

Landscape Character Assessment

**Evidence base under pinning the Local Plan for
the Borough of Oadby and Wigston**

2018



PART 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1.1 This document has been updated by Oadby and Wigston Borough Council in order to ensure that it is a robust piece of evidence base that reflects current National and Local Planning Policy and Guidance (in 2017). Originally, David Tyldesley and Associates were commissioned in August 2005 by Oadby and Wigston Borough Council to prepare a Landscape Character Assessment for the Borough. Fieldwork was undertaken in late September and early November 2004 and in order to update the document, further fieldwork and desk based analysis took place between throughout 2017.

1.1.2 The Borough of Oadby and Wigston contains a diverse range of landscapes including three urban settlements, two green wedges, two country parks and areas of open countryside. The Grand Union Canal and the River Sence run through the south of the Borough. The Borough Council recognises that a high quality and locally distinctive rural and urban environment can make a substantial contribution to quality of life in the Borough and that sustainable development is essential to maintain this quality. Appendix 1.1 illustrates the administrative boundary of the Borough of Oadby and Wigston.

1.1.3 Oadby and Wigston Borough Council are working towards replacing the adopted Core Strategy (2010), Saved Local Plan (2013) and the Oadby and Wigston Town Centres Area Action Plan (2013) with the New Local Plan that will provide a strategy for the Borough up to 2031. It is hoped that the New Local Plan will be adopted by Summer 2018. This Landscape Character Assessment provides guidance to inform the New Local Plan and also to inform the effective management of the landscapes within the Borough.

1.1.4 The key outputs that the study provides are:

- Identification, assessment and description of the rural landscape character areas within the Borough to include an assessment of development pressure, capacity to accommodate change, opportunities to enhance landscape quality and landscape character objectives for the rural area;
- Identification, assessment and description of the urban landscape character areas within the Borough to include an assessment of development pressure, capacity to accommodate change, opportunities to enhance landscape quality and landscape character objectives for the urban area;
- Planning Policy guidance, relating to urban landscape character, for the individual urban character areas;
- Borough wide urban landscape character objectives and policy guidance.

1.1.5 The guidance and policy objectives in this document have been developed with a view to providing the Council with:

- landscape planning and management objectives for the landscape/urban areas;
- a basis for design guidance on the integration of new development into the landscape;

- a basis for design guidance to preserve, develop and enhance local distinctiveness;
- policy guidance that supplements the new Local Plan;
- the scope of adopted policy and supporting evidence in relation to landscape character; and,
- identification and enhancement of potential green networks and biodiversity potential.

1.2 INTRODUCTION TO LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (LCA)

- 1.2.1 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a process used to assist in planning and the effective management of changing landscapes. The term landscape covers all aspects of the physical terrain, both natural and man-made. Natural features such as hedges, trees and woodlands, as well as man-made constructed features such as roads and buildings all contribute to our Boroughs landscape. The aim of the process is to define areas with similar landscape character and attributes. This character can be used to inform planning decisions and to ensure that appropriate landscape management or enhancement regimes are developed and applied to the correct areas.
- 1.2.2 Within the rural landscape, natural and managed natural landscape features are likely to determine the landscape character, for example woodland cover and hedge patterns. In urban areas, however, it is likely to be the built environment such as street pattern and building use.
- 1.2.3 This landscape character assessment of the Borough of Oadby and Wigston includes an assessment of the rural areas (rural landscape character assessment) and also an assessment of the urban areas (urban landscape character assessment). It should be noted that the urban areas of the Borough were once part of the rural landscape and that landscape has influenced their development. The urban areas sit within the wider rural landscape and maintain some of the underlying features eg landform and watercourses.
- 1.2.4 Sections 1.3 and 1.4 below provide a background to, and explain the methodologies used for, both the urban and the rural landscape character assessments.

1.3 INTRODUCTION TO RURAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT IN THE BOROUGH OF OADBY AND WIGSTON

- 1.3.1 There have been several landscape character assessments of Oadby and Wigston at different scales. The first was completed in 1976 by Leicestershire County Council and was the first Leicestershire County Landscape Appraisal. This included a landscape character zone map based on a consideration of geology, landform, soils, land capability, vegetation, woodland, land use and field pattern.
- 1.3.2 In 1996 English Nature and the Countryside Agency (formerly the Countryside Commission) published the Character of England map. This identified 181 Regional Character Areas throughout the country, 12 of which lie either wholly or partially within Leicestershire. The Borough of Oadby and Wigston is situated almost wholly within the Leicestershire Vales Regional Character Area, with only the extreme north eastern corner of the Borough falling within High Leicestershire. Appendix 1.2 shows the boundary of the Countryside Agency's Regional Character Areas in the Borough, 1996.
- 1.3.3 In 1995 Leicestershire County Council began updating the 1976 county appraisal. This culminated in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy, which was published in 2001. Despite significant forces of change in the county over the two decades since the first appraisal (such as continued urban growth, new road building and other development, agricultural change etc.), the character zones identified in 1976 were considered to be still broadly valid and formed the basis for fieldwork which began in 1995. However, the larger scale approach appropriate to a nation-wide assessment inevitably led to some minor differences in boundary details and the omission of some character areas seen as insignificant at the finer grained county scale.
- 1.3.4 Consequently the 2001 strategy identified 18 Landscape Character Areas within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. A line drawn approximately between Oadby and Wigston (roughly through the Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge) separates two landscape areas, namely High Leicestershire to the east and Upper Soar to the west. A small area in the extreme south-eastern corner of the district lies within the Lutterworth Lowlands. Appendix 1.2 shows the boundaries of these Landscape Character Areas.
- 1.3.5 The 2001 strategy concentrated on the visual character of the countryside and, in line with the landscape character assessment guidelines current at the time, did not address issues of built design.
- 1.3.6 In 2004 the Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge Management Strategy was prepared by Munro and Whitten on behalf of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council. This includes a landscape character assessment of the Green Wedge between the built up areas of Oadby and Wigston, and divides the area into three landscape character areas, namely north, central and south. These are identified primarily by differences in land use, topography and visual characteristics.
- 1.3.7 The methodology used for the rural landscape character assessment was based on the standard 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland' published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage. This has been adapted to reflect local conditions and to achieve the purpose and aims of the

assessment as described in section 1.1. The following methodology was followed in the rural landscape character assessment:

Characterisation, which involved:

- Initial discussions with officers of the Borough Council to agree on the scope, appropriate scale and level of detail required;
- Familiarisation visits to gain an initial understanding of the landscapes within the Borough;
- Desk study, to identify natural factors such as geology, landform, drainage, soils and landcover/vegetation;
- Desk study to identify cultural/social factors such as land use, settlement, enclosure and changes over time;
- Field survey;
- Classification and description of landscape character areas and sub-areas.

1.3.8 During the first stages, it was decided that a scale of 1:25,000 would be appropriate for mapping landscape features and character areas / sub-areas within the Borough. However this scale was found to be too small in the field and thus field work was initially mapped at 1:12,500.

1.3.9 During the desk study a number of reports, other background data and mapped information were reviewed, in particular:

2005	2017
National Planning Policy	National Planning Policy Framework
Regional Planning Policy	National Planning Practice Guidance
Saved Local Plan (1999)	Core Strategy (2010)
Structure Plan	Saved Local Plan (2013)
Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge Management Strategy (2004)	Town Centres Area Action Plan (2013)
Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)	Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge Management Strategy (2004)
Local evidence based documents	Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)
Aerial photography	Local evidence based documents
	Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
	Aerial photography
	Tree Protection Order's
	Public Rights of Way

1.3.10 Information was also gained from the British Geological Survey, Leicestershire Environmental Resources Centre, Leicestershire County Council's Records Office, and external organisations including Natural England and Historic England.

1.3.11 Characterisation of draft landscape character areas and sub-areas were mapped and character descriptions prepared for discussion with the Borough Council.

1.3.12 SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis has been undertaken for each landscape character sub-area. Judgements were made on the

sensitivity of each character sub-area, key pressures for change and the capacity for each area to accommodate new development, to enable recommendations to be made. These were discussed and refined to achieve the recommendations in Part 2 of this report.

- 1.3.13 An update has been undertaken of the Landscape Character within the Borough of Oadby and Wigston in 2017/2018. This is to provide an up to date picture of the different character areas within the Borough. The updated Landscape Character Assessment has been produced alongside the new Local Plan, to ensure that all policy guidance within this document supplements and informs policies contained in the new Local Plan.

1.4 INTRODUCTION TO URBAN LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT IN THE BOROUGH OF OADBY AND WIGSTON

1.4.1 Within the Borough's urban character areas, a number of issues have grown in importance. These include:

- the need for development to be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable;
- the need to restore some of the local diversity and character to urban areas that has been lost in the period of expansion since the end of the second world war;
- a new design agenda based on sustainability, increasing density, community safety, biodiversity and the development of key urban design principles;
- the importance of urban areas in contributing to local biodiversity, community wellbeing and creating a positive environment for all to enjoy.

1.4.2 An urban character assessment can provide more detailed and higher levels of information about urban areas to inform planning and design decisions.

1.4.3 The methodology used for the assessment of the urban areas is based on the standard 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland' published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage, however, this update has taken account of Government guidance, 'Landscape and Seascape Character Assessments' 2014. The methodology has also incorporated appropriate features from the 'Urban Design Compendium' suggested character appraisal inventory for urban areas and has been adapted to reflect the specific urban features of the Borough. The aim of the process is to classify the urban areas into spatial units that share common characteristics that affect their character. The character analysis was undertaken based on the following;

- The development of the urban form since the late 19th Century;
- Survey and assessment of the urban area;
- An overall review of the current urban form;
- Desktop review of the contribution of open space to the urban character;
- Desktop review of features within the Borough with biodiversity value.

1.4.4 A brief summary has been provided of the development of the urban area since the late 19th Century. This is not intended to provide a full historical account but to explain the current urban form and to help identify the character areas. A desk top review was undertaken of the correlation between the current field boundary pattern and that of the 1885 and 1887 Ordnance Survey maps to ascertain if the old boundary pattern had affected the urban character and if any of the old boundaries remained.

1.4.5 A review was undertaken of the overall structure of the individual urban areas and their relationship to each other which included looking at boundaries, access, gateways and the location of different functions.

1.4.6 The urban area was surveyed and reviewed using a pre-defined set of criteria detailed in the table overleaf:

Table 1.1 – Urban Character Appraisal Inventory	
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Location and boundaries ❖ Linkages ❖ Context within urban area ❖ Landform
Character appraisal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Street pattern ❖ Street hierarchy ❖ Views – long and internal ❖ Landmarks ❖ Open space ❖ Enclosure ❖ Density ❖ Scale
Detailed character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Building age and style ❖ Relationship of buildings to street ❖ Boundary treatments ❖ Materials ❖ Building details ❖ Streetscape ❖ Special features
Additional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Land use ❖ Activity levels ❖ Designations ❖ Historical and cultural associations ❖ Sense of place

1.4.7 A review was undertaken of the contribution that individual open spaces make to the urban character. The review looked purely at this aspect and does not cover amenity or biodiversity value or importance to local communities. Open space included parks, playing fields and school grounds, urban spaces and linear spaces. On the basis of this a conclusion was drawn about the overall impact of open space on the urban character.

1.4.8 A separate desktop review was undertaken to map any features with biodiversity value, to ascertain what green networks existed and if there was an impact on urban character. The review included open space (as defined above), watercourses, prominent groups of trees, large areas of back gardens, linear features, allotments and sports facilities. For the purpose of this study features with a biodiversity potential were identified, but a qualitative assessment of the biodiversity value of the features was not made.

1.5 REPORT STRUCTURE

- 1.5.1 The report includes information presented in textual and visual formats. The report uses visual information in the form of plans and photographs wherever possible to convey information.
- 1.5.2 The main body of the report is preceded by Part 1, this introduction. This section provides a summary of the purposes of the report, an introduction to landscape character assessment and a summary of the methodology used for landscape character assessments of the rural and urban areas. The section also details any limitations in respect of the study in term of methodology or as detailed in the brief for the work. The final section provides an overall summary of the key findings of the assessment process and key recommendations.
- 1.5.3 Part 2 contains the results of the rural landscape character assessment. A number of rural landscape character areas are identified and the section describes the characteristics of each area, identifies the pressures for change and capacity to accommodate change and suggests opportunities to enhance landscape quality. An overall landscape character objective for each character area is provided and an overall conclusion on the rural landscape character of the Borough.
- 1.5.4 Parts 3, 4 and 5 provide the results of the urban landscape assessment for Oadby, South Wigston and Wigston respectively. Each part contains a description of the overall urban characteristics of each settlement and for each of the urban character areas identified, and an identification of issues that may impact on urban landscape character, including development and the capacity of the area to accommodate that change. An overall urban character objective for each character area is provided and then a number of urban character area specific policy guidance are made.
- 1.5.5 The final part of the report, Part 6, provides urban landscape character objectives and policy guidance which reflect the emerging New Local Plan, emerging policy direction and that relate to all of the three settlements that comprise the urban area of the Borough. This section also provides recommendations on what Supplementary Planning Documents could be developed to protect the urban landscape character of the Borough.

1.6 OMISSIONS

1.6.1 This study does not include an assessment of the Oadby-Wigston Green Wedge.

1.6.2 The urban character assessment has been undertaken to a level of detail in order to identify discrete urban character units, describe their key features and assess the pressure for and capacity to accommodate change. A full detailed character assessment was not undertaken for the purposes of this study. The work on identifying potential green networks and old hedgeline boundaries was based on a desktop study informed by the level of fieldwork undertaken to assess the overall urban character. No detailed evaluation has been made of the biodiversity potential and quality of the features identified. Open space within the Borough has been assessed purely on the basis of its contribution to landscape quality and not on amenity or biodiversity value or value to the local communities.

1.7 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Rural Landscape Character Assessment

- 1.7.1 This assessment has found that, differences in the character of the landscape across the borough are very subtle. In essence, the Borough is a transition zone between the more distinct plateau and steep sided valley landscapes to the north and east and the more open, rolling landscapes to the south and west.
- 1.7.2 Natural factors such as geology, landform, drainage, soils and landcover/vegetation appear to have had little effect in limiting the spread of urbanisation into the countryside. Only the canal and railway have limited the southern expansion of South Wigston and Wigston respectively. Elsewhere built development has occurred on some of the highest ground in the Borough (125m+ in the east, in Oadby), and across watercourses (for example Oadby straddles Wash Brook). Landcover/vegetation has similarly had no impact in halting the spread of development.
- 1.7.3 For the most part, though, the urban edge is reasonably well integrated into the landscape. Generally, hedgerows, trees and subtle changes in landform help to mitigate views of the urban edge from the countryside. This is considered to be an important positive characteristic of the rural-urban fringe in the Borough, and one that should be protected and strengthened where necessary. This will be especially important where further development is planned, for example the Direction for Growth areas to help integrate the development into its surrounding environment and mitigate its impact on the surrounding countryside.
- 1.7.4 The overriding aim should be to retain a predominantly open, natural, rural transitional area between urban area and country, which is well integrated with the countryside and which allows good public access to it and through it. In particular the distinctive character of Oadby Grange (landscape sub-area A (iii)) and the Sence Valley (landscape character type C) should be protected. The separation between Wigston and South Wigston should be maintained, see Appendix 1.2.

Urban Character Assessment

Oadby

- 1.7.5 Though now physically part of the Leicester Principle Urban Area (PUA), Oadby still retains its own identity as a settlement. The overall urban character of Oadby is that of a pleasant residential environment, but the settlement generally does not have a high level of local distinctiveness. Only two of the identified urban character areas, the Arboretum in the northwest and parts of the town centre, have a stronger, more distinctive and higher quality urban character. The underlying landscape influenced the siting of the original settlement of Oadby which was developed on the gentle slopes to the edge of the Washbrook. The later development of the settlement, however, has been primarily, influenced by the settlements role as providing housing for an expanding Leicester. The gentle undulation of the underlying landscape is perceptible and contributes in a positive way to the urban character, by providing a sense of enclosure, adding interest to the streetscape and providing a variety of views.

- 1.7.6 Oadby is joined to the Leicester PUA only on its north-western edge. The north-eastern and eastern edges of the settlement are bounded by an attractive rural fringe and Green Wedge. The western edge of the settlement is adjacent to the Green Wedge that separates the district from Wigston and the southern edge of the settlement is also bound by an attractive rural fringe. Due to the lack of views out of the urban area there is little sense of the proximity of the rural fringe, but vegetation along the edge of the urban area is often present in and softens many views within the urban area. There are a number of rights of way, informal paths and access points, which provide valuable access out of the urban area into the rural fringe beyond.
- 1.7.7 The majority of the growth of the settlement occurred during the mid to late 20th Century. An important historic core is provided by the settlement centre, which covers the area of the original settlement, and dates back to before the beginning of the 20th Century. The centre, particularly the western section, has seen loss of character due to development dating from the later part of the 20th century. The pattern of this new development now threatens the centre with disintegration into two different urban character areas. This trend is negative in urban character terms and the unity of the centre as one character area should be maintained. The only other urban character area of historic interest is the Arboretum, the core of which is formed by a garden suburb dating from the early 20th Century with many houses built in the style of the vernacular revival. The remainder of the settlement consists of mid to late 20th and 21st Century housing estates. The estates are distinguished from each other by exhibiting the architectural housing styles and street patterns typical of their period of construction.
- 1.7.8 This study has found that the potential of the majority of the urban character areas, as defined by this study, to accommodate further development was very limited. The areas identified as being subject to development pressure were Oadby centre and the Arboretum. In Oadby centre any new development would have to reflect and respect the character of the centre and could be used to restore some of that character and unity. Within the Arboretum, any development proposals would have to be of a very high quality design. It is essential that not only the impacts of individual developments on the immediate Arboretum streetscape are considered, but that the cumulative impact of development on the wider character of the area is also carefully assessed in particular demolition and rebuilding. The open space review conducted as part of this study concluded that open space within the settlement, apart from that within the Arboretum, made some but not a major contribution to urban character. The recommendation of this study is that any further loss of open space is likely to be detrimental to urban character and that no open space within the Oadby urban area should be lost to development, particularly within the Arboretum area.
- 1.7.9 Due to its predominantly suburban residential nature the urban character of the wider settlement, it is unlikely to face any degree of active change. The single factor that would result in a decline in the quality of the urban character of the settlement is the loss of tree cover. It is critical that the current level of vegetation and tree cover is maintained. The development of the wider green network, including tree cover, the quality of open space and biodiversity networks is the single factor that would improve the overall urban quality of Oadby.

South Wigston

- 1.7.10 This study suggests that South Wigston is a settlement in its own right and in many ways is more clearly defined as an autonomous settlement than Oadby or Wigston. Its urban character is varied. Its form has been influenced by the rail and canal network rather than by strong topographical influences. Its landscape context is difficult to perceive once within its urban area. Its interface with the open countryside is only apparent to the south where on the whole the boundary is abrupt, but often with a good level of tree planting.
- 1.7.11 Bounded by urban areas to its west, east and north, South Wigston enjoys a rural setting on its southern boundary where it abuts the Sence Valley and Grand Union Canal corridor. As well as affording a physical and perceptual barrier to further growth or expansion to the south, the valley affords relatively easy access to countryside of recognised landscape value and recreational opportunities along the towpath and footpath network. The part of the Sence Valley adjacent to South Wigston is designated as an Area of Local Landscape Value.
- 1.7.12 South Wigston is still a relatively young settlement with its oldest housing dating from the very late 18th Century, so whilst its historic environment is limited in variety, it does include some extensive areas of relatively unspoilt Victorian and Edwardian terraced housing where original attention to detail is still apparent (to the South of the railway line). Other residential areas of the settlement to the north of the railway line, are predominantly mid to late 20th Century housing estates, each one clearly reflecting typical street layouts and architectural uniformity of their period.
- 1.7.13 The settlement is characterised by a mix of land uses within a relatively confined area, often with light industry alongside housing and retail uses. This is a key characteristic of South Wigston, and consequently affords itself the potential to be a highly sustainable community. A quality that is further enhanced by access to the railway network, that offers sustainable connections to Leicester and Birmingham from South Wigston railway station.
- 1.7.14 This study suggests that opportunities for further growth in the settlement are particularly limited. South Wigston's only really undeveloped area, apart from the Blaby Road Park, is the 'Railway Triangle', a large central site bounded by three rail tracks which present significant accessibility and amenity constraints on residential development. As it is, the cordoned off nature of the site offers significant biodiversity benefits close to the centre. Existing residential areas are already quite densely developed, and in the main could not be redeveloped without some degree of clearance first.
- 1.7.15 Priorities within South Wigston should therefore be directed towards enhancement of the existing urban character. In particular the centre has the potential to offer a high quality public realm on Blaby Road. Several of its fine facades have been severely compromised through insensitive ground floor treatments to shop fronts, however, reversal of these mistakes would help maximise the sustainability potential of this easily accessible service centre. The development of Tesco, South Leicestershire College and regeneration of Blaby Road Park, have been a catalyst for growth in South Wigston.

1.7.16 Elsewhere within South Wigston care should be taken to maintain the openness and mature treescape of the western fringe character area, especially around Saffron Road area, and to ensure that the terraced areas around the centre retain their integrity as a distinctive built environment. The newer areas of housing offer few possibilities for significant townscape improvements, but the Gloucester Crescent and Ervin's Lock areas would benefit from increased urban tree planting. The links between the town, and the river and canal corridor are not extensive but nevertheless do offer important opportunities for green links and wildlife 'stepping stones' into the urban area, and should be managed and protected accordingly.

Wigston

1.7.17 In common with Oadby and South Wigston, Wigston, though part of the wider Leicester Principle Urban Area (PUA), retains its definition as a separate town and settlement. This is due to the Green Wedge between Wigston and Oadby to the north and east, the railway line between the town and South Wigston to the west, and Kilby Bridge to the south. The urban character of the town consists primarily of reasonably pleasant residential areas, but there are also urban character areas that are distinguished by their employment and educational use. The underlying landform does not seem to have influenced the development of the settlement, apart from on the siting of the original settlement, which required a reasonably large flat area to lay out the 'tofts and crofts' (see Part 5, 5.2.3). The town has grown outwards to the west and to the south until it has reached the manmade barrier of the railway line. To the north the presence of the racecourse originally prevented the town merging with Oadby and additional protection is now provided by its Green Wedge designation. In the last 40 years the eastern and south eastern fringe of the town has gradually encroached into the rural area of the Borough. This trend is to continue albeit planned, in the New Local Plan. There are subtle differences in the underlying landform of the town, with character areas to the north east of the centre being perceptibly higher than areas to the west and south that are closer to the Sence Valley.

1.7.18 Though Wigston is effectively joined to the wider Leicester PUA to the west and north, the eastern and southern edges of the town are adjacent to attractive rural areas. To the south, the Sence Valley is accessible though, due to the flatness of the landform, the urban form and the trees along the railway, views out are limited. The rural areas to the eastern fringe of the town have more undulating landform and are also attractive. There is access out of the urban area and a footpath network to both the south and the east.

1.7.19 The town centre of Wigston is based on a 'toft and croft' settlement pattern, which dates back to the first Millenium. In the southern part of the town centre, the old street pattern, lanes and open spaces have survived the later growth and intensification of the town giving the area a distinct character. From its origins as a farming settlement, the initial growth of the town in the late 19th and early 20th Century appears to have been supported by growth of local employment sources in the town centre and along the railway. The latest phases of expansion, (to the settlement), to the south and east have been to provide new housing and this trend is set to continue through planned growth. The urban character of the town centre has now broken down into two areas. This break down is likely to have started in the late 19th Century when the intensification of urban form appears to have occurred to a greater degree in the northern part of the town than in the southern.

The southern section, All Saints, retains its historical character and sense of place and is one of the highest quality urban areas in the Borough. The northern section of the town centre, St Wistans, has however, lost most historical character and generally any future development should contribute to develop a contemporary character, rather than attempting to restore links to the southern section. Apart from All Saints the only other urban character area in the settlement with a more individual character is the area along Station Road, Guthlaxton. The majority of the remainder of the settlement consists of housing estates built between the mid 20th Century and the present day. The estates are distinguished by their street patterns and the architectural style of the houses.

- 1.7.20 The urban character assessment found that the capacity of the urban character areas to accommodate additional development is generally low. The key urban areas identified as being potentially under threat from inappropriate, unplanned development were the town centre and greenfield land to the edge of the Leicester PUA. If appropriately designed, new development in the north of the town centre could be welcome and be used to facilitate urban character improvements. Any new development in the All Saints or Guthlaxton areas would have to be of a high quality and respect the urban character in order to ensure protection for these areas. The redevelopment of the former South Leicestershire College site on Station Road into a medical centre and housing, is a good example of this. The open space review conducted as part of this study concluded that open space within the settlement, apart from that within the Guthlaxton area, made a contribution to urban character. The recommendation of this study is that any further loss of open space is likely to be detrimental to urban character and that no open space within the Wigston urban area should be lost to development.
- 1.7.21 The impression gained in undertaking the urban character assessment was that the general level of tree cover in the urban area was less for Wigston than Oadby. This may be due to many of the residential estates in Wigston being of a slightly later date and less mature character. The character of many of the urban areas of Wigston could be improved by additional tree planting. Improvements to the wider green network including open space quality, the public realm in the centre of the town and the biodiversity network would also contribute to some raising of urban character quality.

Kilby Bridge

- 1.7.22 Kilby Bridge is the only rural settlement within the Borough of Oadby and Wigston. It is situated south of Wigston, south of the railway line, but north of the Grand Union Canal and River Sence. Its built form consists of a mix of residential and employment uses with the oldest part of the settlement around (and once serving) the canal. The settlement has few amenities other than a village pub and could therefore benefit from some investment, which could be brought about through some small scale, well designed, canal based development.

PART 2 RURAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1.1 In Part 1 of the report, a background to and history of landscape character assessment in the Borough was provided. A number of landscape character assessments have been undertaken that provide the strategic framework for this study. In particular the 'Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy' was used as the basis for the assessment. The aim of this report is to identify a finer grain of distinctive landscape character areas within the Borough of Oadby and Wigston which adds more detail to the county-wide strategy and is in harmony with the Green Wedge Management Strategy. By identifying what is distinctive and important about the landscape of the Borough of Oadby and Wigston, we can make recommendations for managing future change to conserve, enhance or restore the distinctiveness and characteristics that give the Borough its 'sense of place'.
- 2.1.2 In general, there is a distinction at the broad, strategic, county level between the two main landscape character areas within the Borough: High Leicestershire to the east and Upper Soar to the west. In practice however, it is apparent that the Borough is a transition zone between these distinctive landscapes, with areas that shade into each other. This is due to the subtle topography and extensive urban development, as found in the 2001 county-wide Strategy. The main characteristic feature defining the boundary between these two areas is the steepening of slope and a greater than average height.
- 2.1.3 As this is an assessment of the Borough of Oadby and Wigston, the heading of High Leicestershire is inappropriate and is re-named Oadby and Wigston Vales. The description of this area is found in Section 2.2. The heading of Upper Soar is considered appropriate and remains in this report, (although sub-divided as explained below in Sections 2.3 and 2.5).
- 2.1.4 At the subtler, Borough-wide scale the Lutterworth Lowlands landscape character area identified in the County Strategy is not apparent. What we have identified, however, is a third landscape character area along the River Sence Valley. The description of this area is found in Section 2.4.
- 2.1.5 The remaining countryside areas on the urban fringe of the Leicester PUA, between the current edge of built development and the Borough boundary, have been sub-divided into landscape character sub-areas to provide a more detailed assessment of their character to help inform the guidance. In particular it is recognised that these areas are under the most pressure for development and therefore guidance is given on the sensitivity of each sub-area and the capacity to absorb change. Table 2.1 overleaf indicates the classification of landscape types and sub-areas. Appendix 1.2 indicates landscape character areas and landscape character sub-areas adopted in this study.

Table 2.1 – Landscape Classification in Oadby and Wigston			
Regional Character Areas - Character of England Map 1996	Landscape Character Areas - LCC Strategy 2001	Landscape Character Types - This Study	Landscape Sub-Areas - This Study
High Leicestershire	High Leicestershire	A. Oadby & Wigston Vales	A(i) Stoughton A(ii) Thurnby & Oadby Green Wedge A(iii) Oadby Grange A(iv) Oadby & Wigston Green Wedge A(v) Wigston East A(vi) Wigston South
Leicestershire Vales	Upper Soar		(see also Urban Character Assessment)
	Lutterworth Lowlands	B. Upper Soar (North)	(See Urban Character Assessment)
		C. Sence Valley	C. Sence Valley
	D. Upper Soar (South)	D. South Wigston Clays	

2.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE OADBY AND WIGSTON VALES LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE (AREA A)

See Appendix 1.2.

- 2.2.1 As explained above, the Borough of Oadby and Wigston is essentially a transition zone in landscape character terms, between the high dissected plateau and steep sided valleys of High Leicestershire to the east and the open and gently rolling landscape of the Upper Soar area to the west. This landscape character type extends beyond the Borough boundary in the north and east to the countryside beyond. The western edge is defined by a marked change of slope where the land falls along the western edge of Oadby and through the built up area of Wigston. The southern boundary is defined by the flatter ground of the River Sence Valley.
- 2.2.2 The Oadby and Wigston Vales covers most of the Borough. It is a gently rolling landscape dissected by a series of regularly spaced watercourses falling from higher ground westwards to the River Soar or southwards to the River Sence. These have formed mostly shallow sided valleys separated by broader ridges of higher ground.
- 2.2.3 The highest ground in the Borough lies in the north-eastern corner, at a little over 125m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). This is dissected by the Wash Brook and a minor watercourse which cut shallowly through the urban fringe before passing westwards through Oadby, the Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge and Knighton Park which lies at approximately at 75m AOD.
- 2.2.4 Oadby has developed on the raised ridge in between the Wash Brook and Evington Brook which passes through the most northerly point of the Borough at Stoughton Grange. South of the Wash Brook, the land rises to a broad ridge rising to around 113m AOD through the southern half of the Green Wedge, south of Brocks Hill Country Park. It then falls again further southwards through the urban fringe to a number of minor watercourses which fall to the Grand Union Canal and the River Sence beyond to about 75m AOD.
- 2.2.5 An underlying solid geology of Lower Lias clay shales and limestones is broken up on the surface by lower lying alluvium in the valleys and broad areas of exposed boulder clay ridges. There are also occasional outcrops of sand and gravel, principally in the highest parts of the Borough of Oadby and Wigston.
- 2.2.6 Residential development at Grange Farm has extended the eastern edge of Oadby to the Borough boundary. Elsewhere beyond the urban edge the Oadby and Wigston Vales comprises a mix of land uses, including arable farmland and grazing land; playing fields; parkland, formal gardens and buildings within the historic landscape at Stoughton Grange; golf courses; Brocks Hill Country Park; The Racecourse and numerous farms. The Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge runs through the centre of the area and the Oadby, Thurnby, Stoughton Green Wedge lies on the northern boundary.
- 2.2.7 In general, the urban edge is reasonably well screened and integrates well with the surrounding countryside. This is due to a combination of well-vegetated field boundaries comprising tall hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and the rolling topography. Consequently for the most part views out from within the Oadby and Wigston Vales are confined to glimpses of higher ground close to the Borough

boundary. The large modern farm buildings at Oadby Lodge Farm are conspicuous from some parts of the urban edge, and views northwards to Stoughton village and its church are probably the most extensive. Telecommunications masts are features in several areas of high ground.

