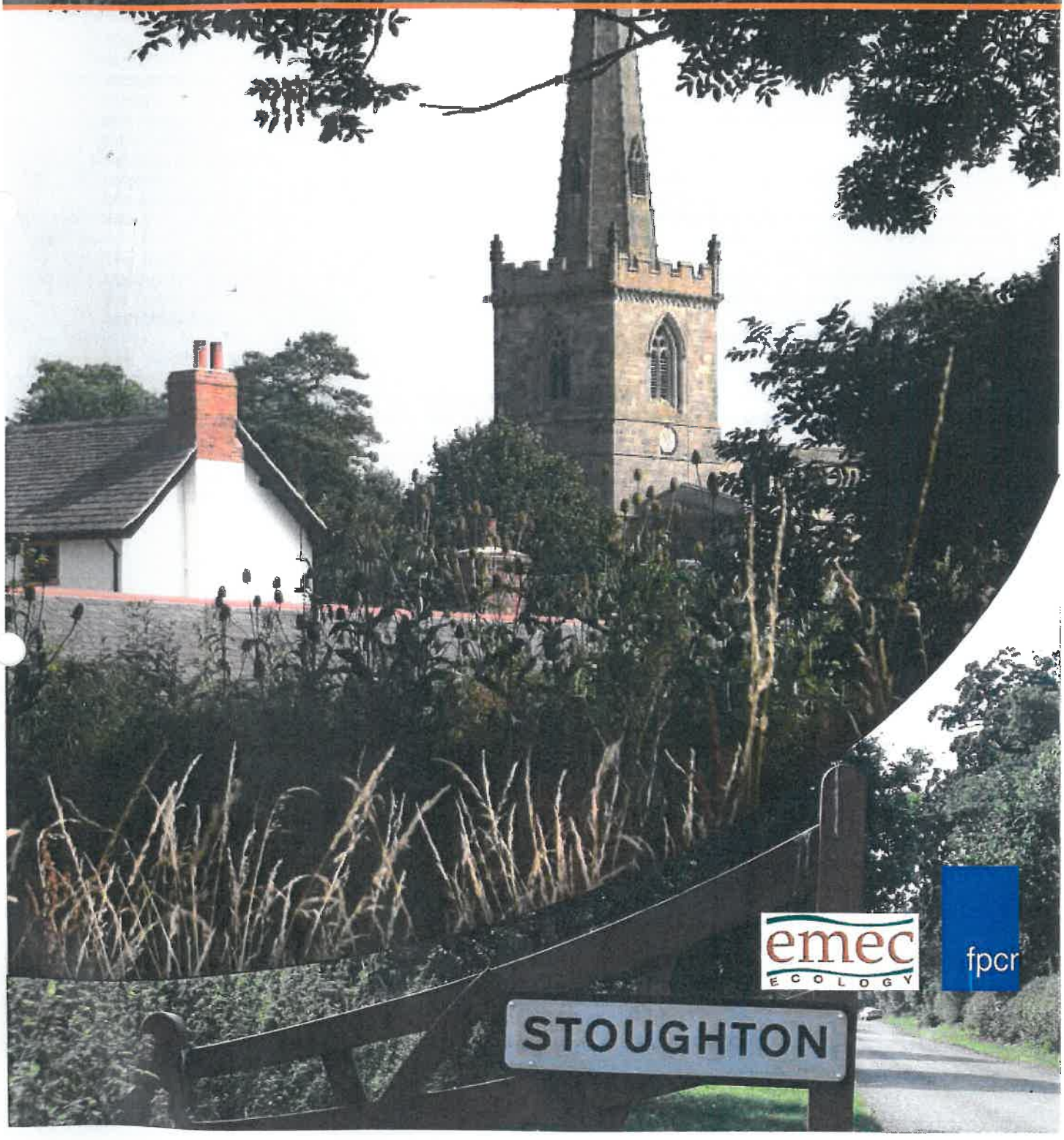
STEPPING STONES
COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT PROJECT

STOUGHTON, OADBY AND THURNBY GREEN WEDGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY



emec ECOLOGY

fpcr

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Stoughton, Oadby and Thurnby Green Wedge Management Strategy seeks to give guidance on the future use and management of the Green Wedge. The study examines the landscape character, land use, ecology and characteristics of the area in order to draw conclusions that will help the Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project achieve its aims.

The primary land use is agriculture, with arable dominating, and pastoral land generally situated on steeper slopes and semi-improved land. The Green Wedge is an asset valued by the residents of Stoughton and surrounding urban areas due to the openness and rural character. Although no formal recreational facilities are present within the Green Wedge, informal recreation, such as walking, horse riding, cycling and bird watching, occurs to some extent across much of the area.

The study area is accessed mostly from the A47 Uppingham Road cutting through the northern point of the Green Wedge, and Gartree road along the south, both of which give access to Leicester.

The Strategy assesses the nature of the existing landscape and divides the area into two local landscape character areas with the boundary line running along part of Stoughton Lane and around the north of Stoughton. Stoughton character area comprises the village of Stoughton with it's whitewashed houses, and the historic parkland and garden remains associated with the former 15th century Stoughton Grange, now the site of the Stoughton Farm Park development. The surrounding landscape is characterised by small areas of woodland, single mature oak trees dotted around, grass verges, and views of the church spire. As well as agriculture, plant nurseries make up a large part of the Thurnby Fields local landscape character area. Tall hedgerows, tree-lined brooks and undulating slopes are characteristic of this part of the Green Wedge, while the surviving ridge and furrow to the south of Thurnby is a distinctive historic landscape feature contributing greatly to the character of the area. Many of the existing field boundaries in both character areas reflect the historical division of the landscape in medieval times or earlier.

The main issue to be addressed through management is the need for conservation of key characteristic landscape features such as woodland and hedgerows, while ridge and furrow must be preserved, but currently has no historic landscape classification. While biodiversity is good across the Green Wedge, it needs to be increased through controlling non-native and invasive species, enhancing wetlands, creating un-cropped field margins, and enhancing hedgerows. Although access is reasonable, the countryside needs to be promoted, with better access for all, and better relationship between routes. It is also important that the Green Wedge can diversify and incorporate new land uses such as formal recreation to boost the rural economy, while making sure that such change is sustainable, and that the character of the area is not eroded by any new development.

INTRODUCTION

Background
The Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project is a partnership project supported by Leicestershire County Council, Charnwood Borough Council, Harborough District Council, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, Leicester City Council, and Oadby and Wigston Borough Council. The project aims to improve access for all, enhance the environment, improve people's awareness and encourage community participation in the countryside around Leicester.

Consultants
EMEC and Faulks Perry Culley & Rech were commissioned by the Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project in July 2005 to provide consultancy services in connection with creating a management strategy for Stoughton, Oadby and Thurnby Green Wedge to offer recommendations for management of land, which can be used as guidance for future development.

EMEC
The Old Ragged School, Brook Street, Nottingham, NG1 1EA T: 0115 964 4829 E: emec@dial.pipex.com

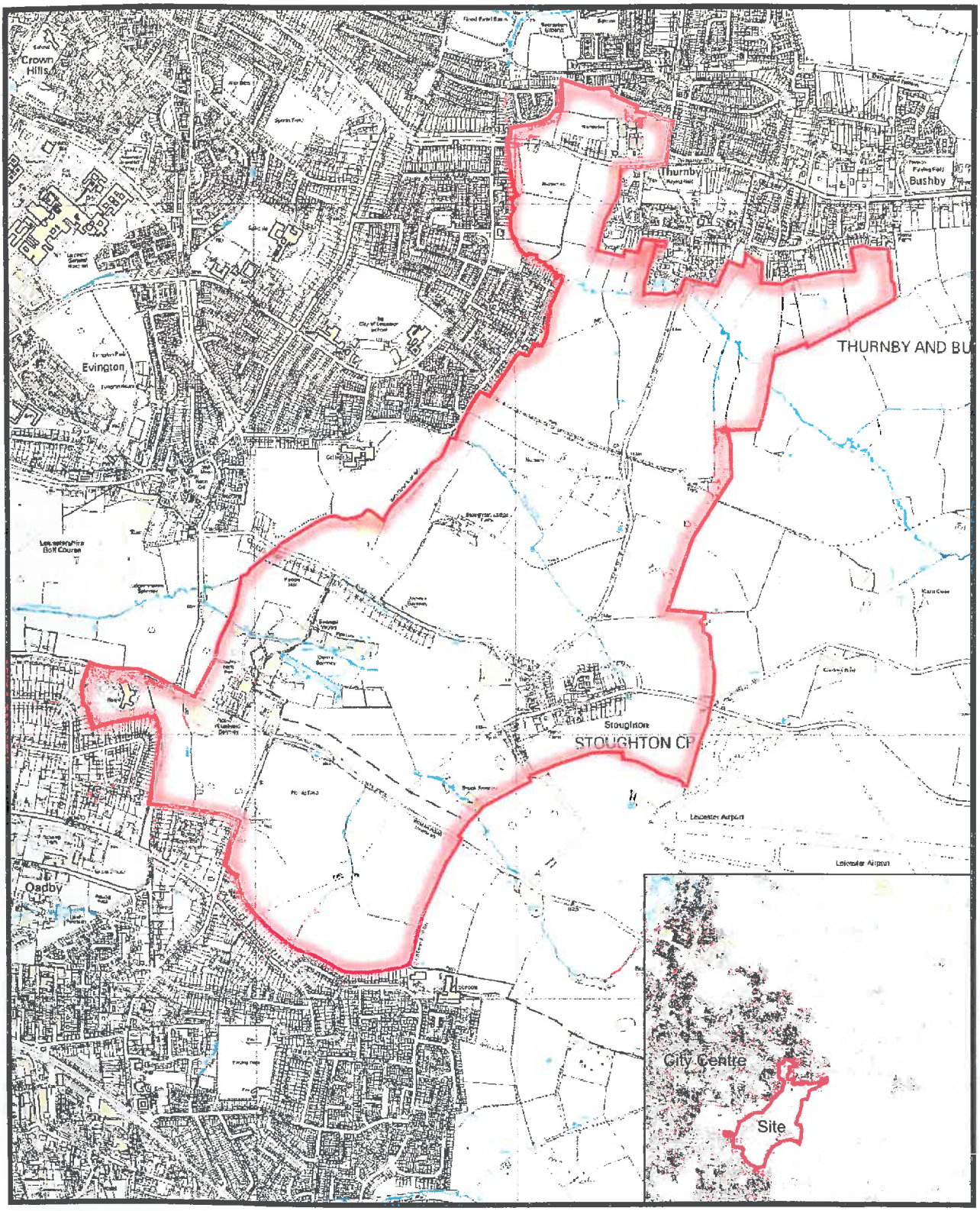
FPCR
Lockington Hall, Lockington, Derby, DE74 2RH
T: 01509 672772 E: mail@fpcr.co.uk

The Project Area
Stoughton, Oadby and Thurnby Green Wedge is an area of countryside around Stoughton situated between the settlements of Oadby, Evington and Thurnby. The extent of the project area can be seen in Map 1 (Page 5).

A Green Wedge is a local designation first referred to in Planning Policy Guidance note 7 in 1997. It is the intention of the Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project to prepare management strategies for all Green Wedges identified within the relevant local and structure plans.

The Nature of this Document
This report has been written in plain English to be readable for all. The text has been purposely limited and emphasis put on graphic presentation of study findings.

Photo 1: View west from Stoughton looking towards characteristic area of small woodland known as Brook Spinney



Site Boundary

Note: Inset map shows site location in relation to Leicester City Centre (Not to Scale)

Stoughton, Thurnby & Oadby Green Wedge

THE STUDY AREA

Map 1 Scale: 1 to 20,000

File: S:/2681/Map 1 - The Study Area.Cdr.

METHODOLOGY

Desk Study
A desk study was carried out to collate information on landform, rights-of-way, archaeological sites, planning designations and surface water. Much of this information is readily available on the Internet, but information was also received from Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project, Harborough District Council, Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council and Oadby and Wigston Borough Council.

The Leicestershire Environmental Resources Centre (LERC) and Leicestershire Wildlife Trust were contacted to provide:

(i) Information on known sites of nature conservation importance in the study area and its vicinity, including statutory sites (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and non-statutory sites, e.g. Wildlife Sites (WS)), and;

(ii) Previous records of notable/protected species from the study area and the vicinity.

English Nature was also contacted where appropriate to provide additional information regarding SSSIs.

Landscape
As well as producing the information required for the survey, the desk study was used as a basis to draft the landscape character areas. A landscape character assessment was carried out based on the Countryside Agency's 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland' (April 2002). The survey points (shown on Map 8, Page 27) were publicly accessible locations decided before visiting the site, and situated well within the draft Local Landscape Character Area, providing a representative view of the landscape. A survey sheet suitable for the site, based on Countryside Agency recommendations, was completed at each survey point, and this included an objective checklist of aesthetic factors and landscape characteristics.

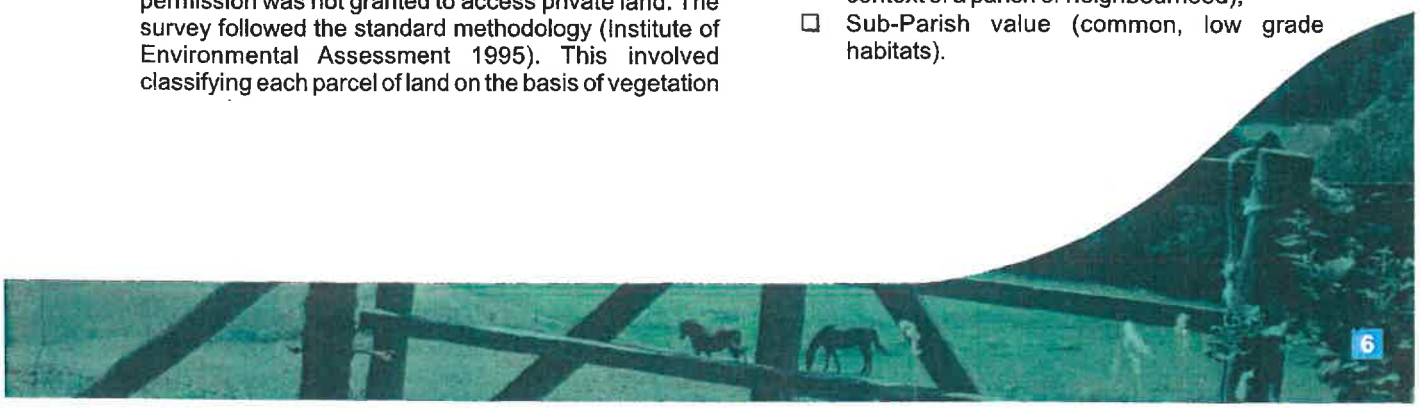
Survey to Identify Landuse Types
An Extended Phase-1 habitat survey of the study area was carried out on the 13th and 14th July 2005. The survey was carried out from public rights of way as permission was not granted to access private land. The survey followed the standard methodology (Institute of Environmental Assessment 1995). This involved classifying each parcel of land on the basis of vegetation into one of approximately 90 habitat types (JNCC 1993). As part of the survey, any habitats or features of particular nature conservation interest (e.g. mature trees and species-rich hedgerows) and any sightings, signs or evidence of protected or notable faunal species or any potential habitat for such species were noted.

Ecological Evaluation
The ecological evaluation was undertaken using a combination of criteria for habitats and species. The criteria used included:

- Species and Habitat Action Plans contained in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) (HMSO 1995) and the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland BAP (Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland BAPWG).
- Schedules and Annexes of UK and European wildlife legislation (e.g. Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) and The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994).
- Taxa specific conservation lists (e.g. RSPB lists of birds of conservation concern (RSPB 2002)).

Where appropriate, ecological values have been assigned to particular habitats and features. These values follow the guidelines provided by the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM 2002; 2005). The categories used are as follows:

- International value (internationally designated sites or sites supporting populations of internationally important species);
- National value (nationally designated sites (e.g. SSSI) or sites supporting viable populations of nationally important species);
- Regional value (sites exceeding county-level designations but not meeting SSSI criteria or supporting viable populations of species on the regional BAP);
- County value (county sites (e.g. Wildlife Sites) and other sites which meet the published ecological selection criteria for county designation, a viable area of habitat identified on the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland BAP);
- District value (sites/features that are scarce within the District and appreciably enrich the District's habitat resource);
- Parish value (areas of habitat considered to appreciably enrich the habitat resource within the context of a parish or neighbourhood);
- Sub-Parish value (common, low grade habitats).



Limitations

Three areas were inaccessible and could not be viewed from public rights of way (refer to Map 6, Page 19). In the remaining areas, lack of access is likely to limit the reliability of the survey. Distant observation is suitable for identifying landuse types and allowing some assessment of the quality and extent of habitats. However, it is likely that some habitats and/or features of ecological interest were missed. Although access to all the land was not possible, a good network of roads and public footpaths allowed views into the majority of the area, which was adequate for the purposes of the landscape survey.

Geology and Soils

Solid Geology
According to the British Geological Survey, the bedrock of this area is Lower Lias. The study area is situated within a 10-15km wide band of this Jurassic rock running from north to south, and is made up of deposits of clay, mud and limestone.

Drift Geology
Superficial deposits of Glacial till, which is boulder clay, as well as Morainic Drift cover the area, and are chalky in some places.

Soils
The soil within the area is mainly clay, however the soil improves around Stoughton, where the ground is higher, and limestone gives more loamy soils.

Topography and Surface Water
As shown on Map 2 (Page 9), the landform of the area is of medium scale, consisting of three hills and two valleys with uniform slopes. Evington Brook and Bushby Brook join together the other side of the hill, on which Evington is situated, and they join the main channel of the Soar River near the centre of Leicester. The boundary of the Sence and Soar catchments runs between Houghton on the Hill (the highest point of Bushby Brook) and Leicester Airport. Within the study area, the brooks flow along their natural courses and are flanked by native trees, forming natural field boundaries.

Photo 2: Gently undulating slopes, typical of this area

Archaeology
Information for this survey was gained from consultation with archaeologists at Leicestershire County Council and using information from the local plan. Reference should be made to Map 3 (Page 10) and Map 4 (Page 12), which respectively show the location of recorded archaeological sites listed on the Leicestershire and Rutland Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and, on Map 4, the designated Scheduled Monuments.

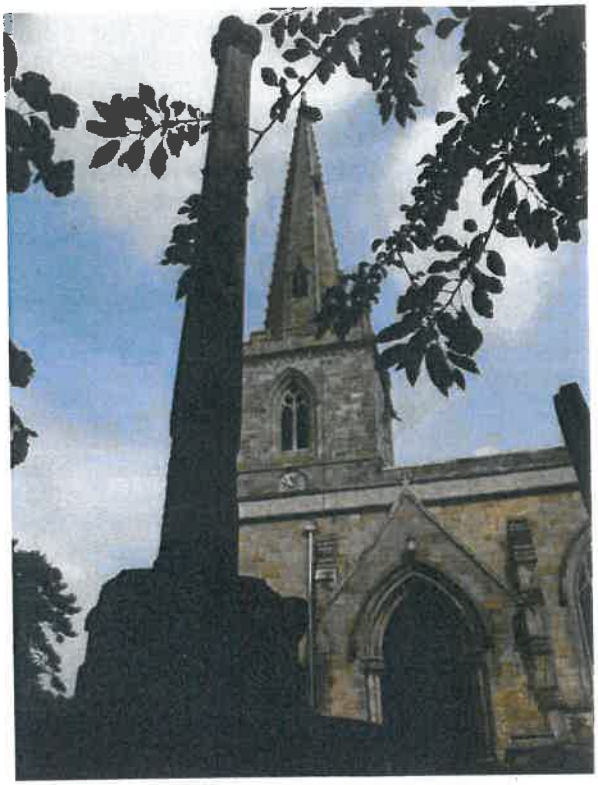


Photo 3: 14th Century Grade 2* listed cross

Two scheduled monuments are present in this area, one being the site of a former Manor House and associated fishponds, gardens and dovecote located just west of the church in Stoughton, and the other is a cross in the churchyard dating back to the 14th century. Although the cross is still present, no remains of the Manor House are visible.

