



Clock Tower



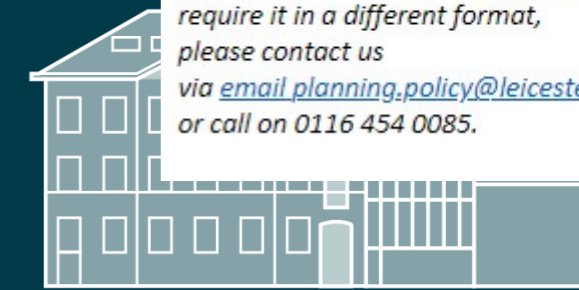
Leicester Corn Exchange



Leicester Cathedral

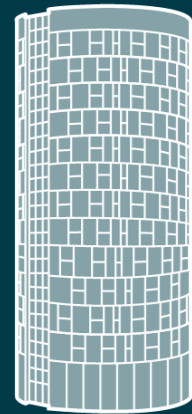


St Mark's Church



Friars Mill

The information in this document has been used to support the preparation of the Local Plan. If you need assistance reading this document, or require it in a different format, please contact us via [email planning.policy@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@leicester.gov.uk) or call on 0116 454 0085.



The Summit



New Walk Museum



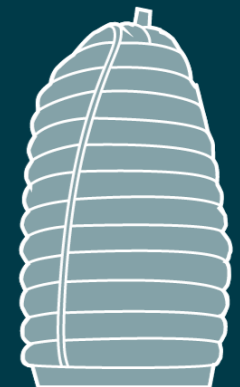
Abbey Pumping Station



St Margaret's Church



St Nicholas Church



National Space Centre

Tall Development in Leicester



Engineering Building



Jain Centre



Curve



The Guildhall

Evidence Base Document

November 2022

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1. Introduction

1.1 Scope of the Study

Cities and skylines evolve. In the right place, tall development can make positive contributions to the townscape and life within a city. They can be excellent works of architecture.

Individually, or in groups, they affect the image and identity of a city. In the right place they can assist with regeneration and stimulate further investment. However, by virtue of their size and prominence, such buildings can also harm the qualities that people value about a place. They can be located and designed with a lack of appreciation or understanding of the context in which they sit. They can also be poorly designed, detailed and maintained.

Despite its unique and rich historic and heritage background, Leicester is familiar with tall buildings and tall development. The increased demand for land supply, together with new housing needs and targets, especially within the Central Development Area (CDA) of Leicester, have resulted in tall development proposals that stimulate debate in the city. Furthermore, the Council is reviewing its Local Plan. As part of this process, the Council would like to review and update its current policy regarding tall development. This document is intended to outline the evidence base for the Tall Development Policy DQP02 and Chapter 9 Central Development Area in the Draft Local Plan. The document details the research, observations and conclusions which have informed the LCC's position on tall development within the city.

It is important that this document is read alongside;

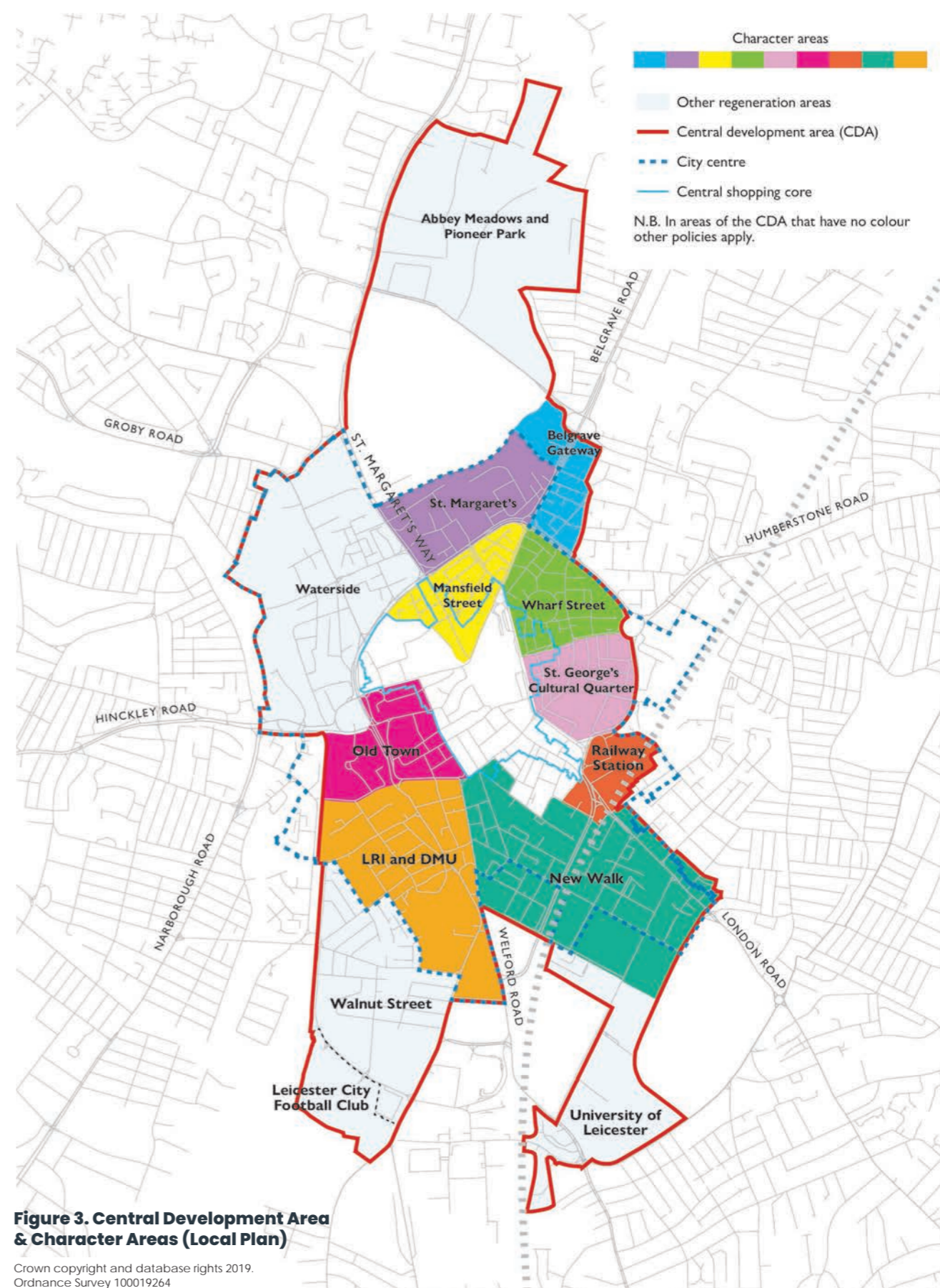
- Townscape Analysis and Design Guidance Evidence Documents for each Character Area (9 documents in total), and
- Draft Local Plan, in particular Chapter 9 (Central Development Area) and Chapter 8 (Delivering Quality Places, including the Tall Development Policy).

The Tall Development evidence base study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of tall development in relation to Leicester. It is intended to identify areas in the city where tall development could be harmful to Leicester's identity and places that are most valued. At the same time, the study recognises the positive contribution of tall development; identifying potential areas within which to be accommodated. The height and location of future development can be optimised to bring regeneration and economic growth, while appropriately responding to the city's image and heritage.

The evidence presented is primarily an urban design/ townscape study which is a major consideration given the impact and prominence that tall development, whether positive or negative, can have on the character, image and identity of a place. This document will refer to 'tall development' rather than 'tall buildings'. This is because tall buildings are often associated with elegant, well-proportioned tall structures and pieces of architecture. On the contrary, tall development can also have significant scale and mass i.e. it is both tall and wide, and therefore does not necessarily reflect the aforementioned view of the .

This evidence document has been updated to address comments received during the Regulation 18 consultation on the Draft Local Plan. In particular, a new chapter has been added for the CDA 'fringe' and Regeneration Areas to widen the scope of the area of study.

1.2 Context & Study Area



The regeneration of Leicester is a key theme of Leicester's development plan. Thus, areas have been identified which have distinctive and different characters and context, identity, opportunities, potential and challenges and therefore different development objectives. These areas will also make a very important contribution to addressing the city's future housing needs.

Much of the needed development activity, to enable the economy's restructuring, will occur in the area within and around the city centre (the CDA - see figure 3). At the same time the area at the outskirts of the CDA will need to be assessed, examining opportunities and potential for future housing accommodation and further development. Leicester's future economic prosperity will depend on making sure that it has the right appeal to a skilled and mobile workforce as well as being an attractive place to live and work. The quality of life, environment, housing, jobs and the cultural, leisure and retail offer of the city and central area in particular, will play a major role in this. The CDA and even its immediate, surrounding area will enable LCC to direct, optimise and encourage investment, whilst managing development appropriately within a local context, so that high quality development is delivered, which in turn creates certainty and developer confidence.

