



Rutland
County Council

**LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND CAPACITY STUDY
OF LAND TO THE NORTH WEST OF OAKHAM,
RUTLAND**



**FINAL REPORT
December 2018**

by



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1. Introduction and Executive Summary

Background to and Outline of the Study

- 1.1 Rutland County Council is undertaking a Local Plan Review in order to extend the Local Plan period to 2036 and to provide for any additional new housing, employment or other sustainable development that may be needed over the extended plan period. The current Local Plan comprises a number of development plan documents (DPD) that will be combined into a single Local Plan, informed by up-to-date evidence within a range of supporting documents on key aspects including the environment, as required by the national planning policy framework (NPPF)¹.
- 1.2 The Council has commissioned a number of studies to examine the landscape sensitivity and capacity of the countryside around towns and villages in Rutland to accommodate new development and to provide evidence to help determine the most appropriate directions for future growth. One such study was a landscape sensitivity and capacity study of land around Oakham and Uppingham and land on the edge of Stamford in Rutland, undertaken in 2010². This included an assessment of the landscape sensitivity and capacity of undeveloped land to the east and south of Barleythorpe, close to the built-up edge of Oakham.
- 1.3 At the time of the 2010 *Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study* referred to above, land to the south of Oakham bypass, east of Barleythorpe, had been allocated for residential and employment land-use but had not been developed. Similarly, the then showground site to the east of the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road had been allocated for housing which had not been built. This previously undeveloped land has now been developed (or building is on-going) by way of housing at Farriers Reach and Buttercross Park and the Hawksmead Park employment site that has extended the town of Oakham to the east of Main Road northwards to the bypass.
- 1.4 Consequently the Council has commissioned this study to provide evidence of the landscape sensitivity and capacity of land to the north west of Oakham and Barleythorpe adjoining the current limits of development of the town in this direction. The land lies between Landscape Areas 5A and 6C as identified in the 2010 landscape study that should be read alongside this report.
- 1.5 The study will form part of the evidence base to inform the next stages of the Council's Local Plan Review and to support the Council's position at the Public Examination of the Council's Local Plan Review.
- 1.6 In order for the Council to compare the suitability of land around all of Oakham on a consistent basis, it requires a landscape sensitivity and capacity study of land to the north west of Oakham and Barleythorpe on a similar basis to that carried out in the 2010 landscape study. To this end the study includes:
 - a) A descriptive analysis of all the land to the north west of Oakham and Barleythorpe, identifying the different landscape sensitivity and capacity areas and the justification behind them;

¹ NPPF, 2018

² David Tyldesley and Associates, May 2010, '*Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study*'

- b) A summary table for each area(s) showing the landscape sensitivity and capacity areas that have been identified;
 - c) Each landscape sensitivity and capacity area is given a rating on a range low-medium-high and colour coded (using a “traffic light” notation) to allow visual comparison between different areas;
 - d) A map showing the different areas using a colour coding (“traffic light”) notation to allow visual comparison between the different areas; and
 - e) Recommendations to the Council for each of the areas as to prioritising land for development in landscape and visual terms and any mitigation measures that might be required should development take place.
- 1.7 The study assesses all the undeveloped land immediately adjoining Barleythorpe to the north west of Oakham in terms of the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape to accommodate new housing or other forms of development. The study also identifies any visual issues that may need to be considered in assessing the suitability of these areas.
- 1.8 For consistency with the previous landscape sensitivity and capacity study of Oakham, the minimum area to be assessed includes all undeveloped land within 150m of the Planned Limits of Development as defined in the Local Plan. The land around Barleythorpe to the north west of Oakham has been divided into coherent parcels, or zones, identified during the initial landscape characterisation and visual survey stages where landscape sensitivity and capacity are generally consistent. Boundaries of the zones are identified by recognisable features on the ground such as hedgerow field boundaries.
- 1.9 The study provides an independent appraisal of the landscape sensitivity of land to the north west of Oakham and Barleythorpe and its landscape capacity to accommodate housing or other development, based on recognised guidance which has been adapted to suit local circumstances (this is discussed further in Section 2). It should be noted that this study assesses landscape and visual considerations only. A range of other environmental considerations may need to be taken into account, such as ecology and nature conservation, heritage and archaeology, water quality and flooding potential, etc. by the Council to determine the potential wider environmental and cumulative impacts of development on a particular site. Other non-environmental site considerations, including access and drainage issues for example, will also need to be considered by others but which do not form part of this assessment.
- 1.10 Local interpretation of existing landscape character assessments was made following field survey, as discussed further below, to gain an understanding of the character of the local landscape to the north west of Oakham.
- 1.11 It was also important to include an historic dimension to landscape character assessment in order to gain a more complete, holistic understanding of existing character and how it has changed over time. The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) was completed in 2010 and provides an historic categorisation at different scales and levels of detail. Although a detailed review of the HLC was beyond the scope of this study, broad category types as defined within it were taken into consideration during the desk study and fieldwork, as discussed further in Section 2. Additional historic

landscape character assessment and detailed site assessments to consider, for example, the setting of heritage assets will be required with any application for development.

- 1.12 It is recognised that stakeholder consultation is important to achieving robust study outcomes. The Council consulted the Statutory Authorities on a Draft Report during October and November 2018³. Further consultation will be undertaken by the Council as part of the consultative process on the Local Plan Review.

Format of the Report

- 1.13 The following **Section 2** describes the methodology used in this study. It follows the same methodology as used in the 2010 study to enable comparison with that study's findings. Criteria for assessing landscape sensitivity and capacity are described and set out in a number of tables within Section 2.
- 1.14 **Section 3** sets out the assessment and analysis of each of the study zones. It begins by describing the local landscape character context of land to the north west of Oakham, using the County-wide *Rutland Landscape Character Assessment, 2003*⁴, and the finer grain of landscape characterisation within the 2010 *Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study*. These documents should be read alongside this report. **Figure 1** indicates the local landscape character setting of the study zones around Barleythorpe to the north west of Oakham. An aerial view is provided in **Figure 2**.
- 1.15 For each of the study zones an assessment is made of its landscape sensitivity, using the criteria described in Section 2 to assess firstly landscape character sensitivity, and secondly visual sensitivity. **Figure 3** indicates the landscape and visual context of each area, for example indicating distinctive ridgelines and key views into and out of the town. The scope for mitigation of each area, for example structure planting in-keeping with landscape character or to help soften an already harsh edge to the town, is discussed and taken into consideration in the assessment. Photographs are included to illustrate the landscape and visual context of Oakham and Barleythorpe within the vicinity of the land being assessed. Photograph viewpoints are shown in **Figure 4**. **Figure 5** illustrates landscape sensitivity of the study zones.
- 1.16 Criteria described in Section 2 to assess landscape value are then applied to each identified area, and conclusions made on the overall landscape capacity of each zone to accommodate housing or other development. **Figure 6** illustrates landscape capacity of the study zones.
- 1.17 A requirement of the Council's brief for the study is that it considers whether an area of separation needs to be maintained between Oakham and around Barleythorpe village, and to make recommendations. This is considered in **Section 4**.
- 1.18 The final **Section 5** provides recommendations to the Council for prioritising the study zones to the north west of Oakham around Barleythorpe for housing or other development in landscape and visual terms, and describes any mitigation measures that may be appropriate.

³ Document Ref: BBe2018/64: Draft Report: 28 September 2018

⁴ David Tyldesley & Associates, May 2003, 'Rutland Landscape Character Assessment'

Executive Summary

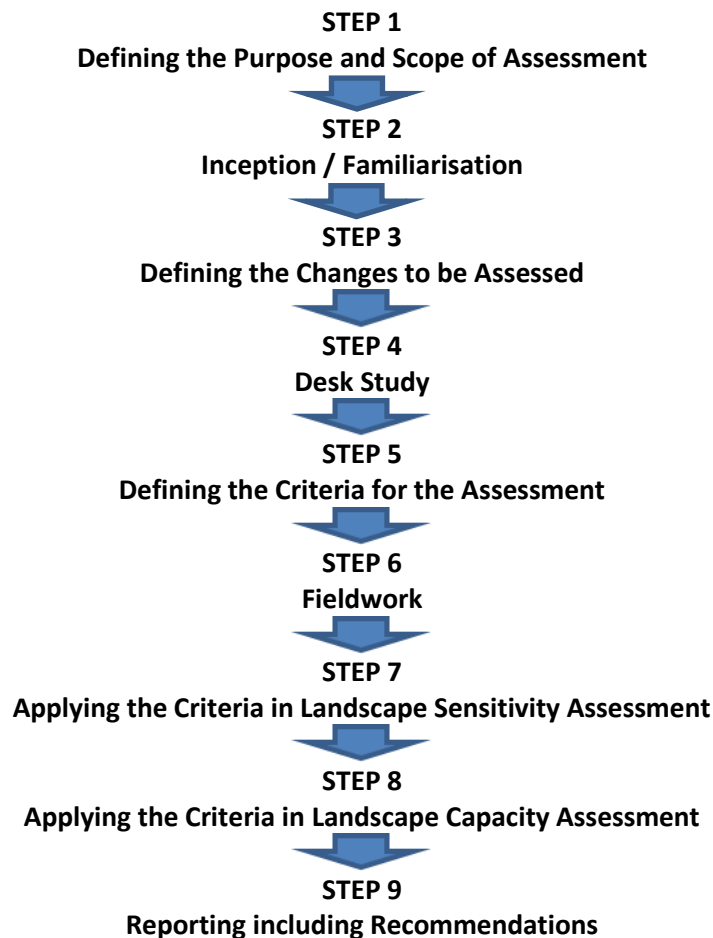
- 1.19 The following **Table 1** summarises the assessment of landscape sensitivity and capacity of the four areas of land to the north west of Oakham around Barleythorpe. The assessment of overall landscape sensitivity and capacity of each area is reported within a range of low-medium-high and colour coded (using a “traffic light” notation) to allow visual comparison between the different areas. **Figures 5 and 6** illustrate separately landscape sensitivity and landscape capacity of each area, reproducing the same colour coding notation.

