	1952-53 OS Plan
Figure KH05	Local Viewpoints
Figure KH06	Wider Viewpoints
Figure KH07	Constraints
Figure KH08	Preliminary Landscape Strategy
Kibworth Harcourt Viewpoints	

Scraptoft North

Figure S01	Location Plan
Figure S02	Aerial Photograph
Figure S03	1904 OS Plan
Figure S04	1956-66 OS Plan
Figure S05	Local Viewpoints
Figure S06	Wider Viewpoints
Figure S07	Constraints
Figure S08	Preliminary Landscape Strategy
Scraptoft Viewpoints	

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of Harborough District Council (HDC) by The Landscape Partnership (TLP) to provide a Preliminary Landscape Assessment of three Alternative Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) within Harborough District. The aim of the study is to compare the landscape impacts of the potential SDAs being considered as part of the new Local Plan and to inform the selection of a preferred option.
- 1.2 The three potential SDAs are :
- Lutterworth East
 - North and East of Kibworth Harcourt
 - Scraftoft North
- 1.3 Options involving the concept of one or more Strategic Development Areas, formed part of the New Local Plan Options consultation which was held in September/October 2015. Subject to Executive approval, it is expected that the above options will be taken forward for further investigation. As part of this work, an assessment of the existing landscape around each SDA and a comparison of the likely landscape impacts of development was commissioned by Harborough District Council.
- 1.4 The brief required the following should be addressed for each SDA:
- General sensitivity of local landscape;
 - An indication of the capacity of the landscape of each SDA. This should indicate areas where development would have most negative impacts and whether these are mitigatable in any way;
 - Impact of SDA on settlement and landscape setting; and
 - Main mitigation considerations for each SDA.
- 1.5 It was an important part of the brief that the findings for each SDA were comparable to enable a relative ranking of the SDAs in terms of sensitivity and negative impacts, taking into account potential mitigation.
- 1.6 The study includes the following stages:
- Review of baseline site constraints;

- Site visit to assess main landscape and visual characteristics of areas/SDAs:
- Identification of opportunities/constraints;
- Report to include introduction, methodology, landscape character background, assessment of landscape/features/characteristics and overview comparison of the 3 SDAs;
- Supporting maps/drawings/photographs as appropriate.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 To provide a comparative approach for each of the potential SDAs involved the following stages.

Desk Based Study

2.2 The initial stages of the project involved gathering of GIS data for each of the SDA sites and local area. This included the following data sets:

- OS mapping at 1:10,000 scale
- Contour information at 5m intervals
- Public footpaths and bridleways
- Wildlife sites including SSSIs
- Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings
- Flood Zone
- Landscape designations

2.3 The GIS mapping was gathered into a GIS project to produce plans of various features and constraints, which were then used in the field stage of the project.

2.4 Historic OS maps were evaluated using the on line resource Old Maps. Two map dates of 1904 and 1965-1968 were selected to illustrate landscape change over the last 100 years. Aerial photographs were also reviewed to provide a record of current conditions and the presence of vegetation.

2.5 A range of landscape character and capacity studies have been produced covering the study areas which were reviewed as follows:

- National Character Areas (NCAs) as published by Natural England
- East Midlands Regional Character Areas
- Harborough District Landscape Character Areas (September 2007)
- Leicester PUA Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study (2009 and 2016)

-
- Lutterworth and Broughton Astley Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study (2011)
 - Rural Centres Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study (2014)
NB. relevant to Kibworth Harcourt

Field Work

2.6 Following the gathering of the desk study information each of the three sites were visited by Jonathan Billingsley (CMLI) in June and July 2016. On each occasion the weather was dry and with clear visibility
The purpose of the site visit was to:

- Identify and verify the key characteristics of the SDAs including topographical features, vegetation, land use and built features
- Assess the condition of the landscape
- Review the appropriateness of the landscape character strategies identified at the district scale in the previous Landscape Character Assessments and Capacity Studies relevant to the SDAs.
- Identify any sub-divisions of each the SDA in landscape character terms. These were not based on a small 'Parcel' scale (as carried out for the Landscape Character Assessments and Capacity Studies) but broader areas.
- Assess the visibility of the SDAs from publicly accessible locations
- Assess the extent of visibility from private locations using the nearest public location
- Take photographs from a range of representative viewpoints

Report

2.7 The report provides an assessment of each of the SDAs describing the following areas:

- Topography
- Vegetation features
- Land-use, scale and complexity
- Historical integrity and landscape change

- Built features and focal points - including major transport infrastructure
- Landscape condition
- Visibility from public locations
- Visibility from private locations
- Relationship with existing settlements
- Effect on coalescence
- Designations – landscape, wildlife and heritage where they inform character
- Scenic Beauty – including tranquillity and conservation interests

2.8 The range of factors considered in this report, as listed above, utilises criteria included in the various Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Studies carried out by TLP for Harborough District Council between 2009-2016. In addition, three further criteria were added including: historic integrity landscape change, built features and focal points and criteria for scenic beauty to provide a measure of the relative scenic attraction of areas in the absence of any existing local landscape designation based on landscape quality.

2.9 A measure of the relative sensitivity of each of the separate criteria was undertaken within each of the Sub-Areas of each SDA. The sensitivity was measured on a five-point scale from A to E where A is the least sensitive and E the most sensitive. Appendix 3 provides a benchmark description for each criteria on this five-point scale against which the circumstances within each Sub-Area of the SDA were evaluated. A record of the relative sensitivity and capacity for all criteria within each Sub-Area of the SDA's is provided on pro-forma's within Appendix 2. A comparative summary for all three SDA's is provided within Appendix 1.

2.10 The first 11 criteria combined to provide an overall measure of landscape sensitivity. The remaining two criteria relate to landscape value and when combined with the overall landscape sensitivity provide a measure of landscape capacity for the Sub-Areas within the SDA's. This can be summarised as follows:

landscape factors + visual factors = landscape sensitivity + landscape value = landscape capacity

2.11 This methodology is based on the approach set out in the Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity (The Countryside Agency 2002). A similar approach was also used in the various Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity studies previously carried out

for Harborough District Council by TLP. Natural England are currently reviewing updated guidance for assessing landscape sensitivity and capacity but the document is not yet published so reference to the 2002 Topic Paper is still considered valid.

- 2.12 No numerical 'scoring' is provided in this study on the prospective SDA's which was used in the prior Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Studies. This is since the three SDAs are different in location, character and context. The previous scoring system was primarily devised to guide relative suitability for development for residential and/or commercial uses at a smaller scale unit and within individual settlements rather than to provide a comparison between settlements/alternative SDA locations. In addition, the criteria were not weighted and it may be that some criteria on relatively greater importance when it comes to making judgements on overall suitability of SDA. In this study of three SDAs the professional view of the balance of factors is considered more important rather than a reliance on a simple numeric score.
- 2.13 Based on the range of constraints a preliminary landscape strategy is provided for each SDA showing a potential structure for development taking into account the various site constraints. This identifies:
- Areas for potential residential development – some areas being noted as more sensitive
 - Areas for potential commercial development
 - Areas suited for strategic green infrastructure
 - Areas for strategic planting
 - Locations for potential site access and/or bypass/relief road
- 2.14 Finally, a comparison of the three SDAs is set out. The main criteria considered are summarised in a supporting table (see Appendix 1), including reference to Sub-Areas within the SDAs and with an overview of the relative sensitivity.

Study Limitations

- 2.15 The following limitations of the study should be recognised by the reader:
- This is a preliminary landscape assessment aims to provide an overview of each SDA and any component Sub-Areas.
 - The field work was carried out in June and July when vegetation was in full leaf. While some assumptions have been made about the likely effects in the winter months this would need verifying by visiting the site within the winter period.

- The study focuses on landscape and visual factors. Other technical topics including: traffic, flooding, noise, ecology, rights of way and heritage should be informed by specialists. However, some observations are provided from a landscape perspective in the report where there is an interface with these topics.
- No reference has been made in the study to the material produced by promoters of the SDAs. The study aims to provide an independent opinion on the relative suitability of the SDA sites at this preliminary stage. However, it is envisaged that at later stage there could be some dialogue with the promoters of the alternative SDA sites.
- The assessment does not provide a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in accordance with GLVIA (3rd Edition) as this would be required at a later stage to support any future planning application. An LVIA would need to evaluate a specific proposal.

3 LUTTERWORTH EAST

Location

3.1 The Lutterworth East SDA occupies c. 204ha and is primarily located on agricultural land to the east of both Lutterworth and the M1 (see Figure LE 01). The SDA comprises three Sub-Areas A-C. The core of the area (Area A) is bounded by the A4304 to the south, M1 to the west, Misterton to the south-east and agricultural land to the east and north-east. A small broadly rectangular part of the SDA is located north of Lutterworth, west of the M1 and east of the A426 (Area B). A further smaller triangular area is located south of the A4304 and east of the M1 (Area C).

Landscape Character Assessments

National scale

3.2 At a national scale the SDA falls within NCA 94: Leicestershire Vales. The details for this NCA were updated in 2014¹.

3.3 The key characteristics of NCA 94 include the following which are relevant to Lutterworth East:

- *An open landscape of gentle clay ridges and valleys..... 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. The NCA's woodland character is derived largely from spinneys and copses on the ridges and more undulating land and hedgerow trees and hedgerows.*
- *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.*

¹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4900422342934528?category=587130>

- *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.*
- *Rich and varied historic landscape, prominent historic parklands and country houses, ridge-and-furrow earthworks and important medieval settlement remains.*

3.4 Statements of Environmental Opportunity include the following of relevance to the SDA:

- *SEO 1: Protect and appropriately manage the strong historic character and heritage and the geological assets within the rural and urban landscapes, maintaining the evidence of past land use and connections between agriculture, settlement pattern and topography, as well as the significant places and events that took place within the area, so that the area can be enjoyed by all. Ensure that development is fully integrated into and informed by the landscape.*
- *SEO 2: Manage, conserve and enhance the woodlands, hedgerows, streams and rivers – particularly the rivers Soar, Sence, Swift and Welland – in both rural and urban areas, to enhance biodiversity and recreation opportunities; improve water quality, flow and availability; benefit soil quality; and limit soil erosion.*
- *SEO 3: Increase, manage and enhance the recreational assets, principally the rights of way network, country parks such as Watermead and historic linear features such as the canals. Improve access to these assets and the open countryside from the city of Leicester and surrounding rural communities and provide green infrastructure to help improve people's health and wellbeing.*
- *SEO 4: Create new habitats where opportunities exist, such as woodlands and wetlands at old gravel extraction sites, to extend, link or buffer areas of existing habitat to reduce the impacts of fragmentation. Manage existing grassland, woodlands, coverts and spinneys that contribute to sense of place, enhancing biodiversity resilience and habitat networks.*

Regional scale

3.5 In April 2010 a Regional Landscape Character Assessment for the East Midlands was completed. This document identifies the 31 regional landscape character types present across the whole East Midlands Region. It describes the major forces for change that the Regional landscapes are experiencing and where these are being experienced. It also provides broad level guidance to inform policy across the Region, by identifying distinctive, rare or special characteristics.

3.6 Within this Regional Assessment, Lutterworth East falls entirely within Landscape Character Type 5C: Undulating Mixed Farmlands. The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are described as:

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

District Scale

3.7 Harborough District Council commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment of the whole district, completed in September 2007. This study identified five different Landscape Character Areas based on those defined in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy. Lutterworth East is located with the Lutterworth Lowlands character area.

3.8 The key characteristics of the Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area include:

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

3.9 The capacity of the Lutterworth Lowlands to accommodate new development is assessed a Medium to High. The assessment states,

'The Lutterworth lowlands character area represents a changing landscape, with many recent developments around the fringes of existing settlements. Expansion due to new development areas may mean that the area is under threat of losing some of its rural characteristics. The area has some limited capacity to accommodate a localised development in particular around the larger settlements

..... The Lutterworth Lowlands character area has the capacity to accommodate further residential development. Lutterworth, Fleckney and Kibworth in particular have the capacity and infrastructure in place to allow the further development, within and adjacent to their current urban envelopes.

