

MELTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
Final Report Identifying Areas of Separation
Criteria and Evidence



Final Report Sent To:

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Contents

1 Introduction

2 Criteria

3 Evidence

3.1 Melton Mowbray and Burton Lazars

3.2 Melton Mowbray and Thorpe Arnold

3.3 Bottesford and Easthorpe

3.4 Asfordby Valley and Asfordby Hill

3.5 Asfordby and Asfordby Valley

4 Maps AoS 1-3

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - AREAS OF SEPARATION

Criteria and Evidence

1. INTRODUCTION

Melton Borough Council is currently in the process of replacing the Melton Local Plan (1999) with the Melton Local Development Framework covering the period to 2016. The Framework is a portfolio of documents with the main document being the Core Strategy, which sets out the vision, objectives and strategic policies. The Core Strategy is a broad policy which is proposing a study into the need for an urban extension to Melton Mowbray in order to accommodate 1000 new houses. In considering where new development should take place, the Council has adopted a sequential approach to village development as recommended in national guidance. This means that sites for development in the Borough will be allocated according to a suggested priority order (three categories according to the number of facilities they have, so that the scale of future developments can be related to their sustainability).

The Core Strategy goes through three stages of consultation and the first of these, Issues and Options, has recently been completed (April – June 2006). The long term spatial vision set out in this consultation was:

“We want to manage development in a way which meets the needs of the local community, benefits the economy and maintains or improves the quality of the local environment. We want to facilitate a sustainable pattern of development which:

- *Strengthens Melton Mowbray’s role as a market town and as the social and economic focus for the Borough*
- *Respects and, where possible, enhances the individual character of Melton’s villages*
- *Maintains the character of the countryside.”*

One of the key issues identified in the Issues and Options document was how to keep the character and identity of villages that are only separated by a small area of open countryside from a neighbouring settlement. Areas of separation were suggested as a means by which countryside between settlements could be given special protection.

This approach is supported by the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan Strategic Policy 7. The Policy sets out to ensure that Local Plans provide for the protection of “predominantly open land between defined development boundaries of neighbouring settlements” and therefore performing “an essential function in keeping the built up areas of those settlements separate.” In so doing it is envisaged that the character and identity of each of the settlements will be maintained.

In preparation for the Melton Mowbray Local Development Framework, the following areas were suggested for investigation into potential Areas of Separation:

- Between Melton Mowbray and Burton Lazars
- Between Melton Mowbray and Thorpe Arnold
- Between Bottesford and Easthorpe
- Asfordby area (Village, Valley & Hill)

2. CRITERIA

For the purpose of the Local Development Framework, the Area of Separation is defined as a small area of open countryside that separates two neighbouring settlements, which are at risk of merging. Application of the designation (broad-brush strategic policy tool) is particularly appropriate where there is local community concern that the two areas might merge to the detriment of the character of either settlement.

Designation of Areas of Separation should be made on the basis of a landscape assessment that looks into the landscape character and visual

appearance of the area. The existing extent of separation should also be taken into account.

In order to define an Area of Separation ADAS carried out a landscape assessment of the countryside between each of the settlements in question. The field assessment was complimented by Environment Systems Ltd who conducted a sieving process using mapped layers in a Geographical Information System. The mapped layers used were:

Landscape – key views, landscape features, landscape character and sensitivity, open country as identified in the LCA and specific field visits.

Agriculture – Agricultural Land Classification [Grade 1 & 2 protected]

Recreation – Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways and playing fields/ recreation grounds.

Cultural Heritage – Scheduled Monuments and Areas of Archaeological Potential (AAP) as identified in the Melton District Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

The Areas of Separation have been applied to **Maps AoS 1-3** as broad hatching and these maps can be found in Section 4 at the end of this report.

