



Areas of Separation

Review of existing and potential areas

Harborough District Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

November 2024

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Contents

Chapter 1	1
Introduction	
Report structure	1
Scope of assessment	1
Chapter 2	6
Policy Context	
National policy	6
Regional policy	8
Local policy	8
Chapter 3	13
Methodology	
Approach	13
Evaluation criteria	14
Chapter 4	18
Settlement Gap Assessment Findings	
Appendix A	29
Settlement Gaps Assessment	
Lubenham – Market Harborough	31
Areas of Separation	

Contents

Great Bowden – Market Harborough	39
Bitteswell – Lutterworth – Magna Park	48
Sutton in the Elms - Broughton Astley	57
Dunton Bassett – Broughton Astley	64
Fleckney - Saddington	71
Kibworth – Smeeton Westerby	78
Misterton/Walcote - Lutterworth	85
Great Glen – Stretton Hall/Oadby	93
Magna Park – Ullesthorpe	101

References 107

Table of Figures

Figure 1.1: Location of settlements to be assessed and existing Areas of Separation	5
Figure A.1: Lubenham - Market Harborough assessment area	30
Figure A.2: Lubenham - Market Harborough key gap characteristics	35
Figure A.3: Great Bowden - Market Harborough assessment area	38
Figure A.4: Great Bowden - Market Harborough key gap characteristics	43
Figure A.5: Bitteswell - Lutterworth - Magna Park assessment area	47
Figure A.6: Bitteswell - Lutterworth - Magna Park key gap characteristics	52
Figure A.7: Sutton in the Elms - Broughton Astley assessment area	56
Figure A.8: Sutton in the Elms - Broughton Astley key gap characteristics	60
Figure A.9: Dunton Basset - Broughton Astley assessment area	63
Figure A.10: Dunton Basset - Broughton Astley key gap characteristics	67
Figure A.11: Fleckney - Saddington assessment area	70
Figure A.12: Fleckney - Saddington key gap characteristics	74
Figure A.13: Kibworth - Smeeton Westerby assesment area	77
Figure A.14: Kibworth - Smeeton Westerby key gap characteristics	81
Figure A.15: Misterton/Walcote - Lutterworth assessment area	84
Figure A.16: Misterton/Walcote - Lutterworth key gap characteristics	89
Figure A.17: Oadby/Great Glen - Stretton Hall assessment area	92

Contents

Figure A.18: Oadby/Great Glen - Stretton Hall key gap characteristics 97

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Harborough District Council (the Council) has identified a need for a robust evidence base to justify the Areas of Separation (AoS) to be proposed in the emerging Local Plan and to inform future reviews of AoS defined in made Neighbourhood Plans. This evidence provides analysis to inform considerations regarding:

- the continuing suitability of gaps and boundaries defined in the adopted Harborough Local Plan and in made Neighbourhood Plans;
- the potential for additional gaps to be defined; and
- the impact on settlement separation of potential development allocations in the forthcoming Local Plan.

1.2 This review supersedes previous AoS Reviews undertaken in 2011 and 2017.

Report structure

1.3 This report outlines the relevant policy context including National, Regional, Local policy before reviewing Neighbourhood Plans (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 sets out the assessment methodology. Chapter 4 summarises the key recommendations of the study. Detailed assessments of each of the existing and potential AoS are included in Appendix A.

Scope of assessment

1.4 Harborough District Council is located within Leicestershire County covering 250 square miles and has a population of approximately 97,600. Harborough District Council borders several local authorities including Leicester City and Blaby, Oadby and Wigston, Charnwood and Melton within Leicestershire County. Rutland County lies to the east. To the south of Harborough District is Northamptonshire which

includes the authorities of North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire. Harborough District borders Rugby Borough to the west which falls within Warwickshire.

1.5 The Council's key considerations when identifying potential areas to include in the assessment process were gap size, settlement size and development pressure. In order to include settlements where coalescence is a realistic possibility it was decided that the criteria for inclusion in the study should be:

- Gap is no more than 1km; and
- With reference to the Council's Settlement Hierarchy Assessment of October 2023, at least one of the settlements is in the 'medium village' tier or above; and
- There is clear development pressure based on sites submitted and assessed in the district's Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).

1.6 On this basis, nine areas were identified for assessment, as listed below. The Council requested the exclusion of potential site allocations from the defined assessment areas, but with the provision of analysis to comment on their impact on settlement gaps should they go ahead.

- Lubenham – Market Harborough
- Great Bowden – Market Harborough
- Bitteswell – Lutterworth – Magna Park
- Sutton in the Elms – Broughton Astley
- Dunton Bassett – Broughton Astley
- Saddington – Fleckney
- Smeeton Westerby – Kibworth
- Misterton/Walcote – Lutterworth
- Oadby/Stretton Hall – Great Glen.

1.7 In the case of the gap between Great Glen and Oadby/Stretton Hall, a strategic allocation is proposed, encompassing land both in Harborough and the Borough of

Oadby and Wigston, which would significantly affect the current separation between Oadby and Stretton Hall. For this gap the Council requested LUC to define an assessment area that would encompass the potential strategic allocation and also to suggest a boundary for an AoS that would represent the minimum area required to retain clear separation between Great Glen and the built-up areas of Oadby/Stretton Hall.

1.8 In addition to the nine gaps listed above, a tenth area for assessment was defined between Magna Park and Ullesthorpe. The current gap between them is almost 1.5km but there is a site being considered for potential allocation for strategic B8 use as an extension to Magna Park in this area that would reduce this below the 1km threshold defined for inclusion in this study. As with the proposed strategic development between Stretton Hall and Great Glen, the Council requested LUC to include the potential allocation in the defined assessment area then to propose a boundary for an AoS that would encompass the minimum area required to retain clear separation between Magna Park and Ullesthorpe.

1.9 The following two AoS are already defined within the adopted Local Plan:

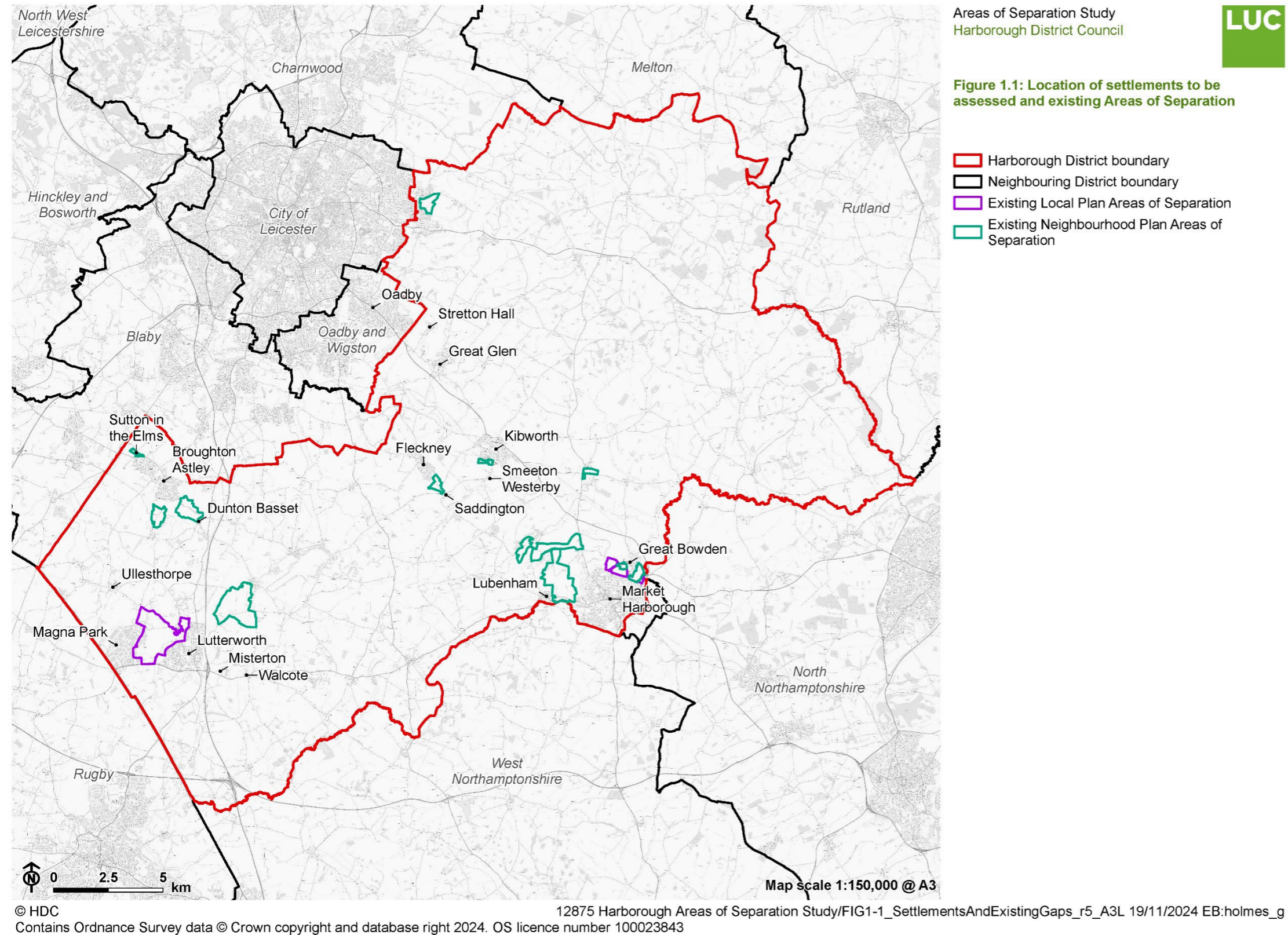
- Great Bowden – Market Harborough
- Bitteswell – Lutterworth – Magna Park

1.10 In addition to this, a number AoS are defined within 'made' Neighbourhood Plans including the Lubenham – Market Harborough gap. These AoS were the starting points for the gap assessment areas considered within this study.

1.11 Where there is potential for coalescence between settlements where both are categorised in the 2023 hierarchy as a 'small village' or 'other village/hamlet', it is considered that Neighbourhood Plans are the most appropriate place for their designation. It is noted that a number of 'made' Neighbourhood Plans have defined AoS, some of which fall into this category, but all of the gaps listed above, with exception of that between Stretton Hall/Great Glen and Oadby, are identified as AoS in Neighbourhood Plans to some extent. See Chapter 2 Policy Context for further details.

1.12 Figure 1.1 illustrates the location of the settlements within Harborough District included within this assessment. The identification of boundaries for each assessment area forms part of the assessment process – see Chapter 3 Methodology for further details.

Figure 1.1: Location of settlements to be assessed and existing Areas of Separation



Chapter 2

Policy Context

2.1 The principle of an AoS between selected settlements has been used as a spatial planning tool for a number of years within Harborough District Council.

2.2 AoS are defined where the potential risk of merging is at its greatest, whether this is between settlements or between settlements and nearby employment areas. Therefore, the function of AoS is to help maintain the character and identity of individual settlements and reduce the risk of coalescence. Harborough District is a relatively rural district and in which most settlements are physically separated from each other. This is an important feature of the District, which helps maintain the unique identity of each settlement.

2.3 AoS are either defined within Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans. This chapter sets out relevant national, regional and local policy and associated guidance.

National policy

2.4 The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) [**See reference 1**] does not provide specific policy on the use of AoS in local plans, nor are AoS explicitly defined within the NPPF. There is also no reference to gaps within Planning Practise guidance (PPG). In addition, there are no specific requirements within NPPF to identify AoS as part of the plan-making process and therefore it falls to individual Local Planning Authorities to determine the most appropriate approach.

2.5 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF sets out three overarching objectives to the planning system, one of which is 'an environmental objective – to protect and

enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land ...’.

2.6 The NPPF states that: “Strategic policies...should make sufficient provision for ...conservation and enhancement of the natural built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure” (paragraph 20). Paragraph 135 states “planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments...are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)”. Paragraph 180 states that “planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by...protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...(in a manner commensurate with their...identified quality in the development plan [and] recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”. Paragraph 181 of the NPPF requires Plans to “distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites”. Paragraph 196 states that strategies within a plan should take into account “the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness”.

2.7 National Planning Practice Guidance builds on the NPPF’s requirements by stating that local plans “can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside. Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully” [\[See reference 2\]](#).

2.8 This guidance is regularly reinforced and elaborated upon by the planning inspectorate through the examination of Local Plans containing local landscape designations, specifically:

- Supporting evidence should take into account potential new boundary features that may alter the risk of settlement coalescence in future (e.g. major infrastructure [\[See reference 3\]](#)).
- Designations to prevent settlement coalescence should only include land that plays a role in maintaining settlement separation rather than other purposes such as protecting the setting of historic environment assets [\[See reference 4\]](#).
- Local designations that preclude certain types or scales of development must be based on evidence, such as a landscape sensitivity study [\[See reference 5\]](#).
- Local designations should be focussed on protecting specific areas or features – not all rural areas outside settlement boundaries [\[See reference 6\]](#).

Regional policy

2.9 There is currently no regional policy that defines or identifies AoS at Leicestershire County Council level.

Local policy

2.10 The Harborough Local Plan 2011 to 2031 was adopted on the 30th April 2019. AoS are defined where there is a high risk of coalescence between settlements or settlements and employment areas. AoS are identified within Policy GD6: Areas of Separation. Policy GD6 is concerned with ‘protecting the identity and distinctiveness’ of settlements where there are ‘specific development pressures and local community concerns over the potential loss of settlement identity’.

Policy GD6: Areas of Separation

1. Areas of Separation, shown on the Policies Map, are designated between:

- a. Great Bowden and Market Harborough; and
- b. Bitteswell, Lutterworth and Magna Park.

2. Development in the Areas of Separation will be permitted where it would not compromise, either alone or in conjunction with other existing or proposed development, the effectiveness of the Area of Separation in protecting the identity and distinctiveness of these settlements.

2.11 Policy GD6 focuses on maintaining separation between Great Bowden – Market Harborough and between Bitteswell – Lutterworth – Magna Park. The Great Bowden/ Market Harborough AoS seeks to retain the identity of Great Bowden and prevent coalescence with Market Harborough. The AoS between Bitteswell/ Lutterworth/ Magna Park aims to protect the identity of Bitteswell from the growth of Lutterworth, and to maintain separation of Lutterworth and Bitteswell from Magna Park.

2.12 There are further designations of AoS in ‘made’ Neighbourhood Plans which are discussed below.

Local Plan Review

2.13 The Harborough Local Plan is currently being reviewed. The Issues and Options Consultation Document (Regulation 18) was out for consultation between January and February 2024. The consultation document states that:

Areas of Separation perform the important function at the localised level of protecting the identity and distinctiveness of settlements by preventing them from merging.

2.14 Harborough District is currently working towards its Regulation 19 Local Plan and this document will help to determine the approach to existing and potential new AoS.

Neighbourhood Plans

2.15 Neighbourhood Plans came into force under the Localism Act 2011 and give local communities the ability to determine where new houses, businesses, shops and community facilities should be located and can allocate sites for development.

2.16 There is a total of 29 'made' Neighbourhood Plans within Harborough District. Seven plans have been reviewed and an additional nine plans are currently being reviewed.

2.17 To prevent coalescence between settlements, a number of 'made' Neighbourhood Plans have designated AoS.

- Policy EH2 of the Broughton Astley Neighbourhood Plan 2014 prevents the merging of Sutton in the Elms and Broughton Astley.
- Policy S7 of the Scraftoft Neighbourhood Plan 2015 defines an AoS to ensure Scraftoft retains its identity and prevents coalescence with development to the south, including Thurnby and Bushby. However, much of this designation is superseded by policy GD7 Green Wedges of adopted Local Plan which identifies a Green Wedge on most of the AoS. Policy GD7 will take precedence in determining planning applications within its boundaries. However, outside of the boundaries of the Green Wedge, the

AoS (as defined by the Scraftoft Neighbourhood Plan) will continue to apply.

- Policy LNP01 of the Lubenham Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2031 retains the open character of the Lubenham and Gartree AoS.
- Policy ENV 10: Area of Separation of the Dunton Bassett Neighbourhood Plan 2024 establishes an AoS between Dunton Bassett and Broughton Astley.
- Policy ENV6: Area of Separation within the East Langton Neighbourhood Plan Review 2021 states that development will not be supported where it reduces the separation between Church Langton and East Langton and between East Langton and West Langton.
- Policy ENV1: Area of Separation within the Saddington Neighbourhood Plan 2020 supports the retention of the AoS between Saddington and Fleckney.
- Policy F4: Foxton Areas of Separation of the Foxton Neighbourhood Plan 2021 requires the separation between Foxton and new development adjoining Market Harborough such as the Airfield Farm development. The policy also protects the separation between Foxton and Foxton Locks due to the latter becoming a growing tourist destination.
- Policy ENV8: Area of Separation within the Leire Neighbourhood Plan 2022 retains the AoS between Broughton Astley and Leire.
- Policy G2: Gilmorton Area of Separation within the Gilmorton Neighbourhood Plan defines an AoS between Gilmorton and Lutterworth.
- Policy HBE 2: East of Lutterworth SDA within the Misterton with Walcote Parish Neighbourhood Plan requires an area of green open space to be maintained as an AoS between the east of Lutterworth SDA and Misterton.
- Policy ENV6: Area of Separation of The Kibworth Villages Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2031 requires an area of land to be maintained as an AoS between Kibworth Beauchamp and Smeeton Westerby.

2.18 Other AoS may be added by future 'made' Neighbourhood Plans.

Significant Planning Applications

2.19 There are a number of consented developments across Harborough District that will be taken into consideration within this study. Most of the consented development was designated through policies within the Adopted Local plan. These include the following policies:

- Policy BE1: Business Allocations
- Policy BE1: Business Permissions-commitments
- Policy BE2: Warehousing Allocations and commitments
- Policy H1: Housing Allocations
- Policy H1: Housing Commitments (Large permissions) which includes the North West Market Harborough Strategic Development Area.
- Policy L1: East of Lutterworth Strategic Development Area Allocation

2.20 Scraftoft North Strategic Development Area planning application is currently with the Council and under consideration. Therefore, it has been assumed for the purposes of this assessment that this site will not be coming forward.

2.21 Outwith the Adopted Local Plan, there is planning consent for a super prison to the south of Gartree near Market Harborough. This super prison will lie to the south of an existing prison in Gartree.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 This chapter details the methodology used in undertaking the review of settlement gaps.

Approach

3.2 There is no specific, recognised guidance for the assessment of settlement gaps. LUC's approach is based on past experience of settlement gaps/AoS studies and through discussion with the Council. It includes, for each settlement gap listed in Chapter 1, the following steps:

- Definition of boundaries of gap assessment area. The defined area encompasses all land, other than that which lies within identified potential development sites, where development has some degree of potential to reduce separation. This may include land not currently included within AoS as defined in the adopted Local Plan or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.
- Assessment of the strength of each gap, taking into consideration i) settlement character and the role of land in providing a distinctive setting; ii) the extent of physical and visual separation between settlements, considering gap size, settlement boundaries, landform, land cover and transport links; and iii) urbanising influences within the gap.
- Identification of the factors important in preserving settlement separation, and reasons why.
- Consideration of the impact on settlement separation of any nearby sites identified as potential site allocations for the emerging Local Plan.
- For the two potential strategic allocations, recommendation of boundaries for minimum AoS required to retain clear settlement separation.

3.3 Gap strength does not equate to robustness but helps to indicate whether land is performing a strong function or whether its value is compromised by, for example, its limited size and by the extent of urbanising influence within it. The potential level of harm from development is higher in a stronger gap than it is in a weaker one, but the latter may still be considered to provide sufficient separation to warrant designation.

3.4 By considering gap strength in tandem with recognition of the features that are key to preservation of that strength, the Council or those drawing up Neighbourhood Plans can:

- Make judgements as to whether an AoS should be defined between settlements.
- Make judgements as to where the boundaries should be drawn, subject to further consideration of proposals in the neighbourhood plan.
- Consider the impact of potential site allocations (including strategic allocations).
- Use the analysis to aid the development management process, by helping to determine whether development in a particular location within the gap would significantly affect settlement separation. If a development proposal can demonstrate no or limited impact on the features listed as being important to settlement separation it is more likely to be acceptable in gap-terms.

3.5 Site visits have been made to help verify desktop findings.

Evaluation criteria

3.6 A gap should provide the sense of leaving one settlement and moving through the gap before entering a different settlement. The evaluation for each gap encompassed three aspects of settlement separation in order to determine the extent to which this applies:

- Settlement identity.

- Physical and visual separation.
- Urbanising influences.