- 2.2.8 The two main roads of the A6 and A5199 radiate south-eastwards from the centre of Leicester City through the valleys and ridges of the Oadby and Wigston Vales. After passing through Wigston, the A5199 passes beneath the Midland Railway Line and over the Grand Union Canal and the River Sence, at Kilby Bridge and beyond. Other roads also radiate through the area, notably the Gartree Road north of Oadby and Newton Lane through Wigston. These are linked by the B582 which runs from Gartree Road through Oadby, and Wigston and westwards through South Wigston.
- 2.2.9 A number of public footpaths and bridleways pass through the area, linking town and country. In several places these join up to provide circular routes which are popular with dog walkers and horse riders.
- 2.2.10 Tall hedgerows and hedgerow trees on field boundaries or alongside watercourses and footpaths are the most significant vegetation features in this landscape type. Hedgerow species are typically Hawthorn and Blackthorn with Field Maple. Tree species are predominantly Ash, Oak and Sycamore. There are isolated, small copses, some of which are Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), such as Fludes Lane Spinney, Stackyard Spinney and Glen Gorse, but woodland is not a significant feature. Grassland/meadows and field ponds, many of which are of importance for nature conservation, are distinctive features beyond the urban edge.
- 2.2.11 The Oadby and Wigston Vales landscape character type is further sub-divided into six separate landscape sub-areas, as indicated in Figure 2.2 and in Table 2. These are described in the following sections.

Landscape Sub-Area A(i): Stoughton

See Appendix 1.2.



View of Stoughton Grange northwards across the parkland towards Polton Hill.



Mature avenue of trees along Gartree Road with dense vegetation within Stoughton Grange parkland in the distance (right).

Landscape Characteristics

- 2.2.12 This sub-area comprises the historic landscape of Stoughton Grange, with a number of buildings of historic interest which previously formed part of the Stoughton Grange Estate. This includes a number of lodges alongside Gartree Road and other buildings since converted for re-use and has seen a range of uses on site including a plant nursery, bar and restaurant.

- 2.2.13 This relatively small area in the extreme northern tip of the Borough forms part of a much more extensively designed landscape which extends northwards into the neighbouring district. It also forms the most northerly extent of the Oadby, Thurnby, Stoughton Green Wedge as designated in the Council's Local Plan.
- 2.2.14 Former parkland and formal gardens associated with Stoughton Grange still exist and form an important part of the setting of the buildings and an appreciation of their previous use. Some mature vegetation, principally road side tree belts and spinneys, other spinneys and tree belts within the grounds are shown on the First Edition OS Map of 1885. They are predominantly Ash, Oak and Sycamore. Tree belts alongside Gartree Road and more extensive areas of semi-natural roadside woodland are recognised as being of nature conservation/wildlife importance.
- 2.2.15 Gartree Road is a former Roman Road and there is a linear bank feature to the west of Brook Spinney included in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) as a possible medieval trackway.
- 2.2.16 The ground is undulating, falling from around 100m AOD in the north at Polton Hill to around 90m AOD at Evington Brook, before rising again to a little over 100m AOD at Gartree Road.
- 2.2.17 There are views from within the parkland northwards to houses on the high ground at Polton Hill/Stoughton Lane, set amongst mature vegetation. Consequently there are views from some of these properties southwards across the parkland, but there are no clear views in this direction from Stoughton Lane. There are no public rights of way through the area, but it is understood that a route from Oadby to Evington via Shady Lane used to be a favourite walk on a Sunday evening in the 1800s, to view the parkland and its peacocks. Historic OS maps indicate a footpath running west to east across the parkland just south of and parallel to Evington Brook, which no longer exists today.

Strengths

- 2.2.18 The distinctive parkland and mature boundary vegetation give this area a strong sense of place.

Weaknesses

- 2.2.19 The historic character could become eroded by the loss of parkland trees, lack of maintenance of other mature vegetation, the unsympathetic re-use of buildings and inappropriate signage along the Gartree Road frontage.

Opportunities

- 2.2.21 Opportunities to conserve and enhance the historic character of the area should be taken which could include:
- the re-planting of parkland trees;
 - the maintenance and re-use of historic buildings;
 - controlling the character and appearance of historic buildings (for example by the preparation of a design guide);
 - recreating historic rights of way across the area;
 - Ensuring that any development maintains and further enhances the historic character of the area.

Threats

- 2.2.22 Commercial concerns if Stoughton Grange is not the attraction it used to be could lead to a lack of maintenance of the historic buildings, which could in turn weaken the character of the area.
- 2.2.23 The protected line of the Proposed Transport Route (PTR) passes through the western edge of the designed landscape. This is designated and if built could impinge on the historic landscape area. The character of Shady Lane and thus the western edge of the historic landscape at Stoughton Grange could be significantly harmed by being irretrievably lost.

LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVES

To conserve and enhance the historic landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area, in particular:

- **Historic buildings and their settings**
- **Parkland and other features of the designed landscape**
- **Historic rights of way**
- **Archaeological features**
- **The openness and rural character of the, green areas**

Landscape Sub-Area A(ii): Oadby, Thurnby, Stoughton Green Wedge

See Figure Appendix 1.2.



View north-eastwards across the university playing fields and arable land within the Oadby, Thurnby, Stoughton Green Wedge, towards Stoughton.

Landscape Characteristics

- 2.2.24 This landscape sub-area abuts the urban fringe in the north of the borough, immediately south of Gartree Road and the historic landscape of Stoughton Grange. It comprises irregularly shaped fields which are in agricultural use to the west and east of the area but which are part of the University playing fields in the centre (immediately east of the B582 Stoughton Road). This area is designated Green Wedge in the Local Plan.
- 2.2.25 The land falls gradually from between 105m and 110m AOD at the urban fringe to around 90m AOD in the north-western corner close to the Spire Hospital. The southern urban edge of the area is recorded as a former boundary on the historic OS maps and is predominantly well screened by mature vegetation. Some houses are visible in views from some sections of Gartree Road except where roadside belts of mature trees and semi-natural vegetation, including Stackyard Spinney provide a dense screen. Sporadic vegetation alongside the field drains running south to north across the area also help filter some views and add to the natural appearance of the countryside. Some of the vegetation alongside Gartree Road is of importance for nature conservation.
- 2.2.26 Views towards Stoughton across the Green Wedge are perhaps the most pleasant of any views out from the urban edge of the Borough, across gently undulating countryside and mature field boundaries towards Stoughton Church. These views are available from a number of locations on the urban edge including residential properties, Manor High School, Stoughton Road and public footpaths. The public footpaths are important links from the town to the countryside.

2.2.27 Most of the area to the east of Stoughton Road, except the field in the extreme south-eastern corner, is recognised as being of archaeological interest, with several recordings on the Site and Monuments Record (SMR). This includes several Roman finds, pit and ditch-like anomalies, enclosures, buildings and a burial, indicating a Roman occupation site.

Strengths

2.2.28 This is an area with well-defined boundaries and a strong rural character, despite abutting the urban edge. Fields are large to medium sized with irregularly shaped boundaries following ditches and historic boundary features. Residential development has for the most part respected these boundaries, which remain except immediately west of Stoughton Road where a former spinney (Gartree Spinney) has been removed.

2.2.29 This is also a landscape with a strong historical character, with many remaining Roman and earlier features, historic field boundaries and footpath routes. Along Gartree Road the roadside avenue of mature trees and other vegetation are an important part of the setting to the historic landscape of Stoughton Grange.

2.2.30 This location and physical characteristics of this landscape sub-area mean it is important visually as a transitional area between town and country, with many public and private views into the area. Views out across the fields are valued.

Weaknesses

2.2.31 The strong rural and historic characteristics are weakened by the well-maintained University playing fields and associated structures such as the brick pavilion, car park and rugby posts, which have an urbanising influence. However, the over riding open nature of the area remains, in keeping with its designation as Green Wedge.

2.2.32 The Green Wedge designation is primarily to provide an undeveloped corridor between settlements and thus to protect their separation. The northern boundary of the Oadby, Thurnby, Stoughton Green Wedge, beyond this landscape character sub-area, is weakly defined in that it does not abut any settlement. Beyond the Borough boundary the Leicestershire Golf Course and Stoughton Grange landscape provide open countryside which is also designated as Green Wedge. Such wider designation may lessen the requirement for the designation within this sub-area.

Opportunities

2.2.33 The setting of the historic landscape at Stoughton Grange could be enhanced by the planting of an avenue of trees alongside Gartree Road, in between Stoughton Road and Stackyard Spinney. This would recreate a former avenue indicated on the OS maps of 1886-1888 and 1904-1905 (see Appendices 2.1 and 2.2) and would help to screen views of the urban edge from this section of Gartree Road.

Threats

2.2.34 This area is likely to come under further pressure for built development. This should be resisted where it would adversely affect the sensitive historic and visual characteristics of the landscape. However, there is some capacity for this area to

accept some development without adversely affecting the character of the landscape as a whole. In particular, a managed extension of the urban edge where detailed design respects the sensitive features and characteristics of the landscape.

2.2.35 The protected line of the Potential Transport Route (PTR) passes through the western edge of this landscape character sub-area. This is on the line of footpath Z2 which follows an historic route. The corner of Stackyard Spinney and an historic boundary line running south from the spinney will also be affected. Development of the PTR could bring additional pressure for further development alongside it. If this is the case, vegetation along the historic boundary south of Stackyard Spinney, which is currently sporadic, could be enhanced with new planting to define the eastern limit of any further development close to the PTR.

2.2.36 A site off Gartree Road has been allocated within the new Local Plan for a new cemetery. This is in the Green Wedge and thus any development should be limited to ensure retention of its undeveloped, rural character. Development of a cemetery here could act as a precedent for development on adjoining land. An alternative form of woodland or green burial, where development is strictly controlled, for example by substituting trees in place of headstones, could be considered as a means of retaining the predominantly rural undeveloped character.

LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVES

To conserve the natural rural, historic and visual characteristics to maintain a predominantly open transitional area between town and country. Particular characteristic features to be conserved are:

- **Historic boundaries**
- **Historic rights of way**
- **Mature vegetation**
- **Archaeological features**
- **Irregular field boundaries following natural features**
- **Views towards Stoughton across gently undulating countryside**

Landscape Sub-Area A(iii): Oadby Grange

See Appendix 1.2.



Arable and pasture fields with predominantly tall, strong field boundaries fall gradually southwards towards the Oadby Grange estate.

Landscape Characteristics

- 2.2.37 This landscape sub-area lies in the extreme north-eastern corner of the Borough, on the highest ground at 126m AOD along its northern and eastern boundaries. The ground, made up of boulder clay outcrops over lower lias clays and limestones, falls southwards and westwards relatively steeply but evenly to the Wash Brook and associated watercourse.
- 2.2.38 As with sub-area A(ii), the southern and western boundaries are well defined by the edge of residential development. The northern boundary follows the approximate line of a public footpath, an historic boundary shown on the early OS maps (see Appendix 2.1-2.5). The eastern boundary follows the borough boundary which lies a few metres to the east of an historic track (Old Mere/Mere Lane, a possible Roman road) and Gorse Lane bridleway which runs between Newton Lane in the south and Gartree Road further north.
- 2.2.39 As well as these two public rights of way, a footpath runs between the northern and western boundaries, a footpath links Fludes Lane and the Wash Brook to the south-east, whilst a footpath links Fludes Lane and the Wash Brook to Gartree Road in the north-east. Consequently this urban fringe landscape has extensive public links from town to countryside.
- 2.2.40 Fields are small to medium, regularly sized and roughly rectangular in shape. Arable use predominates, with some grazing fields for cattle close to the urban edge. Most fields are bounded by strong, tall, well-maintained hedges of mixed species but mostly hawthorn, and mature hedgerow trees, predominantly Ash with some Oak. There are a number of small copses and spinneys on the boundaries and at the junction of fields, giving a lush, well-vegetated appearance to the area. There are

also a number of set-aside scrub areas, where past uses (including agricultural and war-time buildings and waste tipping) have ceased and in wide verges alongside many hedgerows, adding to the natural, rural appearance. The Wash Brook is a Local Wildlife Site (LWS), with a riffle and pool system, pond, eroded banks and varying stream side vegetation. Fludes Lane and the nearby spinney are a designated LWS, as is an area of wet meadow to the east which is a seasonally flooded balancing facility for the nearby housing.

- 2.2.42 The eastern boundary of this area has been marked out by post and wire fencing and a belt of native tree and shrub planting alongside existing hedgerows. Remnant ridge and furrow is visible on some of the grasslands.
- 2.2.43 The large, modern, industrial-sized buildings and silos at Oadby Lodge Farm are conspicuous on high ground in the north-eastern corner. Two telecommunication masts along the northern boundary are also conspicuous in the landscape in some views. Other land uses are the playing fields of Manor High School in the north-western corner.
- 2.2.44 There are clear views into parts of this sub-area from the adjoining houses, especially Windrush Drive along the western boundary, where the existing hedgerow is small and sporadic with few trees. Other views from the high ground to the north include glimpses from Gartree Road where the urban edge is relatively inconspicuous amongst vegetation on lower lying ground. Even the recent three-storey residential buildings in the south of the area are relatively inconspicuous from high ground, only becoming more noticeable where they break the skyline in views from low-lying positions close-by.
- 2.2.45 A key characteristic of this sub-area is the exposed nature of the landscape from the high ground, such as when walking along the footpaths or bridleway. The sky-scape is more dominant than the townscape, especially on windy days when clouds rush by and planes from the nearby airfield are the most obvious noise source.

Strengths

- 2.2.46 This is an area with generally well-defined boundaries and a strong rural character, despite abutting the urban edge. Well vegetated field boundaries, copses and more recent planting provide a strong vegetative appearance and are important wildlife links between town and country.
- 2.2.47 The extensive public rights of way system also provides well-defined, easily accessible links between the urban areas to the countryside.

Weaknesses

- 2.2.48 Modern developments, notably telecommunications masts and industrial sized farm buildings, have weakened the natural, rural character of the landscape. Further similar development could be conspicuous on high ground.
- 2.2.49 Further development, for example residential, would erode the distinct rural character of the area.

Opportunities

- 2.2.50 Areas of poor quality agricultural soil and underused areas which have been set aside from normal agricultural activity could offer the opportunity to establish a new woodland. This would depend on negotiations with landowners but would help increase woodland cover in the Borough which is currently lacking.

Threats

- 2.2.51 This is an urban fringe landscape, which is often the recipe for misuse in the form of vandalism, waste and rubbish tipping etc.
- 2.2.52 This area is likely to come under increasing pressure for built development. This should be resisted given the sensitive nature of the landscape, which is primarily as a result of its natural and visual characteristics. Further development is likely to require hedgerow and tree removal which would significantly affect the pattern of the landscape. Any new development on high ground is also likely to be visible over an extensive area and would be difficult to screen, thus diluting the urban fringe character.

LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVES

To conserve the natural rural and visual characteristics and to maintain a predominantly open transitional area between town and country, by conserving:

- **The small to medium, regularly sized, roughly rectangular fields**
- **Strong, tall field boundaries**
- **Ponds, spinneys and other features of nature conservation interest**
- **Public rights of way with a predominantly exposed nature**

Landscape Sub-Area A(iv): Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge

See Appendix 1.2.



Glimpses of the Green Wedge from urban areas (in this case Pipestrelle Way, Oadby) provide relief from the built form.

- 2.2.53 In 2004, the Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge Management Strategy was prepared by Munro and Whitten on behalf of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council. This includes a landscape character assessment of the Green Wedge between the built up areas of Oadby and Wigston, and divides the area into three landscape character areas, namely north, central and south. These are identified primarily by differences in landuse, topography and visual characteristics.
- 2.2.54 The study makes recommendations on strategies which could be adopted by the borough council and stakeholders to guide future management of the green wedge. The recommendations in this landscape character assessment of the remaining parts of the Borough are consistent with those of the management strategy as far as possible.

Landscape Sub-Area A(v): Wigston East

See Appendix 1.2.

Landscape Characteristics

- 2.2.55 This is a relatively large landscape character sub-area lying between the A6, the southern extent of the built up edge of Oadby and the Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge to the north, the Borough boundary to the east, the River Sence Valley (mostly bounded by the Midland Mainline railway) to the south, and the eastern extent of the built up edge of Wigston to the west.
- 2.2.56 This is a distinctly rural landscape comprising predominantly medium sized, roughly rectangular, regular arable fields with some pasture for sheep grazing. A series of individual farms lie at regular intervals either side of Newton Lane, namely Seven Oaks Farm, Highfield Farm, Spring Cottage Farm, Elm Tree Farm, Tythorn Farm and Glebe Farm.
- 2.2.57 Other land uses in this sub-area are the Glen Gorse Golf Course, Coombe Park Recreation Ground, sports playing fields, riding stables, kennels and a number of detached properties on land between Cooks Lane and the railway.
- 2.2.58 Landform is a series of undulating ridges and valleys of boulder clay over lias clays and limestones, generally falling from north-east to south-west. The Borough boundary runs along a ridge of high ground which rises to approximately 123m AOD at the A6 and falls southwards to around 80m AOD south of the railway where a watercourse falls towards the River Sence. Between the Borough boundary and the Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge the land rises and falls to a further two watercourses which drain beneath Newton Lane and into the canal and River Sence via Wigston Harcourt.
- 2.2.59 The fields are bounded by hedges which are mostly tall and dense close to the urban edge but which become more open, lower and sporadic further east. Some hedgerows have been lost as fields have become enlarged. Hedges are predominantly Hawthorn and often include a number of mature trees, mostly Ash. There are few other copses or spinneys of any note, giving the landscape a somewhat fragmented appearance. The exception to this is the Glen Gorse Golf Course which is designated a LWS due to its woodlands and mature trees, including Black Poplar and Crack Willow, species-rich hedgerows, numerous field ponds and species-rich grassland.
- 2.2.60 There is an area of approximately 4.5ha in between Cooks Lane and the railway which is designated a LWS due to its species-rich grassland and large permanent field pond which is a disused lime quarry of Post-Medieval date.
- 2.2.61 Archaeological finds have been recorded in this area and are included on the County Council's Sites and Monuments Record. These include Bronze Age to Late Iron Age finds and others from the Roman and Medieval periods. The Old Mere/ Mere Lane track running both along or close to the Borough boundary is thought to be a Roman road. The area immediately to the west of the A5199 Welford Road is thought to have been an early Anglo Saxon burial site.

- 2.2.62 Public access across the area is limited. A bridleway follows Mere Lane along the northern half of this landscape sub-area, before continuing along the Borough boundary to join Newton Lane as a track with assumed public access. A public footpath runs from within the built up area of Oadby to the east of Beauchamp College, and continues around the west and south of Coombe Park Recreation Ground, across the golf course to join the bridleway. It then continues eastwards beyond the Borough boundary. A public footpath emerges from within the built up area of Wigston, continues across the southern end of the Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge, alongside arable fields, across the golf course to join the bridleway before continuing eastwards beyond the Borough boundary. Finally a public footpath continues from Wigston Harcourt southwards to join Cooks Lane as a bridleway, which continues across the railway to join the Grand Union Canal towpath.
- 2.2.63 The undulating topography is the overriding characteristic which dictates the extent of visibility throughout this sub-area. From the lower lying valleys, views are generally limited to two or three fields. From the higher ridges, however, views are much more panoramic on the edge of Wigston Harcourt views northwards extend to Oadby beyond the green wedge.
- 2.2.64 Vegetation is also important in limiting views from some directions. Dense vegetation within the golf course limits views, and dense hedgerows and hedgerow trees alongside fields to the north of the golf course and to the west of the A5199 Welford Road also perform this function.
- 2.2.65 The combination of topography and vegetation along field boundaries ensures that entrances into the Borough from the east through this area are characterised by a gradual transition from countryside to the town. Houses on the urban edges are generally well screened and inconspicuous until close by. The exception to this is the eastern edge of houses on Long Meadow and Well Spring Hill in Wigston Harcourt, immediately north of Cooks Lane. This edge is quite open due to the weak, sporadic hedges, but despite this views of the houses are limited by landform. If development occurs in this location, all efforts should be made to ensure that this new boundary is well screened and inconspicuous from the surrounding countryside.
- 2.2.66 Apart from landform and vegetation, other features in the landscape are few. A telecommunications mast is a prominent, modern structure on high ground to the east of Newton Lane. Post and rail fencing alongside the riding stables south of the golf course and around horse fields at Norwood House, east of Cooks Lane, are occasional features. There is also some remnant ridge and furrow in the area around Norwood House.

Strengths

- 2.2.67 The undulating topography and distinctive landform, with well-hedged and treed field boundaries, are strong characteristics of this sub-area. These dictate the level of visibility from both within the area and from beyond the Borough boundary.
- 2.2.68 The gradual transition from town to country and vice versa is a particular visual strength of this area, particularly when travelling on the roads radiating into/out of the area and this should be retained as far as possible as the settlements develop. It is also important for ensuring wildlife links along vegetation corridors.

- 2.2.69 This sub-area is in effect an informal extension of the Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge, being an open area between the two settlements. It is designated in the Local Plan as Countryside.
- 2.2.70 The public rights of way system through the area enables generally good links between town and country.
- 2.2.71 There are a number of field ponds which are a particular characteristic of this landscape sub-area.

Weaknesses

- 2.2.72 In some parts in the east, field boundaries are breaking down or have been removed. Trees are becoming over-mature. Together with the lack of copses/spinneys, the landscape is somewhat fragmented.
- 2.2.73 Modern structures such as telecommunications masts are visible over a wide area on high ground, which dilutes the essentially rural, natural character of the landscape.
- 2.2.74 Species-rich grassland/meadows are characteristic features close to the urban edge, but there is evidence that some of these have been converted to arable use. Control over such non-statutory designations is difficult and relies on close liaison and negotiation with landowners.

Opportunities

- 2.2.75 Field boundaries could be enhanced with new native hedgerow and tree planting. Planting of new woodland would also help prevent the further fragmentation of the landscape.
- 2.2.76 Encouragement could be given to landowners to create species-rich grassland to prevent the loss of this landscape feature. This could include extending the margins of arable fields, and should include agreement for future maintenance.
- 2.2.77 The opportunity to increase public access across the area, and in particular to encourage greater movement from town to countryside with the introduction of circular walks and cycle tracks, should be explored. This is in keeping with the objective of the Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge Management Strategy for improved public access.
- 2.2.78 The possibility of improving the wildlife value of field ponds and the creation of new ponds could be explored with local landowners.

Threats

- 2.2.79 This is an urban fringe landscape with good access, which is often the recipe for misuse in the form of vandalism, waste and rubbish tipping etc. These potential problems are not apparent at the moment but could become a problem in the future.
- 2.2.80 This area, adjacent to the current urban fringe could come under increasing pressure for built development in the future. Development in this area should be resisted given the higher landscape character value of the area and sensitive nature of the

landscape, which is primarily as a result of its natural, historic and visual characteristics. There may be some parts of this sub-area where these characteristics are not as strong as others, and where some form of development may be acceptable in landscape terms as long as it did not have an adverse impact on the character of the wider area.

- 2.2.81 In particular new development such as telecommunications masts on high ground should be avoided and where unavoidable, mitigated through high quality design and screening.

LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVES

To conserve and enhance the natural rural, historic and visual characteristics to maintain a predominantly open transitional area between town and country by conserving and enhancing:

- **The undulating ridges and valleys**
- **Watercourses**
- **Medium sized, rectangular, regular agricultural fields**
- **Ponds**
- **The distinctive pattern of hedgerow field boundaries, generally tall and dense becoming more sporadic and lower further east**
- **Meadows and other features of nature conservation interest**
- **Historic / archaeological features, including ridge and furrow**

Landscape Sub-Area A(vi): Wigston South

See Appendix 1.2.



Gently undulating mixed arable and pasture fields with variable field boundaries around Kilby Bridge Farm, looking southwards to countryside beyond the Borough boundary.

Landscape Characteristics

- 2.2.82 This sub-area lies between the built up areas of Wigston (which is defined by the Midland Mainline railway) and South Wigston, and the River Sence Valley landscape sub-area. It is an agricultural area with a mix of arable and improved grassland for sheep grazing and horse paddocks. It is gently undulating, with a central lower area of alluvium associated with a watercourse falling from around 80m AOD in the north-east to around 75m AOD in the south-west into the Grand Union Canal and River Sence. Either side of this central lower area exposed boulder clay is slightly higher, at around 85m AOD, forming two ridges which fall towards the canal and create a slightly raised edge to the river valley.
- 2.2.83 Kilby Bridge Farm and Ivanhoe Farm lie on the ridge to the east. Other land uses are a former raised waste tip which has been planted under the Community Woodland Planting Scheme (part of the Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project), and Navvy's Pit, a former clay extraction pit now used for fishing, together with a number of smaller ponds close by. Both the former waste tip and Navvy's Pit are LWS, designated for their species-rich grassland and wetland vegetation plus Willow and Ash trees respectively.
- 2.2.84 Fields are small to medium sized, generally rectangular but becoming larger and more irregular in shape to the east. Field boundaries are variable, some comprise tall, dense hedgerows with mature trees, others are lower and sporadic with few trees. Hawthorn and Ash dominate. The dense vegetation around Navvy's Pit includes a large unmanaged hedgerow, and there are isolated groups of trees around the farm buildings. Vegetation alongside the railway is variable, with some

dense patches of shrubby vegetation and trees and other more sporadic areas. Post and wire fences separate the large grass field north of Kilby Bridge Farm.

- 2.2.85 The railway is not a particularly obvious feature in the landscape. Where vegetation alongside the railway is sporadic or where it is absent, the houses on the edge of Wigston create a more noticeable boundary to this area than the railway.
- 2.2.86 A raised footbridge over the railway immediately east of Navvy's Pit is an obvious structure in the landscape in some views from further east. A public footpath crosses the railway on this bridge, providing panoramic views over this sub-area to the River Sence Valley and beyond. The footpath continues past Navvy's Pit to the Grand Union Canal, over the River Sence and westwards. Two farm tracks also pass over the railway, one in the north of the area providing access to the arable fields, the other to the east providing access to the farms.
- 2.2.87 Relatively new housing on the eastern edge of South Wigston, at Pochins Bridge, includes three-storey buildings which provide a visual boundary to this landscape sub-area. They are set within an extensive area of open space, the eastern edge of which has been recently planted, and which together with the planted former waste tip to the north will maintain an open buffer between the houses and the industrial estate to the north.
- 2.2.88 Main views into this area are from close by, from houses overlooking it, from the railway and canal (including the towpath) alongside it and from the footpath that crosses it. More distant views into this area are limited to views from public rights of way to the south and occasional glimpses from Countesthorpe Road further west.
- 2.2.89 Crop marks have been recorded in fields south of Kilby Bridge Farm which are thought to be ring ditches from an Early Bronze Age barrow.

Strengths

- 2.2.90 The northern edge is well defined by the railway which has limited the development of Wigston southwards. Despite abutting the urban edge this landscape sub-area has a strong rural character due to its natural features and views southwards across the canal and river and into the countryside beyond.
- 2.2.91 A Public footpath appears to be well used by local residents as a route out into the countryside and to link up with the canal towpath.

Weaknesses

- 2.2.92 Apart from the northern edge, the boundaries of this sub-area are not well defined. The character of the area, particularly its undulating ridge and valley topography, is typical of the wider Oadby and Wigston Vales landscape character type. However, its boundary with the River Sence Valley to the south is not well defined. It is a transitional area between town and country.
- 2.2.93 The boundary with South Wigston to the west is also ill-defined, as house building encroaches into this area.

2.2.94 Despite being on the urban edge, public access through the area to the wider countryside beyond is limited.

Opportunities

2.2.95 Increased public access, creating circular walks over the railway and along the canal towpath should be explored. This should include access for cyclists.

2.2.96 Field boundaries could be enhanced with new native hedgerow and tree planting.

2.2.97 Encouragement could be given to landowners to create species-rich grassland to increase the amount of this landscape feature. This could include extending the margins of arable fields, and should include agreement for future maintenance.

Threats

2.2.98 This is an urban fringe landscape with some public access. Potential problems in the form of vandalism, waste and rubbish tipping etc are not apparent at the moment but could become a problem in the future if access is improved.

2.2.99 This area is likely to come under pressure for built development. The railway is a well-defined boundary which should prevent the expansion of Wigston in this direction. However, the boundary with South Wigston is less well defined and built development is encroaching eastwards into this area. Any further development eastwards would see the coalescence of South Wigston and Wigston. This should be avoided and an open green area maintained to link up with the school playing fields north of the railway and in so doing maintain a distinct separation between Wigston and South Wigston.

2.2.100 Despite the landscape characteristics of this sub-area not being particularly strong, any new development on the slightly higher ground would increase the visibility of this area from distant viewpoints to the south and west. This would give the impression of the merging of South Wigston and Wigston and should be avoided.

LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVES

To conserve and enhance the natural rural characteristics, to improve public access and to maintain an open transitional area between town and country by retaining a distinct separation between South Wigston and Wigston. Particular characteristic features to be conserved and enhanced are:

- **The gently undulating, mixed arable and pasture landscape**
- **Ponds**
- **Meadows**
- **Public rights of way**
- **Views southwards from the urban edge towards the canal, river and countryside beyond**

2.3 DESCRIPTION OF UPPER SOAR (NORTH) LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE (AREA B)

See Appendix 2.1.

- 2.3.1 As explained in section 2.1 the boundary between the Oadby and Wigston Vales Landscape Character Type and the Upper Soar (North) Landscape Character Type is extremely ill-defined and the areas shade into each other. This is due to the subtle topography and extensive urban development. The main characteristic feature defining the boundary between these two areas is the steepening of slope and a greater than average height.
- 2.3.2 Although the landscape character typology has been washed over the urban areas of Wigston and South Wigston to include them within the Upper Soar (North) Landscape Character Type, any distinctive landscape features characteristic of the type, other than topography and landform, are mostly lost and are not apparent.
- 2.3.3 Consequently, the description and assessment of this character area concentrates on its urban characteristics and can be found in Part 3 of this report.