3. EVIDENCE

3.1 Melton Mowbray and Burton Lazars

The Melton Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) describes the area between Melton Mowbray and Burton Lazars as falling into two distinct landscape character areas LCA 11 Pastoral Farmland and LCA 20 Melton Farmland Fringe. The sensitivity of the landscape in the north east part of

this area (Zone E) is considered to be Medium and the western part (Zone F) is considered to be High/ Medium. The character is described as:

LCA 11 Pastoral Farmland

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

The distinct characteristics are:

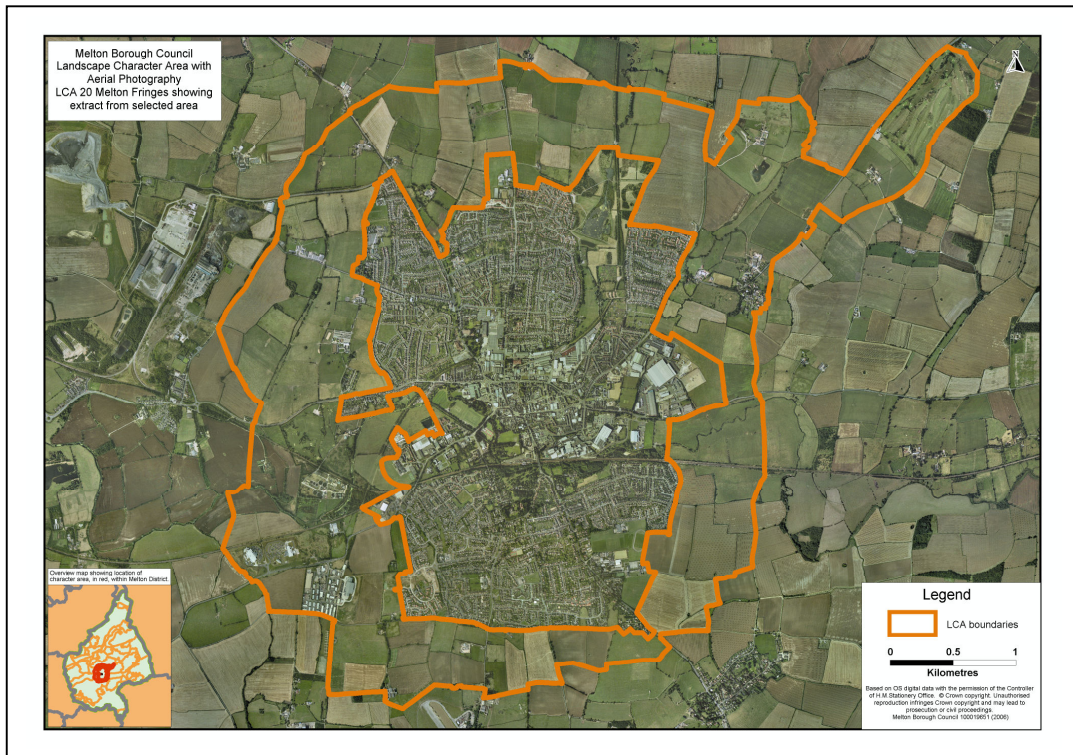
- *Rolling topography*
- *Well managed pastoral landscape*
- *Scattered farmsteads*
- *Thick stock proof hedges*
- *Irregular shaped fields*

LCA20 Melton Farmland Fringe

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

The distinct characteristics are:

- *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)*



Burton Lazars is perched on the edge of the valley and has a predominantly south-west aspect.

The church, which is of local stone and the area around New Road (adjacent to the A606) form the traditional heart of Burton Lazars. This busy main road divides the settlement. Ribbon development has occurred along the Melton Road and to the east, the buildings are mostly modern residential dwellings without a distinct local vernacular.

The area of land between the village and the edge of Melton Mowbray is open countryside. The two settlements are not completely intervisible as intervening topography and vegetation screens the urban fringes.



View from edge of Melton Mowbray SW across open countryside. Burton Lazars is out of the view to the left.

The archaeological potential and associated historic character of this area is significant:

Areas of Archaeological Potential Area 13

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.

Areas of Archaeological Potential Area 14

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.