3.10 A number of key issues are raised, including the following,

- Given the degree of change already experienced in the landscape character area further development proposals should be carefully assessed to avoid additional adverse or irreversible change to the remaining landscape character.
- Landscape character is relatively open, with a lack of enclosing landscape elements, such as mature woodlands and hedgerows. Any new development should take account longer distant visual impacts on landscape setting.
- There is a general lack of vegetation cover across the character area where both mature woodlands and hedgerows have previously been lost. Remaining vegetation cover therefore needs adequate protection against detrimental impacts and supplementary planting where opportunities arise.
- Elsewhere, the southern parts of the landscape character area contain fewer and smaller settlements with the exception of Lutterworth. Any development even small scale should preserve remaining landscape features and mitigate against adverse impacts in the wider landscape.

3.11 A more detailed Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study was carried out for Lutterworth in 2011². This study evaluated the capacity of a number of detailed Parcels close to the existing urban area, but none of these extended east of the M1. However, an overview of the local landscape character was also included in this study. This identified the SDA is primarily falling within the Lutterworth Lowlands-Bitteswell Historic Farmland. A small area south of the A4304 was identified as being located within the Lutterworth Lowlands-River Swift Open Farmland.

3.12 The key characteristics of the Lutterworth Lowlands-Bitteswell Historic Farmland of relevance to the SDA are noted below,

- Gently sloping landform in the series of distinct valleys
- Predominantly pastoral farmland, grazed by sheep, with some cattle

² http://www.harborough.gov.uk/directory_record/490/landscape_character_assessments

-
- Small to medium scale woodland blocks throughout the area creating a treed appearance
 - Hedgerows well maintained, medium to low, with hedgerow trees mainly ash and oak
 - Numerous books and rivers, often originating from springs within the area
 - M1 corridor and associated vegetation that mainly runs through the area in cutting
 - Cross valley views

3.13 The condition of the local landscape was generally identified as being moderate and strength of character strong. This gave rise to an overall strategy to Conserve and Restore.

3.14 The key characteristics of the Lutterworth Lowlands-River Swift Open Farmland of relevance to the SDA set out below:

- The M1 corridor and its bridges have a significant influence on the area
- Predominantly arable farmland with some very large field units
- Hedgerows are generally low and clipped
- Linear belts of tree cover to M1, dismantled railway, River Swift and within Lutterworth golf course

3.15 The condition of the local landscape was generally identified as being moderate and the strength of character moderate. This gave rise to an overall strategy to Improve and Conserve.

Site Characteristics

Topography

3.16 The central core of the Lutterworth East SDA is focused around a network of gently sloping tributary valleys. The core of the SDA (Area A) includes a central Y shaped valley which leads south to the River Swift, which flows, from east to west through the SDA. The valley floors include areas affected by Flood Zone 3 (see Figure LE07) which would constrain built development and require engineering structures to allow for the flow of water, particularly along the course of the River Swift. The SDA typically varies between 130 to 110m AOD with soft ridges present to the north-east and south of the SDA (see Figure LE 07). This pattern of landform is typical of the wider landscape character area of the Lutterworth Lowlands. Sub-Areas B and C are located on slightly more elevated land around 130m AOD and are more gently sloping plateaux in character.

Vegetation

- 3.17 The vegetation cover in the SDA is illustrated by the aerial photography (see Figure LE 02). There is generally a good network of hedgerows, typically medium to tall in height. The condition of hedges tends to be stronger where they support livestock and pasture. Hedgerow trees are present throughout the area to the variable levels of concentration and are predominately ash. In some locations, field boundaries comprise post and wire fences or are unmarked for example to the south-west of Lea Barn Farm.
- 3.18 There is one large area of woodland to the centre of the site at Thornborough Spinney. This contains both areas of conifers, poplars and mixed deciduous planting of varying ages and maturity. Other woodland features within the area comprise a number of small copses, riparian tree cover along the River Swift and some linear belts of tree cover along the main roads. The latter category includes planting along the cutting and embankments of the M1 to the western boundary of the SDA and also along the A4304 corridor to the south.

Land use, scale and complexity

- 3.19 Land use is also illustrated by the aerial photography (see Figure LE 02). Within the SDA land use is predominantly a mix of arable and pasture. Pasture is present throughout the area, but tends to dominate in the lower lying valley floor with arable more prevalent on areas of higher ground.
- 3.20 Misterton Marshes SSSI is located to the centre of the site and partially overlaps with Thornborough Spinney. This provides further variation to the land use and includes areas of fen, marsh swamp and neutral grassland and is currently being managed by grazing.
- 3.21 The scale of Sub-Areas, A and B is typically medium with a variety in pattern and texture due to the combination of arable and pasture and areas of woodland and copses. Sub-Area C is relatively larger in scale.

Historical integrity

- 3.22 OS plans from 1904 and 1965-1968 (see Figures LE 03 and LE04) indicate the degree of change within the SDA over last 100 years. This indicates that in 1904 there were no farmsteads within the SDA. Thornborough Spinney covered a smaller area, but still comprising a mix of deciduous and conifer trees. It is notable that the field pattern has involved very little loss of hedgerows/boundaries from this time with the exception of the triangular Area C south of the A4304. The presence of the Great Central Railway to the east of Lutterworth marked a firm boundary to the east of Lutterworth at this time.

-
- 3.23 The 1965-1968, plan indicates the introduction of a number of farmsteads within the area and the sub-division of some of the larger fields present in 1904 into smaller rectilinear fields associated with the new farmsteads. Thornborough Spinney had also expanded by this date up to and including the stream corridor. The 1965-1968 plan also shows the presence of the M1 motorway, which notably reinforces the physical constraint to an eastern expansion of Lutterworth.
- 3.24 Outside of the SDA boundary the parkland landscape associated with Misterton to the south-east has remained relatively intact.

Built features and focal points (including major transport infrastructure)

- 3.25 Buildings on the SDA comprise isolated agricultural farmsteads including Wycliffe Farm, Fields Farm, Butts Farm and Lea Barn Farm. All these farmsteads date from the 20th century and have limited architectural and heritage value. They typically comprise a modest modern farmhouse with a number of associated barns and outbuildings of average to poor character. The only pre-existing farmstead present on the 1904 OS map is Oback Farm, which is located just outside the SDA boundary to the east.
- 3.26 There are few built landmarks within the SDA. However, St Leonard's Church at Misterton to the south-east of the SDA on rising ground, represents a typical parish church with a Leicestershire spire, which is visible from the southern part of the site. The tower of St Mary's Lutterworth is also visible in a number of views throughout the SDA and represents one of the few built features that can be perceived within Lutterworth from the SDA.
- 3.27 The M1 forms a strong man-made feature and physical boundary to the SDA with marked embankments, cuttings and Junction 20.
- 3.28 A linear arrangement of high voltage electricity cables and supporting pylons runs from south-east to the north-west across Sub-Area A. This represents a constraint to development.

Landscape condition

- 3.29 The core of the SDA (Sub-Areas A and B) is generally considered to be in moderate condition and moderate strength of character. Areas of relatively greater strength of character, include the meadows and valley slopes associated with the River Swift and its tributaries and the mixed habitats of Thornborough Spinney and Misterton Marshes. Sub-Area C to the south of the A4304 is considered to be of relatively weaker character.

Visibility from public locations

- 3.30 The central core of the SDA (Sub-Area A) is partially contained from the public views from public roads. Viewpoint 1 illustrates the view from the A4304. There are also views from the Gilmorton Road that runs from Lutterworth to the north-east. There are also views from short sections of the M1, although receptors on the motorway are considered to be of low sensitivity. Views to the northern Sub-Area are present from A426 Leicester Road as illustrated by Viewpoint 12 (see Figure LE 05).
- 3.31 There are much more open views from the network of public footpaths, both definitive and permissive, that pass through the area including: X44, Y57 (see Viewpoints 3, 6, 7 and 8) and Y97 (see Viewpoint 2). These rights of way appear to be relatively well used, particularly those connecting Lutterworth to the adjacent countryside. There are a number of additional permissive routes that follow the Swift Valley and run through Thornborough Spinney. These permissive routes have an open ended term and cover land currently controlled by Leicestershire County Council. There are no public rights of way affecting Sub-Areas B or C.
- 3.32 Wider views to the SDA are relatively limited due to the pattern of enclosure by landform and local gentle ridges (particularly to the north and south) intervening vegetation comprising hedgerows and small woodlands and the relatively limited extent of rights-of-way and roads. The most extensive views are available from the east as shown on Figure LE06. There are also views to the rear of S Leonard's church from within the graveyard and on the route of footpath Y97.

Visibility from private locations

- 3.33 The SDA is generally well contained from private views. Within the central Sub-Area A private views are restricted to a handful of individual farmhouses. Some of these properties are contained by the outbuildings while others have open views over the agricultural land, most notably Fields Farm and Butts Farm. Properties at Misterton are generally contained, with exception of Park Lodge close to the A4304. Within the Sub-Area B there are more open views towards the site from the northern edge of Lutterworth and from properties on Leicester Road and Bonehem's Lane. Views from Sub-Areas C to the south are much more restricted.

Relationship with existing settlements

- 3.34 The central Sub-Area A has no relationship with existing urban fabric of Lutterworth. The historical development of the town and in particular the alignment of the now disused railway and more significantly the M1 corridor has created a marked physical barrier to development in an eastward direction from Lutterworth. There is currently no access over the M1 to Sub-Area B, while Sub-Area C is relatively detached located both south of the A4304 and east of the M1. The sense of separation

from Lutterworth is reinforced by the earthworks and associated planting along the M1 corridor. The only notable visible presence of Lutterworth to the west is the tower of St Mary's church.

- 3.35 There are two connections by road to Lutterworth, at Junction 20 and along Gilmorton Road. There is also pedestrian access along footpath Y57 via an agricultural overbridge.

Effect on coalescence

- 3.36 The boundary of the SDA is set some 300m on the hamlet of Misterton with the historic parkland providing a buffer between the SDA and the hamlet and its listed buildings. Subject to the nature of the development within the SDA there may be an adverse effect on the setting of the small settlement.

Summary of landscape Sensitivity

- 3.37 Sub-Area A comprises the core of the SDA. This area is assessed overall as having a **Medium sensitivity**. Factors that favour the Sub-Area of the degree of containment by vegetation, the absence of notable built features and few focal points and the relatively good scope to provide mitigation in the medium-term. Factors that are less suitable are the lack of connection with the existing settlement of Lutterworth, the relatively intact historic pattern of the area and variety of land-use and the open, public views from rights of way.
- 3.38 Sub-Area B is considered to have a **Medium-Low sensitivity**. Factors that would favour this area include the level topography and close association with the existing urban edge of Lutterworth. The area is close to the M1 corridor but there is a good level of visual screening and further mitigation would help to contain development in this area. The only notable adverse factor is the openness to public view, but this would be limited to views from the adjacent main road.
- 3.39 Sub area C is considered to have **Low sensitivity** to development. The main adverse factor is its isolation from other forms of development and settlement. However, in other respects the site has a suitable topography, is well contained by vegetation and has limited features of merit.

Landscape Value

Designations

- 3.40 The SDA does not contain any landscape related designations at a national and local level. The former local landscape designation within Harborough district - Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside included within the 2001 Local Plan was not carried forward into the Core Strategy. However, the SDA was not covered by this designation.
- 3.41 The SDA contains one wildlife designation - Misterton Marshes SSSI which is located centrally within the SDA. This statutory designation comprises three separate units. Unit 1 is an area of lowland fen,

marsh and swamp currently under management via Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). This area occupies the northern part of Thornborough Spinney (at the time of 1904 OS plan). Units 6 and 7 are two areas of lowland neutral grassland currently grazed by native sheep. These two units are identified as being relatively species poor but would improve with the continuation of the current management. However, the ability to maintain the integrity and management of the SSSI within the context of extensive development would be challenge.

- 3.42 There are no statutory heritage designations within the SDA. However, there are two listed buildings St Leonards Church and Misterton Manor (former Rectory) to the south-east within Misterton. Development within the site is likely to have an effect on the wider setting of these two listed buildings, both in terms of views from them to the west and views looking east and south towards them notably from the footpath Y97 and other permissive routes (see Viewpoints 2 and 10).