2.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE RIVER SENCE VALLEY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE (AREA C)

See Appendix 1.2.



Pasture fields in the floodplain of the River Sence with generally well-vegetated field boundaries.



The calm rural ambience of the Grand Union Canal with its wetland vegetation, brick arched bridges and reflections in the water.

- 2.4.1 The River Sence Valley extends from the boundary with the Oadby and Wigston Vales landscape character type in the north to beyond the Borough boundary in the south. It cuts through and separates the Upper Soar (North) and Upper Soar (South) landscape character types in the south-west of the Borough.

- 2.4.2 This landscape character type extends along the whole of the southern boundary of the Borough, either side of the River Sence which flows from east to west to eventually join the River Soar in Leicester.
- 2.4.3 This landscape type has similar characteristics throughout the area, and thus has not been further sub-divided into smaller landscape sub-areas. Therefore the following description applies to the whole of the area.

Landscape Characteristics

- 2.4.4 The well-vegetated railway embankment slopes provide a definite northern boundary to the central part of this area, either side of Kilby Bridge. Where the canal has limited the expansion of South Wigston, the edge of built development forms the northern boundary here. In between, the northern boundary is less clear but is defined by the change of gradient where south-facing slopes which are important to the setting of the river valley are included within the area. Thus the sloping ground south of Kilby Bridge Farm and Ivanhoe Farm rising to around 85m AOD is included, as are the south and west facing slopes to the west of Tythorn Hill, in the extreme south-eastern corner of the borough, which rise to over 90m AOD.
- 2.4.5 Both the Grand Union Canal and the River Sence lie within this landscape area. The relatively flat, low lying grassland meadows between the canal and river gradually fall east to west from around 80m AOD to 70m AOD. The small to medium sized, irregularly shaped fields are grazed by sheep and cattle despite regularly flooding. Field boundaries are generally well vegetated with low hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree clumps, although sporadic hedgerows are a feature of this landscape. Hedgerows are generally species-rich, including Hawthorn, Elder, Field Maple and Rose, with Ash the dominant tree. There is a distinctive group of 20 mature Poplar trees close to the bend in the River Sence just south of South Wigston, which are designated a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). The overall impression is of a lush, well vegetated landscape.
- 2.4.6 Some pasture fields are bounded by post and wire fences where traditional hedgerows have broken down or where larger fields have been sub-divided. Landuse becomes more mixed and predominantly arable south of the river in Blaby district.
- 2.4.7 The section of canal east of Kilby Bridge is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of its importance as a wetland site due to its fringes of emergent vegetation on both banks, floating wetland species and mature riparian trees, particularly Willow and Ash, with characteristic exposed roots and over hanging branches. A flooded area of the former Kilby Bridge Quarry (also known as Lime Delves) and its surroundings on the north bank of the canal, west of Clifton's Bridge, is also SSSI. The section of canal west of Kilby Bridge is designated as a LWS.
- 2.4.8 Two paddocks in the extreme western end of this landscape area, in between the canal and river, regularly flood and are designated as a LWS due to the species-rich wet grassland. Similarly, two wetland meadows either side of the canal at Clifton's Bridge, west of Tythorn Hill, are SINCS.
- 2.4.9 New housing at Pochins Bridge on the eastern edge of South Wigston, includes three-storey buildings which provide a visual boundary to the river valley. Some have

balconies overlooking the canal and river valley which must offer attractive views to the rising countryside beyond.

- 2.4.10 The river itself is not a conspicuous feature in the landscape, its meandering course being highlighted only by its bankside vegetation. In places the river side banks are steep and fall around 2m from the level of the surrounding ground. On the more open banks, rough grassland, Nettles and other low scrubby vegetation contrasts with the grazed meadows or arable fields, and provide corridors attractive for wildlife.
- 2.4.11 Tall pylons and overhead power lines are obvious features in the flat landscape. Other features of note are those associated with the canal, in particular the numerous steeply arched red brick bridges taking farm tracks from one side to the other, and the black and white lock gates (paddles).

Kilby Bridge

- 2.4.12 The small settlement of Kilby Bridge is the only other settlement outside the main built up areas of Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston. It lies either side of the busy A5199 in the middle of this landscape character area, on the north side of the canal where The Navigation pub is located. Half a dozen or so white or cream painted houses lie either side of the road close to the canal, and canal-side moorings and a maintenance yard add an air of suburbanisation with its cranes, toilets, dredging barges, urban-type fencing and golden conifers.
- 2.4.13 Two large warehouse-type buildings on the northern edge of Kilby Bridge dominate the street scene and detract from the otherwise small scale, rural surroundings. Bird song and the low hum of slow moving canal boats are regularly interrupted by noise from the A5199 and railway. Fast flowing water is a noisy feature at the lock gates which contrasts with the otherwise calm waters in the canal where reflections appear to double the size of the brick arched bridges and locks.
- 2.4.14 The canal-side towpath allows access through this area, and is used by walkers, dog walkers and anglers in particular. A public footpath passes over the railway to join the canal at Clifton's Bridge, and another passes over the canal at Double Rail Lock from Wigston and continues westwards across the river and beyond.

Strengths

- 2.4.15 The distinctive landscape of the river valley and the canal are the main strengths of this area. Despite being close to the urban edge it has a distinct 'sense of place' unlike any other area within the Borough.
- 2.4.16 The canal towpath allows good access to the canal.

Weaknesses

- 2.4.17 Development at Pochins Bridge, east of South Wigston, has altered the northern edge and has changed the character of this part of the river valley.
- 2.4.18 Although there is some public access along the canal, links into the built up areas to the north and the countryside to the south are limited.

- 2.4.19 The Grand Union Canal was designated a Conservation Area in October 2000, which promotes a level of statutory protection to part of the ALLV. A detailed study of the ALLV and its surroundings, particularly the canal, should highlight those features worthy of protection to enable a decision to be taken as to how that protection can be achieved.
- 2.4.20 The southern boundary of the River Sence Valley lies within Blaby District and Harborough District and therefore out of the control of the Borough Council. Close liaison with the local authorities is necessary to ensure that the character of the landscape is protected.

Opportunities

- 2.4.21 Opportunity should be taken where possible to improve public access. This should provide circular routes between town and country, with the agreement of local land owners. Re-use of existing bridges over the canal should be encouraged, although some are in a poor state of repair and will require maintenance. The possibility of grant aiding this work should be looked in to.
- 2.4.22 Field boundaries could be enhanced with new native hedgerow and tree planting.
- 2.4.23 Perhaps a greater appreciation and understanding of the landscape and history of the canal could be encouraged to a wider audience, for example by the use of leaflets and information boards.
- 2.4.24 The mixed use, suburban character of Kilby Bridge and its location alongside the canal provides the opportunity for small-scale development that would not adversely affect, and could improve, the character of this part of the River Sence valley. There could perhaps be some form of small-scale tourist related development, with appropriate signing and interpretation facilities.

Threats

- 2.4.25 This is an urban fringe landscape with some public access. Potential problems in the form of vandalism, waste and rubbish tipping etc are not apparent at the moment but could become a problem in the future if access is improved.
- 2.4.26 Many of the bridges over the canal are in a poor state of repair and are worthy of protection. Loss of these structures would significantly affect the character of the canal and its surroundings.

LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVES

To conserve and enhance the characteristic features to retain the unique 'sense of place' of the river valley including the canal and its surroundings, part of which is designated an Area of Local Landscape Value, and to improve public access through the area. Particular characteristic features to be conserved and enhanced are:

- **Flat grassland meadows, some of which are of nature conservation interest**
- **Small to medium sized, irregular, grazed meadows**

- **Field boundaries of varying size and condition**
- **Wetland vegetation along the canal, part of which is SSSI**
- **Wetland vegetation in the flooded quarry which is SSSI**
- **The calm rural ambience of the canal and its brick arched bridges, locks and reflections in the water**

2.5 DESCRIPTION OF THE UPPER SOAR (SOUTH) LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE AND SOUTH WIGSTON CLAYS LANDSCAPE SUB-AREA (AREA D)

See Appendix 1.2.



Arable fields of boulder clay and underlying lower lias clays, predominantly with hedgerow boundaries and occasional mature hedgerow trees.

- 2.5.1 This landscape character type lies in the extreme south-western corner of the Borough. It is a small area of land rising up from the River Sence Valley and extending into Blaby District.
- 2.5.2 This area lies within the Upper Soar landscape character area as identified in the County Council's county-wide Landscape and Woodland Strategy. Given its size and location it remains in the Upper Soar landscape area in this study but it has been named as a separate landscape sub-area, South Wigston Clays, to identify it as an area distinct from the Upper Soar (North) landscape character type.

Landscape Characteristics

- 2.5.3 The land rises gradually from the edge of the River Sence Valley at around 75m AOD to the south-west to a high point of around 87m AOD at Rose Farm on the Borough boundary. This forms part of a much wider area of greater undulating landscape extending to the south.
- 2.5.4 A drift cover of sand and gravel and outcrop of boulder clay mark the increase in height above the underlying lower lias clays.
- 2.5.5 This is a rural area predominantly in arable use with medium sized, regular rectangular fields with predominantly low sporadic hedgerow boundaries with occasional mature hedgerow trees. There are larger blocks of woodland close to the Sewage Works. Ash is the main tree species. Except the field immediately to the west, which is now a Solar Farm, fields around the Sewage Works appear to have

been used as settling fields and have been allowed to establish a natural cover of local weed species.

- 2.5.6 A bridleway passes through the area from the Countesthorpe Road eastwards to a tributary of the River Sence, before continuing south-eastwards across the countryside beyond. There are extensive views available from the bridleway northwards across the area towards Wigston and South Wigston. There are views into this area from the canal and from the Countesthorpe Road where gaps in the roadside vegetation allow views through.

Strengths

- 2.5.7 This is a distinctly rural area with a strong tradition of farming.
- 2.5.8 Public access through the area links it to the river valley and the built up area of South Wigston.

Weaknesses

- 2.5.9 Some field boundaries are sporadic with a weakening of landscape character.

Opportunities

- 2.5.10 Field boundaries could be enhanced with native hedgerow and tree planting.
- 2.5.11 Encouragement could be given to landowners to create species-rich grassland to increase the amount of this landscape feature. This could include extending the margins of arable fields, and should include agreement for future maintenance.
- 2.5.12 The possibility of improving the wildlife value of field ponds and the creation of new ponds could be explored with local landowners.

Threats

- 2.5.13 The further weakening of field boundaries could see their removal and the enlargement of arable fields, which would be un-characteristic.
- 2.5.14 Further development and extension of the Sewage Works and/or Solar Farm could be a possibility. Further planting around any extension would help it to be assimilated into the landscape.

LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVES

To conserve the distinctive rural character by:

- **maintaining field sizes and improving field boundaries**
- **continuing the strong tradition of farming whilst allowing continued public access on designated rights of way to and from the urban edge**
- **protecting extensive views from the urban edge across the canal and river to the gently rising countryside beyond to the south**

2.6 CONCLUSIONS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 2.6.1 The character of the landscape is derived from a combination of natural factors, such as geology, landform, drainage, soils and landcover/vegetation. Cultural/social factors such as land use, settlement, enclosure and changes over time are also important in giving an area a distinctive character or 'sense of place'. This assessment has been undertaken at a detailed, local Borough-wide scale to fine tune previous county-wide and national landscape character assessments, to identify where these natural and cultural/social factors combine to provide areas with similar landscape characteristics.
- 2.6.2 This assessment has found that, in keeping with previous larger scale assessments, differences in the character of the landscape across the Borough are very subtle. Four landscape character areas have been identified, but the boundaries between them are not sharply defined as the character of adjoining areas shade into one another. In essence the Borough is a transition zone between the more distinct plateau and steep sided valley landscapes to the north and east and the more open, rolling landscapes to the south and west.
- 2.6.3 The transitional character of the landscape is largely due to the topography across the Borough, which is less varied than other parts of the county surrounding it. Thus the boundary between Area A (Oadby & Wigston Vales) and Area B (Upper Soar – North) is defined by the steepening of slope from Area B to Area A.
- 2.6.4 Area A (Oadby and Wigston Vales) covers the majority of the Borough, and includes the whole of Oadby, three quarters of Wigston and the Borough's Green Wedge in between. Beyond these areas, Area A is sub-divided into a further 5 landscape character sub-areas due primarily to the subtle variations in landform and landcover/vegetation.
- 2.6.5 Area B (Upper Soar – North) is wholly urban, comprising the western half of Wigston and the whole of South Wigston. Consequently the assessment of this area is included in the urban landscape character assessments of South Wigston (Part 4) and Wigston (Part 5).
- 2.6.6 Area C (Sence Valley) is the most distinctive landscape character area in the Borough, due to the flatter topography and land use of flood meadows, the River Sence and Grand Union Canal. Parts of its northern boundary with Area A and Area B are well defined by the railway line and the built edge of South Wigston respectively. Other parts of its northern edge and its southern boundary with Area D (Upper Soar – South) are defined by a more subtle change of slope.
- 2.6.7 Area D (Upper Soar – South) is a small area in the extreme south-west of the Borough, defined by the gradual steepening of slope and change in landcover from the flood meadows of the Sence Valley to the arable claylands of the Upper Soar (South).
- 2.6.8 Natural factors such as geology, landform, drainage, soils and landcover/vegetation appear to have had little effect in limiting the spread of urbanisation into the countryside. Only the canal and railway have limited the southern expansion of South Wigston and Wigston respectively. Elsewhere built development has occurred on some of the highest ground in the Borough (125m+ in the east, in Oadby), and

across watercourses (for example Oadby straddles Wash Brook). Landcover/vegetation has similarly had no impact in halting the spread of development. It is unlikely that any natural or cultural/social factors would prevent further expansion of the settlements.

- 2.6.9 Having said this, for the most part the urban edge is well integrated into the landscape. Generally, hedgerows, trees and subtle changes in landform help to limit views of the urban edge from the countryside. This is considered to be an important positive characteristic of the rural-urban fringe in the Borough, and one which should be protected and strengthened where necessary.
- 2.6.10 Parts of the urban edge on the fringe of sub-areas A(ii) Thurnby and Oadby Green Wedge and A(iii) Oadby Grange are the most obvious. The lack of vegetation and landform allow views in from the north and north-east, primarily from outside the Borough. Despite this, further limited residential development may be appropriate alongside the urban edge in sub-area A(ii) if detailed design respects the sensitive features and characteristics of the landscape (see 2.2.24 - 2.2.37).
- 2.6.11 Any further development within sub-area A(iii) would be on relatively high ground and thus visible over an extensive area. It would adversely affect the exposed nature of the countryside. New planting is unlikely to successfully integrate new development into the landscape (see 2.2.38 – 2.2.52).
- 2.6.12 Sub-area A(v) Wigston East has the capacity to accommodate some further development, where vegetation and landform would enable the successful integration into the countryside. (see 2.2.55 – 2.2.81).
- 2.6.13 Any further development within sub-area A(vi) Wigston South would either breach the current barrier provided by the railway, which could adversely affect the sensitive character of the Sence Valley, or would result in the coalescence of South Wigston and Wigston. This should be avoided and an open Green Area maintained between the two settlements (see 2.2.82 – 2.2.100)
- 2.6.14 The Sence Valley has a distinctive character which remains largely undeveloped. The small settlement of Kilby Bridge lies in this landscape character area where further small-scale development, for example tourist-related, may be appropriate (see 2.4.1 – 2.4.26).
- 2.6.15 Within the South Wigston Clays landscape sub-area D, only further development associated with the Sewage Works or Solar Farm is likely to be acceptable. This is a distinctive rural area with a strong tradition of arable farming and which forms a small part of a much wider landscape character area extending beyond the Borough boundary into Blaby District (see 2.5.1 – 2.5.14).
- 2.6.16 This part of the assessment has highlighted that the new Local Plan should include policies to conserve and, where necessary, enhance the characteristic features as identified for each landscape sub-area. The overriding aim should be to retain a predominantly open, natural, rural transitional area between town and country, which is well integrated with the countryside and which allows good public access to it and through it. In particular the distinctive character of Oadby Grange (landscape sub-area A (iii)) and the Sence Valley (landscape character type C) should be protected. The separation between settlements should be maintained.

PART 3 URBAN LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT: OADBY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 Parts 3,4 and 5 of the Report cover the urban character assessments for Oadby, South Wigston and Wigston respectively. Each section is introduced by a description of how the urban form of the settlement has grown and developed since the late 19th Century. The urban character areas are then individually described. The description includes: a summary of the key characteristics of the urban character area, an overall description of the defining characteristics, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, identification of the likely development pressure for the area and the potential impact of development on the area. Based on these characteristics and the SWOT analysis, an overall urban character objective is developed for each area. Finally urban character policy guidance is given for each urban character area. The policy guidance is intended to support the achievement of the overall urban character objective. The final part of each section gives an overall review of the urban character of the towns.

3.2 REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OADBY URBAN AREA SINCE 1885



Oadby District Centre showing the retention of the older character

3.2.1 The review has been undertaken using the ordnance survey map extracts from 1886-1888, 1904-1905, 1914-1915, 1929-1930, 1950 and a contemporary plan of Oadby. The full ordnance survey maps are included in the report as Appendix 2.1-2.5, at the end of the main Report. On the first edition ordnance survey map of 1886-1888 Oadby appears as a small village settlement just north of the Washbrook. The settlement is surrounded by and separated from Leicester by a landscape of medium sized fields. The village has a simple linear form along what is now The Parade, Leicester Road and London Road. A smaller network of streets is seen to the east around St Peter's Church, which formed the focus of the settlement. It appears that there may have been a small village square to the south of St Peters, which later became incorporated into a widened Wigston Road. The main streets of New Lane, Stoughton Lane, and the through routes to the north-west to Leicester and out to the south-east are already in existence. On the outskirts of the village a number of larger houses are shown: Oadby Hill which still exists, Oadby Frith which stood on

the Asda site and Brocks Hill which still remains. To the north of the village the Stoughton Grange Estate is shown. A number of small woodlands or spinneys are shown of which only Stackyard and Half Moon remain. It is possible that some of the groups of Oak trees in the Arboretum area are remnants of these spinneys. The racecourse is already in existence to the west of the village beyond fields. The first signs of expansion of the settlement can be seen to the north of the settlement at the junction of what is now Leicester Road (formerly Main Street) and Stoughton Road. A planned small-scale grid street pattern is shown with some terrace houses starting to be developed along the streets.

- 3.2.2 The 1904-1905 ordnance survey map shows little change from 1886-1888. The main change is the start of the encroachment of Leicester towards Oadby with expansion out from South Knighton through development along Knighton Grange Road.
- 3.2.3 The 1929-1930 ordnance survey map shows that Oadby had merged with the main Leicester conurbation. The expansion of South Knighton, started earlier in the century, had continued in the form of a planned development of large houses e.g. along Granville Avenue, Glebe Road, Knighton Rise and Knighton Grange Road. At this time the large houses and grounds would have been taking advantage of what was then the desirable urban fringe.
- 3.2.4 The main change by 1929-1930 is that a new by-pass is built to take the main A6 to the north of the old route through the village centre. It is likely that the road was constructed to facilitate new development and for commuting into Leicester from the new 'suburbs'. The new road appears to have stimulated the infill and expansion around the core of Oadby village e.g. along the south of Stoughton Road and Uplands Road including the construction of the Cottage Homes and Disabled Warriors Homes (now known as the Framework Knitters Cottages and North Memorial Homes). At this time development appears to have been on a field by field basis, the plots reflecting and respecting the old underlying field pattern. The majority of development appears to have been detached or semi-detached residential, and taken the form of ribbon development or small estate developments of a group of streets. The only area where mixed employment and residential uses are found is around Cross Street where terrace houses and small-scale workshops can still be seen. To the south of Oadby, on what is now the northern fringe of Wigston, are houses along the Oval. Based on similarities of the street pattern, tree planting and house styles to those in Oadby, the Oval may have originally been an extension of Oadby rather than Wigston.
- 3.2.5 The 1950 ordnance survey map shows that Oadby is now a fully integrated urban area rather than just ribbon development along Manor Road and Stoughton Lane. The area now occupied by the University playing fields still appears as an open space within the urban fabric. Development now begins to the south of Oadby along Wigston Road, and the public housing estate around Brabazon Road starts to be developed. Between 1950 and 2017 Oadby saw continued expansion, the old centre being enveloped with a series of housing estates. The first, in the 1950s and 1960s, are located to the north and south of the town, the later estates in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000's have grown on the edge of the town out to the north-east, east and south-east.
- 3.2.6 In conclusion, Oadby has developed as a commuter town for Leicester with land use in the settlement now being almost entirely housing. The main employment uses are

to be found in identified estates and in the 1970s office developments in the town centre, although these are gradually declining and being converted to mainly residential use. The town appears to have grown not by natural expansion outwards from the original core but by the development of new estates around the settlement that have eventually been built up to the fringe of the old centre.

3.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE URBAN LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES OF OADBY AND POLICY GUIDANCE

Appendix 3.1 shows the urban character areas of Oadby.

Urban Character Area O(i): Oadby Centre

It must be noted that when there is a reference to 'Oadby Centre' it is referring to the area illustrated in the Oadby Character Area map. This is different to 'Oadby District Centre', as defined in the Council's Local Plan.

Defining Characteristics

3.3.1 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area O(i) are:

- Covers the area occupied by the original pre 20th Century settlement;
- Retention of some of the original street pattern;
- Inter-action of two distinct townscape characters;
- Number of older local vernacular buildings to the south-eastern part of the centre;
- 1970s re-development to the western end of the centre;
- Mixed uses include retail, employment, civic, health, residential and religious uses;
- High activity level – pedestrian and vehicular shared space.
- Commitment to modern, high quality public realm and open community space.



Oadby District Centre showing the two distinct townscape characters of the pre 20th Century settlement and the late 20th Century development.

Townscape Characteristics

3.3.2 This character area includes not only the core retail and service provision that is expected of a settlement centre area, but also areas of housing adjacent to the centre, and three supermarkets, Asda to the north-west and Waitrose and

Sainsburys to the east. The town centre provides a good range of services, has a high level of pedestrian and vehicular activity and appears to be thriving.

- 3.3.3 The centre still retains its place at the physical centre of the settlement. It is now bounded on all sides by the earlier residential estates developed in the 1950s and early 1960s, although there is also evidence of more recent infill developments or conversions of buildings that have previously been in use for other purposes. The centre is easily accessible both by car and by foot, although to the north and east the main A6 may form a physical and psychological boundary for pedestrians. The main streets of Leicester Road and London Road run diagonally across a gentle south facing slope that runs down to the Washbrook. The level change is not evident in the centre but steeper sections are evident on the north of the town along New Street and to the south, for example on Churchill Close.
- 3.3.4 Due to the gently undulating topography there are generally limited views into Oadby centre. There are some views in from the housing estates on the higher ground to the south-east, from where buildings in the settlement are softened due to the level of tree cover in and around the centre. Internal views within the centre are mainly linear, focusing along the main street, with the spire of St Peter's Church dominating views. Stoughton House, the recently converted apartment block and the recently developed Waitrose supermarket at the top of New Street and on Harborough Road are visible from along the A6 and within the central section of the town centre —Through the planting of trees and implementation of the recent public realm improvements to The Parade, visitors to Oadby enjoy a pleasant shopping environment. This, together with the trees on the edges, give a sense of some enclosure and provides a green background to many views. Within the London Road and St Peter's Conservation Area there are visual envelopes that retain a strong historical character, such as views up along the terraces along Church Street and back down to St Peter's Church.



View to St Peters Church from the higher Ground of Waitrose Carpark.

- 3.3.5 As described in section 3.2, it is likely that the original settlement of Oadby was focused around St Peter's Church and then extended linearly to the south-east and north-west. The area immediately around the Church, including the northern section of Wigston Road, Church Street and Albion Street, retains some of the character of a smaller scale settlement. This character has unfortunately been eroded by the

overlay of larger scale blocks, with the loss of the connection between Church and High Street, for example. The 1886-1888 ordnance survey map shows a small open space to the south of St Peter's Church, which has been lost to a new section of Wigston Road. The modern centre though has developed its own structure with informal gateways. There is a gateway to the north-west of the centre at the junction near Asda where The Parade joins Leicester Road. To the east of the centre, there is a gateway where London Road meets with Glen Road. An inner gateway is formed on the east by Leicester Road narrowing near St Peter's Church and by the grouping of the church and mature trees in the churchyard. The dominance of the main street formed by The Parade, Leicester Road and London Road gives the centre a linear form with only smaller roads leading off it. Though the western end of the centre has been redeveloped in the 1970s, the old main street has been maintained which provides a linkage to and some continuity with, the older part of the centre to the south-east. Areas to the rear of this modern redevelopment have not maintained this linkage, being opened out to form car parks and service delivery yards. The centre has a defined central point at the junction of The Parade and Chestnut Avenue where the roads widen out and 'The Old Library' building, currently a restaurant but formerly a civic building, forms a positive focus.



The view up Albion Street gives an idea of the original character of the settlement and shows the impact of inappropriate development.

- 3.3.6 Oadby centre generally still maintains a small and human scale. This is due to the limited size and well-defined boundaries of the centre, the small block size, the simplicity of the street pattern and narrow street width together with a general building height of two storeys. The retention of a residential element provides smaller scale details and boundary treatments. The main street has a good sense of enclosure with a positive break at the junction of The Parade and Chestnut Avenue. This enclosure breaks down, though, on roads leading off the main shopping streets, with areas such as Churchill Close and the car parks to the east and west of the The Parade.
- 3.3.7 The centre has an interesting character due to the intermingling of two quite distinct eras. There is that of the small-scale late 19th early 20th Century street pattern and buildings e.g. traditional housing, small-scale employment and shops and pubs, with a red/orange brick or render and with slate or tile roofs. A number of interesting buildings and groups of buildings ensure the centre retains some of this character e.g. St Peter's Church and the Methodist Church, the terraced houses along Church

Street, terraces along London Road and individual older buildings such as the restored former school building. There are also some runs of terraces in the eastern section of the centre and the remnant of a Lime Avenue, which adds character. This is contrasted with a major phase of development in the 1970s, which involved the re-development of the much of The Parade in the centre of Oadby. This development consisted of flat roofed two-storey 1970s-style shop units. Features of the units are a pale brown/yellow brick, large picture windows and the use of white timber boarding. The buildings are of a larger scale, have more emphasis on the horizontal and lack the depth and detail found in older buildings. A number of larger scale taller buildings were also developed, including: two (one former office) buildings along The Parade, a former high rise office building on New Street (now residential) and low rise residential blocks on Churchill Close. This later phase of development does not relate to the earlier street pattern or building style. The south-eastern end of The Parade has wide pavements, which give a comfortable relaxed feel and are being used for some street cafes. The open spaces enhance the centre e.g. The Cemetery, the small pocket park opposite St Peter's Church and St Peter's Churchyard contribute to the overall character.

- 3.3.8 The eastern section of Oadby centre is designated as the London Road and St Peter's Conservation Area. This area also includes an area of archaeological potential around St Peter's Church. The Parade through its recent public realm refurbishment is promoted as an area where pedestrian preference is encouraged, with the raised platform road on The Parade and Chestnut Avenue offering traffic calming measures to provide that mix.
- 3.3.9 Oadby centre is active and pleasant and retains some sense of place and local distinctiveness but it, like so many shopping destinations continues to be considerably diluted by modern development patterns. The centre is likely to see pressure for development on infill sites or on open spaces. Any further development or intensification through windfall sites should benefit the centre by being designed to restore and enhance a more locally distinctive character as well as complement the vitality and viability of the settlement centre.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities

3.3.10

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Attracts national and local retailers. Retention and unity given by main shopping area. Clear structure. Attractive public realm. Comfortable scale/enclosure. Number of distinctive buildings. Retains some historical character.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Subtlety of local vernacular style easily lost. Insufficient mass to influence the overall character strongly.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Continued creation of central focal space. Traffic calming/ semi-pedestrianisation. Further improvements to the public realm.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Further differentiation between the 'old' and 'new' centre areas. Loss of fringe trees and remaining trees in the centre. Further dilution of remaining character. Homogenisation of use. Poor infill design with no positive impact on character. Further erosion of street pattern.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE
Conserve quality historical elements and enhance overall character.

Urban Character Area O(i): Oadby Town Centre – Policy Guidance

3.3.11 Oadby centre maintains some of its historic and distinctive character but it is much diluted by mid-late 20th Century retail and residential development and some taller buildings of an inappropriate scale. Recent investment in the centres public realm indicates a strong sense of place.

Policy guidance O(i)/ 1 Retain and enhance the quality of Oadby centre

3.3.12 The quality of Oadby centre should be maintained and any developments should look to enhance that quality. The quality can be retained and enhanced through the following; a unifying public realm including street furniture, use of the same tree species throughout the centre, encouraging the design of new development to support and enhance the older character and ensuring that the length of the centre maintains activity generating uses.

Policy guidance O(i)/ 2 Improvements to public realm and streetscape

3.3.13 Oadby centre has a subtle structure of gateways and a central focus area. The gateways are of an appropriate distinctiveness for the size of the centre and do not need any obvious device to draw attention to them. They would however benefit

from any public realm works that differentiated the town centre area through a change in paving material or use of street furniture.



Northern gateway to the town centre at the junction of The Parade and Leicester Road

3.3.14 The central spine of The Parade, Leicester Road and moving out of the centre towards 'old' Oadby along London Road provides the centre with unity despite the differences in function and building styles. The new public realm within much of the centre is currently of excellent quality, however, further enhancement and expansion to include Leicester Road and London Road would be a positive step for the future.

3.3.15 The junction of Chestnut Avenue and The Parade has further potential to provide an even more pleasant, low key public space for the centre and enhance its current role as a focal point.

3.3.16 The Oadby and Wigston Town Centre Area Action Plan (2013) indicates that The Parade section of the centre is preserved for continued public realm improvements that favour the pedestrian. This approach supports the existing character of the centre rather than full pedestrianisation, as well as retailers benefiting from passing trade of vehicular traffic, particularly those using public transport. The recent public realm improvements have helped to give pedestrian priority through the traffic-calming scheme at Chestnut Avenue and The Parade, involving increased width of footways, reduced kerb heights, level crossing points and improved material quality. All public realm improvements could be guided by the principles set out in the Council's Public Realm Strategy.

Policy guidance O(i)/ 3 Protect street pattern and retain plot size

3.3.17 The settlement centre appears to have suffered from some loss of street pattern and plot amalgamation. Future development should aim to restore or recreate finer detail within the street pattern and maintain the small to medium plot size.

Policy guidance O(i)/ 4 New development should reinforce and support remaining local distinctiveness through enhancing vitality and viability

- 3.3.18 The remnants of the local vernacular are to be seen in the London Road and St Peter's Conservation Area. New district centre developments should seek to support and enhance the local distinctiveness, as well as enhance the vitality and viability of Oadby centre.

