

APPENDIX A: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER SUMMARIES

This Appendix provides summaries of all the character assessments that are relevant to North West Leicestershire.

National LCA

Countryside Agency Countryside Character Volume 4: East Midlands

This document was published in 1999 and divides the whole of England into broad landscape character areas. It recognises key overriding characteristics and identifies pressure and forces for change within the landscape

Melbourne Parklands

The Melbourne Parklands are steeply undulating. The area has extensive stretches of arable cultivation with low, sparse hedges and few hedgerow trees. On the steeper ground and heavier clays, the land is less intensively farmed and arable and pasture are mixed. Here hedgerows are more substantial, hedgerow trees are more frequent. Extensive oak woodlands as well as specimen trees within the parks are features. Elsewhere woodlands are small and intermittent although the spinneys, copses and game coverts have often been planted on ridges, giving a well-treed character to some areas. There are extensively quarried limestone areas, which have altered the landscape such as at Breedon Hill where the church overlooks parkland from one aspect and the quarry from another. Most of the villages are very rural in character with the exception of Repton, Melbourne and Castle Donington which are modest-sized towns.

Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfields

The coalfield landform is one of gentle ridges and shallow valleys. There is very little woodland or scrub other than that which has regenerated on abandoned mineral workings or present along streams. The farmland includes both arable and pasture. Where arable predominates, hedgerows are low or fragmented. There are generally few hedgerow trees, except locally around Coleorton where they lie within overgrown hedges. Tips of deep mines, abandoned colliery sites, tramways and open-cast sites are frequent within the landscape. There is a dense settlement pattern dominated by the large mining villages and towns. As well as the larger villages there are also small roadside groups of cottages and isolated older houses. Around the edges of the settlements there are commonly extensive areas dominated by an urban fringe character with horse grazing, patchy fencing, sheds and rundown pastures. Outside the built-up areas there are still extensive areas of derelict land resulting from deep mining and brick pits.

Charnwood

This is a unique landscape with upland qualities which contrast with the adjacent lowland farmland. It is characterised by strongly rectilinear pasture fields bounded by a mix of dry stone walls and hedges. The fields contain frequent, mature, well-formed oak trees. Smaller irregular shaped fields are present around the village and older farmsteads. Heathland is a feature although bracken has encroached in many places. Woodlands, attractively sited reservoirs and pools are common landscape features. Large settlements are around the edges of the area with a few villages and scattered farmsteads within. Most of the older buildings are constructed from either Charnwood Stone or Mountsorrel Granite

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with Swithland Slate roofs. Quarries are found on the fringes of the character area.

Trent Valley Washlands

The Trent Washlands is described as a linear landscape with the River Trent flowing through the middle. The character area consists of flat broad valleys associated with two tributaries, the Tame and the Soar. The Washlands landscape comprises pastoral and arable land intermixed with urban development. In pastoral areas, fields are small with full hedgerows but few hedgerow trees. Other stretches within the Washlands are more open arable land with large fields divided by low trimmed hedges. Constrained by the risk of flooding, settlement is concentrated on the sand and gravel terraces where drainage is better.

Mease and Sence Lowlands

The lowlands are gently rolling clay ridges with shallow valleys becoming flat along the rivers Sence and Mease. The field pattern is strongly rectilinear formed during the 18th and 19th century Enclosure Acts. The field pattern is complimented by copses and spinney son ridges and occasional groups of trees along streams. It is predominantly an arable landscape with few hedgerow trees. Small villages are generally on the crest of hills and are prominent within the landscape. Red brick cottages and houses with slate or pantile roofs cluster around spired churches.

Regional LCA

LDA Design was commissioned to complete the Regional Character Assessment of East Midlands. The landscape assessment was produced in August 2009, landscape guidelines to accompany them are currently being prepared to help protect, manage and enhance the landscape. This assessment sits between the National Character Assessment, which identifies broad national character areas, and the local level assessment, which examines landscape character at a finer grain. It is useful for projects which are based at a regional level such as strategic planning projects.

Floodplain Valley

Wide, flat alluvial floodplains, created from gravel deposits, are surrounded by the rising landform of adjacent Landscape Character Types. The river channels are bordered by riparian habitat, with hedgerows and riverside trees, such as Alder, Willow and Poplar, being a common feature. There is a predominant pastoral land use, especially for cereal growing. The pattern of the fields is a regular mix of medium to large sized fields defined by hedgerows and post and wire fencing. These are fragmented in places. There is limited woodland cover, and concentrated on steep riverside bluffs and on restored former gravel extraction sites. There are limited settlements or development within the rural areas. The larger settlements that do exist are in close proximity to the Sewage Treatment Works and power stations on the edge of the floodplains. Roads and communication routes define the outer edges of the floodplain.

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Wooded Village Farmlands

The landform varies from gently undulating farmlands, to rolling hills, becks and steep valleys. Scattered farm woodlands and ancient woodlands are prominent features on the hills and contribute to a well wooded landscape character. The fields are well hedged, enclosing pasture and arable farmlands; however this pattern declines towards the urban areas. There is a traditional pattern of farms and small rural villages linked by quiet county lanes.

