



Landscape Character Description

This character area is distinctive due to the heavy influence of active and former quarrying. Active quarries at Bardon Hill and New Cliffe Hill occupy a large area of land in this part of Charnwood Forest. Whitwick Quarry and Old Cliffe Hill Quarry are substantial dormant quarries.

Views of this landscape are interrupted and complex containing many elements. In addition to quarries, these include large industrial developments, remnants of former workings such as man-made pools, vertical or unnatural landform and rock faces, scattered farms and farmland, major roads, overhead power lines, railway, woodland, settlement and urban fringes.

The landform is generally undulating and occasionally rugged with some rocky outcrops throughout the character area. Hills with steep slopes such as Billa Barra, Bardon Hill and Ratchet Hill are present. Variations in landform are notable where quarries currently exist or have previously been worked. A long uniform ridgeline created south of Old Cliffe Hill Quarry seems smooth and unnatural within the surrounding landscape. Bare ground is present around the perimeters of quarries where land is in transition or under restoration but is a temporary feature.

Billa Barra Hill is an area of raised ground and a local landmark north east of New Cliffe Hill Quarry. The hill is covered by rough grassland, gorse, hedges and woodland. The hillside is used by walkers for informal recreation.

Long distance, open views are available from the top of Billa Barra Hill and Bardon Hill. Short to medium distance views to the east and southeast are possible. Rising landform and woodland obscures views of the M1 and beyond in this direction.

There are a small number of public footpaths and bridleways throughout the character area, including a section of the Leicestershire Round through Stanton-under-Bardon. Active quarries must be secured by law for safety reasons, however, there is often public access to restored landforms such as around New Cliffe Hill Quarry and Whitwick, Bardon Quarries.

Busy roads are prominent features of this character area. The M1 motorway and junction 22 are close to

the eastern boundary of the character area. The A511 connects to the motorway and runs approximately west-east between Coalville and Leicester.

Woodland and Tree Cover

Woodland blocks of mixed age structure are a feature of this character area. Trees generally form a substantial part of many views. Dense woodland planting is used to screen some views of quarry workings. Developing mixed woodland is present where land has been restored post quarrying and various areas have received new planting since the formation of the National Forest Company.

Hedgerows form typical field boundaries throughout the character area. Some are in good condition others are fragmenting. Hedgerow trees are frequent; the most commonly occurring species are oak and ash. Timber fencing is used to enclose fields in some areas, such as around horse grazing paddocks and close to farm buildings. Dry stone walls are also a common feature along roadsides and marking field boundaries.

A mature avenue of trees along the lane to Bardon Hall is a localised feature within the landscape.

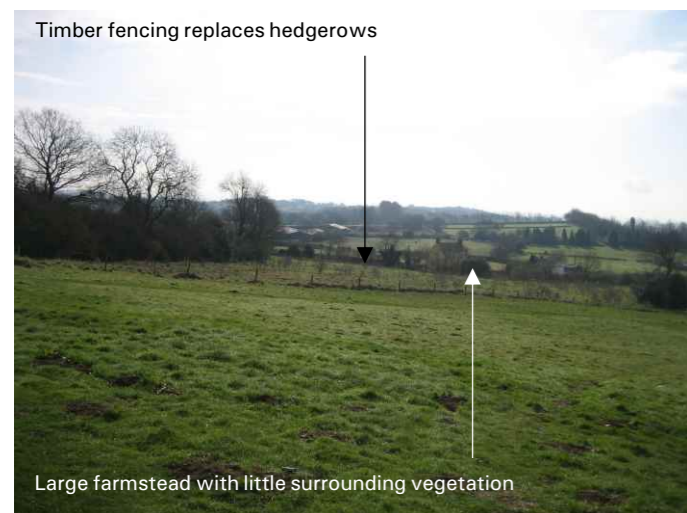
Built Form in the Landscape

Settlements associated with extraction industries such as Whitwick, Stanton-under-Bardon and parts of Thringstone fall within this character area. Settlements are generally on lower ground and are linear in form, following the route of main roads and/or junctions. At Agar Nook and Greenhill development has expanded considerably although is not prominent within the landscape due to extensive mature woodland around Bardon Quarry.

The urban area of Coalville borders the character area to the west and comprises modern housing and a large area of prominent industry and warehousing. Farms are scattered throughout the character area.