The earliest recorded site is a flint scatter just south of Home Farm, which dates back to between 10000BC and 2501BC. Map 3 (Page 10) shows that archaeological sites and finds are concentrated around Stoughton village and along Gartree road, which itself marks the general location of former Roman Road Via Devana. The location and date of

Geology and Soils

Solid Geology
According to the British Geological Survey, the bedrock of this area is Lower Lias. The study area is situated within a 10-15km wide band of this Jurassic rock running from north to south, and is made up of deposits of clay, mud and limestone.

Drift Geology
Superficial deposits of Glacial till, which is boulder clay, as well as Morainic Drift cover the area, and are chalky in some places.

Soils
The soil within the area is mainly clay, however the soil improves around Stoughton, where the ground is higher, and limestone gives more loamy soils.

Topography and Surface Water
As shown on Map 2 (Page 9), the landform of the area is of medium scale, consisting of three hills and two valleys with uniform slopes. Evington Brook and Bushby Brook join together the other side of the hill, on which Evington is situated, and they join the main channel of the Soar River near the centre of Leicester. The boundary of the Sence and Soar catchments runs between Houghton on the Hill (the highest point of Bushby Brook) and Leicester Airport. Within the study area, the brooks flow along their natural courses and are flanked by native trees, forming natural field boundaries.

Photo 2: Gently undulating slopes, typical of this area

Archaeology
Information for this survey was gained from consultation with archaeologists at Leicestershire County Council and using information from the local plan. Refere should be made to Map 3 (Page 10) and Map 4 (P 12), which respectively show the location of recor archaeological sites listed on the Leicestershire Rutland Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and Map 4, the designated Scheduled Monuments.

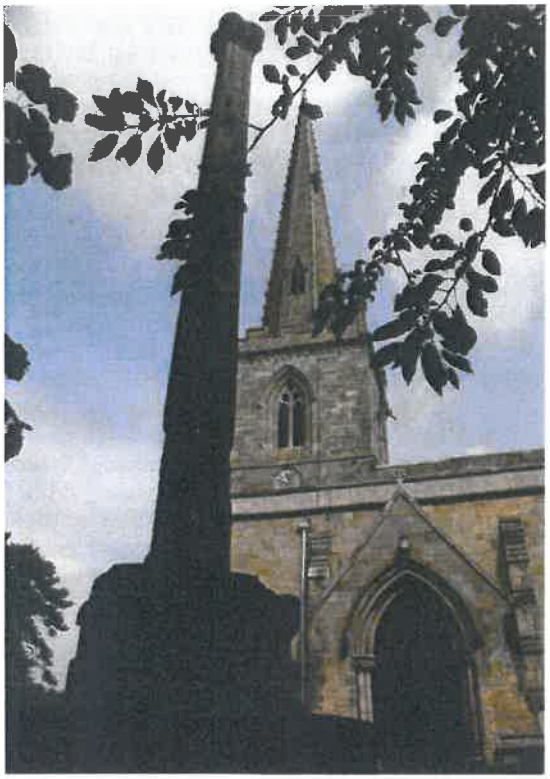
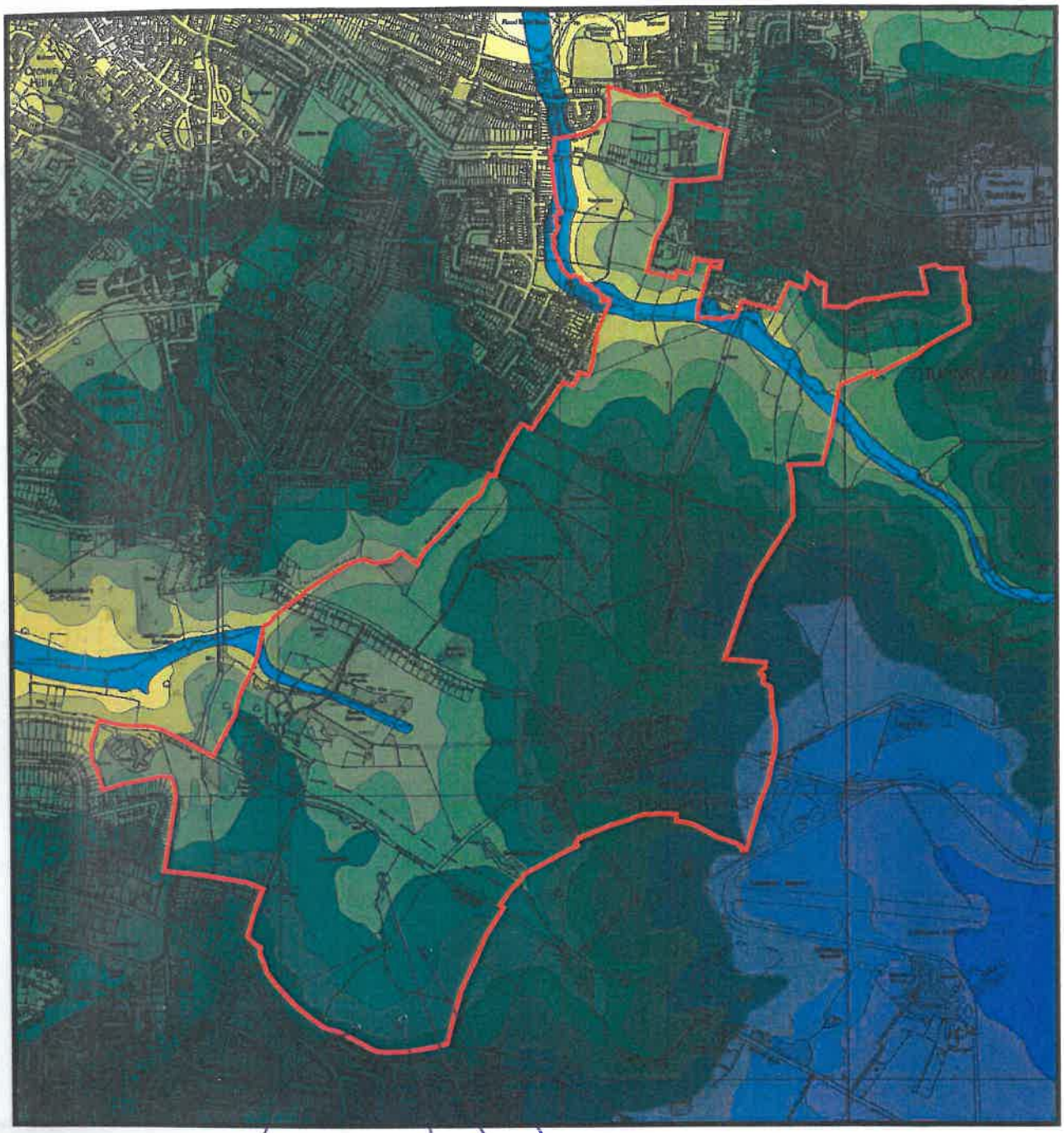


Photo 3: 14th Century Grade 2* listed cross

Two scheduled monuments are present in this area, being the site of a former Manor House and associa fishponds, gardens and dovecote located just wes the church in Stoughton, and the other is a cross in churchyard dating back to the 14th century. Although cross is still present, no remains of the Manor House visible.

The earliest recorded site is a flint scatter just sout Home Farm, which dates back to between 10000 and 2501BC. Map 3 (Page 10) shows archaeological sites and finds are concentrated around Stoughton village and along Gartree road, which itself marks the general location of former Roman Road Via Devana. The location and date of



Site Boundary

Approx. Floodplain extent

140 - 145 m

135 - 140 m

130 - 135 m

125 - 130 m

120 - 125 m

115 - 120 m

110 - 115 m

105 - 110 m

100 - 105 m

95 - 100 m

90 - 95 m

85 - 90 m

80 - 85 m

75 - 80 m

70 - 75 m

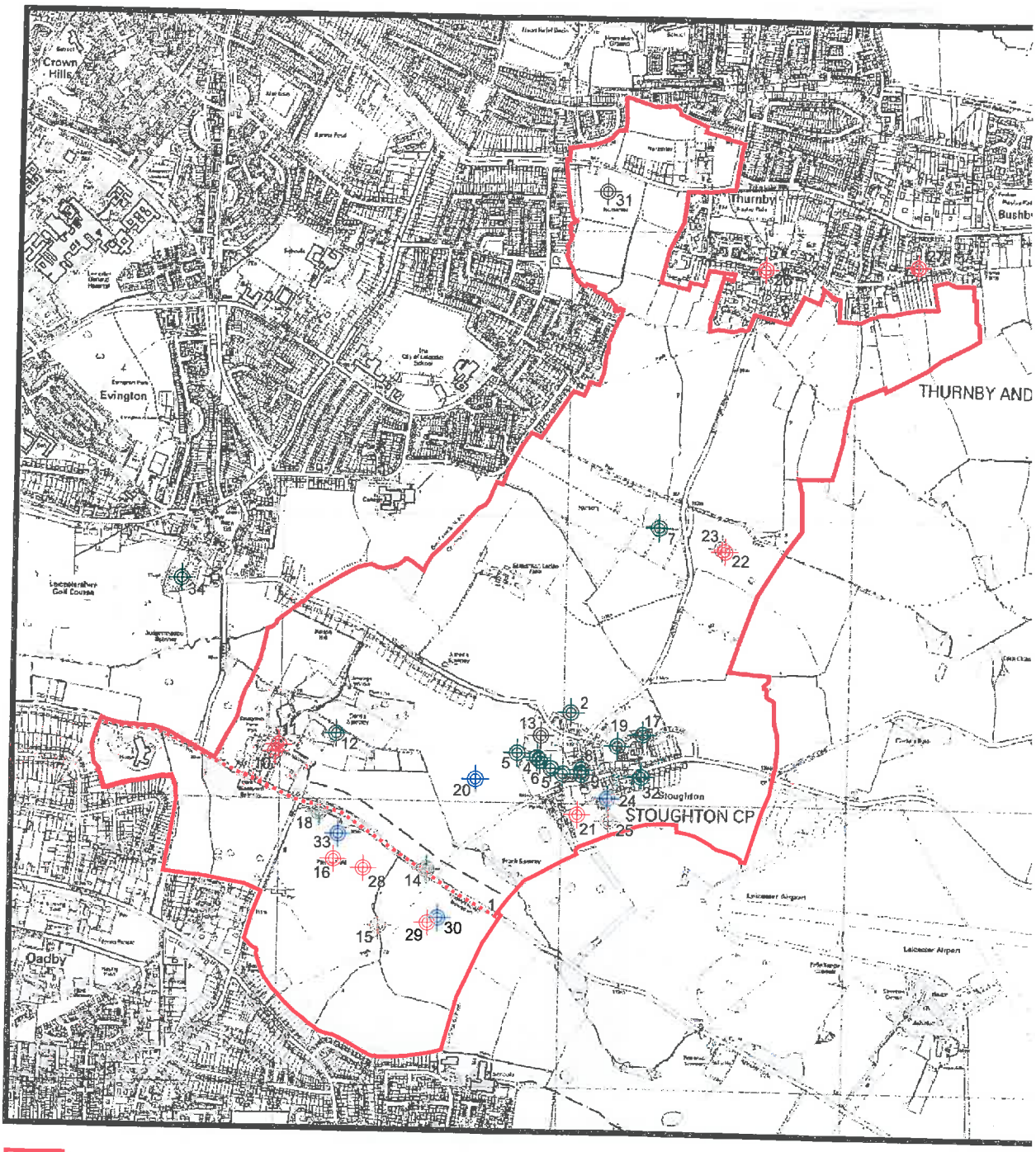
Stoughton, Thurnby & Oadby Green Wedge

N

File: S:/2681/Map 2 - Topography Plan.Cdr

TOPOGRAPHIC & FLOODPLAIN DATA LOCATION PLAN

Map 2 Scale: 1 to 20,000



Site Boundary

28 Roman SMR Site

28 Medieval & Post-Medieval SMR Site

28 Anglo-Saxon SMR Site

28 Early Mesolithic to Late Bronze SMR Site

28 Undated SMR Site

NOTE:
- Details of these SMs and SMR sites can be found in Appendix 1
- Points mark the centre of the sites and not extent of sites

File: S:/2661/Map 3 - Archaeological Significance.Cdr.

N

Stoughton, Thurnby & Oadby Green Wedg

KNOWN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Map 3 Scale: 1 to 20,000

Photo 4: Evidence of ridge and furrow earthworks

sites and finds suggests that there has probably been a settlement on this site since Mesolithic times, and this is likely to have been continuous settlement of Stoughton through historical eras.

Ridge and furrow earthworks, as seen in Photo 4, gives pasture fields an undulating, corrugated appearance, and in most cases marks the remains of medieval strip fields that were once under the plough. They are evidence of farming methods and field patterns in the area during the Middle Ages, and are an important historic landscape feature, but they are being eroded by modern agricultural methods. A post-war survey of ridge and furrow in this area carried out by Leicestershire County Council shows ridge and furrow still evident over most of the site, while a further survey completed in the 1990's shows these earthworks only being visible in a few areas, mainly just to the east of Stoughton and just south of Thurnby. A survey carried out for the purposes of this study found visible evidence of ridge and furrow in seven fields just south of Thurnby and in an area of pasture along the north side of Gartree Road within a landscaped parkland, possibly associated with the 18th and 19th century mansion here. The locations of these are shown on Map 9 (Page 30).

The area is recorded as being anciently enclosed, and although some of the fields have been made larger for the purpose of modern agricultural methods, most of the surviving field boundaries, whilst probably of enclosure date (18th/19th century), are likely to reflect the division of medieval and earlier landscapes. The existing ridge and furrow along the north side of Gartree Road provides clues as to the subdivision of existing fields during enclosure.

Stoughton Grange existed on the site of Stoughton Farm Park from the late 15th century, when it was founded by Leicester Abbey, and the mansion dates from the mid 16th century and was demolished in 1926. Although nothing of the original Stoughton Grange has survived above ground, the cellars, estate buildings and gardens associated with the mansion still exist. Notable features include the ornamental lake, parterre and walled garden, together with earthworks of the former dams to the northeast of the house. The surrounding landscaped parkland still exists, made up of scattered mature trees, and features such as the relict avenue running east from the former Grange to Stoughton village. Although public rights of way used provide routes through this parkland, they have long been closed.

Planning Background

The main designation covering the area is of course the Green Wedge. The purpose of this designation, as defined by the Harborough District Local Plan (2001), is not to restrict the growth of an urban area, but to ensure that as urban development extends, open land will be incorporated within it. The green wedge should remain open and undeveloped to maintain a distinctive urban edge, and to retain links into the countryside from surrounding urban areas.

Stoughton village is designated as a Conservation Area in order to preserve the character and appearance of the village, and ensure that any changes are in character with their surroundings, and do not detract from the rest of the village. The Harborough District Local Plan (2001) explains that the designation does not imply blanket preservation of the existing physical fabric of the environment, but will only permit development which respects the character of the area. Further restrictions are placed upon demolition, and all trees in the area are protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

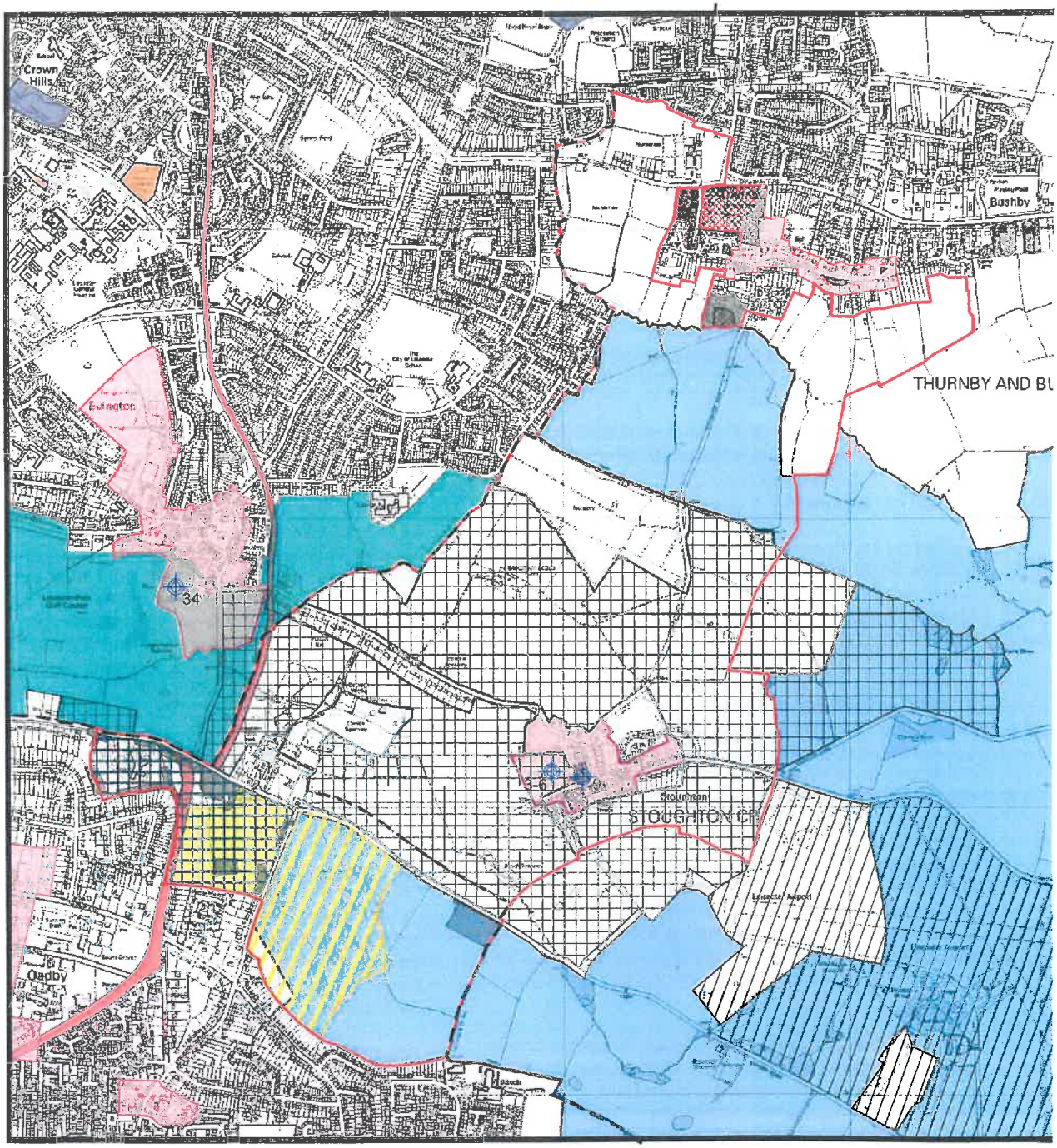
Outside Stoughton, individual or group Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) (refer to Map 4, Page 12) have been used by District Councils to preserve mature trees that make a significant contribution to the character of the countryside. These trees, the majority of which are oak, ash and sycamore, must not be willingly damaged, lopped or cut down without permission from the relevant local authority. (Map 5, Page 14 shows administrative boundaries for local authorities).

The only planning designations signifying change are the Reservation for the Eastern District Distributor Road, and the Provision for Playing Fields in the Green Wedge, the locations of which are shown in Map 4 (Page 12). These both highlight the pressures from the adjacent urban areas, and the requirement of planning policy to provide for these demands without detriment to the landscape character.

Stoughton Parish Plan shows land between Thurnby Lane and Old Charity Farm designated as a future recreational area.

Other Designations and Land-Based Schemes

Information regarding designations other than planning was gained from



Site Boundary

Conservation Area

Nature Reserves & Parks

Tree Preservation Orders

Stoughton Airfield

Site of Ecological Importance

Green Wedge Proposals

Provision for Playing Fields in Green Wedge

Provision for cemetery in Green Wedge

Replacement Playing Fields for Leicester University

9 Scheduled ancient monuments (See Appendix 1)

Reservation for the Eastern District Distributor Road

District Boundary

Important Open Land

Historic Landscape

Organic Farming

Countrysi Stewardsh

Stoughton, Thurnby & Oadby Green Wedg

N

File: S:/2681/Map 4 - Designations.Cdr.

