



## **VCH Leicestershire**

### ***Loughborough Since 1750: A Social and Cultural History*** **Town, Parish and Borough**

## **Boundaries**

The parish was broadly diamond-shaped. The river Soar defined the north-eastern boundary as it flowed north-west to join the river Trent. At the eastern corner of the parish, the boundary turned away from the river to strike south-west in a straight line across fields for 1¼ miles before deviating to the south east (with minor alterations following the opening of the Great Central Railway in 1899), increasing the extent of the parish near the settlement of Woodthorpe. After this deviation it continued south west between two former medieval parks, with Beaumanor Park (in Woodhouse parish) to the south east and the adjoining Loughborough Great Park (in Loughborough parish) to the north west. On reaching the southern edge of the Outwoods the boundary turned north-west, following the border of the Outwoods then continuing that line to meet Burleigh brook. The boundary of the township of Loughborough followed Burleigh brook north to reach the Soar. The township of Knightthorpe, part of Loughborough parish, lay to the west of the brook. The township (and later civil parish) of Knightthorpe and the civil parishes of Garendon and of Thorpe Acre and Dishley to the west each had several detached parts which lay intermixed.<sup>1</sup> The boundaries were reorganised in 1890, with parts of the civil parishes of Knightthorpe and of Thorpe Acre and Dishley passing to Garendon and a small part of Garendon civil parish transferring to Shepshed.<sup>2</sup>

Loughborough became a municipal borough in 1888 containing 3,079 a. (1,246 ha.).<sup>3</sup> Woodthorpe civil parish was largely farmland and was excluded from the borough, as was the land to the south of a line drawn between Woodthorpe and Burleigh Hall (a late 17th-century house, demolished in 1961). This latter area, containing 1,649 a. and including Burleigh Hall and the village of Nanpantan, became the new civil parish of Nanpantan in 1894.<sup>4</sup> Knightthorpe (as redefined in 1890) remained a civil parish until 1902, when it was absorbed within the civil parish of Loughborough (Map 2).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> TNA, OS 29/159.

<sup>2</sup> ROLLR, CC3/1/1, pp. 125–8.

<sup>3</sup> TNA, PC 8/382; [https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10136684/cube/AREA\\_ACRES](https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10136684/cube/AREA_ACRES) (accessed 25 June 2024).

<sup>4</sup> *VCH Leics.* III, 192n, 194; *Nottm Eve. Post*, 10 Feb. 1888; Youngs, *Admin Units*, II, 233; L. Cantor, *The Historic Country Houses of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Newtown Linford, 1998), 29.

<sup>5</sup> *VCH Leics.* III, 192.

*Map 2: Loughborough in 1902, also showing township, parish and borough boundaries from 1750 to 1974. To be professionally drawn.*

The borough was enlarged to 9,200 a. (3,723 ha.) in 1936 through the inclusion of the civil parishes of Nanpantan, Thorpe Acre and Dishley, most of Hathern, part of the parishes of Woodthorpe, Garendon and Woodhouse, and part of the urban districts of Shepshed and Quorndon (Map 2).<sup>6</sup> The entire borough became an 'unparished area' through the abolition of the civil parishes of Loughborough, Woodthorpe, Nanpantan, Garendon and Thorpe Acre and Dishley, and was divided into four electoral wards for the purposes of local representation.<sup>7</sup> The land drawn from Woodhouse resolved earlier anomalies in the south of the parish as it included Nanpantan Mission Room (later church), built for Nanpantan village on land beyond the boundary of the civil parish, and also Nanpantan Hall, a 19th-century mansion, and its Home Farm.

The Local Government Act of 1972 led to the abolition of the municipal borough in 1974 and the creation of Charnwood District Council, which sought and was soon granted borough status. The new borough included the whole of the former Barrow upon Soar Rural District (on the east of the Soar), Shepshed Urban District and four parishes from Castle Donington Rural District – a total area of 108 sq. miles, with c.130,000 residents.<sup>8</sup> Land within the former municipal borough remained a single 'unparished' area, but parish councils continued across the remainder of the administrative area. A parish council was elected for Hathern in 1982 at the request of residents.<sup>9</sup> A new civil parish to the west of the town, Stonebow Village, was created in 2021 from land that had been in Garendon and was to be developed for housing. It takes its name from Stonebow Bridge, which crosses the Blackbrook at the edge of Garendon Park.<sup>10</sup> The remainder of 'Loughborough' continued to be 'unparished'.

This book tells the history of the town of Loughborough and the townships and civil parishes of Knightthorpe, Woodthorpe and Nanpantan between 1750 and 2024 (although Woodthorpe remained too small to have any social, educational or religious institutions of its own). It also includes the history of Thorpe Acre since 1936, as this became an important part of modern-day

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<sup>6</sup> VCH Leics. III, 192; [https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10136684/cube/AREA\\_ACRES](https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10136684/cube/AREA_ACRES) (accessed 25 June 2024).

<sup>7</sup> *Leic. Daily Merc.*, 24 Oct. 1935.

<sup>8</sup> TNA, PC 15/2226; Boro. of Charnwood, *Official Guide* (c.1982), 13, 15

<sup>9</sup> Ex inf. Maureen Spencer, Clerk to Hathern Parish Council, 2024; *Leic. Daily Merc.*, 15 Apr 1982.

<sup>10</sup> Charnwood B.C. (Reorganisation of Community Governance) (Stonebow Village) Order 2018, at [https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/stonebow\\_village\\_re\\_organisation\\_of\\_community\\_governance/Stonebow%20Village.pdf](https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/stonebow_village_re_organisation_of_community_governance/Stonebow%20Village.pdf) (accessed 8 Nov. 2024); <https://historicensland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1320118> (accessed 8 Nov. 2024).

Loughborough. Dishley, Hathern, Garendon and Stonebow Village are only mentioned where relevant to the wider picture.

## Landscape

The alluvium of the Soar valley is more than a mile wide on the south side of the river at Loughborough and is susceptible to heavy flooding.<sup>11</sup> Large meadows on this land provided a valuable resource for fodder, seasonal grazing and recreation (Map 1). The town was built on the river terrace to the south of the alluvium, where the subsoil is gravel with beds of clay. This land is also largely flat and c.150 ft above sea level, with the 'hills' contained within the street names 'Toothill' and 'Sparrow Hill' barely perceptible in the urban landscape. Further south the soil is red marl and boulder clay.

