

PART 4 URBAN LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT: SOUTH WIGSTON

4.1 INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Defining characteristics

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

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

Townscape Characteristics

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



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

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



Gloucester Crescent Park.

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

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

4.3.9

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE
Maintain mature suburban character

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

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

Policy Guidance SW(i)/ 1 Infill development

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

Policy Guidance SW(i)/ 2 Gloucester Crescent Shops

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

improve the area and consideration should be given to mixed uses for the complex to help provide an improved natural focus for the estate.

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

Defining characteristics

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

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

Townscape Characteristics

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

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



Former military housing on Hindoostan Avenue



Mature tree cover along Saffron Road.

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

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



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

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

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

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

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

- 4.3.23

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE

Conserve the mature institutional character and important green spaces.

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

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

Policy Guidance SW(ii)/ 1 Maintain tree cover

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

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

Policy Guidance SW(ii)/ 2 Maintain open spaces

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



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

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

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

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

Defining characteristics

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

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

Townscape Characteristics.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

4.3.37

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE

Maintain functional character within scale appropriate to residential surrounds.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Defining Characteristics

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

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

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

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

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



South Leicestershire College showing high quality, modern design.

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

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



Decorative Brickwork south of Blaby Road



Decorative Brickwork south of Blaby Road.



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

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



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



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

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

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

4.3.52

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE

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

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

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

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

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

reference to Conservation Area Appraisal) and control mechanisms such as Article 4 Directions and the General Permitted Development Order 2015.

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

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

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

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

Policy Guidance SW(iv)/ 4 Redeveloped Sites

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

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

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

Urban Character Area SW(v): Lansdowne Grove Estate

Defining Characteristics

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

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

Townscape Characteristics

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

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



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

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

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

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



Blaby Road Park

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

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

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

4.3.68

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE

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

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

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

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

Policy Guidance SW(v)/ 2 Streetscape Management

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

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

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

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

Defining Characteristics

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

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

Townscape Characteristics

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

4.3.84

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE

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

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

Policy Guidance SW(vi)/ 1 Infill Opportunities

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy Guidance SW(vi)/4 Biodiversity Enhancement

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



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

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

4.4 OVERALL REVIEW OF SOUTH WIGSTON

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

PART 5 URBAN LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT: WIGSTON

5.1 INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A shows the urban character areas of Wigston.

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

Defining Characteristics

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

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



A view of the main retail area along Long Street.

Townscape Characteristics

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

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

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



View of low rise residential flats on Boulter Crescent.



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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.8

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES

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

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

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

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

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



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

Policy Guidance W(i)/ 2 Infill Opportunities

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

Policy Guidance W(i)/ 3 Active Frontages

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

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

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



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

Policy Guidance W(i)/ 5 Public Realm Improvements

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

Policy Guidance W(i)/ 6 Bull Head Street

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



View of Bull Head Street



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

Urban Character Area W(ii): All Saints

Defining Characteristics

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

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



The view of the Southern Town Centre along Long Street.

Townscape Characteristics

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

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

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



View down Blunts Lane towards Manchester Gardens Allotments.

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



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

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

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



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

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

- 5.3.23 This character area retains a strong and distinctive functional sense of place currently fed by both the buildings and the uses. The presence and character of the local open spaces and allotments e.g. the Peace Memorial Gardens, Manchester Gardens Allotments and Manor House Orchard contribute to the character. A key feature of the sense of place of the area is that a sense of practicality and individualism is retained that links the area back to the original settlement and the presence of the Lanes and Manchester Gardens
- 5.3.24 There are a number of designations in this area. Conservation areas include The Lanes and All Saints, the latter of which contains areas of archaeological interest and some areas of valued open space.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.25

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES

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

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

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

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

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



Manchester Gardens Allotments.

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

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



Unique development leading off Long Street.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Urban Character Area W(iii): Gilliver Hill

Defining Characteristics

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

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



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

Townscape Characteristics

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



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

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



New development at Peacock Place showing traditional features.



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

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

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.35

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

<p>URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES</p> <p>Maintain mature urban residential character</p>
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Urban Character Area W(iii): Gilliver Hill – Policy Guidance

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

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

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

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

Urban Character Area W(iv): Guthlaxton

Defining Characteristics

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

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



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

Townscape Characteristics

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

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



Newly Built Leisure centre showing modern contemporary design.