Settled Coalfield Farmlands

The land is characterised by low hills and ridges and shallow valleys. The former mine sites, pit heaps, clay pits, disused railway lines, tramways, canals and opencast coal and clay working areas are prominent features of the area. Immature woodlands and plantations are apparent in association with the restoration of former mining areas. There are substantial areas of intact agricultural land with a variety of field sizes and mixed farming uses. The area is generally covered with scattered, small broadleaved woodlands, linear tree belts and some ancient semi-natural woodland. Heathy vegetation is associated with steeper and uncultivated land. There are small towns, villages and hamlets linked by a network of narrow lanes.

Forested Ancient Hills

The Pre-Cambrian igneous rocks rise out of the lowland farmland. There are distinctive rocky outcrops and knolls on elevated slopes and summits with extensive open areas. The large reservoirs and pools are also common feature. There are clear, fast flowing streams on upper slopes that support an abundance of wildlife. The land use is a distinctive mixture of mixed woodlands, pastoral farmland, heathland, and parkland. The fields have a strong rectilinear pattern and are enclosed by a mixture of stone walls and hedges. Small villages are scattered within the upland area, and larger villages are located at the edge of the higher ground.

Village Farmlands

Gently undulating lowlands, dissected by stream valleys with localised steep slopes and alluvial floodplains. There is a mixture of agricultural farming with a prominence of dairy farming on permanent pastures or arable cropping. There are small and moderately sized broadleaved woodlands and copses on sloping land. There are also extensive new areas of planting in association with the National Forest. Oak and ash trees are common features along hedgerows and streams and contribute to a well treed character. Well maintained medium sized fields create a patchwork of contrasting colours and textures. Ridge and furrow is a feature. The small, historic villages are linked by winding lanes, which contribute to a historic and rural character of the landscape.

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County LCA

This county level assessment is focused at a more local level than the national landscape character assessment. It was produced in February 2001. It provides guidelines for conserving and enhancing these distinctive landscapes and expanding woodland cover.

Langley Lowlands

The undulating landform is often dissected by minor watercourses. Agriculture is mostly deciduous and occurs as small game coverts, with larger blocks of ancient woodland sites at Cloud Wood, Pasture Wood, Piper Wood and Spring Wood. The woodlands of the bordering Charnwood Forest provide a tree-clothed backdrop and wooded horizon to most views. Donington Park includes the surviving remnants of a medieval deer park, with a fine population of ancient oak trees. Industrial and commercial activity is generally limited and small scale, the most visually and audibly intrusive are East Midlands Airport, Breedon Hill and Cloud Wood quarries, and the Donington Park motor racing circuit. By contrast, Breedon Cloud workings present an intrusive scar which the surrounding woodland fails to mitigate. The outcrop of Carboiferous Limestone rising steeply out of the surrounding landscape at Breedon Hill provides a prominent local landmark which is visible as far away as Derby. A number of small villages are throughout the area, connected by quiet, narrow, winding lanes. A pattern of smaller fields surround some of the villages. The small towns of Castle Donington to the north and Shepshed to the south lie on the boundaries of the character area. Several A roads run through the centre connecting with larger settlements in Leicestershire. The area is bisected by the A42/M42, running roughly southwest/ northeast, which in places is visually and audibly intrusive.

Trent Valley

Flat open floodplain bounded by the River Trent to the north and west and the River Soar to the east. Land use is predominantly agricultural although the area is heavily influenced by power generating industry, sand and gravel extraction and roads. Parklands such as around Lockington and Hemington are the only areas to avoid such intrusions. Fields are mainly enclosed by hawthorn hedgerows although their management is variable. Woodland is virtually absent although limited tree cover is provided by hedgerow trees, willows along streams and ditches, localised parkland trees and a few small copses. The area is heavily criss-crossed by overhead power lines to the nearby Ratcliffe on Soar power station. The area contains small villages of Kegworth and Castle Donington located where the land rises and joins the adjacent Langley Lowlands character area. Roads such as the A6 Trunk Road, M1 motorway, A50 and other A roads dissect the area and exert a strong influence on the landscape through traffic movement and noise. Man-made lakes and pools and the open drainage network of ditches and small streams are features.

The Coalfield

Gently undulating landscape, dominated by mixed farmland and shows effects of past and present coal and clay working. The area is distinguished by a denser settlement pattern than almost any other part of Leicestershire, representative of 19th Century former mining villages, with road-side terraces and cottages. The area has few woodlands but hedges, hedgerow trees and small copses

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sometimes give a wooded effect locally. There is visual evidence of present day coal and clay working to the west of the area. The large scale open-cast workings in the north of the area are currently being restored. To the east the landscape is generally open, fields are bounded by low hedgerows, with few hedgerow trees and little woodland. The assessment notes that the land is part of the National Forest. There are good connections to the national road network being crossed in the north by the A50, linking the M1 with Coalville and Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and in the west by the A42.