3.7 The analysis approach for each of these criteria is described in the paragraphs below. The resulting analysis was structured around these criteria, with concluding comments on gap strength and a list of key elements in preserving distinction between settlements (which reflects any significant variations in the contribution of land within the gap to this purpose).

3.8 AoS were assessed on the assumption that allocated sites will be developed in accordance with Local Plan policies. Where development has been consented, consideration was given to any masterplans when assessing the role of boundary features in maintaining settlement separation. Consideration was also given to the existence of any designations that might act as a constraint to development.

Settlement identity

3.9 The assessment of settlement identity considers the extent to which the settlements or neighbourhoods that lie adjacent to the gap have an individual townscape character and identity. AoS are likely to be more significant if they are helping to maintain a strong settlement identity. The analysis has drawn on any relevant information in conservation area appraisals.

3.10 Land is likely to make a stronger contribution to settlement distinction if:

- It has a strong relationship with a conservation area, contributing positively to its character.
- It forms a distinctive feature in a settlement's setting, prominent in views to or from the settlement or contributing to a clear sense of arrival/departure.

Physical and visual separation

3.11 The assessment of physical and visual separation considers gap size, the nature of land cover, topography and connecting routes between the settlements.

3.12 Land is likely to make a stronger contribution to settlement separation if:

- There is a clear physical boundary feature that marks the settlement edge (even if it does not form a visual barrier).
- It has landforms and/or land cover which prevent intervisibility between settlements.
- It lacks visual association with settlements on both sides of the gap, rather than just one of them.
- There is a broad gap between the settlements.
- There are no direct vehicular routes between the settlements.

Urbanising influences

3.13 The assessment of urbanising influences considers the extent and character of any existing development within the gap.

3.14 Land is likely to make a stronger contribution to settlement separation if:

- It lacks residential or employment development.
- Any built development is rural rather than urban in character/form.
- It lacks infrastructure associated with human activity, such as roads, electricity substations, pylons and overhead lines or sewage works.
- It lacks land uses typically associated with urban edges, such as horse paddocks or formal recreational facilities.

- It has semi-natural land uses, such as woodland or marshland.

Chapter 4

Settlement Gap Assessment Findings

4.1 A total of ten settlement gap areas, two of which are defined as AoS within the Adopted Local plan, have been assessed. These include the gaps between the following settlements:

- Lubenham – Market Harborough
- Great Bowden – Market Harborough
- Bitteswell – Lutterworth – Magna Park
- Sutton in the Elms – Broughton Astley
- Dunton Bassett – Broughton Astley
- Fleckney – Saddington
- Kibworth – Smeeton Westerby
- Misterton/Walcote – Lutterworth
- Oadby/Stretton Hall – Great Glen
- Magna Park – Ullesthorpe.

4.2 Detailed assessments for each of the above are set out in Appendix A. The assessment outputs for each gap include:

- A brief analysis in order to explain the boundary definition for each gap.
- Details of any designations that might act as a constraint to development.
- Details of any existing development allocations or approvals which have a bearing on settlement separation. Only committed development, including allocated and permitted development, was considered to affect existing separation.

Chapter 4 Settlement Gap Assessment Findings

- An analysis of the degree of distinction between settlements provided by the gap. 'Distinction' is a measure of the sense of separation between settlements (explained further under the Evaluation Criteria below).
- Concluding comments on gap strength and a list of the key characteristics important to the maintenance of the gap.
- Commentary on the impact on settlement separation of any local sites identified for potential allocation in the emerging Local Plan.
- Recommendations regarding areas for consideration when reviewing the extent of an existing Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan AoS or defining a new AoS.
- Accompanying mapping of each gap, on a 1:25,000 OS base, including any relevant designations which affect the analysis and/or represent a constraint to development.
- An aerial view of the recommended Area of Separation, with symbols and labelling to help visual the key gap characteristics.

4.3 In addition, the outputs for the gaps between Stretton Hall and Great Glen, and between Magna Park and Ullesthorpe, make recommendations regarding minimum boundaries for AoS to maintain settlement separation in areas where potential strategic development allocations have been identified.

4.4 Summary comments regarding considerations when reviewing AoS boundaries, impact of potential development sites and recommendations in relation to boundaries for AoS where strategic development may occur, are set out below.

Lubenham – Market Harborough

Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

4.5 Land between the existing Neighbourhood Plan AoS and the currently allocated site at Airfield Farm is included in the assessment area because the weakening of separation between the planned super prison and Market Harborough could create some sense of the town encroaching on Lubenham from the north. However, Mill Hill is a significant containing feature to the north of Lubenham, the presence of which would limit any impact in this regard.

4.6 Consideration could also be given to the inclusion of additional land in the AoS where the gap is narrowest:

- Small areas of well-treed, low-density development on the edge of Lubenham – to the east of Old Hall Lane, and north of the A4304 Harborough Road opposite and to the east of its junction with Old Hall Lane).
- Small areas of well-treed, low-density development on the edge of Market Harborough - to the south of Harborough Road off Lubenham Hill and to the west of this at the Archway Health and Wellbeing centre.
- Open land to the south of the houses on Lubenham Hill and west of Riley Close.

Impact of potential site allocations

4.7 The allocation of the site in the northern part of the assessment area could leave a very narrow gap between Market Harborough and the super prison, such that the latter would be perceived as lying on the outskirts of the town rather than being separated from it. However, impact on the separate identity of Lubenham would be limited by the intervening presence of Mill Hill.

Great Bowden – Market Harborough

Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

4.8 Any expansion of Market Harborough would be likely to intrude either on slopes that form a clear edge to the town, or on flatter land where visual separation between settlements is weaker and retention of gap size therefore becomes important. Noting that planned development on land at Burnmill Farm will extend Market Harborough to the slope crest west of the defined Local Plan AoS, consideration could be given to extending the gap to include land to the north of this which slopes down to the Grand Union Canal.

4.9 Great Bowden has some small, settlement-edge fields that have weaker distinction from the settlement than is the case with Market Harborough, but their contribution to the historic character of the village is likely to be a constraint to development. Flat land south of Leicester Lane is less important in gap terms than the rising slopes to the south, but the visual openness of this area, including in views from Burnmill Road, means that development here would still have a potentially significant impact on perceived separation.

Impact of potential site allocations

4.10 The potential expansion of Market Harborough across the southern loop of the Grand Union Canal would not bring the town closer to Great Bowden that it is at present. It would to an extent weaken the current distinction the landform provides between the lower-lying Great Bowden and the more elevated setting of Market Harborough in this area, but the latter would still be on higher ground and so would retain some landform distinction

4.11 The canal and adjacent tree cover would maintain a strong boundary along the edge of the allocation site but proximity to the western edge of Great Bowden, linked by Leicester Lane, would nonetheless be likely to create some

sense of Great Bowden becoming contained on two sides by Market Harborough. An extension of the existing AoS west to the canal and north of Leicester Lane would serve to prevent any erosion of the remaining gap in this area.

Bitteswell – Lutterworth – Magna Park

Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

4.12 In light of the recent development on land south of Magna Park (Local Plan Policy BE2), and forthcoming development linking Fairacres to Lutterworth, consideration could be given to expansion of the current AoS to the south of the A4303. The River Swift and its valley would represent a strong natural boundary to expansion of either Lutterworth or Magna Park.

4.13 To the north of Bitteswell, land at Bitteswell Farm is contributing to separation between Lutterworth and development along Ashby Lane, so an expansion of the defined AoS slightly further north could help to protect this role. The AoS as currently defined does not preclude development on the eastern side of Ashby Lane, but its extension into this area would prevent development that could have intervisibility with the northern edge of Lutterworth.

Impact of potential site allocations

4.14 The northward expansion of Lutterworth on the west-facing valley side would not narrow the existing gap between Lutterworth and Bitteswell but would add to the justification for extending the current AoS northwards (as described above) to help maintain openness along the valley of Bitteswell Brook.

Sutton in the Elms – Broughton Astley

Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

4.15 Consideration could be given to extending the current AoS to encompass all of the assessment area, unless the allotments and church grounds are considered sufficiently protected from development to not require this additional designation. At the western end of the gap it could be extended to include sufficient land to prevent further expansion adjacent to the forthcoming business park that could increase the sense of Sutton in the Elms being enclosed by urban development. This is outside the scope of the draft Local Plan and could be considered through future Neighbourhood / Local Plans.

Impact of potential site allocations

4.16 There are no potential site allocations that would have a bearing on separation between Sutton in the Elms and Broughton Astley.

Dunton Bassett – Broughton Astley

Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

4.17 Consideration could be given to extending the AoS defined in the Dunton Bassett Neighbourhood Plan to encompass Clump Hill but to exclude residential development on Dunton Road. This is outside the scope of the draft Local Plan and could be considered through future Neighbourhood / Local Plans.

Impact of potential site allocations

4.18 There are no potential site allocations that would have a bearing on separation between Dunton Bassett and Broughton Astley.

Fleckney – Saddington

Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

4.19 The expansion of Fleckney into the field between allocated employment land and The Chestnuts would in turn increase urbanising influence on land within the gap closer to Fleckney Road, potentially introducing a degree of containment, so consideration could be given to extending the current AoS up to The Chestnuts.

4.20 Expansion of Saddington to the north of Shearsby Road would represent a significant change in the village's settlement form, leaving little separation from the newly extended residential edge of Fleckney. Land to the south of Shearsby Road plays a weaker role in this respect but ridge top development visible from Fleckney would nonetheless represent some weakening of separation, given the narrowness of the gap in this area, so this area could be considered for potential inclusion in the AoS.

4.21 These potential alterations are outside the scope of the draft Local Plan and could be considered through future Neighbourhood / Local Plans.

Impact of potential site allocations

4.22 Development of the area adjacent to the Churchill Way Industrial Estate, broadening the frontage of development facing towards Saddington, could justify extending the AoS northwards to the edge of this site.

Kibworth – Smeeton Westerby

Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

4.23 Consideration could be given to extending the defined AoS further east and west. Although the gap at the core of the assessment area is much narrower than at its eastern and western edges, the relatively large, visually open character of these more peripheral areas means that their openness still makes a significant contribution to perceived settlement separation. This is outside the scope of the draft Local Plan and could be considered through future Neighbourhood / Local Plans.

Impact of potential site allocations

4.24 Development of the potential site allocation to the west of Warwick Road would have no bearing on separation between Kibworth and Smeeton Westerby.

Misterton/Walcote – Lutterworth

Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

4.25 An AoS could be considered to maintain separation between the planned development east of Lutterworth and Misterton. Land south of the A4304 could be included to avoid significant urban views from close to Walcote across the open valley landscape, and to avoid any sense of Misterton becoming contained by urban areas. Land north of the River Swift near Walcote could also be included, to prevent expansion of Lutterworth that would be visible from close to Walcote. This is outside the scope of the draft Local Plan and could be considered through future Neighbourhood / Local Plans.

Impact of potential site allocations

4.26 There are no potential site allocations that would have a bearing on separation between Lutterworth and Misterton or Walcote.

Oadby/Stretton Hall – Great Glen

Recommended Area of Separation boundaries

4.27 Should the potential strategic development between Oadby and Great Glen go ahead, it is recommended that the AoS be defined to encompass all of the assessment area, providing separation of the proposed new development adjacent to Oadby and the existing village of Great Glen. This will ensure that Great Glen retains its distinct identity and openness on the slopes of the valley of the River Sence. The focus of built development within the allocation should be in the area to the west of the AoS, where existing

separation between Oadby and Stretton Hall is weaker than the separation between Stretton Hall and Great Glen.

4.28 Development in the north-eastern part of the site would diminish the extent to which the open slopes of the valley of the River Sence form a consistent settlement gap, but this would still leave a stronger gap than that which can be accommodated between the potential site allocation at Great Glen and the western edge of the assessment area on Chestnut Drive (see below).

4.29 Land in the southern part of the assessment area is peripheral to the shorter gaps between Stretton Hall and the nearest edges of Oadby and Great Glen but urbanising influences diminish perceived settlement separation in the vicinity of London Road.

Impact of potential site allocations

4.30 The potential site allocation on the edge of Great Glen lies on the sloping valley side that forms the principal open space between Great Glen and western edge of the assessment area. To the west of the site, Leicester Grammar School already diminishes openness. This allocation would significantly weaken separation between Oadby and Great Glen were the potential strategic development allocation to result in built development to the west of the assessment area. It is therefore important that the proposed AoS maintains the relatively strong separation between Stretton Hall and Great Glen.

Magna Park – Ullesthorpe

Recommended Area of Separation boundaries

4.31 Should the potential strategic development between Magna Park and Ullesthorpe go ahead, it is recommended that the AoS be defined to focus on retaining openness on the slopes of the northern, and most prominent, of the

two valley that cross east-west through the assessment area. This should encompass the smaller, well-treed fields near Lutterworth Road. Any expansion of Magna Park beyond the public bridleway that marks the ridge crest will cause weakening of current separation, but the lower valley area can still provide clear distinction between settlements, with the recommended AoS preventing any significant further expansion of Magna Park.

4.32 The southern edge of the recommended AoS has been drawn to follow the nearest field boundaries, but it should be noted that this includes some land sloping down close to the valley floor. These areas are more sensitive and built development here would potentially weaken the valley's separating role. The northern boundary of the recommended AoS extends up to the more prominent, visually-exposed south-eastern edge of Ullesthorpe but excludes land further west on the edge of the village which has stronger visual separation from settlement gap.

Impact of potential site allocations

4.33 The potential site allocation to either side of Ashby Road is too far from the settlement gap to have any significant impact on perceived separation.

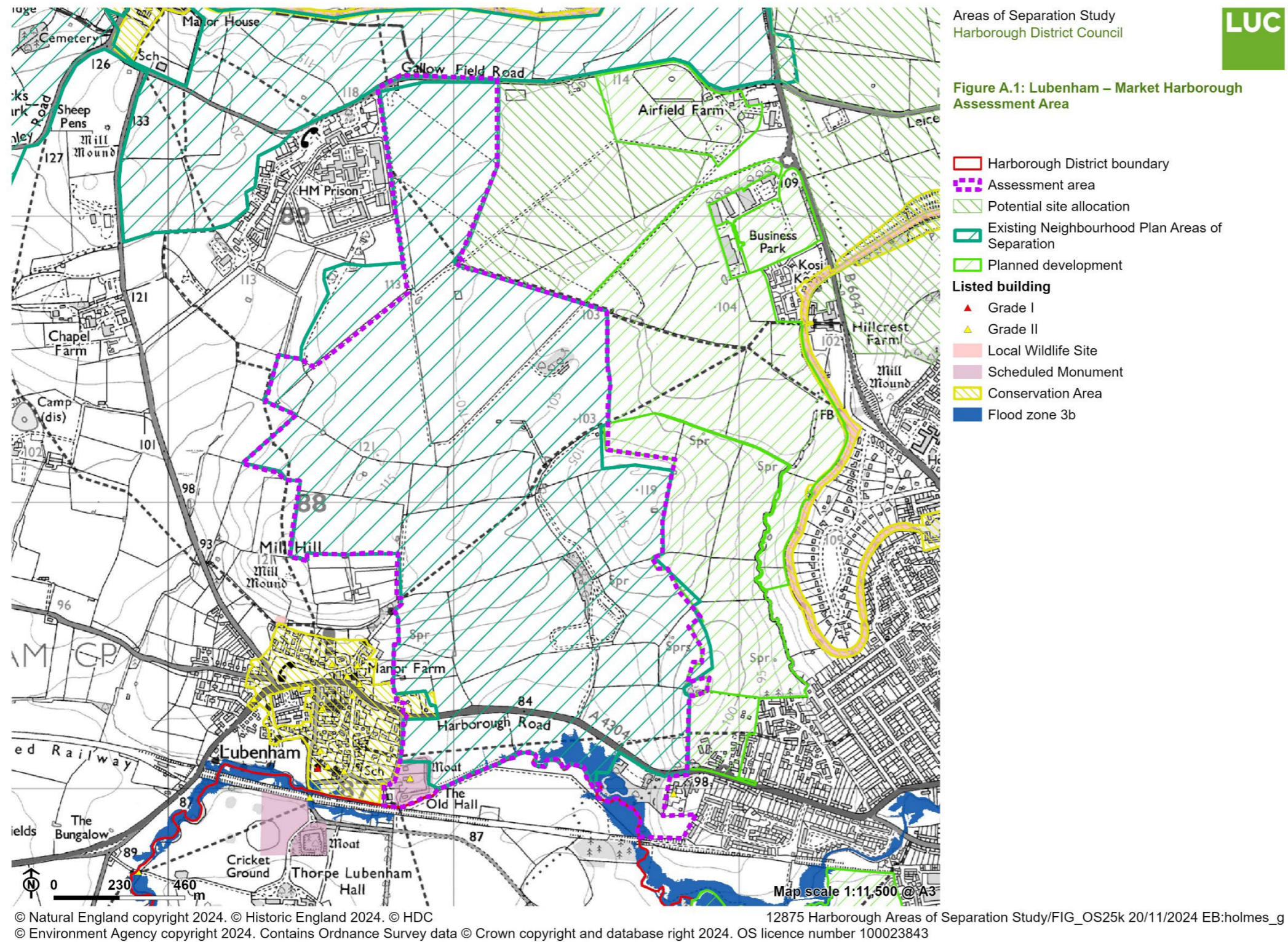
Appendix A

Settlement Gaps Assessment

A.1 Assessments for gaps between the following settlements are set out in this appendix:

- Lubenham – Market Harborough
- Great Bowden – Market Harborough
- Bitteswell – Lutterworth – Magna Park
- Sutton in the Elms – Broughton Astley
- Dunton Bassett – Broughton Astley
- Fleckney – Saddington
- Kibworth – Smeeton Westerby
- Misterton/Walcote – Lutterworth
- Oadby/Stretton Hall – Great Glen
- Magna Park – Ullesthorpe.

Figure A.1: Lubenham - Market Harborough assessment area



Lubenham – Market Harborough

Context

Assessment area

A.2 The assessment area for considering separation between Lubenham and Market Harborough extends north to the edge of the new ‘super prison’ to the south of HMP Gartree. There is a relatively narrow gap between Gartree and the north-western edge of Market Harborough, and likewise between Gartree and Lubenham, so development in either of these gaps could have an impact on overall separation between Lubenham and Market Harborough. The assessment area is larger than the AoS defined in the Lubenham Neighbourhood Plan.

A.3 The southern edge of the assessment area is the Harborough District boundary along the River Welland, but it is noted that land to the south of the river, in West Northamptonshire District, also contributes to settlement separation.

Relationship to designations

A.4 Within the assessment area there are small areas of land constrained from development: the Old Hall moated site on the edge of Lubenham just north of the River Welland is a Scheduled Monument and there is some land in Flood Zone 3b (the functional floodplain) between the river and the A4304 Harborough Road, towards the edge of Market Harborough.

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

A.5 Most of Lubenham, including all of its eastern frontage, lies within a Conservation Area, and this includes land on the village outskirts with low-density development to the north of the A4304 that has been treated as part of the assessment area.

Relationship with development allocations

A.6 The assessment area excludes committed and planned development on the western edge of Market Harborough between the A4304 and Gallow Field Road to the north. Much of this area is under construction, with only the land allocated for employment use under Policy MH4 (Land at Airfield Farm) adjacent to Gallow Field Road yet to commence.

A.7 It also excludes the site of approved new super prison near HMP Gartree, which will extend development south towards Lubenham (leaving a gap of a little under 1km).

A.8 A potential site allocation is located adjacent to the north-eastern edge of the assessment area, alongside the allocated land at Airfield Farm.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement identity

A.9 Lubenham is a historic village. It retains a few pre-19th century buildings but the centre is largely Victorian in character. It has distinctive features forming its setting to the north and south: Mill Hill forms a backdrop to the north, prominent in views from the village green, and the River Welland and a tree belt along the adjacent former railway line, contain the village to the south.

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

A.10 There are open views eastwards across farmland to a ridge of high ground between Lubenham and Market Harborough which, in conjunction with tree cover, largely screens the latter from view and so strengthens the rural character of Lubenham's setting.

A.11 Market Harborough's medieval core, alongside the River Welland, is also designated a Conservation Area but significant modern development lies between it and the open countryside forming the gap to Lubenham. This precludes any significant views of the higher ground on the western edge of the town.

A.12 A narrow valley, along the side of which a branch of the Grand Union Canal passes, formerly defined much of the urban edge north of the A4304, but recent and ongoing development beyond this has created an elevated settlement edge along the ridge.

Physical and visual separation

A.13 There is a gap of slightly over 1km between Lubenham and Market Harborough, with the A4304 providing a direct link between the settlements. However, the aforementioned ridge of high ground is a key separating feature.

