

Charnwood Borough Council
**Green Wedges, Urban Fringe
Green Infrastructure
Enhancement Zones and Areas of
Local Separation**

Methodology and Assessment
Findings Report

Issue | 22 March 2016

This report takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of our client.

It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Arup has been appointed by Charnwood Borough Council to undertake a review of Green Wedges (GW), Areas of Local Separation (AoLS) and Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones (GIEZ) as part of the evidence base to support the emerging Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document. The review assesses these designations against their purposes as defined in the Charnwood Local Plan 2011 to 2028 Core Strategy adopted on 9 November 2015.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the review is to provide evidence of how different areas perform against the purposes of the respective designations set out in local policy; planning authorities may then take this into account alongside other evidence in making decisions about possible changes to designation boundaries. A boundary revision can take the form of an expansion or a contraction. However, equally the review may conclude that no changes are appropriate.

The review provides an independent and objective appraisal of existing Green Wedges, existing and potential AoLS and identifies Urban Fringe GIEZs in Charnwood. This report has been undertaken in accordance with the Brief, which set out the main aim of the study *‘to provide evidence about the potential new Areas of Separation within Charnwood, and also to review and define the boundaries of Green Wedges and Areas of Local Separation. The study will also provide evidence to define the boundaries of Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones based upon the role and purpose described in the Core Strategy and supporting evidence.’*

The purpose of this study is not expressly to include or influence Green Wedges, AoLS or Urban Fringe GIEZ designations in adjacent authorities, but the impact and implications of a review in Charnwood will require dialogue and cooperation with those authorities where appropriate. Charnwood Borough Council will then designate the defined areas with the Charnwood Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document or its successor.

2 Policy, guidance and context

2.1 European

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) (March 2007)

The ELC, which came into effect in March 2007 is the first international instrument to deal with the whole landscape in an integrated manner. By providing an international context for landscape, it places this important resource

alongside biodiversity and cultural heritage. The ELC is adopted and promoted by the Council of Europe and is a Treaty not an EU Directive. It can be considered as seeking to influence rather than direct.

The ELC requires “*landscape to be integrated into regional and town planning policies and in cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as any other policies with possible direct or indirect impacts on landscape*”. It also highlights the need to develop policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscape.

The ELC puts an emphasis on the management of change and creating new landscapes, as well as managing the landscapes that we inherit. It puts emphasis on the whole landscape not just the ‘best bits’ and applies to all landscapes everywhere and in any condition – land, inland water, inter-tidal, marine, natural, rural, urban and peri-urban, outstanding, ordinary and degraded.

2.2 Sub regional

The Leicestershire Structure Plan (1987) introduced the concept of Green Wedges to protect structurally important areas of open land which influence the form and direction of urban development in Leicestershire. The policies were maintained in the 1994 Leicestershire Structure Plan 1991-2006. The Structure Plan was updated to form the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan 1996-2016 which was adopted in 2005. The strategic importance of the designations were recognised in the now withdrawn East Midlands Regional Plan (2009).

The Green Wedges and AoLS policies in the Leicestershire Structure Plan were implemented in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004).

East Midlands Regional Plan (March 2009)

The East Midlands Regional Plan was published in March 2009. It provided a broad development strategy for the East Midlands up to 2026. The Plan was revoked by the Secretary of State on 20 March 2013.

While acknowledging the non-statutory status of Green Wedges in terms of national policy, the now withdrawn East Midlands Regional Plan recognises the designations strategic value and instructs local authorities to review their existing Green Wedges in order to identify new development opportunities.

The panel report (2007) stated that ‘green wedges do not have the national policy status of Green Belt and they should not be regarded as unduly restrictive and must be subject to review in order to accommodate new development’. The Regional Plan acknowledged that the long established Green Wedge policy, located around Leicester, has successfully controlled urban sprawl around the city. However, Green Wedge was not supported by a policy in the Regional Plan.

Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology (July 2011):

The joint Green Wedge review methodology was prepared by the six local authorities of Charnwood, Harborough, Hinckley & Bosworth, Leicester, North West Leicestershire and Oadby & Wigston. The joint methodology was first produced in August 2009 in accordance with the East Midlands Regional Plan. Following revocation of the Regional Plan the methodology was amended and republished in July 2011.

The methodology was prepared in response to the cross administrative boundary nature of Green Wedges, and the requirement by the now withdrawn Regional Plan to undertake reviews of existing Green Wedges. It sets out the background context and proposed a methodology for Green Wedge Review in Leicestershire to ensure consistency of approach and soundness of Development Plans prepared by each local authority in Leicestershire.

6 C's Green Infrastructure Strategy (2010)

The Green Infrastructure Strategy for the 6C's area (The Counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and the Cities of Leicester, Derby and Nottingham) identifies those parts of the green infrastructure network which are important, not just to the community, but also as connections to surrounding communities in Derby, Nottingham and Leicester. This includes green corridors and Urban Fringe GIEZs.

2.3 Local policy

Charnwood Core Strategy 2011 – 2028

The Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy (2015) provides strategic policies for the retention and review of named AoLS and Green Wedges, together with the reconsideration of some former Green Wedges as AoLS. The Charnwood Core Strategy was adopted November 2015 and forms part of the Charnwood Local Plan. It sets out the spatial strategy for the Borough to guide and manage future development in the most sustainable way.

The Core Strategy in Chapter 7 (Our Environment) considers and provides policies for protecting and enhancing all types of Green Infrastructure in the Borough including Green Wedges, AoLS and Urban Fringe GIEZs.

Policy CS 11 (Landscape and Countryside) provides policies to support and protect the character of the landscape and countryside. Of particular relevance to this study is the last paragraph which states

“We will protect the predominantly open and undeveloped character of Areas of Local Separation unless new development clearly maintains the separation between the built-up areas of these settlements”.

Policy CS 12 (Green Infrastructure) provides policies for the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure assets for their community, economic and environmental values. Of particular note is the last paragraph which states:

“We will protect and enhance our Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Areas by:

- *enhancing our network of green infrastructure assets through strategic developments in accordance with Policies CS19 [North east of Leicester Sustainable Urban Extension], CS20 [North of Birstall Direction of Growth], CS21 [Watermead Regeneration Corridor – Direction of Growth], CS22 [West of Loughborough Sustainable Urban Extension] and CS23 [Loughborough University and Science and Enterprise Park];*
- *addressing the identified needs in open space provision; and*
- *supporting development in Green Wedges that:*
 - *retains the open and undeveloped character of the Green Wedge;*
 - *retains and creates green networks between the countryside and open spaces within the urban areas; and*
 - *retains and enhances public access to the Green Wedge, especially for recreation”.*

Urban Fringe GIEZs are described within the Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy, and have been informed by the 6 Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy, which identifies urban areas to which the zones are appropriate for Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire.

Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document

Charnwood Borough Council is currently preparing its Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD). When adopted the DPD will sit alongside the Councils adopted Core Strategy and will form part of the Local Plan for the Borough. The production of the DPD is at a fairly early stage; the Issues and Options consultation took place between February and March 2014. The next stage will be to prepare a Preferred Options Consultation Document.

3 Context of the study

3.1 Charnwood designations

Green Wedges, AoLS and Urban Fringe GIEZs are of strategic importance in Leicestershire and play different and on-going roles in guiding and shaping development pattern across the area. They each provide different contributions to the green infrastructure network, which is strategically important not only to Charnwood but to the wider Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire green infrastructure.

Existing designations are shown in the maps in Appendix A.

3.1.1 Green Wedges

The four purposes of Green Wedges, agreed jointly by the Leicestershire authorities and embedded in the 2015 Charnwood Core Strategy, are:

- Preventing the merging of settlements;
- Guiding development form;
- Providing a ‘green lung’ into urban areas; and
- A recreational resource.

Green Wedges are intended to shape or guide outward development and maintain green space around this, play an active role in maintaining green infrastructure and maximising opportunities for people to access open space and the countryside.

3.1.2 Areas of Local Separation

AoLS, form another part of the policy spectrum in Leicestershire. The Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy defines an Area of Local Separation as:

“An area of open countryside that separates two neighbouring settlements, whose main purpose is preserving settlement identity, and which is based on landscape character and visual appearance of the area”.

AoLS are typically designated to small areas of countryside which prevent the coalescence of settlements, maintaining their unique character and identity. Whilst their remit is narrower than Green Wedges, they form an important part of the policy framework which has maintained Leicestershire’s strategic settlement pattern.

The Core Strategy emphasises the need to balance the retention of AoLS against the need to provide new homes. Paragraph 7.16 of the Core Strategy highlights that the Council will explore opportunities for new AoLS in those areas previously designated as Green Wedge in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004) and in association with strategic developments for homes and jobs.

3.1.3 Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones

The adopted Charnwood Core Strategy defines Urban Fringe GIEZs as broadly defined zones that form the immediate landscape setting to, and encompass the countryside in and around, the principal urban area of Leicester and, the urban area at Loughborough and Shepshed. The zones will promote quality accessible green spaces in the urban fringe connecting with city/town centres, public transport nodes, and major employment and residential areas, including new sustainable urban extensions, and sustainable access routes linking town and country. Their broad definition means that they will overlap with other designations, notably Green Wedges.

The Core Strategy identifies strategically important areas in the green infrastructure network. This includes:

- Charnwood Forest/ National Forest;
- River Soar Corridor;
- the edge of Leicester Urban Fringe; and
- the Loughborough Shepshed Urban Fringe.

3.2 Development context

The development context within Charnwood is an important consideration for the review since designations need to respond and reflect the development needs of the borough.

The recently adopted Core Strategy acknowledges that Charnwood is a “growing and changing community who need homes, jobs, shops and services”.

Approximately 14,000 homes and 12,000 jobs are required by 2028. The Core Strategy details the type and level of development required in the Borough by 2028 to respond to increasing demands for homes, jobs and facilities. The Core Strategy also highlights the limited opportunities for brownfield development in the borough’s primary urban areas, the Leicester Principal Urban Area and Loughborough and Shepshed. This development pressure is reflected in a number of planning applications that have been submitted in or adjacent to existing Green Wedge and/or AoLS, shown in Appendix B.

In order to deliver new housing and employment sites sustainably, the Council seeks to deliver a series of Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE) and strategic developments which will “support new businesses, schools, shops, health care facilities, open space and leisure facilities” as well as provide for homes and jobs.

- **West of Loughborough Sustainable Urban Extension** - of approximately 3,000 homes to the west of Loughborough, delivering approximately 2,440 homes and up to 16 hectares of employment land by 2028;
- **North east of Leicester Sustainable Urban Extension** - for approximately 4,500 homes and up to 13 hectares of employment (east of Thurmaston and north of Hamilton);
- **North of Birstall Direction for Growth** - of at least 1,500 homes and up to 15 hectares of employment to the north of Birstall (north of the A46);
- **Watermead Regeneration Corridor** - up to 8,750 sqm of offices and around 16 hectares of general employment land as well as a focus for leisure and recreation. The planning application for Watermead Business Park (reference P/12/0003/2) falls within this area; and
- **Loughborough University and Science and Enterprise Park** – allocation of 77 hectares of land to the west of Loughborough University for an extension to the Science and Enterprise Park.

The boundaries for strategic sites and planning applications in and adjacent to Green Wedges and AoLS within the Borough, which are particularly relevant to this study are shown in the maps in Appendix A.

3.3 Appeals

In 2014, then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles allowed an appeal on application P/12/2005/2 for construction of a maximum of 250 dwellings, replacement primary school, change of use from dwelling to medical facility, change of use from agricultural land to domestic curtilages, green infrastructure, potential garden extensions, construction of a relief road, and demolition of barns. The application site is located in an Area of Local Separation between Mountsorrel and Rothley.

The Council's justification for refusal of the application was set out as follows:

“...the proposal would lead to the loss of an Area of Local Separation resulting in a significantly narrowed and reduced actual and perceived gap of open undeveloped land between the villages of Rothley and Mountsorrel contrary to the saved policy CT/4 in the adopted Borough of Charnwood Local Plan. This would be contrary to interests of the well-established planning policies and emerging policies in the Charnwood Local Plan to prevent the coalescence and merging of villages in the Soar Valley...”

While the inspector agreed that due weight should be afforded to the AoLS policy, he came to the view that the application did not significantly undermine the integrity of the wider Area of Local Separation or harm its character or appearance, noting the strategic nature of the policy to prevent settlements merging with one another.

This judgement has been given particular consideration in the development of the assessment methodology for AoLS.

3.4 Previous reviews

Charnwood Borough Council prepared a Green Wedge Review in 2011 which evaluated the Green Wedges defined within the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan against the joint Leicestershire methodology (2011).

It concludes that of the six Green Wedge areas located within the Borough, two meet the Regional Plan criteria. These are the Green Wedges that are connected to Leicester:

- Birstall/Leicester/Thurmaston Green Wedge
- Leicester (Beaumont Leys)/Birstall/Thurcaston/Anstey/Cropston Green Wedge

The other four Green Wedge areas do not meet all four of the specified criteria:

- Loughborough/Quorn
- Loughborough/Hathern
- Loughborough/Shepshed
- Syston/Thurmaston

The review recommended that future planning policy should take into account the following four factors, which were considered in the development of this methodology:

- **Preventing the merging of settlements:** The review notes the importance of settlement identity to local people and the importance of ensuring that planning policy continues to maintain it. As such it is recommended that mechanisms are put in place to consider what point development is likely to cause the coalescence of settlements.
- **Support for wider green infrastructure:** The role that Green Wedge areas play in supporting wider green infrastructure needs to be recognised. This includes improvements to health, supporting and protecting biodiversity, promoting recreation and being able to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- **Recreational resource:** It is important to ensure that recreation is supported and improved in the countryside adjacent to urban areas to promote a healthy lifestyle.
- **Protecting areas from inappropriate development:** Planning policy will need to be developed to ensure that Green Wedge areas are not affected by inappropriate development in the future.

A consideration will need to be given as to what forms of development will be acceptable in these areas.

3.5 Neighbouring authorities

Table 3.1 sets out the reviews that have been undertaken by neighbouring authorities and have been taken into account as part of the development of this methodology.

Table 3.1 Neighbouring authorities Green Wedge and AoLS Reviews

Authority	Local Plan Status	Context	Green Wedge Review	Area of Local Separation Review	Methodology comments
Leicester City Council	The current adopted development plan for Leicester City Council is the 2014 Core Strategy and the saved 2006 City of Leicester Local Plan policies. The council is working on a replacement Local Plan which is expected to be adopted in July 2016.	Green Wedges within the Council penetrate towards the City Centre from the edge of the City. In most cases Green Wedges also extend beyond the City boundary through Green Wedge allocations in adjoining districts.	A review of Green Wedges is currently being progressed by the Council. This will inform the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD. The Review is not yet complete, nor have the Council stated their proposed methodology.	N/A	Given Leicester City Council has signed up for the Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology (2011), it is likely that the 2015 review has been carried out in line with this framework.
North West Leicestershire District Council	Consultation on the draft Local Plan ended late 2015. The Local Plan is envisioned to be adopted by September 2017. The current adopted Local Plan is the 2006 saved policies from the 2002 North West Leicestershire Local Plan.	The area of Green Wedge within North West Leicestershire is broadly located between Coalville, Whitwick and Swannington.	In November 2008 the Council published a Green Wedge review which concluded that the Coalville, Whitwick and Swannington Green Wedge designation could no longer be justified since it did not meet all assessment criteria. In May 2012, the Council published a Green Wedge background paper which outlines and explains the approach taken in the now withdrawn Core Strategy regarding Green Wedge and Areas of Separation.	The Coalville, Whitwick and Swannington was assessed against for potential re-designation as an Area of Separation.	The review used the criteria set out in Strategy Policy 5 of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Structure Plan 1996-2016 to assess the area covered by Green Wedges. The 2012 paper re-assessed the previous Green Wedge against the criteria established in the Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology, before considering the potential for re-designation as an Area of Separation.
Harborough District Council	The Harborough District Core Strategy was adopted in November 2011.	There are currently two Green Wedge designations within Harborough District; the	A review of the boundaries of the District's two Green Wedge designations was	The Harborough District Council Areas of	The 2011 review was carried out in line with the Leicester and Leicestershire

Authority	Local Plan Status	Context	Green Wedge Review	Area of Local Separation Review	Methodology comments
	The Council are currently preparing a new Local Plan. The 2014 to 2017 Local Development Scheme (LDS) indicates that the new local plan will be adopted in March 2017.	Leicester/Scraptoft Green Wedge lies entirely within Harborough District and the Thurnby/Leicester/Oadby Green Wedge which adjoins similar designations in Oadby & Wigston Borough and Leicester City. AoLS include Market Harborough and Great Bowden; Lutterworth, Bitteswell and Magna Park; and Scraptoft and Thurnby.	published in December 2011. A draft technical update of the review was published 2015. This reflects changes to the planning policy context and relevant planning appeal decisions since 2011.	Separation Review was published in 2011.	Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology.
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	The current adopted development plan for Hinckley & Bosworth is the 2009 Core Strategy and the saved policies of the 2001 Local Plan. The Council is currently preparing its Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD. It was submitted for examination in March 2015.	There are two Green Wedges within the Borough which are known as the Rothley Brook Meadow Green Wedge and Hinckley/Barwell/Earl Shilton/Burbage Green Wedge. There are nine existing Areas of Separation.	The Hinckley & Bosworth Green Wedge Review was published in December 2011. The Hinckley & Bosworth Assessment of New Green Wedge Allocations Topic paper was completed in July 2012. The paper concluded that none of the 11 areas assessed performed the 4 Green Wedge assessment criteria and none were proposed for allocation.	The Hinckley & Bosworth Area of Separation Review was published in 2012.	The review uses the Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology (July 2011) to undertake assessment of Green Wedges.
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	The current adopted development plan for Oadby & Wigston Borough is the September 2013 Saved Local Plan and the 2010 adopted Core Strategy.	There are two Green Wedges within the Borough, between Oadby and Wigston and Oadby, Thurnby and Stoughton.	The Borough Council prepared Management Strategies for Green Wedges in 2004 and 2005. The LDS indicates that the Council is in the process of producing a Green Wedge Review as evidence to	N/A	The purpose of the Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge Management Strategy (2005) was to formulate an overall strategy to be adopted by the Council and other stakeholders and used to guide future management of Green Wedges.

Authority	Local Plan Status	Context	Green Wedge Review	Area of Local Separation Review	Methodology comments
	The Oadby and Wigston new Local Plan is currently being prepared.		support the emerging Local Plan.		
Blaby District Council	The Local Plan (Core Strategy) was adopted by Blaby District Council in 2013. The second part of the Local Plan is the Delivery DPD including allocations, designations and development management policies. The plan is at evidence gathering stage with adoption planned in 2017.	Blaby has six Green Wedges: between Blaby and Glen Parva (Sence Valley); between Whetstone, Blaby and Countesthorpe; between Whetstone, Enderby, Glen Parva, Braunstone, Blaby, Littlethorpe, Narborough and Cosby (Soar Valley South); between Glenfield, Kirby Muxloe, Kirby Fields and towards Ratby, Groby and Leicester; between Glenfield towards Beaumont Leys, Anstey and Groby; and from Elmesthorpe towards Barwell and Earl Shilton. It also has three AoLS; between Narborough and Huncote, between Stoney Stanton and Sapcote, and between Whetstone and Cosby.	The Blaby District Council Strategic Green Wedge Review was published in 2009.	N/A. Council stated that they would be reviewed through the Delivery DPD.	The review uses the Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology (July 2011) to undertake assessment of Green Wedges.
Melton Borough Council	The development plan is provided by the saved policies of the Melton Local Plan 1999. The Melton Core Strategy was withdrawn from examination in 2013.	There are no Green Wedges in Melton Borough. Thirteen Areas of Separation were assessed in the 2015 review.	N/A	Melton Borough Areas of Separation, Settlement Fringe Sensitivity and Local Green Space Study was published in 2015.	Melton is not part of the Leicester and Leicestershire joint methodology 2011 since there are no Green Wedges in the local authority area.

4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The following section sets out the methodology used when undertaking the review of Green Wedges, Areas of Local Separation (AoLS) and Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones (GIEZ) in Charnwood.

These have been undertaken in parallel so as to ensure an integrated and logical approach to such inter-related designations. Indeed, substantial overlap is envisaged between different elements of the study. Figure 4.1 illustrates the crossovers and synergies between the different designations subject to assessment:

Figure 4.1 Synergies between designation purposes

Green Wedges	Areas of Local Separation
Prevent the merging of settlements	
Guide development form	
Provide a 'green lung' into urban areas	
Provide a recreational resource	
Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones	
Promote quality accessible green spaces in the urban fringe connecting with city/town centres, public transport nodes, and major employment and residential areas	

While both Green Wedges and AoLS are primarily planning designations, with a common function to maintain separation between settlements and safeguard the identities of communities; Green Wedges have a broader role with respect to guiding the form of new development in urban areas, providing access to green infrastructure and the countryside beyond and contributing both informal and formal recreational facilities.

Green Wedges also contribute to the green infrastructure network, which is strategically important not only to Charnwood but within the wider sub-region. Subsequently, Urban Fringe GIEZs may be designated to enhance this offer further, allowing the opportunity to create benefits for existing and new communities and the economy through the improvement of access to green space, creating high quality working and living environments and areas to travel and move through.

4.2 Overall Approach

The purpose of the assessment was to provide evidence of how different areas perform against the purposes of the Green Wedge, AoLS or Urban Fringe GIEZ designations set out in local policy and to review and identify precise boundaries for designations.

The starting point for the development of the methodology was a combination of previously adopted methodologies, as well as best practice. For the Green Wedge

assessment, the existing Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology establishes a framework for the analysis of areas; our methodology complements and build on this, developing a logical, step-based approach which, when summarised, clearly illustrated how conclusions were reached. For AoLS and Urban Fringe GIEZs, our approach has been informed by assessment criteria developed by Leicestershire and other local authorities, as well as other local and national guidance.

Bespoke hierarchies of questions and tests were developed for each designation and used to assess the suitability of existing designations and potential new ones. These have been structured as a series of criteria which have been developed for each purpose, using both qualitative and quantitative measures. The strength of an area against these criteria was attributed for each purpose. These scores informed a recommendation as to whether the designation was appropriate or not, and whether boundary changes have been recommended.

Where possible, we have sought to ensure consistency across the various assessments, for example with respect to the development of assessment criteria or our approach to site visits, while ensuring that the various questions recognise the distinct features, purposes and characteristics of the different designations. Furthermore, a number of 'feedback loops' have been integrated into the developed approach, for example, where areas are found not to meet Green Wedge purposes in their entirety, they may be appropriate for designation as AoLS, or where opportunities for green infrastructure improvement are identified there may be scope for designation as an Urban Fringe GIEZ.

The assessments utilised outputs from a desk-based analysis of relevant publicly accessible datasets and tools and, building on this, observations from site visits. We sought to establish robust baseline assessments in advance of site visits to maximise the efficiency of the assessment, and outputs were frequently cross-checked across the three assessments to ensure that data and information was shared.

The landscape appraisal considered the sensitivity with regard to landscape character in terms of their ability to accommodate change relating to recommendations for designation boundary changes and/or development pressures. It is important to note that the appraisal does not constitute a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, though the approach is based on and reflects the approaches set out in the widely accepted professional and technical Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment guidance¹. It is intended to provide structured guidance on the assessment of landscape, to be used against the existing landscape of the designations and their sensitivity to change.

Information was utilised from the Borough of Charnwood Landscape Character Assessment (2012) - condition/intactness/visual character to provide additional background information for the assessment.

The methodology is structured as follows:

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition, 2013. Often referred to as 'GLVIA3'

- **Section 4.3** sets out the purposes assessment methodology for Green Wedges, AoLS and Urban Fringe GIEZs;
- **Section 4.4** sets out the methodology for reviewing and identifying the boundaries of the designations, as appropriate; and
- **Section 4.5** establishes the methodology for the strategic re-assessment of designations for Charnwood as a whole.

4.3 Purposes assessment

4.3.1 Green Wedges

As highlighted previously, the four purposes of Green Wedges agreed jointly by the Leicestershire authorities and informed by the original purposes set out in the 1992 Structure Plan are:

- Preventing the merging of settlements;
- Guiding development form;
- Providing a ‘green lung’ into urban areas; and
- A recreational resource.

These purposes have formed the basis of the assessment methodology.

The overall approach is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 4.2, specifically how the strength-based criteria approach to the four purposes interfaces with the subsequent boundary assessment and formulation of recommendations.

Each purpose assessment has been applied to Green Wedges in their entirety. The extent to which the Green Wedge met criteria was assessed on a yes (to a strong, moderate or weak extent) or no (does not meet the purpose) basis. Criteria for each purpose as well as a series of questions were developed to inform the assessment which aligned with the joint 2011 Leicestershire methodology. For each purpose, the commentary referred to the following based on the detailed assessment undertaken: ‘zones of weakness’, areas which meet the purpose less strongly; and ‘extension opportunity areas’ areas immediately adjacent to the assessed Green Wedge which might meet the purpose.

A recommendation as to whether the Green Wedge should be designated (as well as any recommended boundary changes) considered identification of ‘zones of weakness’ and ‘extension opportunity areas’, as well as the boundary assessment set out in this methodology in order to acknowledge the interrelationships between boundaries, the development context and the ability of a Green Wedge to meet its purposes. In order to be recommended for designation, a Green Wedge must meet, or have the ability to meet, all four purposes.