Table 1: Summary of Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity of Land to the North West of Oakham around Barleythorpe

Study Zone	Landscape & Settlement Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Value	Overall Landscape Capacity
1	High	Moderate to High	High	Moderate	Low to Medium
2	High	High	High	Moderate to High	Low
3	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Medium
4	High	Moderate to High	High	Moderate to High	Low

2. Methodology

- 2.1 The study follows guidance on judging landscape sensitivity and capacity including the techniques and criteria described in The Countryside Agency's and Scottish Natural Heritage's joint *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland*, 2002, Topic Paper 6. The study is also consistent with the impact assessment methodology advocated by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment in their *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, Third Edition, 2013.
- 2.2 Current guidance stresses the importance of professional, qualitative judgement in reaching conclusions on likely change in the character of the landscape and visual amenity. This study has been undertaken by suitably qualified professionals highly experienced in the field of landscape character assessment and sensitivity throughout the UK. An approach and method has been adopted for assessing landscape sensitivity and the impact of built development and settlement expansion that is appropriate to the purpose and scope of the study. The methodology used in the study replicates that used in the May 2010 *Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study* referred to in Section 1.
- 2.3 Essentially, capacity evaluation is a systematic and chronological process through the steps shown below. However, it is also an iterative process and some steps were repeated in a cycle part way through the method to refine and apply the criteria:



Step 1: Defining the Purpose and Scope of the Assessment

- 2.4 The purpose and scope of the assessment are described in Section 1. The study provides only one part of the evidence base for the review of the Rutland Local Plan. It enables the Council to compare the suitability of areas of land to the north west of Oakham around Barleythorpe on a consistent basis in terms of its landscape sensitivity and capacity to accommodate housing or other development.
- 2.5 The study should not be used in isolation or to ‘test’ proposed development which will need to be supported by additional studies and detailed site assessment. It is important to recognise that an area considered suitable for small scale development in landscape and visual terms may be unsuitable for other reasons.

Step 2: Inception and Familiarisation

- 2.6 Since the report is an addendum to the previous 2010 *Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study* an inception meeting with the County Council was considered unnecessary.
- 2.7 Having undertaken the 2012 landscape sensitivity and capacity study the consultants were already extremely familiar with the landscapes of Rutland in general and the landscape setting of Oakham in particular (having worked on the 2003 *Rutland Landscape Character Assessment* and the 2010 *Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study* when employed at David Tyldesley and Associates). Familiarisation for this study entailed desk study of background material and mapping, and fieldwork as described below.

Step 3: Defining the Changes to be Assessed

- 2.8 The study does not address potential development sites. In undertaking the study the consultants were unaware of any proposals for the development of land within the areas assessed.
- 2.9 Acceptability in terms of landscape and visual impact of any proposal for housing development within the study zones is likely to be determined by detailed site assessment, site layout and detailed design considerations. It is assumed for the purposes of this study that any new housing would be conventional, domestic-scale residential development and that buildings would be well designed and would use traditional or other appropriate building techniques and materials. Other development would be limited to small scale employment/business/commercial use. Where structural landscaping including ground modelling, if appropriate, and tree planting of appropriate scale, area, design and species composition is considered essential mitigation, to ensure that the development achieves a good fit in the landscape, then this is specifically mentioned.

Step 4: Desk Study

- 2.10 Desk study of background information and documents required to carry out the study was undertaken prior to fieldwork. The main documents consulted were:
- Rutland Landscape Character Assessment, May 2003;
 - Rutland County Council Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study, May 2010;

- OS Six Inch, 1888 – 1913 mapping

- 2.11 Other information was obtained from the Council’s website, including background documents. Satellite imagery and aerial photography was used to gain an initial appreciation of landscape and settlement character prior to the fieldwork.
- 2.12 Broad character area data within the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) was used to inform the general descriptions of the character and setting of the study zones. Analysis of this data provides an understanding of how and where the town has expanded over time. Further detailed historic characterisation of land to the north west of Oakham and Barleythorpe was beyond the scope of the study and was considered unlikely to affect the findings.

Step 5: Defining the Criteria for the Assessment

- 2.13 The most important stage in the study is defining appropriate criteria for relevant assessment so that these may be applied in a systematic, impartial and transparent judgement and the conclusions of the assessment summarised into meaningful recommendations. The technique adopted follows the methodology in Topic Paper 6 (see paragraph 2.1 above) for assessing the overall sensitivity of the landscape to a particular type of change or development, defined in terms of the interactions between the landscape itself, the way it is viewed and the particular nature of the type of change or development in question, summarised as follows:

Overall Landscape Sensitivity = Landscape Character Sensitivity + Visual Sensitivity

- 2.14 For judging the ability or capacity of the landscape to accommodate change or development, the technique adopted follows the methodology in Topic Paper 6 for judging the overall landscape sensitivity, as above, and the value attached to the landscape or to specific elements in it, summarised as follows:

Landscape Capacity (to accommodate specific type of change) = Overall Landscape Sensitivity + Landscape Value

- 2.15 Criteria were defined based around four key aspects:

- (i) Landscape and settlement character sensitivity
- (ii) Settlement form and pattern
- (iii) Visual considerations
- (iv) Landscape value

- (i) Landscape and settlement character sensitivity

- 2.16 This considers impacts upon particular aspects of landscape character including landform, land cover, land use, scale, pattern, enclosure, quality and condition. An assessment of the character of the landscape to the north west of Oakham around Barleythorpe was undertaken including local interpretation of the landscape character areas as defined in the 2003 *Rutland Landscape Character Assessment* and the 2010 *Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study*.

- 2.17 It is important to recognise that the study addresses landscape sensitivity and capacity and is not a detailed landscape character assessment. It is also important to recognise that landscape character rarely changes abruptly and boundaries drawn often represent transitional zones between one character area and another where changes in topography, geology, soils, cultural patterns, land use etc. might be quite subtle. Consequently character area boundaries often follow physical or mapped features such as roads or field boundaries, for example hedgerows or walls.
- 2.18 An assessment is made on the presence or absence of distinctive landscape elements or features, whether they could be readily replaced and whether they make a positive contribution to character and sense of place. Conclusions are made on whether development would overall have a negative effect, neutral or positive effect on landscape character.
- 2.19 Criteria are used as developed in the 2010 *Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study*, to assess the function of each area of land in the wider setting of Oakham. The most important considerations in this respect are the function of the land as actual or perceived intervening land between settlements; and as an important break between town and countryside.
- 2.20 Where the character of a zone is defined more by surrounding built development rather than its setting on the edge of the town and countryside, its function as open space affecting the setting, appearance, form and / or character of the built environment is made.
- (ii) Settlement form and pattern
- 2.21 It is recognised that Oakham has a distinctive historical core. Of particular importance in relation to the assessment of built development is the historic settlement pattern and the extent to which this has been sustained or modified. Growth has occurred which has obviously altered settlement shape and to varying extent the pattern of the town, i.e. the direction of growth which is a reflection of natural influences or other considerations. In some areas there is a good landscape fit where the built-up area on the edge of the town relates well to its landscape setting, for example an irregular form or layout related to topography or hydrology or historical land use or patterns of buildings or activities. In other areas the fit is not so good resulting in a harsh edge to the settlement which does not blend so well into the landscape.
- 2.22 Compatibility of change to the overall shape of the town and how it fits into the wider settlement pattern within the landscape is essential if new development is to sustain the appreciation of distinctive settlement pattern and character. Thus the study considers settlement pattern, settlement morphology and the design, external finish and landscape fit of buildings. An assessment is made of whether development within an identified area would represent an appropriate extension to the town, or where there may be some association with settlement form and pattern but where this is less clear, or where development would be isolated from the town. Conclusions are made on whether development would overall have a negative effect, neutral or positive effect on settlement form and pattern.

(iii) Visual considerations

- 2.23 The assessment considers the visual effects of development, such as the obstruction of views (for example by new buildings) or intrusion into views; how conspicuous new housing may be or whether it would affect important skylines or views, for example those seen from dwellings, roads, paths and other viewpoints, and to what extent this might affect the setting of the town. Some visual effects may be reduced by mitigation measures; however these may themselves have adverse effects on the landscape or may obstruct important views in the attempt to prevent views of the new development.
- 2.24 The elements considered to be important in the assessment of visual considerations are:
- Views into the area and approaches; the impact on views of and approaches to the Town and village from the approach roads, public rights of way and other viewpoints;
 - Outward views; the impact of development on views out of the town and village where these are strategically significant and distinctive and an important aspect of settlement character;
 - Ridges and other areas of high ground; the potential effect on distinctive ridges and other areas of high ground or where the settlement avoids such elevated positions;
 - Conspicuity; whether development would be located in a visually conspicuous location, such as open, flat ground or on open, high or rising ground, where this is not already a key positive landscape characteristic.
- 2.25 Visibility of development is not necessarily an adverse effect, even where it would be conspicuous. Thus the assessment considers whether development is likely to be perceptible but would not significantly alter the balance of features or elements within the existing view, or where development would enhance views or existing visual amenity.