A.14 The emerging urban edge of Market Harborough now reaches close to the ridge crest, so there is some visibility of rooftops from close to the edge of Lubenham, but the topography blocks closer views on approach along the A4304 on the valley floor. Several small blocks and lines of trees form prominent features on the ridge crest and western slope, strengthening the town's boundary, and tree cover on the valley floor helps to screen views where the River Welland cuts through the ridge line. There are stronger views east across the gap to development on the ridge crest south of Harborough Road.

A.15 Although there is no clear feature to define a strong eastern boundary to Lubenham, properties on the village edge have a low development density and

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

strong mature tree cover, creating a 'soft' urban edge with limited visual impact on land in the gap.

A.16 Further north there is a gap of less than 700m between the developing edge of Market Harborough and the approved forthcoming edge of the planned super prison near HMP Gartree, but also a gap of around 950m between Gartree and the northern edge of Lubenham. The landform between the former is relatively flat and open, but Mill Hill forms a strong boundary directly to the north of Lubenham, screening the village from the flatter plateau area that forms the rest of the gap to Gartree.

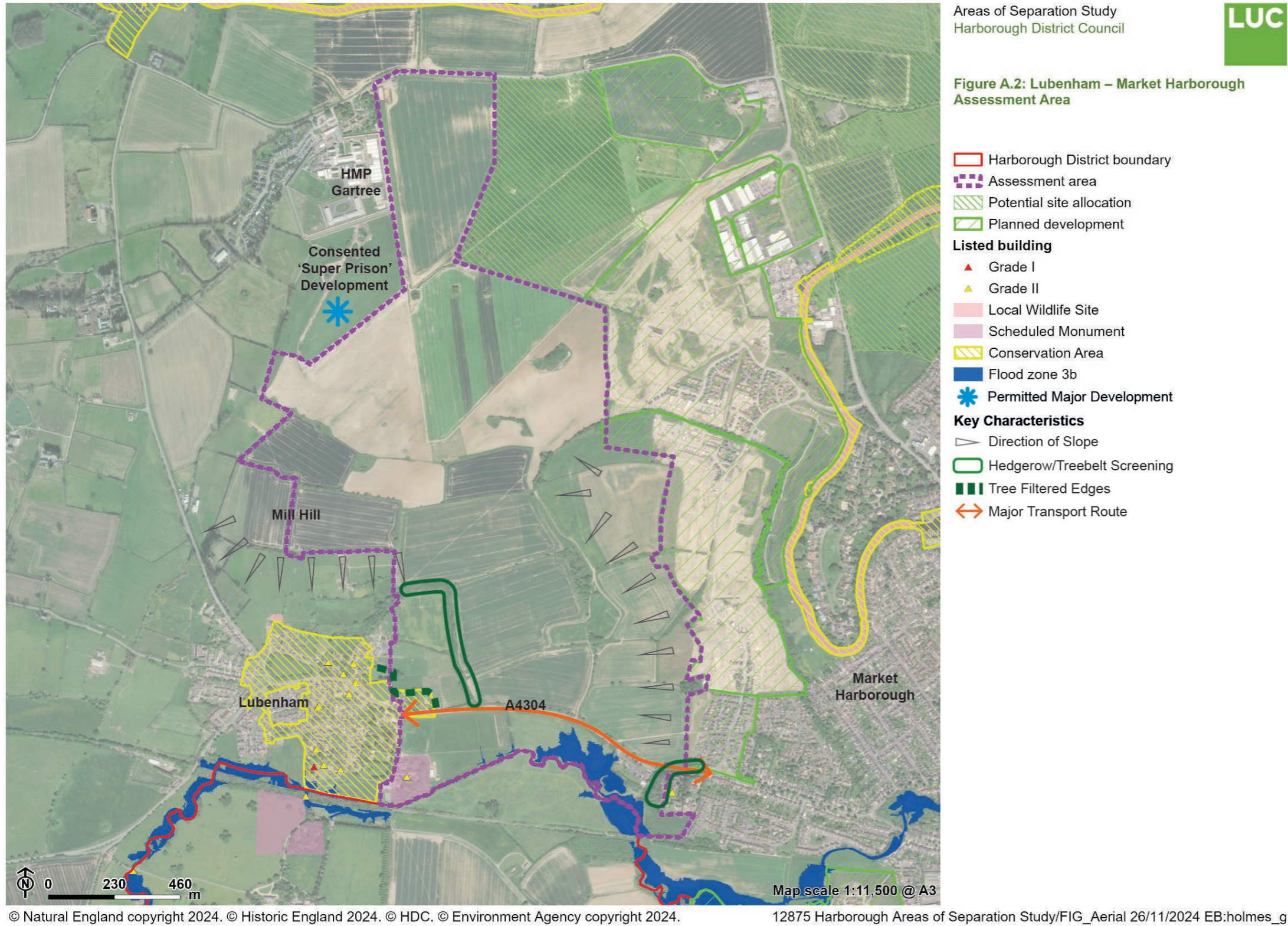
Urbanising influences

A.17 Two large 19th century dwellings, and gardens between them, which are separated from the edge of Lubenham by an open, grazed field, are all included in the Conservation Area. These help to retain a semi-rural character rather than forming a harder urban boundary. The same is true to the south of the A4304, where the Old Hall and adjacent buildings are set within a well-treed landscape.

A.18 Close to the edge of Market Harborough the Archway Health & Wellbeing centre comprises several buildings and a large car park which create some urbanising influence on approach to the town, but strong tree cover surrounding large houses on Lubenham Hill isolates this from the settlement and limits the extent to which it is perceived as urban sprawl.

A.19 The A4304 has a pavement but no street lighting, and the screening of urban edges described above, combined with the availability of views north and south, means that there is a clear sense of leaving one settlement and passing through countryside before arriving at the other.

Figure A.2: Lubenham - Market Harborough key gap characteristics



Settlement gap function

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.20 The gap between Lubenham and Market Harborough, although weakened by recent development on the edge of the latter, is still relatively strong. The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between them:

- The undeveloped crest and western slopes of the ridge along the edge of Market Harborough, which forms a consistent urban boundary.
- Tree cover alongside the A4304 on the edge of Market Harborough, which combines with the ridge slope to strengthen distinction between settlement and countryside.
- The containment of Lubenham to the north by Mill Hill, which is an important feature in the village's setting and which forms a visual and physical boundary to existing and future development at HMP Gartree.
- The undeveloped ridgeline seen in views north from the A4304, which helps to retain the rural character of the settlement gap.
- Mature village-edge tree cover which limits views of Lubenham on approach from Market Harborough.

Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

A.21 Land between the existing Neighbourhood Plan AoS and the currently allocated site at Airfield Farm is included in the assessment area because the weakening of separation between the planned super prison and Market Harborough could create some sense of the town encroaching on Lubenham

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

from the north. However, Mill Hill is a significant containing feature to the north of Lubenham, the presence of which would limit any impact in this regard.

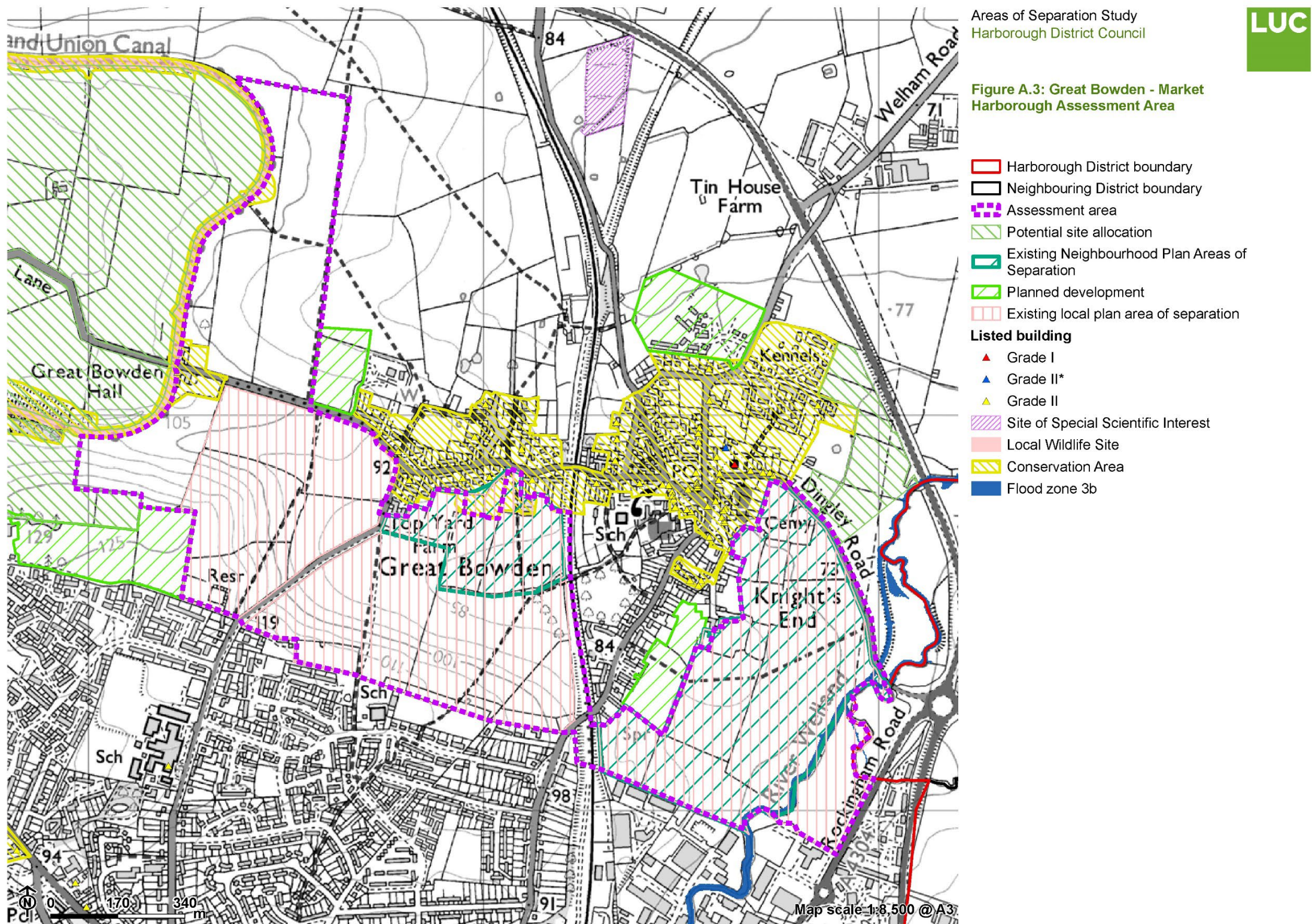
A.22 Consideration could also be given to the inclusion of additional land in the AoS where the gap is narrowest:

- Small areas of well-treed, low-density development on the edge of Lubenham – to the east of Old Hall Lane, and north of the A4304 Harborough Road opposite and to the east of its junction with Old Hall Lane).
- Small areas of well-treed, low-density development on the edge of Market Harborough - to the south of Harborough Road off Lubenham Hill and to the west of this at the Archway Health and Wellbeing centre.
- Open land to the south of the houses on Lubenham Hill and west of Riley Close.

Impact of potential site allocations

A.23 The allocation of the site to the north-east of the assessment area would leave a very narrow gap between Market Harborough and the super prison, such that the latter could be perceived as lying on the outskirts of the town rather than being separated from it. However, impact on the separate identity of Lubenham would be limited by the intervening presence of Mill Hill.

Figure A.3: Great Bowden - Market Harborough assessment area



Areas of Separation Study
Harborough District Council



Figure A.3: Great Bowden - Market Harborough Assessment Area

- Harborough District boundary
- Neighbouring District boundary
- Assessment area
- Potential site allocation
- Existing Neighbourhood Plan Areas of Separation
- Planned development
- Existing local plan area of separation
- Listed building**
- ▲ Grade I
- ▲ Grade II*
- ▲ Grade II
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Wildlife Site
- Conservation Area
- Flood zone 3b

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 12875 Harborough Areas of Separation Study/FIG_OS25k 28/10/2024 EB:holmes_g

Great Bowden – Market Harborough

Context

Assessment area

A.24 An AoS is defined in the current Local Plan (policy GD6) to encompass all open land between the edge of Market Harborough, Dingley Road, Leicester Lane and the Grand Union Canal. The eastern end of the AoS is defined by the A4304 and the district boundary, and the western end by an allocated housing site at Burnmill Farm. That part of the gap which lies within Great Bowden parish is also defined as an AoS in the Great Bowden Neighbourhood Plan.

A.25 The assessment area encompasses all of the land defined as an AOS in the Local Plan but is extended slightly to the west to include land sloping down from the Burnmill Farm housing site to the Grand Union Canal. It is noted that land in North Northamptonshire, between Dingley Road and the A4304 (close to the A6 roundabout) also makes some contribution to settlement separation.

Relationship to designations

A.26 On the eastern side of the gap, there are three Local Wildlife Sites located to the north and also land which falls within Flood Zone 2 and 3, where the River Welland runs under the A6 and parallel to Rockingham Road (A4304), into Market Harborough. The western side of the gap is bordered by the Grand Union Canal which is a Local Wildlife Site and Conservation Area. The canal also causes some land in the eastern area of the gap to fall within its Flood Zone 2 and 3.

A.27 Most of Great Bowden lies within a Conservation Area which overlaps marginally into the northern fringe of the assessment area.

Relationship with development allocations

A.28 Residential development on the southern edge of Great Bowden at Berry Close, allocated in the current Local Plan, has been completed. The housing development at Burnmill Farm, to the south-west of the assessment area, is under construction.

A.29 There is a potential site allocation which would extend Market Harborough north into the loop of the Grand Union Canal west of Great Bowden.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement identity

A.30 Great Bowden is a historic village retaining a high number of historic buildings dating back to the 17th-19th Century. There have been small pockets of 20th-21st Century development to the north, south and west of Great Bowden but the majority of Great Bowden is covered by a Conservation Area designation. Strong tree cover and a network of open green spaces within the village give it a distinctive character.

A.31 Rising slopes to the west of the railway line that cuts north-south through Great Bowden are significant to the visual setting of the village, helping to retain rural character by creating a sense of separation from Market Harborough. To the east of the railway line there is little difference in elevation between the two settlements and so a weaker sense of rural separation.

A.32 Market Harborough's medieval core, alongside the River Welland, is also designated as a Conservation Area but significant modern development lies between it and the open countryside forming the gap to Great Bowden. This precludes any significant views of the higher ground on the western edge of the town.

Physical and visual separation

A.33 Along Station Road / Great Bowden Road the two settlements are separated only by the railway line and associated tree lines. To the east of the railway line there is only 150-175m gap between an industrial estate on the edge of Market Harborough and residential development off Station Road and Berry Close in Great Bowden, with some intervisibility over settlement-edge hedgerows. However, the field forming this part of the gap retains a visual association with the wider gap to the east.

A.34 Further east the gap widens significantly. There is some intervisibility of development across relatively flat, open pasture fields, but the A4304 is a clear urban edge boundary to commercial development on the north-eastern edge of Market Harborough.

A.35 To the west of the railway line the gap immediately opens up. The railway and associated tree cover form a strong visual boundary to the central part of Great Bowden and the village settlement edge along Main Street is around 600m from Market Harborough. A tree belt along the edge of the latter forms a strong boundary screen extending westwards, and although this becomes a narrower hedgerow further west the upward slope of the landform creates an increasing difference in elevation between the settlements. To the west of Burnmill Road a dense tree belt forms a strong boundary around the housing development at Burnmill Farm.

A.36 Along the edge of Great Bowden mature trees significantly filter views from within the gap, particularly east of Burnmill Road, so although the sloping landform allows some strong views from close to the edge of Market

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

Harborough (there are three public footpaths linking the settlements) there is little sense of urban intrusion on the rural character of the intervening pastoral farmland. Tree cover within the settlement itself is also important in limiting urban character.

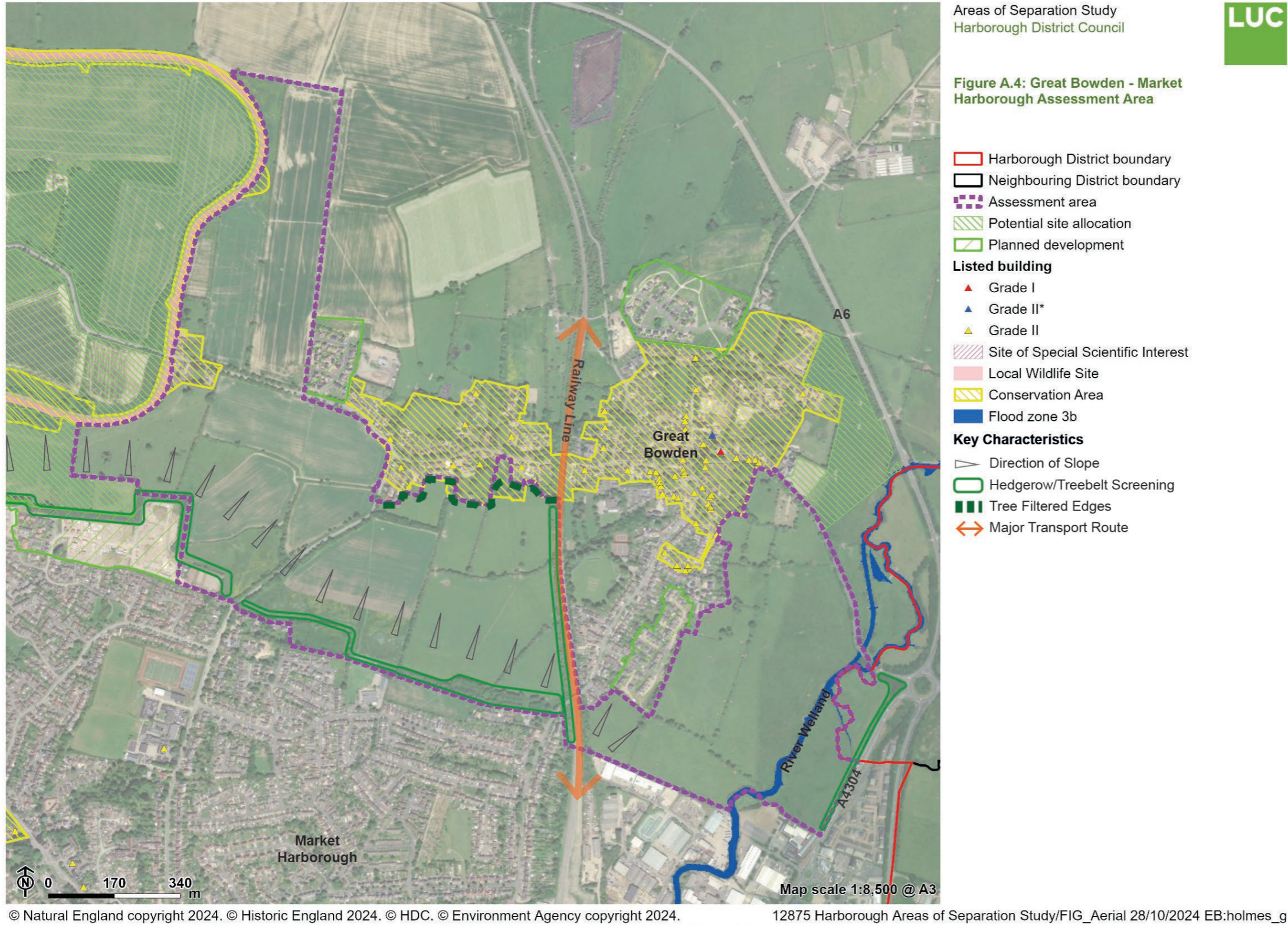
Urbanising influences

A.37 There is little sense of separation between settlements when travelling along Great Bowden Road / Station Road, which has a pavement and street lighting, and there is a partial degree of urbanising containment around the field immediately to the east of the railway line, but there is no development within the assessment area to increase urbanising influence beyond that associated with proximity to urban edges.

A.38 Burnmill Road provides a direct, paved link between the settlements. Descending on the sharp slope out from Market Harborough roadside trees initially screen views, but there is clear visibility of houses along Leicester Lane from the central part of the gap. Travelling southwards there is less sense of the proximity of Market Harborough until close to its edge.

A.39 The A4304 together with Dingley Road also provide a paved road link between the settlements, but well-treed boundaries around small fields to the east of Great Bowden, trees around the A6 roundabout and views along the river corridor, contribute to rural character.

