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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Quartet Design Landscape Architects was appointed by South Northamptonshire Council in 2016 to undertake a review of the Special Landscape Areas (SLA) designation within the Council area.

1.2 The objective of this report is to carry out an assessment of the current landscape qualities within the district based on the criteria set out within this report to provide an updated SLA designation report and recommendations.

1.3 This report outlines the criteria and methodology in section 2 that has been applied to carry out the review and its recommendation.

1.4 The review has been considered within the context of the current local and national planning policies.

1.5 The existing Special Landscape Areas will be reassessed within the updated review and any changes will be reflected within the report recommendations.

1.6 This review has will set out:-

- An explanation of the methodology used and how it accords with the District SLA criteria approach.
- An assessment of evidence to satisfy the selection of an area as SLA.
- A description based upon the stages identified within the SLA criteria.
- For each candidate SLA a description of the key landscape characteristics.
- Where candidate SLA’s vary from the existing areas a clear justification will be given.
- A map identifying the extent of each candidate SLA.

1.7 The visual survey work associated with this report has been undertaken in both the Winter and Summer seasons.

1.8 The SNC Cadcorp Web Map for South Northamptonshire has been used as the base line of the existing information.
2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Method

The process to review and assess the Special Landscape Areas will follow this format:

**Stage One:** A comprehensive desktop study will be carried out analysing existing information and documentation for South Northamptonshire as a whole. This process included a GIS database analysis analysing the contours, typography and geology of the landscape.

A review of existing studies, such as, South Northamptonshire Landscape Character Assessment, The National Character Areas, The East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment, Northampton Green Infrastructure Plan, South Northamptonshire Historic Landscape Character Assessment, OS maps.

**Stage Two:** The information collated from Stage One is recorded onto plans and assessed as a whole to give the full context of the South Northamptonshire landscape.

Unmarked areas on the review plan will illustrate areas assessed with an initial desktop study and a visual overview survey.

**Stage Three:** A visual survey is carried out based on information documented from Stage One and Two. Consideration is taken that the desktop results do not have a physical experience or presence, i.e. a review of the landscape from a desktop or photograph may not have the information for a full 360 degree experience. The information gathered from the visual survey becomes a documented record.

**Stage Four:** A draft report is prepared and reviewed before the final draft is issued.

2.2 Guidance

The existing Special Landscape Areas will be re-assessed to inform an up to date documented review whilst noting any change, or any changes that might need to be documented or the amendment of the Special Landscape Area boundary. This review is based on the existing Special Landscape Areas of South Northamptonshire whilst taking an overview to assess the overall landscape of South Northamptonshire as a whole. With the aim of ensuring that an unbiased analysis is carried out and where new potential Special Landscape Areas are viewed, that they are recommended in this document. The written review will define the special qualities and values of the South Northamptonshire's locally designated landscape.
### Criteria

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<th>Criteria and rationale</th>
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<td><strong>Distinctiveness</strong></td>
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<td>• Coherent landscape</td>
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<td>distinctiveness of an</td>
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<td>areas landscape</td>
<td>a recognisable sense</td>
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<td>character that gives</td>
<td>of place.</td>
<td>(LCA)</td>
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<td>identity and sense of</td>
<td>• Distinct landform</td>
<td>• Visual survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>place.</td>
<td>or typography forming a discrete and recognisable area.</td>
<td>• Heritage designations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Rare / unique landscape type or landscape features / elements in the local context.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Typicality - characteristics or landscape elements are strongly representative or distinctive of South Northamptonshire’s landscape.</td>
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<td>• Strong character linked to particular natural / cultural associations e.g. art / literature.</td>
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<td><strong>Perceptual Character</strong></td>
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<td>The qualities of the</td>
<td>• Tranquillity, relative remoteness and lack of intrusion.</td>
<td>• LCA</td>
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<td>landscape experienced.</td>
<td>• Strong sensory impacts including movement, colour and texture.</td>
<td>• Visual survey</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Special perceptual qualities may be the result e.g. the level of enclosure / scale, combinations of elements or contrasts of features.</td>
<td>• OS maps</td>
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<td><strong>Landscape and scenic quality</strong></td>
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<td>The distinct scenic and</td>
<td>• Strong visual character with memorable, important or distinctive views.</td>
<td>• LCA</td>
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<td>aesthetic qualities</td>
<td>• An intact landscape with characteristic elements in good condition.</td>
<td>• Visual survey</td>
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<td>which add value to the</td>
<td>• Absence of incongruous elements or incongruous features not visually intrusive.</td>
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<td>area and associations</td>
<td>• Dramatic features, visual</td>
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<td>with special landscape</td>
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<td>associated with the</td>
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<td>local landscape.</td>
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<td>Natural character</td>
<td>Cultural character</td>
<td>Function</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special natural characteristics/designations which add value to the landscape</td>
<td>Strong character linked to natural factors.</td>
<td>Special function as a setting to designated landscapes or cultural/natural features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong degree of naturalness contributing to landscape quality - habitats/land cover.</td>
<td>Natural heritage/wildlife designations (e.g. SSSI)</td>
<td>LCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape value which is enhanced through special cultural characteristics and designations.</td>
<td>Strong character linked to cultural factors - which contribute to understanding of its historic character and wider cultural record e.g. archaeology, built heritage.</td>
<td>Visual survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A landscape with particular associations for example with representation in art, music, literature, language or folklore.</td>
<td>Cultural heritage designations (e.g. Conservation Area, listed buildings)</td>
<td>OS maps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Aspects of the landscape which hold particularly special value for recreation and amenity.</td>
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</table>
2.4 Structure of the assessment

The special qualities that contribute and give distinction and identity to the Special Landscape Areas are detailed in the pages to follow. The format layout of each Special Landscape Area in the assessment is as follows:

A selection of illustrative diagrams and maps displaying the Special Landscape Area, its context and location within the district, and a reference to key landscape features such as woodlands, water courses, historic features.

A supporting statement giving detail to the importance and special qualities of the designated area, which aims to encapsulate its special landscape character and give it identity to its overall value and distinctiveness.

A list of Special Qualities that provide a summary as to why and what is valued about the designated landscape.

A table summarising the extent of the area, a short overview and the correlation to the landscape character assessment.

A summary description table with an evaluation of the areas key characteristics, qualities and valued features against each of the criteria. This supplements information in the list of special qualities.

2.5 Recommendations

Potential sites that should be considered to be classed as a Special Landscape Area will be given judgement and reviewed on whether the area is worthy of the landscape designation. The judgement will be based on the criteria used for the assessment. Main considerations taken into account are whether the area contains a number of valued characteristics and qualities and whether these characteristics and qualities were reviewed to be of importance that they warrant the need for protection and the classification as a Special Landscape Area.
2.6 Information References

A range of information was consulted to provide evidence for the study,
Table of documents reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Cultural Heritage</th>
<th>Landscape</th>
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<td>Landscape Character Assessment</td>
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<td>Listed Buildings listings (English Heritage website)</td>
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<td>Ancient Woodland - (GIS database from SNC Cadcorp mapping)</td>
<td>Registered Park and Garden (RP&amp;G) listings (English Heritage website)</td>
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<td>Biological Notification Site - (GIS database from SNC Cadcorp mapping)</td>
<td>Conservation Area Appraisals</td>
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<td>Local Geological Site - (GIS database from SNC Cadcorp mapping)</td>
<td>South Northamptonshire Historic Landscape Character Assessment</td>
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<td>Local Nature Reserve (LNR) - (GIS database from SNC Cadcorp mapping)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Wildlife Site (LWS) - (GIS database from SNC Cadcorp mapping)</td>
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</table>
3.0 Current Policy Context

3.1 Current Policy context

The European Landscape Convention, which is devoted to all aspects of European landscape, with a purpose to promote the protection, management and organise landscape issues, recognises that even if a landscape is designated or not, all landscapes are of value. It states the importance of Landscape Protection, which is defined in the Explanatory Report as:

"measures to preserve the present character and quality of a landscape which is greatly valued on account of its distinctive natural and cultural configuration. Such protection must be active and involve upkeep measures to preserve significant features of a landscape."

The NPPF, the National Planning Policy Framework, states in paragraph 109 that the planning system should contribute and enhance the natural and local environment by "protecting and enhancing valued landscape". The NPPF also states in paragraph 113 that "local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged".

The South Northamptonshire Local Plan is currently being reviewed. Until the New Local Plan is completed and adopted, planning policies for local landscape designations, such as SLAs, consist of saved policies from the previous South Northamptonshire Local Plan (SNLP). In 2014, with the release of the South Northamptonshire Local Plan Saved Policies 15 December 2014, the council saved Policy EV7. Policy EV7 aims to protect and give recognition to the areas of landscape in the district that hold landscape features and qualities of value. The districts current SLAs are defined on the SNC online mapping database with a written documentation under section EV7 of the saved SNLP of each SLA.