DESIGNATIONS & LAND-BASED SCHEMES

Map 4

Scale: 1 to 20,000

www.magic.gov.uk, which is an information system collating data from various government agencies.

The entire area is classified as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone due to high levels of nitrate, of which over 70% enters water from agricultural land. This is a concern, because it must be removed before water can be supplied to consumers.

Photo 5: Oil seed rape nr. Stoughton grown organically

An Organic Farming Agreement covers a large part of the area, centred around Stoughton (refer to Map 4, Page 12). The scheme aims to help farmers move from conventional to organic farming methods and they receive financial help during the conversion process.

Map 4 (Page 12) also shows areas covered by Countryside Stewardship Agreements, which are part of a scheme put in place that makes annual payments to farmers and other land managers from 10-year agreements to enhance and conserve the landscape, wildlife and history and to help people to enjoy them. Stewardship aims to conserve a range of traditional countryside landscapes and features by:

- Sustaining the beauty and diversity of the landscape
- Improving and extending wildlife habitats
- Conserving archaeological sites and historic features
- Improving opportunities for enjoying the countryside
- Restoring neglected land or features
- Creating new habitats and landscapes

The areas within the Green Wedge that are not covered by a Countryside Stewardship Agreement are classed as Countryside Stewardship Agreement Target Areas, where farmers can apply to the England Rural Development Programme to put agreements into place. The target area description for High Leicestershire specifies the features and habitats that will be conserved and enhanced by a successful Countryside Stewardship application. The key objectives for this area are:

- Appropriate management of waterside areas
- Sympathetic management of grassland on unimproved or semi-improved pastures
- Arable reversion to permanent pasture
- Restoration of field boundaries, and
- Creation of field margins and field ponds.

Rights of Way

Information regarding the location of rights of way has been gathered from Leicestershire County Council and details of the cycle network have been gained from Sustrans (www.sustrans.org.uk), and this information can be found on Map 5 (Page 14).

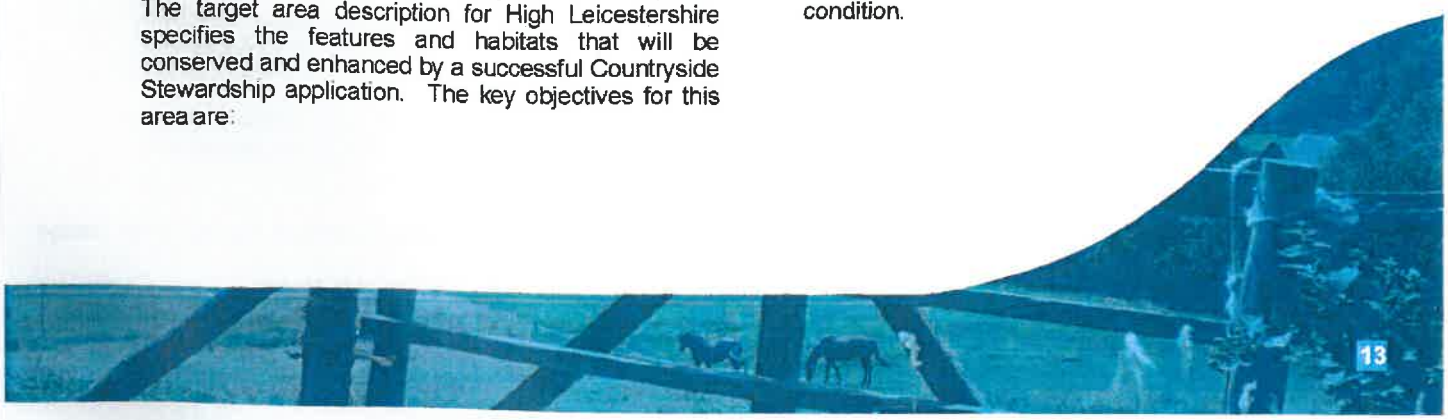
A good network of footpaths allows the area to be easily accessed on foot from adjacent urban areas, while bridleways and cycle paths provide good access onto the quiet roads, although there is no access for bikes and horses from Oadby and Thurnby apart from along roads. Although most paths are not heavily used, Stoughton Lane is a regular route for cyclists, joggers and walkers. A cycle group meet once a week in Stoughton and use the surrounding routes to access surrounding villages.

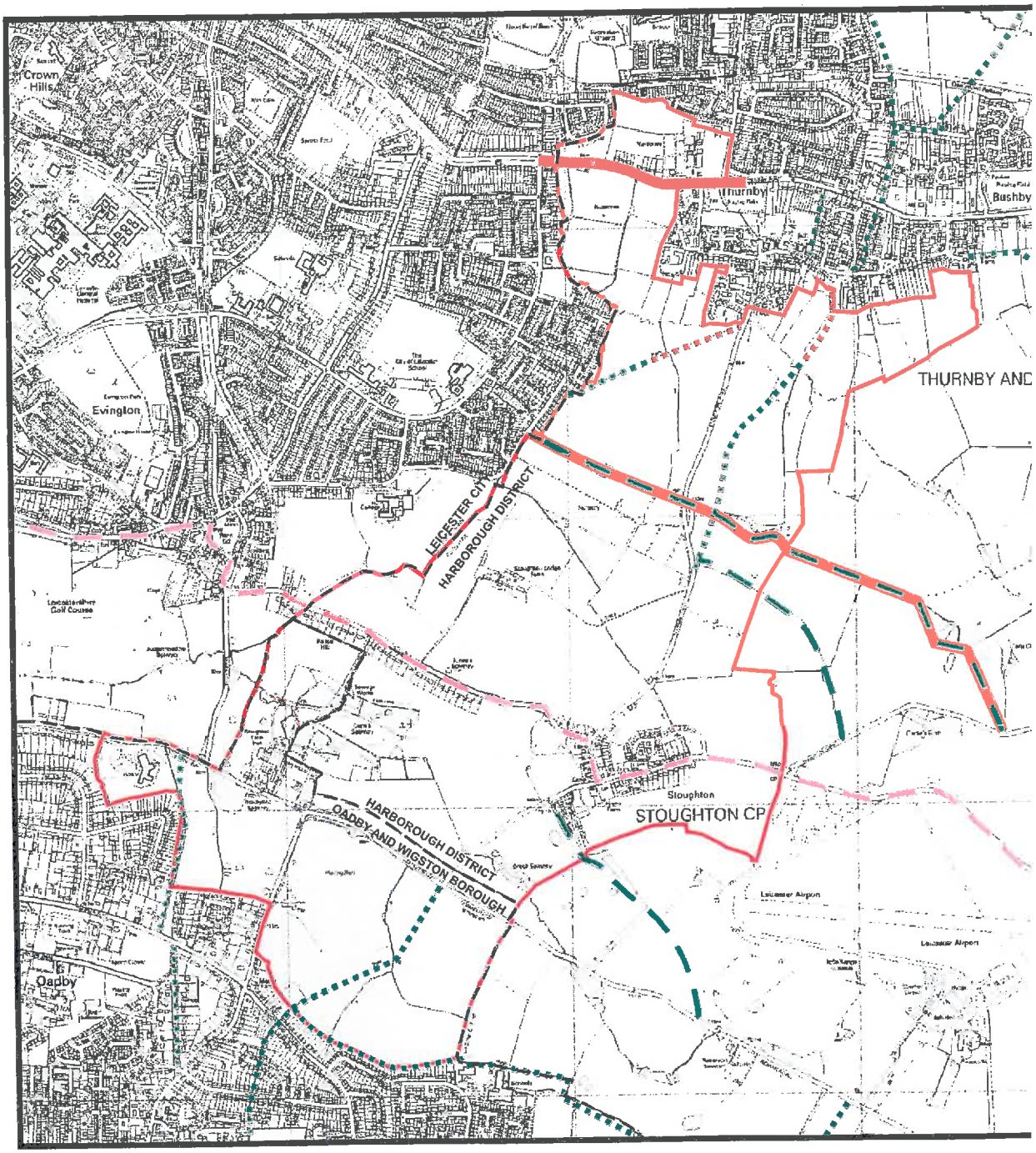
Leicestershire County Council has produced a leaflet showing 3 circular parish walks around Thurnby and Bushby that use all the footpaths shown on Map 5 (Page 14) north of Stoughton Lane.

Footpaths are identified at starting points with green finger-post signs, and crossing points, such as over streams, are marked with timber posts painted yellow.

Photo 6: Signage identifying start of footpaths

Stream crossings take the form of simple concrete bridges, while field boundaries are negotiated using simple timber stiles. Footpaths across fields are earth compacted by walkers, and paths generally are in good condition.





Site Boundary

National Cycle Network on-road Route (63)

Other Traffic-Free Cycle Route

Public Footpath (Including Permissive Paths

Bridleway

District Boundary (And name of District)

Stoughton, Thurnby & Oadby Green W

RIGHTS OF WAY

Map 5 Scale: 1 to 20,000

N

File: S:/2681/Map 5 - Rights of Way.Cdr.

SUMMARY

Known Sites of Nature Conservation Importance
There are no statutory (i.e. SSSIs or LNRs) sites of Nature Conservation Importance in the study area. There is a single non-statutory site, which comprises a short section of road verge that has been designated as a WS (refer to Map 7, Page 21). Five sites that LERC identify as being of 'Parish' value are in the study area (refer to Map 7, Page 21). There are also several Wildlife Sites to the west of the study area (refer to Map 7, Page 21). The sites in the study area are as follows:

'County' Level Importance
- Stoughton Farm Park roadside Wildlife Site

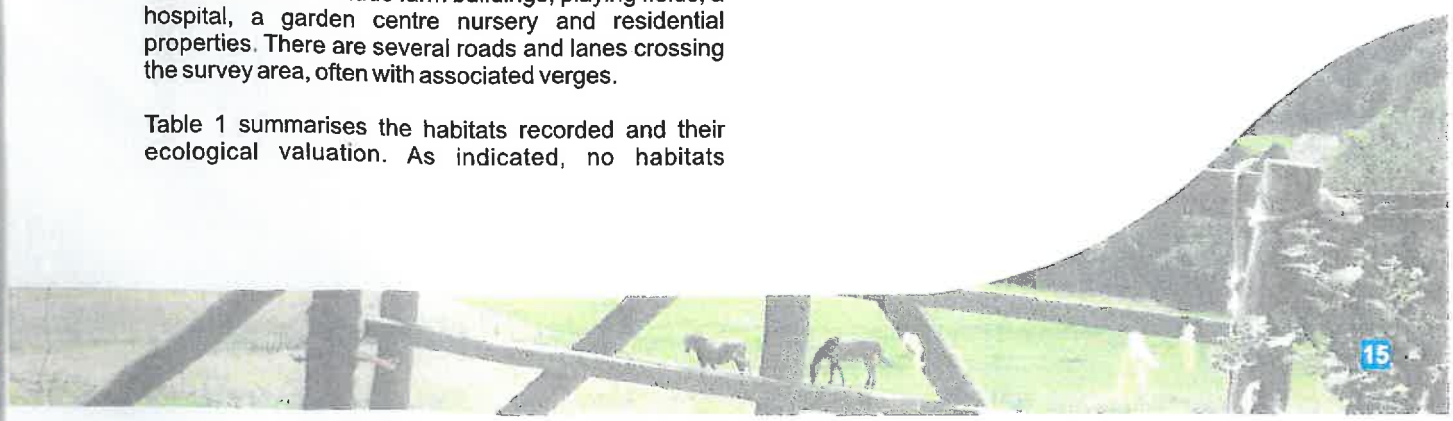
'Parish' Level Importance
- 'Buttercup meadow
- Dams Spinney
- Hedgerow
- Pasture (horse grazed)
- Stackyard Spinney

Habitats
The Phase-1 habitat map of the study area is shown on Map 6 (Page 19). The area is predominantly agricultural land, dominated by arable and improved grassland fields lined with hedgerows and ditches, with mature

Photo 7: Most field boundaries are hedgerows

trees, pockets of woodland and occasionally ponds. Other land-uses include farm buildings, playing fields, a hospital, a garden centre nursery and residential properties. There are several roads and lanes crossing the survey area, often with associated verges.

Table 1 summarises the habitats recorded and their ecological valuation. As indicated, no habitats considered to be of International, National or Regional value were present and the majority were considered to be of Sub-parish or Sub-parish to Parish level importance. Although most of the habitats recorded are common and relatively species-poor, the mosaic and diversity of habitats in the area, including woodland, scrub, hedgerows, mature trees, watercourses and ponds, will provide habitat opportunities for a wide range of characteristic species, many of which are declining and of conservation concern. The network of hedgerows, watercourses, road verges and uncropped field margins across the area also provide wildlife corridors that connect habitats and allow species to move within and across the local landscape.
Habitats recorded that correspond to UK BAP or Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland BAP priority habitats include species-rich hedgerows, unimproved neutral grassland and mature trees (refer to Table 2).



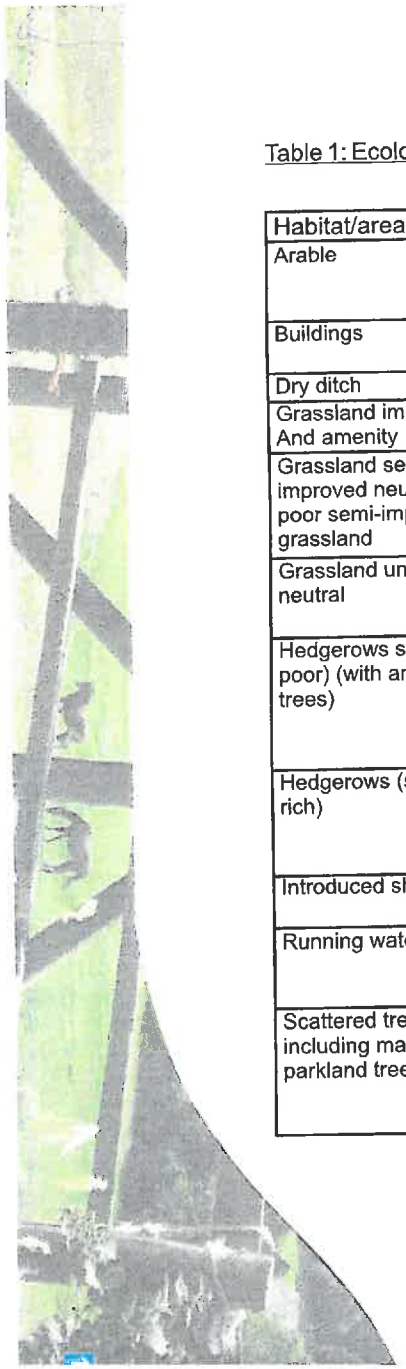


Table 1: Ecological evaluation, based on guidelines from the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM 2002)

Habitat/area	Value	Reason for valuation
Arable	Sub-parish	Common, non-natural habitat that provides limited habitat opportunities for faunal species, although provides part of the habitat used by farmland birds, including the field margins which provide a potentially suitable habitat for ground nesting birds.
Buildings	Sub-parish	Lack of flora and limited opportunity for fauna. However, some buildings may act as roosting areas for bats and nesting areas for birds.
Dry ditch	Sub-parish	Lacked associated flora and unlikely to provide habitat for any protected or notable species.
Grassland improved And amenity	Sub-parish	Common, species-poor habitats that are intensively managed and provide limited opportunities for fauna, although may provide foraging habitat for badgers.
Grassland semi-improved neutral and poor semi-improved grassland	Sub-parish to parish	Dominated by grasses with only a few indicators of less 'improved' swards. Likely to provide badger foraging habitat. Provides potential habitat for invertebrates and mammals and adds to the mosaic of habitats on the site.
Grassland unimproved neutral	Parish	Represents an uncommon and declining habitat and includes several characteristic plant species of unimproved swards. However, is extremely limited in extent and is therefore unlikely to support many characteristic faunal species.
Hedgerows species-poor) (with and without trees)	Sub-parish to parish	A common species-poor habitat. However, an important landscape feature that provides wildlife corridors and potential habitat a wide range of characteristic species including bats and declining farmland birds. The importance of hedgerows is reflected in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland BAP, which lists this as a habitat of conservation concern.
Hedgerows (species rich)	Parish to district	Includes eight woody species, although there are no associated features. Likely to be long established/ancient hedgerows of particular ecological importance. Will provide habitat for a wide range of characteristic species including bats and declining farmland birds. The importance of species-rich hedgerows is reflected by the UK BAP, which has a specific Habitat Action Plan (HAP) for this habitat.
Introduced shrubs	Sub-parish	Common species-poor habitat that is non-natural in composition. Provides limited habitat for faunal species, although does provide nesting habitat for birds.
Running water	Parish to district	Mainly shaded by adjacent trees and shrubs and appear to contain limited marginal vegetation, although will provide habitat for characteristic species such as kingfisher. Also provides potential habitat for water voles and provide an ecological corridor across the area.
Scattered trees including mature parkland trees	Sub-parish to parish	The presence of many large mature trees is a notable feature. These provide potential roosting habitat for bats and may provide habitat for notable invertebrates. The mature trees include at least two that would qualify for veteran tree status. The importance of parkland trees (and particularly veterans) is reflected by the UK BAP, which includes a specific Habitat Action Plan (HAP) for wood pasture and parkland and by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland BAP, which include a specific HAP for mature trees.

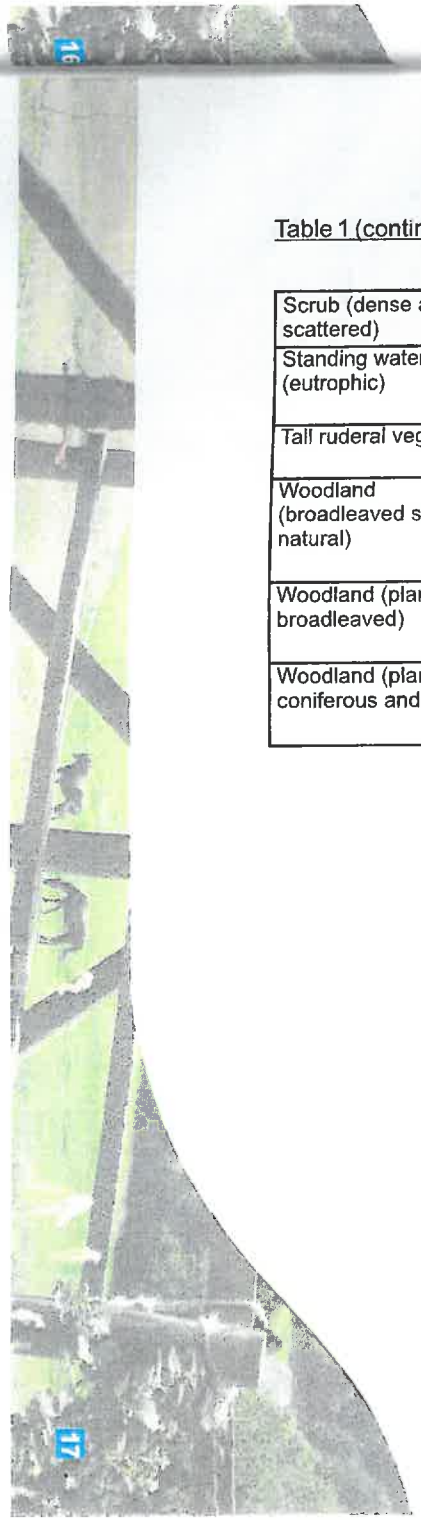


Table 1 (continued)

Scrub (dense and scattered)	Sub-parish	Botanically species-poor and unlikely to provide habitat for any protected species, although provides potential bird nesting habitat and adds to the mosaic of habitats in the area.
Standing water (eutrophic)	Sub-parish to Parish	Farm pond appears highly eutrophic, lacked vegetation and provides limited potential for amphibians. Woodland pond contains vegetation and provides potential breeding habitat for amphibians and potential habitat for grass snakes. Ponds are an uncommon feature in the local landscape.
Tall ruderal vegetation	Sub-parish	Common species-poor habitat and is unlikely to provide habitat for any protected or notable species.
Woodland (broadleaved semi-natural)	Parish	The floristic composition suggests that these are probably long-established secondary woodland. However, they are well established and structurally reasonably diverse, with mature standard trees and a developed shrub layer. It is likely to support a range of mammals, birds and invertebrates, including bats and badgers. The ecological value is reduced due to lack of management and spread of non-native species such as snowberry.
Woodland (planted broadleaved)	Sub-parish to Parish	They are mainly well established (although some are recent plantations), are structurally diverse, with mature standard trees with reasonable shrub layers. Likely to support a range of mammals, birds and invertebrates, including bats and badgers.
Woodland (planted coniferous and mixed)	Sub-parish	Common species-poor habitat composed of non-native species. However, will provide potential habitat for nesting birds.