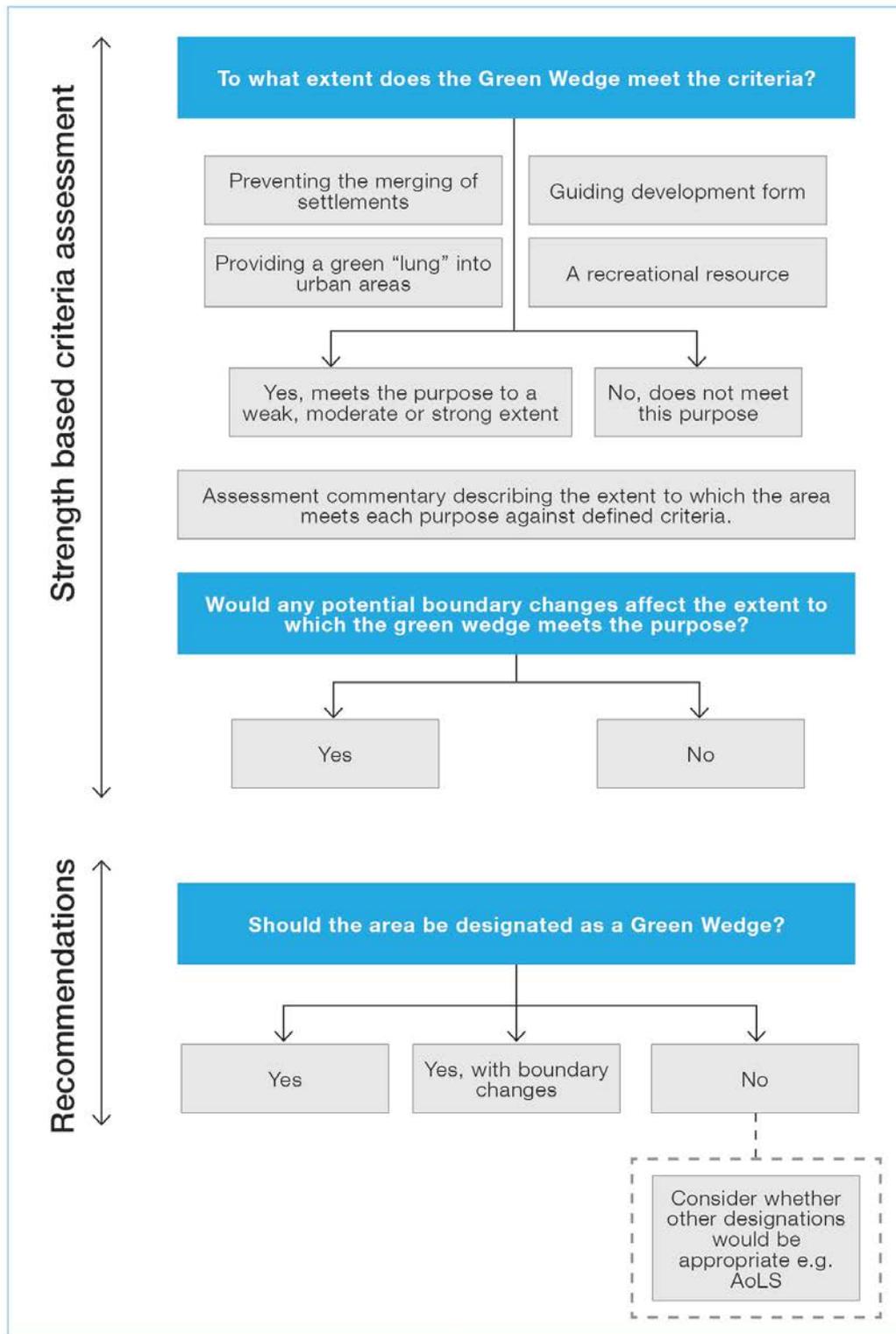


Figure 4.2 Assessment process for Green Wedges

Areas for Assessment

The three broad areas of Green Wedge subject to assessment were:

1. Leicester (Beaumont Leys)/ Birstall /Thurcaston /Cropston /Anstey /Glenfrith /Groby (GW-1);
2. Birstall /Leicester /Thurmaston (Soar Valley North) (GW-2); and
3. Leicester Hamilton Green Wedge area of search (GW-3/PGW-1).

Green Wedges 1 and 2 (GW-1 and GW-2) derive from historic Green Wedge designations set out in the 2004 Charnwood Local Plan, whilst the Leicester Hamilton Green Wedge is a new Green Wedge in Charnwood proposed through the 2015 Core Strategy, extending outwards from the existing Hamilton Green Wedge within the adjacent Leicester City Council administrative area.

GW-1 and GW-2 had pre-defined boundaries dating from the previous Local Plan which formed the area for assessment. The area of search for the new Green Wedge constitutes GW-3, the former Syston/Thrumaston Green Wedge defined in the 2004 Local Plan, and a broader assessment area to the south (PGW-1). A suitable area of assessment was scoped in close coordination with the Council taking into account emerging plans for North East Leicester SUE. It also utilises existing permanent and defensible boundaries such as roads, railway lines, watercourses, the edges of existing development with strongly established, regular or consistent boundaries and prominent physical features. This area of assessment has been identified as PGW-1 in Map 001 in Appendix A.

Approach to the Four Purposes

The following sections examine the definition of each of the four Green Wedge purposes, and set out the criteria and associated scoring applied. As set out in Figure 4.2, the strength based assessment was applied to each of the four criteria for the entirety of the Green Wedge.

Purpose 1 – To prevent the merging of settlements

This purpose forms the basis for maintaining the existing settlement pattern and maintaining the identity of unique settlements in Charnwood. The approach encompasses a qualitative assessment of the extent to which Green Wedges maintain gaps between settlements and the extent to which a reduction in the gap would compromise the separation of the settlements in physical terms and perceived terms (e.g. ribbon development), as well as the overall visual openness of the area. This took into account wider characteristics, including landscape scale/pattern, topography, development patterns and views.

The consideration of settlements took into account the Borough's defined settlement hierarchy set out in the Core Strategy, which seeks to direct development to the most sustainable towns and villages; those villages at the bottom would not be judged as sustainable locations for large scale development and thus unlikely see significant development.

The criteria used to determine the extent to which a Green Wedge performs against Purpose 1 are as follows:

Purpose	Criterion	Strength
(1) To prevent the merging of settlements	Prevents development that would result in merging of or significant erosion of gap between neighbouring settlements, taking consideration of landscape scale/pattern, topography, development patterns and views.	<p>STRONG: Area provides an essential gap between two or more settlements, restricting development which, as a result of the area's landscape scale/pattern, topography, intervisibility or development patterns, would lead to the merging of these settlements.</p> <p>MODERATE: Provides a gap between two or more settlements, restricting further development which, as a result of the area's landscape scale/pattern, topography, intervisibility or development patterns, may lead to the merging of these settlements.</p> <p>WEAK: Provides a less critical gap between two or more settlements which, as a result of the area's scale, character, landscape scale/pattern, topography, intervisibility or development patterns, is unlikely to restrict coalescence or prevent further coalescence between settlements.</p> <p>DOES NOT MEET PURPOSE: Gap is of sufficient scale or character that the area plays no role in preventing coalescence, or settlements have already coalesced.</p>

Purpose 2 – To guide development form

This purpose, which interfaces directly with purposes 1, 3 and 4, aligns with the historic role of Green Wedges in “*ensuring that, as urban development extends, open land is incorporated within it*”. This emphasises that Green Wedges should not unduly restrict the growth of settlements but guide the form which development takes to ensure it is positive in terms of both settlement pattern and the incorporation of green infrastructure and recreation opportunities.

The assessment commenced a review of historic development patterns, recent planning applications and proposed strategic allocations articulated in the Core Strategy, which provided context for the logic behind the original designation (or the proposed designation of new Green Wedges). The criteria-based assessment then considered the spatial compatibility of the designation extent with strategic allocations in the Borough's spatial strategy and the degree to which its boundaries guide development form. The latter of these considered the strength and durability of the Green Wedge's external boundaries, in particular whether boundaries are:

- Durable, regular or consistent, for example: public or made roads; railway lines; watercourses; prominent landforms or landscape features; or built-form edges which are well-defined or rectilinear.
- Lacking in durability, for example: unmade roads or tracks; power lines; ‘softer’ natural features such as inconsistent tree belts or hedgerows; or imprecise or inconsistent built-form edges.

The criteria used to determine the extent to which a Green Wedge performs against Purpose 2 are as follows:

Purpose	Criterion	Strength
(2) To guide development form	Logical, defensible and readily recognisable external and intermediate boundaries guide, rather than restrict, the form of future development in line with the Borough’s spatial strategy.	<p>STRONG: Area is bounded by defensible and readily recognisable linear boundary features which guide rather than overly restrict the form of future surrounding developments, whilst ensuring that the integrity of the designation is maintained. Extent of designation is compatible with strategic allocations set out in the Borough’s spatial strategy.</p> <p>MODERATE: Area is largely bounded by defensible and readily recognisable linear boundary features which guide rather than overly restrict the form of future surrounding developments, whilst ensuring that the integrity of the designation is maintained. Some areas with weaker or less logical boundaries restrict development but do not provide clarity on what form development should take. Extent of designation is generally compatible with the strategic allocations set out in the Borough’s spatial strategy.</p> <p>WEAK: While some boundaries are logical, much of the area is bounded by features which are weakly defined or difficult to recognise. The extent of the designation conflicts with strategic allocations set out in the Borough’s spatial strategy. Thus, it restricts rather than guides future development form.</p> <p>DOES NOT MEET PURPOSE: The area is bounded by features which are weakly defined or difficult to recognise and conflicts with the strategic allocations set out in the Borough’s spatial strategy. The designation restricts rather than guides future development form.</p>

Purpose 3 – To provide a ‘green lung’ into urban areas

The 2011 Charnwood Green Wedge Review defined a green lung as “*open spaces providing a continuous link between the open countryside and penetrating deep into urban areas*”. This particularly illustrates the dual role which Green Wedges are designated to serve; not just a means of maintaining settlement form but also a designation which promotes the creation of robust, inter-connected green corridors in and around urban areas.

The assessment criteria for this purpose qualitatively considered the range of different green infrastructure (and other) functions and assets present, as well as their inter-connectivity and the extent to which these provide a continuous green infrastructure network. It also encompassed a judgement on the extent to which the Green Wedge penetrates into the urban form, or proposed urban form.

The criteria used to determine the extent to which a Green Wedge performs against Purpose 3 are as follows:

Purpose	Criterion	Strength
(3) To provide a ‘green lung’ into urban areas	Forms a strongly connected corridor or network of green infrastructure which penetrates into existing or planned areas of built form.	<p>STRONG: Forms a strongly connected corridor or network of green infrastructure which penetrates into existing or planned areas of built form.</p> <p>MODERATE: A fragmented corridor or network of green infrastructure exists with several clearly defined connections remaining.</p> <p>WEAK: A collection of disparate green spaces weakly linked by fragmented corridors, with little penetration into existing or planned areas of built form.</p> <p>DOES NOT MEET PURPOSE: Overall lack of green infrastructure, with small areas that remain isolated by intervening built form.</p>

Purpose 4 – To provide a recreational resource

Recognising the vital role that Green Wedges should play in providing urban residents with opportunities to pursue recreation, the criteria combine quantitative and qualitative measures relating to the level of public access, the range and strength of recreational typologies available, considering both formal and informal opportunities, to those recreation opportunities and the needs, shortages and surpluses of the settlements identified in the Charnwood Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study (2010).

The strength to which a range of typologies is provided has been informed by the categories identified in Table 2.1 of the Charnwood Open Spaces, Sport and

Recreation Study. These typologies have been adapted to identify formal and informal recreational assets based on their definition and primary purpose in Table 1.

Table 1: Adapted typologies of open space, sport and recreation facilities

Formal / Informal	Type	Definition	Primary Purpose
Informal	Parks and gardens	These range from major parks to small memorial gardens – often used for informal recreation and community events.	informal recreation community events
Informal	Natural and semi-natural green spaces	Includes publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (eg downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands and wastelands.	wildlife conservation biodiversity environmental education and awareness
Informal	Amenity green space	Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces.	informal activities close to home or work children's play enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas
Formal	Provision for children	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children below aged 12. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for children exist (including play schemes and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose), as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces specifically designed as equipped play facilities.	children's play
Formal	Provision for young people	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving young people aged 12 and above. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for young people exist (including youth clubs and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose), as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces specifically designed for use by young people for example: teenage shelters, skateboard parks, BMX tracks, Multi Use Games Areas	activities or meeting places for young people
Formal	Outdoor sports facilities	Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. Includes school playing fields, outdoor sports pitches, tennis courts, bowls greens and golf courses.	facilities for formal sports participation

Formal / Informal	Type	Definition	Primary Purpose
Formal	Allotments	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. May also include urban farms. This typology does not include private gardens.	growing vegetable, fruit and flowers (drop root crops)
Informal	Cemeteries & churchyards	Cemeteries and churchyards including closed churchyards and other burial grounds.	burial of the dead quiet contemplation
Formal	Green corridors	Includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines.	walking, cycling or horse riding leisure purposes or travel opportunities for wildlife migration
Formal	Civic spaces & village greens	Formal areas for pedestrians such as civic squares and market squares – often used for community events and settings for civic buildings.	community events setting for civic buildings
Informal	Historic spaces	Sites of historic value	informal recreation community events

These provide a robust benchmark which can be used to determine the extent to which recreational opportunities in Green Wedges can be assessed against purpose 4 as follows:

Purpose	Criterion	Strength
(4) To provide a recreational resource	Provides a range of publicly accessible, formal and informal opportunities for recreation.	<p>STRONG: The area is wholly publicly accessible and provides an exemplary range of formal and informal opportunities for recreation.</p> <p>MODERATE: The area is wholly or partially publicly accessible and provides an adequate range of formal and/or informal opportunities for recreation.</p> <p>WEAK: The area is partially publicly accessible and provides a limited range of formal or informal opportunities for recreation.</p> <p>DOES NOT MEET PURPOSE: The area is not publicly accessible or fails to provide a range of formal or informal opportunities for recreation.</p>

The output from this analysis fed into the Urban Fringe GIEZ assessment (see section 4.3.3).

Pro formas and reporting

A pro forma was completed for each Green Wedge, which encompassed a descriptive site audit (based on desk based and site visit outputs), followed by qualitative and quantitative assessments against the purposes criteria. The descriptive work directly informed the criteria-based assessments.

A sample pro forma for the Green Wedge purposes assessment has been prepared and can be found in Appendix C.

4.3.2 Areas of Local Separation

In contrast to Green Wedges, AoLS can be considered more purely as ‘planning’ designations, whose function is maintain the separation of settlements, as well as their unique identities and characteristics. The designation has traditionally been applied to areas at the fringes of settlements which might not be considered open countryside but that maintain a degree of openness which separate unique settlements.

Areas for Assessment (AoLS)

The assessment reviewed the 13 existing designations from the Charnwood Local Plan (2004), with unique references attributed to each for the purposes of the assessment²:

- Loughborough/Woodthorpe (ALS-A)
- Quorn/Mountsorrel (ALS-B)
- Mountsorrel/Rothley (ALS-C)
- Sileby/Cossington (ALS-D)
- Sileby/Barrow upon Soar (ALS-E)
- Thurcaston/ Cropston/The Ridgeway Area of Rothley (ALS-F)
- Wanlip/Birstall (ALS-G)
- East Goscote/Queniborough (ALS-I)
- Queniborough/Syston (ALS-J)
- Syston/Thurmaston (west of Melton Road) (ALS-K)
- Syston/Barkby (ALS-L)
- Anstey/Newtown Linford (ALS-M)
- Rearsby/East Goscote (ALS-N)

Additionally, it considered a number of ‘areas of search’ for potential new AoLS which considered and responded to changes in the development context. The ‘areas of search’ are identified in Map 001 in Appendix A and have been based on four lines of inquiry:

² ALS-H is omitted throughout the assessment

- The four Green Wedges designated in the 2004 Local Plan which were not retained in the 2015 Core Strategy, namely:
 - Loughborough/Quorn (PALS-1);
 - Loughborough/Hathern and Loughborough/Shepshed (referred to collectively as PALS-2); and
 - Syston/Thurmaston (assessed as part of GW-3 and ALS-L).
- Areas around planned SUEs and strategic developments set out in the 2015 Core Strategy, which are not covered by other parts of this review identified as:
 - North East Leicester SUE (assessed as part of GW-3 and ALS-L); and
 - North of Birstall Direction of Growth (PALS-3).

The Watermead Regeneration Corridor Direction of Growth has not been included within the area of search since this area relates closely to an existing Green Wedge for which development pressures will be considered. There is also an AoLS adjacent to Wanlip.

- Areas providing gaps between settlements which have experienced notable changes in development context or pressures since the designation was last reviewed. Following collaborative work with the Council, one such area has been identified:
 - Area between Rothley and Thurcaston, previously part of the Rothley Thurcaston AoLS in superseded policy CT/5 Local Separation – The Ridgeway Area of Rothley (PALS-4). This reflects recent development pressure from planning application at “Land off Westfield Lane”.
- Areas recommended for removal from Green Wedge, or which do not perform the wider functions of Green Wedge, but that provide separation between settlements.

Gaps between settlements where the settlement hierarchy precludes development outside of the development limit have not been included in the areas of search.

Approach to purpose

Building on best practice adopted in other Leicestershire authorities, existing AoLS and areas of search were proceeded through a hierarchy of questions to establish whether they should be subject to on-going designation or whether an alternative designation, or removal, may be more appropriate. This process is summarised in Figure 4.3.

The initial consideration was whether an area performs the strategic role of an AoLS, specifically:

- whether an area physically separates settlements; and
- the extent to which this separation is at risk of being compromised.

The assessment aligned with that undertaken against Purpose 1 for Green Wedges by focusing on how areas prevent the visual and perceptual coalescence of settlements. In considering the extent to which separation is compromised, the

sensitivity of the existing gap was taken into account in terms of width, openness or visual/landscape links between developed areas and the area between them, any development proposals or pressures (such as permitted or submitted planning applications) which might compromise the openness of the gap and planned development set out in the Core Strategy. The criteria additionally took into account the contribution of the landscape character to the visual context and perceived gap.

The criteria used for this assessment were as follows:

Purpose	Criterion	Strength
<p>Does the area physically separate settlements?</p> <p>To what extent is the separation at risk of being compromised?</p>	<p>Prevents development that would result in merging of or significant erosion of gap between neighbouring settlements, taking consideration of landscape scale/pattern, topography, development patterns and views.</p>	<p>STRONG: Area provides an essential gap between two or more settlements, restricting development which, as a result of the area's landscape scale/pattern, topography, intervisibility or development patterns, would lead to the merging of these settlements. Area is subject to particular development pressures which are likely to adversely compromise the gap.</p> <p>MODERATE: Provides a gap between two or more settlements, restricting further development which, as a result of the area's landscape scale/pattern, topography, intervisibility or development patterns, may lead to the merging of these settlements. There may, additionally, be particular development pressures which may compromise the gap.</p> <p>WEAK: Provides a less critical gap between two or more settlements which, as a result of the area's scale, character, landscape scale/pattern, topography, intervisibility or development patterns, is unlikely to restrict coalescence or prevent further coalescence between settlements.</p> <p>DOES NOT MEET PURPOSE: Gap is of sufficient scale or character that the area plays no role in preventing coalescence, or settlements have already coalesced.</p>

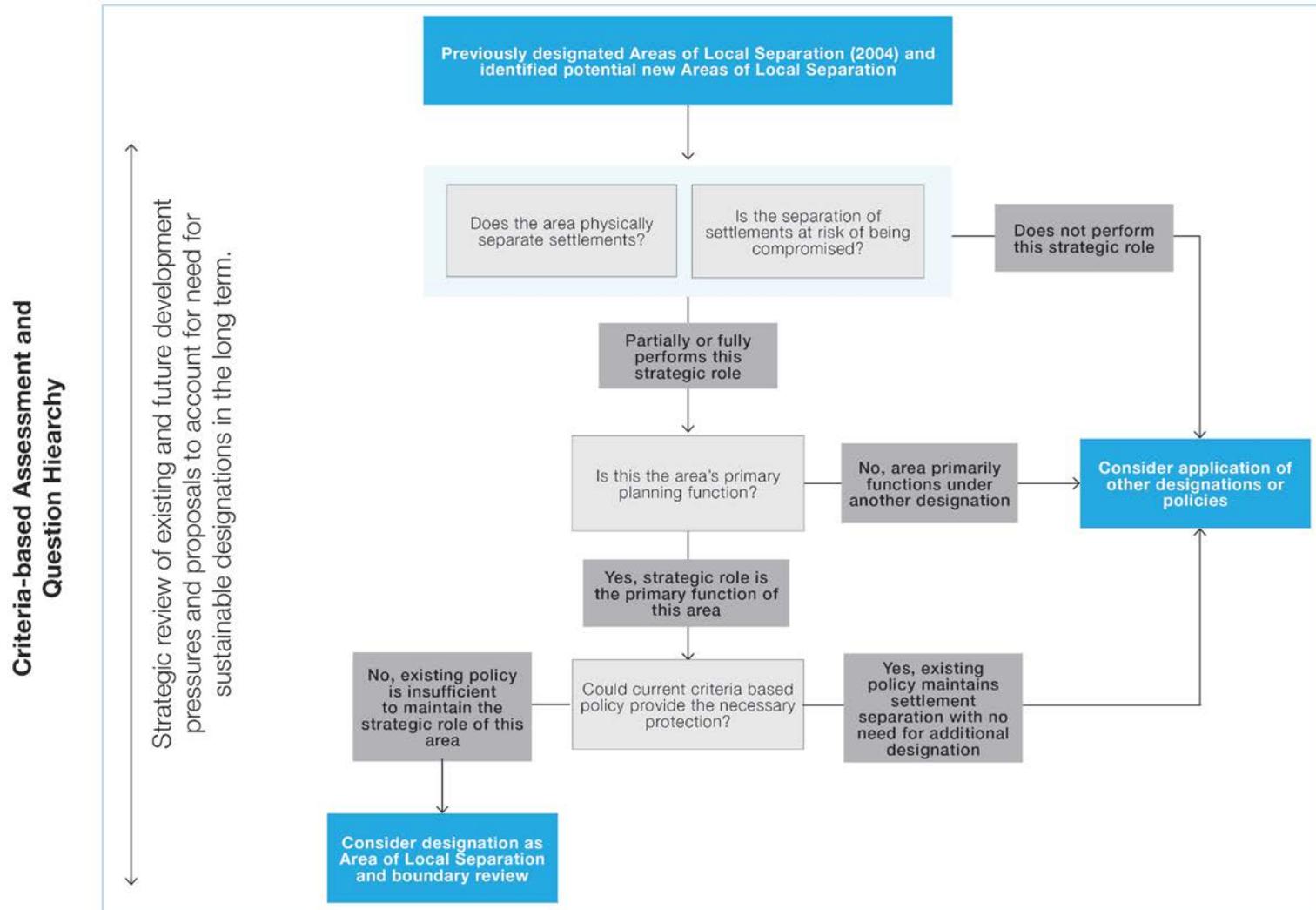


Figure 4.3 Assessment process for AoLS

Areas not meeting this strategic role were excluded at this stage and considered for an alternative designation. Areas which partially or fully met this strategic role were then subject to further assessment. This considered:

- whether this strategic role is the area's primary planning function; and, if so
- whether any other criteria based policies could serve to maintain this role without the need to designate specifically as an AoLS.

This aspect of the work, based on a review of the area's existing character and development form as well as planning permissions and planned growth, considered whether an area's overall strategic role in planning terms is as a separator between settlements or is aligned with an alternative designation or whether other applicable policies may provide suitable protection.

Other examples of designations considered include:

- Green Wedge;
- open space;
- countryside;
- employment land; and
- housing.

Other applicable policies which may provide suitable protection include:

- CS11 Landscape and Countryside
- CS12 Green Infrastructure
- CS19 North East of Leicester Sustainable Urban Extension
- CS20 North of Birstall Direction of Growth and
- CS22 West of Loughborough Sustainable Urban Extension

In line with the approach taken in the Green Wedge assessment, when considering whether alternative designations may be applicable, the analysis considered the potential for designation of Urban Fringe GIEZs, which fed directly into the separate work stream on these designations (see section 4.3.3).

Pro formas and reporting

A pro forma was completed for each AoLS, which encompassed a descriptive site audit (based on desk based and site visit outputs), followed by qualitative and quantitative assessments against the purpose criteria. The descriptive work directly informed the criteria-based assessments.

A sample pro forma for the AoLS purpose assessment has been prepared and can be found in Appendix C.

4.3.3 Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones

Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones are broadly defined areas that encompass the network of existing green spaces at the edges of the principle urban areas of Leicester and the urban area at Loughborough and Shepshed. They provide a valuable opportunity to enhance the provision of existing and new areas of green infrastructure at the fringes of urban areas, embedding high quality green space into future urban extensions.

Areas for assessment

Areas covered by Urban Fringe GIEZs are defined loosely in the 6 C's Green Infrastructure Strategy around the fringes of the principal urban area of Leicester, Loughborough and Shepshed and there were no defined boundaries to the designation. The approach to identifying areas for assessment responded to the existing green infrastructure network as well as potential opportunities for enhancement, such as those relating to planned development. Areas of assessment were identified by applying a 2km buffer to the principal urban area of Leicester and, the urban area at Loughborough and Shepshed to provide the initial area of search for potential designations, which corresponds to the indicative area identified in the 6 C's Green Infrastructure Strategy. Green infrastructure assessment areas were then identified within this 2km buffer using designations in the 2015 Core Strategy and the 6 C's Green Infrastructure Strategy based on three lines of inquiry:

- presence of Green Wedges or AoLS set out in the 2015 Core Strategy and potential AoLS for assessment as set out in Map 001 in Appendix A;
- planned SUEs and strategic development set out in the 2015 Core Strategy:
 - West of Loughborough SUE;
 - Loughborough University and Science and Enterprise Park;
 - North East Leicester SUE;
 - North of Birstall Direction of Growth; and
 - Watermead Regeneration Corridor Direction of Growth; and
- sub-regional and city-scale green infrastructure corridors defined in the 6 C's Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Combined Existing Strategic Green Infrastructure Assets as defined in the 6 C's Green Infrastructure Core Strategy, as well as environmental designations/features that were considered to be important to the local context (such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Registered Parks and Gardens or flood plains) were also considered as part of this process where they interacted with the above areas.