3.2 Existing Special Landscape Areas

The six current SLAs within the district are illustrated on figure QD69_100_01 and shown in the context of South Northamptonshire Character Areas in figure QD69_100_01. With reference to policy EV7 the current SLA’s are:

- Yardley Chase and Castle Ashby
- Tove Valley
- Whittlewood Forest and Hazelborough Forest
- Hemplow Hills, Cottesbrooke and Brington
- Catesby, Fawsley, Maidford & Litchborough
- Aynho, Cherwell Valley & Eydon

3.3 South Northamptonshire’s Valued Landscapes

All landscapes in the South Northamptonshire district that contain landscape character and value are accounted for in the online Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure suite which contains online and downloadable content including the Northamptonshire Current Landscape Character Assessment and other Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure documents. These documents give a written and mapped description of Geological Character, Landform, Topography, Land Use, Biodiversity, English Nature Natural Areas, Historic Landscape Character, commenting on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Special Protection Area (SPA) etc.
The existing Northamptonshire landscape identity is given by its distinctive iron age landscape, by its often hilltop villages and settlements, the broad floodplains of the Nene and Welland which has given form to transportation routes through the county whilst giving historic character and importance. The Eastern fringe of the county contains a varied landscape. The North is characterised by its vast farmed Claylands with its arable fields and wide views across the open countryside. The South is an acting contrast to this with its wooded ridgelines. These create a intimate character which is rich in wildlife whilst also containing historic significance with its remnants of The Royal Forest of Rockingham which are now ancient woodlands. Extending across the clay plateau which is respected for its historic and ecological value, the county also contains distinctive limestone plateau landscapes. These are important footprints from the Cotswolds to the Southwest with its distinctive geometric pattern of fields, some of which are still enclosed by dry stone walls.

South Northamptonshire is characterised by its range of landscapes and recurring landscape elements and features. The tapestry of the landscape is built by hedgerows, designed parklands, woodlands and agricultural land and are present in all of the landscape types identified, creating a strong blend of visual harmony.

3.4 Relationship to the Landscape Character Assessment

Section EV7 of the saved policies documented in 2007 article relating to the SNC, states that:

"The County Council has recognised that there are areas of the County which are of particularly high landscape value and in recognition of such quality, has designated Special Landscape Areas. This Council appointed a landscape consultant to carry out a detailed re-assessment of these areas and has extended the Special Landscape Areas accordingly. The criteria for appraisal was based on factors such as tree cover, topography and landscape features."

This information has been used to form the basis of the criteria for this review of the South Northamptonshire landscape to classifying the Special Landscape Areas.

The objective is to ensure that future development within a Special Landscape Area is monitored, the EV7 policy states that:

"The Council will seek to conserve and enhance the quality of the landscape. Because of their special environmental quality, development opportunities in the Special Landscape Areas will be limited. Any development proposal will be expected to be particularly sympathetic in terms of form, scale, materials and design. There are also specific types of development that would be generally inappropriate within a Special Landscape Area, including garden centres, tourist camping and caravan sites, intensive food production units and sand and gravel extraction, although the last of these may be permitted by the County Planning Authority, which is the planning authority for minerals, where the need cannot be met from a less environmentally sensitive source of supply. Proposals for golf courses, which can involve intrusive development and introduce an artificial character to the landscape if insensitively designed, will need to be carefully considered. Any application will need to demonstrate that particular regard has been given to design and that the level of built development has been kept to a minimum."
3.5 Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations

Landscape designations are documented areas, containing statutory and non-statutory designations which often contribute to the special landscape quality of an area. The landscape designations are a consideration in development control. The hierarchy and examples of local landscape designations are listed in the table below:

Special Landscape Areas are non-statutory conservation designations to categorise sensitive landscapes to support or be referenced to legal or for matter of policy documents, mainly considered to protect sensitive landscapes of quality from development or other man made influences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hierarchy / Status</th>
<th>Natural Heritage</th>
<th>Cultural Heritage</th>
<th>Landscape</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)</td>
<td>Scheduled Monument</td>
<td>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ancient Woodland</td>
<td>Registered Park and Gardens (RP&amp;G)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Biological Notification Site (BNS)</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Special Landscape Areas</td>
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<td>Local Geological Site</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Local Nature Reserve</td>
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<td>Local Wildlife Site (LWS)</td>
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4.0 OUTCOME OF REVIEW AND RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR SLA DESIGNATION

This section identifies each area that has been identified for consideration as SLA within South Northamptonshire. Each area is documented separately so that they may be referenced individually for any future purpose.

To assist this format a plan indicating the definition of each proposed SLA is provided to each section and has a statement clarifying its landscape significance, quality and justification, together with relevant supporting information.

The plan (QD_100_01_Special Landscape Area Review) on the following page indicates the areas reviewed in accordance with the methodology of section 2.

The drawing key is as follows:

- White - Did not achieve base criteria.
- Blue - Considered in detail but did not achieve the criteria threshold.
- Green - Existing SLA recommended for re-designation.
- Yellow - Recommended additional areas for designation

For information purposes the indicative alignment of HS2 is shown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Landscape Areas (SLA)</th>
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<td>3 Whittlewood Forest &amp; Hazelborough Forest</td>
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<td>4 Hemplow Hills, Cottesbrooke &amp; Brington</td>
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<td>5 Catesby, Fawsley, Maidford &amp; Litchborough</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Aynho, Cherwell Valley &amp; Eydon</td>
<td>39</td>
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</table>
4.1 Yardley Chase & Castle Ashby

Summary

Extent of area

The Grade I listed building of Castle Ashby and the surrounding Grade II listed gardens encompassing a blend of parkland and agricultural landscapes East to West joined by the Castle Ashby Avenue to the Yardley Chase woodland. Split by the A428 the western side reaches out to Denton bordered by Denton road and the disused railway line that meet the South Northamptonshire border. East of the A428 the site is encapsulated by the road to Chadstone and Castle Ashby before cutting through the field form to Pastures Farm. Framed by the SNC boundary it returns along the Yardley road to veering off along the field form and along the avenue where it opens up at Yardley Chase.

Description

A rural and preserved landscape in and around the Grade I listed Castle Ashby and its Grade II listed gardens, joined by its iconic avenue to Yardley Chase containing a blend of managed and ancient woodlands and once part of the historic Royal Hunting Forests of Whittlewood Forest. Supported by strong broad views and a sense place with its undulations and mature trees that line the watercourses and the contours of the landscape.

Statement of Significance

The SLA of Castle Ashby and Yardley Chase is contained within the picturesque, undulating agricultural landscape of the South Northamptonshire Vales. Situated at the apex of the surrounding landscape is the recognised Grade I listed building of Castle Ashby with its medieval parkland landscape and Grade II listed gardens of Capability Brown. The landscapes components gives recognition in respect of historical, archaeological, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and ancient woodland value with the broad dense woodlands of Yardley Chase, a sentiment to the Royal Hunting Forests of the 13th Century scattered along the Whittlewood Ridge. The blend of rich landscape with the textured field form, undulating landscape lined by mature tree hedgerows and watercourses, dotted with ponds and small woodland clusters with small village settlements nestled within the landscape give character to a landscape which dominates over the man-made environment. Enhanced by the lack of visual intrusion from urban development and the use of local stone with its historical villages given identity by the church spires that gently puncture the skyline, the landscape within and around the SLA of Castle Ashby and Yardley Chase is a quilted landscape of sensitive and attractive fabric.

Special Qualities

Internationally recognised 18th century registered Park and Gardens of Special Historic Interest and recognised as one of Capability Browns fine landscapes.
The highly attractive architecture of the Grade I listed building of Castle Ashby
Sense of preservation and sense of space through the lack of intrusion created by the undulating landscape and tree form which visually barriers urban development. This sense of place is enhanced by the meandering country lanes which follow the contours of the landscape and the intimacy of the surrounding villages which are small in size, old in feature and a large use of the local stone.
The sense of preservation through lack of development, local material used for buildings, intimate spaced out villages, meandering lanes and mature trees.
Small attractive villages scattered across the landscape in a dispersed settlement pattern, allowing the rural landscape to dominate. Feature buildings in each village, churches, give identity and presence, built with local stone.
A rich blend of ecological networks with biodiversity value created by the variety of habitats supported by the varying woodlands, some of SSSI status, and managed woodlands containing water courses and the ponds and weirs situated in and on the fringe of the SLA.

The strength of the woodlands which remain from the Royal Hunting Forest of Whittlewood Forest which hold ancient woodland value and managed woodland value supporting a variety of copse woodlands. These create a sense of place and enclosure in some areas.

