

**Market Harborough Strategic
Development Area**

Landscape and Visual Assessment

for

Harborough District Council

June 2012

Quality control

Landscape and Visual Assessment

for

Market Harborough Strategic Development Area

Checked by Project Manager:	Approved by:
Name: Ruth Knight	Name: Jonathan Billingsley
Title: Sr Chartered Landscape Architect	Title: Director
Date: 12 June 2012	Date: 12 June 2012

The Landscape Partnership is registered with the Landscape Institute, the Royal Town Planning Institute, and is a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment

The Landscape Partnership

Registered office
Greenwood House
15a St Cuthberts Street
Bedford
MK40 3JB

Registered in England No. 2709001

Contents

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Landscape and Visual Policy Context
- 3 Strategic Development Area – Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints
- 4 Strategic Development Area – Detailed Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity
- 5 Strategic Development Area – Comment on submitted evidence
- 6 Strategic Development Area – Appropriate boundaries for development
- 7 Conclusions

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Appraisal Forms

Figures

Figure 1 – Planning Policy, Landscape Character and Green Infrastructure

Figure 2 – Local Landscape Character Areas

Figure 3 – Local Landscape Capacity

Figure 4 – Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints

Figure 5 – Capacity of Land Parcels within SDA area of search

Figure 6 – Proposed Boundary and Landuses of SDA

1 Introduction

1.1 The Landscape Partnership (TLP) was commissioned in April 2012 to undertake a landscape focused assessment of the extent of existing site features and the detailed landscape sensitivity/capacity of the Strategic Development Area (SDA) identified within Harborough District Council's Core Strategy. The assessment will help to shape development options for the SDA, as part of the forthcoming masterplanning process being carried out by Harborough District Council. This assessment builds upon and refines previous landscape character, sensitivity and capacity work carried out by The Landscape Partnership in 2009 for the land around Market Harborough. The brief for the project required the following main outputs:

- Assess the extent of current landscape features and undertake a detailed landscape sensitivity and capacity of the SDA;
- Identify and map landscape and visual opportunities and constraints for the SDA;
- Provide an independent critique of submitted landscape evidence and any other relevant information;
- Recommend the most appropriate boundaries for the SDA in landscape terms, taking into account that the Core Strategy established the principle of maintaining an Area of Separation between Lubenham and Market Harborough;
- Test possible development scenarios in terms of their impact on the landscape around the SDA and present them so as to facilitate consultation on potential options; and
- Highlight appropriate mitigation measures that could be introduced to minimise potential adverse impacts on the landscape.

1.2 In a separate but parallel process, The Landscape Partnership have also been commissioned to review the landscape and visual aspects of two planning applications that have been submitted within the SDA search area and are currently awaiting determination. The review of the landscape and visual matters are the subject of a separate report. The applications are as follows:

- 11/00112/OUT - Land at Airfield Farm, Market Harborough – outline application for up to 1,000 residential dwellings, as well as access roads, a local centre with retail (A1,A3,A4,A5), healthcare (D1) and community (D2) uses, primary school, construction of marina with hotel (C1) and retail/leisure uses (A1, A3, A4, D2), provision of open space including Country Park, sports fields, allotments, parks, play areas and other open spaces, landscaping and formation of surface water storage ponds
- 12/00044/FUL - Land off Lubenham Hill, Market Harborough – detailed planning application for the provision of 132 residential dwellings

Past involvement by The Landscape Partnership

- 1.3 The Landscape Partnership was commissioned by Harbourh District Council in December 2008 to undertake the preparation of an outline Landscape Character Assessment and a Landscape Capacity Study for the rural areas of Harbourh District in the vicinity of Market Harbourh. The study was used to inform the Council's Core Strategy and other Local Development Documents. One of the outputs of the study was a detailed analysis of the sensitivity of land around the edge of Market Harbourh and its capacity to accommodate future development, particularly residential. The study concluded that there would be variable capacity to accommodate development in the Land Parcels within the SDA.

2 Landscape and Visual Policy Context

Planning Policy (see Figure 1)

2.1 Work is currently underway on the Local Plan for Harborough District. The Core Strategy was adopted in November 2011. Many of the policies replace saved Local Plan (2001) policies, although policies EV/3 (see paragraph 2.4 below) will be retained until the Allocations Plan is adopted.

2.2 The Strategic Development Area is identified in policy CS13: Market Harborough. This policy indicates that Market Harborough will be a main focus for growth, which "*will be accommodated in a manner which respects Market Harborough's role as a historic market town and which safeguards its compact and attractive character*". Part a) of the policy relates to the SDA as follows:

The principal means of accommodating housing growth on greenfield land in Market Harborough will be in the form of a strategic development area of at least 1,000 dwellings to the north west of the town. Development in this area will:

- i) Provide a new community that is linked to and an integral part of Market Harborough;*
- ii) Provide a range of community facilities, local retail opportunities, open spaces and recreational facilities, together with a primary school, if sufficient evidence of need exists;*
- iii) Not prejudice the provision of a future link road to enable transport movements between A4304 (Lubenham Hill) and B6047 (Leicester Road) as part of a wider package of measures that seek to deal with transport issues predicted to arise in and around the town during the Core Strategy period;*
- iv) Provide high quality walking, cycling and public transport links to Market Harborough and to other relevant destinations;*
- v) Have a distinctive identity that maximises the opportunities provided by its location, landscape context and the local built heritage. The relationship with the canal will be taken full advantage of in terms of linkages, uses and design;*
- vi) Conform with more detailed design policies and principles to be set out in the Allocations Development Plan Document and an agreed masterplan, which will be developed in partnership between the developer, the Council and key stakeholders including representatives of local residents and adopted in future planning policy;*
- vii) Consider the suitability of the provision of a Local Nature Reserve as part of the development.*

2.3 The following extracts from Core Strategy policies relate to either the SDA or wider landscape and visual matters:

- Policy CS1: Spatial Strategy for Harborough – to maintain the District's unique rural character whilst ensuring that the needs of the community are met through sustainable growth and suitable access to services. The following aspects are relevant to the SDA:
 - Develop Market Harborough's role as the main focus for additional development within the District, promoting its historic function as a market town and safeguarding its compact and attractive character
 - Bring forward a strategic development area immediately to the north west of Market Harborough, including at least 1,000 dwellings to meet the strategic requirement for new dwellings, and to provide access to new employment, educational and recreational opportunities
 - Safeguard the individual character of settlements, by maintaining in principle the separation between; Scraftoft and Thurnby, Great Bowden and Market Harborough, Lubenham and Market Harborough, Bitteswell, Magna Park and Lutterworth and Sutton in the Elms and Broughton Astley
 - Develop the Green Infrastructure asset of the District as a resource for biodiversity conservation and enhancement, habitat restoration, low key recreation, tree and woodland creation and flood mitigation
 - Support development which protects conserves and enhances the District's built heritage whilst ensuring that new development is safe, well designed, adapts to climate change and helps to reduce the District's carbon emissions;
- Policy CS2: Delivering New Housing – Allocation of residential developments within Harborough District will include at least 3,300 in Market Harborough. New developments should: be located within settlement 'limits to development' (to be defined in the Site Allocations DPD); be of the highest design standard and have a layout that makes the most efficient use of land and is compatible with the built form and character of the area in which it is situated; contain a mix of housing types; have a minimum net density of 30 dph.
- Policy CS8: Protecting and Enhancing Green Infrastructure – This policy seeks to secure a high quality, accessible and multifunctional green infrastructure network across both rural and urban areas of Harborough district, which contributes to healthy lifestyles and a rich, diverse natural environment. The policy highlights:
 - Opportunities to maximise the potential value of existing and new green space will be encouraged