Five green infrastructure assessment areas emerged as a result of the above lines of inquiry and are identified in Map 001 in Appendix A. The five areas of assessment are as follows:

1. North East Leicester (Thurmaston/Hamilton/Barkby/Barkby Thorpe/Syston)
2. Watermead Country Park North (Birstall/Thurmaston)
3. North West Leicester (Anstey/Cropston/Thurcaston)
4. Shepshed/Loughborough
5. East Loughborough

Desk Study and GIS Mapping

Initially, through a thorough site audit, the assessment established baseline landscape and environmental conditions (such as accessibility, landscape character, urban / rural context, geology, historic function, landscape quality, proximity to other green infrastructure assets, vegetation audit, hydrology & water management, climate change adaptation, ecological networks and functional ecosystems/connectivity) in order to evaluate the urban fringe areas.

A review of previous work was undertaken relating to potential sensitivities and opportunities associated with green infrastructure enhancement. This included some engagement with stakeholders such as the Environment Agency, Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, Sustrans, Canal and Rivers Trust and the Stepping Stones Project in order to align the potential of Urban Fringe GIEZs with wider development, community, transport and environmental proposals.

Green infrastructure functional criteria

The criteria for the assessment was developed around the key functions as described in Countryside Agency's vision for the Countryside in and around Towns (2005), which are referred to in the 6 C's Green Infrastructure Strategy (2010) identifying the urban areas to which Urban Fringe GIEZs apply. The aim was to follow on from the strategic work carried out in the 6 C's Green Infrastructure Strategy to identify specific opportunities for integrating Green Infrastructure provision into local development and delivery plans within individual Zones at a more local level.

The extent to which the Urban Fringe provides functioning Green Infrastructure will be assessed against the following criteria:

A. To what extent does the area act as a bridge to the country?

A bridge to the country is formed by linking housing, schools, health centres and hospitals, bus and train stations in urban centres to the existing access network to connect with accessible green spaces in the wider countryside.

B. Does the area provide a gateway to the city/town?

The area provides an improved image, experience and sense of place by encouraging investment in an improved environmental quality for public rights of way and spaces.

C. To what extent does the area function as a health centre?

The area contributes to health and well-being through promoting access to green spaces for exercise for schools, hospitals and health centres.

D. Does the area perform the function of an outdoor classroom?

The area provides opportunities for environmental education through parks, nature reserves and farm-based activities

E. To what extent does the area act as a recycling and renewable energy centre?

The area is helping to address climate change through sustainable management of waste, water and pollution, production of energy crops and creation of woodland to act as carbon sinks.

F. Does the area function as a productive landscape?

The urban fringe farmland is used for food production, processing of local produce and retail (farm shops) for urban areas.

G. To what extent does the area display its cultural legacy?

The area promotes an awareness of the presence of historic features in the urban fringe landscape and how they contribute to sense of place for local communities

H. Is the area promoted as a place for sustainable living?

There are opportunities for future sustainable urban extensions and developments to link with the urban area and address issues such as indistinct boundaries, poor accessibility, fragmented landscapes, etc.

I. Does the area function as an engine for regeneration?

The area benefits from opportunities for community involvement through volunteering or gaining new skills in environmental improvement work, particularly within areas of multiple deprivation.

J. To what extent does the area perform as a nature reserve?

The area performs as a nature reserve by strengthening biodiversity, geological and geomorphological conservation management for sites in and around the urban areas.

The desk-based assessment identified which functions are applicable to which parts of the Urban Fringe and also has been overlain with further information included in the pro formas and an appraisal of landscape sensitivity.

The initial analysis encompassed an assessment of Green Infrastructure against these functions, cross referencing outputs from the Green Wedge and AoLS assessments where appropriate. The assessment resulted in the allocation of separate strength based scores for both existing and potential green infrastructure capabilities, informed respectively by the quality and quantity of functional criteria present and the quality and quantity of reasonable opportunities for enhancing the number of, or improving upon existing, functional criteria present. This assessment was then used to help define recommendations for designations, boundaries for the enhancement zones and principles required for achieving the

spatial planning objectives of the designation as set out in the Charnwood Core Strategy.

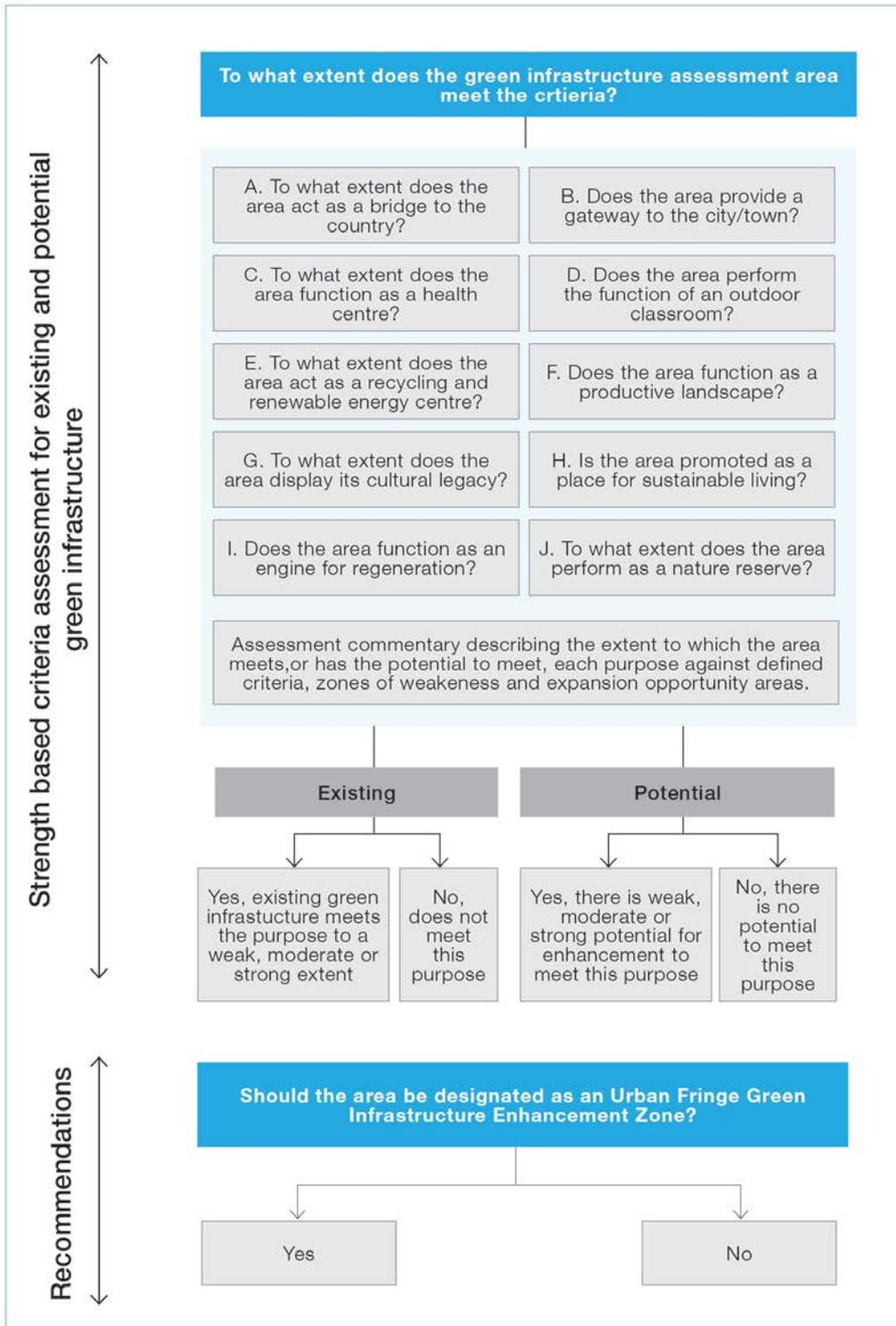


Figure 4.4 Assessment process for Urban Fringe GIEZs

Based on the findings of the desk based assessment, an on-site detailed audit was carried out to verify the boundaries of potential Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones.

Pro formas and Reporting

A pro forma was completed for each potential Urban Fringe GIEZ area, which encompassed a descriptive site audit (based on desk based and site visit outputs). A sample pro forma for the Urban Fringe GIEZ assessment has also been prepared and can be found in Appendix C.

Annotated parameter plans for each proposed zone have been produced and the potential of zones for enhancement of Green Infrastructure were judged on a function by function basis.

4.4 Boundary assessment

Following the purposes review, a thorough review of the boundaries was undertaken for each designation considered: Green Wedges; AoLS; and Urban Fringe GIEZs.

This considered any ‘zones of weakness’ or potential ‘extension opportunity areas’ (identified through the purposes assessments), as well as the boundaries of new strategic developments that could influence settlement form and identity. The boundary assessment also aimed to identify potential changes and the extent to which those changes might compromise the ability of designations to meet their purposes.

The methodology followed the same principles and logic for each of the three designations. It was based on the identification of logical, reasonable, defensible and readily identifiable boundaries and had four foci:

- A sense check of the robustness of existing boundaries of existing Green Wedges and AoLS and, where appropriate, the identification of alternative boundaries;
- Identification of boundaries for proposed new Green Wedges and AoLS;
- For Green Wedges, a focused investigation of the ‘zones of weakness’ and ‘extension opportunity zones’ to identify where boundaries should be realigned as a result of the performance of land as Green Wedges or in response to planned development proposals; and
- A review of the potential, if any, for the fundamental purposes of Green Wedges or AoLS to be compromised by suggested boundary changes.

Identifying durable, clearly identifiable physical boundaries which may be used to clearly define designations is an important consideration for the ability of those designations to perform in the context of a sustainable development strategy. An initial identification of durable, defensible boundaries is shown in the maps in Appendix A, which has been based on the following definitions:

- Examples of durable boundary features:

- Infrastructure: motorway; public and made road; a railway line.
- Natural: river, stream, canal or other watercourse; prominent physical feature (e.g. ridgeline); protected or mature woodland/hedge, historic field boundaries which feature on the first edition Ordnance Survey or earlier; intact examples of early coaxial field enclosures as on the Leicestershire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC).
- Existing development: 'regular' or 'consistent' built form comprised of well-defined or rectilinear built form edges.
- Examples of features lacking in durability:
 - Infrastructure: private/unmade track or infrastructure
 - Natural: poorly defined field boundaries, intermittent or young tree lines
 - Existing development: 'irregular' or 'inconsistent' built form comprised of imprecise or 'softer' edges, which would not restrict outward growth into a Green Wedge or AoLS.

The potential to create new boundaries through the creation of new infrastructure, green infrastructure or the strengthening of intermittent natural boundary features (e.g. denser planting) has been considered.

Specifically for Urban Fringe GIEZs, consistency with Green Wedges and AoLS were sought in how external boundaries are defined to ensure a robust and consistent approach. This considered how the definition of precise boundaries influences the potential of enhancement zones and would be influenced by development proposals.

This stage of the work was aided by a combination of publicly accessible desk-based data sources such as aerial photography, 'bird's eye view' photography and Ordnance Survey mapping, as well as site visits to verify the current situation on the ground.

4.5 Strategic re-assessment

Strategically important designations such as those considered in the Study often cross administrative boundaries and have impacts and influences for a sub-regional and regional network of settlements and green infrastructure. An awareness of this throughout the assessment process lead directly into a strategic re-assessment, following the identification of potential areas for designation or potential release/alternative designations.

In order to understand the contribution that each designation would make to this strategic network, as well as to sense check the logic, interrelationships and influence of potential changes for designations and planned developments, a holistic review of potential changes to Green Wedge, AoLS and Urban Fringe GIEZs has been undertaken. This was developed in close consultation with the Council and sought to review whether proposed changes would be sustainable in the long term in line with the Core Strategy.

4.6 Consultation

Since the introduction of the Localism Act (2011), Local Authorities hold the responsibility for strategic planning and a clear duty to cooperate on strategic issues, such as green infrastructure. The potential change to Green Wedges, AoLS and Urban Fringe GIEZs within Charnwood may also impact on the role of the wider green infrastructure and development context in adjoining authority areas as part of the wider Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire green infrastructure network. As a result it was important to engage with neighbouring authorities on the initial assessment findings and likely recommendations.

4.7 Recommendations

Following completion of the assessments and liaison with the Council, detailed recommendations were set out, in particular identifying areas that would justify designations and/or changes to boundaries as well as a description of the designations in principle. Recommendations for any new designations include precise boundaries for those designations.

Recommendations have also been considered against the strategic inter-relationships assessment outlined in section 4.5.

5 Assessment – Key Findings

5.1 Purpose Assessments

The following sections describe the key findings from the Green Wedge, Area of Local Separation (AoLS) and Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zone (GIEZ) purpose assessments. The primary objective was to determine the extent to which existing and potential new areas meet, or have the potential to meet, the purposes and/or functions of these designations with respect to policy. Instances have been identified where designations should be amended and/or the new designations should be made.

Specifically for the Urban Fringe GIEZs, opportunities for enhancement which would result in stronger performance against the defined criteria have been identified.

5.1.1 Green Wedges

The Green Wedge purposes assessment has considered the extent to which the two existing Green Wedges – GW-1 and GW-2, fulfil the four purposes. Additionally, an area encompassing the former Syston-Thurmaston Green Wedge (GW-3), and a broad area of search around the proposed North East Leicester SUE (PGW-1), have been assessed against these purposes to identify an area which might form a new Green Wedge in conjunction with the emerging development; these areas were considered together as a result of their seamless linkage and close relationship in functional and landscape terms.

A number of overarching conclusions have emerged from the assessment:

- The two existing Green Wedges continue to fulfil all four Green Wedge purposes, but to varying extents;
- Both existing Green Wedges, as a whole, continue to perform moderately with respect to preventing of merging between settlements and guiding development form (purposes 1 and 2), despite their longevity;
- The strong role of the two existing Green Wedges as ‘green lungs’, providing dense networks of green infrastructure and, linked to this, valuable opportunities for public access to open land for recreation (formal and informal) around the urban fringes of the Leicester urban area is particularly noteworthy;
- A Zone of Weakness was identified in the north-east of GW-2, which performed less strongly against the purposes and was not consistent with the Council’s spatial vision for the Watermead Regeneration Corridor;
- Subject to a more detailed boundary review, part of the area of search for a new Green Wedge in association with the NE Leicester SUE (PGW-1) has the potential to perform all four Green Wedge purposes, though it is noted that the former Thurmaston/Syston Green Wedge (GW-3) performs less strongly and it is judged that there is no scope for its integration into the new Green Wedge;

- The new Green Wedge provides a vital opportunity to shape the detailed design phase of the development, ensuring green infrastructure networks are firmly integrated into the final design, whilst also fulfilling important planning functions (for example, maintaining the existing settlement pattern); and
- As highlighted, GW-3 is identified as a Zone of Weakness as it meets only one of the four purposes. However, as a result of its contribution to Purpose 1, consideration should be afforded to the designation of this area as an Area of Local Separation (see ALS-L).

A summary of specific, key findings from the assessment is set out in Table 5.1, with detailed site audits and assessments for the two existing Green Wedges (GW-1 and GW-2) and Potential Green Wedge (GW-3/PGW-1) provided in Annex Report A.

Table 5.1 Key Findings from Green Wedges Purposes Assessment

Assessment Area	Purpose Score				Zone of Weakness	Extension Opportunity Area	Strategic Relationships
	1 – merging of settlements	2 – guide development form	3 – ‘Green lung’	4 – recreational resource			
GW-1	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Strong	<p>As a result of identified consented development, the area of GW-1(A) south of the A46 does not meet the overall purpose of the Green Wedge. This development would compromise the ability of this area to perform as a physical separator between settlements, or as part of an integrated network of GI (a ‘green lung’).</p> <p>Similarly, GW-1(B) and GW-1(C) are both identified as performing weakly.</p> <p>Although these areas perform weakly in isolation, it should be noted that they form part of a wider strategic Green Wedge which crosses into Blaby and the City of Leicester, and consideration should be given to the need maintain the integrity of this wider designation.</p>	None identified.	<p>GW-1 directly abuts ALS-F to the north, sharing a functional and visual relationship. This area’s primary role is to maintain the narrow physical gap between Cropston and Thurcaston. Most importantly, the area functions as part of a wider Green Wedge which includes areas of Blaby and the City of Leicester. There is a need for cross-boundary dialogue to ensure that the strategic integrity of the wider designation is maintained.</p>

Assessment Area	Purpose Score				Zone of Weakness	Extension Opportunity Area	Strategic Relationships
	1 – merging of settlements	2 – guide development form	3 – ‘Green lung’	4 – recreational resource			
GW-2	Moderate	Moderate	Strong	Strong	An area in the north-east of the Green Wedge, north of Wanlip Road and east of the Grand Union Canal, is judged as performing a lesser role in terms of the wider Green Wedge. There is an outstanding planning permission for a new business park in this area which, if built out, would reduce its openness and diminish its role in relation to preventing merging between settlements; furthermore, this area would perform a lesser role against purposes 3 or 4. The identified area is also deemed to contradict the Council’s current spatial strategy (specifically in relation to the Watermead Regeneration Corridor).	None identified.	GW-2, designated through the Charnwood Core Strategy following the 2011 Charnwood Green Wedge Review, forms part of GIEZ-2. This area also forms part of the River Soar Corridor, identified as a strategically important GI network in the Charnwood Local Plan 2011 to 2028 and the 6 C’s Green Infrastructure Strategy. GW-2 forms part of a wider network of open land at the fringes of Leicester which performs an important role in maintaining separation between different settlements; in particular, it is strongly linked to ALS-G, which maintain the gaps between Wanlip and Birstall, and also has a weaker link with ALS-K to the west (though it is noted that the A607 effectively severs this link physically).

Assessment Area	Purpose Score				Zone of Weakness	Extension Opportunity Area	Strategic Relationships
	1 – merging of settlements	2 – guide development form	3 – ‘Green lung’	4 – recreational resource			
GW-3 / PGW-1	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Weak	<p>The area to the north of Barkby Lane, and the area to the west of the Midland Main Line, is not adjudged to meet three of the four Green Wedge purposes and is identified as a Zone of Weakness. As a whole, it: restricts development (as opposed to guiding its form); aligns more with the open countryside than the adjacent settlement, failing to ‘penetrate’ it; and provides no formal and limited informal recreational opportunities (with no clear opportunities for enhancement). While there is more potential for the area to the west of the Midland Main Line to contribute to Purposes 3 and 4, it is physically severed from the wider Green Wedge by the development pattern proposed through the NE Leicester SUE. The future designation has been considered in greater detail in</p>	<p>Two corridors have been identified as the approximate basis for the designation of a new Green Wedge: the Melton Brook corridor, which would separate Hamilton from the proposed NE Leicester SUE and form a natural ‘lung’ in the built form, providing clear opportunities for recreation; and a network of strongly defined fields, aligned with a prominent ridgeline (south-west of Barkby Thorpe), maintaining separation with surrounding settlements and guiding the form of the new development, as well as providing informal recreational opportunities through existing footpaths. Opportunities for recreation enhancement have also been identified in the commentary for GIEZ-1.</p> <p>No specific extension opportunity areas beyond the</p>	<p>The area of search (GW-3/PGW-1) forms part of a strategic network of open land at the edge of the Leicester urban area, which plays an important role in maintaining the local settlement pattern and ensuring that the unique identities of settlements are maintained. ALS-L lies directly to the north-east, maintaining the gap between Barkby and Syston and, in association with the NE Leicester SUE allocation in the Core Strategy, the wider area’s role in maintaining gaps between settlements is anticipated to increase in importance.</p>

Assessment Area	Purpose Score				Zone of Weakness	Extension Opportunity Area	Strategic Relationships
	1 – merging of settlements	2 – guide development form	3 – ‘Green lung’	4 – recreational resource			
					the commentary for ALS-L and GIEZ-1.	area of search have been identified.	

5.1.2 Areas of Local Separation

In general, most existing AoLS continue to perform the ALS purpose, maintaining physical separation between distinct settlements and often in locations where this separation is at risk of being compromised. It is clear that, for the most part, the AoLS perform a critical role in maintaining the borough's dispersed settlement pattern and ensuring that different settlements remain physically, as well as perceptually, separated. While the majority of AoLS meet this purpose moderately, a small number are identified as performing particularly strongly as a result of the small scale of the gaps between settlements, as well as particular development pressures.

In a substantial number of cases, Extension Opportunity Areas have been identified at the edges of existing designations. While the exact logic for these varies on a case by case basis, all of the Extension Opportunity Areas have been identified on the basis that they meet the ALS purpose and form part of the wider, strategic gap between settlements. The overall integrity of these gaps may be at risk if these areas were not incorporated. These Areas also provide opportunities to rationalise and strengthen the boundaries of the AoLS to ensure their ongoing robustness and permanence.

A smaller number of Zones of Weakness have also been identified. It is deemed that these Zones make a lesser contribution to maintaining separation between settlements. In several cases, this is as a result of consented or built-out planning applications which have reduced or completely diminished the contribution of such areas to maintaining separation (as they are effectively part of the built area of the adjoining settlement). Where consented planning applications are outline, this has been noted (as it is recognised that certain elements of the subsequent recommendations may be subject to further, detailed refinement, for example in terms of amended boundaries).

In one case, ALS-K, it is deemed that, as a result of material changes in the character of these Zones, or the configuration of development in or around them, the gap between the settlements has effectively been eroded to such an extent that the adjoining settlements have effectively coalesced. The on-going designation of the area in its current form should therefore be considered.

A number of Potential Areas of Local Separation (PALS), in addition to those designated in the Core Strategy, were also considered as part of the assessment (PALS-1 – PALS-4). Of the four Areas, three were found, overall, to play a role in preventing coalescence between settlements, though contrasts were noted in the extent to which different parts of these Areas met the strategic roles of physically separating settlements and maintaining gaps that would be at risk of compromise. Through the assessment of two PALS specifically associated with allocated SUEs (PALS-2 and PALS-3), specific, smaller areas were noted as being strategically important for maintaining the extent of gaps and preventing the merging of settlements following build-out of the proposed schemes. Similarly, the proposed scale of PALS-1 was narrowed through the assessment process to focus on a particular corridor where the gap between Loughborough and Quorn would be more sensitive to compromise.

One Area, PALS-4, was judged not to perform against the purpose criteria or fulfil the strategic role of an AoLS, as it was identified as being completely within the settlement boundary of Rothley and thus not protecting any gaps between different settlements.

A summary of specific, key findings from the assessment is set out in Table 5.2, with detailed site audits and assessments for every AoLS (ALS-A –ALS-N) and PALS (PALS-1 – PALS-4) provided in Annex Report A.

Table 5.2 Key Findings from Areas of Local Separation Purpose Assessment

Assessment Area	Purpose Score	Zones of Weakness	Extension Opportunity Area	Relationship to other designation
ALS-A	Strong – provides a critical physical gap between Loughborough and Woodthorpe which, as a result of identified development pressures, has been substantially reduced in scale and would be vulnerable to further compromise.	Two Zones identified, west of Allendale Road and north of the A6004, which align with consented planning applications for residential development (P/12/2640/2 and P/12/2641/2). These Zones will no longer function as part of this physical separation between the settlements.	None identified.	There is physical linkage, as well as a functional relationship, with PALS-1 which forms a wider swathe of open land between Loughborough and Quorn.
ALS-B	Moderate - provides the gap between Quorn and Mountsorrel, restricting development which may result in the merging of these settlements.	None identified	A small identified area to the south is both functionally and, in landscape terms, closely related to ALS-B and contributes to maintaining the openness of the gap between the two settlements.	No strategic relationships identified.
ALS-C	Moderate – maintains, in part, the separation between Mountsorrel and Rothley (particularly the north-western area, which has a strong sense of openness and linkage with wider countryside networks). Much of the area is under	Two broad Zones to the east of Mountsorrel Lane, west of Rothley Park and south of Rothley Cemetery, identified as performing no role in the separation of settlements (taking into account outline permission P/12/2005/2 for 250 dwellings, reserved matters application P/15/0156/2 for Phase 1, and subject to submission of further reserved	A small area, to the west of Swithland Lane, is functionally linked to ALS-C, playing an important role in preventing ribbon development that may result in the merging of Mountsorrel and Rothley.	Potential linkage to PALS-4 to the south, a possible new Area of Local Separation under consideration as part of the assessment.

Assessment Area	Purpose Score	Zones of Weakness	Extension Opportunity Area	Relationship to other designation
	pressure from development proposals.	<p>matters applications for Phase 2). The consented scheme will have impact on the openness and coherence of this gap, with a number of remaining areas of open land effectively enclosed within the settlement footprint of Rothley.</p> <p>Additionally, a further small Zone to the west of Mountsorrel Lane in the extreme north of ALS-C, which is almost fully enclosed by continuous development.</p>		
ALS-D	Moderate - provides the gap between Sileby and Cossington, preventing further ribbon development along Cossington Road and ensuring that the integrity of the gap is maintained.	None identified	None identified.	No strategic relationships identified.
ALS-E	Moderate - prevents ribbon development on Barrow Road between Sileby and Barrow upon Soar, which would lead to perceptual merging of the two settlements.	None identified	An extension of ALS-E to the south and east would ensure the wider integrity of the gap is maintained and prevent development which might reduce the perceived distance between the two settlements; furthermore, this would also provide an opportunity to strengthen its boundaries.	No strategic relationships identified.

