



# Somerby Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Covering the villages of Somerby, Pickwell, Leesthorpe, Burrough on the Hill and the Parish countryside

**2018-2036**

*Referendum Version, December 2020*



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*Photographs supplied by Somerby Camera Club and Mr Mark Hamilton,  
with their permission and our thanks*

# FOREWORD

This Neighbourhood Plan is a blueprint for how we, the community of the parish of Somerby, intend to shape our future. It describes how we want it to look and what it will be like to live here, work here and visit here over the years covered by the Plan.

The most important thing about the Plan is that its roots are deeply embedded in the hopes, concerns and ideas that the community has so clearly articulated. It is the community's Plan in more than one sense. The community has told us what it wants. But it is also the community, in the form of the very many volunteers who have given of their time, their skills and their commitment to where we live, who have made it happen.

397 people and 31 businesses completed questionnaires in 2017 to inform this plan. Subsequently in 2019, 11 stakeholder consultees and 30 residents made 179 formal comments on the pre-submission draft of the plan. All of these inputs have been taken into account and numerous amendments have been made in response to them. There are nationally prescribed limitations on what a Neighbourhood Plan can do; for example it must have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. However as far as permissible this Plan seeks to reflect the expressed wishes of parishioners.

It is true to say that the process of plan preparation has taken significantly longer than first expected. Some important developments beyond our control have contributed materially to delay, notably new versions of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2018 and 2019 and the coming into force of the Melton Local Plan in October 2018. To some extent we had to await these developments, and when they did take place substantial changes to the emerging Neighbourhood Plan were required. Given the complexity of the task, it is no mean achievement to have progressed to the present stage and one of which we should all feel proud.

The core of the Plan is chapters 4 to 10 which detail our policies, each chapter with its introduction outlining the present situation and what we are trying to achieve.

Best regards

**Mary Anne Donovan**

**Chair**

**Somerby Parish Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee**

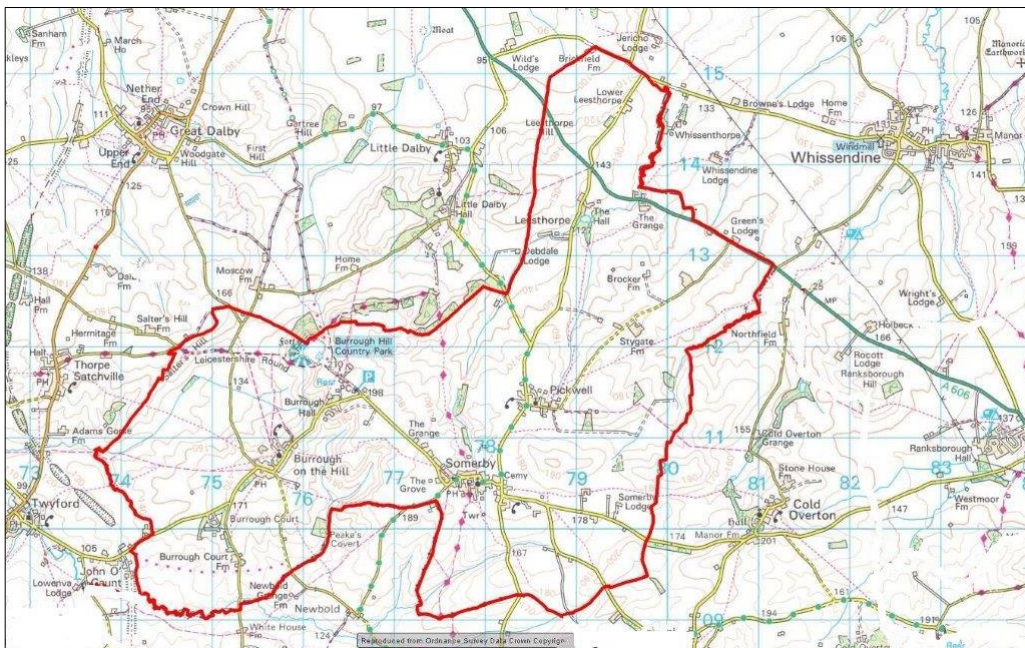
**February 2021**

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 STATUTORY COMPLIANCE

- 001 This document contains the Somerby Parish Neighbourhood Plan. It represents one part of the development plan for the Parish over the period 2018 to 2036.
- 002 Melton Borough Council, as the local planning authority, designated a Neighbourhood Area for the whole of Somerby Parish including the settlements of Somerby, Burrough on the Hill, Pickwell and Leesthorpe on 21st December 2015 to enable Somerby Parish Council to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan has been prepared by the community through the Somerby Parish Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee.
- 003 The map below shows the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area, which is contiguous with the boundary of Somerby Parish.

Figure 1: Designated Plan Area



- 004 This Neighbourhood Plan is prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011, the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended 2015), the National Planning Policy Framework 2019, and the Melton Local Plan 2018. The Parish Council, through the Advisory Committee has prepared the plan to establish a vision for the future of the parish and to set out how that vision will be realised through planning and managing land use and development change over the plan period 2018 to 2036.

005 The purpose of this Neighbourhood Plan is to guide development within the parish and provide direction to any parties wishing to submit planning applications for development within the parish. The process of producing the Plan has involved the community as widely as possible and the different topic areas are reflective of matters that are of considerable importance to Somerby parish residents, businesses and community groups.

006 Each section of the Plan covers a different topic. Under each heading there is the reason for the policies presented which provides the necessary understanding of the policy and what it is seeking to achieve. The policies themselves are those against which planning applications will be determined. Policies should be read in conjunction with the supporting text in order to fully understand them. There are also a number of 'Community Proposals' which are not policies and will not be subject to examination but represent important issues to be taken forward by the community in support of the policies themselves.

## 1.2 NATIONAL POLICY

007 The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) states:

*"Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise." (Para 2)*

*"Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development." (Para 11)*

*"The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed." (Para 12)*

*"The application of the presumption has implications for the way communities engage in neighbourhood planning. Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies." (Para 13)*

*"In situations where the presumption applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided all of the following apply:*

- a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan two years or less before the date on which the decision is made;*
- b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing*

requirement;

- c) the local planning authority has at least a three-year supply of deliverable housing sites (against its five year housing supply requirement, including the appropriate buffer as set out in paragraph 73); and
- d) the local planning authority's housing delivery was at least 45% of that required over the previous three years." (Para 14)

### **Strategic policies**

*"Plans should make explicit which policies are strategic policies. These should be limited to those necessary to address the strategic priorities of the area (and any relevant cross-boundary issues), to provide a clear starting point for any nonstrategic policies that are needed. Strategic policies should not extend to detailed matters that are more appropriately dealt with through neighbourhood plans or other non-strategic policies." (Para 21)*

### **Non-strategic policies**

*"Non-strategic policies should be used by local planning authorities and communities to set out more detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods or types of development. This can include allocating sites, the provision of infrastructure and community facilities at a local level, establishing design principles, conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment and setting out other development management policies." (Para 28)*

*"Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies." (Para 29)*

*Footnote: "Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers their area."*

*"Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict; unless they are superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted subsequently. (Para 30).*

## **1.3 NATIONAL GUIDANCE**

008 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) tells us what is meant by the terms 'general conformity' and 'strategic policies' in the NPPF and how they are to be tested. It is recognized that the NPPG is likely to change following the coming into force of the NPPF 2019 but the



applicable Paras ID: 41-074 to 41-077 are reproduced as they stand in December 2019 for ease of reference at **Supporting Document 1**.

009 This Neighbourhood Plan follows the National policy and guidance on the relationship between Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans, and based on them and *Dr Anna Hoare v The Vale of White Horse District Council [2017] EWHC 1711 (Admin), (07 July 2017)* has reached the view that the following policies of the Melton Local Plan are strategic policies with which the Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity: *All those policies in chapters up to and including chapter 8 of the Melton Local Plan.*

010 This Neighbourhood Plan seeks to meet Melton Borough's housing requirement by applying a locally sensitive spatial strategy with only one different allocation, this being the addition of a reserve housing site in Pickwell (Policy HR1, site RSOM1). This approach finds support from the NPPF 2019 Paras 13, 15, 21, 28, 29 and 78, and the NPPG (our para 008 above and **Supporting Document 1**).

## 1.4 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

011 The NPPF states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: social, environmental and economic, all of which are important and interrelated. It also states that neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic priorities.

### 012 Social

We have sought, through this Neighbourhood Plan, to deliver a number and mix of housing types, including affordable housing, to meet the assessed needs of present and future generations. Also to protect and if possible improve community facilities and open spaces for use and enjoyment in the future, ensuring the community's health, social and cultural wellbeing. Inclusiveness and community cohesion will also be fostered by promoting or reinforcing local distinctiveness in architecture.

### 013 Environmental

The Parish lies in Natural England's National Character Area 93, described as of environmental and historic value and facing significant challenges concerning the protection of its quiet, remote and rural character. This plan adopts Natural England's Statements of Environmental Opportunities for NCA 93 (reproduced for reference at **Supporting Document 2**). In order to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment we will ensure that:

- Development of whatever kind is of the right quantity and type and in the right locations, so that it does not harm but instead positively reflects and if possible improves the existing and historic character of the area;



- The most important open spaces within Somerby Parish are protected from development, to protect village identities, their important landscape settings and retain the rural nature of their surroundings.
- Development will conserve and where possible enhance biodiversity and important habitats.

#### 014 **Economic**

Whilst the community of Somerby Parish is primarily residential, there is also a valued commercial, employment and retail element. It is sought to ensure that appropriate economic activity is maintained as long as the local infrastructure can support it. This plan therefore endeavours to retain and encourage small and medium scale employment opportunities, especially those which are land-based (particularly farming) or concerned with tourism and visitors. This part of the Plan was informed by two published reports, and the business and household questionnaires conducted across the Parish in early consultation. These sources are signposted from Chapter 8.

## 1.5 CONSULTATION PROCESS

015 This Neighbourhood Plan has been developed through extensive engagement with the community. In summary:

- Initial open event
- Household questionnaire
- Business questionnaire
- Youth questionnaire
- Five public engagement days
- Interviews with community stakeholders and groups
- Articles and updates in the parish magazine 'Towards'
- The same articles and updates on the Parish Council website
- Updates to public meetings of the Parish Council
- Use of published reports and professional consultants
- Regulation 14 formal consultation
- Regulation 16 formal consultation

Details of the scope and timing of these activities, as well as the results, can be found in the Consultation Statement at **Appendix 2**.

## 2.0 LOCAL CONTEXT

### 2.1 HISTORY OF SOMERBY PARISH

*016* Somerby is a relatively new Parish having been formed in 1936 from the three original parishes of Somerby, Burrough on the Hill, and Pickwell-Leesthorpe. Therefore the villages, all settled before 1066, each have their own history and character summarized in the Environmental Chapter of the Plan.

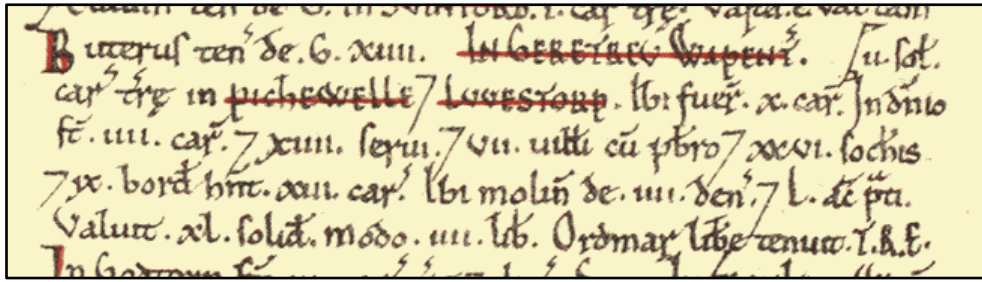
Well before modern boundaries were drawn, the Parish and its surroundings was the domain of communities whose cultural legacies remain as defining features in the largely undisturbed landscape.

At the historic heart of the Parish is the ancient monument of Burrough Hill Fort (HE 1012441), at 210m high, the finest example of its kind in Leicestershire and the most important landmark in Melton Borough. Archaeological excavation shows its settled use in the Mesolithic Age, Iron Age and Roman period. Other ancient monuments are visible from its ramparts including the nearby Iron Age enclosure of Robin-a-Tip-Toe, medieval Whatborough Hill and further afield Breedon Hill Fort, attesting to connections amongst these other age-old settlements and the Parish.

Burrough Hill Fort is not the only evidence of the long history of Parish settlement. 2017-8 excavations in Somerby village, directly to the east of Burrough Hill Fort, also reveal evidence of prehistoric, Roman, and Saxon settlement at two locations on the south and west edges of the village.

From the late 9<sup>th</sup> to early 10<sup>th</sup> Century courtesy of the Viking invasions the area fell under the Danelaw, meaning Danish rule and legal system. There is little or no archaeological legacy of the Danelaw in the Parish but the endings of the place-names Somer**by** and Leest**horpe** are Scandinavian in origin.

All the Parish settlements appear in the Domesday Book of 1086: Summerbee, Bure, Pickwelle and Looestorp. Spellings vary and there is room for discussion but between them they are credited with about 193 villagers, 204 freemen, 18 slaves and 2 priests.



*Pickwell and Leesthorpe in the Domesday Book*

The legacy of the Medieval Period is apparent in the Parish as well. There are three fine churches of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries in Somerby (13<sup>th</sup>) Burrough (12<sup>th</sup>) and Pickwell (13<sup>th</sup>) and also extensive, well preserved earthwork remains of medieval settlement in the fringe areas of Somerby, Leesthorpe and Burrough. The ancient monument of Owston Augustinian Abbey, now in Harborough district, but once with landholdings in Somerby is visible from the south of this village and connected by a track which is now part of the Leicestershire Round.

The four villages of the Parish are all linear in form with large ridge and furrow fields which radiate from their edges preserving a record of agricultural practices of the period. Ancient tracks, hollow ways and drover's roads survive, connecting the villages to open fields, to Burrough Hill and once onto the medieval markets of Melton and Leicester. The architectural heritage of the villages falls into three main periods, including the Jacobean and vernacular of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the classical of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the Domestic Revival and Arts and Craft style of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Overlaying the early landscapes are the designed park lands and gardens of seven remaining country house estates, likely once sites of manor houses or part of manorial estates and at the end of the villages. Although no longer all in single ownership, their 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century built forms, including dwellings, estate cottages, stables, service and ornamental garden buildings and their spatial relationships to their village and open countryside remain defining features of the local landscape.

A record of the built and landscape history of the Parish is preserved in a number of maps associated with past landowners, including the 1607 Brasenose College, Oxford map of Burrough on the Hill, two 18<sup>th</sup> century Pickwell maps and a 19<sup>th</sup> century estate map of Somerby. These documents illustrate the remarkable survival of historic settlement, field and woodland patterns within the Parish.

The stability of economic land use was responsible for the historic character of Somerby Parish today. There is evidence of several ironstone quarries in Pickwell, Somerby and Burrough on the Hill, which provided the distinctive building materials of the villages and iron ore, and which have left striking visual features in the landscape.

However, it was the predominance of agriculture, evolving in the 16<sup>th</sup> century from cultivation to sheep and cattle grazing on the high pasture lands of the Parish, and later, the successful economy associated with country sports tourism in the 19<sup>th</sup> to mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries which contributed to the

preservation of the historic landscape. There was, and is, a thriving equestrian economy in the Parish, especially in Somerby village.

A review of 19<sup>th</sup> century Kelly's Directories and other sources show a diversity of occupations in the Parish. About half of residents were employed in agricultural work, with the rest employed in trades, crafts, professions and domestic service. Retail services, such as hostelrys, dress and boot makers, liveries, also had a particular role in the area, for locals as well as seasonal tourists. Religious diversity was apparent. Along with the established Church, communities of Quakers and Primitive and Wesleyan Methodists lived in the Parish.

During World War II, the 10th Parachute Battalion was billeted in Somerby village in the run-up to Operation Market Garden. The history of the troops' interactions with residents was portrayed in the film *A Bridge Too Far*, and their time here has been commemorated by an annual gathering and parade for the past 70 years, massing at the entrance to The Grove where many of the troops were housed.

## 2.2 SOMERBY PARISH IN 2019

### 2.2.1 Location and composition

*017* Somerby Parish is a small rural parish covering 2,178 hectares (about 22 sq km) in the south east of Melton Borough, Leicestershire. It is part of the area commonly known as High East Leicestershire. The centre of the Parish is roughly equidistant from the towns of Melton and Oakham, both about 9km away. The Parish contains the three villages of Somerby, Pickwell and Burrough on the Hill plus the hamlet of Leesthorpe and a number of separate dwellings and farms. All roads in the Parish can be classed as minor except for about 4km of the A606 which crosses the northern tip of the Parish.

### 2.2.2 Population and demographics

*018* This information is taken from the National Census 2011, so it must be borne in mind that it is already eight years old. The Household Questionnaire provided additional detail but the census is preferred here for its presumed 100% return rate. In 2011 the population was recorded as 812, a 2.6% increase on 2001. The following observations can be made:

- About 16% of residents are aged under 16 which is below the 18% average for the district and region the 19% national rate.
- About 67% are of 'working age' (16 to 64) which is higher than the district (64%) and regional and national rates (65%).
- About 17% are aged 65+ which is in line with the regional rate and between the district (18%) and national rates (16%). The figure was the same in 2001, the percentage of over- 65's has not increased.

- The median age of parishioners is 45 compared to 43 for the district, 40 for the region and 39 for England. The conclusion must be that people of working age tend to be older within the 16-64 age band than elsewhere.
- At 75% the Parish's economic activity rate is higher than the district (74%) regional (69%) and national (70%) rates. Self-employment at 17% is lower than the district rate (22%) but still much higher than the regional (9%) and national (10%) rates. Unemployment is about 3%.
- About 1% of the population give their ethnicity as other than 'white'.
- About 1% give their religion as other than 'Christian' and 28.4% said they have no religion.
- Education levels are on average almost the same as for the district, region and country except for Level 4 and above where the figure of 34.4% is higher than the district (26.2%) region (23.6%) and country (27.4%).

019 Combining the Census with the Household Questionnaire the Parish population can be characterised as predominantly white, slightly older than average, well-educated, economically active, rural-minded, and supportive and caring about their environment and community.

### 2.2.3 Housing

020 According to Census 2011 the number of occupied households was 387, a 10.6% increase on 2001. The Parish has supported significant housebuilding in the past and in 2019 housing development is ongoing independent of Local or Neighbourhood plan allocations. For example, from 2011 to 2019, approximately 38 new homes were built in Somerby Parish. As at December 2019 a further 8 were under construction and planning permission has been approved for a further 26 houses, all of them outside the allocations in the Melton Local Plan ie. Additional to them. This increase in housing provision has been achieved organically by infill and high density conversion of existing commercial or agricultural buildings. There has been minimal harm to the character of the Conservation villages, historic landscapes or community cohesion. A list of the 153 houses built since 1991 or under approval by late 2019 appears at **Appendix 3**.

- Average household size is lower and average number of rooms and bedrooms higher than the district, regional and national averages. This is some evidence of relative under-occupancy of homes.
- The rate of home ownership (whether outright or with a mortgage) is lower than for the district but higher than the region or country.
- The rate of private rental is higher than for the district, region or country. The rate of social rental is in line with the district but lower than for the region or the country.

- The Parish has a larger proportion of properties in high value council tax bands. Taking this fact in conjunction with number of rooms it would be fair to characterise houses in the Parish as relatively costly compared to most of the district and region (but not necessarily the country).

021 Parishioners in the Household Questionnaire have expressed majority support for approximately 25 – 50 houses in the whole parish over the next 20 years. This is consistent with Melton Borough Council’s identified residual requirement of 44. Further preferences are that new housing should be in small developments of 10 or less, spread across the Parish and over time, and contained within existing village boundaries rather than on open countryside. There is support for starter homes or low-cost housing, and for provision for older people.

## 2.2.4 Environment

022 Somerby Parish is part of National Character Area 93 (High East Leicestershire) and highly representative of its defining characteristics, which are detailed later in this plan. Natural England considers the historic character of this area to be at risk. For that reason, we have reflected the conservation principles for NCA 93 put forward by Natural England in our strategic approach to future growth in the Parish. The Household Questionnaire tells us:

- The great majority of current residents (at least 94% of Household Questionnaire respondents) say the greatest strengths of the Parish are its rural nature, access to countryside and tranquil environment.
- More residents use the footpaths and bridleways in the Parish on a weekly basis than use the pubs or shop. The attractive and well-used Leicestershire Round, Jubilee Way and National Cycling Route 64 pass through the Parish. Their use contributes to both physical and mental well-being.
- High value is placed on the traditional appearance of the villages, and historic houses and buildings including the parish churches. It is intended that such irreplaceable assets and the opportunity to appreciate them in their established settings will be robustly protected and where possible enhanced by this plan. An inventory of natural and built heritage assets appears at **Appendix 4**.

## 2.2.5 Economy and employment

023 The Parish is busy. 75% of parishioners are economically active with high representation of home workers, self-employment, micro-businesses and some small businesses. Unemployment and deprivation are relatively low.

- Land-based business dominates the landscape and indeed contributes to the attractive rural appearance of the Parish. In employment terms however farming and related businesses are much less important than they were in the past, as elsewhere across the country. They do

provide many jobs but about 80% of parishioners travel outside the Parish to work – often far outside it. Once there were many shops and trades in the villages themselves, particularly Somerby, but these are mostly gone.

- Employment is high but parishioners travel an average of 26 miles one-way for work. Employment opportunity actually in the Parish is low. Estimates of job density (jobs divided by available workforce) have been made; our own ‘theme group’ arrived at a figure of about 0.6 but did not take into account the unusual extent to which ‘local’ businesses employ from far outside the Parish. A 2017 study by Rose Regeneration puts the figure for Lower Super Output Areas Melton 06A and 06B (of which Somerby Parish makes up about 40%) at only 0.48. This is much lower than their figures for rural Leicestershire (0.64), Leicestershire (0.74) and England (0.84). This indicates that residents need to travel out for work, which is confirmed by the Household Questionnaire.
- It is a concern that if population growth exceeds employment opportunity any further it may become unsustainable on environmental and social grounds (increased carbon emissions, reduced road safety and reduced work-life balance and wellbeing.)

## 2.2.6 Transport and Infrastructure

024 The situation reflects the rural nature of the Plan Area.

- The Parish contains only one major road, about 4km of the A606. The roads connecting the villages are classed as minor roads but nonetheless traffic volume is significant and increasing. Congestion, heavy vehicles, speeding and parking problems are complained of particularly in Somerby and Pickwell villages. The wide variety of traffic types complicates matters; as everywhere cars predominate but there are also coaches, HGVs, agricultural vehicles, motorbikes, cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians.
- Following a reduction in 2019 public transport consists solely of the 100 bus service between Melton Mowbray, Syston and Parish villages. The future even of this service is uncertain due to low usage and a costly subsidy. The private car is by far the dominant means of transport.
- All the settlements have mains water and electricity but only Burrough on the Hill has gas. Superfast broadband is being introduced in stages across the Parish and the main mobile phone providers operate with variable but sometimes improving coverage and quality.

## 2.2.7 Community facilities

025 Although the Parish is relatively affluent in terms of, for example, income, education and housing the government Index of Multiple Deprivation (2015) rates it very poorly in terms of housing affordability and access to services.

- Somerby has a primary school, a doctor’s surgery, a village hall (The Memorial Hall), a church



(All Saints), a Methodist Church (in process of closing in December 2019), a small general store, a pub/restaurant (The Stilton Cheese Inn), allotments, a five-a-side football pitch and a children's play area.

- Burrough on the Hill has a church (St Mary the Virgin) a pub/restaurant (The Stag and Hounds) and small allotments. It has no village hall and the church fulfils this function to a limited extent.
- Pickwell has a small village hall, a church (All Saints) and no other community facilities. Leesthorpe has no community facilities.
- There are valued assets and facilities outside the villages, notably Burrough Hill Country Park and numerous public footpaths and bridleways. The Household Questionnaire disclosed great attachment to these fundamentally rural forms of recreation (at least 222 people using them every week) and relatively little complaint about lack of other facilities (only 25 comments).
- It is the case that 93% of residents were not born in the Parish so at least to some extent chose to live here. Asked why they did so, by far the most common reason (59%) was the rural setting and un-spoilt countryside. Of questionnaire respondents who were considering leaving the Parish only 9.6% (11 people) gave lack of facilities as a reason.
- All our evidence indicates that most residents are in the Parish because, quite simply, they like it as it is. They chose it. Very few would willingly trade away countryside or tranquility for more or better community facilities.
- There is much social interaction and activity both within and between the settlements of the Parish, particularly between the villages of Somerby and Pickwell. These are further described in Chapter 10 and **Appendix 6**.

## 2.3 CHALLENGES FOR THE PARISH

026 This Neighbourhood Plan seeks to identify and as far as possible address challenges that face the community of Somerby Parish. Challenges have been identified from a variety of sources including national statistics, professional reports and local consultation. In summary challenges include:

- A slightly older population (mean and median averages) than the wider population. This is not reflected at all in a low rate of economic activity – in fact it is high (see para 023). In common with the region and the country, it will become older so it is necessary to address:
- Provision of housing, amenities, transport and community facilities for older people.
- Lack of free or affordable community facilities for the young (this was little mentioned in the adult Household Questionnaire but sometimes in the Youth Questionnaire).

- Relatively high property prices and a lack of small and/or affordable housing options which may prevent some people who wish to stay in the parish from doing so.
- Lack of appropriate public transport at times when it is needed. This limits options both to travel out of or into the parish for work or leisure. Reliance on private cars is very high, especially for work. This contributes to:
- Rising traffic volume, both in numbers and size of vehicles, leading to localized congestion, shortage of parking, noise, decrease in road safety and increase in emissions harmful to health.
- Accommodate the Parish's proportion of the 6,125 new homes required by 2036 in the Melton Local Plan, and in doing so represent as far as possible the evidenced preferences of parishioners.
- The Parish contains little employment opportunity (see section 2.2.5 Economy and Employment) and suffers from high out-commuting to work, which is overwhelmingly by private car.

027 The promotion of sustainable growth must therefore be based on the best and most detailed evidence available, which this Plan has sought to obtain. This is to ensure that real environmental, economic and social benefits accompany the planned-for increase in population size.

## 3.0 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

### 3.1 VISION

028 Our vision is to conserve our beautiful rural Parish with a vibrant community at its heart. We seek to meet the changing needs of the community and enhance our thriving and sustainable rural economy, whilst maintaining the unique character of our natural and historic landscapes, our heritage and the pastoral appearance and tranquillity of our Parish for all.

### 3.2 PLAN OBJECTIVES

029 These are objectives not policies. Strategic objectives are in **bold** with subordinate, specific objectives below them. The policies intended to achieve these objectives are contained in Chapters 5 to 10, and can be cross-referenced back to them in the **Policies Index** under Contents.

#### 3.2.1 HOUSING

**OBJ 1: Identify suitable locations for sustainable housing development that meet local need and contribute to Melton Borough Council's housing requirement.**

OBJ 2: Ensure that the locations chosen for housing development do not unduly impact on the Environmental and Heritage assets and conserve and where possible enhance the character of the villages.

OBJ 3: Specify a mix of housing that addresses local need and supports those people wishing to remain in the Parish to do so.

OBJ 4: Introduce a local connection criterion that ensures that local people are prioritised in the provision of affordable housing.

OBJ 5: Require that development reflects, is inspired by and enhances the character and distinctiveness of the landscape and settlement concerned by appropriate design and materials.

### 3.2.2 CHARACTER AND DESIGN

**OBJ 6: Integrate new development into the Parish in places, scale, design and massing that does not conflict with the Environmental policies, and as far as possible conserves the existing character.**

OBJ 7: To protect and enhance settlement edge landscapes by ensuring that development is only permitted in areas supported by this plan and includes considered design of all the boundary edges where they connect with the built environment and the open countryside.

OBJ 8: To ensure that any development in Conservation Areas and their settings is carefully managed and is on the scale, layout and design that will not overwhelm and is not detrimental to the historical character and appearance of the area and if possible will enhance it.

OBJ 9: By using the prescribed materials contained in the supporting material, ensure that all new development retains the traditional character and appearance of the conservation villages and where sites are close to modern development that has not done this, opportunity is taken to restore the traditional appearance rather than reflect the immediate surroundings.

OBJ 10: To make use of new technology and design to reduce energy consumption in construction and occupation of the development, and use environmentally sustainable materials where appropriate, whilst not unduly compromising the traditional external appearance.

### 3.2.3 ENVIRONMENT

**OBJ 11: Protect and if possible improve the natural, built and historic environment and heritage assets for future enjoyment by all.**

OBJ 12: Protect and enhance the rich archaeological, built and landscape heritage of the Parish, its conservation villages, and areas where there are particular concentrations of cultural heritage, including iron-age and medieval remains, churches, country houses, park land and their settings.

OBJ 13: Protect and conserve the deeply rural nature of the Parish, its tranquillity, dark skies at night, historic settlement and landscape patterns and important views produced by the high escarpment topography.

OBJ 14: Protect and where possible improve the rich natural environment especially areas of high biodiversity and deliver high quality natural environments and open spaces that promote increased biodiversity.

**OBJ 15: Manage and mitigate the effects of climate change and ensure development of all types is environmentally sustainable and safe.**

OBJ 16: Promote economic growth in the Parish which sustains and enhances the natural and historic environment.

OBJ 17: Support low carbon energy types which meet small scale and local energy needs but have no adverse impact on the natural and historic environment, important views or village street scenes.

OBJ 18: Improve management of water quality and reduce flood risk to existing and future properties from any and all sources.

### **3.2.4 ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT**

**OBJ 19: Support, develop and grow a successful and prosperous local economy which is sustainable for the life of this plan, maintaining and if possible improving on 2018 rates of local employment and prosperity.**

OBJ 20: Employment opportunity - To ensure that local business activity and employment opportunity provide for the increase in population predicted by demographic data and potentially manifested in housing development.

OBJ 21: Types of business - To support the types of business and enterprise which are recommended as viable and sustainable for this rural Parish by the professional advice available, and which accord where possible with the preferences expressed by parishioners.

OBJ 22: Local businesses - To encourage investment in specifically local businesses and employment including farm diversification and homeworking, and also for local people, subject to their own freedom to decide, to use them when they have a choice.

### 3.2.5 TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**OBJ 23: Ensure the parish is supported by a sound infrastructure (roads, pavements, utilities and communication) that meets the needs of residents and businesses.**

OBJ 24: Ensure that, as the population increases, proportionate improvements and additions are made to the essential utilities and infrastructure in order that service levels, amenities and wellbeing do not decline and if possible are improved.

OBJ 25: To enable convenient and safe travel through and between the villages of the Parish for all legitimate road users by managing the size, numbers and speed of vehicles on the roads and improving parking provision.

OBJ 26: To improve access to employment, amenities and leisure for both parishioners and visitors and to minimize harmful emissions and traffic volume by maintaining viable public transport options for the Parish.