Urban Character Area O(ii): Oadby Arboretum Area

Defining Characteristics

3.3.19 The defining characteristics of the Urban Character Area O(ii) are:

- Large plot sizes; large single dwelling plots with no sub-division,
- High level of tree cover from structured tree planting along streets;
- High level of specimen tree planting along streets and in gardens;
- Dominant but attractive roads and street pattern;
- Impressive building frontages and strong boundary treatments;
- Large houses/University use set in landscaped grounds;
- Individually designed historic buildings;
- Sports grounds and playing fields – open and landscaped;
- Remnant spinneys;
- Rationally structured townscape with strong sense of enclosure;
- Low vehicle presence.



Typical view of the Arboretum along Southmeads Road



Typical view of the Arboretum along Woodfield Road

Townscape Characteristics

- 3.3.20 The area lies to the north of Oadby centre and appears to have developed as an extension of Stoneygate rather than of Oadby. The street pattern retains those linkages to the west via routes such as Knighton Grange Road. The area is predominately a low-density residential area with private homes and some halls of residence for the University. Associated with the University area are sports grounds, buildings and other associated facilities. The area has good vehicular and pedestrian access with wide unspoilt roads. The Arboretum character area is very distinct, only fading towards the eastern edge. The northern boundary is on the edge of the Leicester Principle Urban Area, where the urban fringe is well integrated due to the high level of trees both on the edge and within the area. The landform slopes gently down from the east towards the south-west and north-west and this reads strongly on the ground. The characteristic internal views are ones of long tree lined avenues with medium to high boundaries to large detached properties. The view is repeated across the area, though it is found on a smaller scale in some sections. Cherries and other smaller trees, smaller house and plot sizes replace the London Planes and larger trees and larger house and plot sizes. From the north of the area there are views out to the rural fringe across Leicestershire Golf Course, which are lush and green due to the high level of vegetation and mature trees
- 3.3.21 There is a well-defined road hierarchy with Stoughton Drive South acting as an access road into the area, north to south. Other main roads are Knighton Grange Road and Manor Road, which are long, wide and relatively straight roads with avenue tree planting. Townscape is in large regular blocks with a relatively small number of properties on large landscaped plots. To the east of the area, this structure breaks down with a more informal and smaller scale 'Close' type pattern of the Cottage and Memorial homes and infill development such as The Yews. The scale feels large for a predominantly residential area due to the large plot sizes, impressive house frontages and boundary treatments; road width; avenue planting of large trees; and the large open areas of the University sports grounds. There is a medium/low density and strong sense of enclosure due to the tree planting, boundary height and high profile house frontages. The University playing fields and sports grounds provide a break within the urban fabric and despite their relatively large size retain a sense of enclosure due to the level of tree cover.
- 3.3.22 There is a large Conservation Area in the west of the area, Oadby Hill Top, and two smaller ones, Meadowcourt in the south and the Framework Knitters Cottages and North Memorial Homes to the east. The reserved route for the Potential Transport Route (PTR) runs through the area. There is a small area of archaeological potential along Ringer's Spinney.
- 3.3.23 The historic character and unity for the area is created by the high levels of mature tree cover through street and garden trees, wide roads and large individually designed early 20th Century properties in a mixture of styles. Many of the buildings have impressive frontages including gable, window and entrance features. The main material is brick but render is also used. Boundary treatments are impressive with walls, brick pillars, gates, ornate railings, fencing and hedging. Gardens and grounds are large with shrub and tree planting, which, together with relatively high boundaries, give privacy. The area feels lush and green. This is especially true within the core area of the Arboretum in the western Conservation Area, Oadby Hill Top. Here the historic character has been retained with the majority of the original

buildings still present, (many of which are on the Locally Listed Buildings List), which have large frontages, surrounded by large gardens, mature hedging and trees. Here, the historic built environment greatly adds to the character of the area and steps should be taken to retain, not just the large plot sizes and green environment but, the built environment too as the redevelopment of plots would be detrimental to the character of the area.

- 3.3.24 North of Oadby Hill Top, around The Fairway and The Broadway, some of this historic character has been lost as plots have been redeveloped. Whilst these plots still retain the large size and lush feel typical of the Arboretum Area, the historic character of the built environment is diluting and this is changing the feel of the area. In recent years, there has been an increased pressure to sub-divide or overdevelop these plots by utilising backland development opportunities. Where historic buildings still remain and offer group value, these should be retained. The open spaces within the area, for example, The Botanic Gardens, contribute to the overall character giving the area a campus or estate feel.
- 3.3.25 This area forms one of the most distinctive and high quality landscapes within the Borough. The area does not have indigenous local distinctiveness, as there are no features that link it to the local landscape or a strong local building style. The area does though have a strong sense of place in feeling like a campus or private estate or part of a homogenous planned and managed townscape. The level of trees and vegetation give a lush feel but also give the area the impression of being slightly darker and cooler than other areas. The area has a strong sense of recent history with the early 20th Century Botanic Gardens and strong connections with the University of Leicester.
- 3.3.26 Due to the quality and desirability of the area, open space and large plot and property sizes the area is likely to come under increasing pressure from development. There has been some relatively recent housing development in the east of the area which has taken the form of standard detached and semi-detached residential properties and this has weakened the character in this area and begun to homogenise it with the rest of Borough. Any further development would need to retain key character features and be carefully planned and managed. The majority of the northern boundary of the area runs along the Borough boundary but there is a small area to the east of the proposed PTR where the rural fringe, currently designated green wedge, is within the Borough boundary.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities

3.3.27

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Large, impressive plots and buildings. Distinctive high quality townscape. Level and diversity of tree cover. High biodiversity potential. High value landscape historically and aesthetically.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Low in social and land use sustainability.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Potential for managed change or maintaining existing character. Tree planting opportunities to enhance open space and create a pleasant ambiance.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Road development, (PTR). Decline in tree cover and variety, particularly in private gardens. Flat conversions could change character negatively and increase infrastructure requirements. Inappropriate infill building and sub-division of large plots, in particular tandem development. Loss of green lung areas to development. Over development of sites to accommodate excessive and that are often out of historic character.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE

Conserve distinctive high quality character and large plot sizes by managing sub-division, backland division and over development of sites.

Urban Character Area O(ii): Oadby Arboretum Area – Policy Guidance

Policy guidance O(ii)/ 1 Development of a management plan for the trees in the area

3.3.28 The quality, quantity and variety of tree cover are exceptional for an urban area. In order to maintain this distinctive and exceptional quality, retention of tree cover and species variety is critical.

Policy guidance O(ii)/ 2 Retain plot size, building size to plot ratio, open space and manage sub-division of plots

3.3.29 A characteristic of many parts of the area is relatively large-scale historic buildings, in terms of residential buildings, in spacious plots. Any proposals for the sub-division of plots, infill, backland or tandem development, or loss of open space are likely to dilute the overall character and should not be allowed.

Policy guidance O(ii)/3 Seek to retain the historic built environment in the Oadby Hill Top Conservation Area.

3.3.30 Within the Oadby Hill Top Conservation Area, the built environment greatly adds to the character of the area and steps should be taken to retain, not just the large plot sizes and green environment but, the built environment too as loss of the historic buildings would be detrimental to the character of the area.

3.3.31 Policy guidance O(ii)/4 Seek to retain pockets of historic buildings where there is still a valid group value.

North of the Oadby Hill Top Conservation Area, the historic character of the area has been diluted. Where pockets of historic buildings remain and offer group value, these should be retained.

Policy guidance O(ii)/ 5 Conserve landscaped gardens and grounds and boundary treatments

3.3.32 Strong and complex boundary treatments including walls, fences, verges, garden trees and shrubs, and gates are a key feature and should be conserved.

Policy guidance O(ii)/ 6 Ensure off-street parking and screening of parking provision

3.3.33 The loss of grounds, gardens, street or garden trees to provide parking would be detrimental to the area. If any off-street parking is to be considered as part of a proposal it should be screened and be required to show that it does not have a detrimental impact on the area.

Policy guidance O(ii)/ 7 Ensure integration of new development

3.3.34 The design of any new development in the area, or beyond it which has an impact on the area, should be designed to reflect and enhance the current landscape characteristics, including, structured tree planting, large plot size to building size ratio, well landscaped gardens and grounds, quality treatment of boundaries and off street parking or well screened parking provision. The historic development to the north of this area has achieved this.

Policy guidance O(ii)/ 8 Building design contribution to urban landscape character

3.3.35 The character of the area is derived from the diversity and individuality of building design, scale of the buildings and the high quality. Any new development in the area should contribute to this diversity and quality. Small scale, standardised and innocuous building design would dilute the character of the area.

Policy guidance O(ii)/ 9 Urban fringe development

3.3.36 Though the rural areas on the urban fringe of the Arboretum are in a designated Green Wedge and they may still come under pressure for development. The impact of any development would not in principle be detrimental to the character of the

Arboretum area (the impact of such development on the rural fringe is a separate issue).

- 3.3.37 If at any time in the future any of the rural fringe on the Arboretum edges were to be designated for development, such development should be designed to be consistent with the urban character of the area.

Policy guidance O(ii)/ 10 Highways Development

- 3.3.38 The route of the Potential transport Route (PTR) through the area will have the potential to have a considerable negative impact on the character of the area and cause fragmentation. The scheme will require sensitive design and a high level of mitigation measures.

Urban Character Areas O(iii north and iii south): Oadby Early Estates North and South

Defining Characteristics

3.3.39 The defining characteristics of the Urban Character Areas O(iii) are:

- Structured streetscape laid off key feeder roads;
- Expansion of earlier ribbon development;
- Long straight or medium straight streets or use of strong shallow curves or crescents;
- Regular street frontage formed by building lines;
- Some regular verges;
- Post War housing styles dominate;
- Defined front gardens with low boundary treatments;
- Some small street and garden trees;
- Regular plot shapes - Medium plot sizes in relation to house size;
- Mixture of residential building types – detached/semi-detached/bungalows;
- Limited long range views ;
- Reasonable sense of enclosure given by building lines;
- Uniform plot/building size/height due to unvaried residential use.



Typical streetscape view of mid 20th Century housing along Rosemead Drive.

Townscape Characteristics

3.3.40 This character area consists of two areas geographically, one to the north of the A6 and the other to the south. The area represents the first stage of post war residential expansion. The areas surround the centre of Oadby with the earliest areas of the estate innermost. The areas are close to and have good vehicular and pedestrian links with the centre though the A6 does form a barrier. Both areas have a short section of boundary that forms the urban boundary. In the southern part of the area this is along the Green Wedge between Oadby and Wigston and in the northern section a short stretch adjacent to the University playing fields, which is also in a designated Green Wedge. A path runs along the northern section giving access into the rural fringe. The urban edge is well integrated along both sections due to trees and hedges and landform.

3.3.41 The characteristic view of the area is of a medium range, linear streetscene with a regular building line and some street trees, verges and/or garden vegetation. Views are restricted to internal views, though there are some glimpses into the Green Wedge in the south (see Part 2, photograph above paragraph 2.2.53). Within the southern area there are some views back over the town centre and beyond as the land rises to the east. Throughout the area trees are present on the skyline and in the background.

3.3.42 The street pattern within the area appears planned and formal. There is a hierarchy of long feeder roads either linear or in shallow crescents eg Uplands Road and Rosemead Drive. The feeder roads support a network of medium length roads creating a network of medium block sizes. A sense of enclosure is given by the houses forming a strong line generally parallel to the street and the presence of some street and garden trees. There are small to medium front gardens either open or with medium height walls or hedges as boundaries. The density is medium due to reasonable plot sizes for the size of properties, street length and width.



Streetscape showing the mid 20th Century character starting to be influenced by later design features.

3.3.43 Character is primarily defined by the age of the houses, which is the most dominant element. Houses are predominantly detached or semi-detached two storey with small to medium front gardens and medium sized back gardens. Brick colour is mixed with some orange/red through to paler buff/yellow and there is some use of render. Roofs are pitched and finished in tile. Generally, houses along a street are very similar, or there are small groups of similar houses. Some areas have verges and street trees, and gardens even to the front are generally planted with shrubs. Detail is added to the houses through the use of bay windows, front facing eaves, storm porches and ornate entrances.

3.3.44 There are a number of identifiable sub areas. One is in the Pelham Street area with an earlier denser planned rectilinear street pattern. There is a wider range of housing types ranging from late 19th and early 20th Century terraced housing to recent infill and some small-scale employment use buildings. The Brabazon Road area has a distinct feel, with wide verges with street trees and the use of hedges for boundaries. There is also a small area of housing to the north of Glen Road, adjacent to Gorse Lane, that developed separately from the other early estates, and only became joined to Oadby when later development infilled along the Glen Road.



View along Spencer Street showing the first expansion of Oadby in the late 14th Century.

- 3.3.45 Generally open space in the form of parks or school playing fields does not make a major contribution to the character of the area. This is because it is often enclosed between houses and has no active frontages eg playing fields off Uplands Road and Fludes Lane path, though the later is open at one point. A small number of open spaces do have a prominence, though, and add character.
- 3.3.46 In the north of the area, the Fludes Lane path is designated as a LWS. There is also a smaller fragmented network of urban lanes in the area. In the south there are two areas of archaeological potential, one along Ash Tree Road and the other around Rosemead Drive.
- 3.3.47 This area is a pleasant sub-urban environment providing family housing but it lacks any distinctive character. Linkages to the underlying landscape discernible in the area is the gently undulating landform, and some of the earlier estate street patterns which are based on the old field boundaries. Historical associations appear to be with street names for example, Brocks Hill Drive, Gorse Lane and Glen Gorse. Due to the plot size and land ownership patterns there is likely to be little pressure for development. The area does abut the rural fringe along its northern and southern boundaries but the majority of rural fringe bounding on to the area is designated as Green Wedge so further development is currently unlikely.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities

3.3.48

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Good supply of well maintained family housing with gardens. Some tree cover. Generally streets carrying local residential traffic. Some areas close to town centre. Well kept public realm.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Lack of local distinctiveness. A6 dissects the area. Air quality along the A6. Traffic congestion on primary routes.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Tree cover could be increased through tree planting schemes.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Decline in tree cover would decrease landscape quality and air quality of the area. Loss of tree cover along urban fringe would impact negatively.</p>

OVERALL URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE
Maintain and enhance current suburban character.

Urban Character Area O(iii): Oadby Early Estates North and South – Policy Guidance

3.3.49 These are mature residential areas and have little capacity to accommodate new development. There is no specific urban landscape character policy that needs development apart from those detailed below and the blanket policies for the urban area in the next section. The character should be maintained through the application of planning policy through the development control system.

Policy guidance O(iii)/ 1 Urban fringe development

3.3.50 Any development on the urban fringe of this character area would not have to reflect the existing character of the urban area but could develop a new local distinctiveness.

Policy guidance O(iii)/ 2 Infill development

3.3.51 Due to plot size, land ownership pattern and the homogenous residential nature of the area there is unlikely to be pressure for a high level of infill development. It is worth noting though, that from an urban landscape character perspective infill in the area could be detrimental. The area, though a pleasant residential environment, does not have a strong character and relies on order, repetition, predictability, and low key design to provide the character. If infill disrupts these elements then it could be detrimental and risk setting an unattractive precedent.

Urban Character Area O(iv): Oadby Later Estates North and South

Defining Characteristics

3.3.52 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area O(iv) are:

- Breakdown of street structure with loss of hierarchy;
- Short street runs with the use of loops and curved roads;
- Breakdown in street frontages due to short runs and non traditional street structure i.e. cul-de-sacs built at right angles to streets;
- Buildings address street in different ways e.g. at angles to the street, right angles to the street, use of wide and narrow verges, loss of private front garden space;
- Variety of frontage treatments including verges, shared open frontages as well as gardens defined by low boundaries;
- Some small garden trees;
- Increasing use of irregular plot shapes;
- Late 20th Century housing types dominate;
- Wide variety of house types from terrace/detached/semi-detached and some flats;
- Medium plot sizes in relation to house size but reducing;
- Loss of sense of enclosure;
- Increased views out due to being on higher ground including views towards Oadby centre and out of the urban fringe.



Typical streetscape view of later 20th Century housing along Coombe Rise.



Streetscape view showing later 20th Century housing with some remaining mid 20th Century influences along Severn Road.

Townscape Characteristics

- 3.3.53 These areas consist of some of the latest phases of urban expansion and they are some way from Oadby centre. These estates have started to encroach on the higher ground to the east of the settlement and have long stretches of boundaries with the rural fringe. The boundary between these areas and character area O(iii) Early Estates can be subtle with both areas having some shared characteristics as well as some streets where the character differences are clear. Vehicular access is good within the areas but there is the feeling of being out on the fringe and away from facilities. The distance from the centre and lack of street pattern linkages makes connection to the centre weak. There are generally good connections though to the earlier estates.
- 3.3.54 The characteristic view is of a medium to short streetscape or cul-de-sac with a staggered building line and low or non-existent front boundaries. There is generally a lower level of trees and vegetation than in character area O(iii). There are some longer range views due to the area being on the higher ground, especially from the urban/rural fringe, e.g. from Severn Road over the Washbrook Valley and from Briar Walk down to the town centre.



The Washbrook Valley from Severn Road.

- 3.3.55 A key characteristic of the area is the breakdown in traditional street pattern, with the use of short runs, informal curves and loops, cul-de-sacs, closes and clusters and wide verges. Some areas have a main loop road, others have no road hierarchy. Often houses are staggered along the street, arranged around closes, or are at right angles to the street. The density feels higher than it is due to smaller plot sizes in relation to house size and the lack of regularity, which gives the area a busy feel. The sense of enclosure is often lost due to the lack of a defined building line to the street, use of verges, and low or non-existent boundaries to frontages. In some areas where vegetation levels are low and house design is very functional this can give a bleak feeling.
- 3.3.56 The character of the area is derived from the late 20th Century house styles. The 1960s and 1970s areas have a mixture of housing types including bungalows, terraced, semi-detached and detached houses. The houses have tiled pitched roofs and are built of paler colour bricks than traditionally used in the area, including pale orange, brown and buff brick colours. Building details include large picture windows, the use of pale render sections and white timber boarding, large eaves with boarding and flat roofed porches. Plot sizes are relatively small and frontages are open verges or are designated by low wooden fences. The lack of strong boundary treatments appears to deter residents from planting to front gardens, which contributes to the open character of the area. The later 1980s, 1990s and contemporary house styles, however, show a return to more traditional housing types. Features include smaller windows, slightly stronger brick colours and the re-introduction of earlier generic period details e.g. porches, steps, wooden railings and bays. Some of this contemporary housing is of three storeys. There is a green skyline and background within the area, which is created by the few larger garden trees and hedgerow vegetation and trees along the urban fringe.
- 3.3.57 Open space does not make a major contribution to the character of the area. The larger scale of the later estate development means that the underlying field pattern has been lost and is not reflected in the street pattern.
- 3.3.58 This character area provides a relatively pleasant suburban area, but lacks local distinctiveness and sense of place. The only historical references and links to the underlying landscape left are the Washbrook corridor, Oadby Grange Farm, now a Public House and small spinney remnants now enclosed within the urban area.



View along Briar Walk showing a reducing exposure of housing from the higher ground in the south of the area.

3.3.59 The urban edge of the area abuts the rural fringe along considerable stretches but as the rural fringe along these stretches is designated as Green Wedge or is very close to the Borough boundary then there is little potential for adjacent new development. Within the urban areas themselves there is unlikely to be any pressure other than for small infill plots.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities

3.3.60

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Good supply of well maintained family housing with gardens. Some tree cover. Generally streets carrying local residential traffic. Sense of and access to the urban/rural fringe.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Lack of local distinctiveness. Lack of local open/green space to break the suburban expanse.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Tree cover could be increased especially in more exposed areas to the east.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Decline in tree cover would decrease landscape quality of the area. Loss of tree cover along urban fringe would impact negatively. Loss of access to rural fringe. Disparate boundary treatments.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES
Maintain and enhance maturing suburban estate character.

Urban Character Area O(iv): Oadby Later Estates North and South – Policy Guidance

3.3.61 These are maturing residential areas. Due to the variety of street pattern, plot shape and size and diversity of building design there would be some capacity to accommodate small-scale new development. There is no specific urban landscape character policy that needs development apart from those detailed below and the blanket policies for the urban area in the next section. The character should be maintained through the creation of planning policy and its application through development management.

Policy guidance O(iv)/ 1 Urban Fringe Development

3.3.62 Both the northern and southern parts of this character area have a boundary with the edge of the rural area. Any development on this fringe would not have to reflect the existing character of the urban area but could develop a new local distinctiveness.

3.3.63 As identified above this character area could accommodate some small-scale infill development. The design of any infill development should reflect some of the varied features of the existing character as appropriate to the site and surroundings.

Urban Character Area O(v): Oadby Industrial Estate

Defining Characteristics

3.3.64 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area O(v) are:

- Predominantly Employment and light industrial use;
- Medium block size;
- Generally 2 to 3 storeys;
- Wide forecourt frontages used for parking and some work activities;
- Strong horizontal appearance to buildings;
- Lack of tree cover.

3.3.65 This character area consists of a small area of employment and light industrial use called Oadby Industrial Estate. The location of the estate is not ideal as it is situated behind a residential area containing Langmoor Primary School. The estate is isolated from major transport links and there is only one access that does not pass through the residential area. The employment area is, however, on the edge of the urban area, adjacent to the eastern side of the Green Wedge and Racecourse, so people do not have to pass through to reach residential areas. Due to the slightly undulating topography, no major views into the area have been identified from the wider urban area and views into the area are limited to short-range views from the residential streets immediately adjacent to the estate. Internal views are of buildings and forecourts and are not unpleasant considering the use of the area.

3.3.66 The area has a regular grid street pattern with a small central spine road, which creates medium sized blocks. For an area of light industrial and employment uses the area has a low to medium scale and density. This is due to the street pattern, the medium scale of the buildings and the limited size of the area. The density and sense of enclosure are low due to the relatively low height of buildings for their function and the wide frontages. The majority of the buildings appear to date from the middle to the end of the 20th Century. Some are in brick and others are clad and all have a strong horizontal emphasis to them. The level of signage and advertisements is reasonable and not too intrusive.

3.3.67 The character of this area is both practical and functional, deriving from the uses of the buildings, but the forecourt areas give a sense of shared space and activity and connectivity to the area. This compares favourably with the design of some industrial estates that have larger car parking areas to the frontages and high boundaries to each unit isolating physically the individual businesses. The area does not have a distinctive character, but due to the forecourts acting as an extension of the work areas, it does have some sense of communality, giving the area animation and character. The businesses occupying the estate range from light construction and food to IT and it shares a boundary with the rugby training ground in the Green Wedge. None of the traditional industries associated with the area such as textiles were noted on the estate.

3.3.68 From an urban landscape character view, the estate provides a reasonably pleasant environment and new development should seek to maintain this. The merging of block sizes or increases in height should be avoided

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities

3.3.69

<u>Strengths</u> Functional but pleasant employment area.	<u>Weaknesses</u> Proximity to housing. Lack of off-street parking for some units.
<u>Opportunities</u> Extension of area into previously developed land.	<u>Threats</u> On street car parking. Increase in scale and boldness of signage and advertisements. Increase in scale of plots and buildings. Loss of characteristic frontages. Changes of use to non-employment uses.

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES
Maintain employment character.

Urban Character Area O(v): Oadby Industrial Estate – Policy Guidance

3.3.70 This character area provides a practical but attractive environment for small to medium sized businesses.

Policy guidance O(v)/ 1 Maintain current plot sizes

3.3.71 The current building stock appears in reasonable condition but there may be pressure in the future to amalgamate plots and increase the scale of the buildings. This would not be appropriate in this location due to the proximity of the racecourse, the Green Wedge and residential areas.

Policy guidance O(v)/ 2 Maintain active frontages

3.3.70 The feature that gives the area a unity and positive character is the wide frontages to buildings that provide parking and external workspace. To maintain this character new development should provide a similar space rather than retreating behind car parking or heavily landscaped frontages.

Policy guidance O(v)/ 3 Long term use

3.3.71 In urban landscape character terms the use of the area as an industrial estate is acceptable as long as the accommodation stays at the same scale. If any of the plots on the site came up for re-development in the future then any increase in the scale of the development in terms of plot amalgamation or building height should be resisted.

3.4 OVERALL REVIEW OF OADBY

- 3.4.1 Though now merged with the main urban area of Leicester, Oadby still retains a separate identity. This is due to the northern edge of the Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge and the southern fringe of the Botanic Gardens creating a break, or perceived break, in the urban fabric along the main A6 route into Oadby. To the south-west, the Green Wedge also creates a break in the urban area between Oadby and Wigston, distinguishing the two settlements.
- 3.4.2 The settlement retains a good urban structure with a clearly defined centre area as a focus, providing shops and services and some historical reference. Oadby centre is relatively central within the wider settlement. The centre itself has a good structure with appropriately subtle gateways, and has a focus area where The Parade meets Chestnut Avenue. As detailed above there is a risk that Oadby centre could split into two character areas and this should be avoided.
- 3.4.3 Oadby centre is surrounded by housing estates. Apart from the Arboretum and the old part of the centre area these estates do not have distinct characters other than that given by street patterns and house age. However, they do provide a pleasant residential environment and are unlikely to see a high level of change for some considerable time. These estates generally retain some sense of connection to the settlement but the newer areas of estates on the eastern fringe are starting to feel disconnected from Oadby centre. This is due to the distance from the centre, the lack of mature tree cover and being situated on higher ground.
- 3.4.4 Oadby does not have a distinctive or high quality townscape apart from within the Arboretum and some fragmented areas of good townscape within the eastern section of the settlement centre. The majority of Oadby consists of a reasonable quality suburban environment that lacks in distinctiveness.
- 3.4.5 Oadby has good transport corridors that have attractive frontages and tree planting. Even the A6 is not unpleasant considering the size of road, and offers a glimpse of the underlying landform. There are a number of green gateways into the settlement which provide visitors with a pleasant entrance and help differentiate Oadby from other settlements.
- 3.4.6 The edge of the urban area (i.e. the actual edge of the built development) is abrupt, distinctive and generally well integrated into the urban fringe (i.e. the wider band of built environment on the fringes of the urban area) by hedgerows with trees, garden trees and vegetation. This benefits the rural fringe in screening the urban edge and the urban fringe in providing a source of greenery.
- 3.4.7 The development of the settlement from a small village into a commuter suburb is reflected in the townscape today with the predominance of detached and semi-detached houses with gardens and the low level of other land uses. The development of the area as one reliant on private transport is also apparent, with high levels of off street parking, town centre car parks and the lack of local facilities such as local shops.

PART 4 URBAN LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT: SOUTH WIGSTON

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 Part 4 of the Report covers the urban character assessment for South Wigston. The section is introduced by a description of how the urban form of the settlement has grown and developed since the late 19th Century. The urban character areas are then individually described. The description includes: a summary of the key characteristics of the urban character area, an overall description of the defining characteristics, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis and the likely development pressure and impact of development on the area. Based on these characteristics and the SWOT analysis an overall urban character objective is developed for each area. Finally a number of urban character policy guidance is given for each urban character area. The policy guidance is intended to support the achievement of the overall urban character objective. The final part of the section gives an overall review of urban character of the town.

4.2 REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE URBAN AREA OF SOUTH WIGSTON SINCE 1885

4.2.1 The review is based on the ordnance survey maps of 1886-1888, 1904-1905, 1914-1915, 1929-1930, 1950 and the current edition. The full ordnance survey maps are included in the report as Appendices 2.6 – 2.10, at the end of the main Report.

4.2.2 From the 1886-1888 ordnance survey map it appears that the settlement began as a result of the coming of the railway earlier in the 19th Century as there is no street pattern that indicates an earlier settlement. The settlement appears to have grown up at a railway junction on the main road (consisting of Blaby and Station Road and what is now St Thomas's Road) between Glen Parva and Wigston. At this time, apart from those main roads only Saffron Road, Countesthorpe Road and the early planned terraces of Glen Gate, Bassett, Timber, Canal, Dunton and Station Streets are in existence. The settlement is comprised of the Glen Parva Barracks on Saffron Road to the north of the railway, the Wigston Junction brick and tile works on Saffron Road south of the railway and the Perseverance Works on Canal Street. The plan shows the beginning of the development of terraces in the settlement within the planned street pattern along Blaby Road, Timber Street, Station Street and Glen Gate. This 'industrial' activity is set in amongst fields. Beyond the fields to the west is the village of Glen Parva, to the South is Crow Mill Bridge on the Canal, to the north is Glen Parva Grange surrounded by woodland and orchards and to the east is Wigston, also still a village.

4.2.3 The map of 1904-1905 shows major changes with the triangle of land formed by the railway corridors and Saffron Road and Countesthorpe Road now being filled with a planned street pattern, terraced houses and a number of factories. There appears to be a wide range of industrial activity in the town including a Biscuit Factory, Boot and Shoe factory, Leather Works and a Foundry. The area to the east of the railway adjacent to Wigston remains undeveloped as does the area to the north of the railway. Within the town itself it seems that the infrastructure to support the workers housed in the terraces has appeared in the form the shops along Blaby Road, St Thomas's Church, Methodist Chapel, an infant school and a junior school.

- 4.2.4 The 1929-1930 map shows that the inter-war years saw little change in the town with only infill to the triangular area of development detailed above and small sections of ribbon development on St Thomas's Road to the west of the town and Saffron Road to the north. The facilities for the town have grown, though, with a recreation ground and swimming baths appearing along the canal and extensive areas of allotments to the north of the town.
- 4.2.5 The map for 1950 shows the expansion of the Glen Parva Barracks to the west, no doubt as a result of the war and the loss of the large house at Glen Parva Grange, possibly also due to the war. The woodlands and orchards associated with the house remain. The first post war residential expansion is seen with Marstown Avenue appearing to the north of the railway. Beyond the current Borough boundary the Eyres Monsell fringe of the urban area of Leicester can be seen pushing outwards. Other changes at this time are the building of a major new school on St Thomas's Road opposite the brickworks and new residential development has started to appear on the newly laid out Landsdowne Grove.
- 4.2.6 The last 50 years have seen the re-development of the Glen Parva Barracks and the Brickworks sites into Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution (HMYOI), offices and industrial use. The Perserverance and Vaseledge Works on Canal Street have been demolished to make room for the redevelopment of the site into the new South Leicestershire College buildings. To the north and east, the town has merged into Wigston, mainly as a result of industrial development along the railway corridor. To the north the town has also almost merged with the main Leicester urban area but a wedge of playing fields maintains some separation.
- 4.2.7 The railway lines have been highly influential in the growth of South Wigston, both in terms of urban form and the rapid growth of the town in the late 19th and 20th Centuries.