Assessment Area	Purpose Score	Zones of Weakness	Extension Opportunity Area	Relationship to other designation
ALS-F	Strong - provides the essential gaps between Cropston and Thurcaston, and Cropston and Rothley. These gaps are narrow in scale and vulnerable to compromise from ribbon development along Leicester Road and Station Road.	None identified	Area identified to the north of Station Road is part of this wider gap between Rothley and Cropston, and linked to the existing AoLS in functional and landscape terms. This would also provide an opportunity to align the designated area with more robust, logical boundary features.	Physically and visually linked to GW-1 to the south, which forms a strategic 'green lung' extending outwards from Leicester to the surrounding settlements. Also, (but to a lesser extent), forms part of a wider swathe of strategic open countryside at the edge of Birstall / Syston which provides a coherent break in the built form at the edge of the Leicester urban area and various settlements clustered along the Soar Valley to the north. An area immediately to the east, PALS-3, is considered for designation as a new Area of Local Separation.
ALS-G	Strong – provides the gap between Birstall and Wanlip, which may be vulnerable to compromise as a result of its small scale and identified development pressures.	Area in the west, encompassing the park and ride site, does not contribute to the openness of the gap between these settlements. Area in the south-west corner is physically contained by Birstall urban area and park and ride site to the north and does not form part of the gap between settlements.	None identified	Forms part of GIEZ-2, and physically linked to GW-2 (though it is noted that the latter relationship is functionally and visually relatively weak).

Assessment Area	Purpose Score	Zones of Weakness	Extension Opportunity Area	Relationship to other designation
ALS-I	Moderate - forms part of an important physical gap between Queniborough and East Goscote, playing a role in preventing their coalescence.	None identified	None identified	Physically adjacent to ALS-J and effectively forms part of the same gap between East Goscote and Queniborough.
ALS-J	Strong - provides the essential gaps between East Goscote, Queniborough and Syston, restricting development which would lead to the merging of these settlements. Although these gaps are very small in scale the settlements are visually and functionally separate, with unique characteristics.	Area in the west at the edge of Syston has been compromised by development and no longer functions as part of the gap between Syston and Queniborough.	There is an area to the north-east of the existing AoLS which, in landscape and functional terms, is strongly linked; this area plays an equal role in maintaining the gap between East Goscote and Queniborough.	Physically adjacent to ALS-I and effectively forms part of the same gap between East Goscote and Queniborough.
ALS-K	Weak - provides the less critical gap between Thurmaston and Syston, making a limited contribution to the physical separation of these settlements. It is unclear how ALS-K would prevent further coalescence between these settlements (given that there is very little perceived	The entirety of the AoLS, in its current form, is identified as a Zone of Weakness as a result of its weak performance in the purpose assessment.	None identified.	There are wider opportunities for linkages to green infrastructure to the east (for example those associated with the North East of Leicester Sustainable Urban Extension) – and potential contribution of the areas as part of a Green Wedge in this location (see findings for GW-3 / PGW-1).

Assessment Area	Purpose Score	Zones of Weakness	Extension Opportunity Area	Relationship to other designation
	separation between the settlements). As such, maintaining separation may not be the primary role of the area in planning terms.			
ALS-L	Moderate – maintains the gap between Barkby and Syston, which as a result of particular development pressures on the edge of Syston, make it vulnerable to compromise, both physically and especially visually.	A small area in the north of the AoLS has been identified as a Zone of Weakness, as it will not contribute to separation following the development of this area for housing.	An area to the north-east of the current designation, which is judged to be crucial to maintaining the current scale and character of the current gap and preserving its links to the wider countryside. Additionally, the Zone of Weakness in GW-3/PGW-1 identified through the Green Wedge Purposes Assessment lies directly to the west. This area is noted as maintaining the gap between Thurmaston and Syston and could be considered as a natural extension to ALS-L.	No strategic relationships identified.
ALS-M	Moderate - provides physical separation between Anstey and Newtown Linford, restricting further development which, as a result of the existing development pattern of ribbon	None identified.	None identified.	No strategic relationships identified.

Assessment Area	Purpose Score	Zones of Weakness	Extension Opportunity Area	Relationship to other designation
	development along Bradgate Road may lead to the merging of the two settlements.			
ALS-N	Moderate - provides the relatively small gap but highly open gap between East Goscote and Rearsby. Any development within this area would result in a visual and perceptual reduction in the separation between the two settlements.	A small area to the east of Melton Road is judged to play a lesser role in relation to preventing coalescence. It forms part of the consented residential scheme at the Rearsby Roses site and has an urban, built-up character, making in contribution to separation.	None identified.	No strategic relationships identified.
PALS-1	Weak - would provide a less critical gap between Loughborough and Quorn, and between Quorn and Woodthorpe due to the area's extensive scale and the lack of intervisibility between settlements. It is noted that the central part of the gap between Quorn and Loughborough/Woodhouse (around the A6/A6004 axis) would be more at risk of compromise.	Two areas, in the northern and south-western parts of PALS-1, have limited visual and functional connectivity with surrounding settlements and greater linkage with the wider countryside. Although these areas effectively form part of the physical gap between Loughborough and Quorn, they play a lesser role in preventing coalescence between the settlements.	None identified.	Part of the western boundary adjoins the Loughborough/Woodthorpe AoLS (ALS-A) and PALS-1 is partially integrated with this area.

Assessment Area	Purpose Score	Zones of Weakness	Extension Opportunity Area	Relationship to other designation
PALS-2	Strong - maintains the essential gap between Loughborough and Hathern which is small in scale physically as a result of identified development pressures and at risk of compromise from ribbon development along Derby Road. Currently forms part of the gap between Shepshed and Loughborough, but it is noted that emerging large scale development proposals in the area (the SUE allocated in the 2015 Core Strategy) would dramatically alter the character of the area and its configuration, diminishing its role as part of this gap.	Much of the central and southern part, aligned with the area covered by the submitted outline planning application for the SUE (P/14/1833/2), as well as the area south of the A512, will make no contribution to separation between settlements as it will be contained within the built area of Loughborough and have no interaction with Shepshed to the west. Furthermore, the M1 serves as a physical buffer between these settlements to prevent their physical coalescence.	An area to the north-west, between the northern extent of the proposed SUE and the edge of Hathern, would also form part of the narrow gap to Loughborough. It is functionally and, in landscape terms, linked with PALS-2.	No strategic relationships identified.
PALS-3	Moderate - would provide a physical gap between Rothley and Birstall restricting further development that may lead to potential merging of these settlements. The southern area allocated in the Core Strategy as the North of Birstall	This southern area, allocated the Birstall North Direction of Growth, is identified as a Zone of Weakness. A second area is identified in the north where there is consent for 180 dwellings and erection of school. Although most of the application has been built-out, the area within PALS-3 has yet not been	The area south of Westfield Lane and east of the Great Central Railway is identified linked visually and in landscape terms with PALS-3. Extending the boundaries of PALS-3 to include this area would ensure the robustness and effectiveness of the designation in maintaining separation	Including the proposed Extension Opportunity Area, PALS-3 is physically linked to ALS-F and forms part of a wider strategic network of open land at the north-western edge of the Leicester urban area. PALS-4 is directly adjacent to

Assessment Area	Purpose Score	Zones of Weakness	Extension Opportunity Area	Relationship to other designation
	Direction of Growth, delivering growth which would significantly reducing this physical gap.	implemented. When built out, the development will reduce the area's openness.	between the future northern extent of Birstall and Rothley.	the north (but it is noted that the area to the north of Westfield Lane is adjudged as not meeting the purpose of an AoLS).
PALS-4	Does not meet purpose – plays no role in preventing coalescence between settlements as the area is wholly located within Rothley and has no physical or visual linkage with neighbouring settlements. Existing criteria based policies should provide the necessary protection to maintain the unique character of the historic part of Rothley to the west.	None identified.	None identified.	PALS-4 has a strategic relationship with other designations to both the north and south. ALS-C to the north maintains a wider open swathe of land between Rothley and Mountsorrel. To the south, as part of this study, consideration is being given to the designation of a new AoLS between Birstall and Rothley (PALS-3).

5.1.3 Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zone

The initial desk study into the whole 2km Urban Fringe Green infrastructure Enhancement Zone offsets around Loughborough, Shepshed and Leicester, which has followed the lines of inquiry outlined within chapter 4.3.3.1, identified five specific zones for enhancement to be assessed in more detail, including a site audit. These have been highlighted in chapter 4.3.3.1 as:

1. North East Leicester (Thurmaston/Hamilton/Barkby Thorpe/Syston)
2. Watermead Country Park North (Birstall/Thurmaston)
3. North West Leicester (Anstey/Cropston/Thurcaston)
4. Shepshed/Loughborough
5. East Loughborough

The purposes assessment for these five areas focused on identifying where instances of the 10 functional purposes, outlined in chapter 4.3.3.3, were present and to what extent their role influenced the overall strength of green infrastructure within the assessment areas. Although the study was informed by a wide range of resources, there were instances where some of the functional purposes were difficult to assess due to the availability of relevant information. Functional purpose E *'The area acts as a recycling and renewable energy centre'* was an example of where possible assessment criteria was difficult to obtain, such as identifying where land is used for the production of energy crops. Often, however, there was a good level of information relating to other criteria to be able to form a reliable assessment of each function.

Throughout the desk and site based audit a number of key findings emerged that were common throughout the majority of the Urban Fringe GIEZ assessment areas. In particular it was identified that although all of the areas met many of the functional purposes, there were weaknesses in how well these functions were performing in terms of contributing to green infrastructure. A key example is the number of schools, community groups and sports facilities located within, or in close proximity to, the assessment areas with the potential to act as 'a bridge to the country', but appear be limited in performing this function. The amount of accessible recreational green space also appears to be a weakness common throughout many of the assessment areas, as much of the land within the urban fringe performs an agricultural role that restricts public access. Furthermore, it was commonly identified that although a wide network of PRoW exist surrounding many of the settlements, there were often breaks or poorly defined sections that caused the fragmentation of these networks.

Naturally, opportunities arise in response to these common weaknesses. As a general example, opportunities may exist to actively engage local schools and community groups in the improvement of green infrastructure within the GIEZs. Furthermore, land could be made available for recreation, particularly along the edges of settlements, to act as a transitional zone between urban development and countryside.

The aforementioned are all highlighted in Table 5.3 along with more area specific insights into the weakness and opportunities within each enhancement zone. The table provides a purpose score on the strength of green infrastructure for both its current and potential state, within each assessment area. Detailed pro formas are provided in Annex Report A.

Table 5.3 Key Findings from Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zone Purpose Assessment

Assessment Area	Purpose Score		Identified Weaknesses	Enhancement Opportunities	Relationship to other designation
	Existing	Potential			
GIEZ-1	Weak	Moderate to Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing GI assets are currently fragmented. Historical assets are poorly acknowledged or celebrated. Land along the edges of Thurmaston and Hamilton provides little opportunity for recreation immediately adjacent to settlements and, in places, acts as a barrier to the countryside rather than a gateway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of new pedestrian gateways along the edges of Thurmaston and Hamilton, that bound the GIEZ, could improve accessibility to the countryside. Strengthening and extending existing PRoW could have a positive impact on the strength and accessibility of GI in this area. Improving the quality and accessibility to natural features within GIEZ-1 (i.e. Melton Brook) could enhance their performance as ‘bridges to the countryside’. The opportunity exists to enhance the environmental functions of natural features, for example the land alongside Melton Brook could be further enhanced to provide better flood alleviation. There is an opportunity to improve the promotion of historical features in the landscape (i.e. Roman villa north of Hamilton Grounds Farm which is identified in the Charnwood Local Plan 2011-2028 as 	<p>GIEZ-1 is located north of the Leicester Hamilton Green Wedge. GIEZ-1 is overlain by PGW-1 and is connected along the northern boundary to GW-3 and ASL-L. Land allocated for the North East of Leicester Sustainable Urban Extension is also contained within the boundary of GIEZ-1.</p>

Assessment Area	Purpose Score		Identified Weaknesses	Enhancement Opportunities	Relationship to other designation
	Existing	Potential			
				<p>an ‘at risk’ heritage asset the council is looking at securing improvements for).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GIEZ-1 is an area that could support the provision of a considerable amount of accessible greenspace in line with Natural England’s Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard. • The North East of Leicester SUE could become a key driver for GI enhancement and improving the environmental and recreational function of the landscape in this area. • The new link road proposed as part of the planning application for the SUE could, if suitable mitigation is provided, contribute to a valuable new natural corridor between Thurmaston and Syston, providing a degree of separation between the two settlements which would assist in maintaining their unique identities (in the absence of a specific AoLS designation). Mitigation might incorporate a planting and landscaping scheme which could provide a natural buffer between the two settlements, whilst also providing a sympathetic response to the surrounding landscape 	

Assessment Area	Purpose Score		Identified Weaknesses	Enhancement Opportunities	Relationship to other designation
	Existing	Potential			
				context (which is noted as particularly valuable here, with remnant parkland and tree-lined corridors).	
GIEZ-2	Moderate to Strong	Moderate to Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to GIEZ-2 along the perimeters of the assessment area, at points, is weakly defined, in particular along the eastern edge where the assessment area adjoins Thurmaston. • Settlement edges along the eastern and western perimeters, in places, create a sense of disconnect between Watermead Country Park and the wider communities due to the density of residences and weakly defined links between the neighbourhoods and country park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity exists to improve the interrelationship between GIEZ-2 and the settlements of Birstall and Thurmaston. There may be opportunities to introduce ‘green corridors’ into the wider neighbourhoods that better connect with Watermead Country Park. There may also be an opportunity to improve the relationship between GIEZ-2 and Syston to the north of the assessment area. • Focusing on improving access along the perimeters of the assessment area could help to maximise the potential of GI assets, such as Watermead Country Park, and the roles they play within the surrounding communities; including fostering community cohesion and contributing to an improved quality of life. • The Watermead Regeneration Areas identified in the Charnwood Local Plan 2011-2028 provide a good opportunity to 	GIEZ-2 is located within the same area as GW-2, the Soar Valley North Green Wedge. This area also forms part of the River Soar Corridor, identified as a strategically important GI network in the Charnwood Local Plan 2011 to 2028 and the 6 C’s Green Infrastructure Strategy. GIEZ-2 is adjacent to two Areas of Local Separation with ALS-G, between Wanlip and Birstall, to the west and ALS-K, between Syston and Thurmaston, to the east.

Assessment Area	Purpose Score		Identified Weaknesses	Enhancement Opportunities	Relationship to other designation
	Existing	Potential			
				improve connections between Watermead Country Park, Thurmaston and Syston.	
GIEZ-3	Moderate	Moderate to Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools and sports facilities along the edges of Anstey appear to make minimal use of the adjacent countryside. Little connectivity with the wider environmental assets of Bradgate Park and Cropston Reservoir (SSSI) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GIEZ-3 is within close proximity to the valuable environmental assets of Bradgate Country Park, an area of which is a SSSI and forms part of the wider Charnwood Forest Regional Park. There is an opportunity to improve pedestrian links between this area and the settlements of Cropston, Anstey and Thurcaston in order to improve accessibility and use of the area. Diversification of land use surrounding Anstey, in particular along the northern edge where agriculture is prominent, could improve the amount of accessible greenspace in close proximity to residences. 	GIEZ-3 encompasses parts of GW-1, ALS-F and ALS-M. GIEZ-3 is also adjacent to the Charnwood Forest Regional Park, located immediately north of the assessment area.
GIEZ-4	Moderate	Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The M1 motorway has caused fragmentation of GI assets on either side. Limited number of motorway crossing points restrict the ease of access to the countryside, the motorway also acts as a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to form new pedestrian gateways along the settlement edges of Shepshed and Loughborough. Fragmented PRoW networks could be strengthened to improve connections between Shepshed and Loughborough. A number of historical features reside in Garendon Park that could become key 	Much of the eastern area of GIEZ-4, in between Loughborough and Shepshed, encompasses PALS-2. Land in this part of the assessment area has also been allocated for the West of Loughborough Sustainable Urban Extension. GIEZ-4 is in close proximity to

Assessment Area	Purpose Score		Identified Weaknesses	Enhancement Opportunities	Relationship to other designation
	Existing	Potential			
			barrier between Shepshed and the eastern part of GIEZ-4.	attractors within the GIEZ (Garendon Park is identified as ‘at risk’ heritage asset within the Charnwood Local Plan 2011-2028). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is the potential to improve the usability of important green corridors within GIEZ-4, in particular along Black Brook and Charnwood Forest Railway, these could play an important role in providing continuous pedestrian routes through the countryside. • The West of Loughborough Sustainable Urban Extension could be a key driver for GI enhancement and improving pedestrian access within this area. It will also allow for improvements to “At Risk” Heritage assets • The 6C’s GI Strategy identifies this area as lacking accessible open space in relation to Natural England’s Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard. There is an opportunity for GIEZ-4 to support the provision of a considerable amount of accessible greenspace in regards to addressing this. GIEZ-4 is also well positioned to perform as a gateway, with improved connectivity, to the Charnwood 	the Charnwood Forest Regional Park, located immediately south of the assessment area.

Assessment Area	Purpose Score		Identified Weaknesses	Enhancement Opportunities	Relationship to other designation
	Existing	Potential			
				Forest Regional Park for the communities of Loughborough and Shepshed.	
GIEZ-5	Weak to Moderate	Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing GI assets and PRoW are currently disconnected from Loughborough or one another and are unable to function to their potential. PRoW away from Loughborough are also poorly defined or broken in places. Greenspaces immediately adjacent to Loughborough are unsuitable for recreation due to industrial and agricultural influences. Key gateways along the edge of Loughborough are poorly defined or celebrated. Lack of accessible natural open space is an issue highlighted within the Charnwood Open Spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loughborough’s Industrial Heritage Quarter, identified as an area for future regeneration within the Charnwood Regeneration Strategy, provides an opportunity within GIEZ-5 to integrate GI enhancements with new development. There is an opportunity to positively integrate public accessibility with existing GI assets such as Loughborough Big Meadows. The opportunity exists to increase the provision of recreational open space along the eastern edge of Loughborough. The existing PRoW network could be strengthened through connecting areas that are currently fragmented. The Grand Union Canal acts as a key piece of infrastructure from which these pedestrian networks can coincide. There is potential to enable car parking off Moor Lane to improve access for visitors to the waterway and related assets within the 	GIEZ-5 is located independently from the other designation areas included within this study, however PALS-1 is slightly further south between Woodthorpe and Quorn. GIEZ-5 forms part of the River Soar Corridor, identified as a strategically important GI network in the Charnwood Local Plan 2011 to 2028 and the 6 C’s Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Assessment Area	Purpose Score		Identified Weaknesses	Enhancement Opportunities	Relationship to other designation
	Existing	Potential			
			<p>Sport Recreation Study (2010)</p>	<p>proposed Loughborough Industrial Heritage Quarter as outlined in the River Soar and Grand Union Canal Partnership Action Plan 2016/2019.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification of land alongside the River Soar, away from agriculture, could create more opportunities for biodiversity alongside the river. • Embracing the role of the Grand Union Canal as an important pedestrian bridge into the countryside while enhancing its biodiversity value could contribute to the formation of a new ‘green corridor’ into the heart of Loughborough. 	

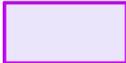
5.2 Boundary Review

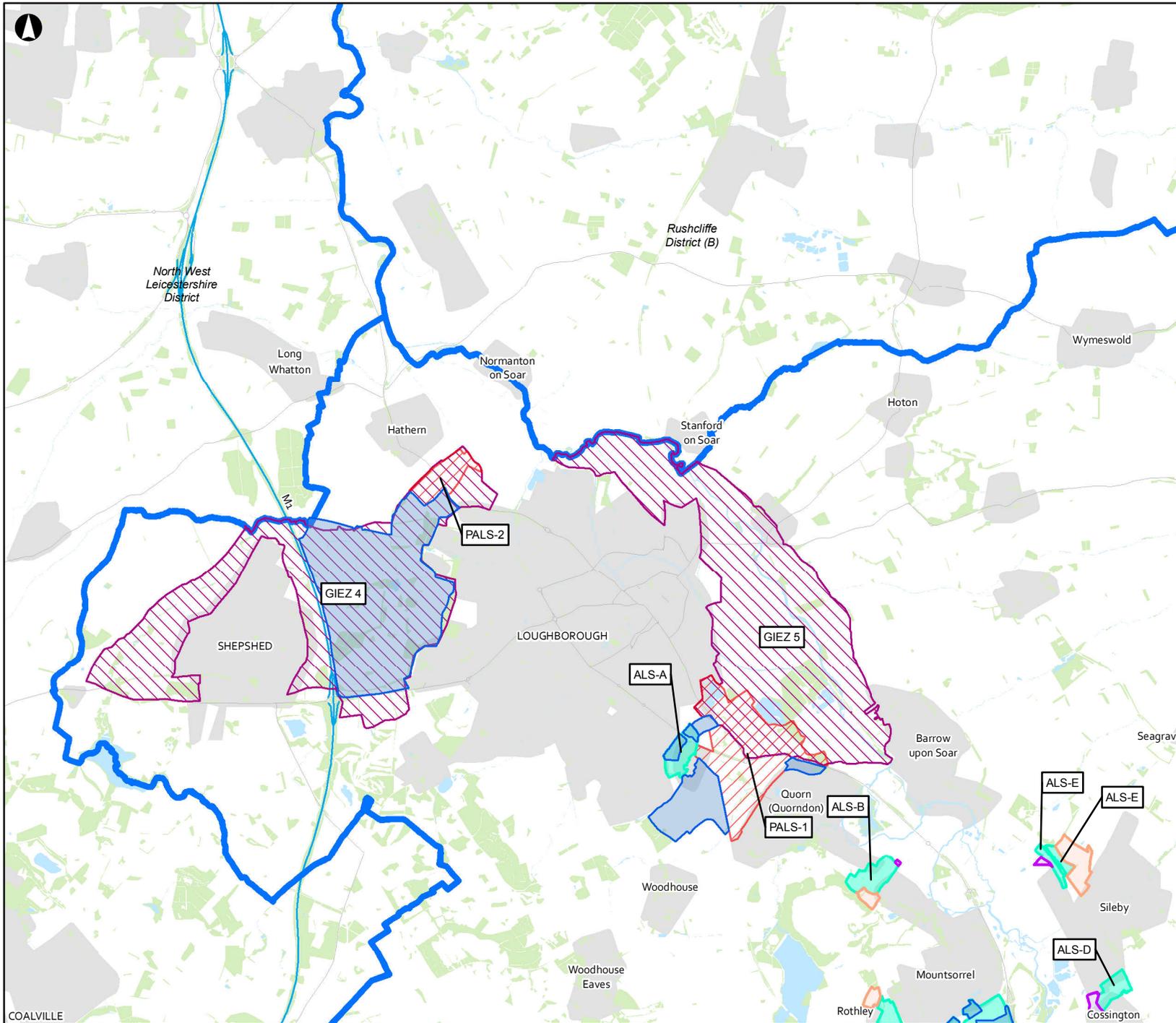
Following the Purposes assessments, the Boundary Review has assessed the strength and durability of the boundaries for the existing Green Wedge and Area of Local Separation designations (GW- and ALS- areas). Where weak boundaries have been noted, or where there have been material changes in the configuration of development since the previous boundaries have been defined, opportunities for boundary strengthening have, where feasible, been identified. These have sought to maintain the broad extent of the designations and ensure their robustness and integrity going forward.

The Review has also sought to incorporate findings from the Purposes assessment, taking into account proposed Zones of Weakness and Extension Opportunity Areas in identifying proposed boundaries.

Details of the findings from the Boundary Review can be found in Table 5.4 (see legend below), with the results illustrated spatially in Maps 5.1a and 5.1b (overleaf).