### 3.2.6 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

**OBJ 27: Maintain and if possible improve the present ratio of community facilities to population.**

OBJ 28: To maintain and if possible improve the present provision of play, leisure and sports facilities in the Parish, being safe and accessible to as wide a variety of people as possible. Such facilities are to be increased or improved in proportion to any population growth so that health, wellbeing and quality of life do not decline and if possible improve.

OBJ 29: To ensure that any developer, whether of housing, business or other development, adds value to the community by not harming and if possible complementing existing facilities and investing in the community for the future.

OBJ 30: To protect, support and if practicable improve those existing community assets and facilities, whether public, commercial or private, which parishioners have identified as most valued by them.

## 4.0 SPATIAL STRATEGY AND SETTLEMENT ROLES

030 This Neighbourhood Plan adopts a spatial strategy for development which is consistent with the strategic policies of the Melton Local Plan, including the overall housing requirement. Additionally the whole Parish was neutrally surveyed and assessed during preparation of this Plan enabling it to introduce a level of detail reflecting local environmental, heritage, economic and social conditions evidenced in:

- Environmental surveys and inventories produced in preparation of this plan
- Physical and social relationships between settlements, particularly Somerby and Pickwell
- The concerns and preferences expressed by parishioners.

Due to this evidenced character of the parish and the value parishioners have said they attach to it, as well as meeting the housing requirement this plan attaches great importance to conserving the natural, built and historic environment for future generations to enjoy.

031 During early consideration of Spatial Strategy for this Neighbourhood Plan the Local Plan was also being prepared, so we did not know whether all parts of it would succeed at examination or which draft policies (including site allocations) would become strategic policies with which we must conform. During the mid stages of Neighbourhood Plan preparation consideration was given to possible alternative housing development sites and 11 of them were provisionally appraised against recognised criteria. Not all of them were in Somerby village. Melton Borough Council did engage helpfully with us during this time of parallel plan preparation; at a meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017 their Counsel advised us to delay finalising the Neighbourhood Plan until the Local Plan was passed, and our Advisory Committee participated fully in the hearing sessions for the Local Plan commencing 30<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

032 The Melton Local Plan was adopted by Full Council on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2018, meaning that several points of strategic policy necessary to decide our own Spatial Strategy became confirmed:

- **Settlement Roles:** Somerby village is a Service Centre, Burrough on the Hill, Pickwell and Leesthorpe are Rural Settlements. Therefore the Local Plan deems only Somerby a sustainable location for major developments.
- **Housing requirement:** The residual requirement of 44 houses is met or exceeded by the Local Plan housing allocations under Policy C1(A). These are sites SOM1 and SOM2 totaling 69 houses, and there is also a reserve site SOM3 for 33 houses. These sites are illustrated on Figure 3.4 Somerby – Limits to Development.
- **Strategic policies:** Policy C1(A) and C1(B), and therefore sites SOM1, SOM2 and SOM3 are strategic policies in the Local Plan and part of the Development Plan. Therefore the Neighbourhood Plan could not ‘replace’ them with alternative sites.

Therefore it was not possible for the Neighbourhood Plan to substitute alternative sites and not necessary for it to allocate additional ones. It was also the case that only one of the sites provisionally appraised for this Plan had progressed towards deliverability, which is the one referred to as RSOM1 at Chapter 5.1 of this Plan and in the next paragraph.

**033 Housing Allocations (Reserve site RSOM1 in Pickwell)**

This Plan makes no unconditional housing allocations for the reasons stated above. However it seeks to ensure that the housing requirements of Somerby village and the Parish are met, including if the Local Plan sites should not meet the requirement or the requirement itself increases during the life of this Plan. We were also mindful that Local Plan reserve site SOM3 might not to have community support (planning application 16/00615/OUT there attracted 79 public comments in 2018, unanimously opposed) which might be adverse to it under Local Plan Policy C1(B) clause (iii). To this end this Plan allocates a reserve site for 11 houses at RSOM1 in Pickwell Village. Justification for this reserve site in a Rural Settlement follows.

**034 Somerby and Pickwell – closeness of relationship**

In the settlement hierarchy Pickwell is a Rural Settlement and this Plan endorses that designation. It is not in general a sustainable location for large housing allocations. However there is much evidence of very close physical and social connections between Pickwell and the Service Centre of Somerby only 1200m away (centre to centre) along a road or surfaced pavement. This evidence is detailed in **Appendix 6**. Recognition of this closeness is supported by NPPF 2019 para.78: ‘Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby’. For these reasons RSOM1 in Pickwell is a sustainable location for one modest reserve site for 11 houses, subject to the need arising during the life of this Plan and normal planning processes.

**035 Unallocated sites**

Melton Local Plan policies SS2 and SS3 address unallocated housing in the rural area and this Plan supports and is consistent with those strategic policies, including that schemes of up to about 10 dwellings in Somerby and about 3 in the other Parish settlement may be appropriate. This Plan adds local detail by the introduction of Limits to Development for all the Parish settlements, based on principles and methodology described in Chapter 5.3 and Policy HR2. These Limits to Development are enlargements of the former settlement boundaries or ‘village envelopes’ in the 1999 Local Plan. As well as recent completions, approvals and Local Plan site allocations they enclose certain areas which have been previously developed (‘brownfield’ sites) or where development would have positive or neutral environmental impact. These are preferred areas for potential unallocated development.



## 5.0 HOUSING AND RENEWAL

- 036 At the heart of the Neighbourhood Plan for Somerby Parish is the principle of ensuring sustainable development, which means providing for the needs of both present and future generations. This principle is consistent with the purpose of the UK Planning System, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF), to 'help achieve sustainable development'. Throughout the process of developing this Neighbourhood Plan consideration has been given to the type and extent of new development required to meet the needs of the people of Melton Borough and Somerby Parish.
- 037 This Plan is not intended to replace the policies contained in the Melton Local Plan and the NPPF. It sits alongside these, complementing the Local Plan's strategic policies with more detailed policies that are specific to Somerby Parish and which help achieve the Community's vision. Where suitable policies already exist in the Melton Local Plan or NPPF they are not duplicated in this Plan.
- 038 When considering development proposals, this Neighbourhood Plan has taken a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Where there are no policies in this Plan relevant to a planning application or development proposal, the provisions of relevant National and Borough wide planning policies apply.

### 5.1 HOUSING PROVISION

- 039 The Melton Local Plan sets out a strategy for the overall housing targets for the Borough and the settlements within Somerby Parish among others. There is a requirement to provide at least 6,125 new dwellings between 2011 and 2036 across the Borough and about 35% (1,822) of these will be outside the Melton Mowbray Main Urban Area.
- 040 The Local Plan establishes a hierarchy of settlements to help to determine the most appropriate locations for these 1,822 houses. On the basis of this hierarchy, Somerby Village, along with 9 other settlements, is identified as a Service Centre. These are identified on the basis of the presence of all of the four essential criteria (primary school, access to employment, fast broadband and a community building) together with regular public transport. Burrough on the Hill, Pickwell and Leesthorpe are not Service Centres or Rural Hubs in the Local Plan (they are Rural Settlements) so have no housing requirement or allocations in it.
- 041 The housing provision required to meet the balance of the Borough-wide housing target up to 2036 set by MBC is 44 for Somerby. This target is a residual target, meaning that any housing completions from 2011 to 31st March 2017, and any dwellings with planning

permission on 31st March 2017, have already been taken into account and do not form part of a settlement's housing requirement. Any completions and commitments after 31 March 2017 will come off the target. This calculation is set out in the Melton Local Plan at Table 6.

042 Somerby is a vibrant parish but is constrained by limited road communications and important environmental and heritage assets, including Burrough Hill Fort, a scheduled ancient monument, and the Leicestershire Round and Jubilee Way long-distance footpaths. This means that the location of new housing must be carefully considered to avoid unnecessary harm. Recent housing growth has been achieved organically by infill and high-density conversion of existing commercial or agricultural buildings. This increase in housing provision has taken place with minimal harm to the character of the Conservation villages, historic landscapes and community cohesion. This plan intends that the success of this approach will inform future planning decisions.

## 5.2 HOUSING REQUIREMENT AND ALLOCATIONS

043 This Neighbourhood Plan exceeds the Housing Requirement specified in the Melton Local Plan. The Parish is an attractive rural area and developers are consistently interested in potential sites. Residential development on small sites is generally welcomed by the community through consultation.

### Site assessments

044 This Neighbourhood plan has undertaken objective site assessment work across the whole Parish using a combination of existing criteria used by MBC and factors identified as important by local people in the Household Questionnaire. The latter included preferences for smaller sites, infill locations and brownfield/pre-developed sites. It was sought to identify those locations which are best or worst in terms of social, environmental and economic sustainability. However nearly all these sites were either subsequently allocated in the Melton Local Plan, received planning permission or did not achieve sufficient landowner participation for inclusion in this Neighbourhood Plan. The exception was the Reserve Site RSOM1 appearing below in Policy HR1.

045 The Melton Local Plan sets out the Housing Requirement for all the Borough settlements in Table 6. For Somerby **village**, the residual housing requirement is 44 based on commitments and completions up to the end of March 2017. Since then a further 49 dwellings have received planning permission, meaning that the requirement for Somerby Village has already been met.

046 There is no strict housing requirement for Somerby **parish**. However the Local Plan allows for about 322 houses to be delivered as 'windfall' on unallocated sites in the rural Borough. We can apply the methodology of Local Plan Table 6 to this: the parish population was 812 at Census 2011, so about 6% of the rural population which equates to 19 houses as 'windfall'.

Since March 2017 Planning Permissions have been granted for a total of 11 houses in Pickwell (six of them already completed before 2019) plus 5 single builds in Somerby, totalling 16. The Parish is therefore contributing very well towards the Local Plan windfall allowance.

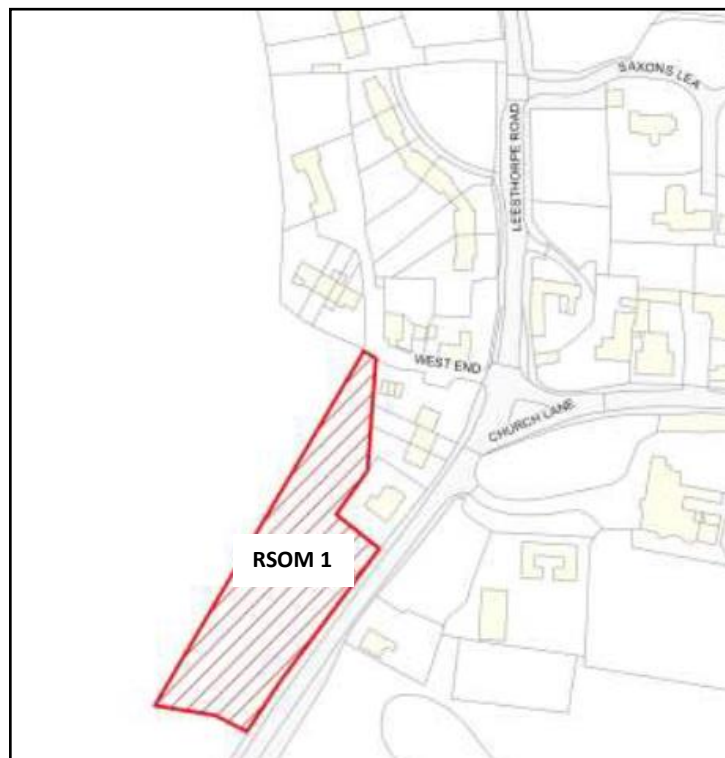
047 Although Somerby village has already met its housing requirement and the Parish has nearly done so, it is recognised that circumstances change and that there may be a need for additional new housing over the timeframe of the Neighbourhood Plan. In the event that the Local Plan policy C1(A) site allocations and other permissions fail to deliver the required housing target, or there is a recognised increase in housing need, the following reserve site will be considered:

**POLICY HR1: RESERVE SITE - New housing development for around 11 dwellings will be supported on the site in Pickwell identified as RSOM1 on Figure 2 below where:**

- a) It is required to remediate a substantial shortfall in the supply of housing land due to the failure of allocated sites and other permissions granted to deliver the housing requirement of the plan area”;

If the development of a reserve site is shown to be necessary due to the situation as set out in a), then whichever reserve site most closely satisfies the quantum of that shortfall should be developed in preference to the other reserve site in the parish. Once the first reserve site has been developed and a shortfall still remains, there will be a presumption in favour of the release of the other reserve site.

**Figure 2: Reserve Site RSOM1, Pickwell**



048 This site was previously MBC/014/16 in the Melton SHLAA. It scored second-highest among the site appraisals conducted in preparation of this Plan and was the only one to achieve the

support of the landowners, who support its inclusion here as a reserve site. There was no adverse comment on RSOM1 at community engagement events or in Reg. 14 consultation, therefore its inclusion in this Plan may properly be taken to indicate community support, subject to normal planning processes. A formal appraisal of the site is at **Appendix 7**.

## 5.3 LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

- 049 The purpose of Limits to Development is to ensure that sufficient sites for new homes and economic activity are available in appropriate locations that will avoid impinging into the local countryside. Settlement boundaries were drawn by Melton Borough Council in the Adopted Local Plan (1999) for villages such as Somerby, Burrough on the Hill and Pickwell which were seen as suitable settlements for development. The Local Plan made it clear that such a measure is important to clarify where new development activity is best located. The Local Plan defined the extent of a built-up part of a settlement and distinguished between areas where, in planning terms, development was acceptable in principle, such as in the built-up area of the village, and where it would not be acceptable, generally in the least suitable locations such as in the open countryside. Such growth would risk avoidable loss of agricultural land, ribbon development and the merging of settlements to the detriment of the community and visual amenity of the Neighbourhood Plan area's surroundings.
- 050 The Melton Local Plan 2018 does not identify Settlement Boundaries, instead using criteria-based policies to help determine planning applications. It is accepted practice that re-drawing and updating Settlement Boundaries is common practice within Neighbourhood Plans, including where they have been removed through Adopted Local Plans. Therefore, this Neighbourhood Plan designates Limits to Development for the villages of Somerby, Burrough on the Hill, Pickwell and Leesthorpe.
- 051 Within the defined Limits to Development an appropriate amount of suitably designed and located development will be acceptable in principle, although some sites within the area are protected from development and all development will be required to take account of the Policies within this Plan. Focussing development within the agreed Limits to Development will support existing services within the village centres and protect the countryside and the remainder of the Neighbourhood Plan area from significant development which is surplus to demand or out of keeping with the rural setting and highly attractive and historic landscapes of the Parish.

### Limits to Development Methodology

- 052 The updated Limits to Development have been determined using the following Criteria:
- a) Recent approvals and existing commitments by virtue of an extant planning permission for residential development on the fringes of the settlements have been incorporated.

- b) Clearly defined physical features such as walls, fences, hedgerows, water courses, allotments and roads have been followed.
- c) Scope has been provided within the limits to allow for future expansion to meet the need for housing and business growth over the Plan period.
- d) Non-residential land which is countryside, agricultural, paddock, meadow, close, woodland or another green-field use has been excluded.

- 053 The Parish is predominately rural in nature with the settlements being surrounded by open, attractive countryside. It is wholly within High Leicestershire Hills, National Character Area: 93 as defined by Natural England for planning purposes and whose Strategic Environmental Opportunities 1-4 have provided guidance for this Plan (our **supporting document 2**). A deeper level of local evidence, gathered by Theme Groups, has also been used to define those areas of the Parish which relate more to countryside than to the built form of villages using borough and county landscape character assessments and relevant evidence set out in the Economy and Environment Chapters.
- 054 It is national planning policy that development in the open countryside should be carefully controlled and allowed only when it is appropriate to a rural location, such as for the purposes of agriculture, or as a rural exception site for affordable housing when there is a proven local need. These types of development have been supported by the community in the past.
- 055 The Parish is notable for the exceptional visual quality of its landscape, its strong historic character and the quality of its agricultural land. The community, in line with the Plan's Vision statement, has expressed the desire for the Neighbourhood Plan to maintain the nationally recognized distinctive landscape and settings of the villages as a non-renewable resource for the local tourist and agricultural economy and for the well-being of current and future residents.

**Policy HR2: Limits to Development - Development proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan area will be supported on sites within the Limits to Development as identified in Figure 3.**

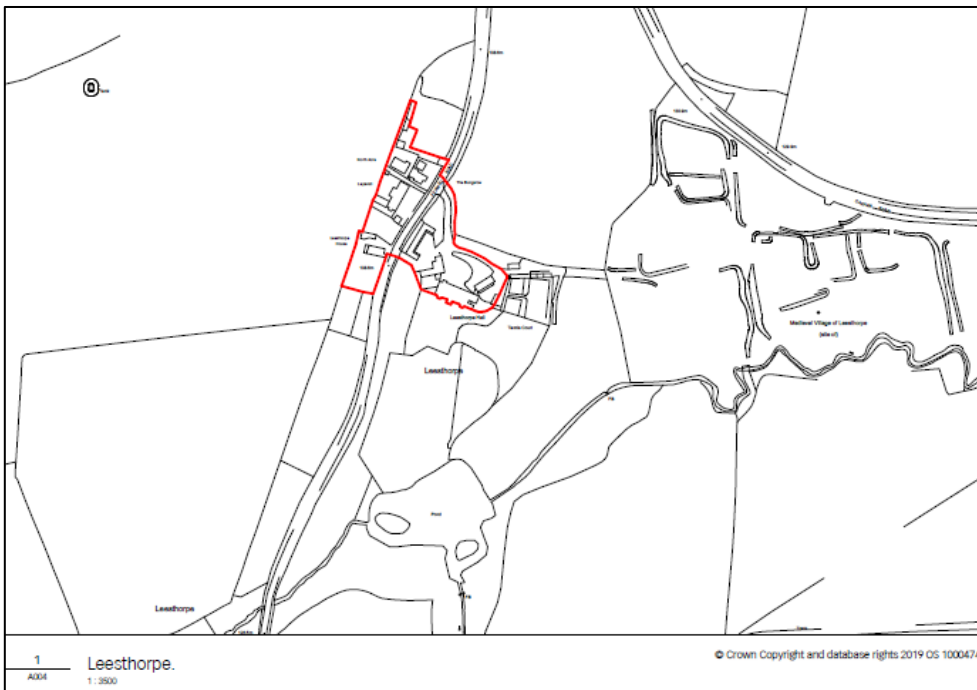
**Land outside the defined Limits to Development, including any individual or small groups of buildings and/or small settlements will be treated as open countryside where development will be carefully controlled in line with local and national strategic planning policies. In particular, proposals to facilitate domiciliary care or downsizing by a resident who wishes to remain in the settlement, and which amount to sub-division of an existing dwelling, conversion of subordinate outbuilding, or addition of subordinate residential accommodation, are supported.**

**If residential development takes place on Site SOM3 or RSOM1, the site will be treated as being within the Limits of Development.**

Figure 3.1 Burrough on the Hill - Limits to Development



Figure 3.2 Leesthorpe - Limits to Development









## 5.4 HOUSING MIX

056 At the 2011 census the Parish was made up of 387 households and had a population of 812, of which most were to be found in the villages of Somerby, Burrough on the Hill and Pickwell.

- Over the 2011-36 period the number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 92% with an even higher (192%) increase in the number of people aged 85 and over (HEDNA 2017). In actual numbers this translates to 127 more people aged 65 and over (if they all choose to stay in the Parish).
- There is a higher proportion of detached homes at 43.4% than the Borough (40.6%) or England (22.3%).
- There are far fewer flats, as would be expected in a rural setting.
- There are far more homes with 4 or 5+ bedrooms (24.9% and 13.4%) than the Borough (19.5% and 6.5%) or England (14.4% and 4.6%) averages.
- There is evidence of widespread under occupancy especially in older person households and there is a 5.7%-bedroom vacancy rate.

057 The Melton Housing Needs Study 2016 and Housing and Economic Development Needs Analysis 2017 (HEDNA) look towards 2036 in the context of an ageing population. They predict a significantly increasing need for:

- Specialist or supported housing for the elderly, including those with disabilities or poor health
- Affordable housing for an ageing population including those in single occupancy
- One- and two-bedroom homes to enable downsizing by retirees (or those becoming alone)
- Wheelchair accessible housing (4% of new homes to achieve the required 3% of all homes).

058 The report 'A Detailed Investigation into the Housing Needs of Somerby' (Midlands Rural Housing 2016, our **supporting document 3**) indicated that smaller family homes, homes for the elderly and homes for young people were needed. 71 % were in support of a small number of homes to meet local people's needs, 31% believed there was a lack of small starter homes and small homes and bungalows for the elderly and disabled. The continued availability of a smaller number of 4+ bedroomed dwellings would help ensure that the needs of growing families and homeworkers continue to be addressed.

059 In the Household Questionnaire conducted for this Plan:

- 52-65% of respondents said any new development should make provision for the elderly

- 68-75% said it should include low-cost or starter homes. (*The % spread is due to Questions 11 and 12 yielding slightly different answers to a similar question.*)
- The particular housing types perceived as most needed were, in descending order, 'smaller private', 'low cost purchase', 'additional needs housing' and 'bungalows', 'larger private' and 'low cost rent'.

**Policy HR3: HOUSING MIX** - All proposals for new housing will be expected to demonstrate how the proposal will meet the current and future housing needs of the Parish as identified by the Melton Housing Needs Study 2016, Local Housing Needs Survey (Midlands Rural Housing 2016), the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Employment Development Needs Analysis 2017, any more recent documents updating them and any more locally-specific documents.

Proposals for homes of 2-3 bedrooms and/or homes physically suited to the needs of older people will be supported. Homes of four or more bedrooms may be included in the mix of dwellings where there is an identified need but will be expected to comprise a clear minority.

## 5.5 WINDFALL SITES

*060* Windfall sites are small infill or redevelopment sites that come forward unexpectedly and which have not been specifically identified for new housing in a planning document. These sites often comprise redundant or vacant buildings including barns, or a gap between existing properties in a built-up street scene. Such sites have made a small but regular contribution towards the housing supply in the Parish for a considerable time. As there remain only limited opportunities for windfall development, there is evidence that windfalls will continue to make a small contribution to housing provision in the Parish up to 2036.

*061* This Plan will support small new residential developments which contribute towards meeting Parish development and housing needs. In conformity with the Melton Local Plan para 4.2.17 and Policy SS3 schemes of up to about 10 dwellings may be appropriate in Somerby and about 3 in the other Parish settlements.

**Policy HR4: WINDFALL SITES** - Small residential development proposals on windfall sites for up to 10 dwellings in Somerby and 3 in Burrough on the Hill, Leesthorpe and Pickwell will be supported subject to the proposal being well designed and where such development:

- a) is within the Limits to Development established in Policy HR2, and
- b) meets a proven local need as identified by substantive evidence, and
- c) comprises a restricted gap in the continuity of existing frontage buildings or on other sites within the built-up areas of the villages or where the site is closely surrounded by buildings, and
- d) it provides for a safe vehicular and pedestrian access to the site, and

- f) does not adversely impact on the character of the area, the amenity of neighbours or have a significant detrimental heritage or environmental impact.

## 5.6 LONG-TERM SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

- 062 As evidenced at Chapter 5.1 in 2019 Somerby Parish's present Housing Requirement to 2036 has already been met, but it is recognised that the housing requirement might increase in the future. Should the selection of further development sites become necessary in the long term, Community Proposal 1 seeks to ensure they are sustainable (socially, environmentally and economically) and as far as possible recognise the expressed preferences of parishioners. Those preferences are very well evidenced in the Household Questionnaire (especially question 11) conducted in preparation of this Plan.
- 063 Point b) is supported by the NPPF 2019 para 171 and footnote 53. To assist with consideration of it a map of agricultural land classifications in Somerby Parish is included at **supporting document 8**.

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 1 - LONG-TERM HOUSING SITE SELECTION CRITERIA – The Parish Council will work with Melton Borough Council, the community and landowners to seek to ensure that any future development site selection:**

- a) prioritises use of land which is 'brownfield' or pre-developed land; and
- b) avoids the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land; and
- c) prioritises sites which are 'infill' inside the village limits to development where they do not conflict with protected open spaces; and
- d) is consistent with the Environmental policies of this plan; and
- e) consists of smaller scale sites (15 or less houses)

## 5.7 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 064 Rural Affordable Housing is intended to help communities by offering local families, couples and single people the chance to live in the place where they have strong connections. This can be people currently living in the Parish, previously living in the Parish who wish to return, permanently employed in the Parish or with close connections to someone still living in the Parish.
- 065 Nationally, affordable housing is defined as housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers) and complies with one or more of the

definitions in the National Planning Policy Framework 2019, Annex 2: Glossary. Those definitions are not duplicated here but are of a) Affordable housing for rent, b) Starter homes, c) Discounted market sales housing, and d) Other affordable routes to home ownership’.

066 In Somerby, social rented properties are at 11% which is in line with the district. There are fewer home ownership models of affordable housing in the Parish than across Melton as a whole. Given this, and in view of the high house prices in the Parish, Affordable Home Ownership Options (for example, to include Starter Homes, Discounted Market Sale, Rent to Buy and Shared Ownership) and other ownership models of affordable housing are supported. This approach has been supported through consultation where 68% of respondents supported provision for ‘starter homes’ and ‘low-cost purchase’. The Parish Council has successfully negotiated favourable terms for affordable housing on several occasions in recognition of and in response to the high property values across the Parish. This will continue to be the approach followed by the Parish Council.

#### **POLICY HR5: AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVISION**

If it is not possible to provide affordable housing on site, in exceptional circumstances it will be acceptable to provide funding in lieu of affordable housing on-site if this leads to the provision of additional affordable housing in the Parish.

The affordable housing stock should be made available as an integral part of the development, should be visually indistinguishable from the equivalent market housing on the site and should be provided as individual units dispersed throughout the development.

## 6.0 CHARACTER AND DESIGN

### Background

- 067 Historically new development in Somerby Parish has not always been well integrated with the architectural styles and materials of the conservation villages, or sensitive to heritage sites, resulting in a loss of settlement character in some areas of Somerby and to an extent in Pickwell.
- 078 Within the villages, conservation areas cover 26 hectares of land. There are 27 Listed heritage sites, 36 buildings and places of local historic significance and 43 sites in the County Historic Environment Record. The Parish is wholly within National Character Area: 93 where Natural England encourages development to protect the strong character of its historic settlement patterns, the built vernacular and landscape settings of villages, including country house parkland. The NCA: 93 Statement of Environmental Opportunity is reproduced at **supporting document 2**.
- 069 The London School of Economics and Historic England's 2016 national study '*An Assessment of the Effects of Conservation Areas on Value*' indicates that settlements with architectural integrity have higher property values, stronger house price appreciation, improved social cohesiveness and higher general satisfaction within the community. Our experiences while preparing this Neighbourhood Plan would support this observation.
- 070 The responses to the Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire showed that 67% of residents want new development to be traditional in design and materials, and 89% want it to 'fit in' and have integrity with existing buildings and surroundings. We believe new development (whether residential, commercial or other) if managed carefully can help restore and refresh the distinctive settlement character of the villages, while housing needs are met, residents made safe and secure and the natural and historic environment protected. To assist in balancing the need for development with the preservation or enhancement of local vernacular and character, Design Guidance is offered in **Appendix 8**.

### Layout of the built environment

- 071 Spatial patterns and land use have remained largely consistent since the sixteenth century. Villages are linear and densely built along a single main street or narrow lanes, creating a strong sense of enclosure. Most dwellings continuously front the pavements with green spaces at their rear and at village edges.
- 072 Of particular note is that the enclosed layout of the traditional villages is considered within current safety and security advice in that it helps to reduce the risk of crime by providing unobstructed views across multiple properties, connectivity amongst gardens and a relatively higher level of activity, real or perceived. (Sources: Secured by Design Homes Brochure 2019,

Section 1(8) Layout of roads and footpaths; Wychavon District Council, Advice Note, Designing out Crime 2013, pp. 6-8.)

073 Views into countryside are a common feature of built areas. Pasture and paddocks within and at village edges are grazed by cattle, horses, sheep, ducks and geese and form part of local rural character. Many character features of the settlements are shared but each village has unique features listed in their inventories. (See Chapter 7.7 Settlement Character for a list of key features.)

## Village landscape settings

074 Near to built areas landscape character is informal, rural, and while purposefully planted, reflects 'idealized' natural forms rather than uniform urban planting schemes. Lawns to the front of dwellings are rare, with gardens usually to the rear. Paved footpaths, where existing, are narrow. Ironstone walls, a strong and common feature, visually link built areas of villages. Groves of trees, many veteran, form canopies, frame the built areas and are an important local landscape feature.

075 The landscape settings at village edges in many places are shaped by the park lands of seven historic country house estates and other extant evidence of past land use, such as ridge and furrow, disused quarries and sites of deserted settlement, medieval and earlier. Hedgerows, groves and avenues of mature and veteran trees, purposefully planted, are a strong feature on the approaches and the edges of villages.

076 The local topography is high and open with striking views. Landscape assessments place the visual quality of the Parish at the high end of the scale and the ancient villages, all within a thriving pastoral setting, are considered a quintessential example of English countryside. The villages are densely populated but located in the highest CPRE rated areas for tranquillity and dark skies at night. These characteristics contribute to the popularity of the Parish as a destination for recreational, heritage and food tourism and this plan seeks to encourage these activities.

## The local vernacular

077 The built environment is characterised by the Midlands stone-belt rural vernacular starting in the early seventeenth century and these forms were later replicated by builders during the Domestic Revival period (C19-early C20). This has produced a cohesive architectural appearance across most of the Parish, particularly strong in Pickwell and Burrough. Some recent building in small pockets of Somerby and in Leesthorpe has introduced styles and materials which are not locally derived.

078 Along with a strong preference for traditional housing design, 71% of residents express that new development should support energy efficiency. Both the Neighbourhood and Melton Local Plan (point 7.16.9) recognise the importance of achieving the right balance between the design of green energy infrastructure and the character of built and natural surroundings in NCA:93.

**POLICY CD1: BUILDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES** – All development proposals including (but not limited to) those for commercial buildings, one or more houses, replacement dwellings and extensions should respect local character and conservation areas, having regard to design, scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access, as appropriate. They should take into account the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. Where appropriate, development proposals should provide safe and attractive public and private spaces and street scenes, and well defined and legible spaces that are easy to get around for all, including those with disabilities.