Table 2: Priority Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats

Habitat	UK BAP Priority Habitat	LL&R BAP Priority Habitat
Broadleaved woodland		
Cereal field margin	X	X
Mature/parkland trees	X	X
Roadside verge		X
Hedgerows (species-rich/ancient)	X	X
Hedgerows (all)		X
Standing water (eutrophic)		X
Streams		X
Unimproved lowland grassland	X	X

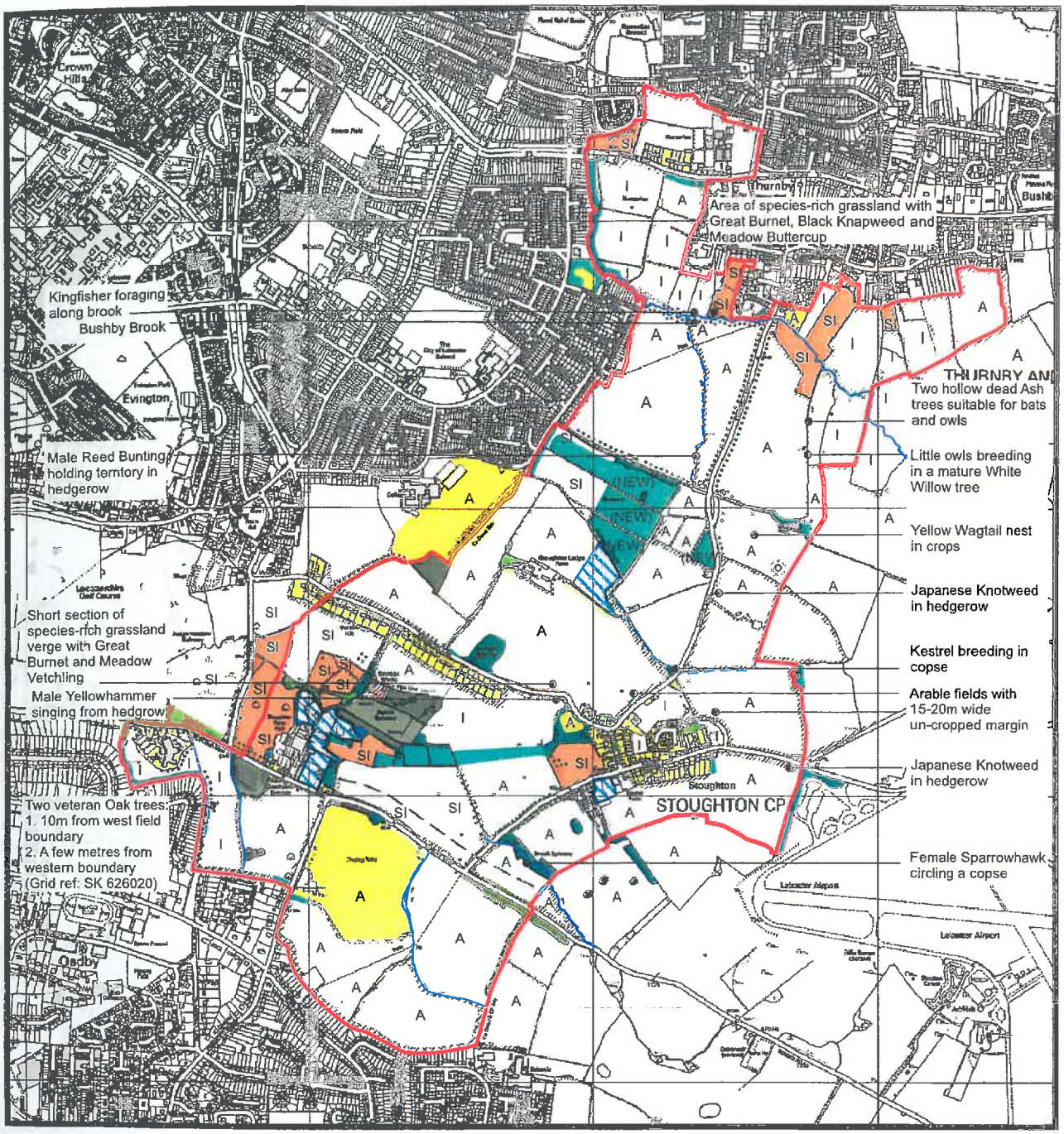
Species

A variety of notable and protected species are present or are likely to be present in the area (refer to Table 3).

Table 3: Notable/Protected Species

Species	UK BAP Priority Species	LL&R BAP Priority Species	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)
Birds			
Barn owl*	X	X	X
Corn Bunting+	X		
Kestrel*	X		
Kingfisher*	X		X
Grey partridge+	X		
Lapwing+	X		
Linnet+	X		
Reed bunting*	X		
Skylark+	X		
Song thrush+	X		
Sparrowhawk*	X		
Tree sparrow+	X		
Turtle dove+	X		
Whitethroat*	X		
Yellow wagtail*	X		
Yellowhammer*	X		
Mammals			
Badgers*	X	X	X
Bats*	X	X	X
Brown hare+	X		
Water vole*	X	X	X
	X		
Reptiles	X		
Grass snake*	X		X

* species that are known to be present.
+ species that are considered likely to be present given the habitats recorded.



Site Boundary

A Amenity Grassland

A Arable

I Improved Grassland

SI Poor Semi-improved Grassland

SI Semi-improved Neutral Grassland

Unimproved Neutral

Plantation Broadleaved Woodland

Plantation Coniferous Woodland

Plantation Mixed Woodland

Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland

Survey Areas Not Visible

Scattered Broadleaved Trees

Scattered Scrub

Dense Scrub

Introduced Shrubs

Standing Water (Eutrophic)

Dry Ditch

Running Water

Species Poor Hedgerow (With or Without Trees)

Species Rich Hedgerow (With Trees)

Tall Ruderal Vegetation

N

File: 5:/2681/Map 6 - Ecology Survey Results.Cdr.

Stoughton, Thurnby & Oadby Green Wedge

ECOLOGY SURVEY RESULTS

Map 6

Scale: 1 to 20,000

HABITAT DESCRIPTIONS AND EVALUATION

Fields

Habitat Types

- ❑ Amenity grassland
- ❑ Arable
- ❑ Improved grassland
- ❑ Poor semi-improved grassland
- ❑ Semi-improved neutral grassland
- ❑ Unimproved neutral grassland

Descriptions

The majority of the study area comprises of large arable fields lined with hedgerows, in wheat or oil-seed rape

Photo 8: The majority of the area comprises of arable

production. Many of the fields have un-cropped margins, on average 2-5m wide, although in some fields they are up to approximately 15-20m wide (refer to Map 6, Page 19). These areas comprise of grasses and typical ruderal species. A yellow wagtail was recorded nesting in an arable field to the east of Thurnby Lane (refer to Map 6, Page 19). The grassland fields in the area have been agriculturally 'improved' and are generally grazed short by cattle or sheep. The grasslands are botanically species-poor being dominated by grasses with few broadleaved herbs present. In addition to agricultural grassland there is a large field being commercially cultivated for turf and there are areas of regularly mown short species-poor amenity grassland in playing fields, the hospital grounds, Stoughton churchyard and in residential gardens.

Two distinct areas of more species-rich and less 'improved' grassland areas were noted in the area (refer to Map 6, Page 19). A field to the north of Bushby Brook includes herbs such as great burnet, black knapweed and meadow buttercup. There is also a short section (15m x 2m) of species-rich road verge on Stoughton Lane. It includes herbs such as great burnet and meadow vetchling.

Evaluation

The fields are generally of low value from a botanical perspective. However, the un-cropped margins of the arable fields will provide important 'buffer zones' for hedgerows, woodlands and watercourses, a resource for insects, mammals and birds (particularly declining farmland birds) and a habitat for declining plant species. Although the grasslands in the area have been 'modified' and are mainly botanically species-poor, they will provide habitat for a range of invertebrates, birds and mammals. The areas of amenity grassland are of low value for wildlife. The importance of some of the semi-improved neutral grasslands is reflected in their designations as habitat of 'Parish' level importance (refer Map 7, Page 21) by LERC. In addition, the importance of field margins, neutral grassland, and roadside verges is reflected by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland BAP, which lists these as priority habitats of conservation concern.

Woodland and Scrub

Habitat Types

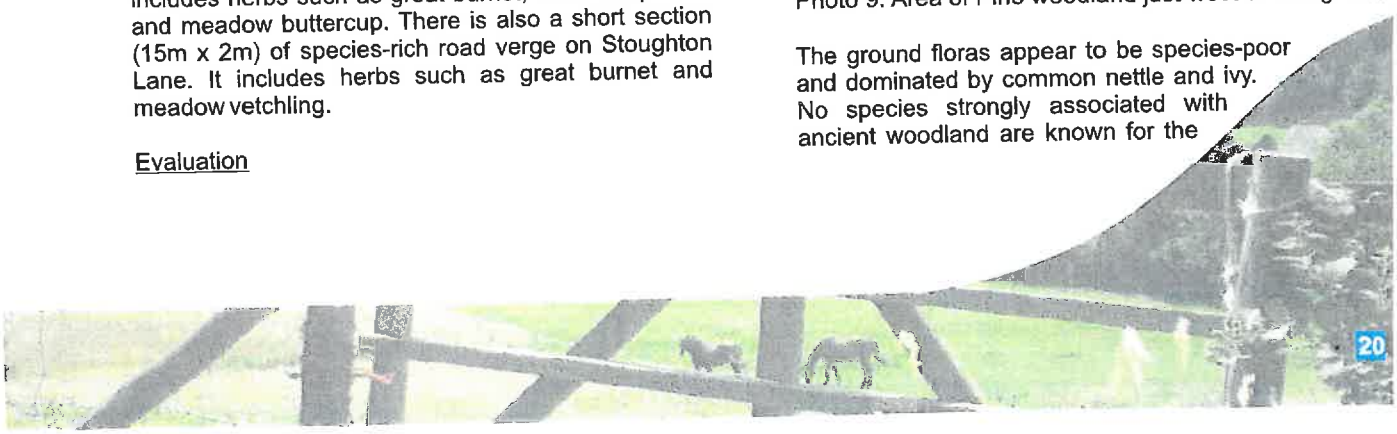
- ❑ Dense and scattered scrub
- ❑ Plantation broadleaved woodland
- ❑ Plantation coniferous woodland
- ❑ Plantation mixed woodland
- ❑ Scattered broadleaved trees
- ❑ Semi-natural broadleaved woodland

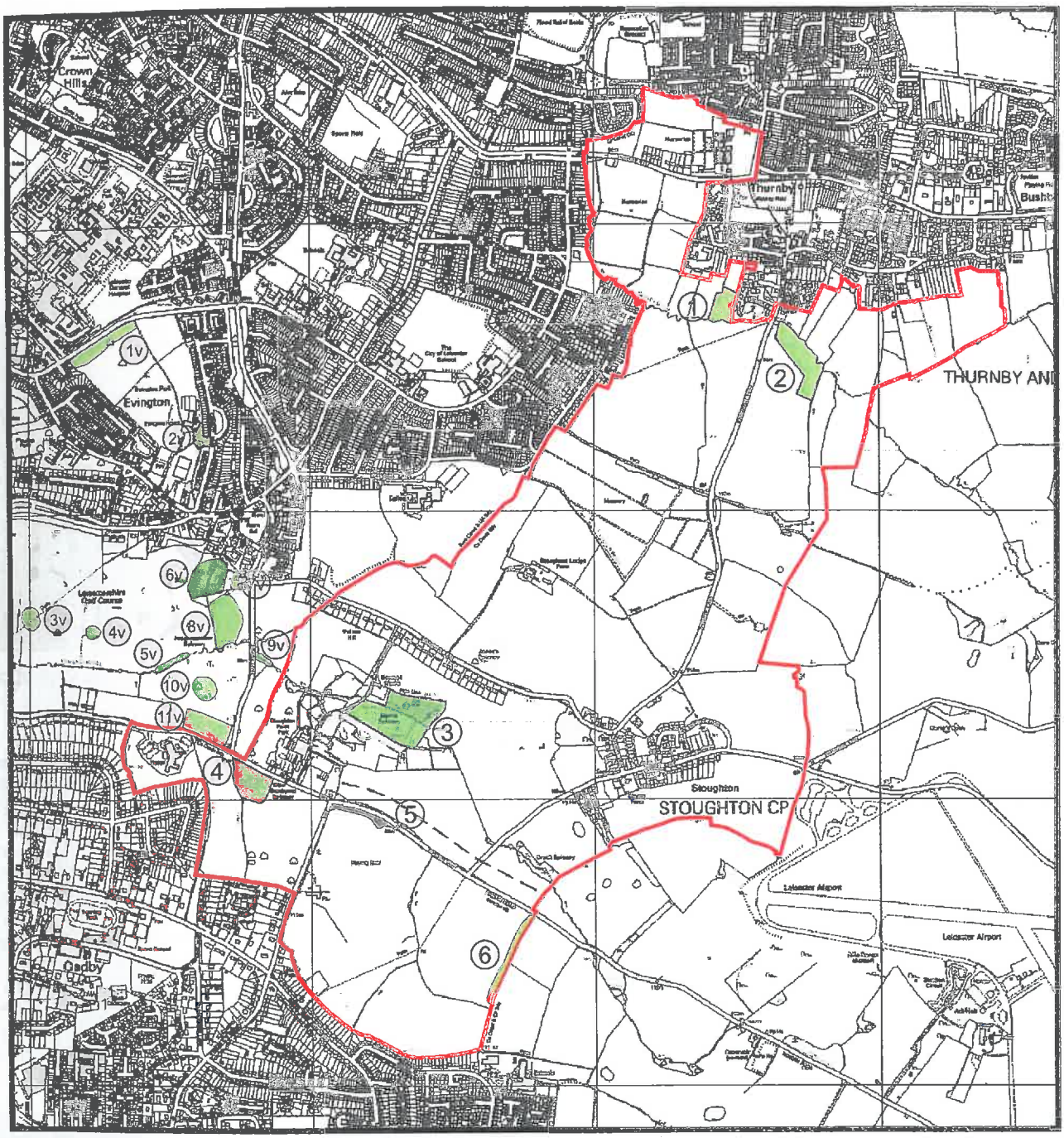
Descriptions

Several pockets of woodland are scattered throughout the study area. They comprise of plantation woodland (mature and recently planted) and areas of semi-natural broadleaved woodland. The woodlands are mainly dominated by mature broadleaved trees such as pedunculate oak, ash, beech and sycamore, with crack willow and white willow near watercourses. They generally have sparse shrub layers consisting of hawthorn, elder, holly and the non-native snowberry.

Photo 9: Area of Pine woodland just west of Stoughton

The ground floras appear to be species-poor and dominated by common nettle and ivy. No species strongly associated with ancient woodland are known for the





Site Boundary

Sites in the vicinity:- (v) All Wildlife Sites

1. Pasture, horse grazed - 'Parish' level site
2. Buttercup meadow - 'Parish' level site
3. Dam's Spinney - 'Parish' level site
4. Stackyard Spinney - 'Parish' level site
5. Roadside, Stoughton - Confirmed Wildlife Site
6. Hedgerow - 'Parish' level site

1v Evington Park, Ethel Rd verge
2v Evington Park, Great Crested Newt Pond
3v Golf course grassland
4v Leicestershire golf course
5v Woodland along brook + lichens
6v Piggy's Hollow
7v St. Deny's Churchyard
8v Shady Lane Arboretum Grassland
9v Wood along brook + lichens
10v Shady Lane Arboretum grassland
11v Shady Lane Arboretum grassland

File. S:/2681/Map 7 - Nature Conservation Importance.Cdr.

N

Stoughton, Thurnby & Oadby Green Wedge

SITES OF NATURE CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE

Map 7

Scale: 1 to 20,000

woodlands. The thin strip of woodland along the roadside on Gartree Road near Stoughton Farm Park did contain some typical woodland species such as dog's-mercury, Lords-and-Ladies and wood false brome. A sparrowhawk and kestrel were recorded in two copses (refer to Map 6, Page 19).

There are also a few small blocks of woodland dominated by non-native species such as false acacia and copper beech. Also, a new plantation on land belonging to the commercial nursery comprises of sapling trees of birches, poplar and maples. Small blocks of plantation mixed and coniferous woodland occur adjacent to buildings and comprise of oak, ash, Scot's pine and Leyland cypress. Scattered trees of varying ages also occur along hedgerows, road verges and field margins. Species include pedunculate oak, ash and Lombardy poplar. Dense scrub occurs in field corners and is dominated by dense stands of blackthorn and bramble. Scattered hawthorn and elder scrub occurs along field boundaries.

Evaluation

The mature woodlands and mature trees are considered important ecological features in the landscape. The 'Parish' value of Stackyard Spinney and Dams Spinney and the 'County' value of roadside woodland on Gartree Road at Stoughton Farm Park is reflected in their LERC designations (refer to Map 7, Page 21). In addition, the importance of broadleaved woodland is reflected in its inclusion on the UK BAP and Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland BAP as a habitat of conservation concern. The presence of many large mature trees is a feature of the landscape in the study area. These included at least two trees (located at grid ref SK626020) likely to qualify for veteran status (these are trees considered to be of particular value due to antiquity, large size and the presence of associated habitats such as deadwood). Mature trees (including veterans) are a priority habitat on the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland BAP. Several trees have Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) (refer to Map 4, Page 12). The woodlands are generally well established, include many large mature trees and have a reasonable structure. The shrub layer of many of the woodlands contains the non-native snowberry. The woodlands are likely to provide habitat for a range of typical species; including protected species such as badger, bats and notable bird species. The scrub is also likely to provide habitat for nesting birds. The mature scattered trees are important landscape features and provide habitat for fungi, insects, birds and bats. Little owls were recorded breeding in a mature white willow tree to the east of Stoughton Road (refer to Map 6, Page 19).

