



Charnwood Forest

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT**

June 2019



<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>p.3</b>
Chapter 1.0 <b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>p.7</b>
Chapter 2.0 <b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>p.13</b>
Chapter 3.0 <b>LANDSCAPE CONTEXT</b>	<b>p.19</b>
Chapter 4.0 <b>OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHARNWOOD FOREST</b>	<b>p.35</b>
Chapter 5.0 <b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS</b>	<b>p.57</b>
Chapter 6.0 <b>SETTLEMENT CHARACTER</b>	<b>p.105</b>
Chapter 7.0 <b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>p.185</b>
Chapter 8.0 <b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>p.292</b>

This document is the property of FPCR Environment and Design Ltd and is issued on the condition it is not reproduced, retained or disclosed to any unauthorised person, either wholly or in part without the written consent of FPCR Environment and Design Ltd.

All mapping and data provided by The National Forest Company.

Rev	Issue Status	Prepared / Date	Approved / Date
B	Final	MST / CEH / LMF 26 June 2019	CEH / MGH 26 June 2019



FPCR Environment and Design Ltd, Lockington Hall, Lockington, Derby, DE74 2RH ■ t: 01509 672772 ■ f: 01509 674565 ■ e: mail@fpcr.co.uk ■ w: www.fpcr.co.uk  
 masterplanning ■ environmental assessment ■ landscape design ■ urban design ■ ecology ■ architecture ■ arboriculture ■ graphic design

K:\8800\8830\LANDS\LCA\LCA Document\8830 LCA Chapters 1-4 Rev B.indd

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

**FPCR Environment and Design Ltd were appointed in January 2019 to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment for the Charnwood Forest Regional Park along with a review of the character of the main settlements located within the area.**

## Introduction

An original landscape character assessment was carried out in 2008 as part of the Charnwood Forest Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment published by Leicestershire County Council. This Landscape Character Assessment document provides a review and update of the original study, to provide a finer grain of assessment detail and incorporates changes to the landscape and settlements that have occurred over the last decade. The assessment has been carried out and produced by a team of Chartered Landscape Architects from FPCR Environment and Design Ltd.

As part of the process of landscape characterisation, a consultation event was held on 1st May 2019 with stakeholders attending a workshop held at Beaumanor Hall in Woodhouse. The draft character areas were presented and described with subsequent discussion held relating to the character area boundaries, names and descriptions as well as identifying appropriate forces for change and management issues within the areas. Feedback from the event was collated and has fed into the final character areas and descriptions. A summary of the consultation event is included at **Appendix 7.3**.

## Purpose of the Study

This Landscape Character Assessment has been carried out in order to review and refine the original Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Assessment (2008), but also has the following purposes:

- to support the second stage application for Heritage Lottery Funding;
- to be used as a tool for future decision making.

## Methodology

The Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Assessment has been prepared following guidance included within An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014) published by Natural England. The Landscape Character Assessment has been carried out through the following basic work stages:

- **Work Stage 1 Review and Update of Baseline Data**
- **Work Stage 2 Baseline Landscape Survey**
- **Work Stage 3 Initial Landscape Classification and Analysis**
- **Work Stage 4 Stakeholder Consultation**
- **Work Stage 5 Draft Report**
- **Work Stage 6 Final Report**

## Content of the Report

**Chapter 1** – This chapter provides an introduction to the Landscape Character Assessment and outlines the purpose of the study and the Primary Objectives.

**Chapter 2** – This chapter outlines the methodology and approach used to review and define the Landscape Character Areas of the Charnwood Forest.

**Chapter 3** – This chapter provides an overview of the context of the Charnwood Forest area. It includes summaries of the existing landscape character assessments which cover the area, and other documents which are relevant to the study.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

**Chapter 4** – This chapter provides an overarching description of the character of Charnwood Forest. It describes the main physical features of the area as well as human influences which have influenced the character of the area over time. The assessment identifies 11 different Landscape Character Areas as follows:

- **Area 1: Bradgate, Beacon Hill and Outwoods Heathland and Forest**
- **Area 2: Ulverscroft Wooded Valley**
- **Area 3: Charley Heath and Pasture**
- **Area 4: Swithland/Woodhouse Farmland**
- **Area 5: Groby Estate Woodland**
- **Area 6: Thringstone/Markfield Quarries and Settlement**
- **Area 7: Loughborough/Shepshed Mixed Farmland**
- **Area 8: Quorn/Mountsorrel/Rothley Settlements, Quarries and Farmland**
- **Area 9: Rothley Brook Lowland Farmland**
- **Area 10: Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland**
- **Area 11: Thornton Plantation Farmlands**

The character areas are shown on the figure opposite.

**Chapter 5** – This chapter provides a more detailed description of the individual Landscape Character Areas. The descriptions include:

- **Summary of Overall Character**
- **Specific Characteristics**
  - **Landform and Hydrology**
  - **Landcover and Vegetation**
  - **Field Pattern and Enclosure**

- **Settlement Pattern, Roads and PRow**
- **Cultural Heritage**
- **Perceptual Qualities**
- **Summary of Landscape Condition**
- **Forces for Landscape Change**
- **Sensitivities for Key Landscape Characteristics**
- **Management Recommendations**

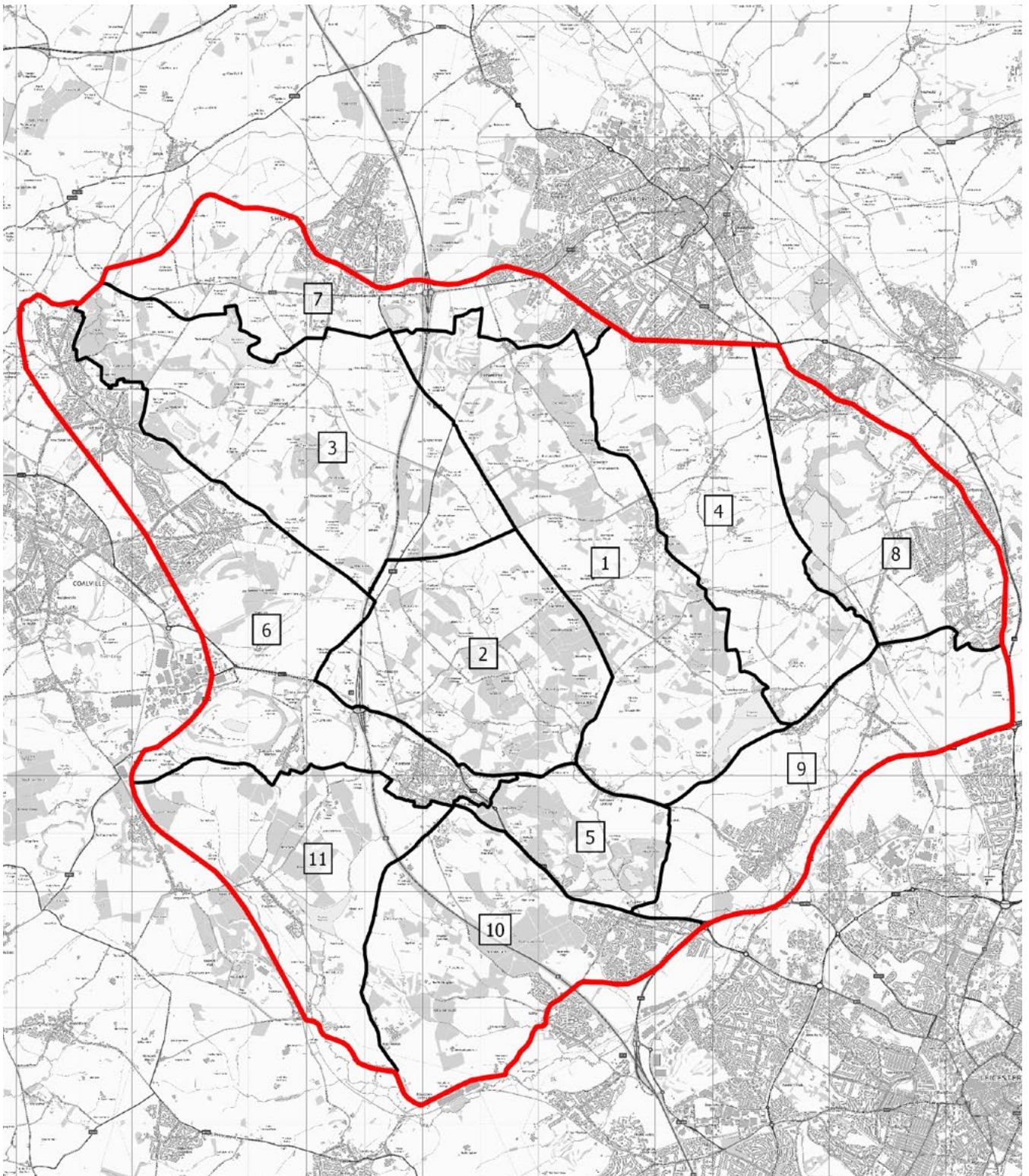
**Chapter 6** – This chapter provides a review of the 19 settlements located within Charnwood Forest which were included within the original 2009 study. The settlement descriptions have been updated to take account of new developments which have been carried out in the last decade which have resulted in changes and growth to some areas.

The settlement descriptions include a summary on the following:

- **Location and context**
- **Built form and settlement pattern**
- **Sense of place**
- **Key characteristics**
- **Setting in the landscape**
- **Recommendations**

**Chapter 7** includes supporting appendices including a full set of figures, the completed Field Survey Sheets and a summary of the consultation event.

**Chapter 8** includes key references.



**Landscape Character Areas**

**Area 1:** Bradgate, Beacon Hill and Outwoods Heathland and Forest

**Area 2:** Ulverscroft Wooded Valley

**Area 3:** Charley Heath and Pasture

**Area 4:** Swithland/Woodhouse Farmland

**Area 5:** Groby Estate Woodland

**Area 6:** Thringstone/Markfield Quarries and Settlement

**Area 7:** Loughborough/Shepshed Mixed Farmland

**Area 8:** Quorn/Mountsorrel/Rothley Settlements, Quarries and Farmland

**Area 9:** Rothley Brook Lowland Farmland

**Area 10:** Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland

**Area 11:** Thornton Plantation Farmlands

**Key**

 Charnwood Forest Boundary

 Landscape Character Areas



Chapter 1.0

# INTRODUCTION

---

# Chapter 1.0

# INTRODUCTION

---

An original landscape character assessment was carried out in 2008 as part of the *Charnwood Forest Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment* published by Leicestershire County Council. This Landscape Character Assessment document is a review and update of the original study, to provide a finer grain of assessment detail, and incorporates changes to the landscape and settlements that have occurred over the last decade. The assessment has been carried out and produced by a team of Chartered Landscape Architects from FPCR Environment and Design Ltd.

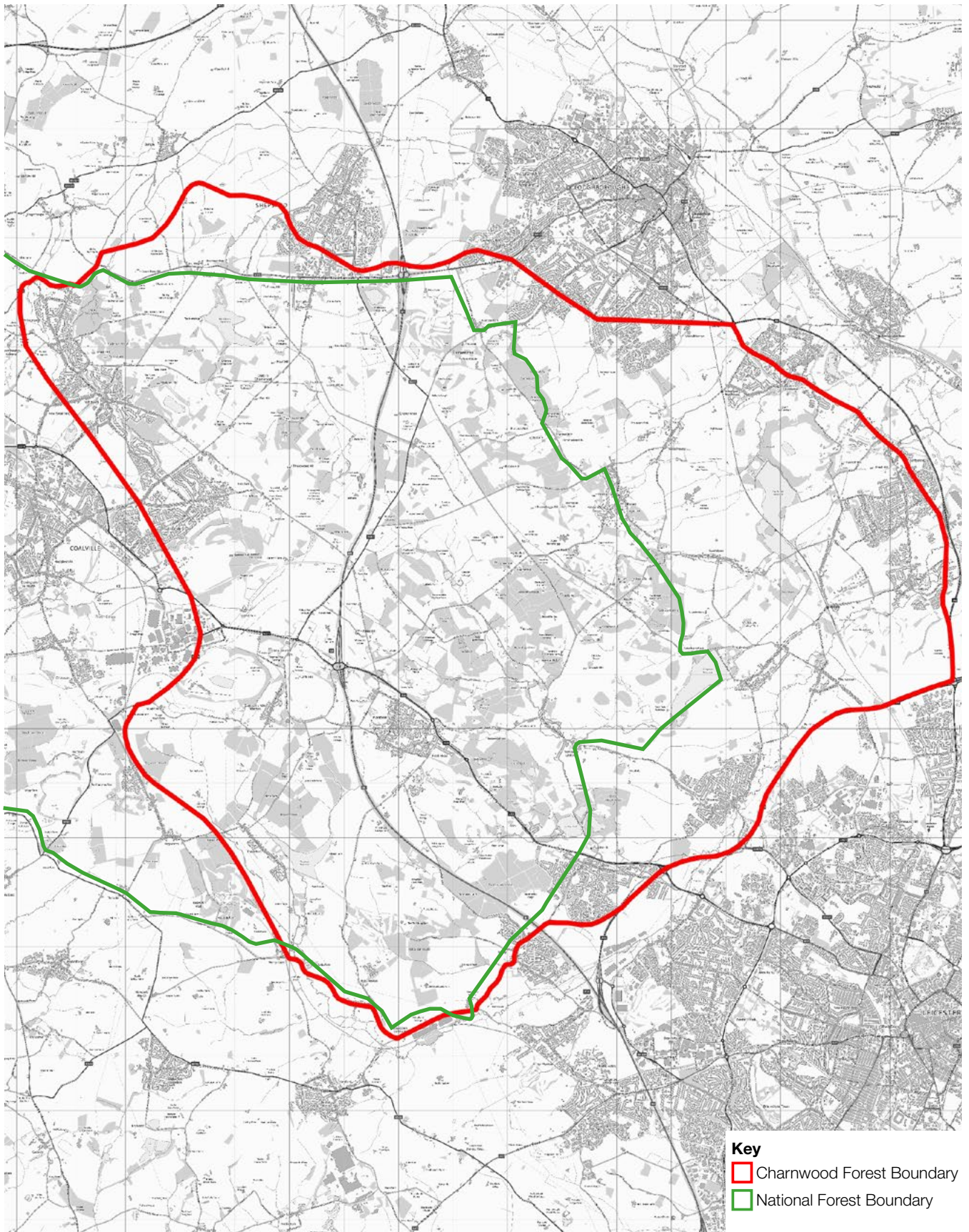
This study has been prepared with reference to the following key documents. **Chapter 8** provides a full list of references.

- National Planning Policy Framework (2019),
- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014),
- National Character Area Profiles; NCA 69. Trent Valley Washlands (2013), NCA 70. Melbourne Parklands (2012), NCA 71. Leicestershire & South Derbyshire Coalfield (2014), NCA 73. Charnwood (2013), NCA 74. Leicester and Nottinghamshire Wolds (2014), and NCA 94. Leicestershire Vales (2014).
- East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment (2010)
- Borough of Charnwood Landscape Character Assessment (2012);
- Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2017);
- North West Leicestershire Settlement Sensitivity and Capacity Study (2009);
- Charnwood Forest Landscape Character and Settlement Character Assessment (2008).
- The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation Project (2010).
- The National Forest Strategy 2014-2024
- Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study for Leicester & Leicestershire (2017)

As part of the process of landscape characterisation, a consultation event was held on 1st May 2019 with stakeholders attending a workshop held at Beaumanor Hall, Woodhouse. The draft character areas were presented and described with subsequent discussion held relating to the character area boundaries, names and descriptions as well as identifying appropriate forces for change and management issues within the areas. Feedback from the event was collated and has fed into the final character areas and descriptions.



Figure 1: Charnwood Forest Boundary



**Key**  
[Red line] Charnwood Forest Boundary  
[Green line] National Forest Boundary

## Chapter 1.0

# INTRODUCTION

---

### Purpose of the Study

This Landscape Character Assessment has been carried out in order to review and refine the original Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Assessment (2008), but also has the following purposes:

- to support the second stage Landscape Partnership Scheme application to the Heritage Lottery Fund;
- to be used as a tool for future decision making.

### Primary Objectives

The Primary Objectives of the assessment are :

- to review and update information included within the original Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Assessment;
- to draw on existing landscape character information contained within other Landscape Character Assessments which cover the Charnwood Forest area such as the Hinckley and Bosworth LCA and the Borough of Charnwood LCA;
- to provide a document that will promote Charnwood Forest's unique sense of place through identifying distinctive landscape areas to be protected or enhanced;
- to help improve people's understanding of and connection to the Charnwood Forest area;
- to assess the sensitivity of the landscape and identify key landscape characteristics which are sensitive to change;
- to identify forces for change and other factors, such as development pressures, which could potentially impact negatively on the landscape;
- to develop recommendations for each landscape character area to ensure that the landscape is respected and reflected in development and interpretation.

## The Study

The document comprises the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1 – Introduction**
- **Chapter 2 – Methodology**
- **Chapter 3 – Landscape Context**
- **Chapter 4 – Overview of the Landscape Character of Charnwood Forest**
- **Chapter 5 – Landscape Character Areas**
- **Chapter 6 – Settlement Character**
- **Chapter 7 – Appendices**
- **Chapter 8 – References**

Figures are included throughout the report with a full set also included at Appendix 7.1.





Chapter 2.0

# METHODOLOGY

---

## Chapter 2.0

# METHODOLOGY

---

The Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Assessment has been prepared following guidance included within *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014)* published by Natural England. The Landscape Character Assessment has been carried out through the following basic work stages:



### Work Stage 1 Review and Update of Baseline Data

This first stage was initiated by an inception meeting between FPCR and the Charnwood Forest Regional Park Partnership when the project requirements and outputs were finalised and timescales agreed. The level of detail was discussed and communication strategy agreed.

Following the meeting, relevant background data and information was reviewed and a preliminary site reconnaissance was carried out to gain an initial understanding of the Charnwood Forest area.

As part of the baseline update, we collated, reviewed and analysed the existing characterisation work previously undertaken at national, county and local scales to help inform the study. This included the National Character Area profiles, the Charnwood Borough Council and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Landscape Character Assessments, and the previous Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Assessment which was completed in 2008. A full list of the key documents that have been considered in the preparation of this study is included at [Chapter 8](#).

GIS mapping data has been provided by the Charnwood Forest Regional Park Partnership and this is used throughout the document. This includes information on access, landscape and other relevant designations, biodiversity, woodland, land use, hydrology, heritage and geology.

Preliminary landscape character areas were identified through combining and analysing the GIS data. These were developed through layering various elements within the landscape such as topography and hydrology, land use, field size and pattern, settlement pattern and scale, woodland cover and vegetation and urban features to identify areas of similar landscape character. These areas were then tested in the field.

## Work Stage 2 Baseline Landscape Survey

Comprehensive field work was carried out during February and March 2019 by an experienced two-person team. A project-specific field survey sheet was prepared for the survey and this informed the assessment to ensure a structured, reasoned and consistent record of baseline information for each of the draft areas supported by a brief written description of landscape character. Representative photographs were also taken from selected locations to provide a visual record.

The Stage 2 field survey sheets were designed to record the following elements as part of the landscape classification exercise:-

- **Landform and Hydrology**
- **Land Cover and Vegetation**
- **Field Pattern**
- **Field Enclosure**
- **Settlement Pattern**
- **Landscape Elements/Distinctive Features**
- **Perception**

The completed survey sheets are included at **Chapter 7, Appendix 7.2.**

## Work Stage 3 Initial Landscape Classification and Analysis

Information collected from the baseline data review and field work was combined and used to develop draft landscape character areas. These were mapped and the character areas described, drawing out management issues and opportunities for each area along with sensitivities to particular changes and forces for change.

## Work Stage 4 Stakeholder Consultation

The draft landscape character areas were presented at a stakeholder workshop. This event was carried out on Wednesday 1st May and included key members of the Charnwood Forest Regional Park Partnership Scheme. The draft character area boundaries and descriptions were discussed and comments obtained on the information identified. Feedback was taken and used in the development of the final character areas and descriptions. A summary of the consultation event is included at **Appendix 7.3.**

## Chapter 2.0

# METHODOLOGY

### Work Stage 5 Draft Report

Following consultation, the draft report was prepared. This included a description of the final 11 character areas identified and included a map of each character area overlaid on an Ordnance Survey base, photographs and figures. The draft report was circulated to the client for final comment.

### Work Stage 6 Final Report

Following final feedback, the report was completed and issued.

The resulting 11 Landscape Character Areas identified are:-

- **Area 1: Bradgate, Beacon Hill and Outwoods Heathland and Forest**
- **Area 2: Ulverscroft Wooded Valley**
- **Area 3: Charley Heath and Pasture**
- **Area 4: Swithland/Woodhouse Farmland**
- **Area 5: Groby Estate Woodland**
- **Area 6: Thringstone/Markfield Quarries and Settlement**
- **Area 7: Loughborough/Shepshed Mixed Farmland**
- **Area 8: Quorn/Mountsorrel/Rothley Settlements, Quarries and Farmland**
- **Area 9: Rothley Brook Lowland Farmland**
- **Area 10: Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland**
- **Area 11: Thornton Plantation Farmlands**

Each of these Landscape Character Areas has been described. An analysis of their landscape character is captured through written text, supported by photographs as appropriate. The assessment follows a clear format under the following headings:-

- **Summary of Overall Character**
- **Specific Characteristics**
  - **Landform and Hydrology**
  - **Landcover and Vegetation**
  - **Field Pattern and Enclosure**
  - **Settlement Pattern, Roads and PRow**
  - **Cultural Heritage**
  - **Perceptual Qualities**
- **Summary of Landscape Condition**
- **Forces for Landscape Change**
- **Sensitivities for Key Landscape Characteristics**
- **Management Recommendations**

A map showing the location of the identified Landscape Character Areas across the study area has been prepared using ArcView GIS mapping and is included at **Chapter 5, Figure 12**. Although the boundaries are clearly defined, it should be recognised that landscape character is not always dramatically different from one side of the boundary to the other. In some places, there are obvious changes in landscape character while elsewhere and more commonly, the change may be more subtle and transitional. In general, boundary lines for the Landscape Character Areas should be regarded as indicative of broad landscape character. It is also important to remember that landscape character may alter over time as a result of changes within the landscape such as development changes in land use, and agricultural practices.



Chapter 2.0  
**METHODOLOGY**

---





Chapter 3.0

# LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

---

## Chapter 3.0

# LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

---

The Charnwood Forest Regional Park covers an area of 158km<sup>2</sup> and stretches across four local authority boundaries including Charnwood Borough, North West Leicestershire District, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough and the very northern extent of the City of Leicester (**Figure 1 page 9 and Figure 2 page 21**).

A number of published landscape characterisation studies have been carried out for the area, at both a national and district level, including the Charnwood Forest Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment which was completed in 2008. These documents provide the context for this assessment and include the following:

- **National Character Area Profiles; NCA 69. Trent Valley Washlands (2013), NCA 70. Melbourne Parklands (2012), NCA 71. Leicestershire & South Derbyshire Coalfield (2014), NCA 73. Charnwood (2013), NCA 74. Leicester and Nottinghamshire Wolds (2014), and NCA 94. Leicestershire Vales (2014).**
- **East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment (2010)**
- **Borough of Charnwood Landscape Character Assessment (2012);**
- **Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2017);**
- **North West Leicestershire Landscape Character Assessment (2009);**
- **Charnwood Forest Landscape Character and Settlement Assessment (2008).**
- **National Forest Strategy 2014-2024**
- **The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation Project (2010).**

### National Context

Natural England have carried out landscape characterisation of the whole country and identified 159 National Character Areas (NCA). Each NCA is described in detail within a 'profile' which includes a description of the current landscape, describes how the landscape has changed over time and identifies key drivers for ongoing landscape change. The descriptions also include a set of Key Characteristics for each area and Statements of Environmental Opportunity.

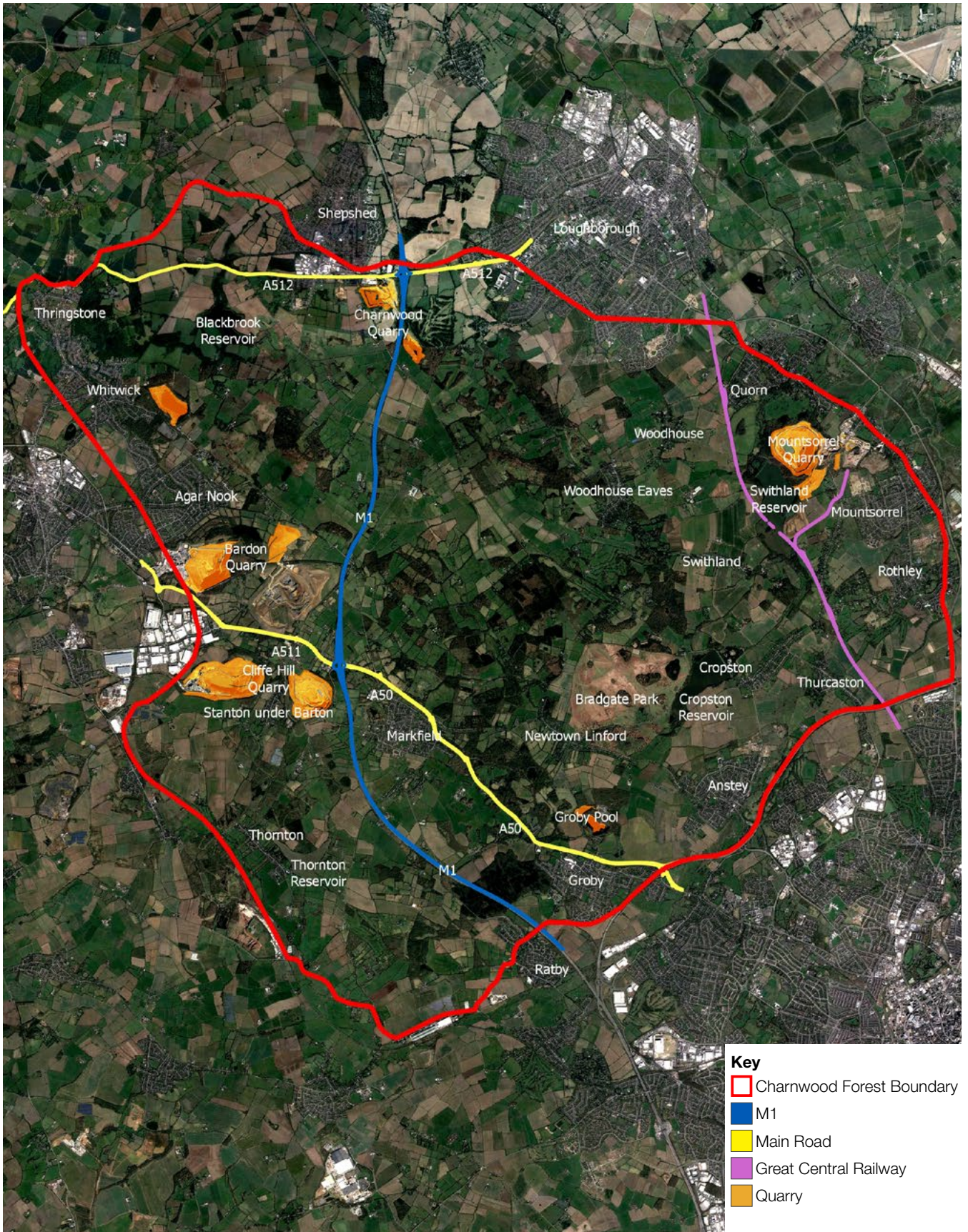
Charnwood Forest is largely covered by NCA 73 Charnwood, but also extends into the adjacent areas of NCA 71 Leicestershire & South Derbyshire Coalfield to the west. The forest area also just overlaps the southern extent of area NCA 70 Melbourne Parklands, NCA 94 Leicestershire Wolds to the south and NCA 69 Trent Valley Washlands to the east (**Figure 3**).

### NCA 73. Charnwood

Charnwood Forest is broadly associated with this NCA. The NCA profile includes the following description (please refer to the NCA Profile for full details):

*“Charnwood is a unique landscape, marked out by its geology and upland qualities, which contrast with the surrounding gentle lowlands. It is formed by a mosaic of heathland, farmland, parkland and woodland. The underlying Precambrian geology has given rise to the distinct area of land characterised by exposures of rugged, rocky outcrops. It is a relatively well wooded landscape, with many areas of mixed, deciduous and coniferous woodlands. The western part of Charnwood lies within The National Forest, which offers people extensive access, environmental education and volunteering opportunities, and the chance to become involved with local community projects...”*

Figure 2: Aerial Photograph



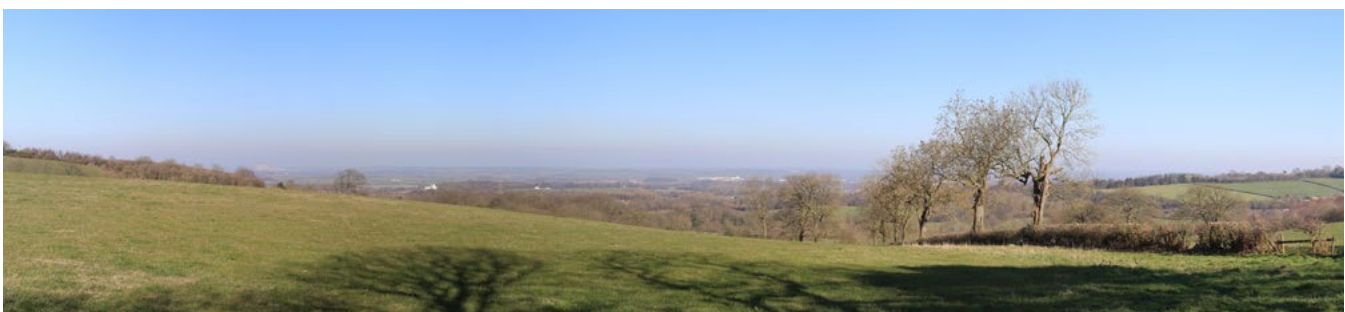
- Key**
- Charnwood Forest Boundary
  - M1
  - Main Road
  - Great Central Railway
  - Quarry

## Chapter 3.0

# LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

The NCA profile identifies the following Key Characteristics:

- *Upland qualities, including extensive open summits and distinctive rocky outcrops, rising from the surrounding lowland undulating farmland.*
- *Outcrops of ancient Precambrian rocks, with Mercia Mudstones in the vales; a significant proportion of the NCA is covered with superficial deposits of the Anglian ice age, as well as more recent deposits.*
- *Thin, acidic, infertile soils are found on upland slopes; mudstones in the valley bottoms produce a deeper, fertile soil.*
- *A well wooded character, with many areas of mixed, deciduous and coniferous woodlands. Large, ancient, pollarded oaks are a feature of country parks.*
- *Rectilinear patterns of parliamentary enclosure fields, bounded by a mixture of drystone walls and hedges. Many of the country parks are also bounded by drystone walls. Enclosure has created a distinctive road pattern.*
- *Land use is a distinctive mixture of woodland, predominantly pastoral farmland, heathland and parkland.*
- *A diverse variety of habitats (including woodlands, acidic grassland and heathland) support a large range of characteristic and rare species.*
- *Clear, fast-flowing watercourses and significant, large, open waterbodies and reservoirs.*
- *Historic parks and country parks such as Bradgate and Beacon Hill, large manor houses and the remains of medieval monastic buildings like Ulverscroft Priory are all prominent cultural heritage features that attract many visitors from the surrounding urban areas.*
- *Local Charnian rocks, Swithland Slate roofs, thatched roofs and some timber-framed buildings characterise the Charnwood villages.*
- *Occasional linear villages and scattered farmsteads through the heart of Charnwood contrast with larger settlements, which ring the elevated areas. A number of large quarries and some busy roads have an urbanising influence in places.*



# LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

The Statements of Environmental Opportunity include the following:

**SEO 1:** Protect, manage and promote the important geology and cultural interests of Charnwood, including the internationally significant Precambrian geology, the characteristic rocky outcrops, the unique country parks, the manor houses and the medieval monastic buildings, to ensure access and interpretation, and for people to enjoy and understand these important resources.