Development proposals are encouraged to have regard to the following building design principles and requirements, to a degree that is proportionate to the development:

- a) Density and infrastructure is minimized towards edges with the countryside; and the scale of roads, pavements and public lighting will be such as to ensure safety and limited to that necessary to achieve it;
- b) existing countryside boundary features, stone walls, hedgerows and trees, are retained or replicated to enclose the development from countryside, with solid wood fencing avoided;
- c) open views through the development to the countryside are included;
- d) the scale of roads are 'rural' in nature and avoid common urban patterns, using sensitive forms of street scape and street scenes, scale and massing, and reflect the sense of 'enclosure' of villages;
- e) adequate provision for waste storage and suitable and safe means of access for collection are provided, and development conceals or softens the visibility of waste bins, storage and car parking spaces by the use of landscaping, walls, hedges or other plantings;
- f) design, materials and skylines reflect the local vernacular; or where contemporary and innovative materials and designs are proposed, they can be positively demonstrated not to detract from the historic context of their surroundings;
- g) development should seek to minimise any increase in the level of noise, including traffic noise, or light at night significantly greater than present that cannot be mitigated, especially in conservation areas and their settings. Lighting infrastructure should be sympathetic to the character of the villages and the countryside;

- h) ecologically sound construction approaches will be supported for building construction, energy provision, and sustainable drainage systems;
- i) use of environmentally sustainable building materials will be supported where technically feasible, to be balanced with the need to retain the character of landscape and built heritage in the Parish;
- j) development should demonstrate how it will protect or enhance the range and population of species, habitat links, permeability with landscapes and avoid fragmentation of specific species;
- k) development should be managed so as to minimise disruption caused by construction for reasons of safeguarding, safety, health and well-being for all and respectful of the highly tranquil character of the area;
- l) developments should demonstrate that their designs reflect guidance on safety, security and reducing the risk of rural crime by reference to the Police and Crime Prevention Initiatives website, Secured by Design website and other available guidance;
- m) Positive regard is demonstrated for the Design Guidance at Appendix 8.



## 7.0 ENVIRONMENT

### INTRODUCTION

#### Landscape, geology and setting

079 The whole area (Figure 4) is part of what is commonly known as *High Leicestershire*. Terminated on its west side by a steep downward escarpment, this is a landscape of breezy high ground with steep-sided, winding valleys, sudden expansive views and medieval villages. Underlying this landscape are gently tilted layers of Jurassic rocks – alternations of soft clay and hard sandstone, limestone and ironstone – whose differing resistance to erosion is the main reason for the attractive, undulating topography.

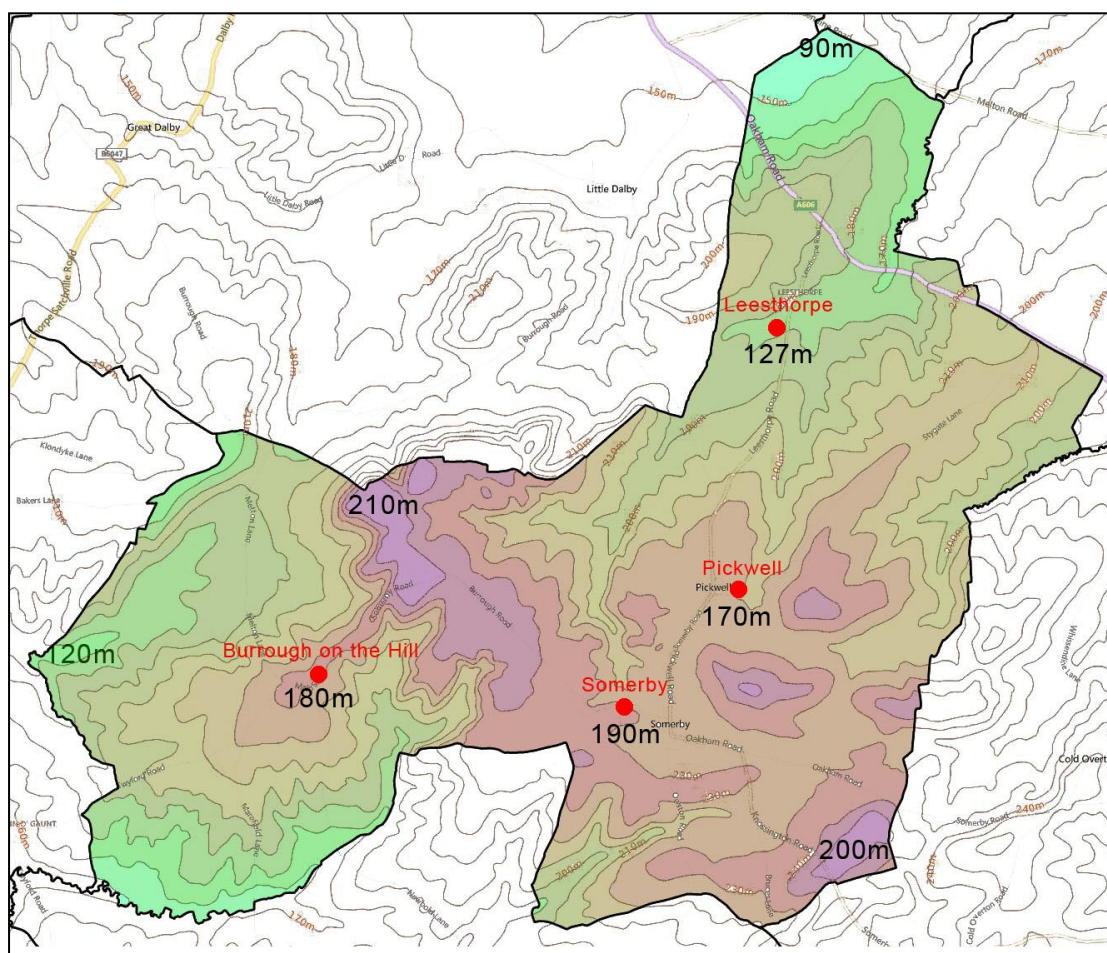


Figure 4: Topography of the Plan Area. Heights in metres.

080 The western escarpment is the result of differential erosion, before and during the Ice Ages, of the Jurassic rocks (about 200 million years old) mentioned above (and see Figure 5). The crest of the hill, best seen at Burrough Hill Country Park, is composed of hard ironstone and

sandstone, both of economic and scenic importance locally since Roman times thanks to their use as iron ore and building stone. The rest of the area is underlain by Jurassic clay, but this is frequently obscured by a thick blanket of till ('boulder clay') and glacial sand and gravel, ice-sheet- and meltwater-deposited debris from about 300 thousand years ago. The last stage of the Ice Age is recorded by head (debris from ground freezing and thawing) and extensive ancient landslip deposits; the latter are an unusual geomorphological feature, caused by collapse of the escarpment when the supporting ice melted, whose explanation was worked out in Leicestershire.

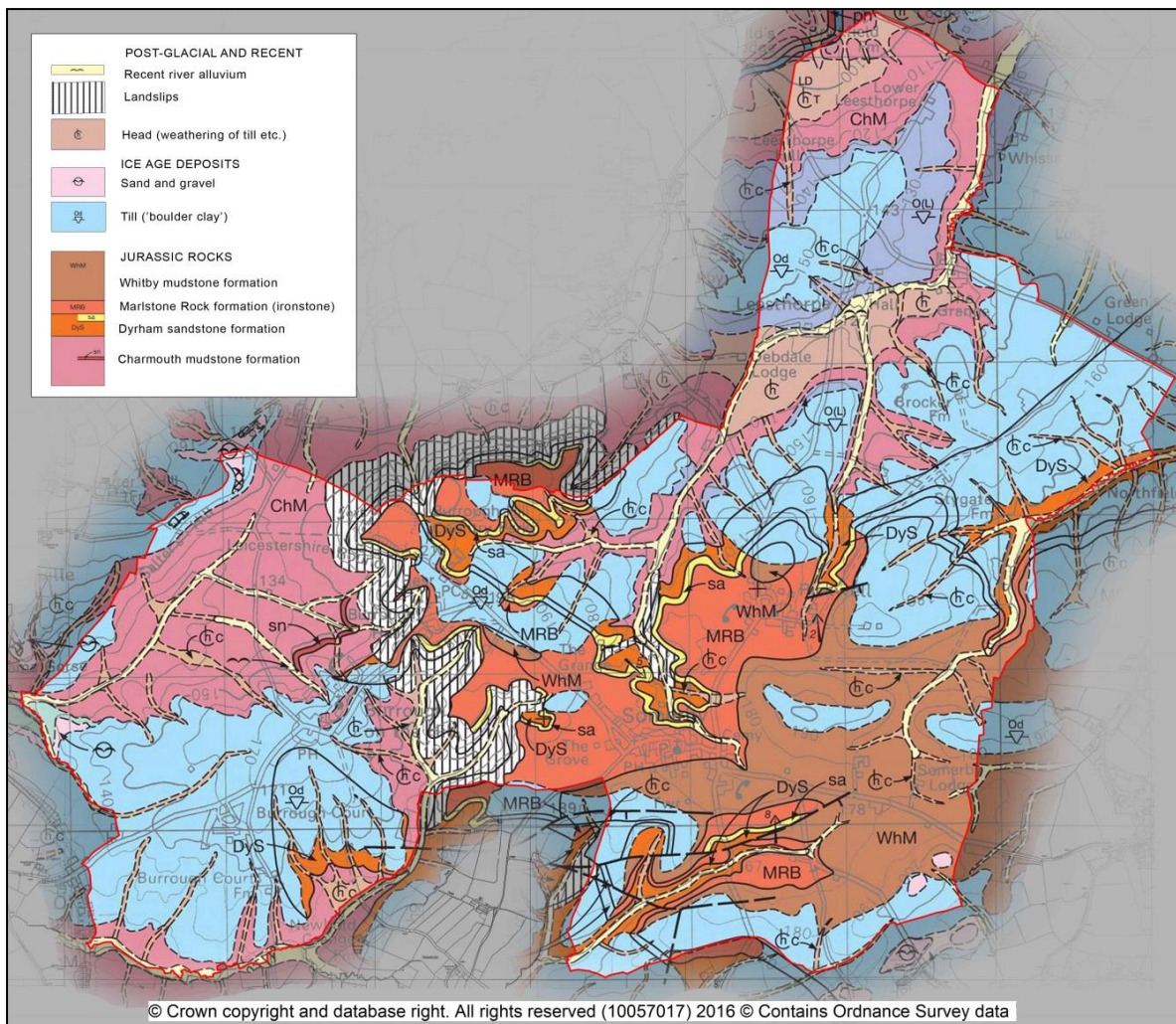


Figure 5: Geology of the Plan Area (Adapted from British Geological Survey mapping)

The settlement pattern, including the locations of the three main villages, has been strongly influenced by topography and geology, as described below.

## Historic environment

### Somerby parish



081 W.G Hoskins writes in *The Making of the English Landscape* that 'most of England is a thousand years old, and in a walk of a few miles one would touch nearly every century in that long stretch of time', an observation true for Somerby Parish, except in a walk of a few miles there one would touch a stretch of time appreciably longer.

**Burrough Hill Fort, ramparts at the west.**

© Nicholas David



082 Before modern boundaries the parish and its surroundings was the domain of past communities, Ancient Britons, Saxons, Scandinavians, Romans and Normans, whose cultural legacies remain both visually defining and buried features in the largely undisturbed landscape. At the heart is Burrough Hill (left), at 210m high the finest example of an Iron Age fort or 'town' in Leicestershire, a landmark in Melton Borough and with human activity in the area suggested since the Mesolithic period. Other Ancient Monuments outside of the modern parish, but meant to be seen, are inter-

visible from the Hill Fort's ramparts such as the Iron Age enclosure of Robin-a-Tiptoe, Breedon Hill Fort and Whatborough deserted medieval village.

083 The villages of Burrough on the Hill, Somerby (right) and Pickwell are near to the Hill Fort to the south and south east. Each is over 170m high and this together with the underlying ironstone geology has influenced their size, linear form and built qualities as well as their past and present economic activities. They appear in the 1086 Domesday Book as Saxon settlements, however the place-names of Somerby and Leesthorpe indicate Danish influence likely beginning from the late 9th to early 10th century.

**High Street, Somerby: linear form and ironstone buildings**

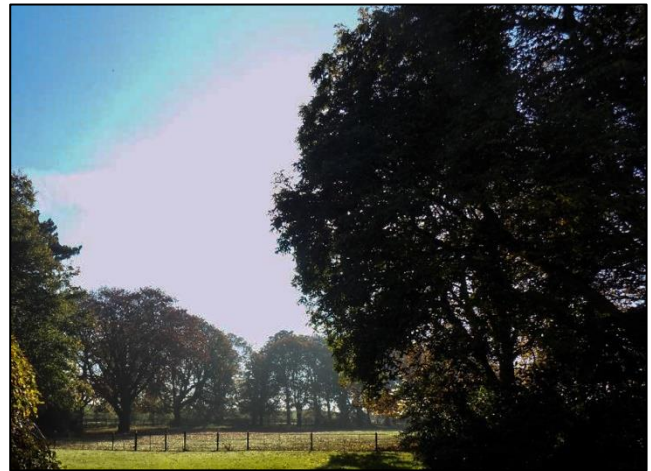


**All Saints Church, Pickwell**

084 The legacy of the early and late medieval period is represented by three fine churches, in Somerby and Pickwell (C13, left) and Burrough on the Hill (C12), and well preserved earthworks of medieval settlements at the fringes of Somerby, Burrough and Leesthorpe. Prominent ridge and furrow fields still radiate from the villages preserving ancient agricultural practices

which locally also included large-scale summer grazing in the parish's high pastures, an economy which thrives today. Ancient tracks, a hollow way and parts of drovers' roads still criss-cross the landscape.

085 Alongside earlier historic landscapes are the designed parks and gardens of seven seventeenth to early twentieth century country house estates. Not every estate continues in single ownership, however their built forms -- dwellings, estate cottages, stables and garden features -- remain largely intact and their park lands still spatially define the villages and help shape the broader landscape.



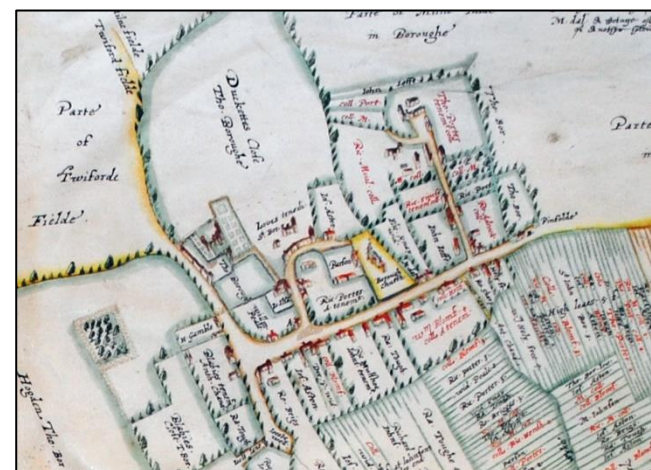
**Part of Grove Park, Newbold Lane, Somerby**

086 The architectural heritage of the parish falls into three main periods, the C17 Jacobean and vernacular style, the classical of the C18 and early C19, and the Domestic Revival style of the C19 and early C20. During the Domestic Revival period the designs and materials (particularly ironstone) of earlier periods were repeated resulting in a cohesive historic character in most built areas of the villages (right).



**The Bakehouse, early C 18, vernacular dwelling, High Street, Somerby**

087 The evolution of agriculture from cultivation to cattle and sheep grazing during the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and later sporting uses, introduced a stability to land use which has contributed to the good overall survival of the historic patterns of settlements, fields and woodlands in the parish. This is illustrated by a number of Ordnance Survey, enclosure and estate maps beginning in 1607 (right), many which show a constancy of appearance and 'sense of place' with the parish of today.



**Part of the 1607 Brasenose College map of Burrough on the Hill**

088 Somerby Parish is a near complete example of the environmental profile described by Natural England for National Character Area: 93, and along with those of the Melton Local Plan, their strategic management objectives for this special area are reflected in the Neighbourhood Plan.



## The villages

089 **Pickwell** is an Anglo-Saxon settlement but could be older; there may have been continuous occupation since Roman times. Its name is Old English *Pic* (a point, spike or hill) *wella* (a spring) – it grew up at the head of a small valley where a natural spring emerged from the ground at a geological boundary. Two maps of Pickwell from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries show that the village form has changed very little since that period. Pickwell still has some of the appearance of a medieval settlement as it would have looked in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with its Grade I Listed 13<sup>th</sup> century church on an early Christian mound, its location at the site of a (presumably sacred) pre-Christian spring, its medieval street layout and greens, the manor house in its landscaped grounds, and its 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century ironstone houses.



090 Pickwell's dependent hamlet of **Leesthorpe** has a hybrid name: *thorpe* is Old Norse (Viking) for an outlying settlement, but *Leoh's* refers to its Anglo-Saxon founder; it seems that, by the time of Domesday Book, its Old English origin but Viking inhabitants was being recorded by its name. Leesthorpe is now a truncated village, with enclosure during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century playing a part in its desertion. By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century only the Manor, its Park and two houses remained. Extensive earthworks remains (see illustration, left) of the deserted medieval village survive as a notable and extensive historical environment site.

091 **Somerby** has an Old Norse name. Like Pickwell it is probably much older but seems to have been re-named by Danish settlers. *Sumarlithi's* is either a Viking personal name or means something like 'summer hill' in Old Norse; a "by" was a farmstead or village. It grew up on a high, spring watered plateau, reached by many tracks. The records of Medieval Rothley



Manor indicate Somerby was a place used for large scale summer grazing. Earthworks of a hollow-way and the medieval village are located at its south fringe and a locally important west-east route,

traditionally used for driving livestock, ran through the village. After failing to succeed as a manufacturing village during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Somerby's economy returned to its agricultural and grazing roots. Somerby also evolved as a centre for the horse trade and related services, the built legacy of which is still visible, and the village's equestrian economy still thrives.

092 **Burrough on the Hill** has a British name carried into Old English '*burh*'. This refers to the Iron Age hill fort nearby. The village, presumably an Anglo-Saxon settlement, could have been occupied



continuously by descendants of the original Celtic, later Romano-British, inhabitants of the hill fort. The rest of its name is medieval or modern English, to distinguish it from the hillfort itself and to describe its location on a narrow high spur leading off the main escarpment. Burrough is a small linear settlement with a many attractive ironstone buildings and walls. Its layout and extent have hardly changed since the

17<sup>th</sup> century (the date of several surviving buildings), while even this was a 'modernisation' of the medieval layout. The church is Listed Grade II\* and dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

## Natural environment



093 Although the Plan Area contains some intensive arable farmland, its topography and agricultural history have allowed a better than average (for Leicestershire) survival of pastoral farming, much of it on permanent grass, and areas of relatively small, hedged fields. The result is a number of areas of high natural environment significance, albeit surviving as oases of biodiversity in the wider landscape.

Among these more biodiverse areas, six historic parklands in the parish are of particular local significance. The case for the establishment in planning policy of wildlife corridors to re-connect these isolated sites is strong.

094 A parish wildlife survey conducted in June 2018 as part of the evidence base for this Plan demonstrated a notable level of biodiversity. It recorded 56 bird species (including 13 species of conservation concern in the national Biodiversity Action Plan, of which three are among Leicestershire's most endangered species), 16 mammals (including four bat species), six reptiles/amphibians and a range of invertebrates and flowering plants. Trail camera observations to

support wildlife corridor proposals were recorded from January to November 2017; the survey data is held by Somerby Parish Council.

## Existing environmental designations

- 095 The parish is located in National Character Area (Natural England landscape area, defined for Planning purposes) 93 *High Leicestershire* and in Melton Borough Council Landscape Character Area 15 *High Leicestershire Hills*. Natural England's *statements of environmental opportunity* for NCA: 93 (**supporting document 2**) are taken into account in this Plan's strategic objectives and environmental assessment.
- 096 There are 26 *Listed Buildings* and one *Scheduled Monument* (features of national importance with statutory protection – see **Appendix 9**), 43 further sites and features of archaeological and historical significance (Leicester & Rutland Historic Environment Records), of which 28 have visible expression in the landscape or have proven buried archaeological remains.
- 097 Twenty-four areas of *Priority Habitat* have been mapped by Natural England; there are 12 *Local Wildlife Sites* (LWS), including three quite extensive areas as well as smaller features like hedgerows and important trees, one *Local Geological Site* (LGS) and two candidate/potential LWSs.

## The objective of the Plan's environmental policies

- 098 The parish and its villages are strongly characterised by its natural, historical and social environmental features. The policies in this chapter will help to protect the details of the parish's environment (at the level below that which Local Plan policies can cover) and thus contribute to sensitive preservation of the whole landscape – while allowing for growth of appropriate type and scale – in order to maintain the 'sense of place' that is so highly valued by the residents of, and visitors to the Plan Area.

## Environmental inventory

- 099 An environmental inventory (**Appendix 4**) of the Plan Area was carried out between November 2016 and September 2018. The work comprised two elements:

- Review of all existing designations and available information, and
- Fieldwork to identify sites and features of natural and historical environment significance in the context of the Plan Area.

The review compiled information from many sources, including:

- DEFRA
- Natural England
- Historic England

- The Gardens Trust
- Leicestershire & Rutland Historic Environment Records (L&RHER)
- University of Leicester Archaeological Service (ULAS)
- Leicestershire & Rutland Environmental Record Centre records (biodiversity and geology)
- Melton Borough Council environmental records and designations
- Environment Agency
- British Geological Survey
- Historic documents (Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition map, Brasenose College Oxford archives, local estate documents and maps, Leicestershire Records Office)
- British History Online
- Local history and archaeology publications
- Local knowledge, including from qualified landscape and buildings historians and the Local History Group

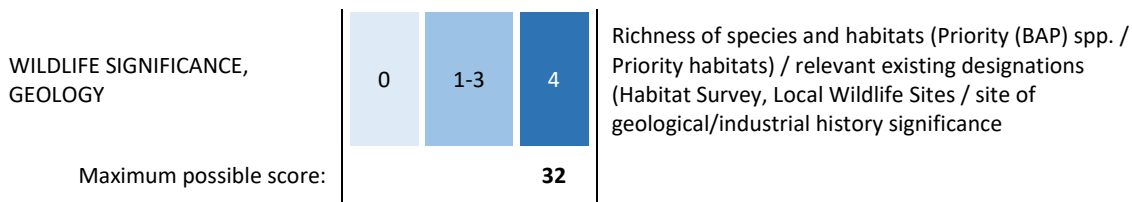
Fieldwork reviewed all open and currently undeveloped land in the Plan Area, and significant species, habitats, landscape characteristics, earthworks and other extant features were checked.

These data, along with all relevant site-specific information from the existing information review, were mapped and tabulated, and each site was scored and evaluated using the nine criteria for Local Green Space selection in the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 para 77 (now NPPF 2019 para 100) shown in Figure 6 below:

**Figure 6: NPPF scoring criteria**

Criterion (NPPF 2012)	Score range			Notes
	0	1-3	4	
ACCESSIBILITY	0	1-3	4	e.g. private, no access (0) – visible from public place – accessed via PRoW – fully open to the public (4)
PROXIMITY / LOCAL	0	1-3	4	Distant (0) --- fairly near to --- adjoins (3) or is within (4) settlement
BOUNDED	0	1-3	4	Individual parcel of land (not an undefined or large area)
SPECIAL TO COMMUNITY	0	1-3	4	Opinion of local people e.g. via questionnaire or at consultation events
RECREATIONAL / EDUCATIONAL USE	0	1-3	4	Actual or potential, informal sports, dog-walking, Forest School use, informal or official open space, etc.
BEAUTY (including views)	0	1	2	Subjective, relative (give justification); use consultation map results
TRANQUILITY	0	1	2	Subjective, relative (give justification)
HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE	0	1-3	4	Extant, visible evidence. Number of periods/features/records etc. / Relevant existing designations (Historic Environment Records)





The MAPS in this chapter have been reduced to fit the document page size. Full-size versions are available as **supporting documents** in the **Policy Maps Folder**.

## SITE-SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES (sub-chapters 7.1 to 7.5)

### 7.1 LOCAL GREEN SPACES

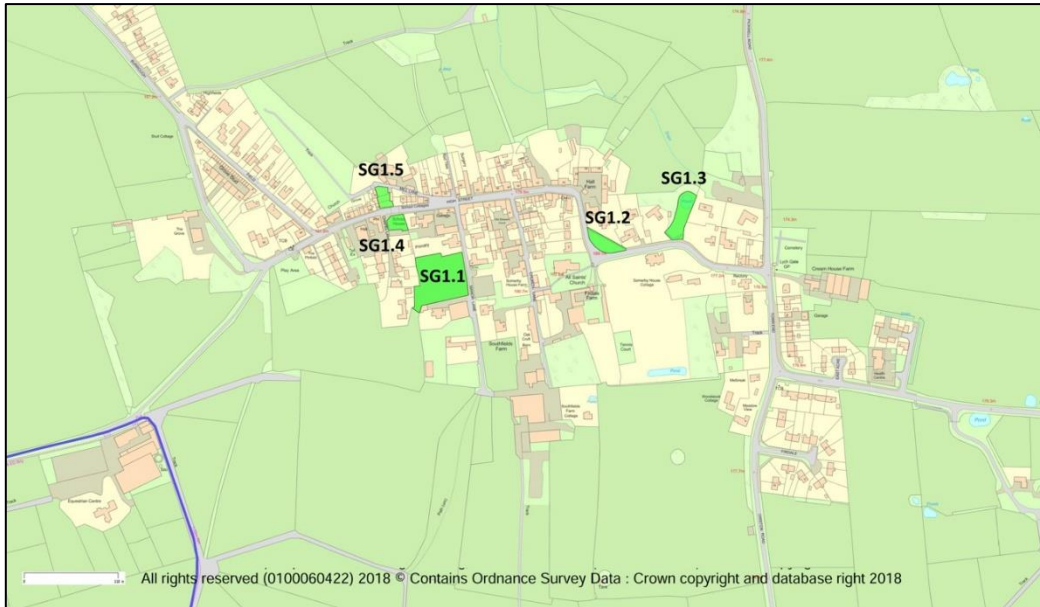
100 Of the approximately 320 parcels of open, undeveloped land in the parish, some 106 were identified as having notable environmental (natural, historical and/or cultural) features. These sites were scored, using the nine criteria for Local Green Space designation noted in the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 para 100. Nine sites (five in Somerby and four in Burrough on the Hill) scored 75% (24/32) or more of the maximum possible and thus meet the requirements for designation as Local Green Space. Their policy protection will ensure that these most important places in the Plan Area’s natural and human environment are protected. Their locations are mapped at Figure 7 below and detailed descriptions (evidence base) are at **Appendix 5**.

**POLICY ENV 1: PROTECTION OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES – Development proposals that would result in the loss of , or have an adverse effect on, the following designated Local Green Spaces (mapped above at Figures 7.1 and 7.2 and listed below) will not be permitted other than in exceptional circumstances.**

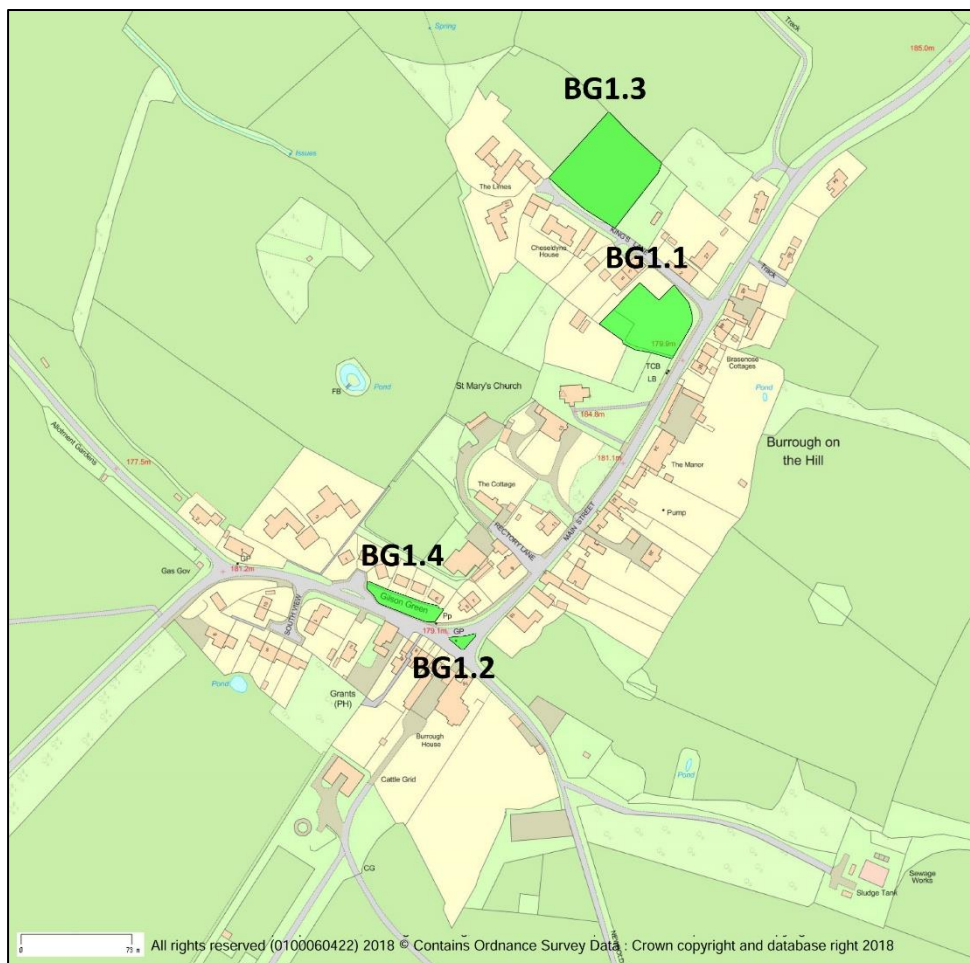
- |                                                          |                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| SG1.1 Manor Farmhouse Green, Somerby                     | BG1.1 Goose Field, Burrough on the Hill        |
| SG1.2 Village Green, Somerby                             | BG1.2 Green Triangle, Burrough on the Hill     |
| SG1.3 The Horse Pond, Somerby                            | BG1.3 Kings Lane Paddock, Burrough on the Hill |
| SG1.4 High Street Green, Somerby                         | BG1.4 Gilson Green, Burrough on the Hill       |
| SG1.5 Fern, Middle and End Cottage green space, Somerby. |                                                |

Figure 7: Local Green Spaces

### 7.1 Somerby



### 7.2 Burrough on the Hill



## 7.2 SITES AND FEATURES OF ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE

101 A group of inventory sites scores highly for ‘history’ and ‘wildlife’ (scoring at least 4/8 under these two criteria) but, because their community value scores are not high enough, they are not eligible for Local Green Space designation. Their locations are mapped at Figure 8 below and the features for they have been selected and notified are listed in the environmental inventory at **Appendix 4**.

102 The **historical environment** sites comprise a) sites with *extant and visible* archaeological or historical features, or proven buried archaeological remains, as recorded in the Leicestershire & Rutland Historic Environment Records database, and b) other sites of historical and social significance identified in local records and during the inventory process. Ridge and furrow, also a significant historic environment feature, is dealt with separately in Policy ENV 6.



**Veteran trees, The Old Rectory, Pickwell (ref PN-03)**

103 The **natural environment** sites comprise:

- a) those where *priority habitats* occur (Natural England mapping);
- b) Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) as designated by Leicestershire County Council and endorsed by Melton Borough Council; and
- c) sites identified during the inventory process as being of high biodiversity significance in the context of the Plan Area.

**POLICY ENV 2: PROTECTION OF SITES AND FEATURES OF ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE – 69 sites** (environmental inventory Appendix 4, and map Figure 8 below) have been identified as being of local or higher significance for biodiversity (habitats and species) and / or history. They are important in their own right and are locally valued. Development proposals that affect these sites and features should balance the significance of the natural and/or historical features for which they have been designated against the demonstrable local benefits of the development.