Wetlands

Habitat Types

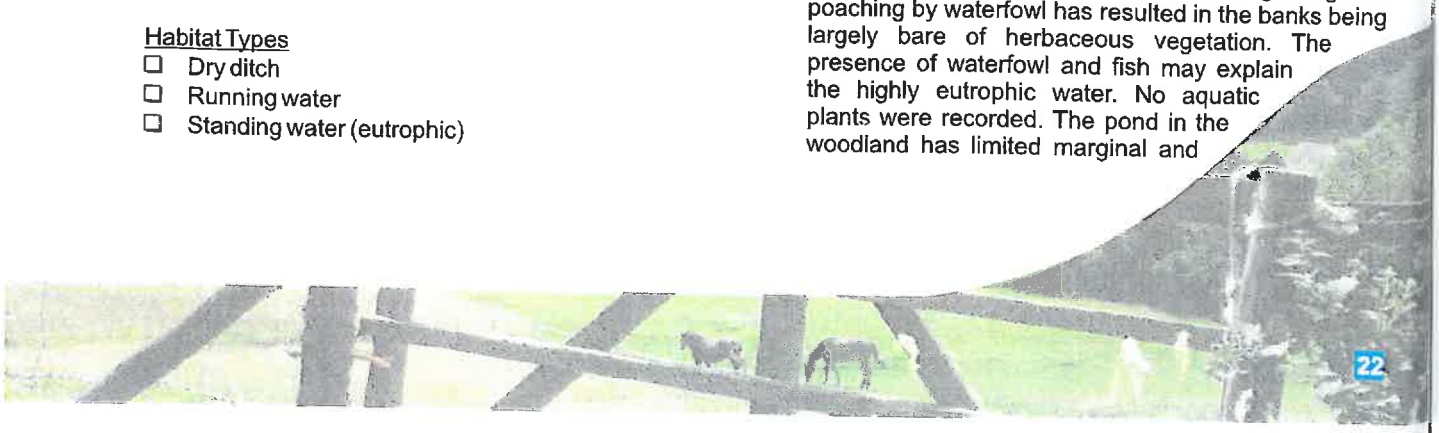
- ☐ Dry ditch
- ☐ Running water
- ☐ Standing water (eutrophic)

Photo 10: Most wetland is found in the form of brooks

Descriptions

Due to lack of access it was not possible to survey the watercourses in detail. The descriptions relate to small sections that were visible from roads and footpaths. Several watercourses including dry ditches, drains, brooks and streams occur within the study area. A kingfisher was seen foraging along Bushby Brook, on the northern side of the area (refer to Map 6, Page 19). The banks of the majority of the watercourses are lined with willow trees and shrubs including hawthorn and elder. The brook running through Brook Spinney is lined with some mature pollard willows. Overhanging trees have led to heavy shading of the watercourses. The brooks and streams have slow-sluggish running water, with mud and gravely substrate. All watercourses appear to have steep to shallow earth banks.

Only two areas of standing water are noted in the area (apart from the likely garden ponds in Stoughton). These comprise a fishing pond at Stoughton Farm Park and a small pond in the thin strip of roadside woodland along Gartree Road near Stoughton Farm Park. The farm pond has bare earth banks with occasional trees and shrubs. The water is green and appears highly eutrophic. Waterfowl use the pond and grazing and poaching by waterfowl has resulted in the banks being largely bare of herbaceous vegetation. The presence of waterfowl and fish may explain the highly eutrophic water. No aquatic plants were recorded. The pond in the woodland has limited marginal and



aquatic vegetation and is surrounded by mature trees and shrubs.

Evaluation
The brooks, stream and ponds will provide habitat for fish, aquatic invertebrates, mammals and birds. The watercourses also act as important 'wildlife corridors' along which plants and animals can disperse. The importance of standing water and streams is reflected in their inclusion on the UK BAP and Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland BAP as habitats of conservation concern. Shading by bankside trees and shrubs may be reducing the value of the watercourses by inhibiting the growth of herbaceous bankside vegetation and marginal and aquatic vegetation. This in turn will reduce their value for water voles. The fields surrounding the watercourses are likely to have a significant effect on them. Any run-off from fertilisers and pesticides could wash into the watercourses. 'Buffer zones' on the margins of fields will help reduce the effects of run-off.

Hedgerows

Habitat Types
- ❑ Species-poor hedgerow (with and without trees)
- ❑ Species-rich hedgerow (with trees)

Descriptions
Hedgerows form the boundaries of the majority of the fields in the study area. They are mainly intact, with some gaps and are a mix of trimmed and unmanaged hedgerows with an average height of approximately 2m. Most are species-poor and dominated by either

Photo 11: Species-rich hedgerow edges

hawthorn or blackthorn. There are three species-rich hedgerows (for the purposes of the strategy species-rich hedgerows include those that are composed of eight or more native woody species in their length) on and adjacent to Gartree Road on the southern side of the area (refer to Map 6, Page 19). Shrub species include hazel, field maple, dog wood and wild plum. Many hedgerows contain scattered mature standard trees including pedunculate oak and ash. No ground flora species associated with woodlands were recorded in any of the hedgerows. Two hedgerows on the eastern side of the area contained the highly invasive, non-native species Japanese knotweed (refer to Map 6, Page 19). Whitethroat, yellowhammer and reed bunting were recorded either singing or holding territory in hedgerows (refer to Map 6, Page 19). Other typical farmland birds are also likely to be present.

Evaluation
Although the majority of the hedgerows in the area are species-poor and do not contain any unusual features, all hedgerows are of ecological value. They will provide 'wildlife corridors' across the area, along which plants and animals can disperse. They will also provide habitat for small mammals, nesting birds and potential cover for amphibians and reptiles. The value of many of the hedgerows is increased due to the presence of many mature standard trees, which increases the structural diversity and provides additional habitat opportunities. The importance of hedgerows is reflected by its listing on the UK BAP and the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland BAP as a habitat of conservation concern. The local importance of one of the hedgerows is reflected in its designation as a feature of 'Parish' level importance (refer to Map 7, Page 21). None of the hedgerows in the area are likely to qualify as 'important' using ecological criteria, under the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations.

Other Habitats

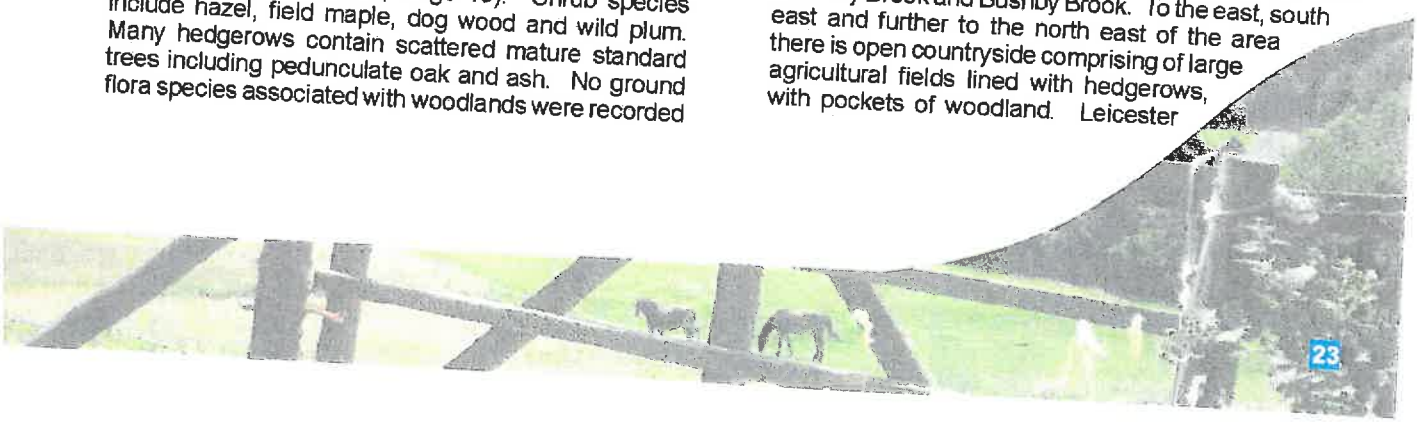
- ❑ Introduced shrubs
- ❑ Tall ruderal vegetation

Descriptions
Patches of non-native, introduced shrubs occur around buildings, car parks and residential gardens. Limited areas of tall ruderal vegetation comprising of tall herbs and rank grasses were found throughout the area, mainly against field boundaries and around buildings.

Evaluation
Although these are botanically species-poor habitats, they will add to the habitat diversity of the area and provide habitat for insects, mammals and birds.

Surrounding Habitats

The study area is situated on the eastern outskirts of Leicester. The northern, north western, southern and south western boundaries of the area adjoin residential areas of Thurnby and Oadby. To the north there is also a school playing field and recreation ground and Thurnby Brook and Bushby Brook. To the east, south east and further to the north east of the area there is open countryside comprising of large agricultural fields lined with hedgerows, with pockets of woodland. Leicester



airport also occurs to the south east. To the west there is an Arboretum (comprising planted woodland, trees, tall and short grassland and a stream), a field and Leicestershire Golf Course (comprising mown grassland, tall grassland and planted trees).

There are numerous County Wildlife Sites and 'Parish' level sites in the surrounding area. The majority of the adjacent Wildlife Sites are grassland and woodland areas in the Arboretum and golf course to the west. Numerous 'Parish' level sites occur in the wider countryside to the north and east of the area. These include grassland, woodland, hedgerow and pond sites. Watercourses and hedgerows link the study area with the wider countryside to the east. However, Shady Lane and Gartree Road separate the area from the semi-natural habitats to the west.

Photo 12: Wildflowers found along hedgerow edges

Flora

No rare or specially protected plant species are known for the area and no areas of particular botanical interest were identified, apart from the small areas of 'less improved' grasslands.

It is of note that two hedgerows contain small patches of Japanese knotweed (a non-native, highly invasive plant) (refer to Map 6, Page 19). Japanese knotweed is regarded as the most invasive plant in Britain. It can colonise most habitats including grassland and river banks and can grow through walls, tarmac and concrete (Environment Agency 1994). It is an aggressive competitor and will out-compete native plant species.

Fauna

The variety of habitats in the area will provide habitat opportunities for a wide range of characteristic faunal species. The mature woodlands and hedgerows in the area provide potential sett building habitat for badgers and the grassland and arable fields provide suitable foraging habitat. Badgers have been previously recorded from the area, although no specific evidence of them was found during the survey. Numerous trees within the woodlands and the scattered mature trees alongside road verges, field margins and hedgerows contain features such as cracks and holes, suitable for roosting bats (e.g. refer to Map 6, Page 19). The farm buildings and residential properties also provide bat roosting opportunities. The woodlands and hedgerows also provide sheltered conditions for insects and therefore will provide bat foraging habitat and the network of hedgerows and watercourses will also provide important bat commuting routes. Bat roosts have been previously recorded from local churches and residential properties in the study area and in the vicinity.

The woodlands, hedgerows, trees, shrubs and fields provide potential habitat for a variety of bird species (e.g. refer to Map 6, Page 19). These include several declining farmland species of conservation concern that are listed on UK BAP and the RSPB 'red list' and 'amber list' of species of conservation concern (RSPB 2002) (refer to Map 6, Page 19). Barn owl, reed bunting and yellowhammer are listed on the Red List and kestrel, kingfisher and yellow wagtail are listed on the Amber List. Barn owl is the only species recorded listed with a specific Action Plan on the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland BAP, although it is likely that other BAP species do occur. It is possible that barn owl nest in buildings or trees in the area. Breeding little owls were noted in a mature white willow tree. A kestrel was observed breeding in an old crow nest in a small copse. A male reed bunting was observed holding territory in a hedgerow. A male yellowhammer and male whitethroat were recorded singing from hedgerows. A female sparrowhawk was observed circling a small copse. A yellow wagtail nest was observed in the crops of an arable field. The only specially protected bird species recorded for the area are barn owl (on Stoughton Road) and kingfisher (recorded on Bushby Brook). It is considered unlikely that kingfishers are breeding in the area, as no steep earth cliffs suitable for nesting were noted near watercourses.

Water voles have been previously recorded from Stoughton Farm Park pond and Bushby Brook. However, the watercourses appear to provide poor habitat for water voles, as they are heavily shaded by adjacent trees and shrubs.

The ponds provide potential breeding habitat for

'Red list' species are birds of high conservation concern, having declined in the UK by 50% or more in breeding population or breeding range over the last 25 years.
'Amber list' species are birds of medium conservation concern, having declined by between 25% and 49% in breeding population or breeding range over the last 25 years.

amphibians. The farm pond is likely to provide poor habitat due to the lack of vegetation and the presence of fish and waterfowl. The woodland pond will provide more suitable habitat as it contains vegetation. Great crested newts have been previously recorded to the west of the area, although the nature of the habitat is such that it is considered unlikely that they are in the study area.

Grass snakes have been previously recorded in the vicinity of Bushby Brook. The area provides some habitat for reptiles, although it is limited in extent with much of this area being comprised of large arable and improved fields.

Legislation

Japanese Knotweed
Under Schedule 9, part II, of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended) makes it an offence to plant or cause Japanese knotweed to grow in the wild.

Badgers
Badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Under this Act it is illegal to destroy, damage or obstruct access to a sett or disturb a badger while it is using its sett. A sett is defined, under the Act, as any structure or place showing signs of current or recent occupation by a badger. Under the current interpretation of the act, licences are required for the following operations:

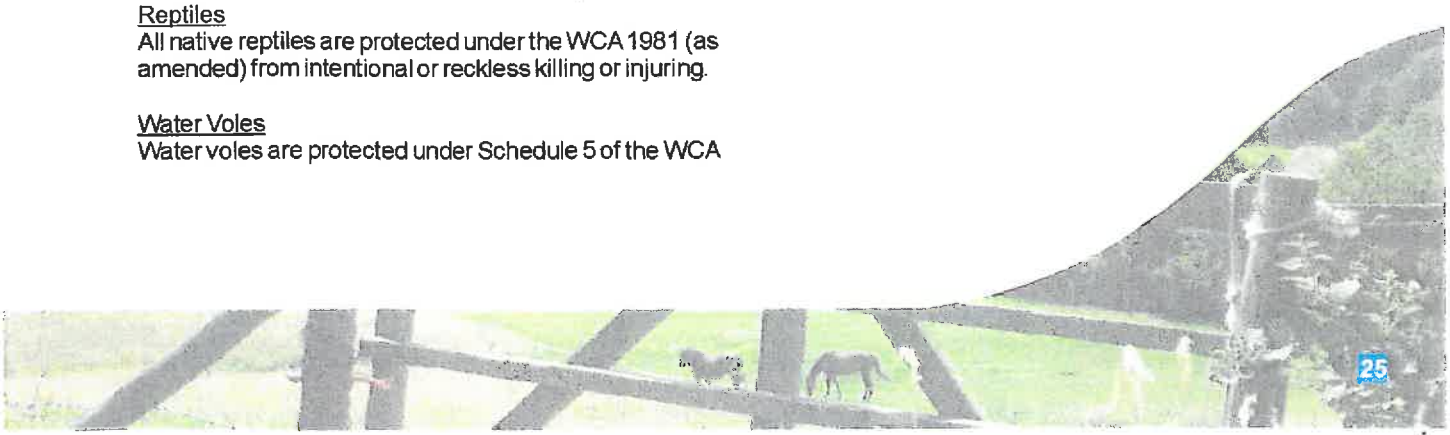
- Use of hand tools within 10 metres of a badger sett;
- Use of light machinery within 20 metres of a badger sett;
- Use of heavy machinery within 30 metres of a badger sett.

Bats
All species of British bat and their roosts receive full protection under both the WCA 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994. This makes an offence to kill, injure or disturb a bat and to destroy any place used for rest and shelter by a bat.

Bird
All nesting birds, their eggs, young and nests are protected under the WCA (1981). Some birds, such as kingfisher and barn owl, are also listed on Schedule 1 of the WCA (1981) and are protected by special penalties at all times, including against harm, disturbance, or destruction of nests.

Reptiles
All native reptiles are protected under the WCA 1981 (as amended) from intentional or reckless killing or injuring.

Water Voles
Water voles are protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 (as amended), in respect of Section 9(4). This makes it illegal to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place which water voles use for shelter or protection and to disturb water voles while they are using such a place.



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Photo 13: View towards Stoughton from Thurnby

OVERVIEW

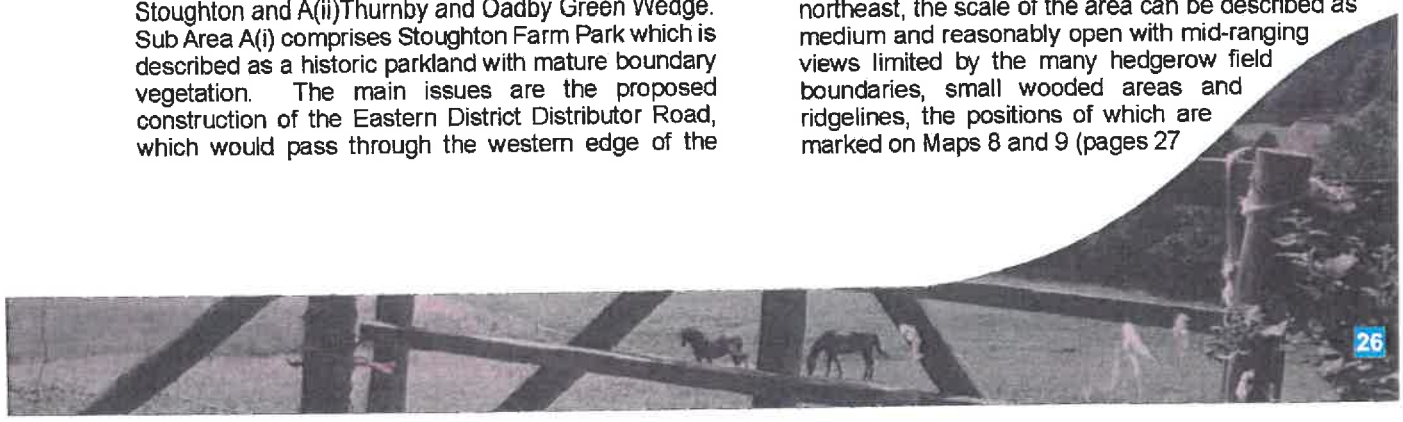
This area lies mostly within the regional character area 'Leicestershire Vales' as defined by the Countryside Agency, but the western extremes of the site are within the 'High Leicestershire' character area. The key characteristics as stated by the Countryside Agency include: gentle clay ridges and valleys with little woodland; frequent, imposing spired churches; frequent and very prominent ridge and furrow; and, green lanes and quiet country. The main issues are the erosive forces of modern agriculture methods, neglect of hedgerows, the ploughing out of ridge and furrow, tree loss, and obtrusive high-density residential development on settlement edges.