Historic Character

Development in the eastern part of the area could 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 to the south west and would

compromise the historic setting of the where the earthwork (Scheduled Monument) remains of the medieval leper hospital can be seen.

The former medieval hospital site, the Roman road (LCA AAP 14) and the associated Roman remains (LCA AAP 13) provide significant cultural heritage constraints. In the fields adjacent to the A606 and to the north of the village there is evidence of ridge and furrow.

To the north east of the village the agricultural land is Grade 2.

There are a number of footpaths running across the area. In the north east part of the area they mostly follow distinct field boundary vegetation (possibly former green lanes). Elsewhere they run across fields providing extensive views of open countryside.

Rationale for Map AoS 1 (south east)

The Area of Separation identified on the map is important if Burton Lazars is to remain a distinct village separated from Melton Mowbray by open countryside. An area of Separation would be justified on the following basis:

- **Landscape – The character of this section of landscape is a good example of both LCA 11- Pastoral Farmland and LCA 20 – Melton Farmland Fringe. Although views to the north west are partially restricted by topography, the proximity of the edge of Melton Mowbray is such that the Area of Separation is needed in order to provide retain the open countryside character. The character of the landscape to the east of the A606 is particularly vulnerable as it offers extensive views from local residences and local paths.**

Other relevant points:

- **Agriculture – Protection of ALC Grade 2 land in the north**

- **Cultural Heritage – Protection of the setting of the Scheduled Monument site of Medieval Hospital. Protection of ridge & furrow in fields and the Roman Burial Grounds (LCA AAP 13)**
- **Recreation – Protection of local amenity provided by footpaths & green lanes offering numerous countryside walks.**

3.2 Melton Mowbray and Thorpe Arnold

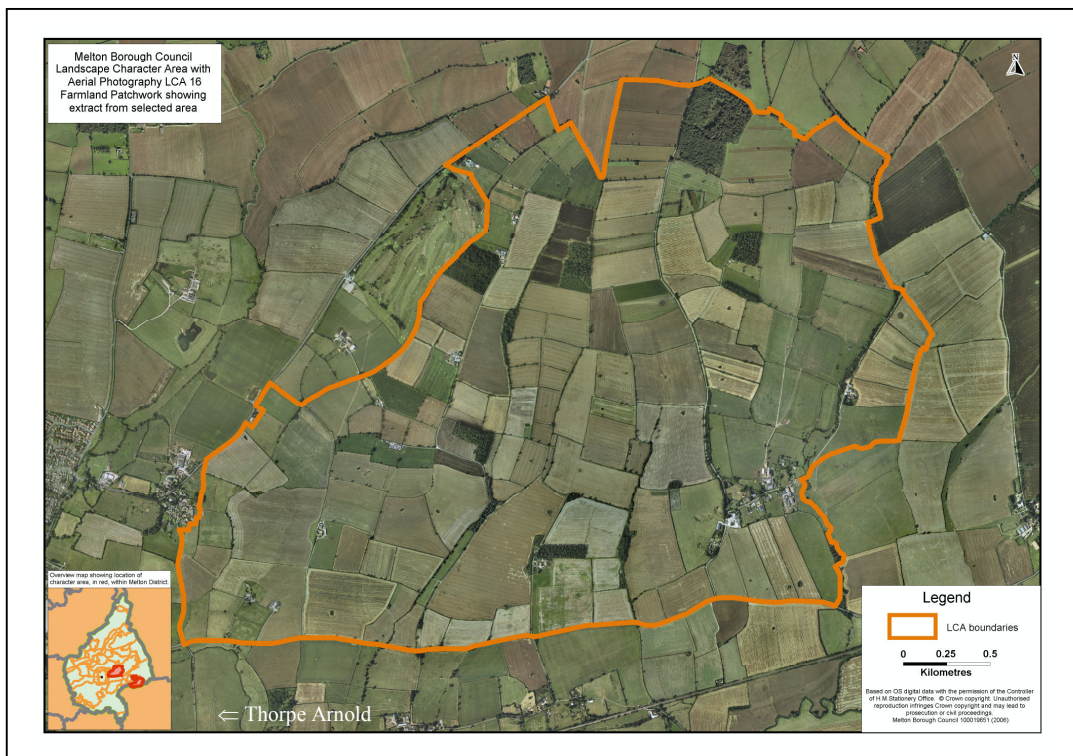
The Melton Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) describes the area between Melton Mowbray and Thorpe Arnold as falling into two distinct landscape character areas LCA16 Farmland Patchwork and LCA 20 Melton Farmland Fringe. The sensitivity of the landscape of this area (Zone D) is considered to be High/ Medium. The character is described as:

LCA 16 Farmland Patchwork

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

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

LCA 20 Melton Farmland Fringe (as in 3.1 above)



Thorpe Arnold is situated on a narrow ridge of land that rises above Melton Mowbray. The majority of views from the settlement are into the valley to the south and south-east. However, properties on the north side of the A607 have good views over Melton Mowbray.

The village is centred around the church and, although the A607 effectively divides the village into two parts, the settlement pattern is retained. The houses vary in size, age and architectural style, but a unified village character is apparent.

The area of land between the settlement edge of Melton Mowbray and the village is dominated by a small valley and floodplain, rising steeply up to the village.

Further development in the north east of Melton Mowbray (where intervisible with Thorpe Arnold) could have an impact on the setting of the historic village and would compromise its separation from the town.

The historic setting of the earthworks on the west side of the village would also be affected.



View southwest from the earthwork on the edge of Thorpe Arnold looking towards Melton Mowbray.

A footpath connects the village with the town crossing the earthwork and running through a small recreation area. A finger of Grade 2 quality land runs under the village and emerges to the south of the village.

Rationale for Map AoS 1 (north east)

The topography of the area and the river provide a degree of natural separation between the village and the edge of Melton Mowbray, however a more comprehensive buffer is required in order to protect the village as a distinct settlement and retain the pastoral character of the valley. The Area of Separation identified on the map is based on the following:

- **Landscape – protection of character of small valley and hill top setting of village. Retention of views across a wide area and maintaining a clear distinction between urban edge and countryside.**

Other Relevant points:

- **Agricultural – protection of ALC Grade 2 land in the south.**
- **Cultural Heritage – protection of the setting of the earthworks.**

3.3 Bottesford and Easthorpe

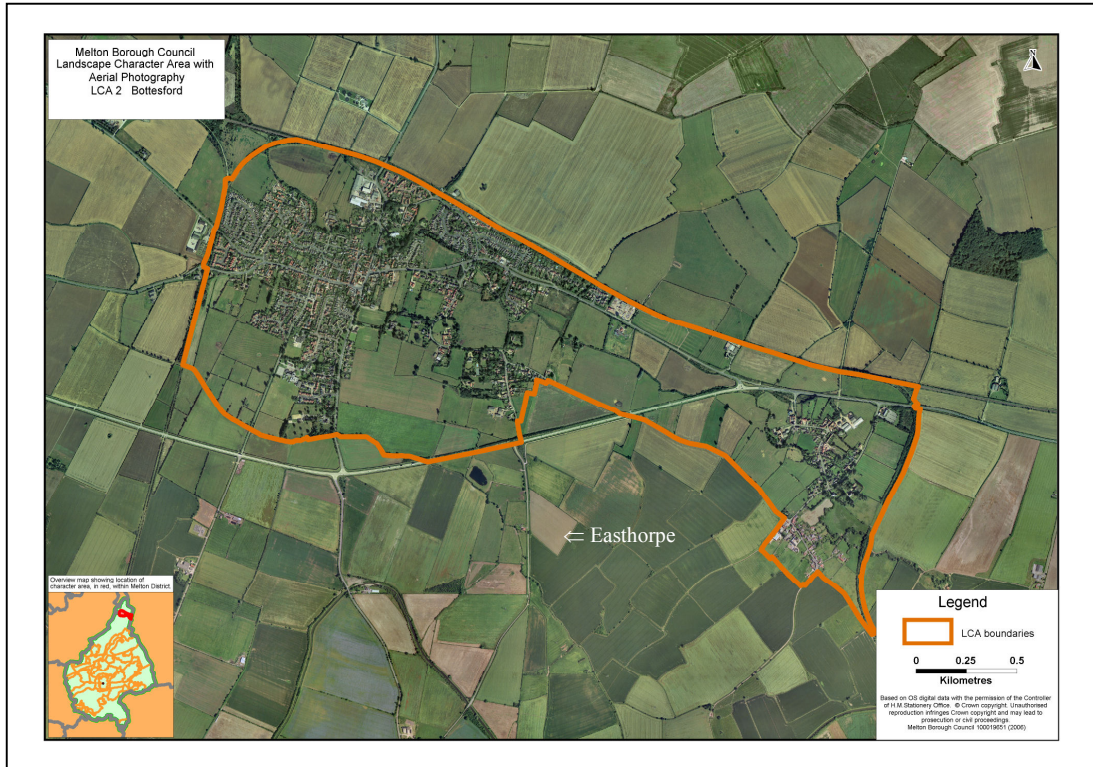
The Melton Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) describes the area between Bottesford and Easthorpe as lying within Landscape Character Area 2 – Bottesford. As this area is outside of the Melton Mowbray Development Search Areas, no landscape sensitivity has been carried out for the area. The character is described as:

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

The distinct characteristics are:

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

Bottesford is a distinct and attractive town, which has grown considerably since the late 19th Century and is now reaching out towards Beckingthorpe and Easthorpe. New housing has been built along the road between the two settlements.



View across ridge and furrow in field looking south towards Belvoir Castle on the horizon

The older part of the village of Easthorpe lies to the south east of Manor Farm and is now quite close new bypass at its southern end. The surrounding farmland is a mixture of pasture near the village edge

and arable fields out near the bypass. The traditional heart of this village is located along Castle View Road, which gives it a distinct character separate from Bottesford. However the arrangement of buildings to the north visually links the two settlements.

Adjacent to Manor Farm lies a large scheduled monument area and the road passing Manor Farm curves around the property creating a distinct settlement pattern. Some of the fields in pasture show evidence of ridge and furrow.

To the south east of Bottesford lie a number of old strip fields creating a distinct field pattern and channelled views back of Bottesford Church spire. A recreation ground and cricket field also lie to the south east between the two settlement edges. Most of the area lies within the floodplain.

Rationale for Map AoS 2:

The area between Bottesford and Easthorpe is a mix of open space and countryside. There are some important areas of open space (recreation and landscape features) and these combine to form a buffer between the two settlements. The Area of Separation identified on the map is based on the following:

- **Landscape – retention of open space and pasture landscape, which contribute to a characteristic green buffer between the two villages. Protection of strip fields and key views towards Bottesford and into the wider countryside.**

Other relevant points:

- **Cultural Heritage – protection of Scheduled Monument to the east of Manor Farm and ridge & furrow in fields between Easthorpe and Bottesford.**

- **Recreation – protection of the amenity value of footpath network, recreation ground, cricket pitches and other open space for amenity use.**