Scenic Beauty

- 3.43 Sub-Area A comprises a relatively frequent landscape character type within the Lutterworth Lowlands. It is generally a pleasant gently undulating rural landscape of moderate scenic beauty. The areas of localised interest and relatively high scenic value relate to the stream and river corridors and also the relationship with Misterton and its associated parkland and parish church.
- 3.44 The main detractor within the SDA is the M1 corridor. This is primarily demonstrated by the movement of traffic and associated noise levels, which adversely affects the tranquillity of much of the SDA to varying degrees. The other main detractor are the high-voltage pylons and cables that run across the site. Local farmsteads are typically of poor visual appearance and add little to the character of the area.
- 3.45 Sub-Area B is also typical of the enclosed pasture and arable landscape and moderate scenic beauty. Sub-Area C mainly comprises one large arable field with limited features and is of low scenic beauty.

Summary of Landscape Capacity

- 3.46 Sub-Area A is considered overall to have a **Medium Landscape Capacity** to accommodate a mixed development. The relatively higher levels of capacity are located on the higher and sloping ground closer to the M1 corridor and to the north-east of the Sub-Area. The central network of green infrastructure following the flood meadows of the River Swift and the tributary streams to the north have a low capacity for built development due to a combination of designated habitats, woodland cover and flood meadows. The location of the Misterton Marshes SSSI in the centre of the area means that a suitable buffer would be required to protect this resource. This may limit the ability to develop land adjacent to it and in particular, to the south-east towards Lea Barn Farm within an area that is already constrained by overhead HV electricity cables.

-
- 3.47 Sub-Area B is considered to have a **Medium- High Capacity** to accommodate development. There are no designations affecting the site and the scenic value is considered to be moderate. Development in this Sub-Area would form a relatively natural extension to Lutterworth.
- 3.48 Sub-Area C is considered to have a **High Capacity** to accommodate development. There are no designations affecting the site and the scenic value is considered to be moderate to low. Development in this Sub-Area would be isolated from Lutterworth, but is well contained and is very well connected to the road network.

Site Constraints

- 3.49 Based on the foregoing assessment and analysis the following main constraints been identified. These are also illustrated on Figure LE 07.
- **Landform** – the undulating topography provides scope for development on the slopes and higher areas although development would locally be more visible from the wider area on the higher ground. The lower lying valleys are prone to seasonal flooding and therefore less suitable for built development.
 - **Hedgerow network** - the SDA contains a good structure of hedged fields which has experienced relatively limited erosion since 1904 and which would provide a useful framework for development parcels within the SDA. The pattern of hedgerows should be retained, where possible, with minimal impact through road connections and built form.
 - **Woodland** - the existing woodland areas within the SDA should be retained wherever possible. These include Thornborough Spinney and other smaller copses and tree belts, both along watercourses and adjacent to roads.
 - **Public rights of way** - there are a number of existing public rights of way that should be maintained. Footpath Y57 and Y97 provide an existing connection into Lutterworth and this link should be retained and enhanced.
 - **Misterton Marshes SSSI** - is a nationally designated wildlife site, and should be retained with continued management. The compatibility of such management in close association to extents development is a real potential threat to the viability of the SSSI. In addition, the requirement to provide a suitable offset and buffer from the designation should also be considered in association with Natural England. This may affect the availability of adjacent parcels of land for development.

-
- **M1 Corridor** - the motorway presents a strong physical, visual and audible feature to the west of the SDA. A new overbridge would be required to provide a bypass/relief road for Lutterworth and to link Sub-Areas A and B to aid connectivity between a new SDA and Lutterworth.
 - **High voltage electricity cables**- these structures form a prominent feature across the site affecting potential development areas. The scope to reroute or underground these cables should be considered as an integral part of the SDA. Alternatively, if retained in situ an offset would need to be provided between built development and cable corridor and guidance sought from National Grid on the appropriate distances and appropriate uses within the corridor.
 - **Visibility** – the SDA is visually contained from the west by the M1 and edge of Lutterworth. There are closer views from Misterton to the south –east. There is longer distance but filtered views from the undulating agricultural landscape to the east.
 - **Relationship with existing settlement** - the detached and separate nature of the SDA from the existing town of Lutterworth is probably the main constraint. New development, particularly residential, would potentially appear isolated from the existing town and depend very much on improved linkages for all modes of transport (pedestrian, cycle, bus and car) between the SDA and the existing urban fabric. The SDA will also need to develop a diverse urban character of its own delivering services and facilities (schools, shops, surgery and open space) at an early stage within the SDA to reduce the need to travel by car into the town. Notwithstanding the need to improve the linkages into Lutterworth the SDA site would need to demonstrate its ability to be a freestanding settlement/suburb in its own right. Conversely, the interface between the SDA and the hamlet of Misterton would need to be sensitively handled to ensure that the latter retains its distinctive character.
 - **Existing farmsteads** - the viability of retaining the existing farmsteads, and isolated agricultural workers' cottages should be reviewed. Due to the limited architectural merit of the structures they should be considered for redevelopment if not required to manage the balance of any agricultural holdings outside the SDA.

Preliminary landscape strategy

3.50 Based on the various site constraints a preliminary layout (see Figure LE08) has been drafted to illustrate a potential strategy for the development of the SDA.

- **Residential development** – potential areas for residential development of located north of the River Swift to the centre and north of the SDA. Existing field patterns should form a suitable structure for progressive development. The development parcels to the south-east (north of Misterton and west of Lea Barn Farm) are relatively more sensitive due the combination of the proximity to Misterton, the HV cables and the proximity to Misterton Marshes SSSI.
- **Community facilities** - the SDA will need to identify suitable location for schools, shops, surgery etc. the should ideally come forward within the early part of the development and probably therefore be located off the bypass/relief road.
- **Commercial development** - the preferred locations for commercial development are considered to be adjacent to the M1 corridor within Sub-Area A. Commercial development would be less sensitive to the visual disturbance and noise associated with the motorway and would also provide some buffering of the noise. Commercial development could be served via a new bypass/relief road. Sub-Area B could potentially include commercial development closer to the M1 corridor due to higher levels of noise. Sub-Area C to the south of the A4304 is also considered to be suitable for commercial development, including use as motor related facility e.g. Motorway Service Area as while it is isolated from the rest of the SAD it has good connectivity to the national road network, and is of relatively low sensitivity and visually self-contained.
- **Lutterworth eastern bypass/relief road** – an eastern bypass/relief road for Lutterworth is considered to be an essential component of the SDA. This should ideally be relatively close to the M1 corridor with a new over bridge linking through Sub-Area B to the north of Lutterworth on Leicester Road. The bypass corridor should be suitably landscaped to provide a framework and setting for both commercial and residential development.
- **Internal site access** - additional access routes are indicated within the SDA. These should avoid wherever possible loss of existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees running parallel to them. The main constraint will be the need to cross the central valley features while minimising any adverse impacts on the habitats involved. Three potential links are indicated. However, this may need reducing to two.

- **Strategic green infrastructure** – the existing tributary valley system and the associated constraints imposed by the presence of Misterton Marshes SSSI, Flood Zone 3 along the River Swift and more sensitive landscape of Misterton hamlet provide an opportunity to establish a strong green infrastructure core within the SDA. This should include the management of existing habitats with public access and also the extension of public open space along the tributary valley leading to Fields Farm which is already affected by the HV electricity cables. In addition, a further green infrastructure corridor should be provided to link with the overbridge on footpaths Y57 and Y97 towards Lutterworth. The connectivity of these rights-of-way west of the M1 should also be explored to improve linkages into the town for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Strategic planting** - there is already a good network of tree belts and woodland to the south of the SDA and other isolated copses to the east and north-east. This pattern of copses and woodland should be developed and strengthened to provide more containment of the SDA from the wider views from the undulating rural landscape to the east and north. There is scope for this to be effectively achieved in the medium-term.

Summary for Lutterworth East

- 3.51 The SDA and in particular the larger central Sub-Area A is considered to have **Medium capacity** to accommodate mixed development. The main factors favouring the SDA site are the degree of enclosure by vegetation, restricted effects on private views and the ability to effectively mitigate a large development on the wider landscape. The least suited factor is the lack relationship with existing settlement of Lutterworth and the effect on the hamlet of Misterton. The local landscape within Sub-Area A also represents a landscape that has experienced relatively little change over last hundred years. This is in part due to the restraining factor of the former railway and M1 road corridor to the east of Lutterworth.
- 3.52 Sub-Areas, B and C to the north and south are considered to have a relatively higher capacity at **Medium/High and High** respectively. Sub-area B between Leicester Road and the M1 is already adjacent to the urban area and is well suited in terms of: topography, vegetation enclosure relationship with existing urban form and modest level of landscape value and designations. Sub-Area C to the south of the A4304 is isolated from the SDA and that will be good connectivity with the main road network would be suitable for commercial development, including MSA. This sub area has few landscape or visual constraints.
- 3.53 Overall, the SDA location would effectively represent the creation of a new settlement. Although relatively close to Lutterworth, the M1 corridor represents a major physical barrier, which will constrain the movement of pedestrians and cyclists into Lutterworth. It will be essential as part of any future

development for community facilities to be provided at an early part of the development to build a sense community.

- 3.54 However, despite the relative isolation, the SDA provides a relatively good location for a large-scale strategic development subject to appropriate delivery of development and supporting infrastructure and local services. The relatively elevated landform, in combination with mature vegetation would visually contain the development to the north and south. There would be a wider influence to the east but within an area with relatively few opportunities to view towards the SDA site. In addition, the existing green infrastructure network provides a positive basis to establish and develop a comprehensive landscape structure and setting for a new community.

4 KIBWORTH HARCOURT

Location

- 4.1 The Kibworth Harcourt SDA occupies c. 104ha and is located on agricultural land to the north and east of Kibworth Harcourt (see Figure KH 01). The SDA comprises three Sub-Areas A-C. The north-west Sub-Area (Area A) is bounded by the A6 to the west and a soft ridgeline to the south. The Sub-Area faces north across open agricultural land and a wider valley towards Great Glen and Burton Overy. The central Sub-Area (Area B) is bounded to the south-west by the edge of Kibworth Harcourt village and to the south-east by Langton Road. The north-east boundary of the Sub-Area does not follow a fixed boundary but extends towards the higher ground around Kibworth Hall. The southern Sub-Area (Area C) is located south of Langton Road and is marked by the A6 corridor to the edge of Kibworth. The eastern edge of the area extends across agricultural land, with no fixed boundary.

Landscape Character Assessments

National scale

- 4.2 At a national scale the SDA falls just within NCA 94: Leicestershire Vales and close to NCA 93: High, Leicestershire. The details for these NCAs were updated in 2014³.
- 4.3 The key characteristics of NCA 94 include the following which are relevant to Kibworth Harcourt include:
- *An open landscape of gentle clay ridges and valleys..... 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. The NCA's woodland character is derived largely from spinneys and copses on the ridges and more undulating land and hedgerow trees and hedgerows.*
 - *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.*

³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4900422342934528?category=587130>

- *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.*
- *Rich and varied historic landscape, prominent historic parklands and country houses, ridge-and-furrow earthworks and important medieval settlement remains,*

4.4 Statements of Environmental Opportunity include the following of relevance to the SDA:

- *SEO 1: Protect and appropriately manage the strong historic character and heritage and the geological assets within the rural and urban landscapes, maintaining the evidence of past land use and connections between agriculture, settlement pattern and topography, as well as the significant places and events that took place within the area, so that the area can be enjoyed by all. Ensure that development is fully integrated into and informed by the landscape.*
- *SEO 2: Manage, conserve and enhance the woodlands, hedgerows, streams and rivers – – in both rural and urban areas, to enhance biodiversity and recreation opportunities; improve water quality, flow and availability; benefit soil quality; and limit soil erosion.*
- *SEO 3: Increase, manage and enhance the recreational assets, principally the rights of way network..... Improve access to these assets and the open countryside from the city of Leicester and surrounding rural communities and provide green infrastructure to help improve people's health and wellbeing.*
- *SEO 4: Create new habitats where opportunities exist, such as woodlands and wetlands at old gravel extraction sites, to extend, link or buffer areas of existing habitat to reduce the impacts of fragmentation. Manage existing grassland, woodlands, coverts and spinneys that contribute to sense of place, enhancing biodiversity resilience and habitat networks.*

Regional scale

4.5 Within the 2010 Regional Landscape Character Assessment Kibworth Harcourt falls entirely within Landscape Character Type 5C: Undulating Mixed Farmlands. The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are described as:

- *Varied landform of broad rolling ridges, steep sided valleys, rounded hills and undulating lowlands;*
- *Well treed character arising from abundant hedgerow trees, copses and woodlands;*
- *Upland areas mark a major watershed in Middle England and are the source of major rivers;*
- *Mixed farming regime with mainly arable land uses on hills and ridges and in fertile lowlands; intact hedgerow networks generally associated with pastoral land uses;*

- *Sparse settlement patterns with limited modern development; widespread use of local limestone and ironstone in vernacular buildings and churches;*
- *Network of quiet country lanes linking rural communities;*
- *Remote, rural and sometimes empty character; and*
- *Frequent and prominent ridge and furrow and evidence of deserted or shrunken medieval settlements.*

District Scale

4.6 According to the Harborough District Landscape Character Assessment (2007) Kibworth Harcourt SDA is located just within the High Leicestershire character area. The existing village of Kibworth Harcourt is located within the Lutterworth Lowlands character area. It should be recognised that the boundary lines that delineate character areas on plans can invariably mark a zone of transition, rather than a fixed point where character changes in an abrupt manner.