(iv) Landscape value

- 2.26 The first three key aspects considered above, namely landscape character and setting of the town and village; settlement form and pattern; and visual considerations, were assessed to reach conclusions on the overall landscape sensitivity of each identified parcel of land. This process inevitably involved both objective assessment, such as the presence or absence of landscape features, and relative and comparative qualitative judgements, such as changes to patterns, diversity and openness.
- 2.27 Turning the sensitivity study into an assessment of capacity to accommodate a particular type of change i.e. new housing, requires consideration of more subjective, experiential or perceptual aspects of the landscape and of the value attached to it. Relative value is attached to different landscapes by society for a variety of reasons and this needs to be reflected in judgements made about capacity to accept change. Thus the capacity assessment considers the interaction between the sensitivity of the landscape, the type and amount of change, the way that the landscape is valued and by whom.
- 2.28 The fact that an area of landscape is not designated either nationally or locally does not mean that it does not have any value. In recent years UK planning policy and advice has on

the whole discouraged local designations unless it can be shown that other approaches would be inadequate. The European Landscape Convention⁵ promotes the need to take account of all landscapes, with less emphasis on the 'special' and more recognition that 'ordinary' landscapes also have their value, supported by the landscape character approach.

- 2.29 Criteria are used which consider landscape designations and other aspects of value, such as scenic value / interest , and public amenity value by way of views, access, biodiversity (general wildlife) interest and opportunity for quiet enjoyment (tranquillity).
- 2.30 With regard to designated landscapes, there are no national designations such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within Rutland. The previous Rutland Local Plan (July 2001) included a policy for the protection of Countryside of Special Landscape Value (Policy EN28) referring to the designation of Areas of Particularly Attractive Countryside (APAC) and Areas of Local Landscape Value (ALLV) within the county. Policies in the previous Rutland Local Plan were automatically saved for a 3 year period to September 2007 under the provisions of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Several policies were extended beyond that date by a Direction issued by the Secretary of State, to remain in force until replaced by new policies through the LDF process. Included in the list of extended policies was EN28.
- 2.31 For that reason in assessing landscape value in the 2010 *Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study* consideration was given to whether a zone was located within or adjacent to a designated APAC or ALLV, which increased landscape value. The current statutory development plan in Rutland does not include local landscape designations. However, to meet the requirement for consistency of this study with the methodology used in the 2010 study, the fact that much of the land to the north west of Oakham lies within an area previously designated APAC increases the value of study zones in that area in landscape terms. This approach is consistent with the national planning policy framework (NPPF) which encourages the planning system to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other things, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes⁶.

Step 6: Fieldwork

- 2.32 Detailed fieldwork in and around Oakham was undertaken in September 2018 to view the landscape and townscape setting of each study zone. Landscape characteristics were recorded, using the finer grain of landscape characterisation within the 2010 *Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study* (rather than the strategic level county-wide *Rutland Landscape Character Assessment*, 2003) as the basis for the study. Key characteristics and features were recorded as referred to in paragraphs 2.16 – 2.22 above.
- 2.33 An appreciation of views into and out of Oakham and Barleythorpe in the vicinity of the study zones was gained by walking along footpaths, tracks and rights of way including sections of the Rutland Round recreational route, and driving along local roads. Photographs were taken to record key characteristics in accordance with the study criteria, and as an aide memoire. Paragraphs 2.23 – 2.25 refer to the key visual considerations during fieldwork.

Step 7: Applying the Criteria in Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

- 2.34 As described in Step 5 appropriate criteria were defined and then applied in a systematic

⁵ Council of Europe, 2000, 'European Landscape Convention', Strasbourg

⁶ NPPF, 2012, paragraph 109

and impartial judgement of the sensitivity and capacity of each study zone. Criteria for all the four key aspects explained in Step 5 were devised as being most appropriate to the consideration of built development on settlement edges. To assess landscape character sensitivity the following criteria in **Table 2** were used:

Table 2: Landscape and Settlement Character Sensitivity

Landscape Sensitivity	Assessment Criteria
High Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctive elements and combination of features present that could not be replaced and which make a positive contribution to character and sense of place. • Important intervening open land between settlements, or perceived as such. • Important to the setting of the town / village by providing a distinctive break between town / village and countryside. • Open space important to the appearance, form and character of the built environment. • Development would be isolated from the town / village or would detract from important aspects of settlement form and pattern. • The area may be adjacent to built limits but lies outside clear and important boundary features defining settlement extent.
Moderate Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common place elements and combination of features present, some of which could not be replaced and which create generally unremarkable character but some sense of place. • Part of a larger area of intervening open land between settlements, or perceived as such. • Of some importance to the setting of the town / village but the break between town and countryside is less distinctive. • Open space of some importance to the setting, appearance, form and character of the built environment. • Development would have some association with the town / village and may have some effect on settlement form and pattern.
Low Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some elements / features are discordant, derelict or in decline, resulting in indistinct character with little or no sense of place. Few, if any, features / elements that could not be replaced. • Is not important intervening open land between settlements. • Of little or no importance to the setting of the town / village as there is little or no distinctive break between town / village and countryside. • Open space of little or no importance to the appearance, form and character of the built environment. • Development would be an appropriate extension of the town / village with no adverse impact on important aspects of settlement form and pattern.

2.35 To assess visual sensitivity the following criteria in **Table 3** were used:

Table 3: Visual Sensitivity

Visual Sensitivity	Assessment Criteria
High Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides important views into and/or out of the town / village which could not be mitigated. Important to the setting of the town / village where development would create unacceptable visual intrusion into the countryside that could not be mitigated. The area is very open to public or private views where views of the countryside or open space are very important. Development would be uncharacteristically conspicuous and could not be successfully mitigated.
Moderate Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views into and/or out of the town / village are of some importance and / or there may be scope for mitigating potential visual impacts. Of some importance to the setting of the town / village but development could be mitigated so that visual intrusion into the countryside is acceptable. The area is partially open to public or private views where views of the countryside or open space are important, or is more open to views in which the countryside or open space is of less importance. Development likely to be perceptible but would not significantly alter the balance of features or elements within the existing view.
Low Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of little or no importance to the setting of the town / village such that development would not lead to unacceptable visual intrusion into the countryside, with or without mitigation. The area is well screened from public or private views. Development would not be discernible or would enhance views or existing visual amenity.

2.36 To make a judgement on overall landscape sensitivity by considering the interactions between landscape & settlement character sensitivity and visual sensitivity, the following categories given in the matrix in **Table 4** were used:

Table 4: Overall Landscape Sensitivity Categories

Landscape & Settlement Character Sensitivity	High	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
	Moderate	MODERATE	MODERATE	HIGH
	Low	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
		Low	Moderate	High
Visual Sensitivity				

Step 8: Applying the Criteria in Landscape Capacity Assessment

2.37 As described above, turning the sensitivity study into an assessment of capacity to accommodate a particular type of change requires consideration of the way that the landscape is valued. To do this the following criteria in **Table 5** were used:

Table 5: Landscape Value

Landscape Value	Assessment Criteria
High Landscape Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lies wholly within a previously locally designated landscape where localised character and scenic value is distinctive. Presents locally important landscape characteristics or scenic value; and / or Presents important public amenity value by way of views, access, sporting facilities, biodiversity interest or opportunity for quiet enjoyment (relative tranquillity).
Moderate Landscape Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lies wholly or partially within a previously locally designated landscape but where localised character and scenic value is less distinctive or has become degraded. Lies adjacent to a previously locally designated landscape. Presents locally distinctive landscape characteristics with some scenic interest; and / or Presents some public amenity value by way of views, access, sporting facilities, biodiversity interest or opportunity for quiet enjoyment (relative tranquillity).
Low Landscape Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not lie within or adjacent to a previously locally designated landscape. Does not present locally important / distinctive landscape characteristics or scenic value / interest; or Does not present important public amenity value by way of views, access, sporting facilities, biodiversity interest or opportunity for quiet enjoyment (relative tranquillity).

2.38 To make judgements on overall landscape capacity by considering the interactions between overall landscape sensitivity and landscape value, the following categories given in the matrix in **Table 6** were used:

Table 6: Overall Landscape Capacity Categories

Overall Landscape Sensitivity	High	MEDIUM	LOW TO MEDIUM	LOW
	Moderate	MEDIUM TO HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW TO MEDIUM
	Low	HIGH	MEDIUM TO HIGH	MEDIUM
		Low	Moderate	High
		Landscape Value		

Step 9: Reporting including Recommendations

- 2.39 This report presents the findings of the landscape sensitivity and capacity assessment. Paragraphs 1.11 – 1.15 set out the format followed in reporting the assessment of sensitivity and capacity for each of the four study zones in turn. The different aspects of landscape character sensitivity, visual sensitivity, and landscape value are assessed to three categories; *low*, *medium* and *high*. However, in some cases the assessment does not fall squarely into one of these categories and a split assessment, such as *moderate to high* landscape character sensitivity, has been given based on professional judgement. Overall landscape sensitivity using the matrix in Table 4 is also assessed to these three categories and colour coded as shown in the table. Again, for some zones decisions have been made about how the individual assessments are combined where split assessments have led to more than one possible category. For example, an area with a *moderate to high* landscape character sensitivity and *moderate* visual sensitivity could have an overall landscape sensitivity of either *moderate* or *high* using the matrix in Table 4. Thus a judgement has been made, including comparison with the assessment of other zones, to arrive at the most appropriate category of overall sensitivity.
- 2.40 To arrive at overall landscape capacity, a five point scale has been used as shown in the matrix in Table 6; *low*, *low to medium*, *medium*, *medium to high* and *high*. A five point scale allows greater differentiation between study zones. These five categories are also colour coded as shown in the table and illustrated via GIS mapping.
- 2.41 When assessing overall landscape capacity, again for some zones decisions have been made about how the individual assessments are combined where split assessments have led to more than one possible category.
- 2.42 Colour coded summary tables are presented at the end of the assessment of each study zone. The four summary tables have been combined into an overall summary table presented as Table 1 in the Executive Summary. This allows easy comparison between zones and cross-referencing to the coloured maps.
- 2.43 A requirement of the Council's brief for the study is that it considers whether an area of separation needs to be maintained between Oakham and around Barleythorpe village, and to make recommendations. This is considered in Section 4.
- 2.44 Finally, recommendations are given in Section 5 to prioritise zones and to guide the direction of the future growth of Oakham. Where study zones have been assessed as having the same overall capacity to accommodate development, a judgement is made and recommendations given on the order that these areas could be brought forward for development, in landscape and visual terms.