The parish was drained by three brooks which flow northwards: Burleigh brook in the west, the Woodbrook, which flows through the town centre and Hermitage brook in the east. The Woodbrook had been dammed in the early 19th century to control the water from seasonal floods above the town,<sup>12</sup> and formed a natural barrier to the expansion of the town westwards until culverts were created in the mid 19th century (Map 1).

*Figure 2: Prospect of Loughborough, c.1790, from a point near the Soar Navigation.*

To the south and west of the town the land starts to climb, reaching the 200 ft contour at the northern edge of the former parish of Nanpantan, with distinct hills around Knightthorpe and Burleigh Hall. The landscape is bisected by Forest Road, which led through Nanpantan to the uplands and thin soils of Charnwood Forest. Other smaller roads also led into the forest. In the south-east the former Loughborough Great Park contained c.850 a. in the 17th century. This land had become 11 enclosed farms by 1804.<sup>13</sup> There were few houses here until the 20th century, and the farming was mostly pastoral. The former Burleigh Park lay to the west of Forest Road and contained c.360 a. including woodland in the south-west (Burleigh Wood), two enclosed farms (that remained part of the Burleigh Estate until 1918) and a designed landscape around Burleigh Hall.<sup>14</sup> In 2024 much of this land had become part of Loughborough University campus, with Burleigh Wood preserved as a nature reserve. The Outwoods (c.150 a.), so-named since at least 1350 perhaps to indicate that they lay 'outside' Charnwood Forest, were to the south-west of Loughborough Great Park.<sup>15</sup> This area

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<sup>11</sup> L. Dudley Stamp, *The Land of Britain: Report of the Land Utilisation Survey of Britain*, V (1937–46), 306; OS Map, 1" Geological Survey, Drift, sheets 141 (1950 edn), 142 (1909 edn).

<sup>12</sup> W. Lee, *Report* (1849), 10.

<sup>13</sup> A.E. Squires and W. Humphrey, *The Medieval Parks of Charnwood Forest* (Wyndham, 1986), 21–2, 27–40; Nichols, *History*, III, 910.

<sup>14</sup> Squires and Humphrey, *Medieval Parks*, 33, 41–51.

<sup>15</sup> Cox, *Place-Names*, 147.

remained woodland in 2025 and was a popular public amenity owned by the borough and county councils.<sup>16</sup> Further south, beyond the earlier parish boundary, the land rises rapidly within Charnwood Forest to Beacon Hill, ½ mile south of the Outwoods and over 800 ft above sea level (Figure 2).<sup>17</sup>

## Communication

Four main roads passed through or met at Loughborough: one from London and Leicester to Derby and Manchester, one from Ashby-de-la-Zouch and the west, the original main road to Nottingham, which led north-eastwards to the river crossing at Cotes, and another (Nottingham Road) leading north over Loughborough Meadow towards Nottingham, with a branch leading to Lincoln and the north east. The roads to Leicester and Derby, and that from Cotes Bridge (on Loughborough's parish boundary) to Nottingham were already turnpikes by 1750.<sup>18</sup> The road between Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Burleigh Bridge in Loughborough became a turnpike in 1756–7.<sup>19</sup>

As the town industrialised in the 19th century it was well-placed to serve the larger markets of Leicester (11 miles south), Nottingham (15 miles north) and Derby (17 miles north-west), although the proximity of these centres of population would dampen the fortunes of shops and entertainment venues in the age of the motor car.

*Figure 3: Swan Street (the main road to Derby) before the road was widened.*

In 1770 streets were 'very dirty in bad weather' due to the 'weight and number of heavy carriages'.<sup>20</sup> High Gate (from Leicester), Swan Street (from Derby) and Baxtergate (leading north) were narrow (Figure 3), with the latter just 22 ft wide.<sup>21</sup> The congestion created by vehicular traffic was eased in the late 1920s and 1930s through the compulsory purchase and demolition of roadside properties that were rebuilt further back on their plots. Conery Lane, at the north end of Baxtergate, was widened from 8 ft to 40 ft, providing an improved link to Nottingham Road.<sup>22</sup> Longer-term relief was provided in 1965 by the opening of the M1 motorway 3 miles to the west of the town, with a junction served by Ashby Road.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Below, Social History.

<sup>17</sup> OS Map 6", Leics. XXIV.NE (1931 edn); Nichols, *History*, III, plate CXXIII.

<sup>18</sup> 12 Geo. I, c. 5 (Market Harborough to Loughborough); 11 Geo. II, c. 33 (Loughborough to Derby); 11 Geo. II, c. 3 (Cotes Bridge to Nottingham); A. Cossons, *The Turnpike Roads of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Newtown Linford, 2003), 40–2.

<sup>19</sup> 30 Geo. II, c. 44; Cossons, *Turnpike Roads*, 51–2.

<sup>20</sup> T. Pochin, 'Historical Description' of Loughborough (1770), printed in J. Nichols, *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica* (1780–90), VIII, 877.

<sup>21</sup> *Lboro. Echo*, 31 Oct. 1930.

<sup>22</sup> *Lboro. B.C.* mins 25 Nov. 1927; *Leic. Daily Merc.*, 2 Oct. 1923; 8 Feb. 1928; 4 June 1934; 23 May 1935.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.roads.org.uk/motorway/chronology?year=1965> (accessed 28 June 2024).