**SEO 2:** Conserve the strong settlement character of the inner Charnwood villages and ensure that development is sympathetic to the character of this rural NCA, surrounded by large and expanding urban areas. Maximise the green infrastructure and sustainable recreation opportunities.

**SEO 3:** Protect and significantly increase the extent and quality of the unimproved grasslands, heathlands, open waterbodies and streams, to enhance biodiversity, ecological networks, water availability and quality, climate regulation and sense of place.

**SEO 4:** Where appropriate, manage and expand the native woodlands throughout Charnwood to reinforce the wooded character, to increase the potential for biomass, access and recreation, and to regulate climate change and water quality.

The south western edge of Charnwood Forest extends into NCA 71: Leicestershire & South Derbyshire Coalfield. This is a linear form running north west to south east and covers the urban area of Swadlincote to the north west and the villages of Newbold Verdon, Desford and Ratby in the south east.

This NCA is described as follows:

*“a plateau with unrestricted views of shallow valleys and gentle ridges that become less pronounced in the south due to a layer of glacial till. To the east the land rises steeply, affording views of the Charnwood National Character Area (NCA)...*

*The area has a developing woodland character, heavily influenced by work of The National Forest that covers the majority of the NCA...*

*The landscape is in continuing transition, from an unenclosed rolling landform that was extensively scarred by abandoned collieries, spoil tips and clay pits, to a matrix of new woodland, restored colliery sites, active brick pits and commercial developments...*

The northern extent of Charnwood Forest extends into NCA 70: Melbourne Parklands which is described as *“a landscape of rolling farmland, ancient and plantation woodland and... a cluster of landscaped parklands with grand country houses...”*

The very eastern extent of Charnwood Forest encroaches into NCA 69: Trent Valley Washlands, a narrow, low-lying, linear landscape which covers the floodplain corridors of the River Trent.

The very southern extent of Charnwood Forest extends into NCA 94: Leicestershire Wolds *“a large, relatively open, uniform landscape”* which is dominated by Leicester City in the north eastern corner.

## Chapter 3.0

# LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

## Regional Context

### East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment (2010)

Charnwood Forest is located within Landscape Character Group 10: Woods and Forests within the East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment 2010. The forest is broadly associated with Regional Landscape Character Type 10D: Forested Ancient Hills which has the following Key Characteristics:

- *Upland landscape of ancient Pre-Cambrian igneous rocks, rising out of lowland farmland;*
- *Distinctive rocky outcrops and knolls on elevated slopes and summits with extensive open areas;*
- *Clear, fast flowing streams on upper slopes that support an abundance of wildlife;*
- *High proportion of woodland cover;*
- *Land use is a distinctive mixture of woodlands, predominantly pastoral farmland, heathland, and parkland;*
- *Strongly rectilinear patterns of parliamentary enclosure fields and roads bounded by a mix of dry stone walls and hedges;*
- *Remnant historic parks and associated houses;*
- *Large reservoirs and pools are common landscape features; and*
- *Occasional villages and scattered farmsteads within the upland area, often constructed in the dark local stone, in contrast to larger villages and settlements located mainly at the edge of the elevated ground.*

This RLCT is described as follows:

*“The Forested Ancient Hills Landscape Character Type is confined to a single area within the East Midlands Region comprising the Charnwood Forest area. The uniqueness of this Landscape Character Type is attributable to the underlying Pre-Cambrian geology which only occurs in this part of the region and has given rise to a distinctive area of elevated land with exposures of rugged rocky outcrops that rise above the surrounding lowland plain.*”

*Overall, the Forested Ancient Hills has a well wooded character derived from the many areas of mixed deciduous and coniferous woodlands that are present, including ancient and wet woodlands. Within this pattern of woodlands, a mosaic of land uses extends across this elevated and dissected Landscape Character Type, comprising more open upland areas with heathland, mixed arable and pasture farmland, and remnant medieval parks, which together contribute to the diversity of the area. There is a notable concentration of SSSIs within the Forested Ancient Hills which is indicative of the high biodiversity value of many parts of the area it covers. The network of hedgerows and associated hedgerow trees that extends across the predominantly pastoral farmland contributes further to the sense of a well-wooded character.*

*The more elevated and open areas of the Forested Ancient Hills Landscape Character Type command expansive views to the surrounding lowland plain and distant horizons. In contrast, at lower elevations views are contained by the intricate pattern of woodlands and farmland and convey a secluded and intimate character.”*



# LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

## Local Context

### Borough of Charnwood Landscape Character Assessment (July 2012)

This study was produced in order to inform future development management plans and decisions for the Borough. The character assessment evaluates the landscape of Charnwood Borough and includes a landscape strategy for each of the areas identified. A landscape sensitivity and capacity study has been completed for the areas which adjoin the urban edges of Leicester, Loughborough and Shepshed.

The document identifies 6 distinct character areas identified as follows:

- Charnwood Forest
- High Leicestershire
- Soar Valley
- Wreake Valley
- The Wolds
- Langley Lowlands

The Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Area broadly relates to the eastern part of Charnwood Forest. This area has the following Key Characteristics:

- *Charnwood Forest is the most complex of the landscape character areas and five sub-areas were identified within the Borough in the 2008 Charnwood Forest Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment*
- *The highly distinctive upland character contrasts with the lower lying nature of the surrounding landscape character areas. It contains the highest land in the Borough of Charnwood, rising to 248m (814ft) at Beacon Hill*
- *Landscape mosaic of pasture, frequent woodland and exposed hilltops of acidic grassland with rocky outcrops of ancient Pre-Cambrian volcanic and plutonic rocks with bracken and heathland*

- *Most densely wooded area of Charnwood Borough with coniferous and mixed deciduous woods*
- *Includes many wildlife areas and ancient semi-natural woodlands*
- *Field boundaries of stone walls and large free growing hedges*
- *Strongly rectilinear pattern of parliamentary enclosure fields and straight roads*
- *Historic quarrying of granite and slates and still active quarrying of granite*
- *Historic houses and ruins - Bradgate Country Park (Grade II Historic Park and Garden), Ulverscroft Priory and Beaumanor Hall*
- *Scattered settlements often of local stone with steeply angled slate roofs*
- *Settlements are Woodhouse, Woodhouse Eaves, Swithland, Cropston, Thurgaston, Anstey, Newtown Linford, western edges of Rothley and Mountsorrel, and the fringes of west Loughborough and south Shepshed*
- *M1 motorway passes through this character area*
- *Much of the area is in the National Forest.*

The character area is described as follows:

*“The upland nature of Charnwood Forest, due to the underlying ancient rock, is very different from other landscape character areas within the Borough. The geology has strongly influenced both the natural vegetation cover and agricultural land use. It has the highest percentage of woodland cover and wildlife sites in Leicestershire. Small villages have a strong sense of identity through the use of local stone. The area is very popular for recreation and visitor pressure is increasing.”*

## Chapter 3.0

# LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

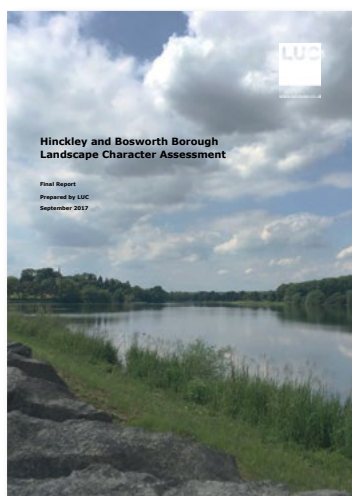
### Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2017)

This study is a review and update of the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Landscape Character Assessment which was originally published in 2006. The study identifies 10 different landscape character areas and 6 overarching Landscape Types which describe more general characteristics of the landscape.

The north eastern extent of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough is included within the Charnwood Forest area. This sector relates to Area A: Charnwood Forest Settled Forest Hills and part of Area B: Charnwood Fringe Settled Forest Hills which are both part of the overarching Settled Forest Hills Landscape Character Type.

The Settled Forest Hills Landscape Character Type is described as

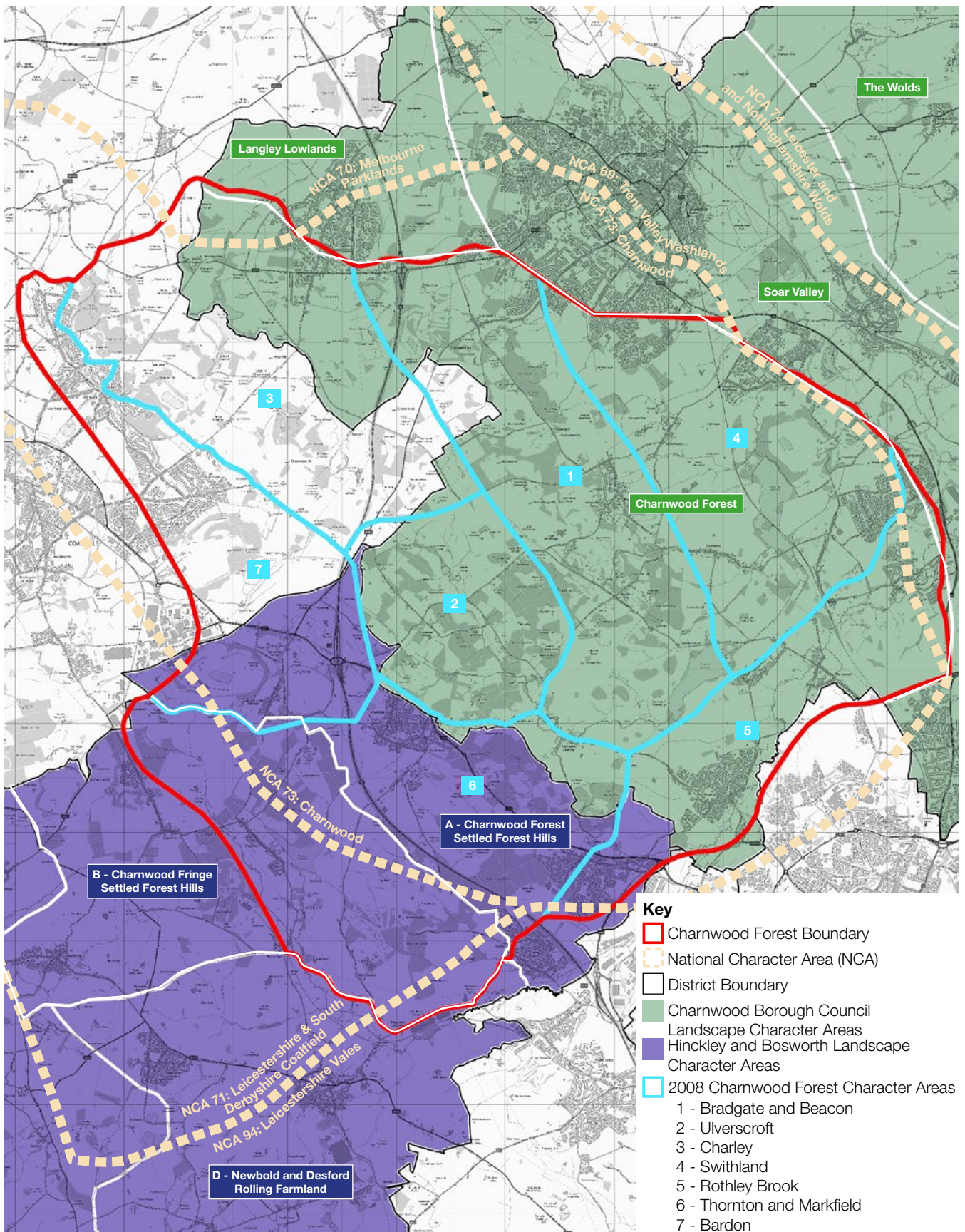
***“Comprehensive forest cover on elevated landform with large open waterbodies influenced by a rich history in mining.”***



The Charnwood Forest Settled Forest Hills landscape character area is described with the following Key Characteristics:

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

Figure 3: Existing Landscape Character Areas



## Chapter 3.0

# LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

The Charnwood Fringe Settled Forest Hills Landscape Character Area is described with the following Key Characteristics:

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

### Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Assessment

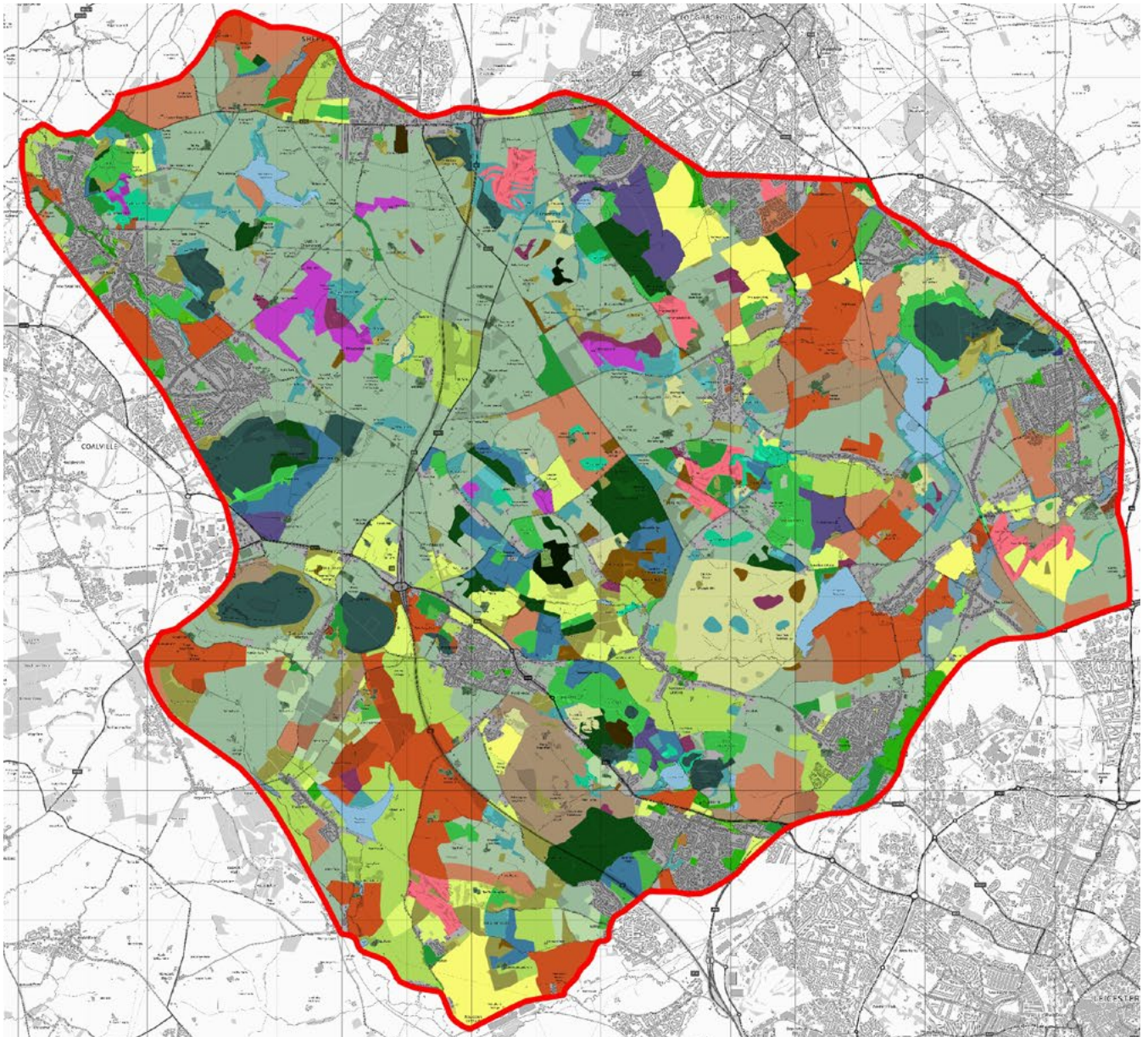
The original Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Assessment was published in 2008 by Leicestershire County Council. The document has been reviewed as part of the background analysis for the production of this updated Landscape Character Assessment which supersedes the original document.

### The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation Project

This study was carried out by Leicestershire County Council between 2006 and 2009. The study involves the examination of the geology, topography, ecology and archaeology of the area. A detailed Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping exercise was carried out through the creation of polygons, analysed against Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) attributes, to identify single historic landscape character types. Broad Character Types are identified as well as more detailed Historic Landscape Character Types which are described in detail within the document (see Figure 4). Within the Charnwood Forest Area, at the broad character type scale, the area is mostly identified as 'Fields and Enclosed Land' with areas of 'Woodland' but there are pockets of other types such as 'Unenclosed Land', 'Ornamental, Parkland and Recreational' for example at Bradgate Park, as well as 'Extractive and Landfill' areas in the locations of the quarries.

At a more detailed level, these Broad Character Types are sub-categorised and defined in terms of Historic Landscape Character Types. For a detailed description of each HLC type please refer to the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation document, specifically section 1.9.6.1.

Figure 4: Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation



**Key**

- |                                   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| Charnwood Forest Boundary         | Public Open Space                             | Other Commons                               |
| Barrack Training Ground           | Pre-War Allotments                            | Mixed Woods with Sinuous Boundaries         |
| Post 1880s Nursery Horticulture   | Post-War Allotments                           | Mixed Plantation                            |
| Reservoir                         | Planned Woodland Clearance                    | Miscellaneous Floodplain Fields             |
| Artificial Lake Pond              | Planned Enclosure                             | Large Irregular Fields                      |
| Landfill                          | Planned Enclosure containing Ridge and Furrow | Large Assarts with Sinuous Boundaries       |
| Stone Quarries                    | Piecemeal Enclosure                           | Irregular Squatter Enclosure                |
| Abandoned Restored Stone Quarries | Parks and Gardens                             | Heathland                                   |
| Very Large Post-War Fields        | Paddocks and Closes                           | Golf Course                                 |
| Sports Field                      | Other Works                                   | Farm Complex                                |
| Small Irregular Fields            | Other Woods with Sinuous Boundaries           | Coniferous Woodland with Sinuous Boundaries |
| Drained Wetlands                  | Other Small Rectilinear Fields                | Coniferous Plantation                       |
| Small Assarts                     | Other Plantation                              | Broadleaved Woods with Sinuous Boundaries   |
| Replanted Ancient Woodlands       | Other Parkland                                | Broadleaved Plantation                      |
| Re-Organised Piecemeal Enclosure  | Other Large Rectilinear Fields                | Broadleaved Ancient Woodland                |
|                                   |   | Train Stations Sidings Cuttings             |

## Chapter 3.0

# LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

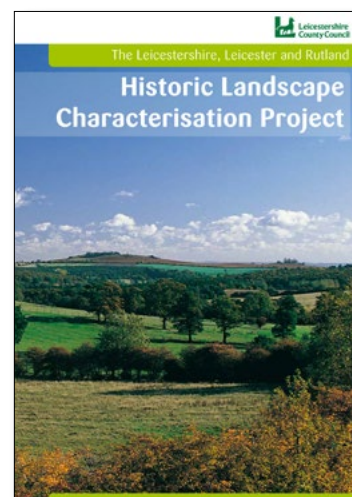
The Planned Enclosures HLC type predominates across Charnwood Forest particularly south of Shepshed and east of Whitwick. Re-organised Piecemeal Enclosure HLC type is also extensively distributed over large tracts of land, wrapping around the peripheries of the forest from the northeast, round to the southern and western areas. Very Large Post War Fields, Large Irregular Fields and Other Large Rectilinear Fields as well as Large Assarts with Sinuous Boundaries HLC types follow a similar pattern of extensive landcover which are distributed along a crescent shape from south of Loughborough, past the north west of Leicester and Groby, extending west towards Coalville.

A more intensive mosaic of HLC types are evident within the more central area between Markfield and Woodhouse Eaves which consists of Planned Woodland Clearance, Piecemeal Enclosures, Piecemeal Enclosures with Ridge & Furrow, Small Assarts and Other Small Rectilinear Fields HLC types.

The Parks and Gardens HLC type is located at the centre of Charnwood Forest at Bradgate Park with a smaller area at Beacon Hill Park a little to the north west.

Broadleaved Ancient Woodland and Replanted Ancient Woodland HLC types are scattered across Charnwood Forest with extensive landcover east of Whitwick, south of Loughborough and west of Quorn as well as various areas surrounding Beacon Hill and Bradgate Park. Heathland HLC type is found mostly along the higher ground towards Whitwick and Grace Dieu but also smaller mosaics are present to the west of Loughborough.

Coniferous and Broadleaf Plantations are also scattered throughout the area with reservoirs and stone quarries also prevalent, including at Mountsorrel, Groby and Bardon.



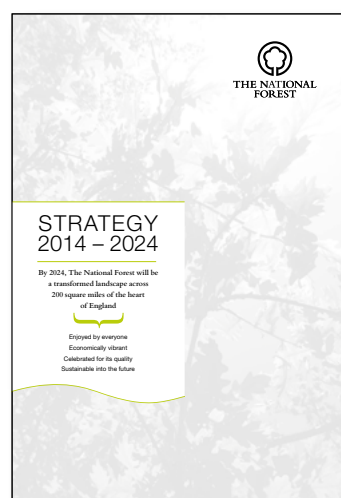
# LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

## The National Forest Strategy 2014-2024

The National Forest extends over an area of 200 square miles across the Midlands and covers parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire (see **Figure 1, page 9**). Originating in the early 1990's the coverage of the National Forest has increased from the original 6% to nearly 21% in March 2019. The latest strategy identifies Key Objectives for the Forest for the period 2014-2019 with a Mid-decade review identified for 2019 which will influence the future objectives of the strategy to 2024. The main priorities and key activities identified to deliver the National Forest to 2024 are identified as:

- **To be a national exemplar, centre of excellence and research partner;**
- **To continue to create new forest;**
- **To manage all aspects of the forest including all habitats and visitor attractions;**
- **To create a 'great experience' for all customers;**
- **To build on the 'National Forest' brand and to be more entrepreneurial; and**
- **To develop the forest 'for everyone' to be inclusive, accessible and welcoming for everyone.**

The National Forest covers a good proportion of the Charnwood Forest area, including the western and central areas.



## Chapter 3.0

# LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

### Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study for Leicester & Leicestershire (2017)

This study was prepared by LUC and forms part of the Evidence Base for the new Strategic Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire. The document examines the sensitivity of the landscape within identified study areas to assess the extent to which different areas can accommodate development without impacting on key landscape qualities. It also identifies possible mitigation and considers the potential for positive change through the development and enhancement of Green Infrastructure.

Within Part 1 of the report, the document identifies existing Green Infrastructure assets<sup>1</sup> and Biodiversity assets<sup>2</sup> and designations across the county (shown within the document at Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.4) and shows a high proportion of these assets located within Charnwood Forest.

Part 2 of the report analyses Strategic Opportunity Assessment Zone profiles of which the southern extent of Area 2 'Northern Gateway' protrudes into Charnwood Forest. This area is identified overall as having a 'Moderate Sensitivity' to residential development (2-3 storeys) and commercial development (light industry).

Key landscape sensitivities identified for the area include:

- **Small-scale strip fields and piecemeal enclosures which are usually associated with the edges of settlements.**
- **Valued semi-natural habitats including Blackbrook Reservoir which is nationally designated as a SSSI.**
- **Generally rural and tranquil in character throughout the majority of the landscape.**

Two Green Infrastructure Opportunities are identified within the southern part of Area 2 as follows:

- **13. Shepshed-Thringstone Ecological corridor: (Biodiversity/Recreation and Play/Health and Equality): Create new areas of woodland, connecting the existing woods and copses, linking to the National Forest/Charnwood Forest.**
- **14. Blackbrook Access and Recreation Project: (Strategic Destination/Biodiversity/Recreation and Play): Enhance access and interpretation to create a new high quality semi-natural open space/destination at Blackbrook Reservoir with new multi-user rights of way from Shepshed.**

<sup>1</sup> Green Infrastructure assets include: Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area, Ramsar, Site of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserve, Ancient Woodland, National Forestry Inventory (Woodlands > 0.5ha), Local Nature Reserve, Local Wildlife Site, Open Space, Ordnance Survey Green Spaces, Green Wedge, Area of Separation

<sup>2</sup> Biodiversity assets and designations include: Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area, Ramsar, SSSI, National Nature Reserve, Local Nature Reserve, Local Wildlife Site, National Forestry Inventory (Woodland >0.5ha, Ancient Woodland, National Forest Scheme, National Forest, Charnwood Forest Regional Park.



## LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

Part 3 of the report reviews Landscape Character Area profiles for the county and identifies Charnwood Forest as being of 'Moderate-High Sensitivity' to residential development (2-3 storeys) and commercial development (light industry).

The area is described as:

*“Charnwood Forest is a distinctive upland landscape punctuated by rocky outcrops and fast flowing streams. A well wooded landscape including large tracts of ancient woodland. Fields are mostly parliamentary enclosure, with some enlargement of fields following introduction of arable crops. Local stone vernacular is visible in buildings and walls. Many sites of nationally and locally valued ecological importance, including former quarries, woodland and heath grasslands. Historic estate parklands add time-depth to the landscape. Long panoramic views are possible from numerous parts of the area.”*

Key landscape sensitivities to development within the area are identified as follows:

- *The elevated, upland landscape, with distinctive rocky outcrops which are visible from long distances.*
- *Nationally and locally valued semi-natural habitats including heathland and wetland habitat.*
- *Well-wooded character, with large tracts of ancient woodland.*
- *The setting and integrity of historic estate parkland landscapes including Bradgate Park and Garendon Park (both Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens).*
- *Nationally important heritage features including hillforts and medieval fish ponds.*
- *Traditional nucleated settlements constructed of distinctive local stone.*
- *Long distance panoramic views, overlooking lower lying adjacent landscapes.*
- *The attractive, scenic qualities of the landscape, which make it a popular destination for recreation.*



Chapter 4.0

# OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHARNWOOD FOREST

---

## Chapter 4.0

# OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHARNWOOD FOREST

---

### Physical Influences

#### Geology

The underlying geology of the Charnwood Forest area (see Figure 5), dates back to the Precambrian Period with some areas being 560-600 million years old. Volcanic eruptions from this time created the rocks of the 'Charnian Supergroup' which include fossilised evidence of primitive life which evolved at this time. Igneous rocks from this era are extracted from a number of quarries within the Charnwood area.

The early volcanoes were worn down by erosion during the Cambrian Period with Swithland Slate resulting from the sea depositing muddy material as it advanced over the land, around 530 million years ago. Quarried since Roman times, this slate features within the area, used as a roofing material, but is also found in the form of gravestones for example, as at Ratby churchyard.

The granodiorite intrusion at Mountsorrel (the Mountsorrel Complex) was formed within a subduction zone during the Ordovician period resulting in hard, medium to coarse-grained crystalline rock. This is being extracted at Buddon Wood (Mountsorrel) but has been worked in the area from late Neolithic times.

Towards the end of the Silurian Period, around 420 million years ago, two continental plates collided resulting in the formation of mountains. These formations are evident today as the Charnwood Hills.

Within the northern parts of Charnwood Forest, areas of Carboniferous Limestone are evident, which date from the Carboniferous Period, 355 million years ago. These were formed as a result of sediments being deposited while the area was covered by a warm sea, as the landmass was located close to the equator at that time. This rock is only found in a limited area due to the majority of the area existing as a mountain range.