**Landscape Character Context**

- NCA - 89 Northamptonshire Vales
- NCA - 91 Yardley Whittlewood Ridge
- LCA - 6b The Hackleton Claylands - Undulating Claylands - page 72
- LCA - 8B Salcey Forest and Yardley Chase - Low Wooded Clay Ridge - page 98
- LCA - 12a Wollaston to Irchester - Limestone Valley Slopes - page 124
- LCA - 18c/d Duston Mill to Billing Wharf to Woodford Mill - Broad River Valley Floodplain - page 172-173

**Criteria**

**Distinctiveness**

- The untouched grounds and surrounding houses of Castle Ashby
- The avenue which runs through the centre of the local landscape
- Its parkland style landscape
- Distinctive architectural style with the work houses orange / red brick brick and stone houses with red tiles
- Meeting points / green create focal points
- Strong complimentary blend with the landscape
- Part of the Whittlewood Ridge landscape giving its unique character to overlook the landscape
- The collective of managed woodland copses, dismantled railways and ponds.
- Established mature woodland form that lines the fields and follows the valley
- Off the main roads are small country lanes which create a rural feel

A broad belt of meandering flows of undulations with hilltop woodland forms, enhanced by the contour flowing woodland chains, distinctive sense of space and place surrounding the important historic landscape and woodlands of Castle Ashby and Yardley Chase. The surrounding rolling blend arable and pasture fields and village pockets with the long country lanes / avenues with distinctive long broad views across the landscape. The gentle undulating plateau mantles Castle Ashby, Castle Ashby Avenue and Yardley Chase with pockets of intimate views and sheltered experiences.

**Perceptual Character**

- Lack of modern intrusion in the local context
- Strong intrusion in the distance of Northampton and Bedford region
- Room to breath, strong connection with the open views of the landscape
Remote, gently undulating landscape with broad long distance views evoking a sense of space, freedom and preservation, due to the lack of major roads and settlement. The historic quality of the villages and the local limestone used accompanied by the ancient woodlands and the blend of arable and pasture field pattern give a sense of timelessness. The gentle undulating field pattern and blend of textures.

**Landscape and Scenic Quality**

- Broad gentle rolling landscape
- Parkland landscape
- Water bodies / ponds dot the landscape.
- Strong woodland avenue
- Strong views from the avenue out over the landscape
- Established woodland form

The Grade I listed Castle Ashby and the associated Grade II listed grounds that accompany it within itself and the village associated with it are of very high scenic quality. With pockets of village greens and historical architecture blending into the landscape around it with strong scenic views and a blend of agricultural and woodland fabrication with watercourse features. Clusters of villages supporting landmark features and natural features of established mature native hedgerow trees such as Oak, Ash etc. The gently meandering roadways that follow the contours of the landscape give strong distance views enhanced and mimicked by the tree lines that follow the valleys and watercourses. The dismantled railway that runs alongside Yardley Chase acts as a woodland belt that leads the eye across the horizon. Yardley Chase has strong biodiversity and scenic qualities with a mixed blend of intimate and broad views creating mixed experiences of enclosure, security and opening out to the exposure of the landscape.

**Natural Character**

- SSSI of the Forests
- Historical Royal Hunting Forest
- Historical Castle Ashby, its grounds and gardens
- Northamptonshire vales NCA 89
- Yardley Whittlewood Ridge NCA 91
- Hackleton Claylands LCA 6b
- Salcey Forest and Yardley Chase LCA 8b
- Wollaston to Irchester Limestone Valley Slopes LCA 12a
- Duston Mill to Billing Wharf to Woodford Mill Broad river valley flood plain LCA 18c/d
- A selection of Biodiversity sites
- Broadleaf mixed ancient and managed woodlands, remains of the Royal Hunting Forest, Whittlewood Forest.
- A sense of place with wildlife, a blend of bird species can be seen and heard, a variety of farming species dotted across the landscape, mix of insects across the terrain and landscape feature.
- The mixed broadleaved and managed woodlands of Yardley Chase and Castle Ashby avenue and the network of woodland belts, hilltop woodlands, strong hedgerow and watercourse network create a landscape of biodiversity and ecological wealth.
Cultural Character

- Clusters of Copse woodlands
- Grade 1 historical landscape of Castle Ashby
- 13th century Royal Hunting Forest remnants
- Historic settlement and distinctive local stone buildings
- Historic Grade I Castle Ashby and the Grade II grounds that support it
- Conservation Area of Castle Ashby
- Remains of the 13th century Royal Hunting Forest of Whittlewood Forest.
- Vast quantities of pre historic, medieval and modern Historic Environmental Assets scatter the landscape with links to the Roman, Iron and Saxon ages.

Function

An extensive network of footpaths and bridleways through the tranquil forest of Yardley Chase supporting woodland facilities, with routes through the historic villages and the scenic landscape in and around Castle Ashby and Yardley Chase. The landscape of the SLA and local landscape support a variety of habitats and wildlife sites.

Key Guidelines for landscape management in the Yardley Chase and Castle Ashby area

- Encourage implementation of new native tree species to replace mature trees.
- Preserve the distinctive scattered settlement arrangement within the landscape and the valley formation.
- Protect the intimate field patterns and mapping of woodland form.

Recommendation

The Yardley Chase & Castle Ashby and extension as outlined by drawing QD_100_01_Special Landscape Area Review is recommended for designation. The area offers a rich and varied landscape character and quality as described in detail in this section.

- Internationally recognised 18th century registered Park and Gardens of Castle Ashby.
- The highly attractive Grade I listed Castle Ashby
- The strength of the woodlands and ecological networks

As part of the assessment of this area, it was considered and identified that the addition of the indicated area in yellow reflected the character of the SLA and met the criteria should be included within the SLA designation.

- Continuation of existing landscape features and qualities
- Contains pocket woodlands
- Strong undulation of quality and value
- Formed by watercourses lined by mature native tree hedgerows
4.2  Tove Valley

Summary

Extent of area

The Tove Valley is framed by the South Northamptonshire Boundary and the A508 from Cosgrove, opening wider past Yardley Gobion, it draws itself back to the A508 at Grafton Regis where the valley is framed by Ashton and the River Tove where it curves round to Towcester before encompassing the grounds and near context of Easton Neston House and its supporting grounds.

Description

The Tove Valley SLA is high in wetland landscape quality with its open, broad, plateau landscape meandering through the undulating land form of the Northamptonshire Vales and the Whittlewood Ridge. The scenic quality of the landscape is enhanced by the hilltop villages that travel through the landscape creating visual landmarks such as the Hanslope Spire. As the SLA nears Towcester the land form changes to become wooded with a parkland field pattern and the avenue of the Grade II Easton Neston House and Gardens.

Statement of Significance

The Tove Valley is a ribbon of distinctive broad landscape plateau rich in scenic quality surrounded by hilltop settlements and woodland feature. The watercourses and land feature of the Grand Union Canal, River Tove and its tributaries meander through the landform whilst forming the feature point of the landscape and giving the local landscape its character. The strong landscape views filter down towards the developed Towcester where the landform begins to change and become more undulating. This landscape enhances in historic value and the change gives residence to the distinctive parkland landscape of Easton Neston and the iconic Grade II grounds that accompanies it and the Towcester Racecourse. As the landscape changes towards Towcester the introduction of more dense woodland features form providing strong ecological and visual attraction as well as public recreation through the gardens and grounds of Easton Neston.

Special Qualities

- The distinctive landform of the Tove Valley is a belt that carries through into the landscape of Milton Keynes, a network of the River Great Ouse, River Tove and the Grand Union Canal meet.
- The Southern section up to the Stoke Bruerne area, where the landscape starts to become more undulating and intimate. The high quality long distance panoramic views of the landscape from the heart of the Tove Valley with its almost flat to gently undulating landscape around the edges. Enhanced by the clusters of woodlands and mature hedgerows. Together with glimpses of the settlements with built features such as church spires blending in with the natural form of the landscape. The dramatic foggy mornings created by the watercourses that pass through the landscape at certain times of the year.
- From the East side of the Tove Valley there are strong views across the Tove Valley and the local context of the landscape creates a rich broad landscape with strong mature woodland belts that line the landscape and to the distance, where the landscape starts to undulate, hilltop woodland features begin.
- Mature trees and areas of hilltop woodland and woodland clusters enhance the natural character of the landscape and visual qualities which contribute to the character and quality of the landscape and its identity.
- The gently undulating perimeters of the landscape with its broad vast central landscape evoke a picturesque and untouched character supported by the historic...
value of the local intimate villages and the identity of hilltop settlements linking to the historical character of South Northamptonshire.