The focus of this study will be the CDA and its fringe/ outskirts. The following map (figure 5) illustrates the overall study area, which is divided into 9 Character Areas, 5 Regeneration Areas and the CDA's Fringe, recognising the individual context of each particular area, while establishing the upcoming policy upon local distinctiveness.

Nine (9) Character Areas

1. Railway Station
2. Mansfield Street
3. St. Margaret's
4. Wharf Street
5. Belgrave Gateway
6. LRI and DMU
7. St. Georges Cultural Quarter
8. Old Town
9. New Walk

Five (5) Other Regeneration Areas

1. Abbey Meadows and Pioneer Park
2. Waterside
3. Leicester City Football Club
4. University of Leicester
5. Walnut Street Area

CDA's Fringe

In understanding and defining urban areas and their activities, the term "rural-urban fringe" is commonly met. It designates the landscape interface between town and country. Otherwise known as the "outskirts", it refers to the transition zone between urban and rural areas, heavily characterised by the mix or clash of the different uses (rural and urban). The fringe area can be also understood as a landscape typology of its own right, created from the interaction of urban and rural land uses.

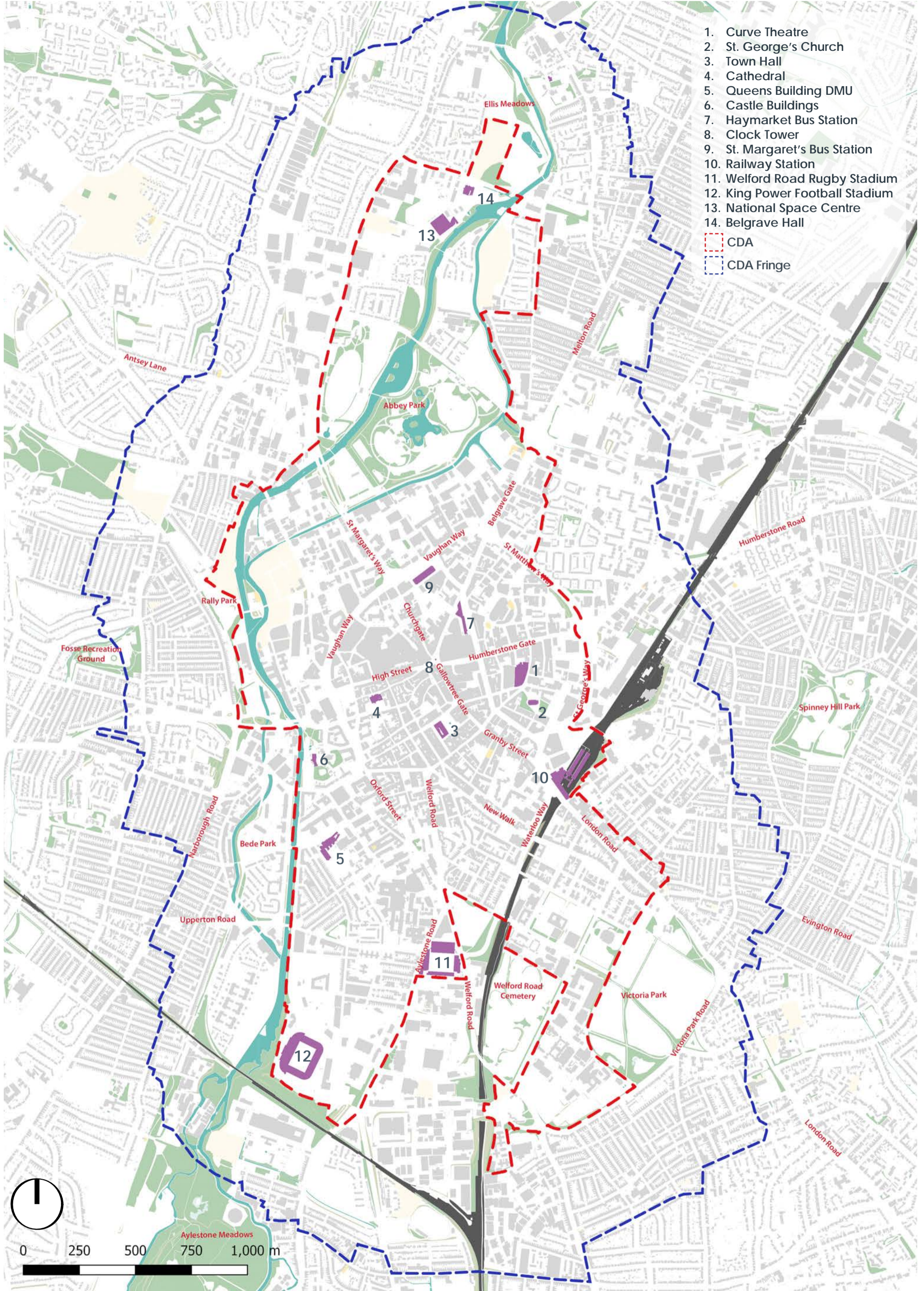
Subsequently, using the analogy of the rural-urban fringe, the CDA fringe refers to the transition zone between the CDA, an area characterised by a mix of uses and development opportunities, and the predominantly residential neighbourhoods that compose the rest of the city of Leicester. Due to the changing development landscape and the new housing needs, LCC explores the potential, through adequate evidence, of tall development within the CDA fringe. The fringe area is a zone of 500m width from the immediate surroundings of the CDA (CDA boundary), where a mixture of city centre uses meet residential space (see figure 5).

It is the Council's view and experience that proposals for tall development are most likely to be received within the aforementioned areas, a result of expected significant change and growth. Well-located and well-designed tall development could contribute to the character and identity of those areas.



Figure 4. The Summit

Figure 5. Leicester & Fringe Context



1.3 Report Structure

The present report is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Defines the scope of the study, illustrating and explaining the study area and greater context through which the present report should be read. Furthermore, Chapter 1 presents the document's structure and the methodology that shapes the study.

Chapter 2 – Tall Strategy Development

Discusses the national and local policies that are relevant to the study, while providing the reader with the adequate, high-level narrative and theoretical framework that explain and characterise tall development and describe its role, need and impact. This chapter concludes setting up Leicester's current landscape with regards to tall development.

Chapter 3 – Character Areas: Issues & Opportunities

Sets out a detailed analysis of the elements that will influence, impact and later define tall development potential within the Character Areas.

Chapter 4 – Regeneration Areas & CDA Fringe: Issues & Opportunities

Sets out a detailed analysis of the elements that will influence, impact and later define tall development potential within the Regeneration Areas and the CDA Fringe.

Chapter 5 – Policy Position

Presents the evaluation of the overall analysis, defining both areas offering potential for tall development and areas where potential tall development will have a negative impact to the townscape and existing built and unbuilt environment. Also, defines 'tall' in the Leicester context.

Chapter 6 – Future Considerations / Tall Development SPD

Provides considerations to be taken on board when tall development is proposed and the basis of a future Tall Development SPD.

Appendices

Further information is given with regards to historic and heritage context, the examined views, and the calculation of the ambient height.

1.4 Methodology

This study follows a proactive planning approach, composed of:

- A robust policy review, covering the national and local planning policy context.
- A framework, providing a high-level, yet comprehensive, theoretical understanding of tall development, establishing crucial tall development objectives and principles and exploring the potential influence and impact tall development can have on a place's identity, character and future growth.
- A detailed overview of existing tall development in Leicester, exploring and assessing its characteristics and elements.
- A comprehensive understanding of the elements that shape the Character Areas, the Regeneration Areas and the CDA Fringe, together with the relevant physical and planning imperatives and development pressures. A detailed mapping of topographical data, transport links, land uses, and existing building heights has been undertaken, together with the presentation of listed buildings, conservation area designations, local views, landmarks and heritage and blue and green infrastructure assets.
- Identification of sensitive areas to tall buildings, such as designated heritage assets and their setting, conservation areas, local and skyline views and distinctive characters and townscapes.
- Exploring and evaluating areas where potentially tall development could be appropriate as part of a place's overall vision and its future growth.
- Identification of areas appropriate for tall development.
- Future considerations that provide clarity on potential tall development proposals.