- Green Infrastructure assets will be safeguarded through ensuring that:
 - i) Development does not compromise their integrity or potential value;
 - ii) Developer contributions are secured wherever appropriate to improve their quality, use and multi-functionality; and
 - iii) Opportunities to add to the Green Infrastructure network are maximised through partnership working.
- The Grand Union Canal and Cycle routes, Right of Ways and Greenways are identified as strategic green infrastructure assets
- The contribution that open space, sport and recreation facilities make to the District's Green Infrastructure network and the well-being of communities will be strengthened
- Policy CS11: Promoting Design and Built Heritage – In recognition of the importance of good design and the built heritage of the District, the highest standards of design in new development will be sought to create attractive places for people to live, work and visit.
 - Development should be inspired by, respect and enhance local character, building materials and distinctiveness of the area in which it would be situated
 - All development should respect the context in which it is taking place and respond to the unique characteristics of the individual site and the wider local environment beyond the site's boundaries
- Policy 17: Countryside, Rural Centres and Rural Villages - Outside rural settlements, new development in the Countryside and other settlements not identified as selected rural villages will be strictly controlled. This includes:

c) Rural development will be located and designed in a way that is sensitive to its landscape setting, retaining and, where possible, enhancing the distinctive qualities of the landscape character area in which it is situated. Key characteristics have been identified for the District's five landscape character areas (High Leicestershire, Laughton Hills, Welland Valley, Upper Soar and Lutterworth Lowlands). All development in these areas will contribute to:

i) Protecting and, where possible, enhancing the character and quality of the landscape in which it would be situated;

ii) Conserving and, where possible, enhancing local landscape and settlement distinctiveness;

iii) Protecting and, where possible, enhancing local character through appropriate design and management which is sensitive to the landscape setting;

iv) Avoiding the loss of features and habitats of landscape, historic, wildlife or geological importance, whether of national or local significance;

v) Safeguarding important views and landmarks;

vi) Protecting the landscape setting of individual settlements;

vii) Restoring, or providing mitigation proportionate in scale for, damaged features/landscapes in poor condition; and

viii) Improving the green infrastructure network including increased opportunities for public access to the countryside and open space assets.

2.4 Within the Harborough District Local Plan, as Adopted in April 2001, one landscape related policy has been retained until the Allocations Plan is adopted. Policy EV/3 relates to 'Separation Areas', which are designated to prevent coalescence of settlements, and are a particular issue in a limited number of locations throughout the District. Within these areas development will generally be refused if it either affects the openness of the land or reduces the separation between settlements. Specifically, development will be refused that would either 'adversely affect the predominantly open character of the land' or 'result in a reduction in the existing open land separating the settlements concerned'. Although there are not currently any 'Separation Areas' in the vicinity of the SDA, Core Strategy policy CS1 indicates that the principle of separation should be maintained between Market Harborough and Lubenham, with the extent of a potential 'Separation Area' currently being considered within the Areas of Separation Review paper (December 2011).

2.5 The East Midlands Regional Plan is the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East Midlands. The RSS forms part of the Development Plan until revocation of RSSs under the Localism Act 2011. The following policy extracts relate to landscape and visual matters:

- Policy 1: Regional Core Objectives - To secure the delivery of sustainable development within the East Midlands, all strategies, plans and programmes having a spatial impact should meet the following core objectives:
 - To protect and enhance the environmental quality of urban and rural settlements
 - To protect and enhance the environment
 - To achieve a 'step change' increase in the level of the Region's biodiversity
 - To minimise adverse environmental impacts of new development and promote optimum social and economic benefits through the promotion of sustainable design and construction techniques
- Policy 2: Promoting Better Design - The layout, design and construction of new development should be continuously improved, including in terms of reducing CO₂ emissions and providing resilience to future climate change

- Policy 3: Distribution of New Development - Development and economic activity should be distributed on the following basis:
 - New development will be concentrated primarily in and adjoining the Region's five Principal Urban Areas (PUAs), including Leicester
 - The development needs of other settlements and rural areas should also be provided for. New development in these areas should contribute to:
 - maintaining the distinctive character and vitality of rural communities;
 - shortening journeys and facilitating access to jobs and services;
 - strengthening rural enterprise and linkages between settlements and their hinterlands; and
 - respecting the quality of tranquillity, where that is recognised in planning documents
- Policy 12: Development in the Three Cities Sub-area - Development should support the continued growth and regeneration of Derby, Leicester and Nottingham. Outside Derby, Leicester and Nottingham, employment and housing development should be located within and adjoining settlements. Such development should be in scale with the size of those settlements, in locations that respect environmental constraints.
- Policy 13a: Regional Housing Provision (excluding Northamptonshire) – Harborough District to provide 350 dwellings per annum
- Policy 17: Regional Priorities for Managing the Release of Land for Housing - Local Authorities, developers and relevant public bodies should work across administrative boundaries in all of the Region's Housing Market Areas to ensure that the release of sites is managed to achieve a sustainable pattern of development.
- Policy 26: Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Cultural Heritage - Sustainable development should ensure the protection, appropriate management and enhancement of the Region's natural and cultural heritage.
- Policy 27: Regional Priorities for the Historic Environment - The historic environment should be understood, conserved and enhanced, in recognition of its own intrinsic value, and its contribution to the Region's quality of life.
- Policy 28: Regional Priorities for Environmental and Green Infrastructure - Local Authorities, statutory environmental bodies and developers should work with the voluntary sector, landowners and local communities to ensure the delivery, protection and enhancement of Environmental Infrastructure across the Region. Such infrastructure should contribute to a high quality natural and built environment and to the delivery of sustainable communities.

- Policy 29: Priorities for Enhancing the Region's Biodiversity - Local Authorities, statutory environmental bodies and developers should work with the voluntary sector, landowners and local communities to implement the Regional Biodiversity Strategy, and to deliver a major step change increase in the level of biodiversity across the East Midlands.
- Policy 30: Regional Priorities for Managing and Increasing Woodland Cover - Local Authorities, statutory environmental bodies and developers should work with the voluntary sector, landowners and local communities to deliver a significant increase in woodland cover in the East Midlands in ways that respect local landscape character and support the implementation of the Regional Plan.
- Policy 31: Priorities for the Management and Enhancement of the Region's Landscape - The Region's natural and heritage landscapes should be protected and enhanced
- Policy Three Cities SRS 3: Housing Provision - Within the context set by Policy 13a, provision for new housing will be made at the following levels over 2006-2026:
 - Harborough: 350 dpa, of which at least 40 dpa should be within or adjoining Leicester PUA, including sustainable urban extensions as necessary. Development in the remainder of the District will be located mainly at Market Harborough, including sustainable urban extensions as necessary.
- Policy Three Cities SRS 5: Green Infrastructure and National Forest - In considering major development proposals, especially those associated with the New Growth Point proposals, Local Authorities and implementing agencies will coordinate the provision of enhanced and new green infrastructure.