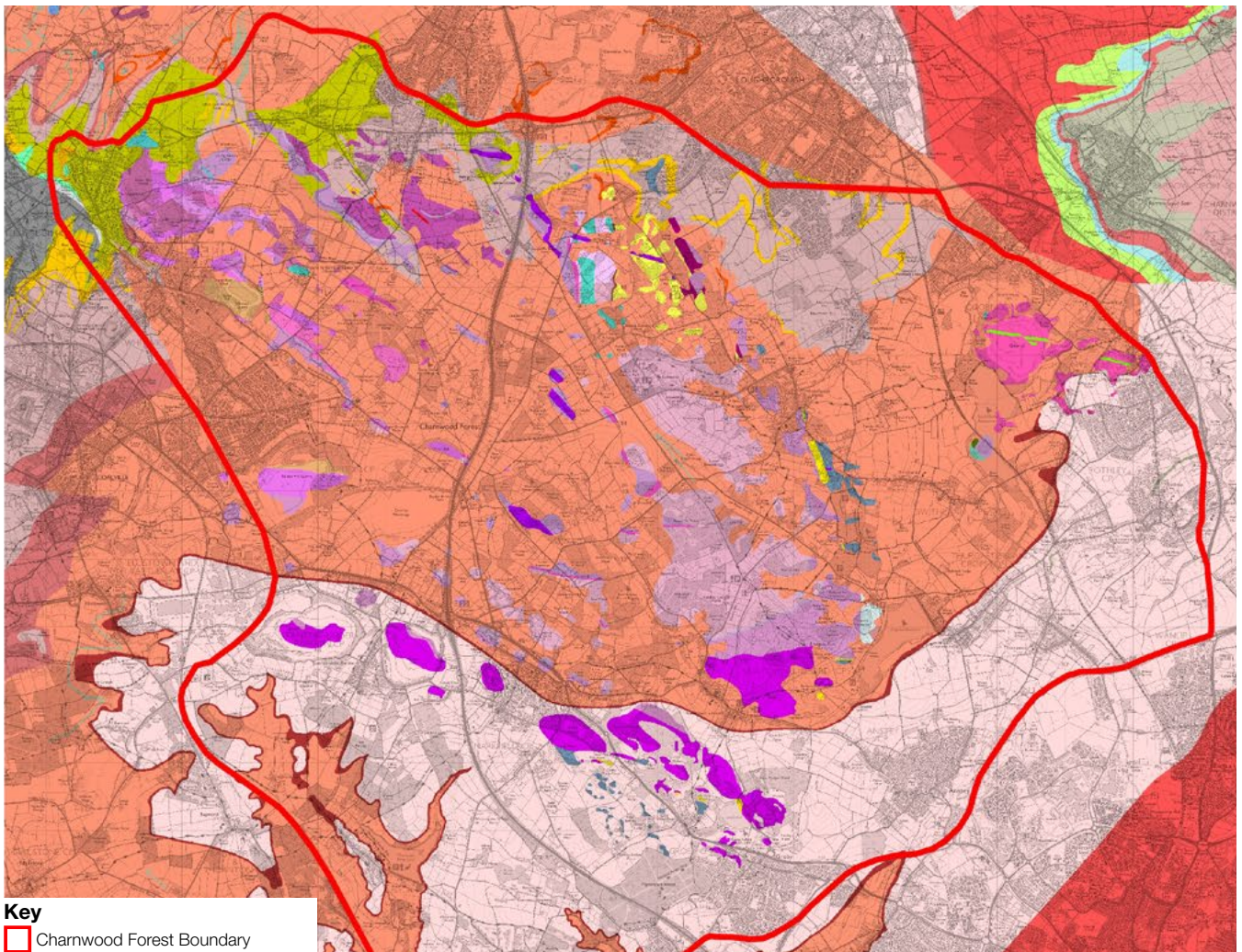
At the end of this period the area covered by the sea was replaced with a large delta which resulted in the accumulation of the Coal Measures. These areas lie to the west of the area, located within the Leicestershire coalfield.

Much of the Carboniferous rock was eroded throughout the Permian Period which lasted for around 40 million years. The erosion was irregular as a result of the landform but during the following Triassic Period, Charnwood became covered in sediments. This period resulted in the creation of Shepshed Sandstone and the Mercia Mudstone Group, formed later in the period which eventually covered the whole of the Charnwood mountains. Subsequent wind erosion has however resulted in the creation of 'tors' of granodiorite in some areas.

A tropical sea covered the area during the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods and by the start of the Quaternary Period, around 2 million years ago, much of the previous strata had been eroded. Glaciers moved across much of the country during the Anglian Ice Age 440,000 years ago, which left superficial deposits of sand, gravel and till as they retreated.

More recently, rivers have developed with associated floodplains consisting of clay and silt.

Figure 5: Geology



**Key**

- Charnwood Forest Boundary
- Barnstone Member - Mudstone and Limestone, interbedded
- Cotham Member - Mudstone
- Scunthorpe Mudstone Formation - Mudstone
- Westbury Formation - Mudstone
- Willmote Limestone Member - Mudstone and Limestone, interbedded
- Blue Anchor Formation - Mudstone
- Branscombe Mudstone Formation - Mudstone
- Arden Sandstone Formation - Sandstone
- Cotgrave Sandstone Member - Sandstone
- Edwalton Member - Siltstone, Dolomitic
- Edwalton Member - Mudstone
- Edwalton Member - Sandstone
- Gunthorpe Member - Siltstone, Dolomitic
- Gunthorpe Member - Mudstone
- Gunthorpe Member - Sandstone
- Helsby Sandstone Formation - Mudstone
- Helsby Sandstone Formation - Sandstone
- Radcliffe Member - Mudstone and Siltstone
- Radcliffe Member - Mudstone
- Shepshed Sandstone Member - Sandstone
- Tarpoley Siltstone Formation - Sandstone
- Tarpoley Siltstone Formation - Siltstone, Mudstone and Sandstone
- Mercia Mudstone Group - Mudstone
- Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation - Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone
- Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation - Sandstone
- Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation - Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone
- Ashover Grit - Sandstone
- Morridge Formation - Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone
- Unnamed Dyke, Carboniferous - Basalt and Microgabbro
- Mountsorrel Complex - Diorite
- Mountsorrel Complex - Gabbro
- Mountsorrel Complex - Granodiorite
- South Leicestershire Diorite Complex - Diorite
- Lubcloud Microgranite - Microgranite
- Swithland Camp Member - Conglomerate
- Stockingford Shale Group - Mudstone
- Swithland Formation - Mudstone
- Stable Pit Member - Sandstone
- Beacon Tuff Member - Tuff, Dacitic
- Beacon Tuff Member - Tuff
- Beacon Tuff Member - Volcaniclastic Rocks (both Pyroclastic and Reworked Volcanic Rocks)
- Bardon Breccia - Andesitic - Rock
- Blackbrook Reservoir Formation - Volcaniclastic - Breccia
- Blackbrook Reservoir Formation - Volcaniclastic - Sandstone
- Blackbrook Reservoir Formation - Volcaniclastic Rocks (both Pyroclastic and Reworked Volcanic Rocks)
- Hanging Rocks Formation - Conglomerate
- Benscliffe Breccia Member - Volcaniclastic - Breccia
- Bucks Hill Member - Tuffaceous - Mudstone
- Bucks Hill Member - Tuffaceous - Sandstone
- Beacon Hill Formation - Tuff, Dacitic
- Beacon Hill Formation - Volcaniclastic - Breccia
- Beacon Hill Formation - Volcaniclastic - Siltstone
- Bradgate Formation - Metavolcaniclastic - Igneous - Rock
- Bradgate Formation - Volcaniclastic - Siltstone
- Charnwood Lodge Volcanic Formation - Pyroclastic - Breccia
- Charnwood Lodge Volcanic Formation - Volcaniclastic - Breccia
- Park Breccia - Volcaniclastic - Breccia
- Sliding Breccia Member - Volcaniclastic - Breccia
- Cademan Volcanic Breccia Member - Pyroclastic - Breccia
- Grimley Andesite - Andesite
- Ives Head Formation - Tuffaceous - Sandstone
- Ives Head Formation - Volcaniclastic - Breccia
- Ives Head Formation - Volcaniclastic - Sandstone
- Kite Hill Tuff Member - Pyroclastic - Breccia
- North Charnwood Diorite - Diorite
- Outwoods Breccia Member - Volcaniclastic - Breccia
- Peldar Dacite Breccia - Volcaniclastic - Breccia
- Peldar Porphyritic Dacite - Dacite
- St Bernard Tuff Member - Volcaniclastic Rocks (both Pyroclastic and Reworked Volcanic Rocks)
- South Charnwood Diorites - Diorites
- Sandhills Lodge Member - Tuffaceous - Sandstone
- South Quarry Breccia Member - Volcaniclastic - Breccia
- Swannymote Breccia Member - Volcaniclastic - Breccia
- Sharpley Porphyritic Dacite - Dacite

## Chapter 4.0

# OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHARNWOOD FOREST

### Soils

Soils are identified and described through the National Soil Map and Soil Classification (2004). The majority of the Charnwood Forest area is covered with soils which are slowly permeable, seasonally wet, loamy and clayey soils (soil type 711l) (see Figure 6). These are of low fertility and typically support seasonally wet pasture and woodland habitat and tend to have landcover consisting of grassland with some arable and forestry. Within the central areas, associated with the higher landform, soils are a similar slowly permeable, seasonally wet, slightly acid, but of a base-rich loamy and clayey soils (soil type 711m). These soils are of moderate fertility but support similar habitats to soil type 711l. These soils are also present in the south west of the area.

Beyond the central area, associated with lower lying landform extending to the north, east and south, soils are slightly acid, loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage (soil type 572f, 572g, 572l). These are of moderate to high fertility and support a wide range of pasture and woodland types and typically

include arable and grassland landcover. Associated with these soils are small pockets of freely draining slightly acid loamy soils which are of low fertility (541r). These soils support neutral and acid pastures and deciduous woodland, as well as acid communities such as bracken and gorse in upland areas. Landcover associated with these soils tends to be arable and grassland.

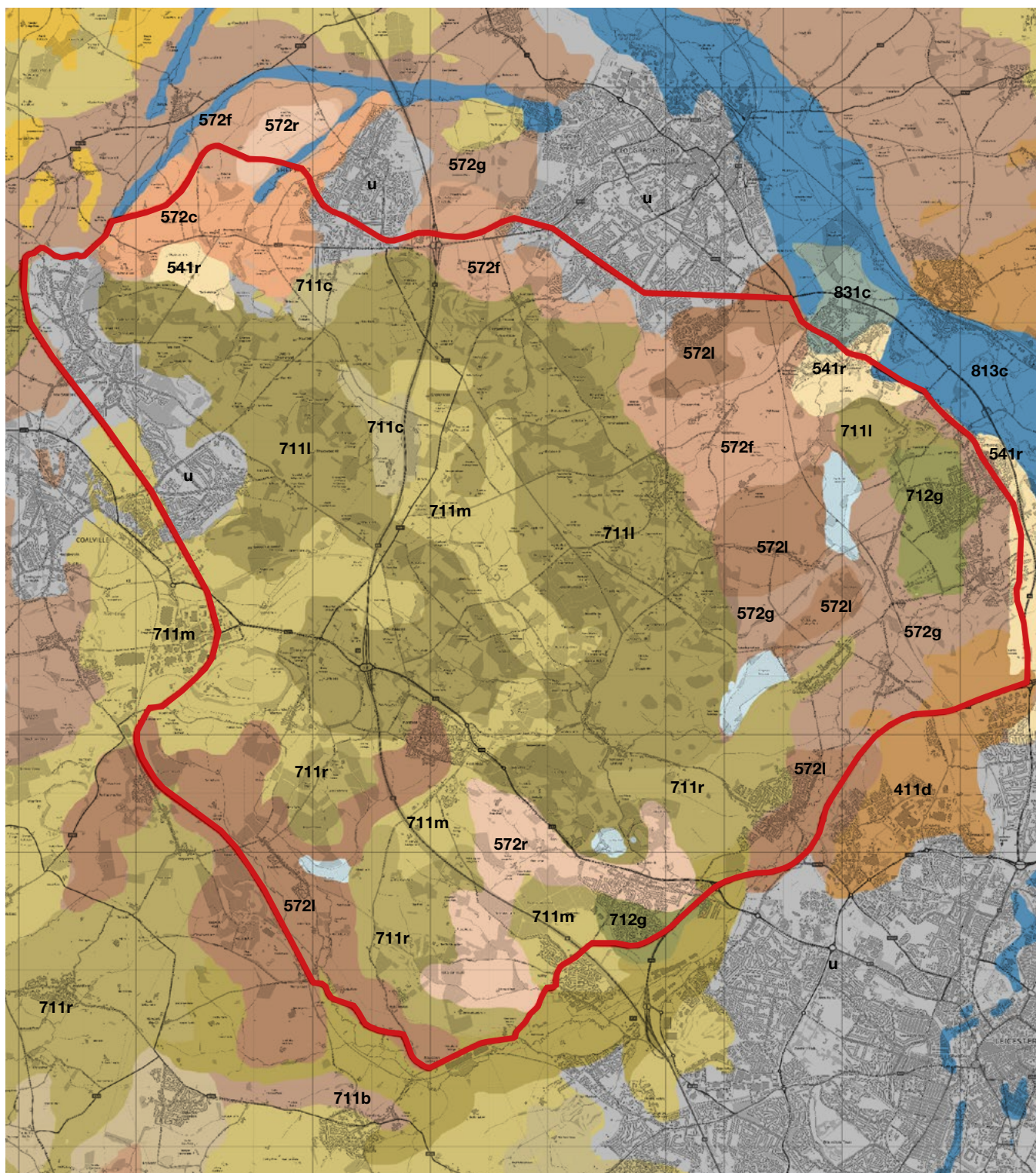
To the south east, associated with Rothley Brook, is an area of lime-rich loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage (soil type 411d). These soils are of high fertility and typically support arable landuses with some grassland.

On the periphery of the forest, associated with the River Soar corridor are loamy and clayey floodplain soils with naturally high groundwater (type 813c). These are of moderate fertility and support wet flood meadows with wet carr woodlands and typically have grassland with some arable land cover. Narrow fingers of this soil type protrude into the area from the north, associated with Black Brook and Grace Dieu Brook.

### Soil Descriptions

- 411d *Deep Clay - Slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils.*
- 541r *Deep Loam - Deep, well-drained, coarse loamy and sandy soils, locally over gravel.*
- 572f *Deep Red Loam to Clay - Reddish mudstone fine loamy or fine silty over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging.*
- 572g *Deep Red Loam to Clay - Reddish coarse and fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging.*
- 572l *Deep Red Loam - Reddish fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging.*
- 572c *Silty over Red Shale - Reddish fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging.*
- 711b *Seasonally wet loam to clayey over red shale - Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged reddish fine loamy over clayey soils.*
- 711c *Seasonally wet loam to clayey over red shale - Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged reddish fine loamy over clayey and clayey soils.*
- 711l *Seasonally wet red loam over hard rock - Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged reddish coarse and fine loamy soils.*
- 711m *Seasonally wet deep red loam to clay - Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged reddish fine loamy over clayey, fine loamy and clayey soils.*
- 711r *Seasonally wet deep loam to clay - Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loamy over clayey soils.*
- 712g *Seasonally wet deep clay - Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey and fine loamy over clayey soils.*
- 813c *Seasonally wet deep clay - Stoneless clayey soils variably affected by groundwater some with sandy subsoils.*
- 831c *Seasonally wet deep loam - Permeable fine and coarse loamy soils variably affected by groundwater, the drier soils being on slightly raised sites*

Figure 6: Soils



**Key**

Charnwood Forest Boundary	572g	711c	712g
411d	572l	711l	813c
541r	572c	711m	831c
572f	711b	711r	

## Chapter 4.0

# OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHARNWOOD FOREST

---

### Topography

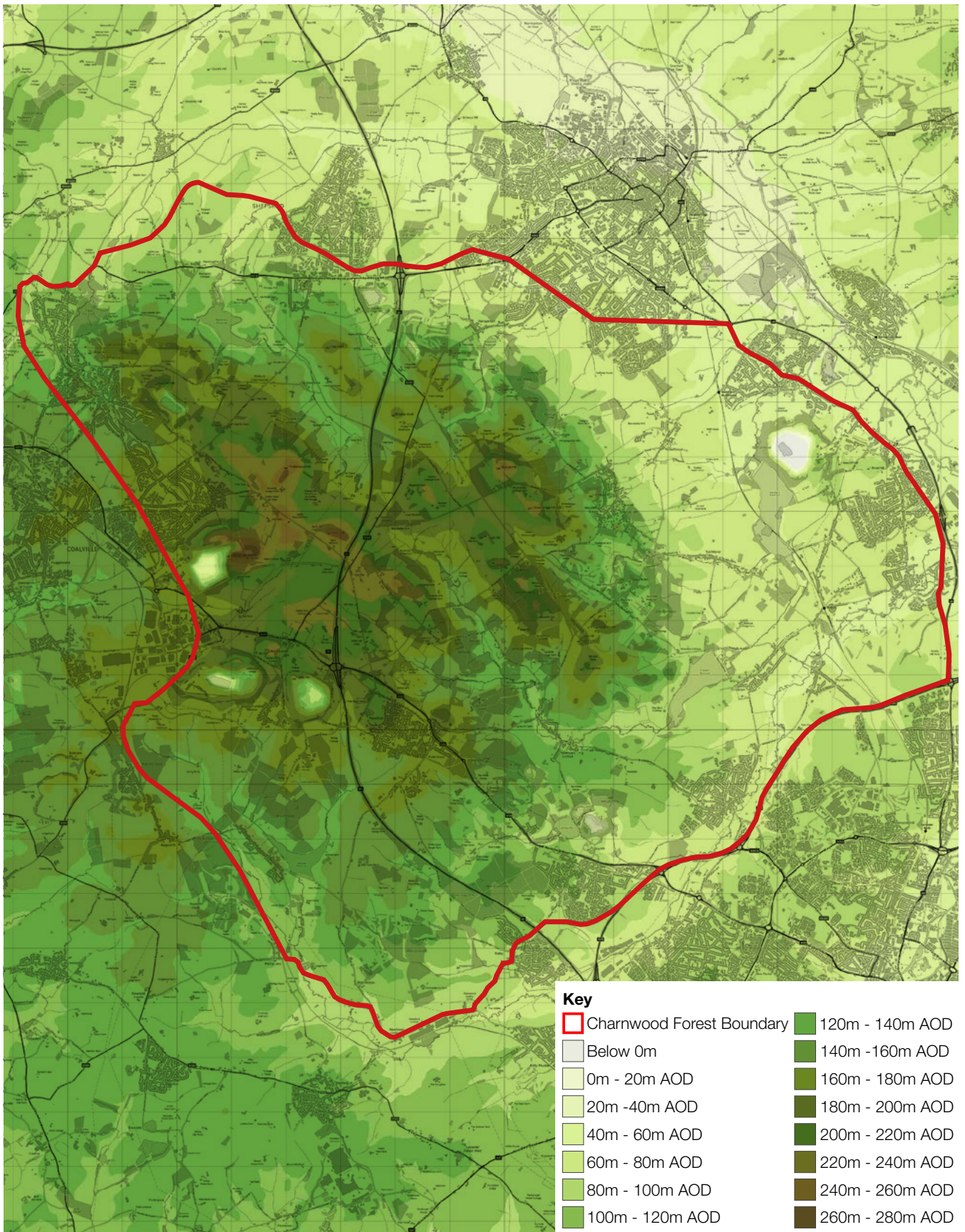
The topography of the Charnwood Forest area is distinctive with variety and contrast. The central upland areas contrast with the lower lying peripheral areas (see [Figure 7](#)).

The central area is elevated and includes areas of heathland and rough grassland with rocky outcrops. This area forms the highest land in Leicestershire and is a distinctive feature within the wider county which generally consists of lower, flatter land. It is a feature of the area that contrasts in landform are created often associated with quarrying, with deep quarries created on areas of high land. This is prevalent towards the west and is evident at Bardon Hill, which has the highest point in the area, reaching 278m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), with the neighbouring quarry forming a major earthwork and deep excavation. This contrast in landform is also evident at Stanton-under-Bardon where Billa Barra Hill reaches 235m AOD and lies adjacent to Stanton-under-Bardon Quarry and also at Markfield where there is a contrast between Hill Hole Quarry and the adjacent hill. The raised landform forms two 'ridges' which run north west to south east separated by a gentle valley, broadly associated with the Black Brook watercourse and the watercourse leading to Cropston Reservoir. Further high points located within this central area are found at Beacon Hill, which reaches 248m AOD and Old John Tower within Bradgate Park.

Landform generally falls to the north, east and south. A rolling landform is evident within the eastern part of Charnwood Forest towards the more settled edges on the outskirts of Loughborough, Quorn, Mountsorrel and Rothley. A lower, flatter valley runs north east to south west along the south east edge of the forest, linking Groby, Anstey and Rothley which is associated with the Rothley Brook corridor. To the north, landform is again more undulating and falls towards the more typical lower plains beyond.



Figure 7: Topography



## Chapter 4.0

# OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHARNWOOD FOREST

---

### Hydrology

The pattern of water courses and water features within Charnwood Forest is closely associated with the topography with a number of streams and brooks with associated reservoirs draining from the central high ground into the River Soar to the north east and east. Land use has also had an influence, with a number of pools and lakes forming in former quarries (see Figure 8).

The flow of water creates an overall pattern of watercourses radiating out from the central higher landform. The source of the River Lin is located centrally, within Ulverscroft, at the heart of Charnwood Forest. The river flows through Newtown Linford and Bradgate Park and feeds both Cropston and Swithland Reservoirs, before joining the River Soar at Quorn.

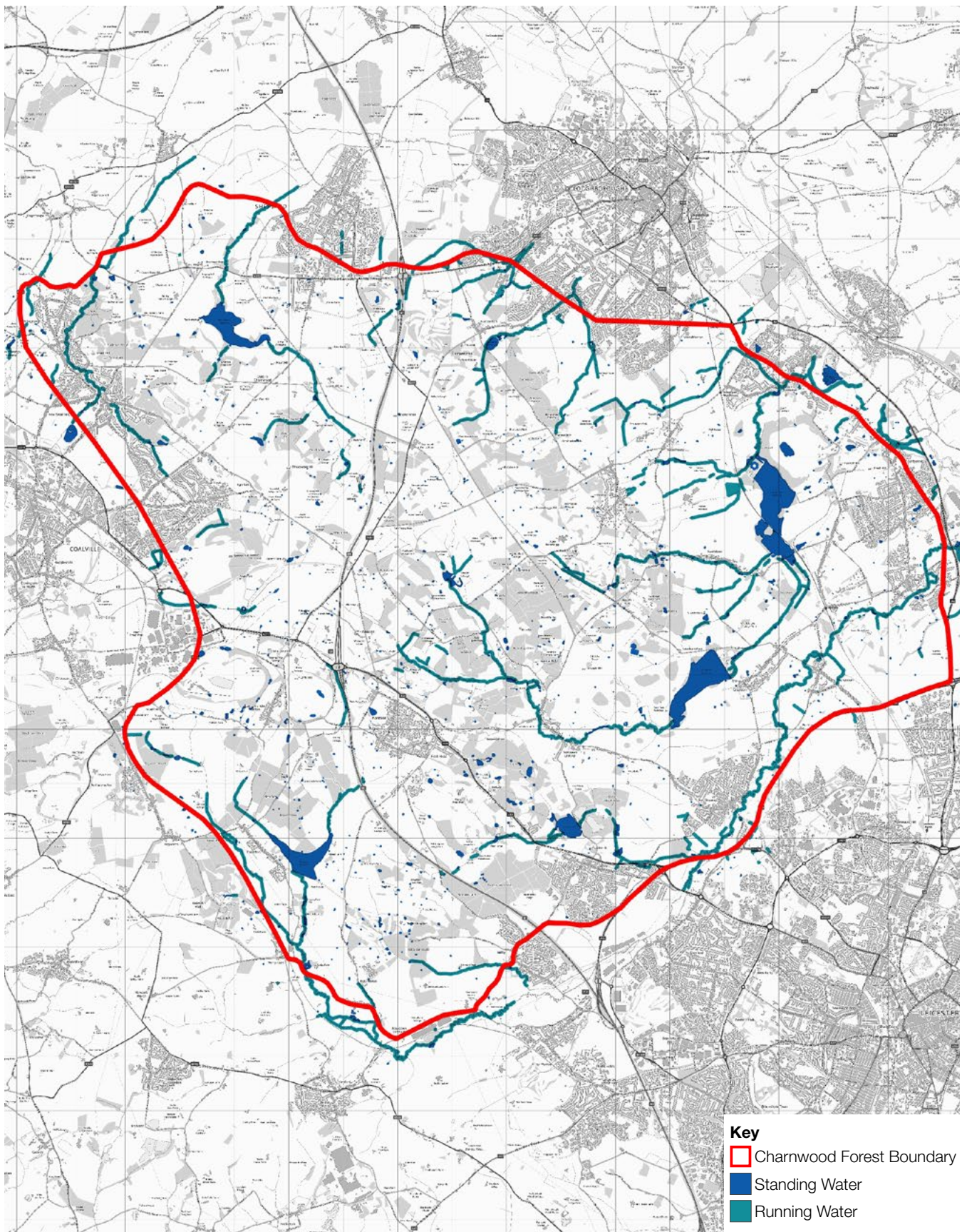
Grace Dieu Brook and Black Brook flow north then east around Shepshed towards Loughborough and Burleigh Brook and Wood Brook also flow north east through Loughborough. Rothley Brook and associated tributaries create a network of watercourses flowing east then north east with the brook itself flowing through a wide floodplain which defines the south eastern edge of Charnwood Forest.

All of these watercourses eventually join the River Soar which flows through a broad low lying flood plain north west to south east around Loughborough and through the villages along the A6 corridor including Quorn, Mountsorrel and Rothley.

Reservoirs form large influential features throughout the area and include Blackbrook in the north, Thornton in the south with Cropston and Swithland located to the east. Thornton, Cropston and Swithland were all constructed in the 19th century and have associated distinctive features. Railings around Swithland are extensive and distinctive while associated buildings are typical red brick Victorian style.

Elsewhere, numerous field ponds are scattered throughout the area.

Figure 8: Hydrology



- Key**
- Charnwood Forest Boundary
  - Standing Water
  - Running Water

## Chapter 4.0

# OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHARNWOOD FOREST

### Ecology

The distinctive geology and landcover within Charnwood Forest results in a rich ecology, with a wide variety of biodiversity including Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats, supporting a range of threatened species including European Protected Species.

The Charnwood Forest NCA states the following regarding species of significant interest;

***“Nationally important species found here include the spreading bellflower and species of dead wood beetle and the Charnwood spider.***

***Hay meadows and pastures rich in wildlife can be found on the fertile soils of the valley bottoms. They are particularly important for wild flowers and for the butterflies and moths they support. Locally rare flowers include the fragrant orchid found in only one site.”***<sup>3</sup>

Charnwood Forest includes many BAP Priority Habitats including Purple Moor grassland, lowland meadows and lowland dry acid grassland. There are also areas of lowland heath mainly within Bradgate Park but also at Beacon Hill, Charnwood Forest Golf Club, Longcliffe Golf Club, as well as at Charnwood Lodge (see [Figure 13](#)).

There are also some small areas of wetland including Lowland Fens and reedbeds.

Extensive areas of woodland habitats are prevalent across Charnwood Forest including wet woodland and lowland mixed deciduous woodland. BAP Priority Wood pasture and Parkland habitats are also evident, at Bradgate Park and south of Quorn.

Ancient woodland is also extensive throughout the area although the National Forest influence is prevalent in the south west with extensive mixed woodland plantations. The country parks have a wealth of hedgerows and veteran trees including areas of ancient woodland.

A large National Nature Reserve is located at Charnwood Lodge and managed by the Wildlife Trust (see [Figure 9](#)).

This site covers an area of 197 ha and includes a mix of valuable habitats including mixed woodland, acid grassland, heath grassland as well as a small reservoir and a number of small ponds. The site contains the prominent 600 million year old Precambrian rocky outcrop which is internationally significant and protected by the National Nature Reserve designation. The elevated wild landscape and presence of exposed rocks combined with rough grassland enclosed by stone walls provides a protected area of distinctive character within the Charnwood Forest area.

There are three Local Nature Reserves in Charnwood Forest including Billa Barra Hill Nature Reserve adjacent to Bardon Hill Quarry, a small area at Halstead Road Centenary Pasture on the western edge of Mountsorrel and Morley Quarry to the south of Shepshed.

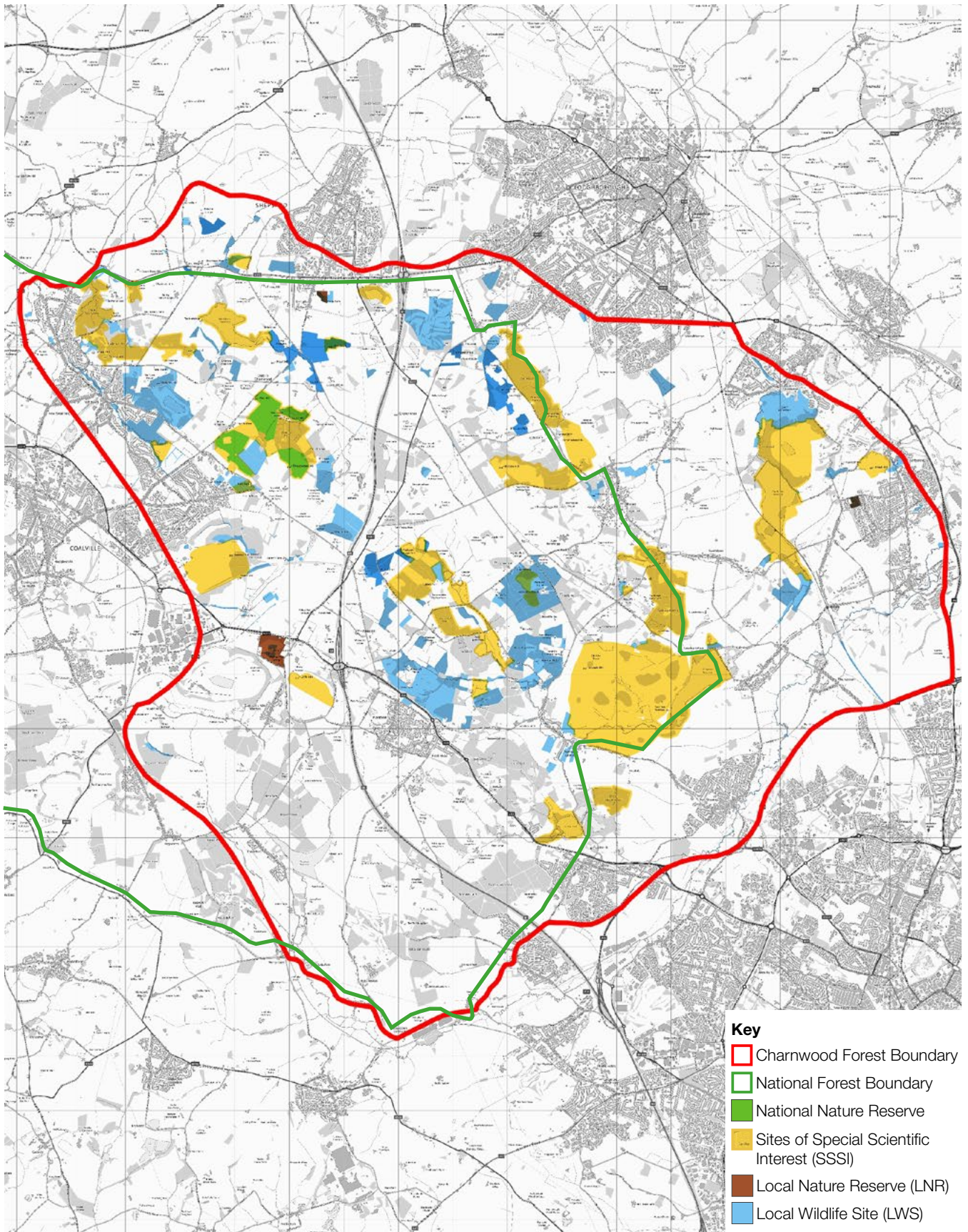
An extensive network of nationally designated SSSIs spread across Charnwood Forest with 22 currently located within the area. A substantial amount of this SSSI land cover is associated with broadleaf mixed woodland combined with mosaics of heathland, lowland or acid grassland, such as at Bradgate Park, Beacon Hill, Grace Dieu, the Outwoods and Charnwood Lodge, with many designations also associated with ex-quarries and reservoirs such as Mountsorrel Quarry, Bardon, Cropston, and Swithland.