3. Assessment and Analysis

Oakham Local Landscape Character Context

- 3.1 Oakham and Barleythorpe lie within the southern part of the *Vale of Catmose* landscape character type. The boundaries and distinctive features of the *Vale of Catmose* were originally identified within the 2001 *Leicester Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy*⁷, described in more detail in the 2003 *Rutland Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)*⁸. The county-wide 2001 Woodland Strategy identified and described the higher ground to the west as *High Leicestershire*, referred to in the 2003 LCA as *High Rutland* as it was considered more appropriate for a district-wide assessment of Rutland. To appreciate the local landscape context of land to the north west of Oakham around Barleythorpe, it is necessary to consider the key landscape and visual characteristics of both the *Vale of Catmose* and *High Rutland* landscape character types.
- 3.2 The following extracts from the 2003 Rutland LCA describe the main characteristics of the **Vale of Catmose landscape character type** appropriate to land to the north west of Oakham around Barleythorpe:

'The Vale of Catmose lies mainly within the County of Rutland, with a small part of its northern area extending into Leicestershire where it abuts the Leicestershire Wolds and Wreake Valley landscape character areas. The Vale stretches down from the north west boundary of the county to the western shores of Rutland Water, south of Oakham. It comprises a broad, generally flat-bottomed valley basin surrounded by the higher land of High Rutland (to the west), the Wolds (to the north) and the Rutland Plateau (to the east). This contrast is at its most dramatic where Burley House overlooks the Vale and Rutland Water Basin from its commanding position on the edge of the Cottesmore Plateau. The Vale of Catmose lies in the Countryside Agency's "Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds" regional character area and English Nature's "Trent Valley and Rises" Natural Area. Its geology is principally ironstone and limestone overlain in part by glacial tills.'

'A key characteristic of much of the Vale is that of an open valley basin created by the edges, shoulders, ridges and slopes of the surrounding hills and plateaux, the skylines of which are frequently wooded. The Vale is typically distinguished by its lower lying land, absence of the dramatic series of ridges and dips of High Rutland and the characteristic enclosure of a vale contrasting sharply with the more exposed plateau to the east. The classic 'vale' landscape of meadows and fields gently rises in altitude towards the north from the outskirts of Oakham. In its northern extremity, the distinction in relief and character between the Vale and the Cottesmore Plateau is more subtle. Land within the Vale typically ranges from about 80m AOD in the lower areas to about 120m AOD on the tops of the rolling hills.'

'The Vale comprises a mix of arable land, which is located mainly on the slopes, and pasture, which is located mainly on the valley bottom. The Vale contributes significantly to the pastoral landscapes of west Rutland. There is relatively little tree cover and fields are generally quite regular in shape and relatively larger in size than in the High Rutland hills. Fields are bounded by low-cut, often gappy, hawthorn hedges with occasional ash

⁷ Leicestershire County Council, 2001, '*Leicester Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy*'

⁸ David Tyldesley & Associates, May 2003, '*Rutland Landscape Character Assessment*'

trees forming noticeable features where they have survived in the open, arable fields’.

‘Throughout the Vale there is evidence of field boundary loss, particularly where arable farming is prevalent. Elsewhere, hedgerow maintenance has declined or has been limited to cutting by mechanical flails, so hedgerows have become generally very low and gappy, often supplemented with post and rail fencing. The hedgerow trees are, in places, less frequent or over-mature. These characteristics are particularly noticeable along the Oakham Road, just north of the town and around Ashwell where there is also evidence of non-agricultural use of the land for horse grazing and stabling. However, this is not a uniform characteristic as there are pockets of land in the northern extremities of the Vale, where there is evidence of a better maintained agricultural landscape with more substantial, stock-proof hedges, although even here field sizes are still relatively large, showing some evidence of intensification of agriculture over recent decades’.

‘There are a number of linear features in the Vale including the disused Oakham - Melton Mowbray canal, the Leicester - Melton - Oakham railway line and the A606 Melton – Oakham road. The Vale also contains a number of electricity transmission lines. The canal retains water in places and, along with its riparian vegetation, is a locally significant feature in both landscape and ecological terms. The railway line also has some ecologically interesting, linear features within its shallow cuttings and along its low embankments which appear to have been relatively unaffected by the intensive arable farming alongside.The road and railway introduce some noise and movement into an otherwise quiet, calm, rural landscape’.

‘The low-lying, flat or gently undulating land form of the Vale means that views across it are limited and settlements are not generally visually prominent from within the Vale, although they can be from the surrounding higher land. Roads across the Vale tend to be straight and narrow’.

‘Other elements of landscape character include a series of small streams running generally west-east across the Vale and a significant network of small field ponds, particularly around Langham, although neither are visually pronounced. The Vale is crossed by a series of minor roads, tracks and other rights of way radiating from most of the villages and there is a sporadic distribution of fox coverts and farmsteads outside the villages’.

3.3 The LCA goes on to present landscape objectives for the Vale of Catmose as follows:

Recommended Landscape Objectives for the Vale of Catmose

To conserve, enhance and, where necessary, restore the generally quiet, calm, rural, pastoral or mixed-agricultural vale character, with its compact stone and tile villages, regular field pattern across a broad, generally flat-bottomed valley basin surrounded by higher land and wooded skylines. To increase woodland cover throughout the Vale especially with small - medium sized, linear woodlands and belts of native broadleaved species which would strengthen the form and line of the landscape and link existing woodlands and other semi-natural habitats. To safeguard the landscape setting of Oakham.

3.4 The following extracts from the 2003 Rutland LCA describe settlement form and pattern in the Vale of Catmose:

'The historic market town of Oakham is the largest settlement in the County and lies towards the southern end of the Vale. It nestles in the narrowest part of the Vale between the slopes of Leighfield Forest on High Rutland to the west and the promontory of high land at Burley-on-the-Hill to the east projecting from the Rutland Plateau. The way that Oakham nestles in the gap between the surrounding hills is important to the setting of the town and gives it a strong relationship with the Vale landscape. The town takes a relatively compact form with well-defined boundaries to the west, south and east, which to the east and west are influenced by the confining hills, providing a particularly strong relationship between the town and its landscape setting'.

'To the north the edge between the Vale and the town is less abrupt, and being characterised by industrial and rail related development, it consequently displays 'urban fringe' characteristics'.

'Apart from Oakham, the settlements comprise small to moderately sized villages - Ashwell, Barleythorpe, Egleton, Langham and Teigh. Ashwell Prison lies between Langham and Burley and there are a number of farm farmsteads and occasional other buildings in the landscape. Except for Oakham, Barleythorpe and Langham, which are close together along the A606, the villages are well distributed and widely spaced across the Vale. They are of generally complex but nevertheless, compact form around a nucleus of historic lanes and are located on the banks of the small streams crossing the Vale. Only Langham has experienced significant 20th C expansion beyond its medieval layout but this is still clearly distinguishable in the series of narrow, parallel lanes. Ashwell, Egleton and Teigh in particular have retained much of their agricultural character with working farms within or close to their small historic cores. Barleythorpe is affected by the main A606 road which tends to divide the western part of the village, which contains Barleythorpe Hall and parkland, from the eastern part of the village, which contains the Barleythorpe Stud. The building materials are varied, including ironstone, limestone, red brick and white render with roofs of Collyweston and blue slate, tiles and occasionally thatch'.

- 3.5 The following extracts from the 2003 Rutland LCA describe the main characteristics of the **High Rutland landscape type** appropriate to land to the north west of Oakham and west of Barleythorpe:

'High Rutland forms part of the watershed between the Soar - Trent - Humber and the Welland catchments. It is dissected by radiating rivers and streams which have formed steep sided valleys separated by ridges. This gives the whole area the distinctive steeply rolling landform familiar to travellers who are either continually ascending and descending the steep slopes or travelling along the ridges enjoying panoramic views across the surrounding countryside'.

'The highest parts of the landscape character type in Rutland reach over 190 metres AOD. Much of High Rutland is deeply rural and locally feels relatively remote. A distinctive feature is the network of narrow gated roads connecting isolated hamlets and farms. The only major roads within the area are the A47 running east to west and the A6003 running north to south, neither of which is seriously visually intrusive in the landscape but they do create a busier, noisier ambience in the main road corridors'.

