MELTON BOROUGH

LANDSCAPE & HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER

ASSESSMENT REPORT

Draft Report To:

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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT
REPORT – ADAS

1. Section 1 - Introduction

1.1 BRIEF AND SCOPE OF STUDY

1.1.1 Melton Borough Council commissioned ADAS to carry out a Landscape Character Assessment of Melton Borough as part of its work on the Melton Local Development Framework. The ADAS team involved Rural Landscape Consultants (Fieldwork), Environment Systems (Mapping & GIS) and Oxford Archaeology (Historic Urban Character Assessment).

1.1.2 The study will be used to inform the policies and proposals of the new plan and in particular the allocation of development sites for a range of uses. Whilst the study covers the whole of the Borough, a more detailed assessment was carried out on eleven areas around Melton Mowbray. These areas offer the potential for new development adjoining the town as identified in the recently adopted Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan (March 2005). The Structure Plan identified a need to allocate about 30 hectares of greenfield land for new housing and 30 hectares for business uses in the Melton Local Development Framework (LDF) and accommodate a bypass around part of the town.

1.1.3 The scale of development is likely to have a significant impact on the setting of Melton Mowbray and the quality of the local landscape and so the study specifically considered the landscape around the town of Melton Mowbray to explore its potential to accommodate the development requirements of the new Framework. The study has therefore focused on the provision if a description of landscape character that will form the background to the preparation of policies and proposals in the new Framework and most importantly, robust decision making within the development control process.

1.2 STUDY OUTPUTS

- A Landscape Character Assessment of Melton Borough

- An Historic Urban Character Assessment of Melton Mowbray

- The identification of specific local landscape areas within the Borough and any areas that could be designated according to paragraphs 24 and 25 of PPS 7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas'

- An assessment of each of the areas (A-K) that considers in particular the landscape sensitivity of each area to accommodate major development that adjoins the town and the consequent effects on the local landscape and townscape

2. Section 2 – Landscape Character Assessment

2.1 METHODOLOGY

2.1.1 The Assessment was carried out in accordance with 'Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland'; Countryside Agency & Scottish Natural Heritage 2002.

2.1.2 Landscape character is defined in the guidance as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape. Particular combinations of physical features create distinct character such as geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, field patterns and human settlement.

2.1.3 The Character Assessment process is primarily concerned with identifying the landscape character of an area, rather than its quality or value. However, in order to make judgements which inform policy or planning decisions the inherent quality of a landscape and its significance or value to local people is very important. This study is an objective assessment of the landscape character of Melton Borough and includes a more detailed evaluation of the sensitivity of the urban fringe landscape around Melton Mowbray.

2.1.4 At this stage of assessment, potential development around Melton Mowbray has not been specified and therefore it has not been possible to conduct an evaluation of landscape sensitivity to a specific type of change nor a landscape capacity study. For this study an evaluation of landscape sensitivity has been undertaken and at a later date the Council (through consultation and discussions with stakeholders) could place values on the identified landscape areas (or on specific elements within it) and assess the areas against particular type of change or development in order to identify the landscape capacity.

2.2 DESK STUDY

2.2.1 A desk study was carried out to review and summarise existing landscape information and relevant data sources.

2.2.2 By its very nature, landscape assessment is very reliant on field appraisal to evaluate the importance and scale of different landscape elements. Field appraisal is however restricted by the limitations of using map data and aerial imagery in 2-dimensional plan only. For this reason the study made use of a product called 'NEXTMap', which is a topographic elevation dataset of the UK and provides a seamless 3-dimensional visualisation of the ground, with a resolution of 5m.

2.2.3 GIS data and imagery can be draped over the NEXTMap image to produce a seamless 3-D landscape image of the area concerned. It allows the landscape to be viewed on-screen as if one were flying above it, enabling height, slope and aspect to be fully taken into account in the initial desk study analysis, and for lines of site and field-of-view determinations to be both identified and evaluated.

2.2.4 The initial desk study involved carry out a visual scanning of images/ maps looking for keylines or breaklines which differentiated distinct landscape character boundaries. This was done by intuitively synthesising the various landscape elements within the images such as geology, topography, slope, drainage, landcover & linear feature type, extent, colour texture and patterns, settlement patterns, historic & cultural features. Differences between natural and agricultural landcover patterns and field boundaries were especially relevant. As it is based on high-resolution data sets it is extremely accurate and provides an auditable and transparent record of decisions about character area boundaries and descriptions. The study used a multi-scale approach working at an appropriate scale for the wider Borough and then focusing down and working on a field by field basis for the urban fringe landscape around Melton Mowbray.

2.2.5 Oxford Archaeology carried out a separate desk study for the Historic Urban Character Assessment element of the project. This study reviewed a range of sources, predominantly Leicestershire Sites and Monuments Record, records of Listed Buildings held by English Heritage and a range of documentary and cartographic sources (archaeological evidence, documentary, cartographic sources and the standing historic buildings).

2.3 FIELD SURVEY

2.3.1 The field surveys were conducted following the initial desk study and draft mapping of Landscape Character Area boundaries. Character boundaries were checked out in the field and representative photos of each draft Character Area were taken from key viewpoints. The locations of the viewpoints were marked on a map and field survey sheets were completed recording the field assessments. The urban fringe area around Melton Mowbray had been divided into Zones (A-K) and these were evaluated in greater detail for landscape sensitivity.

2.3.2 A field survey was also carried out for the Historic Urban Character Assessment and was conducted according to guidelines laid out by English Heritage and with the general methodology established by Oxford Archaeology during their work on similar assessments in Hampshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

Melton Borough Council
LCA Map 1
Character Assessment
Area Overview

Ashfield District

Newark and Sherwood District

Amber Valley District

Gedling District

Broxtowe District

City of Nottingham

Erewash District

City of Derby

Rushcliffe District

South Kesteven District

South Derbyshire District

Melton District

Melton Mowbray

North West Leicestershire District

Charnwood District

Rutland

City of Leicester

Hinckley and Bosworth District

Blaby District

Oadby and Wigston District

North Warwickshire District

Harborough District

Kettering District

Corby District

Nuneaton and Bedworth District

Coventry District

Rugby District

Warwick District

Daventry District

Stratford-on-Avon District

Legend

District Boundaries

Melton District

Leicestershire

0   5   10   15
Kilometres

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Landscape Character Assessment Melton Borough
ADAS 22 March 2006

3. Section 3 – Landscape Character of Melton Borough

3.1 CONTEXT OF STUDY AREA

3.1.1 The Borough of Melton covers the north-eastern part of the County of Leicestershire **[LCA Map 1 Character Assessment Area Overview]**. Nottinghamshire lies to the north and Lincolnshire to the east. The adopted Melton Local Plan states:

3.1.2 *" The quality of the natural environment is perhaps one of the Borough's most important assets. It is traditional English countryside at its best. There is a wide variety in the appearance of the landscape, which includes the broad sweep of the pastureland in the Vale of Belvoir, the ironstone plateau of the Wolds and the shallow river valleys of the Wreake and Eye. The population density of the Borough is the lowest in the County."*

3.1.3 The Melton Local Plan, adopted June 1999, designated a substantial part of the Borough as an *"Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside".*

3.2 EXISTING LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

3.2.1 Regional - There are four National Joint Character Areas (JCA) which cover the Borough, and these are:
- JCA 48 – Trent and Belvoir Vales
- JCA74 – Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds
- JCA75 – Kesteven Uplands
- JCA93 – High Leicestershire.

3.2.2 Being regional descriptions these are course-grained assessments which cover broad areas at a regional scale and therefore more detail would be required in order to make informed judgements at a local planning level.

3.2.3 County - Leicestershire County Council undertook an assessment of the landscape and woodlands of Leicestershire County in 1995, and the findings were published in the Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy in 2001. The Strategy includes detailed descriptions of the Landscape Character Areas and characteristic sketches with lists of distinctive features and issues. There are eight county level Landscape Character Areas that lie within the Borough. **[LCA Map 2 Countryside Character Area]**

3.2.4 **Vale of Belvoir**
This area is an exposed almost flat area of mixed farming, predominantly arable in the east. There is very little woodland, although the ecological

value of the disused canal is significant. The villages are small and regularly distributed through the area. Belvoir Scarp is important in many views.

3.2.5 Belvoir Scarp

This is a steep escarpment giving a long narrow character area. Grazing is to be found on the steep slopes and arable on the flatter areas towards the bottom of the scarp. There is a high proportion of woodland, many of which have ecological value. There is limited settlement. The scarp affords extensive views over the surrounding countryside.

3.2.6 Kinston Bowl

This area is a deeply incised basin with mixed farming and many mature hedgerow trees. The northeastern part is well wooded. Key elements of the landscape are Knipton Reservoir, narrow winding lanes linking small villages and parkland.

3.2.7 The Wolds

This area is a rolling landscape drained by numerous stream valleys with mixed farmland – arable on ridges, pasture in valleys. There are urban and industrial influences of Melton Mowbray and Asfordby and yet much of the area is small to medium sized villages and individual farms. There is little woodland or parkland and some minor roads have broad grass verges. There is local variation in character detail.

3.2.8 Wreake Valley

This area is described as a flat-bottomed river valley with gently sloping sides, mixed arable and pasture with little woodland. The urban influence of Melton Mowbray gives way to a more rural character in the east. There are widespread features of historical and ecological (particularly wetland) interest.

3.2.9 High Leicestershire

This area is described as a high-dissected plateau with steep sided valleys, arable on flatter ridges, pasture on slopes and in valleys. There are high concentrations of local woodland and many ancient woodland sites. Parkland, ridge & furrow, narrow gated roads, deserted villages and field ponds are considered to be the distinct elements of this landscape.
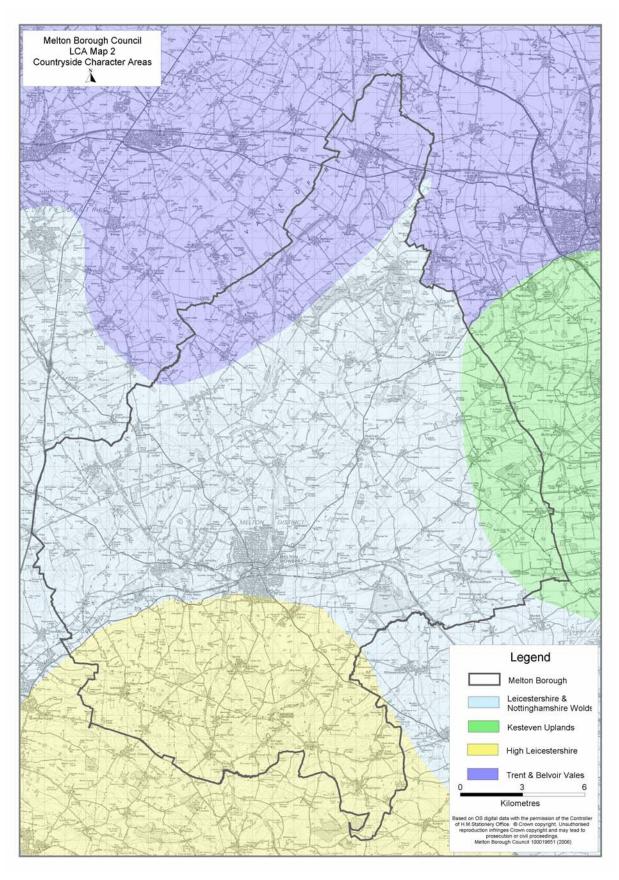
3.2.10 Vale of Catmose

This area is described as being a broad, flat-bottomed, elongated and curved basin with sparsely distributed villages. It is an open landscape with very little woodland. The woodland that does occur around Burley and Barnsdale (in the Cottesmore Plateau character area) is visually important. The disused Oakham-Melton Mowbray canal passes through

this area. Rutland Water in the east is an important recreation and nature conservation site.

3.2.11 **Cottesmore Plateau**

This area is a fairly flat and generally open landscape. The River Gwash and small stream valley give pockets of more intimate landscape. It is predominantly arable with large fields and low hedges. There are large blocks of woodland, many of ecological value. Distinctive features include drystone walls in the east, the influence of Cottesmore Airfield, species rich limestone grassland on road verges and locally important parkland.

Melton Borough Council
LCA Map 2
Countryside Character Areas

Legend

Melton Borough

Leicestershire &
Nottinghamshire Wolds

Kesteven Uplands

High Leicestershire

Trent & Belvoir Vales

0   3   6
Kilometres

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3.3 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

3.3.1 **Historical evolution of the Melton Borough landscape**
Before Neolithic times the landscape of this area was largely wooded. Gradually Neolithic farmers began to clear woods and it is believed that during the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods significant felling occurred, so that by 1000BC much of the original woodland cover had been cleared. Between the end of the Roman period and the Norman Conquest , Anglo-Saxons and Danes colonised the area, and this led to a change in the pattern of settlement from one of dispersed farmsteads to one of villages surrounded by collective open field farming systems. By Domesday, most of the villages and hamlets were in existence and today, the widespread existence of ridge and furrow is an indication of just how much land was ploughed and cultivated during the medieval period.

3.3.2 From the late 15th century onwards landowners enclosed land by planting hedges to form more manageable fields for sheep and cattle pasture, sometimes leading to the loss of villages. Enclosure continued steadily through the 16th and 17th centuries. Hoskins (The Making of the English Landscape, 1955) estimated that about 25% of Leicestershire was enclosed by the early 17th century and about 60% by the time of the first Enclosure Act of in 1734. These earlier enclosures often have more irregular boundary hedges than the Parliamentary Enclosure hedges.

3.3.3 The past 50 years has seen just as radical a change with farms switching from pastoral to arable farming and with field drains and hedgerows removed to create larger fields. In more recent years this decline in the character of the agricultural landscape has been reversed and agri-environment schemes and improved environmental knowledge has ensured a more diverse landscape. However, the fringe landscapes around towns are now under increasing pressure to absorb a variety of development needs and landscape quality in these areas threatened.

3.3.4 **Geology and soils**
The underlying geology of the area, Jurassic Lias Clays, Marlstone, Ironstone and Oolitic limestone is obscured in places by a glacial drift cover of boulder clay. However, the highest parts of the Borough such as the Belvoir Scarp consist of marlstone, which has formed a resistant capping above the clays. The marlstone was quarried in the past, but these workings were on a modest scale and have not had a dramatic visual impact on the landscape. They have left features such as disused small pits which contribute to local landscape character. Opencast ironstone working was carried on around Sproxton and Buckminster until the early 1970's and these workings have now largely been restored to agricultural use.

3.3.5   South of the Wreake Valley erosion of the Lias Clays has resulted in a high-dissected plateau with numerous small stream valleys with clay floors and marlstone slopes. This ridge and valley topography forms the basis of the High Leicestershire landscape character area.

