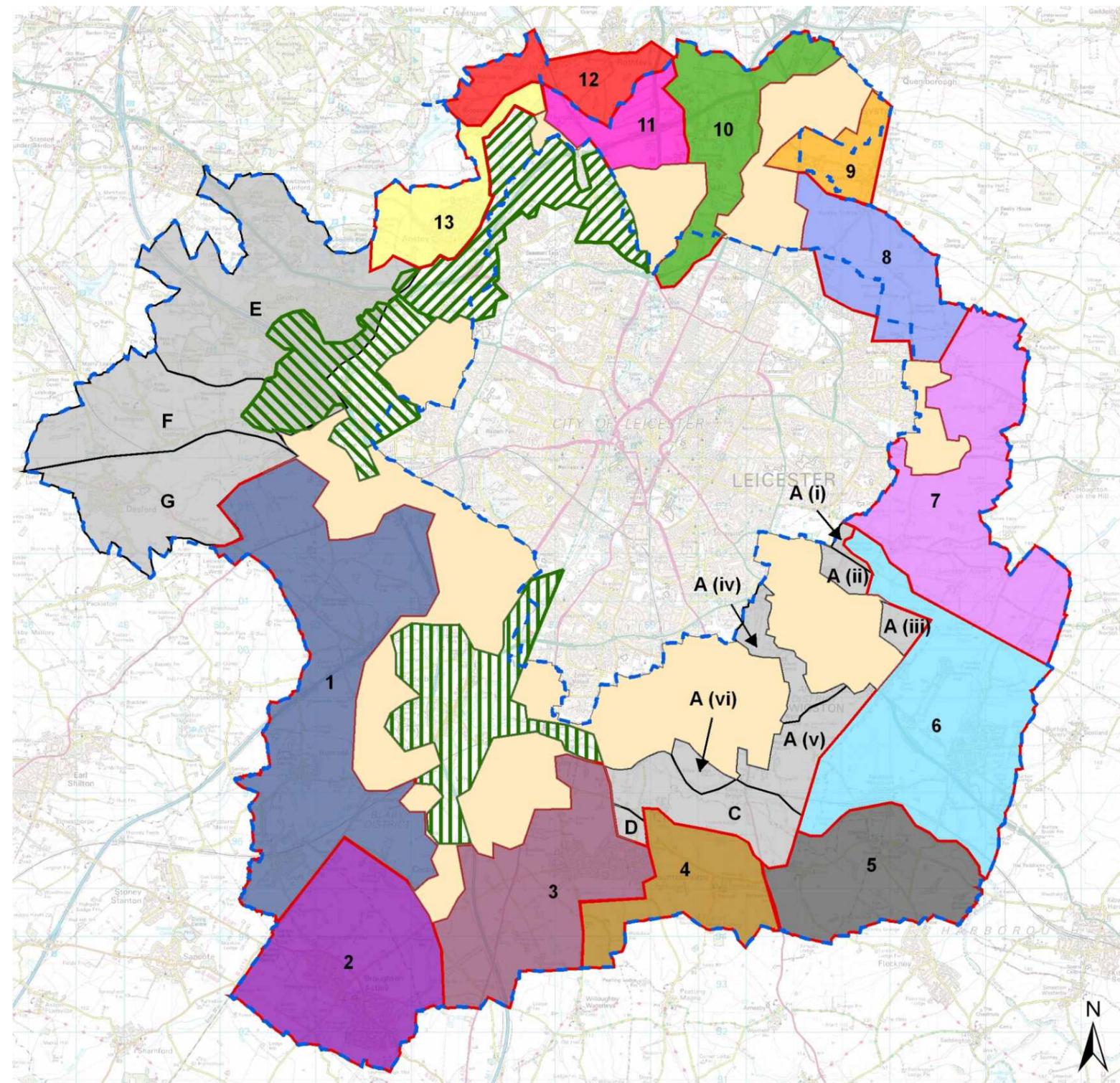
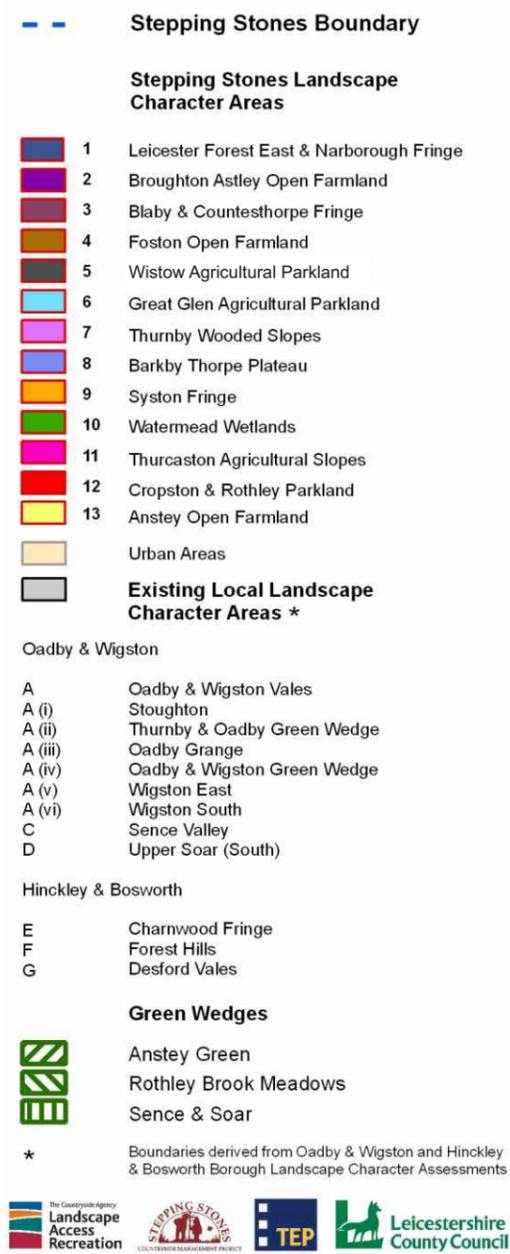