### REGISTER OF SITES OF ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE (POLICY ENV 2)

#### HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

##### Leicestershire and Rutland HER Sites

MLE 4058 Burrough Hill Iron Age hill fort. Scheduled Monument 17088. National significance

MLE 4059 Burrough Hill – late Roman site

MLE 20304 Burrough Hill – Iron Age settlement

MLE 23407 Burrough Hill – Iron Age hoard

- MLE 4062 Burrough on the Hill – Medieval village earthworks west of St Mary’s church
- MLE 4063 Burrough on the Hill – Post-medieval garden (earthworks) west of St Mary’s church
- MLE 4071 Leesthorpe – deserted medieval village (extensive earthworks)
- MLE 4081 Pickwell – quarries north of Pickwell church
- MLE 5888 Leesthorpe – Roman villa
- MLE 8615 Somerby (west of) - Enclosure (undated) earthworks
- MLE 20656 Turnpike Road, Nottingham to Kettering (1753)
- MLE 20860 Burrough on the Hill (east of) – historic track, Hose to Burrough/Somerby
- MLE 22781 Somerby – medieval village earthworks to south, off Chapel Lane
- MLE 23430 Leesthorpe – Iron Age site north of Northfield Farm
- MLE 23431 Leesthorpe – Iron Age site east of Stygate Farm

### Locally Significant Sites

- SH-01 Disused gravel pits, off Burrough Road, Somerby. C19 and earlier
- PH-01 Earthworks (early stone pits) off Main Street, Pickwell. C19 and earlier
- BH-01 Earthworks (bank) off Kings Lane, Burrough

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### Priority Habitat Sites

- P-01 Deciduous woodland at Burrough Court
- P-02 Streamside deciduous woodland, Tilton Lane
- P-03 Deciduous woodland (spinney) east of Burrough Court
- P-04 Deciduous woodland, Peake’s Covert
- P-05 Deciduous woodland, shelter belt, Twyford Road
- P-06 Lowland calcareous grassland west of Somerby
- P-07 Good quality semi-improved grassland west of Somerby
- P-08 Deciduous woodland at Burrough Hall
- P-09 Deciduous woodland west of Burrough Hall
- P-10 Deciduous woodland north of Burrough Hall
- P-11 Good quality semi-improved grassland, Burrough Hill
- P-12 Mixed priority habitats, Burrough Hill
- P-13 Lowland meadow, Burrough Hill
- P-14 Deciduous woodland – ornamental planting and chestnut avenue, The Grove, Somerby
- P-15 Deciduous woodland, streamside, north of Somerby
- P-16 Deciduous woodland, streamside, north of Somerby
- P-17 Good quality semi-improved grassland north of Somerby
- P-18 Deciduous woodland, small covert east of Pickwell
- P-19, P-20 Deciduous woodland, in valley bottom east of Pickwell
- P-21 Deciduous woodland, shelter belt at Stygate Farm
- P-22 Deciduous woodland, ornamental plantings at Leesthorpe Hall
- P-23 Deciduous woodland, west of Stygate Farm
- P-24 Deciduous woodland, Ash Pole Spinney
- P-25 Traditional orchard remains, Kings Lane, Burrough

### Local Wildlife Sites

- LWS-01 Burrough Hill – mixed habitats
- LWS-02 Species-rich hedge, Melton Lane
- LWS-03 Species-rich hedge, Melton Lane
- LWS-04 Large ash tree
- LWS-05 Good quality semi-improved grassland west of Somerby
- LWS-06 Good quality semi-improved grassland west of Somerby
- LWS-07 Good quality semi-improved grassland north of Somerby
- LWS-08 Riparian and valley-bottom habitats south of Somerby
- LWS-09 Large tree
- LWS-10 Pond in small wood southwest of Stygate Farm

### Local Geological Site

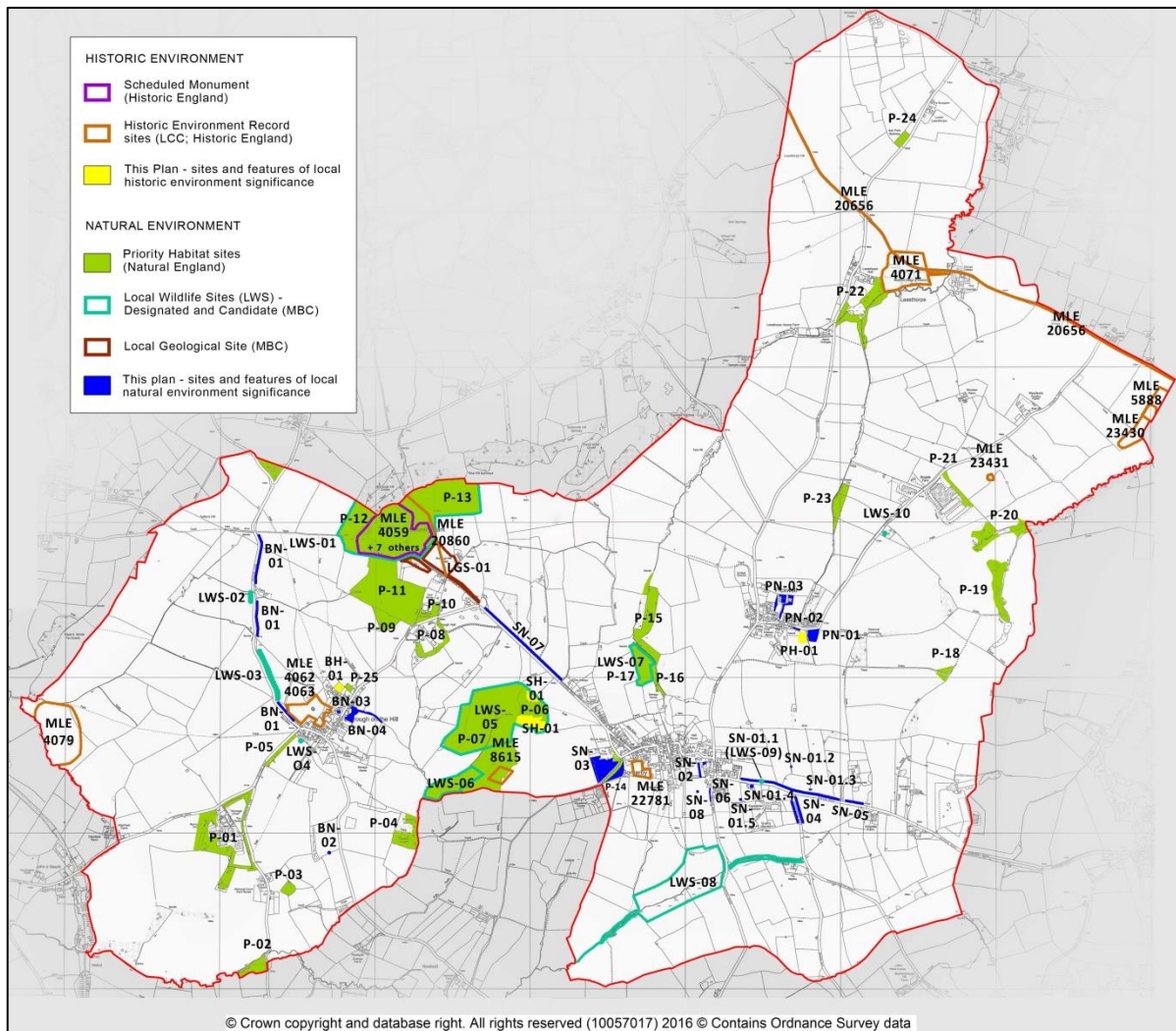
- LGS-01 Abandoned quarries in Marlstone Rock Formation (ironstone) and Dyrham Formation

### Locally Significant Sites

- SN-01.1 – SN-01.5 Field ponds, Somerby
- SN-02 Woodland with notable trees, Somerby House, High Street
- SN-03 Private nature reserve, Newbold Lane, Somerby
- SN-04 Roadside trees, Knossington Road, Somerby
- SN-05 Roadside verge, hedgerow and trees, Oakham Road, Somerby
- SN-06 Roadside verges, Owston Road, Somerby
- SN-07 Roadside verges, Burrough Road, Somerby
- SN-08 Circular copse and veteran tree, Owston Road
- BN-01 Roadside verges, Melton Lane, Burrough
- BN-02 Veteran coppiced ash tree, Newbold Lane, Burrough
- BN-03 Notable tree (English oak), St Mary the Virgin churchyard, Burrough
- BN-04 Woodland, Burrough Manor
- PN-01 Woodland, Stygate Lane/Main Street, Pickwell
- PN-02 Wetland garden, Main Street, Pickwell
- PN-03 Veteran trees, The Old Rectory, Pickwell



Figure 8: Sites and features of environmental significance



### 7.3 IMPORTANT OPEN SPACES

104 Another group of sites scored highly in the inventory but below the 75% required for Local Green Spaces. They have been identified in fieldwork, community consultations and in Parish records for their outstanding community value. Some are previously designated Open Space, Sport & Recreation (OSSR) sites (e.g. in Melton Borough Council (MBC) Consultation documents for *Local Green Space, Open Spaces Strategy* and *Provision for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2015-2016)* carried out in preparation for the MBC Local Plan. Others conform to the types described by the NPPF 2019 paras 96 – 98 (Open space and recreation) and Planning Practice Guidance (paras 37-001 to 003 – 20140306) as contributing to sustainable development. Types may include linear corridors, country parks, spaces providing health and recreation benefits, and/or with ecological and green infrastructure value, or those forming an important part of the landscape and setting of built development. In the

Plan Area these sites fit into the following MBC Open Space typologies (NP Figures 9.1, 9.3, 9.5):

- Natural and semi-natural green space
- Amenity green space
- Provision for children and young people
- Playing pitches and outdoor sports
- Allotments
- Cemeteries and churchyards

105 Additional typologies are proposed in this Plan to reflect the situation in the Plan Area (NP Figures 9.2, 9.4, 9.6):

- Green ways, lanes and linear corridors
- Form, setting and character: paddocks and other open spaces close to or within the villages which contribute to the form and character of the landscape and setting of settlements with ecological, green infrastructure and/or recreational value. Their open nature preserves the historic layouts of the settlements, and provides village views (Figures 9.2, 9.4. and 9.6)

106 Their current and potential value as community resources and as open space *within and close to the built-up areas* are recognised in Policy ENV3. This policy does not purport to prevent development, only guide it. In considering any planning application, identification as an important open space under ENV3 would have to be taken into consideration and weighed against the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

107 Particular to the Plan Area are open spaces which contribute important parts of the historic landscape and setting of built development, especially those with historic features (visible or buried) which spatially define the form and character of three villages in the Parish. For example, areas of parkland (grazing land with woodland and ornamental trees) created in the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries are important enough also to be notified as *Local Non-Designated Heritage Assets* under Policy ENV4.

108 It was pointed out in consultation that replacement in kind of some natural and historic features is not achievable. These would be the open areas *outside but adjoining* the villages mapped in Figures 9.2, 9.4 and 9.6 (Open Spaces contributing to form and character). Policy ENV3 accommodates this situation by treating them differently to the areas in Figures 9.1, 9.3 and 9.5 (Important Open Spaces) which are more distinctly *within* the villages.

**POLICY ENV 3: IMPORTANT OPEN SPACES - The amenities and open character of the following important open spaces in the Plan Area (mapped in Figures 9.1 to 9.6) will be protected. Development proposals that would lead to loss of, or harm to, the sites and their amenities will not be supported unless:**

- In the case of the sites identified in Figures 9.1, 9.3 and 9.5 (Important open spaces) they and their amenities are replaced by equivalent or better provision in a no less convenient location.**

- b) In the case of the sites identified in Figures 9.2, 9.4 and 9.6 (Open spaces contributing to form and character) protection and where appropriate enhancement of the site and its identified significant features (as described in the Environmental Inventory at Appendix 4) is demonstrated.

#### REGISTER OF IMPORTANT OPEN SPACES (POLICY ENV 3) BY VILLAGE:

##### Somerby

- A-1 Surgery Close green space (amenity green space)
- A-2 Green space with bench, Burrough Road (amenity green space)
- A-3 Green space with bench, Owston Road (amenity green space)
- NR-3 Horse Pond (amenity, natural/semi-natural green space)
- AL-1 Mill Lane allotments (allotments) and Mill Lane (green ways)
- CCY-1 Churchyard, All Saints church (cemeteries and churchyards)
- CCY-2 Somerby cemetery, Pickwell Road (cemeteries and churchyards)
- CYP-1 Children's playground, High Street (provision for children and young people)
- PP-1 Football pitch, High Street (playing pitches and outdoor sports)
- GV-4 Chestnut avenue, Newbold Lane (green lane; natural/semi-natural green space)
- HP-1 Grove Parkland, Newbold Lane (form and character; natural/semi-natural green space)
- HP-2 Somerby Hall Parkland, Pickwell Rd. (form and character; natural/semi-natural green space)
- HP-3 Somerby House parkland, Owston Rd. (form & character; natural/semi-natural green space)

##### Pickwell

- CCY-1 Churchyard of All Saints church (cemeteries and churchyards)
- CCY-2 Pickwell Cemetery, Leesthorpe Road (cemeteries and churchyards)
- VG-1 Green way bordering old stone-pits (linear corridor)
- NR-1 Woodland, east end of Main Street (natural/semi-natural green space)
- NR-2 Woodland from north of Main Street to water treatment works (natural/semi-natural green space)
- NR-3 Old quarry site. Leesthorpe Road (natural/semi-natural green space)
- VS-1 Village Hall green space (amenity green space)
- VS-2 Wetlands garden, Main Street (natural/semi-natural green space)
- VS-3 Open space contiguous with churchyard and The Rectory (natural/semi-natural green space)
- VS-4 War Memorial green triangle (amenity green space)
- HP-1 Historic Manor parkland (natural/semi-natural green space)
- PP-1 Old Cricket Field, Leesthorpe Road (form and character; natural/semi-natural green space)

##### Burrough on the Hill

- A-1 Green space with bench, Melton Lane (amenity green space)
- A-2 Green space with two benches, Main Street and churchyard
- A-3 Chrystine Pettifer Memorial Garden, Newbold Lane (amenity green space)
- AL-1 Melton Lane allotments (allotments)
- VG-1 Newbold Lane verge (amenity green; linear corridor)



- VG-2 Verge, Main Street, churchyard to Millennium marker (amenity green space)
- P-1 Paddock, Newbold Lane (form & character; natural/semi-natural green space)
- P-2 Paddock rear of 9 Main Street (natural/semi-natural green space)
- CY-1 Churchyard of St Mary the Virgin church (cemeteries and churchyards)

Important Open Spaces and Open Spaces contributing to Form and Character are mapped at **Figures 9.1 to 9.6** below and described in the Environmental Inventory at **Appendix 4**.

**Figure 9.1: Important open spaces in Somerby Village**

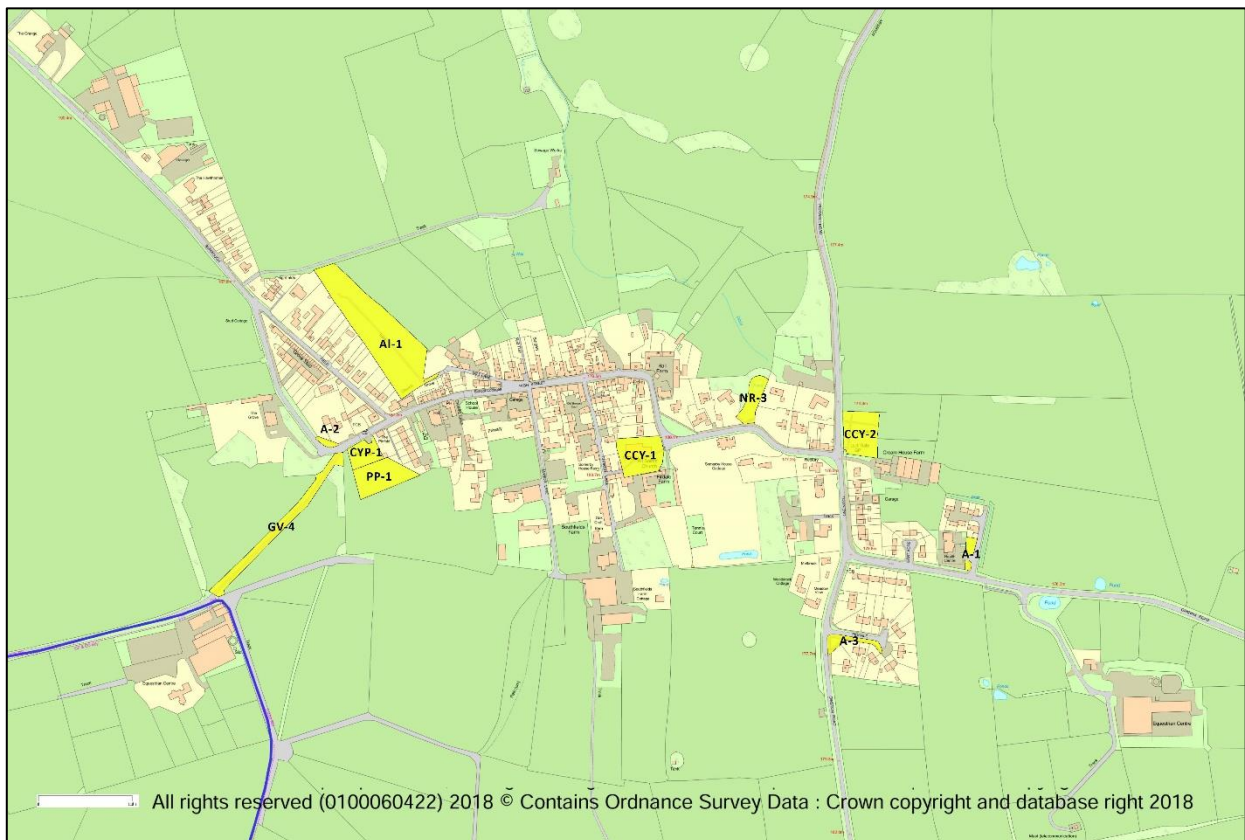


Figure 9.2: Open spaces contributing to form and character of Somerby Village

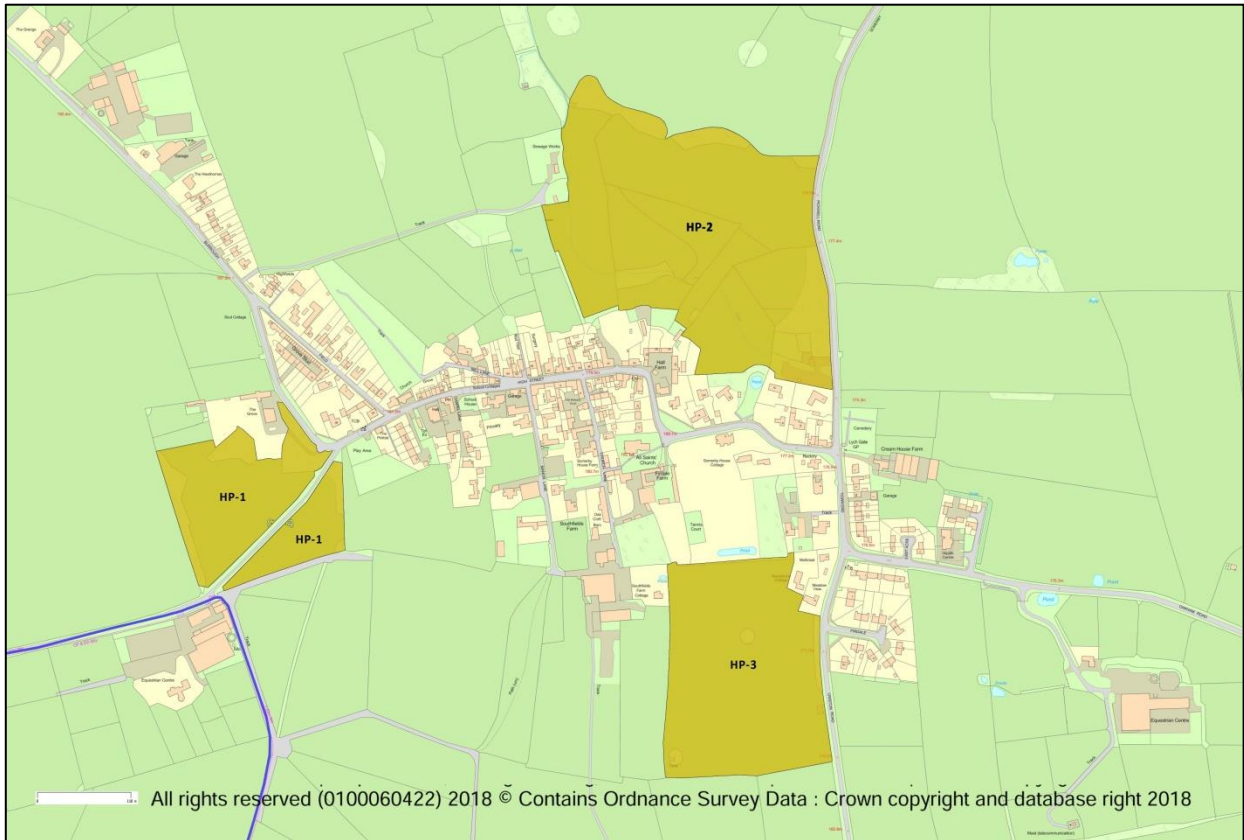


Figure 9.3: Important open spaces in Pickwell Village

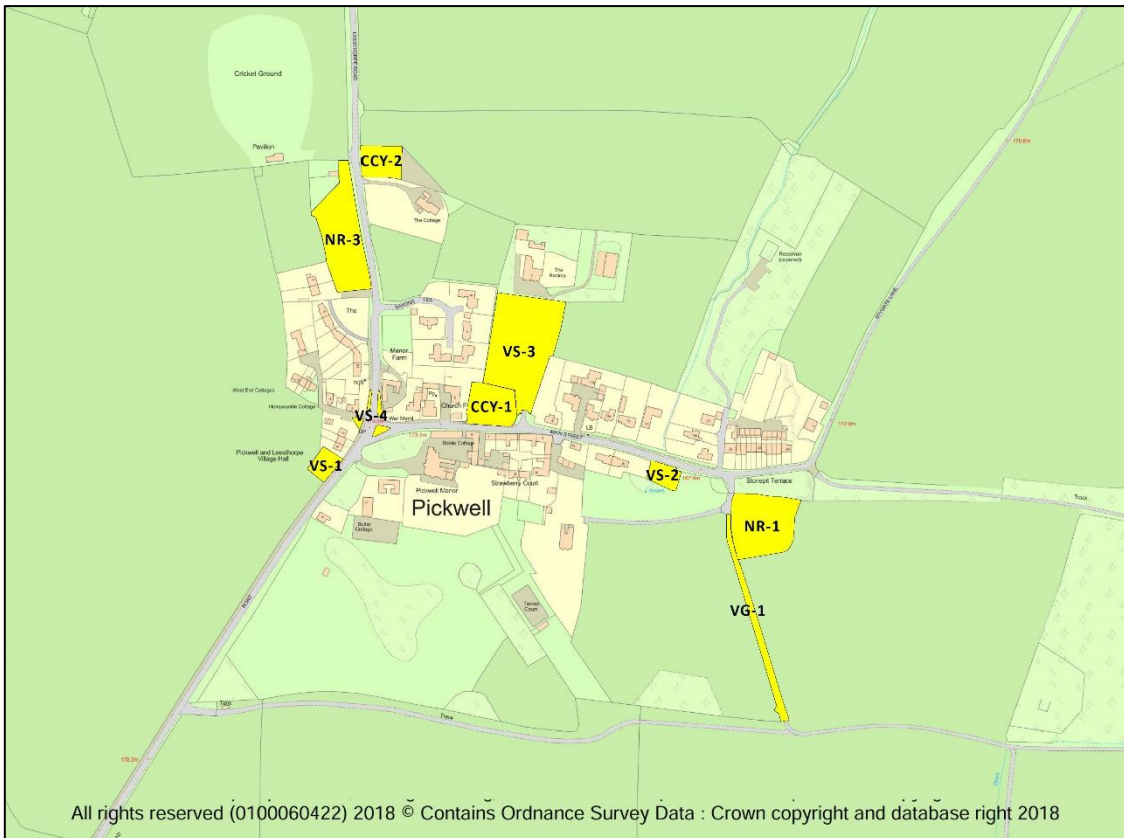


Figure 9.4: Open Spaces contributing to form and character of Pickwell village

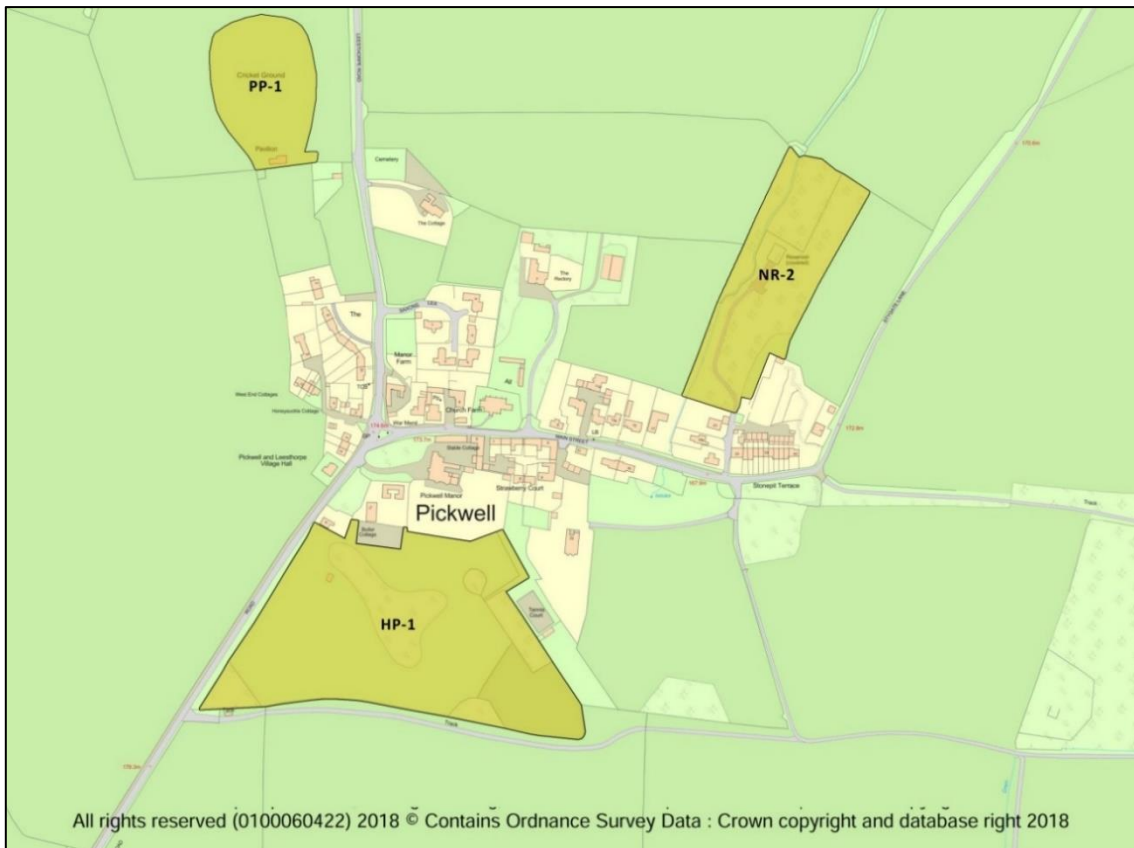


Figure 9.5: Important Open Spaces in Burrough on the Hill





Figure 9.6: Open Spaces contributing to form and character of Burrough on the Hill



## 7.4 LOCAL NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

### LISTED BUILDINGS AND SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

109 Twenty-seven buildings and structures in the Plan Area have statutory protection through Scheduling or Listing at Grade I, II\* or II. The Neighbourhood Plan lists them for reference, and to note that new development will be required to take into account their *settings* as defined, on a case by case basis, by Historic England and any additional evidence. Their location within, or close to, sites designated or noted for protection in the Plan’s Policies and Community Actions contributes to these sites’ evidence of significance. For a list of statutorily protected heritage assets see **Appendix 9**.

### SETTINGS OF HERITAGE ASSETS

110 National planning policy requires development proposals to take account of the *settings* of heritage assets. Historic England reviews any Planning Applications likely to affect statutorily protected buildings and features (Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments), while non-designated heritage assets are recognised as significant by Historic England and the Local Planning Authorities and should be taken into account when Applications are considered.

111 In conformity with the Melton Local Plan, Historic England's *The Settings of Heritage Assets, Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) is supported as the assessment tool to be used when proposing changes or enhancements in the settings of heritage assets, including non-designated assets, archaeological remains, buildings, sites, areas and landscapes.

## LOCAL HERITAGE ASSETS

112 Historic England (*Advice Note 7*, 2016) encourages Local Planning Authorities (and communities, through Neighbourhood Plans) to identify historic heritage features at the level beneath national significance (i.e. Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments). This approach is supported by:

- NPPF 2019 para 184
- Recent Planning Practice Guidance (040 Reference ID: 18a 20190723) confirming that Neighbourhood Planning processes can identify Non-Designated Heritage Assets.
- Melton Local Plan paragraph 7.25 and Policy EN6 (final paragraph).

This Plan's identifications are recommended to be added to any list of Local Heritage Assets maintained by Melton Borough Council.

