

APPENDIX 12

LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS and FEATURES

This appendix consists of the following sections:

- Overview and map of Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs)
- LLCA 1
- LLCA 2
- LLCA 3

Photographs accompany the description of each LLCA

OVERVIEW

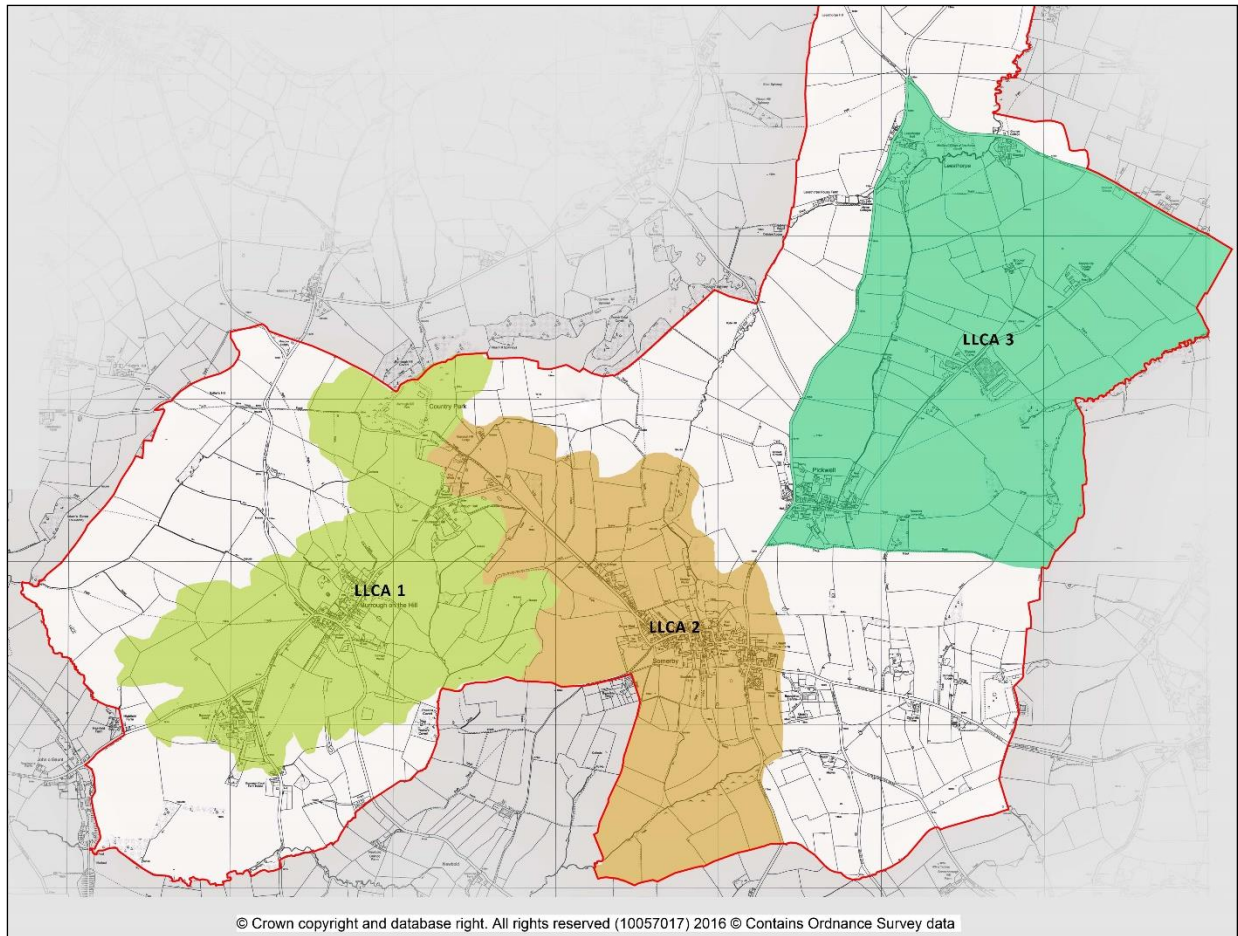
Much of the Parish environment is shaped by the high escarpment which runs north-east to south-west in the parish. In a relatively compact area there are a variety of landscape types and features, natural habitats and scenic qualities which are at the high end of the scale. The landscape is sparsely settled and deeply rural in character but with many public rights of way which support its enjoyment and recreational use by residents and visitors alike.

Expansive views of unspoilt countryside are a landscape feature in the parish, and the presence of medieval villages, church spires and archaeological sites further enrich the landscape and preserve a long time line of human settlement beginning with the Iron Age.