Legend

	Zone of Weakness
	Boundary Strengthening
	Extension Opportunity Area
	Area of Local Separation
	Potential Green Wedge
	Potential Area of Local Separation
	Green Wedge

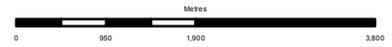


Legend:

- Zone of Weakness
- Boundary Strengthening
- Extension Opportunity Area
- Area of Local Separation
- Proposed Area of Local Separation
- Proposed Green Wedge
- Green Wedge
- Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones
- Local Authority Boundaries

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P1	21/03/2016	GM	OP	ML
Issue	Date	By	Chkd	Appd



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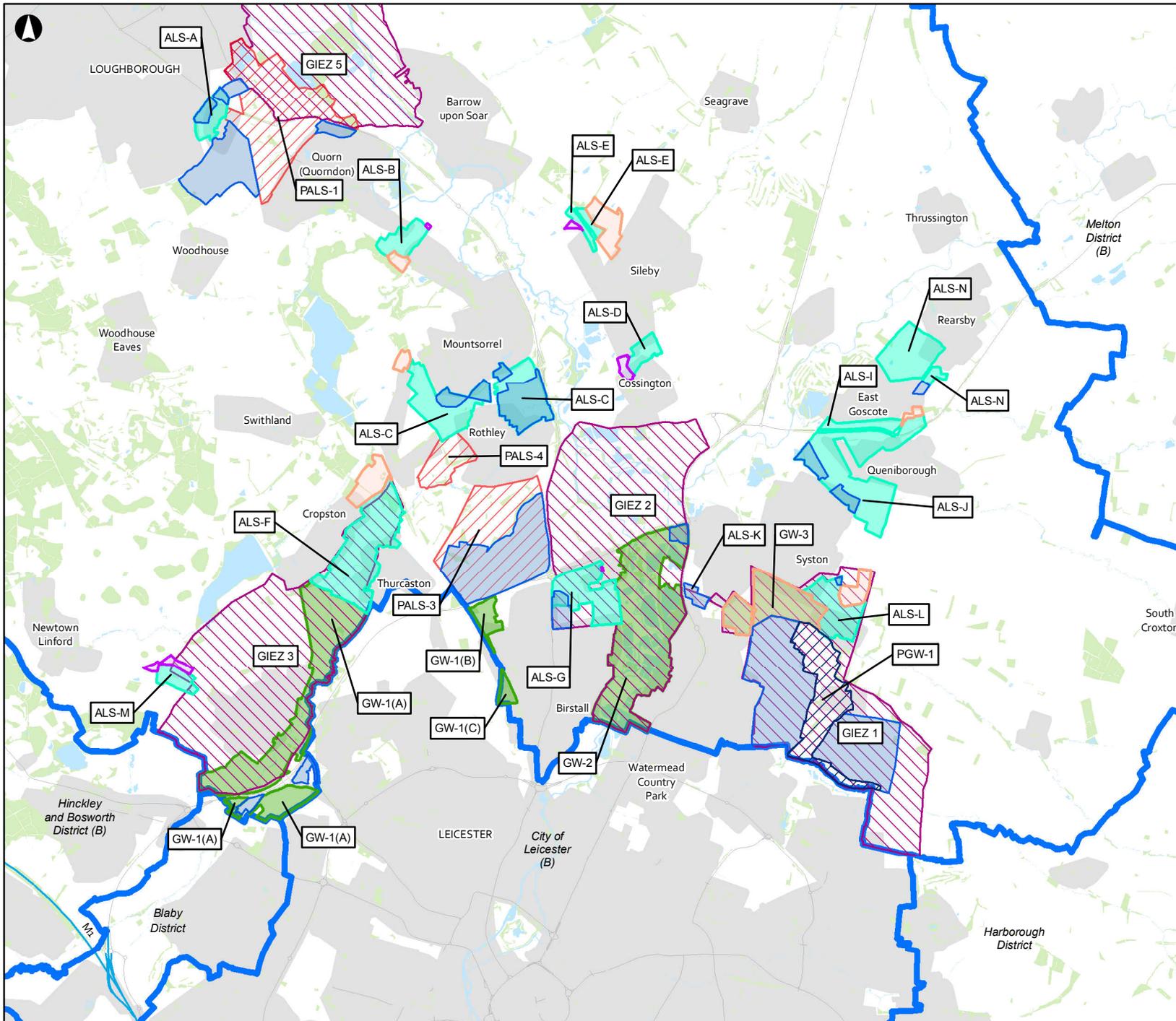
Client
Charnwood Borough Council

Job Title
 Charnwood Green Wedges, Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancements
 Zones, and Areas of Local Separation Study

Assessment Findings

Scale at A4
1:80,000

Job No 247161-00	Drawing Status ISSUE
Drawing No 5.1a	Issue P1



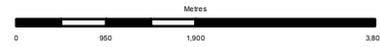
Legend:

- Zone of Weakness
- Boundary Strengthening
- Extension Opportunity Area
- Area of Local Separation
- Proposed Area of Local Separation
- Proposed Green Wedge
- Green Wedge
- Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones
- Local Authority Boundaries

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Issue	Date	By	Chkd	Appd
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Client
Charnwood Borough Council

Job Title
Charnwood Green Wedges, Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancements Zones, and Areas of Local Separation Study



Scale at A4
1:80,000

Job No 247161-00	Drawing Status ISSUE
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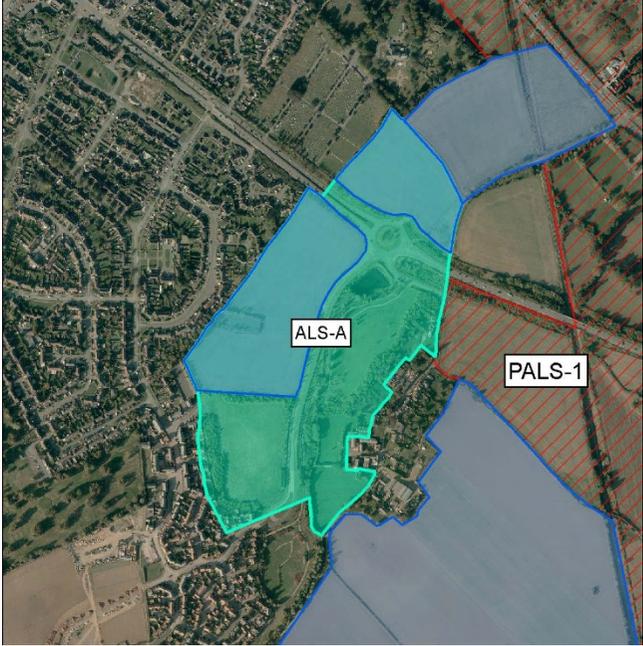
Drawing No 5.1b	Issue P1
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Table 5.4 Findings from Boundary Review

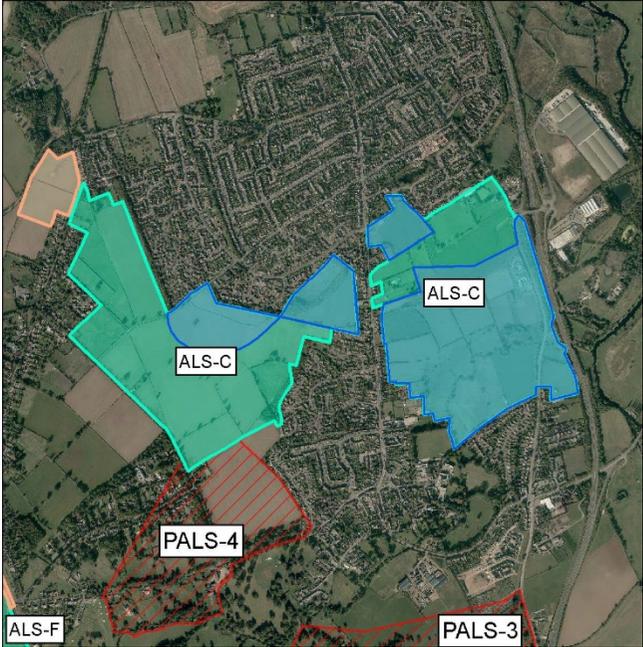
Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
GW-1	<p>GW-1 is predominantly strongly bounded, often by major transport infrastructure such as the A46 and The Great Central Main Line. Minor roads and the rears of properties also frequently form strong boundaries to the assessment area, particularly along the western perimeter of GW-1(A), where Cropston Road and the settlement edge of Anstey form the majority of the western edge.</p> <p>Weaker boundaries exist in the form of shelterbelt planting and minor field boundaries and in some areas the undefined edges of fields. These boundary conditions are more prevalent along the perimeters of GW-1(B) and GW-1(C), where no logical,</p>	Yes – two areas of GW-1(A), south and east of A46, as well as GW-1(B) and GW-1(C).	No	<p>Boundary of GW-1(A), west of Gynsill Lane, should be realigned with proposed development edges associated with planning permissions P/13/2263/2 and P/13/2510/2, whilst ensuring that the edge is still consistent with the Green Wedge in the neighbouring district of Blaby (maintaining the continuity of the designation along the Rothley Brook). The area bounded by Anstey Lane, Gorse Hill and the A46 is physically isolated from the wider GW-1(A) area and the boundary should be aligned with defensible highway features.</p> <p>It is noted that the boundaries of GW-1(B) and GW-1(C) are ‘soft’ boundaries, in that the designation is strategically aligned with a wider Green Wedge extended into Leicester. As such, no boundary</p>	

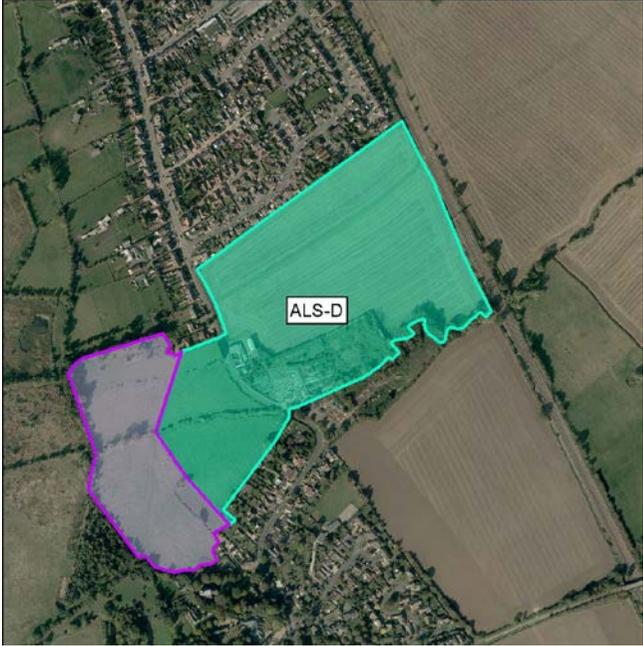
Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
	stronger, alternative boundaries exist.			strengthening is proposed here. These areas are discussed in greater detail in the Strategic Assessment.	
<p>GW-2</p>	<p>For the most part, the boundaries are aligned with logical and defensible features. Along the eastern and western edges, the boundaries tend to be aligned with the well-defined backs of properties at the edges of Birstall, Wanlip and Thurmaston. The northern edge is defined by the A46. It is noted that there are a small number of minor anomalies e.g. around Unicorn Street in Thurmaston where a number of residential properties are included within the boundary.</p>	<p>Yes – area north of Wanlip Road and east of the Grand Union Canal.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>In the north east corner of GW-2, the boundary should be realigned to take into account the area forming part of the outline planning application for a new business park. It is suggested the boundary should be amended to follow Wanlip Road and the Grand Union Canal.</p>	

Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
<p>GW-3 /PGW-1</p>	<p>GW-3 is predominantly strongly defined by rectilinear settlement edges, watercourses and readily recognisable field boundaries. The southern edge is less strongly defined, following weaker, natural features which are intermittent.</p> <p>PGW-1 is an area of search and has no firmly defined existing boundaries.</p>	<p>Yes – GW-3 (also identified as an Extension Opportunity Area for adjacent ALS-L) and those areas where development is proposed in association with the SUE (broad areas to the east and west of Barkbythorpe Road).</p>	<p>Yes – two corridors been identified as approximate basis for the designation of a new Green Wedge: the Melton Brook corridor; and a network of strongly defined fields, aligned with a prominent ridgeline (south-west of Barkby Thorpe).</p>	<p>The proposed boundaries for the new Green Wedge have been aligned with the most prominent, readily recognisable physical features, taking into account (where possible) the illustrative masterplan submitted with planning application P/13/2498/2 for the NE Leicester SUE, and the proposed extent of development. It is recommended that, as further details of this application emerge through reserved matters, the Council take a flexible approach to the precise boundaries to more accurately reflect the built edge of the SUE, whilst ensuring that the principles of the identified Green Wedge are upheld. It should also be noted that, in some cases (for example, north of the Melton Brook and north of Barkby Thorpe Lane) it is suggested that the Council</p>	

Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
				<p>examine opportunities for boundary strengthening as part of future reserved matters applications in relation to the SUE.</p>	
<p>ALS-A</p>	<p>Main Street forms a strong defensible eastern boundary. Woodland on part of the eastern boundary and shelterbelt planting, an established line of vegetation and residential properties on parts of the western boundary form moderate boundaries to the AoLS.</p>	<p>Yes - two areas, west of Allendale Road and north of the A6004</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>In the west of ALS-A, the boundary should be realigned to take into account the planning application for 130 residential dwellings. The suggested alternative boundary follows the A6004 to the north, Allendale Road to the east of the application area and a dense line of tree and scrub planting to the south.</p> <p>In the north of ALS-A, the boundary should be realigned in response to the planning application for 200 residential dwellings. The suggested alternative boundary should align with the A6004.</p>	

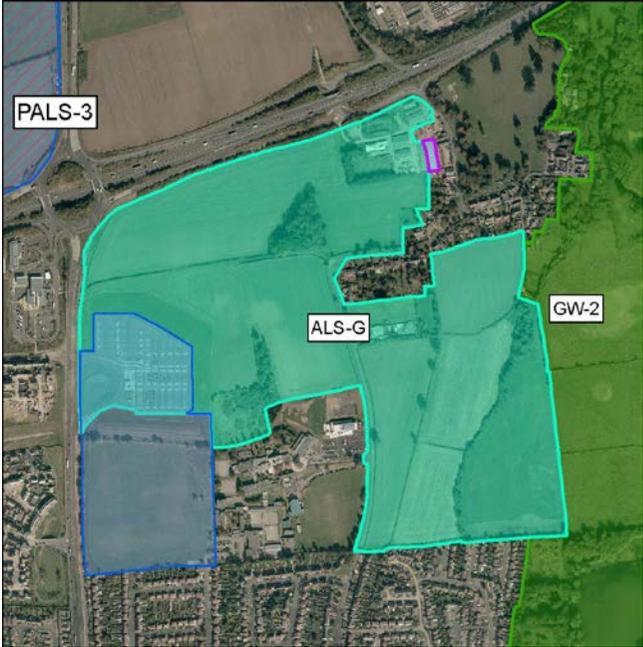
Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
ALS-B	<p>Wood Lane and Granite Way provide strong defensible boundaries along the western and parts of the eastern edges. While the northern edge is predominantly logical, following the backs of properties, a small section cuts through the grounds of the Quorn Grange Hotel and does not follow a recognisable feature.</p> <p>Parts of the northern, eastern and southern edges are bounded by weakly defined field boundaries with sparse vegetation.</p>	No	<p>Yes – a small area to the south-east (north of Wood Lane)</p>	<p>The southern edge of ALS-B should be realigned with the stronger boundary features of Wood Lane and a belt of mature deciduous tree cover that currently defines field extents.</p>	

Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
ALS-C	<p>The western part of the AoLS has strong defensible boundaries to the west in the form of The Ridings Road and Gipsy Lane, and on parts of the northern boundary in the form of West Cross Lane and Swithland Lane. There are weaker boundaries on all other sides comprising of shelterbelt planting and the back gardens of residential properties.</p> <p>The eastern part of ALS-C has strong defensible boundaries to the east in the form of Loughborough Road and partly to the south in the form of Homefield Lane. A small part of the western boundary constitutes a strong boundary in the form of Mountsorrel Lane. There are weak boundaries on all other sides comprising of field boundaries, and the</p>	<p>Yes – two broad areas east of Mountsorrel Lane, a third small area west of Mountsorrel Lane in the north of ALS-C and a fourth coinciding with a planning application for 130 dwellings adjacent to West Cross Lane.</p>	<p>Yes – area west of Swithland Lane.</p>	<p>The boundary should be extended westwards to the north-west of ALS-C, following a mixture of dense tree and scrub planting and well defined field boundaries.</p> <p>The western half of ALS-C should also be realigned to the boundary of the planning application for 130 dwellings. Furthermore, the AoLS should be realigned to exclude the small parcel of land bounded by properties in the north.</p> <p>It is suggested that the eastern half of ALS-C is realigned to take into account the planning application for 45 dwellings to the north of this area. Much of the southern area within this half of the AoLS should be realigned as a result of the planning application for 250 dwellings. However, the realignment should consider the undeveloped land within the planning application which</p>	

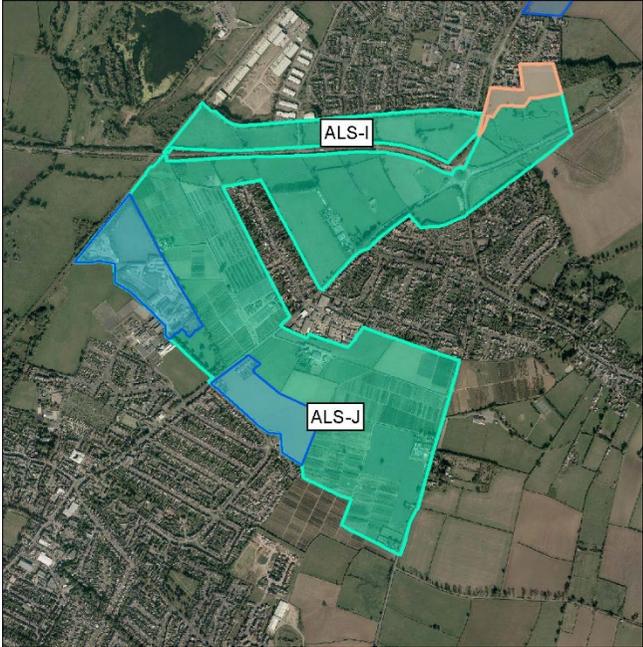
Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
	back garden of residential properties.			could provide a degree of settlement separation, as such the suggested boundary takes this into account and follows the extents of proposed built form.	
ALS-D	The AoLS is bounded by defensible features to the north, south and east, consisting of the hard settlement edge of Sileby, a small brook and the railway line. The boundary to the west is weakly defined and does not appear to follow a logical or readily recognisable feature.	No	No	The western edge of ALS-D should be realigned to the stronger alternative boundary features consisting of dense tree and scrub vegetation at the edges of fields.	

Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
ALS-E	Existing boundaries do not generally follow readily recognisable, durable boundary features. The western boundary cuts across fields and through buildings. Similarly, part of the eastern edge is not logically defined, simply cutting across open land. To the south and north, at the settlement edges, the boundaries are more robust, following a mixture of dense linear planted buffers and well defined edges of properties.	No	Yes – wider area to the north / east, extending to the edge of Sileby	<p>It is suggested that the eastern perimeter of ALS-E should be expanded to the edges of surrounding field boundaries in order to prevent further coalescence of Barrow Upon Soar and Sileby. The suggested boundary follows distinguished field boundaries and the backs of properties to the east and dense tree and scrub planting to the north.</p> <p>Although it was recognised that the western boundary doesn't appear to follow any durable feature, there were no suitable alternatives identified.</p>	

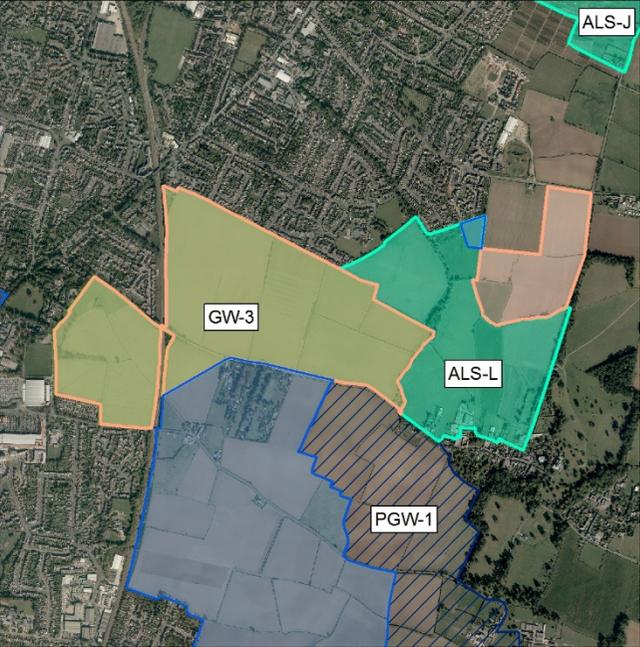
Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
ALS-F	<p>A strong defensible northern boundary exists in the form of The Great Central Railway and on a small part of the eastern boundary in the form of Anstey Lane.</p> <p>The edge of established development along parts of the western and part of the eastern boundaries provides moderate boundaries on that side.</p> <p>The weaker boundaries consist of field boundaries, vegetation and a PRoW along the southern boundary and on parts of the eastern and western boundaries.</p>	No	Yes – area north of Station Road	The field boundaries and woodland plantations to the north of Station road, at the northern extents of ALS-F, provide a stronger and more logical alternative boundary for the AoLS.	

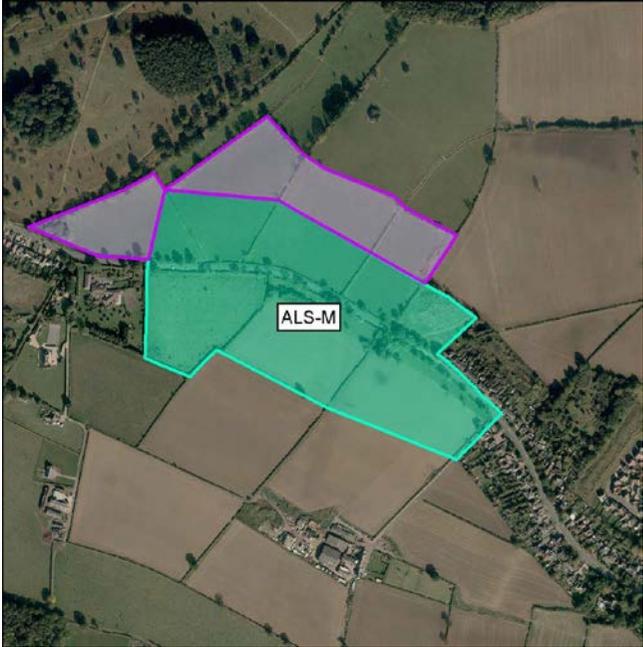
Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
<p>ALS-G</p>	<p>To the north and west, the A46 and A6 are permanent and defensible boundaries. Similarly, to the east, the AoLS is bounded by a strongly defined, established planting buffer at the edge of the Watermead Country Park. The edges of Wanlip and Birstall are largely rectilinear and also strongly defined.</p> <p>There are a small number of areas where the boundary cuts across open land and is aligned with features which are not readily recognisable, specifically: to the rear of properties on Rectory Road; and at the edge of Cedars Academy.</p>	<p>Yes – park and ride facility and playing fields at the western edge of the AoLS.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The boundary should be realigned to take into account the park and ride facility located along the western edge of the AoLS. It is suggested the amended boundary follows the outer extents of hard surfacing. Additionally, it is not judged that the area of playing fields will function as part of the AoLS and the boundary should be realigned with topographical features and/or planted features to ensure a logical boundary north of Cedars Academy.</p>	 <p>The map shows an aerial view of a residential and green area. A large green-shaded region is outlined in cyan and labeled 'ALS-G'. To its north-west, a blue-shaded area is labeled 'PALS-3'. To its east, a green-shaded area is labeled 'GW-2'. The ALS-G area includes a park and ride facility and playing fields along its western edge. The map also shows roads, buildings, and vegetation.</p>

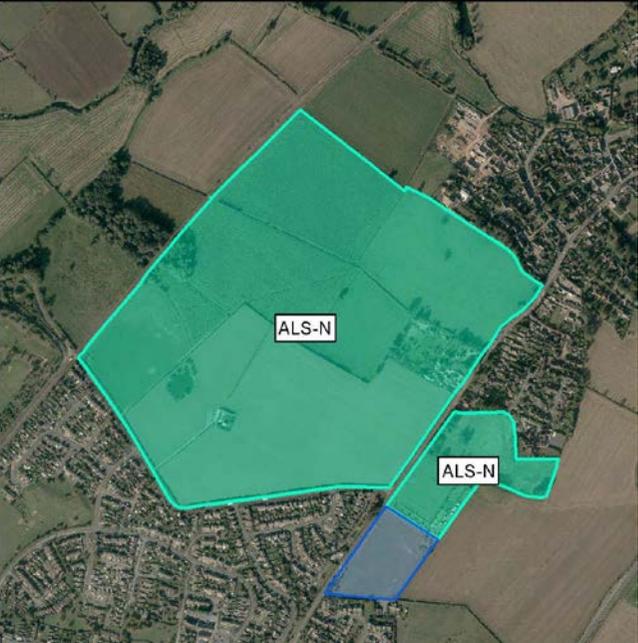
Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
<p>ALS-I</p>	<p>ALS-I is strongly bounded by the Queniborough Brook to the north, the A607 to the south, Melton Road to the east and the Melton-Leicester railway line to the west.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>As the AoLS is already strongly defined, and no Zones of Weakness or Extension Opportunity Areas are identified, no change is proposed.</p>	

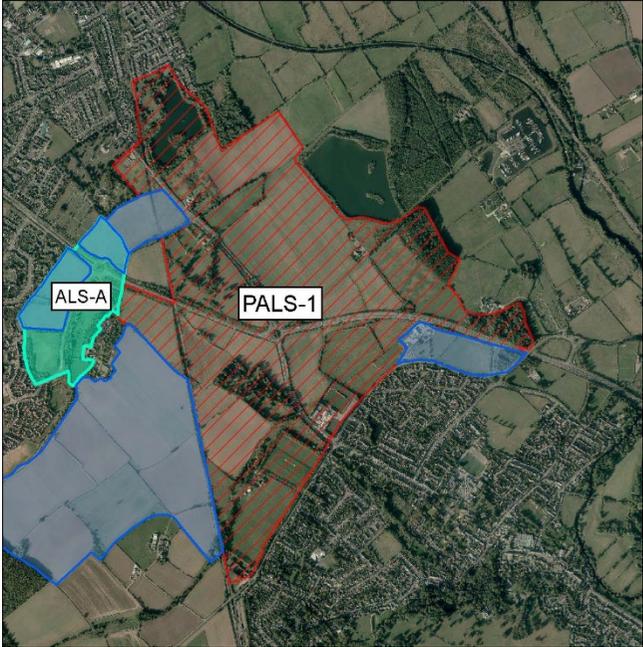
Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
<p>ALS-J</p>	<p>AoLS predominantly strongly bounded by defensible features, consisting of roads, railway lines, established hedgerows along field boundaries and well defined settlement edges. However, the boundary of the AoLS to the east of Melton Road and north of the A607 is weakly defined and does not appear to follow any readily recognisable features.</p>	<p>Yes – two areas in the west at the edge of Syston</p>	<p>Yes – area to the north-east (north of Gaddesby Brook)</p>	<p>In the north-east of the AoLS, the boundary should be realigned with the prominent settlement edge of East Goscote, Melton Road and the edge of a wooded plantation.</p> <p>In the west, at the edge of Syston, the boundary should be amended to reflect the two outstanding residential planning permissions. It is suggested that the boundary is aligned with a mixture of robust planted buffers at the edge of the Queniborough Lodge site and, south of Melton Road, well defined property edges and, subject to possible further refinement, the edge of the residential application site.</p>	