Charnwood Forest

The underlying pre-Cambrian rocks result in a varied, hilly landform with exposed crags and rocky knolls and fast-flowing streams, resulting in a distinctive character. The area has a high concentration of mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland, including many ancient woodland sites, hedges and hedgerow trees. The western two-thirds of the area is part of the National Forest. The area is characterised by an intimate mixture of woodland and farmland in mixed arable and pasture uses. The area's acidic soils support pockets of heathland, particularly around rocky outcrops, where the land has never been cultivated. There are variable field patterns. Irregular fields are bounded by mixed hedges contrasting with long narrow rectilinear fields with stone walls. The settlement pattern is generally one of scattered farms and other dwellings, with large villages mainly around the edges of the area. Quarrying is present but generally well hidden by landform; however are visible from some viewpoints. The telecommunications masts at Copt Oak and Bardon Hill are also visually intrusive. The views are diverse, with long distant views across the countryside and reservoirs. The M1 runs north-south and in locally intrusive.

Mease/ Sence Lowlands

The small streams feeding into the Sence and Mease create a distinctive pattern of small valleys and an undulating landform. The landscape is rural with most land in agricultural use. Arable is prominent overall, although pasture is present. The area has little woodland; although local concentrations are around Gospall Park, Market Bosworth, Bosworth Park and Ambion Wood. Willows are frequently found along the lines of rivers and their tributary streams. One of the most significant landscape features of this area is the frequency of the hedgerow trees, often mature oaks. With the exception of Market Bosworth, the settlement pattern is one of small villages and individual farmhouses evenly scattered throughout the area and linked by a network of minor roads.

Local LCA

The National Forest Character Assessment

The National Forest Landscape Character Assessment was produced in 1994 and covers the administrative boundary of the National Forest. As part of this assessment the following six character areas were identified:

- Charnwood
- Leicestershire & South Derbyshire Coalfield
- Mease and Sence Lowlands
- Melbourne Parklands
- Needwood & South Derbyshire Claylands
- Trent Valley Washland

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The character areas were sub-divided into Landscape Character Types. Guidance on the scale and type of planting was provided for each Landscape Character Type. Summaries of the character of each landscape type are provided below.

Type: Urban/Urban Fringe

Large, often sprawling settlements with new built development are dominant. Major roads and railways are also prominent which affect the tranquillity of the area. Cropped farmland with gappy, poorly managed hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Farmland often appears sandwiched between urban and industrial uses. There are areas of remnant pasture around settlements which display a strong hedgerow pattern although hedges are often overgrown. Urban trees, open spaces and new woodland planting contribute to the setting of the urban area, however horse grazing, allotments and other non-agricultural uses contribute to the fragmented appearance of the area.

Type: Enclosed Farmlands

Predominantly rural with little woodland. There are few urban intrusions. The field pattern is generally defined by hedgerows with areas of arable farmland often having an open pattern with sometimes poorly define hedgerows. Pockets of pasture remain close to settlements and along watercourses with a small field pattern, thick hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Watercourse trees and clusters of small scale estate woodlands contribute to a perceived wooded character in places.

Type: Coalfield Village Farmlands

The landscape is fragmented by opencast mineral workings (coal), new built development and extensive areas of reclaimed land. There are tracts of gently rolling farmland with medium to large scale fields. The planting of new woodland is becoming increasingly prominent and helps to integrate new built development and mineral workings. The main wooded feature consists of mature hedgerow trees, but these are sparse and many show signs of dieback. The hedgerows pattern is also declining, with hedges becoming fragmented. Settlements are characterised by red brick mining villages and isolated terraces of miners' cottages. There are long views across the landscape with industrial uses and edges of settlements visible over long distances.

Type: Historic Settlements and Enclosures

The predominantly open, sparsely wooded, mixed farmland creates a strong rural character with few urban intrusions. The field pattern is generally defined by hedgerows or stone walls. The medium to large fields have low cut, gappy hedgerows, scattered hedgerow trees and some woodland. The intensely cropped fields are large in scale with an 'open' pattern and occasional, poorly defined hedges. There are permanent pockets of pasture along watercourses and around villages. There is a traditional character of small fields with thick hedges and many hedgerow trees. A wooded feel is created by watercourse trees and clusters of small estate woodlands. Settlements are characterised by scattered farmsteads and villages.

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Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Assessment

This Character Assessment was produced in 2008. It describes the character of the landscape and settlements within Charnwood Forest. The only Landscape Character Area of relevance to this study is Bardon.

Bardon

This is an urban fringe landscape which has been heavily influenced by quarrying. Exposed rock faces and rocky outcrops are features. There is unnatural landform of restored previously quarried land, bare ground, man-made pools and large area of new planting on restored land. The landscape comprise mixed farming with lots of horse paddocks with rough grassland, gorse and woodland occupying higher ground. There are long distance views of urban fringes and industry from high ground.