Perceptually, the higher parts of the parish are surprisingly remote in feel whilst lower lying areas have a sense of enclosure, seclusion and timelessness. The built fringes of the villages most often border onto countryside, grazing or park land, archaeology sites or arable, with little wasteland.

Levels of tranquillity and dark skies at night, rated highly in the Plan Area by the CPRE, can be quite widely affected by obtrusive new development especially if located at height. The dominance of the open skyscape can result in a strong visual presence for vertical structures such as church spires and turbines in the countryside and also for large buildings, especially those using more modern materials and urban colour schemes, as addressed in **Appendix 6 – Design Guidance**.

The landscape qualities of the parish have been assessed by Melton Borough in 2006, 2011 and 2014, by Harborough District in 2017, and Natural England's NCA: 93 profile. Using these studies and additional field work by the Environment Theme Group, the Neighbourhood Plan has identified three landscape areas to be given consideration under Policy ENV8: Local Landscape Character Areas:



Local Landscape Character Areas in Somerby Parish

Following is a description of each LLCA with examples of the key features which represent their character and attractiveness, and underpin the wishes of the local community to conserve these places for enjoyment by people today and in the future.

Grid Square (GS) references are given for orientation purposes only (UK Grid Finder Reference - 2019 Ordnance Survey) and are not meant to delineate a specific GS as the sole land parcel for inclusion under the Policy. Major public viewpoints are also noted.

LLCA 1

THE BURROUGH ESCARPMENT- Burrough Hill Fort and Burrough on the Hill village

Burrough Hill Fort itself and its west facing promontory is one the most important landscapes features in Melton Borough, and often described. However the landscapes in the wider terrain of the promontory, including the descent at the west, the setting of Burrough village, and other areas generally facing south and east are considered by this Plan to have value for their mix of landforms, natural beauty and historic features which define the settled land use over time around the Hill Fort. Expansive views over a variety landscapes are a unique character of LLCA 1.

Key features characterising LLCA 1:

- High and undulating tableland (mix of pasture and arable) eastern side of the Hill Fort with long distance views to Belvoir ridge and Waltham wolds (GS 77 11 and 77 12).

- Open and undulating arable land beginning at the west settled edge of Burrough village with wild life corridor and sweeping views west toward Charnwood Forest in Leicester. (GS 74 10 and 75 10).
- Arable fields, hedgerows and copses at the west and north-west foot of Burrough Hill each side of the Melton Lane (GS 75 11 and 75 12).
- Hill-side ridge and furrow fields at south side of Hill Fort ramparts and also hill-side ridge and furrow south off the Somerby Road. (GS 75 11; 75 12 and 76 11).
- Scrubland and semi-improved grassland (Priority Habitat) rising up the south-west face of the escarpment with visible geological landslip area; includes spring head/water course and includes Peakes Covert Priority Habitat (GS 76 10 and 77 09).
- Park lands of Burrough House (GS 75 10) and Burrough Hall (west) (GS 76 11) and Burrough Court (demolished) remaining tree plantations, a Priority Habitat (GS 75 09 and 75 10).
- Tracks and lanes to and around Burrough Hill, especially from Somerby to Melton Lane and from Burrough Hill to Dalby pastures (GS 75 12).
- Medieval earthworks off Melton Lane (MLE: 4062 and 4063), and ridge and furrow, Newbold Lane (GS 75 10)
- Sloping pasture and bottom-land arable fields between the west face of Burrough Hill and Burrough Village at Kings Lane with expansive views. (GS 75 10 and 75 11).
- Accessed by footpaths D70, D72, D77, D81, Jubilee Way and bridleways D86, D107 and D74a.



Hillside ridge and furrow



South-west face of the escarpment



Bottom land at NW face of Burrough Hill



Undulating arable & pasture E of Burrough Hill

LLCA 2

THE IRONSTONE UPLANDS - northern and southern approaches to Somerby village

Somerby village sits on a rolling and gently descending stretch of ridge top approximately 20-30m metres below the crest of Burrough Hill, located less than one kilometre north. The Burrough Road runs south along the top from the Hill Fort to Somerby village.

To the west of the Burrough Road at the edge of an arable field, the landscape abruptly descends with a dramatic character shaped by the eroding face of the escarpment. To the east of Burrough Road lie high fields and isolated hills juxtaposed with deep hollows, incised water courses, and smaller enclosed fields, a few with ridge and furrow, and woodland, some designated as Priority Habitats.