The SSSIs are broken down into individual units. At the time of publication there are a total of 128 SSSI units located within the forest. Of these, around 30% are identified as being in a 'favourable' condition. 12% are identified as being 'in decline' such as Jubilee Wood and a section of Beacon Hill mixed broadleaved habitats, sectors of Grace Dieu & High Sharpley heathland and Blackbrook and Cropston Reservoirs, although 45% are identified as 'recovering'.

Numerous Local Wildlife Sites are identified within the forest, which reflects the richness of ecology and the variety and diversity of habitats and geology prevalent across the Charnwood Forest character area.

<sup>3</sup> From NCA Profile 73. Charnwood page 24 and 56

Figure 9: Environmental Designations



## Chapter 4.0

# OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHARNWOOD FOREST

## Human Influences

### Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

#### Historic Background

Charnwood Forest has been an important centre for human activity since Prehistoric times with early evidence of settlement and exploitation and distribution of its natural resources. An important discovery dating back to the Upper Palaeolithic period was made at Bradgate Park in 2013 where evidence of an open air camp was identified with thousands of scattered flints unearthed. This important find provided evidence of open air living where previous evidence had always been found inside caves.

During the Neolithic period, hand axes were made from local stone and wood. Tools from this period, made from Charnwood's distinctive stones, have been discovered in Derbyshire and as far as East Anglia and the Fen Edge.

Roman activity resulted in the establishment of towns and a complex road system as well as further quarrying. Swithland Slate and granite from Mountsorrel, Hill Hole and Groby were used as construction materials in Leicester City, with Charnwood stone also found further afield in the excavation of Roman villas in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire.

Anglo-Saxon activity is mainly restricted to the edges of the forest and there is evidence of Scandinavian influences in the area through place names such as Groby ('Groo' being the Viking word for 'pit' and 'by' being a common Scandinavian element in English place names)<sup>4</sup>.

Further colonisation of Charnwood occurred during the 12th and 13th centuries with many newer settlements closely related to existing ones on the edge of Charnwood, such as Newtown Linford which is a daughter settlement of Groby.

The medieval period resulted in the settlement of a number of monastic orders and the introduction of hunting parks to the area. Monastic orders settled at Ulverscroft Priory, which was founded between 1134 and 1150; Charley Priory founded in 1190; and Grace Dieu Priory which was founded in 1230. A number of deer parks were established with 12 identified within the forest area. The earliest of these was established at Quorn before 1163 with others located at Bardon, Beaumanor, Bradgate, Burleigh, Grace Dieu, Groby, Ratby, Rothley, Shepshed as well as nearby Belton and Loughborough.

Extensive changes to the landscape came about as a result of the Enclosure Acts of the 18th and 19th centuries. Thousands of acres of heathland were lost to be cleared and drained for farmland with boundaries demarcated as hedges or stone walls. The process of enclosure began as early as 1759 with Enclosure Acts awarded at Loughborough and Anstey in 1762 and many acts being awarded over the following years. The most extensive change was through the enclosure of Charnwood Forest and Rothley Plain which resulted in over 11,000 acres of wastes and common lands being enclosed in 1829.



*Grace Dieu priory in Thringstone*

<sup>4</sup> From Groby Parish Council website [www.groby.com](http://www.groby.com)

## Chapter 4.0

# OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHARNWOOD FOREST

### Quarries and Reservoirs

The expansion of quarrying and subsequent construction of canals within Charnwood Forest led to changes in the forest character. Quarries at Mountsorrel and Shepshed expanded in the 18th century with aggregate transported countrywide along the Soar and Wreake Navigations and the former Charnwood Forest Canal. The developing slate industry went into rapid decline in the 1840's due to an increase in competition from Welsh slate which was thinner and lighter.

The number of historic quarries in the area has had a considerable effect on the development of the character and aesthetic of settlements, especially to the east of the M1. The local vernacular is defined by Swithland Slate and Mountsorrel Granite. Many of the smaller scale quarries are visually obscured by woodland on the steep slopes surrounding the craters.

Man-made reservoirs are prevalent within Charnwood Forest with Swithland, Cropston and Thornton all being constructed in the late 19th century. Blackbrook Reservoir was constructed in the 18th century to feed the Charnwood Forest Canal but had to be altered and replaced with a gravity dam in 1906. The waterbodies are important features for wildlife with Groby Pool, Swithland and Cropston Reservoirs all being SSSIs, important for wetland birds.

### Great Central Railway

The Great Central Railway passes through the eastern side of Charnwood Forest. The railway was originally opened to passengers in 1899, but closed in 1966 due to a decline in use. The line was re-opened as a tourist attraction in 1969 and now runs as a main line heritage railway. The railway is popular with local residents and visitors from further afield. As the steam engine travels through the eastern portion of the forest, it leaves a trail of steam adding to the historic character of the area.

### Historic Features

#### Scheduled Monuments

There are two significant Scheduled Monuments (SM) within Charnwood Forest, at Beacon Hill and Bradgate House. The SM site at Beacon Hill is the only surviving example of this class of slight univallate hillfort in the county. Finds from the site, including a founder's hoard, indicate its use as a centre for production, refuge or trade.

Bradgate House SM is located within a medieval deer park, which was enclosed by 1241. Notable later improvements include 18th century stone walling and plantations which survive today as a public park. Within the park are the ruins of Bradgate House, a brick mansion built somewhere between 1450-1520 and abandoned in the 18th century, as well as the earthworks of the associated garden. Additionally, the Scheduled Monument remains of a Moated Lodge are located 200m to the west of Bradgate House.



*Bradgate House within Bradgate Park*

# OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHARNWOOD FOREST

Other SM's identified in the area include Packhorse Bridge at Anstey, a bridge crossing at Rothley Brook, the Market Cross in Mountsorrel which forms a monument in the centre of the village and Rothley Cross at Rothley. Further moated remains are scheduled in Bardon and Quorn, whilst the remains of a hill fort are also designated as a Scheduled Monument in Woodhouse Eaves. The remains of Whitwick Castle, Groby Castle and Mountsorrel's motte and bailey castle are all Scheduled Monuments. The hill upon which Mountsorrel's motte and bailey castle was originally positioned is a prominent local feature with a beacon, war memorial and seating area overlooking the River Soar Valley. At Christmas, the cross on top of the Grade II Listed War Memorial on Castle Hill is lit and is visible from much of the surrounding area to the south.

### Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

There are 14 Conservation Areas within Charnwood Forest. These are located within Woodhouse Eaves, Swithland, Rothley Ridgeway, Ratby, Rothley, Quorn, Newtown Linford, Mountsorrel, Markfield, Groby, Thurcaston, Cropston, Woodhouse and Anstey. Other settlements in the area such as Whitwick, Bardon and Thringston have a number of Listed Buildings but no designated Conservation Area.

**Figure 10** shows the location of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas within Charnwood Forest. The figure highlights a pattern of Listed Buildings with a greater number shown in the east than the west, although there is a cluster in the north west within the centres of Thringstone, Whitwick and at Grace Dieu.

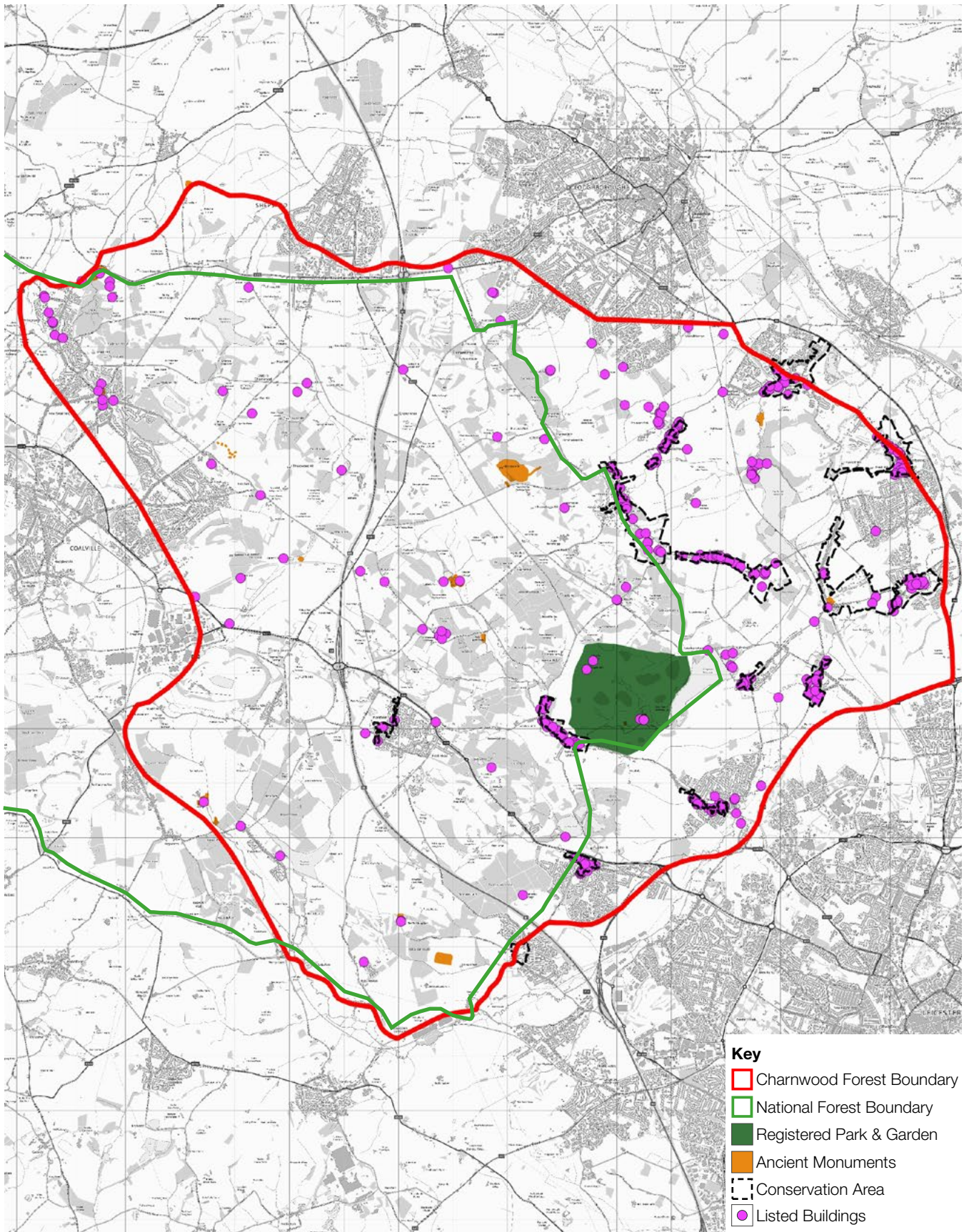
Grade I listed features within the forest include Ulverscroft Priory, the Mountsorrel Cross in Swithland, Rothley Court Hotel and Chapel, the Church of St Bartholomew and Farnham Chapel in Quorn, as well as the Church of St Peter in Thornton. Other Listed Buildings of note include Quorn Hall, Beaumanor Hall, Swithland Hall and Stoneywell, which is an Arts and Crafts cottage now owned and managed by the National Trust.

### Registered Parks and Gardens

As many as twelve hunting parks were introduced in Charnwood Forest during the medieval period. At the end of the medieval period, a number of larger 'country houses' were developed, set within formal parkland landscapes. This includes Bradgate House which was built in the 15th century. The remains of the house are still evident within Bradgate Park which is a Grade II Listed Registered Park and Garden. The park was first enclosed as a deer park (for hunting) in the 12th century and herds of Red and Fallow Deer still roam freely across the park's 800 acres today. Bradgate House was one of the first unfortified, brick-built country houses in the country. It was the childhood home of Lady Jane Grey and played an important role in the English Civil War but was later abandoned in the 18th century. Now, the ruins of Bradgate House, Swithland Wood and Old John are all prominent features within the park with Cropston Reservoir immediately adjacent, adding to the richness of the cultural heritage of the site. The accessibility of Bradgate Park allows it to be an incredibly popular local visitor attraction.



Figure 10: Heritage Designations



## Chapter 4.0

# OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHARNWOOD FOREST

---

### Settlement Pattern

A detailed review of the characteristics of settlements within Charnwood Forest is included at **Chapter 6**. The following provides an overview of the settlement pattern within the Charnwood Forest area (see **Figure 11**).

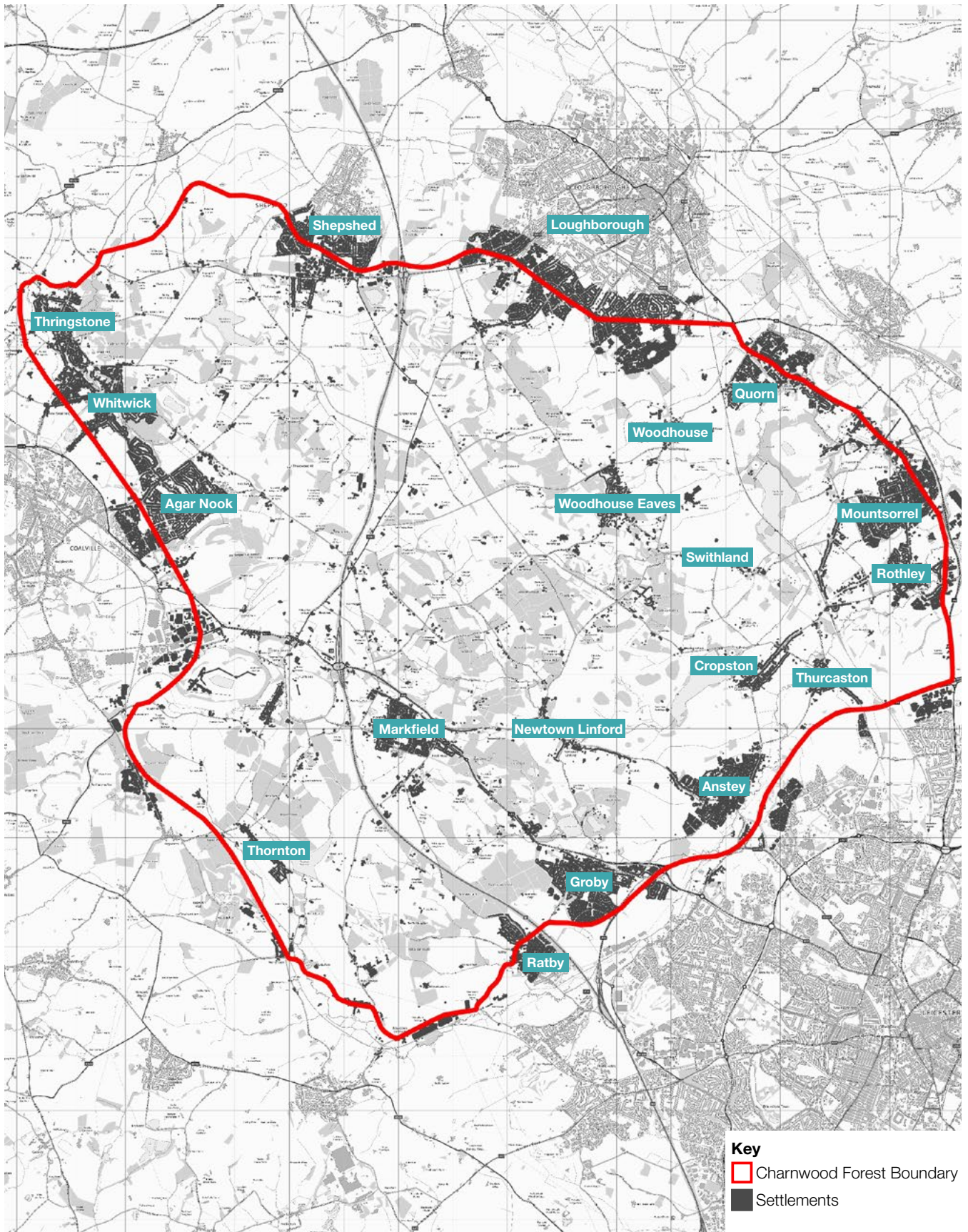
The overall pattern of settlements within Charnwood Forest is that larger settlements generally form a ring around the central forest area, with scattered farms and individual large properties spread through the central areas. This pattern relates to the landform, with the larger settlements located on the peripheral lower lying, generally flatter areas while the central raised and more undulating areas remain un-developed. The one exception is Markfield village which is a large clustered settlement located at an elevated position between the M1 and A50.

The villages within Charnwood Forest are predominantly of a linear form, developing along the roads through the area. This pattern is distinctive in many of the smaller villages such as Stanton-under-Bardon, Thornton, Swithland, Cropston, Newtown Linford and Woodhouse which have not significantly expanded over time. Many of the peripheral settlements have developed and expanded such as Thringstone and Whitwick, Groby, Anstey, Rothley, Quorn and Mountsorrel. Settlements have also developed along floodplain corridors such as Quorn, Mountsorrel and Rothley which follow the River Soar corridor and Ratby, Groby and Anstey which follow the Rothley Brook corridor.

The villages within the forest are all distinctive and relate to the local complex geological patterns through the use of locally sourced building materials which creates localised patterns. Local granites and slates are common building materials, with some use of red brick. All three materials are used in varying degrees within the larger peripheral villages of Quorn and Mountsorrel while granite and Swithland slate are used predominantly within the more central villages such as Woodhouse Eaves, Woodhouse and Swithland. To the south west, Thornton and Botcheston exhibit a greater use of red brick within feature buildings.

Modern expansion has occurred within the settlements to varying degrees. Many of the central villages remain relatively small and have only experienced small scale or infill development, while the peripheral villages including Quorn, Mountsorrel and Rothley, as well as Thringstone and Whitwick, have expanded significantly over recent years. Settlements on the south eastern edge at Anstey, Ratby and Groby have also expanded due to their close proximity to the edge of Leicester City.

Figure 11: Settlements



## Chapter 4.0

# OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHARNWOOD FOREST

---

### More Recent Influences

#### Mineral Extraction

The extraction of minerals from Charnwood Forest has been a major influence on the changing landscape for thousands of years. The complex geology which includes a mix of Precambrian and sedimentary rocks overlain by sediments (drift geology) has led to a large number of quarries in the area. Three large quarries are still active (Bardon Hill, Mountsorrel and Cliffe Hill) while numerous quarries of varying scales are disused but form distinctive features within the landscape and provide valuable habitats for wildlife.

Historically, quarrying in the forest has been evident since Neolithic times; stone for walls and buildings was extracted during Roman times and aggregate used for structures during medieval times. Aggregate has also historically been used for road construction in the area. The construction of the railways through the area in the 19th century, including the Great Central Railway, both created an increased demand for aggregates as well as an efficient means of transportation.

There is still demand for stone and aggregates extracted from Charnwood and the three active quarries are still expanding. This results in a constantly changing landscape as pits and spoil heaps expand but also as areas which have now been restored mature with habitats establishing and biodiversity developing.

#### Infrastructure and Connectivity

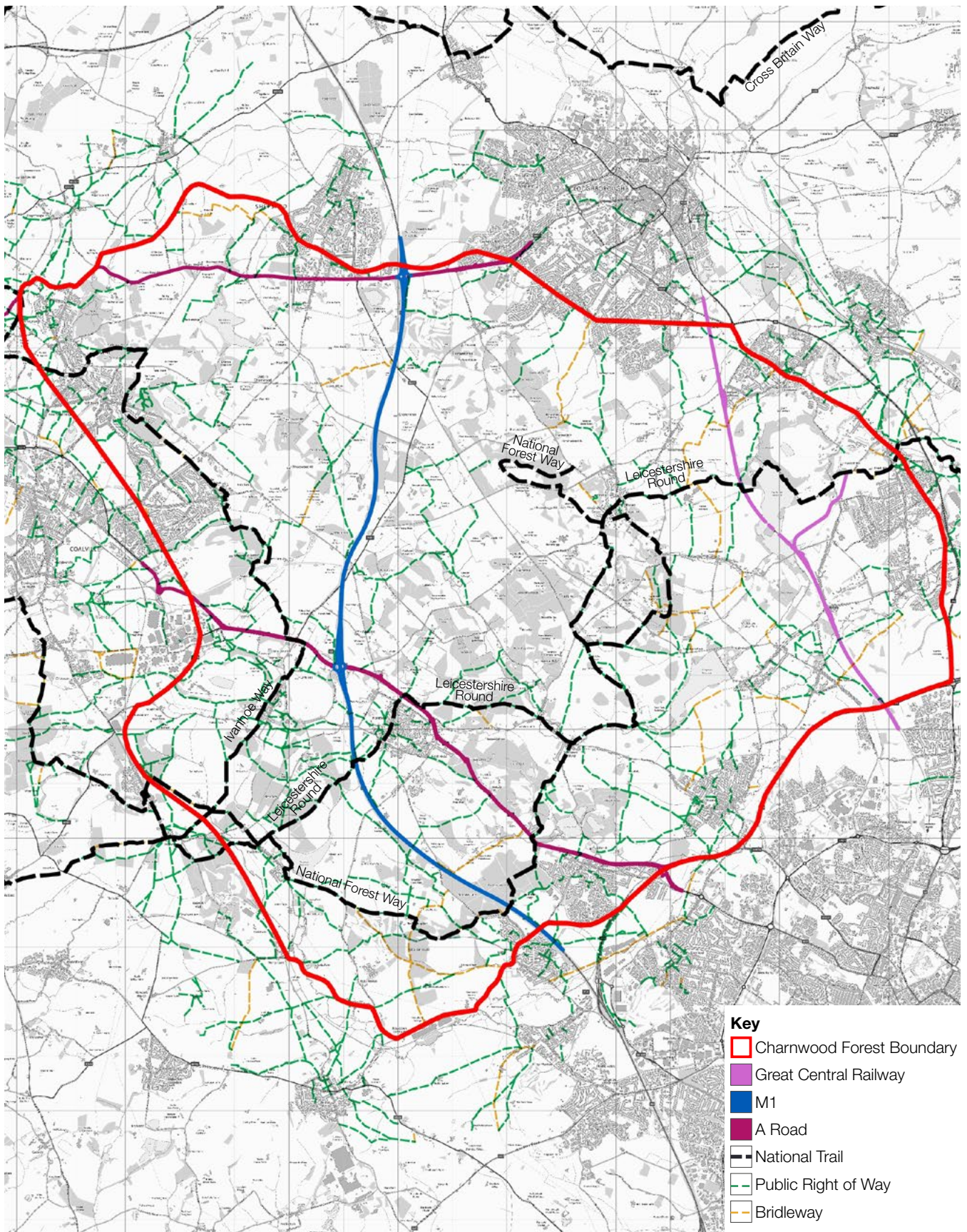
The M1 forms the major transport route through the forest heading north to south through the area. Despite the scale and importance of the major transport corridor, the motorway is not always the dominant feature that it potentially could be. As a result of the landform, the road often passes through a cutting and planting on the embankments has matured to create screening and the road corridor is not often visually dominant within views across the area. A greater influence is created through noise with constant background traffic noise spreading into the central forest areas.

Secondary 'A' roads crossing the area are limited to the A50/511 and A512 which both lead east to west across the M1 and link Loughborough and Leicester in the east to Coalville and the M42 in the west. Otherwise minor roads cross the area as lanes. These are often straight and almost create a grid-like pattern across the area.

Two railway lines pass through Charnwood Forest. A freight line follows the south western boundary of the forest, linking Bardon Hill Quarry with Leicester and Burton-upon-Trent. The Great Central Railway is a heritage line which runs between Leicester and Loughborough through the eastern part of the forest, with stations at Quorn and Rothley. The railway is the only double track heritage line in the UK with steam and heritage diesel trains running regularly throughout the year.

The area is well served by Public Rights of Way (PRoW) with numerous footpaths and bridleways creating a network across the area. There are however slightly fewer routes through the most central parts of the forest although these areas are well served through areas of open access land and woodland with informal tracks and paths. Three recreational long distance routes cross the forest, including the Leicestershire Round, the Ivanhoe Way and the National Forest Way (see [Figure 12](#)).

Figure 12 Road, Rail and Public Right of Way Network



## Chapter 4.0

# OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHARNWOOD FOREST

The pattern of PRow routes is interesting when compared to Strava Heat Maps<sup>2</sup>. These maps are generated through public use and show the 'heat' or activity of members of the public undertaking walking, cycling or swimming activities. The heat map identifies a high level of activity within the main settlements which are locatable on the periphery of the area as well as along connecting roads. There is also a high level of activity within Bradgate Park (see extract below). Beacon Hill and the Outwoods with slightly lower levels of activity within woodland areas such as Martinshaw Wood and Swithland Wood (see extract below).



*Bradgate Strava Heat Map*



*Swithland Wood Strava Heat Map*

### Landcover and Vegetation

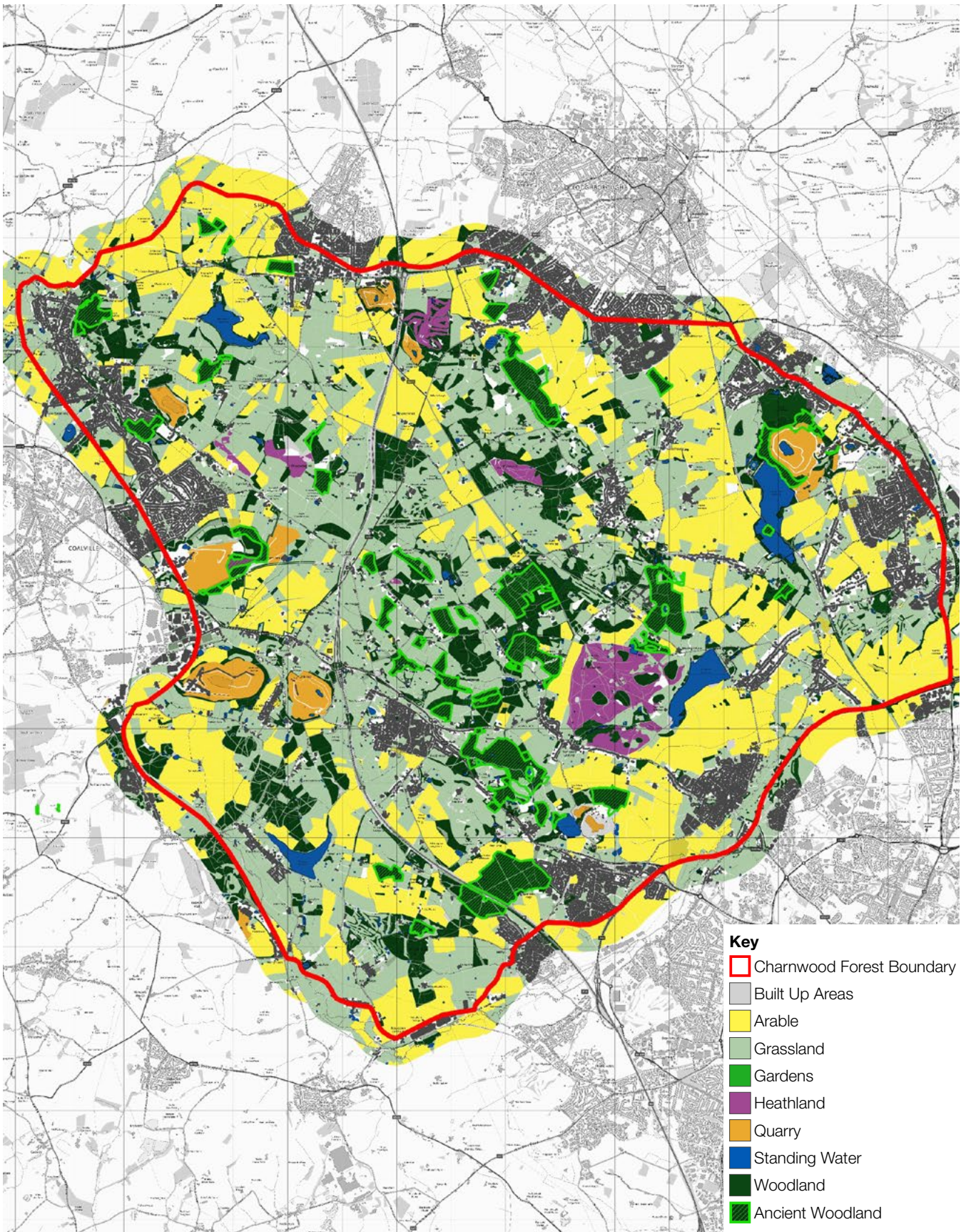
Landcover within Charnwood Forest is complex but is generally made up of a mix of arable and pastoral land, woodland, heathland and areas of quarrying as well as a number of large waterbodies (see Figure 13). An overall pattern emerges which closely relates to the topography of the forest. The more central upland areas feature a greater covering of grassland or pasture with extensive woodland, much of which is ancient woodland. These areas also feature heathland, which is most extensive at Bradgate Park but also found at Beacon Hill/Charnwood Lodge and within golf courses. The lower lying land towards the periphery of the forest has a greater coverage of open arable fields with a lower extent of woodland. The large reservoirs are also located towards the periphery of the forest area.

Woodland cover includes a majority of broadleaved woodland but with some coniferous, mainly located within the elevated, central areas at Ulverscroft, but also around Bardon Hill Quarry and at Beacon Hill. Whilst the majority of the centrally located woodlands are identified as Ancient Woodland and Ancient Replanted Woodland, ancient woodland is found throughout the whole of the forest area. Martinshaw Wood is a large ancient woodland on the outskirts of Groby and Ratby which is bisected by the M1 corridor.