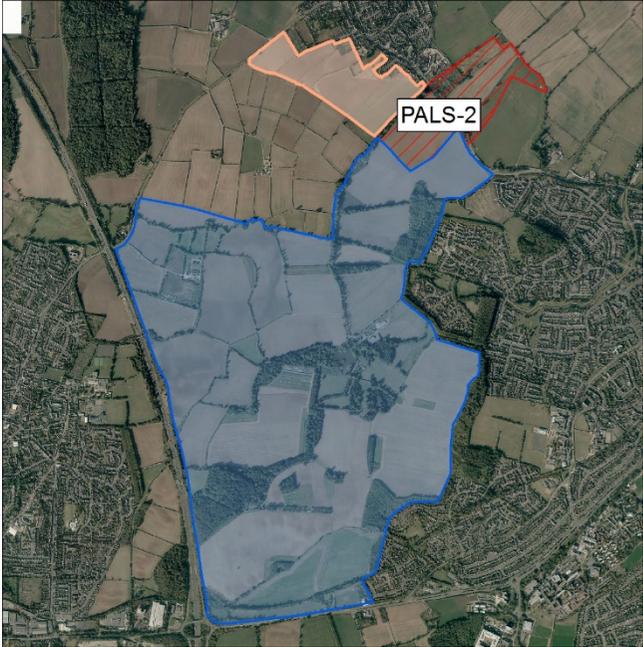
Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
<p>ALS-K</p>	<p>The majority of ALS-K has a defensible boundary, consisting of Melton Road to the east, the A607 to the west, and well defined development edges (rectilinear residential properties to the north, industrial premises bounded by a robust planting buffer to the south). Part of the northern edge of the AoLS cuts through a building at a business park at Granite Way and does not follow a readily recognisable, logical or durable feature.</p>	<p>Yes – the whole area is identified as performing the strategic role weakly.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The purposes assessment found that the entirety of this area does not meet the strategic role of an AoLS and could be considered for an alternative designation.</p>	

Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
<p>ALS-L</p>	<p>The AoLS is predominantly bounded by defensible features, in particular, Queniborough Road to the east, the Barkby Brook to the west (as well as one of its tributaries to the north-east) and the strongly defined settlement edge of Syston. In some cases, hedgerows are adopted as boundaries which are less durable.</p>	<p>Yes – small area in the north (part of planning permission P/13/0925/2, south of Saxby Drive)</p>	<p>Yes – area to the north-east (west of Queniborough Road) and to the west, incorporating former GW-3.</p>	<p>In the north-east of the AoLS, the boundary should be realigned to follow Queniborough Road, Barkby Road and the boundary of the outline planning application for 149 dwellings.</p> <p>In response to the small area of weakness in the north of the AoLS, the boundary should be amended to also follow the extents of the outline planning application for 149 dwellings.</p> <p>It is suggested that the area of land to the west of ALS-L and north of Barkby Lane (currently part of GW-3) should be included within ALS-L as it is currently not performing the strategic role of a green wedge, the southern boundary of this area would follow Barkby Lane.</p>	

Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
<p>ALS-M</p>	<p>The parcel has weak boundaries on almost all sides except on part of the south-eastern boundary which is bound by Bradgate Road. The weaker boundaries consists of open fields, vegetation and residential development.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Although no zones of weakness or vital expansion opportunities have been identified, it is suggested that the northern boundary of the AoLS is strengthened by aligning the perimeter with field boundaries, north of Bradgate Road.</p>	

Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
<p>ALS-N</p>	<p>The AoLS has a relatively strong defensible boundary, largely consisting of durable linear features (roads, railway lines).</p>	<p>Yes – Rearsby Roses housing site in the south-east.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The Rearsby Roses site has a strong, rectilinear edge to the north and would constitute a strong alternative boundary for the AoLS in the south-east.</p>	

Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
<p>PALS-1</p>	<p>Area of search – no firmly defined existing boundaries.</p>	<p>Yes - three areas, in the north, south-east and south-west.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The boundary should be aligned to take into account the planning applications in the north of the potential AoLS. The suggested alignment follows the A6004, The Great Central Railway, a minor road and the A6.</p> <p>The boundary should also be aligned in the south-east to take into account the planning application for 44 dwellings alongside the A6. The suggested boundary follows the A6 and the perimeter of the planning application area.</p> <p>It is suggested that the south-western perimeter is aligned with The Great Central Railway until it coincides with a footbridge, at which point the boundary should align to a small hedge-lined track towards Main Street.</p>	

Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
<p>PALS-2</p>	<p>Area of search – no firmly defined existing boundaries.</p>	<p>Yes – central and southern area covered by the submitted outline planning application for the SUE, and area south of A512.</p>	<p>Yes – area to the north-west between the proposed SUE and Hathern.</p>	<p>In the north of the AoLS, the boundary should extend along the rear gardens of residential properties in the south-west of Hathern towards Shepshed Road and follow the alignment of the proposed SUE boundary.</p> <p>As a result of the proposed SUE, the southern extents of the AoLS boundary should be aligned to the northern perimeter of the SUE.</p>	 <p>The map shows an aerial view of a rural and urban fringe area. A large area is shaded in light blue, representing the current Area of Local Separation (AoLS) boundary. A smaller area to the north and west of this shaded region is outlined in orange and red, representing the proposed extension of the boundary. A white box with the text 'PALS-2' is placed over the orange/red area. The surrounding landscape includes fields, roads, and some residential buildings.</p>

Assessment Area	Assessment of Existing Boundaries	Zones of Weakness?	Extension Opportunity Areas?	Alternative Defensible Boundaries	Plan
PALS-3	Area of search – no firmly defined existing boundaries.	Yes – southern area covered by the North of Birstall Direction of Growth. A small area in the north of the AoLS covered by the submitted planning application for 180 dwellings.	Yes – area to the north-west up to Westfield Lane, encompassing Rothley Park Golf Club.	<p>In the north-west of the AoLS, it is suggested that the boundary should extend towards Westfield Lane and align with the rear gardens of properties and dense areas of trees and scrub.</p> <p>The boundary in the north of the AoLS should align with the southern half of the perimeter of the application for 180 dwellings until it coincides with the A6.</p> <p>The southern extents of the AoLS should terminate along the plantation of woodland. The western edge should terminate along The Great Central Railway.</p>	
PALS-4	Area of search – no firmly defined existing boundaries.	n/a	n/a	<i>The area was adjudged not to meet the AoLS purpose and is not recommended for designation.</i>	

5.3 Strategic Re-assessment

Throughout the Study, consideration has been given to the key strategic inter-relationships between the different designations, summarised in Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3. This has included consideration of the role that Green Wedges, AoLS and Urban Fringe GIEZs play collectively, how they function as part of the wider strategic spatial strategy for the Borough, (as well as the consistency with this strategy), and cross-boundary linkages with designations in the wider sub-region. This section, which is categorised thematically, brings together some of the key thinking and messages emerging from this analysis ‘in the round’.

5.3.1 Strategic Green Infrastructure Networks

A key aspect of this Study has been its active consideration of opportunities to enhance and better integrate different areas of GI. While such opportunities have been considered actively through the Urban Fringe GIEZ analysis, indirect consideration has also been afforded throughout the wider assessment, reflecting the explicitly stated purpose of Green Wedges to provide a well-connected ‘green lung’ into urban areas and also recognising the role of AoLS as part of this wider strategic network of GI.

It is also important to recognise links to wider policy. Notably, five GI networks are similarly identified within the 6 C’s Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Charnwood Local Plan 2011 to 2028 Core Strategy for their important environmental, social and recreational roles within the Borough:

1. Charnwood Forest
2. River Soar Corridor
3. River Wreake Corridor
4. Leicester Urban Fringe
5. Loughborough Urban Fringe

These networks span wide areas of the Borough and consequently encompass many of the assessment areas included within this study, several of which adopt important functions within the wider strategic GI network.

For example, **GW-2** (part of **GIEZ-2**) forms an important part of **the River Soar Corridor**, where it intersects the Leicester urban area. It encompasses the Watermead Country Park, a valuable recreational asset for both Charnwood and the northern part of Leicester, and functions as a gateway to the wider countryside with connections northward along the Grand Union Canal and River Soar. It is important that the strength of green infrastructure is protected and enhanced in order to provide maximum benefit to the surrounding communities. This area has also been identified as regionally important in regards to visitor attraction; The River Soar and Grand Union Canal Strategy observes that the area attracts 250,000 visitors annually looking to use the network of footpaths, cycle routes and boating facilities. This strategically important role will be further distinguished upon the provision of a new visitor hub, within Watermead Country Park, that will serve the wider River Soar Corridor.

GIEZ-5, which interacts with a potential new AoLS to the south (**PALS-1**), also forms part of the **River Soar Corridor** at the edge of Loughborough. This area, where key environmental assets and urban settlements interrelate, is strategically important as this is

where environmental, social and recreation demands are most intense and is a gateway to the wider River Soar Corridor

GIEZ-4, which has also been considered through the assessment for designation as an AoLS (**PALS-2**), forms part of the Charnwood Forest network and is another area of strategic GI importance. It is located between Loughborough and Shepshed and, notably, will effectively be incorporated into the urban area through the **West of Loughborough SUE**, designated in the Core Strategy. Consideration should be therefore be afforded to the area's strategically important role as a gateway to the wider sub-regional GI network, whilst also ensuring that open space is successfully incorporated into the development proposals.

The Green Wedges, and many of the AoLS assessment areas around the urban fringes of Loughborough and the Leicester urban area (including Syston, Thurmaston, Rothley and Thurcaston) provide valued opportunities for the urban population to access open space. These include both formal and informal opportunities for recreation, which in the latter case may simply entail public footpaths through areas of open land. The 6C's Strategy highlights deficiencies in the provision of accessible green space in these areas and further open space is required close to settlements in order to meet the national benchmarks outlined in the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard. The ongoing designation of these areas would make a valuable contribution to meeting these aims.

5.3.2 Community Scale Inter-relationships

Whilst it is important to recognise the role of different designations at a strategic level, many also provide an important function at a smaller scale, for example where areas of open space have been highlighted as vital tools for improving deprived areas. The Council have identified a series of Priority Neighbourhoods in Thurmaston, Syston and Loughborough for improvement, two of which coincide with assessment areas or are in close proximity to assessment areas included within this study. The Loughborough East Priority Neighbourhood abuts **GIEZ-5**, whilst the Charnwood South Priority Neighbourhood (Thurmaston) is directly adjacent to **GW-2/GIEZ-2**. As such, access between these neighbourhoods and the assessment areas has been a key consideration as part of the Urban Fringe GIEZ assessments in order to understand the role that these areas can play in improving access to open space and areas of Green Infrastructure. Furthermore, the Priority Neighbourhood profile for Thurmaston identified deprivation in living environment as a key issue in the area, **GW-2/GIEZ-2** is well placed to help to address this issue and is an example of the strategic importance these areas possess at a local scale.

5.3.3 Sustainable Urban Extensions and Strategic Allocations

As highlighted in the Core Strategy, Charnwood must balance the need for new homes and jobs alongside environmental protection imperatives. Much of the Borough's growth and development will be directed to two Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs), which are allocated to areas North East of Leicester and West of Loughborough (between Shepshed and Loughborough). Given the scope and scale of these proposed developments, which are both subject to pending outline planning applications, the Study has attached significant weight to their emerging designs, whilst ensuring that recommendations remain robust and closely aligned with the strategic purposes of different allocations as articulated in policy.

The North East Leicester SUE will significantly alter the relationships between settlements in the south-east of the Borough and involve substantial changes to the configuration of the urban form. A new Green Wedge (incorporating the proposed **PGW-1** and **GIEZ-1**)

would serve an important dual role: incorporating ‘green lungs’ throughout the development area, maintaining and enhancing existing natural corridors to provide a range of recreation opportunities; and maintaining important gaps between unique settlements around the fringes of Leicester.

Linked explicitly to the latter is the functional relationship with other, surrounding areas of open land which, strategically, form a wider buffer between settlements. In particular, in combination with **ALS-L** to the north, the proposed Green Wedge would maintain the important separation between the SUE (Thurmaston) and Syston, as well as the smaller settlement of Barkby. Additionally, taking account of the proposed wider **ALS-L**, incorporating part of the former **GW-3**, there is potential to protect a swathe of open land which, strategically, would form an important strategic buffer immediately to the north of Thurmaston and Syston (north of the Leicester urban area). The proposed boundaries of the proposed area have been designed to be aligned as closely as possible to the proposed pattern of development in the allocated SUE, whilst maintaining important natural ‘corridors’ with the best potential for enhancement for public benefit. It is felt that the Green Wedge would play an important strategic role in guiding development going forward and ensuring the integration of good sustainability credentials into the wider development, though it is recommended that the precise boundaries of the designation are subject to continuous review by the Council to ensure that emerging details submitted under reserved matters applications are reflected and that development form is guided and not unduly restricted.

The West of Loughborough SUE, much of which was previously designated as the Loughborough/Shepshed Green Wedge and considered as a possible new Area of Local Separation as part of this Study (**PALS-2**), would similarly entail a significant outward expansion of the Loughborough urban area. It is judged through the assessment that, as a result of the proposed pattern of development at the western extent of the SUE and the role of the M1 as a substantive physical barrier, the assessment area is likely to play little role in preventing the merging of Loughborough and Shepshed. However, the proposed SUE would also substantially reduce the physical and perceptual distance between Loughborough and Hathern, a smaller settlement of a contrasting character; as such, a buffer has been identified that, if not subject to an AoLS designation, would be vulnerable to compromise (partly as a result of other development pressures identified through this assessment).

It should also be noted that, in general, the Study has sought to ensure the compatibility of any proposed designations with strategic allocations set out in the Core Strategy, reflecting any material changes since previous designations were made. It has also ensured, where possible, that boundaries are aligned with durable, logical features. For example, a small area of **GW-2** has been recommended for removal as it would seem to contradict a consented development associated with the Watermead Regeneration Corridor policy set out in the Core Strategy. Similarly, the emerging proposals associated with the Birstall North Direction of Growth were actively taken into account for the suggested extent of **PALS-3**.

5.3.4 Borough Spatial Strategy

The principle of maintaining the Borough’s historic settlement pattern is a ‘golden thread’ which runs through much of the assessment. Indeed, this is the primary function of the AoLS (and one purpose of the Green Wedges). In the face of substantial pressures from development, it is paramount that the strategic network of countryside and open spaces which maintain these gaps are retained and, where possible, strengthened to ensure their ongoing robustness and integrity.

While such designations often sit in apparent isolation, focused on the most sensitive parts of gaps between settlements, it is important too to recognise that, particularly at the edge of the larger settlements or wider urban areas, that AoLS and Green Wedges can function together to provide a wider strategic gap. For example, the proposed extent of designations at the north-eastern fringe of the Leicester urban area (including Birstall and Thurmaston), encompassing the proposed new Green Wedge (**PGW-1**), **ALS-L**, **ALS-G** and **GW-2**, perform this strategic role. The same can be said of the proposed new AoLS north of Birstall (**PALS-3**), **ALS-F**, and **GW-1** on the north-west side of Leicester.

5.3.5 Cross Boundary Inter-relationships

It is noted that, particularly at the southern edge of the Borough, there are important cross-boundary relationships between the Green Wedges (including the proposed North East Leicester Green Wedge) in Charnwood and the City of Leicester to the south. Assessed alone, some areas of Green Wedge in Charnwood (notably **GW-1(B)** and **GW-1(C)**), which effectively sit in isolation when considered alone, perform a lesser role with respect to the Green Wedge purposes. However, their strategic role as part of wider Green Wedges which traverse local authority boundaries are noted here, and it is important that the links between these areas are recognised by the Council when considering the future extent of the designations.

This is particularly pertinent in the case of the proposed North East Leicester Green Wedge (**GW3 / PGW-1**). While this assessment has recognised the role of the Melton Brook as a strategic, natural GI corridor which would form a natural ‘green lung’ between Hamilton and the proposed SUE, this corridor is effectively split by the Borough boundary with the southern half within the City of Leicester. Cross-authority cooperation will be necessary, going forward, to designate a logical and effective boundary for the Green Wedge.

6 Recommendations

The following section provides the final recommendations arising following the assessments. Table 6.1 describes the recommended designation for each assessment area and sets out the key changes proposed.

The proposed extent of all designations are set out spatially in Map 6.1a and 6.1b (pages 91-92).

Table 6.1 Recommendations following Green Wedge, Area of Local Separation and Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zone Assessments

Assessment area	Designation	Recommendation
GW-1	Green Wedge	<p>Designation largely retained. It is recommended that Zones of Weakness in GW-1(A), south and east of A46, are considered for removal, ensuring that the wider integrity of the designation which crosses into Blaby, Hinkley and Bosworth and Leicester is maintained.</p> <p>GW-1(B) and GW-1(C), which perform less strongly against the Green Wedge purposes, should be retained pending further work by Leicester City Council, recognising the importance of these areas as part of a cross-boundary, strategic designation. This should be kept under review in response to emerging large-scale development proposals in Leicester to the north-east of Beaumont Lees.</p>
GW-2	Green Wedge	<p>Designation largely retained, with a boundary amendment in the north-east to exclude an identified Zone of Weakness aligned with consented Watermead Business Park development.</p>
GW-3 / PGW-1	Green Wedge	<p>Partially designated as a Green Wedge. Significant swathes of the area will form part of the NE Leicester SUE and will not perform against the GW purposes, and as such are not proposed for designation. Furthermore, GW-3 is judged to perform weakly against the purposes and has little physical connectivity with the identified new Green Wedge as a result of proposed development patterns associated with the NE Leicester SUE, and should be considered for an alternative designation (see ALS-L).</p> <p>In identifying the proposed Green Wedge, significant weight has been afforded to the</p>

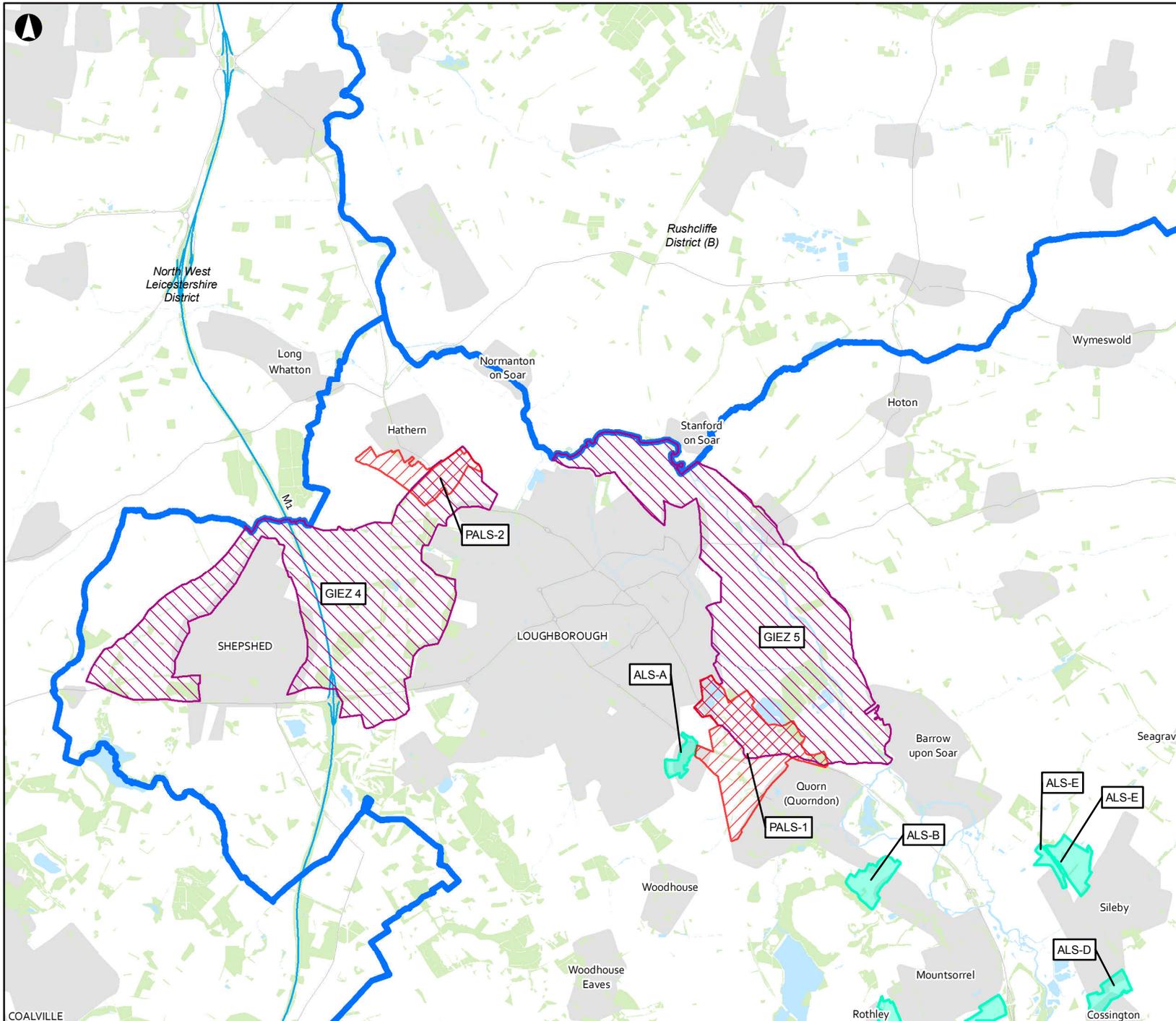
Assessment area	Designation	Recommendation
		emerging Illustrative Masterplan for the SUE, submitted as part of the pending outline planning application, which has been balanced by a logical approach to identifying key GI corridors which might be successfully incorporated into the development, as well as logical boundary features which are able to guide development, in line with the aims of this Study.
ALS-A	Area of Local Separation	Designation partially retained with boundary amendments to exclude Zones of Weakness associated with outstanding planning permissions for residential development.
ALS-B	Area of Local Separation	Designation retained and extended with boundary amendments to incorporate identified Extension Opportunity Area, which will ensure the continued integrity and permanence of the gap between Quorn and Mountsorrel.
ALS-C	Area of Local Separation	Designation partially retained, with an extension to the north-west and substantial boundary amendments to reflect emerging development patterns around the edges of Rothley and Mountsorrel. Proposed new area will ensure a physical gap is retained between these settlements, despite a degree of perceptual merging as a result of existing and consented developments.
ALS-D	Area of Local Separation	Designation retained and extended to strengthen boundaries to the south-west. This change would also enhance the integrity and logic of the designation and ensure the narrow gap between Cossington and Sileby is not compromised.
ALS-E	Area of Local Separation	Designation retained and substantially extended to incorporate wider areas to the south and east, recognising the role that this area plays in maintaining a wider, open swathe of open land between Sileby and Barrow on Soar. Additionally, recognised boundary strengthening to in the north-west to ensure the ongoing integrity of the designation.

Assessment area	Designation	Recommendation
ALS-F	Area of Local Separation	Designation retained, with boundary amendments on the northern edge to align the boundary of the designation with more logical and durable features.
ALS-G	Area of Local Separation	Designation partially retained, with boundary amendments to exclude a small Zone of Weakness on the western edge.
ALS-I	Area of Local Separation	Designation retained with no proposed amendments.
ALS-J	Area of Local Separation	Designation partially retained with boundary amendments to exclude two Zones of Weakness in the west at the edge of Syston and incorporate an Extension Opportunity Area in the north-east at the edge of East Goscote.
ALS-K	Alternative Designation	Whole area is identified as performing weakly against the AoLS purpose and is identified as a Zone of Weakness. The Council should consider what designation might be appropriate for this area.
ALS-L	Area of Local Separation	Designation partially retained and extended to incorporate Extension Opportunity Zones to the north-east and west (encompassing part of former GW-3), which will ensure the robustness of this designation in preventing the merging of Barkby, Syston and Thurmaston (taking into account the NE Leicester SUE). There is a recommended minor boundary amendment to exclude a Zone of Weakness at the edge of Syston.
ALS-M	Area of Local Separation	Designation retained with a minor boundary amendment to strengthen boundaries to the north.
ALS-N	Area of Local Separation	Designation partially retained, with a recommended boundary amendment to the consented residential development.
PALS-1	Area of Local Separation	Partially designated as an AoLS to ensure the physical gap between Loughborough and

Assessment area	Designation	Recommendation
		Quorn is maintained. Zone of Weakness to the south-west not proposed for designation.
PALS-2	Area of Local Separation	Partially designated as an AoLS to protect the narrow physical gap between Loughborough and Hathern, and extended to incorporate a proposed Extension Opportunity Zone to the north-east. The majority of the area, much of which will form part of the West of Loughborough SUE, is identified as a Zone of Weakness and not proposed for designation.
PALS-3	Area of Local Separation	Partially designated as an AoLS, and extended to the north, to ensure, in line with the emerging North of Birstall Direction of Growth proposals, that the physical gap between Birstall and Rothley is not subject to further compromise. The south of the area, which will form part of the strategic development area, is not proposed for designation.
PALS-4	No Designation	The purposes assessment found that PALS-4 does not meet the AoLS strategic role and, as such, no new designation is proposed.
GIEZ-1	Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zone	This area is recommended for designation. Enhancements should focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving accessibility to the countryside along the edges of Thurmaston and Hamilton. • Strengthening the existing PRow network. • Enhancing the recreational and environmental qualities of land immediately adjacent to settlements. • Improving the educational offer and acknowledgment of historical features in the landscape. • Ensuring a buffer between Thurmaston and Syston in association with proposed link road.
GIEZ-2	Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure	This area is recommended for designation. Enhancement should focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the interrelationship and influence of Watermead Country Park with

Assessment area	Designation	Recommendation
	Enhancement Zone	<p>the wider neighbourhoods of Birstall and Thurmaston.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving accessibility to the area and the quality of gateways along the east and west perimeters of the enhancement zone.
GIEZ-3	Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zone	<p>This area is recommended for designation. Enhancement should focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving pedestrian links between Anstey, Cropston, Thurcaston and the wider environmental assets of Bradgate Country Park and the Charnwood Regional Forest. Diversification of land use immediately adjacent to settlements to enhance the provision of accessible open space.
GIEZ-4	Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zone	<p>This area is recommended for designation. Enhancement should focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving accessibility to the countryside along the edges of Shepshed and Loughborough. Strengthening the existing PRow network. Strengthening the environmental and recreational role of linear features such as Black Brook and the Charnwood Forest Railway. Enhancing the acknowledgement and appeal of heritage assets within Garendon Park.
GIEZ-5	Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zone	<p>This area is recommended for designation. Enhancement should focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving provision of recreational and accessible open space. Promotion of GI assets, such as the Loughborough Big Meadows, as local visitor attractions. Strengthening the existing PRow network Diversification of land use to enhance the environmental value of the landscape alongside the River Soar.