3.3.6   To the north of the Wreake Valley lies the undulating plateau of the Wolds, and north of this, below the Marlstone scarp, lies the flatter claylands of the Vale of Belvoir. The Lias Clays give rise to heavy soils that are difficult to work and these are traditionally under pasture, whilst the limestones and ironstones give lighter, more loamy soils better suited to arable cultivation. The better soils are thus generally found capping the hills and ridges or in a series of loamy terrace deposits on the edge of the floodplains. The Marlstone gives rise to orange brown easily worked soils, which are often calcareous and loamy in character.

3.3.7   In terms of agricultural classification the Borough soils are predominantly Grade 3a and 3b with a significant area of better land (Grade 2). Poorer land (Grade 4) is rare across the Borough *{Agricultural Quality of Land in Melton Borough, Land Research Associates, December 2005}*.

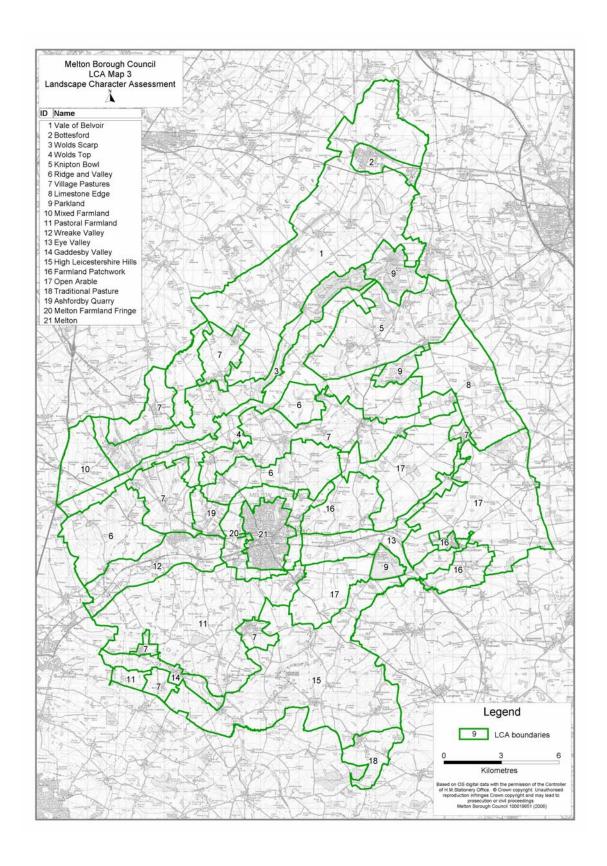3.3.8   **Overall description of the landscape today**
The Borough of Melton in Leicestershire lies in central England and the landscape is typically rolling hills and valleys. The most prominent feature is the escarpment defining the southern edge of the Vale of Belvoir. The landscape of the Borough is rich in rural culture and is closely associated with agricultural products such as pork pies and stilton cheese.

3.3.9   Melton Mowbray is situated in the centre of the Borough and is a large well contained market town on rising ground above the Wreake Valley. The numerous small-nucleated villages within the Borough retain many of their historical features and are built in the local ironstone and sandstone and most are centred on a church with a prominent spire. Ironstone, which has been used as building material for centuries, is a particularly rich and warm ochre-orange colour and is sometimes used in a chequer board design with limestone. The villages remain intact due to the influence of large estates and local planning policies.

3.3.10 The landform of the Borough is generally indistinct lowland ridge and valley, although the Vale of Belvoir, its escarpment and the High Leicestershire Hills in the south are more pronounced. The ridge and valleys predominantly run along a southwest to northeast axis. Gently sloped river valleys are also a characteristic feature of the landscape, notably the Wreake, Eye and Gaddesby. The main waterway is the Grantham Canal.

3.3.11 Due to the heavy fertile soils the predominant landcover is pasture for dairy cows. A large proportion of the Borough (especially in the east) has however been drained and converted to arable production, with the resulting enlargement of fields. In some places the former field patterns are still evident from the sinuous lines of highways, lanes and Parish boundaries. Ancient broad-leaved woodland is generally scarce, yet the Borough appears quite well wooded. This is due to the many tree belts, hedgerow trees, copses and clusters of trees planted to enhance the landscape and to provide cover for hunting and shooting. The major deciduous tree species is ash, with oak and sycamore secondary.

3.3.12 Cultural patterns are a key element of the Melton landscape, especially the many well preserved villages which are surrounded by a complex network of small traditional pastures. The various patterns, shapes and sizes of fields around the villages offer an historical palimpsest. The wider Borough contains many well-preserved field ridge and furrow, a remnant of the early Middle Ages arable farming system. Strip lynchets are a particular feature of the landscape of the Belvoir Castle Estate. The effect of sporting estates has strongly affected the layout of the landscape, with characteristic dense well managed chamfered hedgerows next to wide grassy verges along roadsides.

3.4   LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT RESULTS

3.4.1   The landscape character assessment of Melton Borough has resulted in the definition and mapping of twenty Landscape Character Areas within the Borough. The assessment sought to refine the regional and county level Assessments and whilst some character areas and descriptions remain the same, some new areas have been created in order to characterise the local landscape. The boundaries of each of the Landscape Character Areas are shown on the following map. The Vale of Belvoir, Belvoir Scarp, Knipton Bowl and Wreake Valley are broadly similar with the Leicestershire Landscape Character Areas, however the remainder are new. **[LCA Map 3 Landscape Character Assessment]**

3.4.2   There is little correlation between the Landscape Character Areas identified as a result of this assessment and the Local Plan designated Areas of Particularly Attractive Countryside (APAC). A large part of the undesignated area (area outside APAC) lies within the newly identified character area; Open Arable. It is therefore suggested that these new LCA's should replace the local landscape designation '*Areas of Particularly Attractive Countryside'* as suggested in Government Planning Policy Statement 7.

Melton Borough Council
LCA Map 3
Landscape Character Assessment

ID	Name
1	Vale of Belvoir
2	Bottesford
3	Wolds Scarp
4	Wolds Top
5	Knipton Bowl
6	Ridge and Valley
7	Village Pastures
8	Limestone Edge
9	Parkland
10	Mixed Farmland
11	Pastoral Farmland
12	Wreake Valley
13	Eye Valley
14	Gaddesby Valley
15	High Leicestershire Hills
16	Farmland Patchwork
17	Open Arable
18	Traditional Pasture
19	Ashfordby Quarry
20	Melton Farmland Fringe
21	Melton

Legend

9 LCA boundaries

0   3   6
Kilometres

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ADAS 22 March 2006

4. Section 4 - Description of Landscape Character Areas for Melton Borough

4.1 LCA 1 Vale of Belvoir

This area covers the Leicestershire part of the much larger Vale of Belvoir, in the northwest of the Borough. It is widely visible from the escarpment and higher land to the south, and contains the Grantham Canal and a string of small-nucleated villages within a strongly rectangular landscape pattern of arable and pastoral fields, Redmile, Barkestone-le-Vale, Plungar, Stathern, Harby and Nether Broughton. This is a neat, intensively farmed, domesticated and well-managed farmland area where the landscape is gentle and subtle, and the dominant and most attractive element is the traditional villages with fine stone houses and churches. The linear village of Long Clawson nestled at the bottom of the scarp slope has not grown very much since the First Edition Ordnance Survey. A number of historic lanes and other rights of way lead to and from the village and provide views over a patchwork of small narrow fields. The village and surrounding fields are sensitive to change.

Landscape Character Description
An expansive gentle vale landscape with a strong pattern of medium scale rectangular shaped pastoral and arable fields with managed hedgerows and the Grantham canal, punctuated by nucleated villages with prominent church spires.

Distinct Characteristics

- Expansive vale
- String of nucleated villages
- Strong rectangular field pattern of mixed farming bounded by hedges
- Local stone in houses and churches

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography
LCA 1   Vale of Belvoir showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.5   1
Kilometres

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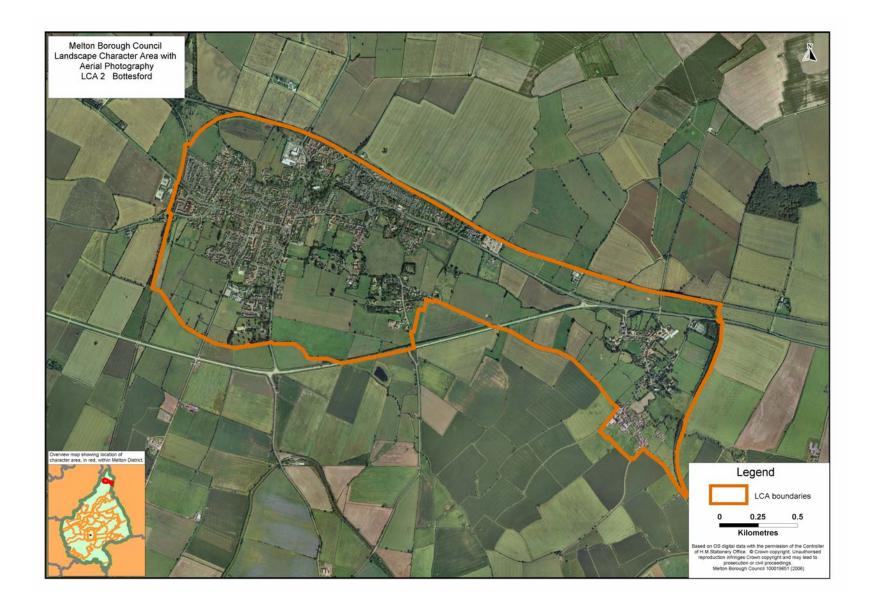Melton Borough Council 100019651 (2006)

4.2 LCA 2 Bottesford

This area covers the town of Bottesford and the village of Muston, and is differentiated from the rest of the Vale of Belvoir settlements because of its larger size, land use and transport routes. When comparing the extent of the current town with early maps it can be seen that the town has grown since the late 19th Century and now incorporates Beckingthorpe and Easthorpe. The historic core is well preserved (still has stocks, whipping post and market cross), but the fringes are less sensitive and bounded by the A52 and railway corridor.

Landscape Character Description
A nucleated townscape, prominent within the Vale, and nearby village with surrounding pastures, streamsides and transport routes.

Distinct Characteristics
- Town prominent in vale
- Dominated by church at centre
- Stream running through
- Closely associated pasture

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography
LCA 2   Bottesford

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5

Kilometres

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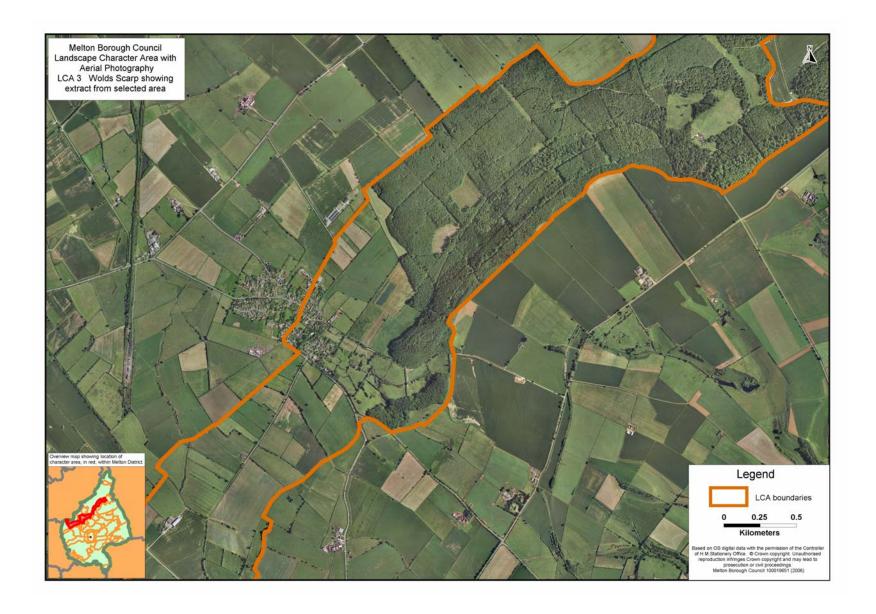
4.3 LCA 3 Wolds Scarp

This area is probably the most dramatic feature of the Borough's landscape, defining the southern edge of the Vale of Belvoir, and running from Belvoir Castle in the north east to Old Dalby in the south west. It contains some of the steepest terrain in the Borough, and rises to nearly 170 metres AOD at Broughton Hill, characterised by its distinct pattern of small traditional pastures, woodland and historic features such as ridge and furrow.

Landscape Character Description
A pronounced locally dramatic northwest facing escarpment landscape, with a distinct pattern of traditional small scale regular & irregular shaped pastures, woodland and historic features.

Distinct Characteristics
- Prominent scarp landform
- Pattern of small traditional pastures
- Woodland
- Ridge & Furrow

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography
LCA 3 Wolds Scarp showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5
Kilometers

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4.4   LCA 4 Wolds Top

This is a long narrow elevated area of top land above the escarpment, again with a distinct northeast to southwest grain. It is open and rather homogenous, and characterised by large-scale regular shaped arable fields with low trimmed hedges and scattered ash trees.

Landscape Character Description
An even elevated wold top landscape with medium to large scale predominantly arable fields, homogenous and open with scattered ash trees but generally lacking distinctive qualities.

Distinct Characteristics
- Narrow strip of elevated land
- Open and homogenous
- Large scale regular arable fields

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography
LCA 4 Wolds Top showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5
Kilometres

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4.5 LCA 5 Knipton Bowl

This area probably contains the most attractive and diverse landscape within the Borough, with varied terrain, landcover, land use, settlements and historic features. It is here that limestone overlies marlstone, and springs, streams and rivers have created a series of sinuous valleys around the edges of the bowl. The landform here is the most intricate and complex within the Borough, rolling, undulating, visually satisfying and softly rounded. Landcover is diverse, with a mosaic of old unimproved pastures, more improved pastures, arable fields, parkland, wetland and woodland. The area is of great historic interest, with well-preserved medieval field systems including strip lynchets and ridge and furrow. There are two villages on the edge of the bowl, Croxton Kerrial and Eastwell, and four villages within the bowl, Eaton, Branston, Knipton and Harston; all nucleated with well preserved, attractive stone buildings.

Landscape Character Description
An outstanding, beautiful well managed bowl landscape with limestone rim and a diverse mosaic of historic features, traditional pastures, arable land, parkland, woodland, wetland, water & nucleated villages, and a strong pattern of small to medium regular and irregular shaped fields, fine trees and woodland.