A greater extent of new woodland plantation is found within the south west of the forest which is a result of National Forest initiatives in this area.

<sup>2</sup> Strava Heat Map is used under Open Database Licence and taken from <https://www.openstreetmap.org/>

Figure 13: Landcover and Vegetation







## Chapter 5.0

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

---

**Area 1:** Bradgate, Beacon Hill and Outwoods Heathland and Forest

**Area 2:** Ulverscroft Wooded Valley

**Area 3:** Charley Heath and Pasture

**Area 4:** Swithland/Woodhouse Farmland

**Area 5:** Groby Estate Woodland

**Area 6:** Thringstone/Markfield Quarries and Settlement

**Area 7:** Loughborough/Shepshed Mixed Farmland

**Area 8:** Quorn/Mountsorrel/Rothley Settlements, Quarries and Farmland

**Area 9:** Rothley Brook Lowland Farmland

**Area 10:** Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland

**Area 11:** Thornton Plantation Farmlands

## Chapter 5.0

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

---

### Introduction

The overall character of Charnwood Forest is of a rolling landscape with an elevated topography and areas of woodland and agriculture closely related to geology and hydrology. There are contrasts between upland and lowland which is closely associated with watercourses and water features within the area.

Settlement is varied with some small vernacular villages such as Newtown Linford and Woodhouse and larger settlements such as Markfield, Groby, Anstey and Mountsorrel as well as the fringe of Loughborough. Within the more central areas, settlement is limited to single dwellings with large plots or scattered farmsteads.

Quarrying is a feature of the area with smaller scale former quarries scattered throughout and large modern quarries located towards the west at Bardon and Standon-under-Bardon as well as to the east at Mountsorrel. The accumulating spoil and gradual restoration associated with these quarries creates large areas of changing landscape. Reservoirs are also a feature, with some pools associated with former quarrying such as at Markfield and Groby.

Woodland and tree cover is generally extensive but also includes a mix of types and ages. Martinshaw Wood is a large ancient woodland on the north western edge of Groby and Ratby, while to the west near Stanton under Bardon, large areas of newly planted National Forest plantations are a feature.

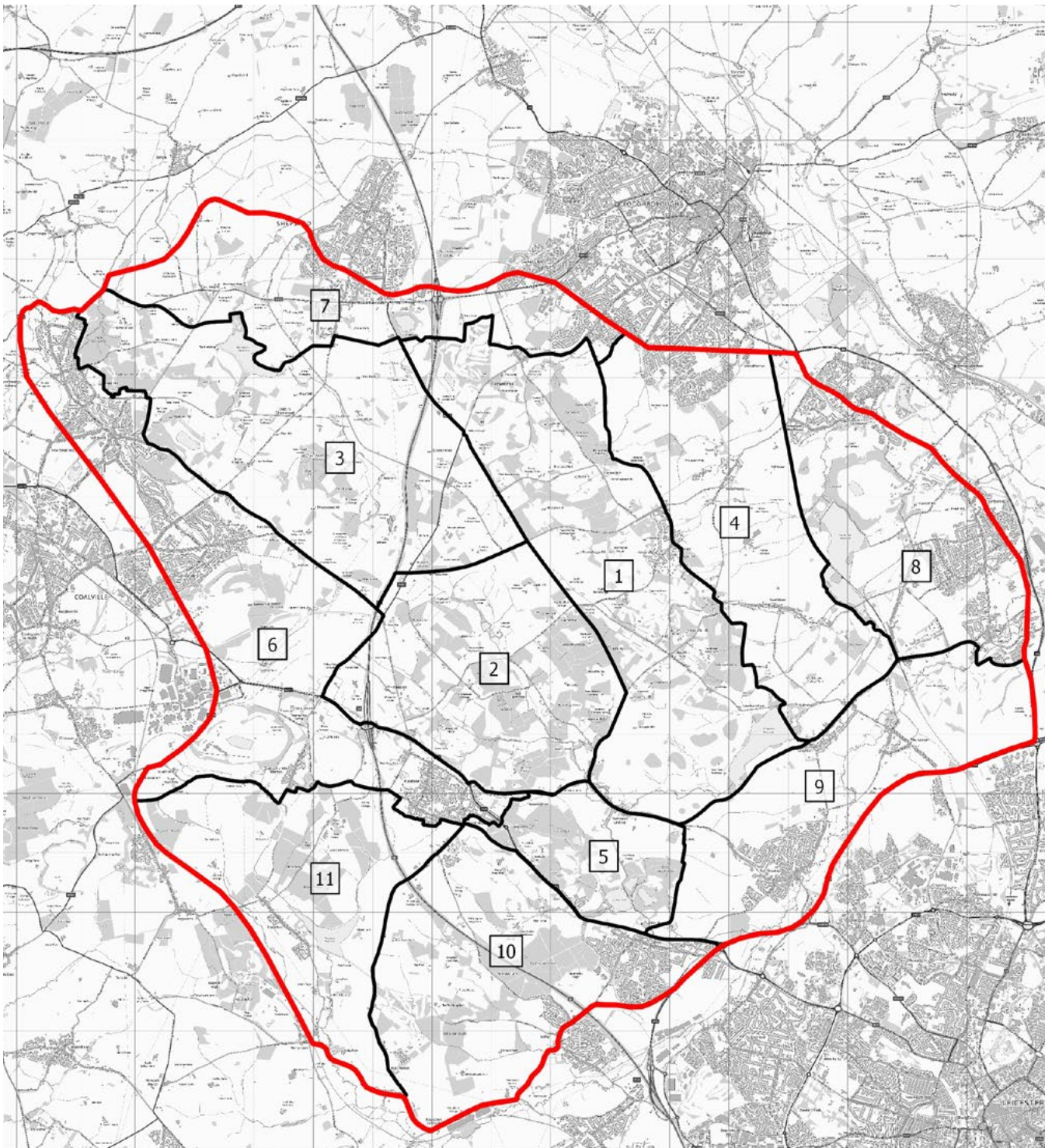
Field pattern varies with boundaries formed by hedgerows in lower lying areas or stone and slate walls which feature within the more upland, central areas.

Transport infrastructure includes the M1 motorway corridor which runs north to south through the area. The influence of the motorway varies. In some areas traffic is visible while in other areas, the heavily vegetated embankments screen views of moving traffic. Noise from traffic is a more regular feature along the corridor and affects tranquillity in areas closer to the motorway. Other main roads include the A511 which provides a link from Coalville in the west to the M1 and the A50 which links the M1 to the A46 and Leicester City to the east. The A512 also leads across the northern extent of the area, linking Loughborough in the east to Shepshed in the west. Other roads link villages and settlements and can often form straight lines cutting through the landscape. The Great Central Railway is a heritage railway between Loughborough and Leicester with a number of associated features such as brick bridges and stations.

Modern influences of large scale quarrying, settlement expansion and solar farms are evident in some areas while other parts retain a more historic character, such as around Swithland Reservoir which includes feature buildings and distinctive perimeter railings, or at Groby Pool which features ancient woodland and historic small scale quarried areas.

This Landscape Character Assessment has identified 11 distinctive Landscape Character Areas which are identified on **Figure 14** and outlined on the following pages:

Figure 14: Landscape Character Areas



**Landscape Character Areas**

**Area 1:** Bradgate, Beacon Hill and Outwoods Heathland and Forest

**Area 2:** Ulverscroft Wooded Valley

**Area 3:** Charley Heath and Pasture

**Area 4:** Swithland/Woodhouse Farmland

**Area 5:** Groby Estate Woodland

**Area 6:** Thringstone/Markfield Quarries and Settlement

**Area 7:** Loughborough/Shepshed Mixed Farmland

**Area 8:** Quorn/Mountsorrel/Rothley Settlements, Quarries and Farmland

**Area 9:** Rothley Brook Lowland Farmland

**Area 10:** Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland

**Area 11:** Thornton Plantation Farmlands

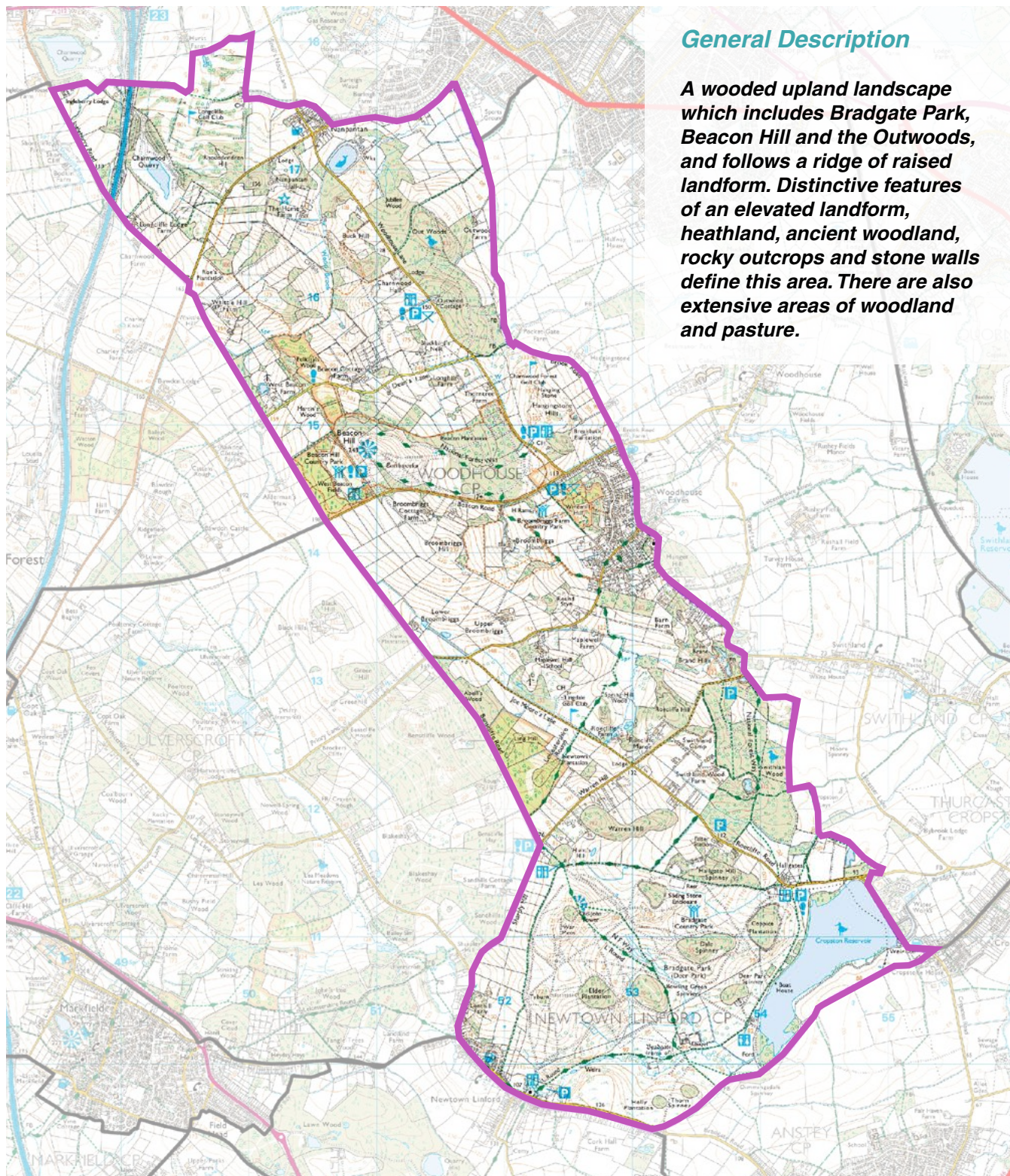
**Key**

Charnwood Forest Boundary

Landscape Character Areas

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 1: Bradgate, Beacon Hill and Outwoods Heathland and Forest



# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 1: Bradgate, Beacon Hill and Outwoods Heathland and Forest

### Key Characteristics

- Elevated undulating topography, watercourses leading to reservoirs and small field ponds.
- Large heathland at Bradgate Park and areas at Beacon Hill and Longcliffe Golf Course. Extensive coniferous and broadleaved woodland, also grassland with some small areas of arable farmland. Ancient woodland at Swithland Wood and the Outwoods which are also SSSIs.
- Small regular field pattern enclosed with walls or hedgerows with hedgerow trees.
- Village settlement at Woodhouse Eaves, some large properties in extensive grounds as well as scattered farms. Secondary roads cross the area often running in straight lines and forming a grid pattern.
- A high proportion of 'honeypot' visitor sites (Bradgate Park, Beacon Hill & Outwoods). PProW focussed around Bradgate Park but multiple informal footpaths and tracks within the woodlands.
- A strong cultural heritage associated with Bradgate Park as well as international geological interest. Also multiple listed buildings at Newtown Linford and Woodhouse Eaves. Beacon Hill features an Ancient Monument.
- Enclosure created in places through mature oak and beech trees along roads, with rough grassland giving an upland feel. Far reaching views are possible from Beacon Hill and within Bradgate Park.

### Specific Characteristics

#### Landform and Hydrology

This area has an elevated, undulating topography which broadly follows a ridge leading north west out of the centre of Charnwood Forest. The highest levels are located at Beacon Hill at 240m AOD and Broombriggs Hill at 237m AOD with further high points within Bradgate Park at the location of the War Memorial which sits at around 212m AOD. The landform then generally falls towards the north eastern edge of the area. A number of small watercourses flow towards reservoirs including Wood Brook which flows towards Nanpantan Reservoir and the River Lin which feeds Cropston Reservoir. Small field ponds are also prevalent, scattered throughout the area.

#### Landcover and Vegetation

The area consists of a mix of pastoral land with extensive areas of woodland and heathland as well as a small-scale former quarry at Charnwood Quarry in the north west of the area. Bradgate Park is a large area of heathland featuring open rough grassland with rocky outcrops, which consist of some of the oldest Precambrian rocks in England, and small areas of woodland. Numerous large veteran oak trees are an integral part of the historic parkland.

Further heathland is found at Longcliffe Golf Course at the northern extent of the area, as well as at Beacon Hill which is located centrally. Extensive areas of woodland are coniferous and broadleaved with ancient woodland located at Swithland Woods and at the Outwoods which are also SSSIs. The area also features open pastoral land used for sheep and cattle grazing.



Bradgate Park

## Chapter 5.0

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 1: Bradgate, Beacon Hill and Outwoods Heathland and Forest

### Field Pattern and Enclosure

Fields are generally small to medium size and of regular pattern, forming a grid in some locations. Fields are enclosed with hedgerows with hedgerow trees with extensive stone walls, especially associated with Bradgate Park and within settlements.

### Settlement Pattern, Roads and PRoW

The area is not very settled, with only the large village at Woodhouse Eaves and the edge of Newtown Linford. These villages feature the use of granite stone or slate in buildings with many thatched roofs. Elsewhere, development is limited to scattered farms or large properties within extensive grounds. Few roads pass through the area with Benscliffe Road and Brook Road forming the area boundaries to the south west and north east, cut across with other minor roads linking east to west through the area.

A high proportion of 'honeypot' visitor sites include Bradgate Park, Beacon Hill and the Outwoods. There are many informal circulation routes as well as access land and a number of Public Rights of Way ensuring good access to the area. Both the Leicestershire Round and National Forest Way recreational routes cross through the area



*The Outwoods*



*View south east from Dean's Lane*

### Cultural Heritage

The area is intensively managed both for conservation and for people. There is a strong cultural heritage associated with Bradgate Park which is a Registered Park and Garden and is of international importance for its history and geology. Extremely rare evidence of open air campsites dating from the late Upper Palaeolithic period was found within the park which was preserved due to the uncultivated nature of the parkland. The park also features associated buildings such as Old John Tower and the remains of Bradgate House. There are also numerous listed buildings located within the villages at Newtown Linford and Woodhouse Eaves. A Scheduled Monument is also located at Beacon Hill.

### Perceptual Qualities

There is a strong sense of history within the area as a result of a combination of the historic Bradgate Park, a strong built vernacular, numerous listed buildings and mature woodlands. The area is generally enclosed as a result of the undulating landform and extent of mature woodland although some panoramic and far reaching views are possible at certain locations such as the peak of Beacon Hill and at the War Memorial within Bradgate Park. The more open areas of rough grassland combined with rocky outcrops and deer parks create an upland character.

### Summary of Landscape Condition

The landscape is generally intact and of good condition with evidence of intense management, especially related to areas of high visitor numbers i.e. Bradgate Park, the Outwoods and Beacon Hill. The area is distinctive and has strong key characteristics which define the overall Charnwood Forest character. Due to its location and visibility within the wider area, it exerts an influence on the surrounding area.

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 1: Bradgate, Beacon Hill and Outwoods Heathland and Forest

### Management Recommendations

#### Forces for Landscape Change

- Encroachment from expansion of Loughborough in the north.
- Pressure on honeypot sites with an ever increasing need for visitor facilities such as car parking and cafes.
- General erosion of key features as a result in a gradual lack of management for example, replacing stone walls with fences.
- Potential loss of mature woodland and trees in the area, especially within Bradgate Park, due to age affecting safety, or from disease

#### Sensitivities for Key Landscape Characteristics

The area is popular with visitors, however, increased visitor pressures to honeypot sites could impact on the area from the provision of car park expansion, additional signage and facilities etc. Increasing access could also result in footpath erosion within the country parks.

The area includes large areas of ancient woodland as well as a large number of veteran trees such as within Bradgate Park. There is a possibility that through disease or for safety reasons, these trees could require management or removal.

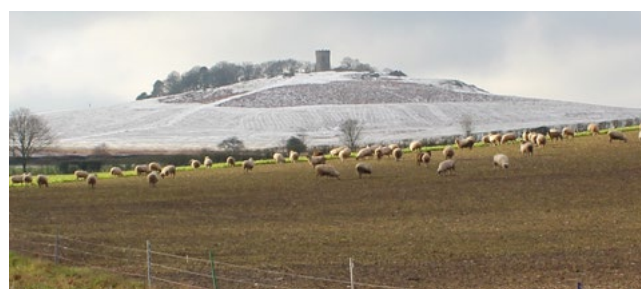
Settlement expansion has currently been limited within the villages which have a strong vernacular through their form, size and use of local materials.

Some areas are showing signs of requiring management through the replacement and repair of stone walls. Encroaching bracken is also an issue in some areas, especially where it is beginning to cover rocky outcrops.

- **Manage encroachment of bracken and scrub to maintain open grasslands within country parks and other areas to ensure longevity of the habitat.**
- **Maintain stone walls and repair/replace where necessary rather than using fencing.**
- **Gap up hedgerows and replant where lost to ensure connectivity of GI through the area.**
- **Protect and manage mature trees within Bradgate Park and other areas and consider replanting to maintain the feature.**
- **Maintain lifecycle of ageing woodlands by replanting and managing.**
- **Maintain habitat diversity through management of woodlands, open grasslands and water features to retain the matrix of habitats currently found in the area.**
- **Continue to protect and manage heritage features including ancient woodland habitat and built features such as Old John and Bradgate House.**
- **Manage visitor focus at key sites to limit visitor pressures elsewhere and to protect other areas.**
- **Ensure visitor facility expansion is controlled and suitable to the area to avoid urbanising influences.**
- **Ensure any new development is appropriate in scale and vernacular and focussed at the main settlements to preserve the pattern and form of the villages.**
- **Ensure any new developments either built or for visitors is suitably designed with ample planting to ensure assimilation into the existing well wooded landscape character.**



*Cropston Reservoir*



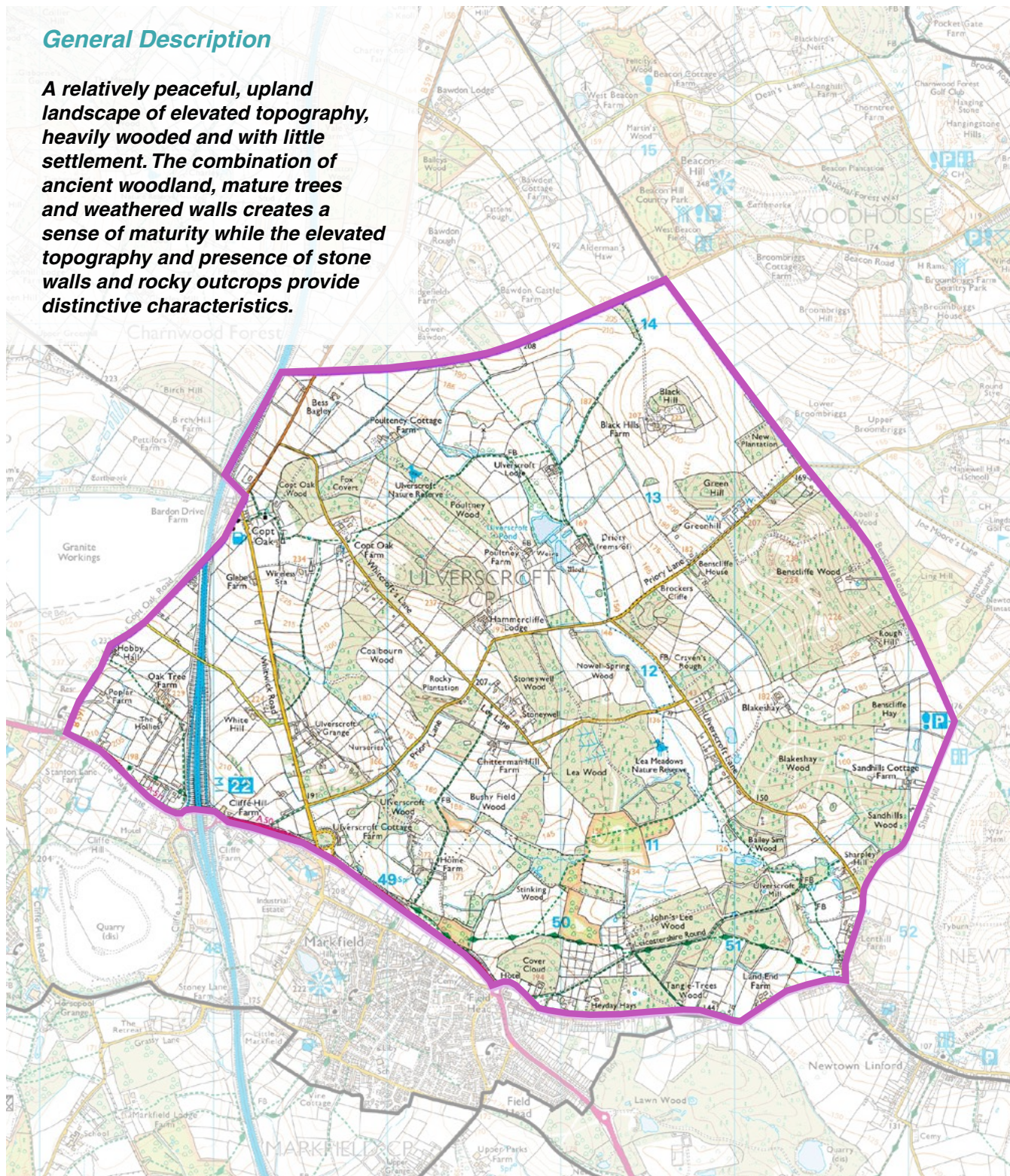
*Old John Tower*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 2: Ulverscroft Wooded Valley

### General Description

*A relatively peaceful, upland landscape of elevated topography, heavily wooded and with little settlement. The combination of ancient woodland, mature trees and weathered walls creates a sense of maturity while the elevated topography and presence of stone walls and rocky outcrops provide distinctive characteristics.*





# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 2: Ulverscroft Wooded Valley

### Key Characteristics

- An upland, undulating landform with higher levels to the east and west at Benscliffe Wood and Stoneywell Wood with a slight valley following a watercourse feeding Ulverscroft Pond.
- Ditches and small watercourses are evident as well as field ponds and Ulverscroft Pond at Ulverscroft Priory.
- Landcover is predominantly pastoral and woodland with a high percentage of ancient woodland although there are some smaller areas of arable farmland. A number of SSSIs are associated with woodland areas and nature reserves.
- Generally medium to small scale field pattern with some distinctive very small fields on the periphery of the area.
- Fields enclosed by a mix of hedgerows with hedgerow trees and stone walls as well as some fences and estate railings.
- A relatively low number of dwellings forming a linear pattern of large properties along roads, some of Arts and Crafts vernacular, with some scattered farms.
- Minor roads generally pass around the periphery of the area; roads are predominantly straight leading south east to north west.
- A good PRoW network with Leicestershire Round recreational route passing through the southern part. There is a lack of 'honeypot' visitor sites.
- Large amount of cultural heritage with two SM's and a number of Listed Buildings including Stoneywell Cottage and Ulverscroft Priory.
- Enclosure is created by large amount of tree cover, especially with large oak and beech trees along roads.
- Generally peaceful, although this is disturbed by low level noise from the M1 corridor.

### Specific Characteristics

#### Landform and Hydrology

The undulating landform forms a valley either side of the River Lin. This area includes the source of the river which then flows south east towards Newtown Linford. A second tributary also flows into the river from the west. The valley landform reaches higher levels of around 234m AOD near to Copt Oak in the west of the area with levels of around 226m AOD to the east at Benscliffe Wood. Ulverscroft Pond is a medium sized waterbody which is associated with a number of smaller ponds lying adjacent to Ulverscroft Priory.

#### Landcover and Vegetation

This area is not intensively farmed, and landcover is predominantly pastoral fields with a large percentage of woodland and includes some pony paddocks. Woodlands are a mix of broadleaved trees with some coniferous plantation often located on rising landform creating wooded horizons. The majority of the woodland is also ancient woodland. Small areas of arable land are located towards the periphery of the area, with a larger extent towards the north at Black Hills Farm. A small area of heath is also located at Copt Oak Farm.

A large number of SSSIs are located within this area at Benscliffe Wood, Stoneywell Wood and Poultney Wood. Three nature reserves are also found, managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, with Ulverscroft towards the north and Lea Meadows and Rocky Plantation located centrally.

Evergreen species including laurels and holly are present within woodlands and large oaks and beech trees are often found located along roadsides creating enclosure.

## Chapter 5.0

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 2: Ulverscroft Wooded Valley

### Field Pattern and Enclosure

Field pattern is generally medium to small scale across the area although some areas of small fields are distinctive. These tend to be on the periphery of the area and are evident at Heyday Hays to the south, here a grid of small fields lie either side of the Leicestershire Round long distance footpath. Field enclosure is generally hedgerows with hedgerow trees with many stone walls. Some fences are also evident as well as estate railings at Ulverscroft Priory.

### Settlement Pattern, Roads and PRow

This area is very lightly settled with a relatively low number of dwellings throughout. Properties tend to be large set within large grounds with some featuring distinctive Arts and Crafts architecture. These tend to form a linear pattern along roads such as Whitcroft's Lane and Ulverscroft Lane. Elsewhere, a low number of scattered farms are spread throughout the area.

The M1 passes north to south through the western edge of this area but only for a short length leading up to Junction 22. The M1 is visually quite contained as it leads through a cutting with vegetated embankments, however, low level background noise does percolate through the wider area to the east. Other roads generally pass around the periphery of the area, including the A50/A511 which forms the south western boundary with Benscliffe Road, Copt Oak Road and Beacon Road forming other boundaries. Other lanes cross through the area and are predominantly straight leading south east to north west with Priory Lane crossing south west to north east.

A number of footpaths create a good PRow network with the Leicestershire Round recreational route passing through the southern part from Newtown Linford towards Markfield in the west. Small amounts of open access woodland are located to the south of Lea Wood, but there is however a lack of 'honeypot' visitor sites with associated car parks and facilities.

### Cultural Heritage

There are two Scheduled Monuments within the area, Ulverscroft Priory and a moat at Lea Meadows. A large number of listed buildings are also located within the area, with a cluster at Lenthill Farm on the edge of Newtown Linford. Stoneywell is an Arts and Crafts cottage, the former home of the Gimson family which is now owned and managed by the National Trust. This is also a Grade II\*listed building.

### Perceptual Qualities

Due to the extensive woodland within the area combined with the undulating landform, the area is enclosed. This is accentuated by large oak and sometimes beech trees often located either side of the straight roads. The area is generally peaceful, although there is some disturbance created by low level noise from the M1 corridor and traffic generally along the roads.



*View north east towards Green Hill*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 2: Ulverscroft Wooded Valley

### Management Recommendations

#### Summary of Landscape Condition

The landscape is in relatively good condition and is intact with large properties that are formally managed and highly maintained. The current condition results in a highly attractive and distinctive area with strong key characteristics. It has a sense of maturity through old woodlands and vernacular buildings as well as heritage features. The area has a low number of visitor attractions which results in a relatively peaceful and tranquil feel.

#### Forces for Landscape Change

- Influence of changing landuse from large property management i.e. encroaching pony paddocks and formal gardens.
- Forestry clearance without replanting could result in a change in characteristic enclosure.
- Increase in accessibility to woodlands or addition of tourist facilities would put pressure on the natural landscape and would erode the tranquillity of area.
- Potential loss of large specimen trees within woodlands and along roads.
- Extensive expansion and re-development of properties could result in a loss of the strong Arts and Crafts style of buildings.

#### Sensitivities for Key Landscape Characteristics

There are many large oak and beech trees along roadsides which are mature. Loss of these as a feature could result in opening up the area if not replaced when lost.

On-going forestry operations could result in opening up the area if not replanted when felled. Increased accessibility of these forests and woodlands with provision of facilities such as car parking could also alter the tranquillity of the area.

Expansion of domestic formal gardens and creation of pony paddocks would gradually alter the rural character of the area.

There is a distinctive pattern of large Arts and Crafts styled properties in the area. These are generally well hidden within the wooded landscape. New development could alter this characteristic if not developed appropriately.