'Land use is a mixture of arable on the flatter and more gently sloping ridge areas and

grassland mainly on the steeper slopes and in the valley bottoms. Ridge and furrow is fairly well distributed throughout the area and reflects the intensity of arable cultivation here in the early Middle Ages. Field ponds are also characteristic. The field pattern is mainly one of regularly shaped fields bounded by thorn hedges with mainly ash, and in a few places oak, as hedgerow trees. These enclosure hedges contrast with the older mixed species hedges that form the more sinuous parish boundaries’.

‘Throughout the area, but especially in Leighfield Forest, some hedgerows are substantial and many still perform an important function in this pastoral landscape, providing containment, shelter and shade for stock. Whilst a number of hedges have been neglected, relatively few have been removed and there is evidence of the increasing practice of traditional hedgerow management by laying, protection of hedgerow trees and fencing of new field and hedgerow trees to protect them from grazing animals. A number of hedgerow trees are over-mature, including some left isolated in the fields when associated hedgerows were removed, these need careful maintenance and surgery to extend their lives and replacement to ensure continuity of hedgerow tree cover. Some ponds are being cleaned, restored and nurtured demonstrating that all these important contributions to landscape character can still be practicable today’.

‘Whilst horse-keeping helps to maintain the pastoral character, a number of the fields are over-grazed. The use of inappropriate fencing and the accumulation of stables, barns and other, usually temporary and unsightly, buildings, vehicles, lighting and clutter detracts from the generally unspoilt rural character and is particularly intrusive in views of, to and from the villages’.

‘Woodland is a significant feature throughout the area reflecting the old Leighfield Forest. The woodlands tend to be broadleaved, mainly ash and oak, but there are also mixed conifer and broadleaved plantations associated with 19th century sporting estates and a number of mature poplar plantations. In general the woodlands tend to be even aged. Parkland is an important component of the landscape in some parts. Other concentrations of sites of ecological value are provided by small streams, ponds, disused railway lines and Eyebrook Reservoir’.

‘Whilst the Leighfield Forest and Chater Valley sub-areas have remained pastoral and well wooded, elsewhere there has been extensive conversion or reversion to arable with attendant loss of pasture, woodland, field boundaries, hedgerow trees and small pockets of semi-natural vegetation. However, in parts new woodland planting is quite extensive; the Woodland Trust has new plantations between Oakham and Braunston-in-Rutland. Some parkland landscapes are in good condition, others urgently need restoration and reinstatement of good management practice’.

- 3.6 The 2003 Rutland LCA considers landscape character at a smaller scale than in the county-wide 2001 *Landscape and Woodland Strategy*. The *Vale of Catmose* landscape character type remains largely the same as that identified in the 2001 strategy, whereas *High Rutland* is divided into a number of smaller landscape character sub-areas, providing a finer grain of detail and a more localised assessment of land to the west of Oakham and Barleythorpe than in the 2001 strategy. Land to the north west of Oakham, west of Barleythorpe, is located within the *Ridges and Valleys* sub-area. The following extracts from the 2003 Rutland LCA describe the main characteristics of the ***Ridges and Valleys sub-area*** appropriate to land to the north west of Oakham and west of Barleythorpe:

'This extensive part of west, south and central Rutland has typical generic landscape elements, features and characteristics of High Rutland but differs from Leighfield Forest by lacking the sense of rural isolation and having a much more open, regular, geometric field pattern (exacerbated by some boundary removal) with fewer, low-cut or gappy hedges, fewer hedgerow trees and less enclosure. The ridges and valleys are evident but not as pronounced as to the west. There are fewer woodlands and those that occur tend to be enclosure or post-enclosure, straight-edged plantations. In parts there are a number of small plantations and some of the valley streams have linear strips of woodland or narrow, linear wetland habitats'.

'Mixed or arable farming prevails with a variety of crops and intensively managed, improved grasslands grazed by cattle and sheep. There are more farm steadings in the countryside and more and larger farm buildings'.

'Although the sub-area does exhibit a number of historic features, with ridge and furrow and old lanes linking medieval villages still characteristic, this part of High Rutland has a less obvious feeling of antiquity and continuity. It is busier and noisier with the main roads passing through it, settlements are more frequent and larger and settlement pattern much denser. Roads, railways and disused railways form important linear features sometimes seeming to run against the grain of the ridges and valleys which run generally east – west'.

'The northern-most part of the sub-area, around Whissendine, differs from the rest of the sub-area in that it is more obviously a transition from the characteristic High Leicestershire / High Rutland landscapes to the west and the Vale of Catmose to the east. Notably, the ridges and valleys tend to run generally north - south rather than east west and the ridges are more rounded and lower, and the valleys shallower, than in the rest of the sub-area'.

'It differs from the Eyebrook Valley because it does not generally exhibit the same large scale valley structure and character, being more like a series of ridges and smaller valleys, some of which have no noticeable watercourse at all. Another distinguishing feature is the density of settlement pattern and larger size of the villages'.

- 3.7 The 2003 Rutland LCA recommends the following landscape objectives for the *Ridges and Valleys* sub-area:

Recommended Landscape Objectives

High Rutland - Ridges and Valleys

To sustain and restore the rural, mixed-agricultural, busy, colourful, diverse landscape with regular patterns, straight lines, frequent movement, many large and small historic, stone built conservation villages that fit well with the landform, to protect the landscape setting and conserve and enhance the edges of villages, to increase the woodland cover and other semi-natural habitats whilst protecting historic features and panoramic views from the ridges.

- 3.8 An even finer-grain of landscape character assessment of land to the north west of Oakham around Barleythorpe is contained within the 2010 *Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study*⁹ to inform the assessment of a number of sites around Oakham within that study. This further sub-divided the *Vale of Catmose* landscape into four landscape sub-units where localised landscape character shows some variation from the generic description of the wider sub-area. One of these sub-units is described below and shown in **Figure 1**, in the context of the study zones and their immediate setting in relation to Oakham and Barleythorpe. The following extracts from the 2010 *Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study* describe the main characteristics of the **North-West Oakham Vale landscape sub-area** within which study zone 1 is located:

'This sub-area fringes Oakham's north-west quarter, extending from the LCT boundary with High Rutland in the west, eastwards to the north of Barleythorpe and the by-pass, as far as the roundabout junction with 'Land's End Way'. From there it is bounded to the east by a north-south linear tree belt. The area presents some of the more undiluted 'vale' landscape character found in the immediate vicinity of Oakham. It is an area of generally flat, slightly undulating pastoral land with slightly smaller field sizes than elsewhere around the town. Its predominant use is rough grazing, enclosed by mostly well maintained hedges which are punctuated with field-side trees, mostly of Ash. Views across the area are mostly foreshortened by hedges and trees because of the general absence of variation in relief. Fox coverts and tree belts also contribute to the character and sense of enclosure of the subarea, particularly to its northern parts where these combine to bring forward the visual envelope. Some of the pasture land still displays historic ridge and furrow character'.

'The area's character is significantly affected by the presence of the by-pass which acts as a visual, physical and perceptual barrier between the town and its vale setting towards the north. The highway's cuttings and verges have been subject to extensive planting, although this remains immature. Road and vehicle noise is a frequent intrusion. The construction of the new road has partially annexed a parcel of land bounded by 'Main Road' and the by-pass north of the Barleythorpe Stud complex which appeared to be partially under development of new housing at the time of this study. The remaining area south of the by-pass is subject to proposals for significant mixed use housing and employment proposals, marketed as the Hawksmead Park sustainable urban extension. Consequently, the agricultural management of the area appears to have been abandoned and new access roads laid down within an area previously characterised by small fields and dense hedgerows. The proposals for Hawksmead Park include the loss to development of the existing showground and sports fields which are to be relocated to the area north of the by-pass'.

'The North-West Oakham Vale extends into the urban area of Oakham in the vicinity of the Showground. However, in this area the transition between open countryside and built area is fragmented and, at the time of study, seldom abrupt. More recent employment development off Land's End Way has diminished this gradual transition. The small hamlet of Barleythorpe to the immediate north-west of Oakham stands separate from the main town, but its separation is diluted by the 'man-made' character of the showground, highway infrastructure, development around Barleythorpe Stud and the construction of the new college'.

- 3.9 The following extracts from the 2010 *Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study* describe the main characteristics of the **High Rutland Fringe landscape sub-area**, shown in **Figure 1** and within which study zones 2, 3 and 4 are located:

⁹ David Tyldesley and Associates, May 2010, '*Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study*'

'The 1995 LCA identifies the Vale of Catmose as extending in a narrow strip between the western edge of Oakham and the raised relief of the High Rutland. From the western built limits of Oakham a series of rounded ridges and valleys flank the town, running generally in a west-east direction. Relief increases markedly over a short distance in a series of rolling slopes from around 115m on the Egleton Plain to a ridge height of up to 160m within the High Rutland 'Ridges and Valleys' LCT. The lower slopes fall within the Vale of Catmose. This study recognises that the Vale of Catmose on the western Oakham fringe displays characteristics which vary somewhat from the typical wider vale's landscape and is consequently defined as the 'High Rutland Fringe' sub-area'.

'The sub-area lies between the Brooke Road in the south, extending northwards immediately west of the rather abrupt built edge of Oakham (primarily late 20th Century housing estates), as far as the Manor Lane and Barleythorpe. It is further dissected by the Braunston and Cold Overton Roads which radiate westwards from Oakham, rising noticeably as they do so. These roads all afford some significant vistas over the town and its rural hinterland.'