Distinct Characteristics
- Diverse landcover
- Mosaic of old unimproved pastures
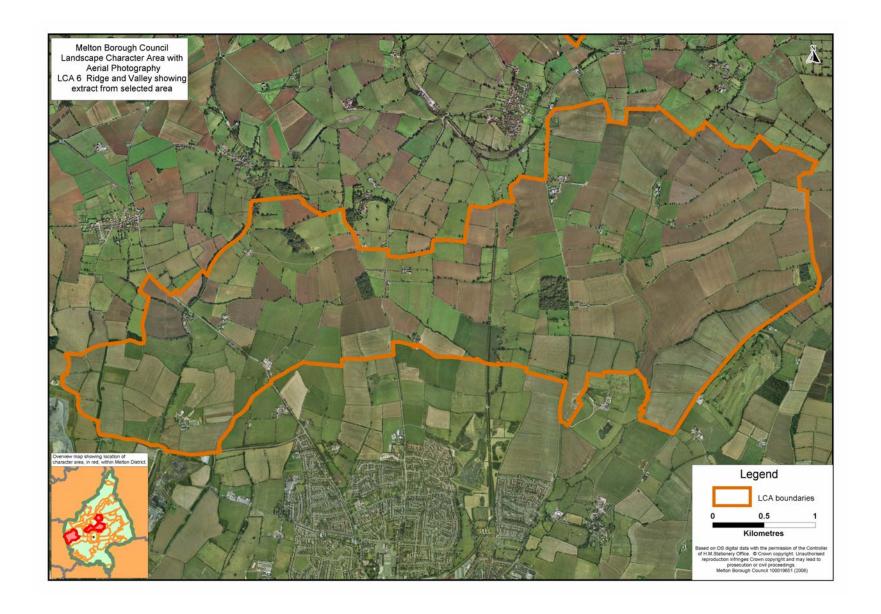- Preserved Medieval field systems
- Local stone buildings

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography
LCA 5 Knipton Bowl showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5
Kilometres

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4.6 LCA 6 Ridge and Valley

This area is typical of a broad swathe of land along the dip slopes to the south of Wold Tops, to the northwest of Melton Mowbray. Here the landform is distinctly rolling with a northwest to southeast grain, and the large-scale open arable fields along the ridgeline contrast with the smaller scale enclosed pastures on the valley sides and floors. The small-nucleated village of Ragdale is located at one of the valley heads.

Landscape Character Description
A broadly homogenous gently rolling ridge & valley landscape with contrasting large scale arable fields along ridgelines and smaller scale pastures in the valleys, with managed hedges and scattered mostly ash trees.

Distinct Characteristics
- Rolling landscape
- Large scale open arable fields along ridgelines
- Small scale enclosed pastures on valley sides and floors
- Few buildings

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography
LCA 6 Ridge and Valley showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.5   1

Kilometres

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ADAS 22 March 2006

4.7 LCA 7 Village Pastures

Village Pastures are perhaps one of the most typical landscape character areas within the Borough, and include many of the smaller attractive villages to the north of Melton Mowbray, often situated along spring lines at the valley heads, such as Saxelbye, Grimston, Wartnaby, Ab Kettleby, Holwell, Scalford, Wycomb, Goadby Marwood, Waltham on the Wolds, Stonesby, Saltby and Sproxton. Great Dalby to the south is also included. These traditional, well preserved ironstone and limestone villages sit within a distinctive historic pastoral landscape of small fields, often with ridge and furrow, enclosed by ancient and more recent irregular and regular shaped hedgerows with abundant hedgerow trees. Waltham on the Wolds is a well established agricultural village with annual fair for horses and cattle until early 20th Century. Lying atop a small plateau area it is centred on a traditional cross roads and is the focus of several roads, ways, lanes and paths. Whilst parts of the village are visually prominent, the north eastern area is less sensitive.

Landscape Character Description
A distinctive traditional pastoral landscape and attractive nucleated villages with a strong pattern of small fields often with historic features, enclosed by abundant hedgerow trees.

Distinct Characteristics
- Traditional stone built villages
- Small field with Ridge & Furrow
- Enclosed by ancient hedgerows with abundant hedgerow trees

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography
LCA 7 Village Pastures showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5
Kilometres

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4.8 LCA 8 Limestone Edge

This is a subtle elevated area at the edge of the Oolitic limestone belt which has been transformed by intensive agriculture and conifer plantations into a productive large scale rather homogenous arable landscape, with a strongly rectangular pattern and lack of naturalness.

Landscape Character Description
A gently rolling and homogenous low limestone plateau edge with a strongly rectangular pattern of large scale arable fields and blocks of conifer plantations, generally lacking naturalness and diversity.

Distinct Characteristics
- Elevated area on limestone edge
- Homogenous arable landscape
- Large scale open field pattern
- Blocks of conifer woodland

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography
LCA 8 Limestone Edge showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5
Kilometres

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4.9 LCA 9 Parkland

There are three parkland areas within the Borough, Stapleford, Croxton and Belvoir, and although each is unique and different, they all have historic buildings and characteristic parkland landscapes with plantation woodlands, ornamental tree groups, pasture and water areas. Stapleford appears to have converted much of the original parkland area into arable farmland, thus losing the traditional parkland character.

Key Characteristics
Historic parkland landscapes with historic houses/castles and a diverse mosaic of ancient, traditional & contemporary agricultural and parkland features and patterns.

Distinct Characteristics
• Historic buildings
• Parkland landscape or remnant parkland
• Plantation woodlands
• Ornamental tree groups & specimens
• Arable on former parkland

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography
LCA 9 Parkland showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5
Kilometres

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4.10 LCA 10 Mixed Farmland

This is a relatively small area of mixed farmland and recreational land on the western edge of the Borough adjacent to the A46 trunk road (Fosse Way). Landform is gently rolling and rising to 150 metres, where it merges with the southern end of the escarpment. It is drained by a stream in a shallow valley running northwards. The area is characterised by a mixture of larger scale arable fields and medium scale pastures, of various shapes and sizes, with a number of large agricultural buildings being visually prominent; creating a fairly bland and unremarkable landscape.

Landscape Character Description
A typical gently rolling lowland farmland landscape with contrasting intensive and traditional units, varied field sizes and scattered trees as well as recreational land.

Distinct Characteristics
- Mixture of agricultural use and recreational land
- Shallow valley
- Variety of field sizes
- Large, visually prominent agricultural buildings

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography
LCA 10 Mixed Farmland showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5
Kilometres

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4.11 LCA 11 Pastoral Farmland

This is quintessential lowland English pastoral landscape, gentle, green, rural, productive and well managed, with scattered farmsteads and thick stock-proof hedges. The topography is very gently rolling with a broad scale and a pattern of medium scale regular and irregular shaped fields with scattered hedgerow trees and little woodland.

Landscape Character Description
A typical, pleasant, rural, gently rolling lowland pastoral farmland landscape, generally well managed, with diverse field shapes and sizes, good hedges and scattered trees

Distinct Characteristics
- Rolling topography
- Well managed pastoral landscape
- Scattered farmsteads
- Thick stock proof hedges
- Irregular shaped fields

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography LCA 11
Pastoral Farmland showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.5   1
Kilometres

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4.12 LCA 12 Wreake Valley

The River Wreake is the largest river within the Borough, and its valley is the most noticeable, with the town of Melton Mowbray situated beside it. The river valley forms an important green wedge through the town and runs westwards to the Borough boundary. A string of small villages are located along the edge of the valley on rising ground above the floodplain(e.g. Hoby and Frisby on the Wreake). Areas of the flat valley floor have been worked for sand and gravel, and restored as lakes and wetland areas, valuable wildlife habitats and recreational areas. The village of Asfordby and the relatively recent developments of Asfordby Valley and Asfordby Hill are situated on the edge of the floodplain tucked into the rising land to the north. Asfordby is nucleated, centred around an historic core and separated from the industrial areas by a railway embankment. Areas away from the floodplain are less sensitive.

Landscape Character Description
A gentle lowland river valley landscape with contrasting sinuous river course and regular pattern of small to medium scale pastoral fields with distinct wetland and water areas from former gravel pits, and small-nucleated villages situated along the rising slopes of the valley edge.

Distinct Characteristics
- River Wreake
- Green wedge running into Melton Mowbray
- String of villages on edge of the valley
- Valley floor worked for sand and gravel and restored to wetland habitat

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography
LCA 12 Wreake Valley showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.5   1
Kilometres

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4.13 LCA 13 Eye Valley

The Eye Valley is the renamed Wreake Valley east of Melton Mowbray, where it is less well defined by landform and landcover, and the river valley landscape to the south has been greatly modified by intensive agriculture. However the river floodplain still forms an important green wedge into the eastern side of the town.

Landscape Character Description
A mixed rather discordant river valley landscape, with traditional small scale pastoral land to the north and contrasting large scale intensive open arable land to the south, which suppresses the natural river valley landscape.

Distinct Characteristics
- Small scale pastoral landscape to the north
- Large scale intensive open arable fields to south
- Sparse hedgerows and tree clumps

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography
LCA 13 Eye Valley showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5
Kilometers

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4.14 LCA 14 Gaddesby Valley

The Gaddesby Brook forms a minor valley running westwards in the southwestern part of the Borough before it joins the Wreake. The landscape here is subtle, gentle and restricted to the narrow valley floor with characteristic country houses in parkland, farmsteads, orchards, traditional pastures and horticulture.

Landscape Character Description
A gentle valley floor with sinuous river course and mixture of country houses, parkland, orchards, pastoral farmland and horticulture.

Distinct Characteristics
- Restricted to valley floor
- Houses set in parkland
- Farmsteads and horticulture
- Traditional pastures and orchards

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography LCA 14
Gaddesby Valley showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5
Kilometres

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4.15 LCA 15 High Leicestershire Hills

This is perhaps the quintessential landscape type within the Borough. The classic carefully managed and well preserved sporting estates with attractive villages lie amongst rolling hills, historic features and mixed farmland with parkland, copses, woodland, chamfered hedges and wide grass verges along roadsides. There is a pronounced escarpment at Burrough Hill, which at 210 metres, is the highest point, and most prominent landmark, within the Borough. The steep slopes of the escarpment contain some important areas of species rich, unimproved grassland, which is rare elsewhere within Melton Borough.

Landscape Character Description
Classic landscape influenced by the requirements of sporting estates with attractive stone villages amongst rolling pastoral hills and escarpment, and a range of field shapes and sizes enclosed by well-managed often chamfered hedges, woodland, parkland, copses, green lanes, wide grass road verges and some more intensive arable land.

Distinct Characteristics
- Rolling hills and pronounced escarpment
- Well preserved sporting estates
- Historic features, green lanes and parkland
- Unimproved grassland

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography LCA 15 High
Leicestershire Hills showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

☐ LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5
Kilometres

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4.16 LCA 16 Farmland Patchwork

The character of this landscape is also derived from the tradition of game shooting in the area, as blocks of trees, woodland and game cover crops have been planted within arable and pastoral fields to sustain pheasants and partridges, creating a distinctly patterned patchwork landscape.

Key characteristics
A gently rolling lowland mixed farmland landscape with a distinct patchwork of small to medium scale regular shaped pastoral and arable fields with blocks of game cover and small woodlands

Distinct Characteristics
- Landscape influenced by game shooting
- Blocks of trees, woodland, game cover crops
- Patterned patchwork landscape

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography LCA 16
Farmland Patchwork showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5
Kilometres

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4.17 LCA 17 Open Arable

This area covers a large part of the eastern lowlands where boulder clay overlies the marlstone and limestone providing fertile soils, when drained, for arable cultivation. This is the most intensively farmed area within the Borough and past field enlargement coupled with hedge and woodland removal has created a large-scale open rather homogenous arable landscape. However, although subtle, the pattern of a more ancient landscape is evident beneath the surface, in the lines of parish boundaries, green lanes and highways.

Landscape Character Description
A contemporary large scale blocky intensively farmed open arable landscape superimposed upon an older smaller scale and strongly irregular patterned landscape. The subtleties are subdued but evident.

Distinct Characteristics
- Intensively farmed, large scale open landscape
- Past field enlargement through hedge and woodland removal
- Pattern of historic landscape still evident in places

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography LCA 17
Open Arable showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.5   1
Kilometres

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4.18 LCA 18 Traditional Pastures

This area in the southeast corner of the Borough is more typical of a Rutland landscape, with its rich green colours and strongly irregular pattern of small pastoral fields enclosed by thick hedgerows, hedgerow trees and ancient woodland.

Landscape Character Description
An untypical traditional pastoral lowland landscape with a rich green colour and pronounced irregular pattern of small fields enclosed by thick hedgerows with abundant trees and ancient woodlands.

Distinct Characteristics
- Irregular pattern of small fields
- Rolling low hills
- Pastoral
- Green
- Hedges, hedgerow trees and ancient woodland

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography LCA 18
Traditional Pastures showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5
Kilometres

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4.19 LCA 19 – Asfordby Quarry

This is the disturbed, excavated, hollow and depleted large-scale landscape of the former colliery, now partly transformed to industrial use. Large industrial buildings dominate the view, however the valley is enclosed and the views contained.

Landscape Character Description
A disturbed, excavated, large scale, former colliery landscape now in industrial use.

Distinct Characteristics
- Industrial landscape – former colliery
- Large scale
- Disturbed
- Continued industrial use

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography LCA 19
Ashfordy Quarry showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.25   0.5
Kilometres

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4.20 LCA 20 Melton Fringes   [LCA 21 Melton Mowbray]

This covers the areas surrounding Melton Mowbray which have a distinctly urban fringes character, including the eleven zones identified for further evaluation.

Landscape Character Description
A mixed urban fringe ridge and valley and valley floor landscape, mostly pastoral farmland, MOD and recreational land.

Distinct Characteristics
- Rolling landscape of fields and hedges
- Mixed pasture and arable land
- Clear distinction between urban edge and countryside
- Housing estates remain unscreened
- Some industrial and other land uses (e.g. MOD)

Melton Borough Council
Landscape Character Area with
Aerial Photography
LCA 20 Melton Fringes showing
extract from selected area

Overview map showing location of
character area, in red, within Melton District.

Legend

LCA boundaries

0   0.5   1
Kilometres

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5.   Landscape Sensitivity around Melton Mowbray

5.1 THE SETTING OF THE TOWN

5.1.1   The town of Melton Mowbray is nucleated and compact with well defined residential areas of the northern and southern edges. The eastern and western edges are less well defined with industrial areas on the Wreake and Eye Valley floodplains. On the eastern side a large factory with light coloured roof and walls is prominent and poorly related to the townscape and landscape. On the western side the mixture of industrial, commercial, and retail buildings in proximity to the road and rail corridors and river floodplain is visually confusing and poorly related to the townscape and landscape.