Landscape Character

Harborough District Landscape Character Assessment

2.6 In order to assist with policy development, Harborough District Council commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment of the whole district, which was completed in September 2007. This study identified five different Landscape Character Areas, based on those defined in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy (see Figure 1):

- Welland Valley
- Laughton Hills
- Lutterworth Lowlands
- High Leicestershire
- Upper Soar

- 2.7 Within the District Landscape Character Assessment, each Landscape Character Area is described and Key Characteristics are defined. The capacity of the landscape to accommodate change is then discussed and key issues facing the integrity of the character area are identified. The SDA area of search falls within the Welland Valley Landscape Character Area.
- 2.8 The Welland Valley Landscape Character Area is described as well defined in terms of topography and location. The general description indicates that the valley is mainly a mix of medium sized agricultural fields enclosed by mixed hedgerows with some evidence of hedgerow removal. There is little established woodland with most mature planting following the water courses. The area has extensive views across the valley but is enclosed by ridges of higher land from the adjoining character areas particularly to the north. The Key Characteristics include:
- Gently meandering river in wide and shallow valley
 - Little tree cover
 - Pasture on the floodplains
 - Arable farming on the valley sides
 - Market Harborough, operating as a traditional market town, is the dominant urban influence
- 2.9 The District Landscape Character Assessment indicates that the Welland Valley Landscape Character Area has Medium Capacity to accommodate development. It suggests that the area would have a medium capacity to accommodate small developments, due to open views across the valley. It also suggests that within the areas immediately surrounding Market Harborough, development is possible with consideration of issues related to layout, natural extents and envelope, defined in the main by topographical features.
- 2.10 A Focus Area Study was also produced as part of this document. This aimed to assess the capacity of areas around the edges of the settlements in order to accommodate potential change and to accept development. The Focus Area Study covered the fringes of Market Harborough, identifying part of the SDA area as having a medium capacity to accommodate development and part of the SDA as unsuitable for development.

Market Harborough study – Landscape Character

- 2.11 As part of the Market Harborough Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study carried out by The Landscape Partnership in 2009, an outline Landscape Character Assessment was undertaken. This included the identification of Landscape Character Areas at a more detailed scale than those identified at the District wide scale. The key characteristics of these Landscape Character Areas were identified in order to provide context to the more detailed landscape capacity work. The area of search for the SDA is located across four different Landscape Character Areas (see Figure 2). These are:

- Burnmill Farm Scarp Slopes
- Mill Hill Undulating Claylands
- Airfield Farm Plateau
- Grand Union Canal Corridor

2.12 The key characteristics of Burnmill Farm Scarp Slopes were identified as:

- Visually prominent steep scarp slope
- Narrow plateau area adjacent to the edge of Market Harborough
- Panoramic views from escarpment to north
- Pastoral farmland, of variable field size, predominantly grazed by sheep
- Occasional arable fields
- Intact ridge and furrow systems on much of the slopes
- Tree belts, including evergreens, form prominent skyline feature
- Largely undeveloped with occasional isolated farmsteads
- Grand Union Canal corridor well vegetated

2.13 The key characteristics of Mill Hill Undulating Claylands were identified as:

- Strongly undulating, rounded landform
- Heavy clay soils
- Predominantly arable landscape with medium to large fields
- Small woodland blocks and copses of deciduous plantations
- Low clipped hedgerows
- Extensive views from isolated footpath over hills including towards Market Harborough
- Relatively little access to and through area

2.14 The key characteristics of Airfield Farm Plateau were identified as:

- Large scale open plateau
- Large arable fields with very few field boundaries
- Site of former airfield
- Intrusion of built development into rural landscape, particularly around Airfield Farm, HMP Gartree and White Lodge, including, poultry sheds, clay pigeon shooting, off-road track and caravan park

- Extensive views towards area e.g. views of prison

2.15 The key characteristics of Grand Union Canal Corridor were identified as:

- Grand Union Canal and associated tow path
- Heavily vegetated boundaries to housing in Market Harborough, the Canal and a tributary of the River Welland
- Pasture and arable fields between river and canal
- Some pony paddocks
- Encroachment of domestic back gardens into pasture at southern edge

Market Harborough study – Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity

2.16 A further part of the Market Harborough Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study was the landscape sensitivity and capacity study. The detailed analysis of the sensitivity of land around the edge of Market Harborough and its capacity to accommodate future development was undertaken at a smaller scale of units based around individual fields, groups of fields or parcels of land. The landscape sensitivity and capacity was derived based on a range of ten criteria and their relative suitability for built development. These were then aggregated to provide an overall measure of capacity. This study identified eight parcels of land within or partly within the SDA area of search (see Figure 3), as follows:

- Parcel 4 – Medium capacity
- Parcel 35 – Medium capacity
- Parcel 36 – Medium Low capacity
- Parcel 38 – Low capacity
- Parcel 39 – Medium capacity
- Parcel 40 – Medium capacity
- Parcel 41 – Medium capacity
- Parcel 42 – Medium capacity

Green Infrastructure

2.17 The 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy covers the counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire, as well as the Principal Urban Areas of Derby, Leicester and Nottinghamshire. The Strategy, which formed part of the Core Strategy evidence base gives the strategic spatial framework needed to safeguard, manage, and extend networks of GI in local planning documents; shows how the benefits of GI to economics, climate change, health, biodiversity and landscape can be realised; significantly reduces the amount of data required to produce local policy documents;

and identifies funding sources and mechanisms for the delivery of GI and the priorities for investment.

2.18 Within Volume 5 of the Strategy, which relates to 'Strategic GI Network for the Leicester Principal Urban Area and Sub-Regional Centres', strategic green infrastructure requirements for the Market Harborough area are identified. These include the following (see Figure 1):

- Two Sub Regional Green Infrastructure Corridors along the Grand Union Canal and the Welland River Corridor.
 - The key opportunities within the Grand Union Canal Corridor are:
 - Access and movement – potential to establish traffic free multi-user greenways e.g. linking the communities of Leicester and Market Harborough to one another and to the Grand Union Canal and River Sence.
 - Biodiversity – opportunities for river corridor habitat management, creation, restoration and extension in all key habitat types e.g. wet woodland and lowland meadows.
 - Natural processes – opportunities to manage flood risk through appropriate land management e.g. flood management works on the River Sence around southern Leicester.
 - Cultural heritage – opportunities to enhance the management, presentation, accessibility and interpretation of historic environment assets, e.g. Market Harborough's historic core.
 - Landscape – opportunities to enhance the character and distinctiveness of the landscape through positive landscape intervention measures and land management actions informed by Landscape Character Assessments e.g. increasing tree cover through streamside scrub and willow planting.
 - The key opportunities within the Welland River Corridor are:
 - Access and movement – potential to establish traffic free multi-user greenways, e.g. linking the communities of Market Harborough and Welham to one another and to the River Welland;
 - Biodiversity – opportunities for river corridor habitat management, creation, restoration and extension in all key habitat types e.g. lowland meadows.
 - Natural processes – opportunities to manage flood risk through appropriate land management e.g. flood management works on the River Welland around Market Harborough.

- Cultural heritage – opportunities to enhance the management, presentation, accessibility and interpretation of historic environment assets, e.g. Market Harborough’s historic core;
- Landscape – opportunities to enhance the character and distinctiveness of the landscape through positive landscape intervention measures and land management actions informed by Landscape Character Assessments e.g. conservation of old willow pollards along watercourses through improved management.
- An Opportunity for New/Enhanced Access Linkages in the form of a new multi-user greenway route from Market Harborough to south Leicester, Narborough, Earl Shilton and Barwell, which passes through the SDA.
- An Urban Fringe GI Enhancement Zone broad zone around the fringe of Market Harborough, which includes areas of land that represent a significant resource for urban communities in the sub-region, comprising dynamic and complex mosaics of land uses and habitats. It forms the immediate landscape setting for the town. It is envisaged that the Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones would:

“encompass a network of interlinked and multifunctional greenspaces that connect with city/town centres, public transport nodes, and major employment and residential areas, including new Sustainable Urban Extensions. A careful balance will need to be struck between creation of new GI and the need to safeguard existing natural and cultural features that contribute to the character and value of the wider agricultural landscape.”