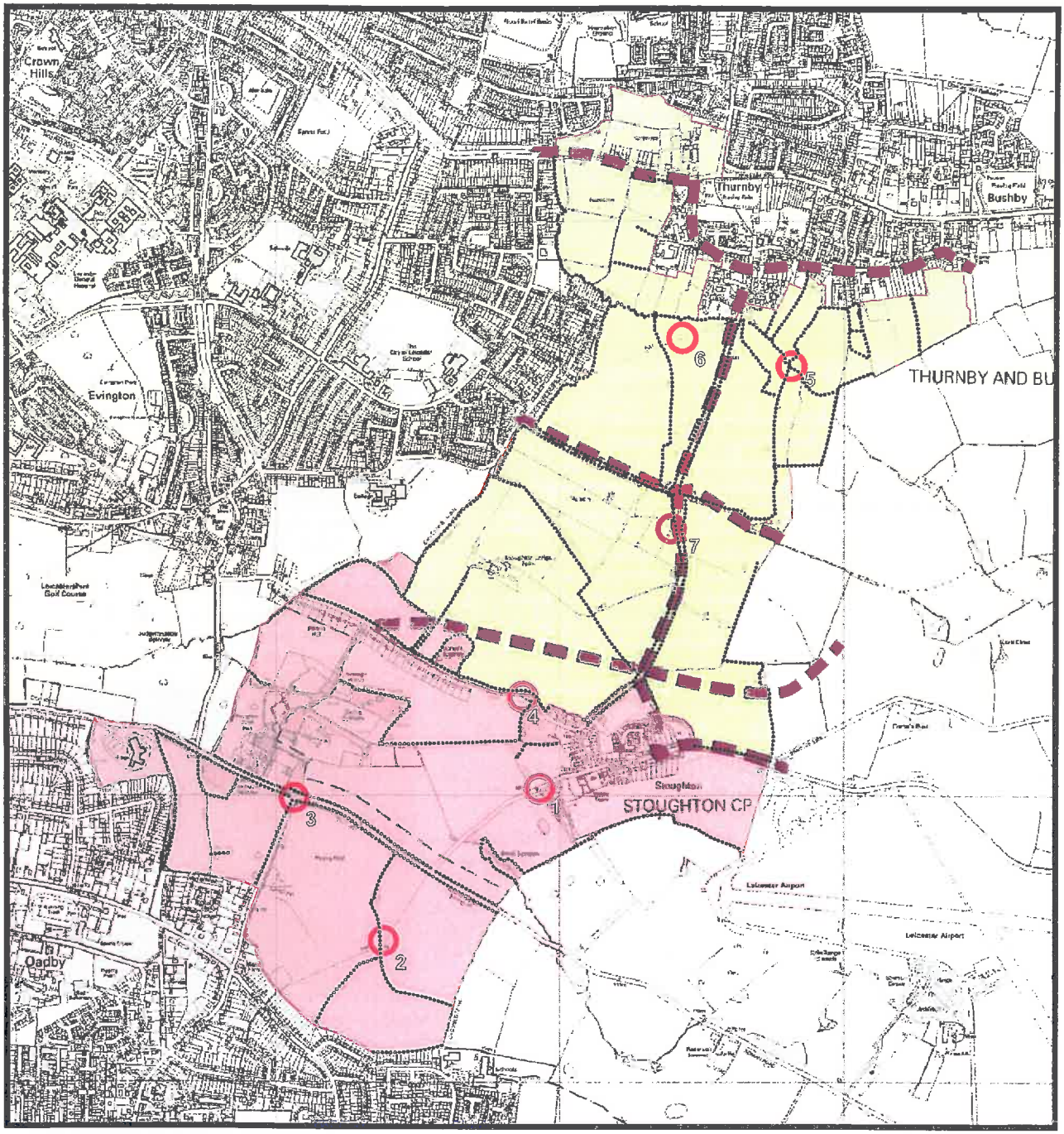
The Leicestershire and Rutland Woodland Strategy (2001), has assessed the character of the region broken it down into eighteen distinctive character areas which are roughly related to the Countryside Agency character areas. This area is within 'High Leicestershire', although the boundary of this differs from the Countryside Agency area with the same name. Some of the distinctive features described are: arable on flatter ridges, pasture on slopes and in valleys; ridge and furrow; narrow gated roads; field ponds; and, locally high concentrations of woodland. Issues within this area are similar to those given by the Countryside Agency, but also include loss of field ponds, loss of hedgerow trees, and lack of woodland management.

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council have also carried out a Landscape Character Assessment of the borough, and it has broken the Oadby and Wigston Vales area into sub-areas, of which two cover the study area; A(i) Stoughton and A(ii)Thurnby and Oadby Green Wedge. Sub Area A(i) comprises Stoughton Farm Park which is described as a historic parkland with mature boundary vegetation. The main issues are the proposed construction of the Eastern District Distributor Road, which would pass through the western edge of the designated landscape, and need for sensitive re-use of the buildings that make up Stoughton Farm Park. Sub Area A(ii) is the area between the urban fringe of Oadby and the north of the borough (refer to Map 4, Page 12) excluding area A(i). The area is dominated by the university playing fields, and a private hospital on the western edge of the area. The key characteristics are described as gently undulating irregular fields bounded by gappy mature vegetation and belts of mature trees, with views towards Stoughton church. Good access could lead to vandalism and misuse of the countryside, while this area could come under increasing pressure for build development.

This study has split the area into two Local Character Areas based on criteria suggested by the Countryside Agency. These areas are described in the next section and their extents are shown in Map 8 (Page 27).

Even though this area is immediately adjacent to the suburbs of Leicester, it is very rural with farming and plant nurseries being the predominant land uses. The survey area is of moderate elevation with levels ranging from 75 to 130 metres, and forms part of the Soar catchment area, feeding two tributaries Bushby Brook and Evington Brook, which flow either side of Evington hill, to the west. The Sence valley is situated immediately to the east, while the site is adjacent to the suburbs of Leicester that surround the area on the other three sides. Demands from the nearby urban area have lead to the creation of playing fields on the edge of Oadby, while the private hospital on Gartree Road is not characteristic of this rural area. Otherwise, the influence of adjacent urban areas is minimal. Although mostly surrounded by higher land at Leicester Airport to the southeast, Evington to the west and Bushby to the northeast, the scale of the area can be described as medium and reasonably open with mid-ranging views limited by the many hedgerow field boundaries, small wooded areas and ridgelines, the positions of which are marked on Maps 8 and 9 (pages 27





Site Boundary

Stoughton LCA

Visually Significant Vegetation / Hedgerows

3 Survey Point with Reference

Thurnby Fields LCA

Ridgelines

N

File: S:/S 2681/Map 8 - Landscape Appraisal.Cdr.

Stoughton, Thurnby & Oadby Green Wedge

LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

Map 8 Scale: 1 to 20,000

Photo 14: Typical view towards Stoughton church

and 30). The edges of the adjacent residential developments, Evington, Thurnby and Oadby are visible from various parts of the site, and likewise, the study area can be seen from the edges of the surrounding urban areas.

Well-drained, gently sloping land provides good conditions for arable farming, which, as Map 9 (Page 30) demonstrates, is the main land use, while pastoral farming takes place mainly on the steeper slopes and semi-improved land.

The field pattern is one of small-to-medium, irregularly shaped fields, with boundaries mostly dictated by roads and watercourses, made up largely of unmanaged hawthorn hedgerows broken up by elder as well as mature oak hedgerow trees. These boundaries, whilst probably of Enclosure date (18/19th century) are likely to reflect the division of medieval and earlier landscapes. Enclosure is likely to have created the pattern of fields that exist today, and a historic map of 1890 shows that little has changed since then, other than the removal of a few field boundaries due to agricultural intensification.

Map 9 (Page 30) shows the location of the very small areas of woodland which are found mostly in the southern half of the site, the majority of which are single species consisting predominantly of poplars, pine and oak. These woodlands are mature, and there is little evidence of management or new woodland planting. Many mature single oak trees are found as hedgerow trees and in fields.

Buildings are mostly found in the south of the area and are mostly concentrated in Stoughton village, where distinctive whitewashed brick dwellings are found. Buildings elsewhere within the area consist of Stoughton Grange Farm, Stoughton Lodge Farm and a lines of residences along Stoughton Lane, between Stoughton and Evington, and along Thurnby Hill at the north of the area. The spire of St Mary's church dominates the skyline around Stoughton, while the tower of the church in Thurnby is less dominant, but is the highest visible point to the north of the area.

Roads in the area are mainly straight and bordered by high hedgerows restricting views on either side, but field openings tend to be large, and filled with wide galvanised gates, which along with post and wire fences are clear signs of agricultural intensification.

Footpaths that cut across undulating arable and pastoral fields are broken up into stages by simple timber stiles at field boundaries and small concrete bridges over brooks, and are marked by green county council finger-post signs.

Ridge and Furrow (location shown on Map 9, Page 30)) is a significant landscape feature in the north of the area.

Other characteristic landscape features are described in more detail in the description of the two Local Landscape Character Areas.

LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

Stoughton

As shown in Map 8 (Page 27), this local landscape character area makes up the southern part of the Green Wedge spreading out to the boundaries of the Green Wedge on the south, east and west and bounded by Stoughton Lane to the north. This area is overlooked from the south by the residential area of Oadby.

From objective assessment, this character area is a medium-scale, reasonably enclosed site with a simple, unified landscape.

Photo 15: Many mature oak trees present around fields

This area is characterised by enclosed, gently undulating arable fields sloping from east to west. The medium-scale, irregular fields are bounded by tall hedgerows, and broken up by roads, streams, and wooded areas. The tall hedgerows are made up of mixed native species and appear virtually unmanaged due to their scale, irregular shape and the occasional gaps. Stand-alone, mature English Oaks are dominant within fields, as well as in hedgerows. Native species such as oak and ash make up the majority of small wooded areas with smaller numbers of sycamore and groups of scots pine.

Views within this area are limited, due to the gentle slopes and tall field boundaries, identified on Map 8

(Page 27) as visually significant vegetation/hedgerows. Unlike the rest of the area, Stoughton itself, being on elevated ground, provides striking views from around it's periphery; west to Oadby, northwest across Evington and to open, more level land in the east.

Photo 16: Dwellings characteristic of Stoughton

Route 63 of the National Cycle Network (refer to Map 5, Page 14) follows Stoughton Lane through Stoughton, along the north of this local character area. The four short paths within this area are mostly earth tracks through fields which are signposted using standard green county council fingerpost signs, with the location of stiles and bridges being highlighted with tall timber posts, the tops of which are painted yellow. Although simple in construction, the stiles, bridges and signposts show evidence of ongoing management.

Only the village of Stoughton, the private hospital in the southwest corner of the Green Wedge, the university playing fields, and the area of pastoral grassland identified in Map 9 (Page 30), break up the characteristic pattern described so far, although these features form part of the character.

The settlement of Stoughton is small and characteristic of an estate village with a church and village hall with an equipped playground, but no other services. The majority of dwellings are whitewashed 2-3 storey brick dwellings with slate roofs, proud red-bricked chimneystacks, and wide roof overhangs with elaborate iron gutter brackets. Recent development has taken place within the village consisting of small groups of dwellings that are well integrated into the fabric of the village. The development of Charity Farm has led to the construction of a new loop road on the eastern outskirts of the village. These new dwellings are mostly constructed from red brick with tiled roofs and little architectural detail.

Between Stoughton and Evington, along Stoughton Lane is situated a line of 27 detached dwellings, all with varying character and little unifying them apart from their size, location and the row of mature trees along the front of the properties.

Old metal-framed barns on the southern perimeter of the village of Stoughton are purely utilitarian buildings with no quality of design or architectural merit and were formerly used for agriculture, but are now disused.

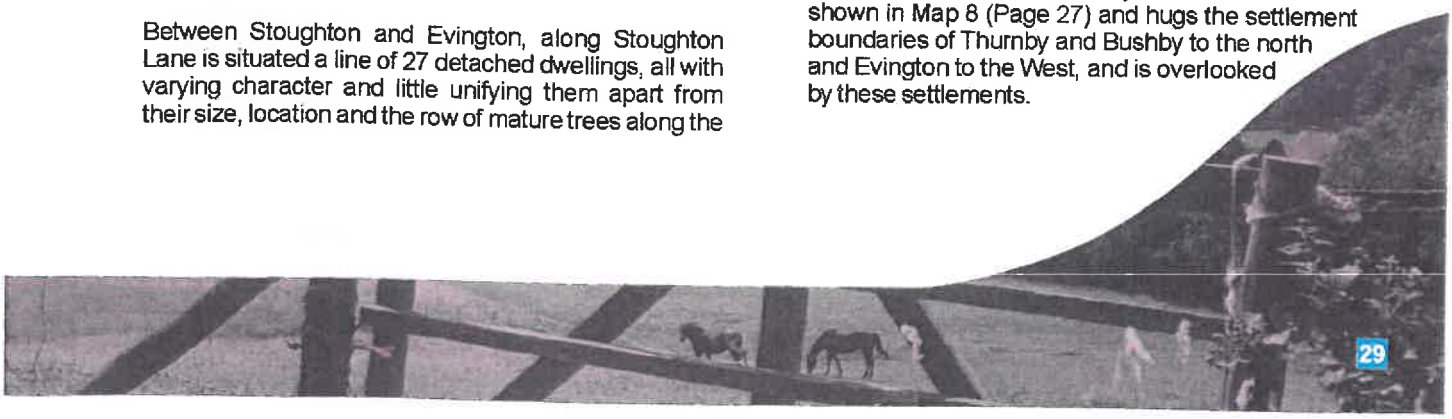
The intensifying of farming is evident where post-and-wire fencing now takes the place of hedgerows and wide field entrances with large, industrial galvanised gates have replaced small timber gates.

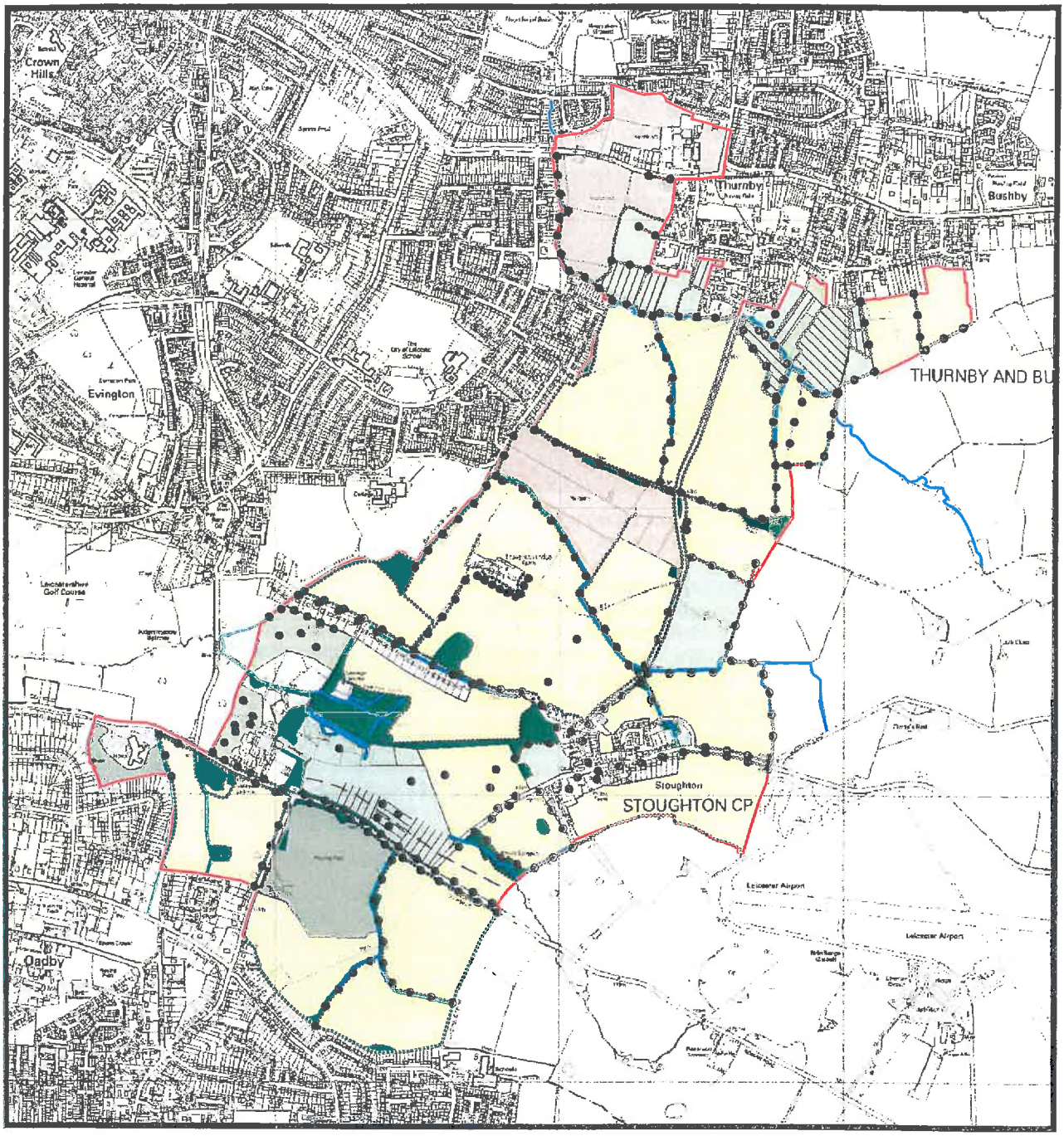
This area also comprises the historic landscape of Stoughton Farm Park, which incorporates areas of former parkland and formal gardens that were associated with Stoughton Grange, the location of a now demolished, post-medieval mansion, as described in the Survey chapter. Many mature trees are scattered around the site within the former parkland, which also encompasses a notable area of surviving ridge and furrow along the north side of Gartree Road. The location and direction of the ridge and furrow, as well as the location of remaining mature trees are evidence of field boundaries or enclosure that has since been removed. Other historic landscape features include a long ornamental lake/'canal' south of Dam's Spinney, formal gardens and parterre, earthworks of the former dams to the northeast of the former mansion, together with a relict, tree-lined avenue running directly from the former grange to Stoughton village.

Thurnby Fields

Photo 17: View south from Thurnby

The area between Stoughton local landscape character area and the northern boundary of the site has been named Thurnby Fields (for the purposes of this report) and makes up the second of two local landscape character areas within Stoughton, Oadby and Thurnby Green Wedge. The boundary of the character area is shown in Map 8 (Page 27) and hugs the settlement boundaries of Thurnby and Bushby to the north and Evington to the West, and is overlooked by these settlements.





Site Boundary

Woodland

Arable Land

Pastoral Land

Semi Improved Grassland

Amenity Mown Grass

Plantation (Nursery)

Mature Trees (Indicative only)

Stream or Pond

Hedgerow

Ridge & Furrow

N

Stoughton, Thurnby & Oadby Green Wedge

LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Map 9

Scale: 1 to 20,000

File: S:/2681/Map 9 - Landscape Features.Cdr.

This local landscape character area is more open than the area around Stoughton, with some larger fields and fewer dominant vertical landscape features such as field trees, hedgerow trees and woodland (refer to Map 9, Page 30). The land slopes steeply to the south from Thurnby providing an uninterrupted view over a large

Photo 18: Plant nurseries within Thurnby Fields area

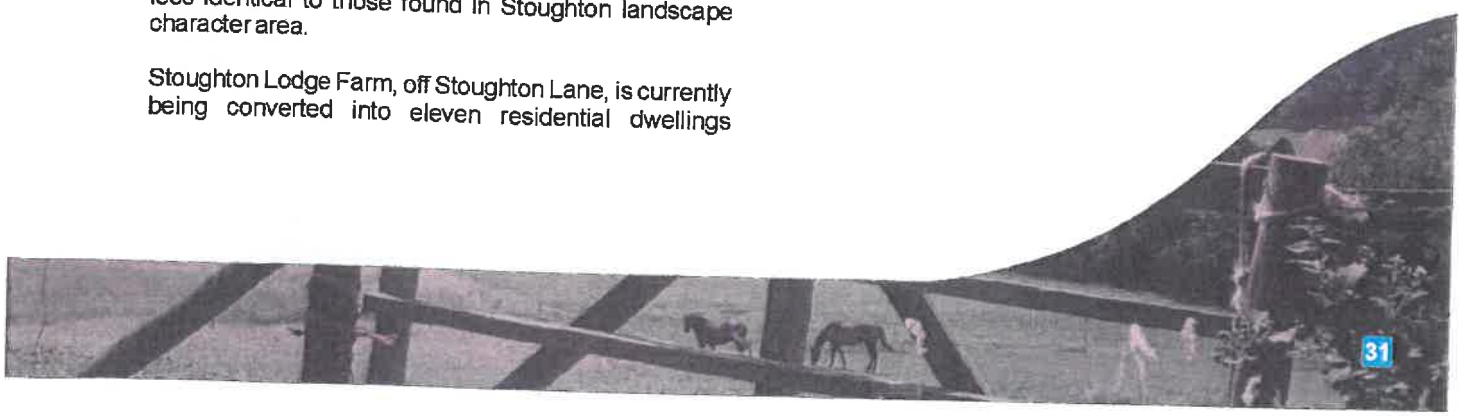
part of this area. Although some variety is evident, the landscape can be described as simple, with the field pattern being the most dominant landscape feature. Little naturalness remains in the landscape, with hedgerows being the only evident features that are not intensively managed.

As identified in Map 9 (Page 30), a relatively extensive area of ridge and furrow has survived in fields just to the south of Thurnby. This is predominately found in the Midlands, giving pasture fields an undulating, corrugated appearance, and marks the remains of medieval strip fields that were once ploughed. The overall area of ridge and furrow has decreased greatly over the last few decades due to agricultural intensification, therefore it is an important historic landscape feature, which helps create the character of this area.

A number of streams flow through the area, with Bushby Brook and Evington Brook being the most dominant. These are surrounded along their length by mature and semi-mature trees, as well as hawthorn and other typical native hedgerow species.