4.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE URBAN LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES OF SOUTH WIGSTON AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Appendix 3.2 showing the urban character areas of South Wigston is included at the end of the document.

Urban Character Area SW(i): South Wigston North or Gloucester Crescent Estate

Defining characteristics

4.3.1 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area SW(I) are:

- Relative uniformity in housing types, materials and density;
- Clear 1950s and 1960s 'estate' character;
- Few points of access;
- Low activity levels;
- Defines part of the Borough boundary to its northern edge.

Townscape Characteristics

4.3.2 This character area occupies a substantial portion of the northern and central part of South Wigston. Its northern edge forms the borough administrative boundary, abutting formal recreational spaces (playing fields) and a cemetery. Its western boundary follows the north south sweep of Saffron Road as far as the railway line. The rail track bed then delineates the area for a short distance in a west-east direction. The area is then delineated by the twin sweeps of Cornwall and Gloucester estate roads in a generally north east direction to where it meets the Borough boundary at a point mid way along Durham Road. On the whole, the delineation of this area is relatively distinct along the boundary as described. This is only slightly complicated by a relatively discrete transition from its totally residential character to the mixed industrial and office character of area SW(iii) to its eastern boundary. Gateways into this area are few (relative to its size), functional and non-remarkable, with access predominantly in the form of estate roads into the area from Saffron Road. Pedestrian access from the centre of South Wigston, over the railway footbridge marks the only non-vehicular access into SW(i), and offers a direct route to the commercial core of South Wigston to the south.



Close proximity of 'industrial uses' and residential character is apparent to the east of Gloucester Crescent estate.

- 4.3.3 The northern most part of this sub area is, in comparison to the rest of South Wigston, elevated, with a gradual fall in a southerly direction towards the Sence valley which lies to the south of the urban area. This dip and relative elevation is however subtle, and only occasionally reveals itself through fleeting vistas between dwellings. Landform is consequently inconsequential in the delineation of this sub area, apart from the artificial barrier of the railway cutting and track-bed to its southern boundary, which otherwise forms an abrupt but well vegetated boundary. Views in and out of the sub-area are few and where they do occur tend to be fleeting, for example through the gaps between dwellings. Notable exceptions are at the southern boundary of the sub-area where open vistas across the railway lands, particularly in an easterly direction are extensive. To the northern edge of the sub-area, glimpses of mature deciduous tree cover which mark the boundaries of the playing fields hint at the undeveloped area beyond, but only become clear in the gap at the entrance to the facility from Dorset Avenue. Internal views within this sub-area are heavily restricted to those following estate roads. The only significant public open space, the recreation ground off Gloucester Crescent is bounded by built development and fencing and is of amenity value. The western boundary to the sub-area, runs north to south along the edge of the back gardens of the eastern side of Saffron Road. Whilst limited in extent the views afforded are pleasing in comparison, containing some trees, to the predominant urban concentration across much of the rest of the sub-area.



Gloucester Crescent Park.

- 4.3.4 This area is predominantly residential in character, displaying typical characteristics of post 1950 estate development. The street pattern and development form of SW(i) is that of planned but organic sweeping main estate roads serving a series of lesser loop roads and cul-de-sacs. Gloucester Crescent and Dorset Avenue form the major routes through the area in its northern and central section. These main roads are wide and often furnished with grassed verges between the highway and footpaths. There are several examples of verge trees within the estate, which add to its character but never become a dominant feature. The southern half of the area is serviced primarily by the north-south running Kenilworth Road. This southern section's slightly higher density, narrower roads and building design hints that the southern area was the first to grow out and away from the railway cutting which marks its southern boundary.
- 4.3.5 The layout of housing within the estate is consistent and displays a clear building line, although these vary in depth dependant on the property type and age, being somewhat shallower within the southern and oldest parts of the area. All properties within this area enjoy front and rear gardens with off-street parking and garaging for the great majority. Boundary treatment varies across the area but is predominantly of low brick walls to the front gardens and timber fencing subdividing rear gardens. Garden vegetation often strengthens these subdivisions.
- 4.3.6 There is no sense of interaction with landscape or historic linkages within the area. The predominant building style of the area is typically of brick built detached and semi-detached two storey houses and bungalows with tiled roofs. Window openings are large and typical of the period of mass house building. There is no clear indication of any local vernacular or attempt to reflect local building style or traditions. The architectural merits of the housing are limited. Generally housing units in the southern part of the area are smaller and more closely spaced with bungalows more prevalent. Some of the detailing in the northern area displays a degree of quirkiness, with large artificial stone clad chimney stack detailing to the gables of semi-detached housing, although this is a cosmetic distinction in terms of building character.
- 4.3.7 Aside from Gloucester Road Playing fields, the estate lacks public open space, and, what little there is, is of low quality. Street trees are important in the sense of 'softening the feel' of the area, but not dominant features. The three storey flats, small shopping parade (including a Sainsbury's Local) and pub in the centre of the estate on Gloucester Crescent are a valued and well used asset locally, but display a very poor quality in terms of the public realm and suggests a clear need for redevelopment or enhancement.
- 4.3.8 The area is dominated by residential land use, with only the primary school, shopping parade and public house on Gloucester Crescent diluting this use. Because of the predominance of relatively low density using the area displays a low level of activity, although some commercial uses within SW(iii) are accessed through the estate, primarily along Gloucester Crescent. Pedestrian movement over the railway footbridge is relatively high. Otherwise the area has a dormitory ambience. Sense of place or, local distinctiveness within SW(i) is non-existent. Character is relatively uniform, but the value of that character, whilst not harsh or unpleasant, is low.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

4.3.9

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Comfortable residential ambience. Defensible space and clearly delineated public and private realms. Street trees and verges.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>No sense of place or local distinctiveness. Bland uniformity. Lack of good quality public open space.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Enhancement of Gloucester Crescent shops and open space. Enhancement of Gloucester Road Playing Fields.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Traffic serving SW(iii) employment areas at peak times on predominantly residential estate roads.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE
Maintain mature suburban character

Urban Character Area SW(i): South Wigston North or Gloucester Crescent Estate – Policy Guidance.

4.3.10 This post war suburban residential estate displays typical characteristics of other such estates within the study area. As such it is unremarkable but provides an important and pleasant residential environment close to the centre of South Wigston.

Policy Guidance SW(i)/ 1 Infill development

4.3.11 This urban area displays very little capacity for additional built development (except for comprehensive renewals) without loss of the very few areas of open space within it, or erosion of the grain of the estate. The housing density is already relatively high in the southern area and the slightly larger plot size to its northern streets important to its character. The character of the area is weak, but defined nevertheless by a pleasant order, repetition, predictability and common but simple building design. Further development of a residential nature within this area would be likely to disrupt this, and serve little in terms of meeting additional housing provision and should be discounted. Comprehensive residential renewal would change the character of the area by removing its repetition, predictability and common but simple design in particular.

Policy Guidance SW(i)/ 2 Gloucester Crescent Shops

4.3.12 Whilst providing a valuable and accessible range of local services, the condition of the building and its residential flats is incongruous with the relatively good condition and sense of well-being that is evident across the estate. The public space it provides is of low quality and potentially a focus for threatening or anti-social behaviour during hours of darkness. Public realm improvements would help to improve the area and consideration should be given to mixed uses for the complex to help provide an improved natural focus for the estate.

Urban Character Area SW(ii): South Wigston Western Fringe Institutions and Industries

Defining characteristics

4.3.13 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area SW(ii) are:

- Institutional ambience and predominant land use;
- Sense of security and surveillance;
- Significant mature tree cover;
- Areas of important open space;
- Forms part of Borough Boundary;
- Important institutional/Military buildings of character;
- Low-density housing as a minority land use.

Townscape Characteristics

4.3.14 The landform within SW(ii) displays a very subtle rise from south to north, although the impact of its relief on the land use, and its contribution to local character is negligible in this sub area. Public access within and around the area is restricted and therefore views within or out of it limited. Again, lack of any significant change in relief, compounded by the presence of mature tree cover (in the northern part particularly) limits longer vistas. The tree dominated Saffron Road affords an important green corridor along its eastern fringe. The open spaces within the southern part of the area are formed by the significant breaks between buildings, particularly the forecourt to the military buildings along Tigers Road. Public access to these spaces is however very limited.

4.3.15 This area can be split into three areas roughly equal in size running south to north along the west of Saffron Road. These are characterised by post war former military housing in the north, large former military offices and the former associated open space of the training ground has now been developed into Elizabeth Business Park, for office and light industrial uses which includes a Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) Test Ground in the central section, and post war industrial units south of the railway. The overall street pattern of this area is irregular, contrasting between its relative grid layout to the southern half, and its organic small estate road layout to the north. Notwithstanding Saffron Road itself, no other through routes exist apart from the servicing of Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institute (HMYOI), which lies immediately outside the Borough, accessed along Tigers Road. It is evident that the very low density former military housing in the northern part of the area has been developed within a well-established area of parkland (possibly remnant from the original Glen Parva Grange, which occupied the site). This area is dominated by mature specimen trees, from Victorian planting on the former estate, covered by tree protection orders. However, the built form and layout pays little or no reference to relief or local landscape characteristics. Saffron Road itself defines the eastern extent of the area, and is characterised by its inter-war period brick and render housing, grander in scale and detailing than other housing in the area and set within larger gardens with a good level of tree cover. The tree cover afforded by the gardens of Saffron Road is important, and in combination with the tree cover to the west within the former barracks, forms a critical landscape component of the area. The Borough Tree Strategy recognises this.



Former military housing on Hindoostan Avenue



Mature tree cover along Saffron Road.

4.3.16 The southern component of the area straddles the railway which itself runs east west at this point. This northern part of this sub area is characterised by large footprint buildings of low and medium rise, many of which are associated with military and government institutions (such as the Territorial Army and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency). This would appear to have been a use long associated with the immediate area as the historical mapping of the area indicated barracks upon the site from before 1885, although it would appear all of those original buildings have now been lost. Nevertheless, perhaps the finest building within South Wigston, the Territorial Army headquarters dominates the sub-area from the north side of Tigers Road. The road layout is more regular than the northern housing layout but does not relate to any particular landscape or topological features. To the south of the railway line this predominant building scale is maintained, although there is higher density, open space less apparent and the uses are clearly more industrial and commercial in nature. Until the early post war period the site was occupied by the Wigston Junction brick and tile works with a large area possibly used as a clay pit.

4.3.17 Across the area it is apparent that its various components have evolved over a long period, pre-dating 1885, where the remnant trees from Glen Parva Grange now stand proud, although parts of the open parkland now formalised and occupied in part by military staff housing of a post war vintage. Its character is however still

apparent. The central 'institutional' third of the area has a mix of building dates, Servicemaster offices and its near neighbours all post 1950, although the Territorial Army Headquarters appears to have evolved to its current grandeur from buildings identifiable from 1885. All of the original barracks have now been lost. The current street pattern in this area is predominantly post war, although it is possible that Tigers Road reflects an earlier thoroughfare within the barracks site.



The 'Institutional Character' of the area is clearly apparent from the Territorial Army Headquarters.

- 4.3.18 The building line to the east of Saffron Road is important in terms of the green space it affords along this important linear corridor in South Wigston. Elsewhere, the military, industrial and low density 'parkland' housing generally offer a low density feel of the area, although the sense of enclosure to the south of the railway line is more evident.
- 4.3.19 The character of the area does vary from south to north, but overall is one of a relative low density with a strong institutional ambience. Whilst site layout is organic and well broken with open space to the north, all the area north of the railway emits an ambience of governmental importance, or even control. This is emphasised by the security fencing and signage to the west of Saffron Road, which becomes dominating at the western end of Tigers Road at the gates of the Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institute (HMYOI).
- 4.3.20 The housing in the northern part of the area is typical of military housing elsewhere in the UK and further emphasises the differences in this sector from elsewhere in South Wigston. Likewise the governmental buildings and the factory units to the south of the railway display little evidence of locally sourced materials or distinctive building style. Nevertheless, the buildings and the well vegetated spaces between them clearly display a character of their own and this enhances the overall landscape in this area.
- 4.3.21 This area has a clear historic connection with the military, which survives today through the existence of the Territorial Army presence on the site. Whilst most of the buildings within the area are 20th Century, Saffron Road is an historic route north from South Wigston, and this sense of establishment is reinforced through the significant level of mature tree cover along its northern part. Traffic along Saffron Road is generally at a high level, acting as a key link between South Wigston and

Leicester City. Goods vehicles are also prevalent as they service the industrial and commercial activities to the southern and central parts of the area.

- 4.3.22 Parkland and street trees in the northern third of the area and along Saffron Road offer townscape and biodiversity value and is recognised by the Council as an area that the Council would wish to conserve and enhance as an area with local distinctiveness that acts as a wildlife corridor.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

- 4.3.23

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Mature, green route into/out of South Wigston from Leicester. Housing to east of Saffron Road adds a comfortable quality to the otherwise non-residential nature of the area. Local Green Spaces throughout the area. Local Green Spaces allocated throughout the area.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Security fencing and sense of surveillance within parts of the public realm.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Management of mature tree cover within area through TPO's and the Tree Strategy, to maintain their important contribution to local area character.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Increasing levels of congestion.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE
Conserve the mature institutional character and important green spaces.

Urban Character Area SW(ii): South Wigston Western Fringe Institutions and Industries – Policy Guidance.

- 4.3.24 This area displays a distinct set of urban characteristics that are attributable in the main to the historic influence of military infrastructure and the historic route from the town to Leicester along Saffron Road. In combination the green spaces which have matured amongst the mix of former military and inter-war residential properties provide for a mature and green corridor along the western fringe of the town whilst also accommodating important employment centres and key townscape buildings.

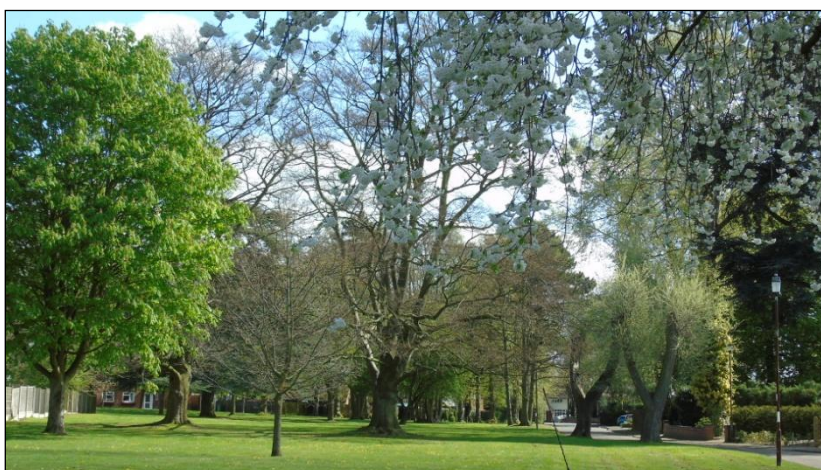
Policy Guidance SW(ii)/ 1 Maintain tree cover

- 4.3.25 The mature tree cover, which exists along most of the length of Saffron Road, and within the former barracks area to the north west of the sub-area represent the most important urban treescape within South Wigston. It also helps define an important gateway into the Borough from the north. Where they are not already in place, the maintenance of tree cover should be encouraged through the implementation of Tree

Preservation Orders to ensure good maintenance and future-well being of this significant urban asset and wildlife corridor.

Policy Guidance SW(ii)/ 2 Maintain open spaces

- 4.3.26 Open spaces within the former barracks area and in the vicinity of the TA HQ on Tigers Road contribute to the character of the area and help differentiate it from other areas of South Wigston. Particularly to the west of Saffron Road there may be pressure for housing and employment development should the site be released from current uses. Any loss of the openness of these sites would be detrimental to its character and furthermore detract from the setting of some fine specimen trees, many of which are covered by Tree Preservation Orders. Therefore, care should be taken to ensure that any new development is carefully integrated into the landscape.



Open Spaces within the former Barracks Area of Hindoostan Avenue/Crete Avenue contribute to the character of the area

Policy Guidance SW(ii)/ 3 Frontages to Saffron Road

- 4.3.27 Residential frontages to the east of Saffron Road tend to be defined by mature hedges trees and garden vegetation. Replacement by hard boundary treatment or by creation of wider vehicular access points would fail to help conserve the character of this part of the settlement. Whilst difficult to control in land use terms, particularly outside a Conservation Area, such weakening of character should be avoided through the increased use of Tree Preservation Orders.

Urban Character Area SW(iii): South Wigston Eastern Fringe Industries and Railway Lands

Defining characteristics

4.3.28 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area SW(iii) are:

- Defines the full extent of the eastern edge of South Wigston;
- An area dominated by industrial and commercial buildings dating from throughout the 20th Century;
- The railway defines the eastern boundary of the area and provides for extensive but inaccessible open space, which is a designated Local Wildlife Site and is important for local Biodiversity.

Townscape Characteristics.

4.3.29 The landform is more apparent within this area of South Wigston than perhaps elsewhere within the district, primarily due to the significant open space within the triangle of railway lines, which both dominate and define this area. Nevertheless, landform in a 'natural' sense is unremarkable, with a gentle rise in levels from south to north. Slight variations can be seen within the area mostly as a result of engineering works in terms of railway cutting and embankment, and by the former tip which lies immediately to the south of the area as defined. Views within this area are more extensive primarily as a result of vantage points from man-made structures. In crossing the railway line on Blaby Road at the eastern boundary of the area, the elevated position offers views to the south across the district, although often foreshortened by the larger industrial buildings within this area. Likewise views in a westerly direction into the town centre along Blaby Road, and to the north across the industrial area are afforded as a result in the embankment of the road. Otherwise the most significant views are afforded from the footbridge over the railway which links area SW(i) and SW(v) in an easterly direction over the railway lands to and beyond the boundary with Wigston.

4.3.30 The street pattern, as such as it exists within the area is functional and organic having evolved with the development of the industrial factory buildings and sheds which now dominate. Only to the south of Blaby Road, the only significant through route, can a more regular grid layout be identified where some of the units display inter-war characteristics in terms of scale and materials.

4.3.31 Industrial and commercial buildings dominate the built environment within this area, although within that type of use the scale varies considerably. Increasingly the trend appears to be towards much larger modern portal framed sheds. This is most clearly evidenced in the southern third of the area where new buildings are massive in scale, considerably increasing the predominant heights of existing buildings, many of which are single or two storeys only. To the north of Blaby Road, but to the south of the railway, a large supermarket development is prominent from the public realm and again is very large in scale. The large car-park to the front of the supermarket, gives the area an open feel, but the building is large enough to mask the industrial buildings the other side of the railway line. Within the northern sector, north of the railway, the access to the buildings is via area SW(i) and Gloucester Crescent, and the buildings reflect a more human scale and appear to be of more solid construction than newer buildings elsewhere within the area. Their relatively abrupt juxtaposition

with the residential estate is softened by their relatively low heights and office facades to their most public elevations.

- 4.3.32 Density across the area is relatively high with little in terms of open space other than the service roads and yards associated with the business and industrial uses. The clear exception to this is however the central 'railwaylands', a triangular section of land enclosed by the three lines as they converge/diverge from the north south and west (also known as the Railway Triangle). Within this essentially flat area of barren landscape there is no substantive built development except for security fencing. Whilst important in terms of its wide openness, public access is not available and the land itself is naturalising in terms of scrub vegetation. The whole of this site is now designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS).
- 4.3.33 The built environment within this area is dominated by employment land uses, probably all post-war, and consequently reflects virtually no sense of local distinctiveness or positive contribution to the built environment. With the passing of time, the more recent, larger scale buildings further exacerbate this phenomena. South of Blaby Road some of the smaller brick built buildings reflect a time of post war economic growth when smaller units were dominant.
- 4.3.34 The open space of the railway lands is perhaps the most important feature within the area, strengthened by the green/wildlife corridor features of the tree and shrub cover, which has become well established along the cutting and embankments of the lines themselves. This asset clearly offers some local biodiversity value and is appropriately designated as a LWS. Despite its inaccessibility in terms of both public entry and visibility, the railwaylands offers an important green-lung and break in concentration of development within South Wigston. Gateways into the area are in general unremarkable apart from the route from the east, which links the area with Wigston itself. Here the entry into South Wigston over the Midland Mainline is marked by the change from a tree lined mature urban corridor into an elevated and more spartan built environment, dominated by industrial and commercial land uses.



The 'Railway Triangle', offers good opportunities for biodiversity enhancement within the heart of South Wigston

- 4.3.35 Clearly there are three distinct sub-areas within the wider delineation of SW(iii), the industrial, business and retail area to the south of the railway lands, the mixed light industry and office use of the north of the Nuneaton line, and the railway lands itself

(inclusive of its cuttings and embankments). Whilst displaying different characteristics, there are clear commonalities both in terms of structure and use, and geographic spread. Whilst not developed, the railway lands associate far more readily with the industrial land uses than the residential character of other contiguous areas of South Wigston. This area does however share considerable levels of similarity with the western fringe of Wigston to the immediate east of the Midland Mainline.

4.3.36 The Local Plan indicates that the great majority of the area is safeguarded for continued employment generating uses. This excludes the Railway Triangle, as this is designated a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and due to its inaccessibility, there is no reason to expect this to be anything other than a long term designation.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

4.3.37

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Important employment base for the borough. LWS within heart of urban concentration. Internal views over the Railway Triangle.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Harsh utilitarian character of the built environment. Low likelihood of improved access to Railway Triangle due to safety considerations. Limited views into and across the Railway Triangle.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Redevelopment/Renewal of industrial units which are no longer fit for purpose. Public Realm improvements including tree planting. Tree planting to improve the barrier between the industrial units and the railway.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Increasing congestion damaging the local environment. Pressure to redevelop employment areas. This could lead to more intensive uses.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE
Maintain functional character within scale appropriate to residential surrounds.

Urban Character Area SW(iii): South Wigston Eastern Fringe Industries and Railway Triangle – Policy Guidance.

Policy Guidance SW(iii)/ 1 Railway Triangle Local Wildlife Site (LWS)

4.3.38 Given the access difficulties to within the Railway Triangle it is expected the Local Wildlife Site designation which exists over the whole of the site should be viewed as a long term designation. This area of underdeveloped open space is a core element

of the network of green corridors within South Wigston and the wider district. Therefore, the Council should seek to preserve it for its open, green value and as a local wildlife site encouraging biodiversity.

Policy Guidance SW(iii)/ 2 Scale of new employment development

- 4.3.39 The trend for regenerated employment development within this sub-area has been towards larger, and taller buildings than those evident from earlier periods. Whilst reflecting business needs and offering vital employment infrastructure, these larger buildings have become increasingly prominent when viewed from within the neighbouring residential areas. In assessing proposals for further modernisation of this well established employment area, policy should be refined to ensure that the impact of the scale and use of the resultant buildings is taken into account to maintain and safeguard the residential amenity of those existing and proposed residential areas.

Urban Character Area SW(iv): South Wigston Town Centre and Terraces

Defining Characteristics

4.3.40 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area SW(iv) are:

- Main thoroughfare and commercial centre of South Wigston;
- Tight historic terraced street pattern;
- Areas of architectural coherence and quality;
- Mixed land uses, but predominance of terraced housing.

4.3.41 The landform is generally typical of the settlement with a very slight rise in land from the Sence Valley to the south of the area to the southern edge of the Nuneaton line cutting. Except where vistas open along the grid-like street pattern, particularly along the longer streets such as Canal Street, views into or out of this area limited and predominantly urban in nature. There are few opportunities to glimpse the rural hinterland to the immediate south of this area over the Sence floodplain e.g. from Park Road and from the St Thomas School playing fields.

4.3.42 Blaby Road dissects the area along an east west axis and forms the main centre to the town. North of this, to the Nuneaton branch railway line the street pattern takes a clear grid form with a north south orientation with six such streets linked to their northern end by the east west Kirkdale Road. To the south of Blaby Road the street pattern again takes a regular terraced pattern, but with an east west orientation. Here the purity of the pattern is slightly more diluted with peripheral 20th Century development to the south-west and southern peripheries. However the main route from Blaby Road along Countesthorpe Road is the oldest route from South Wigston to the south, clearly identifiable on the 1885 OS sheet, and probably following older field boundaries. This part of the area, between Countesthorpe Road and Canal Street saw the earliest housing growth in South Wigston, (predated only by the barracks), prior to the turn of the 20th Century, and rapidly expanded across the whole of SW(iv) by 1904. This area represents the most complete and oldest discrete historic component of the town. To the west of the area adjacent to the school playing field there is a small area of more recent residential infill.

4.3.43 Gateways into the area are not dramatic or sudden although once into the terraced areas a clear sense of place is experienced. Nevertheless the section of Blaby Road within the area represents the core and commercial hub of the town and is clearly apparent and tightly constrained to alongside the main thoroughfare ending in the recently built South Leicestershire College, which with its high quality, modern design, adds a contrasting feature to the older buildings surrounding it. The eastern boundary of the area south of Blaby Road and the college is clearly defined by a series of current and former industrial buildings, many of which have been sympathetically converted for housing. These industrial buildings include the at times dominating Jacobs factory. These buildings along Canal Street, were developed in the final decade of the 1800s along the now disused Leicester to Rugby branch line, and form a clear and appropriate boundary to the character area.



South Leicestershire College showing high quality, modern design.

- 4.3.44 The predominance of terraced housing within this area results in probably the highest density development within South Wigston and the Borough. To the north of Blaby Road the terraces do not benefit from front yards, as in the south of the area. Here the street width is narrow and the combination of no front yards colludes to create a strong sense of enclosure within the street network. This sense of enclosure and small scale is further emphasised by the narrow house widths that prevail. To the southern part of the character area the terraced houses have a slightly larger scale with street width and house width greater than north of Blaby Road. This is further emphasised by a predominance of terraces with small front yards and bay windows at ground floor level.
- 4.3.45 The main retail centre of South Wigston is found along Blaby Road. In the late 19th Century some of the first terraces were built along the road possibly as housing but by 1904 when the whole street had been developed, and the growth of the town was secured, it is likely that the housing had already been converted to shops and other premises were purpose built. Today the retail area is relatively constrained to Blaby Road with some shops and small businesses to be found on the side streets. This part of the area has a strong sense of enclosure due to the relatively high buildings along a relatively narrow street and the number of street trees. The western gateway to the centre is formed by a duel set of traffic lights and St Thomas's Church but the eastern gateway is weaker as the character of the area opens out into the Railway Triangle and looses the sense of enclosure. The narrow building plots give the centre a strong rhythm, especially on the southern side. The original buildings are red brick with slate roofs and a high level of brick and wood detailing. At ground level this has been lost to contemporary shop fronts but it is retained at first floor level, though some buildings are in poor condition. The public realm along the street appears reasonable and the street trees (London Planes), though a positive feature, do add shade and as a pedestrian make the area seem darker.
- 4.3.46 Despite its southern boundary against open countryside and the Grand Union Canal there is little sense of openness within the area. However, within the southern section there is evidence of some building clearance and regeneration and the introduction of more recent late 20th Century housing. These factors, particularly along Countesthorpe Road have allowed for a reduction in the sense of enclosure.

4.3.47 Because of the relative uniformity and age of housing type within this area there is a greater sense of local distinctiveness and character than most of the rest of South Wigston. Further to the street pattern and density, the detailing of the housing adds a considerable level of interest and quality to the area. North of Blaby Road, the small scale of housing has not resulted in lack of attention to detail, with date and name stones being prominent for each pair of the older properties. Door and window lintels are decorative stone or brickwork but avoid being ostentatious, as is the case with the coursing of the eaves brickwork. South of Blaby Road detailing is less consistent but again worthy of note, particularly in terms of window and door surround treatments. Here on-street parking has been managed through the provision of block paving bays along some of the wider streets, along with some recent tree planting, adding to sense of local well-being. Interspersed across this area, community buildings such as the Timber Street Centre provide for occasional breaks in the housing and allow for a small amount of tree cover within this otherwise densely developed quarter of the town.



Decorative Brickwork south of Blaby Road



Decorative Brickwork south of Blaby Road.



Terraced Housing and Traffic Management measures within the South Wigston Conservation Area

4.3.48 Particularly in the southern part of the area there has been some dilution of the terrace structure with the introduction of semi-detached properties of inter war and post war ages, particularly on streets such as Park Road, Best Close and Blenheim Close. Furthermore the southern periphery of SW(iv) has also seen the emergence of a number of small business and light industrial uses, a common feature throughout the town, but which do little to preserve the integrity of the character of this part of South Wigston. Conversely the strong eastern boundary of the area is well defined by a series of larger 19th and early 20th Century industrial scale buildings and the imposing Grand Hotel, a fine brick-built building with intricate brickwork and some neo-gothic features dating from the turn of the 20th Century, which have been converted into housing.



The former Grand Hotel on Canal Street now converted into high quality Housing.



The Stamford Shoe Work on Canal Street, now converted into Housing.

- 4.3.49 There is a predominance of housing across the area, but there is also a considerable degree of shopping, commercial business and community uses within the area, particularly with respect of the Blaby Road corridor. There is therefore a considerable range in the levels of activity across the area, from relatively sleepy terraces to the bustle of Blaby Road's shopping and commercial centre.
- 4.3.50 The whole of SW(iv) as described within this study falls within the South Wigston Conservation Area. To the north east corner of the area, the site of the former shoe factory has been recently redeveloped into housing. This modern housing has been built into small terraces to allow it to blend with the character of the surrounding area. The bus depot on Station Street is currently under an employment use designation; however, it has an adopted Local Development Order for a residential led scheme.
- 4.3.51 This area of the Borough was developed over a relatively short period of time at the turn of the 20th Century in response to growth brought about by the railways. As a result the area possesses a strong sense of place, although not necessarily clearly distinctive from other similar areas of growth across the Midlands from the same period.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

4.3.52

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Community centre. Strong historic street pattern and built environment character. Highly sustainable juxtapose of large numbers of dwellings with shopping and community facilities. Important individual buildings, such as St Thomas’s Church and the former Grand Hotel.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Some deterioration of some important industrial buildings to the eastern fringe on Canal Street. Dilution of strong grid character in far south of the area. Poor shop frontages to Blaby Road dilutes the character of the built environment.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Enhanced tree planting and use of planters to soften the landscape. Continued street enhancements as evident on Timber Road and Kirkdale Road. Enhancement of Commercial frontages to make Blaby Road more attractive. Conversion of industrial buildings on Canal Street currently showing deterioration.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Changes of retail to residential through permitted development. Potential for replacement housing on former industrial sites diluting character of the terraced built environment.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE
Conserve Special Character of Terraces and seek enhancements to Blaby Road Environs.

Urban Character Area SW(iv): South Wigston Town Centre and Terraces – Policy Guidance.