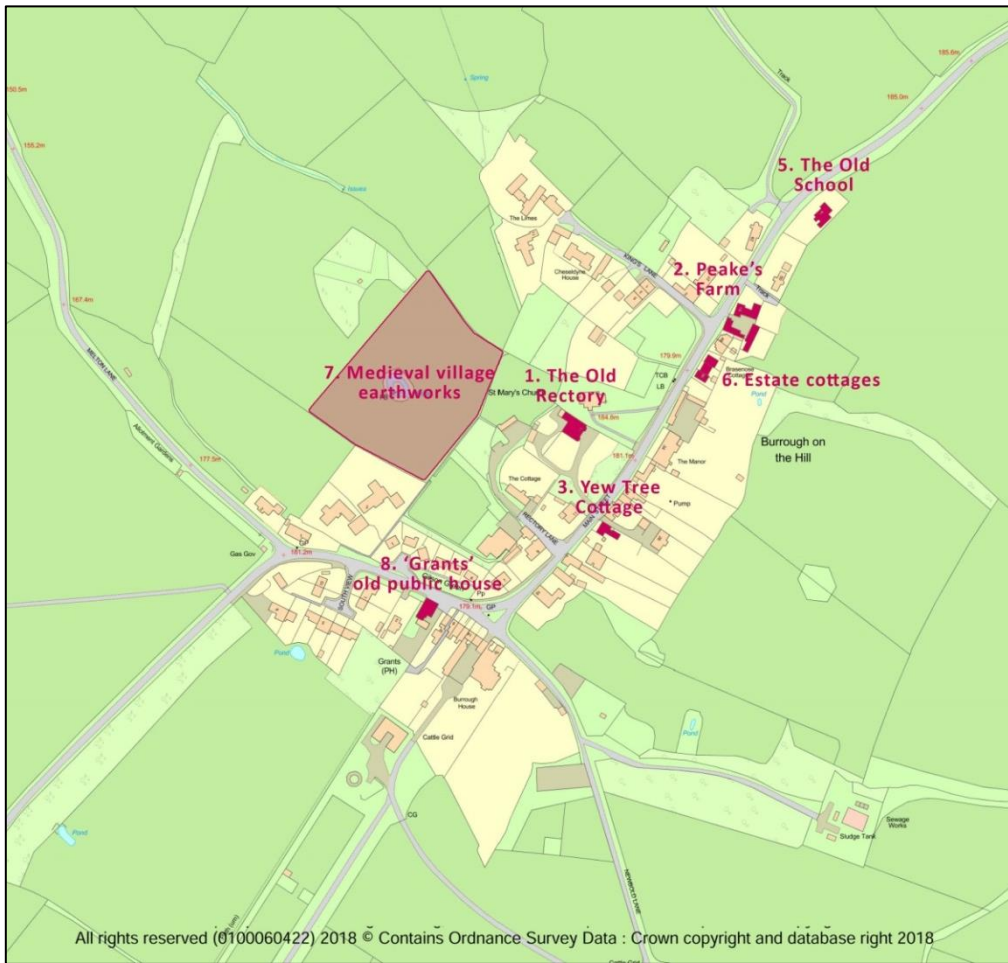
113 This Neighbourhood Plan identifies a number of buildings and structures in the built environment of Somerby, Pickwell, Burrough on the Hill and Leesthorpe that are considered to be of local significance for architectural, historical or social reasons (details below). Their inclusion here in a Local Heritage List provides them with recognition in the Planning system as *non-designated heritage assets*.

## HISTORIC PARKLAND

114 The designed parklands of country house estates in the Plan Area are considered a defining component of the historic landscape in National Landscape Character Area 93. There are six Parklands dating from circa the seventeenth to early twentieth centuries which are considered important as settings for historic buildings, as designed landscapes in their own right, and for their contribution to biodiversity. Parklands are long established at the perimeters of all four settlements. Most are visible from public roads, footpaths and bridleways and are appreciated by residents and visitors alike. *These areas of parkland do not qualify for designation as Local Green Space, but their remarkable contribution to the distinctive historic landscape of this part of Leicestershire qualifies them as non-designated heritage assets.*

Local Non-designated Heritage Assets are mapped at Figures 10.1 – 10.5 below and reviewed in detail at **Appendix 10**.

Figure 10.1 Local Non-designated Heritage Assets, Burrough on the Hill



Note: in 2019 feature 8 'Grants' changed its name to 'The Stag and Hounds'

Figure 10.2 Local Non-designated Heritage Assets, Pickwell

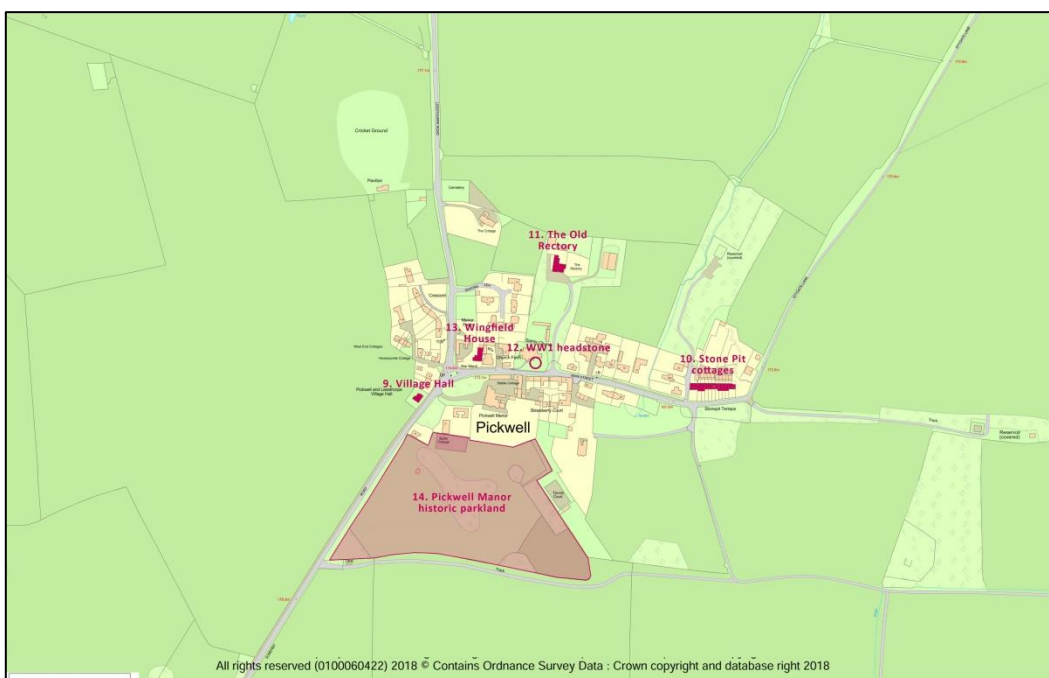


Figure 10.3 Local Non-designated Heritage Assets, Somerby

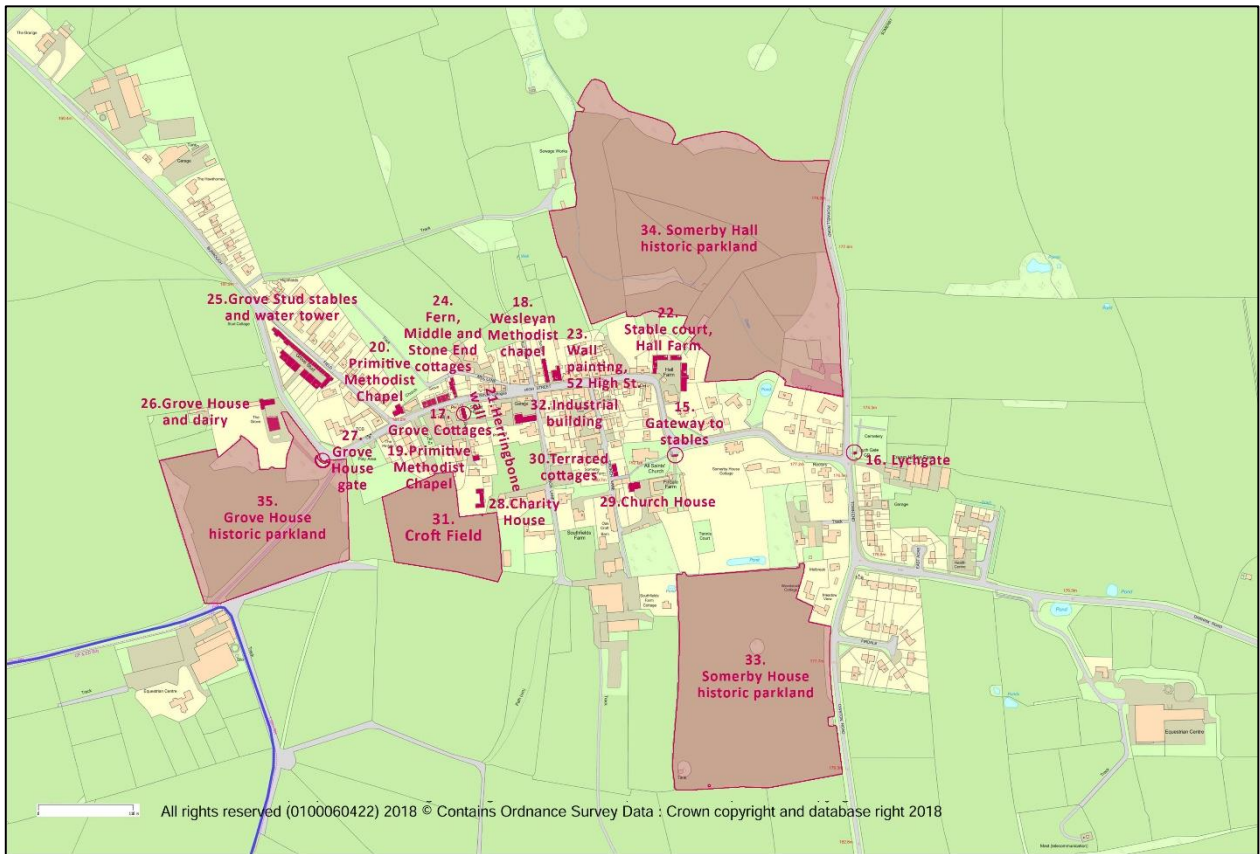


Figure 10.4 Local Non-designated Heritage Assets, Burrough Hall

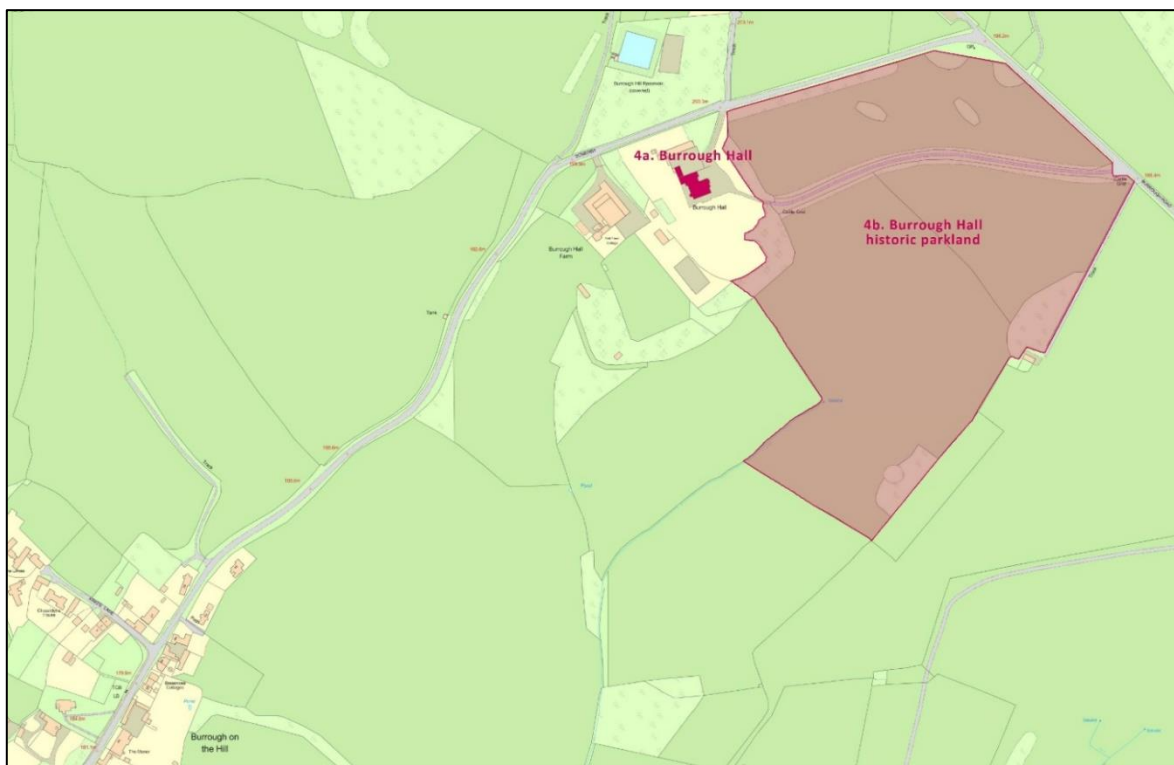
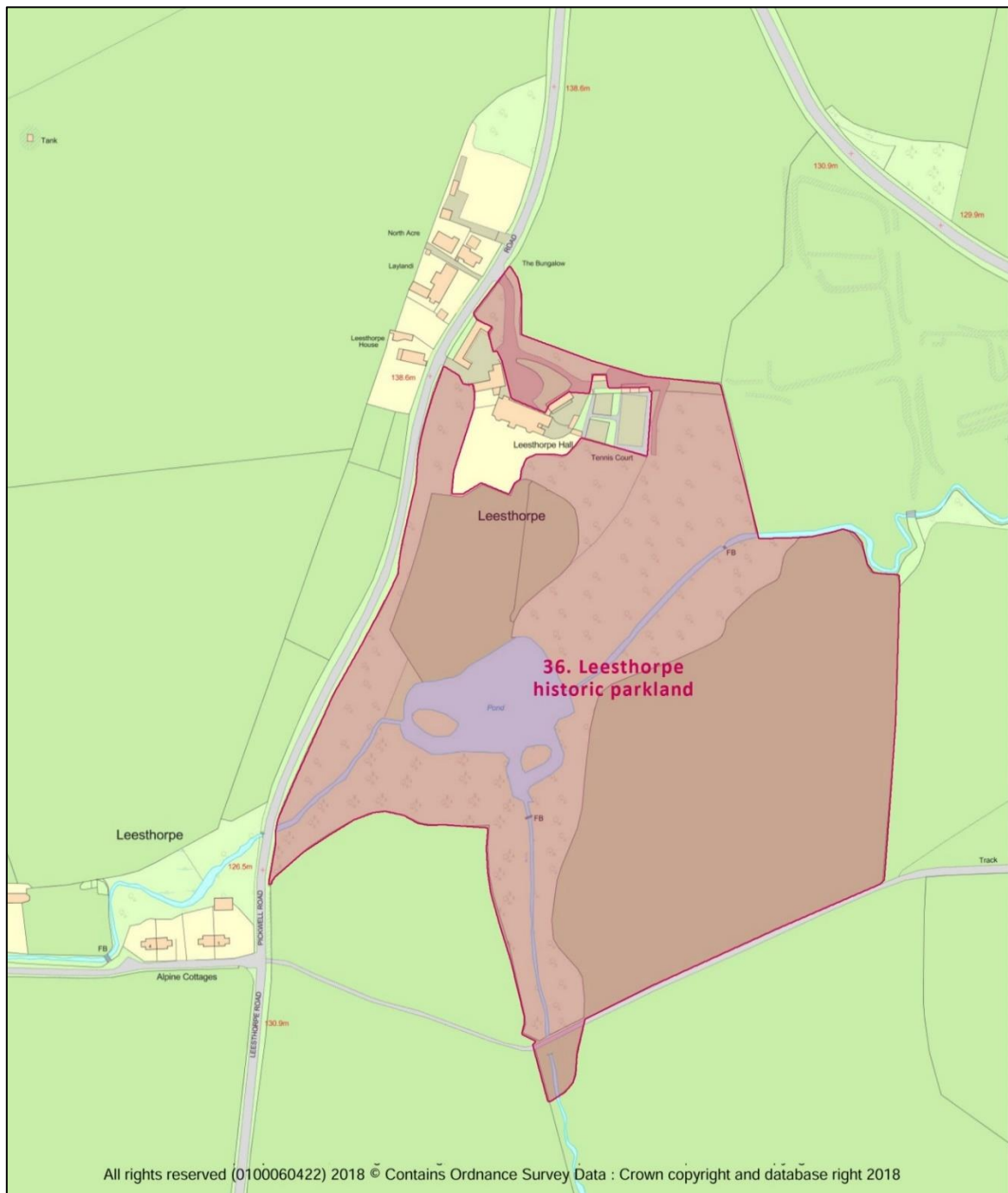




Figure 10.5 Local Non-designated Heritage Asset, Leesthorpe



**POLICY ENV 4: LOCAL NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS** – The structures and buildings listed here (maps, figures 10.1 to 10.5 above) are non-designated heritage assets. They are locally important for their contribution to the historic character of settlements and the mix of architectural styles in the villages, and their features and settings should be protected wherever possible. Their local significance as heritage assets should be balanced against the local value of a development proposal, or of a change of use requiring planning approval, affecting any of them.

## REGISTER OF LOCAL NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS (POLICY ENV 4)

### Burrough on the Hill

1. The Old Rectory, Main St., C19
2. Peakes Farmhouse, Main St, C17
3. Yew Tree Cottage, Main St, early C19
- 4a. Burrough Hall, C19
5. The Old School, Main St, C19
6. Brasenose Estate Cottages, Main St, C20
7. Earthworks, off Melton Lane and behind Church, medieval C16
8. Stag and Hounds public house (Grant's on Figure 10.1 – name changed in 2019)

### Pickwell

9. Pickwell National School (village Hall), Somerby Road, C19
10. Stone Pit Cottages, Main St., C19
11. The Old Rectory, Main St., C19
12. WWI head stone, Sapper Meadows, Church yard, C20
13. Wingfield House

### Somerby

15. Firdale Farm gateway to former Somerby House Stables, High St, C19-20
16. The Lychgate, Pickwell Road, C20
17. Grove Cottages, High St, early C20
18. Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, High St, C19
19. Primitive Methodist Chapel, Chapel Lane, C19
20. Primitive Methodist Chapel, High St, C19
21. Herringbone bond walling, Chapel Lane, C19
22. Hall Farm, stable court, High St, C19
23. Wall painting on old shop, 52 High St, C20
24. Fern, Middle and End Cottages, High St, C18-19
25. Grove Stables with water tower and cottages, Burrough Rd. and High St., C20
26. Grove House and dairy, Burrough Rd, C17-20
27. Grove house gate, Burrough Rd, C19
28. Charity House, Chapel Lane, C17
29. Church House, Church Lane, C17
30. Terraced Cottages, Church Lane, C19
31. Earthworks, Croft Field, High St, Medieval and C9
32. Industrial building, Manor Lane, C19

### Parkland and gardens

33. Somerby House parkland, C17-19
34. Somerby Hall parkland, C18-19
35. The Grove park and gardens, C19
36. Leesthorpe Manor park land, C17-20
14. Pickwell Manor parkland, C17-19
- 4b. Burrough Hall parkland, C19

COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 2 LOCAL NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS - The Parish Council will work with Melton Borough Council, the community and landowners to:

- Update conservation area appraisals, boundaries and management plans in the parish
- Research and document settings and features which contribute significance to Designated and Non-designated Heritage Assets supplementary to the Plan
- Maintain and/or restore historic parkland features, including trees, wildlife habitats and the qualities contributing to their tranquility and dark skies at night.

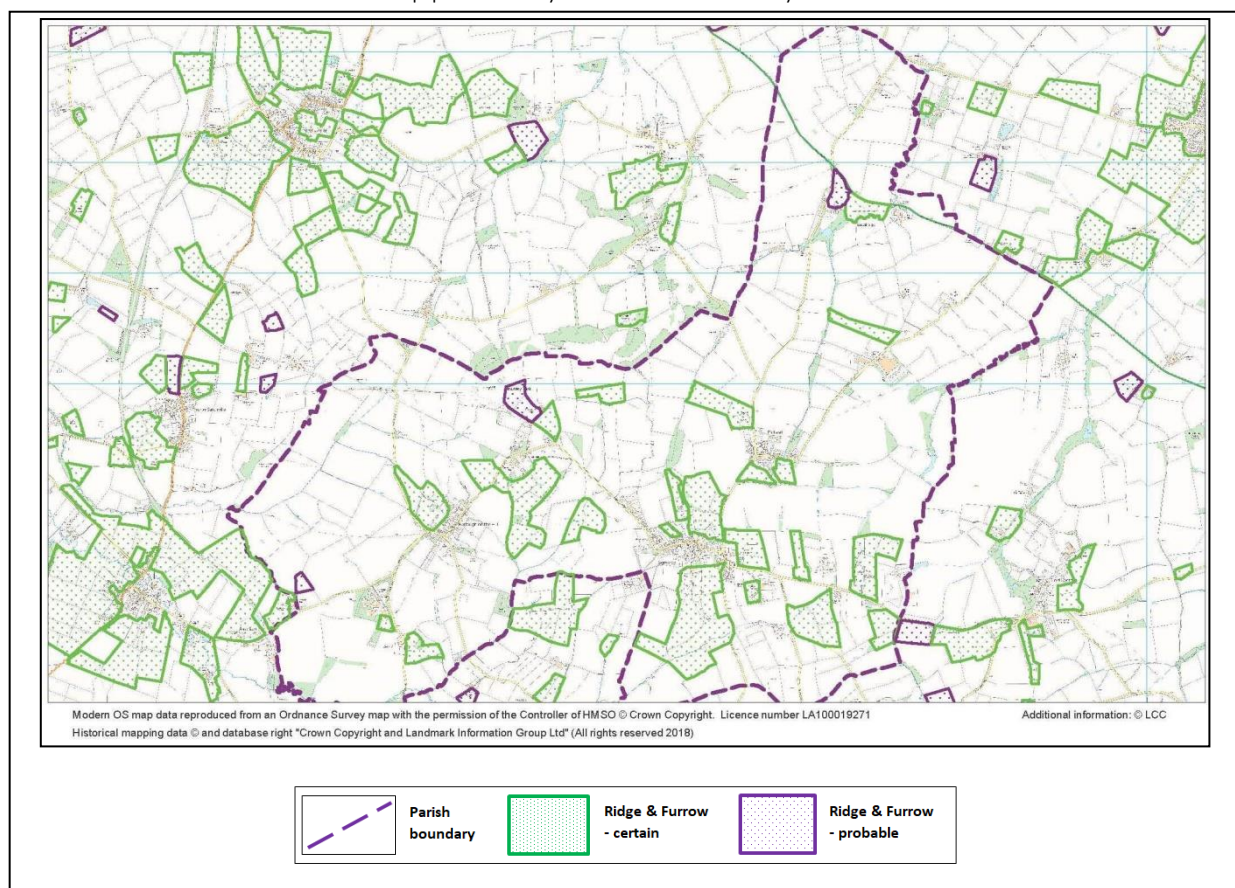
## 7.5 RIDGE AND FURROW

115 A characteristic and important feature of Somerby is the survival of a number of areas of ridge and furrow in the modern fields, as depicted in the *Turning the Plough* project, 1999 (Figure 11.1 below). Fieldwork in 2018 recorded all extant ridge and furrow throughout the parish. Figure 11.2 below, provides an inventory of the results and represents the current situation.

116 The four medieval villages which were subsumed into the modern Somerby parish were farmed using the 'open field' system for some eight hundred years until the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the major landowner began 'enclosing' some fields, and culminating in the Enclosure Award for Somerby itself in 1760. In the open field system, cultivation - arable crops and pasturage - was rotated on a 3-year basis and the land was managed communally. Ploughing was by oxen; the medieval plough was not reversible, meaning that, as the plough team went up and down the field, the soil was always thrown rightwards, forming furrows and ridges that eventually attained a height difference of up to 2 metres.

**Figure 11.1 Ridge and furrow as mapped for the *Turning the Plough* project, 1999**

Map provided by Leicestershire County Council



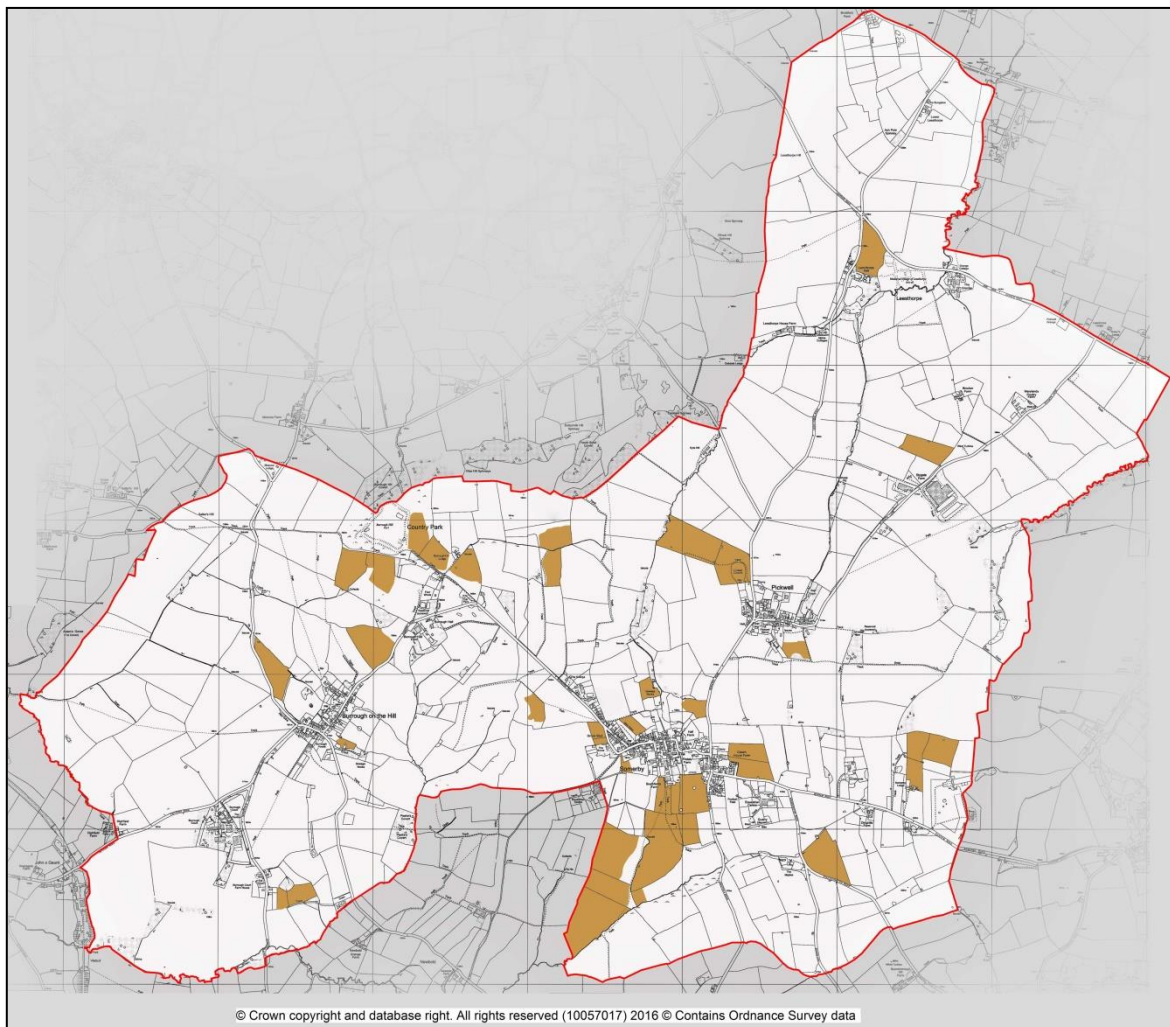
117 After the Enclosures, the open fields were subdivided ('enclosed') with hedgerows and almost all were converted to permanent grazing land, thus 'fossilising' all the features of the medieval farmed landscape, including the furlongs, headlands, sikes and baulks. 'Ridge and



furrow’, earthworks preserving these features, thus survived more or less intact – in other words, covering as much as 90% of the parish – until about 1950, when the Government determined that Britain should never again be reliant on imported food and introduced incentives to grow crops on grazing land. The resulting return to arable farming, using modern ploughs, caused the destruction of most ridge and furrow across the Midlands (Hall, D 2001. *Turning the Plough. Midland open fields: landscape character and proposals for management*. English Heritage and Northamptonshire County Council). The national trend has been a loss of between 85% and 100% per parish, most since 1950.

118 The Plan Area is typical of this pattern. In 1999, when the *Turning the Plough* survey was undertaken, 48 fields (16%) of the parish total of c.300 were mapped as having ridge and furrow (Figure 11.1). The decline has continued: of the c.295 agricultural fields now in the Plan area, 35 (11.8%) still retain traces of ridge and furrow (roughly 120 hectares of the c.1973 hectares of open land, just under 7% by area) in 2018 (Figure 11.2).

**Figure 11.2: Ridge and Furrow in 2018 as mapped for this Plan**



119 In English legislation ridge and furrow fields (except for the few that are also Scheduled Monuments) are not statutorily protected, despite a recognition that “as the open field

*system was once commonplace in NW Europe, these [surviving] sites take on an international importance” (English Heritage, 2012). While individual fields in Somerby parish are not claimed to be of international importance, the well-preserved groups are important in their own right and valued by the local community; any further, avoidable, loss would be irreversibly detrimental. Historic England strongly recommends treating all surviving ridge and furrow as *non-designated heritage assets*, and this is the approach taken in this Plan. However, involvement with local farmers and agricultural landowners on a case-by-case basis will be necessary to achieve a sustainable balance between the historic environment heritage and viable agriculture.*

**POLICY ENV 5: RIDGE AND FURROW – The areas of ridge and furrow earthworks mapped above (Figure 11.2) are non-designated heritage assets.**

**Any loss or damage arising from a development proposal (or a change of use requiring planning permission) must balance the demonstrable benefits of such development against the significance of the ridge and furrow features as heritage assets.**

## **PARISH-WIDE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES (sub-chapters 7.6 to 7.16)**

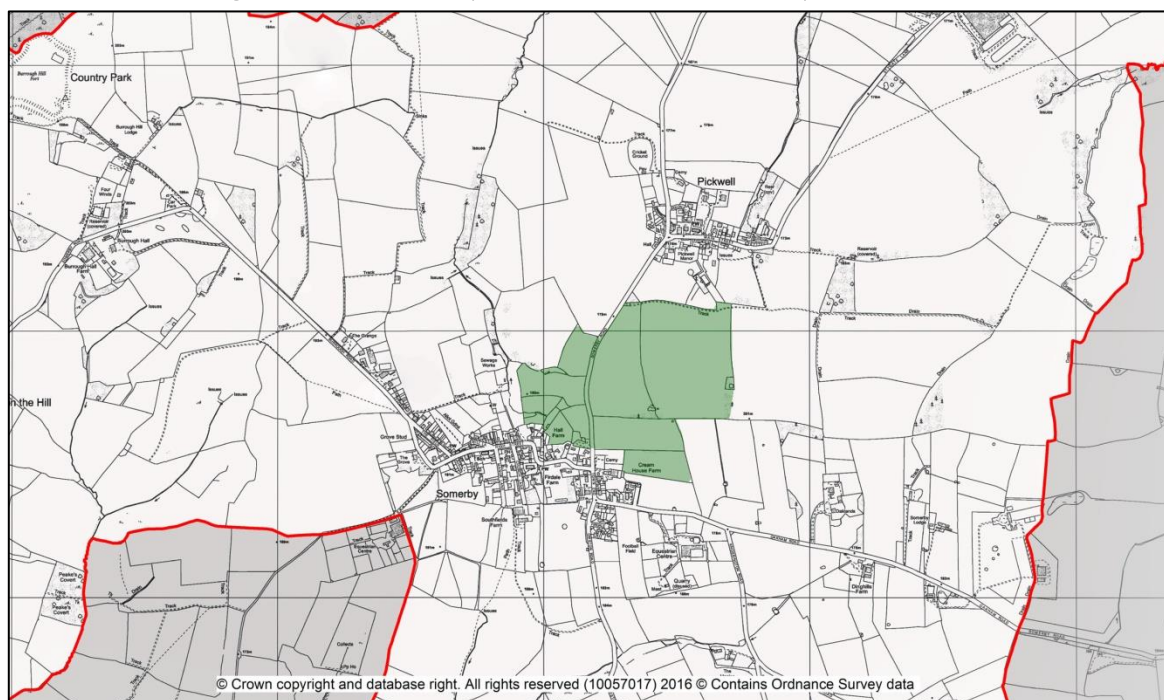
### **7.6 AREA OF SEPARATION**

120 Policy EN4 of the Melton Local Plan has provided Neighbourhood Plans with the opportunity to designate Areas of Separation (AoS). In the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire (question 37), a strong majority of residents – more than 90% - expressed support for preserving the distinctive identities of the parish villages which until 1936 were three separate parishes. Residents ranked six land areas as potential AoSs of which two were further assessed for their contribution to settlement character based on, amongst other criteria distance between, visual perception, topography, green infrastructure, land use, public visibility and recreational value. The results indicated that one area, separating Somerby and Pickwell villages, would qualify as a fundamental and largely open space contributing to the distinct identity of each settlement. That area is mapped at Figure 12 below and a detailed assessment of it can be found at **Appendix 11**.