Apart from the small numbers of vehicles using the Stoughton to Thurby road and limited use of the footpath network, movement within this area is limited. There are three public footpaths within this area, one taking the form of a gravel track between fields, while the others are lines of compact earth across fields. Access between fields is found in the form of simple timber styles, and basic concrete footbridges. Access, waypoint markers and footpath signage are more-or-less identical to those found in Stoughton landscape character area.

Stoughton Lodge Farm, off Stoughton Lane, is currently being converted into eleven residential dwellings making full use of the farmhouse and outbuildings therefore safeguarding their appearance and preserving the character of the area. Any extensions to existing buildings are in keeping with the original design, while garages are to be constructed from timber with open frontages to minimise their effect on the character of their surroundings.



S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

Strengths

- The external influences on this rural area are minimal, and therefore the countryside character is evident, and the area remains open and rural.
- A network of footpaths, roads and cycle paths provide good access into the area for people from adjacent areas wishing to use the area for leisure.
- There is evidence of good maintenance, with footpaths, signs and stiles being in good condition, and grass verges being maintained with an absence of litter and fly tipping.
- Since the Hedgerow Regulations (1997), the trend of hedgerow loss has reversed, and they are evident as boundaries to fields and roads.
- The community of Stoughton hold the surrounding countryside in high regard, and they wish to avoid any detrimental change.
- Incentives such as Free Trees scheme and grants for tree planting, hedge planting and the development of nature areas, are already available, which landowners will hopefully make use of.
- The area includes a diversity of habitats (including woodland, grassland, hedgerows, watercourses and ponds) and a good network of 'wildlife corridors', which provide habitat for a range of characteristic species including several protected and notable faunal species. There are also good habitat linkages (i.e. streams and hedgerows) that connect the area to the wider countryside. It contains several habitats and species listed on the UK and Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland BAPs as being of conservation concern.
- Much of the historic character has survived, including the field pattern, historic parkland and gardens associated with the former Stoughton Grange, and some areas of ridge and furrow.

Weaknesses

- Development on the fringes of the area in many cases is not in character with the area, and there is often no landscaped boundaries to these developments.
- Archaeological sites, such as ridge and furrow, are not protected and have no historic landscape classification. Generally there is a lack of protection for archaeological sites and other heritage sites.
- There is an overall lack of tree cover, with the only areas of woodland being very small in size and comprising non-native species.
- Some groups are under represented in enjoying countryside recreation within this area.
- The majority of the area comprises of large agricultural fields of low value.
- The majority of the woodlands appear to be largely unmanaged and contain non native species such as snowberry and sycamore.
- Many of the watercourses are heavily shaded and lack characteristic species.
- There are few farm ponds and the areas of open water that are present appear highly eutrophic and unlikely to provide habitat for characteristic species.

Opportunities

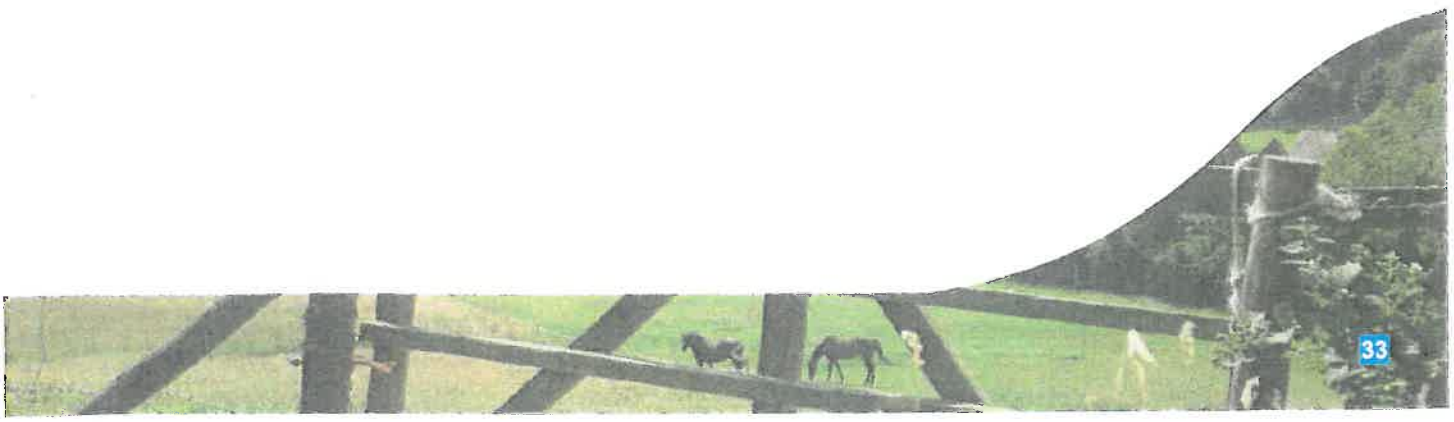
- Planning conditions can be used as a tool to make sure that properly designed landscape schemes are incorporated into new developments.
- A good knowledge base of the landscape character of the area including Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy, Countryside Agency mapping and this document; will help future management of the Green Wedge.
- Promote access to and interpretation of the countryside so the public can understand the environment around them.
- The habitats have the opportunity to be enhanced for wildlife through the implementation of more sympathetic and appropriate management. Creation of new habitats, such as field ponds, hedgerows and woodlands could also significantly enhance the biodiversity value of the area.
- Agri-environment schemes, including Entry Level and Higher Level Countryside Stewardship and the Woodland Grant Scheme offer ideal opportunities for conservation management and habitat creation within an agricultural context.

Threats

- Inappropriate agricultural, recreational, commercial, or housing development inside or around the edges of the Green Wedge would intrude into the countryside and change the character of the area.
- The proposed Eastern Distributor Road will lead to a loss of landscape features, and a general increase in traffic volumes may lead to more changes to the size of the roads.
- Changes in farming practice along with agricultural intensification are changing the character of the area. Field entrances are being widened to allow for larger farm vehicles, and fields are being enlarged, with hedgerows being replaced with post-and-wire fencing to allow a larger workable

area. The continuing conversion of land to arable will increase the openness of the landscape and also endanger the remaining ridge and furrow.

- The landscape character of the area will gradually be eroded by changes in traditional land management practices, such as the management of woodlands and hedgerows.
- The demands of the adjacent urban areas will put pressure on the Green Wedge and may lead to a change in land use, such as more sports facilities on agricultural land.
- Habitat loss and/or neglect could reduce the ecological value of the area by reducing the total available habitat resource for associated species and also by increasing the isolation of habitats.
- Loss of hedgerows, lack of woodland management, agricultural improvement of the remaining semi-improved grassland and conversion of grassland to arable land are considered to be key threats.
- Also run-off and spray drift of fertilisers and pesticides into watercourses, ponds and woodlands would reduce their value.
- The highly invasive, non-native Japanese knotweed could spread further across the area. Non-native species such as snowberry could also spread further within the woodlands.



MANAGEMENT

General
Broad objectives for the management of this area have already been set out in documents such as District Local Plans, County Structure Plans, Leicester Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy, the Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project Strategy and Stoughton Farm Park Development Brief. These objectives outline the need to maintain a diverse and distinctive landscape in order to benefit biodiversity but also social well-being and economic regeneration, and can be summarised as:

- ❑ Conserving and/or enhancing the landscape through sensitive development and management.
- ❑ Preserving the best of the natural heritage.
- ❑ Enhancing biodiversity.
- ❑ Promoting and improving access to the countryside and encouraging community involvement.

The study area contains a variety of habitats, many of which are highly 'modified' and intensively managed which is limiting their potential to support wildlife. More sympathetic and appropriate management would benefit wildlife and help increase the biodiversity in the area. Landowners should be encouraged to produce management plans that integrate the needs and interests of both farming and wildlife. The woodlands and hedgerows (including associated trees) should be a priority for retention and enhancement. It is essential that any new planting or sowing in the area should use native plants, preferably of local genetic stock. It should be noted that all management operations should ensure legal compliance (refer to legislation section).

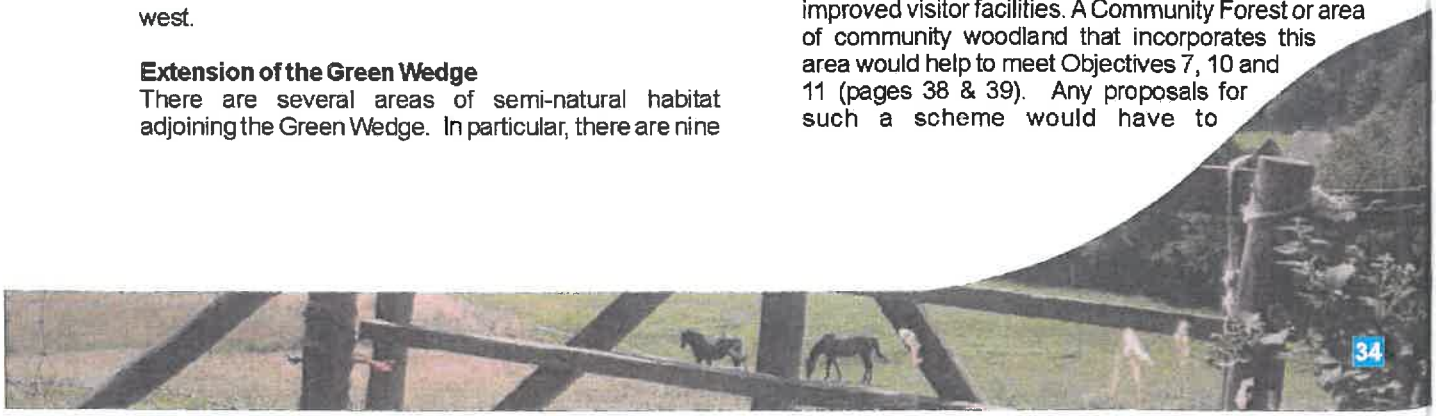
The Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project will co-ordiate the implementation of the management objectives set out in this section.

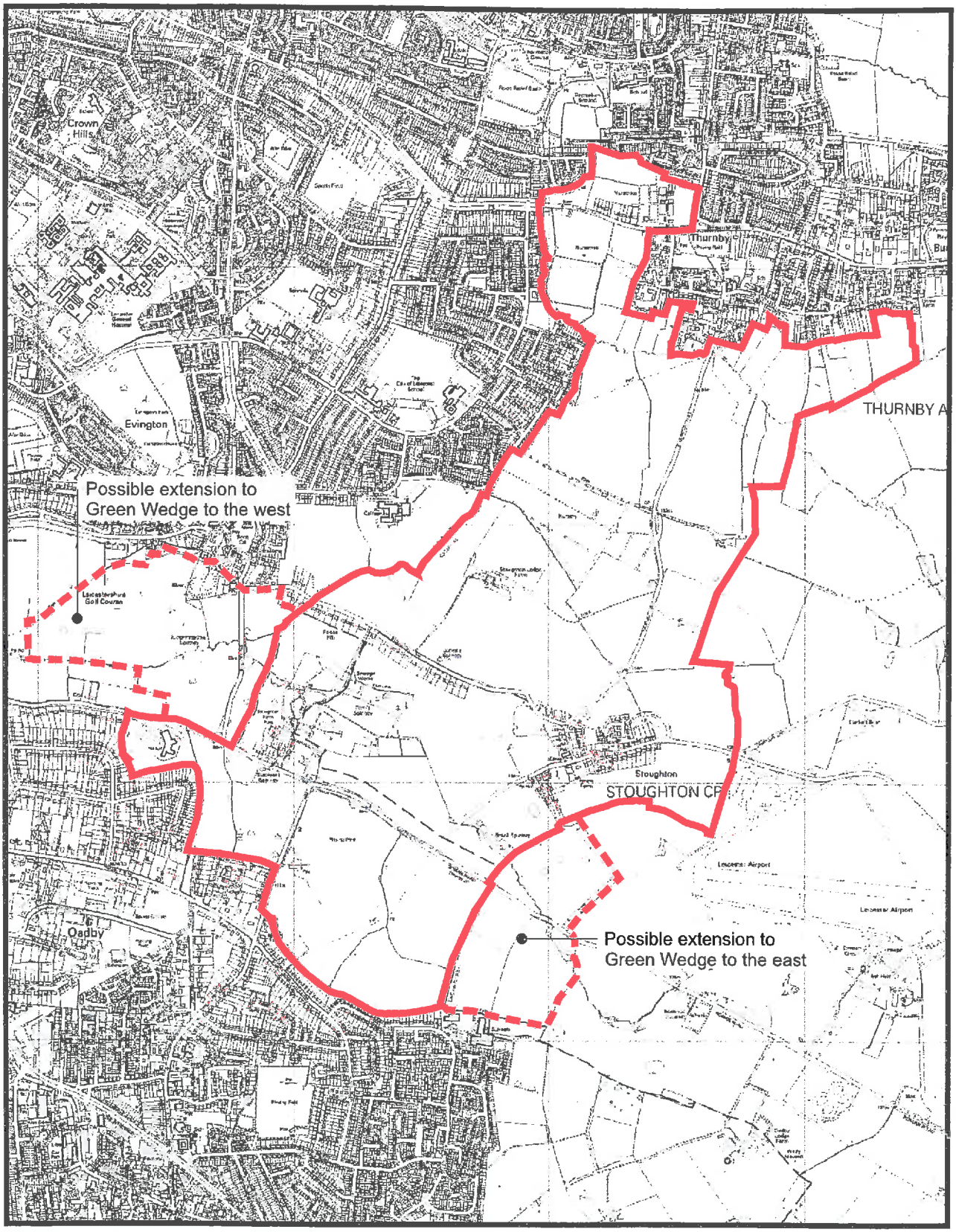
Linkages to the Wider Countryside
The study area comprises of a network of 'wildlife corridors' including hedgerows, watercourses, road verges and field margins. These link habitats across the area and also connect habitats and sites of nature conservation importance in the vicinity. In particular the agricultural land to the east is linked by hedgerows and watercourses. However, Gartree Road and Shady Lane act as barriers to the areas of semi-natural habitats in the Arboretum and Leicestershire Golf Course to the west.

Extension of the Green Wedge
There are several areas of semi-natural habitat adjoining the Green Wedge. In particular, there are nine WS in close proximity to the western boundary in the vicinity of shady lane arboretum and Leicestershire golf course, including woodland and grassland and a pond and brook (refer to Map 7, Page 21). Incorporating an additional area into the Green Wedge to include these designated sites would increase the biodiversity and educational resource within the Wedge and the opportunity for ecological enhancement. At present the Green Wedge only includes a single WS. A map showing a potential boundary extension to the west is shown by Map 10 (Page 35). This extension will help to conserve the setting of 'Piggys's Hollow', a scheduled monument (shown on Map 4, Page 12). The incorporation of this area will also have landscape benefits, as an extended part of the Evington Brook corridor would be incorporated in the Wedge, as well as Judgemeadow Spinney, a small wooded area, characteristic of the Wedge, and any remaining areas of Ridge and Furrow around 'Piggy's Hollow' would also be included. While not characteristic of the area, due to planting of many non-native trees, the inclusion of the Arboretum would benefit the Green Wedge, as it would help encourage residents from surrounding urban areas to visit the Wedge. Incorporating the golf course would have little benefit for the landscape, because even though this land is still open, the character of the landscape has been lost.

Consideration could also be given to extending the Wedge to the east to encompass further agricultural land, and also habitats that LERC consider to be of 'Parish' level importance (see Map 10, Page 35 for a proposed boundary extension). There are some potential ecological benefits of this extension, although these are not as great as the proposed extension to the west.

Creating Community Woodland
One of the objectives of this study is to explore opportunities for creating community woodland. This location would be ideal as an edge to a new Community Forest, as the existing 12 Community Forests are all situated in similar locations on the edge of large towns and cities. As well as enhancing the landscape by helping to meet Management Objective 1 (page 35), Community Forests do not change only landscape, they create a better quality environment for users, all with new areas of woodland, green spaces, greenways and improved visitor facilities. A Community Forest or area of community woodland that incorporates this area would help to meet Objectives 7, 10 and 11 (pages 38 & 39). Any proposals for such a scheme would have to





Existing Green Wedge Boundary

Possible extension to Green Wedge

Stoughton, Thurnby & Oadby Green Wedge

GREEN WEDGE EXTENSION

Map 10

Scale: 1 to 20,000

N

File: S:/2881/Map 10 - Green Wedge Extension.Cdr.

incorporate this area as part of a much larger area, as it would not be appropriate to create any new visitor facilities or large areas of woodland within the Green Wedge. Historically very little woodland has existed here, indeed no woodland areas are noted on maps prior of 1789, apart from an avenue between Stoughton Grange and Stoughton village. Small pockets of woodland have been created in the last 200 years, but the introduction of large areas of woodland would dramatically change the character and lead to the loss of characteristic landscape features described in the Landscape Character section. New woodland creation needs to be done sympathetically and at a scale designed to compliment the existing character.

Opportunities of Local Schools to increase use of the Green Wedge

Many schools lie in close proximity with the area, and therefore it would be appropriate for them to make use of this resource on their doorstep. The earlier local people can learn about the area and make use of it, the more respect they will have for it. The Green Wedge could be used for both education and recreation as long as the activities were appropriate for the area. Group numbers would have to be restricted unless proper facilities were provided for parking and for safe access. An appropriate location for such parking and access would be from Stoughton Farm Park or Judge Meadow Community College, immediately adjacent to the site. Access could be gained from the college along the footpath linking Evington with Stoughton Road.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: ***Maintain and enhance the existing woodland habitats and mature trees and increase the extent of broadleaved woodland in the area.***

Rationale

There are many important mature field trees and hedgerow trees as well as small wooded areas that need to be conserved to ensure that the spatial structure of the character areas is not compromised.

Broadleaved woodland habitats are extremely valuable for wildlife as they provide shelter, cover and feeding for a variety of animals including mammals, birds and a range of invertebrates. They also provide links to other valuable ecological areas. Mature trees also provide valuable wildlife habitats, including for roosting bats, insects and birds. Dead and decaying wood is important for fungi and specialist insects. Woodland and mature trees are BAP habitats. Only just over 4% of Leicestershire and Rutland is wooded.

Recommendations for Action

General:

1. To extend the cover of broadleaved woodland and thereby reduce habitat fragmentation, landowners should be encouraged to plant small areas of woodland in arable and 'improved' fields adjacent to existing woodlands and along field boundaries. Native trees and shrubs should be used such as ash, pedunculate oak, field maple, hazel and holly. This could be achieved through the Woodland Grant Scheme.
2. Promote active conservation management of existing woodlands, including selective thinning to allow certain trees to grow to maturity and removal of non-native species such as snowberry. Where required a native shrub layer could be planted with native shrub species such as hazel, holly and field maple.
3. Encourage the retention of all standing and fallen dead and decaying wood in the woodlands to provide habitat for fungi, invertebrates and bats.
4. Encourage a bird and bat box scheme in the woodlands.
5. Encourage landowners to conserve existing individual mature trees through appropriate arboricultural works, e.g. pollard mature willow trees. This should be carried out outside the bird breeding season, which runs from March-September.
6. New woodland creation should not take place on a large scale, but needs to be done sympathetically in scale with the existing character.