3 Strategic Development Area – Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints

- 3.1 Further to the site work undertaken in 2008/9, the site of the Strategic Development Area was visited in May 2012. During the site visit public rights of way and permissive footpaths within the SDA were visited, as well as public roads and housing areas in the vicinity of the SDA. A number of locations in the wider area were also visited to establish the extent of visibility of the SDA.
- 3.2 As part of this site visit, the sensitivity and capacity of the local landscape was assessed at a finer grain than carried out in the 2009 report and further discussion on the approach and findings can be found in Section 4 of this document. In parallel with this, the landscape and visual opportunities and constraints of the SDA search area were identified. The following factors were considered in regard to the scope for the Strategic Development Area to accommodate new development, in landscape and visual terms. They present both opportunities to enhance and safeguard the local landscape characteristics, as well as constraints to work with in identifying areas suitable for development. Refer to Figure 4.

Landform

- 3.3 Within the SDA the landform varies considerably. In the southern half of the SDA the landform is undulating and contains two pronounced local hills to the north of Lubenham Hill road. These hills create a physical and visual barrier between the edge of Market Harborough and Lubenham. The tops of these hills are prominent features in the local landscape and contribute to its character in conjunction with Mill Hill which lies beyond the SDA to the north of Lubenham and Gallow Hill to the north east of the SDA. Any development located on the top of these hills, or breaking the skyline in views towards the hills particularly as seen from the west, would be both visually intrusive and have a negative effect on the character of the local landscape. In the existing approach from Lubenham one is not aware of the presence of Market Harborough to the east and hence the landform helps to provide a strong and clear sense of separation of the two settlements.
- 3.4 All of these hills have relatively prominent steep slopes associated with them. These slopes would also make building on them more difficult without significant earthworks. Development on the upper slopes would also be almost as prominent as any on the tops of the hills.
- 3.5 In the northern part of the SDA the landform is much flatter and forms part of a gently sloping plateau falling southwards from Gallow Field Road. This flatter land can more readily accommodate development without extensive earthworks. Development in these flatter areas would also be less prominent within the wider landscape, as long as it is set back from the edges of the plateau to the north.

Existing vegetation and landscape features

- 3.6 A significant feature of the eastern edge of the SDA is the corridor of the Grand Union Canal - Harborough Arm. This feature forms or is close to over half of the eastern boundary of the SDA, adjacent to the existing urban edge of Market Harborough from Leicester Road and the Woodlands. The corridor is wider than just the route of the canal, taking in the adjacent fields that form part of its setting, and forms part of a Sub Regional Green Infrastructure Corridor identified in the 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy. It also forms an important recreational corridor, with boat access and moorings along its length as well as a National Cycle Route along the tow path. It also forms an important wildlife corridor. Any proposed development should retain and enhance this corridor, responding to the key opportunities identified in the 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy (access and movement, biodiversity, natural processes, cultural heritage and landscape).
- 3.7 There are also strong tree belts and hedgerows along the Grand Union Canal corridor. There is a further mature tree lined corridor which follows the local stream in the valley west of the Grand Union Canal. In combination these vegetated features create a sense of enclosure and separation from the rest of the SDA. They also add to the character of this part of the SDA and should be retained as part of any future development.
- 3.8 Tall hedgerows are present in a small number of other areas of the SDA, particularly along parts of the western boundary of the SDA. These help to provide some enclosure to the SDA from the wider countryside, as well as providing local green infrastructure corridors, and should be retained as part of any future development.
- 3.9 There are two copses of trees on top of Lubenham Hill, one by the Road and one on the top of the Lubenham Hill, which form skyline landmark features in the local area and can be seen from the eastern edge of Market Harborough as well as more local viewpoints. They are one of few woodland features to the west of Market Harborough and should be retained as part of any future development. An additional area of new planting has recently been implemented adjacent to the northern copse and should also be retained.
- 3.10 The Airfield Business Park has a balancing pond associated with it, situated outside the south west corner of the fenced boundary of the Business Park. This performs a drainage function for the Business Park, as well as a potential ecological function, and would probably need to be retained in any future development layout.
- 3.11 Within the majority of the remainder of the SDA there are a few clipped native hedges which should be retained where possible as they provide structure. However, they are not major landscape features apart from one that runs east west across the middle of the SDA.

Views

3.12 The landform and vegetation present in and around the SDA contribute to its visibility from surrounding areas and the presence of key viewpoints and vistas looking out of the area. There are a range of both public and private views into the SDA, which include:

- Views into the SDA from parts of Market Harborough. The closest of these are the residential areas at:
 - The Woodlands development, to the east of the SDA. This comprises individual established detached residential properties set with large gardens and incorporating significant mature trees. Many of the properties back on to the Grand Union Canal, with varying amounts of screening vegetation between the properties and the canal. The properties have varying views into the SDA, with glimpsed views also possible from the large green at the centre of The Woodlands.
 - Lubenham Hill, to the south of the SDA. There are a number of properties along Lubenham Hill, which includes detached properties that front on to the road and the SDA. They have relatively open views into the southern part of it at present.
 - The Brookfield Road area, to the south east of the SDA. This comprises a typical late 20th century residential development. A number of the properties in this vicinity back directly onto the SDA, and some have with relatively open views into south eastern and central areas. There are also views along some of the roads.
 - Hill Top Close, to the south east of the SDA. This is a relatively new development of detached properties on the former plot of a large individual property that fronted Lubenham Hill. The houses are set at a lower level than the closest part of the SDA, with a hedgerow between the properties and the SDA. There are open views into the SDA from some full length upper floor windows and from some garden areas.
 - The Knoll Street and Gardiner Street area, to the south east of the SDA. A number of properties in this vicinity back onto the SDA, with relatively open views into south eastern and central areas. Several of the properties adjoining the SDA have extended their gardens into the SDA, in the area between the Grand Union Canal and the stream to its west. There are also views along a number of the roads.
- Views into the SDA from parts of Lubenham, particularly Old Hall Lane and Harborough Road, to the south west of the SDA. From the eastern edge of Lubenham very little of Market Harborough (just a small section of the Woodlands) is currently visible due to the intervening landform within the SDA interrupting views to the town. Other areas of the SDA would also be visible, although Mill Hill to the north of the village restricts visibility to the north.

- Views into the SDA from parts of East Farndon village to the south of the SDA. These are relatively distant views at c. 2km from high ground on the northern edge of the village, with much of the SDA visible as are also parts of Market Harborough to the east
- Views into the SDA from parts of Foxton Road, to the west of the SDA. There are views towards the SDA from parts of the road where the intervening landform is lower e.g. at the junction with the private Road to Gartree.
- Views into the SDA from parts of Gallow Field Road on the northern edge of the SDA. There are relatively open views from this road, which is located on higher ground. There is a short length of hedgerow along part of the road, which limits visibility of the SDA for its duration, but otherwise the individual trees along a remaining section of the road are visually permeable.
- Views out of the SDA:
 - Towards unattractive buildings at Gartree Prison to the north west. The visual relationship between any future development and these buildings will require careful consideration.
 - From Lubenham Hill. There are a number of views from the formal right of way and informal routes. To the east there is a direct view towards St Dionysius' church spire in the centre of Market Harborough from the public footpath that crosses the hill in the southern part of the SDA. The layout of any future development in this vicinity should ideally frame this view in order to maintain the connection with the town centre. There are also elevated views from the footpath to the west towards Lubenham from the edge of the SDA. From the informal routes near the copse on Lubenham Hill top there are wide panoramic views to the north and north west across the SDA and to the landscape beyond.

Designations

3.13 There are a few Conservation Areas in the vicinity of the SDA. The closest is the length of the Grand Union Canal, which is partly within the SDA. The other Conservation Areas are at Lubenham and Foxton, beyond the SDA (see Figure 1). The Grand Union Canal Conservation Area is designated by Leicestershire County Council and covers the entire length of the Canal, including the Harborough Arm, within Leicestershire due to its significant archaeological and historical resource that reflects the importance of waterways as major transport networks from the late eighteenth century through to the mid-nineteenth century. The Conservation Areas at Lubenham and Foxton contain the historic core of the villages. Careful consideration should be given to preserve or enhance the setting of these Conservation Areas.