FIGURE 7: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS COVERED BY EXISTING STUDIES AND CWGP LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS



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CHARACTER AREA 1: LEICESTER FOREST EAST AND NARBOROUGH FRINGE



Key Characteristics

Flat to gently rolling landscape with a mix of landuses including agriculture and recreation

Transitional landscape between the urban edge and rural countryside

Long distance views over farmland to the urban fringes of Leicester possible from much of the character area

Limited blocks of woodland although a partially wooded horizon is often created by maturing hedgerow boundaries

Pylons are a prominent feature throughout the area due to their numbers and scale; numerous other smaller telegraph poles are also present in the landscape

Evidence of loss of field boundary structure through both an increase in field size and lack of management leading to rough grassland and scrub



Landscape Character

This character area is located along the western edge of Leicester extending south from the Hinckley and Bosworth District boundary to the villages of Cosby and Croft in the south west.

It is a predominantly flat to gently rolling fringe landscape with the localised topography influenced by small streams and river valleys which flow through the area. The northern and southern parts of this character area are predominantly flat with open views towards the urban edge of Leicester. The landform varies slightly in the central part of this character area with a more rolling rural character, although distant glimpsed views of the urban edge of Leicester remain. Within the southern part of this character area quarrying activity has a marked impact upon the landform. Partly vegetated steep sided spoil tips are a prominent localised change in landform.

Land use within this character area is predominantly agricultural with a mix of medium to large regular and irregular fields bounded by either low neatly clipped hedgerows or taller less maintained hedgerows. Evidence of previous farming methods such as ridge and furrow is present within the rougher ground around the edges of pasture fields. In places field boundaries are becoming fragmented through a lack of management resulting in scrub vegetation establishing and in others changes in agricultural practice have resulted in larger fields without boundaries. This change in pattern and field boundary structure has a strong influence on the level of enclosure throughout the character area.

Field pattern becomes less well defined with field boundary hedgerows either fragmented or absent closer to the urban edge, particularly adjacent to Narborough and Littlethorpe. The land uses alter towards the urban edges and include a number of golf courses, rugby and sports pitches, horse paddocks and areas being restored for nature conservation following quarrying activities.

Where streams and rivers flow through the area these are recognisable by the mature woodland planting along their banks.

CHARACTER AREA 1: LEICESTER FOREST EAST AND NARBOROUGH FRINGE

There are relatively few areas designated for their ecological value, one located to the north of Croft is the only significant habitat designated within the character area.