'The LCT comprises mainly of rough grazing pasture divided into relatively large fields with occasional parcels of arable land use on the better soils and less sloping sites of the valley floor south of the Cold Overton Road. Historic field patterns have been diluted with the remaining boundaries consisting of hawthorn and blackthorn hedges, sometimes thick and overgrown, but at other times are in poor condition. There are extensive historic ridge and furrow remains visible across much of the sub-area, particularly prominent between Brooke Road and Braunston Road, and again north-east of Cold Overton Road as the slope falls towards Barleythorpe.

'Unlike most other areas of Oakham, there are views and glimpses of the rising land from within the western parts of the town. Views back over the town from within the LCT are important and extensive, although these are generally limited to points along the highways as there is a general lack of Public Rights of Way across the area'.

There are limited but important mixed broad-leaved parcels of tree cover within the LCT. A line of trees and shrubs is found along the small watercourse which runs in the valley south of Cold Overton Lane, and again with a similar character along the stream south of Barleythorpe, in the northern segment of the LCT. Elsewhere there are occasional free standing mature trees within the pastures which belie the line of former field boundaries rather than any considered parkland design'.

'Like the Egleton Plain, high voltage cables and pylons also affect the landscape within the High Rutland Fringe. On occasion these run immediately adjacent to the Trent Road housing estate. However, these are often seen against a backdrop of the upper slopes of LCT, or conversely, viewed from above when looking across the town, although these do skyline as they rise and cross Cold Overton Road'.

'The sub-area is primarily characterised and differentiated from its neighbouring LCTs by its pastoral, less intensive land use and contrasting, sometimes steeply rising relief. This contrast to other Vale sub-areas is further emphasised by the harsh boundaries of the western estates of Oakham'.

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment of Study Zones

- 3.10 The following pages comprise the assessment of landscape sensitivity of the four study zones to the north west of Oakham around Barleythorpe and their capacity to accommodate new housing or other development.

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment of Study Zone 1

Location

Located to the north of Barleythorpe adjacent to the planned limited of development that follows the northern edge of the village. The area lies to the west of the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road that passes through the village linking Oakham to the south and Langham to the north. The roundabout junction of the B640 and the A606 abuts the area's northern corner.

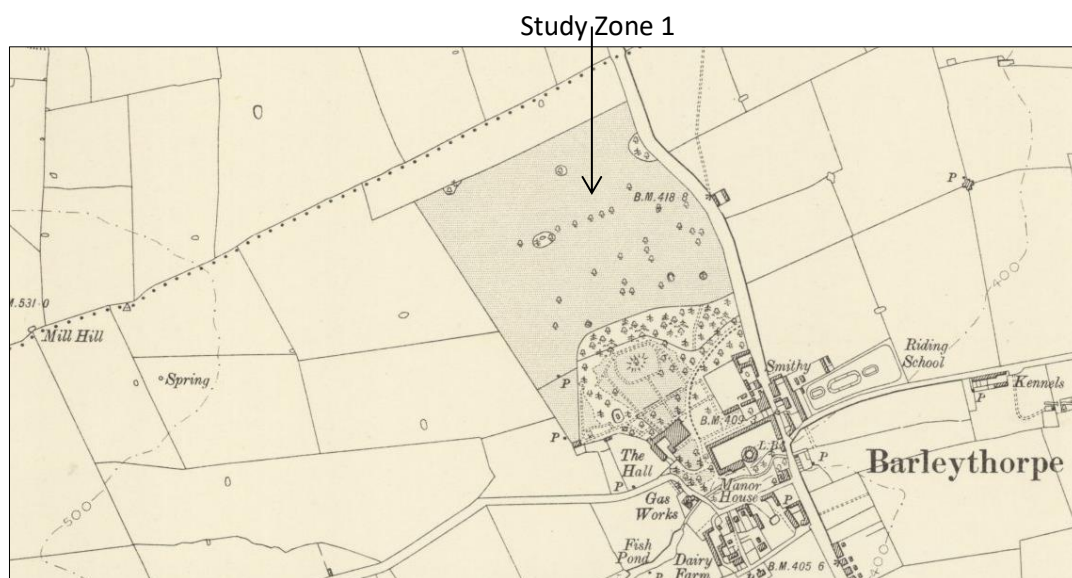
Landscape and settlement character sensitivity

The study zone comprises one small to medium sized, regularly shaped and almost square field, with an elongated narrow strip of land along its northern edge. A line of over-mature, leggy and gappy hawthorn trees separates the two fields.

Study zone boundaries to the north and west are predominantly open, comprising a low trimmed treeless hedge to the north and a low, gappy hedge with occasional hedgerow trees and post and wire fencing along its western boundary. The zone's eastern hedgerow boundary abuts the Main Road and is supplemented by roadside tree and shrub planting including a group of mature trees around the B640 / A606 roundabout.

There is a contrast in edge treatment and enclosure along the zone's southern boundary adjacent to the northern extent of Barleythorpe village. A dense tree belt remains of what was originally the park and ornamental grounds to Barleythorpe Hall, home of Hugh Cecil Lowther, 5th Earl of Lonsdale. Elsewhere the zone's southern boundary abuts low close-boarded fencing alongside land currently accommodated by Oakham United Football Club with views of the goals and pitch floodlighting.

The study zone is relatively flat, gently rising from around 128m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) westwards to approximately 132m AOD. It lies within the North West Oakham Vale landscape character type at the transition with the High Rutland Fringe which rises westwards to the rolling hills and valleys beyond. Sheep graze on the pastureland between individual and small groups of mature trees that gives the study zone a parkland character. Inspection of the OS Six Inch, 1888-1913 map, reproduced below, shows that the zone was indeed part of the parkland and ornamental grounds associated with Barleythorpe Hall. Remaining evidence of ridge and furrow across the zone would also suggest a previous arable land use at some time.



Extract from the OS Six Inch, 1888-1913 map.

The parkland character of the zone is a distinctive landscape feature within an otherwise typically flat, low lying and open valley basin Vale landscape surrounded by the rounded hill edges, shoulders, ridges and slopes of the surrounding higher land of High Rutland to the west. Whilst there are urbanising features within close proximity, in particular those associated with Oakham United FC to the south, an electricity transmission line and pylons to the west, the noise and movement on the nearby Oakham bypass and recent residential development to the east, the study zone retains a strong rural character and is important to the setting of Barleythorpe.

New housing or other development within the study zone would have an adverse effect on particularly sensitive aspects of landscape character and on distinctive landscape features that could not be readily replaced.

Settlement form and pattern

The sustainable urban extension of Oakham to the east of Barleythorpe has inevitably weakened the gap between the village and Oakham. However, Barleythorpe retains its separate identity largely because of the screening function of roadside vegetation alongside the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road and because the recent residential development is set back from the road and has been designed to include an open linear roadside buffer. Whilst the sustainable urban extension of Oakham has consumed some historic features of the village to the east of the B640 (see the OS Six Inch map extract above) there remains the perception of a settlement gap.

Whilst development within the study zone would be on the lower lying, flat Vale land in keeping with the form and pattern of most development within Oakham (although some residential development along the western edge of the town has encroached on to rising land within the High Rutland Fringe), the containment of recent development within land between the A606 bypass and the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road is important to the established settlement form and pattern. Development within the study zone would breach recognised settlement limits and whilst it could be argued that any development would be physically closely associated with the recent urban extension there would be a strong perception that it was isolated from the town and outside clear and important boundary features defining settlement extent.

Designing any new development to mirror the sustainable urban extension to the east by setting it back from the road may help to reduce its visual impact, but not its landscape impact.

Study Zone 1 is assessed as **High landscape and settlement character sensitivity** in accordance with the following criteria in Table 2:

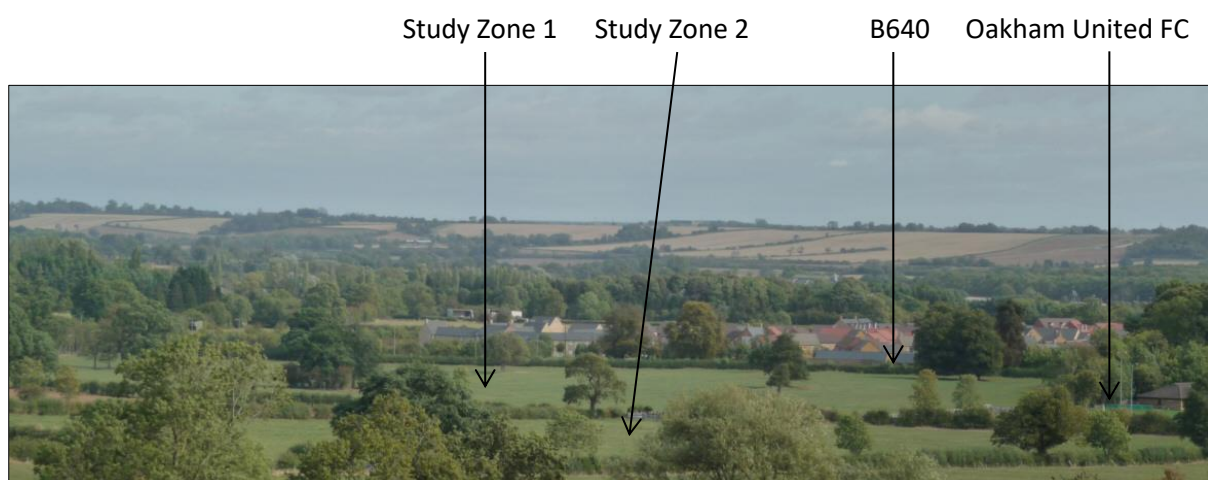
- Distinctive elements and combinations of features present that could not be replaced and which make a positive contribution to character and sense of place.
- Important to the setting of the settlement of Barleythorpe by providing a distinctive break between town / village and countryside.
- Open space important to the setting, appearance, form and character of the built environment.
- Development would be isolated from the town or would detract from important aspects of settlement form and pattern.
- The land is adjacent to built limits but lies outside clear and important boundary features defining settlement extent.