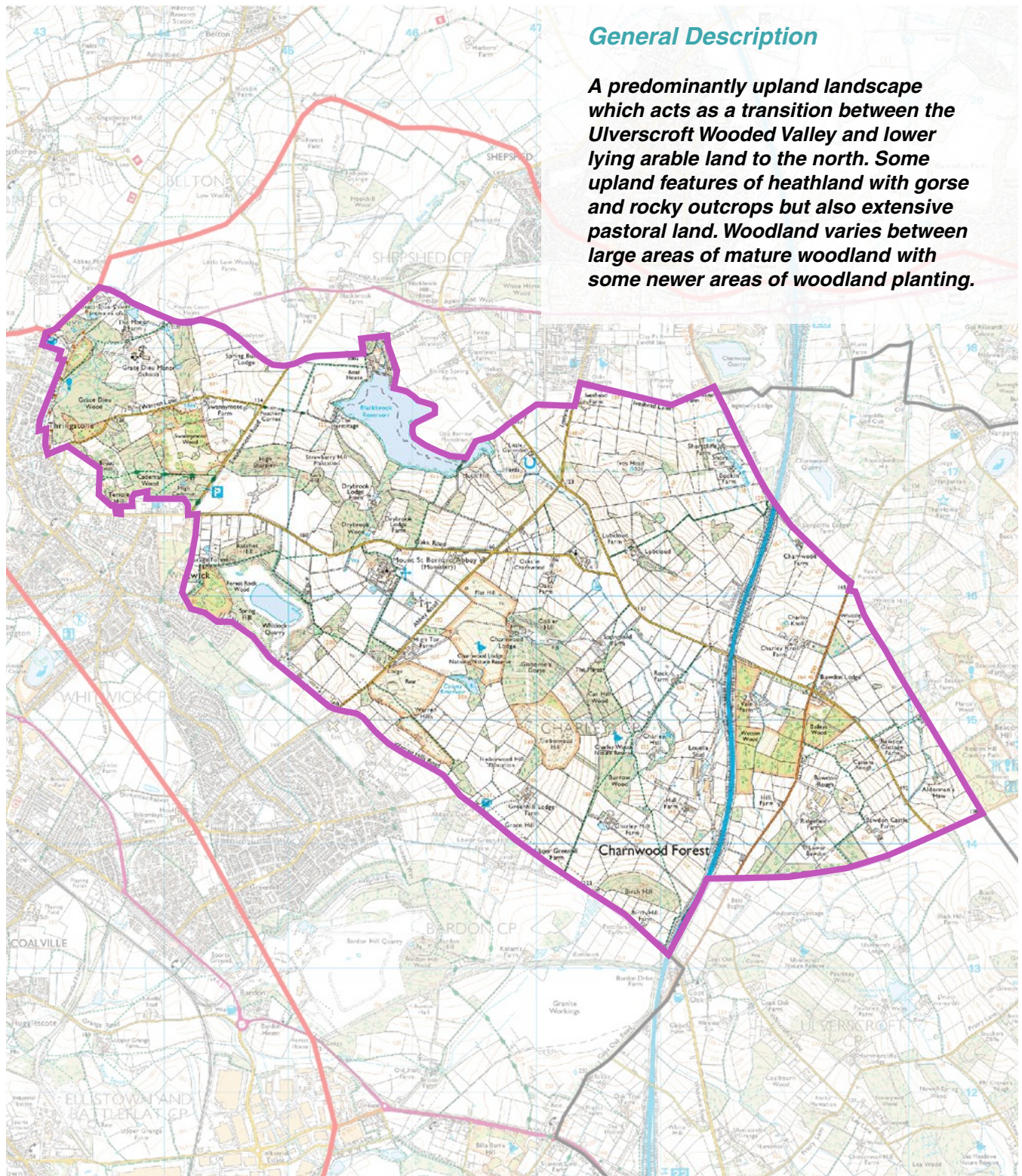
- **Maintain stone walls and estate railings and repair/replace where necessary rather than using fencing.**
- **Gap up hedgerows and replant where lost to ensure habitat connectivity through the area.**
- **Maintain lifecycle of ageing woodlands and roadside trees by replanting and managing and to retain woodlands located on horizons.**
- **Continue to protect and sensitively manage heritage features including ancient woodland habitat and built features such as Ulverscroft Priory and Stoneywell Cottage, as well as SSSIs.**
- **Continue to control and manage visitor sites.**
- **Control conversion of farmland to pony paddocks to maintain rural landscape character.**
- **Maintain vernacular of buildings to retain distinctive 'Arts and Crafts' characteristics as well as associated grounds.**
- **Ensure any new development maintains the linear pattern of large properties along roads and is well integrated within the landscape with planting to maintain character of buildings so as not to become dominant within views.**
- **Maintain large oak and beech trees along roadsides to maintain enclosure.**



*Ulverscroft Priory*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 3: Charley Heath and Pasture

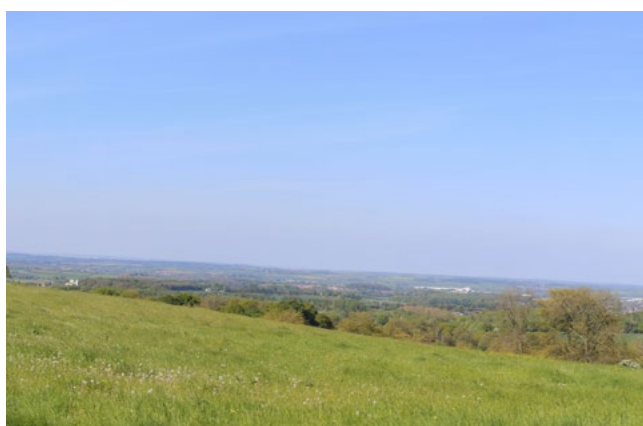


# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 3: Charley Heath and Pasture

### Key Characteristics

- An elevated and undulating landform with a slight valley leading north west to south east following the route of the Black Brook, feeding Blackbrook Reservoir.
- Predominantly farmed pastoral land but with some large areas of woodland and smaller areas of heathland with rocky outcrops as well as scattered trees. Ancient habitat includes heathland and woodland at Grace Dieu Wood, Drybrook Wood, Cat Hill Wood and Burrow Wood. Also SSSIs at Charnwood Lodge, Blackbrook Reservoir and Grace Dieu Woods. Large oaks and beech trees line roads.
- Medium sized fields in a regular pattern are bound by hedgerows and often stone walls with trees following field boundaries. Some walls are in need of repair.
- Little settlement with scattered farms and large individual houses. Minor roads tend to be straight and form a grid across the area. Accessibility is good with a number of PRoW and open access land.
- Some cultural heritage in the form of listed buildings and SM's at Warren Hills and Grace Dieu Priory. Mount St Bernard Abbey is a distinctive feature.
- Large scale, open areas with long views from high points and some more tranquil areas, although some disturbance from noise from the M1.



View from Lubcloud

### Specific Characteristics

#### Landform and Hydrology

The landform within this area is generally elevated and gently undulating, although generally falls towards the north and lower levels beyond. A slight valley follows the route of the Black Brook which flows from the elevated levels in the south towards the lower lying north. This brook feeds the Blackbrook Reservoir. The highest points are found at Timberwood Hill which sits at around 248m AOD with the elevated landform leading towards the north west towards Whitlock Quarry. Across the valley to the north east, further highpoints are located at Ives Head which sits at 201m AOD and Lubcloud at 187m AOD.

Further water courses include Shortcliffe Brook which follows the north eastern boundary, Dry Brook which also flows into Blackbrook Reservoir and Grace Dieu Brook which flows through the north western part of the area. Field ponds are scattered throughout the area and larger waterbodies include Blackbrook Reservoir, Colony Reservoir and a pool at Whitlock Quarry.

#### Landcover and Vegetation

Landcover is mixed but predominantly consists of pastoral farmland with some pony paddocks and mixed woodland with smaller areas of arable land, gorse heathland and quarrying. Extensive woodland is located to the north west and includes ancient woodland at Grace Dieu with further ancient woodland at Drybrook Wood, Cat Hill Wood and Burrow Wood. Woodlands include some coniferous plantations as well as other deciduous semi-natural woodlands.

A large area of heathland is found at Charnwood Lodge. This is a National Nature Reserve which includes many important historic features associated with Charnwood Forest including Precambrian rock outcrops and Triassic deposits. The area is very typical of the Charnwood Forest character with elevated levels, open acidic grasslands, woodland and rocky outcrops. A further nature reserve managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust is located to the south east at Charley Woods.

Large oak and beech trees are often present along the straight roads following walls.

## Chapter 5.0

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

### Area 3: Charley Heath and Pasture

#### Field Pattern and Enclosure

Outside of woodland and heathland areas, the field pattern tends to consist of medium sized pastoral with some arable fields. Fields are of a regular form and almost grid like in some areas, and are enclosed by hedgerows or granite dry stone walls. Individual trees also follow field boundaries either within hedgerows or following lines of walls. Some of the walls are in need of repair within the area.

#### Settlement Pattern, Roads and PRow

Development is limited with no village settlement but a scattering of farms and large individual properties set within substantial grounds which feature the use of granite and slate. Charley Hall is located towards the south of the area and Grace Dieu Manor, now a school, is located towards the north west.

The A512 forms the northern and north western boundary and the M1 corridor passes north to south through the area. As with the majority of the M1 corridor through Charnwood Forest, the route lies within a cutting with vegetated embankments which helps to reduce the visibility of the busy road. Otherwise, minor roads passing through the area tend to be straight in an almost grid like pattern across the area.

The area is well served by Public Rights of Way with numerous public footpaths and bridleways. There is also large areas of access land and woodland such as at Wetton Wood and Baileys Wood in the east, Timberwood Hill located to the south and Swannymote Wood and Grace Dieu Wood in the north west. Access to Charnwood Lodge NNR is however regulated by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust to protect its ecological interest.

#### Cultural Heritage

Listed buildings are scattered throughout the area and include Charley Hall and attached outbuilding range and walls and Grace Dieu Manor which is now the location of Grace Dieu Manor School. Distinctive features of interest are also found at Mount St Bernard Abbey which is located centrally on a localised high point making it visible within the area. Grace Dieu Priory located at the northern extent of the area is also a Scheduled Monument.



*Mount St Bernard Abbey*

#### Perceptual Qualities

The area has a large scale with areas of extensive open grassland and heathland allowing long views across the area, especially from high points such as within Charnwood Lodge and at Lubcloud. Some areas are wild and feel exposed, but these contrast with enclosure created by woodland and lower levels such as towards the north. Central raised areas are tranquil but disturbance is created from noise from the M1 and busy roads which lead through the area.



*View south from track close to Blackbrook Reservoir*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 3: Charley Heath and Pasture

### Management Recommendations

#### Summary of Landscape Condition

The overall condition of the landscape is good with a pattern of walls and hedgerows generally intact and the landscape managed. In some places however, hedgerows are gappy and require infill planting and walls are in need of repair. The area is distinctive with strong characteristics.

#### Forces for Landscape Change

- Encroachment of bracken onto rocky outcrops, although smaller scale than other areas.
- Pressures from residential expansion on the western edge and related pressures such as increased road traffic.
- Potential loss of woodland from not replacing felled plantations.
- Potential loss of boundary walls and mature trees following walls along roadsides.
- Potential pressure from neighbouring quarrying expansion.

#### Sensitivities for Key Landscape Characteristics

There are a number of mature oak and beech trees following stone walls along roadsides, these should be maintained and replanted where necessary to retain this key feature.

Areas of heathland with gorse and rocky outcrops are generally smaller than in other areas and should be protected from bracken encroachment. Charnwood Lodge Nature Reserve is an important location featuring distinctive elements of heathland, rocky outcrops and woodland which are key characteristics of the character area.

New development in adjacent areas will result in ever increasing amounts of traffic on local roads which tend to be straight allowing fast speeds and impact on the tranquillity of the area.

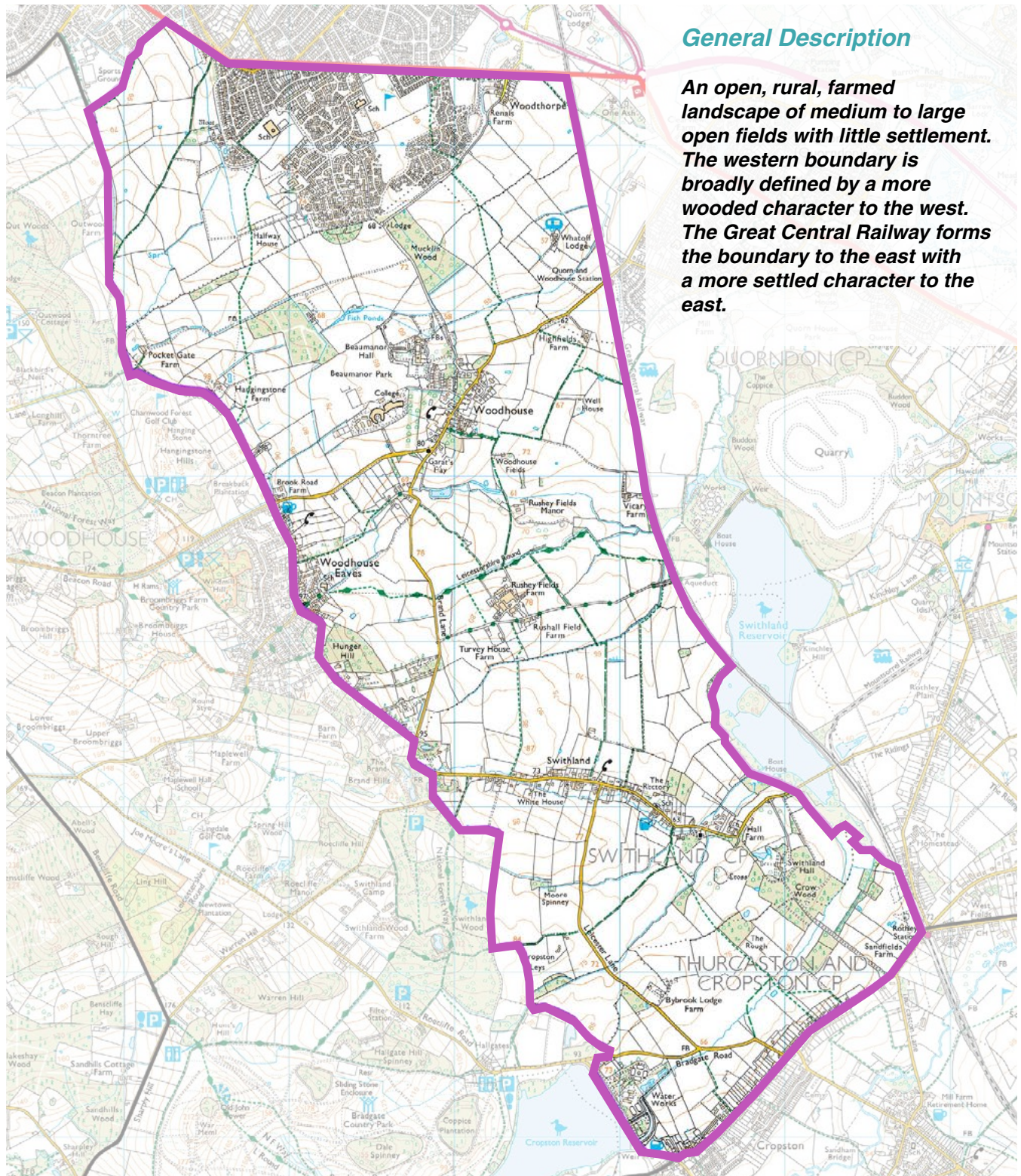
- **Manage encroachment of bracken to maintain open grasslands and rocky outcrops where present, to ensure retention of the key features.**
- **Maintain stone walls in field boundaries and along roads and repair/replace where necessary.**
- **Gap up and replant hedgerows with additional hedgerow trees to maintain the existing pattern of the landscape.**
- **Protect and manage mature trees for example along roadsides, and consider replanting to maintain the feature.**
- **Maintain lifecycle of ageing woodlands by replanting and managing especially along north western edge to maintain buffer to adjacent settlements.**
- **Ensure plantation woodlands are replanted when felled to maintain overall wooded character.**
- **Maintain habitat diversity, especially in sensitive areas such as Charnwood Lodge and wildlife sites and SSSIs, through management of woodlands, open grasslands and water features to retain the matrix of habitats currently found in the area.**
- **Continue to protect and sensitively manage heritage features including ancient woodland habitat and built features such as Mount St Bernard Abbey and buildings at Grace Dieu.**



*Charnwood Lodge interpretation board*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 4: Swithland/Woodhouse Farmland



### General Description

**An open, rural, farmed landscape of medium to large open fields with little settlement. The western boundary is broadly defined by a more wooded character to the west. The Great Central Railway forms the boundary to the east with a more settled character to the east.**



# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 4: Swithland/Woodhouse Farmland

### Key Characteristics

- Lower lying, gently undulating landform crossed by small watercourses and wet ditches.
- Predominantly arable fields, with some pasture and smaller blocks of woodland than in other areas.
- Field pattern varies but is generally a medium to large scale open regular pattern of fields bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees and some fences.
- Small villages (Swithland and Woodhouse) and a more urban character in the north associated with the southern edge of Loughborough. Network of minor roads and footpaths/bridleways.
- Numerous listed buildings in villages at Woodhouse and Swithland.
- A uniform landscape of medium to large scale. Open and generally tranquil with a rural feel and views to neighbouring areas.

### Specific Characteristics

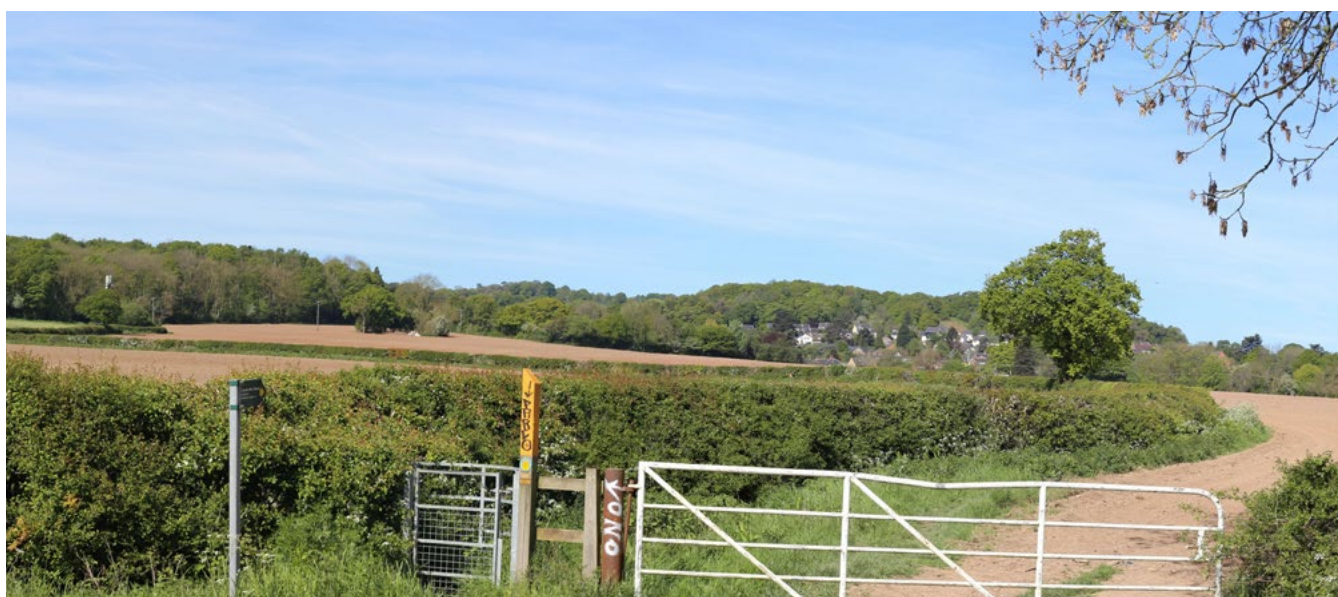
#### Landform and Hydrology

This area occupies a lower lying landform which is overall, gently undulating. Highest levels are located along the edge of Woodhouse Eaves which reaches up to 115m AOD with other local high points located to the north of and south of Swithland village which reach 87m AOD and 98m AOD respectively. On the north eastern edge, levels are only around 55m AOD, indicating a much gentler landform than in other areas. The area acts as a transition between lower lying and generally flatter areas to the north east and more upland and undulating areas to the south west.

A number of small watercourses and brooks cross the area, including the River Lin as it flows towards Swithland Reservoir. Wet ditches are evident as well as some field ponds, although less than in other areas.

#### Landcover and Vegetation

Landcover consists of mostly arable fields but with some large areas of pasture, and a lower level of deciduous woodland cover than in other areas. Ancient woodland is located at Mucklin Wood on the southern extent of Loughborough, and at Crown Wood on the edge of Swithland, but these areas are small compared to other areas. There are no SSSIs within the character area.



View to Woodhouse Eaves from Brand Lane

## Chapter 5.0

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 4: Swithland/Woodhouse Farmland

### Field Pattern and Enclosure

The pattern of arable fields are generally medium to large scale forming a regular pattern with smaller pastoral fields located on the edge of Swithland village. Larger pastoral fields are associated with Woodhouse village to the north. Field boundaries are formed from native hedgerows with hedgerow trees and some fences.

### Settlement Pattern, Roads and PRow

Small linear villages include Swithland and Woodhouse which feature the use of local Swithland slate and granite with some thatched roofs. The area also includes the edges of Cropston and Woodhouse Eaves with the villages located on lower levels and featuring wooded edges. The northern part of the area has a slightly more urban character due to the presence of the residential edge of Loughborough.

The Great Central Railway forms quite a decisive boundary along the north eastern edge while a network of minor roads crosses through the area linking between the villages. The area is well served with public footpaths and bridleways and the Leicestershire Round long distance footpath passes east to west between Woodhouse Eaves and Swithland Reservoir.

### Cultural Heritage

The area features a high number of listed buildings which are generally associated with the main roads through the villages of Woodhouse Eaves, Woodhouse and Swithland. A number of listed buildings and features are found at Beaumanor Hall to the north of Woodhouse.

### Perceptual Qualities

The area appears rather uniform with the pattern of fields and villages and is of a medium to large scale. It is open compared to other more wooded areas but is generally quite tranquil with a rural feel. There is greater disturbance towards the north associated with the southern edge of Loughborough. The area features views towards the west and Area 1 with the edge of Woodhouse Eaves visible on the rising landform.



*View across farmland from close to Great Central Railway line*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 4: Swithland/Woodhouse Farmland

### Management Recommendations

#### Summary of Landscape Condition

The overall condition of the landscape is considered to be generally good, but some areas are of lower quality and require management through infill planting and management of hedgerows which are fragmented in some areas. The northern part of the area is influenced by expanding development on the southern edge of Loughborough.

#### Forces for Landscape Change

- Encroachment from increasing development on the southern edge of Loughborough.
- Intensive farming practices affecting field boundary hedgerows and trees.
- Potential expansion of village settlements would alter their character within the landscape.

#### Sensitivities for Key Landscape Characteristics

New residential development on the southern edge of Loughborough is encroaching into the landscape. Expansion within the village settlements could result in a dilution of the local vernacular if not carried out appropriately.

Intensive farming methods could result in the further loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees in an area which has a lower level of woodland cover than other areas in the forest.

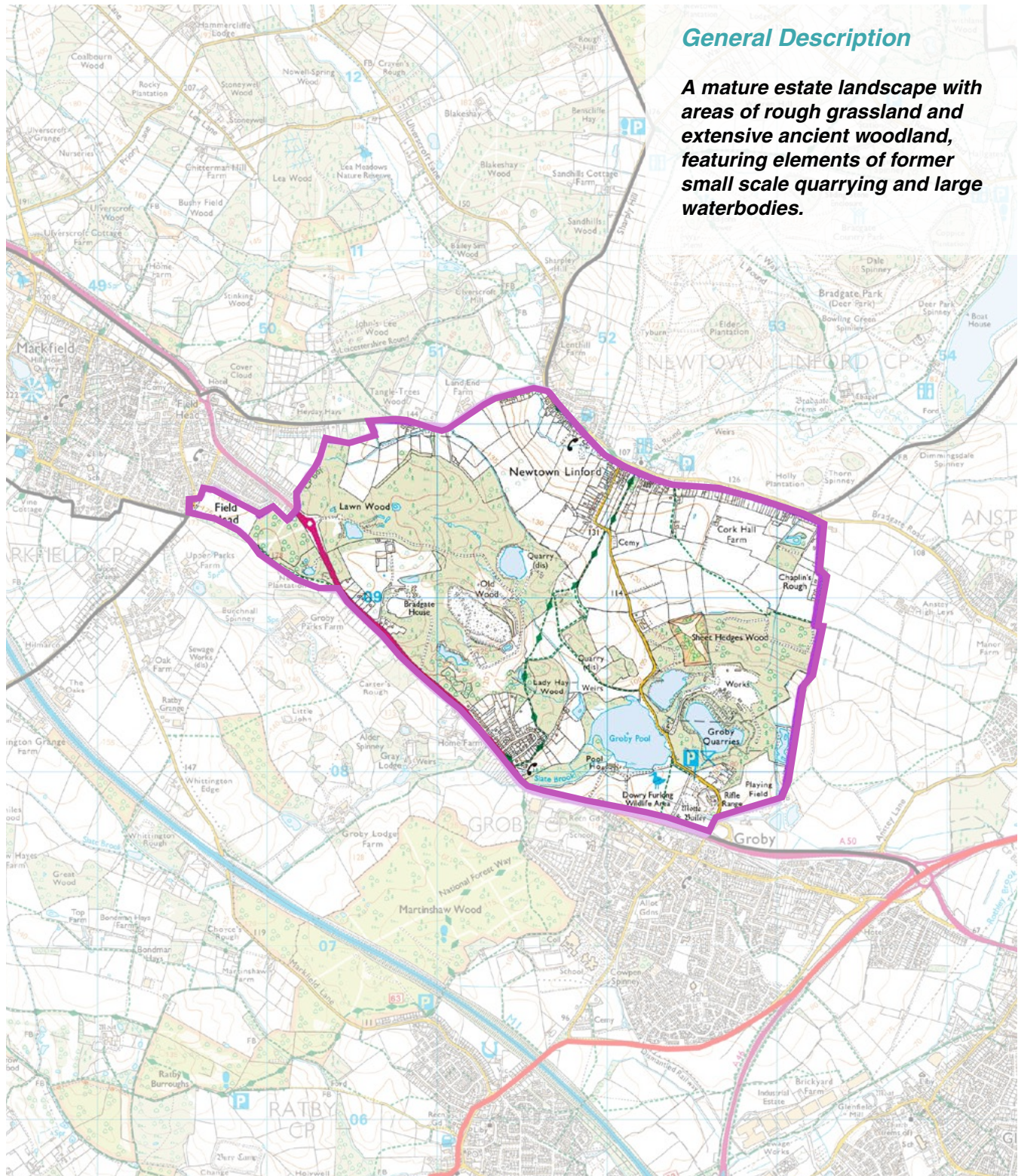
- **Gap up hedgerows and replant where lost to ensure habitat connectivity through the area and to maintain the overall field pattern.**
- **Plant new hedgerow trees where possible to increase the overall tree cover of the area.**
- **Manage and protect areas of ancient woodland and maintain the lifecycle of the woodlands by replanting where necessary.**
- **Expand areas of woodland where possible and ensure appropriate management.**
- **Ensure any new development in the main villages is appropriate in scale and vernacular style to preserve the pattern and form of these villages.**
- **Ensure any further new developments on the edge of Loughborough are suitably designed with ample planting to ensure integration into the existing landscape character and softening of development edges.**



*View to Mucklin Wood*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 5: Groby Estate Woodland



# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 5: Groby Estate Woodland

### Key Characteristics

- A locally undulating landform which includes a number of small field ponds and large pools including Groby Pool, fed by the Slate Brook.
- Heavily wooded with extensive ancient woodland interspersed with open rough grassland. Some arable fields on the eastern edge. Evidence of historic quarrying with some rock faces overgrown by trees.
- Field pattern is medium to small with a linear pattern, especially on the outskirts of Newtown Linford. Fields enclosed with a mix of hedgerows and post and rail fences.
- Includes the edge of Groby and Newtown Linford village. A50 forms main road corridor defining the area with few road connections through the area. Network of PRow including National Forest Way.
- Numerous listed buildings in Newtown Linford although heritage interest is also associated with Groby Pool House. The pools and some woodland at Groby Pool are a SSSI.
- A generally open, rural landscape, but enclosure is created by the undulating landform and large areas of woodland. The area has a managed estate feel and is quite tranquil, but affected by underlying noise from the M1.

### Specific Characteristics

#### Landform and Hydrology

This relatively small character area has a locally undulating landform which reflects the historic quarrying which has occurred in the area. Disused quarries have resulted in a number of large pools. Groby Pool is a large pool fed by the Slate Brook. Smaller water courses and field ponds are also scattered within the woodland areas.

#### Landcover and Vegetation

The area features a high proportion of deciduous woodland, the majority of which is ancient woodland. Within the woodland are areas of open, rough grassland. Pastoral fields with tree lines and scattered trees are located towards the edge of the area, for example on the south western edge of Newtown Linford, while arable fields are located towards the north eastern edge and south eastern edge of Newtown Linford. Around the former quarried areas are some rock faces, often with trees growing out of the exposed rock surfaces.

Woodland is mostly mature broadleaved species.



View to Lady Hay Wood

## Chapter 5.0

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 5: Groby Estate Woodland

### Field Pattern and Enclosure

Fields, where present, are small to medium in size and form a linear pattern on the outskirts of Newtown Linford. Arable fields in the north eastern corner are of a slightly larger size. Field boundaries are formed of native hedges with hedgerow trees or timber post and rail fences.

### Settlement Pattern, Roads and PRow

The area falls between settlements and includes the edges of Groby and Newtown Linford villages. Other buildings include Bradgate House and Groby Pool house. The A50 forms the southern boundary to the area with Bradgate Road forming the northern boundary. A network of public footpaths cross the area with the National Forest Way leading through the woodland, north into Newtown Linford. Other informal tracks also lead through the woodlands.

### Cultural Heritage

The area has a history of small scale quarrying with a number of disused sites and subsequent pools. Groby Pool House and Bradgate House are listed buildings while a number of further listed buildings are located within Newtown Linford. The pool and some associated woodland at Groby Pool are SSSIs.

### Perceptual Qualities

The area is of small scale with enclosure associated with the undulating landform and extensive woodland. More open areas of farmland are located towards the north of the area. The area is relatively peaceful, although does experience some underlying background noise from the M1. The mature woodland and disused quarries give a mature feel to the landscape.



*View from National Forest Way*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 5: Groby Estate Woodland

### Management Recommendations

#### Summary of Landscape Condition

This area is a mature landscape with mature trees and areas of open grassland which has the feel of an estate. The condition of this area is generally good with evidence of management of key areas such as Groby Pool.

