

Melton Draft Local Plan

Representation: Areas of Separation, Fringe Sensitivity and Local Green Space Study Omissions -Somerby West (LCZ1) and Somerby South (LCZ4)

1.0 Summary:

1.1 The Fringe Sensitivity Study assessment for Somerby West (LCZ1) and Somerby South (LCZ4) contains notable omissions with regard to NPPF Section 11, Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, paragraph 170 (Proportionate Evidence Base), which states 'Where appropriate landscape character assessments should also be prepared integrated with assessment of historic landscape character, and for areas where there are major expansion options assessment of landscape sensitivity'.

1.2 The Study fails to integrate a complete and robust Historic Landscape Character analysis for LCZ1/4 and to include and assess the sensitivity of prominent natural landscape, historic landscape and landmark features associated with the Somerby Grove, the Conservation Area, its setting and other landmarks.

1.3 The assessment for LCZ1/4 is inconsistent, in scope and conclusion, with that done for Somerby North (LCZ2). Here, relict historic landscape features of Somerby Hall were integrated and LCZ2 was assessed as of High-Medium sensitivity to the type of change being assessed for residential development, with development described as 'at odds with the intact historic parkland landscape' and 'best avoided'.

1.4 The Study for LCZ1/4 omits to describe and assess significant variations in landscape at the south part of LCZ1, which includes the 'reasonable option' Site MBC/048/13 adjacent to the Burrough Road, and weights the assessment disproportionately by the character of the bordering intensively farmed agricultural landscape and a poor settlement interface without regard to clear, intact historic landscapes.

1.5 Landscape Value has not been described or assessed for scenic quality, rare features, historic features or particular character in the south part of LCZ1.

1.6 The conclusions of the Fringe Sensitivity study for LCZ1/4 should be revised and a high degree of sensitivity to development recognized for the south part which includes Site MBC/048/13 and as 'at odds' and 'best avoided' as in LCZ2.

Sections 2.0, 3.0 and 4.0 below describe and assess the landscape features located in the south of LCZ1 and LCZ4 with regard to the Landscape Sensitivity Definitions (Table 3.3), and the Landscape Assessment criteria, Level 1 and 2 (Table 3.2).

2.0 Settlement and settlement edge character, mitigation and enhancement potential (including landscape function in relation to gateways, nodes, edge integration/relationship, landmarks, etc.)

2.1 The landscape at the south part of LCZ1 (including Site MBC/048/13, Somerby Grove and Conservation Area) is distinct from the mid-20th century/late agricultural landscape to its north and west in terms of time-depth, clear boundaries, cultural patterns, intricacy of landscape features and lack of settlement erosion. This area forms an important part of the local and Borough historic environment.



Somerby Grove adjacent to MBC /048/13 (Site)

2.2 Within LCZ1 and represented by Site MBC/048/13 there is an extensive and intact settlement and landscape character interface which persists unchanged for well over a century and a half and detailed in historic maps. The landscape character interface with the agricultural land to the north is formed by relatively small scale, historically intact field patterns with clear boundaries adjacent to a 'manor house', service buildings, walls, and designed features including related parkland with classic parkland trees and plantations with veteran trees.

The Level 1 criteria of the study states that the integrity of an intact and persisting settlement and landscape character interface would be highly vulnerable to change from residential development. The LCZ1 analysis does not describe nor assess these interface features.



Part of the intact interface adjacent to arable fields



Intact interface with Somerby Grove parkland

2.3 Somerby is a clearly defined linear settlement, outward looking, with a dispersed and porous form, where the few gaps are particularly important to settlement character. At the north end of LCZ1 along one side of the Burrough Road there has been modern development which is described as partially eroding. However that modern development ends before The Field lane and in its largest part is not adjacent to nor facing the south part of LCZ1, the Site forming a gap between it and the Conservation Area of the village.



Burrough Road housing from the footpath

2.4 The gap/open space at the south part of LCZ1 (Site), historically and currently functions as a key/positive approach and gateway to what is now the Conservation zone of the settlement and was the Grove Close/Town End Close detailed in conveyances. The Level 1 criteria states a 'close' is an important node, similar to a village green and is highly sensitive to development.



Gateway/Close - Conservation village entrance from Site

2.5 The gateway at the Site has high intervisibility with distinctive features of the natural and historic landscape and landmarks including the Grove Conservation Area and setting, the Water Tower and Grove stable complex - all with Group Value - and from the footpath off the Burrough Road, intervisibility with Somerby Grade I Church. Excepting a street light there is little erosion visible.



Intervisibility at Gateway including Somerby Grade 1 Church

3.0 Topography and Skylines

3.1 The Fringe assessment states that the open character of LCZ1 is extremely susceptible to change to skylines but overall states that LCZ1 is 'of low susceptibility to change due to the relative absence of distinctive landscape features'. The study omits to describe and assess the distinctive natural and historic landscape features at the south of LCZ1, an omission with regard to Site, which is topographically integrated with the historic landscape of the Grove Conservation Area and its setting. Disproportionate weight is given to the intensively farmed agricultural fields in relation to Landscape Value and Historic Landscape Characterisation.



Integrated topography of the Site/CA

4.0 Landscape scale and pattern including cultural pattern

4.1 There is a strong sense of intact cultural and historic patterns in the south part of LCZ1 (and in LCZ4) compared to the remaining area of LCZ1. The south part was managed as the Grove estate for several centuries which has created a unified landscape with a distinct identity which makes a strong contribution to landscape character at the local level and would be highly susceptible to change.

4.2 Due to the openness of LCZ1, the smaller scale landscape pattern of the Grove, including the gateway, settlement interface, tree plantations, designed groves, parkland and gardens is highly visible and creates a distinct natural and historic landscape within LCZ1 which would be highly susceptible to change associated with residential development and should be assessed as similar to intact historic landscape in LCZ2.



Somerby Grove and parkland from Burrough Rd arable field

4.3 The Site is historically and functionally part of the Grove estate and documented historic land use includes equestrian use (training/grazing), gardens/allotments, social and recreational use, not agriculture, and which remains relatively unchanged.



Somerby Grove including Site pre 1912

5.0 Views, visual character and intervisibility

5.1 The expansive openness of LCZ1 and views from LCZ4 into the Conservation area and setting, provide significant views - in, out and within Somerby Grove - a highly distinct landscape character area, with high Landscape Value in terms of scenic qualities, and rare and historic qualities which have not been described or considered by the Fringe assessment.

5.2 The view from the Burrough Road and the footpath a next to the Site towards the Conservation zone preserves the spatial relationship of the village, an end of village historic estate landscape and the open countryside and is particularly susceptible to change.

5.3 Intervisibility exists at this location amongst the following: the gateway, the Conservation Area and historic landscape setting of the Grove, the Water Tower and stable complex and Somerby Grade I church from the footpath with the Site to the right.



Intervisibility from footpath

Mary Anne Donovan