4.7 The key characteristics of the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area include:

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

4.8 As Kibworth Harcourt is located to the edge of the character area, few of the above characteristics which are common within the core of the character area are prevalent within the SDA. Rather a number of the characteristics associated with the adjacent Lutterworth Lowlands (see paragraph 3.8 above) are more typical of this transition area.

4.9 The capacity of the High Leicestershire character area to accommodate new development is considered to be Low to Medium. The 2007 assessment states,

'The area would have a low capacity to accept any major developments in all but the western suburban areas, where the urban influence of Leicester City is exerted. In general, development should be avoided or minimised in High Leicestershire in all but its most western regions. High Leicestershire's character would be adversely affected by the influence of any development, other than small-scale developments, across the majority of the character area. Any development would need sensitive

integration to prevent encroachment on the highly sensitive rural areas of the rest of High Leicestershire. The western edge of High Leicestershire could accommodate development around the towns of Scraftoft, Bushby, Thurnby and, Great Glen, closer to the urban fringes of Leicester. In general, the smaller settlements throughout High Leicestershire could accommodate little new development. These areas to the west have the capacity to accommodate some residential and other development which is contiguous and connected to the existing urban area as long as the towns' natural and visual envelopes are maintained and it does not exert built influence over the rest of rural High Leicestershire.

- 4.10 While some development to the western edge of High Leicestershire is considered to be appropriate Kibworth is not mentioned as one of the locations or settlements. However, this is not surprising as Kibworth lies outside of the character area and more to the southern edge.
- 4.11 Notwithstanding the broad strategy within High Leicestershire a number of key issues were raised within the 2007 Landscape Character Assessment which would be of relevance to an SDA adjacent to Kibworth Harcourt as follows:
- Development may have an adverse impact on topography and landform which are key defining features of the landscape character of this area. The landscape is particularly vulnerable to negative landscape and visual impacts.
 - Distinctive historic features and elements, which remain within the relatively intact landscape, may suffer adverse and irreversible impacts from inappropriate development.
- 4.12 In contrast to the capacity strategy within High Leicestershire, the Lutterworth Lowlands are assessed as having a Medium to High capacity to accommodate new development. Kibworth is mentioned in the text for the Lutterworth Lowlands in a number of locations as follows,
- 'The Lutterworth Lowlands character area represents a changing landscape, with many recent developments around the fringes of existing settlements. Expansion due to new development areas may mean that the area is under threat of losing some of its rural characteristics. The area has some limited capacity to accommodate localised development in particular around the larger settlements The Lutterworth Lowlands character area has the capacity to accommodate further residential development. Lutterworth, Fleckney and Kibworth in particular have the capacity and infrastructure in place to allow the further development, within and adjacent to their current urban envelopes.*
- 4.13 There has been some development to the west of Kibworth since the production of the 2007 Landscape Character Assessment. Furthermore, the above extracts do not indicate that development to the north and east of Kibworth should be excluded.

4.14 A number of key issues are raised in relation to development within the Lutterworth Lowlands, including the following which are considered to be appropriate and relevant to the Kibworth Harcourt SDA,

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

4.15 A more detailed Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study was carried out for Kibworth by TLP as part of the Rural Centres study in 2014⁴. This study evaluated the capacity of nine smaller scale Parcels north and east of Kibworth within the current SDA close to the existing settlement edge. This, therefore, provided a more detailed assessment compared to 2007 study. The findings of this study identified two parcels (25 and 27) had a Low capacity, while four large parcels (24, 26, 29 and 30) had a Medium-Low capacity and three parcels (28, 31 and 32) had a Medium capacity. The parcels identified as having Medium capacity were located adjacent to the A6 to the east of Kibworth. A more detailed assessment of each these parcels is provided within the 2014 study.

4.16 Furthermore, an overview of the local landscape character was also included in this 2014 study. This identified the SDA is primarily falling within the Kibworth Lutterworth Lowlands and Kibworth High

⁴ http://www.harborough.gov.uk/directory_record/490/landscape_character_assessments

Leicestershire character areas. The land within the Kibworth Lutterworth Lowlands is located closer to the existing edge of the settlement.

4.17 The key characteristics of the Kibworth Lutterworth Lowlands local character area of relevance to the SDA include,

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

4.18 The condition of the local landscape was generally identified as being Good and the strength of character moderate. This gave rise to an overall strategy to Conserve and Strengthen.

4.19 The key characteristics of the Kibworth High Leicestershire character area of relevance to the SDA are noted as,

- Gently undulating, sloping landform with broad valleys
- Large scale open farmland with very limited woodland cover
- Geometric field enclosures defined by hedgerows and trees, predominantly ash, hawthorn and willow
- Numerous streams Brooks that flow to the River Sense

- Open, relatively wide stretching views over the surrounding landscape
- Tranquillity levels locally interrupted by presence of the A6

4.20 The presence of Kibworth Hall was noted as a distinctive feature within the character area.

4.21 The condition of the local landscape was generally identified as being Good and the strength of character moderate. This gave rise to an overall strategy to Conserve and Strengthen.

4.22 Both the Kibworth Lutterworth Lowlands and the Kibworth High Leicestershire local character areas were identified as having moderate to high landscape sensitivity overall. It should be noted that these levels of sensitivity covered a wider landscape area far beyond the boundaries and limits of the SDA.

Site Characteristics

Topography

4.23 The topography of the SDA is formed by an area of gently undulating ground to the north-east of Kibworth Harcourt which marks the transition from the Lutterworth Lowlands towards the higher ground of High Leicestershire to the north. The SDA includes three tributary valleys; one to the west that follows the northern boundary of the Conservation Area and flows from north-west to south-east, a second that follows a valley between Carlton Road and Langton Road flowing from north-east to the south and thirdly a valley and spring located between Langton Road and the A6 to the south and west.

4.24 The SDA typically varies between 130m AOD at its highest point below Kibworth Hall down to 90m AOD at the southern extent close where the mainline railway crosses the A6. There are a number of local ridges, most notably one at the boundary of Sub-Areas A and B, and another extends south-west towards Windmill Farm on Langton Road (see Figure KH 07). This pattern of landform is typical of the transition between the Lutterworth Lowlands and High Leicestershire.

4.25 A major feature of the topography is the way in which the landform and the valley slopes are orientated. Sub-Area A faces north towards the wider open valley beyond. In contrast Sub-Area B and C principally face inwards towards the existing settlement of Kibworth Harcourt. The exception to this pattern is the east face of the ridge that extends towards Windmill Farm which is more exposed to wider views from the east towards Tur Langton.

Vegetation

4.26 The vegetation cover is illustrated by aerial photography (see Figure KH 02). There is generally a good network of hedgerows, which are typically medium to tall in height. The condition of hedges tends to be stronger where they contain pasture used by livestock and more gappy and overgrown between

arable fields. Hedgerow trees are present throughout the area to a variable extent. Tree species are predominately ash but with willow, poplar, oak and horse chestnut are also present.

- 4.27 There are two plantations present within the SDA. One is a rectangular block located south of Windmill Farm at the end of the local ridgeline and the other is the south-west extent of the historic shelterbelt following Carlton Road associated with the former parkland around Kibworth Hall. Other significant tree groups tend to follow the course of local streams, most notably to the northern edge of the Kibworth Harcourt Conservation Area. Some tree groups also follow the local roads notably the A6 e.g. adjacent to Sub-Area A. There are also a number of mature ornamental trees within the cemetery on the A6.

Land use, scale and complexity

- 4.28 Land use is illustrated by the aerial Photography (see Figure KH 02). Within the SDA land use is predominantly a mix of arable and pasture. Pasture is present throughout the area, but tends to dominate in the fields to the north of the Kibworth Harcourt, which also contain ridge and furrow. The arable fields are generally larger in size and are located further from the built edge of Kibworth Harcourt.
- 4.29 The landscape scale of all the Sub-Areas, A to C is typically medium with a variety in pattern and texture due to the combination of arable and pasture.

Historical integrity

- 4.30 OS plans from 1904 and 1952-53 (see Figures KH 03 and KH04) indicate the degree of change within the SDA over last 100 years. The pattern of fields and hedgerows present in 1904 is generally very similar to the current situation in 2016. Slight variations include that in 1904 it appears that there was further subdivision of the two paddocks between Carlton Road and Langton Road but otherwise there has been relatively little field boundary loss. The 1904 OS plan indicates there were no farmsteads within the SDA and that the windmill on the local ridge south of Langton Road was present as an isolated feature. A major feature within the SDA in 1904 was the parkland associated with Kibworth Hall, which then extended south as far as Kibworth Cottage on the Carlton Road. The 1904 plan also illustrates the two distinct settlements of Kibworth Harcourt and Kibworth Beauchamp and that the parish church of St Wilfrid's was located in a relatively detached location between the two settlements. At this time there was also minimal development along the A6 apart from within the historic core of Kibworth Harcourt and the cemetery located some distance from both villages.
- 4.31 The 1952-53 OS plan indicates the introduction of some ribbon development to the south side of the A6 and some limited infill development within Kibworth Harcourt. The windmill was then noted as being 'disused' with few associated buildings but not on the same scale as the current Windmill Farm.

By 1952 the majority of the historic parkland associated with Kibworth Hall had disappeared, presumably under arable production. Other features of interest on the 1952-53 OS plan include a rifle range leading from Langton Road and a large area of allotments to the south of the SDA, which may reflect relatively temporary land-use change during and following the WWII.

Landscape condition

- 4.32 All the Sub-Areas A, B and C are generally considered to be in a moderate condition. Sub-Area A includes one larger arable field that has experienced some hedge removal, together with ridge and furrow pasture and robust hedgerows. Sub-Area B generally exhibits a relatively greater strength of character and more extensive fields of ridge and furrow pasture which face towards Kibworth Harcourt and its Conservation Area. The smaller fields closer to the village and A6 within Sub-Area C exhibit a relatively good strength of character and moderate condition. Conversely, some of the arable fields to the outer edge of both Sub-Areas B and C have a more fragmented hedgerow structure and are considered to be of relatively weaker character.

Built features and focal points (including major transport infrastructure)

- 4.33 Sub-Area A contains no built features or man-made focal points. However, the A6 is a prominent feature and in particular where it turns into a dual carriageway to the north-west of the Sub-Area.
- 4.34 Sub-Area B includes Windmill Farm and the neighbouring modern Fetlock Farm, which are located on the localised ridge south of Langton Road together with a number of large utilitarian agricultural structures. Of particular note is Grade II* listed windmill shown on the 1904 OS plan which dates from 1711. The windmill (restored in the 20th century) comprises a postmill with a red brick round-house, timber-framed body covered with weather boarding and a restored wooden sails and tail pole.
- 4.35 To the north, but just outside of Sub-Area B is the Grade II listed Kibworth Hall, which dates from c.1825. The house is constructed of buff-brown bricks with stone dressings and ashlar parapets. The house is set within its own grounds with mature trees to the north and gardens to the west and south. The southern elevation includes a number of large sash windows on both ground and first floor facing towards the edge of the SDA. There is a small isolated cottage on the Carlton Road (formerly known as Kibworth Cottage).
- 4.36 To the south-west of Sub-Area B lies the Kibworth Harcourt Conservation Area, which also extends into the SDA. There are a number of listed buildings in the Conservation Area (outside the SDA) fronting the A6 and Main Street, which have rear elevations facing towards the SDA. Some of these properties and the parish church of St Wilfrid's can be seen from the public footpath B6 which passes through Sub-Area B to the north.