Figure A.4: Great Bowden - Market Harborough key gap characteristics



Settlement gap function

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.40 Although separation is fragile just to the east of the railway line, where Great Bowden and Market Harborough almost meet there is a relatively strong sense of separation in other areas. The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between them:

- The openness of the slopes down from Market Harborough to the west of the railway line, which form a prominent visual setting to Great Bowden and mark a clear edge to Market Harborough.
- Hedgerows and tree belts on the northern edge of Market Harborough, which provide a strong visual boundary screening development in the town.
- Tree cover along the edges of Great Bowden, filtering views of development and softening urban character.
- The boundary role of the railway line in relation to the southern part of Great Bowden, screening settlement views and strengthening rural character in the fields that form the western half of the settlement gap.
- The retention of openness where the gap is narrowest, to the east of the railway line, and a visual association with the landform of the valley of the River Welland to counter any sense of urbanising containment.
- The role of the A4304 as an urban edge boundary in the vicinity of visually open, low-lying fields close to the River Welland.
- The absence of urbanising features within the gap itself, strengthening rural character.

Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

A.41 Any expansion of Market Harborough would be likely to intrude either on slopes that form a clear edge to the town, or on flatter land where visual separation between settlements in weaker and retention of gap size therefore important. Noting that planned development on land at Burnmill Farm will extend Market Harborough to the slope crest west of the defined Local Plan AoS, consideration could be given to extending the gap to include land to the north of this which slopes down to the Grand Union Canal.

A.42 Great Bowden has some small, settlement-edge fields that have weaker distinction from the settlement than is the case with Market Harborough, but their contribution to the historic character of the village is likely to be a constraint to development. Flat land south of Leicester Lane is less important in gap terms than the rising slopes to the south, but the visual openness of this area, including in views from Burnmill Road, means that development here would still have a potentially significant impact on perceived separation.

Impact of potential site allocations

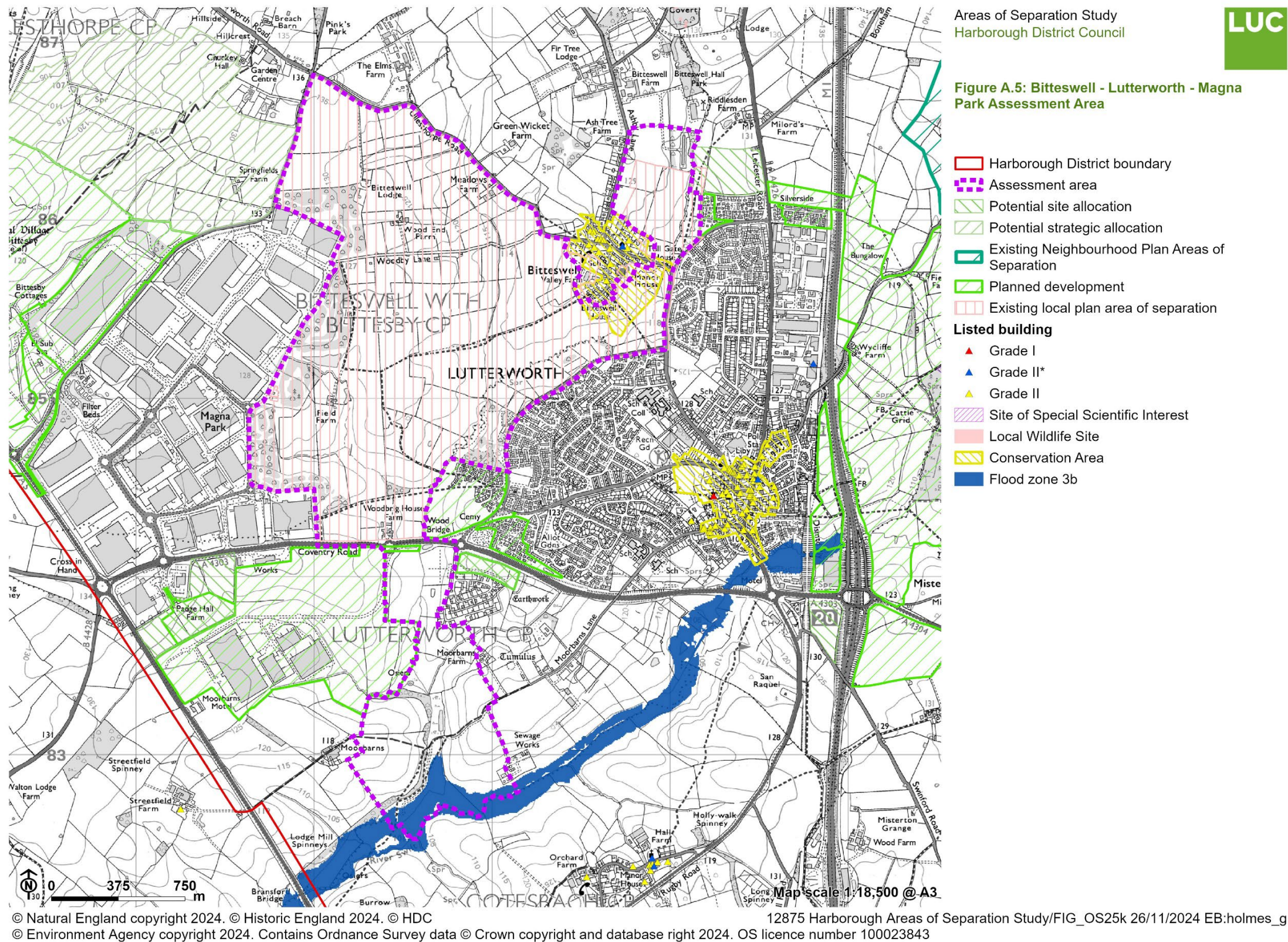
A.43 The potential expansion of Market Harborough across the southern loop of the Grand Union Canal would not bring the town closer to Great Bowden than it is at present. It would to an extent weaken the current distinction that landform provides between the lower-lying Great Bowden and the more elevated setting of Market Harborough in this area, but the latter would still be on higher ground and so would retain some landform distinction.

A.44 The canal and adjacent tree cover would maintain a strong boundary along the edge of the allocation site but proximity to the western edge of Great Bowden, linked by Leicester Lane, would nonetheless be likely to create some sense of Great Bowden becoming contained on two sides by Market Harborough. An extension of the existing AoS west to the canal and north of

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

Leicester Lane would serve to prevent any erosion of the remaining gap in this area.

Figure A.5: Bitteswell - Lutterworth - Magna Park assessment area



Bitteswell – Lutterworth – Magna Park

Context

Assessment area

A.45 An AoS is defined in the current Local Plan (policy GD6) to encompass land between Lutterworth, Magna Park and Bitteswell. The southern edge of the AoS is defined by the A4303, but development of Magna Park has now extended south of this road, Approved commercial development on the edge of Lutterworth will also remove the gap between the town and the Fairacres travelling showpeople site, so the assessment area has been extended to include land between Magna Park and Lutterworth south of the A4303.

A.46 To the north of Lutterworth the assessment area has been extended slightly further north than the currently defined AoS, to encompass a broader area of land close to the village of Bitteswell.

Relationship to designations

A.47 The assessment area encompasses numerous Local Wildlife Sites including the Bitteswell Brook which flows from the north to south along the east boundary of the assessment area. The Bitteswell Conservation Area extends into the assessment area, encompassing land between the eastern edge of the village and Bitteswell Brook south of Lutterworth Road.

Relationship with development allocations

A.48 An extension of Magna Park to the south of the A4303 is currently under construction, as is residential development on land west of Brookfield Way on the nearby edge of Lutterworth. The remaining gap between the Fairacres travelling showpeople site and the southern edge of Lutterworth is to be developed for commercial use.

A.49 There is a potential site allocation on the northern edge of Lutterworth, adjacent to the assessment area on the eastern side of the valley of Bitteswell Brook.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement identity

A.50 Most of Bitteswell, aside from linear residential development extending north along Ashby Lane, falls within a designated Conservation Area, with buildings dating back to the early 18th Century. As noted above, the Conservation Area extends into the assessment area, where pastures and trees in the shallow valley of Bitteswell Brook form a rural setting to the village.

A.51 The centre of Lutterworth is also covered by a Conservation Area but there has been significant expansion to the north and west during the late 20th Century and 21st century such that land in the assessment area does not contribute to any distinctive settlement character.

A.52 To the west of Lutterworth lies Magna Park. Magna Park is a large industrial area focused on distribution. Established in 1987, it occupies close to 300 hectares at present, with approvals for further expansion. A landscape-led approach was used when developing Magna Park, with significant woodland planting and grassland rides located to the east of the development.

Physical and visual separation

A.53 The gap between Lutterworth and Magna Park is generally in excess of 1km, with a core of agricultural fields. These are mostly fairly open and gently undulating in character, with low hedgerows, but there are some small tree clumps, individual field trees and hedgerow trees. The eastern edge of Magna Park is mostly screened by mounding and areas of dense deciduous woodland, created for that purpose.

A.54 The central western edge of Lutterworth is defined by Brookfield Way, beyond which an area of generally well-treed land, including Lutterworth Country Park, slopes down to Bitteswell Brook. However, the consistency of this boundary has been weakened by recent development between the country park and the A4303 on the land sloping down to the brook, where the gap to Magna Park on the north side of the A4303 is reduced 600m.

A.55 To the south of the A4303, the development of Magna Park south is having a significant impact on settlement separation, with built development extending east to leave a gap of only c.400m to the residential edge of Lutterworth north of the main road and also to the Fairacres travelling showpeople site south. The narrow Bitteswell Brook valley still provides a consistent separating feature, but within this gap the roundabout providing access to Magna Park South further reduces perceived separation, and the A4303 provides a short, direct connection with clear views of the large logistics buildings of Magna Park from west of the Coventry Road roundabout and from Fairacres.

A.56 The main urban area of Lutterworth is visually screened from Magna Park South by tree cover alongside the A4303 but Fairacres is not, and whilst previously Fairacres could have been considered an isolated development outside of Lutterworth there is approved commercial development to take place on the narrow field that currently separates the two.

A.57 The A4303 is the only direct vehicular link between Lutterworth and Magna Park. Woodby Lane, a minor, single track road, spans almost the whole

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

of the gap west of Bitteswell, to provide access to a few isolated properties, but is blocked off at the edge of Magna Park. A footpath provides a link across the central part of the gap, also connecting to a footpath to Bitteswell.

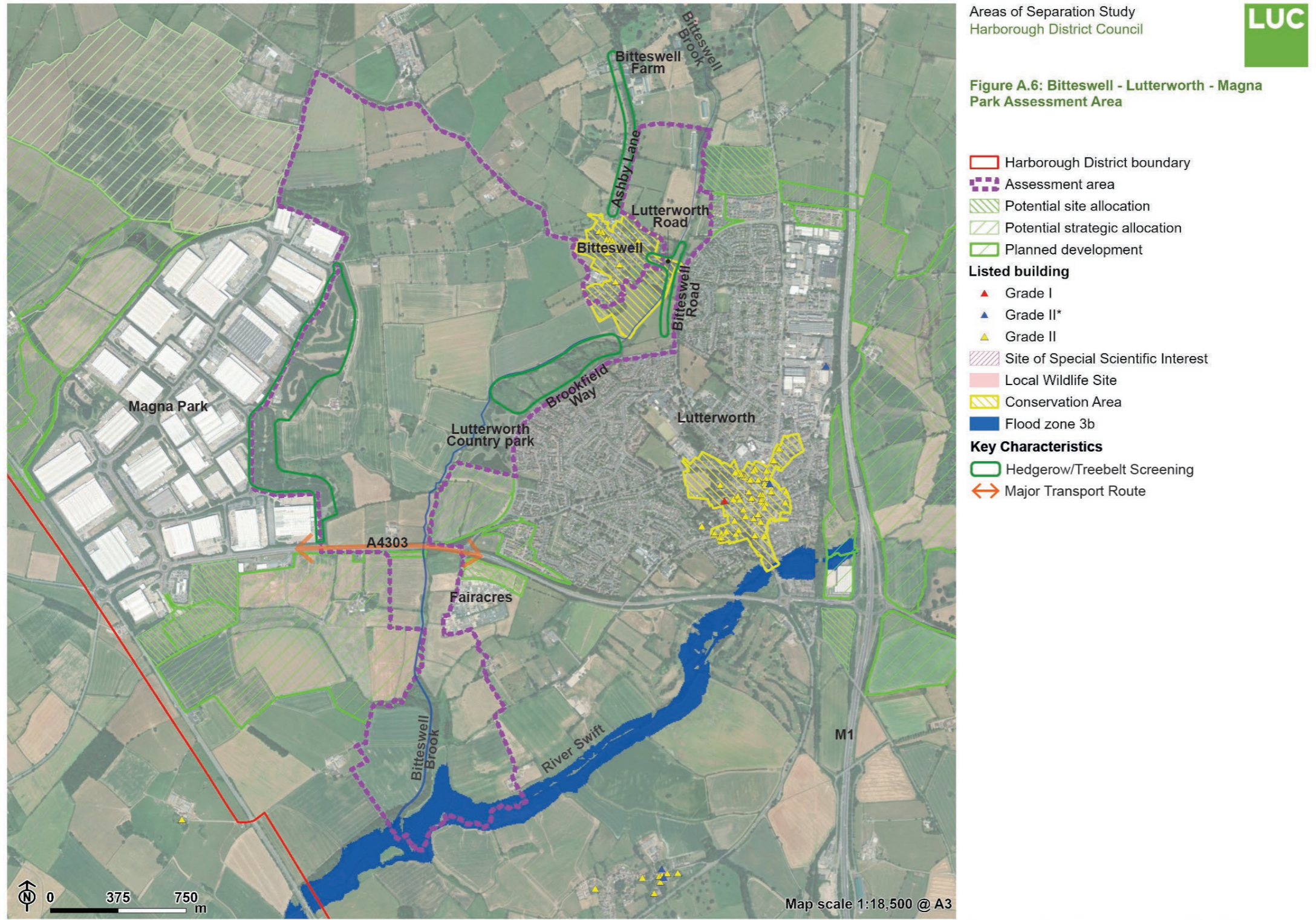
A.58 Bitteswell is 1.3km from Magna Park North but less than 200m from the edge of Lutterworth along Lutterworth Road. However, strong tree cover in the fields to either side of Lutterworth Road helps to provide visual separation between the two settlements. Further south the gap widens to over 300m; there is greater visual openness but the valley of Bitteswell Brook is a clear separating feature and trees on the edge of Lutterworth along Bitteswell Road limit urbanising influence. To the north there is a gap of over 500m between the northern edge of Lutterworth and houses extending north from Bitteswell along Ashby Lane, with the brook providing a boundary to Lutterworth and adjacent amenity land, and Ashby Lane providing a boundary to the houses along its western side. There are also intervening hedgerows to limit intervisibility of settlement edges.

Urbanising influences

A.59 The character of the central and northern parts of the assessment remains rural, with no significant views of Magna Park and no urbanising development in the gap. Higher parts of Lutterworth are visible at some distance, and do not significantly intrude on the open, rural character of the area.

A.60 Further south, in the vicinity of the A4303 and Magna Park South, the gap is too narrow to retain much rural character. Allotments on the slope between Fairacres and Bitteswell Brook also add some urban fringe influence to this area, although the valley landform allows some rural views southwards.

Figure A.6: Bitteswell - Lutterworth - Magna Park key gap characteristics



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Settlement gap function

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.61 The gap between Lutterworth and Magna Park is largely a strong one but is significantly weakened in the vicinity of the A4303 by the ongoing development of Magna Park South and, to a lesser extent, by development on the edge of Lutterworth. The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between them:

- The area of mounded, wooded land along the eastern edge of Magna Park, which screens the large-scale logistics buildings from view from Lutterworth and from within the gap.
- The broad area of farmland between Magna Park North and Lutterworth, which provide clear physical separation and retains rural character.
- The absence of development (other than south of Lutterworth Country Park) and presence of semi-natural vegetation on land sloping down from Brookfield Way to Bitteswell Brook, which strengthens the separating role of the brook and its associated valley landform.
- The absence of vehicular links across the gap, other than the A4303, which increases the perceived width of the gap.
- The retention of openness along the Bitteswell Brook valley south of the A4303, preserving its role as a consistent boundary to Lutterworth and providing views that help to retain some sense of connectivity with the wider countryside.

4.34 The gap between Lutterworth and Bitteswell is relatively narrow but also relatively strong. The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between them:

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

- The absence of development on the western slopes of the valley of Bitteswell Brook and on the lower eastern slopes, which provides a consistent boundary to Lutterworth.
- The strength of tree cover both north and south of Lutterworth Road, which preserves visual separation where the settlement gap is narrowest.
- Tree cover along Bitteswell Road, Brookfield Way and south of Valley Lane, which minimises intervisibility between Lutterworth and Bitteswell even across the more open valley sides to the south-east of the village.
- The role of the tree-lined Ashby Lane as a boundary to development on the valley side north of Bitteswell.

Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

A.62 In light of the recent development on land south of Magna Park (Local Plan Policy BE2), and forthcoming development linking Fairacres to Lutterworth, consideration could be given to expansion of the current AoS to the south of the A4303. The River Swift and its valley would represent a strong natural boundary to expansion of either Lutterworth or Magna Park.

A.63 To the north of Bitteswell, land at Bitteswell Farm is contributing to separation between Lutterworth and development along Ashby Lane, so an expansion of the defined AoS slightly further north could help to protect this role. The AoS as currently defined does not preclude development on the eastern side of Ashby Lane, but its extension into this area would prevent development that could have intervisibility with the northern edge of Lutterworth.

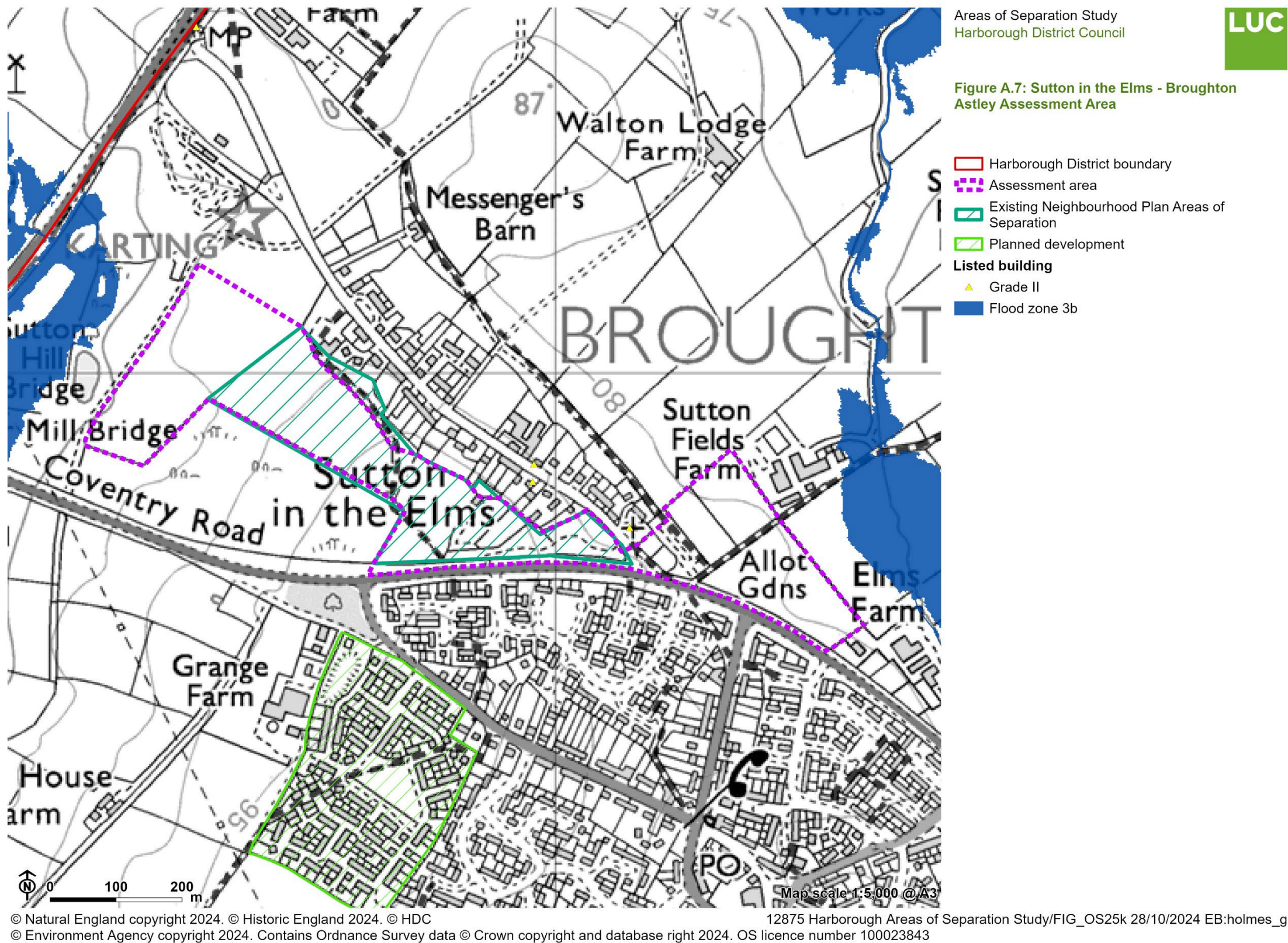
Impact of potential site allocations

A.64 The northward expansion of Lutterworth on the west-facing valley side would not narrow the existing gap between Lutterworth and Bitteswell but would

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

add to the justification for extending the current AoS northwards (as described above) to help maintain openness along the valley of Bitteswell Brook.