Loughborough canal opened in 1778 from the Trent to a wharf in the town, and the Erewash canal to the Trent opened in 1779, linking Loughborough to the Derbyshire coalfields.<sup>24</sup> The Soar Navigation (Leicester Canal) linked the Loughborough Canal to Leicester from 1794 (Map 1).<sup>25</sup> The Charnwood Forest Canal (a mixed water and rail link from the west Leicestershire mines and quarries through Nanpantan to Loughborough wharf) also opened that year, but disaster struck when the Blackbrook reservoir broke in 1799. Although repairs were made, the line was of little benefit to mine and quarry owners and was abandoned.<sup>26</sup>

Railway stations were provided off Nottingham Road by the Midland Counties Railway (1840), off Derby Road for a line from the Leicestershire coalfields area by Charnwood Forest Railway (1883, with the line operated by London and North Western Railway) and at the eastern edge of the town by Great Central Railway (1899). The Midland and Great Central offered routes to London, Sheffield and northern England, the Midland through Derby and the Great Central through Nottingham.<sup>27</sup>

*Map 3: John Wood's plan of Loughborough in 1837. The core of the town shifted south in the medieval period away from the parish church; the streets narrowed near the marketplace, with the Woodbrook forming a 'boundary' that held back the expansion of the town to the west and south west. Note the warehouses along the wharf of the Loughborough canal (a), the town's dispensary on Baxtergate backing on to Churchgate school (b), two large infant schools off John Street (c) and the gas works on the western fringe (d).*

## Population

There were 460 families in the town in 1712,<sup>28</sup> suggesting a population of c.2,000, perhaps growing to 2,500 inhabitants by 1750. Following the opening of the canal, there were 3,936 residents in 1790.<sup>29</sup> Rapid growth followed, with 4,546 residents in 1801 increasing to 10,800 in 1831, aided by an expansion in the lace trade. Growth then stalled, with economic difficulties in the hosiery trade and high mortality arising from overcrowded insanitary housing. There were 10,830 residents in 1861. Further expansion followed the introduction of a clean water supply in 1870, with 11,456 inhabitants in 1871 increasing to 21,382 by 1901 and 26,945 in 1931, shortly before the extension of the borough in 1936. That addition was mostly farmland. Nanpantan's population had grown from

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<sup>24</sup> VCH Leics. III, 92–3.

<sup>25</sup> VCH Leics. III, 93–6, 100.

<sup>26</sup> VCH Leics. III, 96–7, 100–1; ROLLR, DG9/2546; B.C.J. Williams (ed.), *The Forest Line* (Lboro., 1974).

<sup>27</sup> VCH Leics. III, 115, 122, 124–5.

<sup>28</sup> J. Broad (ed.), *Bishop Wake's Summary of Visitation Returns from the Diocese of Lincoln, 1706–1715* (Oxford, 2012), II, 740.

<sup>29</sup> Nichols, *History*, III, 895.

260 in 1901 to 680 in 1931, Hathern had 1,225 inhabitants in 1931 and Thorpe Acre and Dishley and Garendon together had a total population in 1931 of 205.<sup>30</sup>

Rapid growth followed the end of the Second World War, and by 1971 there were 45,875 residents in the 'Loughborough' wards of the borough.<sup>31</sup> Two decades of stability followed, with 46,746 inhabitants in 1991. The population had increased to 64,641 in 2021,<sup>32</sup> with the addition of 18,138 residents over 30 years partly driven by the expansion of the university, which had 5,500 full time students in 1989–90 and 17,245 students based on the Loughborough campus in 2020–21.<sup>33</sup>

## Settlement and the Built Environment

The original settlement was almost certainly near the parish church, and the oldest surviving houses (from the 13th to the 16th centuries) are in this area.<sup>34</sup> The heart of the settlement in 1750 was c.300 yd to the south, near Market Place. Properties stood to its east, west and south, mainly along the roads leading to Leicester and Derby and along Malt Mill Lane (later Mill Street, then Market Street). A plan of 1735 shows buildings forming two islands within the marketplace (Map 4). These were described by Thomas Pochin in 1770 as a 'row, or rather clump, of miserable houses, with petty shops belonging to them' at the south end and 'a ruinous brick edifice, called the Court Chamber' bearing the date 1688 at the north, where the annual court leet was held. Similar structures would have been seen in many market towns.<sup>35</sup> They would have originated in the medieval period through encroachment by temporary market stalls, but over time had become permanent buildings. By 1770 some towns were beginning to improve their market places by removing such buildings to create a wide, open thoroughfare, with engravings of town scenes depicting clean, paved and well-lit streets.<sup>36</sup> Pochin described the town in general as 'very indifferent ... not the least tincture of elegance graces any one single building in the whole place', but on a brighter note he recorded that a new butter and hen cross had been erected in the market place in 1742 and the Bull's Head on High

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<sup>30</sup> VCH Leics. III, 187, 189, 192 194, 200; ROLLR, DG9/2014, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1971 Census: England and Wales County Report, Leicestershire II, table 2, Lboro. MB.

<sup>32</sup> Total of 194 output areas in Nomis (the author is very grateful to Ciara Tee of Charnwood Borough Council for assistance with this calculation).

<sup>33</sup> L. Cantor, *Lboro. University: The First 40 Years, 1996–2006* (Lboro., 2006), 45; Lboro. Univ., *Facts and Figures 2020–21*, at

<https://www.lboro.ac.uk/media/wwwlboroacuk/content/planningteam/documents/factsandfigures/F&F%2020-21.pdf> (accessed 12 Sept. 2024); directly comparable figures are not available: Jelena Buttress, Academic Registry, Loughborough University.

<sup>34</sup> The National Heritage List for England (<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>), List No. 1320404, The Old Rectory Museum; 1074555, 37 and 38 Churchgate; 1115803, 39 and 40 Churchgate; 1074534, 11 and 12 Sparrow Hill (all accessed 30 Oct. 2022); Pevsner, *Leics. and Rutl*, 293–4.

<sup>35</sup> Pochin, 'Historical Description', 876.

<sup>36</sup> R. Sweet, *The English Town 1680–1840: Government, Society and Culture* (Harlow, 1999), 16, 222.