-
- 4.37 There are no built forms within Sub-Area C. However, there are views towards the parish church of St Wilfrid from the A6 and footpath B7 and notable ornamental trees within the around the cemetery.
- 4.38 The mainline railway is a major built feature to the south of the Sub-Area where it crosses the A6 as is the main road and associated commercial buildings of Kibworth Business Park.

Visibility from public locations

- 4.39 Local and wider views are illustrated by Figures KH 05 and 06. Sub-Area A is visible from the north and north-west, including views from the A6 (see Viewpoint 17). Closer to the village of Kibworth views into the Sub-Area from the A6 are more contained by the roadside bank, hedgerows and mature trees. There are also open views internally from footpath B6 within the Sub-Area looking to the north towards Great Glen (see Viewpoint 13).
- 4.40 Public views within Sub-Area B are restricted to a section of footpath B6 running from Carlton Road to the north-west and the minor local roads. Footpath B6 passes mainly through ridge and furrow pasture and one arable field and allows for views back towards the Conservation Area to the south (see Viewpoints 11 and 12). A central field (Viewpoint 12) also includes permissive access over a wider area. The field at the junction of Carlton Road and Langton Road also allows for permissive access from the edge of the village. Both from this field and the section of Langton Road there are views to the north. Further views of the agricultural land from the local roads is generally contained by strong hedgerows that follow the minor roads.
- 4.41 Public views of Sub-Areas C include open views from stretches of the A6, which is currently largely undeveloped to the north, (see Viewpoints 1, 2, 3 and 6). There are also views from the public footpaths B7 and A86 which run east from the A6 towards Tur Langton and Church Langton which rise onto the more elevated ground to the edge of the SDA. There are elevated panoramic views over Sub-Area C from footpath B7 (see Viewpoints 4 and 5) and beyond to Kibworth and more distant views to the Laughton Hills further to the south.

Visibility from private locations

- 4.42 Sub-Area A is generally relatively contained from private views, the main exception being from the two the large individual houses on the A6 - Leicester Road which have open views over the intervening paddocks. Sub-Area B has a number of views from properties on the edge of Kibworth Harcourt including properties within Main Street, Albert Street and Langton Road. These properties experience variable degrees of exposure to the site with some backing directly onto the Sub-Area. Private views within Sub-Area C include open, panoramic views from Fetlock Farm (see Viewpoint 5) and properties along the A6 and Marsh Avenue.

Relationship with existing settlements

- 4.43 The Sub-Areas have different degrees of relationship with the existing settlement. Sub-Area A has very limited association with the village and then only with the two large individual detached houses close to Sub-Area B.
- 4.44 Sub-Area B has some moderate associations with the existing urban fabric at the edge of Kibworth Harcourt in the proximity of Carlton Road and Langton Road. However, this is also the interface with the Conservation Area and any development in this location would need to be sensitively treated. Where the existing Conservation Area extends into the SDA through a series of paddocks and grazing pasture that extends down to a streamline there is a weaker relationship with the built form of the village since in this location many of the existing properties have a more informal structure and arrangement presenting rear facades and outbuildings towards a tributary valley. In this location securing an appropriate relationship between new built form and the existing historic context is more challenging. The existing setting of Windmill Farm and the listed windmill is currently relatively well contained by the existing vegetation and agricultural outbuildings.
- 4.45 Sub-Area C has some closer associations with existing built form. In particular, along with the A6 corridor. Development to the north of this route would form a reasonably logical extension to Kibworth. However, it is noted that there are a few individual residential properties to the north of the A6 whose amenities would need to be protected as would be that of Fetlock Farm which has elevated views into the Sub-Area.

Effect on coalescence

- 4.46 The SDA would result in an extension of Kibworth Harcourt to the north and east. However, it would not result in any adverse coalescence with any other village due to the intervening distances involved.

Summary of landscape Sensitivity

- 4.47 Sub-Area A is considered to have a **Medium-High sensitivity**. Factors that make the Sub-Area more sensitive include open sloping topography and how this is orientated outwards away from the village and that there are public views from both rights of way and main roads. This arrangement means there is no relationship with the existing settlement and development would be difficult to mitigate in the medium-term. There would however be a limited effect on private views and no coalescence.
- 4.48 Sub-Area B is considered also have a **Medium- High sensitivity**. In this location there is a relatively good enclosure by both landform and vegetation since the tributary valleys face inwards towards the existing settlement. However, the factors that are more sensitive to development include the relatively

intact historic pattern, presence of built features and focal points, openness to private views, relatively good condition and the challenge to mitigate potential development in the context.

- 4.49 Sub-Area C is considered to have **Medium sensitivity**. As with Sub-Area B the topography and vegetation provide some natural enclosure from the wider landscape and furthermore, the relationship with existing settlement particularly along the A6 means that the development could form some closer associations with the existing urban fabric to the south of the A6. Many of the criteria are evenly balanced within this Sub-Area but factors that are relatively less suited include the openness to public view and the relatively intact historic pattern of fields.

Landscape Value

Designations

- 4.50 The SDA does not contain any landscape related designations at a national and local level. The SDA was formerly included within former local landscape designation - Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside in the 2001 Local Plan. However, this local designation was not carried forward into the Core Strategy.
- 4.51 The SDA does not contain any statutory or local wildlife designations.
- 4.52 There are no statutory heritage designations within either Sub-Areas A or C, although development within the land west of Windmill Farm may have some effect on the Conservation area near St Wilfrid's Church. The Kibworth Harcourt Conservation Area extends into Sub-Area B (see Figure KH 07). There are also a number of listed buildings, which back onto the Conservation Area on the A6 and Main Street. The listed windmill at Windmill Farm is located within the Sub-Area and there are also open views from the listed Kibworth Hall to the north.

Scenic Beauty

- 4.53 Sub-Area A comprises a relatively frequent landscape character type within High Leicestershire, and forms part of a pleasant gently undulating rural landscape of moderate scenic beauty. The main detractor within the SDA is A6 corridor particularly where it forms a dual carriageway.
- 4.54 Sub-Areas B and C are also typical of the enclosed pasture and arable landscape of High Leicestershire and the Lutterworth Lowlands and are overall also of moderate scenic beauty. There is of relatively higher scenic value found within Sub-Area B in the south facing slopes of the ridge and furrow pastures closest to Kibworth Harcourt. However, this enhanced value is counterbalanced by the relatively less distinctive arable fields to the edges of the SDA.

Summary of Landscape Capacity

- 4.55 Sub-Area A is considered to have a **Medium-Low Landscape Capacity** to accommodate development. The area is located to the north of a local ridgeline and faces towards an open rural valley with no existing relationship with Kibworth. While there are no designations affecting the area it would be very difficult to visually integrate development in this location.
- 4.56 Sub-Area B is also considered to have a **Medium- Low Capacity** to accommodate development. While development would be more contained from the wider landscape than Sub-Area A within the local tributary valleys there would be an adverse effect on the setting of the Conservation Area and the relationship with the existing village. There would also be a loss of historic ridge and furrow pasture, which lends to the setting of the Conservation Area. The areas currently under arable production have a relatively higher capacity being more detached from the historic core of the village but would be at some distance from the remaining part of the settlement.
- 4.57 Sub-Area C is considered to have a **Medium Capacity** to accommodate development. There are no designations affecting the site and the scenic value is considered to be moderate. Development in this Sub-Area would be relatively well-connected to 20th-century development to the south of the A6 and be contained in views from the wider landscape by the natural landform. There are some local sensitivities in terms of the proximity to the Conservation Area, local residences and the listed windmill and Kibworth Hall.

Site Constraints

- 4.58 Based on the foregoing assessment and analysis the following main constraints been identified. These are also illustrated on Figure KH 07.
- **Landform** – the undulating topography and pattern of tributary valleys provides variable scope for development. Where the natural landform faces outwards to the wider landscape the topography represents a notable constraint. Conversely, where the landform is more internally facing it is better suited to development due to the containment provided.
 - **Hedgerow network** - the SDA contains a good structure of hedged fields which has experienced relatively little erosion since 1904 and which provide a useful framework for development parcels within the SDA. The pattern of hedgerows should be retained wherever possible, with minimal impact from road connections and built form. Within the wider arable fields hedgerows would benefit from restoration and strengthening.

-
- **Woodland** - the limited existing woodland areas within the SDA should be retained wherever possible. These include the plantation south of Windmill Farm, the shelterbelt on Carlton Road and tree belts along watercourses and roads.
 - **Public rights of way** - there are a number of existing public rights of way that should be retained. Footpaths B7 and A86 provide an existing connection to the Langtons to the east and B6 connections to the north. The effect on the rights-of-way in association with a Kibworth bypass/relief road should be carefully considered to provide safe and suitable crossings, which may include overbridges and/or diversions. There is also existing permissive access onto fields to the north of the village although this arrangement may be subject to change.
 - **Kibworth Harcourt Conservation Area** - the presence of the Conservation Area within Sub-Area B is a notable constraint. Development within the open paddocks and pasture that run down to the tributary stream would adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area. Furthermore, the south facing slopes beyond the Conservation Area also contribute to the historic setting where they contain extensive areas of ridge and furrow pasture.
 - **Listed buildings** - the setting of listed buildings within the Conservation Area, the listed windmill and Kibworth Hall comprise constraints particularly where there are effects on key views from these assets. The main southern view from and to Kibworth Hall is potentially affected by development in the vicinity and through the provision of a bypass. The setting of the listed windmill is currently more contained. Development within or close to the Conservation Area may also affect the setting of listed buildings within the core of Kibworth Harcourt.
 - **Visibility** – the SDA is variably constrained by some wider views from the rural landscape (See Figure KH 06). Development would be most notable where it occurred beyond the local ridgelines. Visibility from existing residential properties should also be a consideration to respect the amenity but this should not unduly constrain development subject to provision of suitable sensitive masterplan.
 - **Relationship with existing settlement** - the interface with the existing settlement of Kibworth Harcourt represents a constraint particularly around the edge of the Conservation Area. In this location, the looser form of the village and minor roads do not lend itself readily to the provision of substantial additional development in close proximity. The fact there has been relatively limited development to the north and east of Kibworth

Harcourt in recent decades means that any development is likely to create some significant effects on local character and particularly within Sub-Area B. Conversely, land fronting the A6 within Sub-Area C provides a less constrained interface and better relationship for future development.

Preliminary landscape strategy

4.59 Based on the various site constraints a preliminary layout (see Figure KH08) has been drafted to illustrate a potential strategy for the development of the SDA.

- **Residential development** – potential areas for residential development are considered to be most suitable within Sub-Area C between the A6 and Langton Road. This arrangement would place built form relatively close to the existing settlement. Existing field patterns should form a suitable structure for development. Areas of relatively greater sensitivity closer to the Conservation Area and associated with the existing plantation should preferably be retained as open space. Further areas of residential development could potentially be provided within Sub-Area B as indicated. These are shown on arable land set back from the more sensitive fields around the existing village and Conservation Area and also on the single field adjacent to the A6, which is less constrained. However, the character of any development on these parcels would need a strong design ethos that is sensitive to the character of the area.
- **Community facilities** - it is understood that the SDA will need to identify suitable locations for additional community facilities including a primary schools and a local centre. They should ideally be provided within a central location close to the A6 within Sub-Area C. School playing fields could be located on land where there are also benefits in the land remaining open.
- **Commercial development** - the preferred locations for commercial development are considered to be adjacent to the A6 next to the potential bypass within Sub-Area C and opposite the Kibworth Business Park. In this location there will be an opportunity to form a local commercial hub close to the major transportation connections.
- **Kibworth bypass/relief road** – an eastern bypass/relief road for Kibworth is considered to be a desirable component of the SDA and would bring relief to the existing community along the line of the current A6. The route to a new bypass should ideally follow an outer route to the north and east of the SDA as indicated on the Figure KH 08. The alignment would need to be cut into areas of higher ground so that much of the route would be concealed from views within the wider landscape and local views from

within the bypass alignment. Arrangements for overbridges and/or roundabouts on Carlton Road and Langton Road would need to be carefully considered, as would terminal junctions at either end of the bypass to provide suitable connections into Kibworth. A new bypass corridor should also provide space for suitable landscape proposals to assimilate the route into the landscape setting.