Figure A.7: Sutton in the Elms - Broughton Astley assessment area



Sutton in the Elms - Broughton Astley

Context

Assessment area

A.65 The assessment area for considering separation between Sutton in the Elms and Broughton Astley has been extended beyond the AoS defined in the Broughton Astley Neighbourhood Plan to encompass a broader area of land to the north of the B581, both to the east and west of the existing AoS.

Relationship to designations

A.66 The assessment area is contained by the floodplains of the River Soar to the east and the Broughton Astley Brook to the west. The area also includes Local Wildlife Sites in its western section, next to the Soar, including the Broughton Astley pond and golf course hedges.

Relationship with development allocations

A.67 The assessment area excludes land to the north of the B581 Coventry Road, west of the Neighbourhood Plan's defined AoS, which has outline permission for commercial development (Elm Business Park). Land just to the north-west of the assessment area, currently the Sutton Circuit outdoor go-karting centre, has permission for construction of holiday lodges (and a subsequent undetermined application for instead making this a retirement village).

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement identity

A.68 Sutton in the Elms is a small linear settlement running along Sutton Lane. It has a number of buildings dating back to the late 19th/early 20th century, and there has been only limited development since then, but it doesn't have a strong historic character.

A.69 Broughton Astley is a much larger settlement that has expanded significantly with the 21st Century, resulting in a strengthening of connection between what was formerly two distinct villages: Primethorpe to the north/west of Frolesworth Road and Broughton Astley to the south/east.

Physical and visual separation

A.70 Broughton Astley and Sutton in the Elms almost adjoin where Sutton Lane meets the B581 Broughton Way, with that road, the grounds of Sutton Elms Baptist Church and a field to the west of Sutton Lane (Finn's Field) providing the only separation.

A.71 Broughton Way was constructed as a bypass around the Primethorpe part of Broughton Astley, and its associated trees and hedgerows are important in filtering views between the settlements, with development in Broughton Astley having extended up to the road. A bend in Sutton Lane on its approach to the junction with Broughton Way limits intervisibility to the short stretch of road south of the church.

A.72 West of Sutton Lane the gap increases to 200m adjacent to the current north-western corner of Broughton Astley. Houses on the southern side of Sutton in the Elms have no strong boundary features, but long back gardens and trees within them provide only filtered views across the intervening field. A

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

public footpath crosses this field, from which the separation of settlements can be appreciated.

A.73 Land to the west of this has permission for commercial development (Elm Business Park), bridging much of the gap between Broughton Astley and Sutton in the Elms to leave only 100m separation at the narrowest point, rising to 180m at the western end of Sutton. There are hedgerows along the edges of the development site, which is currently part of a partially built golf complex, and there is bunding around the field edges at the western edge of Sutton (also associated with the golf course development), so the forthcoming business park is likely to be largely screened from view.

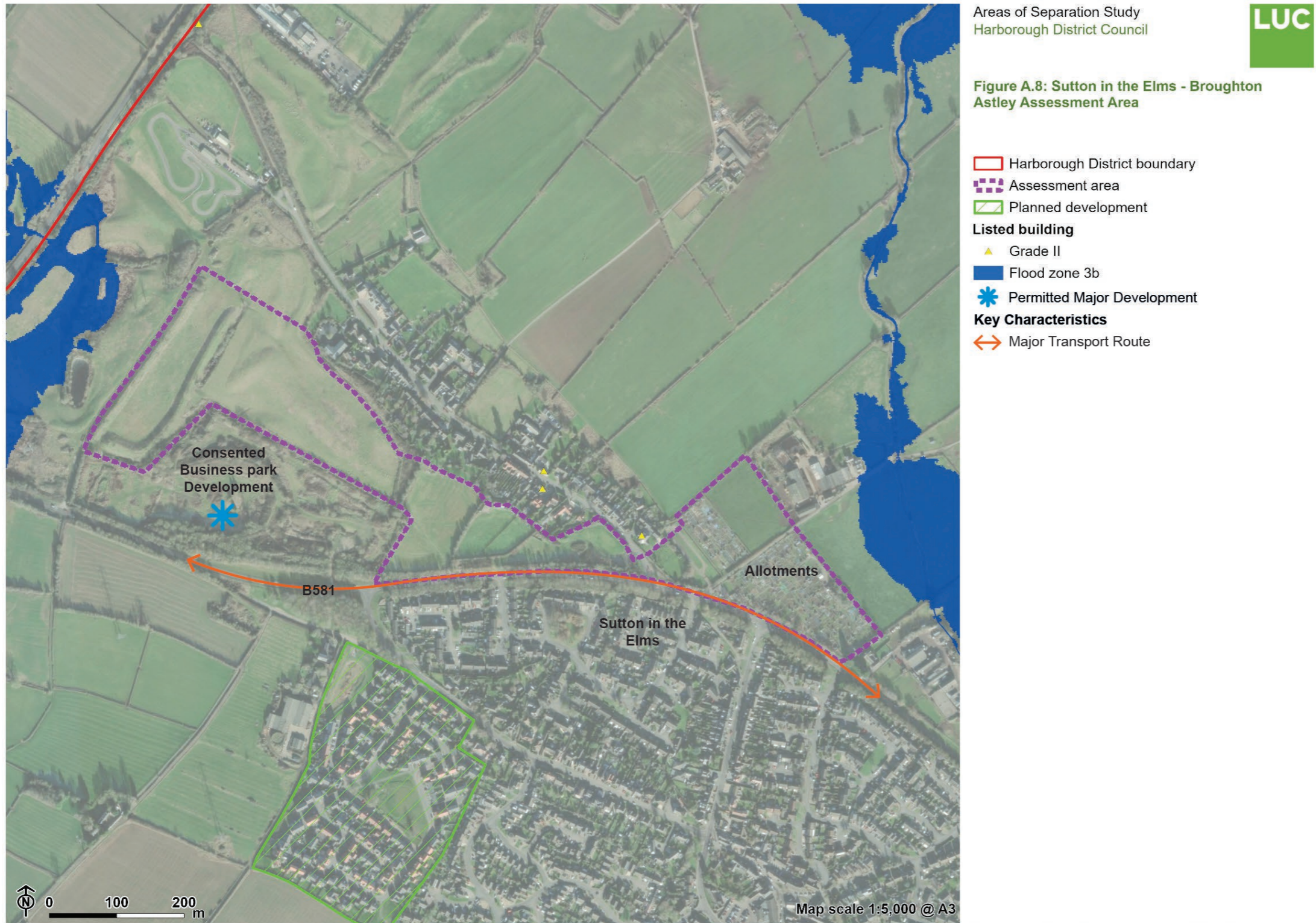
A.74 To the east of Sutton Lane, the church car park and adjacent allotments bridge the gap between the edge of Sutton and the B581 alongside Broughton Astley. A field between the allotments and the buildings of Sutton Fields Farm is included in the assessment area.

Urbanising influences

A.75 The fields to the west and south of Sutton Lane are open, green spaces, retaining some rural character despite the proximity of built development. The golf course works have introduced landform shaping that detracts from rural landscape character, and usage of the site when it becomes operational as a golf course may do likewise, but this does not negate the role of land as an open green gap between areas of development. The development of lodges on the go-karting site is unlikely to significantly add to the level of urbanising influence within the assessment area.

A.76 At the eastern end of the assessment area the allotments have an association with settlements that adds some urbanising influence, but they also retain a visual association with the wider countryside to counter this.

Figure A.8: Sutton in the Elms - Broughton Astley key gap characteristics



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Settlement gap function

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.77 The gap between Sutton in the Elms and Broughton Astley is fragile, particularly given the approved Elm Business Park development which will weaken the settlement boundary role of the B581. However, there is still some sense of rural separation. The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between them:

- The role of the B581 and associated tree cover as a boundary to Broughton Astley. Although the forthcoming business park will to a degree weaken its strength as a consistent boundary it is likely to be perceived as slightly separate from Broughton Astley, rather than part of it.
- The absence of built development in the gap, and limited visibility of development from it (including from the public right of way that crosses it).
- The visually open setting of the allotments, and their association with the wider rural landscape.

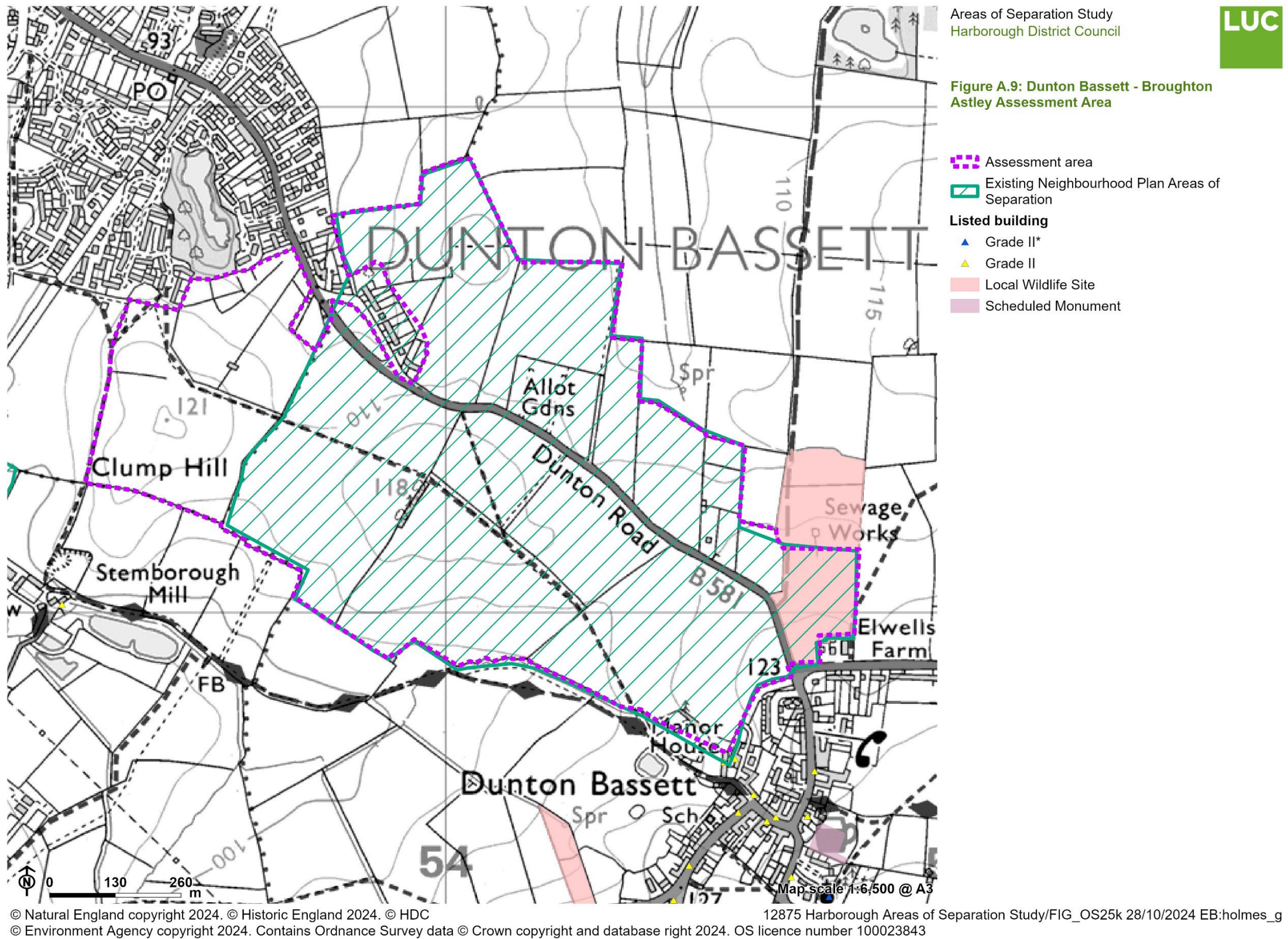
Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

A.78 Consideration could be given to extended the current AoS to encompass all of the assessment area, unless the allotments and church grounds are considered sufficiently protected from development to not require this additional designation. At the western end of the gap it could be extended to include sufficient land to prevent further expansion adjacent to the forthcoming business park that could increase the sense of Sutton in the Elms being enclosed by urban development. This is outside the scope of the draft Local Plan and could be considered through future Neighbourhood / Local Plans.

Impact of potential site allocations

A.79 There are no potential site allocations that would have a bearing on separation between Sutton in the Elms and Broughton Astley.

Figure A.9: Dunton Bassett - Broughton Astley assessment area



Dunton Bassett – Broughton Astley

Context

Assessment area

A.80 The assessment area for considering separation between Dunton Bassett and Broughton Astley extends from the western edge of Dunton Bassett to the eastern edge of Broughton Astley. Most of the assessment area boundary aligns with the AoS defined in the Dunton Bassett Neighbourhood Plan, but the area extends up to the edge of Broughton Astley west of the parish boundary to include Clump Hill. The assessment area also excludes houses on Dunton Road off the B581 on the edge of Broughton Astley.

Relationship to designations

A.81 The assessment area includes one ecological designation: the Willow Pond Grassland Local Wildlife Site located on the northern edge of Dunton Bassett.

Relationship with development allocations

A.82 There is planning consent (22/01208/VAC) for the construction of 8 houses on the site of a former garden centre on the B581 on the edge of Broughton Astley. This is excluded from the assessment area (and the Neighbourhood Plan's AoS).

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement identity

A.83 Dunton Bassett is a small village that has had little population growth since the 19th century, although there was some 20th century expansion of the settlement form in particular eastwards towards the former Ashby Magna railway station. The village lies on the north-facing slope of an undulating plateau of higher ground.

A.84 Broughton Astley is a much larger settlement that expanded significantly in the 20th century, including development on rising ground to the east of the now disused railway line on edge of the settlement closest to Dunton Bassett.

Physical and visual separation

A.85 There is a gap of slightly over 900m between Dunton Bassett and linear development on the edge of Broughton Astley on Dunton Road, although the gap to the more substantial urban edge is around 1.3km, with the B581 providing a direct link between the settlements.

A.86 The gently sloping farmland between the two settlements is visually very open, with houses on the edges of either village visible from the B581 from close to the edge of the other village, although tree cover on the edge of Dunton Bassett south of the B581 limits visibility of the village from the road. Land slopes downhill to the west of Dunton Bassett, which combined with tree cover on the village edge creates a clear boundary.

A.87 The edge of Broughton Astley is largely lacking in screening boundary features, but a copse of trees between the B581 and houses on Dunton Road helps to limit views of the settlement edge in this area and provides a visual marker of the settlement edge. A low ridge running east from Clump Hill plays

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

an important role in limiting visibility of Broughton Astley from the eastern and southern parts of the assessment area, so only a short row of houses on the edge of the settlement can be seen, and only from the vicinity of the B581. There will, however, be some increase in urban edge visibility when the former garden centre site on the B581 is developed. Away from the B581 a public footpath provides a direct link between the settlements, providing views of both where it passes along the aforementioned ridge.

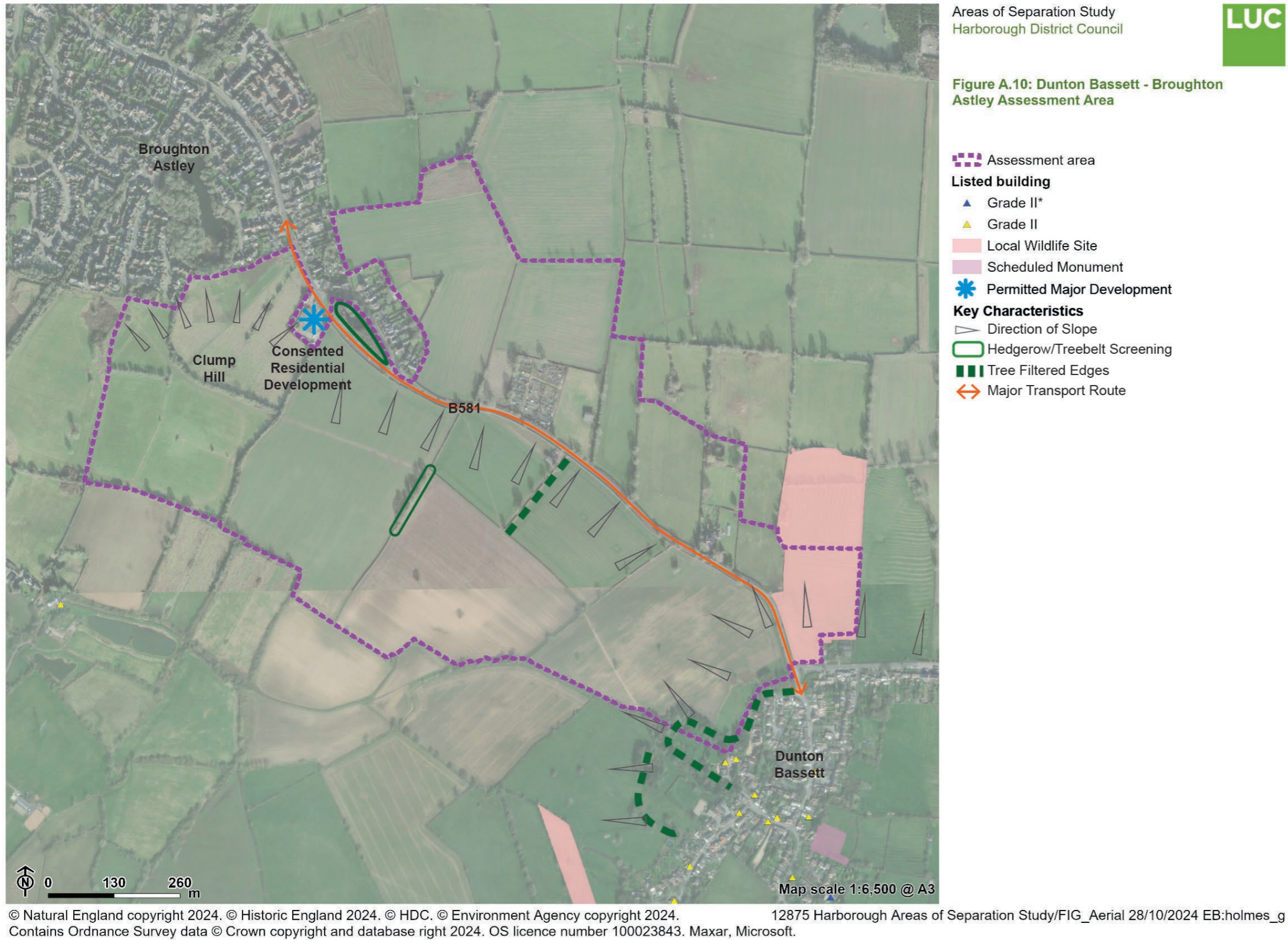
A.88 Hedgerows don't play a significant screening role but mature individual field trees and remnant hedgerow trees in the central part of the gap, in particular one short line of closely spaced trees, do help to emphasise the ridge.

Urbanising influences

A.89 There are no significant urbanising influences in the assessment area. Allotments are located some distance from the edge of Broughton Astley, lying within the countryside rather than extending the urban edge, and a single isolated dwelling operating as a plant nursery doesn't have urbanising characteristics.

A.90 The B581 has a single pavement but no street lighting and the distance between the two settlements, combined with the availability of rural views, means there is a clear sense of leaving one settlement and passing through countryside before arriving at the other.

Figure A.10: Dunton Bassett - Broughton Astley key gap characteristics



Settlement gap function

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.91 The gap between Broughton Astley and Dunton Bassett is relatively strong. The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between them:

- The screening role of the low ridge that runs south of and parallel to the B581, emphasised by some mature trees within fields and along former hedgerows.
- The lack of development up slope from Broughton Astley onto the side of Clump Hill, giving the hill a role in containing the urban edge.
- The retention of tree cover between the B581 and houses on Dunton Road, which defines the south-eastern edge of Broughton Astley.
- The combination of tree cover and sloping landform defining the western edge of Dunton Bassett.
- The dominance of rural views within a visually open landscape. Relatively undeveloped open landscape creating a rural feel to Dunton Bassett and reducing visibility between the two settlements.