Assessment area	Designation	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximising recreational and environmental provision along the Grand Union Canal, particularly within Loughborough where the canal is in close proximity to residences.



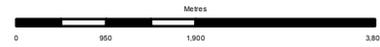
Legend

- Proposed Area of Separation
- Proposed Green Wedge
- Area of Local Separation
- Green Wedge
- Local Authority Boundaries
- Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones

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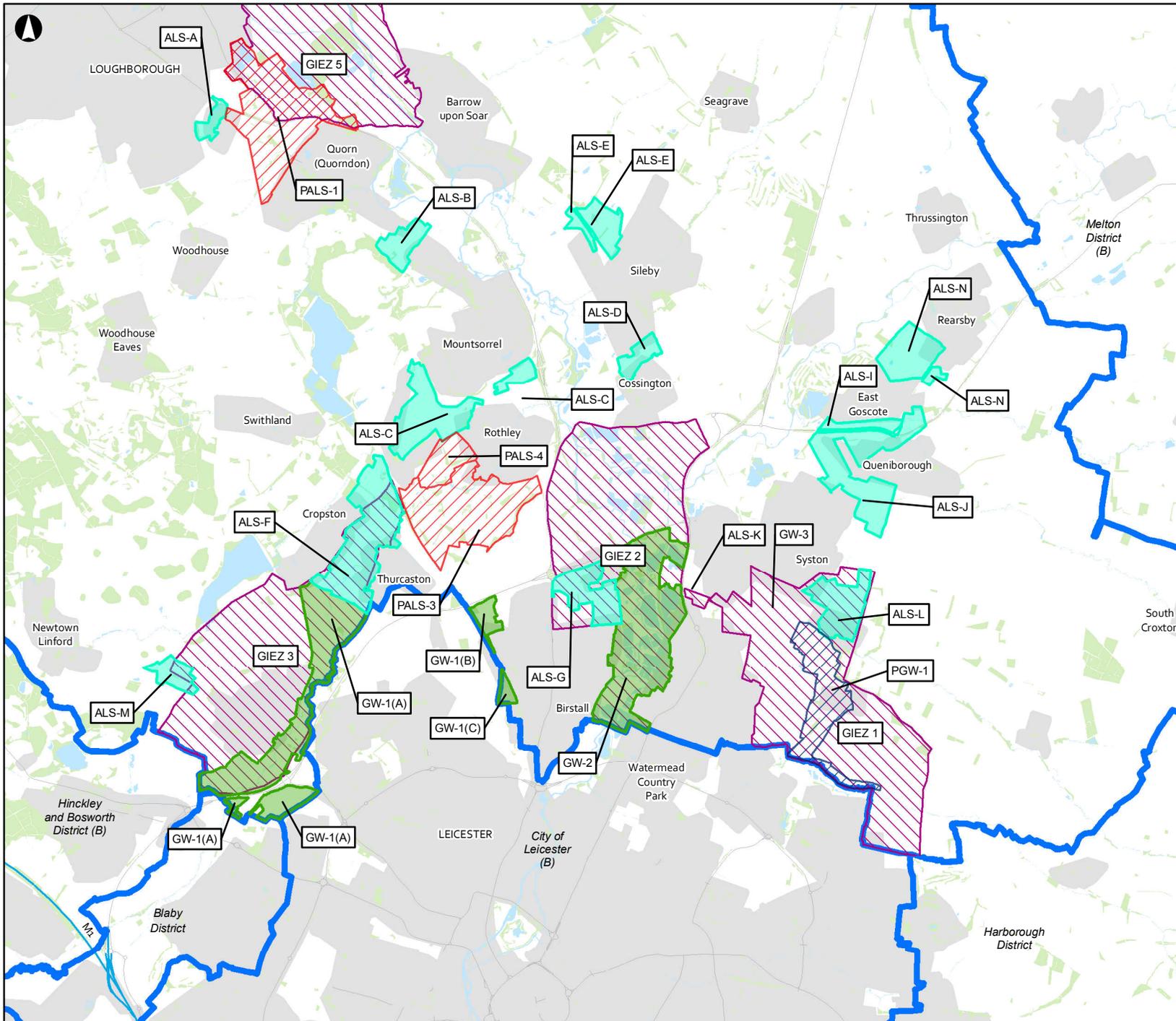
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- Proposed Area of Separation
- Proposed Green Wedge
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- Green Infrastructure Enhancements Zones

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Recommended Designations

6.1 Conclusions

This Study has reviewed the performance of Charnwood's two Green Wedges and 13 Area of Local Separation (AoLS) against their purposes in policy, as set out in the Core Strategy, and reviewed the logic, strength and durability of their boundaries. It has also considered the potential for designation of a new Green Wedge around the NE Leicester SUE, in line with the Core Strategy, and the designation of new AoLS in four potential areas (PALS). Furthermore, it identified five broad assessment areas for potential designation as Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones (GIEZs), assessing their current contribution to 10 functional purposes, developed in line with the sub-regional 6 Cs Strategy and the Countryside Agency's Countryside in and Around Towns strategy. Opportunities to enhance this contribution were also explored.

The assessment of purposes found that, broadly, the AoLS continue to perform an important role in maintaining the settlement pattern in Charnwood and preventing the merging of settlements. It was noted through the assessment that, recently, there have been substantial changes to the patterns of development across the Borough since these areas were first designated. Furthermore, the Borough continues to come under pressure from new developments, risking the compromise of strategic gaps between settlements (in particular, in the south of the borough at the edge of Leicester and around Loughborough).

A small number of Zones of Weakness were identified, which were judged not to perform the strategic role of AoLS, whilst conversely a series of Extension Opportunity Areas were found which, if incorporated into the AoLS designations going forward, would ensure the robustness and integrity of the gaps between settlements. Three of the four PALS were judged to meet the strategic role and are recommended for partial designation.

Similarly, the two Green Wedges broadly meet the four purposes and are noted as playing an important dual role at the edge of Leicester: in planning terms, by maintaining the network of gaps between settlements; and in landscape terms, providing dense corridors of valuable, publicly accessible green infrastructure. Subject to the minor suggested amendments, these areas will continue to play these dual roles throughout the next plan period and beyond.

A thorough review of the boundaries of the AoLS and Green Wedges has led to a series of recommendations which will ensure their durability and integrity going forward.

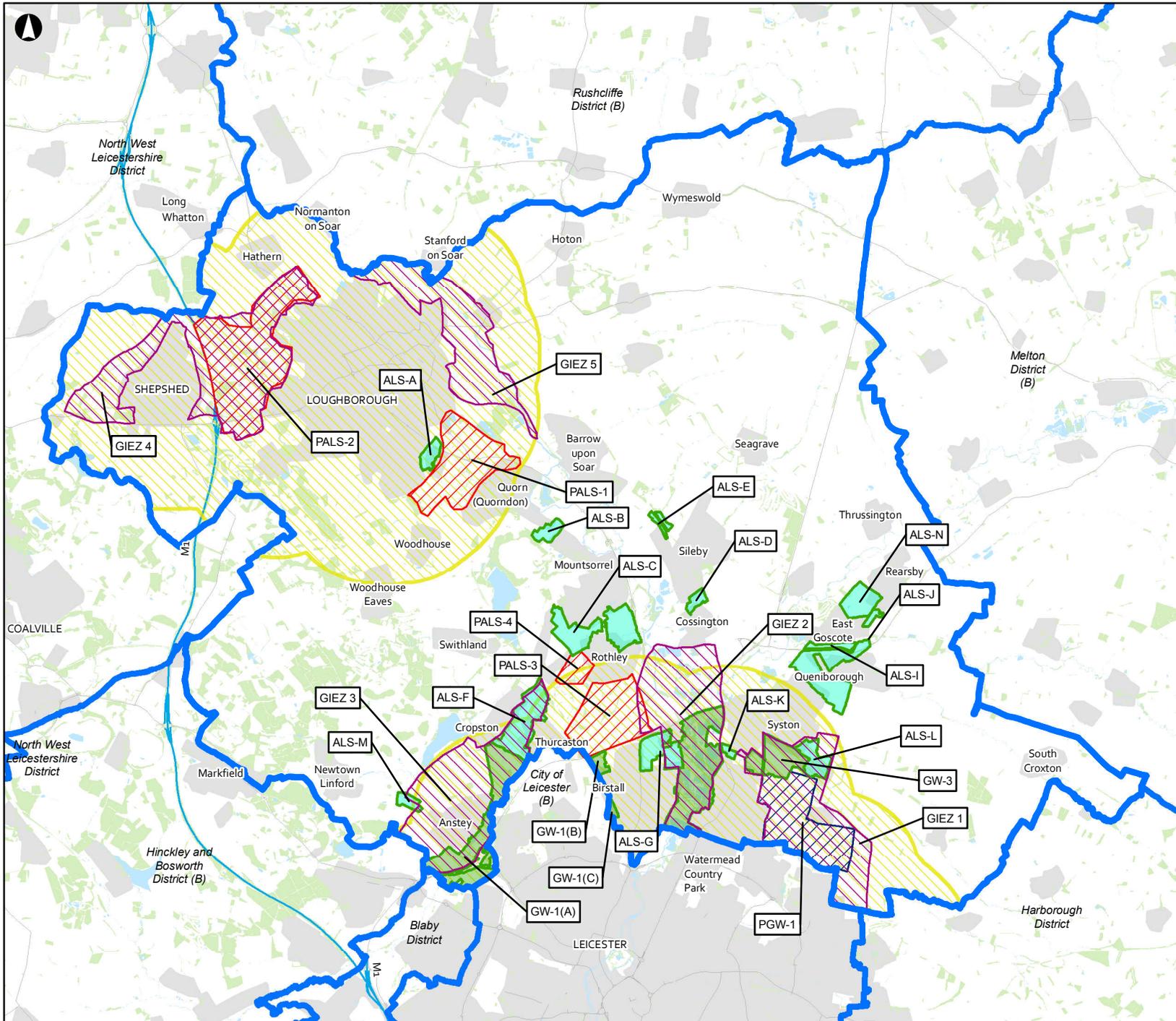
The identified Urban Fringe GIEZ provide broad areas for enhancement and a series of potential enhancement opportunities are identified. The scale of these interventions can range from area wide improvements to localised improvements. These have been identified as indicative zones for enhancement, but the Council may consider how proposed enhancements could extend beyond these areas. It is suggested that boundaries should not serve as to restrict but rather to guide or focus enhancement opportunities on those areas that have the most potential to provide positive impact on the environment and surrounding communities.

The Study has identified, in particular, the need for strategic oversight in the possible implementation of the recommendations. In line with the Duty to Cooperate, further testing of cross-boundary allocations (in particular the Green Wedges) with adjoining local authorities should be undertaken to ensure these areas are considered on a strategic scale. Furthermore, in implementing proposed GI opportunities, the Council should consider how enhancements might complement each other as part of a strategic network at the Borough level, and as part of a broader sub-regional network.

It is important to note that the recommendations set out in this report will not automatically lead to amendments to existing designations. The areas identified through this Study may need to be subject to more detailed assessment to determine the appropriateness and feasibility of adjustments to the Green Wedge and AoLS Boundaries, particularly in areas where the details of consented, outline planning permissions are emerging. Following this work, further decision making by the Council in updating relevant local development plans will determine which areas, if any, might be designated.

Appendix A

Maps



Legend

- Local Authority Boundaries
- Green Infrastructure Enhancements Zones
- Green Wedge
- Areas of Local Separation
- Potential Green Wedge
- Potential Areas of Local Separation
- 2km Urban Fringe

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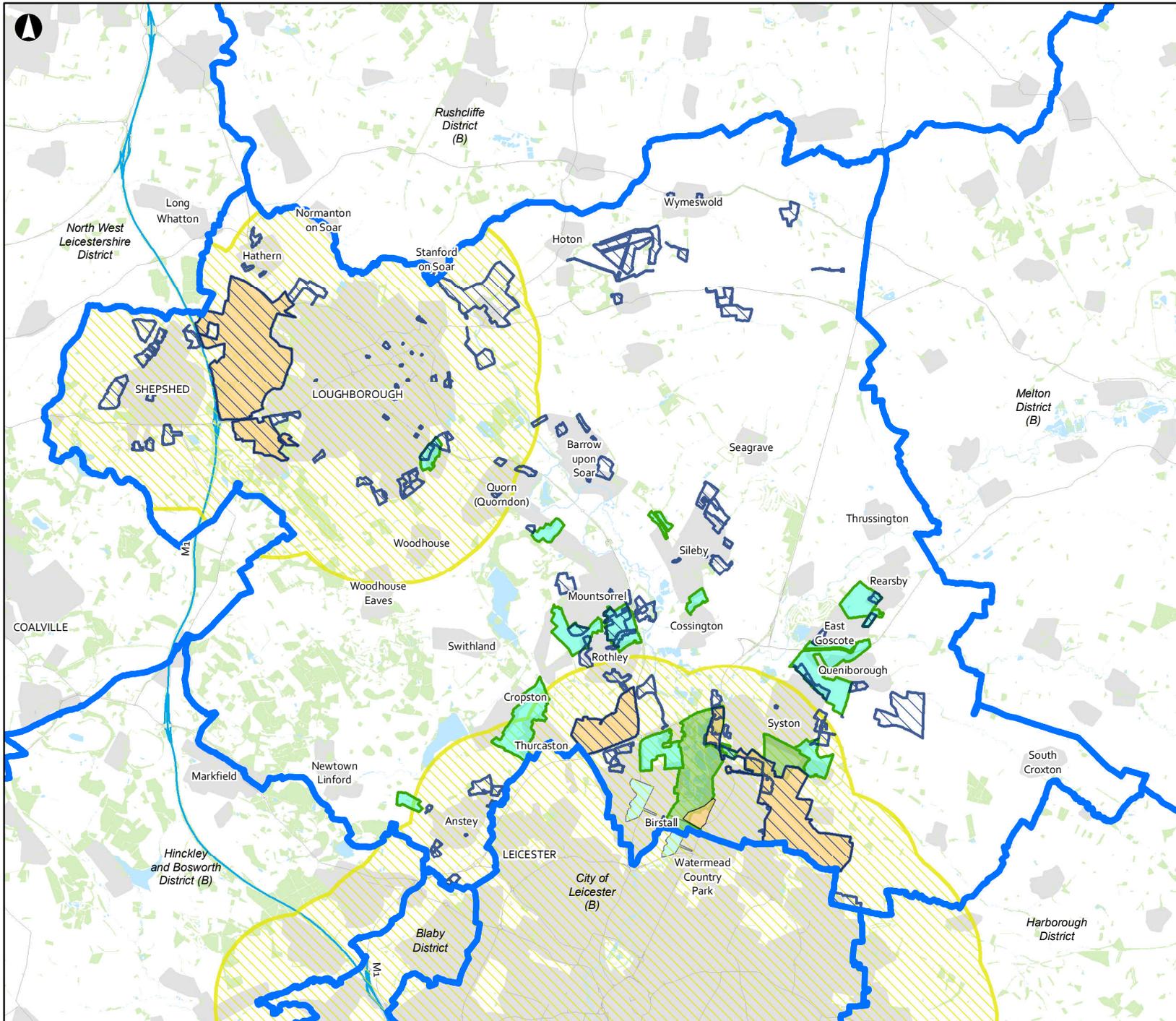
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Legend:

- Strategic Sites
- Green Wedge
- Areas of Local Separation
- Local authority boundaries
- 2km Urban Fringe
- All Major Applications and Allocations

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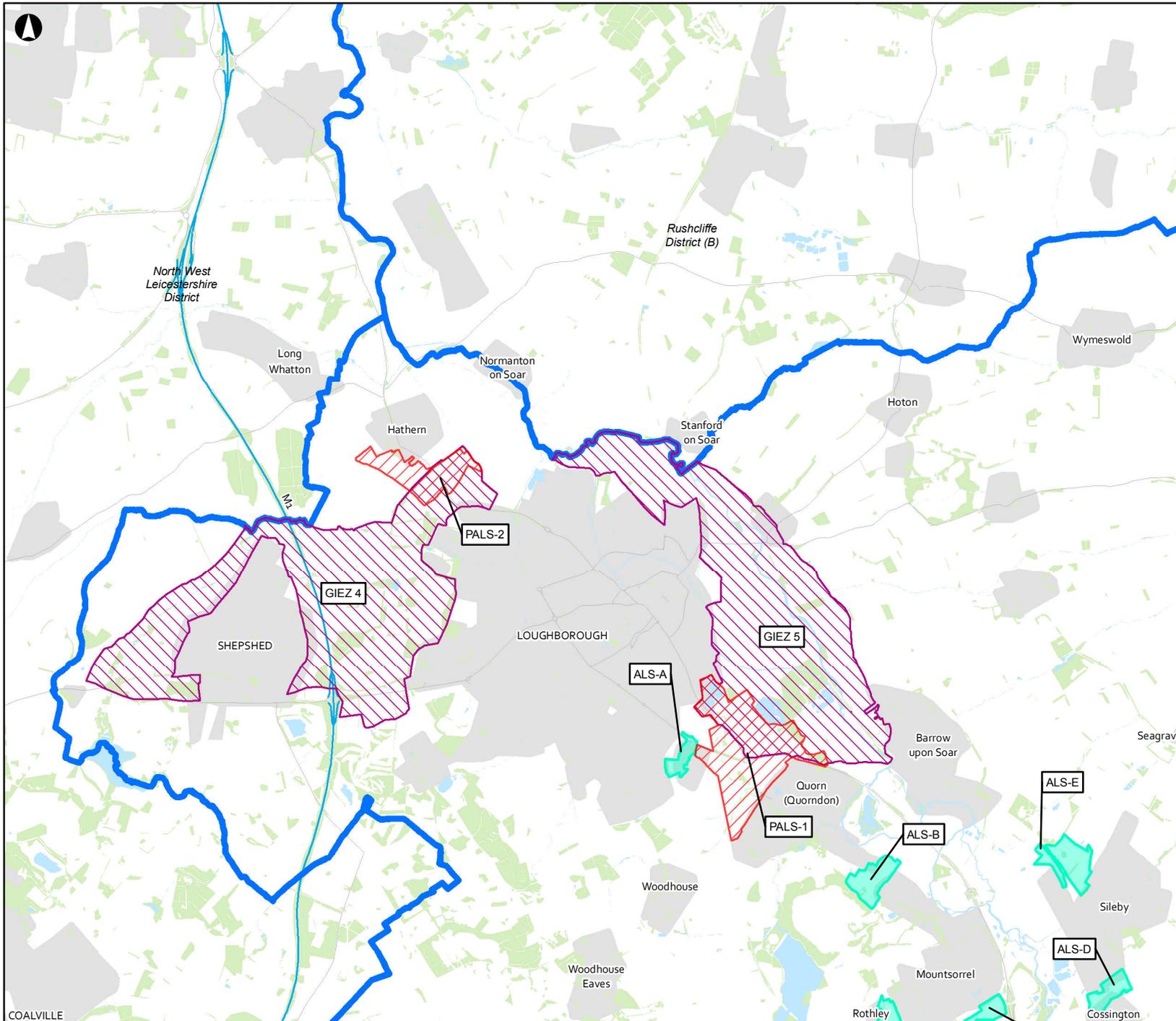
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-  Proposed Area of Separation
-  Proposed Green Wedge
-  Area of Local Separation
-  Green Wedge
-  Local Authority Boundaries
-  Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones

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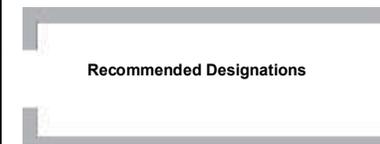


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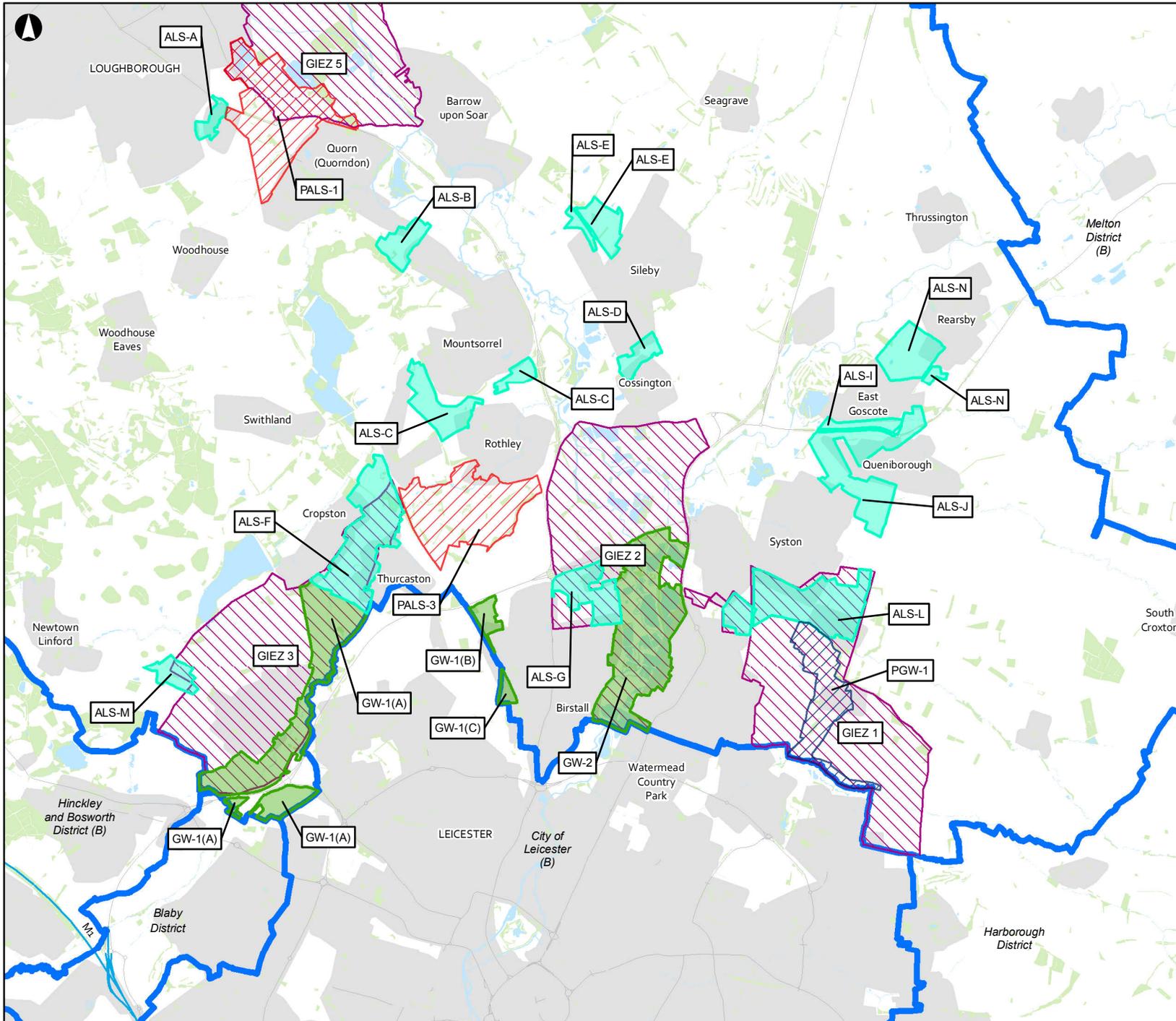
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- Proposed Green Wedge
- Area of Local Separation
- Green Wedge
- Local Authority Boundaries
- Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones

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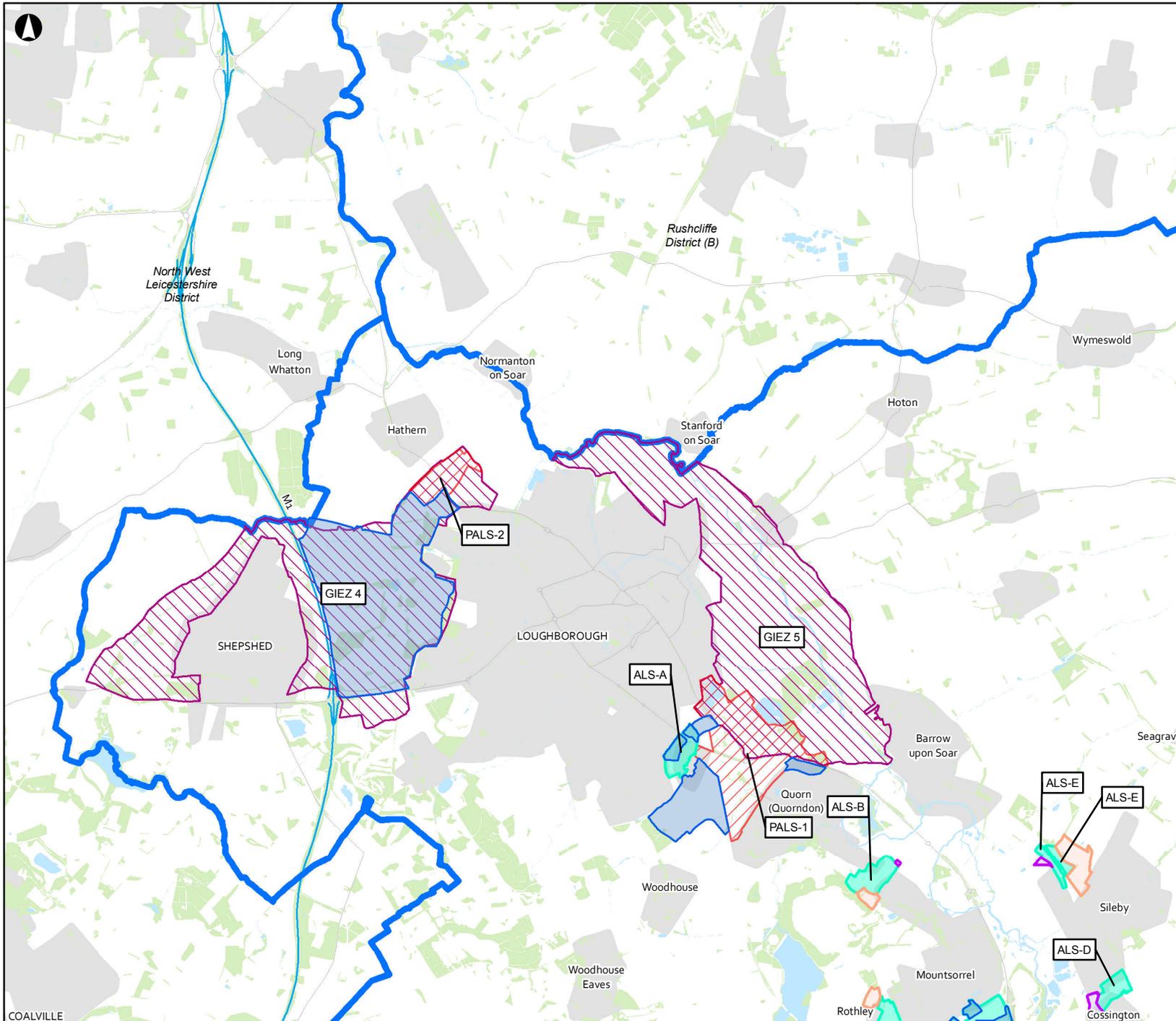
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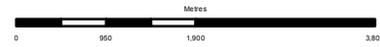