- **Internal site access** - additional access routes are indicated within the SDA. These should avoid wherever possible loss of existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees running parallel to them. The main constraint would be providing any internal connections to the north of the Conservation Area between the A6 and Carlton Road. It may be preferable for potential development in this location to be independently accessed.
- **Strategic green infrastructure** – due to the relatively sensitive setting of Sub-Areas A and B considerable green infrastructure would be required. It is proposed that the existing Conservation Area and the associated slopes to the north are retained as open space. This could still be managed for agriculture, but with enhanced public access to appreciate the Conservation Area and local valley setting. Other areas of land both within and outside the bypass that are more visible to wider views should ideally be retained in agriculture. Within Sub-Area C areas of open space should be provided along the existing footpath network and include areas of pasture to provide an attractive setting into new residential and commercial development. An area of open space could also be provided on the sloping land between Windmill Farm and the Conservation Area. The existing and potential green infrastructure assets should be linked to provide enhanced opportunities for recreation and habitat connectivity.
- **Strategic planting** - opportunities exist to provide new copses and blocks of woodland to add to the framework planting around Kibworth Harcourt and to visually contain built development and the bypass. Potential locations are shown on Figure KH 08.

Summary for Kibworth Harcourt

- 4.60 The SDA contains contrasting areas with variable suitability in landscape terms for development. The most appropriate land is within Sub-Area C, which is considered to have **Medium Capacity** to accommodate a mixed development. The Sub-Area is generally well-contained by landform and vegetation and relates well to the existing urban edge of the settlement along the A6 corridor. There is scope for commercial and residential development supported by community facilities within this Sub-Area. The layout should utilise existing field patterns, to form a structure for development and also to develop a network of green infrastructure and open spaces.

-
- 4.61 Sub-Area A is considered have a **Medium-Low Capacity**. However, in reality any development within Sub-Area A is not considered appropriate due to its relatively small size, lack of relationship with the remainder of the village and openness to wider views from the north. However, the area could form part of the alignment of a bypass.
- 4.62 Sub-Area B is considered have a **Medium-Low Capacity** principally due to the more sensitive edge of the Conservation Area and village. The slopes leading into the tributary valley contain areas of ridge and furrow and an historically intact local landscape, that would be significantly affected by built development. There is potential scope for development on land beyond these closest fields towards the bypass alignment. However, development in these areas would need to be sensitively planned to protect the setting of the Conservation area and village. Development in this Sub-Area is likely to comprise lower density and will be more detached from the rest of the village.
- 4.63 The provision of an A6 bypass for Kibworth is identified as a desirable feature for the existing settlement. However, this would involve a route of approximately 3km length involving substantive earthworks and landscape mitigation. Furthermore, the extent of development within a bypass would still be constrained principally due the presence of the Conservation Area within Sub-Area B.

5 SCRAPTOFT NORTH

Location

- 5.1 The Scraptoft North SDA covers approximately 67ha of land and is located to the north and west of the village of Scraptoft and east of Leicester (see Figure S 01). The SDA comprises two Sub-Areas A and B. Sub-Area A is the larger part of the SDA and is located north of Scraptoft and primarily comprises 16 holes of the Scraptoft Golf Course and associated practice driving area. The remaining part of the Sub-Area is an area of rough grassland and scrub some of which formerly also comprised part of the golf course. Sub-Area B is located to the west of the village of Scraptoft and east of the urban edge of Leicester and comprises a number of small paddocks.

Landscape Character Assessments

National scale

- 5.2 At a national scale the SDA falls just within NCA 93: High Leicestershire. The details for this NCA were updated in 2014⁵. However, the key characteristics of NCA 93 are largely not applicable to the landscape around Scraptoft, which is more influenced by the close proximity of Leicester than the wider character of High Leicestershire.
- 5.3 However, Statements of Environmental Opportunity for NCA 93 include the following of relevance to the SDA:
- *SEO 3: Manage and enhance the recreational assets, such as the rights of way network....., and improve access to these assets and the open countryside from the city of Leicester and surrounding rural communities, to maintain a sense of place, enhance soil and water quality and have a beneficial effect on people's health and wellbeing.*
 - *SEO 4: Manage, conserve and enhance the woodlands, hedgerows, streams, rivers and field ponds*

Regional Scale

In the Regional Landscape Character Assessment for the East Midlands Scraptoft falls entirely within Landscape Character Type 5C: Undulating Mixed Farmlands. The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are described as:

- *Varied landform of broad rolling ridges, steep sided valleys, rounded hills and undulating lowlands;*

⁵ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5911470780973056>

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

District Scale

5.4 The Harborough District Council Landscape Character Assessment of 2007 placed the SDA within the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area. The key characteristics of the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area include:

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

5.5 However, as Scraftoft is located to the edge of the character area and is now much more influenced by the wider urban area of Leicester, few if any, of the above characteristics that are common within the core of the character area are present within the SDA. Rather the SDA exhibits a more typical urban fringe character marking a transition from the more typical High Leicestershire to the east and the built edge of Leicester to the west.

5.6 The capacity of the High Leicestershire character area to accommodate new development is considered to be Low to Medium overall. However, the assessment states,

'The area would have a low capacity to accept any major developments in all but the western suburban areas, where the urban influence of Leicester City is exerted. In general, development should be avoided or minimised in High Leicestershire in all, but its most western regions. High Leicestershire's

character would be adversely affected by the influence of any development, other than small-scale developments, across the majority of the character area. Any development would need sensitive integration to prevent encroachment on the highly sensitive rural areas of the rest of High Leicestershire. The western edge of High Leicestershire could accommodate development around the towns of Scraftoft, Bushby, Thurnby and, Great Glen, closer to the urban fringes of Leicester. In general, the smaller settlements throughout High Leicestershire could accommodate little new development. These areas to the west have the capacity to accommodate some residential and other development which is contiguous and connected to the existing urban area as long as the towns' natural and visual envelopes are maintained and it does not exert built influence over the rest of rural High Leicestershire.

5.7 It is therefore specifically noted that there is scope at Scraftoft to accommodate development and that this is therefore one of the relatively less sensitive parts of the character area as a whole.

5.8 Notwithstanding the broad strategy within High Leicestershire a number of key issues were raised within the 2007 Landscape Character Assessment which would be of relevance to an SDA at Scraftoft as follows:

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

5.9 The most relevant bullet point is the last one that seeks to ensure that suitable design mitigation measures are critical as part of any development.

-
- 5.10 A further more detailed Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study was carried out by TLP for Scraftoft as part of the Leicester PUA study in 2009⁶ and a later Addendum of 2016. This study evaluated the capacity of smaller scale Parcels close to the existing settlement edge. This therefore provided a more detailed assessment compared to 2007 study. The findings of this study identified three parcels, 28, 30 and 31 (which together cover the same area as Sub-Area A within the SDA) as having Medium-High capacity for development. In contrast, Parcel 27 (which covers Sub-Area B within the SDA) was considered to have Medium-Low capacity in the 2009 study. A more detailed assessment of each these parcels is provided within the 2009 study and 2106 Addendum study.
- 5.11 Scraftoft was identified as being located within the Leicester Fringes local landscape character area in the 2009 study. Key characteristics of the Leicester Fringes of relevance to the SDA are noted below,
- Strongly undulating landform with pattern of narrow soft ridges and valleys and localised plateaux
 - Influenced by close proximity to the urban Leicester
 - Hedgerows medium to low with some hedgerows and trees mainly ash
- 5.12 The condition of the local landscape was generally identified as being moderate and strength of character also moderate. This gave rise to an overall strategy to Improve and Conserve.

Site Characteristics

Topography

- 5.13 Sub-Area A is located both sides of a soft ridgeline that runs east-west from a height of approximately 118m down to 110 m AOD. The landform also falls gently both to the north and the south-east into a tributary valley adjacent to Sub-Area B. Sub Area B is located on gentle valley slopes that run south from Scraftoft Lane at around 100m AOD down to the tributary valley of the Scraftoft Brook (at c 93m) which flows westward.

Vegetation

- 5.14 The vegetation cover is illustrated by aerial photography (see Figure S 02). There is generally a reasonable network of hedgerows typically medium to tall in height. Hedges are particularly strong within Sub-Area B along Scraftoft Lane and Hamilton Lane. Historic hedge lines along field boundaries are also present within the golf course. However, there are some locations most notably on Beeby

⁶ http://www.harborough.gov.uk/directory_record/490/landscape_character_assessments

Road where there are gaps in the hedgerow network. Hedgerow trees are present throughout the area and are predominately ash with smaller numbers of oak.

- 5.15 The main tree cover is provided throughout the Scraftoft Golf Course where the fairways are subdivided by a number of mature and semi-mature tree belts. These combine to provide a good level of enclosure by vegetation within Sub-Area A. In addition, there are mature shelterbelts of oak trees just outside the north-west boundary. Within the Local Nature Reserve there are areas of scrub that have developed between former fairways and elsewhere scattered regenerating hawthorn. There are also mature trees within the grounds of Nether Hall to the western edge of the village of Scraftoft

Land use, scale and complexity

- 5.16 Land use is also illustrated by the aerial photography (see Figure S 02). Within Sub-Area A land use is predominantly recreational with the majority of the area being used as a golf course. A small area to the south-east forms a Local Nature Reserve, combining areas of regenerating scrub and rough grassland that is also informally grazed by horses.
- 5.17 Sub-Area B comprises five paddocks bounded by mature hedges. These are largely grazed by horses and further subdivided by makeshift fencing.
- 5.18 The landscape scale of Sub-Areas A and B is typically small to medium with a variety in pattern and texture due to the combination of pasture, recreation and natural regeneration.

Historical integrity

- 5.19 OS plans from 1904 and 1956-66 (see Figures S 03 and S 04) indicate the substantial degree of change within the SDA over last 100 years. This indicates that in 1904 there was a very different context to the present day. At that time the small hamlet of Scraftoft was set within a much wider agricultural landscape and the substantive Scraftoft Hall was the major feature to the west of the village. The 1904 plan shows the pattern of hedges and fields, most of which have still been retained to the present day apart from a number of smaller fields the north of the unclassified county road that runs between Keyham Lane West and Keyham Lane East that now fall within the golf course.
- 5.20 By 1956-1966 the city of Leicester had expanded up to the western edge of the SDA and also to the south along Scraftoft Lane with the presence of extensive residential development, including a number of large council house estates one named Humberstone Garden City. At this time the development lay outside the administrative boundary of Leicester but this was later extended eastward to the current boundary next to the SDA. Development had also occurred by this period within Scraftoft including the residential estate to the south of Sub-Area A at Hall Road. The 1956 to 1966 OS map also indicates the presence of the golf course to the north and north-west of Sub-Area A. At this time the larger

field to the south-west of Sub – Area A is unmarked. However, it is known that this area was used as a prisoner of war camp in WWII and localised areas of hard standing still exist on this site between areas of regenerating scrub. The aerial photography also enables the identification of the outline of various former Nissan huts outbuildings on the site.

- 5.21 Therefore, while the 1904 hedge boundaries are still largely retained as field compartments the land uses particular within Sub-Area A have changed a number of times during this period. In contrast, the smaller fields within Sub-Area B have experienced less change, although the 1956 to 1966 OS plan indicates one of the fields closest to the village was used as a cricket pitch at the time.

Built features and focal points (including major transport infrastructure)

- 5.22 Although contained by housing to a number of the site perimeters there are few buildings within the SDA itself. The Scraftoft Golf Club clubhouse and associated car park is located within the north-east of Sub-Area A. The converted farm buildings associated with Nether Hall are present within Sub-Area B, which forms a focal point seen from the north within a residential estate (see Viewpoint 6). However, there are limited views to any other distinctive buildings within Scraftoft Conservation Area.

Landscape condition

- 5.23 The larger part of Sub-Area A that comprises the golf course is currently considered to be of moderate condition. The fairways and greens are well maintained as would be expected for an operational golf course. However, some of the boundary hedgerows and trees show less signs of management. The Local Nature Reserve is currently informally grazed by horses but does not appear to encourage or promote access.
- 5.24 The paddocks within Sub-Area B are currently being used for grazing by horses. However, the condition and character is considered to be generally poor with unsightly subdividing fences. This probably reflects the urban fringe location, which brings pressures from potential unauthorised access etc. The boundary hedges are tall and generally, unmanaged and in parts declining.