5.1.2   The topography of Melton Mowbray is essentially one of gentle sloping ridge and valley, with two halves of the town situated on rising land north and south of the river valley. The Scalford Brook forms a secondary valley through the northern part of the town, an important green wedge that has been conserved as the Country Park. The urban fringes to the north of the town rise to over 130 metres whilst that to the south is slightly lower at 112 metres. Another valley containing a small stream forms the western fringe of the town, and this is partly farmed and partly used by the Ministry of Defence for dog training. This valley also separates the town from the large excavated area of the former Ashfordby Colliery. Two nucleated villages of Thorpe Arnold and Burton Lazars are located close to the east and southeastern fringes of the town, with a narrow strip of farmland in between.

5.2 APPROACH TO EVALUATION

5.2.1   The evaluation of landscape sensitivity is set out in the Countryside Agency's Topic Paper 6 – *Techniques and Criteria for Judging Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity.* The Topic Paper defines landscape character sensitivity as follows:

5.2.2   *"Evaluating the sensitivity of the landscape as a whole, in terms of its overall character, its quality and condition, the aesthetic aspects of its character, and also the sensitivity of individual elements contributing to the landscape"*

5.2.3   For the following Zones, decisions were taken on;
- The degree to which the landscape in question was considered robust, in that it might be able to accommodate change without adverse impacts on character.
- Whether or not significant characteristic elements of the landscape will be liable to loss through disturbance.

- Whether or not the significant characteristic elements could easily be restored. Whether important aesthetic aspects of character will be liable to change. Consideration was also given to the addition of new elements, which may also have a significant influence on character.

Relevant information was drawn from the Historic Urban Character Assessment to identify,
- Whether or not direct destruction or damage to cultural heritage might occur.
- Whether or not indirect effects to cultural heritage or setting might occur.

5.2.4 The following **Table 1 Landscape & Cultural Heritage Sensitivity Matrix** was put together in an attempt to rank the urban fringe areas around Melton Mowbray in terms of sensitivity. Following an identification of significant agents of change for landscape and cultural heritage, each of the areas were scored on the basis of likely ability to absorb change (1=Negative 2=Neutral 3=Positve). These scores were added up and ranked from High Sensitivity (lowest score) to Low Sensitivity (highest score). The range of scores provides a useful framework for comparing adjacent areas and offering an indicator of sensitivity. **LCA Map 4 Sensitivity Map** provides a visual presentation of Less Sensitive Areas combined with key areas of cultural heritage sensitivity (areas of archaeological potential, historic setting, standing/ designated features and areas).

Table 1 Landscape and Cultural Heritage Sensitivity Matrix – Zones A-K Around Melton Mowbray

ZONES	Landscape				Cultural Heritage		High/Medium/Low Sensitivity
	Loss through disturbance	Ability to be restored	Aesthetic change	Addition of new elements	Direct destruction or damage	Setting and indirect effects	
A	1	1	1	2	1	1	7 High
B	1	1	1	1	2	3	9 High/Medium
C	1	1	1	1	3	3	10 High/Medium
D	1	2	2	2	3	1	11 High/Medium
E	2	3	2	2	3	1	13 Medium
F	2	2	2	2	1	2	11 High/Medium
G	2	2	2	2	2	3	13 Medium
H	2	3	3	3	1	1	13 Medium
I	2	2	3	2	1	1	11 High/Medium
J	2	2	3	3	3	3	16 Low
K	2	2	2	2	1	1	10 High/Medium

Landscape Criteria
1   =   High likelihood of loss/ Very poor ability to be restored/ Negative aesthetic change/ Negative impact of new elements
2   =   Medium likelihood of loss/ Poor ability to be restored/ Neutral aesthetic change/ Moderate negative impact of new elements
3   =   Low likelihood of loss/ Ability to be restored/ Positive aesthetic change/ Low negative impact of new elements

Cultural Heritage Criteria – Direct destruction/ damage to cultural heritage
1   =   Likely severe impact on above ground features
2   =   Impact on known below-ground archaeological potential
3   =   Negative known impact

Cultural Heritage Criteria – Indirect Effects
1   =   Significant negative aesthetic or contextual impact
2   =   Some reduction in quality of setting
3   =   Neutral effect on setting

<u>Score</u>

7 = High	9 = High/ Medium	11 = Medium	13 = Medium/ Low	15 = Low
8	10	12	14	16

Melton Borough Council
LCA Map 4
Sensitivity Map

Legend

Areas of Archeological Potential

Historic Setting

Standing/Designated Areas or Features

Development Search Areas

Less Sensitive Areas

5.3 LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY OF ZONES A-K AROUND MELTON MOWBRAY [Refer to Table 1 Landscape & Cultural Heritage Sensitivity Matrix and LCA Map 4 Sensitivity Map]

5.3.1 **Zones A, B, C**
These Zones have the highest quality landscape surrounding the town. This is an area of farmland, arable and pasture, mostly on the open higher ground to the north of Melton Mowbray and is a coherent well managed rural landscape with few visual detractors. Landform is ridge and valley and landcover is mostly traditional pastoral farmland with a strong pattern of small to medium scale fields enclosed by hedgerows and scattered mature trees. The ridgelines have high visibility, and the townscape/ landscape interface is well defined.

5.3.2 Zone A has a high historic value with features such as ridge and furrow and former settlement sites. The area around Sysonby Lodge is particularly sensitive having both designated historic features and an interesting setting. This area also includes some open space areas protected by the Protected Open Area designation.

5.3.3 Melton Country park is situated between Zones B and C and forms an important green wedge into the town. The park affords extensive views over the surrounding landscape. A footpath to Holwell and the Mowbray Way (which both run north south) add to the amenity value of the areas. Zone B has two areas (in the north and south of the zone) of archaeological potential.

5.3.4 If development were to take place in Zones A, B, C, particularly in the higher northern part of the zone, it would significantly increase the visibility of the town from the surrounding area. At present, built development is confined to the lower slopes leaving open countryside to the north. The landscape character sensitivity of Zones A is considered to be **High** and the Zones B and C to be **High/ Medium**.

5.3.5 **Zone D**
Zone D forms an arc of farmland around the eastern edge of Melton Mowbray between the railway line and the A607, Thorpe Road. It is bisected by Saxby Road, the B676. The area to the south of Saxby Road is on the floodplain of the River Wreake/Eye and low-lying. Across Saxby Road the ground crosses the slopes of the ridge on the crest of which lies the village of Thorpe Arnold, dropping down towards Thorpe Road, where there is a stream and playing fields. Within the arc of Zone D is the Hudson Road Industrial Estate and a Tesco store. This Zone covers two distinct landscape character areas, ridge and valley in the north, and the Eye valley in the south.

5.3.6   The northern area has small traditional pastures and a strong network of hedges and trees, high visibility from residential areas and a public footpath, a riverside area with wildlife interest and close proximity to an important historic site and the village settlement. The medieval village of Thorpe Arnold sits in a prominent position and with its well preserved earthworks is considered to have a sensitive setting.

5.3.7   The southern area includes the eastern edge of Melton Mowbray and this is very visible. It is also dominated by large-scale industrial buildings that fail to relate to the more intimate rural landscape beyond the urban fringe. New development within this industrial area might provide an opportunity for improving the urban edge, creating a stronger sense of identity, and a better relationship between townscape and landscape.

5.3.8   There would be some impact on the visibility of the town from the surrounding area from development in Zone D. The most significant impact would be on Thorpe Arnold, which is at present a distinct historic settlement and is at risk of becoming an extension of Melton Mowbray. The setting of the earthworks on the West Side of the village would also be compromised. Landscape sensitivity of Zone D is considered to be **High/ Medium**.

5.3.9   **Zone E**
The landscape character of the eastern side of the town at Zone E is open and has few features of great significance.. Here the edge of the town is well defined and the townscape/ landscape interface is abrupt. The land is productive agricultural land, which provides a buffer against the potential coalescence with the nearby settlement of Burton Lazars on the higher land in the southern part of the Zone. Overhead power lines and a public footpath cross the area. The lower lying northern part of the zone is more robust and amenable to change. The southern boundary of the area is the line of a former Roman road and has archaeological potential. The setting of the historic position of the village of Burton Lazars is sensitive.

5.3.10 If development were to take place in Zone E, particularly in the upper parts, it would moderately increase the visibility of the town from the surrounding area. The river valley makes the existing town edge more visible from the east, particularly from the hilltop villages of Thorpe Arnold and Burton Lazars. Landscape sensitivity of Zone E is considered to be **Medium**.

5.3.11 **Zones F and G**
The landscape of these two Zones is open, predominantly arable farmland with gentle ridges alternating with hollows. This area is bounded on the north side by the line of the former Roman road and extends from Dalby Road in the west to Burton Road in the east, crossing Sandy Hill. It is agricultural land, mainly in arable cultivation. In the area to the west of

Sandy Lane the ground rises towards the southwest, but the eastern part is more level. The southern edge of Melton town stops abruptly along the line of the Roman road and there is very little screening. The area is dominated by residential development and this intrudes on the rural landscape.

5.3.12 There is potential for coalescence of Melton Mowbray with the settlement of Burton Lazars at the eastern end of Zone F, which is on the higher more visible land and ridgeline. The land in-between is productive farmland with springs, ponds and watercourses. Zone F has a number of cultural heritage constraints - the setting of Burton Lazars, the setting of the medieval leper hospital (Scheduled Monument) and the Roman Road.

5.3.13 Zone G is less sensitive away from the Roman Road and the area of archaeological potential along the Dalby Road and west of Aerodrome Farm. The landscape to the west of the ridgeline at Old Guadaloupe in Zone G is of stronger character than elsewhere within the Zone, and provides a softer edge to the town. The landform contains concave dips creating natural screening opportunities. The landscape sensitivity of Zone F is considered to be **High/Medium** and Zone G is considered to be **Medium**.

5.3.14 **Zone H**
This area lies either side of Leicester Road (A607), which is a major route into the town of Melton Mowbray. The Zone is bounded on the north side by the railway line and the Roman Road (Kirby Lane) in the south. The northern part of Zone H is fairly flat and open, but in the southwest it slopes upwards towards Kirby Lane, which is lined by vegetation. The developments to the north east are partly screened by the topography and artificial bunding has been used to screen some parts of the site adjoining the Lane. Much of the area has already been developed for business and industrial estates, the remainder for arable farming.

5.3.15 The ridge and valley landscape continues in Zone H, where there are contrasting areas of housing, farmland, industry and more farmland. Industrial buildings, which are large in scale are located within the valley area and are partly screened by natural and artificial landform. In the western part of the Zone, south of Leicester Road, there is a prominent west facing farmland slope providing an effective green edge to the town..

5.3.16 There is an area of rough grassland on the north side of the Leicester Road, which is a Scheduled Monument containing earthworks and buried features from the medieval settlement of Eye Kettleby. The monument, its setting and an area of archaeological potential alongside the railway line make the north western part of Zone H sensitive. However, the overall landscape sensitivity of Zone H is considered to be **Medium**.

5.3.17 **Zone I**

This area is located between the railway line to Leicester to the south and the A606, Asfordby Road to the north and is divided by the River Wreake. The south bank of the river contains fields. A disused railway bisects the Zone and is marked by trees for much of its length. The landscape character of the river valley and floodplain has been significantly modified and altered by a variety of built development, as well as by road and railway infrastructure. This is a mixed use landscape without a clear townscape/ landscape interface. Egerton Park, nearby golf course and the open spaces that remain along the river valley provide an important green wedge to the town and a valuable local amenity for the town. The addition of well-designed new development could bring a greater unity of character and sense of identity.

5.3.18 The area contains the remains of the former village of Sysonby, particularly the church, farm and earthworks from a moated site next to the river. The listed buildings, scheduled monuments and historic features have an important setting that could be compromised by further development. The land in the western part of the zone rises fairly steeply to the northwest and the low-lying area would be fairly visible from Asfordby Hill, although this is itself a modern development. Landscape sensitivity of Zone I is considered to be **High/Medium**.

5.3.19 **Zone J**

This area occupies a block of land between the A6006 to the south, Welby Road to the east and Welby Lane to the north, with a stream running north south through the centre. This is the lowest part of the area and the ground rises on either side, more steeply towards the east. The eastern part of Area J is MoD land, containing the Remount Depot and associated pasture and training grounds. Along Welby Road in the west are some arable fields. This Zone is a gentle sloping rural valley lying between the west of Melton Mowbray and the former Asfordby Colliery site. The valley is visually contained and thick screening obscures the colliery site to the west. The Welby Road runs along the crest of a ridge with the area to its east dropping away.

5.3.20 Zone J can be seen from Asfordby Hill, to its southwest, but this is itself a modern development. The urban edge is partially fragmented and encroaches into the surrounding fields. The impact of development within Zone J on the surrounding area would be limited. Landscape sensitivity of Zone J is considered to be **Low**.

5.3.21 **Zone K**

This area is bounded by Welby Lane in the south, Welby Road to the west and Nottingham Road to the north. The east-west road, St Bartholomew's

Way, divides it in two and a stream runs through from north to south. This stream represents the lowest point with the ground sloping upwards on either side. In the southwest corner of Zone K is a Depot and the Animal Defence Centre. From midway along St Bartholomew's Way, Horseguards Way runs into new housing east of the area. The remainder of the southern part of Zone K is farmland.

5.3.22 The landscape character of this Zone is the northwards extension of the gently sloping valley in Zone J, and the southern part is also MOD land, with a strong pattern of pastoral fields enclosed by hedges. The roads are bounded by hedges creating a rural character. The urban edge is well defined and partially screened and the southern part of the Zone is less sensitive. In the northern part of the Zone lies a well defined earthwork, the remains of Sysonby Grange which is a medieval monastic farm. The earthwork is a Scheduled Monument and together with its setting and the surrounding area of archaeological potential it makes the northern area sensitive in cultural heritage terms. The Landscape sensitivity of Zone K is considered to be **High/ Medium**.

5.4   RECOMMENDATION

5.4.1   The general recommendation based on an evaluation of landscape sensitivity of Zones A-K around Melton Mowbray is that,

- Zones A, B, C, D, F, I and K are considered to be sensitive landscapes that would not be suitable for most new development. Any proposed development would need to very sensitively designed and demonstrate a high regard for the local landscape and historical character of the area.

- Zones E, G & H are considered to have landscapes that are moderately sensitive to development but possess areas that could accommodate appropriately designed development.

- Zone J is considered to have a landscape character that has low sensitivity and could accommodate appropriately designed development.

5.4.2   The new Landscape Character Areas should replace the local landscape designation '*Areas of Particularly Attractive Countryside'* as suggested in Government Planning Policy Statement 7.