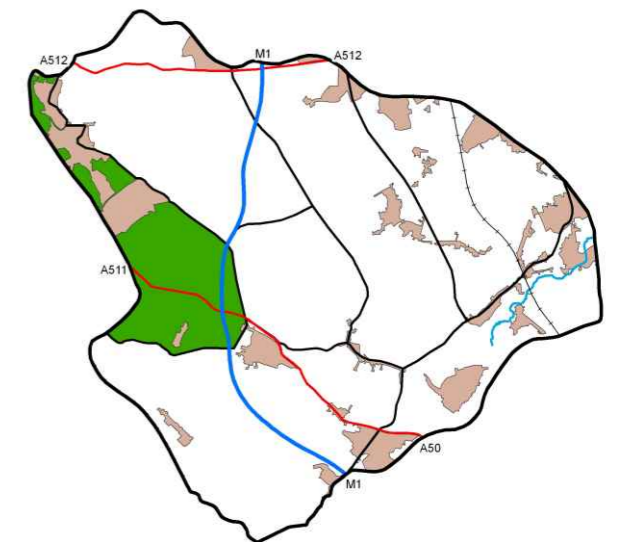
Large scale structures, buildings and machinery at some quarries are visible above surrounding mature woodland.

Building materials are mixed. Modern cladding materials cover the roofs and walls of industrial buildings which are visually prominent. Houses are typically red brick, although some granite and render are also present. Roofs tend to be slate or a dark grey tiles.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Urban fringe landscape heavily influenced by quarrying
- Unnatural landform of restored previously quarried land
- Bare ground, man-made pools and large areas of new planting on restored land
- Exposed rock faces and some rocky outcrops
- Mixed farmland with lots of horse grazing
- Rough grassland, gorse and coniferous woodland on high ground
- Long distance views of urban fringes and industry from high ground
- Large settlements border the character area



Ongoing Pressures Likely to Effect Change

Expansion and retraction of quarrying. Extensions to existing quarries or opening up new areas for extraction of stone and aggregate would result in significant effects on the landscape. Sufficient permitted reserves exist to meet expected demand through to 2021 but extensions to existing quarries may be required for operational reasons. Retraction and closure of exhausted quarries could provide opportunities for positive restoration and could expand areas of recreation land.

Improvements to infrastructure, such as road widening may have a localised influence. Further industrial development or expansion of the existing industrial development would increase urban influences.

The RSS highlights Coalville as a potential housing growth point. Changes may expand the fringes of the town to merge with areas such as Greenhill and Agar Nook. The fringes of Thringstone and Whitwick have merged, further expansion of Coalville's north eastern fringes could join the settlements at the edge of Charnwood Forest.

Green Infrastructure

Accessibility is limited at present but there is great potential for future improvements through restoration of quarried landscapes to public open spaces. Billa Barra Hill is a locally accessibly area of open space.

The Leicestershire Round long distance footpath follows a course approximately northwards through the character area from Stanton under Bardon to Agar Nook and provides links to the network of local public footpaths. This network provides access from the fringes of Coalville to informal recreation areas and woodlands. The expansion of Coalville offers opportunity to create new and to improve existing GI links to these areas.

Ability of the Landscape to Accommodate Change

LANDSCAPE STRENGTH

The strength of character is considered to be **weak**. Features and elements are associated primarily with urban fringe land uses and the quarrying industry and are not positive features of the natural landscape. Where natural features exist such as woodlands, they are relatively young plantations with a regular layout and are planted to cover man-made landform.

LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Much of the area is already impinged upon by urban expansion or extraction industries which has resulted in a discordant landscape of **low** quality and condition.

Landscape Condition	Good	MODERATE <i>Enhance</i>	MODERATE - GOOD <i>Conserve and Enhance</i>	GOOD <i>Conserve</i>
	Moderate	POOR - MODERATE <i>Enhance and Restore</i>	MODERATE <i>Enhance</i>	MODERATE - GOOD <i>Conserve and Enhance</i>
	Poor	POOR <i>Restore/Create</i>	POOR - MODERATE <i>Enhance and Restore</i>	MODERATE <i>Enhance</i>
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

The recommended landscape management strategy is **restore** and **create**. Emphasis should be on restoring and creating landscape features to reduce urban influences and improve landscape quality.

Recommendations

- Restore and create new publicly accessible woodlands and outdoor spaces where quarrying ceases.
- Create new woodland along roadsides and industry fringes to reduce their visual prominence within the landscape.
- Protect the few distinctive features within the area such as the tree-lined avenue to Bardon Hill and existing mature woodland.
- Protect the existing long distance views from Billa Barra Hill through appropriate management of woodland vegetation on the summit.
- Restore hedgerows where they have become fragmented and encourage farmers to use hedgerows rather than timber fencing to demarcate field boundaries.
- Restore quarried land adjoining Billa Barra Hill to create new public open spaces and new recreational footpaths, cycleways and bridleways linking to surrounding areas and the wider footpath network.