Visibility from public locations

- 5.25 Sub-Area A is partially contained from the public views and local roads. However, there are number of locations where the area can be seen as illustrated by Figure S06. There are relatively strong hedgerows along Hamilton Lane although there are isolated locations where the golf course can be seen (see Viewpoint 4). The most open aspect of the Sub-Area is from Beeby Road, which is marked by a length of unsightly post and wire and chain-link fencing. From this location, there are views across the Scraftoft Local Nature Reserve and distant views towards Leicester city centre (See viewpoint 9). Public views from within the Sub-Area are mainly restricted to being from the Unclassified County Road

that runs from east to west through the golf course. Although stated as being open to all traffic it is only feasible to use it on foot. Viewpoint 8 shows a view into the golf course from this route where it crosses a fairway.

- 5.26 Sub-Area B is a relatively well contained from public views by the tall and extensive mature hedgerows along the public roads that bound and pass through the area. There is one short length of a public footpath D26 that passes north of Nether Hall but this is currently unmarked and there is no through access due to the presence of the residential development on the edge of Leicester to the west. Potential views from this route should therefore be discounted.
- 5.27 Wider views towards the SDA are relatively limited due to the pattern of enclosure by the local ridges, and in particular the strong vegetated and treed boundaries to the north around the golf course (see Viewpoint 10 close to Hamilton Grounds Farm). This vegetation cover markedly limits views from the wider landscape to the north and north-east. Potential views from the landscape to the edge of the SDA are illustrated by Figure S06 extending up to a ridgeline approximately 1.5 km to the north but in reality these are very limited with only two distant rights of way having views back the site.

Visibility from private locations

- 5.28 Private views into Sub-Area A are partially contained by the mature vegetation to the edge of the golf course along Hamilton Road. However, there are views into the Local Nature Reserve area from Hall Road and Keays Way to the north of Scraftoft village.
- 5.29 Private views to Sub-Area B are more extensive and in particular from the west, including the estate to the edge of Leicester. In this location the most open views are from New Romney Close throughout the year and in the winter months from houses fronting New Romney Road. There are also open views from properties within Hall Road, Scraftoft over the adjacent paddock to the west.

Relationship with existing settlements

- 5.30 Both Sub-Areas have a close relationship with existing settlements being bounded on two/three sides by continuous residential development. In places, remaining hedgerow boundaries and trees help to reduce this effect, particularly in the summer months. Scraftoft has a mixed pattern of development. This includes the historic core of the settlement, which has a relatively organic character, but is very small and does not exert a strong influence. Other residential areas in the village include Hall Road, a ubiquitous 20th century residential development and more recent development comprising a number of small closes within the centre of the village together with the larger development associated with

the grounds of Scraptoft Hall which has an early 21st century planned character, reflecting in part the local vernacular together with new self-conscious designs.

Effect on coalescence

- 5.31 The boundary of the SDA occupies the vast majority of the remaining available land between Leicester and Scraptoft. The development of either Sub-Area A or B would lead to the coalescence of the two settlements, subject to the amount of any intervening landscape open space. This would effectively combine the two settlements.

Summary of landscape Sensitivity

- 5.32 Sub-Area A is considered to have a **Medium-Low Sensitivity**. Factors that make the Sub-Area relatively less sensitive include: the strong containment by vegetation and consequential ability to provide effective mitigation in the medium-term, the relatively weak historic character following progressive changes and the good relationship with the existing urban edge. The main factor that counts against the Sub-Area is the impact on coalescence by joining Scraptoft with Leicester. The location of the area on a local ridgeline is potentially a sensitive feature. However, the extensive planting in the locality means that the potential negative effect of this criteria is substantially reduced.
- 5.33 Sub-Area B is also considered to have a **Medium-Low sensitivity**. Factors that make the Sub-Area less sensitive to change include: the good containment by mature hedgerows to many of the boundaries and internally, the relatively poor condition of the paddocks and subdivisions and the close relationship with existing urban edge. As with Sub-Area A, the main factor that is most sensitive to change is that of coalescence by effectively joining Scraptoft with Leicester. There would also be a notable effect on number of private views.

Landscape Value

Designations

Green Wedge

- 5.34 The SDA lies fully within a local Green Wedge designation, which is supported by Core Strategy Policy CS8 and the area is identified on the Proposals map under Saved Policy EV/2 within the 2001 Harborough District Local Plan.
- 5.35 Built development of the type associated with an SDA within the Green Wedge would be contrary to Policy EV/2. The policy is not based on the landscape quality or the character of the area, but rather to provide a break around the city to prevent coalescence and to provide opportunities for recreation

and links to the countryside. The objectives of the Green Wedge are similar in many respects to the purposes of Green Belt but expressed at a more local level.

5.36 Core Strategy Policy CS8: Protecting and Enhancing Green Infrastructure states,

This policy seeks to secure a high quality, accessible and multifunctional green infrastructure network across both rural and urban areas of Harborough district, which contributes to healthy lifestyles and a rich, diverse natural environment.

Opportunities to maximise the potential value of existing and new green space will be encouraged through the promotion of recreation, tourism, public access, education, biodiversity, geo-diversity and water management; the protection and enhancement of heritage assets and local landscape (including protection of and proposals which increase tree and woodland cover); and the mitigation of climate change. Improvements to links between green assets within and extending beyond the District will be a priority.

Green Infrastructure assets will be safeguarded through ensuring that:

- i) Development does not compromise their integrity or potential value;*
- ii) Developer contributions are secured wherever appropriate to improve their quality, use and multi-functionality; and*
- iii) Opportunities to add to the Green Infrastructure network are maximised through partnership working.*

The Policy specifically covers Green Wedges as follows,

b) Green Wedges

The Leicester/Scraptoft Green Wedge to the north of Scraptoft and the Thurnby/Leicester/Oadby Green Wedge to the south of Thurnby will be important elements of Green Infrastructure provision not only for that part of the District but also for communities in neighbouring authorities. Green Wedges are largely undeveloped areas defined with the aim of:

- i) Preventing the merging of settlements;*
- ii) Guiding development form;*
- iii) Providing access from urban areas into green spaces/ countryside; and*
- iv) Providing recreational opportunities.*

In order to retain the open and undeveloped character of the Green Wedges the following land uses will be acceptable, providing that they are consistent with the above aims:

- *Agriculture, horticulture and allotments not accompanied by retail development;*
- *Forestry;*
- *Outdoor leisure, sporting and recreation facilities;*
- *Cycle ways, footpaths and bridleways.*

A detailed review of Green Wedge boundaries will take place as part of the Allocations DPD. Green Wedges and, where appropriate, Areas of Separation will be the focus for GI improvements in urban fringe areas of the district. So far as is consistent with their predominantly open and undeveloped character, opportunities to improve public access and recreation use in these areas will be encouraged for the benefit of the wider community. Similarly, opportunities to conserve, enhance and/or restore their biodiversity and geo-diversity value will be a priority.

5.37 The explanatory text for the policy in relation to Green Wedges goes on to state,

5.84 The strategic policy basis for the definition of Green Wedges around Leicester was included in the Leicestershire Structure Plan (1987) and subsequent versions of the plan. Their role is to guide urban form so as to prevent the merging of settlements, providing a green lung into urban areas and acting as a recreational resource.

5.85 Leicester City Council has set out its commitment to retaining Green Wedges in its Core Strategy. The Thurnby/Leicester/Oadby Green Wedge is part of a more extensive Green Wedge which extends out from Leicester City and Oadby and Wigston Borough. The Leicester/Scraptoft Green Wedge borders the built up edge of Leicester City. The two Green Wedges provide adjoining communities, both from within Harborough and from adjoining local authority areas, with access to countryside and green spaces.

5.86 In supporting the principle of Green Wedges, the strategy reflects the strong community support expressed for the retention of Green Wedge designations and their established strategic role. Fundamental to their success is the need to protect their open and undeveloped character through the prevention of inappropriate development. To this end the strategy sets out a number of land uses which may be consistent with the objectives of Green Wedges.

5.87 The detailed boundaries of the two Green Wedges in Harborough were originally defined in the Scraptoft, Thurnby and Stoughton Local Plan (1987) and were carried forward into the

Harborough District Local Plan (2001) with no change. A methodology for the review of Green Wedges was drawn up by relevant local authorities in 2009. This document (Leicester and Leicestershire – Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology: 2009) will form the basis for a review of the detailed boundaries of the District’s Green Wedges as part of the Allocations DPD and will be carried out in conjunction with neighbouring local authorities.

5.88 Given the location of the Green Wedges in relation to the Leicester Principal Urban Area, their potential for contributing to the city’s Green Infrastructure will be promoted. The Council and its partners, primarily through the Stepping Stones Project, will seek to encourage multiple functions for Green Wedges to serve both their local and wider urban communities so that their contribution to Leicester’s and the District’s Green Infrastructure network is maximised.

Local Nature Reserve

- 5.38 The SDA contains one wildlife designation – a Local Nature Reserve on the site of the former WWII prisoner of war camp. It is understood that the Local Nature Reserve within Sub-Area A was designated in part through the work of the Stepping Stones Project.

Cultural Heritage

- 5.39 There are no listed buildings within the SDA. However, Nether Hall located outside Sub-Area B, is Grade II listed. The house dates from 1701 and is a whitewashed rendered brick house with Swithland slate hipped and gabled roof. The house faces towards Hamilton Lane and is surrounded to the north-west and south by mature trees within the garden.
- 5.40 Sub-Area B also lies directly adjacent to and includes a small area of the Scraftoft Conservation Area, which extends to the west towards the SDA. With the exception of Nether Hall and the associated converted outbuildings the majority of the remaining buildings within the Conservation Area that are directly adjacent to the SDA are of relatively limited heritage/architectural value.

Scenic Beauty

- 5.41 Sub-Area A is considered to possess moderate scenic beauty. While the character is not typical of the wider landscape, it includes a managed golf course and areas of regenerating scrub. By contrast, Sub-Area B is considered to be of relatively lower scenic beauty, due to the unkempt nature of the paddocks.

Summary of Landscape Capacity

- 5.42 Both Sub-Areas A and B are considered to have a **Medium landscape capacity** to accommodate change. Both areas have a good degree of containment by mature vegetation and are well associated

with existing urban areas. The landscape has also undergone considerable change particularly within Sub-Area A over the 20th century during which time Leicester has expanded up to the SDA and typical urban fringe development, including golf course, regenerating scrub and horse paddocks have come to define the area. However, the main factors that restrict the landscape capacity are the designations on and adjacent to the site most notably the Green Wedge, Scraftoft Conservation Area and to a more limited extent the Local Nature Reserve. In particular, there would need to be a change to the Green Wedge designation to facilitate the delivery of an SDA on the site. However, if this primary constraint was put aside the SDA has a number of positive aspects that would make it suitable for development.

Site Constraints

5.43 Based on the foregoing assessment and analysis the following main constraints been identified. These are also illustrated on Figure S 07.

- **Landform** – the gentle valley slopes to the south of Sub-Area A and also within Sub-Area B are relatively well suited to development. The central ridgeline within Sub-Area A presents a potential constraint but in combination with the mature vegetation that cloaks much of the ridge this is not in reality a significant obstacle.
- **Hedgerow network** - the SDA contains a structure of the mature tall hedges which have experienced relatively limited loss since 1900 and which would provide a useful framework for development parcels within the SDA, particularly in Sub-Area B. The pattern of hedgerows should be retained, where possible, with a minimal impact by road connections or built form.
- **Woodland and tree cover** - the majority of the tree cover is present within the existing golf course. This is an important asset of the site which should be carefully appraised. Some specimens are very large, most notably a number of poplar and the suitability of these in combination with future residential development will need careful evaluation. The pattern of tree cover primarily divides the fairways of the golf course. The retention of all the trees and groups is unlikely to be viable in association with residential development. Rather it is likely that certain groups of trees would need to be lost to enable those which are more suited to be retained as part of a mature landscape setting. However, the aim should still be to retain a number of layers of vegetation within a future developed area.
- **Public rights of way** - there is one footpath within the SDA, footpath D26. However, this currently provides no useful amenity and should not be considered to be a constraint.