MELTON BOROUGH CHARACTER ASSESSMENT
HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER
FOR
MELTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

BY
OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY

MARCH 2006

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MELTON BOROUGH CHARACTER ASSESSMENT
HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER

FOR

MELTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

1   Introduction

1.1   Melton Borough Council have commissioned Oxford Archaeology (OA) in partnership with ADAS to carry out a Character Assessment Study for the Borough. OA's role has been to carry out a Historic Urban Character Assessment for Melton Mowbray and a less detailed Historic Character Assessment of 11 areas around the town which might be considered for major development.

1.2   The limits of the town of Melton Mowbray used for the urban assessment correspond within those in the Melton Local Plan (Melton District Council 1999) and shown on the Proposals Map. The areas for possible future development were identified by the Council.

1.3   The project team put together by ADAS also included Environmental Systems who are experts in preparation of digital mapping using GIS. All aspects of the project were incorporated into a single package by them.

2   Methodology and Sources

2.1   Data Collection and processing

2.1.1   Digital map data was supplied by Melton District Council. In addition to the modern Ordnance Survey basemap, this included a recent aerial photograph, Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments (SAM), Registered Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas and Areas of Archaeological Interest. The Melton District Council formed the basis for the project GIS, set up by Environmental Systems and shared with Oxford Archaeology. Descriptions of Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments were obtained from the 'Images of England' website maintained by English Heritage and the 'Magic' website maintained by DEFRA.

2.1.2   The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), maintained by Leicestershire County Council, was consulted and supplied data on archaeological sites and historic buildings. The digital data added to the GIS. Melton District Council provided a copy of the Local plan. Information was also obtained from historic maps and documentary sources held at the Leicestershire Record Office and the Sackler and Bodleian Libraries in Oxford. Relevant websites were accessed.

2.2   Baseline Study

2.2.1   The data described in Section 2.1 was used to understand the historical development of Melton Mowbray and the known extent of activity in the area before the foundation of the town. Maps were prepared showing the extent of the town as different periods and areas where significant archaeological potential can be identified. These were digitised and added to the GIS.

2.2.2   More detailed pictures of the Historic Character Types, a generic series of historic components of the town, present in Melton Mowbray, were prepared for the medieval and post-medieval periods. Again these were mapped and added to the GIS.

2.2.3   Surviving features and the pattern of the built environment were identified.

2.3   Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCA)

2.3.1   Using the baseline study, a series of likely Historic Urban Character Areas divide the town into areas which have a distinct character. HUCAs describe the town as it exists in the present day, but this may derive from a number of historic features. They include

- townscape rarity

- built environment

- time depth

- completeness

- forces for change

- amenity value

- association.

2.3.2 A site visit was carried out to check the provisional character areas for accuracy. Detailed observations were made to assist in preparation of the descriptions for each character area and a photographic record made.

2.3.3 The final HUCAs were mapped and added to the GIS as a layer.

2.4 Areas of Search A-K

2.4.1 The Areas of Search which are being considered for possible future development, A-K, were included within the Baseline Study. Site visits were carried out to assess the historic character of these areas and their relationships with the existing town and the surrounding area.

2.5 Previous Work and the Quality of the Evidence

2.5.1 There has been only a limited amount of archaeological investigation carried out within Melton Mowbray and its environs. Some surface scatter collections and watching brief observations on developments have been carried out, but only a few full scale excavations carried out. The most significant work was carried out near Eye Kettleby Mill where an early medieval settlement was found and east of the former Framland Hospital where evidence for Roman occupation was uncovered. Few archaeological summaries or overviews have been produced for Leicestershire, where Leicester itself has dominated recent work. The existing level of archaeological knowledge about Melton Mowbray does increase the level of uncertainty in assessing archaeological potential.

2.5.2 The range of published documentary sources is also limited. Unfortunately, the Victoria County History series for Leicestershire does not include the town. The local histories which have been produced are all rather short and do not provide a details analysis of

the development of the town. A study of primary source material falls outside the scope of this project.

2.5.3 A reasonable selection of historic maps from 1787 onwards was available for study. These allowed the town before construction of the canal and during the brief period when the canal was operating to be compared with the more recent layouts.

3   Setting

3.1   Administrative Areas

3.1.1   Melton Mowbray is the centre of the Melton District of Leicestershire. The urban extent of Melton Mowbray falls within the boundary of the parish, which also includes the Areas of Search A-K identified for possible expansion of the town with the exception of a small part of Area E. This extends into the parish of Burton Lazars.

3.2   Geology and Topography

3.2.1   The town of Melton Mowbray developed around a crossing point on the River Wreake, which runs east-west across the centre of the area. To the east of the town it is called the River Eye The town is partly situated on the alluvial floodplain, but predominantly on higher ground where there are substantial deposits of glacial till, mainly boulder clay (Leicestershire CC 2001). The underlying geology is the clay, mudstone and limestone of the Lower Lias.

3.2.2   The topography of the town and its surroundings is linked to its watercourses. Along the Wreake/Eye Valley the land lies at around 70 m OD. The ground rises to the south reaching a maximum height of *c* 105 m OD although it tends to drop away towards the south-west. There is also a rise in land levels to the north of the river, but the formation of north-south ridges is more pronounced. In the east there is a pronounced valley where the Scalford Brook flows southwards to join the River Wreake. Again the land reaches *c* 105 m OD as a maximum within the town itself, but the rise continues further north. Beyond the town on the west side is another valley associated with a north-south stream.

3.3   Communication Routes

3.3.1   The River Wreake was an important factor in the original formation and development of the town, although it was not a major freight route until 1797 when the Melton Navigation was opened. This consisted mainly of canalisation of the River Wreake with a new stretch of canal within the town leading to the Burton Street Basin. Subsequently the Oakham Navigation was constructed to extent the route. However, the impact of the railway led to the closure and extensive infilling of these canals in the mid 19th century.

3.3.2   By the end of the 19th century Melton Mowbray was served by two Midland Railway lines. The line from Syston to Oakham still operates with a branch to Nottingham. The Market Harborough to Bottesford line has closed.

3.3.3 Melton Mowbray has a good network of roads, which has existed probably from the medieval period. It lies on the junction of the A606 from Nottingham to Oakham and the A607 from Leicester to Grantham. Unfortunately, despite some late 20th century road improvements all the main routes still pass through the town centre.

3.4 Designated Areas of Historic Significance

3.4.1 There are three Scheduled Monuments within or on the edge of Melton Mowbray. Two consist of earthwork remains, a monastic grange at Sysonby or Welby Grange and a deserted settlement near Eye Kettleby Mill. There is also The Mount, thought at one time to be a motte, but more probably a pillow mound.

3.4.2 There is a total of 104 Listed Buildings within the town centre and a further four situated within Areas A-K. These range from the medieval churches to the 20th century bandstand, but the majority are of 18th and 19th-century date.

3.4.3 There is single Conservation Area in Melton Mowbray, which covers the historic core in the centre and has been extended to include Egerton Park. Within the town the current Melton District Local Plan designates a large number of Protected Open Areas.

3.4.4 All of these designated features are shown on Figures H1 a, b.

4   Development of Melton Mowbray

4.1   Brief History

4.1.1   There is no evidence to suggest that the origins of Melton Mowbray as a permanent settlement pre-date the early medieval period. The Wreake Valley was extensively occupied by Danish settlers as the prolifity of 'by' place names, such as Sysonby, shows (httm://wwwMelton.co.uk/history.htm). A number of pagan Saxon cemeteries have been identified around Melton Mowbray also.

4.1.2   The manor and town of Melton Mowbray was well established before the Norman conquest with its market first recorded in 1077, but was probably granted by Edward the Confessor. The Domesday Survey of 1086 listed for Medeltune two mills, two priests and the market, the only one listed for Leicestershire. The name probably refers to Melton's position relative to the surrounding hamlets of Burton Lazars, Eye Kettleby, Sysonby, Freeby and Welby (Hunt 1979,40). The town very soon became part of the estate of the Mowbray family and the name changed to reflect this. Their estates were divided in 1475 with Melton Mowbray passing to the Berkeleys (Hunt 1979, 7).

4.1.3   During the medieval period Melton Mowbray thrived as a market town and the market charter was issued in 1324. There were four market crosses, marking the areas for sale of sheep, corn, butter and herbs. There was a tradition of a castle, but this was more probably a fortified manor house. The prosperity of the town was reflected in the splendour of St Mary's church and the growth of the Guilds whose activities included the foundation of a school in 1347.

4.1.4   The Hospital of St John of Jerusalem stood in Spital End (now Nottingham Street) from the 12th century, although it probably not a hospital, but a manor. The Templars had also held land in the town, which after their suppression in 1322 passed to the other order (Hunt 1979, 64-6).

4.1.5   At Eye Kettleby the settlement appears from documentary evidence to have virtually disappeared by the end of the medieval period, probably as a result on inclosure and creation of a park (EH Scheduled Monument description).

4.1.6   At the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s the Guilds, which were strongly linked to the church, lost their endowments. Thomas Cromwell seized the Manor of Lewes, now known as Anne of Cleves House, which was probably a chantry house. This property gained its new name when it formed part of the queen's divorce settlement from Henry VIII (Hunt 1979, 74). The monastic grange north-east of the

town, known as Sysonby Grange or Welby Grange, would also have been seized.

4.1.7 Local Government in Melton Mowbray was maintained by the establishment of the Town Estate. Church plate was sold and the proceeds used to by land to support the schools, of which there were two by the end of the 16th century, and provide other benefits to the town such as road and bridge upkeep. This system operated through Trustees continued until 1879.

4.1.8 The manor of Melton Mowbray had passed to the Hudson family by the 17th century and the Maison Dieu almshouses were built for Robert Hudson in 1640. During the Civil War Melton Mowbray was a roundhead garrison which was attacked on two occasions by Royalist forces, in 1643 and more seriously in 1645 when around 300 men died in battle. The local landowners were divided, but the Hudsons seem to have been royalist as he was knighted by Charles II.

4.1.9 During the post-medieval period much of the farmland in northern Leicestershire was subject to inclosure and converted from open arable fields with associated grazing to all pasture, originally within large open areas of grass. The open nature of the country was attractive for hunting. Melton Mowbray was situated at the confluence of three major hunts, the Quorn, Belvoir and Cottesmore, and was therefore a convenient location for the wealthy participants to establish their hunting boxes and lodgings. Many large houses were built in and around the town inns thrived. Local businesses supplying this market included boot making. Hunting continued in importance into the 20th century, attracting even royalty to the town.

4.1.10 The production of Stilton cheese had also been established in the early 18th century and three cheese fairs a year were added to the list of special markets and fairs held in the town. At the end of the century attempts were made to introduce wool spinning.

4.1.11 A further boost to the prosperity of Melton Mowbray came when the Melton Navigation opened in 1797. This was mainly created by canalisation of the River Wreake, but a section of new canal was built in the town leading to the Burton End Wharf. The Oakham Navigation opened in 1803 extending the line east from the town. Coal from Derbyshire was the principal cargo.

4.1.12 Turnpike roads were established at the end of the 18th century with four toll gates in Melton Mowbray and first post coach to Leicester ran in 1792. Access to the towns for passengers and goods was further improved when the Midland Railway from Syston to Oakham was completed in 1847. Later the link to Nottingham and a line from Market Harborough to Bottesford opened, although the latter was closed in the

20th century. The railways led to closure of the canals, the Oakham Navigation in 1847 and the Melton Navigation in 1877, after which the basin and part of the canal were filled in.

4.1.13 During the 19th century there were improvements to infrastructure. The New Union workhouse, now St Mary's Hospital, opened in 1832 and the sewage works in 1861. Gas lights came in 1853 and mains water in 1885. New industries emerged. Evans Pork Pie Factory opened in 1860 and there were breweries and an iron foundry by the end of the century. Beck Mill had become a brick works by 1884.

4.1.14 The Town Estate changed its responsibilities in the 19th century. It had been issued a new charter in 1775 after it had lost land under the 1760 Enclosure Act, but had opened further schools and bought the remains of the manor land from the Lamb family in 1850. However, many of its roles passed to the new Local Government organisations and the Town Estate now concentrates on its parks and recreation grounds and on maintaining the markets.

4.1.15 During the 1930s Melton Mowbray received a boost to its prosperity when Pedigree Petfoods was established. Around the same time the Royal Army Veterinary Corps moved to the town and the Defence Animal Centre is a prominent feature on the west side of the town. World War I made little impact on the town itself, but during World War II there were a number of airfields operating in the area. The Transport Command airfield on the south side of the town opened in 1943. After the war a substantial number of Polish servicemen settled in Melton Mowbray and there is still a Polish church on Sandy Hill.

4.1.16 Since the middle of the 20th century Melton Mowbray has grown, but its character has remained principally that of a market town. Some new industries and businesses have come, such as PERA, the Production Engineering Research Association) in 1964.

4.2   Pre-urban activity

4.2.1   Melton Mowbray and its surroundings lie in an area where there have been are substantive deposits of glacial till. It is not therefore surprising that no archaeological evidence for human activity in the area pre-dating the end of the last ice age. The evidence from the Mesolithic period (10,000 - 4,000 BC) consists of three sites where flint artefacts have been found, all to the west of the town, south of and close to the River Wreake. River valleys were favoured by the hunter-gatherers of this period, who exploited the water resources and the forested areas on higher ground.

4.2.2   It is thought that there was extensive woodland clearance in Leicestershire during the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods (4,000-800

BC), when more settled agricultural communities began to be formed (Bowman & Liddle 2004, 36). Most of the evidence for activity during the Neolithic period consists of flint artefacts although some pits were found just south of Egerton Park. Finds dating from the Bronze Age have also been made, but a triple bank and ditch earthwork surveyed in Melton Country Park in 1989 was assigned to this period also. On the site of the former police station, near the Mount School ditches and a possible round house suggests occupation, but this could not be dated reliably to the Bronze Age and may have originated in the Iron Age.

4.2.3 Other evidence for Iron Age settlement was found during excavation at the end of Wymondham Way, next to the Country Park. Another possible occupation site was identified in the south-west corner of the town, near Rydal Manor and a collection of sherds from St Mary's Way may also represent occupation. Clay soils were not thought to have been particularly attractive for settlement until the later Iron Age when environmental evidence suggests an expansion of mainly pastoral farming at a time of population growth (Bowman & Liddle 2004, 46).

4.2.4 Leicester was an important town in the Roman period and a number of small towns have been identified elsewhere in the county. The nearest town to Melton Mowbray is thought to have been Frisby on the road from Thistleton to Leicester (Bowman & Liddle 2004, 67). This road runs south of the Wreake Valley near Melton Mowbray and its line, modern Kirby Lane, forms the southern boundary of the present town. There is evidence for a number of small settlements or farmsteads around the town and finds dating from this period have been found across the area. The pattern of known sites across the county suggests that there was a well developed agricultural landscape between the towns.