2. Tall Development Strategy

2.1 Introduction

Tall buildings and tall development, in general, are controversial typologies that divide opinions. Some people are strongly in favour of them, while others are highly sceptical about them. Objectively, tall development can have both beneficial and adverse impacts. This chapter gives an overview of the meaning, importance and impact of tall development, while presenting existing overarching policy documents. Specifically, the current chapter:

- Presents national and local policy guidance, discussing their relevance to tall development and the present study. Covered topics are:
 1. the National Planning Policy Framework,
 2. the National Design Guide,
 3. the National Model Design Code,
 4. the Historic England Tall Building Advice,
 5. the Tall Building SPD adopted LCC (2007)
- Discusses the necessity and role of a tall development strategy and comprehensive approach as a way to coordinate design, minimising potential adverse impacts.
- Provides a comprehensive review of the theoretical foundations, impacts and opportunities for tall development, setting out robust principles that should govern tall development planning and design. Covered topics are:
 1. Tall Development Definition,
 2. Landmark Buildings & Landmark Development,
 3. Clusters of Tall Buildings,
 4. Townscape Character, and
 5. Heritage & Visual Impact.
- Examines and assesses the current situation of tall development within the context of Leicester.

2.2 Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

The revised NPPF February 2019 in paragraphs 126 – 129 under Section 12. Achieving Well-designed Places, states the importance of plans creating a clear design vision and expectations, at an early stage, tailored to the context and an area's defining characteristics. This will support the creation of high-quality buildings and spaces and give applicants some certainty on what is likely to be acceptable.

To support the Local Plan policies, further clarification will be outlined within appropriate Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that are to follow (post adoption of the Local Plan). The future Tall Development SPD for Leicester, in combination with the nine Townscape Analysis and Design Guides for each Character Area will be part of a 'Quality Design Framework' for Leicester to provide further clarification and expand upon on aspects of design policies within the Local Plan.

It should also be noted that NPPF policies apply to tall development just as much as any other development in the requirement to create well-designed places.

NPPF paragraph 130 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- will function well and add to the quality of the overall area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development,
- are visually attractive because of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping,
- are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities),
- establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming, and distinctive places to live, work and visit,

- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public spaces) and support local facilities and transport networks, and
- create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

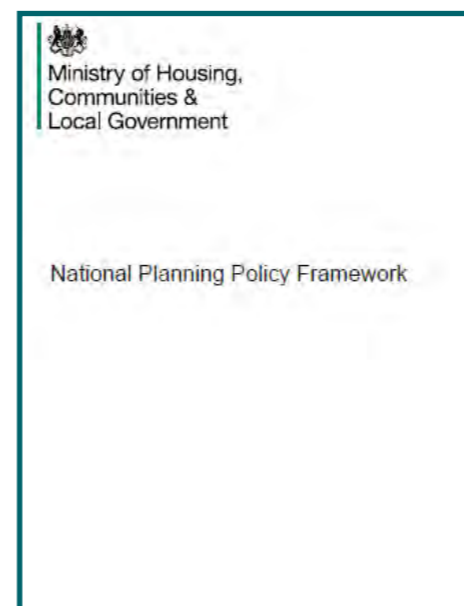


Figure 6. NPPF Cover, MHCLG 2021

12. Achieving Well-Designed Places

126. The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

127. Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local planning authorities and developers.

128. To provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, which reflect local character and design preferences. Design Guides and codes provide a local framework for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a high level of design. Their geographic coverage, level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances and scale of change in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety.

NPPF Extract (July 2021): Paragraphs 126- 128

National Design Guide

Further, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) published the National Design Guide in October 2019 which expands upon the NPPF and seeks to clarify what the Government considers to be 'well-designed places.'

The National Design Guide recognises that well-designed places have individual characteristics which work together to create an identity, sense of place and community. The guide outlines 10 characteristics of a well-designed place that all contribute towards the cross-cutting themes for good design set out in the NPPF. They are:

- Context – enhancing the surroundings
- Identity – attractive and distinctive
- Built Form – a coherent pattern of development
- Movement – accessible and easy to move around
- Nature – enhanced and optimised
- Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive
- Uses – mixed and integrated
- Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable
- Resources – efficient and resilient
- Lifespan – made to last

The National Design Guide also states in paragraph 70 that; 'proposals for tall buildings (and other buildings with a significantly larger scale or bulk than their surroundings) require special consideration. This includes their location and siting; relationship to context; impact on local character, views and sight lines; composition - how they meet the ground and sky; and environmental impacts such as sunlight, daylight, overshadowing and wind'.

Proposals should be assessed in terms of both the contribution and any adverse impacts they will bring. Proposals for tall development should be considered as pieces of architecture in their own right, and as pieces of urban design sitting within a wider context; and in this respect they should be assessed in the same way as any other scheme, and against the most demanding standards of quality. However, given their prominence and design it is important to further expand on the general National and local policy context and be more explicit on the criteria for evaluating tall development proposals. Outlining these criteria will be a further objective of a Tall Development SPD for Leicester.



Figure 7. Extract from National Design Guide, MHCLG 2019

National Model Design Code

The National Model Design Guide was published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) in 2021 and expands on the ten characteristics set out in the National Design Guide, providing further detailed guidance on how local authorities should regulate upcoming development through the design codes production. Aligned with the NPPF the National Model Design Code states the importance of reflecting local character and townscape, while providing the appropriate framework for high-quality places creation.

In Part 1 of the National Model Design Code it is stated that "the existing built-up area to be covered by the code needs to be identified as an area type or a mixture of area types". Through that area identification some of the potential types to be identified are "high rise city" areas, "town/ city centre" areas, "industrial" areas, "local centre" areas, "urban neighbourhood" areas etc. Thus, the identification of appropriate areas for tall development is in alignment with the overarching planning framework, taking into account all peculiarities and specificities of each place, where appropriate development is identified in keeping with the existing local character and the future growth aspirations.

Furthermore, within part 2 of the National Model Design Code the following are stated:

"113. Building heights influence the quality of a place in terms of its identity and the environment for occupiers and users. Consistent building heights, or variation within a relatively narrow range, can help to make an area type feel coherent. Large variations in height can make an area feel dynamic."

"114. The identity of an area type may be influenced by building heights, including its overall scale, its skyline, key views and vistas and the relative prominence of landmark buildings. Building height may also have an impact on local environmental conditions in neighbouring properties, amenity spaces and public spaces in terms of daylight, sunlight, overshadowing, wind and micro-climate. The placing of tall buildings needs to maximise user comfort of spaces between buildings by taking into account their impact on orientation and overshadowing of public and private spaces, quality of external spaces at ground level, wind tunnel effect, noise pollution and enable safe dispersion of pollutants."

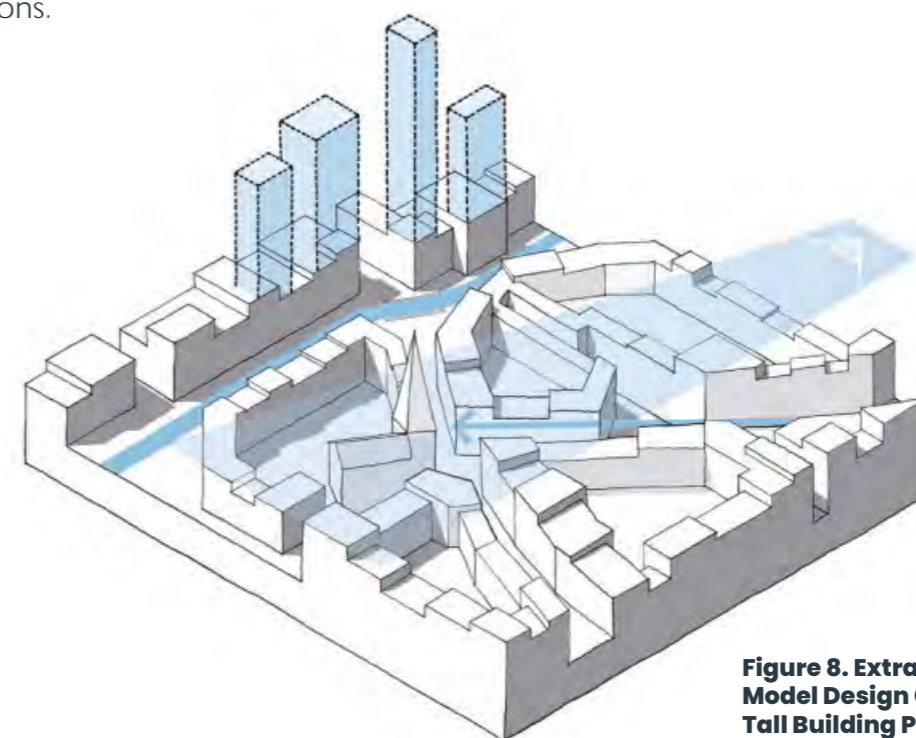


Figure 8. Extract from National Model Design Code, MHCLG 2021: Tall Building Principles

Historic England – Tall Building Advice

In March 2022 Historic England published a revised Advice Note (HEAN4) providing advice on planning for tall buildings within the historic environment. This note supersedes 'Historic England Advice Note 4: Tall Buildings, first edition (2015) to recognise changes to national planning policy and guidance. Advice Note 4 focuses on the impact of tall development on heritage assets, providing several guidelines for its the design and location.