**POLICY ENV 6: AREA OF SEPARATION: To retain the geographic delineation and visual and perceptual separation between the neighbouring villages of Somerby and Pickwell, the open and largely undeveloped land shown on the map below (Figure 12) will be designated as an Area of Separation. Development proposals in the delineated areas between these villages will be carefully controlled and limited to that which is necessary and appropriate in open countryside. Any development will be located and designed to maintain as far as possible and where possible enhance the separation between the villages.**

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 3: AREA OF SEPARATION** - The Parish Council will work with landowners to ensure that proposals for residential or commercial activities and infrastructure in this location will respect the character and features of the landscape, including public views, and the existing qualities of tranquillity and dark skies at night.

Figure 12: Area of Separation between Somerby and Pickwell



## 7.7 SETTLEMENT CHARACTER

121 Melton Local Plan Policy EN6 encourages Neighbourhood Plans to identify open spaces and other features which contribute to a settlement's character and which, by implication, should be taken into account in the Planning system. The Environmental Directory at **Appendix 4** of this Neighbourhood Plan records the sites and features which make each village individually distinctive. Overall, the three extant villages share the characteristics of high elevation, ironstone bedrock and building stone and, to some extent, similar historic development patterns. These, and the important open spaces which form key gateways to the villages, contribute to the Historic England *settings* of built forms and characterise the existing Conservation Areas.

122 Common features contributing to settlement character are:

- Linear form of villages, sense of enclosure, densely built main streets and lanes
- Vernacular architecture of the C17 and C19/early C20 Domestic Revival styles
- Ironstone as the visually dominant building material
- Extensive use of ironstone boundary walls
- Parkland settings at one or more of the edges of each village

- Tree plantations in natural patterns with native species
- Varied skylines with prominent towers, spires, cupolas and chimney stacks
- Open countryside views into and from the villages
- Ridge and furrow and grazing fields close to built-up areas
- Archaeological sites at the edges of villages

123 Open spaces contributing to gateways, built heritage and conservation areas, mapped on Figure 13 below, include:

- Leesthorpe Hall ornamental lake and park land, Pickwell Road (*outside of Figure 13 map*)
- Pickwell Manor parkland, area to south of manor house, Somerby Road
- Somerby Grove Close, Burrough Road
- Somerby Grove parkland, Newbold Lane
- Croft Field, Chapel Lane, Somerby
- Somerby Hall parkland, Pickwell Road
- Somerby House parkland, Owston Road
- Burrough on the Hill: Open space at the north entrance, Somerby Road

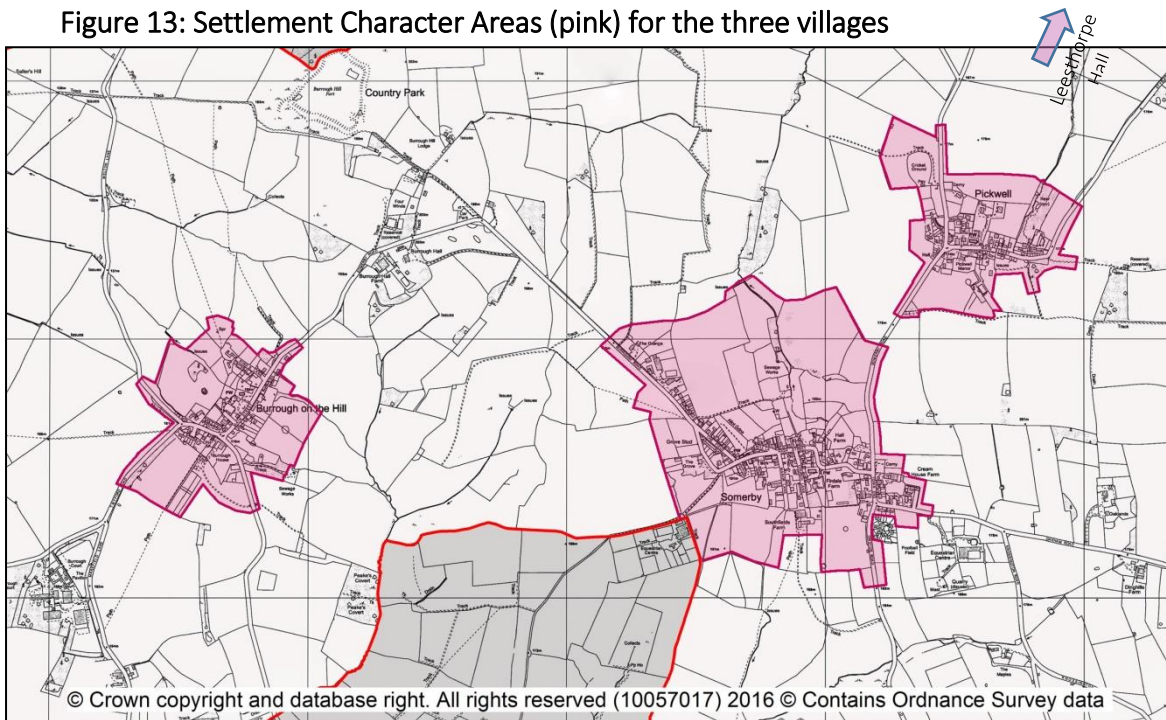
124 More intimate views within the built-up areas are also essential for defining the spaces within the villages and interrelationships of the buildings and other features, both of which are the irreplaceable result of the centuries of human history that defines the parish.

125 This policy adds local detail to Melton Borough Council Local Plan policy EN6 and helps deliver Natural England's NCA: 93 Statement of Opportunity SEO1 about the settlement patterns and character of villages. It also conforms with the intent of the detail of MBC Local Plan policy EN1 as mapped for Somerby village.

**POLICY ENV 7: SETTLEMENT CHARACTER – Development proposals will be supported where they protect and enhance the features defining settlement character within and around the three villages, including the historic open areas forming settlement boundaries, gateways, the physical settings of historic built forms, features and the characteristics of Conservation Areas (see Figure 13 below).**



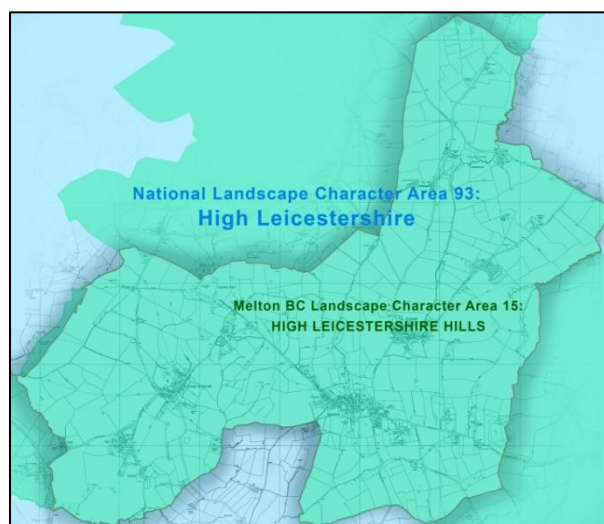
Figure 13: Settlement Character Areas (pink) for the three villages



## 7.8 LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

126 As noted in the chapter introduction, the Plan Area lies within National Landscape Character Area 93 *High Leicestershire* and in Melton Borough Council Landscape Character Area *High Leicestershire Hills*. The whole parish is recognised as being of high landscape value and sensitivity for its “broad, rolling ridges and secluded valleys ... [and] quiet, rural character. ... Extensive views reveal a pattern of small attractive villages and hamlets set within an agricultural landscape, with traditional churches acting as distinctive features.” The landscapes of Somerby Parish are of at least moderately high significance nationally and of very high significance in Leicestershire and the East Midlands.

Figure 14: National (blue and green tints) and Melton Borough Council (green tint) landscape character designations covering the Plan area.

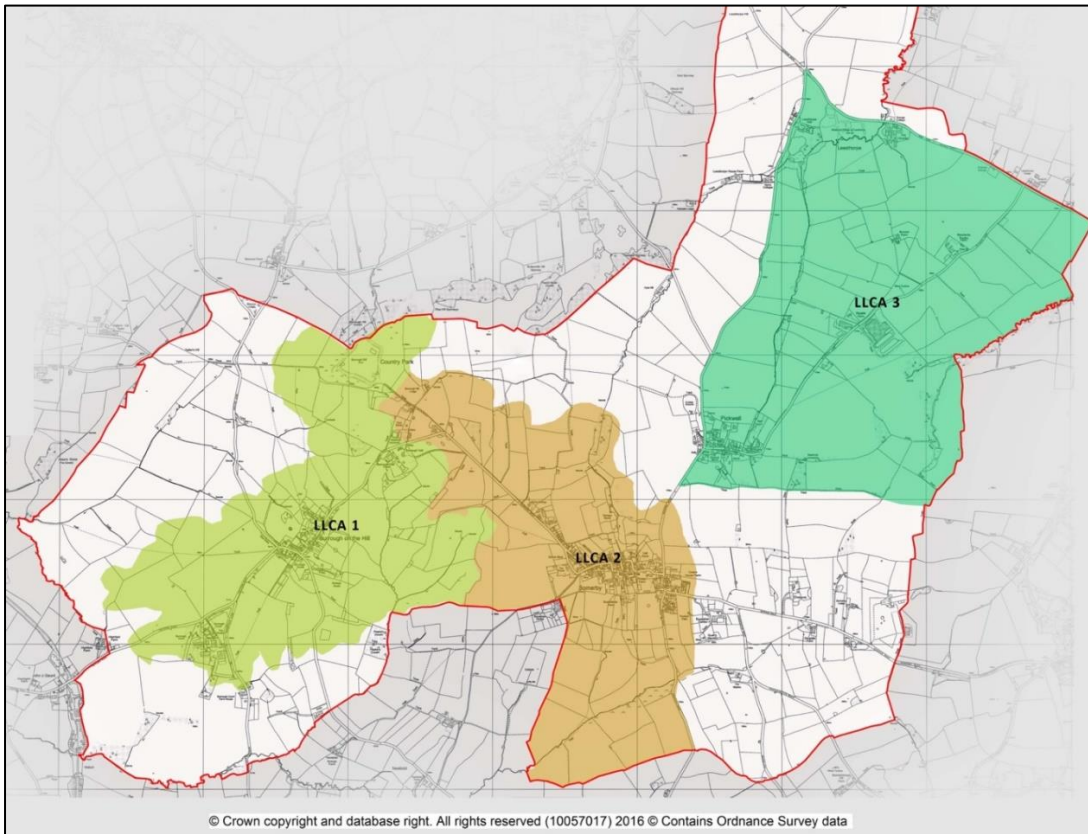


- 127 It is an area where the night sky can still be seen well. CPRE maps place it in the three lowest categories (of nine) for light pollution in England. It is also one of the few areas in Leicestershire where a number of bird species of conservation concern still survive, albeit in small numbers, thanks to agricultural practice and the rural nature of the landscape.
- 128 Based on consultation responses, community experience and fieldwork, three local areas of particular landscape character and sensitivity were identified during the development of this Plan. These are the Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCA 1-3) subject of Policy ENV8. This policy adds local detail to Melton Local Plan policy EN1 in respect of landscape character and features, topography, tranquillity, views and dark skies, and helps deliver Natural England's NCA:93 Statement of Opportunity (our **Supporting Document 2**) to protect the 'varied and sparsely settled rural landscape'. The LLCAs are mapped below in Figure 15 and described and illustrated at **Appendix 12**.

**POLICY ENV 8: LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS – Development proposals in the three landscape areas mapped here (Figure 15 below) will be required to respect the qualities, character, distinctiveness and amenity value of the affected landscape(s). The local benefit of the development should be judged against the recognised high value of the landscape. Specifically, development should not:**

- Create inappropriate visual intrusion,
- Adversely affect landscape elements which contribute to the landscape character,
- Introduce incongruous landscape elements, or
- Adversely affect areas of tranquillity, including those benefiting from dark skies, unless the proposal can be adequately mitigated through the use of buffering and the prevention of light pollution.

Figure 15: Local Landscape Character Areas in the Somerby Neighbourhood Plan Area



### LLCA 1: The Burrough escarpment



Burrough on the Hill and Burrough Hill Fort.

Ridge and furrow fields to the south, seen from Somerby Road.



### LLCA2: The ironstone upland



Somerby and its northern and southern approaches.

Escarpment edge, disused gravel pits northwest of Somerby.

### LLCA3: The Back Slope



Pickwell and the upper catchment of the rivers Eye and Wreake.

Pickwell back-slope, looking towards Cold Overton.

## 7.9 IMPORTANT VIEWS

- 129 The relatively high and open topography of the Plan Area has created long distance and panoramic views across many attractive natural and historic landscape areas within the parish, both from and to the villages, and much farther afield. The visual quality of views within the parish is noted by Natural England in its profile of NCA: 93 and referenced by Melton Borough Council in the 2014 Melton and Rushcliffe Landscape Sensitivity Study.
- 130 Consultation with residents confirms a desire to conserve the rural setting of the parish and with it the character of important views, whether extensive ones from the high ground, or those more intimate views from within the villages essential for defining open spaces and the inter-relationships of buildings. The parish is a very popular destination for recreational

tourism such as walking, cycling and horse riding, and the often striking views, publicly visible from footpaths, bridleways and quiet lanes play a major role in attracting visitors. In consultation a third of local businesses said tourism and visitors were economically important to them.



View from Kings Lane, Burrough village, towards Burrough Hill Fort

131 The consultation findings informing Policy ENV9 below are also supported by the Environmental Inventory (Appendix 4) which was principally aimed at identifying sites of significance, but also confirmed sight-lines and mapped suggested views mapped on **Figure 16.1 – 16.6** below. The principal views (orange fans) should be protected by careful siting of all development in the parish during the lifetime of the Plan. A full description of the key elements within the listed views can be found with photographs at **Appendix 13**.

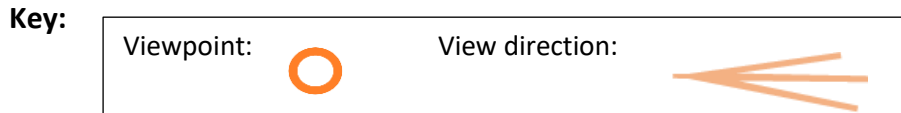
**POLICY ENV 9: IMPORTANT VIEWS** - Seventeen views from publicly accessible viewpoints around and within the three villages are important contributors to the character and recreational use of the Plan Area and are highly valued by local people and visitors. Development should be located and designed to avoid any significant adverse impact on the perceptual experience of these views.

#### REGISTER OF IMPORTANT VIEWS (POLICY ENV 9)

- SV7.1 from Owston Road north toward Somerby village
- SV7.2 panorama from and to south of Somerby village toward Whatborough Hill (SAM)
- SV7.3 from Somerby High Street south down Manor Lane to Countryside
- SV7.4 south from Burrough Road and Footpaths D70 and D72 to Somerby village
- SV7.5 from Somerby High Street to Somerby Church, Somerby House and Village Green
- SV7.6 from Burrough Hill and escarpment towards Pickwell Village
- SV7.7 from Newbold Lane and Footpath D72 west and south toward Burrough, Owston and Tilton
- SV7.8 from Somerby High Street toward Somerby Hall parkland



- SV7.9 from escarpment edge toward Tilton
- BV3.1 from Twyford Road/Melton Lane towards Charnwood Forest
- BV3.2 panorama from and to Kings Lane and Burrough Hill Fort
- BV3.3 from Newbold Lane towards Whatborough Hill (SAM)
- PV5.1 of Pickwell village core, to and from Main Street
- PV5.2 from Cricket Field towards Leesthorpe and Old Dalby
- PV5.3 from Pickwell Road and Footpath D68 to Somerby Conservation Area and Church
- PV5.4 from footpath D68 and permitted bridal way toward Cold Overton
- LV8 from Cuckoo Hill across Lower Leesthorpe Fields towards A606



**Figure 16.1: Important Views, whole Parish**

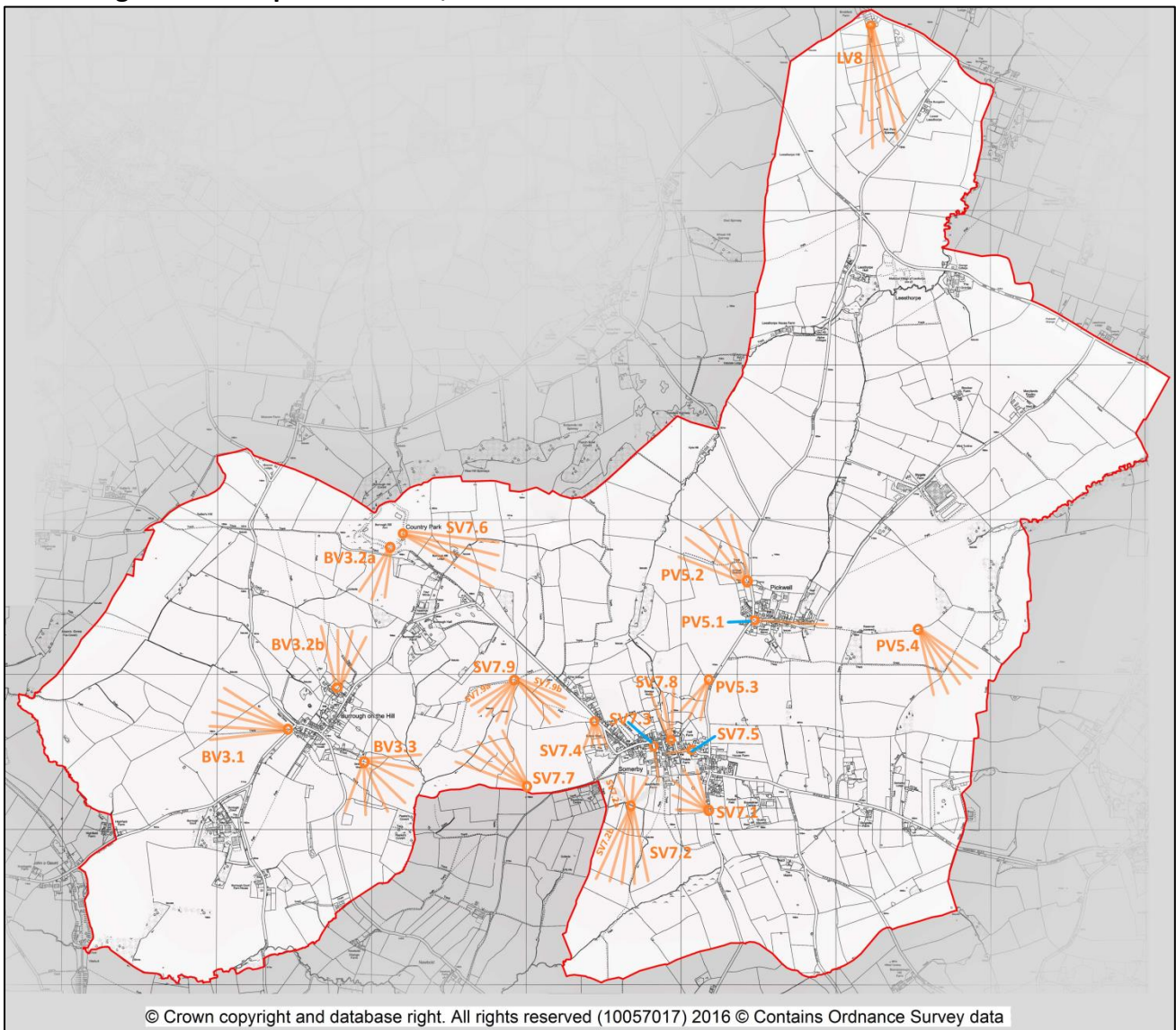


Figure 16.2: Important Views, Somerby village

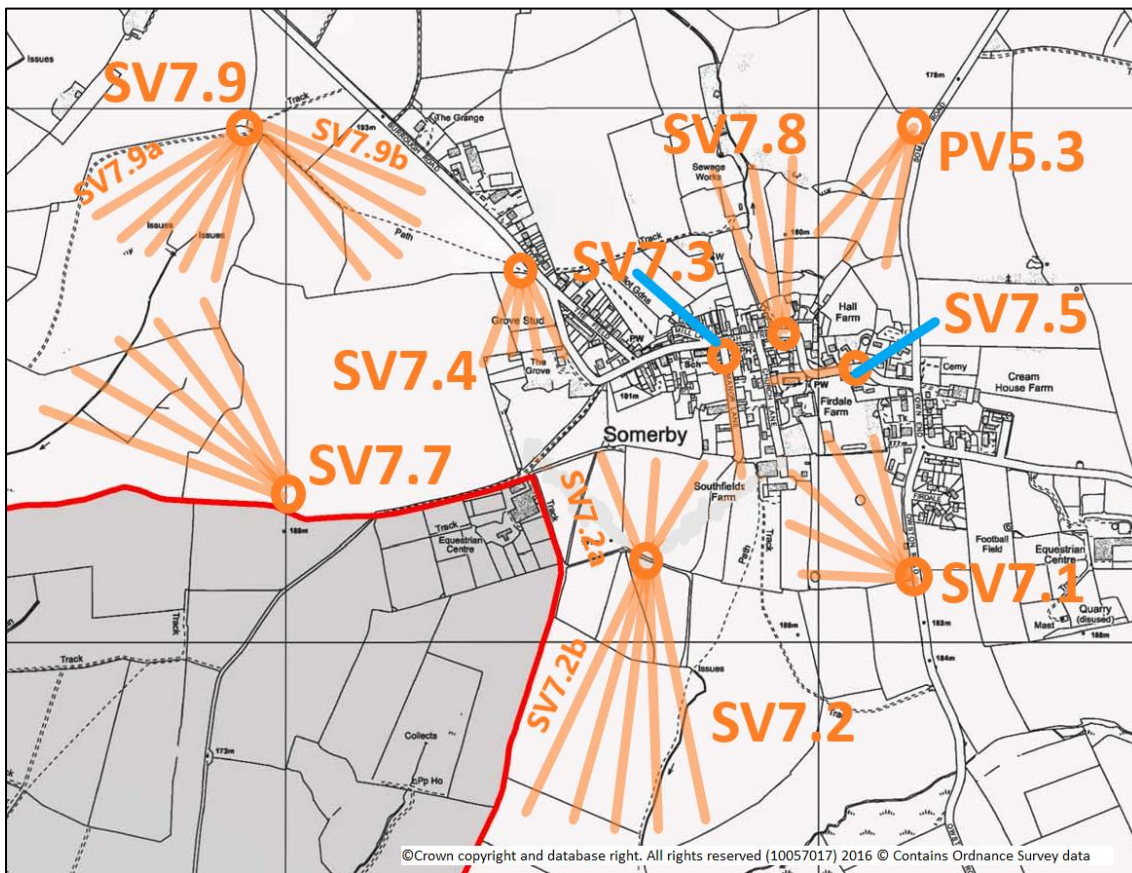


Figure 16.3: Important Views, Pickwell village

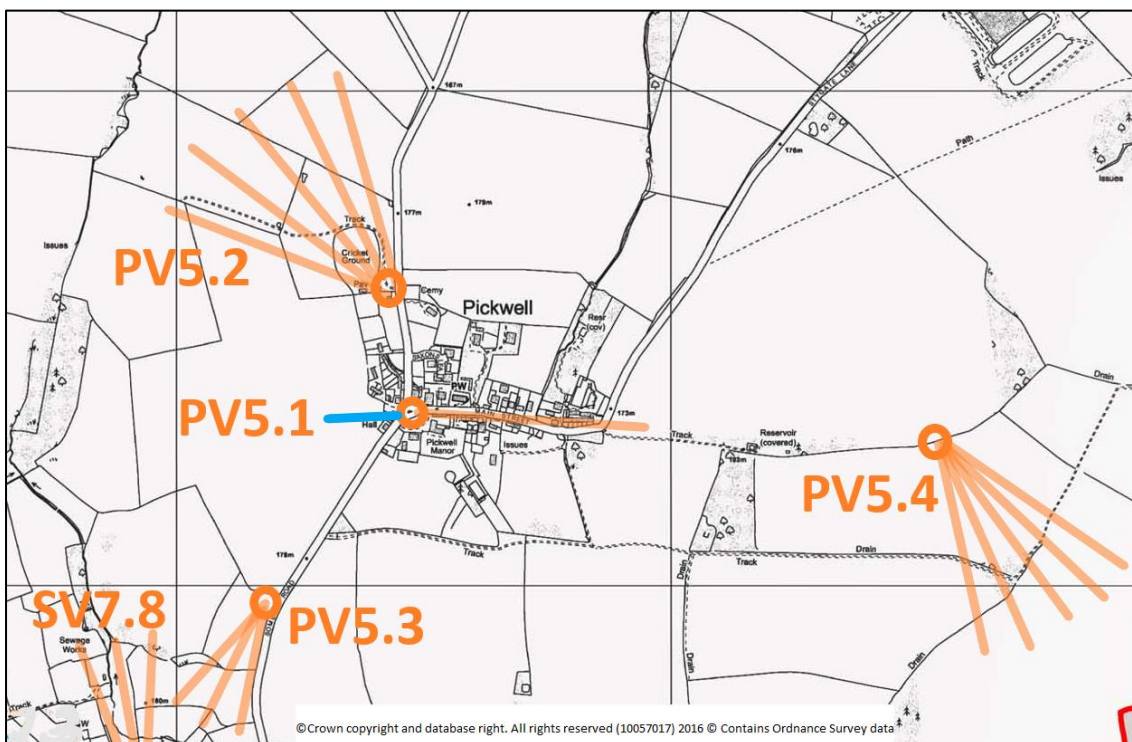




Figure 16.4: Important Views, Burrough on the Hill village

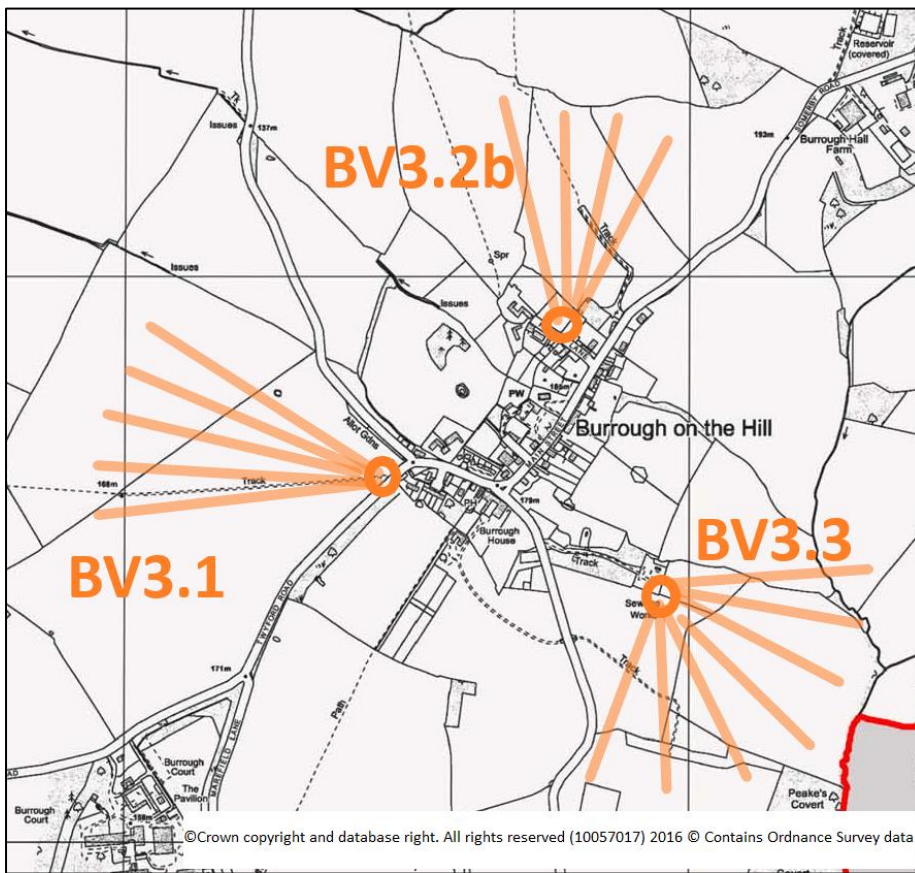
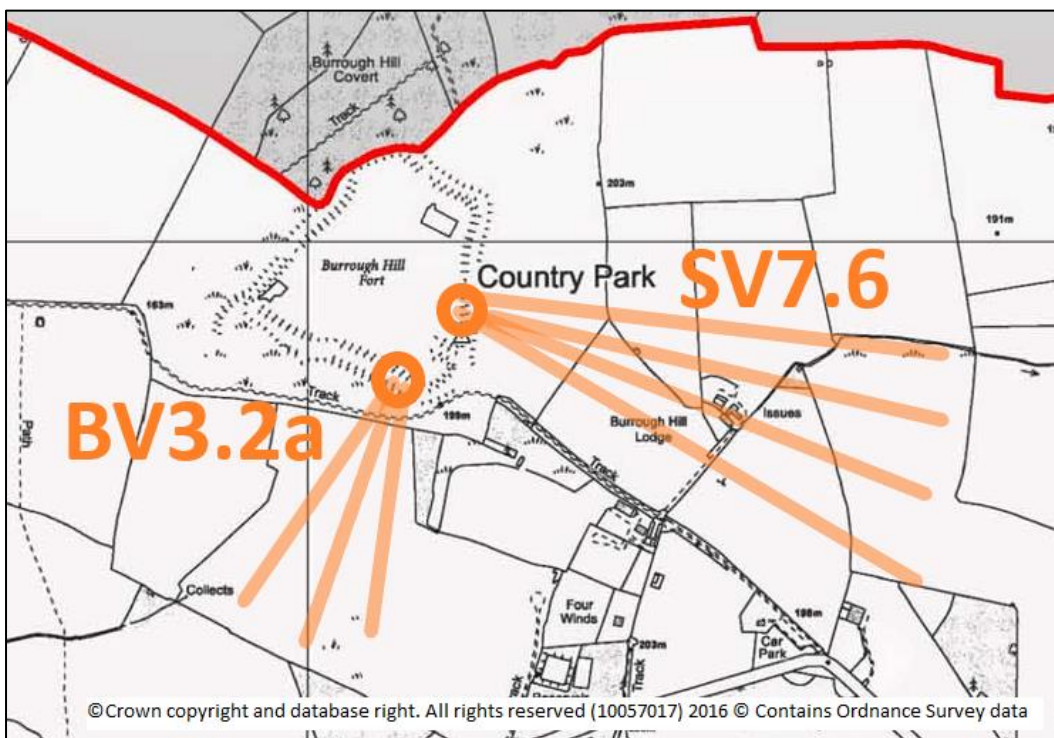
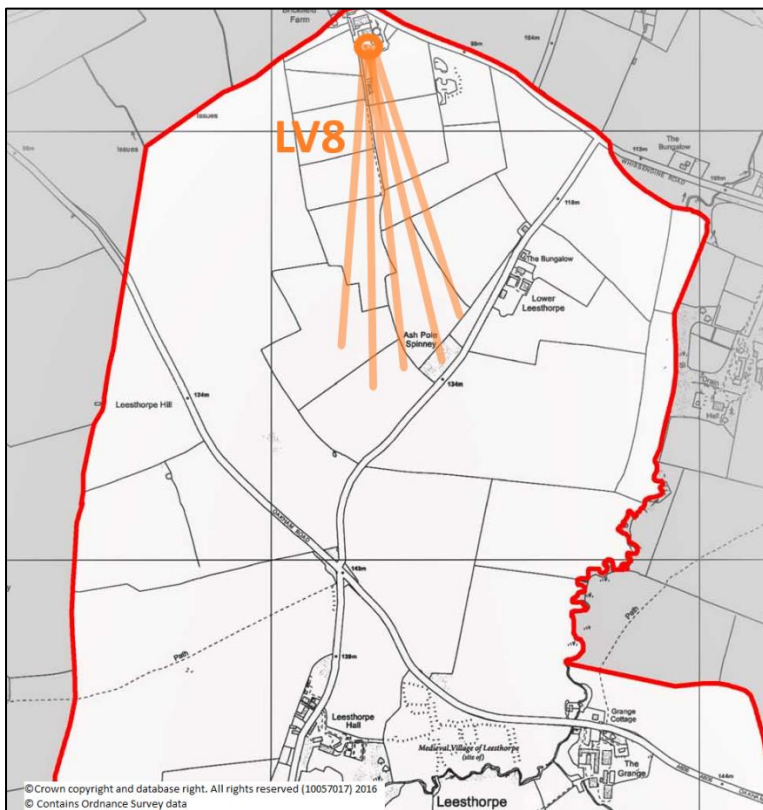


Figure 16.5: Important Views, Burrough Hill Fort



**Figure 16.6: Important Views, Leesthorpe**



## 7.10 BIODIVERSITY AND WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

132 Although the Plan Area includes some areas of intensive arable farmland, its topography and agricultural history have allowed a better than average (for Leicestershire) survival of pastoral farming, much of it on permanent grass, and areas of relatively small, hedged fields. The result is a number of areas of high natural environment significance, although, as with much of Leicestershire, these survive as ‘hotspots’ of biodiversity in the wider landscape. A parish wildlife survey conducted in June 2018 as part of the evidence base for this Plan demonstrated a notable level of biodiversity. It recorded 56 bird species (including 13 species of conservation concern in the national Biodiversity Action Plan, of which three are among Leicestershire’s most endangered species), 16 mammals (including four bat species), six reptiles/amphibians and a range of invertebrates and flowering plants.