Gate (later High Street), which also served as the post office, had been partly rebuilt in 1754–5 by the 10th Earl of Huntingdon.<sup>37</sup>

The subsequent development of the town can be considered in five phases, the first in the thirty years that followed the opening of Loughborough canal in 1778, the second between the sale of manorial property in 1809–10 and the provision of fresh water in 1870, the third between 1870 and 1918, a fourth phase between 1918 and 1946 and a fifth phase across the enlarged borough from 1946.<sup>38</sup>

### 1750–1809

The more prosperous inhabitants were still living in the town in the 18th century and a few ‘Georgian’ town houses near the church were built or older properties upgraded in this period (Figure 4).<sup>39</sup> Wharfs and warehouses were built near the basin of the Loughborough canal by 1780.<sup>40</sup> A further basin and wharf were created alongside the Leicester canal at North Street (Nottingham Road) in 1794, when Thomas Warner’s Angola factory, alongside the Leicester canal, was also built. The number of houses in the town increased from 800 in 1790 to 1,140 in 1811,<sup>41</sup> partly through the sub-division of existing houses and by cramming new courtyards of houses behind existing buildings.<sup>42</sup> A house in Churchgate had been divided into three dwellings by 1809 with a further four tenements in its yard,<sup>43</sup> and another house in Churchgate shared a plot of 9 perches (272 sq. yds) with a further house, a plumber’s shop, warehouse, stable, two gardens and eight other tenements.<sup>44</sup> Nine perches on ‘Woodgate and Ward’s End’ contained three houses, six further tenements, a butcher’s shop and slaughterhouse.<sup>45</sup>

*Figure 4: Three Town Houses on Rectory Place (north elevation). The property in the centre, Chesterton House, was rented by the Burton Charity from 1850 to be the Girls’ Grammar School. The wall in the foreground belongs to the former rectory.*

<sup>37</sup> Pochin, ‘Historical Description’, 876.

<sup>38</sup> For a diagrammatic representation see C. Read and W. Hamley, *Atlas of the Borough of Charnwood* (Lboro., 2nd edn, 1980), section 23; I. Keil, ‘Loughborough Centenary: The Archaeology of Change’, *Bulletin of Lboro. & Dist. Archaeological Society*, 3:1 (1989), 65–8. See below, Education, for the expansion of Loughborough College/University.

<sup>39</sup> Below, Education; NHLE, 1074533, Chesterton House; 1361169, 3 Rectory Place.

<sup>40</sup> *Leic. Jnl*, 22 Apr. 1780.

<sup>41</sup> Nichols, *Leics*, III, 895; Census, 1811.

<sup>42</sup> OS town plan, 1:500 (1884 edn); OS Map, 25”, Leics XVII.8 (1884 edn); Leics. XVII.14–15 (1884 edn).

<sup>43</sup> ROLLR, DE2857/121/1, lot 71.

<sup>44</sup> ROLLR, DE2857/121/1, lot 75.

<sup>45</sup> ROLLR, DE2857/121/1, lot 216.



## 1809–70

Loughborough's lord in 1809 was Francis Rawdon Hastings, 2nd earl of Moira. Having substantial debts and with his commercial interests elsewhere in the county, he sold 965 a. of land and 483 properties in Loughborough at two auctions in 1809 and 1810, including shops, houses, warehouses, a 'dockyard for building boats', three water mills and many plots of land described as 'well situated for building'. Offered in 472 individual lots, a wide range of people became able to invest in property or to purchase the land or premises they occupied.<sup>46</sup> In 1822 it was noted that a 'great part of the town has been rebuilt and much enlarged'.<sup>47</sup> The 'old market house' was taken down in 1828 and by 1831 the marketplace was 'surrounded by good houses and handsome shops, four-fifths of which have been rebuilt since 1800',<sup>48</sup> probably between 1810 and 1831. The exceptions would include the town centre properties owned by the Burton charity. In 1841 these were 'for the most part very much out of repair' and 'unfit for business'.<sup>49</sup>

The houses on the south-eastern edge of the town in 1837 (Map 3) were probably developed after 1810.<sup>50</sup> These were mostly occupied in the 1840s by framework knitters and lace makers, with a few skilled craftsmen, a factory manager and a Nonconformist minister. Living conditions may have been better than in the courtyards but residents suffered high rates of sickness and mortality in an area where cesspools drained into an open ditch and seven houses in Queen Street, for example, shared a single privy.<sup>51</sup> Building quality improved following the establishment of a Board of Health in 1850. The board installed basic drainage across the town between 1853 and 1855, introduced regulations for new buildings,<sup>52</sup> and laid piped water from 1870.<sup>53</sup>

Those who could afford to do so built away from the town centre, where their wells were uncontaminated by the pollution not yet understood to be the source of local health problems. Notable houses in this period include The Elms, built for Thomas Warner on the east side of Leicester Road and The Grove on Ashby Road, built c.1830 for banker William Middleton (Figure 5), both purchased by Loughborough college for student accommodation in the 1920s,<sup>54</sup> and Southfields, on Southfield Road, probably built for the Paget family and occupied in 2025 by Charnwood Borough Council.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>46</sup> ROLLR, DE2857/121/1, 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Pigot's Dir. of Leics. and Rutl.* (1822), 223.

<sup>48</sup> J. Curtis, *A Topographical History of the County of Leicester* (Ashby-de-la-Zouch, 1831), 119.

<sup>49</sup> TNA, C 13/3066/7.

<sup>50</sup> Lboro. Loc. Stud. Libr., Wood's plan of Loughborough, 1837.

<sup>51</sup> TNA, HO 107/595/10; ROLLR, DG9/2014, pp. 14, 22, 27.

<sup>52</sup> ROLLR, DE1834/142, pp. 1, 214–5; *Leics. Mercury*, 18 Nov. 1854, 7 July 1855.

<sup>53</sup> ROLLR, DE1834/144, pp. 96–99.

<sup>54</sup> NHLE, no. 1074519, The Elms; 1361134, The Grove; Lboro. Univ. Arch., LC/P/Z1.

<sup>55</sup> Locally listed [https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/listed\\_buildings/southfields\\_southfields\\_road\\_loughborough](https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/listed_buildings/southfields_southfields_road_loughborough) (accessed 30 Apr. 2025).