- Historic landscape character of the Grand Union Canal and the natural character of the River Tove and its tributaries. The historic flood meadows encompassed by woodland belts create a sense of contained naturalness.
- The varying views experienced through the broad landscape created by the broad plains give a sense of openness between settlements and the urban developments to the North and South, enhanced by the intimate views formed by the woodland belts.
- Strong historic character created by the conservation villages of Shutlanger, Ashton, Stoke Bruerne and Grafton Regis.
- The strong recreational value supported by the Grand Union Canal and network of public rights of way which map the landscape and the grandeur of the private historic landscapes of Easton Neston and Stoke Park.
- The historic value of the landscape is marked with historic sites dating back to the medieval era.
- A rich landscape in biodiversity and ecology supported by the observation of a variety of bird species and animal farming.

Landscape Character Context

NCA - 88 Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire Claylands
NCA - 89 Northamptonshire Vales
NCA - 91 Yardley Whittlewood Ridge
LCA - 6a The Tove Valley Catchment - Undulating Claylands - Page 77
LCA - 6b The Hackleton Claylands - Undulating Claylands - page 72
LCA - 8a Whittlewood Plateau - Low Wooded Clay Ridge - Page 96
LCA - 8B Salcey Forest and Yardley Chase - Low Wooded Clay Ridge - page 98
LCA - 17b River Tove Floodplain - River Valley Floodplain - Page 163
Historic Landscape of Easton Neston grade II - The Avenue of Easton Neston - Nun Wood - Burn Wood - Stokepark Wood - Blagden Wood - Stoke Park Wood - Stoke Bruerne Park - Cosgrove Leisure Park - The Viaduct - Old Stratford Canal - Ouse Valley Way

Criteria

Distinctiveness

- Broad landscape along the wetland floodplain.
- Unique wetland landscape to the South Northamptonshire Area.
- Broad views across the landscape.
- Mature hedgerows.
- After the plains the landscape begins a soft undulation.
- Hilltop villages.
- Tree massing and hilltop woodlands.

The distinctive broad wetland landscape gets its identity from the merge of the Northamptonshire Vales and the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, sheltered by hilltop woodland feature, gentle undulations and settlements. The landform gives strong residence to mature woodland belts and pockets which map, define and enhance the landscape. The landscape features of the Grand Union Canal and the River Tove support along side the woodland form a strong and diverse ecology and biodiversity which serves a strong network of public rights of way.

Perceptual Character

- Intimate along road ways.
- Open within the field form.
- Lined with established hedgerows.
- Dotted with mature trees.
- Room to breath.
• Broad distance views across landscape.
• Hilltop villages and woodlands.

A calm and steady landscape is experienced, evoked by its broad plains towards Buckinghamshire, its large open field form encompassed by gentle rolling undulations and woodland character. A gentle transition is experienced to the North towards Roade, where the expansive landscape becomes refined and undulations begin, shielded by pockets of woodland, hedgerows and expansive and intimate views creating a varied experience through the landscape, winding roads and lanes that go with the undulations of the landform is experienced off the major roadways. There is a lack of intrusion from major developments the woodland form creating and effective barrier.

Landscape and Scenic Quality

• Scenic views of the landscape in most directions.
• Long distance views across the textured and quilted landscape by the field form and hedgerows.
• Waterways following the valleys of the field form.
• Strong views of key features such as Hanslope spire.
• New tree planting since last assessment.
• Grade I listed Easton Neston House and Grade II listed Gardens.
• Northamptonshire Vales.
• Whittlewood Ridge.

From the A508 pockets of the long distance views can be experienced, with vantage points from the surrounding hilltop settlements and road networks. Iconic views of Hanslope spire can be seen and other landmark features make for distinguished viewpoints. Towards Shutlanger and Ashton where the landscape begins to undulate, views back across the claylands can be experienced. There are strong views of scenic quality in all directions across the landscape as a whole, looking out to other districts and areas of South Northamptonshire creating a strong blend of qualities.

Natural Character

• The broad landscape of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, though a blend of farmland and wetland as a majority, its basic identity is intact by lack of development.
• The mature native mixed broadleaved woodlands that map the landscape are a blend of ancient and managed woodlands.
• A strong blend of wildlife sites and habitats that are supported through the landscape within the wetland marshes, woodlands and other landscape features.
• The River Tove and Grand Union Canal support local biodiversity

Cultural Character

• Historic settlements, environmental assets and archaeological sites are dotted across the landscape with a distinct handful of historic sites and conservation areas.
• The house and gardens of Easton Neston
• Stoke Park House and Gardens
• Listed buildings are sprawled across the landscape.

Function

The Grand Union Canal supports the use of walking, cycling and using the canal to commute and for recreational value. With facilities at both Easton Neston and Stoke Bruerne available to the public and a strong network of public rights of way through the landscape, it serves a strong function for recreational value. The Tove Valley gives home to a variety of wildlife habitats and reserves and agricultural use.
Key Guidelines for landscape management in the Tove Valley area

- To encourage the preservation of the strong open landscape views
- Preservation of historical landscape character and
- Maintenance methods should be encouraged to restore the mature tree die back

Recommendation

The Tove Valley and extension as outlined by drawing QD_100_01_Special Landscape Area Review is recommended for designation. The area offers a high scenic quality and a sense of place whilst offering a varied landscape character and quality as described in detail in this section.

- The distinctive wetland landscape formed by the local rivers and water courses
- The hilltop woodlands and settlements that contain a strong historical value into the South Northamptonshire’s past
- The expansive broad views across the landscape with its gentle undulating perimeter landform

As part of the assessment of this area, it was considered and identified that the addition of the indicated area in yellow reflected the character of the SLA and met the criteria and should be included within the SLA designation.

- Continuation of existing special landscape qualities landscape of value and view of quality
4.3 Whittlewood and Hazelborough Forest

Summary

Extent of area

The SLA of Whittlewood and Hazelborough Forest is a ribbon of land that encompasses Whittlewood Forest to the East, framed by the SNC boundary to the South, avoiding Silverstone, and the A5 to the East. The Northern border trails along the field pattern exterior to the woodland belt before meeting Whittlebury, taking the Whittlebury road to Challock Farm, before following the exterior of Hazelborough Forest to the SNC boundary with Aylesbury Vale District Council creating the West end of the area.

Description

A strong woodland belt from East to West with strong undulations and a pocket of settlements in the form of Whittlebury and Silverstone. Disected by the A413, the SLA contains two large woodlands broken into clusters, Whittlewood forest and Hazelborough forest, remnant of the Royal Hunting Forest. These managed woodlands provide biodiversity benefits and give residence to a selection of historic homes with parkland style landscaping.

Statement of significance

Whittlewood and Hazelborough Forest are remnants of the 13th Century Royal Hunting Forest which forms part of the Whittlewood Ridge. The diverse landscape lends itself to a variety of viewpoints and experiences through the landscape providing broad open views of the landscape to the intimate enclosed views with pockets of undulating landscape. Divided by the intrusion of the A43, it has strong views south over the Stowe landscape. A small network of SSSI meadows towards Syresham give biodiversity quality

Special Qualities

- Parkland landscape and field character.
- Avenue runs through the landscape of Whittlewood Forest leading to Wakefield Lodge.
- Small field pattern and woodland pattern amongst the large clusters creating intimacy.
- Good views in the direction of Deanshanger area.
- Managed woodland landscape.
- Deer parkland
- Open views in areas
- A massing of registered woodlands on the West side
- East side contains registered woodlands and high percentage of them are SSSI (Whittlewood Forest)
- SSSI meadows on Syresham side of site.
- Distinctive landform created by the Yardley Whittlewood ridge with views out towards the Bedfordshire claylands and Northamptonshire Vales on the outskirts of the SLA of Whittlewood and Hazelborough Forest.
- Within this SLA there is a mix of landscape experiences, from the managed shelters of the woodlands, to small intimate field patterns, pockets of open views and parkland landscape
- Strong sense of historical preservation with the remains of the Royal Hunting Forest
Landscape Character Context

NCA - 88 Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire Claylands
NCA - 91 Yardley Whittlewood Ridge
LCA - 6a The Tove Valley Catchment - Undulating Clays - Page 77
LCA - 8a Whittlewood Plateau - Low Wooded Clay Ridge - Page 96
LCA - 17b River Tove Floodplain - River Valley Floodplain - Page 163
Wakefield Lodge and Avenue - The Manor House -

Criteria

Distinctiveness

- Strong mature woodland form.
- Undulating landscape lined with mature woodland form of age.
- Deer parkland.
- Small field patterns within woodland areas creating intimacy.
- Managed woodland landscape.
- Gentle variations in undulating landscape.
- Avenue runs through the landscape of the Whittlewood Forest.