Visual considerations

The relatively open study zone boundaries to the north and west enable views out in these directions. Views northwards across flat arable and pasture fields are limited and curtailed by tall field boundary vegetation south of Langham. There are no views into the zone from Langham. Views to the west are curtailed by topography that rises steeply to the rounded Mill Hill within the High Rutland Fringe landscape, which is a characteristic feature of importance to the setting of Oakham and Barleythorpe. The high ground around the study zones continues from Mill Hill southwards and runs parallel with Cold Overton Road, creating a bowl-like setting to the study zones. Development within the study zone 1 would adversely affect the setting of Oakham and Barleythorpe when seen in views across the flat Vale landscape towards the surrounding hills, in particular from the A606 when travelling southwards out of Langham, at the roundabout junction with Oakham bypass and the B640, and in views from around the Barleythorpe Hall complex (a mix of large detached houses, The King Centre serviced offices and Oakham United FC). There may be views from other low-lying locations within Oakham out towards the surrounding higher ground that could be adversely affected by development within study zone 1.

The parkland trees to the north of Barleythorpe Hall are visually important to the setting of Oakham and Barleythorpe when approaching from the north along the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road from its roundabout junction with the A606. The trees would create a mature backdrop to development within study zone 1 but it would be uncharacteristically conspicuous within a landscape devoid of buildings, and could not be successfully mitigated.

Although the low-lying landform of the Vale means that views across it are limited and settlement is not generally visually prominent from within the Vale, built development can be visually prominent from the surrounding higher ground. There are views into the north western edge of Oakham from higher ground along Manor Lane, which is also part of the Rutland Round recreational route. From here the recent sustainable urban extension of Oakham is apparent beyond study zone 1 (and study zone 2) although its prominence is reduced by surrounding hills and vegetation including roadside vegetation alongside the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road. Development within study zone 1 would exacerbate the prominence of built development which takes a relatively compact form within the well-defined boundary of the B604. Development within study zone 1 could not be mitigated by replicating a strong western boundary. See photograph A below.



Photograph A: looking down from Manor Lane / Rutland Round into study zone 1 (across study zone 2) in the middle distance in front of the recent sustainable urban extension of Oakham beyond the B604 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road.



Photograph B: looking westwards from the B640 Main Road across study zone 1 towards Mill Hill.



Photograph C: looking westwards from the roundabout junction of the A606 and B640 across study zone 1 showing remnant ridge and furrow.

Study Zone 1



Photograph D: from the roundabout junction of the A606 and B640 looking towards the parkland tree belt north of Barleythorpe Hall.

Study Zone 1 is assessed as **Moderate to High visual sensitivity** in accordance with the following criteria in Table 3:

- Provides important views into and out of the town and village which could not be mitigated.
- Important to the setting of the town and village where development would create unacceptable visual intrusion into the countryside that could not be mitigated.
- The area is partially open to public or private views where views of the countryside or open space are important.
- Development would be uncharacteristically conspicuous and could not be successfully mitigated.

Conclusion on overall landscape sensitivity

A judgement has been made on overall landscape sensitivity by using the matrix shown in Table 4 to consider the interactions between landscape & settlement character sensitivity and visual sensitivity; **overall landscape sensitivity for Study Zone 1 is judged as HIGH.**

Study Zone 1 is assessed as **Moderate landscape value** in accordance with the following criteria in Table 5:

- Lies wholly within a previously locally designated landscape (Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside) but where localised character and scenic value is less distinctive.
- Presents locally distinctive landscape characteristics with some scenic interest.
- Presents some public amenity value by way of views.

Conclusions on landscape capacity

A judgement has been made on landscape capacity by using the matrix shown in Table 6 to consider overall High landscape sensitivity and Moderate landscape value; **landscape capacity for Study Zone 1 is judged as LOW to MEDIUM.**

A low to medium capacity has been allocated because development would intrude into the countryside, would be isolated from the town, and would overall have a negative effect on landscape character and settlement form and pattern. Recognising the sensitivity of the study zone is in keeping with the recommended landscape objectives within the 2003 Landscape Character Assessment *'to safeguard the landscape setting of Oakham'* and *'to protect the landscape setting and conserve and enhance the edges of villages'*.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment of Study Zone 1

Study Zone	Landscape & Settlement Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Value	Overall Landscape Capacity
1	High	Moderate to High	High	Moderate	Low to Medium

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment of Study Zone 2

Location

Located to the north west of Barleythorpe, set back from the village with study zone 3 lying in-between. Study zone 2 adjoins Manor Lane along its southern boundary.

Landscape and settlement character sensitivity

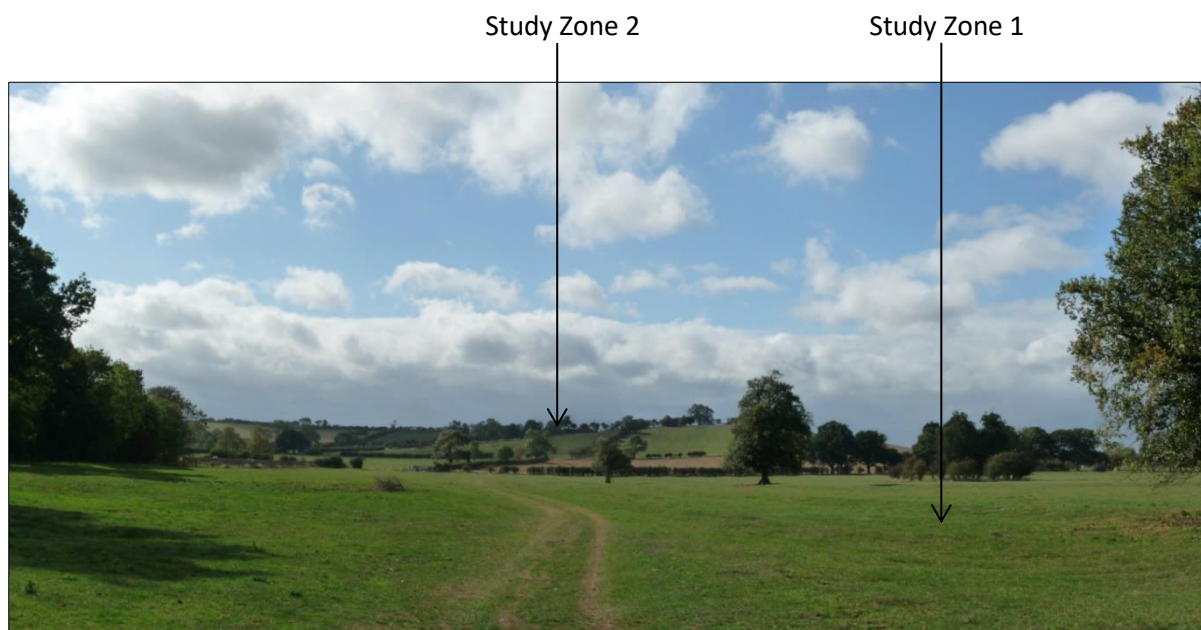
Study zone 2 lies at the transition of the *North West Oakham Vale* and *High Rutland Fringe* landscape character types, where the broad flat-bottomed valley rises to the surrounding higher land and pronounced ridges and valleys. It comprises a small number of small scale, regularly shaped, mixed arable and pasture fields bounded by low hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees. Arable land use occurs on the flatter and more gently sloping ground with grassland on the steeper slopes and in the valley bottoms. Hay barns are located in the study zone's south-eastern corner off Manor Lane. Power lines cross the study zone's lower reaches from north to south, the lines and pylons only becoming conspicuous where they break the skyline.

The zone rises from east to west, at first gently from around 130m AOD then steeply to a prominent, rounded hill at Mill Hill at around 165-170m AOD along the area's northern boundary. From this high point the land also falls gently southwards towards a minor watercourse which is itself inconspicuous in the landscape but its sinuous course is emphasised by a line of denser trees contrasting with the geometric field boundaries. The hedgerow field boundaries emphasise the pronounced west-east fall of the ground from the high point at Mill Hill.



Photograph E: looking north westwards from Manor Lane across study zone 3, showing the High Rutland Fringe landscape of study zone 2 rising to the pronounced rounded hill at Mill Hill.

The High Rutland Fringe landscape of the study zone continues southwards as a series of rounded ridges and valleys, running generally in an west-east direction, where relief increases markedly over a short distance in a series of rolling slopes. Study zone 2 plays an important part in the landscape setting of Oakham and Barleythorpe. Development within study zone 2 would significantly affect the strong relationship of the town and village in the Vale with the surrounding hills to the north west.



Photograph F: looking westwards from the B640 Main Road across study zone 1 towards study zone 2, lying within the rolling slopes of the High Rutland Fringe landscape rising to the pronounced rounded Mill Hill.

Settlement form and pattern

The established form and pattern of growth in Oakham has largely restricted development to the lower lying flatter Vale landscape, mostly avoiding the surrounding rising land (although some residential development along the western edge of the town has encroached on to rising land within the High Rutland Fringe). Development within study zone 2 would go against the established settlement form and pattern, would be isolated and would not represent an appropriate extension of the town. The important sensitive landscape setting of Oakham and Barleythorpe would be significantly affected by development within study zone 2 to the north west of the town and village.