133 All of this confirms the relative importance, in the context of the Plan Area (which is the context in which this Plan’s environmental policies apply), of the remaining sites of local biodiversity importance, whether ‘natural’ or artificial, as high or irreplaceable’.

- 134 Policy ENV 2 deals, in part, with the protection of identified parcels of land of proven high biodiversity value. Policy ENV 10 covers the general principal of protecting wildlife in the Planning System, mainly through development conditions. It also identifies three wildlife corridors in the Plan Area and endorses a fourth, already designated by Melton Borough Council. These wildlife corridors will provide *habitat connectivity*, both within the Parish and to and from habitats outside but near to the Plan Area, for example the Owston Woods SSI south of Somerby Village. The corridors will enable wildlife to move between the otherwise isolated surviving places for living, breeding, foraging and feeding, and (because of its popularity of the area's footpaths) give opportunities for local people and visitors to enjoy the benefits of appreciation of the natural world.
- 135 Protection of habitats and species in the Planning system is an obligation under European directives (e.g. *Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora*) and the English legislation derived from them (e.g. *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* as amended). An individual Planning decision affecting one parcel of wildlife habitat in Somerby parish might feel too small to affect wider biodiversity. But English biodiversity consists *only* of the sum of all such individual places; destruction of any one reduces English biodiversity irreversibly by that amount. The cumulative effect of this approach, allowing development to destroy local habitat sites, has played a significant part in the 60% decrease in abundance of priority species since 1970 (*State of Nature Report 2019*). Residents in this Plan Area wish to discourage this harmful approach. In so doing they are explicitly supported by a number of paragraphs in the National Planning Policy Framework as well as by the thoughtful interpretation of its definition of *sustainable development* on which they expect local Planning decisions to be based.

**POLICY ENV 10: BIODIVERSITY AND WILDLIFE CORRIDORS - Development proposals will be expected to safeguard locally significant habitats and species, especially those protected by relevant English and European legislation, and, where possible, to create new habitats for wildlife. If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission will be refused. Development proposals should not damage or adversely affect the wildlife corridors identified in Figure 17 below.**

Development in the Plan Area will be expected to protect and enhance wildlife corridors and other potential habitat links, considering where appropriate habitats which lie outside but near to the Plan Area. It should not create barriers, including light and noise pollution, to the permeability of the landscape for wildlife in general, or fragment populations of species of conservation concern.

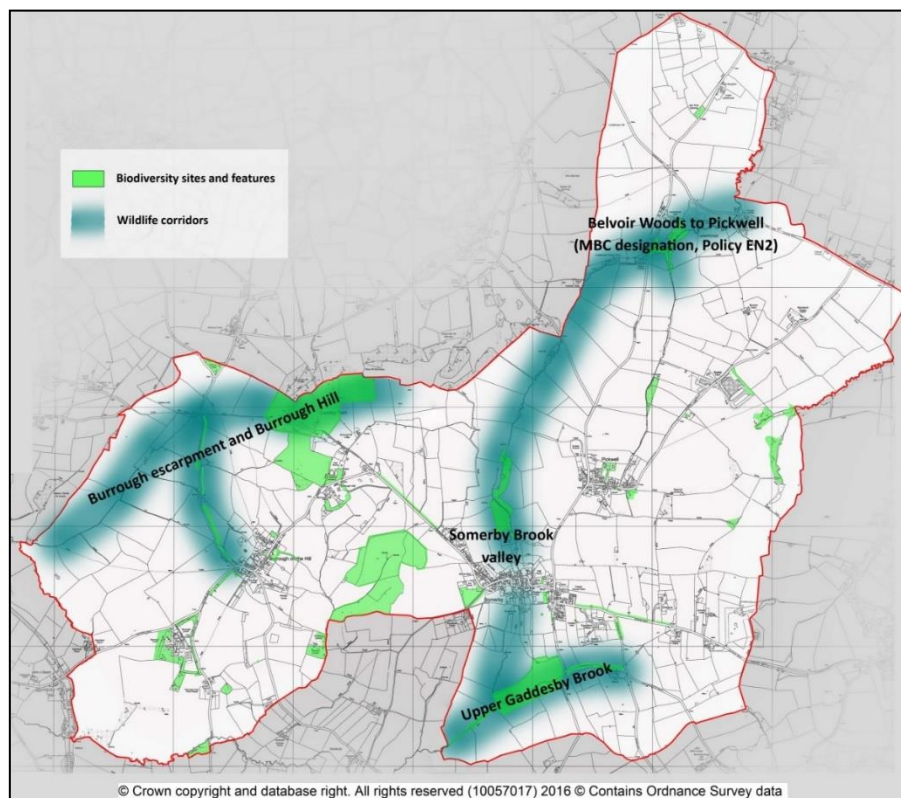
#### **COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 4: BIODIVERSITY**

**a) The Parish Council in conjunction with other bodies will maintain the environmental inventory list of known sites of biodiversity interest prepared for this Plan;**



b) The Parish Council will work with community groups, landowners, funders and other organisations to enhance the biodiversity of the Parish by creating and/or managing habitat sites (e.g. wildflower meadows, woodland, wetland) on suitable parcels of land.

Figure 17: Biodiversity Sites and Wildlife Corridors



## 7.11 TREES, HEDGEROWS AND GREEN VERGES

136 Consultations show that residents prize the abundance of trees, hedgerows and green verges in the parish, both in the countryside and within or on the edges of built areas. NCA: 93 notes that trees in all forms - field and park land specimens, copses, spinneys and wood land -- are important elements of the local landscape character and the *Natural England Priority Habitat Inventory (Central England) 2019* designates 16 deciduous woodlands in the parish. The network of hedgerows, both roadside and dividing fields and green verges contribute rural character to the parish and promote biodiversity. Locally, there is a strong presence of mature and veteran trees. These features contribute a distinct 'sense of place' to the Parish, provide an ecological link between the built environment and the surrounding countryside and help mitigate climate change. Local landscaping character is mature, informal and although purposefully planted reflects idealised natural forms rather than the more regimented forms of urban schemes. Positive regard should be shown for protection and maintenance of trees under Tree Preservation Orders and other important trees identified by this Plan. (See **supporting document 7** containing TPOs in the Parish, and chapter 7.2 Sites and Features of Environmental Significance, Policy ENV2).

137 To assist in creating landscape proposals for new development, advice is offered in **Appendix 8 Design Guidance (Layout and Landscaping)** appropriate to the type and overall size of proposals, and considering site constraints including neighbouring properties.

**POLICY ENV 11: TREES, HEDGEROWS AND GREEN VERGES – To be supported development proposals must demonstrate that:**

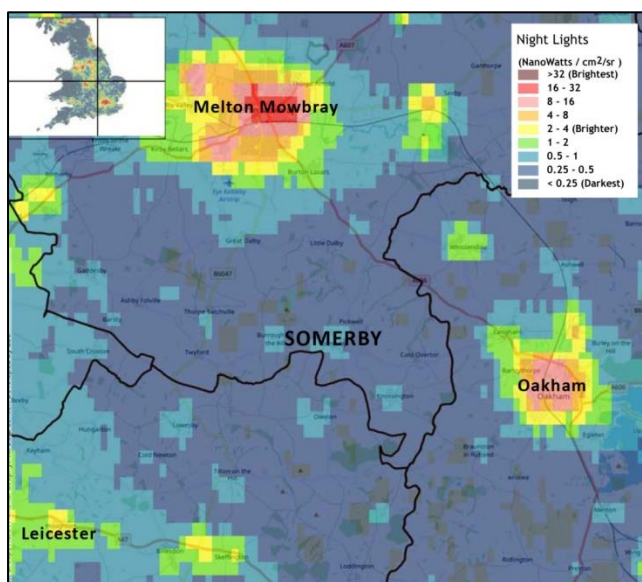
- a) the proposal fully integrates hard and soft landscape schemes, taking account of local landscaping character, materials (paving and fencing), the character of adjoining landscapes and properties, biodiversity and where appropriate, the edges of open countryside,
- b) the general presumption is that, wherever possible, all existing trees and hedgerows, that contribute to the amenity of the area, should be retained. Proposals should seek to avoid the unnecessary loss or damage to existing trees, woodlands, hedgerows or green verges during or as a result of development but where trees cannot be retained as a result of the development, they shall be replaced at a ratio of at least 2:1, where possible either on site or in the near vicinity. Hedgerows that cannot be retained should be replaced, as appropriate, as part of the overall landscaping scheme for the development.
- c) adequate tree and hedge surveys are provided, giving special attention to mature and veteran trees, their root protection zones and stability of hydration to demonstrate any adverse effects from development are minimised,
- d) In addition new trees are to be planted as part of a residential development of three or more houses at three trees per dwelling, and as part of non-residential development at one tree per 50m<sup>2</sup> of gross floor-space; using species native to the Plan Area and landscaped to reflect the existing 'naturalized' planting styles,
- e) trees planted to meet this policy shall be located where they can reasonably be expected to grow to maturity,
- f) green verges are preserved wherever possible and if lost when splay areas are needed, contributions are made for establishing or restoring green verges elsewhere in the Parish, and
- g) positive regard is shown for any existing Tree Preservation Orders within or affected by the proposal.

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 5: TREES AND GREEN VERGES - The Parish Council will:**

1. work with MBC and LCC as a priority to complete up to date assessments of Tree Preservation Orders in the parish
2. work with community members and other partners to identify verges at risk from neglect or overuse by traffic and propose schemes to protect, restore and replant them.

## 7.12 DARK SKIES AND TRANQUILITY

- 138 Consultations show the parish's rural character, amenities and recreational opportunities are very important to residents and attractive to visitors. One aspect of local character is the ability to enjoy a very bright view of the stars and the dark sky at night. Dark skies at night are also important for nocturnal wildlife whose rich diversity in the parish has been described. Another aspect of intrinsic rural character is tranquillity, a quality the CPRE defines as the calm induced by the sights and sounds of nature, undisturbed by such things as traffic noise and poorly designed lighting. The CPRE has mapped areas of dark skies and tranquillity across England, and the Plan Area is considered among the relatively rare places with the 'most tranquillity' and also in the three lowest categories measured for light pollution.
- 139 The high topography of the Plan Area makes it susceptible to the adverse effects of uncontrolled artificial light, which can be experienced, often quite widely, in the landscape. For example, lighting schemes with a strong presence in the landscape include those on poles, substantial schemes associated with agricultural and commercial development, external lighting for homes and businesses and lighting from development in new areas with previously dark skies. The Design Guidance in **Appendix 8** suggests approaches to light pollution avoidance and mitigation in the Plan Area.



Left: CPRE mapping of light levels in the Plan Area

Below: Night sky over All Saints Church, Pickwell



POLICY ENV 12: DARK SKIES AND TRANQUILITY – All development proposals must demonstrate, as appropriate:

- a) the scale and height of proposed lighting schemes forming part of a development proposal are unavoidable to ensure the viability and safety of the development, and that all feasible mitigation solutions have been implemented to reduce light pollution to the minimum,
- b) external street and common area lighting is modest in scale, limited to what is necessary for pedestrian safety, installed at low levels and sympathetic to luminosity levels of its surrounding area,
- c) that the impact of light pollution on the amenity of nearby premises, the character of listed buildings, the countryside and on identified nocturnal wildlife is reduced to the minimum,
- d) best practice guidelines in Bats and Lighting LRERC 2014 are followed and maximum light spillage onto bat foraging corridors should be 1 lux,
- e) the operating hours of the lighting scheme is reduced to the minimum, and
- f) Any increase in the level of noise, as a result of the development, compared to the current measured level of noise at night, should be minimised.

COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 6: DARK SKIES AT NIGHT – The Parish Council will endeavour to raise awareness in the community (residential and business) of light pollution, the law concerning it, actions they can take to reduce it and where advice and guidance are available.

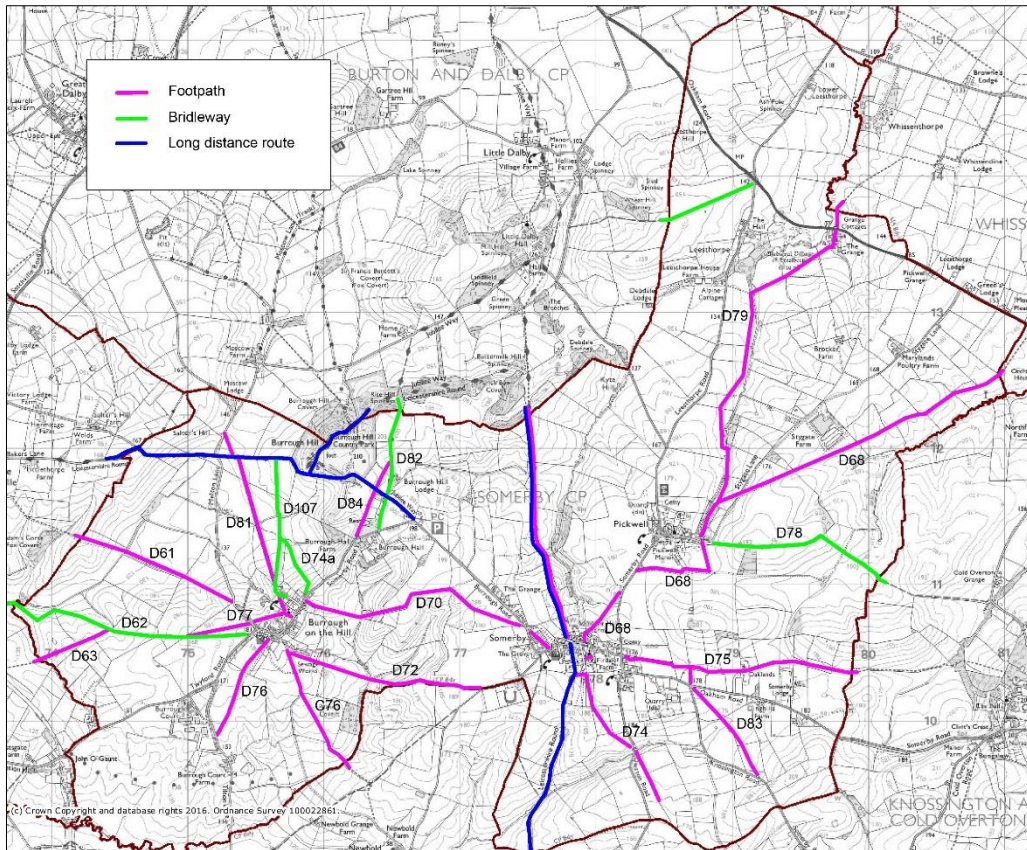
## 7.13 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

140 The Household Questionnaire conducted in preparation of this plan shows that footpaths and bridleways are the single most frequently used amenity in the parish, more so than the pubs, churches, village halls or shop. Usage by equestrian and rambler groups has recently shown an increase, with positive economic effects reported by local businesses. Key features contributing to the popularity of the footpaths and bridleways of the parish include the long views across unspoilt pastoral and historic scenery, tranquillity and peacefulness, ease of access, long-distance connectivity and safety, and nearby quality services for food and drink.

141 The Plan Area's escarpment and valley topography produces a high level of inter-visibility across areas of the Parish, not always apparent from a given site but apparent from footpaths and bridleways. Policy ENV13 seeks to protect and if possible improve the quality and accessibility of public rights of way. Existing rights of way are indicated at Figure 18.

**Figure 18: Existing Public Rights of Way** (adapted from, but not, the definitive map)





The 'Long distance routes' in blue are the Leicestershire Round and the Jubilee Way. The **Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way for Leicestershire (Somerby)** is much better, but not scalable to fit on a page. It can however be viewed in the **Policy Maps Folder** as **Figure 18a**.

**POLICY ENV 13: FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS** - Development proposals that result in the loss of, or have a significant adverse effect on, the existing network of footpaths and bridleways will not be supported, and:

- a) Any change from the existing rural character of a footpath or bridleway, including its incorporation into a new development as a paved sidewalk or restricted-width alleyway, will be considered to be an 'adverse effect'.
- b) Proposals should demonstrate having minimised any potential conflicts of use of these rights of way by different types of users, and that loss of rural character is mitigated so as not to reduce public use or enjoyment of the way, and that the safety of legitimate users is not compromised.

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 7: FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS** - The Parish Council will work with landowners, Leicestershire County Council, community groups and other bodies to achieve enhancements to the present network of walking routes in the Parish.



## 7.14 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT

142 Residents in the Plan Area want their communities to play their part in the sustainable development of the Borough. The NPPF 2019 states that sustainable development includes protecting and enhancing our natural environment and helping to improve biodiversity (para 8c), and that planning policies and decisions should minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity (para 170d). New development in the Plan Area should be designed to incorporate the current (at time of Application) best practice standards and methods for biodiversity protection and enhancement.

**POLICY ENV 14: BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION IN NEW DEVELOPMENT – Where appropriate provision should be made in the design and construction of new development in the Plan Area to protect and enhance biodiversity, including:**

- a) Roof and wall construction following technical best-practice recommendations for integral bird nest boxes and bat breeding and roosting sites
- b) Hedges (or fences with ground-level gaps) for property boundaries that maintain connectivity of habitat for hedgehogs
- c) Includes roof designs meeting RSPB guidelines for internal bird nest boxes, follows the guidelines in Bats and Lighting LRERC 2014 and contains light spillage onto bat foraging corridors below 1 lux.
- d) Security lighting operated by intruder switching, should not be on constantly. Site and sports facility lighting to be switched off for bats during ‘curfew’ hours from March to October (see Figure 19 below).

Figure 19: Recommended ‘switch-off’ times for lights during the active bat season

Month	Switch-off	Month	Switch-off
March (GMT)	18.30	July	21.30
March (BST)	19.30	August	20.45
April	20.30	September	19.45
May	21.15	October (BST)	18.45
June	21.45	October (GMT)	17.15

Source: Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre 2014 – Bats and lighting.

## 7.15 RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION INFRASTRUCTURE

143 Based on the findings of the joint Rushcliffe and Melton Borough’s *Landscape Sensitivity Study* 2014, Melton Local Plan policy EN10 does not consider turbines of any height or

configuration to be acceptable in the High Leicestershire Hills Landscape Character Unit (LCU 12), in which the whole of this Plan Area is located. This is because Policy EN10 supports wind turbine proposals in areas of Low or Low-Moderate sensitivity and LCU 12 is assessed as of at least Moderate sensitivity to wind turbines of any height.

**Figure 20: Landscape sensitivity to turbines** (Extract from the Melton and Rushcliffe Landscape Sensitivity Study 2014, applied in the Melton Local Plan).

Landscape Character Unit (LCU)		Turbine Height Categories (metres to tip) and Sensitivity Ratings				
		<25m	26-50m	51-75m	76-110m	111-150m
12	High Leicestershire Hills: Burrough Hills	M	M-H	H	H	H

144 However whilst preserving conformity with the Local Plan, this Neighbourhood Plan supports proposals for wind turbines in certain defined circumstances as representing a renewable energy source with potential to contribute to the sustainability of small businesses and farms. Policy ENV 15 acknowledges the high sensitivity of the Plan Area to (and, because of topography, general practical unsuitability for) any large-scale renewable energy generation infrastructure. It also represents the community view on the siting and acceptability of such development, as permitted by MBC Local Plan policy EN10.18. Only appropriate, small-scale, locally-initiated schemes will be favourably considered by local people and this Plan.

**POLICY ENV 15: RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION INFRASTRUCTURE - Small-scale renewable energy generation infrastructure will be supported if the proposal can demonstrate that it:**

- a) will not have an adverse impact (including, *inter alia*, noise, visual impact, reflections, glare, shadow flicker, water pollution, smell, air quality, gaseous or particulate emissions) on the health, wellbeing or amenities of residents and visitors,
- b) will not have an adverse impact on the area in relation to views or the character of the surrounding landscape,
- c) will not have an adverse effect on biodiversity (species and habitat sites, as in Policies ENV 2 and ENV 10),
- d) will not have an adverse effect on statutory or significant historic environment sites, non-designated heritage assets or ridge and furrow (Policies ENV2, ENV4 and ENV5),
- e) will be of an appropriate scale for the size, character and level of other facilities, the built environment and services in the three villages,

- f) will be supported by appropriate and relevant assessments and documentation in respect of, *inter alia*, transport, heritage, archaeology, landscape impact, environmental impact, flood impact, ecological mitigation, arboriculture (impact and method) and tree protection, and
- g) has demonstrable support from the local community.
- h) Wind turbine development proposals will only be acceptable if:
  - Turbine tip height is less than 25 metres,
  - The proposal is for no more than one turbine, and
  - The turbine will not be connected to the National Grid.
- i) Solar energy generation development proposals will not be supported if:
  - The panel array is visible from any valued and accessible viewpoint (see Policy ENV 9), or from any private or residential property,
  - Reflection (glare) is evident from any important viewpoint (Policy ENV 9), or
  - The proposal will be connected to the National Grid.
- j) Development proposals for small-scale generation using anaerobic digestion will be supported where:
  - the development is visually integrated with its surroundings by layout, design and landscaping,
  - the impact of associated heavy goods vehicles in the Plan Area is strictly controlled by monitored, enforceable planning conditions, and
  - raw materials used in the process are constant e.g. not comprised of general waste or varying materials so that the process is balanced and emits no odours.

## 7.16 FLOOD RISK

145 This Neighbourhood Plan follows the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 paragraphs 155 – 165 and National Planning Practice Guidance Paragraphs 001 – 054. The NPPF 2019 is clearer than the NPPF 2012 that development should be steered away from areas of higher risk and towards areas of lower risk from *any* form of flooding (not only rivers):

*“The sequential approach should be used in areas known to be at risk now or in the future from any form of flooding.”* (Para 158)

146 The whole of Somerby Parish lies in Environment Agency (EA) Flood Zone 1 meaning low strategic risk of flooding from rivers. However, because the EA zones and other strategic datasets, such as the EA Risk of Flooding from Surface Water suitability (RoFfSW) and EA Areas Susceptible to Groundwater map (AStGW) are intended and suitable only for high-level

planning, they should be supplemented by site-specific flood risk assessments and the best information locally available when allocating development sites or deciding planning applications. The general principle, established as part of the evolving guidance on the scope of Neighbourhood Plans, is that this locally-available information provides the level of *detail* to be used in Planning below that which can be dealt with strategically in Local Plans.

147 Some such local detail on the Plan Area (Somerby Parish) is available from existing strategic sources and public records. The Leicestershire and Leicester City Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (JBA Consulting, October 2017) at 6.5.2 states:

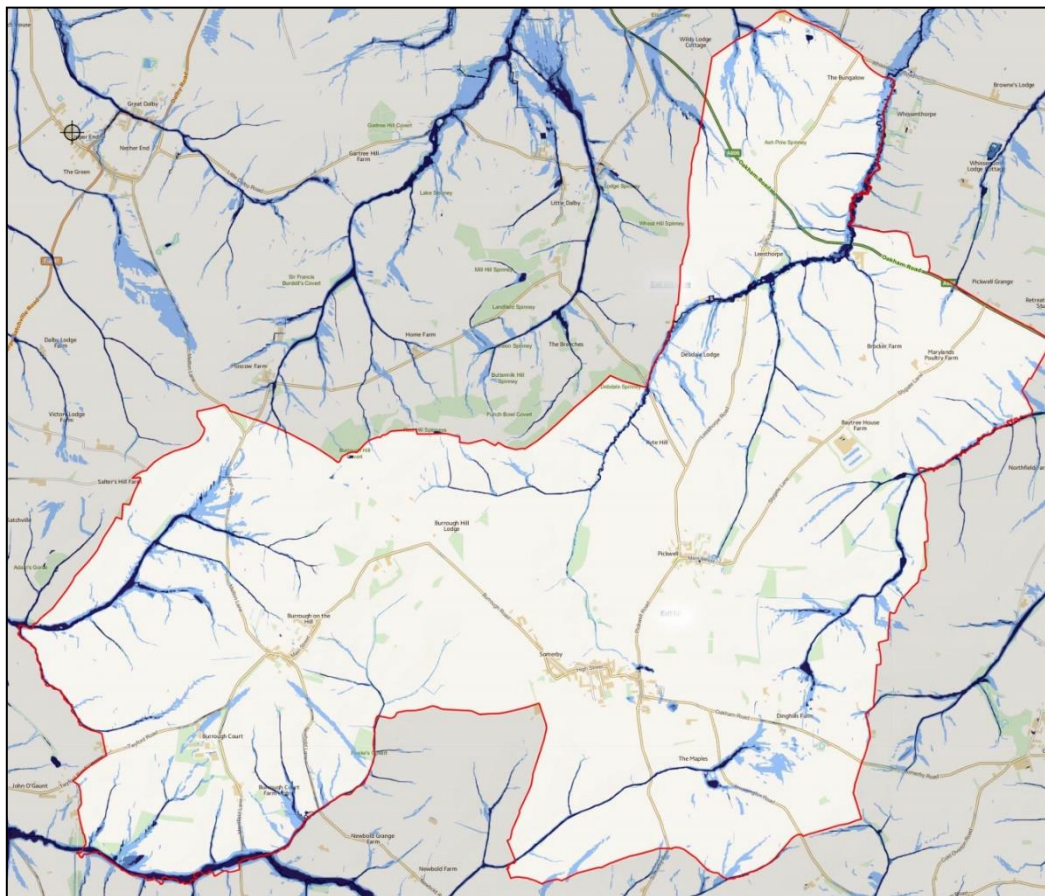
*“There are cases where the RoFfSW map does not reflect historic flood information. One such instance is around the east end of Oakham Road in the village of Somerby. Residents have reported that flood events occur in this area twice a year. A possible source of this flooding is from surface water runoff from fields or adjacent land. As part of site-specific Flood Risk Assessments, historic flood risk information should be considered in the assessment of flood risk, in conjunction with flood risk mapping datasets.”*

The Lead Local Flood Authority was consulted during the Reg.14 stage of preparation of this Plan and provided the following information:

*“Below is a summary of all the flooding incidents within the Plan boundary held by Leicestershire County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority:*

- *Flooding to land at Oakham Road, Somerby attributed to surface water, potentially groundwater.*
- *Highway and property flooding at Owston Road, Somerby, attributed to highway drainage system and culverted watercourse.”*

Figure 21: Flood risk from rivers and surface water (Environment Agency mapping 2018, publicly accessible online where it is explained, interactive, expandable and linked to much relevant material)



148 This Neighbourhood Plan therefore seeks first for development to *avoid* flood risk and if it cannot be avoided improve the management of flooding and reduce flood risk from whatever source; fluvial, pluvial, surface water, groundwater, ponds and reservoirs, road drains and sewers based on both current (at the time of a Planning Application) Environment Agency mapping and local knowledge and experience. The term ‘flood risk’ refers to any of these sources.

149 Community Proposal 8 follows the advice provided by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA - Leicestershire County Council) during Regulation 14 and regulation 16 consultations for this Plan. It applies to development of any kind whether residential, commercial or other. The LLFA advises the Parish Council and stakeholders to seek ongoing improvement of water management and reduction of flood risk, not only when a development proposal or planning application arises.

150 Severn Trent Water advised during regulation 16 consultation that watercourses should be retained as open features and where possible, not contained within private land, to ensure



that development does not result in an increase in flood risk or prevent the long-term maintenance of these hydrological features

## COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 8: FLOOD RISK

The Parish Council and local community will:

- Support proposals by landowners, appropriate agencies and organisations to improve the current infrastructural measures in the Parish for managing and mitigating river, run-off, surface water and ground water flooding.
- Encourage compliance with relevant policy and guidance and prioritise infiltration and SuDS as the primary means of disposing of surface water.
- Seek early engagement with developers in the pre-planning process.

## 8.0 ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

### 8.1 DESCRIPTION AND ISSUES

151 This description of the economic and employment condition of the Parish in 2019 is drawn from published data, professional reports, and our own business and household questionnaires.