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



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

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



The new medical facility on the site of the former College

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

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.45

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES

Maintain distinctive scale and mixed use character and conserve and enhance tree cover

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

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

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

Policy Guidance W(iv)/ 2 Retain Distinctive Scale

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

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

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

Urban Character Area W(v): The Orchards

Defining Characteristics

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

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



Central Avenue, showing mid 20th Century housing.



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

Townscape Characteristics

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



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

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



Midland Cottages Conservation Area.



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

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.53

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES
Maintain distinctive mature residential character

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

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

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

Urban Character Area W(vi): Gold Hill

Defining Characteristics

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

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



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

Townscape Characteristics

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



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

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

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

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.60

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES

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

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

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

- 5.5.61 The landform of the wider area gives a limited visual envelope into this employment area and the area therefore provides a suitable one for such uses within the Borough. The impact of the area on the residential area to the east is also limited due to there being older smaller scale buildings along the eastern fringe of the estate.
- 5.3.62 In order to maintain this level of impact any redevelopment that involves larger scale buildings should be restricted to the western fringe of the site. In addition the height of any new larger development along the western fringe should also be maintained to current heights. An aspiration for the eastern fringe would be to develop a buffer strip of trees and planting to improve the outlook from the adjacent housing.

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

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

Urban Character Area W(vii): The Poplars

Defining Characteristics

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

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



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



Shakerdale Road in the western section of the area.

Townscape Characteristics

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



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

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

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

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



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

- 5.3.68 This area provides a pleasant residential environment but lacks character and distinctiveness. Due to the quality and type of housing area, open space and infill plots are likely to come under pressure for development. The urban fringe of the area is protected from development as all of it bounds on to the Green Wedge with a small section adjacent to Knighton Park.
- 5.3.69 There are three distinctive sub-areas within the area. The Oval and Granville Road which are small areas of detached houses set in larger plots along tree lined streets, and an area of small detached and semi-detached new development along the southern end of the racecourse.



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



Granville Road showing large plots along tree lined streets.



New residential infill on the former Racecourse.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.72

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES
Maintain mature suburban residential estate character

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

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

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

Policy Guidance W(vii)/ 1 Infill development

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

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

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

Policy Guidance W(vii)/3 Maintain Tree Cover

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

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

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

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

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

Defining Characteristics

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

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



View showing the Key Characteristics of Wigston Meadows.



View of Horsewell Lane showing key characteristics of Little Hill.

Townscape Characteristics

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



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

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



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



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

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

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



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

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

- 5.3.84 Both estates are pre-dominantly residential. Unusually for the Borough, they both have small local centres. In the Little Hill estate this consists of a co-op, shops and small park off Launceston Road. This could be a positive feature but this area feels bleak. In the Wigston Meadow estate the local centre also consists of a pub and shops. Both estates have schools located on the edge of the urban area with views out into the rural fringe beyond. This is a feature not only of this character area but also of the earlier housing estates in both Wigston and Oadby and the later housing estates in Oadby. The school frontages provide green frontages that make a positive contribution to the area.
- 5.3.85 The Little Hill urban character area has little open space within it, the only space being behind the small park behind the local shops, but is adjacent to playing fields on both its eastern and western boundaries. These playing fields, though, have little impact on the overall urban character of the area. The area has access out to the rural fringe from Durnford Road, Barford Close and Taverstock Road with good views across the Sence Valley. The Wigston Meadow area has a central linear open space, which provides a valuable break in the urban fabric and creates an interesting focus feature for the area. There is a short but valuable hedgerow remnant close to Alport Way on Kelmars Avenue and a strip along the eastern urban edge accessed from Rosedale Road that provides valuable views out into the Green Wedge and rural fringe.
- 5.3.86 The estates though pleasant have no local distinctiveness or character. There seems to be little tree cover to mature to improve the character or improve the sense of enclosure. With low pedestrian and vehicular activity both areas can feel a little desolate in areas.
- 5.3.87 There is likely to be little pressure for development within these areas apart from small infill plots.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.88

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES

Maintain and enhance maturing suburban residential estate character

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



View of Local Centre on Launceston Road, Little Hill.