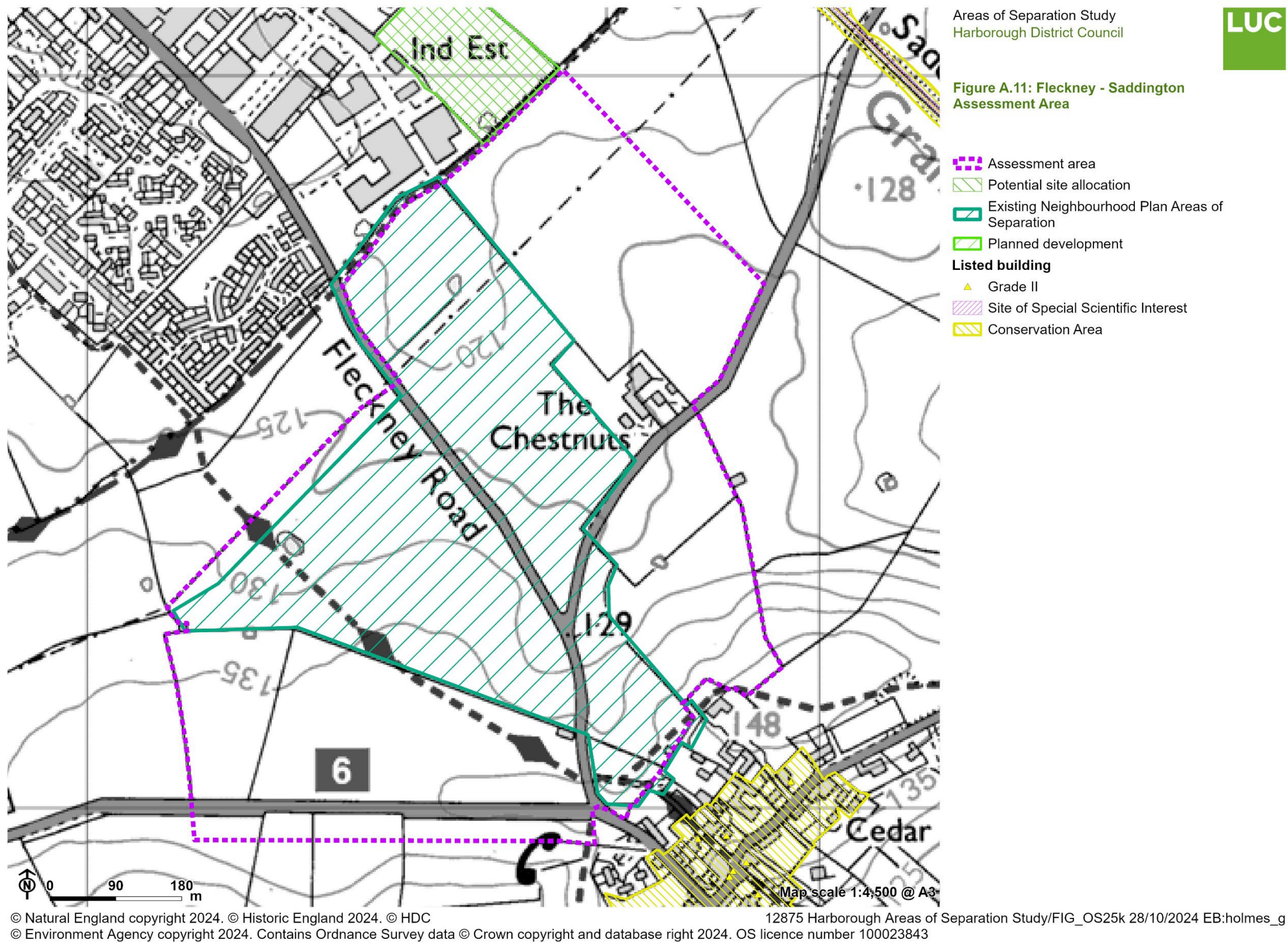
Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

A.92 Consideration could be given to extending the AoS defined in the Dunton Bassett Neighbourhood Plan to encompass Clump Hill but to exclude residential development on Dunton Road. This is outside the scope of the draft Local Plan and could be considered through future Neighbourhood / Local Plans.

Impact of potential site allocations

A.93 There are no potential site allocations that would have a bearing on separation between Dunton Bassett and Broughton Astley.

Figure A.11: Fleckney - Saddington assessment area



Fleckney - Saddington

Context

Assessment area

A.94 The assessment area for considering settlement separation reflects in part the AoS defined in the Saddington Neighbourhood Plan, which extends from the edge of Saddington up to the edge of Fleckney. It has been extended beyond the defined AoS to include fields up to and slightly south of Shearsby Road where, particularly since the recent Tigers Road housing development, development would result in a narrowing of the gap between settlements. It has also been extended to the north to include the field adjacent to land allocated for employment development (see 'Development allocations and planning approvals' section below).

Relationship to designations

A.95 The assessment area has no designations of note within its boundary but the core of the village of Saddington, in places less than 50m from the assessment area, is designated a Conservation Area.

Relationship with development allocations

A.96 Land adjacent to the assessment area boundary on the eastern side of Fleckney, adjacent to the Churchill Way Industrial Estate, is allocated in the Local Plan for employment development (policy BE1). Land to the east of

Fleckney Road, between the edge of the village as shown on the map and the edge of the assessment area, has recently been developed for housing.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement identity

A.97 Saddington is a small village with a high number of buildings that have been present from the late 19th/early 20th Century and little significant development since. The majority of the village is covered by a Conservation Area designation. Saddington retains a rural character in part associated with a low development density but also associated with a distinct end of ridge-top setting that provides a strong visual relationship with the wider countryside. Much of the largely pastoral landscape forming the settlement gap is characterised by ridge and furrow fields, adding to historic settlement character. Fleckney pre-WW2 was not significantly larger than Saddington but it has expanded significantly to the north and south of its historic core within the late 20th and 21st Century. The village has a valley setting, with higher ground to the west, south and east (beyond the Grand Union Canal).

Physical and visual separation

A.98 There is a gap of around 650m between Fleckney and Saddington, with Fleckney Road/Kibworth Road providing a direct link between them.

A.99 Saddington's elevation means that the edge of Fleckney is clearly visible from close to the settlement edge. The recent Tigers Road housing development is very prominent, with no significant boundary feature to screen it, and buildings in the industrial estate to the north, although edged by a strong hedgerow, are still clearly visible above it, so Fleckney presents an urban character.

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

A.100 However, Saddington's elevation also creates a sense of distinction between settlements, despite the clear views, and looking from the edge of Fleckney the landform on which Saddington is located is more prominent than the village itself. Houses are located to the south of the ridgeline, on land sloping gently away from Fleckney, and clusters of mature trees on and close to the village edge, and close to the junction between Kibworth Road and Fleckney Road, play a strong screening role.

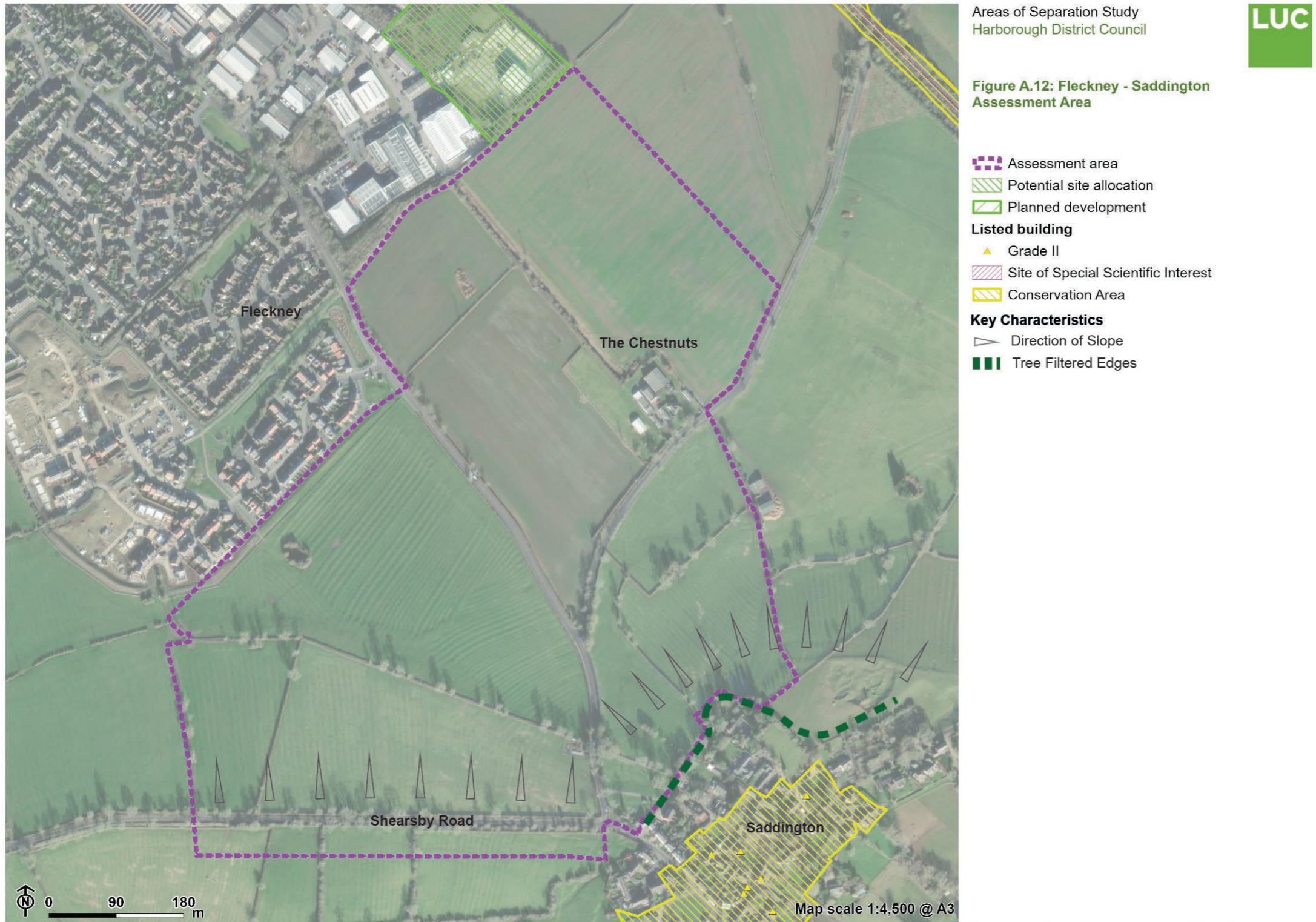
A.101 Land south of Shearsby Road also slopes downhill to the south but development directly adjacent to the road could potentially be intervisible with the edge of Fleckney, which is less than 350m from Shearsby Road.

Urbanising influences

A.102 The assessment area is relatively undeveloped with only one farmstead (The Chestnuts) and therefore very little urbanising influence beyond that associated with views of Fleckney.

A.103 Fleckney Road/Kibworth road has a pavement but no street lighting, and whilst Fleckney is a visible urban presence the descent towards it through groups of mature trees to either side of Kibworth Road, and ridge and furrow pastures, provides a clear sense of transition between separate settlements. As the landform levels out more along Fleckney Road the influence of the urban edge increases.

Figure A.12: Fleckney - Saddington key gap characteristics



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Settlement gap function

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.104 The gap between Fleckney and Saddington, is moderately strong. The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between them:

- The absence of development on the steeper slopes beneath Saddington, so that the village retains a principally south-facing orientation.
- The screening role of ridge-top trees and tree groups on the higher slopes.
- The presence of open fields on more gently sloping land between the edge of Fleckney and the steeper slopes closer to Saddington, to maintain some physical distance to offset the visual openness of the landscape.

Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

A.105 The expansion of Fleckney into the field between allocated employment land and The Chestnuts would in turn increase urbanising influence on land within the gap closer to Fleckney Road, potentially introducing a degree of containment, so consideration could be given to extending the current AoS up to The Chestnuts.

A.106 Expansion of Saddington to the north of Shearsby Road would represent a significant change in the village's settlement form, leaving little separation from the newly extended residential edge of Fleckney. Land to the south of Shearsby Road plays a weaker role in this respect but ridge top development visible from Fleckney would nonetheless represent some weakening of

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

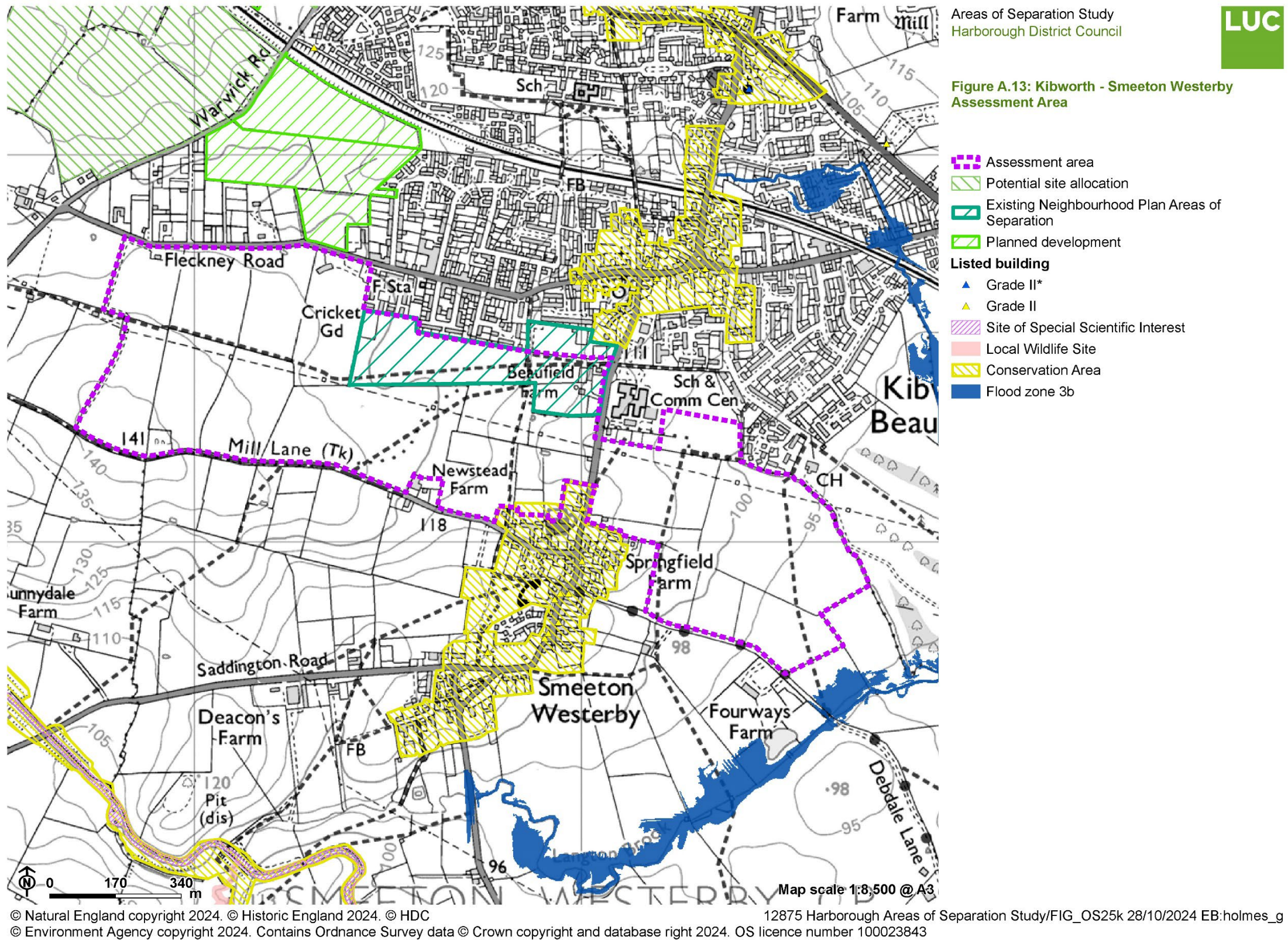
separation, given the narrowness of the gap in this area, so this area could be considered for potential inclusion in the AoS.

A.107 These potential alterations are outside the scope of the draft Local Plan and could be considered through future Neighbourhood / Local Plans.

Impact of potential site allocations

A.108 Development of the area adjacent to the Churchill Way Industrial Estate, broadening the frontage of development facing towards Saddington, could justify extending the AoS northwards to the edge of this site.

Figure A.13: Kibworth - Smeeton Westerby assessment area



Kibworth – Smeeton Westerby

Context

Assessment area

A.109 The assessment area for considering separation between Kibworth and Smeeton Westerby includes land in both parishes. The former has an AoS defined in its Neighbourhood Plan but the latter has no Neighbourhood Plan. The assessment area includes some land within Kibworth Parish both to the east and west of the defined AoS, as well as adjacent land in Smeeton Westerby Parish. Smeeton Road Park lies within the defined AoS but has been excluded from the assessment area. It is largely contained by the urban edge, with tennis courts strengthening its association with the settlement rather than with the countryside, so its value as open space is considered to be recreational rather than in making any significant contribution to settlement separation.

Relationship to designations

A.110 The assessment area includes some individual mature trees (mostly ash) identified as Potential Local Wildlife Sites and borders a grassland field south of Fleckney Road also identified as a Potential Local Wildlife Site. Smeeton Westerby and Kibworth Beauchamp both have Conservation Areas close to the assessment area, with the former incorporating a small area of open land within the fringes of the assessment area.

Relationship with development allocations

A.111 There are no unbuilt allocations in the vicinity of the assessment area, with land north of Fleckney Road having recently been developed for housing.

A.112 There is a potential site allocation at Kibworth to the west of Warwick Road.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement identity

A.113 Almost all of Smeeton Westerby is designated a Conservation Area, reflecting its lack of significant growth since Victorian times. The village lies on gentle east and south-east facing slopes above Langton Brook.

A.114 Kibworth comprises two historic villages, Kibworth Harcourt and Kibworth Beauchamp. Both have Conservation Area designations but there has been significant expansion of both, principally east and west, since the 20th century. The historic cores of the two villages slope towards each other but the eastern part of Kibworth Beauchamp, the southernmost of the villages, lies on a generally east-facing slope.

Physical and visual separation

A.115 At its narrowest point the gap between Kibworth and Smeeton Westerby is less than 150m, with Main Street/Smeeton Road providing a direct link between the settlements. The edge of Kibworth is defined by Kibworth Mead Academy, to the east of Smeeton Road, which includes large buildings visible from several locations on the edge of Smeeton Westerby (where the gap to the east of the road broadens to about 250m) across visually open fields. A short

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

row of houses on the west side of Main Street marks the edge of Smeeton Westerby but mature tree cover to the south of this screens most village dwellings from view from within the gap.

A.116 To the west of Smeeton Road a health centre (built in 2018) is considered to lie within the gap rather than form part of the urban area because open fields to the north, and the buildings of Beaufield Farm, are considered to retain some rural separation. The settlement gap to the west of Smeeton Road is over 400m and also includes a series of small, well-hedged fields that have a strong screening impact across the relatively flat terrain, but west of Newstead Farm there are clear views from Mill Lane across larger, arable fields to the edge of Kibworth.