The southern approach to the ironstone uplands includes areas within Harborough District. It has been described in representations as 'quintessentially English countryside' for the close harmony of pastoral land with small villages, scattered farmsteads, grazing herds and the presence of ancient monuments and archaeological sites.

Key features characterising LLCA 2:

The *northern* approach to Somerby village:

- Steeply sloping south west face of escarpment with rare geological landslip, expansive views south and west across pastoral land (GS 76 10).
- Disused gravel pits and protected specie's habitat (GS 76 10); east, a smaller area of gravel pits (GS 77 11).
- Prominent ridge and furrow bordering an arable field (GS 76 10), likely once part of an open field system; and east, arable and small and later enclosed ridge and furrow fields (GS 77 11).
- Priority Habitats for calciferous and semi-improved grassland and deciduous trees; and established hedgerows (GS 76 10, and 77 11).
- Parkland of the Grove with extensive tree plantings, veteran trees and avenue; intact Grove Close, separation of built edge with countryside (GS 77 10); Burrough Hall park land (GS 76 11); and east, a spur of Somerby Hall park land and specimen trees. (GS 77 11).
- Wildflower meadows; and steep sided stretch of spring-fed stream with belts of ash, oak willow (GS 77 11).
- Accessible by Leicestershire Round, Jubilee Way, Footpaths D68 and D70.



Disused gravel pits, ridge and furrow, hedgerows



Avenue of veteran trees



Enclosed fields, ridge and furrow



Meadows, stream-side belts of ash, oak and willow]

The *southern* approach to Somerby village:

- Undulating and sloping fields with balanced mix of grazing fields, small irregular pasture with hedgerows and field trees, arable and farmsteads; enclosed by small hills rising towards Somerby, Knossington parish and Whatborough Hill (SAM). (GS 77 and 78, 08-09-10).
- Large and prominent ridge and furrow fields, some adjoining built areas. (GS 77 09-10 and 78 09-10).
- Brook with riparian vegetation, trees and wild life corridor (GS 77 09- 78 09).
- Earthworks and hollow way of medieval (and earlier) Somerby settlement (GS 77 10), and nearby Newbold deserted village (GS 76 09- Harborough District).
- Park lands of Somerby House (GS 77 09-10); Grove park with avenue of veteran trees (GS 77 10)
- Views encompassing Owston Abbey (SAM), Whatborough Hill (SAM), Robin-a-Tip Toe (SAM), and Owston Wood SSI; and the southern rim of Somerby conservation area and Grade I Church.
- Accessible by Leicestershire Round, Footpath D74, Newbold Lane, and a bridleway without a number.



Undulating pastoral land



Brook, riparian vegetation and trees



Large and prominent ridge and furrow fields

LLCA 3

THE BACK SLOPE- Pickwell and the upper Eye/Wreake valley

Rising to the back of Pickwell village and Leesthorpe hamlet the landscape of LLCA 3 is on a larger scale than other areas of the parish and a place from which a strong sense of the elevation of the whole Plan Area is experienced, with a sense of remoteness and timelessness.

Its character is shaped by a limited number of distinctive elements, including a dominating skyscape, broad valleys and swelling hillsides. Arable use has simplified the landscape overtime but it remains verdant and fertile in character.

The sweep of the landscape is broken by wide green tracks (D68, D78 and D79), scattered woodland and thickets of field maple, ash and hawthorn, and cut through by a water course outlined by mature trees. Within are places with notable hedgerows and ditches, smaller grazing fields, ponds and several Priority Habitats. It is an area highly rated by CPRE for Dark Skies at Night and Tranquillity.

LLCA 3 has a deep timeline which contributes to the landscape setting of built and economic cultural heritage from Iron Age, Roman and medieval periods. Expansive views encompass heritage features from the Whissendine wind mill to Burrough Hill.

A few commercial businesses have grown-up at the north-west corner of LLCA 3 which cumulatively have a strong presence in this high sky dominated historic landscape.

Key features characterising LLCA 3:

- Open fields and dominating skyscape (GS 79 11)
- Wide green tracks through fields and woodland (GS 79 11)
- Small bounded woodland, stream-side mature trees, hedgerows (GS 79-80 11)
- Early settlements, buried remains of Iron Age habitation (MLE 23430, MLE 23431) and a high status Roman villa (MLE 5088). (GS79- 80-81 13)
- Views of five medieval church spires, Whissendine windmill (Rutland County) and Cold Overton Hall parkland, in places Burrough Hill, Leesthorpe Hall parkland and deserted medieval village.



View towards Cold Overton from permissive footpath



Area of Iron Age and Roman settlement



Wide green track through woodland