#### Forces for Landscape Change

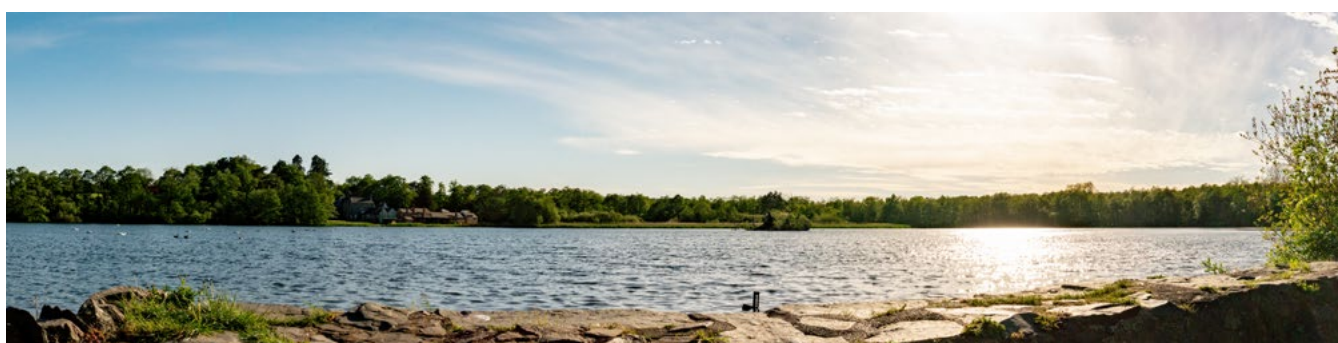
- Potential loss of woodland if not managed appropriately.
- Loss of hedgerows which are replaced by fencing in some areas.
- Increase in visitor pressure to Groby Pool.

#### Sensitivities for Key Landscape Characteristics

Much of the woodland and trees are mature and should be effectively managed to ensure longevity. Bracken is encroaching into some areas of open grassland and exposed rock faces which should be managed to maintain the prominence of these features.

The current management regimes should be continued to retain the estate character of this relatively small area.

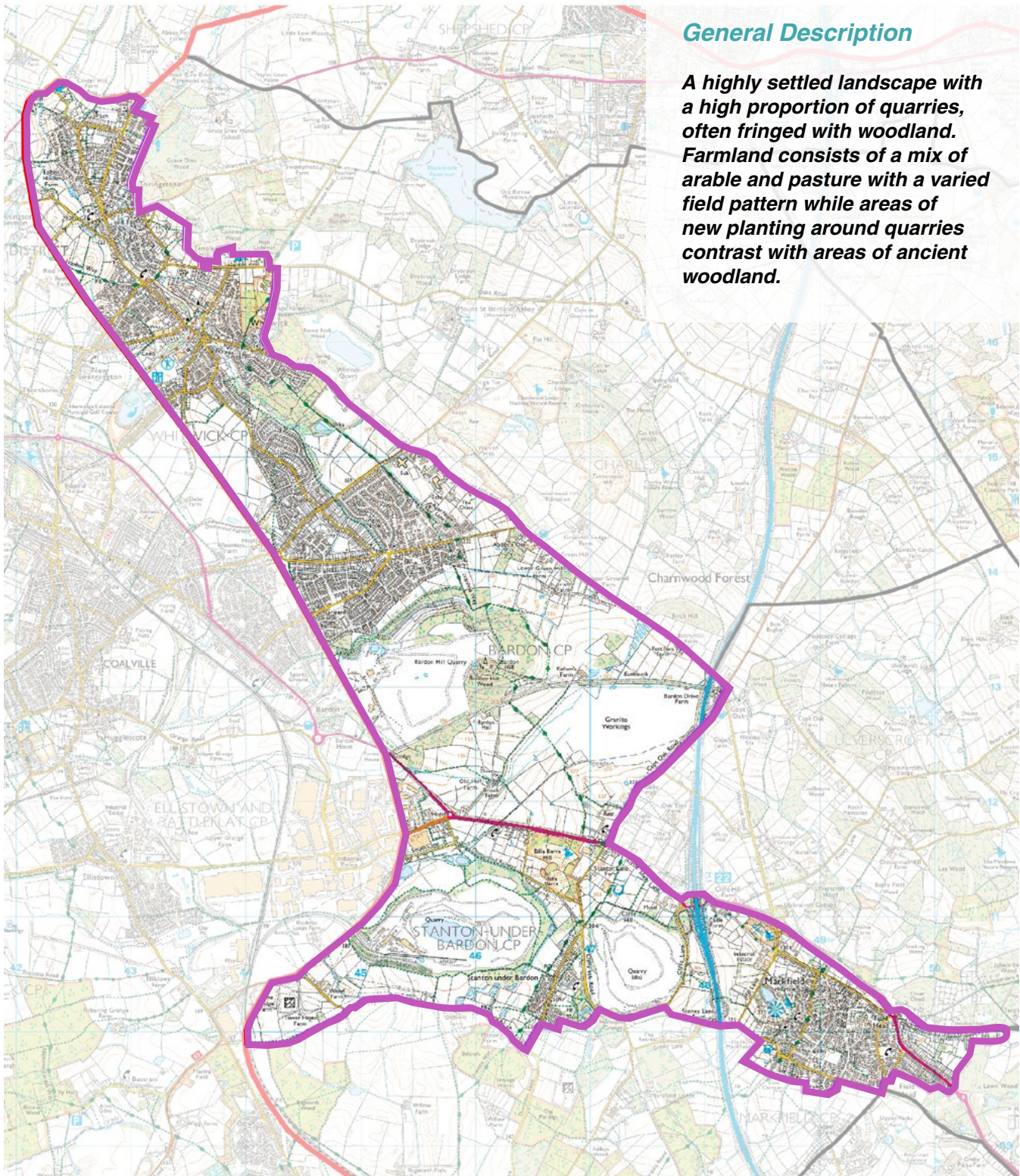
- **Manage encroachment of bracken and scrub to maintain areas of open grassland, exposed rock and former quarries to ensure longevity of the habitats.**
- **Gap up hedgerows and replant where lost to ensure habitat connectivity through the area.**
- **Maintain lifecycle of ageing woodlands by replanting and managing.**
- **Continue to protect and sensitively manage heritage features and SSSIs including ancient woodland habitat and built features at Groby Pool.**
- **Ensure visitor facilities are suitably managed to avoid urbanising influences.**



*Groby Pool*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 6: Thringstone/Markfield Quarries and Settlement





# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 6: Thringstone/Markfield Quarries and Settlement

### Key Characteristics

- **Undulating landform heavily affected by extensive quarrying.**
- **Highly settled with Whitwick and Thringstone, Agar Nook, Stanton-under-Bardon and Markfield villages.**
- **Small brook flows through the settlements and multiple field ponds.**
- **Mix of landuses including arable, pasture and woodland as well as quarrying and associated spoil mounds.**
- **Fields enclosed by hedgerows with hedgerow trees as well as some walls and fences.**
- **Mix of woodland with pine plantations and mixed woodland as well as new plantations and grasslands associated with quarry restoration.**
- **Small scale regular fields on settlement edges and around peripheries of quarries, bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. Also some walls along roads.**
- **Linear villages of Thringstone, Whitwick and Stanton-under-Bardon, with small number of scattered farms. Markfield is a large clustered village located on higher ground. Settlements link along roads with the A511/A50 corridor passing through.**
- **Several PRoW through area with Ivanhoe Way looping through.**
- **Listed buildings associated with villages and some located close to quarries such as Bardon Hall.**
- **A rich heritage of quarrying in the area with Bardon Hill Quarry evident on OS maps dating back to 1884.**
- **Large scale expansive views from higher levels often close to quarries. Background noise from industrial areas and settlements.**

### Specific Characteristics

#### Landform and Hydrology

This linear area has a generally undulating landform but also includes a number of large quarries which have greatly altered the natural landform over time. Stanton-under-Bardon Quarry occupies the majority of the southern part of the area with Bardon Hill Quarry located to the north. The quarries create extreme low points but are often associated with local high points. Billa Barra Hill for example reaches 235m AOD and is located adjacent to Stanton-Under-Bardon Quarry while Bardon Hill Wood adjacent to Bardon Hill Quarry reaches 278m AOD. This is also found at Markfield where Hill Hole nature reserve lies at around 222m AOD immediately adjacent to the former Hill Hole Quarry. Away from these features, the landform is more gently undulating with settlement in the north west associated with lower levels.

Water courses flow through the settlements including Grace Dieu Brook which flows through Thringstone and Whitwick. Small field ponds are scattered throughout the area with larger water bodies associated with the quarries for example at Stanton-under-Bardon.

#### Landcover and Vegetation

The area is highly settled with quarrying and associated spoil heaps occupying the majority of the area. Between these main landuses are small areas of mixed arable and pastoral farmland and small heathlands and woodlands. Woodland is mixed with some pine plantations and some mixed broadleaf and pine. There are also areas of new plantation and grasslands associated with areas of quarry restoration. A low proportion of woodland is ancient woodland for example at Whitwick and around Bardon Hill Quarry. This area also includes a small area of heathland.

Billa Barra Hill and Hill Hole are local nature reserves managed by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. Billa Barra Hill at Bardon Hill Quarry is important for its acidic grassland habitat and pre-Cambrian geology while Hill Hole at Markfield features a meadow, woodland, heath grassland and a water body at the bottom of the quarry. The Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust also managed a further local nature reserve at Altar Stones Lane, close to Markfield which includes heath grassland and Precambrian rock outcrops. A number of SSSIs are also located within the area, associated with heathlands and grasslands or geological features.

## Chapter 5.0

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 6: Thringstone/Markfield Quarries and Settlement

### Field Pattern and Enclosure

Fields tend to be located on settlement edges and around the peripheries of the quarries with the field pattern consisting of small, regular fields. These are enclosed with a mix of hedgerows with hedgerow trees but also some walls and timber fences. Walls are also present along roadsides.

### Settlement Pattern, Roads and PRow

The area is highly settled with a number of linear villages and scattered farms. Villages tend to be linear following a central road and include Thringstone, Whitwick and Agar Nook located within the north western area and Stanton-under-Bardon to the south. Markfield is a large village with a more clustered form, located on the eastern edge and on a raised landform, which is a unique feature for Charnwood Forest as a whole. Settlements extend along the roads with the A50/A511 corridor passing through southern part of the area across the M1. The M1 leads for a short distance north to south through the area but is not a visually dominant feature.

Numerous public footpaths lead through the area with a number of short lengths through the settlements and a loop route around Standon-under-Bardon Quarry. The Ivanhoe Way long distance route also loops through the area leading around the quarries and through Whitwick and Thringstone. Elsewhere, small areas of access land are located adjacent to Whitwick, Billa Barra Hill and close to Markfield.

### Cultural Heritage

A number of listed buildings are located within the settlements of Whitwick and Thringstone and on the western edge of Markfield. Other listed buildings are associated with quarries such as Bardon Hall and the associated Lodge. The area features a rich heritage of quarrying with quarries at Bardon Hill, Cliffe Hill and Markfield Quarry visible on OS maps dating back to 1884. Scheduled monuments are also evident with a moated site near Kellam's Farm near Bardon and at Whitwick Castle.

### Perceptual Qualities

The area has a large scale due to the extent of settlement and expansive quarrying in the area. Wide extensive views are also possible from higher levels, often from locations close to quarries, with views across the restoration areas or extraction areas to adjacent character areas. The area is not particularly tranquil with noise from quarrying and industrial areas as well as settlements and roads.



*View of Bardon Hill Quarry*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 6: Thringstone/Markfield Quarries and Settlement

### Summary of Landscape Condition

This is a changing landscape heavily influenced by settlement and quarrying with urban fringe influences which results in a generally low landscape condition, although areas of interspersed farmland and restoration schemes are managed and of a medium condition.

### Forces for Landscape Change

- Expansion of quarrying activity resulting in further loss of farmland.
- Maturing quarry restoration schemes will alter the landscape over time, increasing woodland cover.
- Greater opportunities for recreation once restoration schemes have established.
- Pressure from further settlement expansion especially due to the close proximity to Coalville, outside of the Charnwood Forest area.
- Pressure of further industrial development due to the close proximity to the major road network and Junction 22 of the M1.

### Sensitivities for Key Landscape Characteristics

Increased expansion of quarrying will result in further impacts on the landscape such as the loss of open fields and associated hedgerows and trees as well as the existing field pattern.

Any further development in the form of settlement expansion or industrial developments would also increase the urban influences on the area and potentially erode the landscape character, without appropriate design.

### Management Recommendations

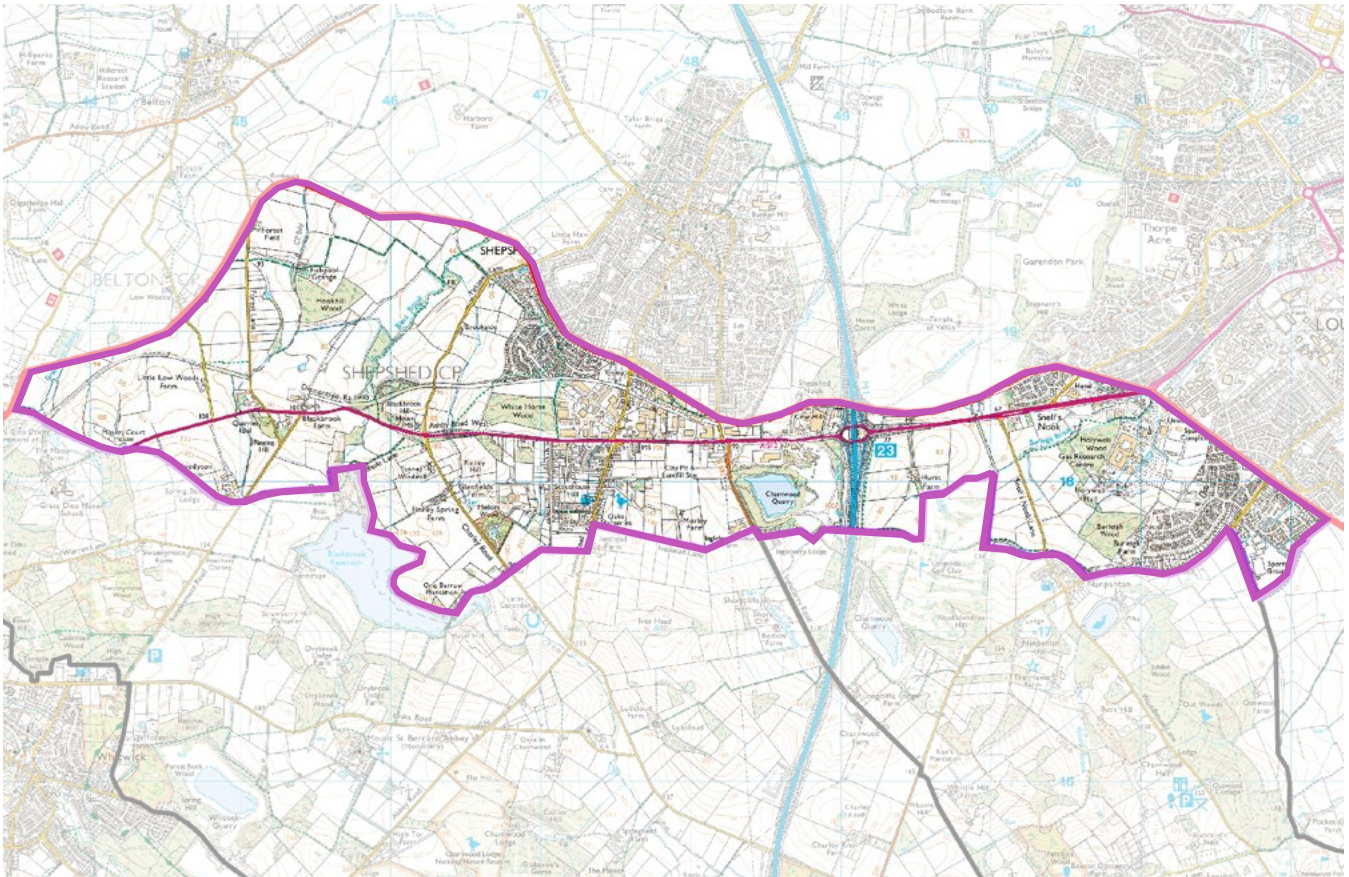
- **Ensure continued management of restored landscapes to ensure establishment and effective regeneration.**
- **Ensure extensive new woodland and habitat creation within future quarry restoration plans.**
- **Maintain stone walls and repair/replace where necessary rather than using fencing.**
- **Maintain habitat diversity through management of woodlands, open grasslands and water features including SSSIs and wildlife sites to retain and enhance the matrix of habitats found in the area.**
- **Ensure any new residential development is focussed at the main settlements and includes adequate landscape proposals to integrate development into the landscape.**
- **Ensure any new industrial development proposals include woodland planting to soften buildings within views.**
- **Maintain woodland vegetation at the summit of Billa Barra to retain long views.**
- **Gap up hedgerows and replant where lost to strengthen field pattern through the area.**
- **Explore possibilities of creating new recreation facilities in areas of restored quarrying to provide for local communities.**



*View west from Hill Lane on the edge of Markfield*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 7: Loughborough/Shepshed Mixed Farmland



### General Description

***A lower lying, predominantly open, arable landscape with some small pockets of pasture and small blocks of ancient woodland. The character area lies between central upland areas to the south and the wider lowland to the north. This area is heavily influenced by settlement from the urban edges of Shepshed and Loughborough.***

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 7: Loughborough/Shepshed Mixed Farmland

### Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling landform, generally falling to the north. Small water courses include Black Brook and Burleigh Brook as well as scattered field ponds.
- Wider extent of arable farmland with some pasture and smaller blocks of woodland. Ancient woodland close to Shepshed and Loughborough and SSSIs at Charnwood Quarry and Blackbrook Hill.
- Varied field pattern with some small fields close to Shepshed and larger fields to the west. Field enclosure mainly hedges with some walls.
- An urban fringe landscape which includes the edge of Shepshed and Loughborough and associated influences such as Loughborough University which features within views. The A512 leads east to west through the area with minor roads leading south. Some PRoW leading out of Shepshed and Loughborough.
- Relatively low number of listed buildings, although some vernacular stone and brick buildings.
- A large to medium scale open landscape with some long views. Lower level than central areas of the forest, but still views to lower extent to the north. Not particularly tranquil with noise from roads including the M1 and settlements.

### Specific Characteristics

#### Landform and Hydrology

This linear area has a gently rolling landform but generally falls towards the north. Minor valleys follow the route of the Black Brook which flows around Shepshed and the Burleigh Brook which flows into Loughborough. The highest point is located to the west of Morley Farm in the south which rises to 147m AOD with a further high point at Woodyton Farm on the south western boundary which is located at 130m AOD.

As well as the brooks and small watercourses, a small number of field ponds are located across the area and a large water body is located at Charnwood Quarry adjacent to the M1.

#### Landcover and Vegetation

The lower lying levels result in a greater extent of arable farmland, especially to the west of Shepshed, with only small areas of pastoral land. Woodland cover is lower than in other areas, but a large proportion of the woodland is ancient woodland. Charnwood Quarry is also an extensively quarried area between the M1 and A512. Only two SSSIs are located within this area, at Charnwood Quarry and at the woodland adjacent to Blackbrook Hill House.



View south east from Fishpool Grange

## Chapter 5.0

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 7: Loughborough/Shepshed Mixed Farmland

### Field Pattern and Enclosure

Field pattern varies with some smaller, regular fields associated with pastoral land close to the edge of Shepshed and Loughborough with a pattern of linear pastoral fields on the eastern side of Forest Lane to the west of the area. The more prevalent arable land consists of much larger fields which extend to the west of Shepshed and beyond. Field enclosure is formed by hedges with hedgerow trees and although some stone walls are evident, these are used less than in other areas within Charnwood Forest.

### Settlement Pattern, Roads and PRoW

The area is settled and covers the southern extent of Shepshed and the south western extent of Loughborough. Development includes residential areas, with some recent developments, but also industrial uses which spread along the A512 out of Shepshed and Loughborough as well as the south western extent of Loughborough University.

The A512 forms the main road which leads east to west through the linear area with minor roads heading north to south off it. Some public footpaths lead out of the main settlements of Shepshed and Loughborough, but there is no access land within the area.

### Cultural Heritage

There are a relatively low number of listed buildings within the area, although the Fenney Windmill to the south west of Shepshed is a feature of interest. Further listed buildings are associated with the edge of Loughborough and include Holywell Farmhouse and outbuildings within the university grounds. There are a number of buildings which however feature local vernacular brick or stone features.

### Perceptual Qualities

The area is of a medium to large scale and is more open, especially to the west, with long views possible away from the settlements. Development including the edge of Shepshed and Loughborough University buildings do however feature within many views. Longer views are predominantly to the north across the more open, lower levels beyond the Charnwood Forest boundary. From some locations planes leaving or approaching East Midlands Airport are regularly visible.

The area is not particularly tranquil due to disturbance from main roads such as the A512 and M1 motorway and from the edge of developments.



*View along Iveshead Road towards settlement edge*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 7: Loughborough/Shepshed Mixed Farmland

### Management Recommendations

#### Summary of Landscape Condition

The overall condition of this area is considered to be good. Hedgerows and stone walls are generally intact and managed although some hedgerows need gapping up in places and stone walls appear in need of repair.

#### Forces for Landscape Change

- Continual expansion of large settlements, including Shepshed and Loughborough, into open farmland.
- Potential expansion of quarrying activity adjacent to the M1 resulting in further loss of farmland.
- Pressure from further industrial development due to the close proximity to the major road network and Junction 23 of the M1.

#### Sensitivities for Key Landscape Characteristics

Any further development in the form of settlement expansion or industrial developments and also including expansion of Loughborough University would increase the urban influences in the area and potentially erode the landscape character, without appropriate design.

Intensive farming methods could result in the further loss of hedgerows, hedgerow trees, reducing overall tree cover, as well as stone walls.

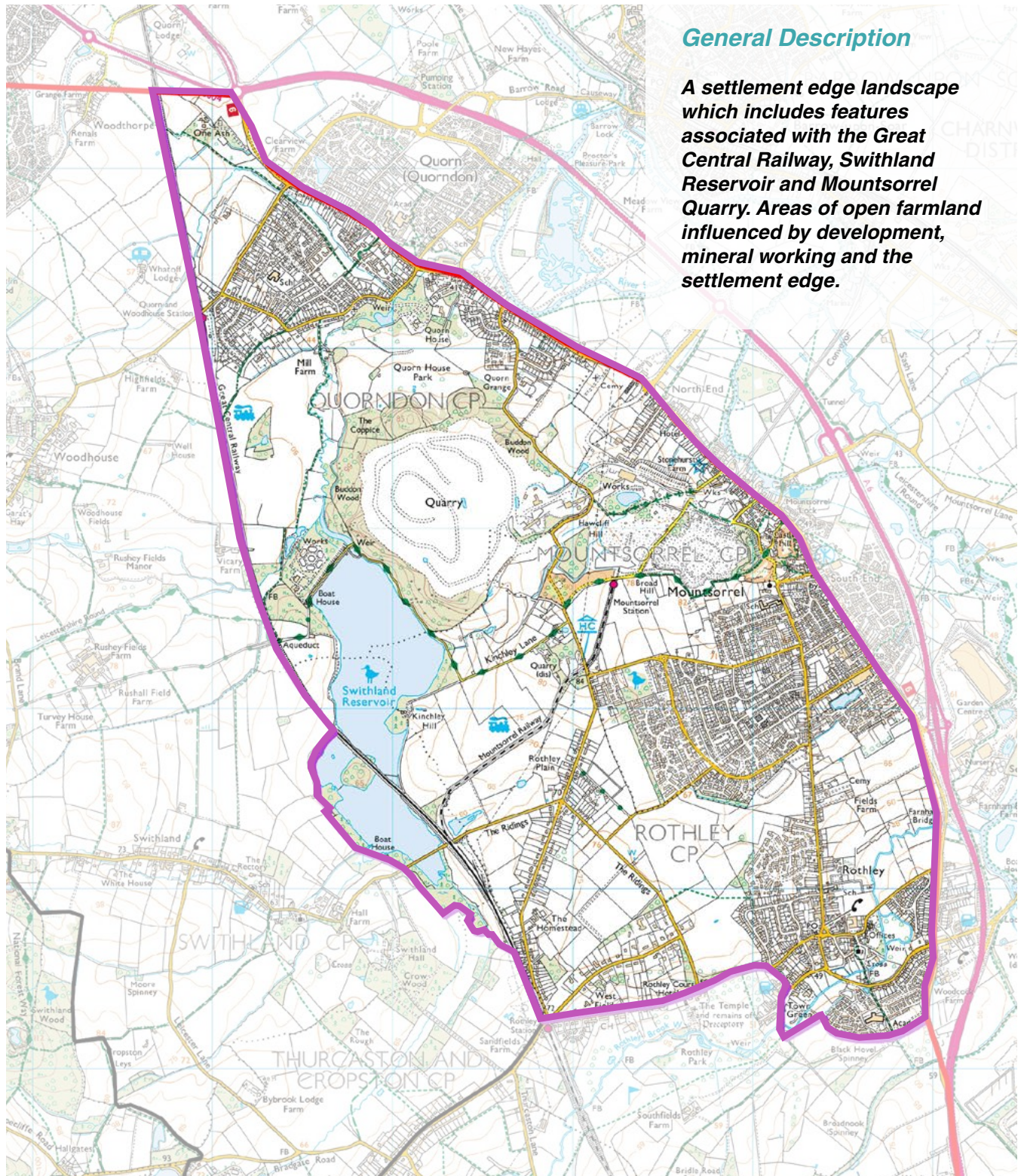
- Ensure new development is well integrated within the landscape with adequate planting to soften urban edges and maintain the existing vegetated edges to settlements.
- Maintain stone walls and repair/replace where necessary rather than using fencing.
- Gap up hedgerows and replant where lost to strengthen field pattern through the area.
- Ensure woodland around Charnwood Quarry is managed to maintain screening effect.



*View north west from Nanpantan*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 8: Quorn/Mountsorrel/Rothley Settlements, Quarries and Farmland



### General Description

**A settlement edge landscape which includes features associated with the Great Central Railway, Swithland Reservoir and Mountsorrel Quarry. Areas of open farmland influenced by development, mineral working and the settlement edge.**



# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 8: Quorn/Mountsorrel/Rothley Settlements, Quarries and Farmland

### Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating landform but with landform changes created from extensive quarrying and spoil mounds in and around Mountsorrel Quarry. Large water body at Swithland Reservoir and other smaller watercourses leading into Mountsorrel and Quorn.
- An area of predominantly settlement and quarrying but with some arable and pastoral fields and woodland. Ancient woodland around Mountsorrel Quarry, and by Swithland Reservoir and extensive SSSI at quarry and reservoir.
- A changing field pattern around Mountsorrel due to quarrying. Otherwise a mix of field sizes but a regular pattern of fields enclosed by hedgerows with some walls.
- Highly settled including Quorn, Mountsorrel and Rothley villages which create a settled edge to the forest. A network of minor roads leading out from the villages but relatively few public footpaths.
- Multiple listed buildings associated with village centres, but also at Swithland Reservoir and along the railway corridor. Other heritage features include reservoir railings which are consistent around the reservoir area and brick structures (bridges etc) along the railway line. There is a Community Heritage Centre at Mountsorrel/Rothley Station.
- Larger scale and more open than other areas. Mountsorrel Quarry and associated mineral workings are dominating in close proximity. Other interest and industrial architecture associated with reservoir and railway. Some road and vehicular noise, but otherwise quite peaceful.

### Specific Characteristics

#### Landform and Hydrology

Landform across this area is generally gently undulating although extremes of high points and low points are created through extensive quarrying at Mountsorrel Quarry and the associated mineral workings. A local high point is also located at Castle Hill in Mountsorrel which is the site of a prominent War Memorial, erected in 1926. Small watercourses flow through Quorn and Mountsorrel with the River Lin which feeds Swithland Reservoir, joining the River Soar beyond the forest boundary to the north of Mountsorrel. Swithland Reservoir is a large water body with a number of small field ponds also scattered through the area.

#### Landcover and Vegetation

The area is highly settled, with a large land take also associated with the quarry at Mountsorrel and the associated mineral workings with spoil mounds expanding. Away from the settlement and quarry, farmland is a mix of arable and pastoral and woodlands are generally deciduous including mature birch woodlands present on the edge of the reservoir and quarry. Buddon Wood around the edge of Mountsorrel Quarry is ancient woodland while the quarry and reservoir are both large SSSIs.

## Chapter 5.0

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 8: Quorn/Mountsorrel/Rothley Settlements, Quarries and Farmland

### Field Pattern and Enclosure

This is a changing landscape with some fields being lost to expanding spoil mounds. Where present, fields are of varying sizes but generally form regular patterns between the settlements. Field boundaries are formed by hedgerows with some stone walls.

### Settlement Pattern, Roads and PRow

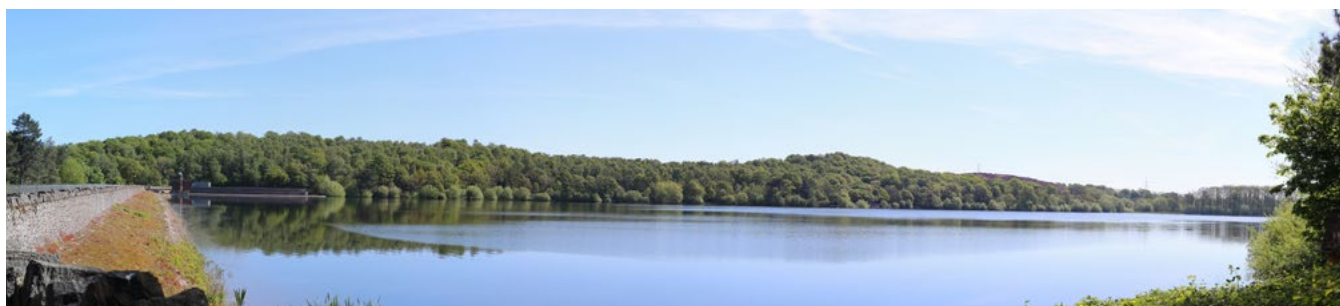
The area is heavily settled and includes the villages of Quorn, Mountsorrel and Rothley which have a wooded character to the settlement edges. These villages have expanded over time and recent developments include use of local stone in detailing. The villages form a settled edge to the forest. A network of minor roads lead out from the villages while the former A6 forms the north eastern boundary. The Great Central Railway line forms a distinctive boundary to the west of the area. There are relatively few public footpaths through the area but the Leicestershire Round long distance route leads around Swithland Reservoir, into Mountsorrel and small areas of access land are located around Mountsorrel Quarry.

