

# **Belton House and Park Setting Study and Policy Development**

South Kesteven District Council and National Trust

January 2010

# Belton House and Park Setting Study and Policy Development

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose & Scope of the Study

This study was commissioned by South Kesteven District Council and The National Trust in 2008 to define and describe the setting boundary of Belton House and Park; and to inform the need for, and content of, any new LDF policy for the setting of Belton House and Park.

For this study the Park boundaries are assumed to be those of the Registered Historic Park and Garden, rather than those of The National Trust's ownership.

## 1.2 The National Trust Belton House Estate

Belton House and most of its Park are owned by The National Trust and bound the urban area of Grantham to its north east. The house is Grade I Listed with a number of Listed Buildings and structures associated with the house, among which are the stables and South Lodge (both Grade I) and buildings around the western court and Bellmount Tower (Grade II\*). The surrounding parkland is a Grade I Registered Historic Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest. Belton village, to the north, is a Conservation Area.

The National Trust Belton House Estate comprises a country house and its surviving outbuildings, in 505 hectares of designed parkland, on the north east edge of Grantham, set in a valley along the east side of the A607. The house itself and ancillary buildings are situated in the north west corner of the park. Although the present main entrance is on the north side of the park, to the north west of the house, the historic main drive runs south-south-west to north-north-east near to the west side of the park and there is a gate near the south west providing access from Grantham. Another avenue runs east-south-east from the house. This avenue is bisected towards its east end by a public road, Five Gates Lane, which provides a north south route across the site. To the east of this road the parkland rises sharply to a ridge, topped by Bellmount Tower. The eastern boundary of the park is screened with woodland.

The River Witham runs through the park, just inside its western edge, with two separate groups of linked lakes, or ponds, roughly set at right angles to and running into the river. These ponds are separated by a low wooded hill, to the south east of the house, situated to the west of the public road that runs through the park.

Belton House, its ancillary buildings and park retain evidence of the historic developments in its design. Externally to the buildings themselves, these developments are mostly manifested in the arrangement of features and buildings. A number of the surviving views within, out of and within the park are survivals of historically designed views.

## 1.3 Structure of the Report

The Report is set out as follows:

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: Description of the Setting of Belton House and Park – A Description of the House, Park and environs, and the historic development of the house and park, and their significance.

Section 3: Sensitivity of the Setting to Change– An assessment of areas where different types of change could adversely affect the setting of the house and park.

Section 4: Policy Review and Recommendations – National, Regional and Local Policy is reviewed to assess whether it is able to protect sensitive aspects of the park’s setting. Options and recommendations resulting from the review are presented.

## 1.4 Method

### 1.4.1 Focus of the assessment

The landscape of the park around Belton House was designed and altered over time in accordance with the changing aesthetic tastes in landscape and country house design. The significance of Belton’s setting is therefore chiefly aesthetic and visual, and the definition and delineation of its setting is chiefly based on the definition of the significant views, and the landscape that is visible beyond the boundaries of the park, within these views. Other aspects of significance are its rural character, its quiet atmosphere and its community value.

Map evidence and research undertaken on behalf of the National Trust has charted the history of Belton House and Park from the 1680s to the present. This evidence and the Atkins team’s knowledge of the history of architecture and landscape design have been drawn on to define the significant views within, out of and into the park over time, and the part that the land beyond its boundaries has played, and continues to play, in these views.

### 1.4.2 Method used to define the setting

Where the historically significant views survive these have been identified.

Once the key significant views and viewing points are defined (in 2.74 and 2.75 below) contour maps were used to produce maps showing what would theoretically be visible from these viewpoints using a GIS system. This produced a series of maps of what areas of ground and urban development are visible from the most elevated views. The main obstructions to these views were from hills and ridges and from tree belts on the periphery of and beyond the park boundary. For the purposes of the study the obstructing tree belts were assumed to be permanent features in the landscape, being an essential part of the Park’s setting and for the purposes of the study, their protection (within any policy arising from the study) and retention is assumed. The site visit allowed the maps of what ground is visible to be amended to take into consideration the obstructions produced by trees (which can raise the visual barrier produced by high or low ground by 10-30 metres) and the limitations in views produced by the distance between raised areas outside the site and by distance from the site.

It was found that the significant elevated viewpoints (the roof of Belton House and the viewing gallery of Bellmount Tower - the roof of Bellmount Tower was not accessible throughout the project, for Health and Safety reasons) produced the most extensive views of the countryside beyond the park boundaries, with a small number of other key viewpoints and views only revealing small additional areas outside the park, not already visible from the more elevated viewpoints. The visible ground and urban development in the elevated views and in the views from ground level, where additional land beyond the park boundary not visible from the elevated views can be seen, are shown on a number of maps (Figures 10, 11 & 12). These visible areas define most of the setting of Belton House.

In addition to these significant views there has been an analysis of the approach roads to Belton House, used by visitors (see Figures 8 & 9), so that the location of important views into the park are also defined within the house’s setting.

Where aspects of setting are not defined on a map, they are described.

### 1.4.3 Method of assessment of sensitivity to change

Having defined the setting of Belton House and Park its sensitivity to different types of development was assessed on the basis of their potential to diminish the significance of the views.

The sensitivity of the setting to the following types of development is assessed:

- Smaller scale development (e.g. Small numbers of additional dwellings, agricultural buildings, holiday chalets, etc.) including those within the defined setting within 2km of the site boundary.
- Medium sized developments, (e.g., groups of 50 houses or more or large building complexes);
- Major Development (e.g. developments that would require assessment under the terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment regulations (Statutory Instrument 1999 No. 293, Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations, 1999); and
- Tall Structures (such as wind turbines, tall power plant / manufacturing plant chimneys)

### 1.4.4 Method of Policy Review

Current national, regional and local policy was reviewed to assess its capacity to protect the setting of Belton House and Park and to identify any weaknesses in policy which may lead to the erosion of the setting. Options and Recommendations are set out in Section 4.

## 1.5 Planning Background

Grantham was identified in the East Midlands Regional Plan as a sub-regional centre. The Plan was adopted in March 2009 and replaces the 2005 Regional Spatial Strategy. Following successful application for funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government, Grantham was also designated as a New Growth Point in 2007<sup>1</sup>. This means that the town will see major growth in order to accommodate up to 4,300 new homes and the infrastructure to support this up to 2016. There is the potential for growth of the town via sustainable urban extensions to the south and north west of Grantham, the latter incorporating the Poplar Farm site allocated in the 1995 South Kesteven Local Plan as suitable for residential development. South Kesteven District Council is currently preparing a number of documents to guide development of the town as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) to replace the existing Local Plan<sup>2</sup>. The suite of documents being prepared include:

- Core Strategy Development Plan Document
- Area Action Plan for Grantham
- Site Specific Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document
- Supplementary Plan Documents for the two urban extensions

The Belton House and Park Setting Study and Policy Development addresses the need to protect the setting of Belton House and Park during and after the current period of growth.

Recommendations of this report are developed within the context of the emerging LDF.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.granthamforgrowth.co.uk/PublishedPages/>

<sup>2</sup> South Kesteven District Council, adopted 1995. *Local Plan*

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SETTING OF BELTON HOUSE AND PARK

### 2.1 Introduction

In order to define the setting of Belton House, it is important to understand its historic development and how this has produced the site's current form and significance. The significance of the views within, into and out of the site forms the basis of the definition of its setting. The following provides a short description of Belton House and park and its immediate environs, followed by a summary of its historic development. This summary focuses on the changing design of the house and park, the changing key views and thus the factors that have dictated the significance of the views and the park's setting.

This section continues to list the key views and to assess views into the site from the various approach routes. The areas visible within the significant views are mapped.

#### 2.1.1 The House and Park today

Today, the House and the majority of the Park are owned by the National Trust. The house, garden and commercial facilities are open to visitors from the end of February until the beginning of November and over the Christmas and New Year period, while the park, outside these areas, is open throughout the year. Belton House, itself lies to the north west of the park and retains its original appearance.

The house and main ancillary buildings are of two storeys, plus an attic and semi-basement. Its fenestration looks out on all four sides of the house. The roof is topped with a central cupola and a balustraded viewing platform. There are a number of ancillary buildings located close to the House itself. The main ancillary block is to the west of the house, and is two storeys high with an attic. It has two projecting west wings enclosing the west forecourt. The ancillary buildings vary in design, having been built at different times. The predominant material used is Ancaster stone, although there is some use of red brick, in a small number of ancillary buildings. To the north of the house are the surviving 19<sup>th</sup> century formal gardens associated with the house, with Belton village located beyond just outside the boundaries of the park.

The main access to the park for visitors to the property is from the north west towards Belton village, where there is a visitor's car park in the grounds. Further access to the park can be gained from the south entrance at Lion Lodge, where there is a small car park and from Five Gates Road where there is access through the East Avenue to the east towards Bellmount Tower. There is no access to the larger portion of Belton Park and the house itself at this location.

The Park extends predominantly to the south and east where there is a substantial area currently used for sheep and deer. Part of the south-eastern part of the park is a golf course.

The park is bisected by Five Gates Road running north-north-west to south-south-east through the eastern part of the park, and Bellmount Tower is located at the very eastern edge of the park estate.

Within the park are two avenues of trees, the first and most dominant runs south-south-west to north-north-east in the western half of the Park, from the Lion Lodge gates at the south to Belton House to the north. The secondary avenue runs east-south-east to west-north-west through the northern part of the Park and frames Bellmount Tower and Belton House at each end.

The ground within the park is gently undulating, with a low hill to the south east of the house, west of Five Gates Road, on the western side of which is the Old Wood, an original late 17<sup>th</sup> century plantation. The ground rises steeply to a high plateau on the eastern edge of the park, on the

edge of which Bellmount Tower is located. Outside of the park are prominent ridges of land to the west, especially that near and to the north of Great Gonerby, and to the north towards Syston, Syston Grange and Hambleton Hill.

There are thick belts of woodland within the edges of the park's boundaries, as well as within the parkland itself. At the western park boundary, which is partly delineated by the A607 carriageway is a particularly thick shelterbelt known as 'the wilderness' which thins out and disappears further south. There is also a very thick area of woodland located on the plateau, immediately to the east of Bellmount Tower. There is some thick tree planting in clusters, such as those in the centre of the park (known as 'Old Wood'), surrounding the southern entrance at Lion Lodge and within the northern part of the park.

The plateau to the south east, on which Londonthorpe stands, effectively closes views to and out of the site, except on its forward slopes, facing the site.

## 2.1.2 Historic Development

### The late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century house and the formal park

(see Figure 2, map of the original estate, c.1690 taken from National Trust, Volume 2, 1986)

The original 1685-1688 house was built at a time when the formality of classicism expressed in the design of the Country House was extended into the design of the garden.

The fashion of the period was for a symmetrical building with a symmetrical plan, built to display the wealth and power of the owner. The main rooms were located centrally with the saloon facing onto the central axis of the formal garden. The main door, providing access to the entrance hall and staircase, faced a similarly symmetrical formal garden on the other side of the main central axis. Ancillary and more functional structures were, where possible, set to one side of the formal arrangement. Apartments of rooms were generally arranged either side of the central rooms. The main central axis through the house was thus expressed both in the building's exterior architecture and in the park design, thus projecting the importance of the owner, who would have dined and entertained in the saloon at the centrepiece of composition, advertising his status to the wider world.

The house has changed very little in outward appearance since it was first built. It was built in an 'H' plan in accordance with this fashion, although externally its design did not adopt the more flamboyant aspects of the baroque which dominated the period. The fact that the house was built in a corner of the park, is another way in which the design did not conform to the height of fashion, although this can be partly explained by the constraints of the site and the fact that the site slopes away to the south and west.

In other respects the design was of its time and its later inclusion in *Vitruvius Britannicus* in 1725, testifies to its continuing fashionable status and its acceptability to the Palladians who dominated the 1720s and 1730s and whose influence extended through much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The adherence to the current formality is manifest in its design and layout. Thus, the plan and external elevations were symmetrical; the central pediment and cupola emphasised the park's and building's central axis; and the formal gardens were arranged symmetrically around this main axis on both sides of the house (Belton Park, Volume I, The Garden, NT, 1985).

The visual centrality of the house to the surrounding park was maintained despite the fact that the house was located at the corner of the park, by a second grand avenue extending from the house's shorter east side. The nearly symmetrical design of the side elevations helped to create this axis and the area nearest this side elevation was also emphasised by formal gardens arranged symmetrically either side of this axis and a central pond. The fact that the avenue extended downhill and then climbed the hill to the eastern boundary of the park enhanced, and continues to enhance, the prominence of the house in the landscape in views from the east.

The lower, detached service range also expressed symmetry and complimented the symmetrical west wing opposite. This wing and its setting in the park were subordinate to the main house, with its grand axes and vistas, although it also maintained the formal layout, albeit with a kitchen garden, laundry yard and other, more functional uses.

In the tradition of rooftop belvederes, that appeared a century earlier with the fashion for informal rooftop after dinner snacks, known as banquets, the roof had a viewing platform behind a rooftop balustrade. This helped the guests appreciate the main axial views and other views of lesser significance, such as that of the wood to the south east of the house. The wood's location on the forward slope of a hillock would have screened views to the south east while providing a clear view of the wood itself from the house.

The park originally extended further to the north east than it does today. Its western boundary was set on the River Witham, except in the northern part of the park where this boundary extended as far as the current A607. The fact that this extension was located near the low status ancillary buildings, suggests that it did not form part of the main visual aesthetic of the park, but served the ancillary areas. This more informal wooded area, or 'wilderness', would have been wooded and used for informal walking. This more marginal land would have played a more prominent role in the park's aesthetic, when the Picturesque became more fashionable later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The south eastern boundary was closer to the Old Wood and to the main eastern avenue than it is today and the views beyond the boundary were screened by tree planting and the lie of the land. The southern boundary of the site was visible from the house.

Thomas Badeslade's c.1750 views of the house from the East and South (reproduced in Belton House, NT, Vol 1) confirm the primacy of the north south axial view, and especially the view from the south, as well as the view of the house along the east avenue. In both views the land to the west of the river is partly or fully screened by trees. As is the case today, the more distant hills rise above these tree screens and provide a backdrop to the important park views.

Key views of this early period are therefore:

- The view from the house along the south drive;
- The view from the house along the east avenue;
- The view of the original formal gardens to the north of the house along the house's central axis;
- The view from the house towards the wood to the south east (the Old Wood), although not beyond it;
- Views of the house from the eastern part of the park, where the eye is drawn towards the house along the east avenue as the centrepiece of the view which includes the surrounding parkland and the trees and hills in the background;
- Views of the house along the south drive from the entrance gate;
- Close views of the house and ancillary block from the western approach; and
- Close views of the house along the formal northern side of the central axis.

Despite the disappearance of nearly all of the original formal gardens, except that to the north of the house, which has disappeared and reappeared over time, all of these views survive.



### The mid 18<sup>th</sup> century-c.1800 informal park and its expansion

(see Figures 3, 4 & 5, map of the park in 1751, 1778 and 1800, taken from National Trust, Volume 2, 1986)

By the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century formal gardens were no longer fashionable, as the work of William Kent and others popularised the more informal garden, with variety and garden features appearing. Symmetry disappeared, asymmetrical lakes became popular and ha-has were introduced to bring livestock close to the house, creating the appearance of a controlled rural setting. Later in the century Capability Brown introduced more "natural" gardens, using a more eclectic stylistic approach and later Picturesque designers took the naturalisation of the garden further by introducing contrived wildness and follies. Humphrey Repton, towards the end of the century reacted to this by bringing more order to the garden, with circuitous drives that provided a series of contrived natural views and glimpses of the park and its features, and the introduction of belts of trees to screen the park's periphery. The country house and park were increasingly private places and their roles in providing enjoyment to the owners and entertainment to guests increasingly took precedence over the role of the house as the economic centre of a wider agricultural landscape. Country parks therefore became increasingly inward looking, with the surrounding working landscape screened from view.

At Belton House the park was developed in line with these fashions. The stream that ran from west-north-west to east-south-east was used to create fish ponds and water bodies were created to the north of the main east avenue. The fashion for garden features and follies resulted in the construction of Bellmount Tower in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, which provided a focal point in the view from the house along the east avenue. The Tower also provided a viewing point with extensive views over parkland, the countryside beyond and of Grantham, and nearby villages.

In the late 1770s (see Figure 4) it was proposed to extend the park to the south east, screen its edges more completely with tree plantations and introduce circuitous drives through the park and around its perimeter. The plan, designed by William Emes, who worked on Belton Park between 1778 and 1784, included a new more circuitous approach road from the southern gate which ran north east as far as the fish ponds and ran north-north-east from there to the public road beyond the north boundary of the park. This would have necessitated the removal of much of the original south drive. It was planned to expand the fish ponds to create a larger lake and build a new road that crossed the park from north to south to the east of the Old Wood and provided access to Londonthorpe.

These proposals were only partly implemented and by 1800 (see Figure 5) the boundaries of the park remained unchanged from their original extent, except for a small addition to the east of the Old Wood. Additional belts of trees screened the views along the western side of the park to a greater extent than originally and there were additional tree plantations on the southern boundary, to the east of Bellmount Tower, around the keeper's cottage, north of the Old Wood and around the fish ponds, all of which would have limited views within the park, to create variety and set piece views of the various structures and water bodies.

The drive running north-east from the main south gate to the fish ponds and then north-north-east to a new park entrance, and the drive running north south through the park to the east of Old Wood were added by 1784 and there was a paddock screened by a curved tree plantation in the park's south east corner. The new drive from the south gate may have temporarily replaced that on the original South avenue, with the trees of the avenue being temporarily thinned out. The primacy of the original South avenue was re-instated by 1800 (Figure 5).