3.14 The Harborough District Core Strategy sets out the principle of a potential Area of Separation between Lubenham and Market Harborough. As established in 'saved' policy EV/3 of the Harborough District Local Plan, Areas of Separation are intended to preserve the predominantly open character and maintain open land separating settlements in order to prevent coalescence. In December 2011 Harborough District undertook a review of Areas of Separation. This identified a potential boundary of a new Area of Separation between Lubenham and Market Harborough, although the eastern boundary is still to be determined following identification of the full extent of the SDA. The physical and visual separation between the two settlements should be maintained.

Rights of Way

3.15 There are a number of existing Public Rights of Way through the area of search for the SDA. These include part of a footpath from the eastern edge of Lubenham, which crosses the A4304 and rises over Lubenham Hill towards the western edge of Market Harborough near Brookfield Road. A further public footpath runs from the north east edge of Lubenham, around the western edge of the northernmost hill in the SDA, to the north east (in the direction of Greenacres caravan park). There are also two footpath routes which run from the Grand Union Canal and then north west towards Gartree Prison and on towards Foxton. These routes should be carefully considered and accommodated in the layout of any proposed development within the SDA.

3.16 At present, there are no formal existing circular routes within or around the SDA. Development within the SDA and green space that could be associated with it offers the opportunity to create a significantly enhanced network of routes for both new residents and those already living in the vicinity. These could include a number of notable panoramas and viewpoints.

Access

3.17 Main vehicular access into the SDA can only occur from a limited number of locations, given the configuration of the existing built edge of Market Harborough and the location of the Grand Union Canal. Possible locations for access into the SDA include:

- From Lubenham Hill to the south of the SDA. This access could be located either directly from Lubenham Hill within the built up area to the east or further to the west. If located to the east the access point would be better contained within the urban area and more sympathetic from a landscape and visual perspective. If the access route were located to the west then this would involve a route passing outside the existing town. The route could follow the relatively low lying ground between the two hills. The route would be separated from the main areas likely to be developed and would be much more visible from Lubenham, potentially impacting on separation between Lubenham and Market Harborough. Such a route would need substantive planting and mitigation.

- From Leicester Road to the east of the SDA. There is an existing roundabout that provides access to the Airfield Business Park and this could provide access to the SDA at an existing junction. There is also a suggestion by one of the developers for an access into the SDA through a lay-by off Leicester Road and with a new bridge over the Grand Union Canal. This alternative would have a greater environmental impact on the existing vegetation and the Grand Union Canal Conservation Area. If this route were identified as being required from a highway perspective then sensitive design of a bridge, possibly with restricted access would be required to minimise impacts. An improved bridge at this location would improve disabled access as the current footpaths require negotiation of a steep footbridge.

Interface with other development

3.18 Any proposals for development within the SDA will need to carefully consider existing surrounding development and the interface with them. The following should be considered:

- The interface with Airfield Business Park. There is currently some limited containment of the Business Park by mounding and very young planting. This will increase as the planting matures. Land uses and boundary treatments in this vicinity will need to consider this and the relationship with the built form of the Business Park. Views towards the landmark Harborough Innovation Centre building, which has recently won an award for its construction, will also need to be carefully considered.
- The interface with unattractive buildings at the Highways Depot in the north east corner of the SDA. Views towards these buildings will need to be carefully considered.
- The interface with existing housing developments on the western edge of Market Harborough e.g. The Woodlands, Brookfield Road, Knoll Street, Gardiner Street and Hill Top Close. As discussed under the 'Views' section above, many of these properties currently experience views over the open countryside located within the SDA and beyond. Factors such as overlooking, shading and proximity of tree planting will also need to be considered.
- The frontage of any development along Lubenham Hill should also be considered carefully. The existing pattern of development is for properties to front on to the road with a footpath and a wide verge containing tree planting creating separation between the properties and the road. A similar pattern would be desirable along Lubenham Hill.
- The interface with Greenacres Caravan Park and adjacent properties such as Kosi Korner. The land adjacent to Greenacres is also used for horse grazing by some residents. Furthermore, similar considerations to those for other adjacent housing developments should be taken into account.
- The interface with the potential future showground site in the northern area of the SDA. The showground which has planning approval through a Section 106 Agreement in

association with the Airfield Business Park development would be used for agricultural shows. Boundary treatments and the irregular use of the showground would need to be carefully considered.

Screening requirements

- 3.19 At present the northern part of the SDA in particular is very open and devoid of vegetation. Definition of the northern and north western boundaries of the SDA will be important to define the edge of the SDA to visually contain any development and reduce visibility from the wider surrounding area.

4 Strategic Development Area – Detailed Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity

4.1 The methodology used in this assessment to assess the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development, while respecting its character, is based on the guidance in Topic Paper 6 – ‘Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity’. This paper forms part of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Heritage ‘Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland’. Topic Paper 6 also reflects the thinking in the publication, ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ 2002. A similar method was used in the Market Harborough wide study undertaken in 2009.

4.2 The methodology developed for this study adopts the following premise that:

“existing landscape features + visual sensitivity = Overall Landscape Sensitivity”

4.3 A number of criteria have been selected to identify both existing landscape features and visual sensitivities. These criteria reflect both the national guidance in Topic Paper 6 and the particular circumstances for the rural landscape around Market Harborough.

4.4 The criteria were grouped into primary factors (representing features that are more permanent in the landscape, such as landform) and secondary factors (representing features that are of a more temporary or transient nature).

4.5 The following criteria have been selected to reflect existing landscape features:

- slope analysis (primary)
- vegetation enclosure (primary)
- the complexity and scale of the landscape (secondary)
- the condition of the landscape (secondary)

4.6 The following criteria have been selected to reflect visual sensitivity:

- openness to public view (secondary)
- openness to private views (secondary)
- relationship with existing urban built form (primary)
- prevention of coalescence (primary)
- scope to mitigate the development (primary)

4.7 It is recognised that Topic Paper 6 makes reference to a wider range of factors within what is termed Landscape Character Sensitivity. However, in the context of this assessment it is assumed that these topics are covered elsewhere by the District Council e.g. nature conservation and

cultural heritage features. It is considered that for the purpose of this assessment the main relevant existing landscape and visual factors are addressed in the above categories.

- 4.8 The Overall Landscape Sensitivity provides an evaluation of the sensitivity of a land parcel in broad strategic terms. In order to assess the Overall Landscape Capacity of a land parcel, landscape value was added to the equation, as follows.

"Overall Landscape Sensitivity + Landscape Value = Overall Landscape Capacity"

- 4.9 In the absence of any specific stakeholder consultation, the landscape value of the land parcels was assessed by considering proximity to landscape designations. In Harborough District this approach was informed by the presence of the local designation 'Areas of Particularly Attractive Countryside'. However, this designation was not carried forward to the Adopted Core Strategy. At a more local level appropriate to the study for the SDA the presence of Conservation Areas has been used and in particular the Grand Union Canal corridor which is a landscape scale feature. Any development which could affect the visual setting of a Conservation Area is considered to be an important aspect of the landscape and visual setting.
- 4.10 The landscape within the SDA was assessed at a finer grain than in the previous 2009 assessment. This involved sub dividing some of previous land parcels into smaller units based on visual and landscape characteristics.
- 4.11 To effectively assess the landscape capacity of a site, an assumption is made as to the form that the potential development will take. For the purposes of this study it is assumed that development would include in the main 2-3 storey residential development. It is not anticipated that there would be any taller structures in the assessment.
- 4.12 Each site was assessed against the criteria noted above, using a 5-point scale from A to E (guided by a definitions/descriptions that have been devised for this particular study to reflect local characteristics). These definitions are contained in Table A below.
- 4.13 The criteria were then scored, with 5 points being awarded to A's (the most suitable for development) and 1 point to E's (the least suitable for development). The scores were totalled for each Land Parcel to provide both a Landscape Sensitivity Profile and a Landscape Capacity Profile. Parcels with an overall higher score are considered to be relatively less sensitive to change and to also have a relatively higher capacity. The total score is then allocated an Overall Capacity value by using the following range. The bandings between categories have been defined based on the range of scores achieved across the parcels within the SDA search area. This work compares the relative capacity of land parcels within the SDA area. It does not compare the capacity of land within the SDA area with other potential development areas surrounding Market Harborough. As such, the scores and colour coding identified in this assessment for each land parcel cannot be compared with the wider Market Harborough Landscape Character Assessment.