*Figure 5: The Grove on Ashby Road, built c.1830 for William Middleton and later converted for student accommodation, with a further accommodation block built in its grounds in 1929.*

The increasing wealth of the town, a growing interest in cultural pursuits and a desire to improve the town centre through better-quality buildings also becomes apparent in this period. The town's first theatre was built in 1823 by subscription.<sup>56</sup> A public meeting in 1853 launched a campaign to raise money through donations and subscriptions for shares to build a town hall and corn exchange to provide a room for elections, meetings and court hearings, space for a library and reading room, a covered market for farmers and an assembly hall for charitable balls.<sup>57</sup> Properties on the east side of the marketplace were purchased and demolished to provide the space required and an Italianate-style building designed by William Slater was built by Charles C. and Ananias Dennett of Nottingham. It opened in 1855 at a cost of c.£8,000.<sup>58</sup> A clock was added in 1880.<sup>59</sup>

Pearson Bellamy and John Spence Hardy, architects of Lincoln, designed a new court room and police station that was built on Woodgate in 1859–60. This two-storey building, in a 'modern Italian' style with round-headed windows to the ground floor is built in red and cream brick with stone dressings.<sup>60</sup> Following the provision of new premises for the police (in the 1970s and again in 2014) and the courts (in 2007), the building was refurbished by Charnwood B.C. to create units for small businesses.<sup>61</sup>

Bellamy and Hardy also designed 'the best cemetery buildings in the county', which opened with the cemetery on Leicester Road in 1857 (Figure 6). Two Gothic chapels in blue Claypole stone with Bath stone dressings are linked by a loggia with three arches surmounted by a spire. They were built by John Sudbury of Loughborough.<sup>62</sup>

*Figure 6: Cemetery chapels, Leicester Road*

A new dispensary was built on Baxtergate in 1862, at a cost of c.£5,000, replacing an earlier building.<sup>63</sup> In white brick, with Derbyshire stone dressings and red Mansfield stone columns flanking the main entrance, the two-storey building featured a stone oriel window on the west elevation

<sup>56</sup> Below, Social History.

<sup>57</sup> *Leic. Chron.*, 29 Oct. 1853, 28 Oct 1854.

<sup>58</sup> Pevsner, *Leics. and Rutl.*, 291; *Leic. Chron.*, 16 Sept., 14 Oct. 1854; 17 Mar., 28 Dec. 1855; *Post Office Dir. of Leics. and Rutl.* (1876), 439; *Post Office Dir. of Notts.* (1855), 78.

<sup>59</sup> *Leic. Chron.*, 10 Jan. 1880.

<sup>60</sup> *Leic. Guardian*, 29 Sept. 1860.

<sup>61</sup> *Lboro. Echo*, 15 Aug. 2014; [https://www.incharnwood.com/pages/woodgate\\_chambers](https://www.incharnwood.com/pages/woodgate_chambers) (accessed 9 Feb. 2025).

<sup>62</sup> Northants. RO, ML 1118, between pp. 488–9; Pevsner, *Leics. and Rutl.*, 284–5; *Leic. Guardian*, 29 Aug. 1857.

<sup>63</sup> *Post Office Dir. of Leics. and Rutl.* (1876), 439.

serving the visiting room, with a door for outpatients beneath (Figure 7). The architect was William Slater of London, and the contractors were Osborne Brothers of Leicester.<sup>64</sup> The building was extended to the north in 1896 and two storeys were added to the whole in 1938, designed by Arnold Barrowcliff in collaboration with London architects Young and Hall, specialists in hospital design.<sup>65</sup>

*Figure 7: Loughborough Dispensary on Baxtergate, before the extension of 1896*

### 1870–1918

As industry grew from 1870 and the population expanded, mixed developments were added, for example, terraces and a hosiery factory between Sparrow Hill and Clarence Street and, to the east of the town, terraced houses, factories, Holy Trinity church (1878) and Cobden Street school (1880).<sup>66</sup> The predominant building form became the red brick terrace. One hundred building plots, sufficient for c.400 terraced houses, were laid out in 1883 on land owned by Joseph Paget to the west of the town, between the workhouse and Derby Road station.<sup>67</sup> By 1887, 212 houses had been built here and were occupied.<sup>68</sup> Immediately to the south-west, land owned by the Storer charity and considered suitable for ‘high-class private residences’ was sold for development in 1884 and 1888.<sup>69</sup> These terraced properties were slightly larger and had small front gardens. St Peter’s mission room (1888), the Paget Arms public house (1889) and Rosebery Street school (1897) helped to create a community.

By 1901 further houses, factories and dye works extended to the Leicester Canal in the north and to the Great Central Railway to the east. South of the town, terraced houses with bay windows and front gardens and a few semi-detached houses were built for the middle classes and skilled working classes near the High School and on the roads leading towards Charnwood Forest.<sup>70</sup> A more exclusive area grew along Burton Walks, where seven large plots were let by the Burton charity on a piecemeal basis between 1880 and 1929 for approved tenants to commission their own individual

<sup>64</sup> *Lboro Monitor*, 18 Dec. 1862; J. Brownlow, T. Keil, I. Keil, G. Lowe, J. Slatter and D. Wix, *The Story of Loughborough Dispensary and Hospital, 1819–2003* (Loughborough, 2006), 60.

<sup>65</sup> ROLLR, DE7187/2; *Lboro. Echo*, 26 Oct 1928; Brownlow and others, *Loughborough Dispensary*, 123–5; Wall plaque later moved to new hospital buildings, extant 2023.

<sup>66</sup> OS map, 25”, Leics. XVII.8 (1886edn). For more detail on building in this period see D.F. Postles ‘Building for a Borough: housing and the building process in Loughborough, 1883–1890’ (2018), especially 21–6 (hereafter Postles, ‘Building, 1883–90’).

<sup>67</sup> ROLLR, DE5099/1325; Principal Probate registry, COW1726691649916G.

<sup>68</sup> *Leic. Chron.*, 27 Aug. 1887.

<sup>69</sup> *Lboro. Herald*, 8 May 1884; 28 June 1888; D.F. Postles, ‘Building for a borough: housing the people of Loughborough, 1861–1900’ (2024), 54–5, online at <https://davelinux.info/BOOKS/building.pdf> (accessed 28 Nov. 2024) (hereafter Postles, ‘Building, 1861–1900’).