The document does not oppose tall development, but rather states that tall buildings can be excellent works of architecture with a positive contribution to urban areas. However, Advice Note 4 draws attention to the fact that measures to control the location and design of tall development must be embedded in local planning documents to safeguard the tall development's success. A plan-led and specific to each area approach should be created identifying the location and steering the design of tall development, while including a tall development local definition that is appropriate to its specific context.

Local Plans will be expected to:

- identify the role and contribution of tall development as part of place's overall vision,
- ensure that the setting of heritage assets is protected from any potential tall development negative impact,
- identify areas that are appropriate for tall development, equally areas where the potential impacts upon the historic environment will be difficult to overcome.
- express design requirements for tall development,
- encourage a mix of uses that are required in the local area,
- ensure early and effective engagement is undertaken,
- reduce inappropriate applications for tall development in the wrong places,
- ensure that tall development applications fully consider the impacts on local people,

- identify sites where removal of existing tall development may enhance the environment; and
- identify whether tall development is the most appropriate way to deliver high densities or whether another solution is more appropriate.

Advice Note 4 proposes the use of characterisation and building height studies as well as heritage, townscape, and urban design assessments to identify appropriate tall development locations and future policies. It is stated that tall development should have a positive relationship with a place's topography, character, heritage assets, urban grain and streetscape, open spaces and rivers, important views and skylines and height and scale of the surrounding development. Environmental impact and the cumulative, combined impacts on heritage assets from existing, consented and proposed tall buildings should be considered.

The 2022 updated version of Advice Note 4 has placed greater emphasis on the importance of a plan-led approach, acknowledging changing technologies and tools to provide evidence on tall development proposals (e.g. 3D modelling, urban design, townscape analysis and views studies) and the use of case studies to support tall development guidance.

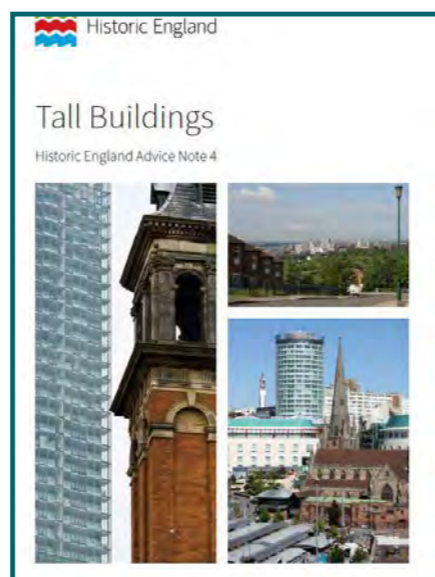


Figure 9. Historic England 2022 Tall Buildings: Advice Note 4 Cover, 2022

Tall Building SPD

The most recent Council policy concerning tall development has been the Tall Buildings SPD which was adopted in 2007. The SPD was mainly focussed on the criteria for achieving high quality tall development. This remains vitally important and will be a necessary area in a revised future SPD. However, it was very generic and did not consider locations where tall development would or would not be appropriate in Leicester by undertaking a detailed urban design analysis of the city.

The Council is of the view that a revised policy for tall development is needed for the following reasons:

- There is a need for a Leicester specific policy.
- To ensure tall developments are properly planned, considering place-making, and informed by a comprehensive long-term vision, rather than in a reactive, piecemeal manner.
- The Council recognises that some tall development can contribute to areas undergoing significant change in the city.
- Leicester receives speculative applications for tall development.
- To build on the adopted Waterside SPD.

The Waterside SPD, which was adopted in August 2015, has been very successful in identifying areas appropriate for tall development and those areas for which it is not appropriate. The Waterside SPD identified appropriate building heights within the Regeneration Area which was intended to 'recalibrate' expectations regarding scale and land values. Planning applications that have been approved after the adoption of the SPD are in general compliance with the building height parameters outlined within the SPD. In addition, the Council is also able to quickly reply to proposals that are not in compliance with the SPD.

Alongside this study the Council has considered future growth and the need for new homes within and outside the CDA over the plan period which will be an important component of Leicester's housing supply.

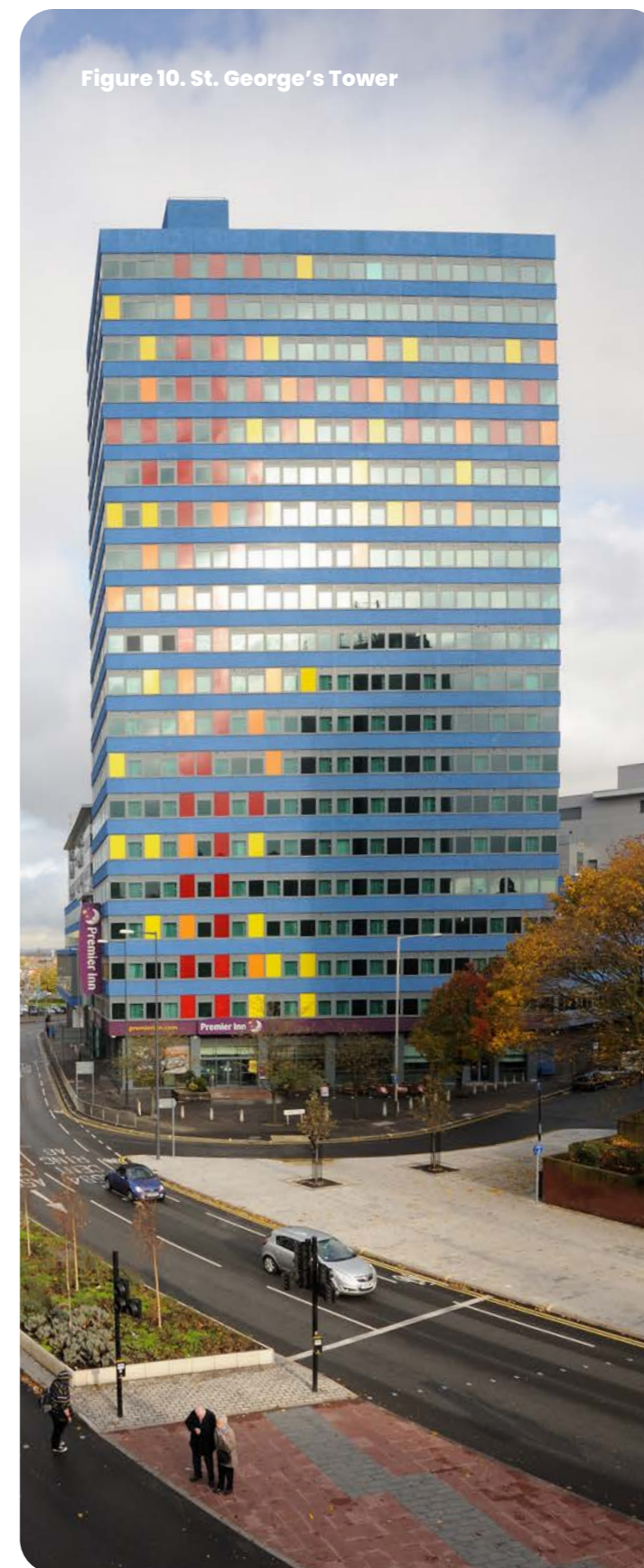


Figure 10. St. George's Tower

2.3 The Necessity & Role of A Tall Development Strategy

Tall development can be detrimental to a place's skyline, townscape, and character, due to its scale, massing, form and height. Appropriate location and high-quality design, when placing tall development, can have a transformative and lasting-positive impact on a place's character and identity. On the other hand, failing to identify the 'right location', together with poor design quality (within the development's characteristics) can make tall development be resented by the community, negatively impacting and detracting from a place's character and identity. Therefore, there is an imperative need to define 'appropriateness' when considering tall development proposals, carefully balancing all beneficial and adverse, potential impacts to their immediate and greater surroundings.

Things to consider are:

- a place's characteristics,
- a place's sensitivities,
- visual impact,
- environmental impact,
- design response to the surrounding streets, spaces and urban fabric,
- wider development objectives,
- wider planning objectives,
- development interest and
- development's deliverability.

The main objectives of a tall development strategy for Leicester will be to:

- consider areas which have some potential for tall development,
- provide the basis for protection of parts of the city along with views and vistas that are deemed to be of value because of their character and the qualities which make Leicester and its areas special,
- ensure proposals for tall development add positively to the townscape and the vision for the city centre,
- promote market confidence through a clear strategy,
- provide Design Guidance and Criteria for Evaluation for consideration in the detailed design of any tall development proposals,
- enable proper consultation at the plan-making stage on key principles,
- reduce the scope for speculative applications in the wrong places, and
- provide a coherent, three-dimensional, urban design/ heritage led policy framework that encourages place-making and within which the suitability of any development proposals can be assessed.