The distinctive cluster of woodland creates one of the most distinctive woodland belts in South Northamptonshire enhanced by its status as a remnant of the Royal Hunting Forest of Whittlewood Forest. Its context with Aylesbury Vales Stowe landscape area creates a strong woodland composition in the landscape with outstanding scenic and character qualities. Its land use for a blend of arable, pasture and parkland style landscape within the centre accompanied by the managed woodland creates a woven fabric of harmonious landscape. With ranging views from intimate to broad long distance views, the Whittlewood and Hazelborough Forest is of an overall high quality.

Perceptual Character

- Intimate, often enclosed or a sense of protection by the bold strong woodland form.
- Few roads until the silverstone area.
- A sense or privacy and preservation.

The depth, domination and quality of the managed woodlands creates a strong sense of remoteness, offering a sound barrier to the major roads locally, this enhances the sense of tranquillity. With pockets of quality views accompanied by pockets of intimate views the sense of space and place is a constant variable and experience of diverse quality.

Landscape and Scenic Quality

- Intimate scenic quality within the heart of the woodlands / forest creating a sense of enclosure and retreat.
- Strong broad parkland views near Whittlebury.
- Set in undulating landform with bold established hedgerows.

High quality views of undulating landscape shaped by mature woodlands from the exterior boundaries of the site, from the interior of the site a blend of long distance views, intimate field patterns and deer parkland. The long stretches of country roads give form to the grandeur and depth of the space, giving opportunity to experience the scale of the Forests. With historical context and built form accompanied by the proximity of Silverstone, it is a real juxtaposition of rural, ancient woodland, and modern entertainment, situated in the close context of the Stowe landscape offering high scenic quality and character.
Natural Character

- Ancient mature woodlands of native species which contain SSSI, conservation and historical value.
- Rich in wildlife habitats with watercourses and water bodies dotted over the site from the large lake at Wakefield Lodge to the Great River Ouse that runs through Brackley Hatch. The mature forest that accompanies these water bodies create a localised hub for wildlife.
- The heritage in the historical quality of the landscape relates back to the Royal Hunting Forest with features of the avenue at Wakefield Lodge and the Deer Park in its local context.
- Although dissected by the major development of Silverstone and the A413, the naturalness of the woodlands are of a high native quality, given rarity by its age.
- Strong sense of wildlife, through the noise and movement of birds, rabbits and deer.

Cultural Character

- 13th Century Royal Hunting Forest
- Wakefield Lodge
- Wakefield Lodge Parkland landscape containing deer.
- Lodge Park Whittlebury

Strong experience of time and history, encouraged by the remaining ancient woodland. Landmarked with architecture of historic value and acting as an oasis encompassing Silverstone.

Function

The designated landscape of Whittlewood and Hazelborough Forest is rich in historical and archaeological value. Serving a network of public rights of way and bridleways, the landscape serves as a strong wildlife resource with its SSSI status areas and its potential and listed wildlife sites.

Key Guidelines for landscape management in the Whittlewood and Hazelborough Forest area

- The preservation of strong woodland presence and massing
- Processes to replace hedgerow trees
- Preservation of distinctive and historical field patterns and intimacy along side farming and parkland farming techniques.

(Continues on next page)
Recommendation

The Whittlewood & Hazelborough Forest and extension as outlined by drawing QD_100_01_Special Landscape Area Review is recommended for designation. The area offers a historical and woodland landscape character rich in ecological and biodiversity qualities as described in detail in this section.

- Parkland landscape and field character
- Historical heritage with its links the 13th century Royal Hunting Forest
- The distinctive landform created by woodland massing and the undulations created by the Yardley Whittlewood ridge.

As part of the assessment of this area, it was considered and identified that the addition of the indicated area in yellow reflected the character of the SLA and met the criteria and should be included within the SLA designation

- Landscape views of quality
- Strong view across the landscape that fit with existing landscape quality
4.4 Hemplow Hills, Cottesbrooke & Brington

Summary

Extent of area

The Hemplow Hills, Cottesbrooke & Brington SLA is situated in the Northern limb corner of the South Northamptonshire district, where Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire meet. The site runs North East to South West framed by the county borders, the M1 and the A4500, Harpole is not included in the SLA.

Description

The Hemplow Hills, Cottesbrooke & Brington SLA contains rolling undulations blended with the mature hedgerow form lined with mature trees accompanying the feature hilltop woodlands. The SLA contains a complimentary blend of the Northamptonshire Vales and the Northamptonshire Uplands.

Statement of Significance

The Hemplows Hills, Cottesbrooke and Brington SLA is a pocket of tranquillity in the close context of urban development of Northampton. Its varied qualities as it blends the boundaries of the Northamptonshire Vales and the Northamptonshire Uplands, creating views of high scenic quality that are of rarity. The richness of the visual textures in the landscape with the scattering of mature trees, established hedgerows, the distance views of the attractive undulating hills and agricultural land.

Special Qualities

- The rich blend of the South Northamptonshire Vales and the Northamptonshire Uplands.
- A high quality field pattern in areas and quality landscape features supported by long distance views into Daventry.
- Visual containment of the urban developments of Northamptonshire
- Contains a historic Roman settlement.

Landscape Character Context

NCA - 95 Northamptonshire Uplands
NCA - 89 Northamptonshire Vales
LCA - 13b Bugbrook to Daventry - Undulating Hills and Valeys - Page 136
LCA - 18b/c Broad River Valley Floodplain - River Valley Floodplain - Page 171-172
Nobottle belt / Nobottle wood - Harpole Covert -

Criteria

Distinctiveness

- Broad views to the Daventry Landscape.
- Undulating landscape towards the Daventry border.
- Hilltop woodlands.
- High scenic qualities of the landscape into Daventry and of the Northamptonshire Claylands.

The pocket of rural landscape that divides Daventry on the fringe of Northampton contains high quality scenic views across the landscape, to the North where Daventry sits and with its strong qualities of the Northamptonshire Uplands and to the West the views across Bugbrooke towards Litchborough and Canons Ashby.
Perceptual Character

- Encased by the M1 and Northampton and the A4500
- Strong views North into the Daventry area of undulating landscape
- A pocket of tranquillity framed by a major roadway and urban Northampton
- A rural retreat so close to Northampton

The immediate change in the landscape from urban Northampton to the rural landscape gives greater quality to the designated area, the immediate change in view and the quality of the mature hedgerows and tree form, enhanced by the contours of the landscape create a strong feeling of tranquillity and respite.

Landscape and Scenic Quality

- Strong views to the Daventry District Council area framed by road infrastructure and Northampton
- Gateway into Daventry area with a bold entrance into the rolling landscape
- Strong wide landscape views
- Field form lined with mature trees
- Strong views of Bugbrooke to the Daventry area of undulating hills and valleys
- Looks out to Nobottle belt / Nobottle wood / Harpole covert.
- Soft undulating landscape lined by mature flourishing native broadleaved trees accompanied by pasture and arable farming creating an attractive patchwork.
- Country lanes lined by strong verges of wild planting.

The Landscape of Hemplow Hills, Cottesbrooke and Brington acts as a strong viewing platform to the landscape around it, with its quality views to the North and the East. The richness of the maturity and landform of the designated landscape and its blend of pasture and arable farming creates a small pocket of quintessential landscape.

Natural Character

- Hilltop villages.
- Pockets of woodlands.
- A rich tapestry of wildlife from bird species to invertebrates and insects supported by the country lanes along the wildlife planting.
- Distance views of mixed mature woodlands of Daventry.
- Blend of landscapes with undulating forms from the Northamptonshire Uplands and Northamptonshire Vales.

Function

- Public rights of way.
- Visual backdrop and boundary between rural and urban landscape.

Serves a strong network of public rights of way that connect with the surrounding network. Fringes on a Nene Valley Improvement Area.

Key Guidelines for landscape management in the Hemplow Hills, Cottesbrooke and Brington area

- The preservation of the strong distance views into the Daventry area enhanced by the landform of the area giving shelter from the visual intrusion of Northampton.
- Reinstatement and replacement of hedgerow trees.
**Recommendation**

The Hemplow Hills, Cottesbrooke & Brington as outlined by drawing QD_100_01_Special Landscape Area Review is recommended for designation. The area offers a strong visual and scenic landscape character whilst creating a sense of place between the Daventry District and the urban Northampton as described in detail in this section.

- Broad views to the Daventry landscape
- Hilltop woodlands
- Strong views across the Northamptonshire Uplands.

As part of the assessment of this area it was considered and identified that the addition of the indicated area in yellow reflected the character of the SLA and met the criteria and should be included within the SLA designation.

- No extension potential identified
4.5 Catesby, Fawsley, Maidford & Litchborough

Summary

Extent of area

The Catesby, Fawsley, Maidford & Litchborough SLA is situated along the Northern border of the South Northamptonshire boundary running North East to South West as a belt from Bugbrooke to just past Adstone, encased by the country lanes from Pattishall to Blakesley creating the southern boundary line.