- Legend:**
- Zone of Weakness
 - Boundary Strengthening
 - Extension Opportunity Area
 - Area of Local Separation
 - Proposed Area of Local Separation
 - Proposed Green Wedge
 - Green Wedge
 - Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones
 - Local Authority Boundaries

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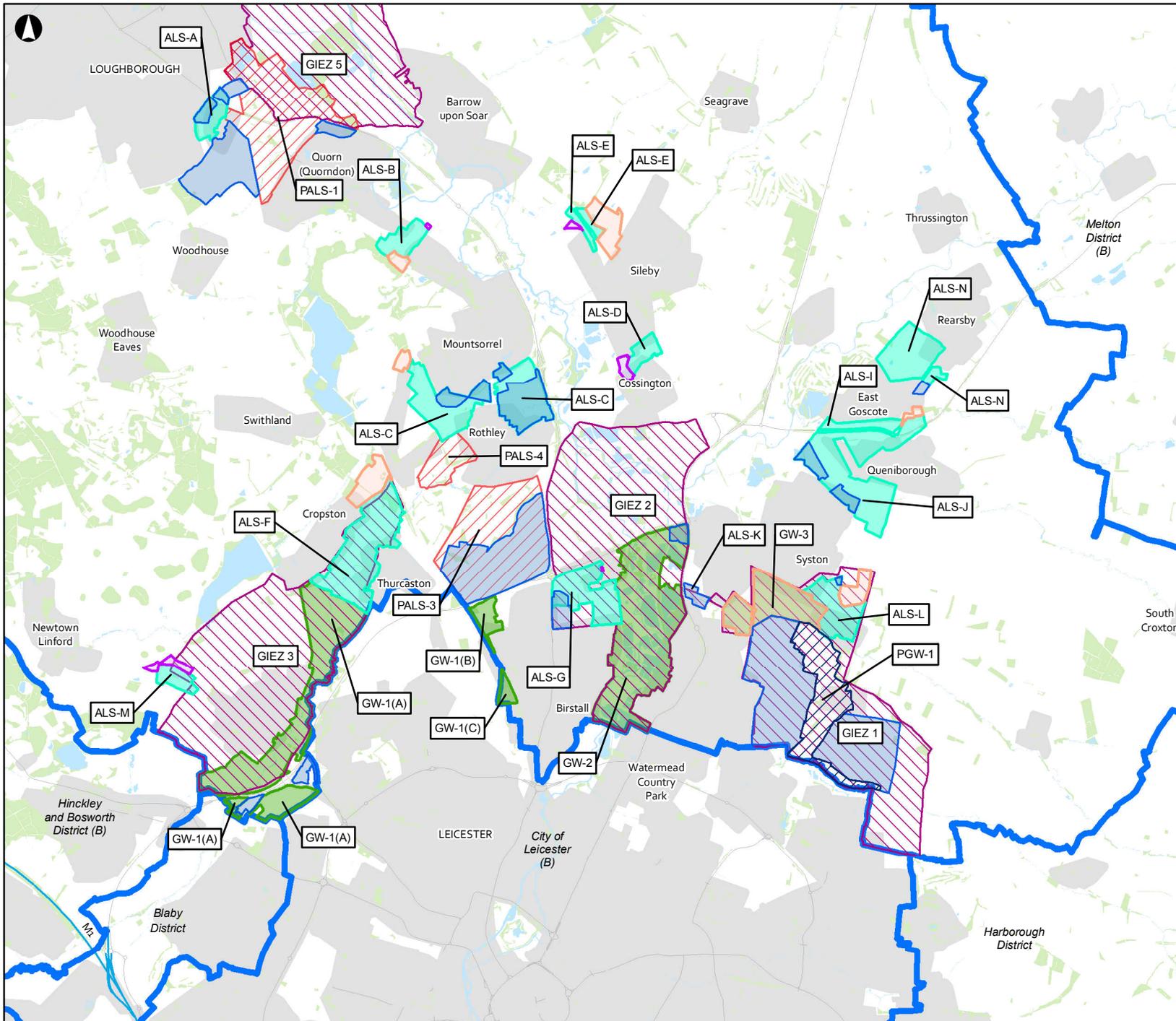
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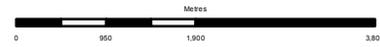
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- Boundary Strengthening
- Extension Opportunity Area
- Area of Local Separation
- Proposed Area of Local Separation
- Proposed Green Wedge
- Green Wedge
- Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones
- Local Authority Boundaries

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Appendix B

Relevant planning applications
within and adjacent to Green
Wedges and Areas of Local
Separation

Site Name	Description	Reference Number	Name of Green Wedge (GW)/ Areas of Local Separation (ALS)	Status of Planning Application Pending/Decided/ Allowed at Appeal/ Dismissed at Appeal
West Loughborough SUE	Outline planning permission for residential development up to 3,200 dwellings; up to 16 ha of employment land of B1/B2 and B8 uses; a mixed-use Community Hub of up to 4 ha comprising a local convenience retail unit (2,000 sqm); up to 1,000 sqm of other A1 retail, A2 financial and professional services, A3 food and drink, B1 business and D1 uses, sites for Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople provision totalling 1 ha; 2 primary schools up to 2 ha each; strategic open space including allotments; access roads and new Strategic Link Road; open space/landscaping and associated works; principal means of access; restoration of Garendon Park and assets; all other matters to be reserved.	P/14/1833/2	Loughborough/ Shepshed GW	Outline Sub. to S106
North East of Leicester SUE	Brief description of works Hybrid application: - Outline permission for Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) of up to 4500 dwellings, up to 13ha of employment land, two local centres, one district centre, one food store, reserved land for traveller site, school and healthcare facilities, allotments, open space and other associated works. - Full permission for new southern link road and associated works For full description see application form.	P/13/2498/2	Syston/Thurmaston ALS	Outline Sub. to S106
Former Rearsby Roses Limited Melton Road, East Goscote	Erection of 60 dwellings.	P/13/1369/2	Rearsby East Goscote ALS	Under Construction
Land at Melton Road, Rearsby,	Site for the erection of up to 66 dwellings and public open space.	P/15/0482/2	Rearsby East Goscote ALS	Refusal

Site Name	Description	Reference Number	Name of Green Wedge (GW)/ Areas of Local Separation (ALS)	Status of Planning Application Pending/Decided/ Allowed at Appeal/ Dismissed at Appeal
Land at Queniborough Lodge, 1446 Melton Road, Queniborough	Conversion of outbuildings to form 7 dwellings, erection of 3 detached garage blocks following demolition of industrial buildings. Erection of a detached dwelling and carport following demolition of existing detached dwelling. Erection of a detached garage block to serve existing dwelling. Construction of access onto Melton Road and associated works.	P/13/1696/2 & P/13/1613/2	Queniborough/Syston ALS	Outline
Land off Millstone Lane, Queniborough	Erection of 101 dwellings with associated works and erection of cemetery.	P/14/0393/2	Queniborough/Syston ALS	Under Construction
220 Barkby Road, Syston	Erection of 148 dwellings and associated works.	P/14/0816/2	Syston/Barkby ALS	Under Construction
Land north of Barkby Thorpe Lane, Thurmaston	Erection of 224 dwellings with associated public open space, landscaping and infrastructure with access off Barkby Thorpe Lane.	P/14/1670/2	Syston/ Thurmaston GW	Pending
Land off Cropston Road, Anstey,	Site for the erection of up to 70 dwellings including highways alterations to The Nook.	P/13/2340/2	Leicester Birstall, Thurcaston Cropston, Anstey, GW	Outline
Land at 129 Cropston Road, Anstey,	Erection of 39 dwellings.	P/15/0963/2	Leicester Birstall, Thurcaston Cropston, Anstey, GW	Pending
Land adj to Gynsill Court	Erection of 57 dwellings with associated access, open space, landscaping and construction of noise attenuation bunds.	P/13/2510/2	Leicester Birstall, Thurcaston Cropston, Anstey, GW	Full
Gynsill Court Mews, Gynsill Lane	Site for residential development up to 40 dwellings.	P/13/2263/2	Leicester Birstall, Thurcaston Cropston, Anstey, GW	Outline

Site Name	Description	Reference Number	Name of Green Wedge (GW)/ Areas of Local Separation (ALS)	Status of Planning Application Pending/Decided/ Allowed at Appeal/ Dismissed at Appeal
Land off West Cross Lane, Mountsorrel	Site of residential development of up to 130 dwellings.	P/14/0058/2	Mountsorrel/Rothley ALS	Outline, Reserved Matters now Granted.
Land off Westfield Lane, Rothley	Site for residential development of up to 175 dwellings with associated works including vehicular/ pedestrian/cycle access, public open space, landscaping, parking and drainage.	P/14/2083/2	Mountsorrel/Rothley ALS	Pending
Manor Holt, 1082 Loughborough Road, Rothley	Erection of 14 dwellings with associated parking, garages, landscaping, and demolition of dwelling.	P/11/1431/2	Mountsorrel/Rothley ALS	Built
Land off Mountsorrel Lane, Rothley	Erection of 45 dwellings.	P/12/2005/2 & P/15/0156/2	Mountsorrel/Rothley ALS	Outline at Appeal Allowed
Land at Beacon View Industrial Estate, Farley Way, Quorn	Site for the erection of up to 44 dwellings and access and associated works.	P/12/2569/2	Loughborough/ Quorn GW	Under Construction
Land North of Ling Road, Loughborough	Site for the erection of up to 200 dwellings.	P/12/2641/2	Loughborough/ Quorn GW Woodthorpe ALS	Under Construction
Land off Lodge End, Loughborough Road, Woodthorpe	Site for residential development (1.61ha) and creation of access.	P/14/0242/2	Loughborough/ Quorn GW	Outline: Subject to Signing of S106

Site Name	Description	Reference Number	Name of Green Wedge (GW)/ Areas of Local Separation (ALS)	Status of Planning Application Pending/Decided/ Allowed at Appeal/ Dismissed at Appeal
Land West of Allendale Road, Loughborough	Site for the erection of up to 130 dwellings with associated infrastructure to be accessed off Allendale Road	P/12/2640/2	Loughborough/Woodthorpe ALS	Outline with Reserved Matters Submitted
Watermead Business Park Phases 2 & 3, Wanlip Road, Syston	Outline application for Business Park, comprising offices, research and development/light industry; erection of hotel and leisure facilities, cafe/pub/restaurant, playing field/sports pitches, changing facilities and clubroom, canal footbridge and footpath diversion, alterations to car park and toilet facilities and associated landscaping (NB amended office floorspace to a maximum of 26,950 and a minimum of 13,700 square metres).	P/12/0003/2	Adj to Birstall / Leicester / Thurmaston GW	Outline

Appendix C

Pro Forma Templates

**Sample Green Wedge Assessment
Pro Forma**

Green Wedge	
Area (ha)	
Location Plan	
Description	

Site Audit																															
Existing Uses and Density of Buildings	<p><i>What built development exists within the Green Wedge?</i></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Farm buildings</td> <td>Hotel</td> <td>Health</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Industrial</td> <td>Civic</td> <td>Religious</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Commercial</td> <td>Educational</td> <td>Leisure/Sports</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vernacular</td> <td>Residential</td> <td>Other _____</td> </tr> </table> <p><i>Does the parcel feel open or is it punctuated by piecemeal developments?</i></p> <p><i>Do these reduce openness/sense of rurality?</i></p>	Farm buildings	Hotel	Health	Industrial	Civic	Religious	Commercial	Educational	Leisure/Sports	Vernacular	Residential	Other _____																		
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Landscape Character and Type	<p><i>To be initially guided by existing Charnwood Landscape Character Assessment but local scale of landscape character to be recorded</i></p> <p><i>Note evidence of pollution, erosion, bare or disturbed ground, condition of historic features, new planting and landscape restoration work</i></p> <p><i>Landscape condition</i></p>																														
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Proximity to Neighbouring Settlements	<p><i>What is the perception of distance to neighbouring settlements?</i></p> <p><i>Are there established and permanent physical features which disrupt views between settlements and increase the perceived distance between them?</i></p>																									
Views and Intervisibility	<p><i>Can more than one settlement be seen from current position?</i></p> <p><i>Are there long sightlines or vistas across the parcel to the next settlement?</i></p> <p><i>Are there any key views across the site from neighbouring land?</i></p> <p><i>Are there any important views looking out from the site across the wider landscape/urban areas?</i></p>																									
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Nature and Extent of Urban Edges	<p><i>Does the current Green Wedge have a strong defensible boundary?</i></p> <p><i>Does an alternative strong defensible boundary exist?</i></p> <p><i>Does the settlement have a prominent edge which is highly visible from the surrounding countryside?</i></p> <p><i>Are there any obvious forces for change/pressures on the landscape?</i></p>																									
Recreational opportunities	<p><i>Does this Green Wedge provide recreational opportunities? (including footpaths / cycle ways / bridle paths)</i></p>																									

	PRow Sports pitches Playgrounds Public Park Informal Rec. Dog walking Picnic site Camping Open water Watercourse
Public access	<i>To what extent is public access possible (ie. all or some of the area)?</i>
Transport Infrastructure	<i>How is the area influenced by surrounding transport infrastructure?</i>
Planning History	
Other Local Planning Policies	
Consultation Responses	
Site Photographs	Photograph 1:
	Photograph 2:
	Photograph 3:

Purpose	Criteria	Assessment Commentary
(1) To prevent the merging of settlements	Prevents development that would result in merging of or significant erosion of gap between neighbouring settlements, taking consideration of landscape scale/pattern, topography, development patterns and views.	<p>STRONG: Area provides an essential gap between two or more settlements, restricting development which, as a result of the area's landscape scale/pattern, topography, intervisibility or development patterns, would lead to the merging of these settlements.</p> <p>MODERATE: Provides a gap two or more settlements, restricting further development which, as a result of the area's landscape scale/pattern, topography, intervisibility or development patterns, may lead to the merging of these settlements.</p> <p>WEAK: Provides a less critical gap between two or more settlements which, as a result of the area's scale, character, landscape scale/pattern, topography, intervisibility or development patterns, is unlikely to restrict coalescence or prevent further coalescence between settlements.</p> <p>DOES NOT MEET PURPOSE: Gap is of sufficient scale or character that the area plays no role in preventing coalescence, or settlements have already coalesced.</p>
Purpose 1: Assessment of strength; identification of <i>zones of weakness and extension opportunity zones</i>		
(2) To guide development form	Logical, defensible and readily recognisable external and intermediate boundaries guide, rather than restrict, the form of future development.	<p>STRONG: Area is bounded by defensible and readily recognisable linear boundary features which guide rather than overly restrict the form of future surrounding developments, whilst ensuring that the integrity of the designation is maintained. Extent of designation is compatible with the Borough's spatial strategy.</p> <p>MODERATE: Area is largely bounded by defensible and readily recognisable linear boundary features which guide rather than overly restrict the form of future surrounding developments, whilst ensuring that the integrity of the designation is maintained. Some areas with weaker or less logical boundaries restrict development but do not provide clarity on what form development should take. Extent of designation is generally compatible with the Borough's spatial strategy.</p> <p>WEAK: While some boundaries are logical, much of the area is bounded by features which are weakly defined or difficult to recognise. Furthermore, the extent of the designation conflicts with the Borough's spatial strategy.</p>

		<p>Thus, it restricts rather than guides future development form.</p> <p>DOES NOT MEET PURPOSE: The area is bounded by features which are weakly defined or difficult to recognise and conflicts with the Borough's spatial strategy. The designation restricts rather than guides future development form.</p>
<p>Purpose 2: Assessment of strength; identification of <i>zones of weakness and extension opportunity zones</i></p>		
<p>(3) To provide a 'green lung' into urban areas</p>	<p>Forms a strongly connected corridor or network of green infrastructure which penetrates into existing or planned areas of built form.</p>	<p>STRONG: Forms a strongly connected corridor or network of green infrastructure which penetrates into existing or planned areas of built form.</p> <p>MODERATE: A fragmented corridor or network of green infrastructure exists with several clearly defined routes remaining.</p> <p>WEAK: A collection of disparate green spaces weakly linked by fragmented corridors.</p> <p>DOES NOT MEET PURPOSE: Overall lack of green infrastructure and those small areas that remain are isolated by intervening built form.</p>
<p>Purpose 3: Assessment of strength; identification of <i>zones of weakness and extension opportunity zones</i></p>		
<p>(4) To provide a recreational resource</p>	<p>Provides a range of publicly accessible, formal and informal opportunities for recreation.</p>	<p>STRONG: The area is wholly publicly accessible and provides an exemplary range of formal and informal opportunities for recreation.</p> <p>MODERATE: The area is wholly or partially publicly accessible and provides an adequate range of formal and/or informal opportunities for recreation.</p> <p>WEAK: The area is partially publicly accessible and provides a limited range of formal or informal opportunities for recreation.</p>

		<p>DOES NOT MEET PURPOSE: The area is not publicly accessible or fails to provide a range of formal or informal opportunities for recreation.</p>
<p>Purpose 4: Assessment of strength; identification of <i>zones of weakness and extension opportunity zones</i></p>		
<p>Should the area be designated as a Green Wedge?</p>		<p><i>[Yes, no, partially – zones of weakness or extension opportunity zones, alternative designations]</i></p>

**Sample AoLS Assessment Pro
Forma**

Area of Local Separation	
Area (ha)	
Location Plan	
Description	

Site Audit																															
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Planning History				
Other Local Planning Policies				
Consultation Responses				
Site Photographs	Photograph 1:			
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	Photograph 3:			

Purpose	Criteria	Assessment Commentary
<p>Does the area physically separate settlements?</p> <p>To what extent is the separation at risk of being compromised?</p>	<p>Prevents development that would result in merging of or significant erosion of gap between neighbouring settlements, taking consideration of landscape scale/pattern, topography, development patterns and views.</p>	<p>STRONG: Area provides an essential gap between two or more settlements, restricting development which, as a result of the area's landscape scale/pattern, topography, intervisibility or development patterns, would lead to the merging of these settlements. Area is subject to particular development pressures which are likely to adversely comprise the gap.</p> <p>MODERATE: Provides a gap two or more settlements, restricting further development which, as a result of the area's landscape scale/pattern, topography, intervisibility or development patterns, may lead to the merging of these settlements. There may, additionally, be particular development pressures which may compromise the gap.</p> <p>WEAK: Provides a less critical gap between two or more settlements which, as a result of the area's scale, character, landscape scale/pattern, topography, intervisibility or development patterns, is unlikely to restrict coalescence or prevent further coalescence between settlements.</p> <p>DOES NOT MEET PURPOSE: Gap is of sufficient scale or character that the area plays no role in preventing coalescence, or settlements have already coalesced.</p>
<p>Judgement of fulfilment against the strategic role</p>	<p>[Yes / no / partially]</p> <p>[If not fulfilling role, skip to "Should area be considered for another designation"]</p>	
<p>Is this the area's primary planning function?</p>	<p>[Qualitative description of the area's function, in particular in relation to the spatial policies set out in the core strategy]</p>	
<p>Could current criteria based policy provide the necessary protection?</p>	<p>[Review based on other planning policies/designations etc. which may prevent coalescence]</p>	
<p>Should the area be designated as an Area of Local Separation?</p> <p>Should area be considered for another designation?</p>	<p>[Yes, no, partially]</p>	

**Sample Urban Fringe GIEZ
Assessment Pro Forma**

Green Infrastructure Area	
Area (ha)	
Location Plan	
Description	

Site Audit													
<p>Existing Uses and Density of Buildings</p>	<p><i>What built development exists within the Urban Fringe GI Enhancement Zone?</i></p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">Farm buildings</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Hotel</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Health</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Industrial</td> <td>Civic</td> <td>Religious</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Commercial</td> <td>Educational</td> <td>Leisure/Sports</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vernacular</td> <td>Residential</td> <td>Other</td> </tr> </table> <hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p><i>Does the area feel open or is it punctuated by piecemeal developments?</i></p> <p><i>Do these reduce openness/sense of rurality?</i></p>	Farm buildings	Hotel	Health	Industrial	Civic	Religious	Commercial	Educational	Leisure/Sports	Vernacular	Residential	Other
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<p>Landscape and other features</p>	<p><i>How do landscape features characterise the area?</i></p> <p><i>What is the dominant landcover?</i></p> <p>Designed parkland Scrub Marsh</p> <p>Peat bog Moor/heath Rough</p> <p>grassland</p> <p>Water meadows Grassland Species rich</p> <p>grassland</p> <p>Orchard Deciduous woodland Coniferous</p> <p>plantation</p> <p>Mixed woodland Shelterbelt Arable</p> <p>Other _____</p> <p><i>What landscape features or other features exist within the area which may help to guide development form?</i></p> <p><i>What are the main attractors / detractors?</i></p> <p><i>Landscape elements:</i></p> <p>Walls Fences Hedges Trees</p> <p>Pylons Communications Masts Tumuli Other</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Views and Intervisibility</p>	<p><i>Can more than one settlement be seen from current position?</i></p> <p><i>Are there long sightlines or vistas across the area from the urban area to the countryside?</i></p> <p><i>Are there any key views across the site from neighbouring land?</i></p>

Visual Assessment	<p><i>Assessment criteria:</i></p> <p>Scale: Intimate Small Medium Large</p> <p>Enclosure: Expansive Open Enclosed Constrained Remoteness: Wild Remote Vacant Active</p> <p>Unity: Unified Interrupted Fragmented Chaotic</p> <p>Visual Dynamic: Sweeping Spreading Dispersed Channelled</p> <p><i>Perception:</i> Security Stimulus Tranquillity Pleasure</p>
Nature and Extent of Urban Edges	<p><i>Does the settlement have a prominent edge which is highly visible from the surrounding countryside?</i></p> <p><i>Are there any obvious forces for change/pressures on the landscape?</i></p>
Recreational opportunities	<p><i>Does this urban fringe area provide formal and/or informal recreational opportunities? (including footpaths / cycle ways / bridle paths)</i></p> <p>PRoW Sports pitches Playgrounds Public Park Informal Rec. Dog walking Picnic site Camping Open water Watercourse</p>
Public access	<p><i>To what extent is public access possible (ie. all or some of the area)?</i></p> <p><i>What is the quality of access? Is there evidence of the level of use?</i></p>
Transport Infrastructure	<p><i>How is the area influenced by surrounding transport infrastructure?</i></p>
Consultation Responses	

Site Photographs	Photograph 1:
	Photograph 2:
	Photograph 3:

Purpose	Criteria	Assessment Commentary	Potential for Enhancement
(A) The area acts as a bridge to the country	A bridge to the country is formed by linking housing, schools, health centres and hospitals, bus and train stations in urban centres to the existing access network to connect with accessible green spaces in the wider countryside.		
(B) The area provides a gateway to the city/town	The area provides an improved image, experience and sense of place by encouraging investment in an improved environmental quality for public rights of way and spaces.		
(C) The area functions as a 'health centre'	The area contributes to health and well-being through promoting access to green spaces for exercise for schools, hospitals and health centres.		
(D) The area performs as an outdoor classroom	The area provides opportunities for environmental education through parks, nature reserves and farm-based activities		
(E) The area acts as a recycling and renewable energy centre	The area is helping to address climate change through sustainable management of waste, water and pollution, production of energy crops and creation of woodland to act as carbon sinks.		

(F) The area is a productive landscape	The urban fringe farmland is used for food production, processing of local produce and retail (farm shops) for urban areas.		
(G) The area clearly displays its cultural legacy	The area promotes an awareness of the presence of historic features in the urban fringe landscape and how they contribute to sense of place for local communities		
(H) The area is promoted as a place for sustainable living	There are opportunities for future sustainable urban extensions and developments to link with the urban area and address issues such as indistinct boundaries, poor accessibility, fragmented landscapes, etc.		
(I) The area functions as an engine for regeneration	The area benefits from opportunities for community involvement through volunteering or gaining new skills in environmental improvement work, particularly within areas of multiple deprivation.		
(J) The area performs as a nature reserve	The area performs as a nature reserve by strengthening biodiversity, geological and geomorphological conservation management for sites in and around the urban areas.		
Assessment of strength; identification of zones of weakness and extension opportunity zones			