The Classified County Road that now effectively acts as a footpath between Keyham Lane East and Keyham Lane West should be retained along with the associated hedgerows.

- **Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve** - this is a local wildlife site with no statutory protection. Designated in 2002, the Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve (14 ha) lies off Beeby Road and to the south-east of Sub-Area A. It forms part of the Green Wedge and access to the land is informal. The site was formerly used a prisoner of war camp during WWII. The habitats include an area of semi-improved grassland and mature hawthorn scrub. A pond been created to increase the wildlife variation. The current ecological value of the nature reserve does not seem to be supported by any particular recent evidence. This should be provided to establish the relative value and merit of the local nature reserve.
- **Visibility** - the SDA is visible from a number of locations within and around the perimeter. Hamilton Lane passes through the SDA, although visibility here is contained by the tall roadside hedgerows. The most public open aspects are from Beeby Road and also on foot from the unclassified County Road that passes through the golf course. The other more glimpsed views are at entrances to fields and gateways into the paddocks within Sub-Area B. There are a number of residential views from the rear gardens within Scraptoft and Leicester.
- **Planning designations**- the Green Wedge designation is supported by Core Strategy Policy CS8 and defined in saved Local Plan (2001) Policy EV/2. This currently seeks to maintain the area bounded by the proposed SDA as open in character. Harborough District Council has produced a Green Wedge Review: Draft Technical Update in 2015, which confirmed that the Green Wedge at Scraptoft fulfils the principles of a Green Wedge around Leicester i.e. that it: prevents the merging of settlements; guides development form; provides a green lung into urban areas; and provides a recreational resource. However, at paragraph 3.6.4 the Draft Review recognises that depending on the scale of development to be accommodated in the Leicester urban fringe settlement, the identification of potential strategic allocations to meet development needs to 2031 could mean that some adjustment to Green Wedge boundaries as currently defined, or as set out in the Review, may become necessary.
- **Heritage designations** - the designated Scraptoft Conservation Area places a direct constraint on a small part of the site (north of Nether Hall) located within the Conservation Area and an indirect effect on land within Sub-Area B located adjacent to the Conservation Area in respect of effects on the setting of the heritage asset. There will be a further

constraint from the presence of and setting of the Grade II Nether Hall located to the west of the Conservation Area.

Preliminary landscape strategy

5.44 Based on the various site constraints a preliminary layout (see Figure S 8) has been drafted to illustrate a potential strategy for the development of the SDA. This has been developed on two notable assumptions, firstly that the Green Wedge designation is deleted or substantially redrawn and secondly that there is a revaluation of the ecological value of the Local Nature Reserve. If either of these two changes did not occur then the ability to deliver a meaningful SDA within this location would be significantly constrained.

5.45 The preliminary landscape strategy includes the following features:

- **Residential development** – potential areas for residential development are located within compartments formed by the hedged paddocks within Sub-Area B. Throughout much of the golf course and Local Nature Reserve in Sub-Area A the form and extent of development should be directed by a detailed assessment of the suitability and merits of the main tree groups and ecological features present to provide a structure that retains most valuable assets while also creating sufficient space for a reasonable housing density.
- **Community facilities** - the SDA would need to identify an appropriate provision for schools, shops, surgery etc. related to the additional population. There is scope to provide new community facilities e.g. close to the sports pitches and accessed off Beeby Road or close to Scraftoft Lane. Alternatively, the local shops and community facilities within Scraftoft could potentially be upgraded since they are relatively close to the SDA site.
- **Commercial development** - there are limited commercial premises in the locality. It is unlikely that commercial development would be appropriate although potentially some small-scale office space could be included.
- **Site access** - the capacity of the local road network would need testing for its suitability for the given quantum of residential development. Access into the SDA will include a number of internal service roads from the local network. Development within Sub-Area A may require a loop road linking between Beeby Road and Hamilton Lane.
- **Strategic green infrastructure** – a network of green infrastructure should be provided within the SDA. This could include green corridors along Scraftoft Brook, Hamilton Lane and utilising existing rights of way within the golf course. On site sports provision could be provided on the existing driving practice area as this already level and available. A

central recreational area could also form an attractive focal point for residential development next to community facilities. An area of open space fronting Nether Hall barns would enable them to become a visual focal point within the built development.

- **Strategic planting** - there is already a strong network of tree belts and hedgerows within the SDA. Additional strategic planting could be provided, particularly along Beeby Road and in the area of the existing clubhouse and car park supplementing the existing tree belts on the northern boundary of the site.

Summary for Scraftoft North

- 5.46 Sub-Area A has a **Medium Capacity** to accommodate a predominantly residential development, with associated community facilities and open space. The main factors favouring the site are the degree of enclosure by mature vegetation from the wider landscape, the close relationship with the existing urban structure and the ability to provide effective mitigation through a network of open spaces and green infrastructure. Development would involve the loss of the existing golf course a current community recreational facility, but a suitable alternative site could potentially be identified close to the urban edge. The mature landscape setting of the golf course provides the basis for a ready-made structure to contain a residential development in an attractive setting. The ability to develop part or all of the Local Nature Reserve should be tested against the ecological value of the site and the ability to provide potential off-site measures or other improvements within parts of the SDA.
- 5.47 Sub-Area B also has a **Medium Capacity** to accommodate a residential development, with associated community facilities and open space. The main factors favouring the site are the degree of enclosure from the wider landscape, the close proximity to the existing urban structure and the ability to provide a network of open spaces and green infrastructure with enhanced public accessibility. Development within Sub-Area B would need to follow the pattern of pre-existing paddocks, which provide a natural compartmentalisation of landscape. Parts of these parcels could be retained as open space to provide a suitable setting for the Conservation Area and provide linkages for green infrastructure towards Scraftoft village centre. The mature hedged character along Scraftoft Lane and Hamilton Lane could be retained apart from a suitable access points.
- 5.48 The main, and potentially overriding constraint, is the designation of the SDA as a Green Wedge. This currently provides a sense of separation between Scraftoft and Leicester, which would be seriously eroded if an SDA were approved in this location. This is primarily a planning related designation that seeks to prevent coalescence between settlements. The other objective of the Green Wedge is to provide enhanced access for the community to the countryside. This second objective is currently

limited to users of the golf course as there is limited evidence of use of the unclassified county road that passes through the golf course which has no wider links to the east. There is therefore scope that an SDA could provide some increased public access to green space for recreational use. Other facilities such as the Local Nature Reserve have restricted access and the only other footpath (D26) within the area is effectively blocked. The suitability of the Scraftoft site as an SDA is therefore strongly related to the continuation of the Green Wedge policy in this location. Due to the presence of the designations the capacity has been reduced from potentially Medium-High to a **Medium Capacity** level.

6 SUMMARY AND COMPARISON OF SDAS

6.1 A full comparative summary table of all three SDA’s is provided within Appendix 1. This lists all the criteria evaluated and gives a measure of relative sensitivity and capacity for each of the separate Sub-Areas within the SDA. An overview table is provided below summarising the landscape sensitivity and capacity within the separate Sub- Areas. The Sub-Areas within each SDA are shown on Figures LE01, KH01 and S01 within Appendix 4.

Summary Table of Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity of SDAs

Criteria	Lutterworth East	Kibworth North and East	Scraftoft North
Overall Sensitivity	Sub-Area A (Central) Medium Sensitivity Sub-Area B (North) Medium/Low sensitivity Area C (South) Low sensitivity	Sub-Area A (North) Medium/High Sensitivity Sub-Area B (Central) Medium/High Sensitivity Sub-Area C (South) Medium Sensitivity	Sub-Area A (North) Medium/Low Sensitivity Sub-Area B (South) Medium/Low Sensitivity
Overall Capacity	Sub-Area A (Central) Medium Capacity Sub-Area B (North) Medium/High Capacity Sub-Area C (South) High Capacity	Sub-Area A (North) Medium/Low Capacity Sub-Area B (Central) Medium/Low Capacity Sub-Area C (South) Medium Capacity	Sub-Area A (North) Medium Capacity Sub-Area B (South) Medium Capacity

6.2 Each potential SDA exhibits a number of contrasting constraints and opportunities reflecting the three different locations.

6.3 Lutterworth East is the largest of the potential SDAs and therefore provides scope for some substantive areas of mitigation and green infrastructure focused on the centrally located network of tributary valleys that flow into the River Swift. However, notable constraints include the proximity to the M1 and the current limited connections to Lutterworth, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. The development of this site as an SDA would in many respects need to be able to support itself as an independent settlement, a process which would take time and co-ordinated planning. Misterton Marshes SSSI is located centrally within the SDA and the ongoing viability and management of this statutory protected habitat would need to be carefully evaluated due to the pressure that would come

from an urban population. Furthermore, the close proximity to the hamlet of Misterton is a constraint on Sub-Area A. Overall, the main core of the SDA site, Sub-Area A is considered to have a **Medium Capacity** for development. This is based on a scheme that would deliver a comprehensive mixed-use development incorporating a substantive package of mitigation and green infrastructure within a clear framework and timescale. The two Sub-Areas to the north-west and south (B and C) have a relatively higher capacity for development. Sub-Area B (**Medium-High Capacity**) is more closely associated with the northern edge of Lutterworth, while Sub-Area C (**High Capacity**) would provide a relatively good location for freestanding commercial development, such as an MSA.

6.4 Kibworth Harcourt is more closely associated with the existing settlement but with no complications of coalescence or restrictive Green Wedge policies that are present at Scraftoft. The SDA is bounded by the existing built edge of the settlement to the south-west and an outer sweeping line that could form an alignment for bypass/relief road to Kibworth along a realigned A6. Three Sub-Areas were identified within this SDA. The smallest Sub-Area A is located to the north, beyond a local ridgeline which places it in a more isolated location facing a wider rural valley and visually and physically detached from the rest of the village. As result, this is Sub-Area has a **Medium-Low Capacity**. Sub-Area B occupies the central section of the SDA but is more sensitive due to its relationship with the Conservation Area and the relatively more intact historic pattern of fields including notable areas of ridge and furrow that back onto existing village. Development within this Sub-Area would need to be sensitively handled and be set further from the historic core within the current arable fields. As result, this Sub-Area has a **Medium-Low Capacity**. The most suitable part of the SDA is within Sub-Area C located to the south. This would occupy land directly opposite, existing commercial and residential development currently located along the A6 and provide a good fit within the structure of fields up to a potential bypass alignment. Sub-Area C has a **Medium Capacity** and represents the most suitable part of any of the SDA's for mixed development. However, due to the constraints within Sub-Areas A and B the overall developable area within the SDA could be substantially less than the total site area may otherwise indicate.

6.5 The Scraftoft SDA is generally well contained from the wider landscape due to the mature vegetation within the golf course. The SDA is relatively more open on sections of Beeby Road. However, there is scope for strategic planting to provide containment of this boundary and also to further strengthen the boundary planting around the north of the existing golf course. The historic landscape pattern of this SDA has been most affected of all the SDA's by changes in land use over the 20 century from agriculture to a prisoner of war camp and to recreation and in this respect the SDA is relatively less sensitive. The condition of the paddocks within Sub-Area B is also relatively low as is the scenic beauty of the Sub-Area. In landscape character terms this SDA as a whole has a relatively lower landscape sensitivity at Medium-Low and consequentially less sensitive than either Lutterworth East or Kibworth

SDAs. However, there are a number of designation constraints, which affect the Landscape Value and adversely influence the suitability of the SDA. The main planning constraint is the designation of the whole of the SDA as a Green Wedge, which seeks to retain the sense of separation between the village of Scraftoft and the urban edge of Leicester. This is supported by Core Strategy Policy CS8 and the area defined by saved policy EV/2 in the 2001 Local Plan. Other designations include the Scraftoft Local Nature Reserve, established in 2002 on the site of the former prisoner of war camp. This would potentially constrain development on some or all of that designation. Furthermore, the proximity to the Scraftoft Conservation Area adjacent and partly within Sub-Area B places a heritage constraint on development, as it may affect the setting of the Conservation Area and the listed buildings within it including Nether Hall. Due to the presence of these designations the capacity of both Sub-Areas A and B within the SDA has been reduced to **Medium**. However, should the Green Wedge designation in this location be amended substantially or not be carried forward through the emerging Local Plan, then the capacity would increase to **Medium/High**.