Pylons are a visually prominent element of this landscape character area. The relatively flat landform and the lack of large scale development combined with the presence of a number of overhead line routes on higher ground contribute to the prominence of the overhead lines within the landscape.

A number of well used roads dissect the area including the M1, M69 and A47 as well as numerous smaller B classified roads and small lanes. These all have visible traffic movement and contribute to a more urbanised feel to the character area.

Views across the area particularly in the southern part and from selected locations within the north are of a mix of urban and rural activities. The generally flat topography and limited mature field boundary structure provides open views of the urban edge including overhead lines, busy roads and quarrying activity and some areas of scrub vegetation providing a transitional urban fringe character to the landscape.

Woodland and Tree Cover

Woodland is relatively sparse within this area. A perceived wooded landscape is created predominantly through maturing hedgerows with small groups of mature hedgerow trees. Within some areas hedgerows have been left to develop into lines of semi-mature trees. This in combination with shelterbelts planted around recreational facilities, golf courses and farmsteads adds to the wooded feel. However where long distance views are possible it becomes apparent that much of the landscape is open agricultural land.

Mature broadleaved woodland cover is located mainly along watercourses and disused railways adjacent to the urban edge and in small blocks around quarries. There are a few small copses present within agricultural land on sloping ground. Some of these represent traces of the old Leicester Forest East. These are a prominent feature within the landscape and provide some seasonal screening of urban elements.

Building and Settlement Pattern

The urban edge of Leicester is prominent within this area, and was very visible during the time of survey (winter). Buffer tree planting along disused railways will provide some seasonal screening, however, rooflines would remain visible.

The settlements of Kirby Muxloe, Leicester Forest East, Narborough, Littlethorpe and Cosby are seen within the context of the urban edge of Leicester, although their village centres retain a distinct village character and church spires are visible from outside the settlement. The villages of Croft and Huncote retain their separate identities although both are influenced by the proximity of quarrying adjacent to their boundaries.

Key Pressures

- Urbanising influences including roads, new development and overhead lines are in places fragmenting the character of this area. In addition there may be localised impacts resulting from the widening of the M1.
- New development is encroaching into the landscape. Change of land use to predominantly recreational and small scale horse paddocks alters the character along the urban edge.
- Quarrying activities have a distinctive impact upon land form and land use in this predominantly flat to undulating landscape.
- Increasing field size and reduction in field boundary vegetation is altering the nature of hedgerow boundaries.



STEPPING STONES DRAFT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Character Area Assessment	Capacity for woodland (see paragraph 6.6 for definition)	Suitable type of woodland
<i>Anstey Green Wedge: Landscape, Recreation, Land-Use, Biodiversity And Future Management Strategy</i>		
This green wedge has the capacity to accommodate woodland particularly as buffer planting along the urban fringes and roads. However woodland placement would need to ensure that open framed views along the valley are maintained.	Moderate	Buffer woodland planting along roads and the urban edge
<i>Rothley Brook Meadows Management Strategy</i>		
There is a mosaic of habitats within this green wedge with some areas strongly enclosed by woodland and other areas generally more open. The area has the capacity to accommodate some small scale wet woodland planting to provide linkage between woodlands and other planting to augment hedgerow boundaries.	Moderate	Small woodland blocks Linear belts of woodland Hedgerow trees
<i>Sence And Soar Green Wedges Management Strategy</i>		
There is capacity to accommodate small scale woodland within this character area, particularly as a buffer to the M1 and other roads along the boundary of the green wedge. However, it is important that views along the valley are maintained.	Moderate	Buffer woodland planting

Table 2: CWGP Landscape Character Assessment (TEP 2006)

Character Area	Assessment	Capacity for woodland (see paragraph 6.6 for definition)	Suitable type of woodland
1. Leicester Forest East and Narborough Fringe	This landscape is characterised by farmland with a strong urban influence. Urban edge of Leicester and overhead lines are prominent features in the landscape. Woodland structure overall is confined to small blocks of woodland planting and mature hedgerow boundaries. There is limited capacity for planting blocks of woodland and linear belts of planting to provide greater screening of busy roads particularly in the northern and southern parts of the character area where topography becomes generally flat and along river corridors with some small groups on higher topography. This will help to strengthen the rural character which is becoming fragmented particularly close to the urban edge provided long distance views from high ground are retained.	Moderate	Small blocks of woodland Buffer planting Hedgerows Hedgerow trees