1. Somerby Parish is very economically active with a diverse range of activity, high representation of home workers, self-employment, micro-businesses and some small businesses. It enjoys relatively high employment and low deprivation and this situation should continue for the life of this plan.
2. The largest employment site in the Parish is at Burrough Court. Occupancy varies but in 2017 it accommodated 29 businesses ranging from sole traders up to small businesses. However those businesses very rarely recruit locally, preferring to bring their trained staff in from elsewhere.



**Above: large and diverse workspaces**



**Right: Small and moveable workspace**

3. Gates's Garden Centre lies outside the Parish but within 5km so is considered an employment opportunity. It has a large number of employees (second after Burrough Court) including some skilled and many unskilled, but lies within 5km of Langham and Oakham so opportunity is lessened for this Parish.
4. Additionally there are a few small businesses and many micro-businesses in the Parish. These tend to employ more locally but tend to require employees with specifically land-based skills and inclination. There are also many sole traders and some homeworkers in the Parish.
5. There are about 15 farms in the Parish varying considerably in size and of course not always wholly lying within the Parish boundary.
6. Farming and related land-based industries remain important employers in the parish although mechanization and the use of independent contractors have lessened this. They also represent and help to sustain the attractive rural character of the parish, which parishioners greatly value. Some farms have diversified for example into warehousing and distribution, renewable energy production, meat processing, food and drink, direct sales and livery.



**Land-based industry: Contracting**



**Farm diversification: food and drink**

7. There is very little employment actually within the settlements; almost all employment sites are located in relative isolation in the countryside between them. No settlement has an industrial estate or even a collection of business units. Consequently even within the parish most travel to work is by car
8. The Matt Hampson 'Get Busy Living' Centre is a charitable establishment of regional importance located in open countryside outside Burrough on the Hill. It provides advice, support, relief and/or treatment for anyone suffering serious injury or disability particularly from participation in sport, sporting activity or other form of physical education or recreation."
9. According to the household questionnaire, at least 77% of respondents work outside the Parish, sometimes far outside it. The mean average distance travelled regularly for work is

26.5 miles and the median distance 16 miles. This is an environmentally and socially undesirable situation which this plan seeks to prevent from worsening and if possible improve.

10. The Leicestershire Rural Economy Evidence Base (Rose Regeneration 2014) (LREEB) notes the decline since 2008 of Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) growth sector businesses in rural Leicestershire. These are Business Services, Creative Industries, Distribution, High Tech Manufacturing, Knowledge Based Industries, Food and Drink, and Tourism. All of these are represented to some extent in the Parish, especially at Burrough Court, but we have no evidence of decline locally.
11. The same study does however highlight the relative resilience of the 'signature rural sectors' of farming, forestry, food production, land freight, distribution and tourism. These are considered sectors where there is opportunity for positive intervention to support growth.
12. During consultation with businesses in the parish only three cited that higher population would help their businesses (themselves specifying small-scale affordable development). None have said lack of business development land is an issue for them, and half (including the two largest businesses) say the attractiveness of the villages and countryside is important to them. Some wished the planning process was easier but none had been prevented from growing by it.
13. Poor mobile phone signal was the difficulty most often mentioned by local businesses. Broadband provision was mentioned less as the larger businesses needing it have found (and paid for) their own solutions, but both phone and broadband provision are below urban standards which disadvantages particularly micro-businesses, sole traders and homeworkers.
14. Farmers in particular complained that traffic congestion and the parking situation in Somerby High Street is in danger of harming their businesses, obstructing necessary movements of farm machinery.
15. When asked what types of business development they would support residents put high value on the attractiveness of the landscape and villages, preferring 'light' and low-impact activity. Most popular were arts and crafts, creative industries, artisan food and drink production and domestic and gardening services. In the middle were financial and professional services and offices. Least popular were medium-scale manufacturing, storage and distribution and large-scale food processing.

Visitors to the Parish  
Below: Faster and drier  
Right: Slower and wetter



16. Seven businesses said tourism (in the wide sense of visitors from outside the parish) is important to their businesses and in those cases, it was very important indeed. Examples would include the annual 'Cicle' professional cycle race in the Parish and year-round use of the Leicestershire Round by hikers. Professional analysis recommends intervention to encourage sustainable tourism and 82% of household questionnaire respondents support this.
17. Asked what they thought would improve the visitor experience, most popular were walking maps and information points. In the middle were a café, dog waste bins and car parking. Least popular were bicycle hire and public toilets.
18. Provision of more visitor accommodation was supported by 78% of household questionnaire respondents. However, they were very selective as to type; for example most supported B&B in existing houses and pubs but very few would support building new holiday lets.

## 8.2 OPTIONS

152 'No economic development' is *not* an option. The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) *encourages* Neighbourhood Plans to support sustainable economic and business growth. It would not be viable anyway to base our economy only on 'cottage industries'. Many existing businesses in the Parish fall outside the types most preferred by parishioners in the Household Questionnaire but are nonetheless valuable employers of local people. This plan supports economic development and in doing so will represent local opinion and preferences where permissible. Supporting sources of information include:

- Leicestershire Rural Economy Evidence Base (Rose Regeneration 2014)(**supporting doc. 4**)

- East Leicestershire Rural Workspace Demand Study (S4W Ltd 2014) (supporting doc. 5)
- Business and Household Questionnaires conducted in preparation of this Plan (Appendix 2)

## 8.3 ECONOMIC GROWTH

153 The NPPF 2019 provides useful direction on supporting a prosperous rural economy at Paras 83 and 84 and this Plan has regard to and incorporates this National guidance in its present form. It also endorses the recommendations of the Leicestershire Rural Economy Evidence Base (LREEB) for the ‘signature rural sectors’ of farming, forestry, food production, land freight, distribution and tourism. Prominent among those recommendations are:

### *Distinctive rural employment features:*

- *There is real scope to grow the rural economy around the encouragement of home workers, particularly through promoting the County as a high-quality living environment for workers in the higher skilled and knowledge based businesses which have a strong footprint in rural Leicestershire.*
- *Key strands within this approach could be to consider scope for home workers to ‘graduate’ to small start-up and shared facilities. The Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership could consider the development of a dedicated programme of support for homeworkers as a means of underpinning the sustainability of settlements in rural Leicestershire.*

154 Policy EE1 complies with the NPPF by supporting business growth and employment generally, but with safeguards for a rural Parish where environmental sensitivity and attractive appearance are important to existing businesses as well as to most residents.

**POLICY EE1: BUSINESS GROWTH - Small scale employment-related development for new, or the expansion of existing, employment uses will be supported where they:**

- respect and are compatible with local character and uses,**
- would not be harmful to the living conditions of neighbouring residents,**
- promote sustainable transport options, free flow of traffic and safe parking.**



## 8.4 CONNECTIVITY

- 155 The modern economy is changing and increasingly requires a good communications infrastructure to maximise technological advances. High-speed internet connectivity is driving business innovation and growth, helping people access services, and opening up new opportunities for learning. Leicestershire County Council said in consultation *‘Having a superfast broadband connection is no longer merely desirable but is an essential requirement in ordinary daily life’*. This is particularly so in rural settings, such as Somerby Parish, where better broadband enables improved access to an increasing number of on-line applications and services, provided by the public and private sector. This can help to reduce road travel and social isolation, and create business and employment opportunities.
- 156 Poor mobile phone reception and to a slightly lesser extent broadband provision were frequently mentioned as impediments in the Business Questionnaire. Mobile phone reception can potentially be improved by small receivers on buildings rather than masts, an approach preferred by this Plan. The post office service is used and valued by smaller businesses and residents.

**POLICY EE2: CONNECTIVITY - The improvement of broadband provision and mobile phone reception in the Parish is supported.**

- a) New dwellings, commercial buildings and community facilities should enable access to full fibre-optic broadband (or such newer technologies as may appear) at the time they first come into use, subject to viability;
- b) Proposals to improve mobile phone reception are supported. The construction of new masts will only be supported if less visually-damaging technical solutions are shown to be impracticable;
- c) Above-ground installations to support broadband or phones must be sensitively located and designed;

### COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 9: POSTAL SERVICE

**That the Parish Council does not support removal of the postal service in Somerby and supports proposals to enhance it.**

## 8.5 HOMEWORKING

- 157 In rural areas such as Somerby with limited employment opportunities, the benefit of supporting home based working is that it helps to promote employment whilst reducing dependence of the private car for long journeys to employment sites outside the Parish. Homeworking is encouraged because it can contribute to employment and prosperity of local

people and reduction of traffic volume and carbon emissions arising from travel to work. It is also compatible with the preference for low-impact businesses favoured by parishioners in the Household Questionnaire, such as arts and crafts and knowledge-based work.

**POLICY EE3: HOMEWORKING** – The design of new homes suitable to accommodate homeworking will be supported. Where planning permission is required, the use or adaptation of parts of a dwelling for office or light commercial use, addition of small-scale buildings within the curtilage, extensions to a dwelling or conversion of outbuildings will be supported provided:

- a) the development is required for business use,
- b) other than minor ancillary support all work activity is by the occupants,
- c) there will be no adverse effect on nearby residents from noise, smell, light or other emissions or nuisance, and
- d) adequate off-road parking is provided for vehicles connected to the business including any visitors.

## 8.6 FARM DIVERSIFICATION

158 There are several working farms in the Parish. Given potential challenges facing the agricultural economy, this Neighbourhood Plan seeks to support farming businesses within the Parish as they are considered essential to maintaining a balanced and vibrant rural community. Policy EE4 below seeks to support in a measured way the farms that characterise the Parish. It encourages diversification such as farm shops, direct sales, livery and equestrianism, and artisan food and drink production but proposals such as workshops, offices or storage might also be able to attract the support of this policy if well designed. It is unrealistic to expect all such developments to be of very high economic value but they are supported as alternatives to higher-impact proposals resulting in the outright loss of agricultural land.

159 The change of use of some rural buildings to new uses is already permitted under the General Permitted Development Orders. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment and Consequential Provisions) (England) Order 2014 allows, under certain circumstances, the change of use of agricultural buildings to residential use and change of use of agricultural buildings to registered nurseries providing childcare or state-funded schools, under the prior approval system.

**POLICY EE4: FARM DIVERSIFICATION** - Development for the diversification of farming, agricultural or similar land-based businesses, including the conversion of redundant buildings, will be supported where:

- a) development is of a scale and design visually sympathetic to its surroundings,
- b) it does no significant harm to the natural or historic environment without effective mitigation,
- c) there will be no adverse effect on nearby residents from noise, smell, light or other emissions or nuisance, and
- d) adequate access and off-road parking is provided for vehicles connected to the business including any visitors.

## 8.7 TOURISM AND VISITORS

160 This is an area with potential to grow to the benefit of local businesses, but also compatible with preserving the beauty and tranquillity of the Parish. LREEB identifies it as an area where there is the opportunity for positive intervention. Compared to 'heavier' and higher-impact business possibilities it is also popular with residents as evidenced in the Household Questionnaire. A proposal would not necessarily have to be a 'business' to attract the support of Policy EE5. It could for example be something publicly funded, charitable or voluntary. Equally it would not have to be useful only to 'tourists and visitors', but could be useful to residents as well.

161 Complementary to Policy EE5, Community Proposal 10 suggests the measured and low-key encouragement of people to visit the Parish and perhaps to stay for longer, to the benefit of local businesses and where acceptable to local residents. We specifically refers to cyclists, riders and walkers because parking possibilities are limited, but any proposal should also maximise access for disabled or otherwise less mobile people.

**POLICY EE5: TOURISM AND VISITORS - Development proposals for tourism and leisure facilities will be supported within the Parish, on a scale and of a type appropriate to the settlement or surrounding countryside, where it:**

- a) Does not have a detrimental effect on the distinctive rural character of the Parish,
- b) Does not have a significant adverse impact on the surrounding infrastructure, particularly local road networks and water supply and sewerage,
- c) Where feasible, the development involves the re-use of existing buildings or is part of farm diversification, and
- d) There will be no adverse effect on nearby residents from noise, smell, light or other emissions or nuisance.

The net loss of tourism and leisure facilities will not be supported unless they are no longer viable or alternative provision is made available.

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 10: VISITOR ACCESS AND INFORMATION** - Assets of architectural, historic, natural or leisure interest could be identified and made more accessible to visitors by the use of modest signage and literature. Some of this could be achieved online.

The Parish has several circular country walks, Burrough Hill Fort, three churches containing unique features, and a shop, cafe and pubs. Historic connections to Operation Market Garden (Arnhem 1944) and King Edward VII are also of interest to some. Numerous cyclists, riders and walkers (especially on the Leicestershire Round) pass through the Parish and could potentially contribute more to local businesses, maintenance of heritage assets and the wider reputation of the Parish.

## 8.8 LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

162 The cost of living in a relatively isolated rural area is usually higher than the cost of living in a town or city. Examples would be the cost of housing, heating and transport. Concern has been expressed in consultation that some people (often young, but not always) in the Parish cannot remain here when they would like to for financial reasons. Community Proposal 11 seeks to address this issue by specifically encouraging local employment which is sustainable for both employer and employee. This is also complementary to objectives and policies on emissions reduction, farm diversification, homeworking and social sustainability.

163 This plan does not presume to tell people where to take their business or do their work. However, Community Proposal 12 might encourage a more efficient, viable and sustainable local economy in the interests of local prosperity, reduced road travel and improved community cohesion. Insofar as it overlaps with what can already be found online it will at least do no harm and might assist the minority of people who don't use computers in this way.

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 11: LOCAL EMPLOYMENT** - This plan particularly encourages business enterprise and development of business sites which is shown to be likely to:

- a) employ people living in Somerby Parish or within 5km of the employment site,
- b) offer training or opportunity for advancement to people within that range, or
- c) enable people already living in the Parish to continue to live and work there if they so wish.

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 12: BUSINESS DIRECTORY** - Establish and maintain an on-line directory of local businesses which people might try first before obtaining goods and services from further away. The definition of 'business' is wide here and includes manufacturers, suppliers, contractors, trades people, arts and crafts, home-help and domestic services. In effect, free advertising. This could extend somewhat outside the Parish – to the Ward for example - to broaden the range of possibilities.

## 9.0 TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### 9.1 DESCRIPTION AND ISSUES

164 Despite some localised efforts both professional and voluntary, the speed, volume, destinations and types of traffic have never been comprehensively surveyed or assessed in the Parish. Perception is that traffic volume is increasing, in common with most of the rest of the country.

1. The Parish is very rural characterised by minor roads crossing open countryside between settlements. All the roads in the Parish are classified as secondary or minor except for about 4km of the A606 crossing its northern tip.
2. Somerby village is the Parish settlement most remote from the major roads network. Vehicles travelling to the A606 from Somerby must pass through either Pickwell and Leesthorpe or Cold Overton and Langham. Getting to the B6047 means passing through Burrough and Twyford. More vehicles in Somerby whether private or commercial also means more vehicles passing through the other Parish settlements.
3. Somerby, Burrough and Pickwell are all connected by road (though the way between Burrough and Pickwell without passing Somerby is convoluted) and Leesthorpe lies north of Pickwell by road.
4. Only Somerby and Pickwell are connected by pavement and could be described as in easy walking distance of one another. The other roads between villages would be unsafe to walk after dark due to narrow verges and traffic.
5. Notwithstanding the absence of main roads traffic volume can be significant especially at the conventional 'rush hours'. The variety of traffic can also be problematic; as everywhere cars predominate but there are also coaches, HGVs, busses, agricultural vehicles, motorbikes, cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians.
6. There is no railway or bus station in the Parish. The closest are roughly equidistant in Melton and Oakham from where there are both local and national connections. The only public transport is the 100 bus service roughly two-hourly 7.30am to 5.30pm on weekdays between Melton and Syston stopping at Somerby, Pickwell and Burrough but not Leesthorpe. This is a heavily subsidised service and in 2019 its future is uncertain. The private car is by far the dominate means of transport both around the Parish and beyond.
7. When asked to identify 'negatives' in the Parish, the issue most often raised by parishioners was congestion in Somerby High Street. This is attributed to the narrowness and sharp bends



of the road, mix of traffic including many heavy vehicles, and parking problems. There is a shortage of off-road parking.

8. Residents of Burrough and Pickwell complain about congestion in Somerby as well as speeding throughout the Parish and inappropriate use of Stygate Lane by heavy vehicles.
9. All of these difficulties compromise road safety to varying degrees, particularly to pedestrians when vehicles mount the pavement to pass and in the vicinity of Somerby School.
10. Water and water treatment are by Severn Trent PLC, electricity is supplied by Western Power Distribution (East Midlands) PLC, BT Openreach are rolling out superfast broadband in stages across the Parish, and all the main mobile phone providers are present with varying degrees of coverage. Only Burrough has a mains gas supply.

## 9.2 OPTIONS

165 Transport and infrastructure issues are relatively difficult for a Neighbourhood Plan to address for two reasons. First, connection to essential utilities such as electricity and water is not strictly a planning policy consideration except possibly if it bears on the environmental and social sustainability of development. Second, traffic matters are predominantly the responsibility of the Highways Authority or sometimes the Local Authority or police. However, this plan does seek improvement in these challenging areas. There is opportunity to exert influence when new planning proposals are considered; the approach here will be to prevent or at least mitigate any adverse traffic or infrastructure issues arising from new development of whatever type at the planning approval stage. Outside of individual planning applications, continuous and pro-active engagement with relevant businesses and authorities will be required and the NPPF 2019 provides direction in this regard:

***Promoting sustainable transport:***

*“Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals” (Para 102)*

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 13: POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT (INFRASTRUCTURE)** - In matters such as road maintenance and provision of utilities, policies alone may not themselves achieve the desired result. The Parish will engage regularly and pro-actively with the relevant authorities and businesses to identify defects, deficiencies and opportunities for improvement in transport, utilities and infrastructure. The Parish Council has a part to play, but often the most effective channel is the direct one between provider and user. This is particularly true where there is a contractual relationship i.e. business and customer.

## 9.3 ROAD TRAVEL, ROAD SAFETY AND PARKING

- 166 The narrowness of the streets through the villages cannot be altered at all and it would be difficult (and expensive) to widen any of the country lanes. Therefore, it is necessary to manage the volume and type of traffic using them, to prevent or at least mitigate increased congestion, damage to road surfaces, reduction of road safety and increase in emissions harmful to health. Just as parishioners find it difficult to travel other than by car, so do their visitors find it difficult to get here by any other means. Adequate provision should therefore be made for them also.
- 167 Parking difficulty in the villages contributes to congestion and risk of accident, particularly but not only in Somerby village. Traffic congestion in the villages was the single strongest negative of the Parish expressed in the Household Questionnaire. It impedes both business and leisure and parishioners want it addressing. Local experience has shown (for example on Surgery Close, Somerby) that the standard ratio of two spaces for every house up to three bedrooms is insufficient for a rural location where reliance on cars for essential journeys has been proven to be unusually high (Household Questionnaire). Overspill onto narrow roads, verges and other unsuitable spaces then occurs and congestion and parking problems are exacerbated.
- 168 Policy TI1 was drafted having regard to the Leicestershire Highways Design Guidance (2018), Part 3. Following DG14 (Vehicle parking) para 3.173, for developments of 1 to 5 houses this Parish is an area 'where car ownership is likely to be higher than locations better served by public transport'. Our Household Questionnaire disclosed reliance on private cars as high as 98.5% for essential journeys. For residential developments of more than 5 houses DG14, paras 3.174-3.175 advises use of the DCLG Paper Method (Residential Car Parking Research) which also quantifies the need for appropriate visitor parking. Policy TI1 is supported by Community Proposals 14, 15 and 16.
- 169 In 2019 all the large housing proposals for the Parish are designed around a spur road running off an existing country lane. Overspill parking from the new development would render such roads effectively single-lane, causing congestion and some potential danger. This already happens in the Parish villages and should be prevented or mitigated.

**POLICY TI1: TRAFFIC VOLUME, ROAD SAFETY AND PARKING - Development proposals which result in a severe direct or cumulative impact on congestion or road or pedestrian safety will not be supported.**

**Where a proposal for new development represents an enlargement, extension of, or addition to an existing development or concern (of whatever type) the cumulative whole of the development shall be assessed against this policy.**

### **PARKING:**

- a) The provision of car parking in Somerby village centre with low visual impact is supported.**

Development of any type whether residential, business or other will be assessed and supported subject to:

- b) provision of sufficient off-street parking for occupants, employees and visitors in line with the Leicestershire Highways Design Guide and in the case of residential development, visitor parking at a ratio of one space for every three houses, where appropriate, and
- c) replacement where possible of any off-street parking lost through the development with parking space of at least equivalent size and amenity.

In the case of residential developments:

- d) adequate off-road parking should be provided as a minimum of two car parking spaces for dwellings of three bedrooms or less and three spaces for dwellings of four bedrooms or more, in line with the Leicestershire Highways Design Guide, and
- e) additional provision for visitor parking for the whole of the development at a ratio of one space for every three houses should be provided where appropriate.

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 14: HIGHWAYS MATTERS** - To work with LCC Highways, Melton Borough Council, landowners and businesses to improve the safety of roads and footpaths in the Parish, including where appropriate the imposition of speed limits, improved signage, traffic-calming measures, parking provision and parking restrictions, maintenance of road and footpath surfaces and roadside verges and hedgerows. It is to note in 2019 that the Parish Council does already engage in this way.

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 15: CONSIDERATE PARKING** - Encourage those residents and businesses that possess off-street parking to fully utilize it in preference to parking on the street. Those with any off-street parking that they don't use themselves could consider allowing it to be used by another.

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 16: PARKING AND NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS** - A sustainable housing development contains enough parking space for its residents. There should be no need for them to park outside it. Support a measure whereby the main road from which the development is accessed is protected from overspill parking by a parking restriction. This might be thought a reasonable application of developer contributions.

## 9.4 FARM TRACKS

- 170 Congestion and parking problems are contributed to not only by numbers of vehicles but by their type. Large vehicles are more likely to cause obstruction in the village high streets and heavy ones more likely to damage road surfaces and edges. However no-one is likely to operate such vehicles casually; they are vehicles necessary for business – particularly farming in this Parish. Although they may contribute to congestion they also suffer from it. Therefore, if businesses can find ways to move their vehicles across private land instead of on the public roads (especially village centres) they should be encouraged and helped to do so, for their own as well as others' benefit. Other possible benefits include reduced soil erosion and less likelihood of mud being carried onto the public roads by heavy vehicles.
- 171 For the purposes of Policy TI2 below a 'track' is a feature up to 3m wide with a permeable surface not requiring elevation above existing ground levels or the installation of kerbs. It should be able to 'weather' and blend in with the ground. A proposal which is of concrete or tarmac or could be described as a 'road' is very unlikely to have the support of this policy.

**POLICY TI 2 – FARM TRACKS - proposals for 'farm tracks' on private land will be supported where they:**

- a) divert commercial or business-use motor traffic off the public roads and onto the private land,
- b) minimise harm to the environment,
- c) maximise visual harmony with the built and natural surroundings, and
- d) cause no adverse effect on nearby residents from noise, smell, light or other emissions or nuisance.

The pre-existence of, or permission for, a farm track (as defined above) shall not of itself be taken as justification or support for constructing a tarmac or concrete road or similar.

## 10.0 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### 10.1 DESCRIPTION AND ISSUES

172 This is a summary of what is available in the Parish in 2019. No attempt is made here to rank their importance but many indications and perceptions of that can be found in the results of the Household Questionnaire (**Appendix 2**).

1. Somerby Village has a small general store which also accommodates a twice-weekly limited post office service. It is also a place where people meet and socialise in passing and where advertisements can be placed. It was very helpful in preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan.
2. There are two community halls in the parish, one larger in Somerby and one much smaller in Pickwell. The former hosts a very wide range of activities and events whilst the latter is considered somewhat under-used. Burrough and Leesthorpe have no hall.
3. Somerby, Pickwell and Burrough each have a Church of England church which is a Grade 1 listed building. In 2019 they are in interregnum but nonetheless Holy Communion is conducted weekly rotating around the Burrough Hill Benefice, which comprises these three churches and those of Great Dalby and Little Dalby. Additionally there are monthly evening services. The churches accommodate a variety of occasional and seasonal events throughout the year and their presence goes beyond the provision of religious services. Burrough Church serves as a community hall for that village when practicable, though amenities are almost nil.
4. Somerby has a Methodist Chapel which has offered its space for a variety of community activities. In December 2019 services ceased and in January 2020 a Community Right to Bid process began in relation to the building.
5. There are two pubs in the Parish, the Stilton Cheese Inn in Somerby and The Stag and Hounds Free House in Burrough which are important places for both parishioners and numerous visitors to eat, drink and socialise.
6. There is a café, the Dairy Barn Café (and Ferneley's Ice Cream) north of the A606 at Leesthorpe.
7. There is a modern and well-equipped doctor's surgery in Somerby which in partnership with the surgery at Market Overton serves a much larger area than this parish. In consultation it was established as able to manage present patient numbers and with potential for more.
8. The Matt Hampson 'Get Busy Living' Centre is described at Chapter 8.1.
9. Somerby has a primary school which in 2017 had 31 children and a theoretical capacity based on floor-space of 49. It is rated 'good' by OFSTED and as of 2017 was considering expansion dependent on demand and funding.



10. The Somerby Town Estate, an ancient and now registered charity, owns 2.8 acres of land in the village which is given over to allotment gardens.
11. Various events often take place in the Parish and are well advertised in the parish magazine 'Towards', usually potentially annually though years can be missed. The 'Cicle' professional cycle race is a regular spring event passing through the Parish. All three villages sometimes hold fetes; Pickwell has a large summer fete and a smaller craft fair each year. Somerby is home to the annual Arnhem parade in September and Burrough has hosted beer festivals. Somerby recently held its first 'open gardens' day. There have been Christmas tree and floral displays in the churches and pantomimes, plays and singing take place in Somerby Memorial Hall.
12. There is much travel between the settlements of the Parish and shared use of the facilities within them. An analysis of this parish-wide activity can be found at **Appendix 6**.



**Quiz: Very serious**



**Somerby Singers: Reasonably serious**



**Panto: Opposite of serious**

## 10.2 OPTIONS

- 173 The Household Questionnaire asked Parishioners about amenities and community facilities. Responses disclosed that some are used or valued more than others, but there is no evidence that any of them are undesirable or should be discontinued. 244 respondents considered them a positive feature of the Parish alongside 35 who considered lack of them a negative. 18 said facilities were one reason why they moved into the Parish compared to 11 who said lack of them was a reason why they were considering leaving.
- 174 66% of respondents have lived in the Parish for less than 20 years and only 7% have always lived here. 58% moved here because of the unspoilt rural setting. Residents are realistic about what facilities a parish of about 800 people can be expected to contain and arrived with their eyes open. There is no appetite for major housing or business development or change of the character of the Parish to support relatively minor improvement of amenities and community facilities. This plan therefore aims to preserve valued existing facilities and improve them where this can be done sustainably without disproportionate financial, environmental or social cost.

## 10.3 EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

175 During consultation for this Plan much information was obtained on the particular assets and community facilities most used and valued by residents. Most of this information is to be found in the Household Questionnaire. Policy CF1 seeks to retain and where possible improve them. Community Right to Bid was not specifically considered during consultation for this plan. Community Proposal 17 suggests an approach which the Parish Council has in fact already embarked upon, to be kept under periodic review during the life of this Plan.

**POLICY CF1: RETENTION OF EXISTING COMMUNITY ASSETS AND FACILITIES** - Development proposals that result in the loss, reduction or degradation of the following important community assets or facilities, or makes them less accessible to local people, will not be supported, unless the building or facility is replaced by an equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in an equally suitable location or it can be demonstrated that the service or facility is not viable or is no longer required by the community and there is adequate alternative provision within the same settlement.

- Burrough Hill Country Park
- Somerby Memorial Hall
- Pickwell Village Hall
- The Churches of Somerby, Pickwell and Burrough-on-the-Hill
- Somerby Primary School
- Somerby Doctors' Surgery
- The Matt Hampson 'Get Busy Living' Centre (outside Burrough on the Hill)
- Somerby Methodist Church (in January 2020 closed and in the Community Right to Bid process)
- Somerby general store (village shop)
- Somerby pub (Stilton Cheese)
- Burrough on the Hill pub (Stag and Hounds; until 2019 named 'Grant's')
- Somerby allotment gardens (Somerby Town Estate)
- Somerby five-a-side football pitch and children's playground.

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 17: COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID** - The Parish should identify the buildings, assets and community facilities which are most useful and valued and register them with Melton Borough Council under the Community Right to Bid (or such equivalent future scheme as may exist).

## 10.4 NEW COMMUNITY FACILITIES

176 As the number of people in the Parish increases it is necessary that the present ratio of people to facilities is at least maintained and if possible improved. Policy CF2 is intended to ensure that increase in the size of the population is not accompanied by a decrease in social sustainability, health or quality of life.

**POLICY CF2: NEW COMMUNITY FACILITIES** - The diversification or enhancement of Somerby Parish's range of community facilities will be supported provided that the development does not impact on the amenity of residential properties; will not generate a need for parking that cannot be adequately catered for; and is of a scale appropriate to the needs of the locality and conveniently accessible for residents of the village wishing to walk or cycle.

## 10.5 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

177 Policies and frameworks for developer contributions to communities have varied over time and will no doubt continue to do so. The Parish Council seeks to maximize benefit to the Parish from whatever may be available at the time. This will require pro-active engagement with Melton Borough Council, developers and other organisations.

178 A community cannot reasonably expect to receive money from any source, especially any discretionary source, if it cannot evidence how it will spend that money efficiently and effectively. This plan has not gathered sufficient evidence to identify and justify individual spending priorities for the next 20 years, therefore the Parish is urged to do so on an ongoing basis by Community Proposal 18.

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 18: SPENDING PRIORITIES** - To define the Parish's priority spend list for any funds from whatever source (including developer contributions) which may become available to it in the future. This may include a realistic list of community facilities which could be built, maintained or improved from such funds. It would not simply produce a list of areas where spending is possible, but gather evidence as to where spending is necessary or would be beneficial and identify best value.

## 10.6 COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

179 Although several sources of information are available in the Parish (parish magazine 'Towards', notice boards, church weekly notice sheets, website and social media accounts) it became apparent during preparation of this plan that not all parishioners use them. They are often unaware for example of important planning applications or activities or events which may be of interest to them. People vary in how much information they need or want to

receive but possibly all the best possible methods of communication – written, spoken, electronic - social media - are not being fully utilized. It is recognized that means of communication will change over time therefore this proposal is ‘in principle’:

**COMMUNITY PROPOSAL 19: COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT** - Use all reasonably available methods of communication to ensure individuals and businesses in the parish are kept well-informed of developments, proposals and activities in the Parish and outside the Parish where they may affect it. This would be intended to maximize inclusion and make any consultation as wide and meaningful as possible.

## 11.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

180 The Plan will last up to 2036. During this time, it is likely that the circumstances which the Plan seeks to address will change.

The Plan will be regularly monitored. This will be led by Somerby Parish Council on at least an annual basis. The policies and measures contained in The Plan will form the core of the monitoring activity, but other data collected and reported at the Parish level relevant to the delivery of the Plan will also be included.

The Parish Council proposes to formally review The Plan on a five-year cycle commencing in 2024 or to coincide with the review of the Melton Local Plan if this cycle is different.