These changes would have created more varied designed views within the park. It became increasingly fashionable to create oblique views of country houses, so that they would appear as part of their landscape, rather than the landscape being formally arranged around the house. The various additional drives that ran past rather than to the house would have afforded these oblique views.

The tree belts on the periphery of the park and the increasing number of plantations within the park would have closed views beyond the boundary of and within the park, and would also have accentuated the effect of the distant hills rising as a backdrop to the key views within the park.

The formal gardens to the north and east of the house were swept away in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the sole exception of the formal water body to the north east of the house, and replaced with a more naturalised informal pleasure garden.

The key views in this more natural-style c.1800 landscape were:

- The view from the house along the south drive;
- The view from the house along the east avenue towards Bellmount Tower;
- Views of the house towards the southern lake;
- Oblique views of the house from the paths in the pleasure garden to the north and north east of the house;
- Oblique and sequential views afforded by the new approach road from the south (Lion Lodge) gate. These views are of the main house, of the former fish pond (by then the island pond) towards the Old Wood, Glimpses of Bellmount Tower and views of the northern ponds along the valley towards the north end of the park.
- Views of the house along the south drive from the entrance gate;
- Views from Bellmount Tower; especially those towards the house, but also including the wider panorama afforded by the height of the building; and
- Close views of the house and ancillary block from the western approach.

Although many of these views survive, that from Bellmount tower only faces west; the sequential views from the approach road from the south gate, inserted between 1778 and 1784, have disappeared, due to the removal of the road, although some of the views from this former road are still visible from grassed, if fenced off, areas. The southern lake is now considerably less visible from the house than it was and the pleasure garden has been largely reconfigured.

Except for on parts of the south and north boundaries and on parts of the southern end of the west boundary, the land immediately around the park would not have been visible in these key views, with the more distant hills rising above the screening tree lines to the south, south east, west and north.

### 19<sup>th</sup> Century

(see Figure 6. taken from National Trust, Volume 2, 1986)

19<sup>th</sup> century design introduced increased comfort and sense of luxury to the country house. At Belton the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the park increase in size, with some reconfiguration of the roads and drives and new types of ancillary buildings providing diversion and luxury products.

The Grantham to Lincoln road (now the A607) was built in 1804 and the park boundary was extended to its east verge. This area would have remained largely screened from view from the house and the main part of the park. In the north west corner of the park a new walled kitchen garden was built on the western side of the new Grantham to Lincoln road.

The park boundary was also extended to the south east, approximately to its current alignment.

The approach road built in the early 1780s, which ran north east from the Lion Lodge gate, was removed before the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and a formal Italian garden, with an Orangery by Jeffry Wyatt as its focus, was added to the north west of the house in 1821. More garden buildings were added, such as Bellmount cottages (now gone), ice houses, a boat house and a Hermitage, both to designs by Salvin, next to the south pond. The Alford memorial was also built to the west of the



South avenue. Additional tree plantations were added to the north east of the house and specimen trees were also added, in accordance with the fashion for introducing greater diversity of planting and flowers into gardens.

The significant views throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century were much as they had been in 1800, except that the removal of the early 1780s approach road removed the oblique sequential views that it had afforded. The new buildings and the memorial created several short views within the park, such as that from the boathouse to Bellmount Tower, and the new buildings and the Italian garden would have enriched the views from the house. Towards the south end of the new west boundary, some of the adjacent land outside the park would have been visible from the roof of the house, to the north of Manthorpe. The new tree plantations would have further restricted views within and outside the park.

The reinstatement of formal gardens to the north of the house and the introduction of specimen trees meant that the view north from the house was once again significant. The houses of Belton village were also by this time of a quality as to enhance the views to the north.

### **20<sup>th</sup> Century**

(see Figure 7. taken from National Trust, Volume 2, 1986)

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw increased tree plantation on the periphery of the park as well as within it. A new golf course added at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1892) altered the character of the south eastern part of the park, although previously (and current) restricted views from the key viewing points to this part of the park meant that the significant views within the park were not substantially eroded.

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a new formal garden had been introduced to the north of the house, effectively reinstating the original axis from the south Lion Lodge gate, through the house and to the northern boundary of the site.

The woodland to the east and south of Bellmount Tower, extended slightly to the south west of the tower, further restricting the panoramic views.

Another 20<sup>th</sup> century development was the growth of Grantham on the southern boundary of the park. The drop in the ground and tree screens on and beyond the southern park boundary effectively screened this new development from the key views.

In more recent years, under National Trust ownership, Belton has become an important visitor attraction. This has increased the footfall within the grounds from the public using parts of the park, even when the house is closed. The National Trust ownership does not encompass all of the Registered Park and Garden, although the National Trust ownership extends beyond the Registered Park and Garden's boundaries at its south west and north west corners and along its east side. The Registered Park and Garden also does not extend to the historical limits of the park at its south west corner and to the east of Belton Village.

As the house and park is open to the public the views into the park along the main approaches are also significant.

The park is essentially quiet and rural in character. The road to the south is largely sunken relative to the parkland, and there are stretches of surviving stone perimeter walling on the north and west boundaries. These factors reduce much of the traffic noise from these busier areas. The relative inaccessibility to the western strip of the park, between the river and the park boundary and the physical gap this creates between the traffic on the A607 and the visitors to the park, also maintains the quietness of the accessible parts of the park.

## 2.2 Description of Setting

The park landscape developed in response to changing aesthetic fashions. Historically the key views across the park were therefore designed to enhance the aesthetic qualities of the house and its park and emphasise its layout and features. The land beyond the boundaries of the park, although historically contributing to the wealth of the Belton House estate, was a working agricultural landscape that was not specifically designed to contribute to the aesthetic qualities of the designed landscape. It did, however, act as a rural backdrop to some of the designed views within the park and therefore formed part of them, effectively containing the views.

The surrounding landscape's contribution to the significance of the park is limited to those areas visible on the key views and visible from the key viewing points. The setting of Belton House is therefore mostly defined as these visible areas that contribute to the significance of the house and park.

The value of the park also partly lies in its function as a visitor attraction and an important heritage asset. The views into and across the park from the main access routes used by the public also need to be taken into consideration as aspects of the park's setting. Along the main access routes the appreciation of the rural context of the park, where it remains rural, is also important, although this aspect is not as important as the significant-views into and out of the park itself.

From the historic summary above the key viewing points and views of within and out of the park, as shown on Figures 8 and 9, are:

- **The roof of the House:** a key viewing point with panoramic views (View A), although with an emphasis on the views along the principal north-north-east to south-south-west axis. The ground visible outside of the park within the panoramic view is shown in Figure 10;
- **Bellmount Tower:** a key viewing point (View B), with panoramic views to the west of the building, which has no main east windows; although there is a view east through the arch at the base of the tower. The ground visible outside of the park within the panoramic view is shown in Figure 11;
- The **historic main drive:** a key view to the south-south-west and to the house itself;
- The **historic main drive:** views south-east and east towards the Alford memorial;
- The **southern entrance at Lion Lodge:** a key view to the north-north-east towards the House;
- The **view west-north-west from Five Gates Road** (access route 6), from Bellmount Avenue to the House; and
- **Eastern Avenue:** view south west towards memorial.

There are a number of additional views from outside of the park which although not historically designed are now key views into the park itself, which have been assessed as part of this study. Many of them are on the approach roads to the park. These are shown on Figure 9 and comprise:

- From the A607, just south of Syston looking south towards Belton village and Belton House (Assessed View F);
- From Whipperstall Hill looking south-south-west towards the Park (Assessed View G);
- From a point on the road above the junction of Five Gates Road and Belton Road looking south-south-west towards the Park (Assessed View H);
- From the crossroads of Five Gates Road and Longthorpe Lane looking north-north-west towards the Park and Bellmount Avenue (Assessed View I);

- From the south-western edge of Belton Park on the A607 looking NE towards the park and main drive (Assessed View J);
- From Belton Lane looking east-south-east towards Belton Park (Assessed View K); and
- From the main western approach from the A1, on the West side of Great Gonerby (Assessed view M).

From the above a number of maps have been created showing the ground that is visible from elevated viewing points within the park, including:

- Figure 10: The setting visible from Belton House Roof
- Figure 11: The setting visible from the Viewing Gallery of Bellmount Tower
- Figure 12: The setting visible from D, H, and L in Figure D (Viewpoint L is included as an example of a view from the raised open ground in this part of the park and is not of particular historic significance)

## 2.3 Assessment of the approach routes to Belton House

Figure 8 indicates 9 approach routes to the house (numbered 1-9). The routes are shown in blue. Figure 9 shows the points on these routes where the furthest assessment of views into the park was made (except in the case of viewpoint K, which is located where a view of the site reappears along on route 1). Locations F, G, I, J, and M on Figure 9 provide the first views into the park along these routes. The main routes are:

- Route 2 from Grantham along the A607, which leads to the main north gate;
- Route 7 from Grantham;
- Route 3 from the North along the A607;
- Route 1, the route from the west that joins route 2 north of Manthorpe Church.

Minor routes to the site include:

- Route 8, an extension of route 7, leading to the golf course;
- Route 6, access from the Alma Park industrial estate to the car park at the bottom of the slope up to Bellmount Tower and from Londonthorpe;
- Route 9, an extension of route 6 leading to the golf course;
- Route 4, from the north east, towards Belton Village;
- Route 5 diverges from Route 4 and provides access to the car park at the bottom of the slope up to Bellmount Tower.

The views on these approach routes are not designed views and thus have no historic significance. Their significance is that they provide an appreciation of the character of the Park and the wider rural and urban landscape within which the park is situated which helps indicate its location and convey a degree of legibility for the visitor. The most significant aspects of these views are the views of and into the park. Maintaining the uninterrupted nature of these views into the park is therefore important and elements visible in the viewing panorama directly behind the park are also significant. The foreground of these views is of less significance than the views of the park itself. The views of the land that appears to either side of the park boundaries, are less significant than the views of the land in front of and behind the park.

Another aspect of the approach routes that is significant, although less so than the views of and into the park, is the immediate surroundings of the approach routes that convey, in some locations, the generally rural character of the park's environs to the visitor.

Table 1 below sets out an assessment of each approach route and descriptions of the viewpoints assessed on these routes.

**Table 1: Assessment of Approach Routes**

Route	Assessment	Assessment of Viewpoint (see Figure 9)
1	From the west the park is first visible from Location M, the main access route from the A1, the approach road dips and the views of and over the park reappear at Location K, nearer the A607 there are views to the ESE into nearest part of the park, at its westernmost corner. The farmland immediately to the north and south of the road, as it runs towards the A607 provides an appreciation of the park's generally rural location and character.	From Location M the open ground in front of the park is visible. To the north east the views are blocked by woodland and to the south by rising land preventing views towards Great Gonerby and Manthorpe, with the exception of the church spire. There are views into much of the park. The urban development on the north east edge of Grantham, including the Alma Park Estate appears to the right of the park. The ground visible from point M is shown on Figure 13.  From location K in the view to the ENE the park is screened by trees, Only Bellmount Tower and the high ground immediately around it is visible.
2	At the southern end of the approach the nearest part of the park is visible through sparse tree screening (its SW corner) , further north the park is screened by trees, a hedge and the perimeter wall. The field immediately adjacent to the west side of the A607 provides an appreciation of the park's generally rural location and character to the visitor.	From the corner of the park (J) the south western part of the park is visible.
3	From the north, the house's cupola is visible from location F. From nearer parts of the route, there are glimpses of Bellmount tower to the south east. The setting of the village of Belton is also rural and the village, its surrounding fields and the Park form part of the same wider rural landscape. This is appreciable from the approach route.	From location F there is a view of Bellmount Tower and its hill, as well as the cupola of Belton House.
4	The park's north east boundary is well screened on the approach road to its north east. At the boundary of the park to the west of the tree screen (Point G) the vista of and over the park opens up. There are views over the park on the drive downhill particularly from point H on Figure 9. From here there are views of, and over, the park and a distant view of Manthorpe church	From G the park first becomes visible and there are views into and over the park, beyond the park there are very narrow views of Manthorpe Church , with the bottom of Stubbock Hill visible behind
5	Along the edge of the park and within the park there are views of Londonthorpe Wood and the slope to its north and north east There are also views of the park, house and Bellmount Tower	
6	The park is screened by trees until the route passes north into Belton Park, from which the eastern part of the park is visible	From location I east end of the avenue extending east from the site can be seen Eastern Avenue
7	The park is generally screened by trees and views are obstructed by built development. The park only really becomes visible as the road draws close to the park. The gate area provides views into the park from the road	From C (close up to the gate, on foot) there are views along the south avenue.
8	The road is lower than the park and there are limited views into it	
9	The road is lower than the park and there are limited views into it. Buildings and trees further screen the views into the park, which are limited	
10	There are views of Bellmount Tower from the railway around Barkston Junction (Barkston Junction is shown on Figure K)	

## 2.4 Description of the Assessed Views from within the Park

The views into the park from the approach routes are described above. The significant views from within the park are described below. The locations of the view points are shown in Figure 9.

### 2.4.1 Viewpoint A (Figures 9 & 10)

From the roof of Belton House the significant views are panoramic and face in all directions. The most historically significant aspects of the panorama are the views to the south (in fact the south-south-west), east (east-south-east) and north (north-north-east). These were all originally designed as the principal views from the roof.

The view to the south is straight down the south avenue to the Lion Lodge gate. This view terminates in the hill behind Grantham which rises very slightly above the horizon. On the periphery of this view, to its left, the hills that rise beyond the eastern edge of Grantham are the only land visible beyond the park boundary. To the centre right of this view the spire of Manthorpe appears through the trees with a narrow view of far hills behind.

To the east the principal view is along the eastern avenue towards Bellmount Tower. There are no views out of the park in this direction, as they are closed by the perimeter tree screen and other trees.

To the north the formal garden and its central axis are significant in the view, as well as views through and over the specimen trees of Belton Village and church. To the right and left the view is framed by the nearby hill to the north east of Belton Village and Hambleton Hill and the high ground to its north, to the left.

Of lesser importance, though still of significance, is the view to the west, centred on the arch and cupola of the ancillary block. The views are clear to the river. Outside the park the land in front of the nearby hotel, close to the park is visible. The rest of the visible ground is raised and includes the ridge that runs north and north east from Great Gonerby. Distant hills, such as Stubbock Hill, appear on the extreme left of this view.

Other views out of the park from Belton House's roof include those to the south east, the north east and the north west. The raised distant hills are generally visible in these views, although only in the views to the south east and north east is ground adjacent and contiguous with the park boundary visible.

The distant views are generally closed by woodland on top of the distant hills.

### 2.4.2 Viewpoint E (Figures 9 & 11)

From the viewing gallery of Bellmount Tower the significant view is the panorama visible from the viewing gallery to the west. The centrepiece and most significant part of the view is Belton House with the avenue drawing the eye towards it. As the tower was built at a date when formal park layouts was going out of fashion, the other aspects of the view are also significant, and remain of interest to the viewer.

There are wide views over and beyond the park to the west. The rising ground to the east and north east of Belton Village, in and around Belton village itself, and a narrow view of the land in front of and around Manthorpe village, is the only ground adjacent to and contiguous with the park that is visible. The hills and ridge along the west side of Grantham that extend as far north as Hambleton Hill are visible and form a backdrop to the views of the park. There are very distant views in a corridor to the right of Hambleton Hill, where there is a gap between the hills nearer to the park. The clarity of the mostly flat landscape within the more distant parts of this view fades with increasing distance from the park. This is especially the case more than 5km from the park's boundary.

The distant views to the west are generally closed by woodland on the hill tops, or the ridge lines of bare hills.

To the south and south west Grantham and the hills around it are visible.

At the base of the tower there are views in both directions through the arch. The views to the west include part of the landscape that is also visible from the tower's viewing gallery. To the east a small area of ground beyond the park's eastern boundary is visible,

#### 2.4.3 Viewpoint D (Figures 9 & 12)

The views from Five Gates Road, at the point where it crossed the east avenue are significant and relatively limited. The key views from this point are those towards Belton House and Bellmount Tower. Views to the south west are closed by the low hill within the park and the Old Wood. In both of these views there is no ground visible outside the park. In views to the north and south the views are of less significance, although there are views beyond the park's north and south boundaries.

#### 2.4.4 Viewpoint B (Figure 9)

The significant views towards the monument, to the main gate and to the house, are closed by tree screens at the park boundaries and the setting of the park therefore has no bearing on these views.

#### 2.4.5 Viewpoint L (Figures 9 & 12)

Although Viewpoint L has never been in a significant accessible location within the park, it represents the highest ground in the middle of the site, relatively near to the east avenue. It is also close to a minor footpath that ran from north west to south east across the site to the north of the Old Wood. It has been selected as a viewpoint for its elevated position in the middle of the park.

The Old Wood screens views to the south west. There are views towards the house, the eastern avenue and Bellmount Tower. Views across the park to the south and north take in some of the ground adjacent to the park, although the wooded hills to the south and the band of woodland beyond the northern boundary of the park close the views.

## 2.5 Summary

The assessment has produced a definition of the features and characteristics of the setting of Belton House and Park.

Many historically designed views within the park survive today and form part of the character of the park. The backgrounds to these views, visible beyond the park boundary, form the most significant elements of the setting of the house and, with some exceptions (set out below) consist mostly of the nearby surrounding hills and ridges. Most of these background views are currently of fields and woodland and help preserve the rural character of the park. Where urban development is visible it is generally low and does not unduly detract from the views, with a few exceptions, such as the chalets on the hill to the west of the park, and some agricultural buildings to the north of the park. The perimeter trees partly block views of the adjacent areas, except to the north of Belton House, and along the southern side of the park to the north west of Londonthorpe and at the park's south east corner. The perimeter tree screens and the tree screens beyond the boundaries that contain the key views also form part of the setting of the park.