Policy Guidance SW(iv)/ 1 Retain Unity and Coherence of Terraces

4.3.53 Whilst modest and simple in form, the built environment and street structure of this area is distinctive and reflects a clear historic period in the development of the town. Whilst unpretentious the terraces themselves often display pleasing attention to detail in window and door treatments and decorative brick courses at eaves height. The retention of the grid street pattern further emphasises the historic integrity of the area. Conservation Area status has served to help retain this special character thus far and this continued special treatment in planning terms is supported.

4.3.54 In reviewing policy the primary objective should be to retain and enhance the character thus far conserved, and to seek continued attention to detail where new development is proposed. Where dilution of character has occurred, it appears to have been due, in the main, to permitted development works, such as window replacement and surface cladding. Policy should focus on how these minor but

cumulatively harmful alterations can be avoided, through both educational (i.e. reference to Conservation Area Appraisal) and control mechanisms such as Article 4 Directions and the General Permitted Development Order 2015.

Policy Guidance SW(iv)/ 2 Conserve former industrial buildings along Canal Street

- 4.3.55 The run of mainly former textile buildings to the north-east of Canal Street mark an important distinguishable boundary to the terraces sub-area and provide in their own right interest to the built environment. In particular the former Grand Hotel is a building of strong character and despite redevelopment to housing, remains on the whole unaffected by the alterations. This and its neighbouring late 19th and early 20th Century buildings offer important interest in the town's built environment. Policy should seek to conserve these buildings and as necessary find alternative uses, such as residential conversions or mixed residential and office/retail use. The underlying principle in the regeneration of the Canal Street environs should be for the retention of the existing building fabric, and to avoid further over-development which has already had a detrimental impact on the residential amenity of some of the terraces.

Policy Guidance SW(iv)/ 3 Continuation of Street Management

- 4.3.56 Some streets within the terraces sub-area have been subject to street enhancement works in terms of delineated parking bays and block paving. This programme should be rolled out elsewhere within the sub-area whilst having full regard to the character of the Conservation Area.

Policy Guidance SW(iv)/ 4 Redeveloped Sites

- 4.3.57 As demonstrated on Countesthorpe Road, former industrial buildings that are scattered within the predominance of residential terraces will from time to time become available for redevelopment. The scale and detailing of the new buildings will need to be carefully considered so as to contribute to, and help retain, the distinctive character of this part of South Wigston. Furthermore, the regimented street pattern should not be diluted by small 'estate' development where larger sites become available for development. Where these former industrial buildings add to the character of the area, it should be endeavoured to conserve the buildings and convert them for a new use.

Policy Guidance SW(iv)/ 5 Blaby Road Commercial Frontages

- 4.3.58 Despite the Conservation Area status of the area there seems to be a relatively low standard of shop fronts within the centre. Due to the character of the area being based on design detail, it is critical to retain that detailed level of design elements. The Borough Council would seek to make Blaby Road Commercial Frontages more attractive through enhancement schemes, should funding become available. The area would benefit from improvements to the public realm. It is understood though that these detailed character issues are no doubt part of a wider series of economic issues affecting the area including, for example, re-use of buildings and their upper floors.

Urban Character Area SW(v): Lansdowne Grove Estate

Defining Characteristics

4.3.59 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area SW(v) are:

- Post war local authority housing;
- Planned street pattern;
- Some garden hedging;
- Parker-Morris housing;
- Gradual reduction in density to south of area;
- Blaby Road Park as largest public open space within South Wigston.

Townscape Characteristics

4.3.60 As elsewhere in South Wigston, this is a generally flat area with a very slight dip from north to south. The most expansive view is across Blaby Road Park from its southern open boundary in a northwards direction. Elsewhere views out of the area are constrained by the predominance of housing along all the thoroughfares. However a hint of the open countryside of the Sence valley is apparent between houses when travelling in a southwards direction. The southern extremity of this area coincides with the built up boundary of South Wigston, and as the Countesthorpe Road crosses the canal and river, views across the meadows into Countryside and beyond.

4.3.61 This relatively discrete area has two clear street patterns in evidence. Firstly the older, northern housing area shows the feeder road – Lansdowne Grove, linking a series of short straight cul-de-sacs in a regular grid pattern. To the southern section, Lansdowne Grove adopts a slightly more organic curve to the south west, (reflecting the course of the canal to its boundary), and in turns serves two further estate roads which serve to contrast with the grid pattern of the northern part of this estate.



Traffic calming, on street parking, street lights and service infrastructure serve to clutter the street scene on Lansdowne Grove.

4.3.62 This area mainly consists of a post-war, local authority housing estate and as such is of medium density of dwellings. The buildings are of a two-storey construction with both gabled and hipped roof structures. Open space within the estate is generally

private and often enclosed by privet hedging. The housing is often in short terraces of three or four dwellings and hence the sense of enclosure slightly more emphasised than similar areas of semi-detached properties. The southern section of the housing in this area appears to be of a slightly later age, 1960s to early 1970s and displays a slightly lower density as well as the introduction of some semi-detached dwellings as well as short terraces. As such the sense of enclosure is slightly lessened.

- 4.3.63 By contrast to the developed part of the area, Blaby Road Park offers a linear and open link from the town's southern boundary to the main through route. The park is extensive in area and due to regeneration in 2013, offers an area of high quality Public Open Space. It marks the western boundary of the area, abruptly defined by the rear of the industrial buildings of Canal Street, particularly Jacobs works, only slightly softened by a row of mature poplars close to the boundary.



Blaby Road Park

- 4.3.64 Character is evident within this area, with many features typical of this era of Council housing development. Red brick and slate roof are predominant in the older areas, whereas render and tile are common in the newer properties. The area suffers from a degree of street clutter, in terms of the 'wirescape', telephone poles, street lighting traffic calming and on-street parking. Some evidence of individualisation of properties as they have come into private ownership has slightly diluted the uniformity of the housing style.
- 4.3.65 The relatively recent nature of the built development within this area does not lend itself to features which are important to the landscape or townscape. Clearly the wide open space of the Blaby Road Park is a very important open space within the settlement, and the poplar trees which soften its western boundary with area SW(v) are important in the context of the area. The views out of the urban area from the canal bridge at the southern end of the area are also clearly important.
- 4.3.66 The area is predominantly residential in character and therefore, apart from the small boundary with Blaby Road, relatively quiet in terms of movement. The Countesthorpe Road to the southern boundary is a main route south from the town, but experiences relatively light traffic movements outside peak times. Blaby Road Park is an important community facility, but again its use results in low key impact on the traffic levels across the area.

4.3.67 Historical analysis of OS plans shows that the current development within this area was on green field sites, and buildings pre-dating the war non-existent. Prior to the development of this estate's complex, South Wigston did not extend eastwards of the Rugby branch railway line. Likewise, the area now covered by Blaby Road Park has never been developed, and as such offers an important historical break in development.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

4.3.68

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Clarity in age, typical of its type. Blaby Road Park, public open space within South Wigston refurbished on 2013. Countryside and canal corridor to south.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>On street parking. Services clutter.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Soft landscaping and tree planting to enhance the existing character.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Anti-social behaviour and vandalism in Blaby Road Park. Dilution of character through individualisation of property.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE
Resist further erosion of distinctive character whilst seeking to enhance the public realm.

Urban Character Area SW(v): Lansdowne Grove Estate – Policy Guidance.

Policy Guidance SW(v)/ 1 Blaby Road Park maintenance and enhancements

4.3.69 Blaby Road Park provides the most extensive publicly accessible space within South Wigston and acts as a strategic break between the late 19th Century industrial and terrace development of SW(iv) and the mid 20th Century housing estate of the Lansdowne Grove estate. The park offers functional open space in terms of playing fields and playground, and through the redevelopment carried out in 2013 contributes greatly to the urban landscape in terms of its environmental quality. This Guidance seeks to maintain and further enhance this important asset by conserving the high quality of the refurbished park, maximising its potential as a green link and wildlife corridor within the heart of the town.

Policy Guidance SW(v)/ 2 Streetscape Management

4.3.70 The Lansdowne Grove Estate is a mature inter-war development of former local authority housing. Its character is distinctive yet relatively stark and suffers from ad-hoc individualisation of properties which has served to disrupt the unity of the built environment. On-street parking is a problem with a lack of driveway spaces. A cluttered wirescape and street lighting further diminish the quality of the urban

environment. Boundary treatment varies with the original privet hedging having been removed or replaced by a variety of fencing and masonry materials.

- 4.3.71 The priority for the urban character of this area should be for the improvement to the unity of the public realm, although the achievement of this will be very difficult given the mixed ownership of the individual properties affected. De-cluttering of the street scene through undergrounding of telephone infrastructure represents a more realistic opportunity subject to co-operative working with the telephone companies concerned.
- 4.3.72 Public service undertakings within the estate should seek to soften the street scene where possible through street furniture and pavement treatments, street lighting improvements and on-street parking management. Opportunity for improvements in terms of soft landscaping is severely restricted due to absence of soft verges.

Urban Character Area SW(vi): Ervin's Lock Housing

Defining Characteristics

4.3.73 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area SW(vi) are:

- Post 1980 housing;
- Encroachment into open countryside and canal side development;
- Open layout of older properties;
- Higher density of new canal side development;
- Design interest in new development.

Townscape Characteristics

4.3.74 The southern and newest housing within this area sits at the top of a gentle slope which extends northwards from the Grand Union Canal and Sence Valley. Thereafter, across the northern half of the area the landform is essentially level with little discernable landscape influence on the built environment. The new housing to the southern boundary now forms an abrupt edge to the built extent of South Wigston which is at times harsh, including from the important corridor along the canal towpath.

4.3.75 The older area of post 1980 housing adjacent to SW(v), along Lansdowne Grove offers a series of internal views as a result of its open design and network of public open spaces. This is emphasised by a lack of enclosure around front gardens. External views are foreshortened to the east by the embankment of the former tip site, which has been planted to the east and north as a woodland area. This separates much of this area from the southern quarter of SW(iii) although some of the larger and most recent industrial buildings of SW(iii) and the college are very prominent, from within the area. This prominence will be lessened as the development is completed, and the woodland area matures. However, a vista along the open drainage ditch, which dissects the site from north to south offers longer views in each direction, and particularly to the south. From the newer housing to the south-east there are extensive views across the River Sence and the canal into the rising land to its south side. To the east views are currently possible along the canal path, although advance screening planting has been established which is starting to restrict such vistas.



The 1980's housing of Ervin's Lock Character Area is punctuated by open green space.

- 4.3.76 The layout of SW(vi) is not influenced heavily by landform or landscape, although clearly the canal offers a physical and perceptual barrier to the extension of South Wigston. The whole of the area is served by estate scaled roads accessed via a loop from Lansdowne Grove only. The north and western parts to this sector, i.e. the 1980s development, takes a rather open and irregular street pattern, with spaces between buildings as influential on the placement of buildings as the roads themselves. Clearly a planned layout, the street hierarchy is organic but influenced by the drainage ditch and need for flood balancing. This area has a mixture of boundary treatments including hedging and timber fencing.
- 4.3.77 The newer development to the south east of the area is of a higher density than the older parts with a tight street pattern and limited off street parking reflecting the need for maximisation of density. Building lines in their strictest sense are not in evidence across this area. Particularly in the 1980s sector development is of medium density but layout with wide grass verges and provision of public open space, whilst of limited amenity value per-se, provides for a sense of openness which actually belies the close proximity of individual housing units which would benefit from soft landscaping and tree planting. Building units themselves are relatively compact two storey dwellings, usually of a semi-detached or short terrace design. Properties here originally did not have fencing or hedging enclosures to front gardens, but many now do, adding to the feeling of enclosure. This scale of build contributes to the open nature from the main distributor road.
- 4.3.78 The newer housing at Pochins Bridge adjacent to Ervin's Lock is of a more recent age and incorporates higher density standards, which have inevitably contributed to a greater sense of enclosure. This is slightly off set by the open space afforded close by, including the canal corridor itself, and the balancing pond open space, which in part separates the latest housing from its 1980s neighbours and allows a pleasing view over the canal, meadows and countryside. Boundary treatments in this development are often defined by the front elevations of the dwellings or flats themselves. Elsewhere house curtilages are defined by simple ironwork fencing to front gardens and less attractive but more substantial timber panel fences to rear gardens. To the East and North the development at Pochins Bridge has been further extended and building work is still continuing. These very recent houses are again of a high density but the addition of small front gardens and no boundary treatments allows the area to have a more open feel. The boundary to the eastern side of the

development has been softened through the planting of a wooded area which curtails views but gives the boundary a natural feel. The boundary to the northern edge currently does end abruptly, but the land slopes down towards Blaby Road and it provides pleasing views over this part of the Borough with the new college building as a focal point.



The most recent housing at Pochin's Bridge is of high density but the small front gardens and lack of boundary treatments reduces the impact of relatively small plot sizes.

- 4.3.79 All phases of development within this area displace distinctive characteristics as expressed above. The earlier housing scheme suggests an attempt to improve on the design interest of the adjacent 1950s properties, particularly in terms of brick colours, dark roof tiles (in comparison to elsewhere in the town) porch and canopy detailing and more complex roof structures through the introduction of additional gables. Combined with the open layout and little in the way of enclosure, it can be seen to have a clear character.
- 4.3.80 Likewise the post 2000 housing to the south east of this area is clearly meeting a need for volume housing delivery but in doing so has adopted interesting design philosophy in terms of building heights (two and three storeys), materials (range of brick and tile types), roof orientations and rotunda detailing to the corners of flats. Given its prominence from the important towpath these features are both necessary and welcome. The most recent housing has further built on the styles of the earlier phases and has adopted interesting design styles, using red bricks with rendering to some houses and interesting brick patterns. Roof styles are again complex with additional gable ends and are tiled either in red or grey tiles. Houses have porch canopies in a variety of styles and bay windows.
- 4.3.81 The recent nature of the whole of this area does not lend itself to an abundance of special features or gems of townscape. Nevertheless the drainage ditch which dissects the area is of some landscape value, (although this could be simply and effectively enhanced through additional tree planting), as is the wooded area to the east of the development. These features, whilst adding interest also have considerable potential as a wildlife corridors from the heart of the town to the canal corridor. Clearly the canal itself, which marks the southern extent of this area, is a major contributor to sense of place, local amenity and wildlife habitat.

- 4.3.82 This area is residential in character across its full extent. It contains no community or retail facilities other than the communal open spaces therein. As a consequence of its predominant residential character and no through route, activity levels of traffic and pedestrians is low.
- 4.3.83 As covered elsewhere in this analysis the age and relative uniformity of the land use has not resulted in strong character, although aspects of the most recent developments has raised the bar to some degree in this respect. Clearly the canal and the open countryside beyond presents the newer development with an attractive setting, and as the development matures with site planting and development of a 'neighbourhood' this perception may improve.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

4.3.84

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Proximity of development to the canal and Sence Valley. Interesting design principles and housing mix in newer development Public open space. Wildlife corridors.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Uninviting quality of public open space in older housing. Poor linkages to towpath over Ervin's lock and at Pochin's Bridge.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Enhancement of public open space, particularly in older area. Soft landscaping and tree planting. Enhance linkages across the canal.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Conflict between increased recreational use of the canal towpath/corridor and the residential amenity of the housing.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE
Facilitate further integration of new urban limits with rural hinterland and maintain diversity in design and form.

Urban Character Area SW(vi): Ervin's Lock Housing – Policy Guidance.

Policy Guidance SW(vi)/ 1 Infill Opportunities

- 4.3.85 SW(vi) consists of two distinct areas of post 1980s housing which contrast both in their design fundamentals and residential densities. The older, post-1980 development is characterised by its organic layout, low density and generous areas of public open space. Whilst clearly a major component of the urban character, such areas of open space may present opportunities for some in-fill development in order to meet district-wide housing targets. It is likely that some of this space has been left undeveloped for drainage purposes, but other areas may be developed without practical difficulties.
- 4.3.86 Should the Borough Council consider that raising the housing density within this sub-area is necessary then design briefs would be required to ensure that the informal layout of the estate is not lost. Moreover, the open space within should not be

diminished to such a degree that those remaining public spaces would become over pressured.

Policy Guidance SW(vi)/ 2 Open Space Management and Biodiversity Enhancements

- 4.3.87 Notwithstanding the potential for infill housing within the older parts of SW(vi), the existing public open space appears to be heavily managed in terms of mowing regimes. The spaces are predominantly of grass, with little in terms of other vegetation cover to add landscape or biodiversity interest to the sub-area. There is clearly an opportunity to apply more creative open space management techniques and planting within these spaces, whilst having regard to issues such as designing out crime and maintaining or improving sense of security of local residents. In doing so objectives could be multifunctional, such as improved habitat and wildlife corridor (particularly along the open drain corridor), enhanced screening of industrial buildings and improved privacy between groups of dwellings in areas where boundary definition to front elevations is often weak.

Policy Guidance SW(vi)/ 3 Landscaping at Ervin's Lock

- 4.3.88 Clearly a very recent area of housing development where a considerable amount of effort has gone into producing a varied and stimulating, relatively high density housing within a sensitive landscape location. It is considered that the council has achieved a good standard of development given the characteristics of the site, and the implementation of advance planting to the east will serve to soften its impact in the future, especially from along the important canal towpath.

Policy Guidance SW(vi)/4 Biodiversity Enhancement

- 4.3.90 The open space to the west of the newest housing at Ervin's Lock represents a key interface between the natural habitats of the Sence Valley and the urban limits of South Wigston. This access point also links with the drainage channel which runs north south and is subject to recommendation SW(vi)/2. Clearly this area offers a critical first stepping stone for wildlife movements into and out of South Wigston, and positive management techniques should be put into place to maximise the effectiveness of this important function.



New housing at Ervin's Lock offers interesting higher density design qualities, although the interface with open countryside to the south remains abrupt.

4.3.91 Furthermore, canal side vegetation on the South Wigston bank of the canal should not be over managed in terms of mowing and seeding as has been evidenced elsewhere within the sub-area. A management plan for the open spaces and canal side should be prepared and implemented within the Ervin's Lock sub-area.

4.4 OVERALL REVIEW OF SOUTH WIGSTON

- 4.4.1 Though physically now merged with the main urban area of Leicester, South Wigston still maintains a separate character and identity. To the north and the west the playing fields, the green corridor of Saffron Road and the tree cover associated with the Young Offenders Institution provides a break in the urban form to give some separation. To the east the railway corridor also provides a distinguishing feature between Wigston and South Wigston. This is positive in some sections due to the tree cover but of a less positive nature in others where it feels like the 'backs' of each settlement have run into each other. The southern edge of the town is bounded by the Grand Union Canal and the rural openness beyond.
- 4.4.2 The town does benefit from its relationship with the River Sence and canal corridor which flows to its immediate south, separating the urban area from pleasing gently rising countryside towards Countesthorpe. However this valuable recreational and biodiversity resource also forms a physical and perceptual barrier to access on foot. Visitor management may need to be carefully managed to maintain a balance between its landscape, biodiversity and recreational value.
- 4.4.3 Due to its later development and its origins as a railway town the urban structure is very different from that of Oadby and Wigston. There is no old settlement core to form the town centre, but rather a more planned late Victorian street pattern. The centre feels more like an urban district centre or local shopping area rather than an autonomous town centre. The main retail area does present a strong architectural context, but insensitive ground level alterations have seriously degraded urban character. It does however have clear gateways at St Thomas's Church to the west and at Blaby Road Park and South Leicestershire College to the east.
- 4.4.4 The area has a high level of mixed use areas including a significant amount of employment, industrial and retail uses, and is distinctly more 'urban' in feel than Oadby or Wigston. In many respects South Wigston displays a balance between socio-economic components which suggests the potential for it to become a self-sufficient, 'sustainable' settlement. Less notable are its environmental components which on the whole are unremarkable, but rarely poor. More recent development clearly reflects an improved consciousness of design and character considerations.
- 4.4.5 It is considered that the character of the area, whilst not unduly degraded could be considerably enhanced through relatively minor undertakings. Attention to the centre facades along Blaby Road should be a focus of regeneration, whilst elsewhere continued sensitive attention to established character should serve to secure long term gradual improvements to the urban character.

PART 5 URBAN LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT: WIGSTON

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 Part 5 of the Report covers the urban character assessment for Wigston. The section is introduced by a description of how the urban form of the settlement has grown and developed since the late 19th Century. The urban character areas are then individually described. The description includes: a summary of the key characteristics of the urban character area, an overall description of the defining characteristics, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis and the likely development pressure and impact of development on the area. Based on these characteristics and the SWOT analysis an overall urban character objective is developed for each area. Finally a number of urban character policy guidance notes are given for each urban character area. The policy guidance is intended to support the achievement of the overall urban character objective. The final part of the section gives an overall review of urban character of the town.

5.2 REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE URBAN AREA OF WIGSTON SINCE 1887

5.2.1 The review is based on the ordnance survey maps of 1886-1888, 1904-1905, 1929-1930, 1950 and the current edition. The full ordnance survey maps are included in the report as Appendix 2.11-2.15, at the end of the main Report.

5.2.2 The first edition ordnance survey map of 1886-1888 shows Wigston as a relatively large village surrounded by fields. An inner area of fields, adjacent to the village are smaller and in the form of long narrow strips. The Midland Railway runs to the south west of the town but is, at this time, far beyond the edge of the built up area. The main roads are already in existence with Aylestone Lane and Leicester Road to the northwest, Oadby Road to the northeast, Station Road to the west, Welford Road to the south and Newton Lane to the east. The racecourse runs from the northern edge of the town northwards to Oadby.

5.2.3 The village street pattern formed a rectangle, the northern edge being formed by Burgess Street, the western by Long Street, the southern by Moat Street and the eastern by Bull Head Street, with Bell Street and Frederick Street cutting across the village. This street pattern is mediaeval and known as 'toft and croft'. The croft was the house and the toft the rectangular area of land worked by the occupants. The centre of the rectangle formed by the streets is full of tofts and many are also seen around the outside. Key features of the town at this date are the orchards and the network of lanes cutting through the centre of the village associated with the croft and tofts. The village appears to consist of three clusters. To the south there is one around All Saints Church and The Manor House, to the east a smaller cluster at Little Hill, the main cluster is to the north with St Wolstan's Church which formed the most intensively developed section of the village.

5.2.4 At this time, there was relatively little development outside the main centre. The largest area is associated with the railway and is along Station Road between the village and the railway line. A regular grid street pattern including Manor Street, Cherry Street, Pullman Street and Clarkes Road has been laid out and the construction of terraces in the area has begun. The area is notated as the Orchard probably due to the former orchards associated with the larger houses of Bushloe

House and Hawthorn Fields, which can still be seen at that date to the east. The Wigston Gas works at the end of Newgate End, the Cemetery along Welford Road and limekilns are shown in the Cooks Lane area.

- 5.2.5 The 1904-1905 ordnance survey map shows very few changes to the village. The area between the village and the railway seems to have become less rural in nature with the loss of orchard planting. This characteristic is repeated to the north of the town at Wigston Fields where the orchards have been cleared, the road improved and housing construction started. There is no general expansion yet of the main settlement but internal intensification is beginning to appear e.g. in the Wistow Road area, Central Avenue, Paddock Street where terraces appear and at Water Lees where a hosiery factory is notated.
- 5.2.6 The 1929-1930 ordnance survey map shows that growth was still restricted to a number of specific areas. There is now considerable development along Station Road, the orchards being completely replaced with terraced housing and some early ribbon development. The two larger houses in the area, Bushloe and Abington (formerly Hawthorn Fields) both remain. The terraces of Central Avenue now stretch eastwards and with the ribbon development along Station Road the area is now joined to the main settlement. There has also been some intensification to the east of the settlement around Little Hill with the construction of houses along Wistow and Harcourt Road and the appearance of ribbon development and factories on Newton Lane and Welford Road. Development has also started at the top of the newly enlarged Horsewell Lane. The northern area of the main settlement, including the Water Lees area, though this name is now lost, has become denser with the development of houses and factories. The first planned estate style development appears to the north of the town at Wigston Fields. Finally a number of fields now become allotments with expansive areas to both the north of Wigston Fields and South of the town around the cemetery.
- 5.2.7 The 1950 ordnance survey map shows some changes to the south and east of the town but the greatest changes are to the north and the west. To the north there is now continuous development with new estates spreading along the Leicester Road linking Wigston, Wigston Fields and the Knighton edge of Leicester. The greatest area of expansion is between the town and the railway with the whole area being laid out for estate development with the long avenues and sweeping crescents typical of the era. Adjacent to the railway the emerging industrial and employment area can be seen. To the east there has been ribbon development along Wigston Road and the start of estates and some ribbon development along Welford Road.
- 5.2.8 Though by 1950 the northern part of the town has seen some expansion and intensification the southern part appears to have been very much as it was in the early 20th Century. The southern section of the rectangle still open and in use as allotments and Moat Street still forming the southern boundary of the built up area. The area between the southern edge of the town and the railway and the area to the east of the town remain undeveloped.
- 5.2.9 Since 1950 the town has seen incredible growth, first into the late 1960s with the consolidation of the estate development to the west, northwest, north and northeast joining Wigston to Leicester and effectively, apart from narrow strips, joining it to South Wigston and Oadby. The next stages in development were estates to the southern and eastern fringes with expansion to the south halted when the edge of

the urban area reached the railway line. Expansion to the east and south east is now well into the formerly rural areas beyond the town.

5.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE URBAN LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES OF WIGSTON AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A shows the urban character areas of Wigston.

Urban Character Area W(i): St Wistan's

Defining Characteristics

5.3.1 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area W(i) are:

- Mixed use with larger scale retail and some residential in the form of low rise flats and terraced houses;
- Dominance of roads and traffic in parts of the Character Area, for example Bull Head Street and Moat Street;
- High level of 1970s re-development over the older town centre;
- Lack of street trees and vegetation;
- Some areas of poor quality public realm, however Bell Street has undergone a recent improvement scheme;
- Backland car parks and alleyways.



A view of the main retail area along Long Street.

Townscape Characteristics

- 5.3.2 This character area is based around the northern part of the town centre and includes the main retail area and the residential fringes to the west and the north of the centre. There is no homogenous character across this area and the different sub-areas are detailed. The argument for constituting the character area is that there are a number of features that the sub-areas share including: unplanned expansion, seventies re-development, the non-estate nature of housing and the dominance of traffic and roads.
- 5.3.3 The area retains primarily the street pattern formed by the centre of the original rectangular village settlement with Long Street, Wakes Road and Bull Head Street forming the northern section of the rectangle. Smaller and less regular streets spread out from the main street but these often end in dead ends, ignored by the

later estates that developed beyond them. This combined with sporadic development has made the residential fringes of the area disorientating in streetscape terms. The streets internal to the rectangle including Bell Street, now fully pedestrianised, and Frederick Street, form the main shopping area of the town. Bull Head Street dominates the eastern fringe of the area.

- 5.3.4 Some parts of the character area retain a sense of scale and density appropriate to a small town centre. These include the residential area to the west with Victoria Street and the eastern end of Aylestone Lane, and the small residential area to the north and east of St Wistan's Church including Church Nook. In other parts of the area, though, this character has been lost. These include the northern fringe of the centre and along Bull Head Street; the large areas of car park and larger retail developments; and the low rise flats on Boulter Crescent. The townscape around the flats on Boulter Crescent is very open as the land has started to rise to the east and there are no boundaries or gardens to offset the increased exposure. There is some tree cover which softens the hard buildings a little and the area would benefit from increased tree planting or soft landscaping. There are no key views in the area apart from streetscene views of mixed quality. The only landmark in the area is St Wistan's Church. The view along Bull Head Street is poor in sections with open frontages⁷ and poor quality buildings.



View of low rise residential flats on Boulter Crescent.



View to St Wolstan's Church from the residential area to the east.

- 5.3.5 The area does not have a strong or quality townscape character. Despite being at the heart of the old settlement local distinctiveness has been lost due to re-

development particularly in the 1970s. There are a number of different building styles including flat roofed 1970s retail units, low rise 1970s flats set in open plan grounds, 1970s bungalows, Victorian terraces, larger scale supermarkets (likely to be from the 1980s or 1990s), and large open car parks characteristic of the last twenty years. The Police Station and Library are distinctive buildings in a style that may not appeal to all tastes, but the library in particular could age well and appreciation for the building may increase.

5.3.6 The area appears to have had a mix of functions, at least dating back to the early 20th Century including housing, employment and retail. In this way the area serves vital functions being at the heart of the highway circulation system, providing car parks and larger retail outlets that strengthen the economic viability of the town. The retail streets within the area seem bustling but the northern and eastern fringes are dominated by traffic. This functionality however, has resulted in a degradation of the character of the area. The public realm is dated with little in the way of tree planting and in some areas of a poor quality e.g. along the alleyways that run from Long Street into the car parks. From the western edge of the town this part of the centre is easily and pleasantly accessible and integrated with the residential areas beyond but along the northern and eastern fringes Bull Head Street forms a major barrier. The only parts of the area that retain some sense of distinctiveness and quality of streetscape are the very small island of Church Nook and St Wolstan's Close and the Spa Lane Conservation Area.

5.3.7 The central section of this area is designated as primary retail area. The site on the corner of Paddock Street and Bull Head Street and St Wolstan's Church and yard is of potential archaeological interest. There is a small Conservation Area that includes Spa Lane and Mowsley End, designated for its relevance to Wigston's working past.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.8

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Functional area providing shopping and car parking. St Wistan's Church. Spa Lane Conservation Area. Public Realm on Bell Street since pedestrianisation in 2016.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Loss of street enclosure in some areas. Lack of character, quality design and distinctiveness. Impact of Bull Head Street due to the volume of traffic and as a barrier to pedestrians. Lack of coherence. Poor quality public realm. Bleak housing in some areas.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Further public realm improvements. Continued town centre re-development. New uses to improve townscape. Increase in town centre fringe housing. Planting of Street Trees.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Further increases in scale and street pattern. Loss of street pattern.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES

To prevent further deterioration in character, repair the character of selected areas and improve the overall quality and appearance of the area in accordance with the Council's adopted Local Plan.

Urban Character Area W(i): St Wistan's – Policy Guidance.

5.3.9 The following policy recommendations are made in the understanding that this area of the town serves a number of key economic and transport functions.

Policy Guidance W(i)/ 1 Relationship to urban character area W(ii) All Saints

5.3.10 There has been, apart from small pockets around St Wistan's and Spa Lane considerable loss of local character in the northern part of the town centre. In light of this it is recommended that this area of the town should be allowed to develop a new character rather than try and restore the former one. This character should involve the re-interpretation of local architectural features to accommodate the functions required in this area. A good example of this is the rejuvenation of Bell Street through the full pedestrianisation and public realm improvements including the pocket park at the Bull Head Street end. This provides a small area of tree and container planting and affords a greatly improved view towards Bull Head Street.