Figure 11. Leicester City Wide View



2.4 Theoretical Framework for Tall Development

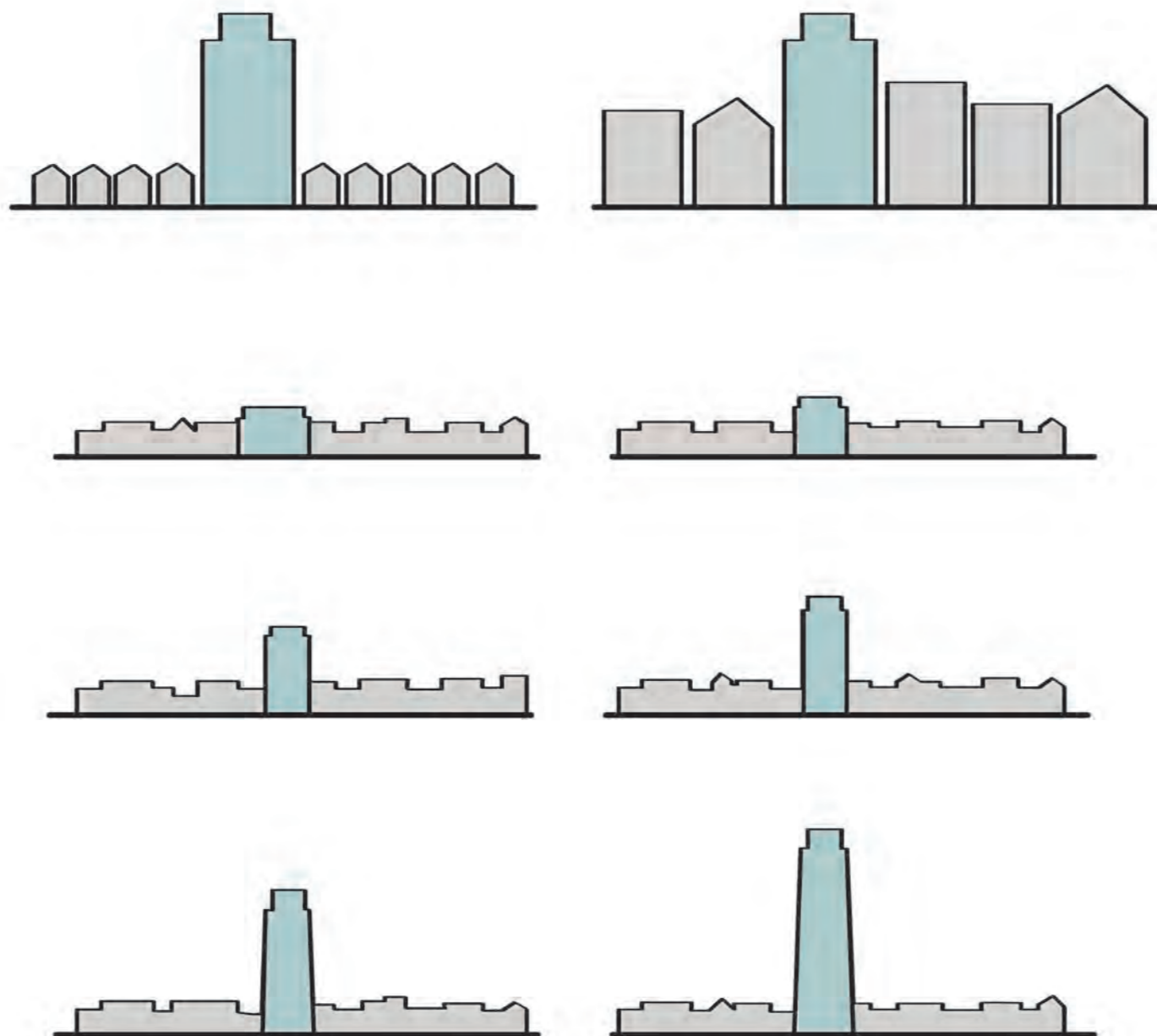
Understanding Tall Development

The term 'tall building' is relative, dependant to its surrounding environment. An eight-storey building might be a tall one within a two-storey suburban area, yet it would be perceived only as a high point in a six-storey, urban context. Thus, all tall development must be considered in relation to its local context.

The taller the development the greater is its presence and impact, both locally and on the skyline. The ratio of the tall development height to the prevailing contextual height / ambient height is a useful indicator of development 'tallness' within its specific context. The prevailing height in an area and the degree of variation or coherence in building height, are important physical attributes that shape the experiential quality, while defining an area's character. These attributes are the contextual references against which the height of tall development is recognised and appreciated within the urban environment. Proactive tall development management will need to ensure that permitted proposals are meaningful and proportionate to their context, reviewing their cumulative impact on the skyline and views, and where appropriate becoming a distinct skyline feature and marking important places of special character.

It is recognised that other contextual factors may also influence how the relationship of a taller building with its context is perceived. These include local topography, existing context height variations, form, scale and roofscape of surrounding buildings, other tall buildings in the vicinity, tall element's location within the street block, structure of the area and from where a tall building can be seen.

Figure 12. Tall Development within Surrounding Context



The previous policy position regards height for a tall building in Leicester is as outlined in the Tall Building SPD (adopted 2007);

- a building over 20m in height,
- a building of any height which is substantially higher than the predominant height of the buildings in the surrounding area; and /or
- a building which would make a significant impact on the skyline of the city.

In reviewing the policy position, it did not seem appropriate to simply repeat the definition of the past. Even if the conclusions were to be the same, an evidence base for this position needed to be understood.

In establishing this definition for Leicester, the Council have considered the following:

- existing building heights,
- ambient or prevailing building heights,
- street sections and streetscape,
- heights of existing and approved tall development and
- existing tall building development theoretical framework.

It should be noted that heights are predominantly expressed in metres throughout the document given the variations that can occur for different uses and their associated storey heights. For example, commercial buildings will have a greater floor to ceiling height than residential buildings as would many historic buildings. In some instances references to storeys are considered helpful and 3m is broadly equivalent to 1 residential storey.

Landmark Buildings & Landmark Development

Landmark buildings or landmark development usually refers to a tall or taller structure/ built element with great visibility and a significant impact on its surroundings. They offer distinctiveness to locations within the urban fabric, contributing to an area's character and making it memorable.

Landmarks with a prominent spatial location and a clear form, contrasting with their background, are more easily identifiable and significant. Potential locations where tall buildings can act as landmarks in the urban fabric and assist legibility and orientation are:

- nodal points,
- arrival and departure points,
- gateway locations at the edge or border of neighbouring urban areas and
- prominent focal points at the end of vistas or important streets, emphasising the importance of a route or destination.

As building height increases tall buildings become visible on the wider city scale, being notable markers on the skyline that affect panoramic views and the urban image.

Historically tall buildings and structures were associated with landmarks that stood out as symbols of public life, dominating the skyline. In the British context, tall buildings have remained a relatively recent phenomenon. Thus, we still associate greater height and prominence with civic importance. However, prominence should be meaningful and proportionate, having a coordinated and strategic approach to tall development. Legible towns or cities are those where the prominence of tall development corresponds to a clear meaning as special places in the urban fabric or as an important function.

Being a 'landmark' and 'enhancing the legibility' are common arguments for taller structures. However, not every tall building or tall development will qualify as a landmark. Further, not every landmark has to be expressed in 'tallness' or height. Therefore, it is important to guide the location and height of tall buildings and tall development with respect to an area's character, function and structure.

Clusters of Tall Buildings

When several tall elements are grouped in a constrained area, such as a town centre or a central business district, a cluster of tall buildings is formed. Tall building clusters can produce significant and distinctive skyline characteristics, being a positive way of combining tall elements that should bring higher density development, activity intensification and a strong sense of urbanity.

Tall building clusters should have a coordinated location/ position and height to be and remain prominent features on the skyline. A tall cluster's identification and further perception within the skyline may be influenced by competition amongst sites for the 'tallest' development. Outside of a cluster, tall buildings might detract from its strength and readability. Clusters can rapidly morph into an uncontrolled sprawl of taller elements if not carefully managed, reducing their impact and uniqueness on the skyline.

The tallest elements should ideally be located at the cluster's centre. The further the distance from the centre, the lower the height of the taller elements. At the same time, they must be near enough to be read as one entity on the skyline. Appropriate spacing and arrangement of tall development will allow the individual built forms in the cluster to be read as one entity on the skyline and avoid a merging of built forms to create an overbearing monolithic impact. The cumulative impact of tall development over time should be considered.