<sup>70</sup> OS map, 25”, Leics. XVII.4 (1901 edn); XVII.5 (1903 edn); XVII.8 (1903 edn); XVII.17 (1903 edn); Postles, ‘Building, 1861–1900’, 60–2.

homes.<sup>71</sup> The most notable among these houses is 'Buckland' (1903), designed by George Barrowcliff for his own occupation, in the 'Arts and Crafts' style of Charles F.A. Voysey (Figure 8). Barrowcliff later sold the house to Edmund Denison Taylor of Taylor's Bell Foundry, who added an 'Arts and Crafts' garage for his Rolls Royce, with a domed roof representing a bell casting (behind the house, in Castledine Street).<sup>72</sup> Others who could afford an individual design built along Forest Road for cleaner air and a view of Charnwood Forest,<sup>73</sup> or Ashby Road, where several large detached 'gentleman's residences' were built, including Field House (1887 on plaque, which appears to relate to an extension),<sup>74</sup> Redholme (1888) and Tynte House (1900).<sup>75</sup>

*Figure 8: Buckland, built in 1903 on Burton Walks*

This period also saw the addition of several public buildings. Offices for town officials and a board room were built on Ashby Road in 1877. They were designed by the borough surveyor George Hodson in a 'Tudor' style, in red brick with stone dressings.<sup>76</sup> Hodson also designed a library in the same style that opened on an adjacent site in 1886.<sup>77</sup> These have subsequently been demolished.

Tucked away to the north of the parish church, Fearon Hall was one of four projects planned as a memorial to the Venerable Henry Fearon, rector from 1848 until his death in 1885. Insufficient funds were raised to complete the plans immediately, but a first phase providing accommodation for the Sunday schools attached to All Saints' church opened in 1889. The two-storey hall, built in red brick with stone dressings in two colours and orientated west–east, has a 'Gothic' window at the west end with seven bays of square-headed windows along its length. The Sunday school classrooms occupied the ground floor, with a single room 80 ft by 30 ft upstairs for meetings and events. The architect was George Hodson and the contractor was William Needham.<sup>78</sup> The Hall was completed in 1914 through an offer from William Byerley Paget (a Unitarian) to cover three-quarters of the cost. Frederick Walter Hodson was engaged as architect and made minor changes to his late father's original plan. The new block was set at right angles to the first phase to form a T-shape, as originally

<sup>71</sup> Below.

<sup>72</sup> LGS Digital Arch., J. Weitzel, *The Houses and Residents of Burton Walks* (2019); Historic England, 6 Burton Walks, listing 1361140 <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1361140?section=official-list-entry>; Garage and Walls, 61 and 71 Castledine Street, listing 1391956 <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1391956?section=official-list-entry> (both accessed 26 Nov. 2024).

<sup>73</sup> Postles, 'Building, 1861–1900', 42–3.

<sup>74</sup> NHLE, 1116122, Field House; Lynne About Loughborough, <https://lynneaboutloughborough.blogspot.com/2020/06/spotlight-on-field-house.html> (both accessed 30 Apr. 2025).

<sup>75</sup> Postles, 'Building, 1883–90', 12.

<sup>76</sup> *Kelly's Dir. of Leics. and Rutl.* (1891), 734; *Building News*, 20 Apr. 1877.

<sup>77</sup> *Lboro. Herald*, 14 Jan. 1886.

<sup>78</sup> *Leic. Daily Merc.*, 2 May 1889.

intended, with an entrance on Rectory Road.<sup>79</sup> Known in 2024 as Fearon Hall Community Centre, the building included a small café and provided a venue for meetings, classes and events.

A limited company was formed in 1895 to provide a temperance hall near Cattle Market.<sup>80</sup> Funds were boosted by the proceeds of a grand bazaar, opened by the duchess of Rutland.<sup>81</sup> The hall, designed by Albert E. King in brick and terracotta with entrances on Devonshire Square and Granby Street, opened in 1899 and provided a public hall and gallery that could seat 500 people on the upper floor, with a committee room and other smaller rooms downstairs.<sup>82</sup> The building later became an auction mart and subsequently a bookmakers.

Alderman Joseph Griggs, Loughborough's first mayor, provided the Memorial Baths for the town as a gift to mark HM Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897. The baths opened in 1898 with entrances on Granby Street and facing Queen's Park, itself a diamond jubilee project that had not yet opened. Designed by George Barrowcliff and built by T. Barker and Son in local red brick, the baths incorporated a swimming pool, spectator gallery, private slipper baths and a laundry. Hot water was provided by a boiler with a 60 ft brick chimney.<sup>83</sup> The building was later converted to become Charnwood Museum.<sup>84</sup>

The library was replaced by a larger building on Granby Street in 1905, with £5,000 provided by the Scottish-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Captain Frank Griggs provided the site on Granby Street, opposite the Memorial Baths given to the town by his father. The council chose an 'Edwardian Baroque' design by Barrowcliff and Allcock.<sup>85</sup> Terracotta was becoming prominent in this period as an ornamental building material, as well as for simple plaques. Much of it was made locally by the Hathern Station Brick and Terra Cotta Company, who combined local clay with material brought in by rail.<sup>86</sup> The Granby Street façade of the Carnegie library features two terracotta cupolas flanking a central pedimented bay, all lavishly adorned with terracotta swags (Figure 9). A tall octagonal domed ceiling crowned by a wooden lantern and cap provided the reading room with natural light. Offices and a house for the librarian were provided at the rear. The tender of William Moss and Sons Ltd was accepted for £4,587.<sup>87</sup> The Carnegie library was opened by Joseph Griggs in

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<sup>79</sup> *Lboro. Echo*, 20 Mar. 1914.

<sup>80</sup> *Melton Mowbray Merc.*, 28 Feb. 1895.

<sup>81</sup> *Nottm Jnl*, 11 Oct. 1898.

<sup>82</sup> *Leic. Chron.*, 2 Sept. 1899.

<sup>83</sup> *Leic. Jnl*, 16 Apr. 1897; 12 Aug. 1898.

<sup>84</sup> Below, Museums.

<sup>85</sup> *Leic. Daily Post*, 22 June 1905. The Memorial Baths are discussed below, Social History.

<sup>86</sup> M. Stratton, *The Terracotta Revival* (1993), 26–7, 98.

<sup>87</sup> *Nottm Eve. Post*, 20 Sept. 1904.