The most significant views with backgrounds outside the park, which form part of the park's setting are in:

- The views from the roof of Belton House, especially those to the north, south and east, and west (see Plates 1-4), although the other aspects of the panorama help maintain the rural character of the park; and
- The views to the west from Bellmount Tower, especially that towards the house (see Plate 5).

Some of the visible ground in the views above is also visible from other key viewpoints within the park.

From within the park, on the approaches to the park and on its periphery the significant views with backgrounds outside the park are shown on Figures 8 & 9, although the view from viewpoint 'L', also on that plan, is not as significant as the rest.

The approach routes to the park provide views into the park from Locations M, K F, I and J. These views into the park itself form part of the park's setting. The rural character of parts of some of the approach routes themselves, which do not look towards the park (on routes 1, 2, 3 and 4) also convey the generally rural landscape in which the Park is situated. This character is also part of the setting, although of less significance than the other elements.

Figure 14 shows all of these areas and the ridge lines that contain the views on a single map.





**Plate 1**      **The view South from the roof of Belton House**



**Plate 2**      **The view East from the roof of Belton House**





**Plate 3** The view North from the roof of Belton House



**Plate 4** The view West from the roof of Belton House



**Plate 5**      **The view West from Bellmount Tower.**



## 3. THE SENSITIVITY OF THE SETTING TO CHANGE

### 3.1 Introduction

Having defined the nature of Belton House and Park's setting, and the landscape features within and round the site that contribute to its key views and its special interest there now follows an assessment of the sensitivity of the key views and features to the various types of development.

Sensitivity of the setting of the Park to the following types of development are assessed:

- Smaller scale development
- Medium sized developments, (e.g. groups of 50 houses or more or large building complexes);
- Major Development (e.g. large urban extensions, and developments that trigger the Environmental Impact Assessment regulations); and
- Tall Structures (such as wind turbines, tall power plant/ manufacturing plant chimneys)

For each type of development the sensitivity of the area beyond the boundaries of the Park is assessed in terms of the potential effects on the key views and relationships identified in section 2. For the purposes of the assessment of sensitivity to development, the various aspects of setting (Key views and relationships) are grouped into the following elements:

- Element 1: Ground visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L;
- Element 2: Urban development visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L;
- Element 3: Areas visible from the key approach points I J K and M and routes (1-9);
- Element 4: Areas where the ground is not visible between the park boundary and the containing ridgelines and tree screens that prevent far reaching views; and
- Element 5: Areas beyond the ridge lines and tree screens that contain the significant views.

For ease, these areas are shown on Figure 15 with an outer boundary that broadly defines the setting of the park. For reference purposes, this plan also includes a 2km and 5km boundary from the edge of the Registered Park.

### 3.2 Small Scale Development

This category of development includes small numbers of dwellings, individual and groups of agricultural buildings, small groups of other buildings, such as holiday chalets. The sensitivity of the five elements of the setting to small scale development is assessed below.

#### 3.2.1 **Element 1: Ground visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L**

Within the ground beyond the park boundaries which is visible within these key views, the main aspect of their contribution to the significance of the views is their rural generally open nature, especially on the key axial views identified in Section 2, the directions of which are shown on Figure 8.

Most of this visible ground, which forms part of the key views, tends to be located on the rising ground within the landscape's containing ridges and is visible above the tree screens within and

on the edge of the park. There are currently elements which detract from the significance of the views of open ground. These include:

- The Holiday Chalets on the hill to the west of the site, which appear in both the view from Belton House Roof and Bellmount Tower
- The modern agricultural buildings with prominent roofs to the north of Belton Village, on the centre right of the northern view along the central axis from the roof of Belton House and visible from Bellmount Tower.

Future small scale development that appears in these views adjacent to the detracting elements identified above has the potential to further erode the rural character and significance of the historic views, as backdrops to the designed views.

Individual, buildings that appear as isolated in the views, may be acceptable in the areas that retain their rural character, if the materials are not prominent within the views e.g. developments should generally avoid the use of bright colours and reflective finishes.

Buildings in these locations that are more than two storeys high would be intrusive to the scene and detract from the significance of the views.

The flatter open areas beyond the boundaries of the site that are visible in the key views from within the site include:

- The areas around Manthorpe and to its north west, visible from Bellmount Tower (Assessment point E) and the north edge of the park (Assessment Point H).
- The land around Tapp's Plantation, to the west of the park, that appears in glimpses from Belton House roof
- The land to the north west of the park that appears between and beyond the trees, in views from the roof of Belton House and from Bellmount Tower.

The sensitivity of these areas, where they fall within 2km of the site, to small scale development is the same as those in the raised open ground. Flat ground beyond 2km from the site is not sensitive to small scale development, as long as it is not excessively tall in relation to its local context. Types of development that may be considered excessively tall in this area could include amongst others pylons, masts, 3+ storey buildings (depending on local context), silos, wind turbines etc. The 2km extent is important as this broadly marks the distance at which small scale development would not be visually prominent and would generally be difficult to perceive in views.

### **3.2.2 Element 2: Urban development visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L**

Urban development is most widely visible in the historically significant views within the Park from Bellmount Tower. From other significant views within the Park, no additional urban development is visible.

The significant views are not sensitive to small scale development within the boundaries of current urban development.

### **3.2.3 Element 3: Areas visible from the key approach points I J K and M and routes (1-9)**

On the key approach routes there are significant views into and over the park. In some of these a number of intrusive features that detract from the general views of the park appear in front of or behind the park, or immediately adjacent to it. These include:

- Views of the Alma Park Industrial Estate in views over the park from viewpoint M, on approach route 1 (see Figure 8).
- On approach route 9, although there are no views to any depth into the park, the view towards the park is dominated by the modern buildings on its south edge, at a higher level.

- On approach route 3 the glimpses of the park to the south of assessment point F are in places obstructed by modern buildings.

The views from the main viewing points on the approach roads towards the site preserve their significance, where they are currently relatively unobstructed. Where views of and across the park have intrusive elements in front of the park, these detract from the significance of the view. Where new development is to one side of the view of the park, these will have less of an impact on the significance of the views on the approach routes, as the view will continue to provide the viewer with an appreciation of the character of the park, indicate its location and convey some degree of legibility for the visitor.

The views towards the park along the approach routes to the site, are sensitive to small scale development. Isolated or small groups of buildings and structures of two storeys or less within the foreground of these views into the park would not detract from these views where the views of the park itself would remain substantially clear. However, small scale development that obscures parts of the park from these views, or unduly tall buildings in the foreground of these views would adversely affect their significance.

As discussed in Section 2, the rural landscape around the major approach routes (mainly routes 1 and 2) contributes towards the appreciation of the parks generally rural setting. Small scale development in these areas is unlikely to significantly degrade the rural character although it may have negative impact on it.

#### **3.2.4 Element 4: Areas where the ground is not visible between the park boundary and the containing ridgelines and tree screens that prevent far reaching views**

This category includes the tree screens themselves outside the park and the ground hidden behind them within the views.

The tree screens are very sensitive to any development that will thin out the tree cover, including small scale development which does so.

The ground that is hidden by the tree screens is not considered to be sensitive to small scale development that does not rise above the tree screens in the significant views from within the Park or that would be strongly visible through the screens in winter. Generally this means that this hidden ground is not sensitive to small-scale development of two storeys or less, as long as it does not interrupt significant views towards the site identified in 3.2.3 above or significantly alter the rural character of locations near to the major access routes.

#### **3.2.5 Element 5: Areas beyond the ridge lines and tree screens that contain the significant views**

Within the current views to the south east from the roof of Belton House the mast that rises behind the tree screen on the containing ridge partly detracts from the significance of the view.

These areas are not sensitive to small scale development, unless it visually rises above the ridge lines and tree screens.

### **3.3 Medium Sized Scale Development**

This category of development includes groups of 50 houses or more or large building complexes/institutions, and medium sized business or small industrial estates, below the size that would require the application of the Environmental Impact Assessment regulations (Statutory Instrument 1999 No. 293, Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations, 1999).

### 3.3.1 **Element 1: Ground visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L**

Within the ground beyond the park boundaries which is visible within these key views, the main aspect of their contribution to the significance of the views is their rural open nature, especially on the key axial views identified in Section 2, the directions of which are shown on Figure 8.

This visible ground is mostly raised ground that appears above the tree screens within the park. It also includes areas of flat ground as set out in 3.2.1 above.

The raised ground visible above the tree screens in the significant views from the park is sensitive to medium sized development, which is likely to adversely affect the significance of the significant views. Exceptions include the distant raised ground to the south west Grantham, south of Barrowby, where distance and the views of urban Grantham nearer the foreground of the view from Bellmount Tower make the view of the ground less sensitive to medium sized scale development.

The visible areas of flat ground within 2km of the site are sensitive to medium sized development. Such areas beyond 2km and within 5km of the site boundary are sensitive to bulky or high medium sized scale developments. Any such development would need to be two storeys high or lower to avoid detracting from the significance of the setting of Belton House. These areas would also be sensitive to medium sized scale development that appears very wide within the views. Wide developments would be those which, regardless of height etc, appear visually prominent in the view, and perhaps even dominate the view, by virtue of their horizontal spread across the view e.g. their presence notably alters the character of the view and begins to shift balance between developed and undeveloped areas within the view. The issue of width is important as the orientation of the development in relation to the view will alter its visual impact on the view e.g. a "hypothetical" rectangular development area presented end on will have less impact than if it was built with the full width of its face towards the view. Managing the overall orientation of development in relation to the views is therefore important in terms of minimising impact on the character of the view.

Beyond 5km from the park the setting is less sensitive to medium scale development as over this distance such development would become less visually noticeable and in many instances would not be visible

### 3.3.2 **Element 2: Urban development visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L**

The significant views are not sensitive to medium sized scale development within the boundaries of current urban development, unless they are of excessive height in relation to their local context e.g. isolated tall buildings (see CABE & English Heritage guidance on Tall Buildings - 2007), masts, turbines, pylons etc.

### 3.3.3 **Element 3: Areas visible from the key approach points I J K and M and routes (1-9)**

The views towards the park along the approach routes to the site are sensitive to medium sized scale development. Medium sized scale development that obscures parts of the park from these views, or unduly tall buildings in the foreground of these views would adversely affect the significance of those views. Low developments of two storey structures or less within the foreground of these views into the park would not detract from these views where the views of the park itself would remain intact.

The rural landscape around the major approach routes (mainly routes 1 and 2) contributes towards the appreciation of the parks generally rural setting. Medium scale development in these areas is likely to alter the rural character of these areas and consequently affect the wider rural context in which the park sits. However, as discussed in Section 2, this general rural context is of less significance than the designed views and other aspects of the park's setting.

### 3.3.4 **Element 4: Areas where the ground is not visible between the park boundary and the containing ridgelines and tree screens that prevent far reaching views**

The tree screens are sensitive to any development that will thin out the tree cover, including medium sized scale development.

The ground that is hidden by the tree screens is not sensitive to medium scale development that does not rise above the tree screens in the significant views from within the Park. Generally this means that this hidden ground is not sensitive to development of two storeys or less, as long as it does not interrupt significant views towards the site identified in 3.2.3 above.

The ground that is hidden by the tree screens is not generally considered to be sensitive to medium scale development that does not rise above the tree screens in the significant views from within the Park or that would be strongly visible through the screens in winter. Generally this means that this hidden ground is not sensitive to medium-scale development of two storeys or less, as long as it does not interrupt significant views towards the site identified in 3.2.3 above or significantly alter the rural character of locations near to the major access routes.

### 3.3.5 **Element 5: Areas beyond the ridge lines and tree screens that contain the significant views**

These areas are not sensitive to medium sized scale development, unless it visually rises above the ridge lines and tree screens.

## 3.4 Major Development

Major development includes large urban extensions, and developments that trigger the Environmental Impact Assessment regulations (Statutory Instrument 1999 No. 293, Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations, 1999).

### 3.4.1 **Element 1: Ground visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L**

This visible ground is mostly raised ground that appears above the tree screens within the park. It also includes areas of flat ground as set out in 3.2.1 above.

The raised ground visible above the tree screens in the significant views from the park is very sensitive to major development as such development is likely to adversely affect the significance of the significant views.

The visible areas of flat ground within 2km of the site are sensitive to major development and such development would detract from the significance of the views.

In the areas of flat ground between 2km and 5km of the park boundary the views of flat ground would be sensitive to bulky or high major developments. As discussed in Section 3.3.1 above, the width of development (regardless of height) in terms of their relationship to the view is also an important issue in terms of impact on the character of the view.

Beyond 5km from the park boundary the views would not be sensitive to major development unless it is tall.

### 3.4.2 **Element 2: Urban development visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L**

The significant views are not sensitive to major development within the boundaries of current urban development, unless this is of excessive height or of a design which uses highly visible materials or highly visible lighting that would be prominent in the significant views from within the park.

### 3.4.3 **Element 3: Areas visible from the key approach points I J K and M and routes (1-9)**

The views towards the park along the approach routes to the site, are sensitive to major development. Major developments are likely to interrupt views of the park, rather than being foreground features that do not interrupt views of the park itself. Additionally they are likely to affect the generally rural landscape character of the areas around the major approach routes (mainly routes 1 and 2). However this general rural context is of less significance than the designed views and other aspects of the park's setting.

### 3.4.4 **Element 4: Areas where the ground is not visible between the park boundary and the containing ridgelines and tree screens that prevent far reaching views**

The tree screens are sensitive to any development that will thin out the tree cover, including major development.

The ground that is hidden by the tree screens is not generally considered to be sensitive to major development that does not rise above the tree screens in the significant views from within the Park or that would be strongly visible through the screens in winter. Generally this means that this hidden ground is not sensitive to major development of two storeys or less, as long as it does not interrupt significant views towards the site identified in 3.2.3 above or significantly alter the rural character of locations near to the major access routes

### 3.4.5 **Element 5: Areas beyond the ridge lines and tree screens that contain the significant views**

These areas are not sensitive to major development, unless it visually rises above the ridge lines and tree screens that contain the views. Major development that does rise above the ridge lines and distant tree screens in the significant views out of the park would be detrimental to these views.

## 3.5 Tall Buildings/Structures

Tall structures include wind turbines, tall masts, power plant / manufacturing plant chimneys, as well as tall buildings. CABE & English Heritage *Guidance on Tall Buildings* (2007: Section 4.1) broadly defines tall buildings as:

- Buildings significantly taller than the surrounding buildings; and / or
- Buildings that have a significant impact on the city's skyline

For the purposes of this study and in the urban context of Grantham, where most buildings visible in the significant views from the park are 2-5 storeys, tall buildings are assumed to be 9 storeys or more in height as this would constitute development that is "significantly" taller than that currently within Grantham and it would consequently have a "significant" impact on the towns skyline akin to that of a church spire. For comparison the spire on St Wulfram Church is c. 24 storeys high (assuming 3.5m storey height).

### 3.5.1 **Element 1: Ground visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L**

The views of the open ground in the significant views from the park are sensitive to tall structures, especially where they will rise above the tops of the containing ridges and tree screens in the significant views.

Tall structures in flat open ground in the significant views, within 5km of the site boundary would be unacceptably detrimental to the significance of the view.

Beyond 5km the sensitivity of the views depends on the degree of intrusion produced by the tall structure. Although there will be detrimental effects from these they may not be unacceptably detrimental, especially if isolated and narrow.



### 3.5.2 **Element 2: Urban development visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L**

The views of Grantham generally include dense areas of 2-5 storey buildings. The spire of Manthorpe church figures prominently in some of the significant views to the south and south west and other tall structures within Grantham stand out from the other structures, adding variety to the scene, without appearing over-prominently within the significant views.

The views over the urban area of Grantham, within the key views from Belton House and Bellmount Tower, are sensitive to tall buildings/structures, where they would appear above and outside the limits of the urban area in the significant views, or where they appear too close to Manthorpe Church in the views.

### 3.5.3 **Element 3: Areas visible from the key approach points I J K and M and routes (1-9)**

Tall buildings and structures in the foreground of the views of the site from the key approach routes would be detrimental to the significance of the views as they would interrupt views of the park and represent a distracting focal point in front of the park.

Where tall buildings are visible in these approach route views to one side of the park they would only be detrimental to the views if immediately adjacent to the park, where they would overawe the views of the park itself. If tall structures appeared more than 200m to one side of the park in these views they would not detract from their significance although they may affect the generally rural landscape character of the areas around the major approach routes (mainly routes 1 and 2). However, this general rural context is of less significance than the designed views and other aspects of the park's setting.

Tall buildings appearing behind the park in the approach route views into the park would be detrimental to the views.

### 3.5.4 **Element 4: Areas where the ground is not visible between the park boundary and the containing ridgelines and tree screens that prevent far reaching views**

The tree screens are sensitive to any development that will thin out the tree cover, including tall buildings.

Where the ground is not visible in the significant views within the containing ridges and tree screens that prevent far reaching views, the significance of the views would be sensitive to tall structures.

Where tall structures rise above the screening elements that prevent the ground being seen they will detract from the significance of the view. The only exception to this is where the tall structure would appear wholly within the boundaries (vertical and horizontal) of the existing urban development.

### 3.5.5 **Element 5: Areas beyond the ridge lines and tree screens that contain the significant views**

Tall buildings that rise above the containing ridge lines or the tree screens that prevent far reaching views would detract from the significant views unless they were far away (in excess of 5km from the site boundary), did not impinge upon the historical designed views (e.g. westerly views from Bellmount Tower), appeared narrow in the view and appeared isolated.