The city's skyline articulation is heavily connected to tall building clusters. A planned or accidental aesthetic arrangement of various developments, structures, topographic and landscape characteristics that together constitute a distinctive spatial composition, such as a waterfront vista, is what this term refers to. A large skyline composition is typically a feature of the city image, highly cherished by its people. Therefore, uncoordinated tall structures can detract from its distinguishing traits.

Heights within a cluster should respond to the relative importance, role and function of the cluster's location within the wider urban settlement. Heights should vary so they contribute to a lively skyline and an aesthetically pleasing form.

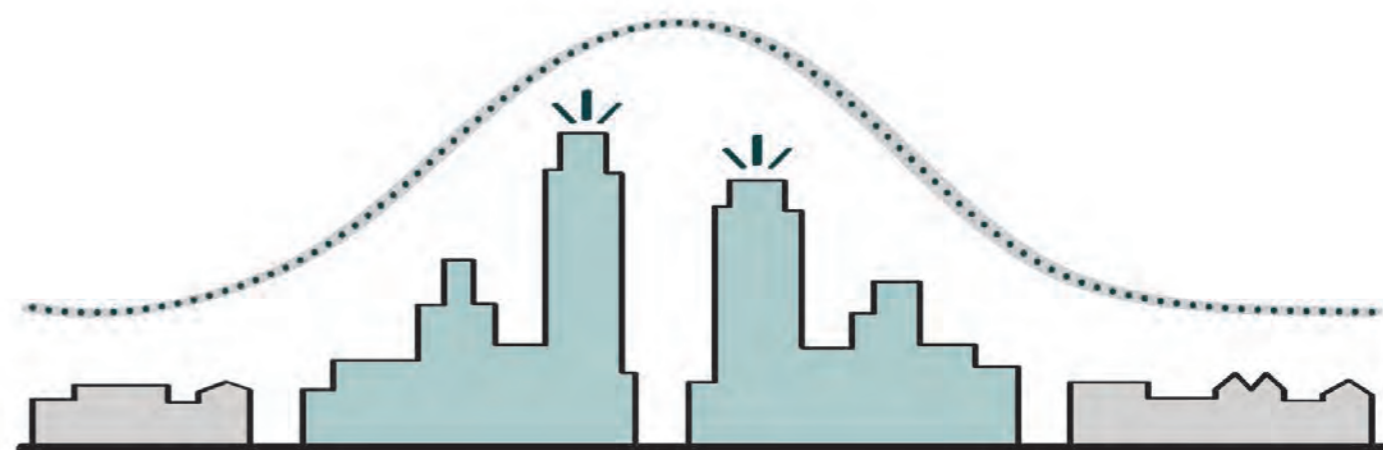


Figure 13. Leicester Cathedral



Figure 14. Curve

Figure 15. Tall Development Cluster within the Townscape



Townscape Character

Tall development can be transformational and detrimental, bringing considerable and irreversible change to the townscape, character, and activities of a place. As a result, the suitability of tall development on the local townscape and character will need to be thoroughly examined. The following contextual aspects must be evaluated and adequately addressed when tall development proposals are considered:

- building height, scale and massing,
- urban grain and townscape,
- streetscape,
- building composition, silhouette and skyline characteristics,
- built form and building elements articulation,
- architectural language, materials and details, and
- spatial response to special features as open spaces and railway lines.

According to the NPPF development should be *"sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation"* (para. 130c) and *"establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit"* (para. 130d).

As a result, tall development should favourably respond to its surroundings, not being viewed as 'out of character' with the area's overall townscape. It is desirable to maintain and enhance the area's prevalent character where there is a well-established sense of place and strong townscape characteristics. In disjointed areas, with poor townscape characteristics, often identified suitable for regeneration, development should promote place-making, creating a cohesive and unique townscape. Similarly, for big brownfield sites with the potential to develop their own identity. Tall development can be beneficial in such cases, not being however the only option/ output.

Tall development can contribute to place-making through three main ways:

- Acting as a landmark building that supports local and wider legibility,
- Providing a distinctive skyline feature that contributes to a desirable image of a place, or
- Being part of a typological solution within a greater plan-led and comprehensive development, delivering a place's overall vision.

Heritage & Visual Impact

Heritage assets are part of a place's uniqueness, significance, and beauty. For the sake of future generations, they must be strictly monitored and fostered, whereas beneficial heritage conservation should respond to social, economic, and technological change in a way that allows these assets to be preserved and further enhanced. Due to its nature, tall development will have a visual impact on heritage assets that should be critically evaluated. Even when positioned further away, the visual prominence of tall development can detract from the relevance of heritage assets and their context.

Development's height and scale should respect, respond and contribute to a place's setting while reflecting on its heritage. An experienced heritage specialist will need to analyse and guide the impact of tall development design on heritage assets within their context. Tall development must be properly located to avoid intruding on the historic fabric and causing damage to historic sites. Moreover, according to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, local planning authorities should pay special care to conserve the character, appearance, and setting of heritage assets.

Tall development can have a beneficial or adverse impact on vital views, prospects, and panoramas, as well as the overall visual experience of an area, its character, and skyline, depending on

its massing and height. Recognised and relevant views include views of a heritage asset in its setting, views of iconic buildings and landmarks, distinct townscapes, topographical features, waterfronts, and more broadly the skyline, especially where they are prominent, accessible and highly appreciated. An altered sense of scale, diminishing the relationship of built form to the sky or the surrounding landscape or detracting from the colour, materials, and shape that exemplifies what is unique about a place are all potential negative effects of tall development.

Protected strategic vistas and local views are mentioned in local plans and conservation area statements. However, on a local or city-wide scale, there are many more non designated views that are valued by people and are vital for the collective perception of an area. Because of the openness of the landscape, views from rivers, major parks, and open spaces are particularly important, identifying the greater settlement characteristics in their setting.

To assess the impact of tall development on the skyline, one must first comprehend the visual elements that compose the skyline and their significance to an area's image and identity. Tall development should only be allowed when it does not detract from the integrity of highly valued skyline features.



Figure 16. Townscape & Skyline Relation



Figure 17. Leicester Riverside - Visual Impact

2.5 Setting the Basis: Existing Tall Development in Leicester

Existing Tall Development in Leicester

Leicester is a city that does have tall buildings, development and structures. Some contribute positively to the heritage and identity of Leicester; others have a detrimental effect on the townscape. However, by virtue of their size, such buildings are always prominent in the townscape.

To identify existing tall development within and at the fringe of the CDA consideration has been given to buildings, developments and structures that are substantially taller than their neighbours. Furthermore, taking into account that the predominant heights within the CDA vary between 12 and 21 metres (broadly equivalent to 4 to 7 residential storeys), while at the CDA fringe vary between 6 and 15 metres (broadly equivalent to 2 to 5 residential storeys), buildings, developments and structures above these levels have also been identified. On the basis of this report's conclusions, heights above the predominant ones have been divided into two categories; buildings between 21 and 24 metres (broadly equivalent to 8 residential storeys and almost 3 storeys higher than the maximum predominant height within the CDA Fringe) and buildings above 24 metres (figure 19). Findings to inform and support such claims can be found in chapters 3 and 4, where the detailed height analysis is presented.