1905,<sup>88</sup> and remained in use as part of the extended public library in 2025. Andrew Carnegie also provided gifts of £250 and £300 towards new organs at Baxtergate Baptist and St Peter's churches.<sup>89</sup>

*Figure 9: The Carnegie Library of 1905 is at the centre of this image, behind Queen's Park (opened 1899). The large building on the left is the Memorial Baths (1898), which became Charnwood Museum in 1999.*

## 1918–46

The borough council found that 500 houses were needed to meet the needs of anticipated industrial development immediately after the First World War, and a further 630 to rehome those living in 'unfit dwellings' or in 'unhealthy areas'. The first council houses were built on a limited scale, such as the 24 houses on King Edward Road near the Great Central station, but by 1928 three large-scale council developments were in hand at Meadow Lane, Derby Road (Knightthorpe) and at Shelthorpe and Ling Farms.<sup>90</sup> The borough council had engaged Barry Parker, who with Ray Unwin had designed Letchworth Garden City, to advise them on developing the Shelthorpe/Ling site of 120 a. to provide houses for sale or rent.<sup>91</sup> Parker's plans broke away from the high-density grid pattern of earlier private and council developments, with 'parlour' and two sizes of 'non-parlour' homes grouped in pairs or short rows of four standing behind a wide roadside verge, each with a front garden and many in cul-de-sacs (Figure 10).<sup>92</sup> The first 100 of the 300 planned houses were complete by 1927, with weekly rents from 13s. 5d. to 15s. 11d, or purchase at £485 to £575, with a 90 per cent mortgage from the council.<sup>93</sup> Six parlour-type houses were reserved for sale, but despite asking large employers to share details with their employees, the accounts suggest that only four were bought, with the others being let.<sup>94</sup>

*Figure 10: Shelthorpe Estate*

Concerns were soon voiced over the building costs and the affordability of the rents to 'workmen',<sup>95</sup> and plans were approved in 1928 for a further development of '100 cheaper houses' off Meadow Lane.<sup>96</sup> Meanwhile building continued at Shelthorpe, with 627 houses completed by 1939

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<sup>88</sup> *Leic. Daily Post*, 22 June 1905.

<sup>89</sup> *Lboro. Echo*, 15 Aug. 1919.

<sup>90</sup> Lboro. B.C., *Official Guide to Loughborough* (not dated, early 1930s), 35.

<sup>91</sup> Lboro. Loc. Stud. Libr., Lboro B.C. mins, Rpt of Housing and Town Planning Cttee, for full council on 12 and 26 Apr. 1926; *ODNB*, Parker, (Richard) Barry (1867–1947), architect and town planner (accessed 9 Feb. 2022).

<sup>92</sup> Pevsner, *Leics. and Rutl.*, 295.

<sup>93</sup> *Leic. Daily Merc.*, 18 Oct. 1927; Lboro. Loc. Stud. Libr., Lboro. B.C. mins, Housing and Town Planning Cttee mins 16 Nov., 14 Dec. 1927.

<sup>94</sup> Lboro. Loc. Stud. Libr., Lboro. B.C., Housing and Town Planning Cttee mins 17 Nov., 14 Dec. 1927, 11 Jan., 15 Feb. 1928; Lboro. B.C. accounts, 1929–30, pp. 100–1, 105; 1930–31, p. 115; 1931–2, p. 41.

<sup>95</sup> *Leic. Eve. Mail*, 11 Oct. 1927.

<sup>96</sup> *Leic. Chron.*, 12 May 1928.

together with a small number of bungalows and flats, a school, a row of shops, a pub and a recreation ground.<sup>97</sup>

The building of the carillon tower in Queen's Park in 1923 as a war memorial provided an addition to the town's skyline (Figure 23).<sup>98</sup> In the town centre, the expansion of Loughborough College between 1918 and the 1930s resulted in the construction of many buildings in local red brick, several of which still stood in 2025 having found an alternative use (Figure 28).<sup>99</sup> These buildings have a certain similarity, one might call it '1920s/30s academic', which is also seen in Shelthorpe School (1933).

Many of the town centre properties that were rebuilt under a road widening scheme in the 1920s and 1930s adopted the fashionable Art Deco style, as did other new buildings of that period, including two cinemas built by rival operators in 1936: the New Empire Picture House in Market Place that traded as the Odeon in 2025, and the original Odeon by Harry Weedon on Baxtergate, under restoration in 2024 by Junction church. Both buildings are clad with tin-glazed faience tiles by Hathern Station Brick and Terra Cotta Company and make good use of the ability to add a decorative contrasting colour (Figures 18 and 19).<sup>100</sup> The cinema on Market Place retains many of its original windows and fittings. This dominance of a single style creates a harmony that is not often seen in a town of this size.<sup>101</sup> One of the finest of these buildings, featuring cream faience tiles and Egyptian lotus columns (the latter protected by cladding following a traffic incident), opened in 1931 and was designed by Edward Allcock as a headquarters for the Loughborough Echo Press.<sup>102</sup> Two neighbours, occupied in 2025 by Halifax and Nationwide, are also of the same period (Figure 11), as is the corner property (not illustrated).<sup>103</sup>

*Figure 11: The former Loughborough Echo Press Headquarters on Swan Street, with its Art Deco Neighbours*

A few Art Deco houses were built outside the town centre, for example, on Forest Road and Highfield Road. A large detached house ('Ronaldsway', later renamed 'White Ladies') was built on Beacon Road by Loughborough builders F. Read and Son Ltd in 1937–8 as a home for, and to the

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<sup>97</sup> Lboro. B.C., *Official Guide to Loughborough* (1948), 25.

<sup>98</sup> Below, Social History, Social and Cultural Life.

<sup>99</sup> Below, Education, Technical Institute and College, 1902 to 1952.

<sup>100</sup> Pevsner, *Leics. and Rutl.*, 295; below, Social History (cinemas); Religious History (Junction church).

<sup>101</sup> Lboro Libr. Local Studies Group (K. Phillips, ed.), *The Loughborough Art Deco Trail* (2024).

<sup>102</sup> L. Dyer, *Loughborough in 50 Buildings* (Stroud, 2018), 80–2; Lboro Libr. Local Studies Group, *The Loughborough Art Deco Trail* (Lboro., 2024), 3–5.