## 3.6 Summary

The sensitivity assessment above has described the sensitivity to development of the five elements of setting shown in Figure 15. The sensitivity of these areas to development is summarised below:

### 3.6.1 Element 1: Open ground visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L

The open ground visible from Belton House roof, Bellmount Tower viewing gallery, and from the significant assessed views from within the park is sensitive to small scale development adjacent to the elements that already detract from the views. On flat open ground in these views within 2km of the park boundary and on raised ground, isolated small scale development in these locations may be acceptable providing materials are not prominent, and the buildings do not rise above two storeys. Flat ground visible in these views beyond 2km from the site boundary and the open raised ground to the south of Barrowby, is not sensitive to small scale development.

The visible open raised ground is sensitive to medium scale development except in the distant ground to the south of Barrowby. Open flat ground within 2kms of the park boundary is similarly sensitive to medium scale development. Beyond 2kms and less than 5km of the site boundary the visible flat open land is only sensitive to bulky, wide or high medium scale development. Medium scale development would need to be of two storeys or less and should not appear very wide (see Section 3.3.1) within the views if it is to avoid excessively detracting from the views.

The raised open ground and flat open ground within 2km of the park boundary, visible in the significant views from within the park are sensitive to major development. Major development between 2km and 5km from the park boundary would need to be 2 storeys or less. Beyond 5km the views would not be sensitive to major development unless it is tall.

The significant views of open ground from within the park are sensitive to tall buildings/structures. On visible flat ground, in excess of 5km, the sensitivity of the views to tall buildings depends on the degree to which they intrude on the view and the importance of the view.

### 3.6.2 Element 2: Urban development visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L

The visible urban development within the setting of Belton House and Park includes west Grantham and the villages on its fringe.

The urban areas visible from Belton House roof, Bellmount Tower viewing gallery, and from the significant assessed views from within the park are not sensitive to small scale development within the boundaries of the current urban area. They would only be sensitive to medium scale and major development, where this is of excessive height and would be prominent in the significant views. The significant views of urban areas would be sensitive to tall structures where they would appear above and outside the urban area in the views and where they would appear too close to Manthorpe church spire.

### 3.6.3 Element 3: Areas visible from the key approach points I J K and M and routes (1-9)

On the key approach routes the significance of the views is maintained by development not obstructing views of the park. These views into the park are sensitive to small and medium scale development that obstructs the views into the park. The foreground of the views into the park is less sensitive to such development, providing that it does not interrupt the views of the park and do not exceed two storeys. Major development in the foreground of the views from the approach routes is likely to interrupt views into the park. Tall buildings would be detrimental if located in the foreground or if visible in the background of the views into and over the park. If located more than 200m to one side of the park in these views they would not detract from the views' significance.

The significance of these views is less sensitive to development that appears to one side of the park in these views than to development that appears in front of and behind the park.

In terms of the general rural character of the areas around some of the approach routes development could affect this, particularly major development and tall structures, this would be detrimental to people’s ability to appreciate the wider rural context in which the park is situated. However, this general rural context is of less significance than the designed views and other aspects of the park’s setting.

### 3.6.4 Element 4: Areas where the ground is not visible between the park boundary and the containing ridgelines and tree screens that prevent far reaching views

The tree screens are sensitive to any development that will thin out the tree cover.

The ground that is hidden by tree screens in the significant views is not sensitive to small scale, medium scale or major development that does not rise above the tree screens or screening ridge lines. This generally means that these areas are not sensitive to development of two storeys or less. Tall buildings would be inappropriate in these areas.

### 3.6.5 Element 5: Areas beyond the ridge lines and tree screens that contain the significant views

The containing ridge lines and the tree screens that rise over them are sensitive to any development that rises visibly above the level of the ridge or ridge top tree screens.

### 3.6.6 Summary Table

Table 2 below summarises the sensitivity of the various aspects of the setting of Belton House and Park to the various types of development.

**Table 2: Table summarising the sensitivity to development of the different aspects of Belton House and Park’s setting**

Element of setting	Small-Scale Development	Medium Sized Development	Major Development	Tall Structures
Element 1: Ground visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L	<p><b>Sensitive</b></p> <p>Sensitive to development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adjacent to detracting elements</li> <li>• in groups</li> <li>• over 2 storeys</li> <li>• with highly visible materials</li> </ul> <p><b>Not sensitive</b> in flat ground over 2km from park.</p>	<p><b>Exceptionally sensitive</b></p> <p>Raised ground and flat ground within 2km of park is sensitive</p> <p>Flat areas beyond 2-5km from the site are sensitive to bulky, wide or high development</p>	<p><b>Exceptionally sensitive</b></p> <p>Unlikely to be suited for this form of development, except on flat ground 2-5km from the park, where it would have to be 2 storeys or less and in excess of 5km where development should not be tall.</p>	<p><b>Exceptionally sensitive</b></p> <p>Beyond 5km from the park sensitivity depends on location, bulk and design</p>
Element 2: Urban development visible from Belton House Roof, Bellmount Tower and points D, H, and L	<p><b>Not sensitive</b></p>	<p><b>Not sensitive</b></p> <p>Unless extends visually beyond urban boundary</p>	<p><b>Not sensitive</b></p> <p>Unless extends visually beyond urban boundary</p>	<p><b>Sensitive</b></p> <p>Sensitive to tall buildings that appear in views beyond urban boundary or too close to Manthorpe Church</p>

Element of setting	Small-Scale Development	Medium Sized Development	Major Development	Tall Structures
Element 3: Areas visible from the key approach points I J K and M and routes (1-9)	<p><b>Sensitive</b></p> <p>Foreground sensitive to elements that obstruct views into park</p>	<p><b>Sensitive</b></p> <p>Foreground is <b>very sensitive</b> to elements that obstruct views into park, other aspects are Sensitive</p>	<p><b>Very Sensitive</b></p> <p>Foreground is very sensitive. Views over park are more sensitive than the parts of views to the sides of the park</p>	<p><b>Very Sensitive</b></p> <p>Unacceptable in foreground and background, but may be acceptable away from and to sides of park in views</p>
Element 4: Areas where the ground is not visible between the park boundary and the containing ridgelines and tree screens that prevent far reaching views	<p><b>Sensitive</b></p> <p>Especially the tree screens themselves, which are <b>very sensitive</b>. These areas are sensitive to development that is visible above the tree screens and ridges that conceal the ground from view. These areas may also be sensitive as elements of the approach routes</p>	<p><b>Sensitive</b></p> <p>Especially the tree screens themselves, which are <b>very sensitive</b>. These areas are sensitive to development that is visible above the tree screens and ridges that conceal the ground from view. These areas may also be sensitive as elements of the approach routes</p>	<p><b>Sensitive</b></p> <p>Especially the tree screens themselves, which are <b>very sensitive</b>. These areas are sensitive to development that is visible above the tree screens and ridges that conceal the ground from view. These areas may also be sensitive as elements of the approach routes</p>	<p><b>Exceptionally sensitive</b></p>
Element 5: Areas beyond the ridge lines and tree screens that contain the significant views	<p><b>Not sensitive</b></p> <p>Except to development that rises above ridge or tree line</p>	<p><b>Not sensitive</b></p> <p>Except to development that rises above ridge or tree line</p>	<p><b>Not sensitive</b></p> <p>Except to development that rises above ridge or tree line</p>	<p><b>Exceptionally sensitive</b></p> <p>Where development rises over ridge line or ridge top tree line</p>

## 4. PLANNING POLICY REVIEW

### 4.1 Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15)

PPG15 provides a statement of Government policy for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic environment. The key policies in relation to this study are considered below.

#### 4.1.1 Historic Parks and Gardens

Whilst these do not receive any statutory protection in terms of planning control local authorities are encouraged to give appropriate protection to Historic Parks and Gardens in development plans and when determining planning applications.

When included in the development plan the effect of a development proposal on a registered park or garden will be a material consideration.

Paragraph 2.24 of PPG15 states that:

*“Again no additional statutory controls follow from the inclusion of a site in English Heritage’s Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest (see paragraph 6.38), but local planning authorities should protect registered parks and gardens in preparing development plans and in determining planning applications. The effect of proposed development on a registered park or garden or its setting is a material consideration in the determination of a planning application. Planning and highway authorities should also safeguard registered parks or gardens when themselves planning new developments or road schemes.”*

#### 4.1.2 The Wider Historic Landscape

The quality and character of historic landscapes should where possible be conserved through appropriate management. Local Authorities should assess the qualities of landscapes as part of development plan preparation to ensure that policies are sufficiently robust to ensure that the historic character is maintained

#### 4.1.3 The Settings of Listed buildings

Paragraphs 2.16, 2.17 and 3.5 iii of PPG15 draw attention to statutory requirement for local planning authorities to have special regard to preserving the settings of listed buildings when considering applications that affect their setting. Paragraphs 2.16 and 2.17 are quoted below:

*“2.16 Sections 16 and 66 of the Act [Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990] require authorities considering applications for planning permission or listed building consent for works which affect a listed building to have special regard to certain matters, including the desirability of preserving the setting of the building. The setting is often an essential part of the building’s character, especially if a garden or grounds have been laid out to complement its design or function...”*

*2.17 Local planning authorities are required under section 67 of the Act to publish a notice of all applications they receive for planning permission for any development which, in their opinion, affects the setting of a listed building. This provision should not be interpreted too narrowly: the setting of a building may be limited to obviously ancillary land, but may often include land some distance from it. Even where a building has no ancillary land - for example in a crowded urban street - the setting may encompass a number of other properties. The setting of individual listed buildings very often owes its character to the harmony produced by a particular grouping of buildings (not necessarily all of great individual merit) and to the quality of the spaces created between them. Such areas require careful appraisal when proposals for development are under*

*consideration, even if the redevelopment would only replace a building which is neither itself listed nor immediately adjacent to a listed building. Where a listed building forms an important visual element in a street, it would probably be right to regard any development in the street as being within the setting of the building. A proposed high or bulky building might also affect the setting of a listed building some distance away, or alter views of a historic skyline. In some cases, setting can only be defined by a historical assessment of a building's surroundings. If there is doubt about the precise extent of a building's setting, it is better to publish a notice."*

#### **4.1.4 Conservation Areas**

Section 4.14 of PPG 15 discusses the importance of setting to the special character of Conservation Areas and states that:

*"Section 72 of the Act [Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990] requires that special attention shall be paid in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.... ...The desirability of preserving or enhancing the area should also, in the Secretary of State's view, be a material consideration in the planning authority's handling of development proposals which are outside the conservation area but would affect its setting, or views into or out of the area..."*

## **4.2 East Midlands Regional Plan**

This East Midlands Regional Plan comprises the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands for the period up to 2026. It also replaces the previous RSS8 and all policies in adopted structure plans

It provides the strategy on which to base the preparation of individual local development frameworks and Local Transport Plans, and to aid the determination of planning applications. The Plan provides a broad development strategy by identifying the scale and distribution of provision for new housing and priorities for the environment, transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, energy, minerals and waste treatment and disposal. Key relevant policies include:

### **4.2.1 Policy 1 Core Strategy Objectives**

- *To protect and enhance the environmental quality of urban and rural settlements to make them safe, attractive, clean and crime free places to live, work and invest in, through promoting amongst other things, enhancements to the urban fringe.*
- *To protect and enhance the environment through the protection, enhancement, sensitive use and management of the Region's natural, cultural and historic assets.*

### **4.2.2 Policy 2 Promoting Better Design**

- *The layout, design and construction of new development should be continuously improved, including in terms of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and providing resilience to future climate change, by design led approaches which take account of local natural and historic character.*

### **4.2.3 Policy 26 Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Cultural Heritage**

- *Sustainable development should ensure the protection, appropriate management and enhancement of the Region's natural and cultural heritage. As a result the following principles should be applied:*
  - *the Region's internationally and nationally designated natural and historic assets should receive the highest level of protection;*



- *damage to natural and historic assets or their settings should be avoided wherever and as far as possible, recognising that such assets are usually irreplaceable;*
- *unavoidable damage must be minimised and clearly justified by a need for development in that location which outweighs the damage that would result;*
- *unavoidable damage which cannot be mitigated should be compensated for, preferably in a relevant local context, and where possible in ways which also contribute to social and economic objectives;*
- *there should be a net increase in the quality and active management of natural and historic assets across the Region in ways that promote adaptation to climate change, and an increase in the quantity of environmental assets generally;*

#### **4.2.4 Policy 27 Regional Priorities for the Historic Environment**

- *The historic environment should be understood, conserved and enhanced, in recognition of its own intrinsic value, and its contribution to the Region's quality of life. Across the Region and particularly in areas where growth or regeneration is a priority, development should promote sensitive change of the historic environment. To achieve this, Local Planning Authorities should:*
  - *identify and assess the significance of specific historic assets and their settings;*
  - *use characterisation to understand their contribution to the landscape or townscape in areas of change;*
  - *encourage the refurbishment and re-use of disused or under-used buildings of some historic or architectural merit and incorporating them sensitively into regeneration schemes;*
  - *promote the use of local building materials; and*
  - *recognise the opportunities for enhancing existing tourism attractions and for developing the potential of other areas and sites of historic interest as part of Green Infrastructure, having regard to potential impacts on biodiversity.*

#### **4.2.5 Policy 31 Priorities for the Management and Enhancement of the Region's Landscape**

- *The Region's natural and heritage landscapes should be protected and enhanced by:*
  - *the establishment of criteria-based policies in Local Development Frameworks to ensure that development proposals respect intrinsic landscape character in rural and urban fringe areas, including, where appropriate, recognition of the value of tranquillity and dark skies; and*
  - *the identification in Local Development Frameworks of landscape and biodiversity protection and enhancement objectives through the integration of Landscape Character Assessments with historic and ecological assessments.*
- *Where not already in place, Local Authorities should prepare Landscape Character Assessments to inform the preparation of Local Development Frameworks. These can also be used to develop Supplementary Planning Documents.*

### **4.3 South Kesteven Core Strategy**

The Core Strategy is a key part of the Local Development Framework and provides the spatial policy framework for development and change in the District for the period to 2026, and establishes the key principles which should guide the location, use and form of development. The

Core Strategy Submission Version was published in January 2009 for consultation. The Core Strategy has been submitted for examination and this is due to commence in January 2010.

#### 4.3.1 SP1: Spatial Strategy

- *The majority of all new development should be focused upon Grantham to support and strengthen its role as a Sub-Regional Centre. New development proposals shall be considered on appropriate sustainable and deliverable brownfield sites and appropriate greenfield sites (including urban extensions), sufficient to ensure the achievement of growth targets.*

#### 4.3.2 EN1: Protection and Enhancement Of The Character Of The District

- *South Kesteven's Landscape Character Areas are identified on the map. Development must be appropriate to the character of the landscape within which it is situated, and contribute to its conservation, enhancement or restoration. All development proposals will be assessed in relation to:*
  - *Local distinctiveness and sense of place;*
  - *Historic character, patterns and attributes of the landscape*
  - *The quality and character of the built fabric and their settings*
  - *The condition of the landscape*
  - *Public access to and community value of the landscape*
  - *Visual intrusion*
  - *Conservation Area Appraisals and Village Design Statements*

#### 4.3.3 H1: Residential Development

- *Housing growth should be focused on Grantham to deliver the wider social and economic aspirations of Grantham Growth Point Partnership. There is a requirement for a further 7000 homes in the Grantham growth area in addition to existing commitments.*
- *It is envisaged that a large proportion of the new housing will be delivered in two sustainable urban extensions (Policy H2) at Poplar Farm and the Southern Quadrant.*

### 4.4 South Kesteven Local Plan

The Local Plan was adopted in 1995. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 introduced a new system of plan making to replace the two tier system of Structure Plans and Local Plans. The Local Plan will eventually be replaced by the Local Development Framework (LDF). In the intervening period until the LDF is adopted some of the Local Plan policies have been saved to ensure that proper policy coverage is maintained.

The following policies relating to the protection of open spaces, countryside and historic areas have been saved under the new system pending their replacement.

#### 4.4.1 H7: Housing in Other Settlements

This policy sets out the likely scale appropriate in the smaller settlements in the District and gives criteria that will be considered when determining planning applications.

The policy makes a specific reference to not normally permitting new residential in Belton village. This strict limitation on development in Belton will protect the unique architectural style, form and character of the estate village.



#### 4.4.2 **EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Environment**

This policy provides guidance on how new development should be considered against the need to protect and enhance the environment of towns, villages and the countryside. This may require the prevention of development in certain locations and in others by ensuring high quality design.

Development proposals should ensure that the visual quality and amenity of built and countryside environments are conserved and enhanced, in particular known archaeological sites, features of heritage significance, landscape features or prominent views.

#### 4.4.3 **EN6: Open Areas Important to the Character and Setting of Built-Up Areas**

This policy seeks to protect areas within and adjacent to settlements which by virtue of their open and undeveloped character make an important contribution to the character of the place.

In the case of Grantham the land alongside the River Witham from Belton Park to Wyndham Park is designated under this policy. In this location planning permission will not normally be granted which would destroy or adversely affect the open character of the area.

#### 4.4.4 **EN7: Historic Parks and Gardens**

There are 7 parks in the District currently on the English Heritage register, including Belton House. Care needs to be taken to ensure that development within and adjacent to these areas enhances the historical value.

The District Council will not normally approve development which would destroy or adversely affect the character, appearance or setting of the historic parks and gardens.

#### 4.4.5 **Expired Policies**

There are a number of policies that have not been saved in the Local Plan and have now expired. Two of these relate to specific landscape designations:

- EN3: Areas of Great Landscape Value
- EN4: Prominent Areas for Special Protection

These policies sought to protect the high visual quality of the landscapes identified on the proposals map, including Lincolnshire escarpment and hills around Grantham.