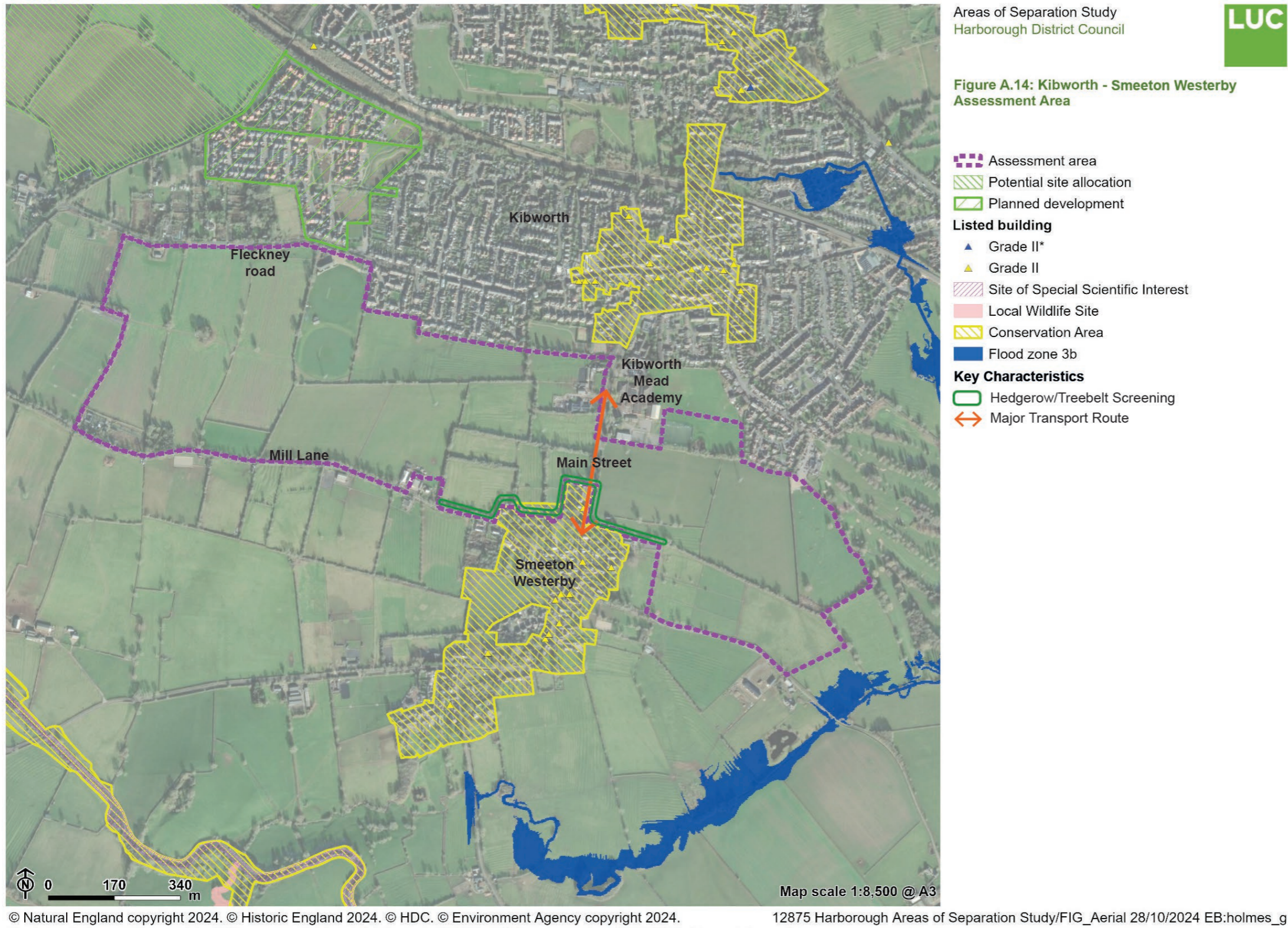
A.117 A number of public footpaths to both sides of Main Road/Smeeton Road connect the settlements, with the edge of Kibworth presenting a more urban edge than the largely screened edge of Smeeton Westerby.

Urbanising influences

A.118 The assessment area contains largely undeveloped landscape with mainly agricultural fields, although a pylon line running through the centre of the gap does have some impact on rural landscape character. Main Street/Smeeton Road has a pavement and street lighting, with the short distance between settlement edges limiting the experience of passing through countryside between settlements, but open rural views east and west ensure that there is still a clear distinction. The health centre is an urbanising influence in the gap, limiting rural character in the adjacent field.

A.119 Kibworth Cricket Club in the western part of the gap, and Kibworth Golf Club's driving range at the eastern end of the gap, also have formal recreational use that strengthens association with the adjacent settlement edge but they are nonetheless open in character. The Leicestershire Wildlife Hospital, off Mill Lane, is isolated and does not have an urban character.

Figure A.14: Kibworth - Smeeton Westerby key gap characteristics



Settlement gap function

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.120 The gap between Kibworth and Smeeton Westerby is narrow and relatively weak. The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between them:

- The remaining open fields between the settlements to the east of Main Street/Smeeton Road, where the gap is narrowest.
- Strong tree cover on the northern side of Smeeton Westerby, screening/softening the settlement edge and providing a transition between the narrow open gap and the centre of the village, as experienced on approach along Main Street.
- The hedgerows containing the small fields to the west of Main Street/Smeeton Road, strengthening separation by limiting perception of the settlements.
- The absence of development on higher ground between Fleckney Road and Mill Lane. Although west of Smeeton Westerby the visual openness of this area helps to prevent any sense of urban containment with the core of the gap, where public rights of way allow the settlement gap to be experienced.
- The openness of the Kibworth Mead Academy playing fields which, although contained by development on three sides, limit any additional urbanising influence on the single field to the south that forms most of the settlement gap.

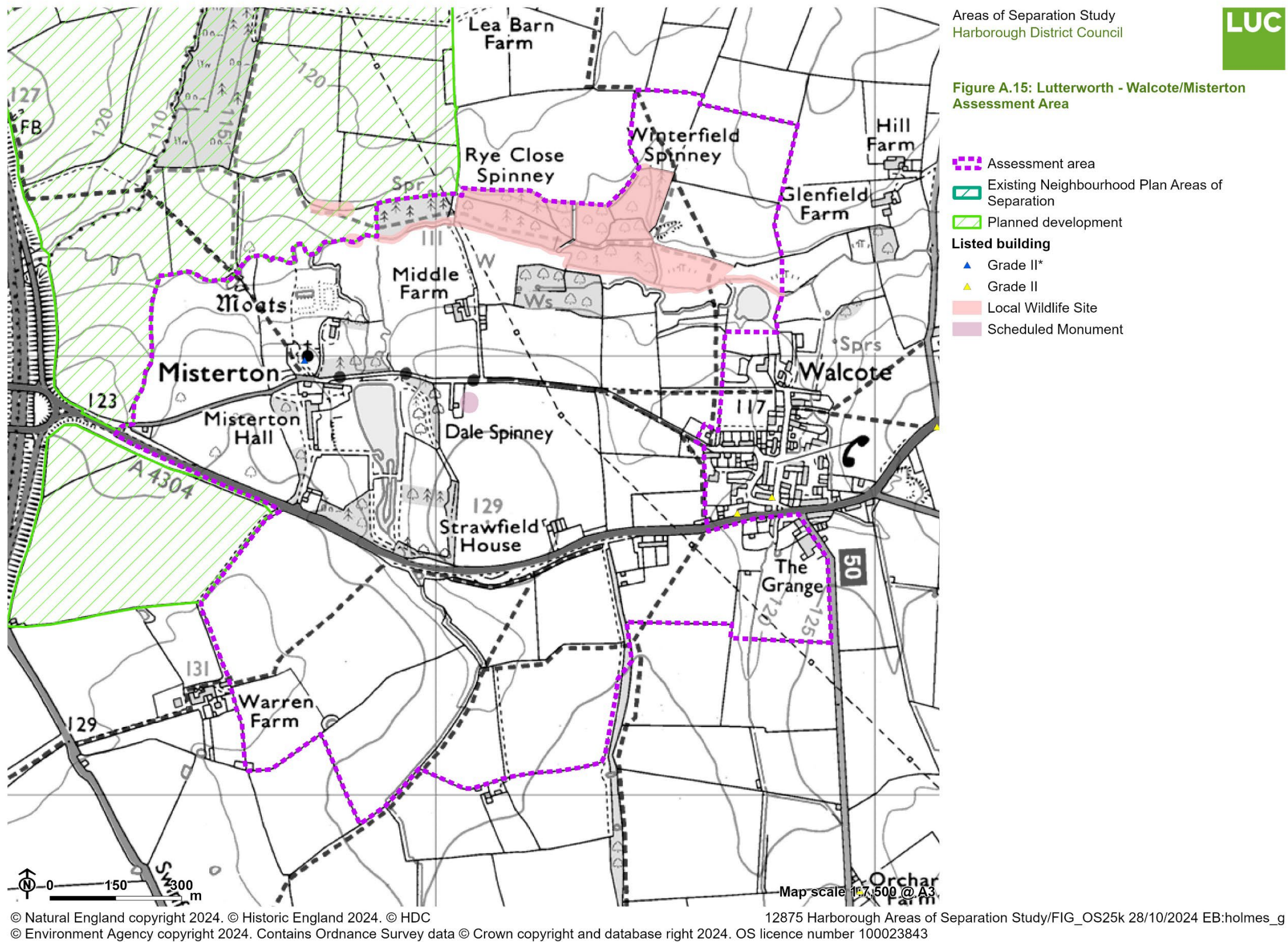
Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

A.121 Consideration could be given to extending the defined AoS further east and west. Although the gap at the core of the assessment area is much narrower than at its eastern and western edges, the relatively large, visually open character of these more peripheral areas means that their openness still makes a significant contribution to perceived settlement separation. This is outside the scope of the draft Local Plan and could be considered through future Neighbourhood / Local Plans.

Impact of potential site allocations

A.122 Development of the potential site allocation to the west of Warwick Road would have no bearing on separation between Kibworth and Smeeton Westerby.

Figure A.15: Misterton/Walcote - Lutterworth assessment area



Misterton/Walcote - Lutterworth

Context

Assessment area

A.123 The assessment area for considering the separation between Lutterworth, Misterton and Walcote encompasses open land between Lutterworth and Walcote to either side of the connecting A4304. The majority of the assessment area lies to the south of the River Swift but land north of the river near Walcote is also included. Misterton is defined as part of the gap due to its small size, low density and absence of any significant urban characteristics.

A.124 The Misterton with Walcote Parish Neighbourhood Plan does not specifically define an AoS but identifies a need (in Policy HBE 2) to define an area of green space that will prevent any intervisibility between the East of Lutterworth Strategic Development Area (see below) and Misterton.

Relationship to designations

A.125 Much of the northern part of the assessment area, in the valley of the River Swift, has Local Wildlife Site designations, and a relatively narrow belt of land also lies within Flood Zone 3.

Relationship with development allocations

A.126 The Lutterworth East SDA is planned to the east of Lutterworth beyond the M1. This Local Plan allocation covers an extensive area to the north and west of Misterton and also land close to the motorway to the south of the A4303.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement identity

A.127 The centre of Lutterworth has a Conservation Area designation but 20th century development, including in particular the construction of the M1, separates it from the assessment area. The town is currently almost entirely located to the north of the River Swift but development of the East of Lutterworth SDA will create a more substantial urban area both to the east of the motorway and south of the river.

A.128 Misterton is a very small settlement centred on the parish church and Misterton Hall. Located in a shallow valley containing a lake, the settlement is characterised by a strong wooded setting giving it an isolated, rural character.

A.129 Walcote is a small village that similarly lies in a tributary valley above the River Swift. It hasn't grown significantly in footprint over the last century, but infill development has increased its density.

Physical and visual separation

A.130 North of the A4304 there is a gap of less than 200m between Misterton and the edge of the East of Lutterworth SDA, but it is noted that the Local Plan policy for the SDA (Policy L1) requires the retention of open green space to

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

preserve the setting of the Church of St Leonard. There is a similarly sized gap between the southern edge of Misterton Hall and the edge of the SDA to the south of the A4303.

A.131 Woodland blocks, tree belts and parkland trees combine to give Misterton a strong landscape setting and visual containment. The undeveloped valley of the River Swift, although relatively shallow in form, adds to separation from the SDA to the north, where there is less tree cover to screen the church and a cluster of buildings nearby. To the south the A4304 and mature tree lines to either side form a strong boundary feature.

A.132 The northern edge of Walcote is approximately 800m from the nearest edge of the SDA, but the river and valley-side tree cover form a strong boundary in between. Development would need to extend a significant distance east of the SDA edge, to the north of Walcote where the valley sides are more open, to provide any sense of encroachment on the village. Separation for both Walcote and Misterton from the SDA to the north is strengthened by the absence of any vehicular routes across the river valley.

A.133 The gap between Walcote and the edge of the SDA south of the A4303 is around 1km. There are no strong boundary features on the western side of the village but mature roadside trees preclude any views between the settlement areas. There is stronger visual openness south of the main road, where large fields span a shallow valley, but the SDA does not extend far enough south to indicate any likelihood of intervisibility.

Urbanising influences

A.134 There are no significant urbanising features within the assessment area, just isolated rural dwellings and the low-density, rural settlement of Misterton. A short row of houses alongside the A4304 is sufficiently isolated from the edge of Walcote to be considered within the gap, rather than the settlement edge. The A4304 has a cycle path and footway but over this distance this does not add any urbanising influence. The outlook from most of the route, where views are

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

available between trees, will be rural in character, with a clear sense of leaving one settlement before arriving at the other.

Figure A.16: Misterton/Walcote - Lutterworth key gap characteristics



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Settlement gap function

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.135 The gap between Lutterworth and Misterton/Walcote is relatively strong. The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between them:

- The strong tree cover surrounding Misterton, which maintains an isolated, rural character but without any sense of being contained by urban development.
- The undeveloped character and tree cover in the River Swift valley, forming a strong visual gap between the SDA and both Misterton and Walcote.
- The absence of any vehicular links across the River Swift within the assessment area.
- The role of the A4304 and associated tree cover in forming a strong boundary to the southern part of the SDA and limiting east—west views.
- The lack of urbanising influences in views across the visually open valley landform south of the A4304.
- The retention of an undeveloped belt of visually open land between Misterton and Walcote, to provide a sense of distance between the settlement.

Considerations when reviewing Area of Separation boundaries

A.136 An AoS could be considered to maintain separation between the planned development east of Lutterworth and Misterton. Land south of the A4304 could

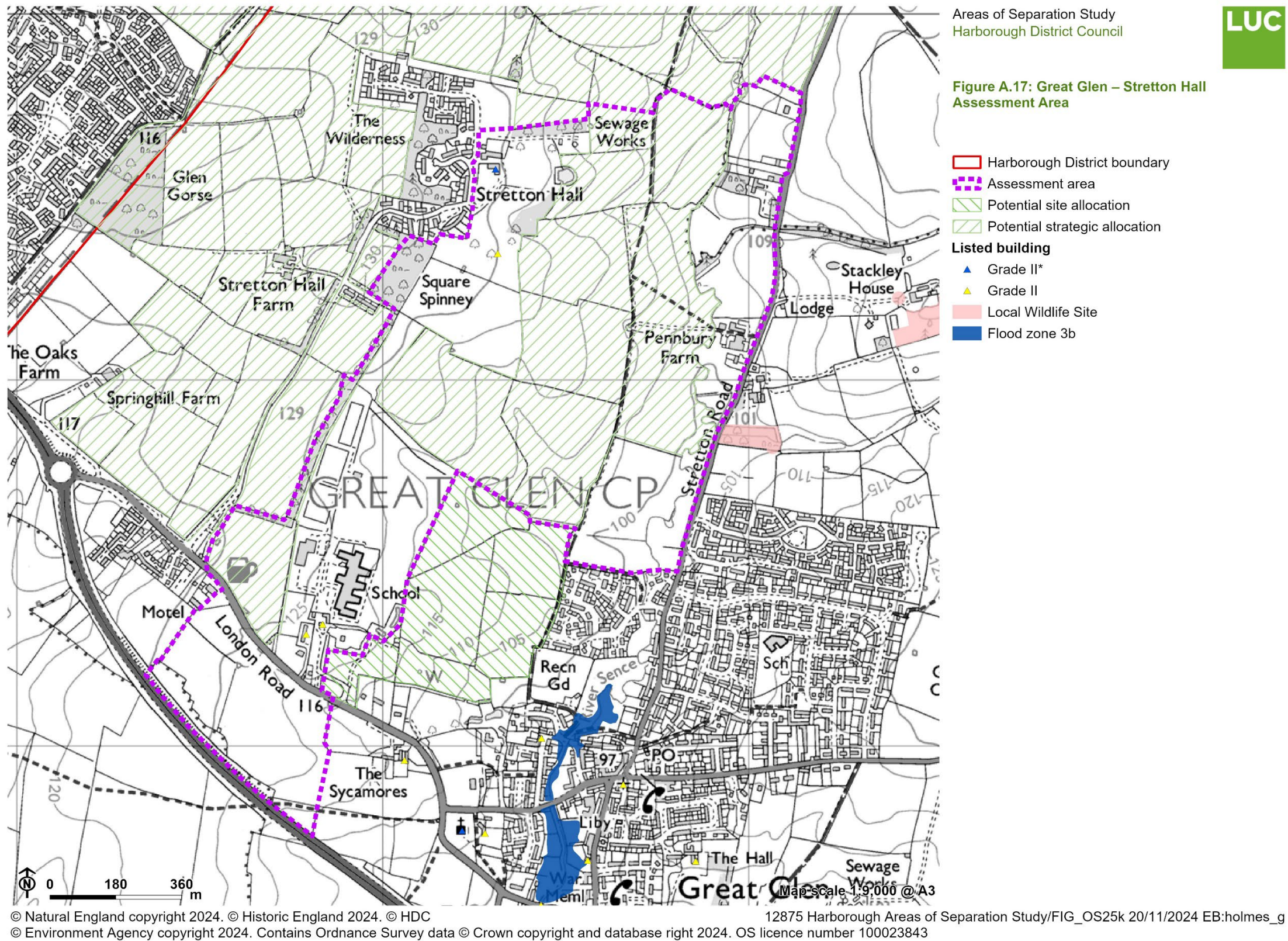
Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

be included to avoid significant urban views from close to Walcote across the open valley landscape, and to avoid any sense of Misterton becoming contained by urban areas. Land north of the River Swift near Walcote could also be included, to prevent expansion of Lutterworth that would be visible from close to Walcote. This is outside the scope of the draft Local Plan and could be considered through future Neighbourhood / Local Plans.

Impact of potential site allocations

A.137 There are no potential site allocations that would have a bearing on separation between Lutterworth and Misterton or Walcote.

Figure A.17: Great Glen - Stretton Hall/Oadby assessment area



Areas of Separation Study
Harborough District Council

Figure A.17: Great Glen – Stretton Hall Assessment Area

Great Glen – Stretton Hall/Oadby

Context

Assessment area

A.138 The assessment area encompasses land north of the A6 and London Road between Great Glen and a potential future expansion of Oadby, including existing development at Stretton Hall (see ‘Relationship with development allocations’ section below). There are no AoS defined in the Great Glen Neighbourhood Plan.

Relationship to designations

A.139 The assessment area contains a number of hedgerows and trees which are classified as potential Local Wildlife Sites.

Relationship with development allocations

A.140 There are no development allocations or significant unbuilt development permissions in this area. Houses have recently been built on land to either side of London Road on the edge of Great Glen.

A.141 A potential strategic site allocation lies adjacent to the north-western edge of Great Glen.

A.142 A potential strategic development allocation encompasses most of the open land between Oadby and Great Glen (and extends north-east into Oadby

and Wigston District). Noting that the gap between Oadby and Great Glen is larger than the 1km limit used as part of the basis for identifying settlement gaps to include in this study, this assessment focuses on the extent and characteristics of separation between Great Glen and Stretton Hall, assuming a potential eastward expansion of Oadby up to Stretton Hall.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement identity

A.143 Historically a distinct village, Oadby merged into the expanding urban area of Leicester in the first half of the 20th century. Its small historic core, designated a Conservation Area, is a long way from the current urban edge.

A.144 Stretton Hall is a small settlement of residential properties constructed in the 21st Century in the grounds of Stretton Hall, an 18th century country house (Grade II* listed) that lies just to the east. The strong tree cover around the village forms part of the former estate parkland.

A.145 To the south-east of Stretton Hall lies Great Glen. Great Glen is a historic village located alongside (principally to the east of) the River Sence in, as the village name suggests, a valley location. Modern development has expanded the village significantly upslope to the north-east but has also introduced urban development to the west of the river.

Physical and visual separation

A.146 There are no vehicular routes or public rights of way across the gap between Oadby and Stretton Hall, with access requiring a much longer journey vis the A6, London Road and Chestnut Drive, a cul-de-sac access road of over 1km.

A.147 The gap between Stretton Hall and the north-western edges of Great Glen is just under 1km. There are no vehicular routes or public rights of way across the gap between Great Glen and Stretton Hall, with access requiring a longer journey via London Road and Chestnut Drive, a cul-de-sac access road of over 1km. Tree cover limits views towards Stretton Hall.

A.148 In reverse views there is visibility across the visually open terrain to more elevated parts of Great Glen in particular, but the intervening valley side and River Sence create clear distinction between the settlements. The valley of the River Sence, to the east of Stretton Hall, is more pronounced than the difference in elevation between Oadby and Stretton Hall. There is weaker separation between Stretton Hall and development in Great Glen on the western side of the river.

Urbanising influences

A.149 The assessment area is largely agricultural, with several farmsteads. There are a few dwellings to the east of the gardens of Stretton Hall, slightly isolated from the houses on Chestnut Drive, and also a short row of houses to the south of Stretton Hall, close to Stretton Hall Farm. These do not have a strong urbanising influence in the wider landscape, particularly the latter which are largely contained by tree cover.