<sup>103</sup> Lboro Libr., *Loughborough Art Deco*, 5–8.

specification of, Dr Thomas E.N. Fargher, head of Mechanical and Civil Engineering at Loughborough College, and made bold use of geometric shapes in its design.<sup>104</sup>

## 1946–2024

The extension of the borough boundary in 1936 returned Nanpantan and Woodthorpe to Loughborough and added the villages of Thorpe Acre, Dishley and Hathern and land at Garendon. The small village of Thorpe Acre shared a raised plateau with Knightthorpe hamlet with the civil parish boundary having passed between them. It seems likely that these were once a single settlement (Map 1). The hamlet of Dishley,  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile north of Thorpe Acre, included the farm of the renowned agricultural improver Robert Bakewell (1725–95).<sup>105</sup> The land at Garendon, to the west of Thorpe Acre, included the site of Garendon Abbey and Garendon Hall, a Palladian mansion built in a parkland setting c.1730 for the Phillipps family. The Hall was demolished in 1964, but three Classical monuments remained in 2024, a Triumphal Arch, Temple of Venus and an obelisk.<sup>106</sup> Hathern, the next village along Derby Road after Dishley, was the most populous of the additions, with a medieval church, a school and several timber-framed houses in addition to more modern dwellings.<sup>107</sup> There was little change in any of these villages until after the Second World War, but with the peace came further expansion of the built area.

The three main post-war council developments were in Knightthorpe between what became 'Old Ashby Road' and Burleigh Brook, at Shelthorpe and in Thorpe Acre.<sup>108</sup> Progress was slowed by the national shortage of construction workers and the government prioritising areas devastated by bombing, but between 1945 and c.1960, 706 houses were built on the Ashby Road Estate, 583 homes were added to Shelthorpe Estate and 446 houses were added to the small village of Thorpe Acre. Building licences for private building were difficult to obtain in this period.<sup>109</sup> The borough council also bought land on Thorpe Hill, near the Knightthorpe and Thorpe Acre developments, and earmarked it for a 'schools' campus'. Two primary and three secondary schools opened on this land between 1954 and 1962.<sup>110</sup> All Saints' church in Thorpe Acre was extended and land intended by the council for another place of worship was sold to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>104</sup> NHLE, 1469564, White Ladies, 328 Beacon Road, Loughborough (accessed 1 November 2024).

<sup>105</sup> VCH Leics. III, 200; [https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10392470/cube/AREA ACRES](https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10392470/cube/AREA%20ACRES) (accessed 25 June 2024); ODNB, 'Bakewell, Robert (1725–95), stock breeder and farmer' (accessed 25 June 2024).

<sup>106</sup> L. Cantor, *The Historic Country Houses of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Newtown Linford, 1998), 20–1; NHLE, 1009171, Cistercian Abbey and Mansion, with fishpond and mound at Garendon (Scheduled Monument); 1361136, Garendon Park, The Triumphal Arch; 1116109, Garendon Park, The Temple of Venus; 1074548, Garendon Park, The Obelisk (accessed 1 November 2024).

<sup>107</sup> VCH Leics. III, 189.

<sup>108</sup> OS map, 1:10,560, SK51NW (1955 edn); (1967 edn).

<sup>109</sup> Lboro. B.C., *Official Guide to Loughborough* (c.1955–6), 30; (1958), 32; VCH Leics. III, 200; Lboro. *Echo*, 29 July 1950; *Leic. Daily Merc.*, 16 Oct. 1964.

<sup>110</sup> Below, Education.

<sup>111</sup> Below, Religious History.



Major changes closer to the town included the demolition of poor-quality 19th-century terraces that had been occupied by working-class families, who were rehoused on the new estates. Blocks of flats were built where some of these had stood and were mostly let to older people, often living alone.<sup>112</sup> Other older properties were refurbished and made available to migrants of South Asian heritage who had been forced to leave Uganda.<sup>113</sup> On the west side of the town, the large detached houses along Ashby Road were gradually purchased by Loughborough College / University for student accommodation, and many of the terraced houses on the Paget and Storer Estates were converted by private buyers to multi-occupancy student lets. These changes affected the viability of some places of worship, and were one factor leading to the closure of Holy Trinity and St Peter's Anglican churches.<sup>114</sup>

The Leicestershire structure plan of 1980 saw the need for 1,560 new houses in Loughborough.<sup>115</sup> The financing of housing developments changed as councils ceased to agree contracts for new houses at scale, instead granting permissions for speculative housing developments with conditions attached for a number of 'affordable' homes and specified community facilities. Further houses were added in the south of the parish off Forest Road and towards Woodthorpe (Map 4).

*Map 4: The urban area in 2000*

The borough's desire to leave 'green space' between settlements and protect views of the forest resulted in relatively little development in either Nanpantan or Woodthorpe, although new houses are being added to both in the 2020s. To the north and west of the town, a large development was underway in 2024 at the former Garendon Park, where planning consent was granted for 3,200 homes and associated community facilities, with access from Ashby Road and Derby Road.<sup>116</sup>

Loughborough University has also continued to expand, and several buildings worthy of note have been added to the campus.<sup>117</sup> In the town, a new magistrates' court opened on a prominent site on Jubilee Way in 2007. This striking three-storey design by Stephen George and Partners in brick and reconstituted stone includes four courtrooms, rooms for private consultations and custody cells.

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<sup>112</sup> Hewitt, *Holy Trinity*, 6, 9–10; OS Map 1:1250, SK419NW, SK5419SW (1961 edn ); (1970 edn).

<sup>113</sup> Lboro. Reminiscences Group, 'Memories of Asian Residents' (2 DVDs, 2014).

<sup>114</sup> Below, Social History; Religious Life.

<sup>115</sup> Leics. County Council, *Leicestershire: Planning for the Eighties* (Glenfield, 1980), 14–5.

<sup>116</sup> *West of Loughborough SUE* [Sustainable Urban Extension], *Phases 1 and 2* (2019), at [www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/development\\_framework\\_plan/Development%20Framework%20Plan.pdf](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/development_framework_plan/Development%20Framework%20Plan.pdf) (accessed 8 Nov. 2024).

<sup>117</sup> Below, Education.

The building won the Leicester and Rutland Society of Architects Design Award in 2009.<sup>118</sup> In 2025 only a small area of farmland remains, in the south-east of the former Loughborough parish, between the expanded urban area and the Outwoods.

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<sup>118</sup> Dyer, *50 Buildings*, 91–2; <https://find-an-architect.architecture.com/stephen-george-partners-llp/leicester/magistrates-courts-loughborough>; <https://www.flickr.com/photos/stevenbrandist/6696776617> (both accessed 27 Jan. 2025).