These policies have been removed on the basis of guidance contained in PPS7 which advises against local landscape designations. These issues have now been covered by more general policies in the Core Strategy and the Landscape Character Assessment.

### 4.5 **South Kesteven Landscape Character Assessment (2007)**

The District Council has prepared a Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape Character Assessment is a tool used to define areas in the landscape which are distinctly different from one another by looking at a combination of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, human settlement and built form.

The Landscape Character Assessment provides an understanding of the landscape, its history and future pressures and is designed as a basis to provide guidance for future management strategies which will help secure the unique qualities and subtle idiosyncrasies which make South Kesteven special. This can then be used to ensure that sensitive areas are protected and also that opportunities for improving the landscape character are highlighted.

The town of Grantham and the surrounding areas fall within the Grantham Scarps and Valleys Character Area. The area relating to Belton is characterised by the following features:

- Built development in Grantham is generally on the lower lying land in valleys;
- Steep scarp slopes to the east and south;

- Attractive parkland and woodland at Belton;
- Small villages separated from Grantham by narrow areas of open countryside.

The Assessment makes the following recommendations in relation to how new development within this landscape is managed:

- Protect and enhance woodlands and parklands;
- Soften harsh urban edges by new woodland planting;
- Avoid built development on the higher scarp slopes;
- Use new development, and associated structural landscape, to soften existing harsh urban edges;
- Maintain a varied urban edge with fringes of countryside extending into the town;
- Protect gaps between Grantham and existing villages.

The assessment also provides an analysis of the sensitivity of the landscape to accommodate new employment and residential development around the town. This provides a graphical representation of the differing sensitivities to development ranging from high to low. The assessment concludes that there would be high landscape sensitivity to potential wind turbine development.

This assessment was based on the sensitivity of the landscape character of the area, not on analysis of the setting of historic environment assets such as Belton Park and House. It is entirely feasible that the two studies would identify differing levels of sensitivity for the same areas of land as they are examining entirely different concepts.

## 4.6 Belton Conservation Area Appraisal (January 2009)

The village of Belton is located immediately adjacent to the northern boundary of Belton House and was designated as a Conservation Area in 1985 and the boundary was subsequently amended in 2009. The development of the village is closely related to Belton House having been commissioned in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century as a model village for the estate workers.

The Conservation Area Appraisal provides a descriptive analysis of the spatial character of the area and the quality and character of the buildings. It also identifies opportunities for development management and enhancement of the Conservation Area.

The close relationship, both historically and physically with Belton House and its parkland setting is an important element of the special character of the village. Consequently any proposals for the enhancement of the Conservation Area will have a wider beneficial impact on Belton House. Similarly inappropriate development in the Belton Conservation Area will have a negative impact.

## 4.7 Assessment of the Need for Further Policy to Protect the Setting of Belton House

### 4.7.1 Current policy and development issues

Existing National, Regional and Local policy provides clear provision for the protection of the setting of Belton House and Park. The following explores the implications of this policy framework in relation to the four types of development set out in Section 3. Section 4.7.2 examines some of the issues arising from this.

#### **Small Scale Development**

In certain locations small scale development could have an impact on the setting of the Park and many areas of the site's setting are considered "sensitive" to this form of change (see Section 3

for further details). In terms of development within the existing urban area of Grantham there are no issues relating to small-scale development. Consequently, current policy should be sufficient and there is no requirement for further policy to mitigate these potential impacts.

In the wider countryside and surrounding villages there may be impacts associated with this form of development. Key potential issues include:

- The need to limit the height and massing of buildings;
- The need to ensure the use of appropriate materials;
- The need to retain views into the Park on the approach routes; and
- The need to give protection to the existing tree screens (see Section 4.7.2 for discussion of this issue).

Following its adoption, Policy SP1 (Spatial Strategy) of the Core Strategy would restrict the type and scale of development in the countryside to that relating to agriculture, like for like replacements and conversions of existing buildings. This would limit the opportunities for inappropriate development in locations that will have an impact on the setting of the park.

Where development is considered appropriate in the context of SP1 the proposed Core Strategy makes further provision for the protection and enhancement of the physical character of the area (Policy EN1). Development in these cases would be assessed against the Landscape Character Assessment and in particular to the historic character of the landscape, visual intrusion and where appropriate, adopted Conservation Area Appraisals and Village Design Statements. This could be supported by the application of National and Regional Policy relating to the impact of development on the setting of historic buildings and parks.

However, there can be issues relating to the awareness of applicants of the need to consider these policies (and policies contained in the current Local Plan) in relation to the potential impact of their development on the setting of Belton House and Park. Therefore, whilst balanced planning decisions relating to these forms of development can be determined within the existing and proposed local policy framework, and hence it is not considered necessary for a new specific policy to address these forms of development, it is recommended that consideration is given to better identifying when applicants need to consider the setting of Belton House and Park in developing their proposals and what they need to consider. This is discussed further in Section 4.7.2 below.

### **Medium Scale Development**

The sensitivity of the landscape to accommodate medium scale development varies (see Section 3). The existing urban area of Grantham is not sensitive and therefore, providing the use of excessively high buildings is avoided, there is capacity to accommodate development of this scale. The impact on areas beyond the defined ridgelines and tree screens is not considered sensitive provided that the skylining of development is avoided and the existing tree screens are afforded protection (see 4.7.2 for further discussion of this point).

Those locations where the impact is likely to be sensitive (visible ground, approach routes) are generally in locations where this scale of development is not likely to be appropriate, particularly those areas to the west, north and east of Belton Park. These areas would be protected from this type of development in Policy SP1 and EN1 in the proposed Core Strategy.

The exception to this would be on visible ground further than 2km from the Park boundary, where medium scale and major bulky development could still have a significant impact. Examples of this could include large scale agricultural development such as glass houses or polytunnels or distribution related uses connected with the A1 or East Coast Mainline.

There is potential for greater impact from medium scale development on the Grantham fringe to the south of the Park. These areas are currently outside the urban area of Grantham but are in

locations which could be considered appropriate for medium (and large scale) development to meet the requirements of the town as a growth area.

The existing policy framework should be sufficient to determine in a balanced way the acceptability of medium scale development that would affect the setting of Belton House and Park. However as with small-scale development there are issues relating to applicant awareness and the recognition of the need to manage change in the setting of Belton House and Park in the context of existing policy. So whilst current and proposed policy is felt to be sufficient for decision making purposes, further guidance on when the setting of Belton House and Park needs to be taken into account and what aspects of its setting need to be considered, would probably be of benefit to ensure the appropriate application of the proposed policy framework.

### Major Development

The impact of major development in the Grantham urban area from within Belton Park is not likely to be a significant issue provided that excessive building height is avoided.

Given the scale of development proposed for Grantham and particularly the requirement to make better use of urban land it is possible that the use of tall buildings may be appropriate. If the District Council were to consider this option then further analysis may be required to determine the capacity for tall buildings within the context of the constraints identified in this study and Grantham in general (see CABE & English Heritage Guidance on Tall Buildings – 2007).

The Core Strategy proposes two sustainable urban extensions, Poplar Farm to the west of Grantham and the Southern Quadrant to the south. It is expected that these will deliver 3500 and 4000 new homes together with required infrastructure.

The Poplar Farm location would be visible from points within the Park and it also forms part of the wider rural context for the park, it is therefore a sensitive location in terms of major development. It should also be noted that the analysis of the landscape character assessment considered this area to have a sensitivity range from low to high.

The Southern Quadrant site is not considered to be sensitive in relation to the setting of Belton Park unless the development visually rises above containing ridgelines and tree screens. This contrasts with the landscape character assessment which identifies the site as being medium / medium-high sensitivity.

Major Development, such as sustainable urban extensions could potentially have a significant impact on the setting of Belton House and Park. Current local, regional and national policy indicates that the setting of nationally important assets such as Belton Park should be conserved and that any impacts should ideally be avoided, although as stated in Regional Policy 26 (see Section 4.2.3) *“unavoidable damage must be minimised and clearly justified by a need for development in that location which outweighs the damage that would result”* and *“unavoidable damage which cannot be mitigated should be compensated for, preferably in a relevant local context, and where possible in ways which also contribute to social and economic objectives.”* This and other national and local policy provides a clear policy framework through which the acceptability of such an urban extension can be assessed.

In relation to the Poplar Farm site it is therefore important to use the design process to minimise any possible impacts on the visual setting of the park. In this regard the development of the design using the identified viewpoints as reference locations to test design ideas may provide to be a useful process in developing a scheme whose benefits can be shown to outweigh any impacts on the setting of Belton House and Park.

As with other forms of development the current and proposed policy context is considered to be robust enough to enable a balanced decision on applications for major development to be taken.

## Tall Structures

The setting of Belton House and Park is considered to be very sensitive to tall structures, both within the containing ridge lines and beyond. Grantham and its suburbs are generally low rise in character and such buildings are likely to have an adverse effect on other designated features in addition to Belton House and Park. The more likely impact from tall buildings on Belton House and Park, is from distant tall structures e.g. wind energy developments.

Existing policy has already proved sufficient in relation to the determination of applications for wind energy development that would have affected the setting of the park and house. However, unlike other forms of development it is not feasible or desirable to create a bounded area around the Park and say that that “constitutes the setting of Belton Park as tall structures can have a visual impact at distances far beyond and reasonable area. Therefore it is important to ensure that all proposals for tall developments are assessed in terms of their impact on the setting of Belton House and Park and consequently assessed in the context of existing policy. It is also important to ensure that such developments are assessed in the context of a clear understanding so what constitutes the setting of Belton House and Park.

### 4.7.2 Outstanding issues

The preceding review has examined the different scales of development in relation to the setting of Belton House and Park and in the context of the existing and emerging policy framework. This framework provides a sufficient level of protection and guidance in relation to the setting of Belton House but there are a small number of issues that would benefit from being addressed to support the implementation of the framework, these include:

- SKDC’s need to respond to Regional Policy 27
- Providing clarity to applicants for different forms of development on whether they need to take the setting of Belton House and Park into account
- Providing clarity on what constitutes the setting of Belton House and Park
- Safeguarding the important tree belts and plantations

#### Responding to Regional Policy 27

This policy states that “*Local Planning Authorities should: identify and assess the significance of specific historic assets and their settings...*”. The study presented here, in particular Section 2 and the five elements presented on Figure 15 and set out in Section 3, address the Council’s requirement to identify and assess the setting of Belton House and Park.

A mechanism to ensure that the descriptive elements of this report carry weight within planning decisions, including within the broader allocation process, remains to be identified by the Council. It could form part of core policy; it could be incorporated into a stand-alone SPD or within another broader SPD or DPD; or it could be adopted as a document outwith the LDF. Section 4.8 sets out a way forward in this context.

#### Providing clarity to applicants for different forms of development on whether they need to take the setting of Belton House and Park into account

Currently there is no “line on a map” that would inform an applicant that they needed to consider the setting of Belton House and Park whilst developing their application and that the planning authority would need to consider it during their determination of an application. The inclusion of a defined area within a core or supplementary policy document would provide guidance to applicants and officers on this issue (the extent of setting marked on Figure 15 could serve this purpose).

In relation to tall buildings, it is however recommended that a form of policy wording be included within the LDF that would ensure that all tall developments in the plan area demonstrate what, if any, impact they would have on the setting of Belton House and Park.

#### **Providing clarity on what constitutes the setting of Belton House and Park**

Currently there is no description of the setting of Belton House and Park within the Core Strategy, Local Plan or other DPDs or SPDs. The absence of an agreed and adopted description of what constitutes the setting of Belton House and Park means that it is difficult for applicants and the determining authority to assess the acceptability of a proposal in the context of the existing policy framework. The development of Section 2 and 3 of this report could form the basis for such a description.

#### **Safeguarding the important tree belts and plantations**

The analysis of the setting presented in Section 2 indicates that the tree belts and plantations around the park are an important part of the site's setting and that their whole or partial loss would fundamentally alter the setting of the Park and House.

The protection of these woodlands is therefore considered important in terms of safeguarding the setting of Belton House and Park. In this context it is recommended that the Council reviews the possibility of placing Tree Protection Orders on the woodland blocks (inside and outside the Registered Park and Garden boundary) to support their long term retention. As working plantations cannot be covered by this approach it is recommended that the Council and its partners seek other mechanisms, e.g. negotiation and discussion to phase works and support re-planting, to help manage the potential impact of the loss of these plantations on the setting of the site.

## **4.8 Proposed Way Forward**

### **4.8.1 Overview**

The emerging Local Development Framework offers the Council the opportunity to address the issues identified above in a robust and timely manner.

The proposed Core Strategy contains policies which reflect regional and national policy. The Core Strategy is not considered the appropriate mechanism for including detailed policy and descriptive material relating to the setting of Belton House. The Core Strategy has been submitted for examination and amendments are unlikely to be achievable at this point. However, should the opportunity arise in the future it may be appropriate to consider the following very minor amendments:

- Alter text in paragraph 4.1.6 to make particular reference to Belton House and Park
- Add reference in paragraph 4.1.5 to Regional Policies 26 and 27
- Consider adding a short statement in 4.1 or 4.3 relating to the particular issues that large scale wind energy developments have on the setting of historic assets e.g. Belton House and Park.

Outside of the Core Strategy, three broad options are open to the council in relation providing the definition and detail required to address the issues set out in Section 4.7.

- One of the emerging DPDs e.g. Site Specific Allocations and Policies could be expanded / adapted to include a policy and relating;
- A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) could be prepared for the Setting of Belton House and Park; or
- A description of the Park's setting and its sensitivity could be "adopted" by the council and used to support the assessment of applications for development.



There are likely to be considerable issues associated with effectively including a policy and evidence base in a DPD. It would also potentially make the issue of the setting of Belton House less visible and could lead to it not being taken into account by applicants and when applications are determined. This would undermine its effectiveness and given the statutory difficulties associated with DPDs this is not recommended as a way forward.

The simplest approach would be for the Council to edit this study – essentially focussing it on Sections 2 and 3, to create a document that describes the setting of Belton House and Park and outlines its sensitivity. This document would then be “adopted” by the Council and used to support the determination of applications. It would not directly form part of the LDF but could still carry weight in applications. It would not however have the visibility of an SPD (see below) and is therefore really a second best choice.

A dedicated SPD would be visible, highly focussed and carry significant weight in determining applications; it would also be relevant to all forms of applications. As such the development of a short and highly focussed SPD is considered to be the most appropriate way forward.

#### 4.8.2 Recommended Way Forward: SPD

The proposed SPD could supplement a range of existing and emerging policies including:

- Policy 26 of the RSS
- Policy EN7 of the current Local Plan
- Policy EN1 of the emerging Core Strategy

It would also provide a very visible response to the requirement under Policy 27 of the RSS for Local Planning Authorities to “*identify and assess the significance of specific historic assets and their settings...*”

The SPD could be structured in broadly the following manner:

- 1) Introduction and relationship to relevant plans and policies
- 2) Description of Belton House and Park and its Setting
- 3) Guidance
- 4) Implementation and Monitoring

The document would not need to be overly long and much of Section 2 could be adapted from Sections 2 and 3 of this report.

In relation to Section 3: Guidance, the following provides an initial form of words for relating to the guidance that could supplement Policy EN7 or EN1 (see above). This text would have been preceded by a robust description of the site and its setting which would have highlighted the national importance of the site (Section 2 of the SPD). The extent of the setting would have also been defined and this has been taken to be the extent marked on Figure 15 of this report.

##### ***Protecting and Enhancing the Setting of Belton House and Park***

*Protecting and enhancing the character of Belton House and Park and its setting in the wider landscape is a key objective for the Council.*

*Proposals for all new development within the defined extent of the setting of Belton House and Park (see Plan \*\* - note this is the extent of setting on Figure 15) should demonstrate in their Design and Access Statement and, if required by the Council, in a Heritage Impact Statement, how through their location, scale, design, landscaping and materials they have responded to the setting of Belton House and Park.*

*Proposals for all tall structures i.e. wind energy turbines and communication masts, or for tall buildings within and around Grantham, whether they are situated within or*



*outwith the defined extent of the setting of Belton House and Park will need to demonstrate what, if any, impact they will have on the setting of Belton House and Park. This should be demonstrated in their Design and Access Statement and, if required by the Council, in a Heritage Impact Statement,*

*In accordance with Policy \*\* applications for development will normally be refused if they:*

- intrude on key historical and designed views,*
- degrade the open nature of key views,*
- require the loss of important woodland areas,*
- breach important ridgelines,*
- visually dominate the setting, or*
- significantly degrade the rural character of adjacent areas,*

*As set out in Policy 26 of the RSS. exceptions to this may be made when unavoidable impacts have been minimised and it is clearly shown that the need for development in that location outweighs the harm to the setting of Belton House and Park that would result from that development.*

Importantly, this statement could be supported by design guidance for developments within the defined area of the site's setting.