View of the northern section of the town centre where the character of the original town has been lost.

Policy Guidance W(i)/ 2 Infill Opportunities

5.3.11 There has been some loss of enclosure in this area and infill of sites. The town centre location is sustainable in terms of transport and services. The potential for further residential and retail uses should be encouraged in order to maintain the vitality of the character of this area of the town centre in accordance with the adopted Local Plan and other local policy and guidance.

Policy Guidance W(i)/ 3 Active Frontages

5.3.12 There has been a loss of active frontages in parts of the area, eg sections of Bull Head Street, and this should be restored through refurbishment and infill where possible.

Policy Guidance W(i)/ 4 Improvements to areas of low rise flats

5.3.13 There are two areas of low-rise flats in the area, one off Junction Road and one along Boulter Crescent. External refurbishment and public realm improvements would be of benefit to the character of these flats particularly through the softening of the external appearance of the flats, potentially by the introduction of boundary treatments and tree planting.



The low rise residential flats along Junction Road could benefit from public realm improvements.

Policy Guidance W(i)/ 5 Public Realm Improvements

5.3.14 The area could benefit from improvements to the public realm similar to those introduced on Bell Street. Traffic calming, but not pedestrianisation should be considered for the northern section of Long Street. The alleyways and car parks throughout the area could be improved, in particular those to the east of Long Street and the Junction Road area.

Policy Guidance W(i)/ 6 Bull Head Street

5.3.15 This street currently serves as a by pass for the town. It appears that over recent years the town has turned its back on the street resulting in vacant sites and properties and loss of active frontages. The eastern fringe of the road seems to have suffered in particular, being outside the town centre boundary and not offering an attractive residential environment. The restoration of frontages and infilling of sites along Bull Head Street should be encouraged and the potential for further tree planting should be explored.



View of Bull Head Street



Bell Street towards the Pocket Park, following Public Realm Improvements provides a busy, vibrant centre to the town.

Urban Character Area W(ii): All Saints

Defining Characteristics

5.3.16 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area W(ii) are:

- Retains a distinct local character and historical references;
- Mixed use including small residential, civic, educational, community, religious and green open space;
- Retention of old street pattern and scale and a range of buildings of historical interest, back lanes and undeveloped central area with green space;
- A range of distinctive older buildings, some of which are of historical interest;
- Open space, green frontages and mature trees contribute to character;
- Retention of appropriate scale and sense of enclosure;
- High level of townscape detail e.g. walls, gardens, trees building design and features.



The view of the Southern Town Centre along Long Street.

Townscape Characteristics

5.3.17 This character area includes the southern part of the town centre including All Saints and The Lanes Conservation Areas. A high quality attractive townscape retaining the street pattern and scale of the late 19th Century village defines this area and provides the Borough with one of its highest quality townscapes.

5.3.18 There are three types of street pattern to be found in the area, all of a small to medium scale with good enclosure due to buildings fronting the street, and the presence of walls or hedges. The dominant street pattern consists of the southern section of the old croft and toft pattern formed by Long Street and Moat Street to the west and south. The character area extends to Bull Head Street, which forms the eastern edge. The northern edge of the area runs along Paddock Street which was originally one of the lanes internal to the croft and toft area. The character area contains a number of these lanes, Blunts Lane, Long Lane and Ross's Lane. Together with the remaining open spaces, including Manchester Gardens Allotments and The Peace Memorial Park, they give the area a distinctive character with strong historical references. In the south west of the area there is an intricate street

pattern around Newgate End and Moat Street, which contains the Manor House and its associated open space. The exceptional quality of the buildings in this area and the level of tree cover retain the village feel. The final street pattern is formed by the first section of Central Avenue, one of the first stages of expansion of the settlement in the early 20th Century. The character area is visible from the higher ground to the east of the town giving views of All Saints Church spire surrounded by greenery. There are also views into the southern part of the character area from Seaton Road and the northern part of Launceston Road. Views out of the area are limited. Internally there a number of good views in the area e.g. looking south down Long Street towards All Saints Church; looking along Moat Street and Bushloe end; along Central Avenue; along Long Lane; and down Newgate End. The higher quality buildings in the area also provide good short-range views e.g. The United Reformed Church, with its distinctive pillars and The Manor House.



View down Blunts Lane towards Manchester Gardens Allotments.

5.3.19 The area has good physical and visual connections with the residential areas to the south and to the west and to the main retail area of the town centre to the north. To the eastern fringe however this connectivity is poorer with a weaker street pattern and Bull Head Street forming a physical and visual barrier.



The junction of Station Road and Long Street forms an attractive and subtle gateway to the town centre.

5.3.20 There are a number of different architectural styles in this character area. In All Saints Conservation Area the finest examples of the local vernacular are found. The buildings are two or three storeys in a strong red/orange brick with slate or tile roofs. The emphasis of the buildings is on the horizontal as they have long frontages with narrow depth. Some of them still retain their high enclosing brick walls and brick paved yards. The area of development off Davenport Road appears to have interpreted this vernacular very successfully to produce a quality high-density housing development to meet contemporary needs. Along Central Avenue and Paddock Street there are good quality early 20th Century terraces in red/orange brick with slate roofs and a good level of detail e.g. bay window features and boundary walls. The former factory on Paddock Street has been converted to housing, but has retained the earlier character of the building and the area.

5.3.21 Building styles in the rest of the area are mixed. Along Long Street, there are a variety of small scale functional employment buildings from the late 19th and early 20th Century, which give the area a slightly 'cottage industry, mixed-use' feel, rather than the more traditional 'village' feel found in the Newgate End area. Whilst it is positive to see mixed-use development along Long Street, some of the newer development, has damaged the character of the area. There are also some good examples of 'Art and Craft' inspired buildings along Long Street with a high level of intricate detail. There has been some infill housing along Long Street, some of this has had a detrimental impact e.g. Elizabeth Court. In the far south east of the area and along Blunts Lane, late housing and not of the quality found in the rest of the character area can be seen. The lane-based street pattern, scale, quirkiness of the walls backing on to the Lane and the Chapel on Cross Street, however, mean that this area is pulled into the wider character.



View along Long Street showing the variety of building styles in the character area.

5.3.22 The area retains a wide and lively mixture of uses with housing, religious buildings, schools and nurseries, some civic and retail use, residential homes and leisure use, health and vets surgeries and a remnant of employment use. This mixture of uses retains different styles of buildings that is a key to the character. There is a good level of pedestrian activity and though traffic levels are medium to high, it does not dominate the area, except at peak times.

5.3.23 This character area retains a strong and distinctive functional sense of place currently fed by both the buildings and the uses. The presence and character of the local open spaces and allotments e.g. the Peace Memorial Gardens, Manchester Gardens Allotments and Manor House Orchard contribute to the character. A key feature of the sense of place of the area is that a sense of practicality and individualism is retained that links the area back to the original settlement and the presence of the Lanes and Manchester Gardens

5.3.24 There are a number of designations in this area. Conservation areas include The Lanes and All Saints, the latter of which contains areas of archaeological interest and some areas of valued open space.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.25

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Street pattern and the Lanes. Open space with Peace Memorial Park and Manchester Gardens Allotments. Distinctive quality buildings and Churches. Mixture of uses. Tree cover. Permeability from western and southern residential areas.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Dilution of character and poor design of some infill. Proximity to Bull Head Street which creates a barrier to the east and access into the town centre.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Use of infill to restore character. Regeneration or conversion of factories to residential uses. Increased planting of street trees.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Increased traffic, congestion and street parking. Inappropriate infill. Loss of tree cover. Development pressure due to town centre location. Homogenisation due to pressure for residential and loss of diversity of character.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES
Conserve distinctive sense of place and mixture of uses and enhance weaker parts of the character area

Urban Character Area W(ii): All Saints – Policy Guidance.

5.3.26 This character area contains some of the most distinctive and high quality townscape in the Borough. The majority of the area has Conservation Area status so is already afforded the protection it requires.

Policy Guidance W(ii)/ 1 Retain and enhance the distinctive pattern of streets, lanes and open space

5.3.27 The street pattern and open space are critical to the character of the area and should be afforded a high degree of protection. Any loss of street pattern, lanes or open space would represent a considerable loss to the environmental capital of the area.



Manchester Gardens Allotments.

Policy Guidance W(ii)/ 2 Re-introduce the local vernacular

5.3.28 The area has a mixture of building styles including the local vernacular and good examples of late 19th and 20th Century terraces, civic, retail and employment use buildings. There is enough character left in the area for it to benefit from new buildings reflecting the original vernacular. New buildings could also reflect the later building styles but this is probably harder to control and would introduce another style into the area.



Unique development leading off Long Street.

Policy Guidance W(ii)/ 3 Prevent homogenisation through residential infill

5.3.29 The area retains a small scale and an intricacy of uses that give a sense of practicality to the area that is critical to the character. There are a number of sites that present infill opportunities and there is no doubt that there is pressure for new residential development similar to that at Kingswood Court. In order to retain the character of the area a balance should be kept, if possible between non-residential and residential uses.



New residential development on Kingswood Court is pleasant but further similar developments could erode the character of the area.

Policy Guidance W(ii)/ 4 Protect views north and south along Long Street

5.3.30 The views, both north and south along Long Street are both good views, with the view south towards All Saints being one of the best townscape views in the Borough. These should be protected where possible as new development is considered.

Policy Guidance W (ii)/ 5 Restoration of lane character and frontages

5.3.31 Where the opportunity arises, future development should look to restore the scale of and enhance the character of the frontages to the network of Lanes that exist in the character area.

Urban Character Area W(iii): Gilliver Hill

Defining Characteristics

5.3.32 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area W(iii) are:

- Mixture of different 20th and 21st Century residential styles;
- Street pattern based on original settlement;
- Key transport corridors with green frontages;
- Retains non-estate character.



View west east along Moat Street showing the early 20th Century expansion of the town.

Townscape Characteristics

5.3.33 This area is an area of relatively early primarily residential expansion to the south of the town. The street pattern is dominated by the main streets of Moat Street, Newton Lane and Welford Road all of which were present in the late 19th Century and now form main transport and access routes for the town. Between Welford Road and Newton Lane is an area of smaller organic streets e.g. Wistow Road, again the majority of which were present by 1900. In the west of the area is the more regular street pattern of Horsewell Lane, Davenport Road and Falmouth Drive which was implemented to facilitate the expansion of the town in the early 20th Century. The area contains a major crossroads where Bull Head Street, Newton Lane, Welford Road and Moat Street meet. The transport corridors, apart from the crossroads are actually a positive feature of the area, with both Welford Road and Newton Lane being generally very green, and Newton Lane and Moat Street providing positive viewing corridors to the south of the town centre and to All Saints Church. The area generally has a good sense of enclosure given by the fall in the land, greenery and a small to medium scale street pattern.



Early 20th Century ribbon development showing the green route created by trees, front gardens and verges.

- 5.3.34 The area contains a mixture of housing types. The oldest are the terraces and semi-detached found in the Wistow Road and Harcourt Road area. These are of brick and slate construction but the brick colour seems to have moved away from the clear orange/ red of the early terraces, found in the southern part of the town centre, to the redder, duller brick colour which is less distinctive. This area though does retain a village feel probably due to the street pattern and features such as the small open space at the junction of Wistow and Harcourt Road. Along the northern edge of Newton Lane and the Western side of Welford Road is 1930s ribbon development. Large 1930s houses, detached and semi-detached are generally set back from the road in long rectangular plots. They have a mixture of design features that include brick, slate, tile and render. A key contribution to the character of the area are the trees and vegetation contained in the front gardens and the presence of grass verges. Along Horsewell Lane, Davenport Road and Falmouth Drive are found early public housing with utilitarian housing in reddish brick set in quite a stark streetscape. There is some later housing development of a variety of styles in the south east of the area e.g. Stanhope Road and some 1970s or 1980s flats at the junction of Newton Lane and Bull Head Street which have a negative impact on the area.
- 5.3.35 A new development has been built off Moat Street at Peacock Place. This development has incorporated many characteristics traditional to the north of the character area. The houses have been built using orange/red brick, render, brick detailing and wooden porches. The houses are built into short terraces around a square giving the area an open, village square effect.



New development at Peacock Place showing traditional features.



The northern end of Horsewell Street showing the ribbon development of public housing from the early 20th Century. The development to the left of the photograph is of private properties

5.3.36 Though this area does not have a strong character, it remains distinct from the larger scale later estate development and retains a remnant of the small town atmosphere. The original street pattern, some of the housing types and views link it to the southern part of the town centre and the Station Road area but the townscape quality here is not as high quality or as distinctive.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.35

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Tree cover and green transport corridors. Proximity to town centre. Retains small town non estate feel.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Not a coherent area in townscape terms – made up of remnants. Bull Head Street junction.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Newton Lane and Welford Road could provide stronger green corridors. Strengthen links with All Saints character area.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Any road or junction widening would impact negatively. Loss of tree cover. Increased volume of traffic and congestion on the Bull Head Street/ Moat Street/ Newton lane Junction.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES
Maintain mature urban residential character

Urban Character Area W(iii): Gilliver Hill – Policy Guidance

Policy Guidance W(iii)/ 1 Style of Residential Infill

5.3.38 This area is of a lower quality townscape than the southern town centre ~~south~~ but shares some characteristics. Some local character and mixture of uses are retained. Any new build should reflect the local vernacular in order to retain and strengthen the area's links with the All Saints character area.

Policy Guidance W(iii)/ 2 Enhance Public Realm and Highway.

5.3.39 The public realm in this area is generally poor and efforts should be made to improve it through de-cluttering of the streets and seeking opportunities to introduce boundary treatments, trees, shrubs and public art.

Urban Character Area W(iv): Guthlaxton

Defining Characteristics

5.3.40 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area W(iv) are:

- Numerous mature tree to road frontage creating green corridor;
- Campus feel given by medium scale educational and civic buildings set in grounds and playing fields;
- Mature band of trees and woodland along the railway;
- Expansive open space created by school playing fields;
- Medium range views along;
- Medium/large scale relative to the Borough.



View along Station Road westwards showing the green route created by mature trees and hedges.

Townscape Characteristics

5.3.41 A key characteristic of this area is the scale. The area is dominated by Station Road, which is relatively wide and lined by large mature trees. Though there is some smaller scale residential development the dominant buildings are of a medium to large-scale, relative for the Borough, and set back from the road in 'grounds'. Associated with the schools is a large area of open space. This open space and the long straight, flat nature of Station Road provides some medium range views along this road and out into the open space of the school fields. There is a good sense of enclosure along Station Road created by the trees; this balances well with the more open nature of the schools and grounds to the south. The western edge of the area has a green boundary created by the trees and woodland along the railway. The trees along Station Road and the railway create a green corridor and gateway to the town, which is a positive feature.

5.3.42 The main architectural style in the area is that of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s buildings. There are a number of educational facilities present, as well as a new Council owned Leisure Centre. These are low-rise flat roofed buildings, mainly pale in colour, dominated by glass and horizontal windows.



Newly Built Leisure centre showing modern contemporary design.

To the north of the road land has been redeveloped to provide a new medical facility and housing on the site of the former South Leicestershire College. Older building styles are found in the Victorian, Grade II Listed, Borough Council Offices, formerly Bushloe House, which is a pale buff brick and some 1930s ribbon development to the east of the area. It is the mature tree planting that holds the character of this area together. The orchards shown on the late 19th and early 20th Centuries are not apparent in the area today.



The western end of the area showing the high quality streetscape.

5.3.43 The dominant education and civic uses also set this area apart, providing a distinct scale and feel to the area. Though Wigston and South Wigston are joined, as access between them is primarily along Station Road this area, this along with the railway line actually functions as a green wedge between the towns.



The new medical facility on the site of the former College

5.3.44 This area could come under pressure for development due to the need to expand the existing uses, likely land ownership pattern, large sites, playing fields and proximity to the town centre.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.45

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Schools/Colleges and their playing fields. Trees creating green corridor and gateway. Civic/public presence.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Heavy traffic along Station Road.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Quality new development. Strengthen pedestrian/cycle links and safety along Station Road. Increased tree planting.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Loss of tree cover. Intensification of land use. Loss of distinctiveness.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES
Maintain distinctive scale and mixed use character and conserve and enhance tree cover

Urban Character Area W(iv): Guthlaxton – Policy Guidance

Policy Guidance W(iv)/ 1 Retain and Enhance Tree Cover and Hedges

5.3.46 A critical feature of the character of the area is the trees and hedges that line Station Road, the playing fields and the railway corridor. These should be retained and enhanced. The tree cover weakens to the west of the area and opportunities to increase the tree cover in this section should be sought.

Policy Guidance W(iv)/ 2 Retain Distinctive Scale

- 5.3.47 This area is distinguished from other areas of the Borough through having a larger scale to many of the buildings, plot size and tree cover. Some of the smaller scale ribbon development to the east of the area retains this feel as the buildings are set well back from the road and have large trees to their frontages. The area could accommodate different uses as long as the scale is maintained.

Policy Guidance W(iv)/ 3 Protect Open Space to South of the Area

- 5.3.48 Ideally this open space should be protected from invasive development on the fringes. If development does occur then it should reflect the scale and level of tree cover found along Station Road.

Urban Character Area W(v): The Orchards

Defining Characteristics

5.3.49 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area W(v) are:

- Post war street pattern of long avenues and shallow crescents;
- Homogenous utilitarian post war housing types;
- Terraces;
- Privet hedges and wooden fencing boundaries;
- Lack of street trees;
- On street parking;
- Industrial estate to the western fringe;
- On street parking.



Central Avenue, showing mid 20th Century housing.



Cherry Street showing late 19th Century terraces. The street forms part of a grid of planned expansion laid out in the late 19th Century.

Townscape Characteristics

- 5.3.50 This character area consists of two areas of early expansion of the town. The first dates back to the early 20th Century when an area of regular planned streets, Clarkes Road, Cherry Street, Pullman Road and Manor Street was laid out adjacent to the railway. This area was gradually developed with regular plain brick and slate roofed terraces fronting directly on to the street. In the post war years long sweeping crescents e.g. West Avenue were laid out to form a public housing estate. Central Avenue was extended from the town centre to link this new estate. The streets with early 20th Century terraces feel enclosed due to the street width and continuous building line. Other areas feel less enclosed e.g. Central Avenue is a wide residential road and lacks street trees. The flatter landform of the underlying landscape is evident in the character of this area.
- 5.3.41 The core of the area has a strong and distinctive character within the Borough that is given by the buildings. The houses are generally in a dark red brick with red or grey tile roofs. They tend to be very plain with only small external porch roofs and small projecting window bays. The buildings lack the render typical of many residential areas of the Borough. There are areas of semis and terraces but no detached houses in the area. The semis have the generous plot sizes typical of the time with medium sized front gardens and longer back gardens. The post war terraces are in smaller plot sizes but retain both front and back gardens. Boundary treatments are privet hedges and wooden fences. There is a lack of open space, street and garden trees and even the background or skyline tree cover, found in other areas of the Borough, is not apparent.



The character of the area is improved along the southern fringe adjacent to Station Road along Clarks Road.

- 5.3.52 The character area has a strong, if somewhat spartan sense of place. Midland Cottages and the Public House in the southwestern corner of the area, along the railway, are designated as a Conservation Area due to its characteristic style associated with the railway. The impact of the railway is not apparent on the rest of the area. The area is unlikely to see high development pressure.



Midland Cottages Conservation Area.



The character of the area can be spartan as shown by this view along Warwick Road.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.53

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Distinct strong, if somewhat spartan, character.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Lack of tree cover.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Formal tree planting and soft landscaping could improve the character of the area.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Individualisation of properties could soften and break down the uniformity of the houses which is the source of the areas character.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES
Maintain distinctive mature residential character

Urban Character Area W(v): The Orchards – Policy Guidance.

Policy Guidance W(v)/ 1 Retain and Enhance Distinctive Character

- 5.3.54 This area has a distinctive and strong character and enhancement of this character should be sought through subtle soft landscaping and attention to pockets of land that could be developed as infill sites. This character should be maintained i.e. the ornamentation and differentiation of residential properties should be resisted. Any greenery should take the form of formal trees or conifers or hedging. Boundary treatments of wooden fencing and hedging should be maintained. There are issues in this area though as it has no special status and there may be pressure from residents to want the character of the area changed and softened. In addition many of the features that add to the character are high maintenance e.g. hedging.

Urban Character Area W(vi): Gold Hill

Defining Characteristics

5.3.56 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area W(vi) are:

- Identified as a core 'employment area';
- Employment and light industrial uses;
- Larger block and building size in comparison to residential;
- Strong horizontal emphasis and flat roofs to buildings;
- Lack of greenery and vegetation;
- 2/3 storey functional buildings.



The Eastern fringe of the area along West Avenue showing mid 20th Century light Industrial development.

Townscape Characteristics

5.3.57 This character area consists of an area of industrial and employment use that has grown up along the railway line. The area forms a long strip between the railway and the residential character area of The Orchards, detailed above. The main access is from West Avenue and Pullman Road that form the eastern boundary. The buildings along this fringe are medium in scale, generally in an orange brick and date from the thirties through to the present day. The flat roofs and use of large windows give the buildings a very regular and horizontal feel. Many of these buildings are accessed directly from West Avenue and Pullman Road some having wide forecourts. The frontage to West Avenue and Pullman Road is relatively bleak and functional lacking in trees or boundary treatments, however, signage appears to have been kept to a minimum reducing the impact on views from the adjacent residential area. The estate has a small section of frontage to the north to Aylestone Lane. This is softer due to the presence of grass verges, tree planting and more contemporary buildings.



Northern fringe of the area to Aylestone Lane showing later 20th Century properties with trees and verges giving a softer aspect.

5.3.58 There are two access routes into the estate. Viking Road leads off Aylestone Lane into the northern area but is not a through road. Chartwell Drive leads off West Avenue and serves the southern section of the estate. The western edge of the estate is larger in scale with some more contemporary buildings in non-traditional materials. The flatness of the land and the smaller scale buildings to the east hide these from the residential area and the full impact can only be seen from the road bridges across the railway.

5.3.59 The entire area is designated as an identified 'Employment Area' in the Local Plan. There is likely to be ongoing but slow development pressure on this area, as some of the employment provision becomes obsolete. There could be pressure for an increase in scale of any new development.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.60

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Larger higher impact more utilitarian buildings screened from adjacent residential areas. Northern frontage to Aylestone Lane is reasonable with good boundary treatments.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Eastern fringe impacts on adjacent residential areas.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Softening of frontages.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Changes of use from employment uses. Proliferation of signage and advertising. Increase in scale of new development.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES
Maintain reasonable quality functional character but soften impact of eastern fringe on adjacent residential areas

Urban Character Area W(vi): Gold Hill – Policy Guidance.

Policy Guidance W(vi)/ 1 Scale and height of future development

5.5.61 The landform of the wider area gives a limited visual envelope into this employment area and the area therefore provides a suitable one for such uses within the Borough. The impact of the area on the residential area to the east is also limited due to there being older smaller scale buildings along the eastern fringe of the estate.

5.3.62 In order to maintain this level of impact any redevelopment that involves larger scale buildings should be restricted to the western fringe of the site. In addition the height of any new larger development along the western fringe should also be maintained to current heights. An aspiration for the eastern fringe would be to develop a buffer strip of trees and planting to improve the outlook from the adjacent housing.

Policy Guidance W(vi)/ 2 Maintain Control of Signage and Advertisements

5.3.63 The public realm to the frontages of the estate is currently well maintained and signage and advertisements for premises and businesses is unobtrusive. This reduces the impact of the estate and the control should be maintained.

Urban Character Area W(vii): The Poplars

Defining Characteristics

5.3.64 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Area W(viii) are:

- Regular street pattern of long straight streets and crescents;
- Houses form regular building line to the street frontage;
- Presence of greenery as small garden trees and garden vegetation;
- Medium size and regular plots in relation to house type;
- Front gardens with low wall boundary treatment;
- Subtle backdrop of greenery by railway in the west, racecourse in the north and country park in the east;
- Number of housing types in built runs;
- Large backland areas of back gardens;
- Schools on the urban fringe.



Grasmere Road showing the character of the eastern section of the character area.



Shakerdale Road in the western section of the area.

Townscape Characteristics

5.3.65 This character area is relatively large sweeping across the entire northern part of the town and to the west and is likely to extend out to the north of the Borough into Leicester. The area represents the rapid residential expansion that took place in the 1950s and early 1960s. The southern boundary in the west is formed by Aylestone Lane, from which the area sweeps round the town centre to Leicester Road. The section from Leicester Road to the racecourse has the Green Wedge as its northern boundary. The section east of the racecourse also has the Green Wedge as its northern and eastern boundary. The housing along Mere Road forms the southern boundary in the east. Street widths and pavement widths are generous. Some of the inner areas are relatively close to the town centre but due to the impact of Leicester Road and Bull Head Street feel very disconnected. The areas to the east of Carlton Drive are probably the only ones within easy walking distance of the town centre. There are some views out of the urban area into the Green Wedge e.g. along Kensington Drive and Winslow Road but they are limited. The trees and hedgerow trees along the urban fringe edge can however be seen on the skyline from many parts of the area.



Characteristic view within the area of the green wedge or rural fringe from Kensington Road.

5.3.66 The area has a planned estate street pattern with larger feeder roads with smaller streets and some cul-de-sacs. Block sizes in the area vary but long narrow block shapes are common with smaller squarer blocks as infill. Housing is built facing the street and a regular building line is generally maintained. This gives a sense of enclosure, which is enforced by the use of low boundary walls and the presence of hedges and fences in the area. Plot sizes are still regular and generous giving the houses a medium to small front garden and a larger back garden. The large back gardens of some areas create large backland areas. There are some stretches of verges and street trees but these are rare with small garden trees and larger shrubs supplying greenery.

5.3.67 The predominant house type is semi-detached although there are also detached, terraced and bungalows in the area. The older buildings in the area use an orange/red/ brown brick but the later houses start to use stronger orange and buff bricks. Roofs are pitched and generally in grey tile. The older houses have some detailing e.g. storm porches, rounded front doorways, bay windows and forward facing eaves. The later houses tend to be plainer. Many of the properties have off

street parking provision reducing the impact of vehicles on the streetscene. Open space does not really contribute to the character of the area. The main open space is Willow Park along Aylestone Lane, which provides a valuable break in the urban fabric. Other open space is hidden e.g. the allotments off Westfield Avenue and the recreation ground off Thirlemere Road. The public realm within the area is well maintained. Areas of trees associated with the frontages and school grounds provide valuable tree cover within the area.



Mid 20th Century detached and semi detached housing showing characteristic residential design for the area on Challaston Road

5.3.68 This area provides a pleasant residential environment but lacks character and distinctiveness. Due to the quality and type of housing area, open space and infill plots are likely to come under pressure for development. The urban fringe of the area is protected from development as all of it bounds on to the Green Wedge with a small section adjacent to Knighton Park.

5.3.69 There are three distinctive sub-areas within the area. The Oval and Granville Road which are small areas of detached houses set in larger plots along tree lined streets, and an area of small detached and semi-detached new development along the southern end of the racecourse.



The Oval showing detached houses in large plots along tree lined streets.



Granville Road showing large plots along tree lined streets.



New residential infill on the former Racecourse.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.72

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Area under little pressure to change. Biodiversity in large backgardens and along urban fringe.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Leicester Road is a hard traffic dominated environment.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Planting to soften Leicester Road.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Poor infill and/or change of use. Loss of open space to development.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES
Maintain mature suburban residential estate character

Urban Character Area W(vii): The Poplars – Policy Guidance.

5.3.73 Due to the almost homogenous residential use, plot size and land ownership pattern there is probably little development pressure in the area apart from small infill and

windfall sites. The area, at its north and eastern edge bounds on to playing fields and to the Green Wedge area so development on the fringe is also unlikely to occur.

Policy Guidance W(vii)/ 1 Infill development

- 5.3.74 Any infill development should respect the features of the area: eg use of paler buff and brown brick colours, respect the regular frontages and plot shapes, use of formal planting, verges and trees, use of low walls as boundary features and use of design features such as bays and porch and entrance features. In parts of the area three storeys may be appropriate.

Policy Guidance W(vii)/ 2 Tree Planting to Leicester Road

- 5.3.75 The area has a number of major roads running through it. Oadby Road and Aylestone Lane are both softened by verge roadside tree planting and garden trees and vegetation. Leicester Road is a wider road with central and edge verges along some stretches. This road corridor would benefit from additional tree planting.

Policy Guidance W(vii)/3 Maintain Tree Cover

- 5.3.76 The mature tree cover that exists along the length of Granville Road and The Oval represent a important urban treescapes within Wigston. Where not already in place, the maintenance of tree cover should be encouraged through the implementation of Tree Preservation Orders to ensure good maintenance and future-well being of these significant urban assets and wildlife habitats.

Policy Guidance W(vii)/4 Maintain Large Plot Sizes

- 5.3.77 Both Granville Road and the Oval are of historic significance to Wigston. They both have large plot sizes which contribute greatly to their character and historic integrity and should be sought to be retained and the breakdown of plot sizes avoided.

Urban Character Areas W(viii): Wigston Meadows and W(ix): Little Hill

5.3.76 The character areas of Wigston Meadows and Little Hill share enough urban character features to justify their being described in the same section. Though due to their different physical locations and landform characteristics, they have been given individual names and urban character area numbers. The key difference between the areas is that Wigston Meadows lies on the higher ground to the east of Wigston, whereas Little Hill lies on the flat land to the south of Wigston.

Defining Characteristics

5.3.77 The defining characteristics of Urban Character Areas W(viii) and W(ix) are:

- Non traditional street pattern and break down in street pattern;
- Small block size or houses in small groups;
- Loss of solid building line addressing street frontage;
- Housing from late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s form the edge of the urban area adjacent to the urban fringe;
- Mixture of housing types – detached/semi-detached/bungalow/terrace;
- 1970s housing design features – larger roofs, dormers, large windows, white boarding;
- Some greenery as garden trees and vegetation;
- Levels impact on area viii with loss of enclosure towards the east on to the higher ground with some views back over Wigston;
- In the Little Hill area the flatness of the landform is evident;
- Subtle green backdrop formed by railway for Little Hill and the Green Wedge for Wigston Meadows;
- Both have small focus area of shops/pub/bus stops.



View showing the Key Characteristics of Wigston Meadows.



View of Horsewell Lane showing key characteristics of Little Hill.