4.2.5 A coffin and pottery found at Sysonby suggest occupation and a possible cemetery, and another possible site was identified close to the railway west of Eye Kettleby. On the south side of the line of the Roman Road, west of Sandy Lane, the density of finds from the surface also suggests occupation, as does the quantity of pottery recovered from the Remount Depot. An enclosed settlement and two burials were excavated adjacent to the Country Park. Within the town centre Roman period ditches and gullies were found on King Street.

4.2.6 It is not possible to show continuity of occupation from the Roman to early medieval periods in Melton Mowbray. However, excavations west of Eye Kettleby, close to the possible Roman site discussed above, found an extensive settlement from the Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon period (LAHST 2000, 250). The area near the Roman Road also produced evidence for possible cemeteries. A number of pagan cemeteries have been identified at Melton Mowbray, one near Beck Mill in the clay workings (Meaney 1964, 47) and another near Sysonby

Lodge Farm, on the Nottingham Road. A single burial has been found at Sysonby.

4.2.7 Recently a sunken featured building was recorded at the St Mary's Hospital site. It is likely that there were other buildings, but that development has destroyed them. Ditches dating from the early medieval period were found near The Mount School. Within the town some finds such as loomweights have been recovered and one area of occupation identified. At 14-24 Sherrard Street postholes and pits were found, dated to the Middle to late Saxon period from pottery.

4.3   Growth of Town

4.3.1 It would appear from the documentary record and the available sequence of historic maps that Melton Mowbray did not expand significantly before the second half of the 19th century. Figure H2 plots the extent of the built-up area of the town for a series of dates in order to illustrate the pattern of development as well as its extent. These dates correspond to those of the appropriate map on which the extents are based.

4.3.2 It is clear from documentary evidence that Melton Mowbray was established as a market town by the end of the early medieval period. These records, limited archaeological evidence and later historical maps enable the probable layout and extent of the medieval town to be described. It seems likely that it was not very different from the extent shown on the earliest available map, the Burton Estate map of 1787. There was a bridge over the River Wreake at the south end of Burton Street, which led northwards into the Market Place. The existing road network of Leicester Street, High Street, King Street, Sherrard Street and Nottingham Street leading from it was probably in place early in the medieval period. From the pattern of building plots which appears on the 1st Edition Ordnance survey maps of 1884 and the surviving layout of the town centre, the principal streets appear to have been laid out as tenements running back from narrow street frontages. Few medieval buildings have survived.

4.3.3 The parish church is on Burton Street. The existing building is mainly late 13th century, but it is likely that there was a church on that site from an early date. The locations of some other important features of the town have also been identified. There were four market crosses - the Buttercross in Market Place itself, the Sheep Cross in Spital end as Nottingham Street was then called, the Corn Cross at the junction of High street and Nottingham Street and Sage Cross at the end of Sherrard Street. The existing crosses are not original although that in the Market Place reuses an old base.

4.3.4   The site of the manor house is uncertain, but it was probably at 5 King Street. There was reportedly a castle, and a stone wall on the south side of King Street was known as 'Castle Wall'. The Mound, a Scheduled Monument, was considered to be a medieval motte or castle mound, but is now thought to be a post-medieval mill mound. Nottingham Street was the location of the hospital of St John of Jerusalem and the former street name, Spital End or Spitalgate, recognises the hospital. The only surviving feature is a stone gateway which has been moved to the wall of Egerton Lodge on Wilton Road.

4.3.5   Beck Mill on the Scalford Brook and the corn mill close to the junction of the brook and the River Eye are believed to have been on the site of two mills listed for Melton Mowbray in Domesday Book. Both are now parts of industrial complexes.

4.3.6   Little remains of the medieval settlements at Eye Kettleby mill and Sysonby to the west of Melton Mowbray. At the former all that survives are earthworks, now a Scheduled Monument. At Sysonby the church still stands and there are earthworks from a moated site. Another Scheduled Monument north-west of the town contains the earthwork remains of Welby Grange, a monastic grange.

4.3.7   Large areas of ridge and furrow survive around Melton Mowbray demonstrating the presence of open arable fields during the medieval and earlier post-medieval periods (John Samuels Archaeological Consultants 2000, Appendix 2). The road network connecting the surrounding towns and villages shown on the early 19th century OS map was probably already laid out during the medieval period.

4.3.8   The ridge and furrow has survived because much of the countryside was inclosed during the 17th and 18th centuries and turned over to grazing (Williamson 2002, 34-5). The pattern of inclosed fields and hedgerows can be seen on all editions of the Ordnance Survey mapping.

4.3.9   Melton Mowbray continued to thrive as a market town in the post-medieval period, but the town does not appear to have undergone much expansion before the late 18th century. The buildings along the principal streets were mostly rebuilt or refronted. Construction of the Melton Navigation canal through what is now Egerton Park and Prior close with the wharf at Burton Bridge appears to have had a limited impact, and indeed the wharf had closed by 1845 when the Tithe Map was produced. However, the establishment of hunting lodges and the need to service their wealthy occupants lead to more development around the edges of the town. Most growth was on the east side up to the line of Scalford Brook.

4.3.10 By 1884, as shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of that date the canal had closed and mostly been filled and the railway had reached the town. Development had begun to take place south of the river, mainly consisting of large houses in extensive grounds along the existing roads. Most of the area between the northern railway line, now closed, the river and Scalford Brook had been developed. Industry had reached the town with brick works at Beck Mill and to its north-east on the other side of the Mill Race. There were also two breweries, on Snow Hill and east of Thorpe End where there was also the Union Workhouse, Gas Works and a tannery. West of the town were the Sewage Works and a pumping station.

4.3.11 Expansion slowed again at the end of the 19th century. The cemetery opened on Thorpe Road before 1904 and a few houses were built in the south. Some industry had come to the town, with Wyvern Mills marked near the former canal basin on the 1904 2nd Edition OS map. In the early 20th century this picture of limited development continued. Some housing was built on Nottingham Road and Welby Road and on the southern edge of the town. Within the town itself the Doctor's Lane area had been developed and brick working had been replaced by a saw mill, boot factory and allotments. Wyndham Lodge became the Memorial Hospital and Framland Isolation Hospital was built on Scalford Road, outside the town.

4.3.12 After World War II the town began to grow again. The northern railway line closed and was dismantled, helping to generate expansion in that direction. Alterations within the town centre provided better public facilities and made space for a range of businesses. The most noticeably of these was the Pedigree Petfoods factory occupying a large area north of the railway. By the 1970s the Ordnance Survey mapping shows that the southern edge of the town had reached its present limit at Kirby Road and the north-west estates were largely in place.

4.3.13 A major change took place in the centre of Melton Mowbray following the road improvements in 1984 when Norman Street was widened and extended to create Norman Way. This acts as a relief road. Its construction cut Park Road, radically altered the street layout to the north of Thorpe End with large numbers of houses demolished both there and to the north of Norman Street. Redevelopment has taken place providing a mixture of commercial and residential premises. The reduction in traffic has enabled parts of the town centre to be pedestrianised.

4.4 Areas of Archaeological Potential

4.4.1 As discussed in Section 2, the existing level of understanding of the archaeology of Melton Mowbray and its surroundings is limited by the

low level of past archaeological investigation. This reduces the reliability of assessments of archaeological potential since lack of information does not necessarily correspond with absence of below-ground archaeology. However, it has been possible to identify a number of areas where there is clear potential for the survival of archaeological evidence.

Area 1

4.4.2 The historic core of Melton Mowbray has a high potential for below-ground survival of evidence of the medieval town and its early medieval precursor. The limited archaeological investigations that have taken place have also found evidence for activity during the Iron Age and Roman periods.

4.4.3 Experience from market towns in other parts of the country suggests that below-ground archaeology does survive below post-medieval redevelopment.

Area 2

4.4.4 In addition to the presence of the Scheduled Monument, the Mount, this area has produced evidence for occupation during the Bronze Age or Iron Age period.

Area 3

4.4.5 During the 19th century an Anglo-Saxon cemetery was identified within clay pits and a substantial number of burials uncovered. Recent developments have not found any further evidence, but there is the potential for further burials to have survived.

Area 4

4.4.6 An early medieval sunken featured building was uncovered at the St Mary's Hospital site. This building is unlikely to have existed in isolation and, although development may have destroyed much of the evidence, there is some potential for further below-ground archaeology to survive.

Area 5

4.4.7 The area to the east of the former Framland Hospital, now mainly under housing, but extending into the Melton Country Park, has produced archaeological evidence dating from the Bronze Age and Roman periods.

Area 6

4.4.8   A pagan early medieval cemetery was identified in this area.

Area 7

4.4.9   The earthwork remains of a monastic grange survive within this area and have been designated a Scheduled Monument. It is possible that below-ground archaeology will survive beyond the scheduled area.

Area 8

4.4.10 Pottery recovered in this area suggests the possible location of a Roman occupation site.

Area 9

4.4.11 In addition to the earthwork remains of the shrunken settlement at Sysonby, an early medieval burial and evidence for a possible Roman period occupation site and cemetery has been found.

Area 10

4.4.12 Around the railway north of Leicester Road an extensive Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon settlement site has been excavated. Evidence from surface scatter suggests there may also have been occupation there during the Roman period.

Area 11

4.4.13 Around Eye Kettleby Mill are the earthwork remains of a deserted medieval settlement, which is now a Scheduled Monument.

Area 12

4.4.14 On the north side of the line of the Roman Road, modern Kirby Lane, evidence for a possible Iron Age occupation site has been found.

Area 13

4.4.15 To the south of the line of the former Roman Road, modern Kirby Lane, there is evidence to suggest occupation during the Roman period. There is also evidence to suggest the presence of two early medieval cemeteries.

Area 14

4.4.16 Modern Kirby Lane follows the line of the former Roman Road from Thisleton to Leicester. There is potential for below-ground evidence of

the road make-up to survive and also for roadside activity, some of which has been found in Area 13.

5   Historic Urban Character

5.1   Overall Settlement Character

5.1.1   The topography of the countryside around Melton Mowbray consists of rolling hills, which from a distance mask views of the town. Melton Mowbray originally lay on the north bank of the River Wreake, but it has now expanded on both sides of the river crossing, up the valleysides more than along the valley itself. It retains the character of a market town, which it has been since its establishment.

5.1.2   The floodplain areas contain a mixture of green areas and the town's main industrial estates. The historic core of the town remains a compact area of shops, small businesses and food and drink outlets, centred on the still active Market Place. So far there has not been much out-of-town retail development (a Tesco store to the east of the town) and the centre is thriving.

5.1.3   Away from the historic core there is little to distinguish Melton Mowbray from other country towns of its size. The central part of the town contains much late 20th century redevelopment and there are large areas of housing estates to the north and south. These are generally of fairly open character, benefiting from their position on the hillsides. Melton Mowbray is fortunate in the amount of green space, which can be found within the estates, along the river and in the Country Park to the north.

5.1.4   The presence of large areas of open green space are important to the town for recreation, but they also play a part in improving the atmosphere of the town, acting as a green lung to help reduce urban pollution levels. With the distribution of protected open spaces, particularly along the river corridor, along Nottingham Road and in the Country Park to the north, there is in effect a 'green chain'.

5.1.5   Although large areas of modern housing can be featureless, the presence and varied form of the open spaces helps to break up the estates and to give them a more open feel. The green areas along Nottingham Road, the lines of old streams, playing fields and allotments all contribute. To the south and west, the green corridor along the river provides a buffer between the historic core of the town and more recent development and enhances pedestrian access to the town from that direction. The surrounding parks have helped maintain the feel of a small market town.

5.1.6   There are a number of landmark buildings in Melton Mowbray outside the town centre itself, where the setting is enhanced by the extensive

grounds surrounding them. These include the War Memorial Hospital, Warwick Lodge, Egerton Lodge and PERA.

5.1.7 Within the town centre the most prominent building is the church. Its eastern side stands out prominently on Burton Street, but the main entrance to the west has a different aspect. The doorway opens onto the secluded Church Close and the boundaries between that, the churchyard and Play Close to the south are not rigid. Play Close has been a public open space from an early date and together with the extensive riverside meadows has made an important contribution to the survival of the historic town centre, restricting development.

5.2 Built environment

5.2.1 There are few buildings in Melton Mowbray to which a medieval date can confidently be assigned. The most impressive is St Mary's Church, dating mostly from the period 1280-1330 and widely regarded as the finest church in Leicestershire. There are remains of an earlier Norman structure and some 15th century alterations. The small 13th-century church at Sysonby is almost all that remains of the former settlement. The two market crosses are not medieval originals.

5.2.2 Next to St Mary's Church is Anne of Cleves House, a 14th-century structure, now an inn, which formed part of the Tudor queen's divorce settlement. Other buildings which contain probable medieval elements are 5 King Street, 23-31 Nottingham Street and 34-35 Market Place, the last having a cruck frame. In the wall to Egerton Lodge on Leicester Road is a 15th century archway, which was moved from Nottingham Street in 1890. This is thought to be the only remains of the manor of the Order of St John of Jerusalem.

5.2.3 The number of 17th-century buildings is also small and the building adjoining 13 Church Street may in fact be earlier in date. They are dotted across the principal streets in the historic core at 9 Burton Street, 19-21 High Street, 27 Leicester Street and 19 and 26 Market Place. Two very distinctive examples are Ye Olde Pie Shop in Nottingham Street and Maison Dieu, a block of almshouses in Burton Street opposite the church. Riverside Farm at Sysonby also dates to this period.

5.2.4 As the importance of Melton Mowbray as a centre for fox-hunting and for coal distribution increased in the 18th and 19th century the amount of rebuilding or refronting increased and there are many fine surviving buildings from this period. The most important 18th-century building is the George Hotel in High Street, which was a coaching inn. Lady Wilton's Bridge, formerly Eye Kettleby Bridge, over the River Wreake at the bottom of Wilton Street is probably of this date and at its north-east corner is a former horse wash.

5.2.5　The 19th century was the prime period for construction of hunting lodges in and around the town. Many have been demolished or converted for other purposes, such as Wyndham Lodge, which was built in 1869 and became the War Memorial Hospital in 1922. Egerton Lodge was built for Lord Wilton in 1829, but is now a care home. Burton Street contains the former Manor House, Cardigan House and Coventry House. Nottingham Road contains Staveley Lodge, not Listed and now part of PERA Innovation Park and, further out of town, Sysonby Lodge.