**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

**Client:**  
National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

**Title:**  
Figure 1  
Belton House location map

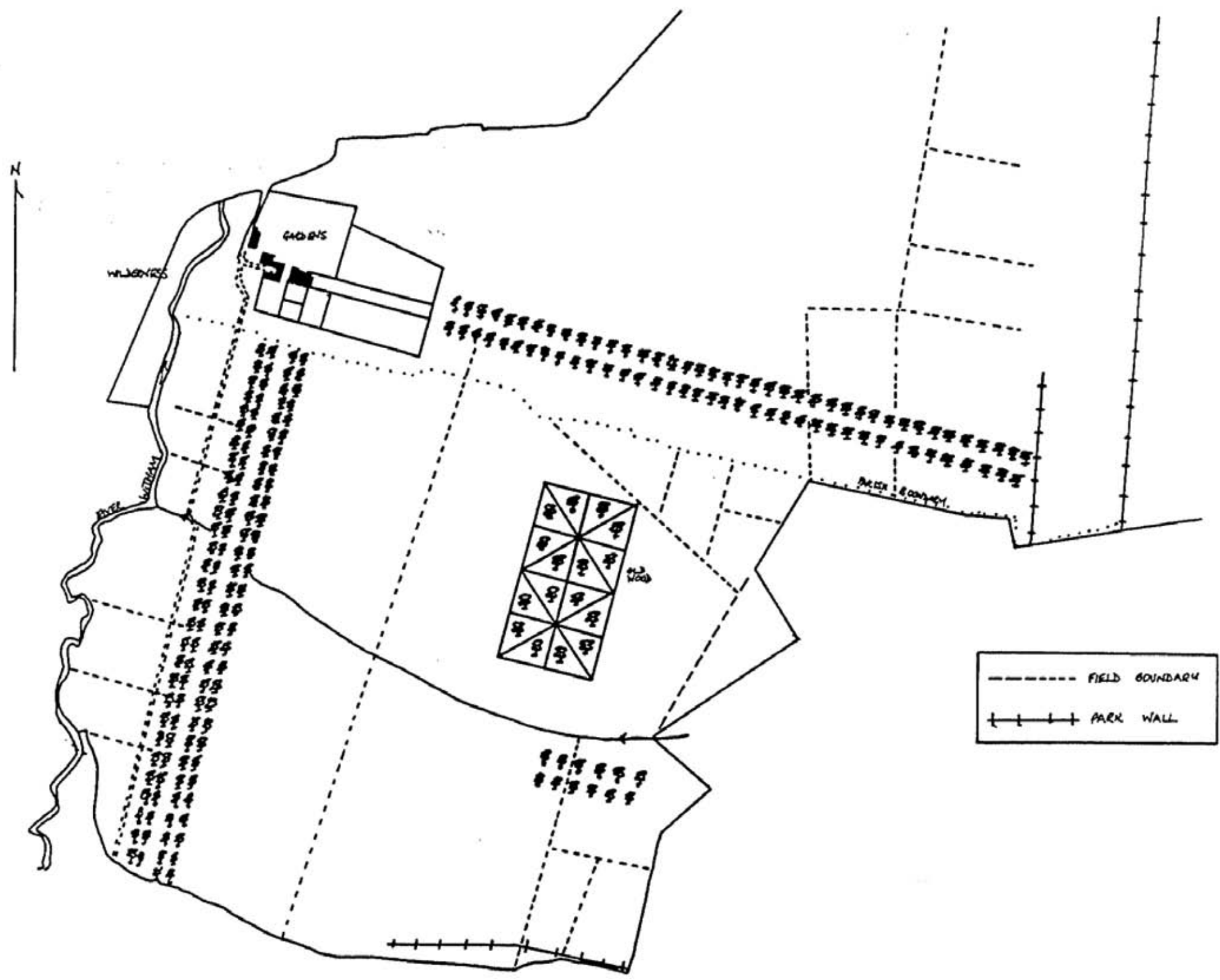
**Key:**  
— English Heritage Historic  
Park and Garden Boundary

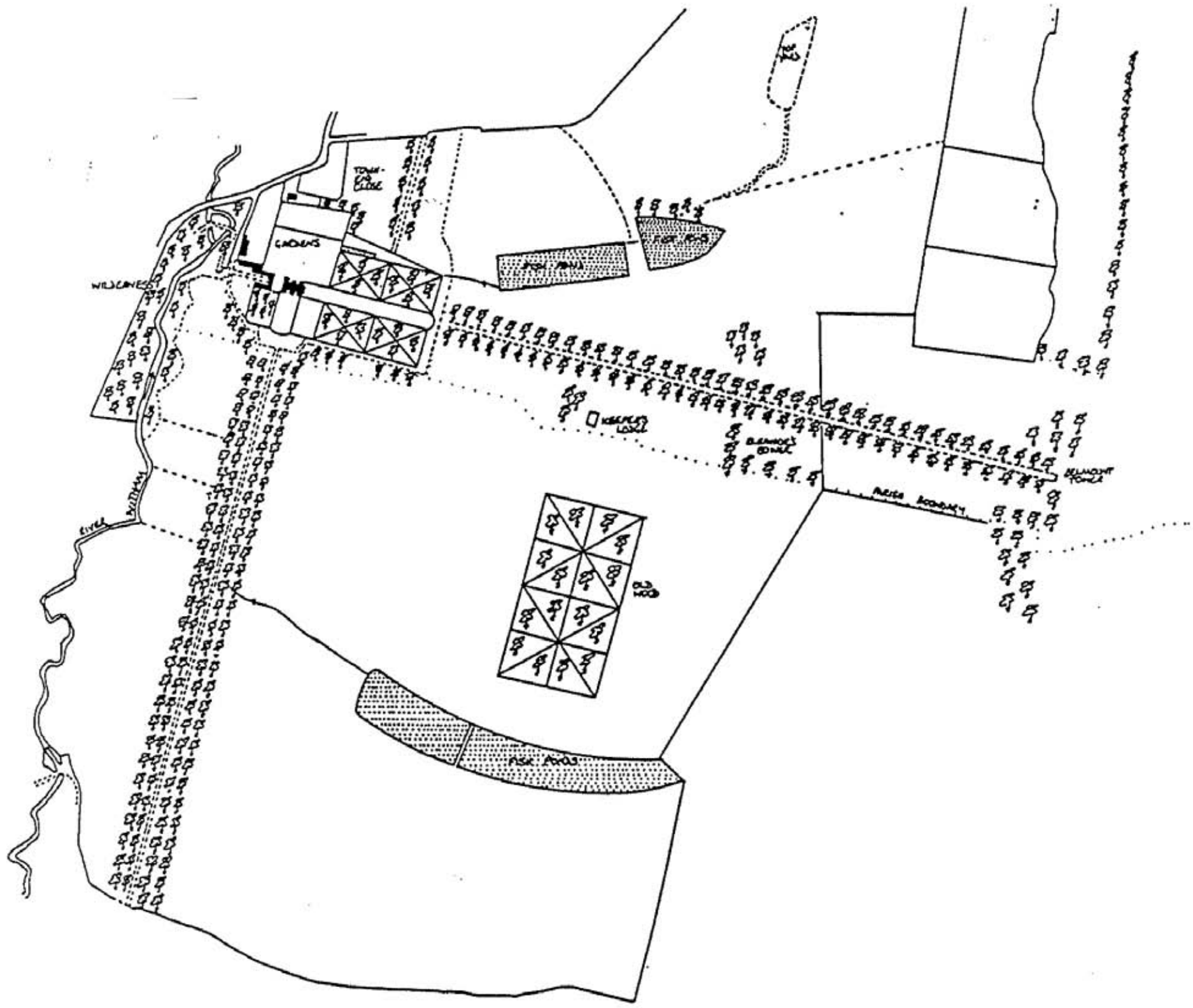


**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

**Client:**  
National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

**Title:**  
Figure 2  
Sketch Map of Belton c:1690,  
taken from A Survey of the  
Gardens and Park At Belton - Volume II,  
National Trust Report, 1986





**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

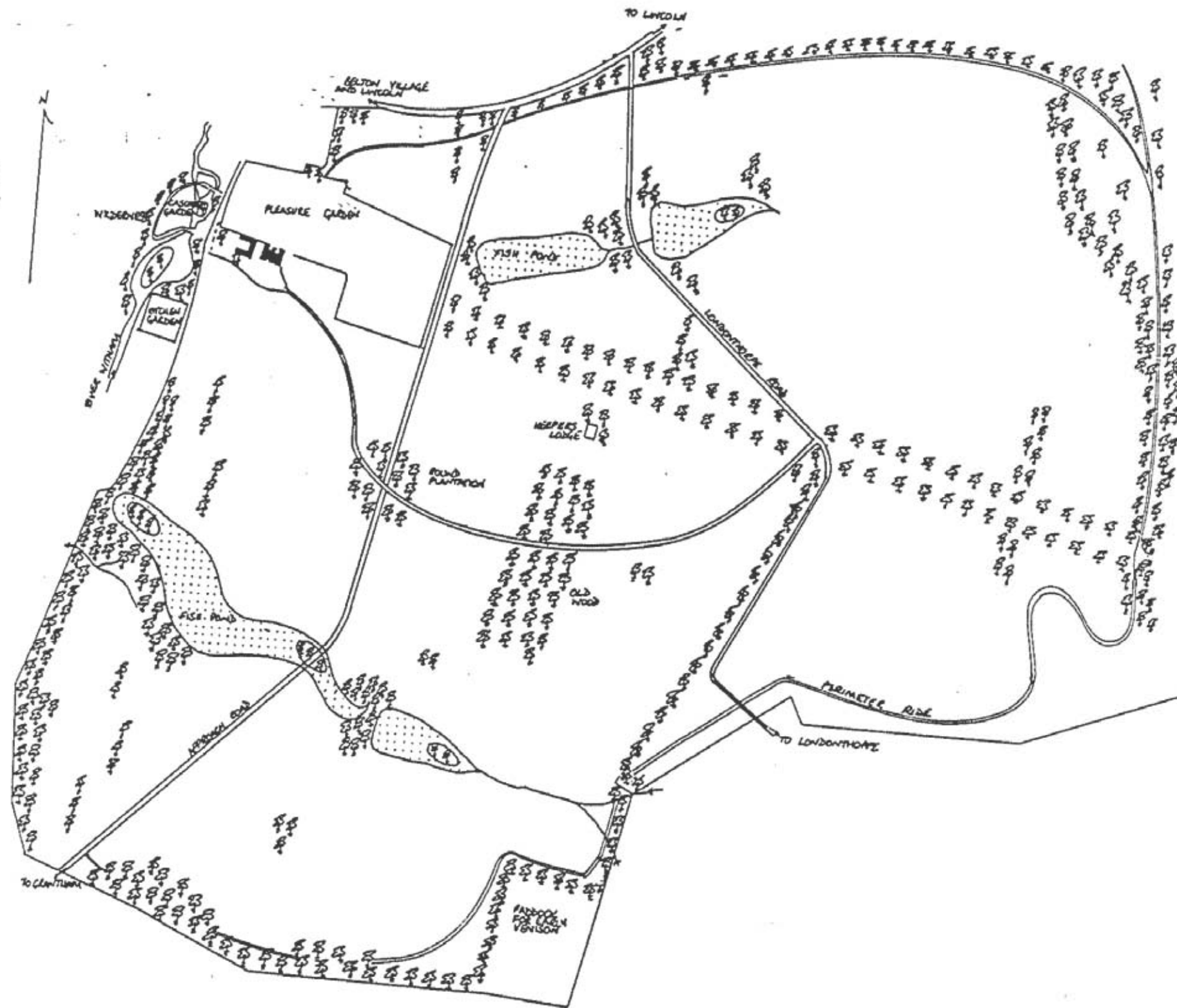
**Client:**  
National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

**Title:**  
Figure 3  
Sketch Map of Belton c:1751,  
taken from A Survey of the  
Gardens and Park At Belton - Volume II,  
National Trust Report, 1986

**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

**Client:**  
National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

**Title:**  
Figure 4 -  
Sketch Map of Belton c:1778,  
taken from A Survey of the  
Gardens and Park At Belton - Volume II,  
National Trust Report, 1986

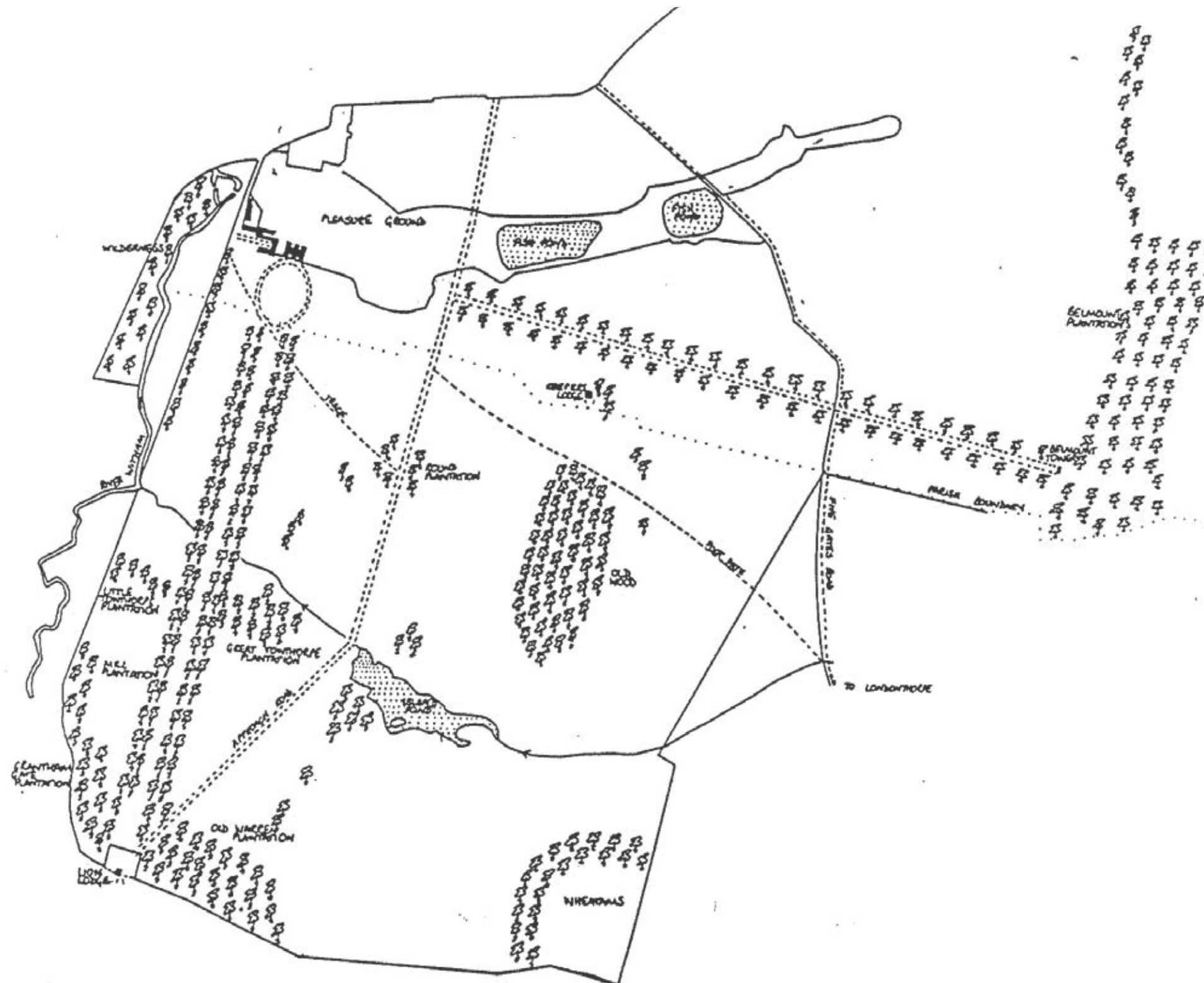




**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

**Client:**  
National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

**Title:**  
Figure 5  
Sketch Map of Belton c:1800,  
taken from A Survey of the  
Gardens and Park At Belton - Volume II,  
National Trust Report, 1986