### Cultural Heritage

There are numerous listed buildings associated with the historic cores of the villages within the area but also listed features are associated with both Swithland Reservoir including a pumping house, bridge and fountain, and the Great Central Railway which includes the Quorn and Woodhouse Station. The reservoir boundary is demarcated through distinctive railings which are visible in a number of locations across the area. Other features of interest include bridges and station buildings associated with the railway. The Community Heritage Centre at Mountsorrel/Rothley Station provides information relating to the history of the area.

### Perceptual Qualities

The area is of a larger scale than other areas due to the extent and influence of the quarrying but also due to the large reservoir and areas of open fields away from the settlements. The quarry and spoil mounds are dominating features in close proximity. The presence of industrial architecture associated with the reservoir and railway corridor create an awareness of the industrial heritage within the area. There is some disturbance from quarry vehicles and road noise but otherwise, away from the settlements, the area is quite peaceful.



*Swithland Reservoir*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 8: Quorn/Mountsorrel/Rothley Settlements, Quarries and Farmland

### Management Recommendations

#### Summary of Landscape Condition

The area includes large scale mineral workings from Mountsorrel Quarry which has a large influence on the area. The overall condition is moderate with some farmland areas fragmented with gappy hedgerows.

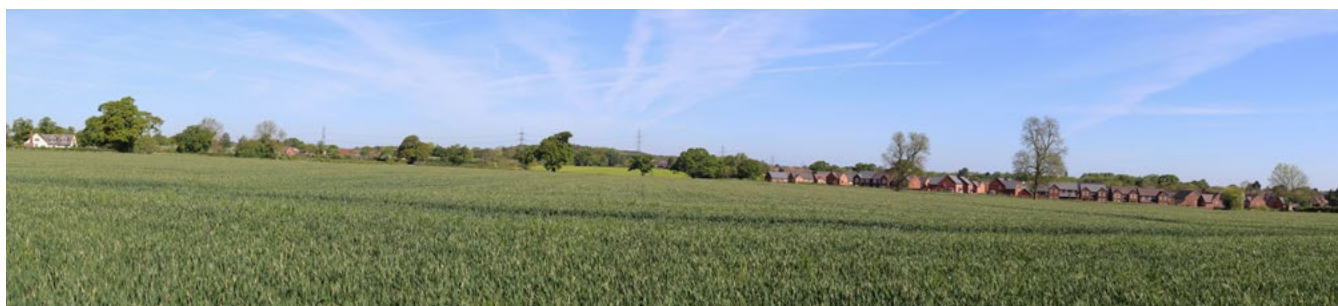
#### Forces for Landscape Change

- Ongoing changes as a result of expanding quarrying and associated mineral workings resulting in potential loss of woodland and farmland.
- New residential development increasing urban influence on the area.
- New planting associated with quarry restoration and new developments will mature to increase tree cover.

#### Sensitivities for Key Landscape Characteristics

Any further expansion in quarrying at Mountsorrel will continue to affect the landscape character through the loss of hedgerows and farmland as well as possible areas of woodland. The restoration of these areas give potential for new woodland planting and habitat creation which will increase woodland cover and biodiversity in the area. There is also potential for these areas to provide recreation facilities for local residents. The loss of historic features associated with the heritage railway such as former stations and bridges as well as the brick buildings and perimeter railings at Swithland Reservoir would affect the industrial heritage influence of the character area.

- **Gap up hedgerows and replant where lost to maintain field pattern and ensure habitat connectivity through the area.**
- **Maintain habitat diversity through management of woodlands, especially SSSI woodland around Mountsorrel Quarry, open grasslands and water features to retain the matrix of habitats currently found in the area.**
- **Continue to protect and sensitively manage built heritage features associated with the Great Central Railway and Swithland Reservoir to maintain the industrial heritage of the area.**
- **Ensure any further new developments are suitably designed with ample planting to soften edges and ensure assimilation into the landscape.**
- **Ensure areas of restoration around Mountsorrel Quarry reflect the rural character of the area with the inclusion of woodland planting.**
- **Promote appropriate management of woodland and grassland habitats to enhance biodiversity in the area.**
- **Explore potential to increase access to restored quarry areas for local residents.**



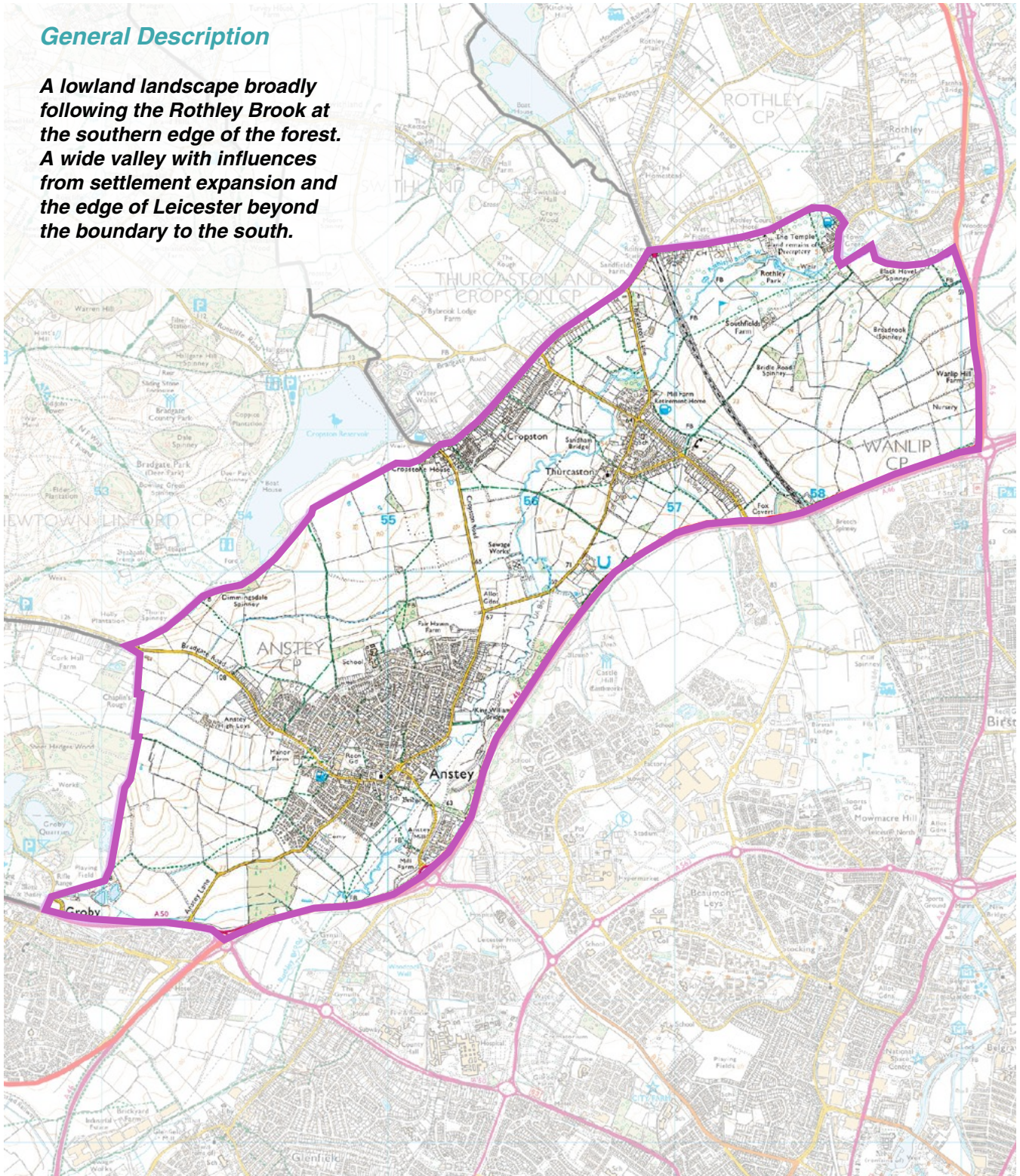
*View north towards edge of Mountsorrel*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 9: Rothley Brook Lowland Farmland

### General Description

*A lowland landscape broadly following the Rothley Brook at the southern edge of the forest. A wide valley with influences from settlement expansion and the edge of Leicester beyond the boundary to the south.*



# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 9: Rothley Brook Lowland Farmland

### Key Characteristics

- Lower level, generally gently sloping and wide valley following Rothley Brook extending south west to north east through the area.
- Extensive arable farmland with some small areas of pasture along the brook. Relatively little woodland cover with some woodland belts.
- Mix of some large and medium arable fields in regular pattern bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees.
- Settlement concentrated on villages with expansion at Anstey. Minor roads link settlements; area bounded by A46 dual carriageway to the south. Good network of footpaths and bridleways.
- Pylons and overhead lines follow the line of the brook.
- Some listed buildings within village centres. (No SSSIs or ancient woodland).
- Lowland, wide valley with views to higher ground to the north, including towards Bradgate Park. Urban influences and views to the wider expanse of Leicester City to the south east.

### Specific Characteristics

#### Landform and Hydrology

This area covers a lower lying landform which follows the Rothley Brook extending south west to north east along the edge of Charnwood Forest. The landform gently slopes from high points of around 85 to 115m AOD on either side of the corridor, down towards the brook. A number of small field ponds are also scattered along the brook corridor.

#### Landcover and Vegetation

The area features a greater extent of arable farmland with only some smaller areas of pasture along the Rothley Brook. There is also a much lower extent of tree cover with only small woodland belts and trees within Rothley Park Golf Course which also features areas of open grassland. A belt of willow and alder woodland and mature scrub follows the line of the brook.

## Chapter 5.0

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 9: Rothley Brook Lowland Farmland

### Field Pattern and Enclosure

Field patterns vary with generally a mix of medium to large fields, but with some small fields on the edges of the settlements. Fields form a regular pattern and are bound by tall hedgerows with hedgerow trees which increases the sense of tree cover across the area.

### Settlement Pattern, Roads and PRow

The area is rather well settled and includes the villages of Cropston and Thurcaston which have a linear form as well as Anstey, and the southern edge of Rothley. The villages have all experienced modern expansion, although this is most evident at Anstey. Minor roads link the settlements with the A46 which forms the southern boundary to the forest. A good network of footpaths and bridleways also cross the area.

### Cultural Heritage

A number of listed buildings are located within the village centres at Thurcaston, Cropston and Anstey, as well as Rothley Court Hotel and Chapel which are Grade I listed on the edge of Rothley. Packhorse Bridge which crosses Rothley Brook on the edge of Anstey is also a Scheduled Monument.

### Perceptual Qualities

The area has a lowland feel due to the lower lying landform and open corridor along the Rothley Brook. Views are possible out of the area to the higher ground of Bradgate Park to the north and towards the edge of Leicester City to the south. Views of the wider expanse of Leicester City across the A46 corridor create an urban influence along the southern edge of the area.



*Rothley Brook corridor*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 9: Rothley Brook Lowland Farmland

### Management Recommendations

#### Summary of Landscape Condition

This area has an overall moderate landscape condition. The open arable fields are managed but the field pattern is fragmented by broken hedgerows and there are influences from settlements edges and busy road corridors.

#### Forces for Landscape Change

- Ongoing pressure for settlement expansion resulting in further loss of open farmland.
- Additional pressures for recreational needs from nearby residents on the current informal footpath network resulting in footpath erosion, or from upgrading footpaths resulting in further urbanising influences.

#### Sensitivities for Key Landscape Characteristics

The settlement of Anstey has already expanded due to recent developments, and the close proximity to the A46, A50 and edge of Leicester is likely to result in pressure for further growth. Also, due to their locations, Cropston and Thurcaston are also likely to be under pressure for expansion in order to absorb the additional housing need not locatable within Leicester City.

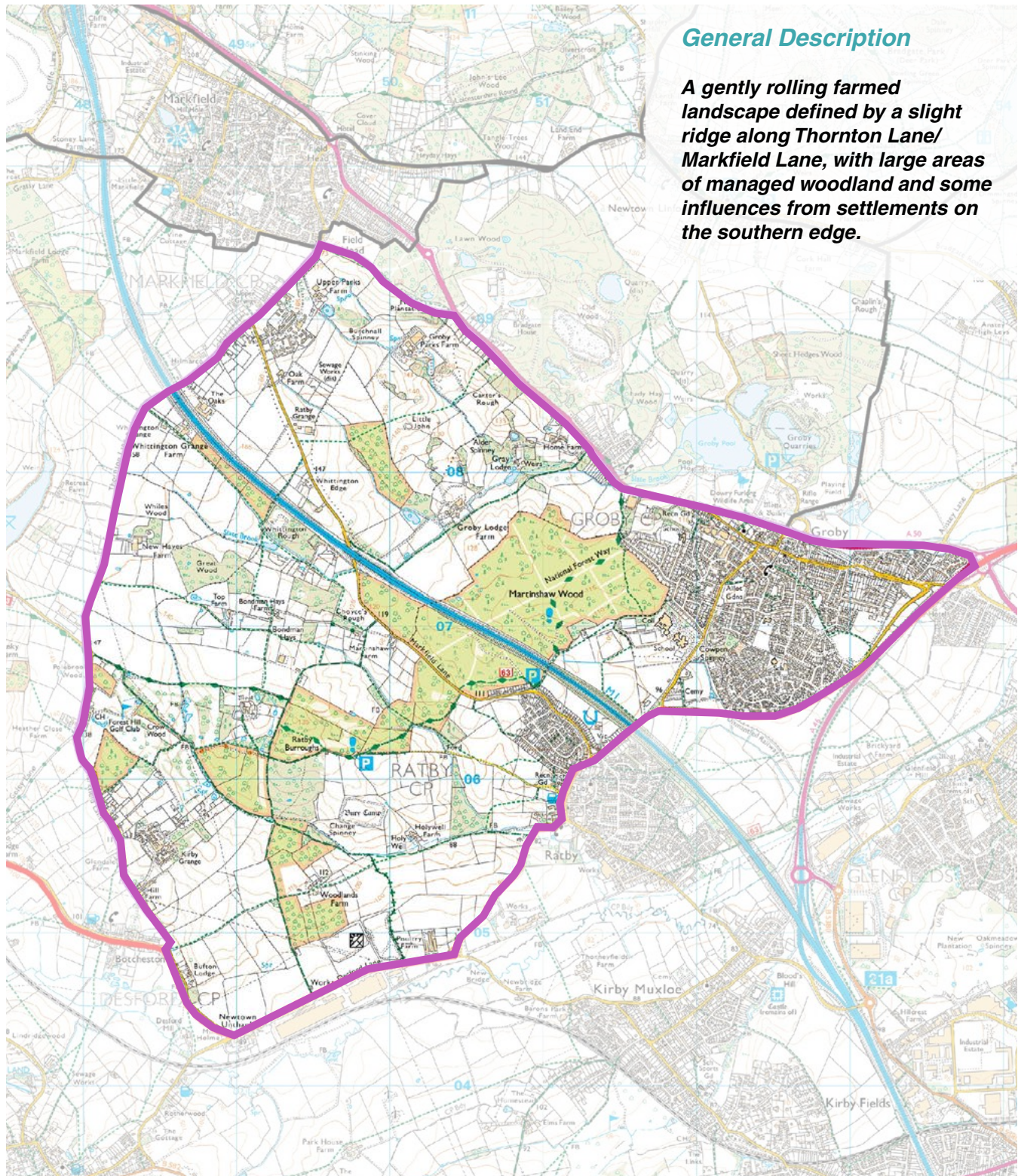
- Gap up hedgerows and replant where lost to strengthen field pattern through the area.
- Maintain habitat diversity along the Rothley Brook corridor through the management of trees and open grasslands within the floodplain to enhance the matrix of habitats currently found in the area.
- Ensure any new development is well integrated within the landscape with planting to soften urban edges.
- Ensure any new development is appropriate in scale and vernacular style and focussed at the main settlements to preserve the pattern and form of the villages.
- Ensure recreation provision is appropriate for the area to avoid undue urbanising influences.



View north towards Bradgate Park across open farmland

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 10: Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland





# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 10: Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland

### Key Characteristics

- A rolling landform, generally falling towards the south east which includes Slate Brook and tributaries to Rothley Brook as well as numerous scattered field ponds.
- Heavily wooded in part with extensive ancient woodland and open access land at Martinshaw Wood as well as areas of more recent plantation. Mix of arable and pastoral land with some small scattered rocky outcrops surrounded by stone walls (ie Little John).
- Medium to large regular field pattern enclosed with hedgerows featuring hedgerow trees and some stone walls.
- Includes Groby and the edge of Ratby as well as some large houses (Bradgate House and Markfield Court). M1 forms main road corridor through the area but is mostly screened by vegetated embankments. Few minor roads connect through the area but good network of PRow and access land at Martinshaw Wood.
- Multiple listed buildings in Groby centre. Scattered SM and listed buildings elsewhere.
- A generally open feel with some views towards the edge of Leicester, but enclosure is created by extensive woodland which extends into settlements at Ratby and Groby. The area is quite tranquil, but affected by underlying noise from the M1.

### Specific Characteristics

#### Landform and Hydrology

The area has a rolling landform which generally falls towards the south east from higher levels along Thornton Lane/Markfield Lane of around 145-165m AOD to lower levels of around 80-100m AOD along the south eastern boundary which forms the boundary to Charnwood Forest. Small valleys follow minor watercourses which run into the Rothley Brook, including the Slate Brook. Field ponds are scattered within the western area, associated with the higher levels.

#### Landcover and Vegetation

The area consists of a mix of arable and pastoral farmland with extensive woodland and some scattered trees, and also includes the Forest Hill Golf Club. Much of the woodland is open access land, including the extensive Martinshaw Wood which is ancient woodland which straddles the M1 corridor. More recent plantation is also evident within the area. Some small areas of rocky outcrops for example 'Little John' which is surrounded by a stone wall, located in the north of the area. Woodland generally consists of mixed broadleaved species although pine trees are also present.

A solar farm is also located close to the southern boundary.



View north across Groby Park

## Chapter 5.0

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 10: Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland

### Field Pattern and Enclosure

Fields are a mix of sizes ranging from some large linear fields to smaller fields close to settlements. These form a regular pattern in the south of the area and are more irregular in the north. Fields are bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees, often oak, with stone walls in some areas.

### Settlement Pattern, Roads and PRow

The area includes the village of Groby and the north western part of Ratby to the north of Main Street. Other development includes large scattered farmsteads as well as Kirby Grange in the south and Ratby Grange in the north, also some large houses such as Bradgate House and Groby Lodge.

The M1 motorway forms the main road corridor through the area, although vegetation along the embankments result in it being screened along the majority of the length. Other than this, there are few minor roads crossing through the area with only Markfield Lane linking Ratby and Markfield and Thornton Lane which forms the western boundary. The area does feature a good network of footpaths and bridleways with access land at Martinshaw Wood and the National Forest Way leading across the area.

### Cultural Heritage

There are multiple listed buildings located within the Conservation Area at Groby with four other listed buildings or structures located within the area. Scheduled Monuments include the Old Hays moated site and associated manorial earthworks and camp outside Ratby and a motte and bailey castle and manorial complex at Groby.

### Perceptual Qualities

The area has a generally open feel but enclosure is created by the extensive woodland which extends into settlements at Ratby and Groby through tree planting along the main roads. Away from the settlements, the area is generally quite tranquil, although disturbance is created as a result of underlying noise along the M1 corridor.



*View north towards Kirby Grange*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 10: Groby/Ratby Wooded Farmland

### Management Recommendations

#### Summary of Landscape Condition

The overall condition of the landscape is moderate to good with some farmland areas and new woodland plantations well managed, but others more fragmented with gappy hedgerows.

#### Forces for Landscape Change

- Ongoing pressure for settlement expansion in Groby and Ratby resulting in further loss of open farmland and woodland.
- Additional pressures for recreational needs from nearby residents on the current informal footpath network resulting in footpath erosion, or from upgrading footpaths resulting in further urbanising influences.
- Modern renewable energy pressures in the form of solar farms which could expand in the area, altering the farmland character.
- Recent woodland plantations will continue to mature creating a more mature woodland cover.

#### Sensitivities for Key Landscape Characteristics

Groby and Ratby are located close to the main road network and M1. This makes them vulnerable to further expansion, especially as they are close to Leicester City. This will result in loss of open farmland and a greater influence from urbanising influences.

The influence of the National Forest is clear within the area with many newer woodland plantations evident. These will continue to mature, expanding the already wooded character of the area.

Solar farms are a modern feature of the landscape which could become more common in the future, altering the character of the local landscape.

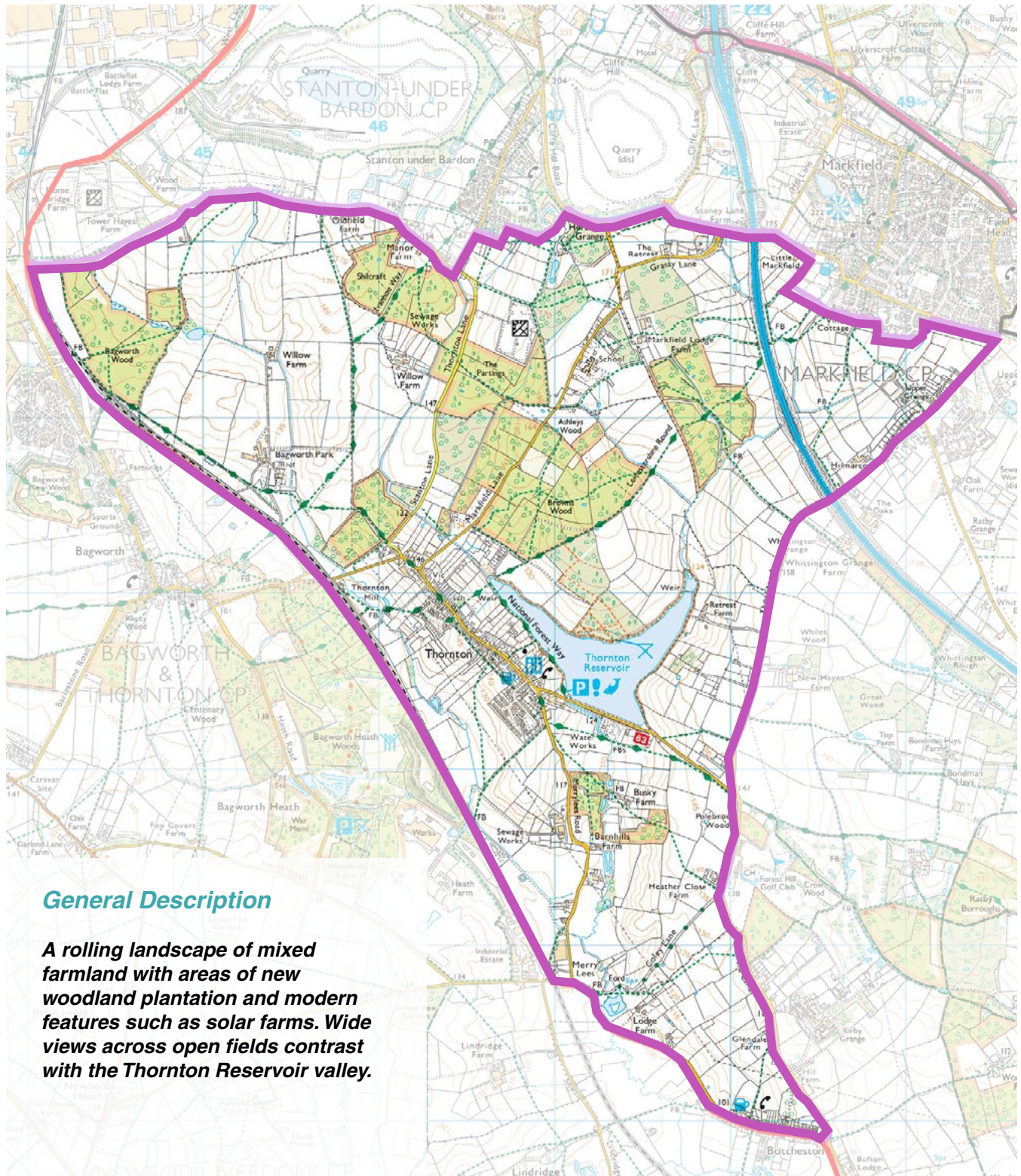
- **Gap up hedgerows and replant where lost to reinforce the field pattern through the area.**
- **Ensure any new development is well integrated within the landscape with planting to soften urban edges.**
- **Ensure any new development is appropriate in scale and vernacular style and focussed at the main settlements to preserve the pattern and form of the villages and scattered farms.**
- **Protect the existing vegetation on settlement fringes to retain their wooded setting and reduce dominating the local landscape.**
- **Ensure recreation provision is appropriate for the area to avoid undue urbanising influences.**
- **Maintain lifecycle of ageing woodlands by replanting and managing.**
- **Ensure plantation woodlands are replanted when felled to maintain overall wooded character.**
- **Promote good woodland management in newly planted areas to create diverse woodland habitats and promote these areas for informal recreation.**
- **Continue to protect and sensitively manage ancient woodland habitat especially at Martishaw Wood which links across the M1 corridor.**



*Little John*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 11: Thornton Plantation Farmlands



### General Description

***A rolling landscape of mixed farmland with areas of new woodland plantation and modern features such as solar farms. Wide views across open fields contrast with the Thornton Reservoir valley.***

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 11: Thornton Plantation Farmlands

### Key Characteristics

- A rolling landform with small valleys falling towards Thornton Reservoir and associated small water courses.
- A mix of open arable fields with some pasture and large areas of woodland, often young plantation.
- Modern renewable energy pressures in the form of solar farms which could expand in the area, altering the farmland character.
- Field pattern is varied with some large arable fields and small regular pastoral fields, especially close to the settlements. Fields are generally enclosed with hedges with some hedgerow trees and some post and rail fences in places.
- Linear villages include Thornton and Botcheston with other scattered farms and a school on Markfield Lane. Villages are linked by winding lanes, numerous PRow provide good links through area.
- Low number of listed buildings in Thornton and two SM's.
- Areas of large open fields mixed with narrow enclosed valleys. Some long views from raised areas. Generally quiet although less managed condition with outgrown hedgerows.

### Specific Characteristics

#### Landform and Hydrology

This area features a rolling landform with high points of around 175m and 155m AOD on the northern and eastern boundaries falling to lower levels of 124m AOD at Thornton Reservoir. Small valleys are formed from associated water courses. Field ponds are scattered throughout Browns Wood and The Partings to the north of the reservoir and along the northern edge of the area.

#### Landcover and Vegetation

The area consists of a mix of arable and pastoral fields but with open arable fields much more prevalent in the north west of the area. Large areas of woodland are located centrally as well as on the western boundary with some scattered mature trees in fields and along hedgerows. There are no ancient woodlands within the area, but many are new plantation woodlands which are a result of National Forest initiatives in the area. Pine trees are a feature at Thornton Reservoir. Pastoral fields are more extensive within the southern part of the area.



Thornton Reservoir

## Chapter 5.0

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 11: Thornton Plantation Farmlands

### Field Pattern and Enclosure

Field pattern varies through the area with some large open arable fields in the west and a more regular pattern of medium sized pastoral fields in central and eastern areas. Small fields are associated with the edge of Thornton village. Fields are generally enclosed with hedges with some hedgerow trees and some post and rail fences in places.

### Settlement Pattern, Roads and PRow

Thornton and Botcheston (on the very southern boundary) are of a linear form with Thornton located on a slight ridge which follows Main Street. Both villages feature red brick buildings. There are also a number of scattered farms and a school located on Markfield Lane. The villages are linked by winding lanes. There is localised influence from the M1 which crosses the eastern edge of the area. The area has a high number of public footpaths with all three of the long distance recreational routes crossing the area (Leicestershire Round, Ivanhoe Way and National Forest Way) as well as a large amount of open access woodlands.

### Cultural Heritage

There are a low number of listed buildings with only three located within Thornton, although there is a Scheduled Monument, a moat and fishponds, close to the edge of the village.

### Perceptual Qualities

The area features a contrast of larger scale, more open areas towards the west with a smaller, more enclosed feel around Thornton Reservoir and the associated valleys at the centre. Some long views are possible, mainly from the more open and raised areas to the west. The area is generally quiet although has a less managed condition than other areas with some hedgerows outgrown.



*View north west from public footpath off Thornton Lane*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 11: Thornton Plantation Farmlands

### Management Recommendations

#### Summary of Landscape Condition

The overall condition of the landscape is moderate with newly planted woodlands showing signs of management but many hedgerows being fragmented or outgrown.

#### Forces for Landscape Change

- Ongoing pressure for settlement expansion both in neighbouring Markfield and on smaller villages resulting in further loss of open farmland and woodland.
- Additional pressures for recreational needs from nearby residents on the current informal footpath network resulting in footpath erosion.
- Recent woodland plantations will continue to mature creating a more mature woodland cover.
- Modern renewable energy pressures in the form of solar farms which could expand in the area, altering the farmland character.

#### Sensitivities for Key Landscape Characteristics

Markfield is located close to the main road network and M1 making it a potential focus for future expansion.

The influence of the National Forest is clear within the area with many newer woodland plantations evident. These will continue to mature, expanding the already wooded character of the area.

Solar farms are a modern feature of the landscape which could become more common in the future, altering the character of the local landscape.

- **Gap up hedgerows and replant where lost to reinforce field pattern and strengthen field pattern through the area.**
- **Ensure any new development is well integrated within the landscape with planting to soften urban edges.**
- **Ensure any new development is appropriate in scale and vernacular style and focussed at the main settlements to preserve the pattern and form of the villages and scattered farms.**
- **Ensure recreation provision is appropriate for the area to avoid undue urbanising influences.**
- **Maintain lifecycle of ageing woodlands by replanting and managing.**
- **Ensure plantation woodlands are replanted when felled to maintain overall wooded character.**
- **Promote good woodland management in newly planted areas to create diverse woodland habitats and promote these areas for informal recreation.**