Objective 2: ***Maintain and enhance the existing hedgerows and enhance and extend the network of hedgerows while maintaining the overall scale of the area.***

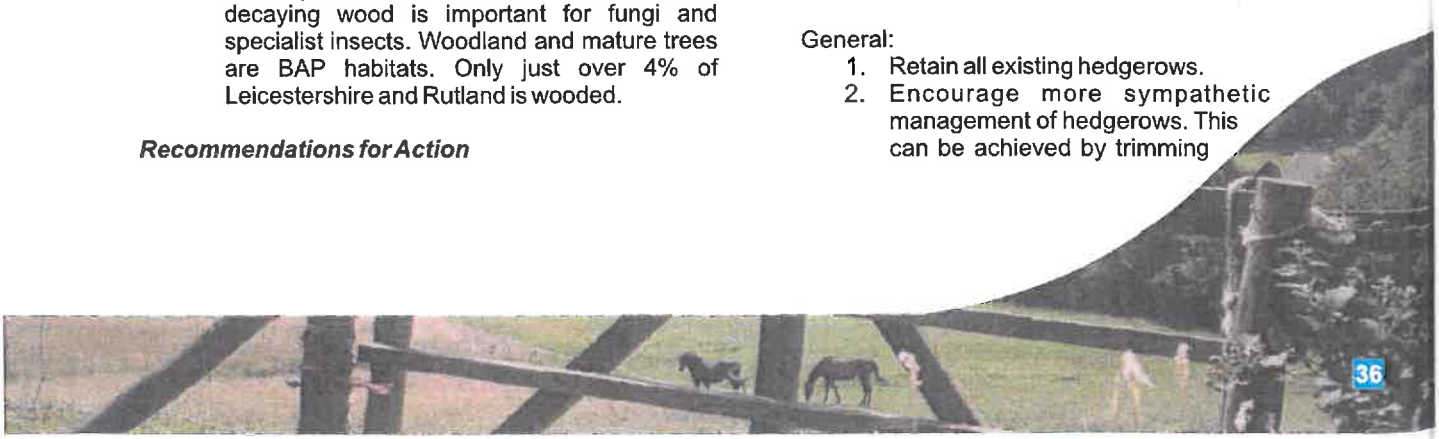
Rationale

Hedgerows are important characteristic landscape features, and they provide boundary definition. Hedgerows provide valuable wildlife habitats, 'wildlife corridors' along which animals and plants can disperse and provide links to other valuable ecological areas. Hedgerows also help to buffer areas such as watercourses from agricultural run-off. Hedgerows are a BAP habitat.

Recommendations for Action

General:

1. Retain all existing hedgerows.
2. Encourage more sympathetic management of hedgerows. This can be achieved by trimming



once every two-three years in February (this allows the berries to be present over the winter for birds and is before the onset of the bird breeding season). They should be trimmed into a broad flattered 'A' shape. Tree saplings should not be strimmed but allowed to grow to maturity. This should be carried out outside the bird breeding season.

3. Encourage landowners to lay and coppice hedgerows where appropriate. This should be carried out outside the bird breeding season.
4. Encourage the planting of new native hedgerows with trees along fenced boundaries and in gaps in existing hedgerows. This will help to extend linkages and the connectivity of hedgerows across the area. These recommendations could all be achieved through agri-environment schemes such as Countryside Stewardship Agreements.

Objective 3: *Encourage more sympathetic management of the grassland habitats (including road verges)*

Rationale

Although amenity grass accounts for a small overall area, less-intensive management would enhance the landscape character.

Grassland is an important habitat for wildlife, providing food and breeding sites for a range of animals including small mammals, birds and invertebrates such as butterflies. Neutral grassland and road verges are BAP habitats.

Recommendations for Action

General:

1. The less 'improved' species-rich grassland fields should be lightly grazed or mown once annually in September with cuttings raked off and placed in designated habitat piles under hedgerows or in woodlands. This could be implemented through agri-environment schemes.
2. Encourage the creation of areas of species-rich meadows on areas of 'improved' fields. A mix of native grasses and herbs should be used. This could be achieved through agri-environment schemes such as Countryside Stewardship Agreements.
3. Road verges should be cut less frequently (where safety considerations permit), particularly the species-rich verges.

Objective 4: *Reduce the amount of intensive arable land-use around field margins*

Rationale

Un-cropped areas around the margins of arable fields provide important habitat for insects, mammals and birds (including declining farmland species). They also act as important 'buffers' for hedgerows, watercourses and woodland against agricultural run-off and spray drift. Field margins are a BAP habitat and in Leicestershire and Rutland they are a key habitat for a number of red data book species, including many farmland birds (e.g. grey partridge, corn bunting and skylark), arable plants and insects.

Wildflowers and grasses found within such margins create attractive, extended field boundaries.

Recommendations for Action

General:

1. Encourage landowners to create and extend field margins and conservation headlands around arable fields to a width of at least 5m (wider if possible). This could be achieved through agri-environment schemes such as countryside stewardship agreements.

Objective 5: *Enhance the existing wetland habitats for wildlife and encourage the creation of new ponds*

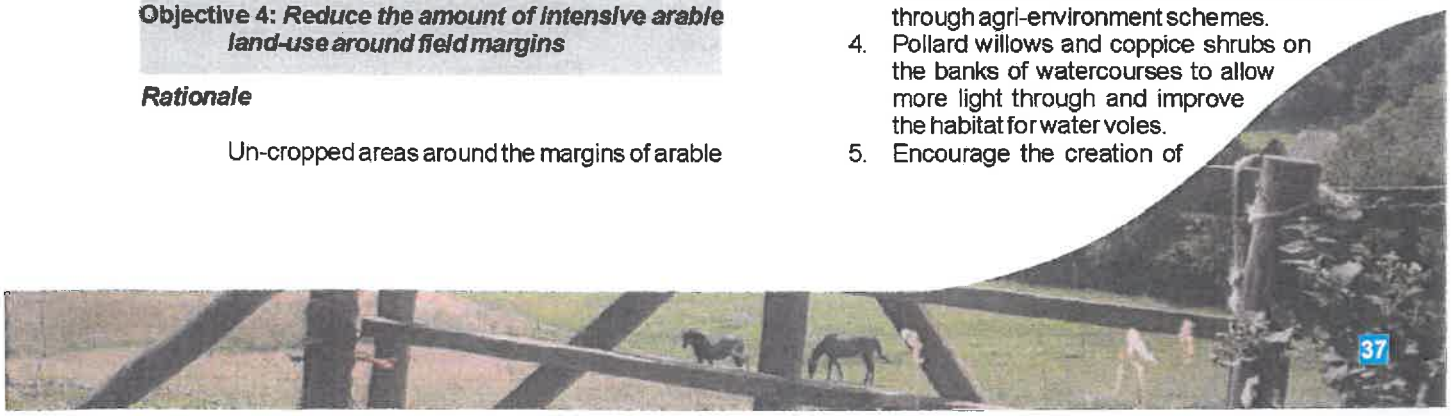
Rationale

Watercourses and ponds are valuable habitats for wildlife, such as water voles, bats, amphibians and reptiles. A 'buffer zone' strip alongside watercourses would help reduce agricultural run-off. The presence of fish in the ponds may reduce its value for amphibians. Reducing shading of the watercourses would encourage water voles, for which there is a species action plan. Standing water and streams are BAP habitats.

Recommendations for Action

General:

1. Retain and protect all existing watercourses and ponds.
2. Enhance the farm pond by planting native aquatic and marginal plants.
3. Encourage the creation of an undisturbed margin of vegetation alongside the watercourses to act as a 'buffer strip' to help reduce agricultural run-off from fertilisers and pesticides. Fences should be used to prevent stock from these areas. This could be achieved through agri-environment schemes.
4. Pollard willows and coppice shrubs on the banks of watercourses to allow more light through and improve the habitat for water voles.
5. Encourage the creation of



new field ponds. This could be achieved through the agri-environment scheme such as Countryside Stewardship Agreements.

Objective 6: *Control and eradicate non-native floral species from the area, specifically Japanese knotweed and snowberry*

Rationale

Japanese knotweed is a highly invasive non-native species, which will spread widely if not controlled. Snowberry is also a non-native species. Both species will spread at the expense of native floral species.
If non-native species help to eradicate the native floral species, the contribution that wildflowers currently make to the character of the landscape will be eroded.

Recommendations for Action

General:

1. Encourage the control of Japanese knotweed as a priority. If controlled and eradicated at the earliest opportunity this will help control its spread through the area.
2. Remove snowberry from the woodlands (as per Objective 1).

Objective 7: *Increase accessibility to the public on foot, by bicycle and by horse.*

Rationale

This is one of the main aims of the Stepping Stone Countryside Management Project. Although footpaths, cycle paths and bridleways are present within both character areas, some routes seem to have no relation to each other, and just provide links between roads. There are no circular routes within the Stoughton character area, and there is no link between bridleways. Although most roads within the Green Wedge are suitable for horses and cyclists, there is little connectivity with surrounding urban areas.

Recommendations for Action

General:

1. Improve signage in conjunction with Leicestershire Walking and Cycling Strategy policy KP9 to show the destination and length of routes to encourage more use.
2. Investigate the possibility of creating routes along field margins.

Stoughton Character Area:

1. Create a network of circular walks and make information available about these routes. Routes should be planned as close to features of interest as possible, and there should be negotiations with landowners to create permissive paths.
2. Investigate the possibility of creating a mostly off-road cycle link between Oadby and National Cycle Network Route 63 in conjuction with policy Kp11 .

Thurnby Fields Character Area:

1. Investigate creating a small section of footpath along Bushby Brook to join together the two footpaths in the north of this character area.
2. The footpath linking Thurnby to Stoughton Road is not be suitable for cycles and horses due to the steep gradient and the presence of ridge and furrow, so the possibility of using Stoughton Road to provide a link between Uppingham Road (A47) and existing bridleways and cycle path mid-way between Thurnby and Stoughton should be investigated.

Objective 8: *Conserve landscape features of historic significance*

Rationale

It is widely acknowledged that ridge and furrow earthworks should be preserved, but there is no historic landscape classification for them, and a change in management techniques along with the lack of designation for this feature means that they are steadily disappearing. Other historic features are in danger of being lost through agricultural intensification.

Recommendations for Action

Thurnby Fields Character Area:

1. Explore with the farmers the possibility of retaining fields as pastoral land where ridge and furrow is evident, so that they trend of conversion to arable land is not followed and a special archaeological feature is not destroyed.

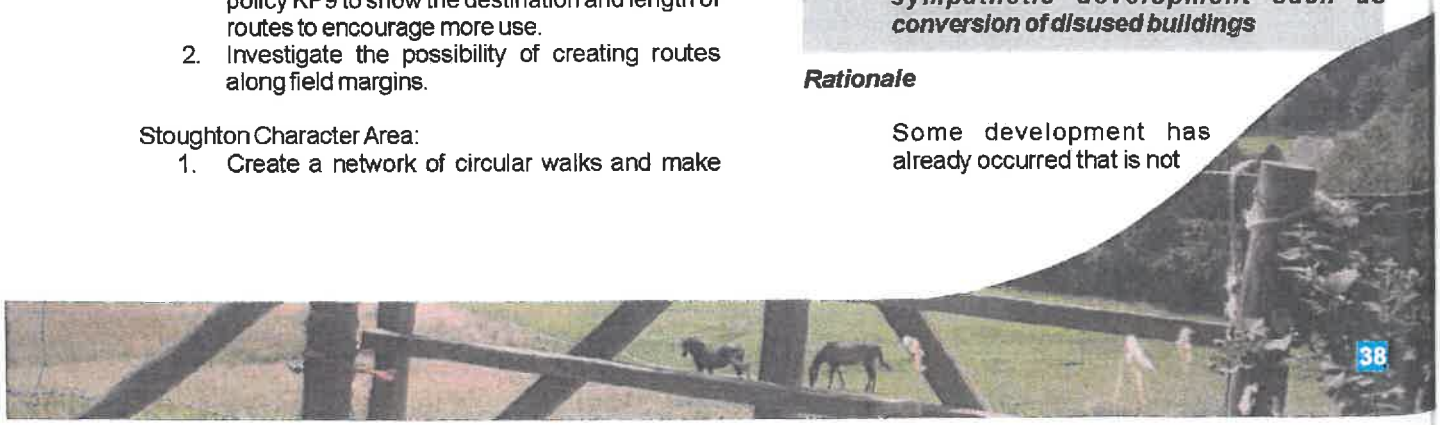
Stoughton Character Area:

1. Conserve historic landscape features, including ridge and furrow, situated around Stoughton Farm Park as mentioned in the description of this character area.

Objective 9: *Enhance key areas and encourage sympathetic development such as conversion of disused buildings*

Rationale

Some development has already occurred that is not



in character with the rest of the Green Wedge. It is important that all buildings within the Green Wedge are retained wherever possible, and converted when there is need for diversification or change of use in order to retain the building's contribution to the character of the area. With the current conversion of Stoughton Lodge Farm into dwellings, it is important to make sure that as similar schemes take place, the design is sympathetic to the surroundings.

Recommendations for Action

Stoughton Character Area:

1. Enhance the university playing fields and pavilion by planting trees or areas of vegetation around the perimeter.
2. Either modify or remove disused agricultural buildings on the southwest corner of Stoughton to enhance views of the area from adjacent bridleway.
3. Investigate enhancing the grounds of the private hospital through tree planting and the creation of nature areas.
4. Improve the appearance of the entrance to Stoughton Farm Park through the use of appropriate materials, and suggest removal of purely utilitarian agricultural barns but retention and adaptation of all other buildings in any new development.

Thurnby Fields Character Area:

1. Investigate breaking up bland nursery area just south of the A47 by planting hedgerows along access lanes.

Objective 10: *Encourage the involvement of community groups*

Rationale

The community of Stoughton wish to avoid any detrimental change to the landscape, and through a survey carried out for Stoughton Parish Plan, it is apparent that residents realise they must take action themselves in order to improve their environment. The Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project has developed links with The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and are able to encourage the setting up of local conservation groups. With an increase in cases of fly tipping and alike, it is important that local people identify with the surrounding countryside and that they feel a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Recommendations for Action

General:

1. Encourage the public and community groups to involve themselves in practical action and liaise with landowners so volunteers can plant trees on private land.

Objective 11: *Increase appropriate formal recreation and create more opportunities for informal recreation*

Rationale

As farms continue to diversify and land uses change, it is important that appropriate land uses for the Green Wedge are defined now and that these land uses will help to conserve and enhance the character of the countryside. Appropriate recreation will benefit the rural economy, while retaining the countryside for the enjoyment of a large number of people.

Recommendations for Action

Stoughton Character Area:

1. Explore the possibility of developing the site of Stoughton Farm Park as a formal recreation centre with appropriate small-scale retail as existing. Such use of this site will protect the Green Wedge from large out-of-town retail development that would not enhance the existing character of the site. Any formal recreation that requires the development of large scale buildings within the Green Wedge would not be appropriate. The proposed Eastern Distributor road would create better links with the area and increase the accessibility of the site. Such development should safeguard the historic character of the site and make use of existing buildings, while enhancing the character of their surroundings. This use would allow the former parkland to be made available to public use, and historic rights of way could be re-opened and linked with surrounding routes. Appropriate recreation would be activities that will not lead to erosion of landscape character or damage important habitats.

Thurnby Fields Character Area:

1. Although the A47 would provide good access into the northern point of the Green Wedge, the scale of development that would be required for any formal recreation would not be appropriate, as there are open views to this area of the site, and new development would change the character of a large area.
2. Investigate the provision of a small area for parking on the southern edge of Thurnby to allow access-for-all to viewpoints overlooking most of this character area and to provide pedestrian access to the existing footpaths.

Objective 12: *Discourage inappropriate development*

Rationale

It is vital that the openness and rural character of the Green Wedge is retained and that existing communities are maintained, and increased development does not lead to a coalescence of built-up areas. The distinct characteristics of settlements within and around the area must be retained and not diluted by modern developments on settlement fringes.

Recommendations for Action

General:

1. A design guide for the area should apply principles to the Green Wedge to ensure that changing practices and new development do not destroy characteristic features.
2. Settlement boundaries should remain as they are and not extend any further into the countryside.
3. Future development should not be totally discouraged, as economic regeneration is vital, but it is necessary to ensure that future change is appropriate to the character described earlier.

Prioritisation of Management Objectives

The most important objectives are hedgerow and woodland retention, and the conservation of historic landscape features such as ridge and furrow. From an ecological perspective, woodland and hedgerow habitats constitute the most extensive habitats of ecological value in the Green Wedge, and therefore appropriate management of these area would have the greatest ecological benefit. The conservation of ridge and furrow, and other historic landscape features is critical to conserving the character of the area. If these features were lost, then they could not be reinstated, thus having an irreversible detrimental effect on the landscape character.

APPENDIX 1 - ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

The following details of sites and monuments was gained from Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council.

1. MLE 2292: A Roman road running south-east out of Leicester into Northamptonshire via Medbourne Roman town.
2. MLE 2468: Crop-marks of what is probably the old course of the lane to Evington.
3. MLE 2469: An area of uneven ground suggests the remains of a series of buildings. A manor house is mentioned at Stoughton in 1477. The site is scheduled (SM17056).
4. MLE 2470: A dovecote is mentioned in 1477 associated with the manor house. A small circular earthwork west of the church may represent this. The site is scheduled (SM17056).
5. MLE 2471: Fishponds are mentioned in 1477 associated with the manor house. Two L-shaped ponds survive as earthworks. It has been suggested that these fishponds represent two corners of a split-level moat. The site is scheduled (SM17056).
6. MLE 2472: Gardens associated with a manor house are mentioned here in 1477. A raised area between two fishponds may represent this feature. The site is scheduled (Sm17056).
7. MLE 2475: A low circular mound within fields called Mill Close is almost certainly a post-mill mound. A windmill is mentioned in 1341, 1477 and 1557, presumably on this site.
8. MLE 2477: The church is a 13th century church (or chapel) that has been heavily rebuilt, using existing materials, in the 1860's.
9. MLE 2478: A 14th century churchyard cross, Grade II* listed (SM30227).
10. MLE 2480: Only the name remains of Stoughton Grange, founded in the late 15th century by Leicester Abbey.
11. MLE 2481: Site of a post dissolution mansion owned by Thomas Farnham, Duke of Suffolk. Only the cellar remains.
12. MLE 2482: A long canal like fishpond of post medieval date, almost certainly an enlargement of a fishpond mentioned in 1477.
13. MLE 2484: A skeleton within a lead coffin was found in the sand pit next to Stoughton Grange.
14. MLE 4948: A linear earthwork bank, possibly a medieval trackway.
15. MLE 4949: In 1993 LMAST fieldwalked here finding a scatter of prehistoric flint.
16. MLE 4950: Metal detecting has produced a collection of Roman artifacts including coins and brooches around the pond. Excavation to the south has revealed occupation in the form of a ditched enclosure, a late Iron Age and early Roman circular stone building, a Roman rectangular stone building, some ditches and a burial. The limits of the settlement are unknown.
17. MLE 6771: An almost complete 13th century jug.
18. MLE 6915: A medieval buckle and plate was found on the site.
19. MLE 8677: Medieval pits and ditches were found during evaluation prior to development.
20. MLE 8680: One large sherd of Anglo-Saxon pottery was found by inexperienced fieldwalkers - possibly indicating occupation, therefore.
21. MLE 8681: Small scatter of Roman pottery, possibly representing an occupation site.
22. MLE 8682: In 1996 the Oadby Fieldwalking group discovered a scatter of sherds of Roman pottery. This may suggest occupation especially since there is a possible Roman Road adjacent to where the scatter was found.
23. MLE 8683: A small, thin flint scatter (mostly blades and flakes) were recorded in a fieldwalking survey conducted by the Oadby Group.
24. MLE 8684: Scatter of early Anglo Saxon pottery possibly representing an occupation site.
25. MLE 8685: Prehistoric flint scatter including a scraper.
26. MLE 9022: RF Hartley has deduced the historic core of the village.
27. MLE 9023: RF Hartley has deduced the historic core.
28. MLE 9052: An Early Roman burial was found in a ditch with a Roman pot of late first to early second century date.
29. MLE 9053: Leicsestershire Museums archaeological survey team found six sherds of Roman greyware during fieldwalking. Geophysics found several pit and ditch like anomalies.
30. MLE 9055: Two sherds of Anglo Saxon pottery found which might indicate occupation.
31. MLE 9138: Undated quarry cropmarks.
32. MLE 9252: A Mid Saxon Loomweight was found in the garden.
33. MLE 9056: Three sherds of Anglo Saxon pottery found amongst the Roman scatter around the pond might indicate occupation.
34. MLC 417 The Hollow, Evington (more commonly known as 'Piggy's Hollow') is a moated site with fishponds, part of a medieval manorial complex. (SM17026).