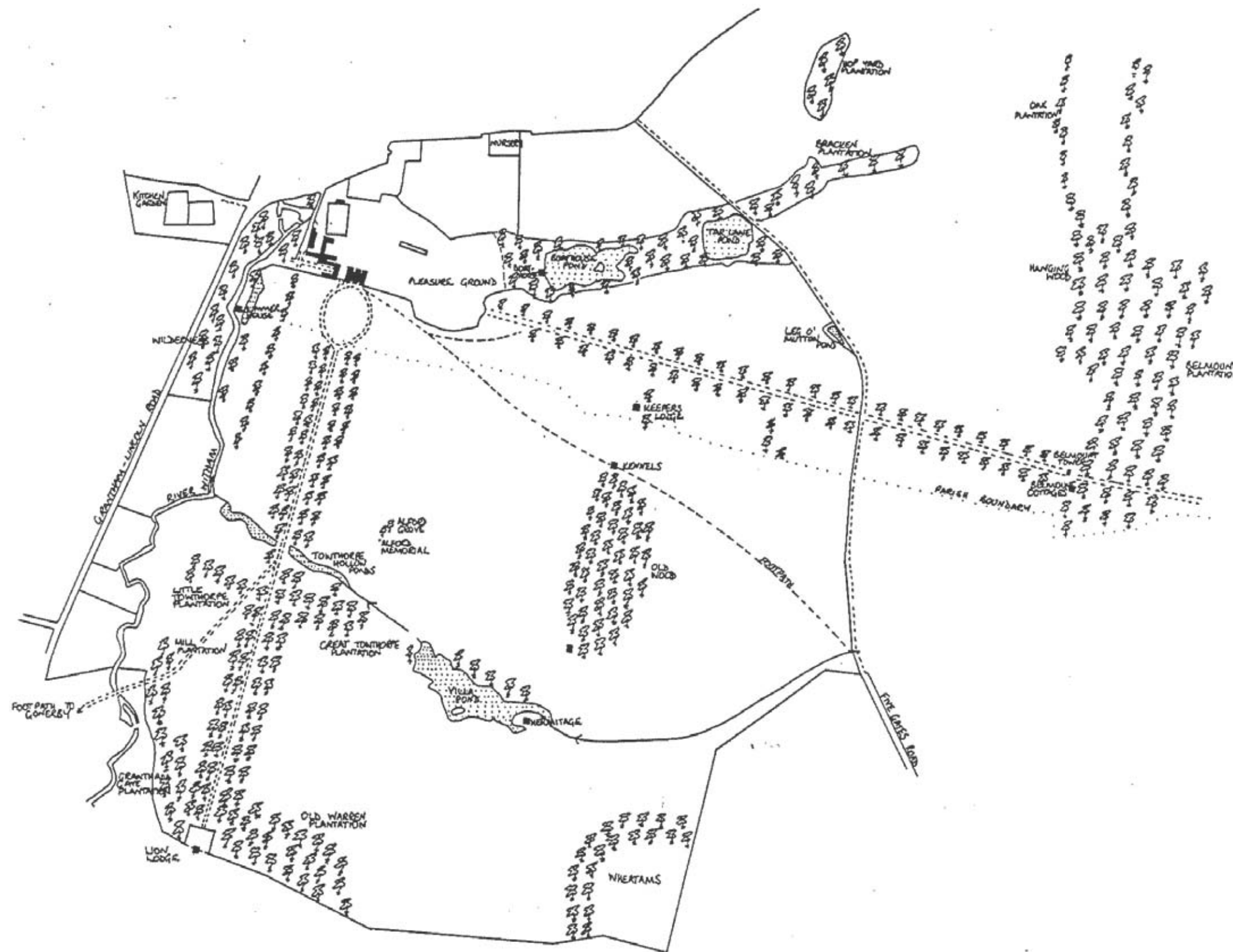




**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

**Client:**  
National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

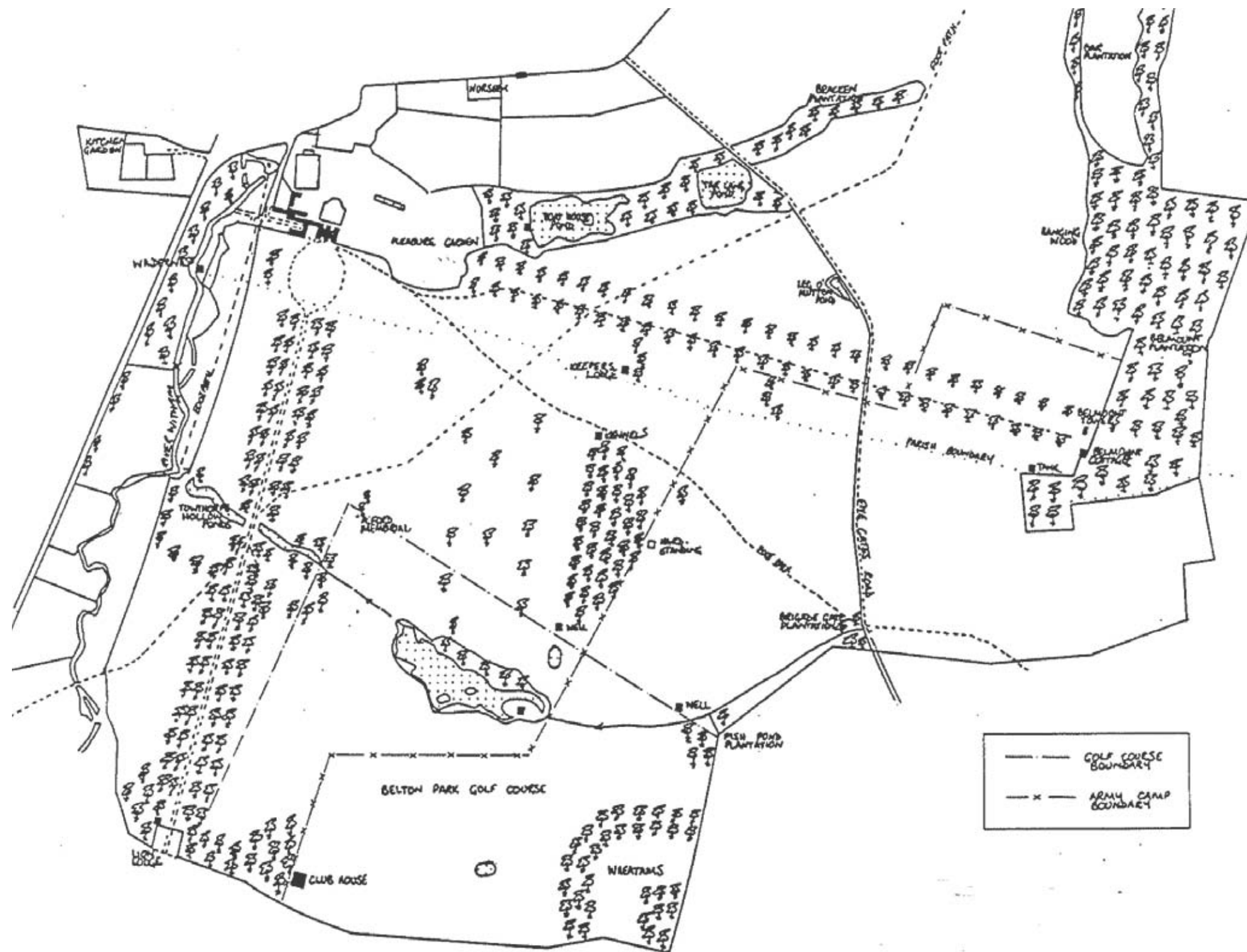
**Title:**  
Figure 6  
Sketch Map of Belton c:1852,  
taken from A Survey of the  
Gardens and Park At Belton - Volume II,  
National Trust Report, 1986



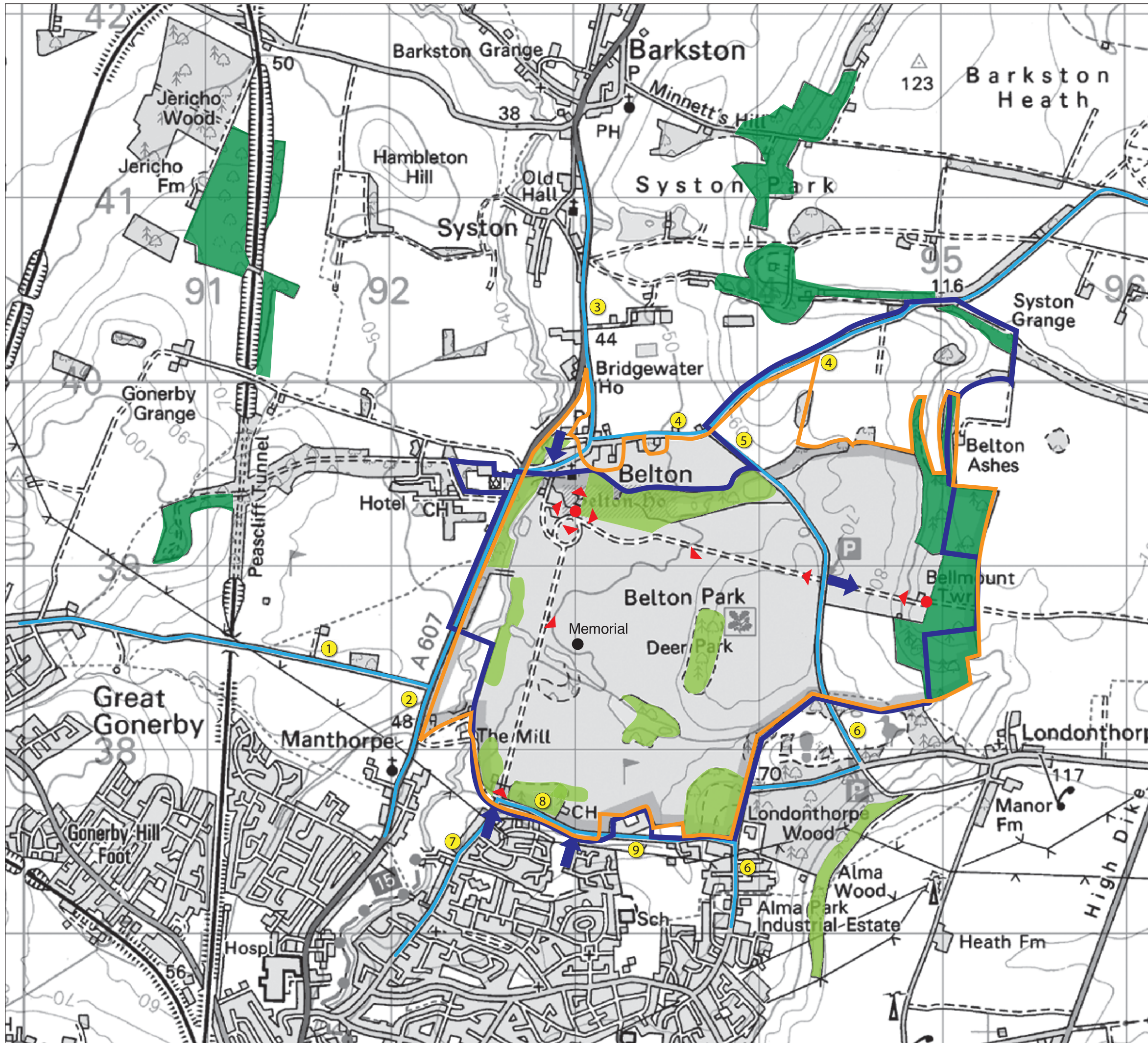
**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

**Client:**  
National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

**Title:**  
Figure 7  
Sketch Map of Belton c:1915,  
taken from A Survey of the  
Gardens and Park At Belton - Volume II,  
National Trust Report, 1986







**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

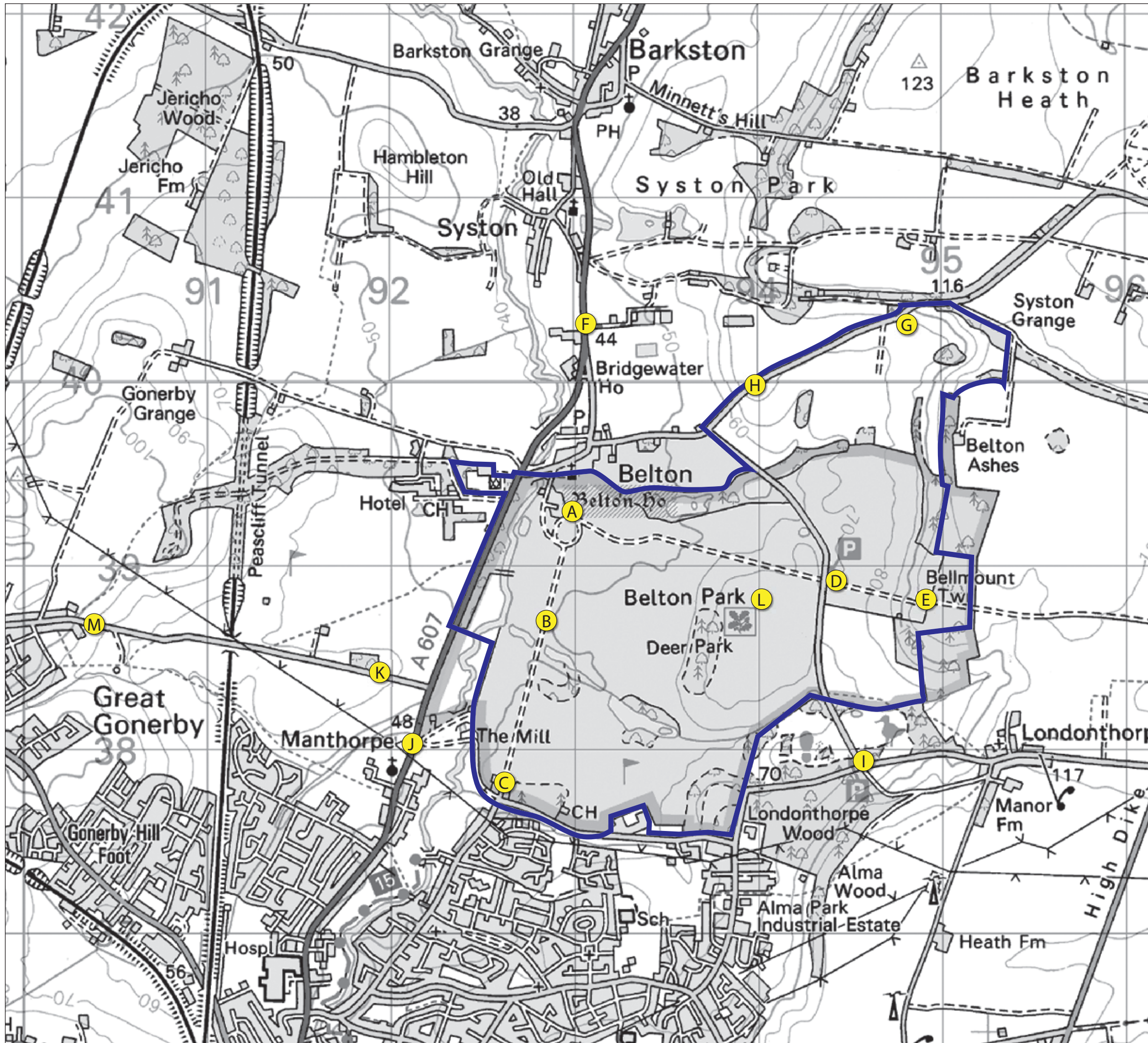
**Client:**  
National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

**Title:**  
Figure 8 The Park Boundaries,  
Approach Routes and Tree Screens

**Key:**

- Key surviving historically designed viewing point
- ▲ Historically designed views
- Access route
- ▼ Current visitor access points
- Wooded areas obscuring views into, out of and within the park
- Wooded areas that prevent far reaching views
- National Trust Ownership Boundary
- English Heritage Historic Park and Garden Boundary





**Project:**  
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**Title:**  
Figure 9 Assessed views

**Key:**

- A A - M Assessed views
- English Heritage Historic Park and Garden Boundary





**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

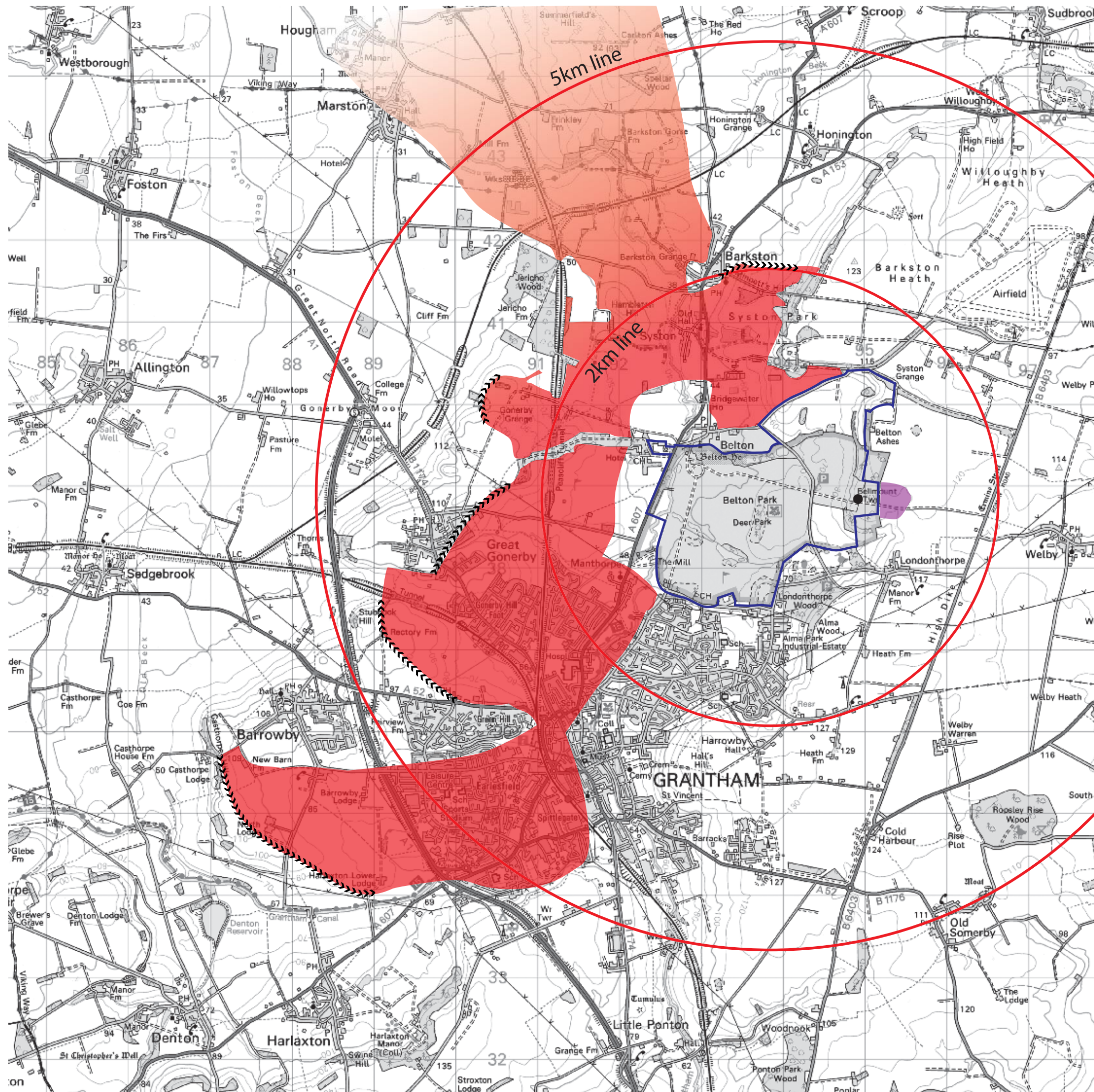
**Client:**  
National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

**Title:**  
Figure 10 Area visible outside of park  
from roof of Belton House

**Key:**

- Area visible outside of park from roof of Belton House
- Containing Ridge Lines
- English Heritage Historic Park and Garden Boundary
- 2km and 5km buffers from Belton Park