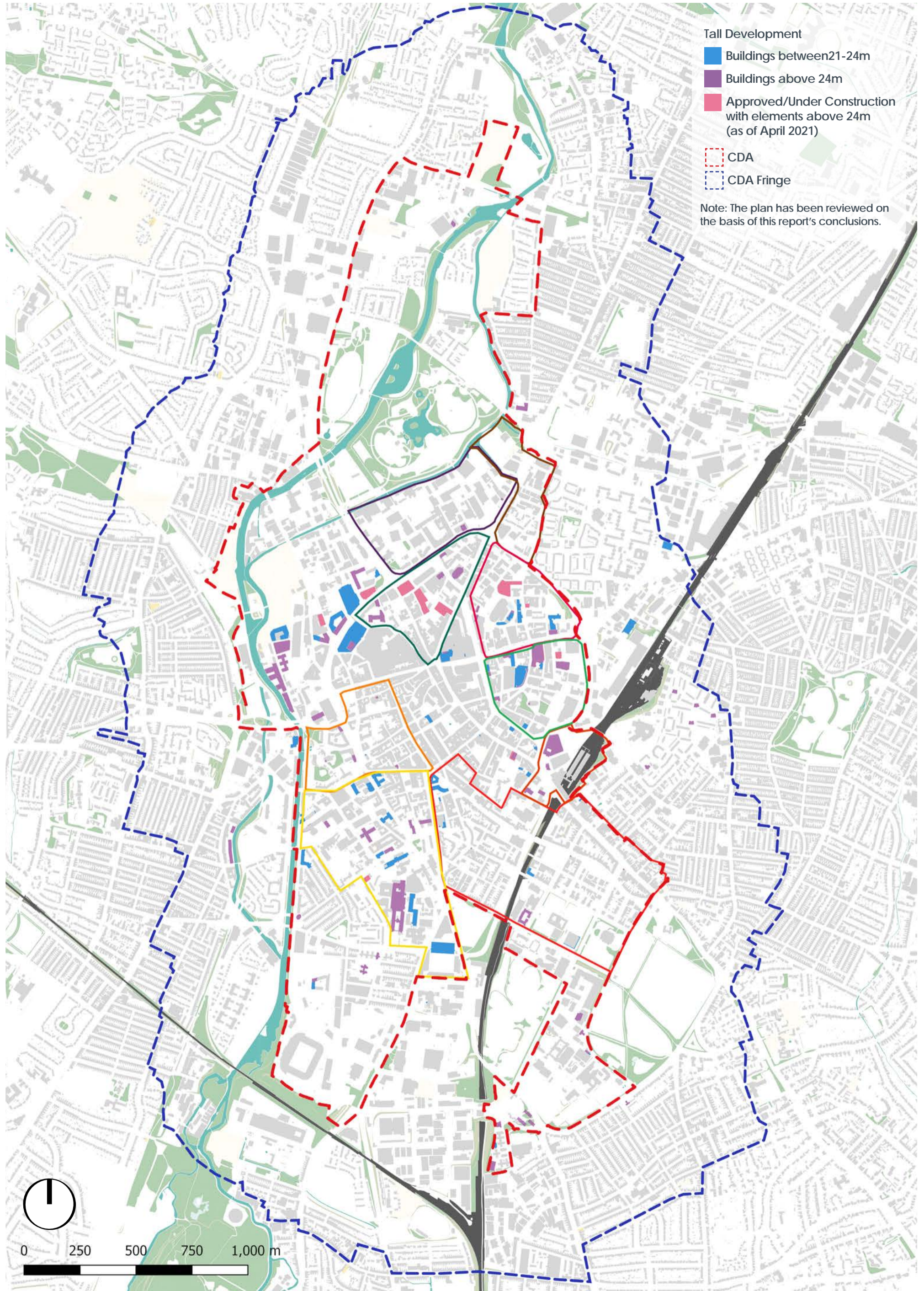
In considering tall development in Leicester (figure 19) there are some general observations that can be made. In previous Local Plans and planning frameworks, there has been limited direction on identifying locations for tall development or even restricting tall development. Therefore, many of the tall developments we see today represent speculative development of its time and the popularity of tall building forms during the 1960s and 70s. In some cases, tall buildings were seen as a solution to build the accommodation needed at a high density, in others a 'catalyst for regeneration'. Indeed, quite a few of the residential-only tall buildings in the city would be viewed as isolated. If we consider the existing tallest developments in Leicester, excluding the Cathedral and St. Mark's Church, six of the remaining eight were constructed during the 1960s and 70s.

Existing and upcoming notable clusters of tall development are:

- University of Leicester: Engineering Building, Charles Wilson Building and Attenborough Tower,
- University of Leicester: Freeman's Common Campus
- De Montfort University: Vijay Patel Building and Gateway House,
- Near the railway station area: office, residential and mixed-use buildings, including Elizabeth House, Arnhem House (Frederick Gibberd Coombes and Partners Architects) and St. Georges Tower.
- Abbey Pumping Station, the National Space Centre and Wolsey Island chimney.
- Whilst not a cluster, Epic House and Crown House off Lee Street / Charles Street are also a very recognisable pair of tall buildings in the city.
- More recently other clusters are evolving at the junction of Highcross Street / Vaughan Way and along Bath Lane within the Waterside area which are resulting in a significant change to the character of the area. The Waterside area has in recent decades been identified as a Regeneration Area and planning permissions for tall development date back to 2003 along Bath Lane, with the planning permissions for West Bridge Wharf (approved in October 2003) and Merlin Heights (approved in 2011) which are now built and occupied.
- In considering the site of Merlin Wharf, planning permission was granted in 2006 for two 22 and 27 storey-buildings and a 39 storey one, designed by Ian Simpson Architects. The planning permission was extended, allowed under Government planning policy at the time, and the permission for the 22 and 27 storey-buildings was subsequently technically implemented in 2016. The approved scheme was never fully constructed and new planning permission for the new proposal was approved in 2019 and is now built and occupied.
- The tall development at the junction of Highcross Street / Vaughan Way was in response to the adopted Waterside SPD which identified potential for tall development in that location. This includes the new residential development called The Wulcomb and the new Novotel hotel.



Figure 19. Existing Tall Development within the CDA & CDA Fringe



Assessing Tall Development

Tall development in Leicester has been delivered over a series of decades and within different planning policy contexts. In considering future policy, it is useful to reflect on what can be learnt from existing tall development in the city.

An assessment of 19 of the existing tallest developments in Leicester was carried out to consider, primarily, their townscape contribution. In undertaking the assessment, the current Tall Building SPD (2007) was used, in particular the Design Quality Assessment criteria. These are outlined in the following “Quality of Tall Development” sub-chapter.

The assessment identified some general conclusions regarding existing tall development as presented below:

- Context is crucial given the prominence of tall development. Tall development must be appropriately located.
- Some tall buildings have been designated as heritage assets and recognised for their architectural quality and heritage significance. They could be described as ‘first-rate works of architecture in their own right’, as described within the Tall Building SPD (2007).
- However, there are examples in the city where these developments, whilst considered to be high-quality buildings, have an impact on the townscape of the city by causing harm to key views and other heritage assets. Therefore, design excellence cannot mitigate the harm caused by poorly located tall development.
- Some tall developments could be considered to have a detrimental impact on heritage assets. However, some were constructed prior to the designation of heritage assets including conservation areas, listed and locally listed buildings and registered parks and gardens.

- The built form of tall development can vary significantly. The aspiration, as described in the Tall Building SPD (2007) of a ‘slender, graceful structure’ has rarely been achieved. Often tall development is of both significant mass and scale. Podiums of lower height may reduce the impact of tall development at street level and on short views but the impact on mid to long views can still be experienced. Therefore, podiums cannot mitigate the harm caused by poorly located tall development.
- Tall development of both significant mass and scale is highly prominent, in combination producing a monolithic building form or ‘groundscraper’, harming key views and heritage assets. Therefore, design excellence cannot mitigate the harm caused by tall development of inappropriate mass and scale.
- The private rented sector and student residential models generally require built forms that would be considered tall and often have significant mass. They often have to be one unified building with limited opportunities for a more integrated finer grain of development.
- There are some tall developments that would not be described as ‘slender, graceful structures’ but have a mass and scale that is well proportioned and is appropriate as a tall development within their context. For a few of those tall developments, an improvement in appearance would significantly improve their townscape contribution.
- The contribution tall development makes to public spaces and providing active frontages is mixed. There are very clear examples of tall development ‘turning their back’ on the surrounding context. For example, by being located within the centre of a large urban block without any street frontage provision at all or by having a poor relationship with the street. Some have successful active frontages but could contribute more to the wider public realm. A few tall developments make a significant contribution to the public realm as they have been considered as part of greater, comprehensive development. The prominence and design of entrances could be much improved on many of the existing tall developments.
- It is very difficult to ascertain the impact of tall development on micro-climate and the environment. A few developments were adjacent to homes with gardens and would cause some overshadowing at certain times.
- Some of the tall developments, but not all, act as landmarks and contribute to wayfinding in the city. This is mostly due to their prominence combined with their location, especially if they are near popular destinations.
- The telecommunications on top of tall development can have a detrimental impact on the townscape. The design of the top of tall development should give an appropriate silhouette and roofline and this is being undermined by telecommunications. However, it is recognised that some communication equipment is covered under permitted development and the Council could have limited control.
- The elevational changes, including re-cladding and material changes, on some of the tall developments have had an impact on the appearance of those buildings. This could be viewed as detrimental as the clear rationale and design intention/ quality of the previous design has been lost. Given the prominence of tall development, the changes will have more of a visual impact.

- A well-proportioned built form of an appropriate mass and scale does not necessarily have to be a ‘slender, graceful structure’ as described in the Tall Building SPD (2007).
- Tall development in itself does not need to help people find their way around, although given their prominence they can make a contribution.

Based on the above conclusions an overarching point is that for tall development to be successful and of high quality, all the relevant criteria concerning design quality and townscape need to be addressed. Providing excellence in one criterion does not necessarily mitigate for being poor in others. Whilst all criteria may not need to be addressed equally, they would all need to be addressed positively.