19 – 21 = Low Landscape Capacity

22 – 24 = Medium Low Landscape Capacity

25 – 27 = Medium Landscape Capacity

28 – 30 = Medium High Landscape Capacity

31 – 33 = High Landscape Capacity

- 4.14 Completed appraisal forms for each Land Parcel within or adjacent to the SDA area of search can be found in Appendix 1, with the results illustrated on Figure 5. It should be emphasized that no absolute conclusion should be drawn from the numerical totals. The influence of individual criteria in a given Land Parcel and in the context of the wider Landscape Character should also be given due consideration. There may be individual criteria, particularly where they are primary criteria and in the 'E' category, where it is possible that development may be incompatible unless it can be effectively mitigated. It is important that the overall spread and balance of the profiles is fully considered rather than just the total Landscape Capacity value. In other words, each proposal will still need to be considered on its merits.

Table A

Criteria group	Criteria	Measurement of criteria	Comments
Existing Landscape Features	Slope analysis	A= Plateau (away from edge) B= Rolling /undulating landform providing some enclosure C= Tributary valleys/lower valley slopes/floodplain edge D= Valley floor/floodplain E= Elevated landforms, plateau edge, ridges and prominent slopes on valley sides with limited enclosure	
	Enclosure by vegetation	A= Enclosed by mature vegetation – extensive treebelts/woodland B= Semi-enclosed by vegetation - moderate woodland cover, good quality tall hedgerows/ hedgerows with hedgerow trees C= Fragmented vegetation - scattered small woodlands, fragmented shelterbelts and/or hedgerows D= Limited/poor hedges (with no trees) and/or isolated copses E= Largely open with minimal vegetation	
	Complexity/ Scale	A= Extensive simple landscape with single land uses B= Large scale landscape with limited land use and variety C= Large or medium scale landscape with variations in pattern, texture and scale D= Small or medium scale landscape with a variety in pattern, texture and scale E= Intimate and organic landscape with a richness in pattern, texture and scale	
	Landscape Character Quality/ Condition	A= Area of weak character in a poor condition B= Area of weak character in a moderate condition or of a moderate character in a weak condition C= Area of weak character in a good condition or of a moderate character in a moderate condition or of a strong character in a poor condition D= Area of moderate character in a good condition or of a strong character in a moderate condition E= Area of strong character in a good condition	

Criteria group	Criteria	Measurement of criteria	Comments
Visual Factors	Openness to public view	A= Site is well contained from public views B= Site is generally well contained from public views C= Site is partially contained from public views D= Site is moderately open to public views E= Site is very open to public views	Public views will include views from Roads, Rights of Way and public open space. The evaluation considers a summer and winter evaluation. However due to the time of the study the summer evaluation was estimated based on the character of the vegetation. This criterion is also considered in association with 'Scope to mitigate the development' criteria. Score will depend on the extent of the visibility from all the site perimeters and the rights of way through site.
	Openness to private view	A= Site is well contained from private views B= Site is generally well contained from private views C= Site is partially contained from private views D= Site is moderately open to private views E= Site is very open to private views	This relates to private views from residential properties. The evaluation considers a summer and winter evaluation. However due to the time of the study the summer evaluation was estimated based on the character of the vegetation. This criterion is also considered in association with 'Scope to mitigate the development' criteria. The score will depend on the extent of the visibility from all the site perimeters.
	Relationship with existing urban built form	A= Location where built development will form a natural extension of an adjacent part of urban fabric B= Location where built development will form some close associations with the existing parts of urban fabric C= Location where built development will form some moderate associations with existing urban fabric D= Location where built development will only form some limited associations with the existing urban fabric due to major obstacles E= Location where development will be isolated from and not form any relationship with existing urban fabric	

Criteria group	Criteria	Measurement of criteria	Comments
	Prevention of coalescence	<p>A= Development would not compromise any separation</p> <p>B= Development would have slight impact on separation</p> <p>C= Development would have moderate impact on separation</p> <p>D= Development would significantly compromise separation</p> <p>E= Development would cause complete coalescence</p>	
Potential Landscape Features	Scope to mitigate the development	<p>A= Good scope to provide mitigation in the short to medium term in harmony with existing landscape pattern</p> <p>B= Good scope to provide mitigation in the medium term and in keeping with existing landscape pattern</p> <p>C= Moderate scope to provide mitigation in the medium term broadly in keeping with existing landscape pattern</p> <p>D= Limited scope to provide adequate mitigation in keeping with the existing landscape in the medium term</p> <p>E= Very limited scope to provide adequate mitigation in the medium to long term</p>	This is an assessment based on landscape character, aesthetic factors - scale, enclosure, pattern, movement – overall visibility of site and consideration of existing viewpoints
Landscape Value	Local Landscape Designations	<p>A= Location where built development will have no impact</p> <p>B= Location where built development will have slight impact</p> <p>C= Location where built development will have moderate impact</p> <p>D= Location where built development is adjacent to designated area, and /or will have high impact</p> <p>E= Location fully within a designated area of landscape value</p>	This criteria is used as a proxy for Landscape Value in the absence of specific stakeholder consultation, and includes consideration of Conservation Area designations

5 Strategic Development Area – Comment on submitted evidence

5.1 As mentioned in Section 1, two applications have already been submitted for residential development within the SDA. Reports relating to the landscape and visual effects of these developments have been submitted by the applicants' consultants in support of the planning applications. This evidence is now considered below.

11/00112/OUT - Land at Airfield Farm, Market Harborough

5.2 This proposed development would include:

- around 1,000 dwellings at varying densities, as well as access roads, a local centre with retail (A1,A3,A4,A5), healthcare (D1) and community (D2) uses, primary school, construction of marina with hotel (C1) and retail/leisure uses (A1, A3, A4, D2)
- of the total site area, 32.82Ha would be used to accommodate residential development
- 16.16ha would comprise of larger open spaces, including sports pitches and a country park
- a further 3.04Ha would be provided as open space within residential areas
- formation of surface water storage ponds

5.3 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for the proposed development indicates the following points, particularly in relation to mitigation for any proposed development:

- Site selection has been the main mitigation, as the former airfield site has few landscape components of any value - TLP generally agree with this statement and consider that the gently sloping landform and open character increases the relative suitability of the site.
- The opportunity arises for additional tree and shrub planting. It would not be appropriate to surround the site in a belt of woodland, but groups of trees and open spaces would form a soft edge to the development and provide opportunities for properties to overlook the open countryside - TLP generally agree that the edge of the development needs to be carefully assimilated into the surrounding countryside. They also agree that a continuous belt of woodland planting around the application site may not be appropriate as it is not in character with the local pattern of woodland cover. A mix of copses and hedges may be more appropriate. However, the proposed boundary treatments do not appear to provide enough containment in some locations.
- The secondary access from Leicester Road has potential for adverse landscape and visual impacts. Careful scheme design would mitigate this effect, particularly the location of the access in an area where diseased Horse Chestnut trees have been recommended for removal - TLP have concerns about the impact and design of any road bridge that would cross the Grand Union Canal.