5.2.6　A number of public buildings were built during the 19th century. There id the United Reform Church in Church Street, Baptist Chapel in Nottingham Street from 1872 and St John's Roman Catholic Church at Thorpe End built in 1840. The Union Workhouse on Thorpe Road, now St Mary's Hospital, opened in around the same time as the Thorpe End Brewery, both came some original sections. These are not Listed. Along Norman Way are St Mary's C of E Infants School from 1839 and the Magistrate's Court from 1872.

5.2.7　Structures from this period are the Leicester Road Bridge over the former canal, dating from about 1822 and the 1890s' bandstand in New Park.

5.2.8　The only Listed Building from the 20th century is the gateway to New Park, erected in 1907-9. There are other buildings of some architectural interest such as Kings Road Garage and the former school in the same street and the cemetery chapel. Thorpe End contains Melton Museum, which originated as the Carnegie Library in 1906. The Regal Cinema is an Art Deco structure from 1934.

5.2.9　Although there was extensive rebuilding in Melton Mowbray during the later 20th century there are no outstanding features. The most striking example is the tower block at PERA Innovation Park.

5.3　Architecture and building materials

5.3.1　No distinct regional style of architecture or building material can be identified for the Melton Mowbray area, but the vast majority of buildings are of red brick with slate roofs. Tile is used on occasions, for example in the 19th century St John's Roman Catholic Church. There are a small number of buildings in white brick, including the italianate Magistrates Court on Norman Way and 2 High Street.

5.3.2　A few buildings contain at least some evidence of timber-framing, with a 14th century crown post roof at 5 King Street and a cruck at 34-35a Market Place. It is possible that more examples of this earlier building technique could be identified in the rear of some of the structures along the principal streets.

5.3.3   The number of stone buildings and structures is low. Both the medieval churches are stone as are Anne of Cleves House and Maison Dieu. More recent stone structures include Egerton Lodge, Colles Hall, Lady Wilton's Bridge and the new market crosses. 9 Burton Street has a rubble rear wall.

5.3.4   One unusual building for Melton Mowbray is that adjoining 13 Church Street. It was built in the 19th century for stocking frame knitters. This trade was carried out across the region, but never became important here.

5.3.5   The Leicester Road Bridge over the former canal is early 19th century cast iron. Wrought iron was used for the New Park gates and for some ornamental work, such as the balconies on houses in Park Road.

5.3.6   These houses, like many in the town, have stucco facades. Stucco, render and paint are used extensively for decoration on buildings of all dates. 5 King Street is rendered while 11-15 Nottingham Street is painted. Blue brick is used as ornament on the Baptist chapel in the same street while St Mary's Hospital uses both blue and yellow bricks. Chequered brickwork can be seen at 64 Sherrard Street and 27 Market Place. Stone decoration is also common, as decorative bands at Cardigan House for example. Quoins are seen on 10 High Street and other buildings use stone for string courses, mullions and door pillars. The Three Tuns in King Street and the Coach House at 19-21 High Street have ornamental wooden bargeboards.

5.3.7   Although no one architectural style dominates in Melton Mowbray and the older buildings are of varying heights, the mixture along the principal streets within the town centre is predominantly 18th and 19th century and there is a coherent atmosphere. The housing estates and areas of surviving 19th century developments also have a pleasing coherence, but where there has been piecemeal later 20th century redevelopment this is lacking.

5.4   Landmarks and views

5.4.1   The view into and out of the historic core of the town is limited apart from Burton Street on the south side. Although the town centre is above the river valley the density of buildings along the fairly narrow street is high. Burton Street provides good views of the town on the opposite side of the river from where the church in particular is clearly visible. Unfortunately the river valley at that point contains factories and the railway station, but there are plenty of trees providing screening.

5.4.2   The views from the housing estates and along the Leicester Road and the roads into the town on the east side provide good panoramic views of both the town and its surrounding countryside.

5.4.3 Melton Mowbray's monuments are small scale. The market crosses are surrounded by buildings and other commemorative plaques are situated within parks. From a distance the most prominent landmark is the tower building of the PERA Innovation Park. Fortunately this is situated far enough away from the town centre to stop its presence spoiling the view. St Mary's Church is also quite prominent from the south when its imposing scale is clearer than the impression received in its proximity. The other noticeable feature from a distance is the Pedigree Petfoods factory, but this is low-lying.

5.5 Historic Character Types

5.5.1 The Historic Character Types which have been identified within the NHCS area are listed in Appendix 2.

5.5.2 These HCTs have been identified and plotted for the medieval period and the later post-medieval period. The map of the medieval town is conjectural, based on the limited archaeological evidence available and later historic mapping.

5.6 Historic Urban Character Areas

Basis for definition

5.6.1 This stage of the project entailed the division of each town into a series of zones, each of which was illustrated on the GIS mapping. The definitions of the character areas considers factors such as:
6   Built environment
7   Townscape rarity
8   Time depth
9   Completeness
10   Forces for change
11   Amenity value
12   Association.

12.1.1 Physical and historic characteristics which inform the definitions include:
13   Their predominant architectural style
14   Their historical development
15   Their archaeological potential
16   The quality and character of their fabric
17   Their topography, layout and street patterns
18   The nature of their designed spaces.

18.1.1 In order to arrive at these zones and their definitions information from a desk-based assessment of historic maps, aerial photographs and other sources was used. The mapping of the development of the town and the work done to identify Historic Character Types for key dates contributed to these definitions. A drive/walk through survey of the town

was carried out, after a preliminary set of Historic Urban Character Areas had been proposed. This survey looked at physical characteristics and urban character, providing a check on the level of conservation of historic features. It enabled the character areas to be refined to provide an accurate picture of the modern town and its development.

18.1.2 The survey allowed a more detailed assessment of the built environment to be made, enabling architectural features and building materials to be assessed. Groups of buildings, and individual buildings of importance to the character of the town were noted.

18.2 Historic Urban Character Areas

1   Historic Core

18.2.1 Until the Melton Navigation was constructed in the late 18th century the town expanded little beyond its medieval core, the eastern medieval boundary of Melton Mowbray being marked by a modern stone at the west end of Leicester Street This area extended northwards from the bridge over the river up Burton Street to the Market Place, situated on higher and drier ground, with streets radiating from it. The area remains the commercial centre of the town, the streets lined with shops, small businesses, restaurants and public houses. A market still operates in the centre on Wednesdays and Saturdays and the open area provides a focus for community activities. It is a compact geographical area distinguished by the proportion of independent retailers which continue to operate despite the presence of more familiar chains. The businesses such as supermarkets and Argos are located on the fringes, close to car parking. Generally out-of-town shopping, which can be very detrimental to the health of the town centre, has been avoided.

18.2.2 The architecture is predominantly a mixture of 18th and 19th century buildings, with some older premises surviving among them. There is a mixture of styles and no consistent roof height although most buildings have three storeys, but the combination provides a coherent feeling of a town which has developed gradually over time. The frontages generally respect the pattern of narrow plots running back from the street, which was probably established during the medieval period. In the northern part of Burton Street the church and Anne of Cleves House are a significant survivals from the medieval period, which together with the 17th century Maison Dieu almshouses form a historic grouping. The proportion of more recent rebuilding increases towards the edges of this core area and tucked behind the Nottingham Street frontage is a modern shopping mall, the Bell Centre.

18.2.3 Although Nottingham Street and High Street have been pedestrianised, Burton End Bridge provides one of the limited routes across the River Wreake within Melton Mowbray itself. Traffic routes have therefore been maintained along Burton Street and along an east-west corridor consisting of Sherrard Street and Leicester Street. The latter is one-way.

18.2.4 Roads within this historic core are relatively narrow and the buildings are frequently three storeys high. This reduces views both into and out of the area, apart from in the northern part of Nottingham Street and the southern part of Park Road, which has been opened out by the late 20th century changes associated with Norman Way, and in Burton Street. This offers views across the river valley and can be seen from the corresponding slopes on the other bank. On the south side of Leicester Street narrow lanes lead to enclosed areas of older buildings, particularly in Church Terrace. There are cottages on its west side and the main door of the church lies on the east. The small central green contains the 18th century Gregory and Hugh tomb, outside the wall of the main churchyard.

18.2.5 The historic core of Melton Mowbray has survived as a thriving town centre and has a largely pedestrianised open space which provides a location not just for the regular markets, but for open air performances. However, the need for access to the river crossing via Burton Street does not allow for all traffic to be excluded to allow the space to be developed along piazza lines. The town centre is vulnerable to development pressures for a number of reasons. The pattern of existing buildings would not encourage some of the better-known national retailers to move into the town centre without major alteration and often the viability of a town appears to depend on chains. The enclosed nature of the centre, which benefits the preservation of the historic character, also means that its existence can easily be overlooked by visitors who are unfamiliar with the layout of the time.

Plate HUCA 1 Historic Core

a)   St Mary's Church

b)   Market Place

c)   Nottingham Street

d)   Anne of Cleves House

e)   Church Close

f)   Market Cross

2   The Waterfront

18.2.6 To the west of the town centre there is a block of parkland associated with the line of the River and the disused canal. It is crossed by the length of Leicester Road extending from the Leicester Road Bridge to Lady Wilton Bridge. All of the land now belongs to the Melton Mowbray Town Estate, which maintains a range of recreational facilities. There had been a private residence on the site of Egerton Lodge since the 16th century, but until the late 18th century when the Melton Navigation was constructed across the southern part the area mainly consisted of fields and meadows in private ownership.

18.2.7 Acquisition of the land took place in stages from 1866, when Play Close was purchased, to 1986 when Prior Close was handed over by Pedigree Petfoods. The distribution of activity types maintains some links to the separate parcels of land with formal sporting facilities grouped to the west and south-west where they are closest to access routes. The areas closest to the historic core are laid out as open space and gardens.

18.2.8 Along the river it is possible to see where the infilled section of the former canal used to be. A set of lock gates remains in Prior Close as a reminder. The area east of Lady Wilton's Bridge is New Park, entered from Leicester Street through wrought iron gates. Between there and the bridge is the old horsewash. There are many pedestrian routes into these open areas and Play Close runs right against St Mary's churchyard. This is probably the only area where there is a good visual link with the historic core.

18.2.9 There are splendid vistas across the river towards Egerton Lodge raised on a terrace. The building is now linked to more recent additions on Wilton Road, but from the park it retains the appearance of a gracious private house. The formal gardens close to the house have been set aside as a memorial garden.

Plate HUCA 2 The Waterfront

a)   Egerton Lodge

b)   Lock Gates in Prior Close

c)   New Park Gates

d)   Swimming Pool

3   Redeveloped Town Centre

18.2.10   In 1984 the historic east-west road layout of central Melton Mowbray was changed by the creation of Norman Way as an inner relief road. The creation of Wilton Road some years earlier and closure and removal of the Bottesford railway line had already begun a process of change which led to the demolition of mainly 19th-century buildings, destruction of existing streets and creation of new ones. From the Scalford Brook westwards an arc of 20th century developments interspersed with 19th-century survivals surrounds the historic core of the town. There is little sign of any coherent planning in these areas.

18.2.11   Norman Way is a busy road. On its north side are mainly business units with some older industrial units behind. To its south is a mixture of housing, carparking shops and other services. Along Sherrard Street and Thorpe End the older shops are gradually replaced by modern retail premises and then a Pork Pie Factory with older buildings such as the Museum and St John's Roman Catholic Church mixed in.

18.2.12   East of the junction of Norman Way and Wilton road is a similar combination of modern block design and inner town housing. Moving north on Nottingham Road the cattle market dominates. Beyond that lie the Melton District Council Offices and PERA.

18.2.13   Many of the facilities within this area are very important for the town and reduction of traffic flow within the core was to be welcomed. Unfortunately the overall effect is unattractive and distracts attention from the centre. The topography and the density of building in the core provide a visual barrier, but this means that the historic core is isolated and could easily be overlooked.

Plate HUCA 3 Redeveloped Town Centre

a)   North end of Wilton Road

b)   At Mary's school, Norman Way

c)   PERA Tower

d)   Scalford Road

4 North-east Melton Mowbray

18.2.14   In the 19th century this area was covered with inclosed fields. The first major development was construction of the Union Workhouse, which survives as St Mary's Hospital on Thorpe Road and the Thorpe End Brewery on the corner of Thorpe Road and Saxby Road. By 1905 the cemetery had been established on Thorpe Road with the existing chapel. The whole of this area is primarily residential development, but the portion north of the cemetery was built up in the late 20th century while that to the south dates predominantly to the period before World War II.

18.2.15   The characters of these two areas also vary. During the earlier period the housing was mainly terraces opening on to the street with some semi-detached properties. The building density is fairly high and gardens usually small. Views both in and out of these streets are limited and it gives the feeling of a distinct community within the town. On King's Road are the former school, now the head office of an auctioneer, and ex-garage built around a bend, part of which is now a carpet shop. The building styles are individual, but match the materials of their surroundings. The Scalford Brook runs along the western edge at the bottom of the gardens of the King's Road properties before turning south to the junction of Thorpe Road and Saxby Road where it is clearly visible from the bridge, running between brick walls.

18.2.16   The housing north of the cemetery consists of a mixture of semi-detached and detached houses with gardens to front and rear. Going northwards there is a gradual change from straight roads, similar to the earlier pattern, to curves and crescents. The land here is sloping upwards to the north-east, increasing the open feel and the quality of the views across the town and surrounding countryside. Although it is a pleasant neighbourhood, there is nothing in the design to link the estates to its particular location. It is difficult to identify any evidence for the former field pattern or the existence of The Spinney, a large houses built at the end of the 19th century, whose grounds stretched from Thorpe Road to Doctor's Lane, although the trees between the gardens of Rowley Road and Beechwood Road may be the remains of its tree-lined boundary.

18.2.17   Thorpe Road, Saxby Road and Doctor's Lane are all historic roads with the first two shown on Cary's 1787 map of Leicestershire. The smaller road was certainly in existence by at least the early 19th century.

Plate HUCA 4 North-east Melton Mowbray

a)   Cemetery Chapel

b)   Kings Road Garage

5   *Eastern Industry*

18.2.18   On the east side of Melton Mowbray town centre is a band of industrial development extending along the north side of the railway line and then arcing northwards to Thorpe Road within the river valley. The western part of the area, next to the bridge, was occupied by the Melton Navigation canal basin in the first half of the 19th century, which was filled in when water transport was superseded by rail. The railway station, west of Burton Road, forms part of this grouping. All the buildings are of late 20th century date apart from parts of the station where some original 19th century features survive.

18.2.19   The complex is dominated by the Pedigree Pet Foods factory, which lies closest to the town centre. This is clearly visible from the surrounding hills, although hedges screen the view from the bottom of Burton Street and Burton End Bridge. Access to this factory is possible from the east through the rest of the industrial estate, but there are also access routes from the town centre which are likely to encourage higher traffic levels along residential streets.