Urban Character Area W(x): Harcourt

Defining characteristics

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

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



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

Townscape Characteristics

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

- 5.3.97 The area has access to the urban fringe from a small open space on the eastern edge of the area. This also provides access to a small urban lane running along the eastern fringe behind the houses. These spaces though they do not have a high impact on the character area are valuable and should be maintained, as should the washland to Willow Brook Farm.
- 5.3.98 There is unlikely to be development pressure within the area though there could be pressure to develop in the urban fringe adjacent to the area.

Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

5.3.99

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

URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES

Maintain and enhance maturing suburban residential estate character

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

Policy Guidance W(x)/ 1 New Development

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

5.4 OVERALL REVIEW OF WIGSTON

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

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

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

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

PART 6 BOROUGH WIDE POLICY URBAN CHARACTER RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

6.2 BOROUGH WIDE URBAN CHARACTER POLICY OBJECTIVES AND POLICY GUIDANCE

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

Tree Cover

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

BW/1 Tree Cover Policy Guidance

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

Guidance BW/1/a Encourage Formal Street Tree Planting

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



The urban fringe is generally well integrated into the landscape.

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

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



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

Transport Corridors

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Biodiversity and Urban Landscape Character

<p>BOROUGH WIDE URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE BW/3</p> <p>Increase biodiversity within the urban areas</p>
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Uplands playing field may have the potential to have its biodiversity potential increased.

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

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

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



A retained hedgerow and trees screen development along Newton Lane.

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

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

Urban Lanes and Access to the Rural Fringes

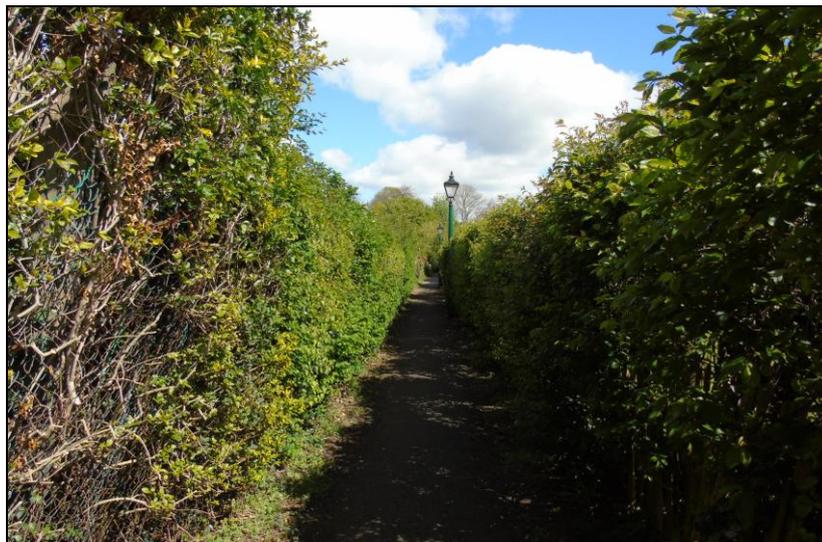
BOROUGH WIDE URBAN CHARACTER OBJECTIVE BW/5
Protect and enhance urban lanes and access to the rural fringe

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

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



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



View of Long Lane in Wigston.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

New Development and Local Distinctiveness

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

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

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

Policy Guidance BW/7/a Respect Natural Boundaries

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

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

Policy Guidance BW/7/b Respect and Integrate Hedgerows

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

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

Policy Guidance BW/7/c Compatible Tree Planting

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

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

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

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

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

Policy-Guidance BW/7/e Street Pattern

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



Late 19th Century terraces along Church Street in Oadby.



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



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

6.2.30 The Borough also contains some good examples of Victorian terraces, for example in South Wigston, late 19th and early 20th Century small scale industrial vernacular e.g. All Saints, early 20th Century Arts and Crafts inspired development e.g. Cottage Homes, low density 1970s architect designed houses as at the Yews and late 20th Century housing estates as at Wigston Harcourt. These all could potentially provide inspiration and reference for new development within the area.

6.2.31 Some of the most contemporary residential development in the Borough appears to have started to reflect this local distinctiveness e.g. terraced housing on Countesthorpe Road in South Wigston, new housing along Davenport Road and on Oadby Road in Wigston.

6.2.32 It should be noted that the urban character assessment carried out for this study did not undertake a detailed architectural analysis of the buildings of the Borough, and the Conservation Area Appraisals provide a more detailed summary of these features.

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

Policy Guidance BW/7/i Protect and Enhance Biodiversity

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

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