Description

Situated on the borders of the Northamptonshire Uplands and the Northamptonshire Vales, it creates a complimentary blend of rolling undulating landscape with dramatic form and strong views across the landscape. The quality of the landscape is enhanced by the typography of the hedgerows and woodland massing.

Statement of significance

- Blend of the Northamptonshire Vales and the Northamptonshire Uplands.
- Contains historic qualities in settlements and built form.
- Use of local natural building materials.
- Rich textured landscape with mature tree and hedgerow form.
- Undulating landscape.

The Catesby, Fawsley, Maidford & Litchborough SLA, defined by its blend of the Northamptonshire Uplands and the Northamptonshire Vales, creates a soft merge of gentle undulations and wide open expansive views, with small intricate valleys defined by the tributaries and water ways of the Tove river. The visual matrix of the landscape form is enhanced by the mature tree structures which line the hedgerows giving greater definition to the blend of the landscape character. The rural communities which dot the landscape are characterised by the use of local stone and the historical settlements are enhanced by the church landmarks. The landscape creates a presence of nature over the man-made, similar to the Castle Ashby SLA where the settlements are given privacy, sheltered within the valley and undulations of the landscape.

Special Qualities

- Views and silhouettes of the landscape.
- Views of and towards Canons Ashby.
- Big open views of the rolling landscape.
- Reasonable intimate fields.
- Strong woodland feature.
- Near Pattishall there is blend of the landscape and views and large open fields
- Historic villages: Adstone, Maidford, Litchborough, Blakesly, Moreton Pinkney and Woodend.
- The character of the landscape is enhanced by the character and blend of the rural and agricultural landscape elements. The placement of a large scattering of farms highlighting the farming history within the area.
- The historical value of the village settlements gives additional value of the landscape.
Landscape Character Context

NCA - 95 Northamptonshire Uplands
NCA - 89 Northamptonshire Vales
LCA - 6a The Tove Catchment - Undulating Claylands - Page 77
LCA - 13b Bugbrooke and Daventry - Undulating Hills and Valleys - Page 136
Plumpton Wood - Dismantled Railway - Seawell Wood - Maidford Wood - Seawell Valley
House and Reserver - Burntfold Copse - Grimscote Heath - Grand union canal

Criteria

Distinctiveness

The area displays rural value with dispersed rural settlements and the use of ironstone for local buildings. The hedgerows define the field pattern are punctuated with mature trees which meander through the landscape following the contours and give character and identity. A strong sense of rural place is created with the experience of the gentle undulations and shallow valleys through the landscape.

Perceptual Character

A strong sense of rural tranquillity given by the quiet and intimate settlements that dot the landscape which have no intrusion of larger development. The undulating landscape creates varying experiences of exposure and security, supported by the varied tree form of the landscape from mature hedgerows to woodland clusters. Hedge laying techniques are seen in use giving a sense of rural traditional skills.

Landscape and Scenic Quality

- Undulations of rolling landform.
- Deep valley views across the landscape.
- Native hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Hedgerow trees of mature age.

Natural Character

- Pockets of woodlands.
- Old farm barns and farm houses.

Cultural Character

- Ironstone houses linked to local stone, geology and resource giving local identity and character.
- Small intimate villages.
- Churches in villages, the church spires punctuate/ blend in with the skyline.

Function

- Scattering of historical sites.
- Good network of public rights of way.
- Serves a network of wildlife sites and ancient woodlands.
- Used for farming.
- Good quantity of farms.
Key Guidelines for maintenance in the Catesby, Fawsley, Maidford & Litchborough area

- Reinstatement and replacement of hedgerow trees.
- To encourage the preservation of the strong open landscape views
- Preservation of historical landscape character and

Key Guidelines for landscape management in the Catesby, Fawsley, Maidford & Litchborough area

- Reinstatement and replacement of hedgerow trees.
- To encourage the preservation of the strong open landscape views
- Preservation of historical landscape character.

(Continues on next page)
Recommendation

The Catesby, Fawsley, Maidford & Litchborough as outlined by drawing QD_100_01_Special Landscape Area Review is recommended for designation. The area offers a strong visual, historic and ecological landscape character whilst creating a sense of place between with its varied landscape qualities as detailed in this section.

- Views towards Canons Ashby
- Strong woodland feature
- Historical villages of Adstone, Maidford, Litchborough, Blakesly, Moreton Pinkney and Woodend
- The open views of the undulating landscape

As part of the assessment of this area, it was considered and identified that the addition of the indicated area in yellow reflected the character of the SLA and met the criteria:

- No extension potential identified
4.6 Aynho, Cherwell Valley & Eydon

Summary

Extent of area

The Aynho, Cherwell Valley & Eydon SLA covers a linear footpath on the Western side of South Northamptonshire. The East boundary follows the country lanes North to South through the villages of Eydon, through Culworth, Farthinghoe and Charlton. The Western boundary meanders through the landscape, Middleton Cheney and Chipping Warden.

Description

The Aynho, Cherwell Valley & Eydon SLA is the combination of a rich and diverse landscape in its form, visual identity and quality. The Southern area of the SLA forms a meeting of the National Characters Areas of the Cotswolds, Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge and the Northamptonshire Uplands, with views in the local distance to the Northamptonshire Vales. The Northamptonshire Uplands diagonally cuts across the landscape from Southwest to Northeast creating gently rolling undulations and strong views of the landscape. The field form varies from intimate field pattern to larger open field layouts. The field boundaries are lined with established hedgerows and mature Ash and Oak tree forms. There is a strong connection with the historic landscape with the hilltop villages surrounded by intimate field pattern. The disused railways that meander through the landscape are identifiable by the strong banked woodland ways which compliments the water courses that are character to the valley trees and woodland forms.

Statement of Significance

- As a majority it contains the landscape character of the Northamptonshire Uplands.
- Whittlewood Ridge, Northamptonshire Vales in close proximity.
- Diverse and rich landscape built up from a matrix of landscape features and views.
- Mature tree form with older trees to the North now dying back.

The Aynho, Chewell Valley & Eydon SLA comprises, as a majority, the landscape character of the Northamptonshire Uplands, with essences of the Whittlewood Ridge and the Northamptonshire Vales within close proximity. The varied landscape contains a progression of alternating layers from South to North meandering through gentle, stable landscapes into undulating forms. The landscape contains a matrix of expansive open views to intimate spaces, created by the undulating landscape and the woodland forms that line the landscape. There is a strong sense of history and age with the mature tree forms which compliments the tree planting associated with the valleys. The age of the settlements which are scattered across the site, enhanced by the use of local stone and containing architecture of historical value.

Special qualities

- Expansive landscape towards Eydon.
- Buildings and villages of historical value.
- Broad undulations.
- Components of woodlands.
- Mature trees dotted along hedgerows.
- Good quality landscape.
- Sweeping undulations.
- Woodland copse.
- Associated water course lined with mature trees.
- Hilltop woodlands.
- Profiled trees, swept by wind.
- Undulations.
- Trees along disused railway lines.
- Mature trees in the hedges.
- Established hedgerows.
- Disused railway lines add to character.
- Good views towards the Cotswolds
- Good, distance views.
- Rich varied landscape.
- A landscape tapestry created by woodland pockets and varied field pattern.

**Landscape Character Context**

- NCA - 107 Cotswolds
- NCA - 95 Northamptonshire Uplands
- NCA - 91 Yardley Whittlewood Ridge
- NCA - 89 Northamptonshire Vales
- LCA - 6a The Tove Catchment - Undulating Claylands - Page 77
- LCA - 8a Whittlewood Plateau - Low Wooded Clay Ridge - Page 96
- LCA - 10a Croughton, Aynho and Farthinghoe Plateau - Limestone plateau Page 111
- LCA - 13a Middleton Cheney and Woodford Halse - Undulating Hills and Valleys - Page 135
- LCA - 13b Bugbrooke and Daventry - Undulating Hills and Valleys - Page 136
- LCA - 16a Boddington Hills - Low Pastoral Hills - page 157

**Criteria**

**Distinctiveness**

- Houses and buildings of strong historical value.
- Grafton houses dot the landscape.
- Large manor houses / castle / monasteries dot the landscape.
- Small intimate rural villages with track roads.
- Rural areas retaining rural features - local family shops / butchers.
- Villages with Squares / meeting places and churches.

**Perceptual Character**

- Rural communities and a lack of urban intrusion.
- Strong presence of rural character.
- Woodland pockets and walkways.
- Scale of the landscape and its varying topography and views.

**Landscape and Scenic Quality**

- Strong visual character.
- Rural village communities established around Manor houses / large homes of historical presence and value.
- Undulating landscape.
- Roadways and watercourses follow the undulations.
- Trees line the landscape and enhance its form.
- Trees of a mature age.
- Woodland / tree belts follow the disused railways line.
- Woodland belts follow the contours of the landscape.