18.2.20   The density of buildings is lower to the east where a number of playing fields are interspersed. At this end of the complex there is a also Tesco supermarket.

Plate HUCA 5 Eastern Industry

a)   Pedigree Petfoods factory

b)   Industrial estates from the west

6 South of the Railway

18.2.21 The area immediately south of the railway, around Burton End Bridge and cut by Burton Road, has a large area of wooded open space, mostly lying to the south of the River Wreake. Copper Beeches Nursing Home on Warwick Road, the Memorial Hospital on Ankle Hill and the King Edward VII School on Burton Road are all set within extensive grounds established during the 19th century for private houses. Around Brook Lane are the remains of inclosed fields.

18.2.22 The hospital opened in 1922 and incorporates parts of Wyndham Lodge, a former hunting lodge which was built in 1869 on the site of an earlier building. Part of the house and stable block are Listed Grade II. The adjacent nursing home was built in 1902 for Lord Hamilton of Dalzell, and has been known as Hamilton Lodge and Warwick Lodge. Another hunting lodge, Craven Lodge, built in 1827, has become the school. There are a few 19th century buildings on Brook Lane and Nos 15 and 17 have been Listed.

18.2.23 This area does not have public access, but it provides a major enhancement to the setting of both the historic core of the town and the newer housing estates to the south. The woodland draws attention away from the unattractive industrial area lying along the river valley.

Plate HUCA 6 South of the railway

a)   River from the railway bridge

b)   Memorial Hospital

7   Southern Melton Mowbray

18.2.24   The area south of the railway line is mainly occupied by housing developments, mostly dating to the later part of the 20th century. By the 19th century it was occupied by inclosed fields with a number of large houses, often hunting lodges, situated on the northern parts of Burton Road, Ankle Hill and Dalby Road. These with Warwick Road are all historic routes shown on 18th-century maps. Of the 19th-century buildings Wicklow Lodge, Braeside and The Gables, on Burton Road, have survived, the last two as school buildings and the former as flats.

18.2.25   The area is physically separated from the town centre by a combination of the railway, the River Wreake and the band of green areas and industry associated with them, but as the land slopes upwards towards the south, there is good intervisibility forming a link. There are no roads connecting with the rest of the town to the east. Ankle Hill joins the south end of Burton Road and Dalby Road joins Leicester Road where it crosses the disused canal. The only other link is via modern Edendale Road to the west which also joins Leicester Road.

18.2.26   Some limited development of terraced and semi-detached housing took place between the old road layout during the early part of the 20th century, just south beyond Victoria Street, which is itself of this date. These older properties gradually blend into the more recent developments. The housing estates have the usual mix of mostly semi-detached and detached properties, several with quite large gardens. Expansion of the town in the south extends as far as Kirby Lane, which follows the line of a former Roman Road. This produces a very sharp edge. It also coincides with a flattening out of the upward slope so that the housing is fairly well shielded from the view towards the town. Some of the former field boundary lines can be detected in the modern road layout, in Valley Road and Hartland Road for example.

18.2.27   There are many larger green spaces, some playing field, but some common open areas. One on Edendale Road has a stream which runs through the area in a conduit for most of the length. The playing fields associated with the group of schools in the south-east of these estates form a large green block adjoining open countryside beyond.

Plate HUCA 7 Southern Melton Mowbray

a)   Polish Church

b)   Tamar Road

8   *Leicester Road*

18.2.28   To the west of the town north of the railway line, Leicester Road is lined with a range of businesses and community services, within which are a few houses. This is almost exclusively a 20th century development apart from the sewage works. Until the later 20th century the area was farmland. The combination of County Council offices, ambulance station, police station and schools is convenient for users, but does not provide the most attractive introduction to the town for travellers using Leicester Road.

18.2.29   The constraints exercised by the main road, railway line and river to the north have to an extent dictated the type of development that has taken place.

Plate HUCA 8 Leicester Road

a)   Modern business premises

b)   Older survivals

9 North-west Melton Mowbray.

18.2.30 The northern slopes surrounding the A606, Nottingham Road, and Scalford Road are covered with housing estates, mostly dating from the late 20th century. Prior to this the land was laid out as enclosed fields. Very little evidence for former field boundaries can be detected within the modern road layout.

18.2.31 There is a mixture of housing types, although semi-detached and detached properties predominate, particularly in the east. A common use of red brick with tile for roofs gives the area a coherent appearance, but no distinctive local character emerges. Some large gardens, surviving allotment plots and open, grassed recreation areas helps to prevent the density of housing from becoming oppressive. The fine views southwards across the town centre also contribute to an open feel.

Plate HUCA 9 North-west Melton Mowbray

a)   View from Staveley Road

b)   Redwood Road

10   Melton Mowbray Country Park.

18.2.32   To the north-east of Melton Mowbray there is a north-south valley through which run the Scalford Brook and the line of the dismantled railway from Bottesford to Melton Mowbray. This valley forms a green wedge, comprising the Melton Mowbray Country Park, open parkland in the north and areas of allotment and playing field in the south.

18.2.33   The Country Park is sign-posted from the town centre and at the junction of Wymondham Road and Scalford Road, but from that point the route runs through the housing estates without any further signs which could generate doubts in visitors' minds. It is possible that at busy periods visitor traffic may prove hazardous to residents. Vehicular access to car parking for the playing fields is possible from the south-east.

18.2.34   At the entrance to the Country Park are a carpark, children's play area and small Visitors' Centre, which contains toilets and a display area, which has restricted opening in winter. There have been major archaeological finds from the park and the displays contain some of the finds from the site. Even in winter, the park is popular with dog walkers.

18.2.35   A number of lakes have been created by damming Scalford Brook, which have associated areas of nature reserve. Surviving ridge and furrow can be seen in places. There are also areas of tree planting and a network of foot paths has been established around the area with a number of picnic areas. The railway line has been incorporated into a long-distance footpath, Jubilee Way, which leads to Scalford.

18.2.36   The park itself is low lying and can be seen from the surrounding higher ground. To the west the view from the park is of the housing estates and the town centre is visible to the south. Looking eastwards there is a ridge of high ground on which the tops of houses can be seen. North of the estates there are currently uninterrupted views of the open countryside surrounding the town.

18.2.37   Melton Country Park provides a valuable recreational facility for the town where there is exceptional access to countryside within the urban area.

Plate HUCA 10 Melton Country Park

a)   Lake with ridge and furrow

b)   Wooded area

19 Historic Character of Surrounding Area

19.1 Melton Borough Council has identified the need for the provision of additional housing, infrastructure and employment opportunities for Melton Mowbray and its surrounding area. The Council has therefore identified a number of areas around the edge of the present town in which further development might be encouraged. This section of the report assesses each of the areas in turn with respect to its history, current land-use patterns and its relationship to the town of Melton Mowbray and the wider surroundings. The potential effects of further development on landscape character and any possible constraints relating to the historic environment have been identified.

19.2 Area A

19.2.1 Where the southern part of the area dips down towards the town, Sysonby Lodge, a Listed Building, lies, set back from Nottingham Road behind a band of trees. In front of the building the original fishpond still survives. Originally Plymouth Lodge, this building dates from 1789. It currently has a secluded setting while forming a distinctive feature of the northern approach to the town. Development around it would have a distinct adverse impact on this setting.

19.2.2 The major archaeological evidence from this area consists of an early medieval inhumation cemetery in the north-west corner. A stray find of a medieval silver buckle or brooch was made to the SE of Sysonby Lodge.

19.3 Area B

19.3.1 There is no archaeological evidence recorded within Area B at present, but prehistoric, Roman and medieval material has been found just to the south and the activity is likely to have extended northwards. Prehistoric material consisted of a Neolithic stone axe, a Bronze Age bank and ditch and an Iron Age settlement site. The recorded alignment of the Bronze Age earthwork appears to continue into Area B along a former field boundary. From the 2nd - 4th centuries AD there was also Roman occupation, suggesting possible continuity of settlement. Two burials from this period were also found. The medieval finds consist of stray pieces of metalwork. There is clear potential for development to impact on below-ground archaeology in this area.

19.4 Area C

19.4.1 This area has excellent intervisibility with the hilltop village of Thorpe Arnold to the south-east. Development would have an impact on the

setting of the historic village and could compromise its separation from the town.

19.4.2 The only archaeological evidence recorded within Area C is a stray find of a Bronze Age arrowhead from the southernmost field.

19.5 Area D

19.5.1 The east side of Area D passes very close to the medieval village of Thorpe Arnold and adjoins a field on the outskirts of the village where there are well-preserved earthworks. There are no records of any archaeological finds from within Area D itself.

19.5.2 Development would make a severe impact on Thorpe Arnold, which is at present a distinct historic settlement and would become an extension of Melton Mowbray. The setting of the earthworks on the west side of the village would be suffer a considerable adverse impact.

19.6 Area E

19.6.1 The southern boundary of Area E is the line of the former Roman road. The only archaeological evidence recorded within the area consists of two stray finds, a Roman coin and a silver bracelet probably of Roman or early medieval date.

19.6.2 If development were to take place in Area E it would reduce the separation of the town from the village of Burton Lazars, which lies to its south-east. This might compromise the historic position of the village as a distinct settlement.

19.7 Area F

19.7.1 This area is bounded on the north side by the line of the former Roman road. Finds from Area F suggest possible Roman period occupation on both sides of Sandy Hill, possibly associated with the Roman road. Similarly, two concentrations of early medieval artefacts have been identified either side of the road, both of which suggest possible cemetery sites. Finds from the prehistoric and later medieval periods have also been found across the area, but the distribution does not suggest any particular focus of activity.

19.7.2 In the eastern part of the area there would be some impact on the setting of Burton Lazars, which is at a slightly higher elevation. There is also some risk that the village might become an extension of Melton Mowbray if the town expanded in that direction. The southern edge of Area F comes within 200 m of the SAM south-west of the village, where the earthwork remains of the medieval leper hospital can be seen.

19.8 Area G

19.8.1 Although the northern boundary runs along the line of the former Roman road, Area G has yielded only a few archaeological finds to date, Mesolithic flints found during field walking. This may be the result of a lower level of previous investigation than in Area F to the east and the potential exists for development to impact on below-ground archaeology.

19.9 Area H

19.9.1 Area H has the potential to contain below-ground archaeological features and finds dating from several periods. Kirby Lane follows the line of a former Roman road and a silver brooch of that date was found on the site of the depot on the south side of Leicester Road. During fieldwalking and excavations in the field in the north-west next to the railway line significant amounts of Roman pottery and evidence for early medieval settlement was uncovered. There is an area of rough grassland on the north side of Leicester Road, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument containing earthworks and buried features from the medieval settlement of Eye Kettleby, thought to have been abandoned around the 16th century. The site contained a manorial complex, which had included a chapel and fishponds as well as a manor house.

19.9.2 The present setting of the SAM gives the appearance of land awaiting development. Although it will act as a constraint, it might be possible to landscape the area into development as a green feature and provide some elements of interpretation, while enhancing the setting.

19.10 Area I

19.10.1 The area contains the remains of the former village of Sysonby, particularly the church and earthworks from a moated site lie next to the river. The medieval church and its surroundings are of historic and archaeological significance - the church is a Listed Building. Their surroundings are currently quiet and secluded and there is still a sense of Sysonby as a distinct settlement. Development might compromise this setting. It is also possible to follow the line of a disused railway, a feature which might have some historic significance.

19.11 Area J

19.11.1 No archaeological evidence has been recovered from Area J. Apart from a number of field boundaries there are no obvious historic features.

19.12 Area K

19.12.1 The field opposite Horseguards Way contains well-defined earthwork remains of Sysonby Grange, a medieval monastic farm. These cover a roughly square area which has been scheduled. No other archaeological evidence has been recovered from Area K.

19.12.2 The earthworks of the SAM are very distinct and at present the best view is obtained when approaching along Welby Lane from the east. There would be an impact on the setting of the SAM if the northern part of the area were to be developed, while the scheduled area would itself prove a constraint.

19.13 Areas of sensitivity to development

19.13.1   Some of these areas exhibit a degree of sensitivity to development due to the known or likely survival of historic features or below-ground archaeology.

High sensitivity

19.13.2   Areas H and K both contain Scheduled Ancient Monuments, which represent a constraint on development. In addition to the Scheduled area there is a possibility that below-ground archaeological features might survive in the immediate surroundings. Development will also have an impact on the setting of these monuments. Within Area H there is also part of an area of known archaeological potential.

19.13.3   Area A contains Sysonby Lodge, a Listed Building. Development would impact on this building and its setting. The southern tip of the area contains part of a 'Protected Open Area' as designated on the Local Plan.

19.13.4   Area I contains the earthwork remains of Sysonby village as well as the medieval church and farm buildings, which are all Listed. Again there is a setting impact. To the south-west there ids also part of an area of known archaeological potential.

Medium Sensitivity

19.13.5   Areas B, F and G all contain parts of areas of known archaeological potential. Most of Area F falls into this category and development at its eastern end might also have an impact on the setting of the nearby village of Burton Lazars. The loss of below-ground archaeology would be offset at least in part by the additional knowledge and understanding gained by any archaeological mitigation work.

Low - Medium Sensitivity

19.13.6   Areas D and E are close to villages, Thorpe Arnold and Burton Lazars. Development could have an adverse impact on these villages and potentially compromise their position as distinct settlements.

Low sensitivity

19.13.7   There are no known historic or archaeological implications associated with development in Areas D and J.

20 Conclusion

20.1 Melton Mowbray is a market town, which has managed to preserve the integrity of the structure of its historic core and keep the town centre active with a range of local shops. Regular markets and other events draw people in.

20.2 The whole town is situated in or on the sides of a river valley and is shielded from the surrounding area by rolling hills. The rural setting is one of the attractions of the town, enhanced by the large areas of green space along the river and in the Melton Country Park. Although there are industrial areas these are confined to the lower ground and do not detract from the character of the town to a significant degree.

20.3 Although there are large areas of modern housing in the town with no distinctive local character they have a coherence in design and materials. Laid out mainly on the slopes above the town they do not appear to encroach on the older part of the town, but the views from them form a link.

20.4 There are areas around the town centre where development has not been as sympathetically carried out and there is a detrimental effect on the character of the town as a whole.

20.5 Melton Mowbray is vulnerable to future development. Out-of-town shopping and the take over of independent retailers by chains have not yet made an impact, but a demand for these may well arise. There is a need for more housing and employment in the town and a number of possible areas have been identified around the edge of the existing built up area. Adoption of some could result in a big change in the position of Melton Mowbray in its wider area.

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