- The landscape design of the scheme provided effective mitigation and the concept draws off the 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy - TLP consider that whilst the scheme would help to deliver a strategic Green Infrastructure Corridor along the Grand Union Canal, it does not fully address the 'city scale' Green Infrastructure Corridor between Leicester and Market Harborough.
- Major visual impacts would only be experienced from footpaths passing through the application site. There would be no visibility from Lubenham or Harborough Road to the south and the Zone of Visual Influence indicated for the proposed development indicates no visibility from Market Harborough or from Foxton Road to the west of the proposed development - TLP consider that there would be wider major visual impacts and that there would be visibility of the proposed development from parts of Foxton Road and from higher ground to the south, particularly around East Farndon. The representative viewpoints should also cover a wider area. The proposed built area of the scheme extends further to the north west than is considered appropriate.
- Effects on Landscape Character would be moderate to negligible for the application site and surrounding Landscape Character Areas. The Landscape Character Areas are based on previous work by TLP - TLP consider that the effect on the Airfield Farm Landscape Character Area would be higher than moderate in EIA terms.

5.4 The Design and Access Statement accompanying the planning application also identified the following landscape and visual related opportunities and constraints associated with the proposed development, which TLP are in agreement with:

- Opportunities
 - Grand Union Canal - opportunity to create canal side leisure facilities and gives unique character to site.
 - Provision of new community, leisure and recreation facilities.
 - Degraded land - site is located in a former airfield and lost most of its original hedgerows and trees, offering the opportunity for new planting and to increase the biodiversity in the area.
 - Low lying land adjacent to canal – opportunity to create a marina offering attractive leisure facilities to both new and existing communities and mooring facilities on the canal network.
 - Footpaths - site offers a number of footpaths, encouraging walking and facilitating connection to the surrounding area.

- Towpath - offers attractive canal side walk, long distance walking route and access to Foxton Locks.
- Potential Green Corridor - opportunity to create an attractive, publicly accessible Country Park serving the wider area, incorporating flood meadow attenuation ponds and increasing biodiversity.
- Existing hedgerows - incorporated where possible to create green links
- Existing crossing points to be retained, allowing connection to the east of the canal and Market Harborough. The proposed southern access to the site offers the opportunity to create a feature bridge allowing pedestrian and vehicular access.
- Main access points directly off Harborough Road, with access to the existing transport network and wider area.
- Plan out crime and antisocial behaviour in a new residential layout.
- Constraints
 - Gas main - running along the northern boundary of the site, the gas main and its easement need to be considered during the design stage.
 - Edge to open countryside - to be carefully designed and create a positive edge.
 - Existing trees and hedgerows to be retained.
 - Integration with adjacent land uses – the area has developed sporadically with some commercial uses nearby.

5.5 In addition to the opportunities and constraints, the Design and Access Statement also indicates the following in terms of Landscape Design:

- Edges – providing a soft edge to the development to create a varied settlement edge with small groups of trees in copses to break up views of the built form.
- Green Infrastructure – the landscape design for the new development includes extensive green spaces to contribute to the 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- Spaces with Identity – distinctive but linked green spaces would be developed. Diverse environments and habitats would be created, including increased public access. Green corridors would be established through the built development, incorporating play facilities and allotments.

5.6 TLP agree that these are sound principles on which to base the Landscape Design for the proposed development. However, the design could go further in delivering these themes, particularly in softening the edge of the development and providing green infrastructure corridors.

12/00044/FUL - Land off Lubenham Hill, Market Harborough

5.7 This proposed development would include:

- 127 residential dwellings
- access from Lubenham Hill
- a central link road that could be widened to provide part of the link road from Lubenham Road to Leicester Road, as required in Core Strategy Policy CS13
- retention of the public footpath through the site in situ
- re-profiling of the site to lower the development area and raise the ridgeline
- attenuation of surface water run-off in wetland open spaces to the east of the proposed development
- provision of play areas

5.8 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for the proposed development indicates the following points, particularly in relation to mitigation for any proposed development:

- The western edge of the development has been kept well back from the ridgeline, with the last line of housing units and associated structures cut into the ridgeline so that they are not visible above the ridgeline in views from the west - Whilst TLP agree that development on or breaking the ridgeline, particularly when viewed from the west, should be avoided the cut and fill proposals for the site indicate mounding on top of the ridgeline. This could appear unnatural and incongruous when viewed from the surrounding area.
- Ensuring that street lighting has full horizontal cut-offs and do not protrude above the ridgeline - TLP agree this is an important consideration.
- Positioning the first line of houses to accord with the building line along Lubenham Hill and retaining or replacing avenue trees - TLP agree that this is good practice, although other elements of the street and footpath patterns on Lubenham Hill are not being continued.
- Limiting the scale and extent of housing so that development is commensurate with other residential areas in this part of Market Harborough - TLP do not consider that this is an important consideration given the location of the application site within the SDA.
- Planting trees and shrubs along the northern boundary to reduce potential visual impacts from the north - TLP do not consider that the proposals accompanying the application provide sufficient planting along this boundary.
- Retention and management of existing woodland copses, hedgerows and hedgerow trees around the boundaries of the site, excluding at the site access on the southern boundary - TLP agree that this is appropriate.

- Planting of additional trees along the eastern boundary to soften views from existing residences, woodland planting along the ridge to link existing copses and provision of trees and shrubs along roads within the development - TLP do not consider that the proposals accompanying the application provide much planting along this eastern boundary. Also the interface with the existing houses appears close and would potentially give rise to overlooking of first floor rooms at Hill Top Close.
- Substantial visual effects would be experienced by users of Lubenham Hill and Brookfield Road, users of the public footpath through the site, residents of some odd numbered properties on Lubenham Hill, residents of Hill Top Close and some residents of Brookfield Road - TLP agree that these are the most significantly affected visual receptors but that the mitigation measures proposed would go some way to reducing these impacts.
- Effects on Landscape Character would be limited as the development would largely be perceived as an extension of the existing urban area - TLP consider that there would be localised significant effects on landscape character.

5.9 The Design and Access Statement accompanying the planning application also identified the following landscape and visual related opportunities, constraints and design principles associated with the proposed development, which TLP are in agreement with unless comments indicate otherwise:

- Opportunities:
 - Access possible on to Lubenham Road
 - Scope to provide good quality residential development along Lubenham Hill
 - Opportunity to protect and enhance ecology on site
 - Scope to maintain and reduce surface water runoff rates
- Constraints:
 - Located beyond settlement boundary
 - Sloping topography – TLP are concerned about the appropriateness of the cut and fill proposals indicated as part of the planning application.
 - No visibility of development beyond ridgeline on western side of site - TLP are concerned about the appearance of additional mounding on top of the ridgeline as seen from the west
 - Public footpath runs across site
 - Established boundary vegetation

- Design Principles:
 - Create an attractive development that reflects the high quality built development of Lubenham Hill
 - Avoid breaching the ridgeline so the development is not visible from the west - TLP are concerned about the appearance of additional mounding on top of the ridgeline.
 - Safeguard the potential for a Link Road between Lubenham Hill and Leicester Road
 - Provide a satisfactory relationship with the housing development to the east - TLP are concerned about this relationship, particularly with properties on Hill Top Close.
 - Integrate and protect existing landscape features
 - Protect highway safety
 - Maximise the potential for connectivity with the surrounding area
 - Protect and enhance safety and security
 - Minimise the potential for flood risk from surface water runoff