**Natural Character**

- Settlements have strong identity and link to the landscape.
- Maturity of trees and hedgerows of native species.
• Use of localised ironstone and materials give a strong presence of its quality and localisation.

Cultural Character
• Presence of Manor houses / larger homes of historical value act as tourist attractions and draw people to visit the landscape and area.

Function
• A strong network of public rights of way across the landscape area.
• Historical villages / settlements and sites
• Diverse range of habitat and natural site

Key Guidelines for landscape management in the Aynho, Cherwell Valley & Eydon area
• Encourage implementation of new native tree species to replace dying out trees.
• Preserve the distinctive scattered settlement arrangement within the landscape and the valley formation.
• Protect the intimate field patterns and mapping of woodland form.

Impact of HS2 on the SLA

The impacts of the of HS2 on the SLA will be of moderate effect. To minimise these impacts, it is highly recommended that a well designed mitigation process is pursued and implemented.

(Continues on next page)
Recommendation of additional area to the SLA

The Aynho, Cherwell Valley & Eydon and extension as outlined by drawing QD_100_01_Special Landscape Area Review is recommended for designation. The area offers a strong visual, rich and varied landscape character whilst as described and detailed in this section.

- Expansive landscape to the North
- Buildings and villages of historical value
- Hilltop woodlands
- Trees along disused railway lines
- Broad undulations
- Mature trees in the hedgerows

As part of the assessment of this area, it was considered and identified that the addition of the indicated area in yellow reflected the character of the SLA and met the criteria:

- Landscape is of a standard that meets existing landscape quality
- Disused railway lines now acting as strong woodland belts and green ways
- Strong field pattern and mature tree identity
- Strong views across the landscape
- Local ironstone villages of value
- Open sweeping view of Canons Ashby
4.7 Sulgrave and Grand Central Railway

Summary

Extent of area

The Sulgrave and Grand Central SLA is situated in the valley between the SLA of Catesby, Fawsley, Maidford & Litchborough and the SLA of Aynho, Cherwell Valley & Eydon. The Northern boundary follows the South Northamptonshire boundary from the dismantled Woodford Halse Junction towards Moreton Pinkney where the Eastern boundary follows the country lane east of Moreton Pinkney towards Weston heading south to Helmdon. The Southern boundary follows the country lane from Helmdon to Sulgrave before following the country lane and field pattern north to Eydon where it meets the SNC boarder below the Dismantled Woodford Halse Junction.

Description

Located on the boarders of South Northamptonshire and Daventry with the disused Grand Central railway forming the axis of the SLA. Situated in the Northamptonshire Uplands, with the landscape characters of the Ironstone hills of Eydon, which gives the built form of the local area its identity. The views created by the undulations of the landscape offer a range of intimate views with the valleys to broad views towards the Northamptonshire Uplands, Northamptonshire Vales and the Yardley - Whittlewood Ridge, softened by the undulations and mature hedgerow forms. The character of the landscape is created by the harmony of the man made built forms of the intimate historical villages and the disused grand central railway, which now acts as a greenway through the landscape, complimented by the meandering watercourses lined by mature tree form.

Statement of Significance

- As a majority it contains the landscape character of the Northamptonshire Uplands.
- Whittlewood Ridge, Northamptonshire Vales in close proximity.
- Diverse and rich landscape built up from a matrix of landscape features and views.
- Mature tree form with older trees to the North.
- Contains historic qualities in settlements and built form.
- Use of local natural building materials.
- Rich textured landscape with mature tree and hedgerow form.
- Undulating landscape.
- The Disused Grand Central Railway (GCR) thread through the landscape.
- Historical features such as Sulgrave Manor and Sulgrave Mill.

The Sulgrave and Grand Central Railway SLA is situated in the undulating landscape of the Northamptonshire Uplands. The landscapes components are built up of a matrix of woodland forms, agricultural usage, which supports a mature and established network of hedgerows, and the engineered landscape of the disused railway network which features within the landscape. Associated earthworks and track bed formation are naturalised by the landscape which acts as a mature greenway. The landscape and man made built form work in harmony with each other offering a variety of views from broad horizons to sheltered enclosures, with the local historical settlements nestled within the landscape giving a sense of place that the landscape has ownership over the man-made environment. With the use of local stone and the lack of intrusion of any major developments, the small villages have retained their identity with local features of manor houses and churches of strong historical value, such as Sulgrave Manor and the local context of Culworth House.
South Northamptonshire: A Review of Special Landscape Areas
June 2017

Special Qualities

- Expansive landscape towards Eydon.
- Buildings and villages of historical value.
- Views towards Canons Ashby.
- Engineered character from the earthworks of the railway network.
- Broad undulations.
- Components of woodlands.
- Mature trees dotted along hedgerows.
- Good quality landscape.
- Sweeping undulations.
- Woodland copse.
- Associated water course lined with mature trees.
- Softened open views of the rolling landscape.
- Reasonable intimate fields.
- Woodland feature.
- Registered woodlands and gardens: Allithorne Wood
- Historic villages: Sulgrave, with the fringe of Moreton Pinkney, Eydon, Culworth, Helmdon and Weston close by.
- The character of the landscape is enhanced by the character and blend of the rural and agricultural landscape elements.
- The historical value of the village settlements gives additional value of the landscape.
- The identity and historical value of the disused railways, especially Grand Central, enhance the landscapes character and quality acting as a greenway.
- Historical built forms of Sulgrave Manor, Sulgrave mill, Castle hill and Culworth house in close proximity.
- Views towards Canons Ashby

Landscape Character Context

Moreton Pinkney Disused Railway EV24 - 1997 south northamptonshire local plan
Conservation villages
NCA 95 - Northamptonshire Uplands
NCA 89 - Northamptonshire Vales
NCA 91 - Yardley - Whittlewood Ridge
LCA - 2a Ironstone Hills - Eydon Hills
LCA - 6a Undulating Claylands - Tove Catchment
LCA - 13a Undulating Hills and Valleys - Middleton Cheney and Woodford Halse
LCA - 13b Undulating Hills and Valleys - Bugbrooke and Daventry

Criteria

Distinctiveness

The area contains rural value with small pockets of settlements of historical value, built from local stone. The hedgerows contain a high percentage of mature tree form and woodland mapping enhanced by the meandering woodland forms of the engineered characteristics of the earthworks from the disused railway lines and the watercourses lined by tree form creating identity and a sense of place. The landscape contains a varied intensity of undulations within a small context of area, giving a blend of varying views and landscape qualities.

Perceptual Character

The landscape creates a sense of space, remoteness and preservation through the landscapes character. The villages that are spaced across the landscape and the undulations create pockets of visual enclosure and exposure enhanced by woodland form and the maturity of the hedgerows.
Landscape and Scenic Quality

- Undulations of rolling landform.
- Deep valley views across the landscape.
- Native hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Hedgerow trees of mature age.
- Strong visual character.
- Rural village communities with Manor houses / large homes of historical presence and value.
- Roadways and watercourses follow the undulations.
- Trees line the landscape, watercourses, contours and disused railway lines which enhance its form.
- Trees of a mature age.
- Woodland / tree belts follow the disused railways line.

Natural Character

- Settlements have strong identity and link to the landscape.
- Maturity of trees and hedgerows of native species.
- Use of localised ironstone and materials give a strong presence of its quality and localisation.
- Pockets of woodlands.
- Meandering woodland forms that follow the water courses and disused railways

Cultural Character

- Ironstone houses linked to local stone, geology and resource giving local identity and character.
- Small intimate villages.
- Churches in villages, the church spires punctuate/ blend in with the skyline.
- Presence of Manor houses / larger homes of historical value act as tourist attractions and draw people to visit the landscape and area.
- Historical context of the disused railway network with the GCR that runs through the SLA

Function

- Scattering of historical sites.
- Good network of public rights of way.
- Disused railway lines act as greenways for wildlife
- Used for farming.
- Historical villages / settlements and sites
- Diverse range of habitat and natural site
Key Guidelines for landscape management in the Yardley Chase and Castle Ashby area

- Preserve the distinctive scattered settlement arrangement within the landscape and the valley formation.
- Protect the intimate field patterns and mapping of woodland form
- Reinstatement and replacement of hedgerow trees.
- To encourage the preservation of the strong open landscape views
- Preservation of historical landscape character.

Recommendation

The Sulgrave and Grand Central as outlined by drawing QD_100_01_Special Landscape Area Review is recommended for designation. The area offers a rich and varied landscape character and quality as described in detail in this section.