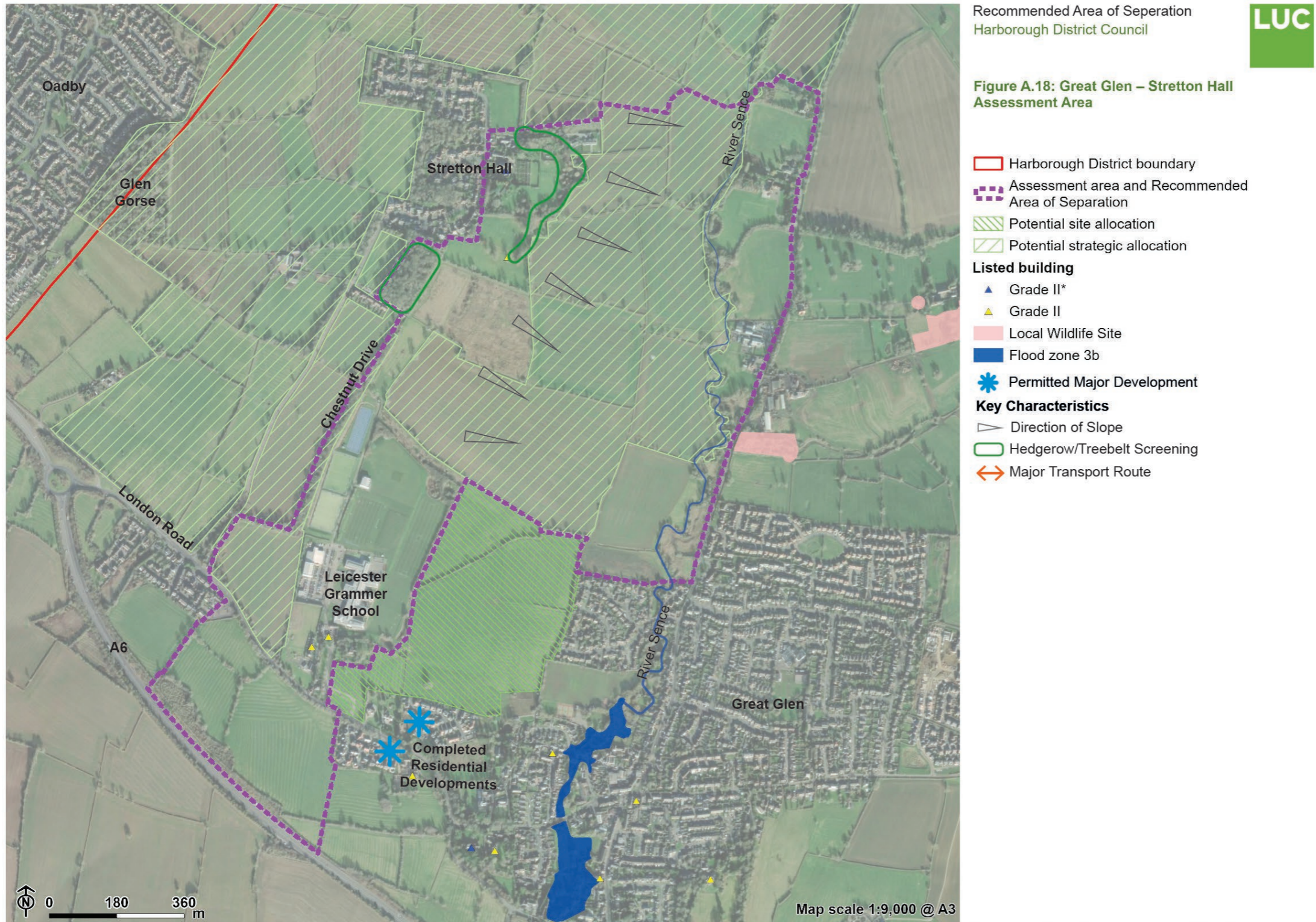
A.150 There is more substantial modern development further south, off London Road, several residential closes are located opposite the Chestnut Drive access road to Stretton Hall, and Leicester Grammar School was relocated in 2009 to a large site slightly further east. This combined with recent residential development on the western edge of Great Glen blurs the settlement edge.

A.151 There is some weakening of distinction from Stretton Hall in terms of distance, as sports pitches associated with the school extend north to within 250m of the row of houses near Stretton Hall Farm, and to within 500m of the main area of housing on Chestnut Drive, but a mature tree belt combines with the sloping landform to screen both the sports pitches and the large school

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

buildings from view from Chestnut Drive. Chestnut Drive still retains a rural setting, despite street lighting having some urbanising influence. The impact of development on the western side of Great Glen is perhaps more significant in terms of perceived separation from Oadby.

Figure A.18: Great Glen – Stretton Hall/Oadby key gap characteristics



Recommended Area of Separation
Harborough District Council



Figure A.18: Great Glen – Stretton Hall Assessment Area

- Harborough District boundary
- Assessment area and Recommended Area of Separation
- Potential site allocation
- Potential strategic allocation
- Listed building**
 - Grade II*
 - Grade II
- Local Wildlife Site
- Flood zone 3b
- Permitted Major Development
- Key Characteristics**
 - Direction of Slope
 - Hedgerow/Treebelt Screening
 - Major Transport Route

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Settlement gap function

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.152 The current gap between Great Glen and Stretton Hall/Oadby is relatively strong. The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between them:

- The strong tree cover around Stretton Hall, limiting views of housing from across the gap.
- The landform of the valley of the River Sence, creating distinction between Stretton Hall's ridge-top location and the location of Great Glen on the valley floor and rising eastern slopes.
- The absence of any direct access, either by road or footpath, across the narrower part of the gap.
- The role of the tree belt parallel to the eastern side of Chestnut Drive, in combination with landform, in screening Leicester Grammar School and sports pitches from Chestnut Drive. This helps to preserve the rural setting of Stretton Hall.

Recommended Area of Separation boundaries

A.153 Should the potential strategic development between Oadby and Great Glen go ahead, it is recommended that the AoS be defined to encompass all of the assessment area, maintaining openness on the slopes of the valley of the River Sence. The focus of built development within the allocation should be in the area to the west of the AoS, where existing separation between Oadby and Stretton Hall is weaker than the separation between Stretton Hall and Great Glen.

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

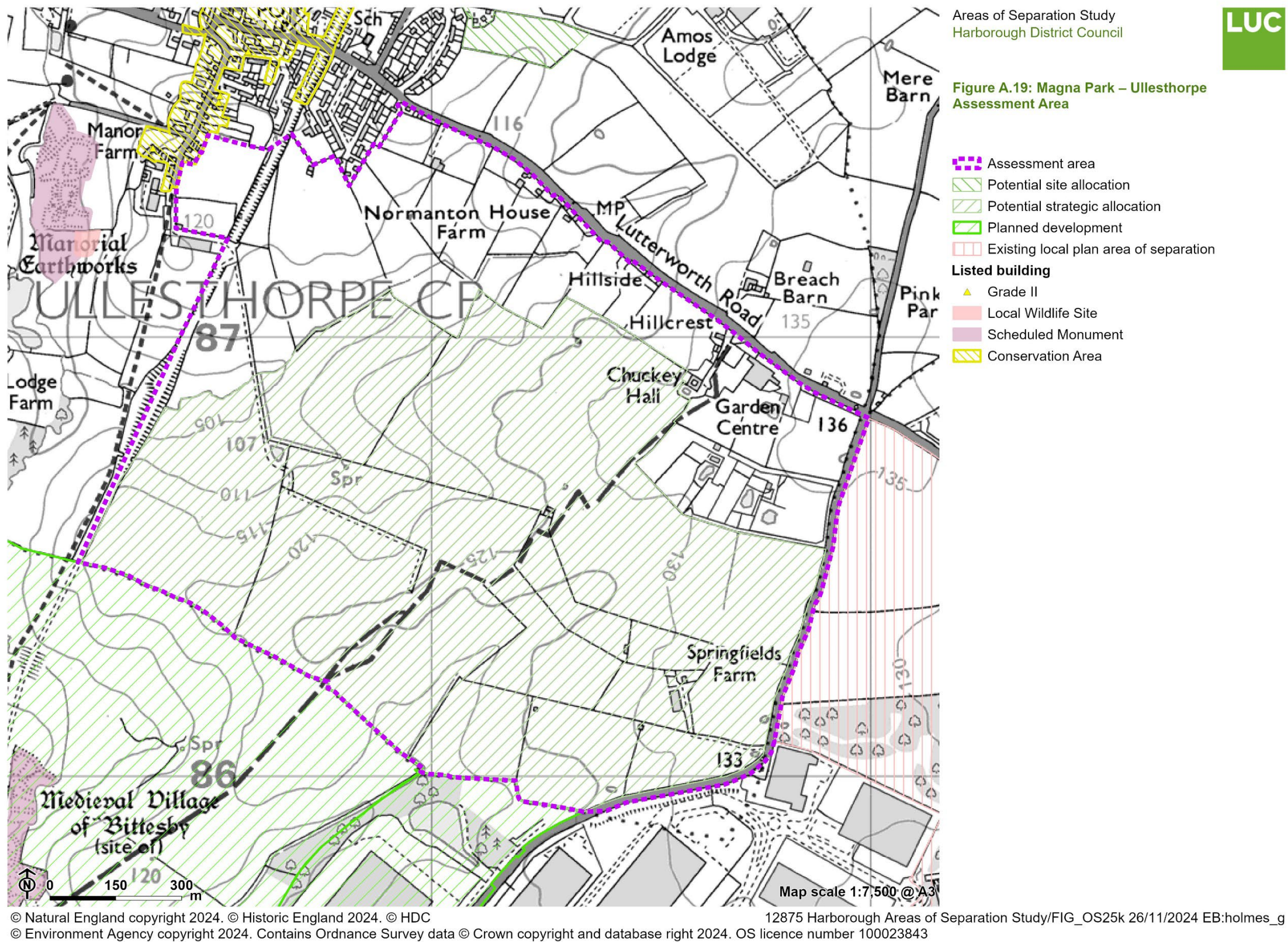
A.154 Development in the north-eastern part of the site would diminish the extent to which the open slopes of the valley of the River Sence form a consistent settlement gap, but this would still leave a stronger gap than that which can be accommodated between the potential site allocation at Great Glen and the western edge of the assessment area on Chestnut Drive (see below).

A.155 Land in the southern part of the assessment area is peripheral to the shorter gaps between Stretton Hall and the nearest edges of Oadby and Great Glen but urbanising influences diminish perceived settlement separation in the vicinity of London Road.

Impact of potential site allocations

A.156 The potential site allocation on the edge of Great Glen lies on the sloping valley side that forms the principal open space between Great Glen and western edge of the assessment area. To the west of the site, Leicester Grammar School already diminishes openness. This allocation would significantly weaken separation between Oadby and Great Glen were the potential strategic development allocation to result in built development to the west of the assessment area. It is therefore important that the proposed AoS maintains the relatively strong separation between Stretton Hall and Great Glen.

Figure A.19: Magna Park - Ullesthorpe assessment area



Magna Park – Ullesthorpe

Context

Assessment area

A.157 The assessment area encompasses land north of existing development at Magna Park and its consented north-western extension, an area defined to the east by Mere Lane and Lutterworth Road, and to the west by a dismantled railway line with associated trees and hedgerows. There is no adopted Neighbourhood Plan for Ullesthorpe Parish.

Relationship to designations

A.158 There are no designations within or adjacent to the assessment area that have a bearing on settlement separation. Part of Ullesthorpe is a Conservation Area but this is all along or to the west of the former railway line, with modern development lying in between it and the assessment area.

Relationship with development allocations

A.159 There are no development allocations or significant unbuilt development permissions in or adjacent to the assessment area.

A.160 A potential development allocation lies approximately 175m to the north of the assessment area, on the eastern edge of Ullesthorpe to either side of Ashby Road.

A.161 A potential strategic development allocation encompasses much of the assessment area between the edge of Magna Park and a tributary stream which feeds into the River Soar. This development would be large-scale employment uses, representing an expansion of Magna Park.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement identity

A.162 Magna Park is a large industrial area focused on distribution. Established in 1987, it occupies close to 300 hectares at present, with approvals for further expansion. A landscape-led approach was used when developing Magna Park, with significant woodland planting and grassland rides located to the east of the development (east of Wellington Parkway and Harrier Parkway).

A.163 Ullesthorpe is a long-established village which was relatively small in size until the 19th century, when the opening of a railway station facilitated more growth. The historic core of the village and a short stretch of the disused railway are designated a conservation area, but the well-treed former railway line forms a significant boundary between modern expansion of the village and the Victorian and older parts to the west.

Physical and visual separation

A.164 The gap between the current edge of Magna Park and Ullesthorpe is 1.5km. They are joined by Mere Lane and Lutterworth Road, which although not a direct route across the narrowest part of the gap is still a relatively short route. There are no direct connecting public rights of way through the gap, with a bridleway crossing the gap from the A5 to Lutterworth Road and a footpath running from the A5 to Ullesthorpe along the western side of the former railway line.

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

A.165 The northern edge of Magna Park lies to the south of a ridge crest, the line of which is followed by the bridleway noted above. The undulating landform drops into two valleys with watercourses, both tributaries of the River Soar: one to the south of the ridge and one to the north. To the north of the latter the landform rises up towards Ullesthorpe.

A.166 The large-scale logistics buildings at Magna Park, although fronted along Mere Lane by a belt of trees and, to the west, partially screened by the ridge crest, are still a very visible feature from within the gap. Although painted in shades of blue which lighten with elevation, to minimise skyline impact, they can nonetheless be seen from the edge of Ullesthorpe.

A.167 Development in Ullesthorpe is mostly less visible from within the settlement gap, with the tree-lined former railway providing screening and most of the village being set back from the valley crest, but houses on South Avenue are more prominent. This road extends further south than the rest of the village, lacking any significant urban edge boundary features, and also sits at the crest of the valley.

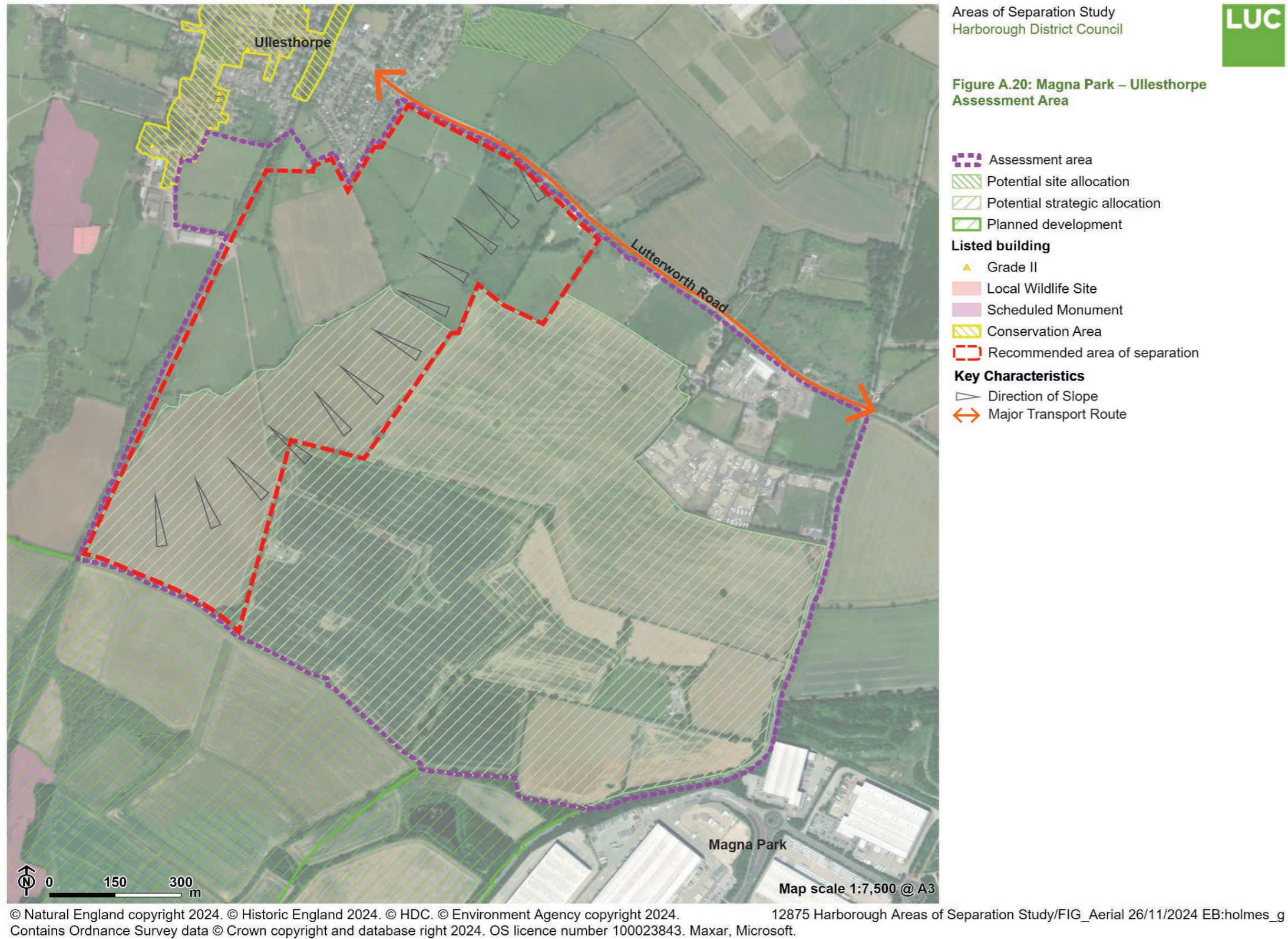
A.168 The sloping landform limits the screening impact of field boundary trees and hedges, but smaller fields with stronger tree boundaries limit views from the central section of Lutterworth Road.

Urbanising influences

A.169 A gypsy and travellers' site located off Mere Lane near its junction with Lutterworth Road, together with a nearby garden centre and large associated areas of hardstanding, have some localised urbanising impact in the eastern part of the gap, but tree cover limits their wider impact. Isolated dwellings along Lutterworth Road, often well-screened by trees, have less impact.

A.170 A wind turbine located on relatively high ground in the western part of the gap is a visible feature but, in isolation, does not have a strong urbanising influence.

Figure A.20: Magna Park – Ullesthorpe key gap characteristics



Settlement gap function

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.171 The current gap between Magna Park and Ullesthorpe is moderate in strength. The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between them:

- The valley landforms, in particular the northernmost one, that cross east-west through the gap to create a sense of distinction from the development areas located on higher ground to the north and south.
- Tree cover along the former railway line on the western edge of the gap, which screens much of Ullesthorpe from view across the gap.
- The absence of any direct access, either by road or footpath, across the narrower part of the gap.
- Trees around smaller fields in the eastern part of the gap, including around the garden centre and travellers' site, limit urbanising visual influences.

Recommended Area of Separation boundaries

A.172 Should the potential strategic development between Magna Park and Ullesthorpe go ahead, it is recommended that the AoS be defined to focus on retaining openness on the slopes of the northern, and most prominent, of the two valleys that cross east-west through the assessment area. This should encompass the smaller, well-treed fields near Lutterworth Road. Any expansion of Magna Park beyond the public bridleway that marks the ridge crest will cause weakening of current separation, but the lower valley area can still provide clear distinction between settlements, with the AoS preventing any significant further expansion of Magna Park.

Appendix A Settlement Gaps Assessment

A.173 The southern edge of the recommended AoS has been drawn to follow the nearest field boundaries, but it should be noted that this includes some land sloping down close to the valley floor. These areas are more sensitive and built development here would potentially weaken the valley's separating role. The northern boundary of the recommended AoS extends up to the more prominent, visually-exposed south-eastern edge of Ullesthorpe but excludes land further west on the edge of the village which has stronger visual separation from settlement gap.

Impact of potential site allocations

A.174 The potential site allocation to either side of Ashby Road is too far from the settlement gap to have any significant impact on perceived separation.

References

- 1 HM Government (2023) National Planning Policy Framework
- 2 Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721
- 3 Fareham Local Plan Examination – The Planning Inspectorate, Report to Fareham Borough Council, May 2015, File Ref: PINS/A1720/429/4
- 4 Canterbury Local Plan Examination. The Planning Inspectorate, Report to Canterbury City Council, June 2017, File Ref: PINS/J2210/429/5
- 5 North Warwickshire Local Plan Examination. The Planning Inspectorate, Report to North Warwickshire Borough Council, December 2015, File Ref: PINS/R3705/429/4
- 6 High Court Judgment between South Northamptonshire Council (claimant) and Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Barwood Land and Estates Ltd (defendants), March 2014 – in particular paragraph 47: Ref [2014] EWHC 573 (Admin)

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