5.10 In addition to the opportunities and constraints, the Design and Access Statement also indicates the following information in terms of Landscape Design:

- The existing footpath that runs east-west across the site is retained without alteration to its alignment and it is included within a green corridor with landscaped areas and play areas adjacent to it - TLP are pleased that the alignment and therefore views towards St Dionysius' church in the centre of Market Harborough would be retained. However, the proximity of the houses to the route should frame and not restrict view to the church from the right of way. This should be demonstrated by the applicant.
- 1.21ha of open space would be provided, with the majority proposed for the western part of the site and a landscaped area along Lubenham Hill - TLP agree that these are important areas to provide open space and landscape treatments. There are concerns about the steepness of the earthworks within the open space on the western boundary.
- Ground levels would be amended across the site, with the central part raised by 0.5-1m and the western part lowered up to 2.5m. The western area would be re-profiled to create a sweeping topographic appearance that is more usable as open space and an ecological corridor - As previously mentioned TLP have concerns about the extent and scale of the earthworks and how appropriate they are. The earthworks proposed would significantly alter the existing landform, with the Isopachyte Contours (cut and fill) plan indicating that in some locations (to the west of the proposed housing) the existing ground level would be lowered by 5m and that mounding on the western boundary would be up to 3m above the

existing ground level. These alterations to the landform could have implications on retained site boundary vegetation where cut or fill would take place within the root protection area. The mounding along the western boundary could also create an unnatural looking landform on top of the existing hill, particularly given its proposed height and the need to taper the mounding at the ends to retain the copses at either end. There is also a concern that much of the area given over to open space within the development would be less usable, as well as the route of the public footpath, due to the steepness of the proposed slopes, which are typically 1 in 4 to 1 in 5.

- Existing vegetation, with the exception of approximately 18m of hedgerow in the vicinity of the site access, would be retained - TLP agree with this approach. However, the impacts from access and sight lines on roadside trees should be verified.
- Existing vegetation would be augmented with a variety of other vegetation, which would significantly increase the biodiversity value of the site - TLP agree with this approach.

6 Strategic Development Area – Appropriate boundaries for development

- 6.1 After identifying the landscape and visual opportunities and constraints of the SDA, along with the more detailed Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity and reviewing the landscape and visual evidence submitted with the two planning applications within the SDA, it is possible to identify appropriate boundaries in landscape and visual terms and to diagrammatically indicate appropriate land uses within the SDA. These indications are based on landscape and visual factors. Other considerations may require alterations to the boundary or land uses.
- 6.2 The proposed boundary of development and therefore extent of the SDA has been based on the relative capacity of the Land Parcels identified in the detailed study to accommodate residential development. This capacity is based on a number of factors including: the visibility of the Land Parcels, the underlying landform, retention of existing vegetation and consideration of surrounding land uses. A boundary has been drawn to indicate the recommended extent of built development.
- 6.3 In addition areas of strategic open space are indicated that should also be brought forward as an integrated part of the development and the Green Infrastructure provision. This open space particularly includes land to the east and west of the SDA.
- 6.4 The land on the eastern edge of the SDA area of search is recommended to be left as undeveloped to retain the setting of the Grand Union Canal and increase its recreational and green infrastructure value.
- 6.5 The land on the western edge of the SDA area of search is recommended to be left as undeveloped to maintain the visual and physical separation between Market Harborough and Lubenham as well as to create a high quality and defensible boundary as part of the development. The areas structural landscape provision and associated planting and open space will also provide for increased accessibility and connectivity for all existing and future residents. The open spaces would vary in size and character dependent on the site circumstances. For areas with lower capacity, including areas of more prominent higher ground the open space areas are more extensive. For areas where there is a relatively higher capacity for built development a narrower belt of strategic landscape is indicated. In these higher capacity areas the recommended structural landscape areas are shown. However, they should be a minimum of 30m wide at any point. This width is recommended to provide sufficient space to form a robust landscape boundary to the open countryside with associated space for a suitable recreational access route adjacent to the SDA boundary.
- 6.6 Land to the north of the proposed boundary of the SDA, although considered relatively suitable for development, has been excluded from the SDA due to the existing consent for the Showground site. See Figure 6. The presence of the oil pipeline is also a constraint to the extension of built development further north together with the objective of minimising coalescence with Gartree.

6.7 In addition areas of the land indicated as having relatively higher capacity for built development may also be required to meet the required standards for sports pitch provision within the development.

6.8 The following principles should be adhered to for any development within the SDA:

- Development should not break the skyline of the two hills within the southern area of the SDA. It should also be set away from the upper sections of these hills to ensure that it is not visible from Lubenham to the south west so that a visual and physical separation is maintained between Market Harborough and Lubenham. The eastern boundary of the proposed Area of Separation should follow the extent of the SDA indicated on Figure 6. The potential effects on views from the west and other key locations should be clarified by the use of photomontages and cross sections and include areas of built development and mitigation at year 1 and year 15.
- Development should avoid the steepest slopes within the SDA in order avoid the need for unnecessary and inappropriate earthworks.
- The corridor of the Grand Union Canal, including the wider setting and fields to the west up to the tree lined stream, should be retained as open space in order to both respect this setting and provide a strategic green infrastructure corridor in accordance with the 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- Existing vegetation and field boundary hedgerows should be retained as far as possible and enhanced to form appropriate boundaries to development or local green infrastructure corridors wherever possible.
- Existing rights of way should be retained and enhanced as part of local green infrastructure corridors wherever possible, or re-routed to more appropriate locations if necessary. Additional rights of way or areas of public access should also be created through areas of open space in order to provide circular routes and increase accessibility and enhance the experience of users, both for new and existing residents of the local area.
- Interfaces with existing residential areas should be treated carefully, in consultation with local residents as far as possible, allowing properties to overlook areas of open space or creating screening along property boundaries to mitigate the proposed development.
- Boundaries of proposed development should follow logical features within the existing landscape or create new boundaries that reflect the pattern of the surrounding landscape. These boundaries should be softened with open space and tree and shrub planting. Full enclosure of the boundaries with tree planting would not be in keeping with the local landscape, but the creation of copses and tall linking hedgerows would be appropriate.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 The inclusion of an indicated strategic location for growth to the north west of Market Harborough in the Harborough District Core Strategy acknowledges that the area has capacity to accommodate future development. The previous study undertaken by TLP identified those significant areas of the SDA that had Medium capacity to accommodate residential development.
- 7.2 More detailed consideration of the SDA area of search has assessed the relative capacity of Land Parcels across the SDA to accommodate residential development. This consideration of smaller parcels of land has identified areas of relatively higher capacity to accommodate development within the northern part of the SDA area of search and lower capacity in the vicinity of the Grand Union Canal and in the south west of the area of search.
- 7.3 The landscape and visual opportunities and constraints of the SDA area of search have been identified, including key views and designations to be considered, the effects of landform and existing vegetation, potential vehicular and pedestrian accesses to and through any proposed development and interfaces with existing development. These factors should be addressed by any future development.
- 7.4 The landscape and visual evidence submitted with the two planning applications already received by Harborough District Council has also been considered. This review has indicated that although both of the schemes have some merits in landscape and visual terms, neither scheme in its current form entirely addresses the landscape and visual issues affecting the SDA.
- 7.5 Appropriate boundaries for the SDA, in landscape and visual terms, have been identified, along with indicative future land uses. These take into consideration all the findings of the study as a whole and address the landscape and visual opportunities and constraints. This would create an area for the SDA that should be able to provide more than the minimum of 1,000 dwelling indicated in the Core Strategy and allow for future increases in housing requirements beyond the plan period of the Core Strategy.