**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

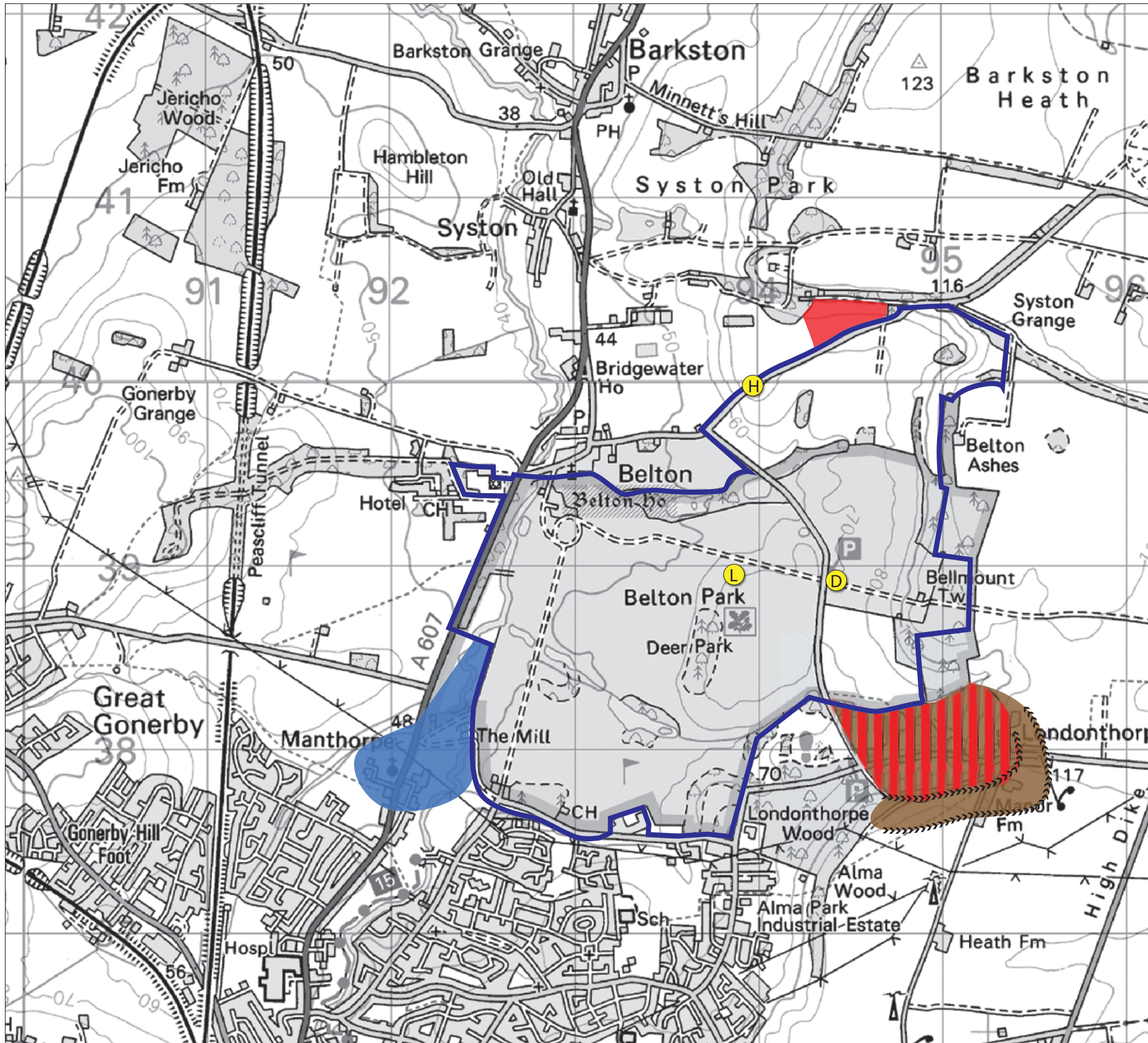
**Client:**  
National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

**Title:**  
Figure 11 Area visible outside of park  
from Bellmount Tower

**Key:**

- Bellmount Tower
- Area visible outside of park from first floor viewing platform of Bellmount Tower
- Area visible outside the park through the arch of Bellmount Tower
- Containing Ridge Lines
- English Heritage Historic Park and Garden Boundary
- 2km and 5km buffers from Belton Park





**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

**Client:**  
National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

**Title:**  
Figure 12 Area outside the park visible  
from assessed views D, L, & H.

**Key:**

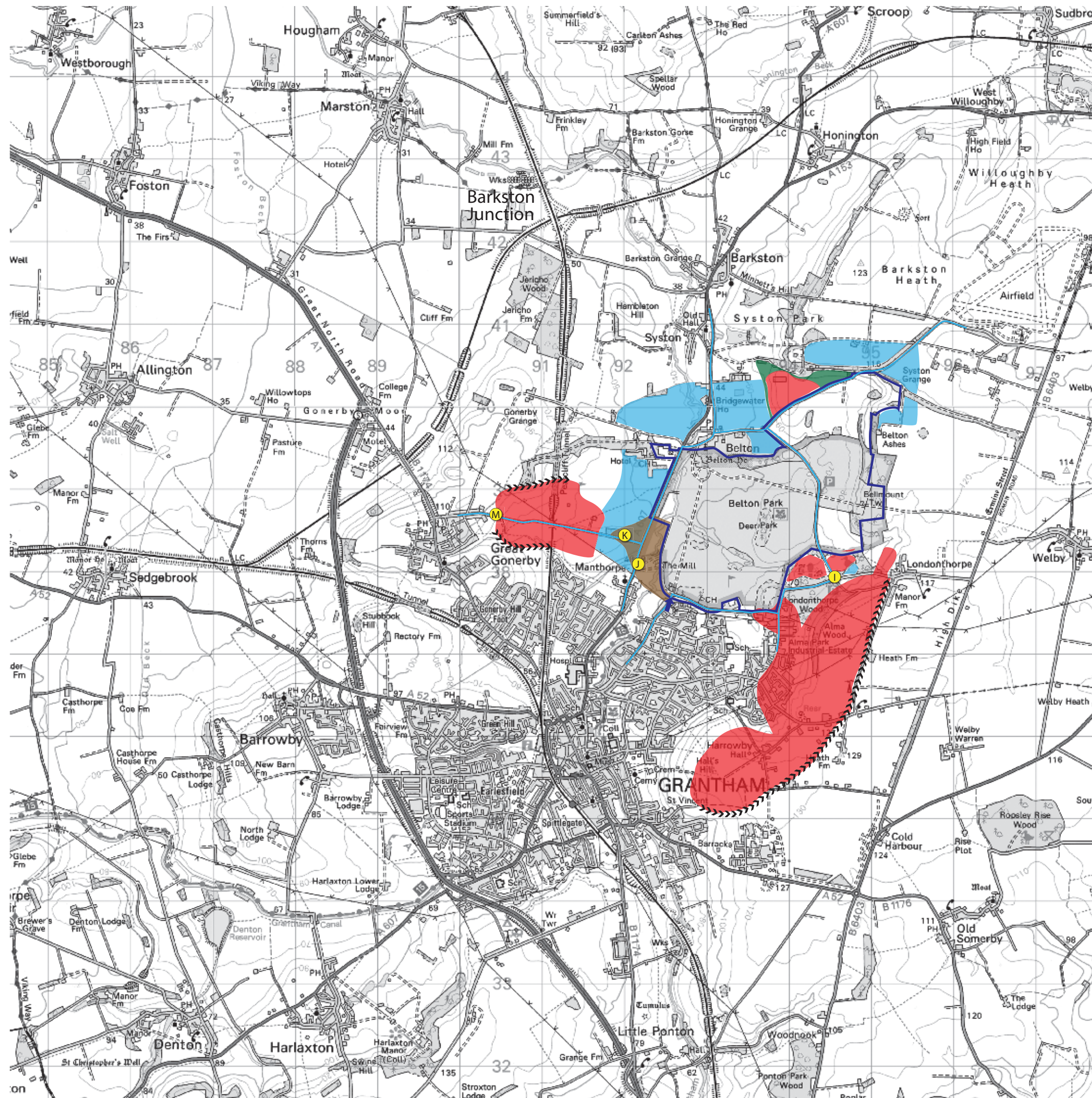
- Area outside the park visible from assessed view D
- Area outside the park visible from assessed view L
- Area outside the park visible from assessed view H
- Containing Ridge Lines
- English Heritage Historic Park and Garden Boundary
- M Accessed Views











**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

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National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

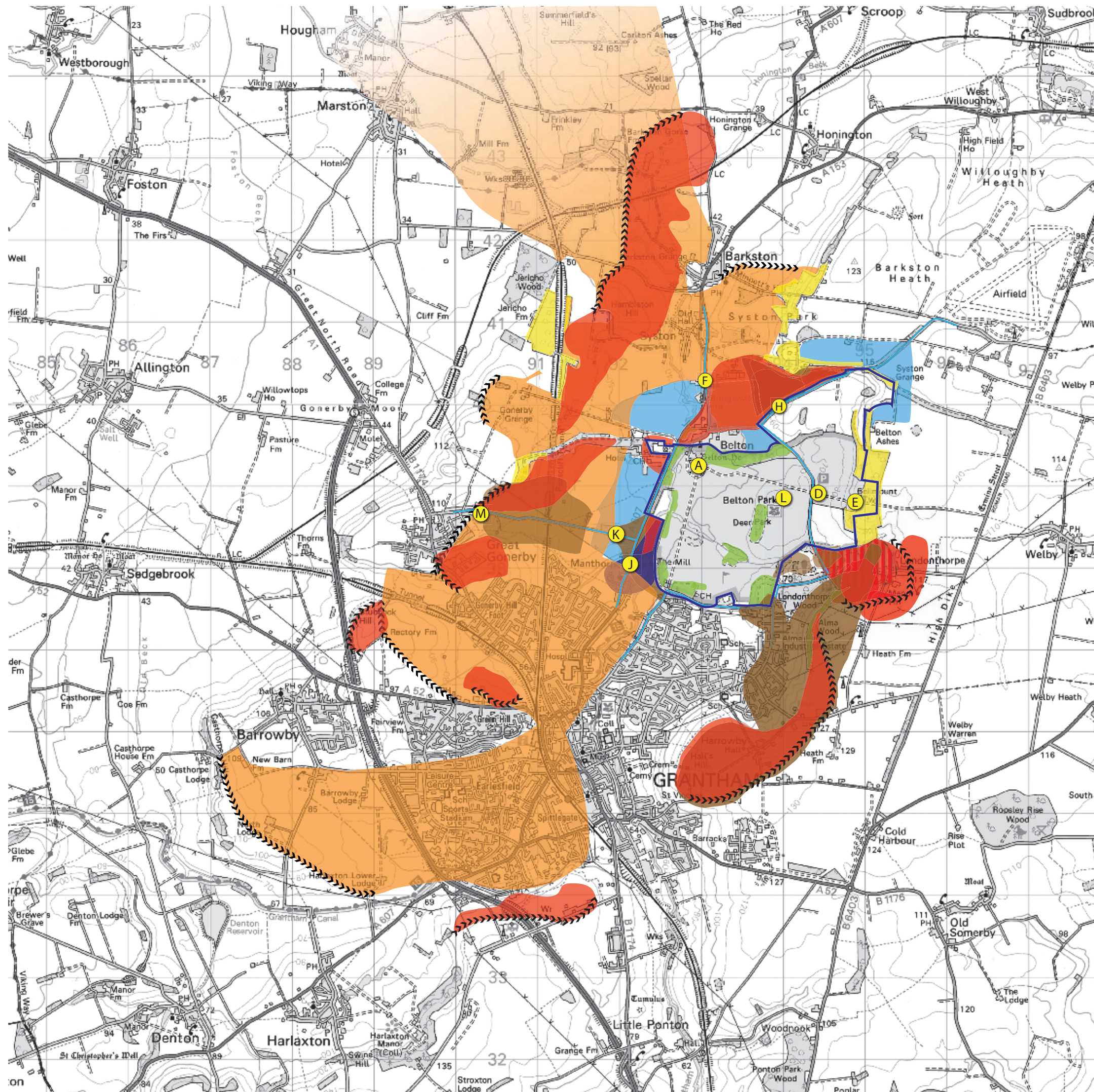
**Title:**  
Figure 13 Ground visible outside the  
park from I, J, K, and M and from the  
approach routes 1-9.



**Key:**

-  Assessed Views
-  Areas Outside Park Visible from Assessed View M
-  Areas Outside Park Visible from Assessed View I
-  Areas Outside Park Visible from Assessed View J & K
-  Areas adjacent to the approach routes that provide an appreciation of the park's rural location
-  Containing Ridge Lines
-  English Heritage Historic Park and Garden Boundary
-  Access route





**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

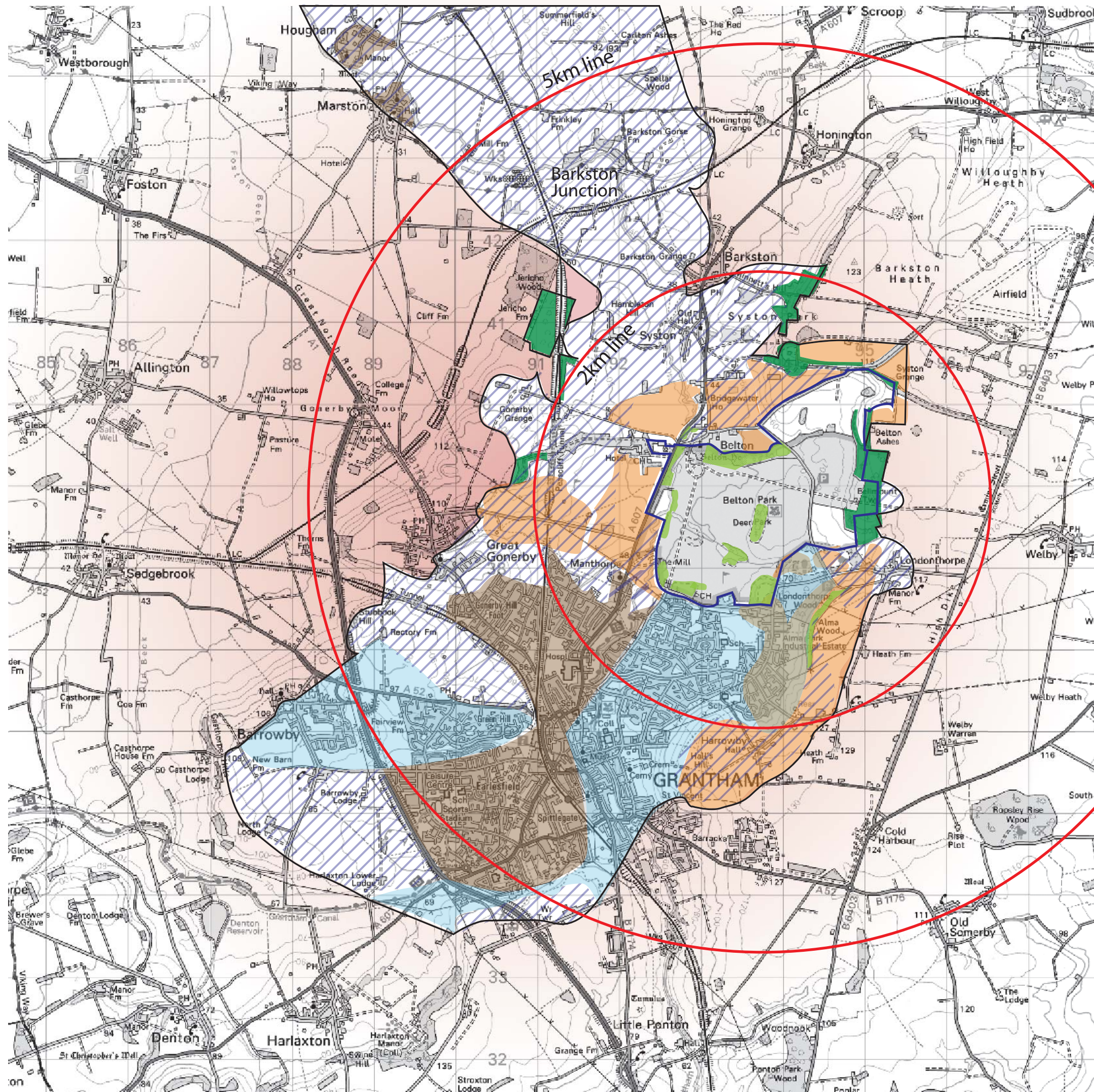
**Client:**  
National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

**Title:**  
Figure 14 Aspects of the setting of  
Belton House

**Key:**

- Containing Ridge Lines
- Ground and urban area visible from the roof of Belton House
- Ground and urban area visible from the Bellmount Tower's viewing Gallery
- Wooded areas obscuring views into, out of and within the park
- Wooded areas preventing far reaching views
- Area outside the park visible from assessed view H
- ▨ Ground visible from viewpoint D
- Ⓜ Accessed Views
- Areas Outside Park Visible from Assessed View J & K
- Areas adjacent to the approach routes that provide an appreciation of the park's rural location
- English Heritage Registered Park and Garden
- Access route















**Project:**  
Belton House Setting Study

**Client:**  
National Trust and South  
Kesteven District Council

**Title:**  
Figure 15 Elements of the setting  
of Belton House

**Key:**

-  Element 1
-  Element 2
-  Element 3
-  Element 4
-  Element 5
-  Wooded areas obscuring views into, out of and within the park
-  Wooded areas preventing far reaching views
-  Extent of the setting of Belton House
-  English Heritage Historic Park and Garden Boundary
-  2km and 5km buffers from Belton Park



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