Townscape Characteristics

5.3.78 These two character areas are physically separate. The Wigston Meadows urban character area lies to the east of the town centre. It is accessed from either Bull Head Street or from Newton Lane. It is a relatively large estate dating from the 1970s to the 1990s. As one moves eastwards through the estate the land rises noticeably giving some good views west towards the town centre and the spire of All Saints Church, a valuable visual link to the historic settlement centre. The eastern edge of the estate is bounded by the rural fringe and the Green Wedge. There are very limited views out into the rural fringe but it is evident in a skyline view of trees along the urban edge. The western areas of the estate are relatively close to the Town Centre but Bull Head Street may serve as a barrier for pedestrians. Newton Lane, with its good tree cover and hedgerows, to the south of the estate, provides an attractive frontage.



There are a number of good views of Wigston town centre from within Wigston Meadow.

5.3.79 Little Hill is an estate dating from the late 1960s and 1970s. It does not appear to have any housing of a later date. This estate, directly to the south of the town centre is accessed from Launceston Road or Horsewell Lane. Attractive frontages surround the estate with the Newgate End Conservation Area to the north, school playing fields to the west, the edge of the urban area and green railway corridor to the south and playing fields and the cemetery to the east. The landform of the area is very flat. This can be seen most clearly when looking southwards over the estate from the top of Launceston Road. Conversely there are good views of the All Saint's Church steeple and surrounding trees from many points within the estate e.g. Seaton Road, which provide a valuable visual link with the older part of the town.



View of All saints Church from Seaton Road, Little Hill.



View of the edge of Little Hill adjacent to the railway corridor.

5.3.80 Despite the slight differences in age profile of housing on these two estates and differences in landform they have been treated as one character area as they share many similar characteristics. If adjacent to one another they would have been identified as one character area. Further detailed study and urban character assessment may separate them or find sub-areas within them.

- 5.3.81 Both estates show the characteristic dilution and break down of formal street pattern typical of estates of the late 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. Both have a central spine road that provides access and from which other roads lead off. In the Wigston Meadows area Kelmarsh Avenue and Meadow Way provide this. From this spine road lead numerous smaller avenues, many of which are cul-de-sacs or so short that the housing appears grouped in clusters rather than arranged along a street. In many areas of the estate the building line to the street has disappeared completely. The Little Hill spine road is formed by Horsewell Lane (which developed from an older lane seen on the late 19th Century ordnance survey maps) and from Launceston Road. Again from the spine road leads to a number of streets. In this estate though, due to the larger size, a more formal street structure is maintained with the cul-de-sacs appearing on the fringes of the estate.
- 5.3.82 In some areas of both estates there is a break down in the regularity of plot sizes, housing frontages without boundaries and the disappearance of the building line in the street. This coupled with the lack of mature street trees and garden trees means that the sense of enclosure is lost. However in other areas where building lines and boundary treatments are retained the sense of enclosure is maintained.



Wigston Meadow, showing the breakdown in traditional street pattern. The rural fringe can be seen in the background of the photograph.

- 5.3.83 The main source of character for the areas is through the late 1960s 1970s and 1980s housing styles. Both areas contain pre-dominantly semi-detached properties but detached, modern terraces and bungalows were also built. There is also an area of low-rise flats on the Little Hill estate. The housing is built in pale orange, buff or pale brown brick with tiled roofs. The 1970s house styles dominate on the estates and include features such as large picture windows, front facing eaves, weather boarding, flat roofed porches and white render features. Plot sizes tend to be irregular with boundary treatments taking the form of low wooden fences. Late 1960s style houses are to be found in the earlier sections of both estates and these areas share some of the characteristics of the earlier estates in the town such as within The Poplars urban character area. There is a more traditional street pattern, regular plot sizes and a building line frontage to the street. On the Wigston Meadow estate there are houses from the 1980s and early 1990s, which have features that show a return to more traditional building styles.

5.3.84 Both estates are pre-dominantly residential. Unusually for the Borough, they both have small local centres. In the Little Hill estate this consists of a co-op, shops and small park off Launceston Road. This could be a positive feature but this area feels bleak. In the Wigston Meadow estate the local centre also consists of a pub and shops. Both estates have schools located on the edge of the urban area with views out into the rural fringe beyond. This is a feature not only of this character area but also of the earlier housing estates in both Wigston and Oadby and the later housing estates in Oadby. The school frontages provide green frontages that make a positive contribution to the area.

5.3.85 The Little Hill urban character area has little open space within it, the only space being behind the small park behind the local shops, but is adjacent to playing fields on both its eastern and western boundaries. These playing fields, though, have little impact on the overall urban character of the area. The area has access out to the rural fringe from Durnford Road, Barford Close and Taverstock Road with good views across the Sence Valley. The Wigston Meadow area has a central linear open space, which provides a valuable break in the urban fabric and creates an interesting focus feature for the area. There is a short but valuable hedgerow remnant close to Alport Way on Kelmars Avenue and a strip along the eastern urban edge accessed from Rosedale Road that provides valuable views out into the Green Wedge and rural fringe.

5.3.86 The estates though pleasant have no local distinctiveness or character. There seems to be little tree cover to mature to improve the character or improve the sense of enclosure. With low pedestrian and vehicular activity both areas can feel a little desolate in areas.

5.3.87 There is likely to be little pressure for development within these areas apart from small infill plots.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.88

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Area under little pressure to change. Access to urban fringe.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Lack of tree cover. Lack of enclosure in some areas. Lack of character. Outer areas are some distance from town centre.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Improve tree cover. Improve local centres to provide focus and structure to estates. Improvements to open spaces.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Poor infill. Loss of open space to development.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES
Maintain and enhance maturing suburban residential estate character

**Urban Character Areas W(viii): Wigston Meadow and W(ix): Little Hill:
Wigston – Policy Guidance.**

Policy Guidance W(viii) and W(ix)/ 1 New Development

- 5.3.89 Any new development on the urban fringes of these areas would not have to be in keeping with the existing character of the areas. Any infill development within the areas should respect the character but could develop other characteristics.

Policy Guidance W(viii) and W(ix)/ 2 Green Space

- 5.3.90 The linear green space running from Meadow Way to Kelmarsh Avenue provides a valuable feature for the estate and should be protected from development, unless of a small community nature that would benefit the space itself.



Linear green space running between Meadow Way and Kelmarsh Avenue, Wigston Meadow.

Policy Guidance W(viii) and W(ix)/ 3 Launceston Road Centre

- 5.3.91 The shops and park should provide a positive focus for the estate but appear bleak and underused. Depending on ownership patterns and local consultation, the potential for re-developing the area should be explored and provide increased local retail provision and a pub, with higher profile open space supported through higher density housing.



View of Local Centre on Launceston Road, Little Hill.

Urban Character Area W(x): Harcourt

Defining characteristics

5.3.92 The defining characteristics of the Urban Character Area W(x) are:

- Use of loop road structure with small closes – houses in some areas appear to be in Clusters rather than along streets;
- Green corridor formed by main loop road;
- Very strong green boundaries formed by Welford Road, trees and cemetery, Cooks Lane, rural fringe and Newton Lane;
- Drives and garages providing off street parking;
- Return to traditional house styles;
- Detached and semi-detached properties;
- Good tree cover.



Herrick Way showing a typical streetscape view within the character area.

Townscape Characteristics

5.3.93 The landform within the area is slightly undulating falling down from Newton Lane and then rising up to a small ridge that runs along at Spring Farm Cottage and then falling down again to Cooks Lane. This undulation is not noticeable on the ground but does give a subtle sense of enclosure and improve the microclimate. A small water body runs through the area but appears to have been culverted and is only evident in the open washland area to Willow Farm and in the field to the east of the area.

5.3.94 The estate is very well integrated into the urban fringe and has a good tree cover. This is no doubt due to its later date when an approach was taken of retaining existing trees. Mature ash trees are evident in amongst the housing that formed part of the original hedgerows in the area. The retained tree cover has also been enhanced by structure planting of smaller species e.g. Rowans as along Guthlaxton Way.

5.3.95 The estate has a main access route, Guthlaxton Way, which runs through the estate from Newton Lane to Welford Road. From Guthlaxton Way run a couple of loop roads, Herrick Way and Foston Gate from which run smaller closes and cul-de-sacs. The estate though recently built retains a non-traditional street pattern. The curving

nature of the roads is evident on the ground and is a positive feature. Guthlaxton Way is a wide road with its width emphasised by the verges. A sense of enclosure is retained along the Way due to tree planting. The housing is organised into small clusters on irregular plot sizes. Frontages are open but a sense of enclosure is maintained by the houses themselves, and the rear boundary treatments and tree planting. The estate has many features in common with estates built in the 1970s e.g. cul-de-sacs, open frontages and lack of front boundary treatments. However a sense of character and enclosure is maintained through the use of other features e.g. house positioning within plots, rear boundaries and tree and shrub planting.



A high level of tree planting and the retention of trees pre-dating the Development adds to the attractiveness of the estate.

5.3.96 This estate, probably one of the most contemporary within the Borough shows a return to more traditional house types e.g. smaller windows, porch and bay features, some darker brick colours and a traditional use of render. There appears to be some features that are taken from the local vernacular e.g. use of orange red brick, use of render and houses with relatively long frontages giving a horizontal emphasis. These features coupled with the retention of trees provide the basis for a character to mature and provide features that could be used in new development elsewhere in the Borough.



Development in this character area has started to reintroduce some traditional local features e.g.the orange/red brick.

5.3.97 The area has access to the urban fringe from a small open space on the eastern edge of the area. This also provides access to a small urban lane running along the eastern fringe behind the houses. These spaces though they do not have a high impact on the character area are valuable and should be maintained, as should the washland to Willow Brook Farm.

5.3.98 There is unlikely to be development pressure within the area though there could be pressure to develop in the urban fringe adjacent to the area.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.99

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Little pressure to change. Good access to urban fringe. Good tree cover. Attractive frontages.</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Lack of local facilities.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Maintain tree cover.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Loss of open space to development. Development on the adjacent fields.</p>

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES
Maintain and enhance maturing suburban residential estate character

Urban Character Areas W(x): Harcourt – Policy Guidance

Policy Guidance W(x)/ 1 New Development

5.3.100 Any development on the rural fringe to the edge of this estate could benefit from some of the features incorporated in this estate. This includes the use of some housing design features that relate to the local vernacular, retention of hedgerows and trees, inclusion of open space and access to the urban fringe, structure planting and use of boundaries to maintain privacy and structure.

5.4 OVERALL REVIEW OF WIGSTON

Figure 5.3 at the end of Part 5 shows the features detailed in the review.

- 5.4.1 The town of Wigston though now merged with the main urban area of Leicester still retains a separate physical identity. This is due to a number of features: to the west of the town the railway corridor that runs between South Wigston and Wigston provides a break in the urban fabric and along some stretches provides a green corridor that differentiates the two towns. To the east and north-east of the town the Green Wedge, Country Park and racecourse provide breaks in the urban fabric and these areas again have levels of tree cover that increase the impact of these areas in distinguishing the towns. The only boundary of the town that merges into the main Leicester urban area is that on the north-west.
- 5.4.2 The town retains a good urban structure with a clearly defined town centre area, centrally located within the wider town. The town centre itself in terms of urban character has almost broken down into two distinct areas: an older smaller scale centre to the south and a larger scale centre to the north with the main retail, business areas and car parks. The town centre area is reasonably well defined and has a number of 'gateways' that aid in this definition. Though the break down of the centre into two different character areas may be negative in some ways, for example due to the loss of historic character in the north and the loss of integrity of the centre, the break down does have some positive aspects. It may allow the centre to accommodate new development, critical to economic and vitality, that may not have been able to be accommodated in a more sensitive character area.
- 5.4.3 The housing estates that have grown around the town centre have generally developed in sections or as wedges that have grown out from the town centre. This means that except for the Harcourt estate, they all have an inner boundary with the town centre giving them some physical connection to it. Though now the outer edges of the housing estates are some way from the town centre and can feel disconnected in some areas e.g. the southern edge of the Little Hill estate and the eastern edge of Wigston Meadow. To be sustainable any further development on the fringes of the urban area may have to provide a small local centre to provide a focus and help develop some local character.
- 5.4.4 The town has a number of areas of good quality townscape. All Saints, and Station Road, Guthlaxton, located to the south of the town centre, are two such areas. Both, however, could benefit from enhancement with the characters of each being vulnerable to inappropriate development and tree loss. The Oval to the north-east of the town and Granville Road to the north of the Town represent areas of high quality which may warrant consideration for a higher level of protection. The eastern fringe of the Harcourt estate has also been identified as one of the best examples of a more contemporary environment within the Borough. A number of areas of townscape which require development and/or enhancement were also identified. The most prominent is the eastern fringe of the town centre and the stretch of Bull Head Street that runs along that eastern fringe. Both these areas have the potential to be improved through more sensitive new development and through tree planting where the potential exists.
- 5.4.5 The town has a number of good green transport corridors that provide attractive approaches to the town and differentiate between the different urban character

areas. These corridors include: Oadby Road, Newton Lane, Welford Road, Station Road and sections of Aylestone Lane. These routes also have concentrations of trees that act as informal gateways to the town. Leicester Road was the only main transport corridor that was noted as being weaker.

- 5.4.6 The edge of the urban area is generally clear and abrupt giving a clear distinction between urban and rural areas. The only part of the urban fringe where the distinction is slightly blurred is the area to the south of Cooks Lane where there are a number of individual properties set in largish gardens in the rural fringe. Due to the style of the buildings, good hedgerows and large tree cover this area is an attractive and interesting part of the Borough. The edge of the urban area is generally well screened with trees, hedges and garden vegetation. The only area where the screening was weaker was along the eastern fringe Wigston Meadow.
- 5.4.7 Wigston's development was firstly as a farming community based on the croft and toft system and later as a small town. This development is reflected in the land uses and urban character of the older parts of the settlement e.g. All Saints, The Orchards and Gilliver Hill. Though today Wigston's population is likely to commute to other centres for work, the town centre retains a sense of place based on the vitality and practicality of the older settlement. This is present both in All Saints e.g. with the allotments on Manchester Gardens and in St Wistan's with the smaller shops and supermarkets.

PART 6 BOROUGH WIDE POLICY URBAN CHARACTER RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

6.1.1 This section of the report provides policy recommendations that could be applied across all the urban character areas of the Borough. The recommendations focus on:

- the protection and enhancement of the character of the urban area;
- the integration and creation of a locally distinct character for areas of new development;
- the development of green networks and enhancing the biodiversity value of the urban areas and any areas of new development.

6.1.2 The policy recommendations are limited to those that address the wider urban character and are not covered in other areas of planning policy. It is intended that the policy recommendations made here would supplement and support other areas of planning policy e.g. building conservation, nature conservation and the Borough Tree Strategy. The recommendations here avoid duplication of planning policy. This section does not cover detailed design issues other than where there is an overall impact on the landscape character. Open space and biodiversity issues are only covered in so far as they relate to contributing to the overall urban character quality and distinctiveness.

6.2 BOROUGH WIDE URBAN CHARACTER POLICY OBJECTIVES AND POLICY GUIDANCE

6.2.1 Based on the assessment of the urban character areas a number of urban character objectives have been developed that relate to all the urban areas in the Borough.

Tree Cover

BOROUGH WIDE URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE BW/1
Protect existing positive contribution made to the urban character by trees and identify opportunities to increase tree cover

BW/1 Tree Cover Policy Guidance

6.2.2 The current level of tree cover in the Borough makes a major contribution to the general attractiveness of the Borough. If this tree cover level is allowed to decline then environmental quality and appearance of the Borough would suffer considerably. The type of tree planting in an area contributes to the overall character of an area and this could be used as a feature to create some distinctiveness within the Borough. There are a number of potential general locations for tree planting and these are discussed below:

Guidance BW/1/a Encourage Formal Street Tree Planting

6.2.3 Formal street trees (ie in avenues, in verges or as specimens) are a strong feature within the following areas:

- O(i) Oadby Town Centre;
- O(ii) Oadby Arboretum Area;
- O(iii) Oadby Early Estates North and South;
- W(ii) All Saints;
- W(iv) Guthlaxton
- W(vii) The Oval
- W(vii) Granville Road
- SW(ii) South Wigston Western Fringe.

6.2.4 The street trees in the above areas should be maintained and enhanced. In addition formal street tree planting should be encouraged in the following area to improve the overall character.

- O(iv) Florence Wragg Way
- W(i) St Wistans;
- W(v) The Orchards;
- W(x) Welford Road
- SW(i) Gloucester Crescent Estate;
- SW(vi) Ervin's Lock.



The earlier areas of Ervin's Lock would benefit from street tree planting.



Areas of Horsewell Lane can be bleak and would benefit from tree planting.

Policy Guidance BW/1/b Encourage Informal Street Tree and Garden Tree Planting

6.2.5 Informal tree planting i.e, smaller trees along streets, groups of trees or in gardens are a feature of the following areas:

- O(i) A6 Oadby
- O(iii) Oadby Early Estates North and South;
- O(iv) Oadby Later Estates;
- W(vii) The Poplars;
- W(viii) Wigston Meadows;
- W(ix) Little Hill;
- W(x) Harcourt.

Informal tree planting should be maintained and enhanced in the above areas

Policy Guidance BW/1/c Increase the Contribution of Urban Fringe Trees to Landscape Character

6.2.6 The edges of the urban area are generally well integrated into the rural fringe by the presence of trees around the urban fringe. This level of tree cover should be maintained and where possible added to, especially in areas where development takes place. The following areas would benefit from additional tree planting around the urban fringe if the opportunity arose:

- O(iv) Oadby Later Estates;
- W(viii) Wigston Meadow;
- W(x) Goldhill.
- SW(v) Landsdowne Grove Estate.



The urban fringe is generally well integrated into the landscape.

Policy Guidance BW/1/d Improve the Contribution of Green Frontages and Open Spaces to Landscape Character and Biodiversity

6.2.7 There are a number of green frontages in the Borough, which make a considerable contribution to the character of the area and should be maintained and enhanced. There are a number of open spaces in the Borough that, though hidden, contain trees that make a contribution to the tree cover. Increasing the level of tree planting in open spaces would contribute to the attractiveness of the Borough, particularly those that have an open frontage. A desktop review of the open spaces of the Borough and their contribution to urban landscape character is included as Appendix 3 at the end of the Report.



The open frontage and mature trees ensure that Willow Park makes a very important positive contribution to the surrounding townscape.

Transport Corridors

***BOROUGH WIDE URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE BW/2
Protect and improve quality of transport corridors***

Policy-Guidance BW/2/a Improve the Contribution of Road Corridors to Landscape Character

6.2.8 The following road corridors were noted of being of high quality where tree cover should be maintained with some enhancement

- Oadby – Gartree Road;
- Oadby – Stoughton Road;
- South Wigston – Saffron Road north of the railway line;
- Wigston – Welford Road;
- Wigston – Newton Lane;
- Wigston – Station Road;
- Wigston – Bull Head Street – south of town centre.

6.2.9 The following road corridors where noted as being of good quality but would benefit from additional tree planting

- Oadby – Glen Road;
- Oadby –Leicester Road – West of Oadby Town Centre;
- Oadby – Wigston Road through the green wedge;
- Wigston – Aylestone Lane.



This section of Aylestone Lane has good tree cover creating a positive approach to the town centre. Other stretches would benefit from some additional planting.

6.2.10 The following road corridors were noted as being of relatively lower quality and should be prioritised for additional tree planting providing this meets Highway approval.

- Wigston – Bull Head Street – adjacent to town centre;
- Wigston – Leicester Road and Cleveland Road (where adjacent to Bull Head Street).



Sections of Leicester Road and Bull Head Street (pictured) would benefit from additional tree planting.

Policy Guidance BW/2/b Improve the Contribution of the Railway Corridor to Landscape Character and Biodiversity

6.2.11 The railway corridor enters the Borough running due north south forming the boundary between Wigston and South Wigston. It then splits with one section going due west through the urban area of South Wigston and the other running south east along the southern edge of Wigston and out into the rural area of the Borough at Kilby Bridge.

6.2.12 The corridor is an important and positive feature of the Borough in that it:

- has a number of sections with good tree and shrub cover;
- provides a background of trees for residential and some of the employment areas;
- provides a boundary between Wigston and South Wigston;
- currently provides integration for the south western urban fringe of Wigston;
- provides a landmark and orientation within the area;
- offers potential as a wildlife corridor and encourages biodiversity;
- provides a diversity of townscape and historical reference.

6.2.13 The existing trees and vegetation along the corridor should be protected. The potential should be explored to increase the tree and vegetation in sections where the cover is weaker. This could increase the potential for the railway corridor to form a core element of the green corridor network, particularly in the following areas:

- Adjacent to SW(iii) Eastern Fringe;
- Adjacent to W(vi) Gold Hill.

Biodiversity and Urban Landscape Character

<p>BOROUGH WIDE URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE BW/3 Increase biodiversity within the urban areas</p>



Uplands playing field may have the potential to have its biodiversity potential increased.

Policy Guidance BW/3/e Protect and Enhance Hedgerow and Urban Fringe Trees and Hedges

6.2.14 The urban edges of Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston are generally well integrated into rural fringe beyond the urban boundary. This is due to a number of reasons:

- Development patterns where residential streets run parallel to the urban boundary;
- The presence of large to medium back gardens;
- The expansion of the urban areas in the mid to late 20th century used hedgerow as development boundaries in many areas and the old hedges and trees appear to remain.



A retained hedgerow and trees screen development along Newton Lane.

6.2.15 This integration benefits both the rural fringe and the urban character within. The urban area is well screened from rural areas and the hedgerows and trees form a backdrop of vegetation for the urban areas. This characteristic of the Borough should be protected and maintained. The areas where enhancement of this feature would be beneficial if the opportunity arose are:

- O(iv) Oadby Later Estates North and South – along the eastern edges north of Glen Road and the section to the south of Briar Meads;
- W(viii) Wigston Meadows – along the eastern fringe.

Urban Lanes and Access to the Rural Fringes

***BOROUGH WIDE URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE BW/5
Protect and enhance urban lanes and access to the rural fringe***

Policy Guidance BW/5/a Protect and Enhance Urban Lanes

6.2.16 A fragmented network of urban lanes exists within the Borough. A plan of those noted in undertaking the urban character assessment is included as Appendix 6 at the end of this Report. Some of these lanes contribute to pedestrian movement, some may have biodiversity value and all add to the interest and historic reference to the urban fabric. Many are remnants of old track routes or lanes that existed prior to the growth of the urban area. These urban lanes should be protected from loss due to development and any new development permitted should extend or improve them if the opportunity arises. Although on the edge of the urban area, Cook's Lane is included as an urban lane due to its proximity to the urban area.



Urban Lane off London Road, Oadby – a very high quality urban lane.



View of Long Lane in Wigston.

Policy Guidance BW/5/b Protect and Enhance Access to the Rural Fringe

6.2.17 A number of access points between the urban and rural fringes are found on the boundary between the rural and urban areas. These access points should be protected as they provide diversity within the urban area, form a link between the urban and rural fringes and provide for informal leisure opportunities. Access points should also be extended and increased in number should development take place on the edges of the urban area.

BOROUGH WIDE URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE BW/6
Protect key views of Borough wide significance

Policy Guidance BW/6/a Protect and Enhance Key Views

6.2.18 A number of views were noted that are of Borough wide significance, adding to the quality of the urban areas and providing historic reference. These views should be protected and enhanced. The views are:

- view out to Stoughton Church from the north eastern fringe of Oadby;
- view of All Saints Church southwards from Long Street in Wigston;
- view over the Railway Triangle from the station footbridge;
- linear vistas along the canal towpath from the bridge at Countesthorpe Road in South Wigston;



Linear Vistas are important along the canal towpath – Pochins Bridge looking towards Pochins Bridge housing.

New Development and Local Distinctiveness

BOROUGH WIDE URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE BW/7
Develop local distinctiveness for new development and integrate it into the existing landscape character areas

6.2.19 New development in the urban area should contribute to the existing urban landscape character. This should be influenced primarily by detailed design guidance including urban design principles as advocated by Conservation Areas Appraisals and other detailed design guidance.

6.2.20 The lack of distinctive character of the majority of the urban landscape character areas along the urban fringe provides an opportunity to develop a new character for new development extending the urban limits. Character should be driven by design considerations arising from: site specific conditions, the need to integrate into the urban fringe, selecting appropriate residential densities, providing for community safety and increasing bio-diversity.

Policy Guidance BW/7/a Respect Natural Boundaries

6.2.21 Should future development occur outside the current urban boundary, to minimise its impact on the rural fringe it should, where possible, respect the landform as follows:

- avoid higher areas of the Borough where it will impact on views from both within the urban area and on the rural fringe;
- be located in dips or to the lower levels of slopes so the ridge lines can act as a visual boundary.

Policy Guidance BW/7/b Respect and Integrate Hedgerows

6.2.22 The Borough retains a strong hedgerow pattern, consisting of hedges and hedgerow trees, in many areas including along the urban boundary and rural fringe. If in the future development occurs outside the current urban boundary, then in order to minimise the impact on the rural fringe development should where possible:

- avoid areas of the rural fringe of the Borough with larger field patterns, and therefore less hedgerows to integrate development;
- retain the existing hedgerows and use them as boundaries for development and, where possible, retain internal hedgerows;
- enhance existing hedgerows on the fringe of the development and, where possible, the internal hedgerows; also
- develop new boundary and internal hedgerows in appropriate pattern to facilitate integration of the development into the landscape;
- use native hedge species appropriate to the area.

Policy Guidance BW/7/c Compatible Tree Planting

6.2.23 As detailed above the dominant form of structure planting on the urban rural fringe is hedges with informal hedgerow trees. Urban Character Areas on the urban fringe also exhibit other forms of structure planting as follows:

- O(i) Oadby Arboretum Area – formal avenues, specimen tree planting and estate style planting;
- O(iii) Oadby Early Estates North and South, W(v) The Orchards and W(vii) The Poplars – informal street trees and garden trees;
- O(iv) Oadby Later Estates North and South, and W(viii) Wigston Meadow, W(ix) Little Hill and W(x) Harcourt – informal specimen trees and garden trees.

6.2.24 Any development in or on the rural fringe of the Arboretum Area should use structured tree planting to reflect those existing in that landscape character area. For development within the other character areas the tree planting and structure planting style should reflect the existing style within the character area. For any development extending into the rural fringe then the emphasis of the structure planting should be on integration, bio-diversity and developing an individual character for the new development rather than being in keeping with adjacent character areas

Policy Guidance BW/7/d Protect and Enhance Access to the Rural Fringe

6.2.25 Where new development impacts on an access point from the rural to urban areas the access point should be protected. Where development has the potential to increase the footpath network or access to the rural fringe then the development should be required to include this as a feature of the development

Policy-Guidance BW/7/e Street Pattern

6.2.26 There are a number of different street patterns within the Borough with no particular pattern characteristic of the wider urban area. New development within the urban area should retain the existing street pattern or restore any losses to it. Within new developments on the rural fringe a street pattern does not have to reflect existing street patterns within the Borough, but can develop a new character for the development taking the following into consideration:

- Selecting appropriate densities for residential developments;
- facilitating the retention of existing hedge lines, hedge line trees, trees in general and any other features with a biodiversity value;
- contribution to a pleasant micro-climate;
- protection or creation of positive views;
- maximising community safety, for example incorporating traffic calming;
- providing linkages, if possible, with existing communities;
- providing opportunities for development of high profile open space and biodiversity features.

Policy Guidance BW/7/f Protect and Enhance Urban lanes

6.2.27 Urban lanes are not a strong feature of the Borough, however, fragments do exist and add diversity and distinctiveness to the urban area. Any urban lanes in the development should be protected. If appropriate the development should extend any adjacent urban lanes or develop new ones.

Policy-Guidance BW/7/g Provide Open Space and Encourage Community facilities

6.2.28 Open space either in the form of green space or urban focal spaces, such as small squares or local shopping areas, does not form a characteristic feature of the Borough. This feature can result in the urban fabric of the Borough appearing homogenous and lacking in focus. Any new development, particularly that on the urban fringe and of an appropriate scale, should include green space or an urban space that provides a focus for the development. These spaces should be well related to other community facilities, for example public transport provision, childcare facilities or local shop provision.

Policy Guidance BW/7/h Re-introduce and Respect the Local Vernacular

6.2.29 A limited number of buildings remain in the Borough that are characteristic of local vernacular style. These however are low in number and concentrated within the town centres. Development of the urban area of the Borough began around 1900 and the majority has taken place since 1950. This has meant that the majority of the urban area of the Borough has developed when local distinctiveness was not a key driver for building design. The result is that the Borough contains a range of

building styles forming character areas that, although distinct from each other and sometimes attractive, do not have a strong local identity by which to inform new development. The use of features of the traditional local vernacular style to some new development may be appropriate. These features include:

- strong orange/red brick colour;
- slate or orange/red tile pitched roofs;
- long fronted buildings with focus on the horizontal, narrow in depth and often of three storeys;
- raised brick detailing and subtle 'chess board' patterning;
- render;
- timber work e.g. porches;
- houses grouped around a 'yard'.



New housing association development on Countesthorpe Road, South Wigston demonstrates effective and careful reflection of its built environment context.



Late 19th Century terraces along Church Street in Oadby.



Refurbished three storey building on London Road, Oadby with an example of Characteristic local detailing.



Three storey house on London Road, Oadby showing traditional features.

- 6.2.30 The Borough also contains some good examples of Victorian terraces, for example in South Wigston, late 19th and early 20th Century small scale industrial vernacular e.g. All Saints, early 20th Century Arts and Crafts inspired development e.g. Cottage Homes, low density 1970s architect designed houses as at the Yews and late 20th Century housing estates as at Wigston Harcourt. These all could potentially provide inspiration and reference for new development within the area.
- 6.2.31 Some of the most contemporary residential development in the Borough appears to have started to reflect this local distinctiveness e.g. terraced housing on Countesthorpe Road in South Wigston, new housing along Davenport Road and on Oadby Road in Wigston.
- 6.2.32 It should be noted that the urban character assessment carried out for this study did not undertake a detailed architectural analysis of the buildings of the Borough, and the Conservation Area Appraisals provide a more detailed summary of these features.

6.2.33 The recommendation of this report is that a new local distinctiveness is informed by the features detailed above but also by the need to keep residential densities appropriate for the area, increase bio-diversity, maintain hedgerows, improve the public realm and public space and provide for community safety. The key features from these examples, in terms of landscape character retention, would be the brick and roofing materials and their colours. Appropriate and high quality contemporary design is likely to improve the character of residential areas in the Borough.

Policy Guidance BW/7/i Protect and Enhance Biodiversity

6.2.34 New development should be required to protect any features that are of habitat value and to integrate into the development features that will support existing or increase bio-diversity. These include:

- new hedges;
- structure planting or garden planting (if provided) that uses native or wildlife supportive species;
- tree planting;
- water features if appropriate;
- open space that has a bio-diversity input at the design stage;
- building and boundary design features.