- Woodland feature
- Historical villages of Sulgrave, Eydon, Culworth, Helmdon, Moreton Pinkney and Weston
- The open views of the undulating landscape
- Historical buildings of Sulgrave Manor and Sulgrave Mill
- Disused railways and the old Grand Central route
- Expansive landscape to the North
- Trees along disused railway lines
- Broad undulations
- Mature trees in the hedgerows

As part of the assessment of this area, it was considered and identified that the addition of the indicated area in yellow reflected the character of the SLA and met the criteria should be included within the SLA designation.

- Landscape is of a standard that meets existing landscape quality
- Disused railway lines now acting as strong woodland belts and green ways
- Strong field pattern and mature tree identity
- Strong views across the landscape
- Local ironstone villages of value
5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The landscape of South Northamptonshire is a diverse and rich landscape with a wide range of landscape types and form with varying landscape features, qualities and characteristics that are unique to its landscape history and typography.

As part of the introduction and methodology of this document a criteria was established for the extensive assessment of the existing special landscape areas and others potential areas identified following an overview of the District. Survey and analysis has been carried to all those areas identified and the analysis criteria applied to establish the relative merits of special landscape status.

The outcome of the study has been to confirm the qualities of the existing SLA designations and to identify a number of additional areas to be included within the designation. The majority of these are modest extensions of existing areas.

Wider areas have been considered but did not achieve the criteria threshold. The extent of the detailed areas reviewed is shown on drawing QD69_100_01_Special Landscape Areas Review in section 4.

(5.2 Continues on next page)
5.2 The following area have been assessed and identified as meeting the criteria and qualities to meet the designation of Special Landscape Area. Boundary definition has used positive feature to provide clarity and understanding of SLA boundaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designated area</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Yardley Chase &amp; Castle Ashby with extention</strong></td>
<td>This existing designated area contains a high value landscape rich in diversity with its established woodland forms and Historical value. It contains strong features such as Castle Ashby and its parkland landscape, with the remains of the Hunting Forests of Whittlewood. The landscape contains strong indication of value to the criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 Tove Valley with Extension</strong></td>
<td>The Tove valley contains a strong wetland landscape within the South Northamptonshire landscape. With its broad views and hilltop settlements encompassing the valley it contains a distinctive landscape alongside the Grand Union Canal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 Whittlewood Forest &amp; Hazelborough Forest with extention</strong></td>
<td>Its distinctive woodland form is rich in historical value related to the Hunting Forests of the Whittlewood ridge. Its Deer parkland and managed woodlands give a strong identity rich in wildlife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 Hemplow Hills, Cottesbrooke &amp; Brington</strong></td>
<td>Though the smallest of the Special Landscape Areas, it compensates with its high quality scenic views across the landscape into Daventry and the rolling landscape that accompanies it. It in itself is a rich pocket diverse in its landform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 Catesby, Fawsley, Maidford &amp; Litchborough</strong></td>
<td>A highly valued and coherent landscape supported by strong values linked to all criteria. It contains distinctive landform and strong broad views of the landscape. High in historical value and settlements it creates a sense of place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6 Aynho, Cherwell Valley &amp; Eydon</strong></td>
<td>The landscape is more fragmented with visual and development intrusion from Banbury, Brackley and Middleton Cheney to the South, with the future development of HS2 through the upper centre of the designated landscape area. However it is a rich diverse landscape with the features from the multiple Landscape characters, dotted with historical settlements. It contains character features of the disused railways which line the valleys now strong woodland belts. The valleys contain waterways lined with established mature tree form giving its distinctive age and charm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7 Sulgrave &amp; Grand Central Railway</strong></td>
<td>A intimate landscape characterised within the topography given by the transition of the landscape character from the Northamptonshire Uplands to the Northamptonshire Vales and the Yardley - Whittlewood Ridge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.0 Significant Green Corridors

In undertaking the Special Landscape Area review and the assessment of the existing landscape character and qualities, it became apparent, that there are some distinct elements of supplementary landscape features that exist within South Northamptonshire's countryside.

These features contribute to the landscape with a contrasting quality. They are based on mainly historic and disused transport corridors. Principally they follow the disused railway lines, with the exception being the Grand Union Canal. The alignments of these routes historically provided connection across parts of the district linking the communities. These railway lines once served the villages along the route, and since closure, considerable lengths have been left to naturalise.

Because of the engineered characteristics and ingredients of the railway alignments their presence has remained in the landscape. There has been limited intervention within these railway corridors due to the engineering formation and the topographical adjustments built to achieve the gradients and structures for the railway.

The resulting naturalisation process has allowed trees together with understory planting to colonise and establish along these routes. The vegetation that has established along these disused railway routes has created a series of distinct green corridors which thread across the landscape providing identifiable corridors in the landscape. These are now providing a positive visual contribution to the local and wider landscape.

Additionally there is a major benefit for wildlife with these green corridors as they provide a continuity of movement corridors which together with the blend of earthworks and remnants of structures has provided wildlife with the opportunity for a wide range of diverse habitats.

The Grand Union Canal corridor provides similar characteristics to the disused railway lines with strong tree and hedgerow planting to the canal corridor edges. Wildlife benefits from the long distance connectivity and there is also historic association and interest along its route. A conservation plan for the Grand Union Canal was created in 2014.

Within these corridors there are various artefacts and structures which remain from the days of the railway use. These provide an interesting association with the past and could offer a basis for local interest and community history. The disused Grand Central Railway offers a very significant number of landscape elements and historic qualities in particularly as it was at one time a significant National main line.

The Grand Union Canal already provides a recreation function and enjoyment and there exists the prospect and opportunity to explore the recreational potential of these corridor routes as they offer the possible connection routes between communities and circular routes.

The Significant Green Corridors are identified as follows:

1. The Grand Central Railway - Brackley to Woodford Halse.
2. Branch Line - Towcester to Woodford Halse.
5. Branch Line - Banbury to Woodford Halse.
7. Grand Union Canal.

These Significant Green Corridors are indicated on drawing QD69_100_03_Strategic Significant Corridors.
7.0 **Recommendations**

7.1 **Special Landscape Areas (SLA)**

It is recommended that the proposed 6 areas which the study has been identified as meeting the criteria for Special Landscape Areas designation are confirmed.

The location and definition of the areas are indicated on drawing QD69_100_02_Special Landscape Areas. SNC is drawn to the appendix I and the longer term implication and effects on the landscape qualities.

**Special Landscape Areas**

1. Yardley Chase & Castle Ashby + Extension
2. Tove Valley + Extension
3. Whittlewood Forest & Hazelborough Forest + Extension
4. Hemplow Hills, Cottesbrooke & Brington Extension
5. Catesby, Fawsley, Maidford & Litchborough + Extension
6. Aynho, Cherwell Valley & Eydon + Extension
7. Sulgrave and Grand Central Railway

7.2 **Significant Green Corridors**

The Significant Green Corridors are identified as follows:

8. The Grand Central Railway - Brackley to Woodford Halse.

These Significant Green Corridors are indicated on drawing QD69_100_03_Strategic Significant Corridors.

It is considered important that there are safeguards to maintain the continuity and identity of these historic corridors and their place within the history of South Northamptonshire and to ensure they continue to contribute to the wider visual quality of the landscape of South Northamptonshire whilst providing a significant wildlife environment and habitat together with potential recreational opportunity.
8.0 Appendices

Appendix 1

Future impacts and awareness on the Landscape qualities of South Northamptonshire Council administrative area.

The landscape character of any area is fragile and can be affected by a variety of factors.

During the site assessments for this study it is becoming noticeable that some landscape qualities within the SLA’s are beginning to be affected by the changes to the landscape components within those landscapes.

These elements are the factors that contribute or detract from the landscape composition and quality. They are varied and can include agricultural techniques and operation of scale, changes to highways and infrastructure, new built form (domestic and agricultural), energy generation, trees and hedgerows.

A significant element of most landscapes is the population of native trees and hedgerows which provide visual presence, stature and composition of spaces which create landscape quality and character.

It is now noted that in some of the areas of SNC landscape there is a high percentage of quality trees that have reached maturity or are over mature. These trees are beginning to decline and become very prone to storm damage and failure. These trees will then be lost to the landscape.

Particularly within SLA’s 5+6 the decline of mature individual and hedgerow trees is now becoming apparent in certain locations and this will progressively change the landscape quality, composition and experience.

Most landscapes do not change over night but change slowly and progressively over time. Therefore it is important to be aware of landscape change and ensure that the key components are renewed in order to maintain that landscape quality rather than just assume it will always be there.

It is suggested that SNC establish a review/policy framework that assists with the renewal of rural and landscape elements to ensure the long term landscape qualities that are such an inherent part of South Northamptonshire character, identity and quality of environment.

Review Items.

Hedgerow retention
Planting of native hedgerow trees
Planting of woodland groups
Position and setting of buildings
Landscape mitigation and scale.