3.4 Asfordby Valley and Asfordby Hill

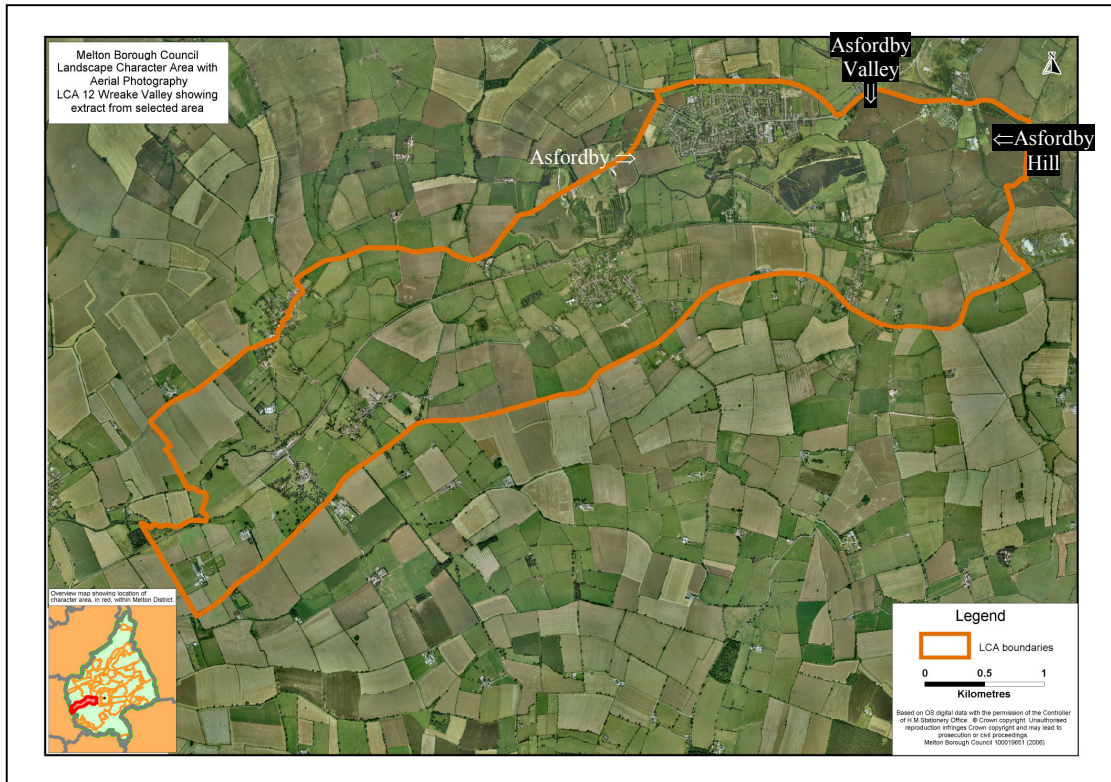
The Melton Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) describes the area around Asfordby as lying within the landscape character area LCA 12 Wreake Valley. As this area is outside of the Melton Mowbray Development Search Areas, no landscape sensitivity has been carried out for the area. The character is described as:

LCA 12 Wreake Valley

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.

The distinct characteristics are:

- *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*



View east from Asfordby Valley across recreation ground towards the settlement edge of Asfordby Hill

Asfordby Hill sits on a prominent ridge with its western edge only partly visible from the valley below. The countryside immediately below the village is open and offers wide views across the Valley. A small recreational area lies adjacent to the Valley and a footpath follows the edge of the valley floor.

Rationale for Map AoS 3

The settlement of Asfordby Hill is distinctly separate from Asfordby Valley and is surrounded by open countryside. As the area between Asfordby Hill and The Valley slopes significantly and there are extensive views from the south, any development of this area would have a impact on the quality of the surrounding countryside and affect the existing relationship with the Valley. An Area of Separation would be justified on the following basis:

- **Landscape – Protection of the lowland river valley landscape and retention of open countryside and significant views.**

Other relevant points:

- **Recreation – protection of recreation area and amenity value of footpath.**

3.5 Asfordby and Asfordby Valley

Asfordby and Asfordby Valley are separated by a narrow area of countryside. A small buffer area has been created with a recreational area and some woodland adjacent to the bypass. The eastern side of Asfordby Valley is still open countryside and in need of protection if a joining of the two settlements is to be avoided.

Rationale for the Map AoS 3

- **Landscape – Retention of countryside to the east of Asfordby Valley in order to maintain the character of distinct settlements.**

Other relevant points

- **Recreation – Retention of sports fields and small park to the east of Asfordby.**

4 Maps AoS 1-3