Figure 20. The Vijay Patel Building, De Montfort University, part of a comprehensive scheme.





Figure 21. Thames Tower Now & Before Changes Were Made to Their Appearance



Figure 22. St. George's Tower Now & Before Changes Were Made to Their Appearance



Figure 23. Examples of Tall Developments with Poor Relationship with the Street Scene.



Figure 24. The Summit Next to Low Scale Residential Streets (© Skyscrapercity)



Figure 25. The War Memorial on Victoria Park with the Attenborough Building in the Background.

Land Uses of Tall Development

Tall Development within the city provides a mix of uses:

- 1. Education** - Buildings within the campuses of the University of Leicester and De Montfort University, and also part of St. George's Tower.
- 2. Medical** - Leicester Royal Infirmary
- 3. Office** - The cluster of office buildings near the railway station on East Street / Albion Street, Campbell Street, part of St. George's Tower and Cardinal Exchange. There are other office uses along Humberstone Gate and Charles Street (Midland House) and Causeway Lane.
- 4. Leisure** - Hotels include parts of St. Georges Tower (St. Georges Way), Holiday Inn (St. Nicholas Circle), and the new Novotel (Highcross Street).

Other Leisure uses include the Phoenix Cinema and Arts Centre (which also includes residential) and the Cinema de Lux within Highcross shopping centre.

- 5. Retail** - Highcross and the Haymarket shopping centres, but is often an ancillary use for other developments.
- 6. Car Parks** – Abbey Street car park, with a hotel use at the top.
- 7. Residential** - Most of the existing tall development within Leicester is for residential use, including purpose-built student accommodation. These include;

- part of St. Georges Tower
- the Summit (Walnut Street),
- the Wullcomb (Highcross Street),
- Elizabeth House (London Road),
- Merlin Heights, Merlin Wharf, Westbridge Wharf, The Arches (Bath Lane),
- Opal Court (Lancaster Road),
- Leicester Square (Sanvey Gate),
- Primus Edge (Jarrom Street),
- De Montfort House (Lower Browne Street)
- CODE (Western Road)
- The Wolsey (Abbey Park Street)

- Clipstone House, Maxfield House, Framland House, Gordon House (Jupiter Close, Taurus Close, Neptune Close, Pluto Close)
- There are also tall developments which have been all or partly converted from offices into residential, for example, Thames Tower (Burleys Way) and Allied Place (Abbey Street).

Within the CDA Fringe area all tall development is for residential use.

The recent emergence of private rented sector (PRS) housing, for example, the Wullcomb (Highcross Street) often require a compact, high density built form with scale and mass.

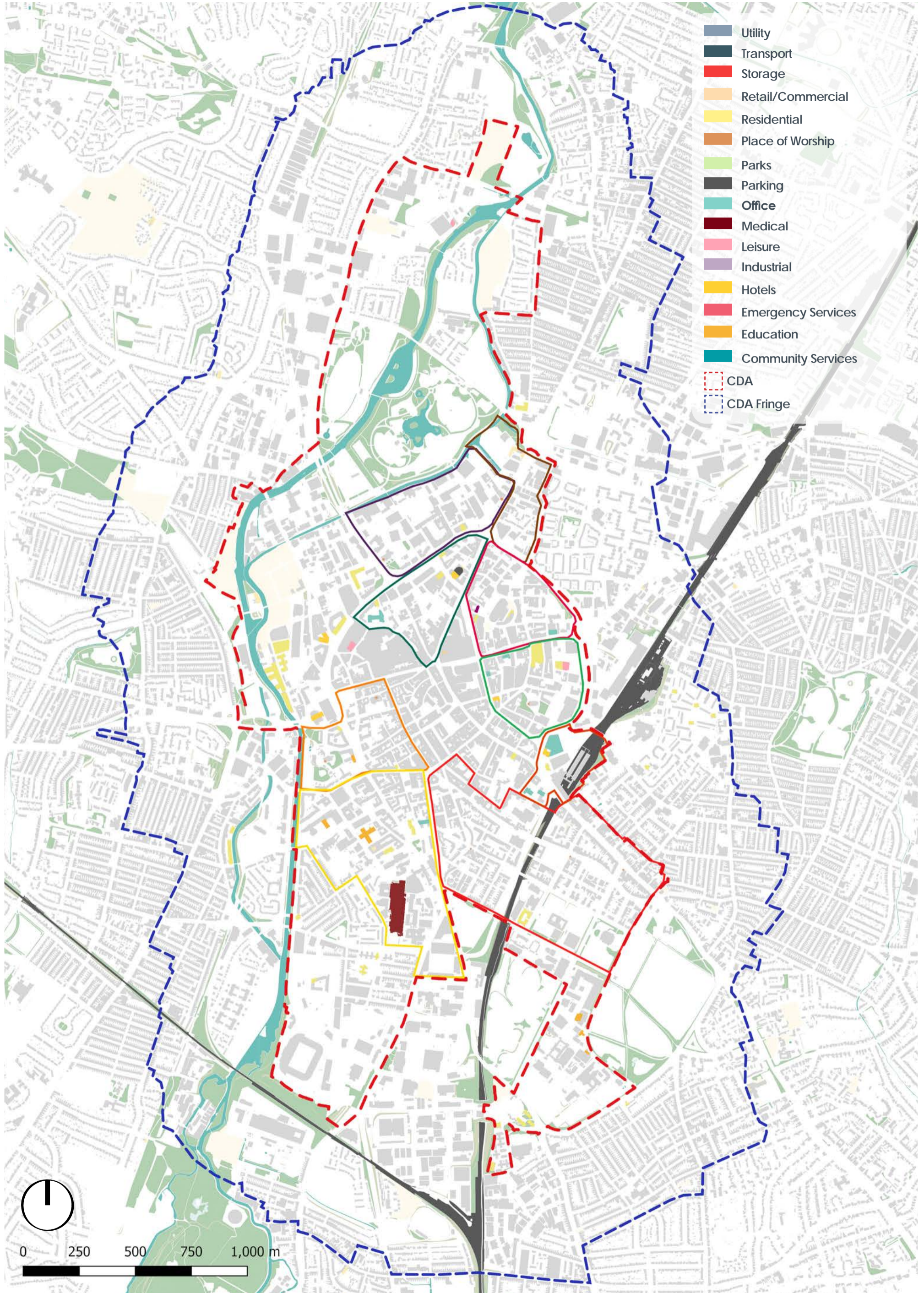
At the present time there is limited demand for offices within taller developments. In cities similar to Leicester the need to balance an occupier need for increasingly large footprints (10,000-20,000 sqft) with a developer / investor appetite for risk and not extending themselves is typically leading to mid-rise developments of 4-6 storeys (approximately 16m to 24m assuming 4m commercial floor to ceiling heights).

In Leicester, the Mattioli Woods offices at the end of New Walk is a good example of this.

Crown House is a prominent tall building in the city, which is currently in need of improvement, redevelopment and re-use. There is no current use for this building. Another previously vacant building is the former International Hotel (Humberstone Gate), which is currently under construction following planning approval.

Further information on this proposal and on the use class of recently approved tall development, including those that are not yet constructed, are in Appendix 3. The predominant Use Classes are C3 Residential and Sui Generis, which includes student accommodation.

Figure 26. Tall Development Land Uses within the CDA & CDA Fringe



Tall Structures

There are many tall structures within the CDA and CDA fringe. Just like tall buildings and tall development, they can positively contribute to wayfinding, connecting places and helping people to find their way around. They are often local landmarks or features that are recognisable and contribute to the identity and character of an area. In most cases, in Leicester, they are architectural features on significant heritage buildings, for example, spires, towers, cupolas, chimneys etc. and are in themselves of significant heritage value, for example, Lewis's Tower on Humberstone Gate. They can also have a significant effect on the skyline, most notably the spire of the Cathedral (at 61 metres) and St. Marks (at 51 metres).

Tall structures are identified in this document where they are tall within their surrounding context, so they are prominent and provide a 'positive landmark function' within their local setting. On that basis, structures needed for telecommunications, services and additional utilities have not been included. Unless their presence is significant to the townscape.

Tall structures are also identified where they form a taller element of a modern building where they exceed 24m (broadly equivalent to 8 residential storeys and above - findings to inform and support the claim can be found in chapters 3 and 4). Even if they are unoccupied space or provide an infrequently used space they still may have a clear impact on the townscape.

Heights of the structures shown in Figure 31 are provided in Appendix 2.

Figure 27. Lewis's Tower



Figure 28. Town Hall



Figure 29. Corah Chimneys



Figure 30. Grand Hotel, Granby Street



Figure 31. Existing Tall Structures within the CDA & CDA Fringe