Study Zone 2 is assessed as **High landscape and settlement character sensitivity** in accordance with the following criteria in Table 2:

- Distinctive elements and combination of features present that could not be replaced and which make a positive contribution to character and sense of place.
- Important to the setting of the town and village by providing a distinctive break between town and countryside.
- Open space important to the appearance, form and character of the built environment.
- Development would be isolated from the town and village and would detract from important aspects of settlement form and pattern.

Visual considerations

Views from lower lying locations westwards towards Mill Hill and the surrounding high ground are important to the setting of Oakham and Barleythorpe. Development within the study zone 2 would adversely affect the setting of Oakham and Barleythorpe when seen in views across the flat Vale landscape towards the surrounding hills, in particular from the A606 when travelling southwards out of Langham, at the roundabout junction with Oakham bypass and the B640, and in views from

around the Barleythorpe Hall complex (a mix of large detached houses, The King Centre serviced offices and Oakham United FC). There may be views from other low-lying locations within Oakham out towards the surrounding higher ground that could be adversely affected by development within study zone 1.

There are views across study zone 2 towards the north western edge of Oakham and Barleythorpe from higher ground along Manor Lane, which is also part of the Rutland Round recreational route. From here the recent sustainable urban extension of Oakham is apparent beyond study zone 1 although its prominence is reduced by surrounding hills and vegetation including roadside vegetation alongside the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road. The King Centre serviced offices and features associated with Oakham United FC can be seen nestled within the dense vegetation surrounding Barleythorpe Hall.

Development within study zone 2 would exacerbate the prominence of built development which takes a relatively compact form within the well-defined boundary of the B604 in views from higher ground to the north west. Mitigation by way of boundary planting to any new development proposal would not successfully reduce visual impact and would adversely affect the key characteristics of the High Rutland Fringe landscape.

Study Zone 2 is assessed as **High visual sensitivity** in accordance with the following criteria in Table 3:

- Provides important views into and out of the town and village which could not be mitigated.
- Important to the setting of the town and village where development would create unacceptable visual intrusion into the countryside that could not be mitigated.
- The area is very open to public views where views of the countryside are important.
- Development would be uncharacteristically conspicuous and could not be successfully mitigated.

Conclusion on overall landscape sensitivity

A judgement has been made on overall landscape sensitivity by using the matrix shown in Table 4 to consider the interactions between landscape & settlement character sensitivity and visual sensitivity; **overall landscape sensitivity for Study Zone 2 is judged as HIGH.**

Study Zone 2 is assessed as **Moderate to High landscape value** in accordance with the following criteria in Table 5:

- Lies wholly within a previously locally designated landscape (Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside) where localised character and scenic value is distinctive.
- Presents locally important landscape characteristics and scenic value.
- Presents some public amenity value by way of views and opportunity for quiet enjoyment (relative tranquillity).

Conclusions on landscape capacity

A judgement has been made on landscape capacity by using the matrix shown in Table 6 to consider overall High landscape sensitivity and Moderate to High landscape value; **landscape capacity for Study Zone 2 is judged as LOW.**

A low to medium capacity would also be a possible result of using the matrix, but on balance a slightly lower capacity has been allocated to reflect the importance of study zone 2 in the landscape setting of Oakham and Barleythorpe. Development within study zone 2 would significantly affect the strong relationship of the town and village in the Vale with the surrounding hills to the north west.

Recognising the sensitivity of the study zone is in keeping with the recommended landscape objectives within the 2003 Landscape Character Assessment 'to safeguard the landscape setting of Oakham' and 'to protect the landscape setting and conserve and enhance the edges of villages'.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment of Study Zone 2

Study Zone	Landscape & Settlement Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Value	Overall Landscape Capacity
2	High	High	High	Moderate to High	Low

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment of Study Zone 3

Location

Located to the west of Barleythorpe adjacent to the planned limited of development that follows the western edge of the village. The area lies to the north of Manor Lane and abuts study zone 1 to the north and study zone 2 to the west.

Landscape and settlement character sensitivity

Study Zone 3 is a relatively small area on the western 'urban fringe' of Barleythorpe with a mix of land uses: the northern half of the area is occupied by Oakham United FC, with its club house, training area and floodlit football pitch with surrounding close boarded fencing; a residential property 'Lonsdale Paddock' and stables are located towards the centre of the zone, accessed by a drive off Manor Lane; grass horse paddocks occupy the southern half of the area with typical equestrian paraphernalia of timber and wire fencing, gates, muck heaps etc.



Photograph H: looking northwards from the centre of study zone 3 into the Oakham United FC ground.



Photograph I: showing the view from Manor Lane north-westwards into the grass horse paddocks that occupy the southern half of study zone 3, looking up to the High Rutland Fringe landscape beyond.



Photograph J: showing the view from Manor Lane north-eastwards across the horse paddocks that occupy the southern half of study zone 3, looking towards Barleythorpe.

Study zone 3 lies at the transition of the *North West Oakham Vale* and *High Rutland Fringe* landscape character types. Its flat topography, generally between 128-132m AOD, is more characteristic of the Vale landscape than the surrounding higher land and pronounced ridges and valleys. Its character is derived from the mix of 'urban fringe' land uses, absence of distinctive landscape elements or features, and its setting on the edge of the village adjoining open countryside. Despite its potentially sensitive location the study zone and features within it are not prominent, being relatively inconspicuous and well screened by surrounding vegetation on the edge of the village. Tall hedgerow boundaries and a relatively high number of hedgerow trees help assimilate the study zone into the village landscape. The study zone has a small scale, almost intimate, character.

Settlement form and pattern

Despite its 'urban fringe' location and flat topography, the study zone is highly sensitive to any form of new built development that would be out of scale and which would adversely affect its intimate character. New development within the area would be directly associated with the village of Barleythorpe and its immediate setting rather than as an extension to Oakham town. Consequently only very small scale development by way of a limited number of residential properties may be appropriate within the study zone where detailed design ensured the use of appropriate materials and style(s) and a successful landscape fit.

Study Zone 3 is assessed as **Moderate landscape and settlement character sensitivity** in accordance with the following criteria in Table 2:

- Common place elements and combination of features present which create generally unremarkable character but some sense of place.
- Of some importance to the setting of the village but the break between village and countryside is less distinctive.
- Open space of little or no importance to the appearance, form and character of the built environment.
- Development would have some association with the village and may have some effect on settlement form and pattern.

Visual considerations

Views of study zone 3 are limited despite the surrounding higher ground from where any development would generally be visually prominent. Study zone 3 is relatively well screened by surrounding vegetation on the edge of the village and by tall hedgerows and trees along field boundaries to the west. Consequently views into the area are limited to glimpses from Manor Lane, which is also part of the Rutland Round recreational route (see photograph A), and from the access drive to Lonsdale Paddock. There are limited views from the A606 south of Langham into the northern end of the study zone where low close-boarded fencing alongside the land currently accommodated by Oakham United FC allows glimpses of the goals and pitch floodlighting.

The view westwards across the paddock from Manor Lane (see photograph I) shows the importance of the rising fields of High Rutland to the setting of the village.

Small scale limited development may be appropriate that would be unlikely to affect any views of importance. Mitigation by way of detailed design, that may include, for example, setting any buildings back from the study zone's northern boundary and enhancing site boundaries by planting with appropriate species, could be considered.

Study Zone 3 is assessed as **Moderate visual sensitivity** in accordance with the following criteria in Table 3:

- Views into and/or out of the village are of some importance and there may be scope for mitigating potential visual impacts.
- Of some importance to the setting of the village but development could be mitigated so that visual intrusion into the countryside is acceptable.
- The area is partially open to public and private views where views of the countryside are important.
- Appropriate development is likely to be perceptible but would not significantly alter the balance of features or elements within the existing view.

Conclusion on overall landscape sensitivity

A judgement has been made on overall landscape sensitivity by using the matrix shown in Table 4 to consider the interactions between landscape & settlement character sensitivity and visual sensitivity; **overall landscape sensitivity for Study Zone 3 is judged as MODERATE.**

Study Zone 3 is assessed as **Moderate landscape value** in accordance with the following criteria in Table 5:

- Lies wholly within a previously locally designated landscape (Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside) where localised character and scenic value is less distinctive.
- Presents locally distinctive landscape characteristics with some scenic interest.
- Presents some public amenity value by way of views, access and biodiversity interest.

Conclusions on landscape capacity

A judgement has been made on landscape capacity by using the matrix shown in Table 6 to consider overall Moderate landscape sensitivity and Moderate landscape value; **landscape capacity for Study Zone 3 is judged as MEDIUM.**

As referred to above, it is considered that study zone 3 has some capacity in landscape and visual terms to accept limited development that is in scale with the location and which does not affect its intimate character and sense of place. Only very small scale development by way of a limited number of residential properties may be appropriate within the study zone where detailed design ensured the use of appropriate materials and style(s) and a successful landscape fit.

Recognising the limited capacity of the study zone to accommodate small scale residential development is in keeping with the recommended landscape objectives within the 2003 Landscape Character Assessment *'to safeguard the landscape setting of Oakham'* and *'to protect the landscape setting and conserve and enhance the edges of villages'*.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment of Study Zone 3

Study Zone	Landscape & Settlement Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Value	Overall Landscape Capacity
3	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Medium

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment of Study Zone 4

Location

Located to the west of Barleythorpe adjacent to the planned limited of development that follows the western edge of the village. The area lies to the south of Manor Lane and abuts study zones 2 and 3 to the north.

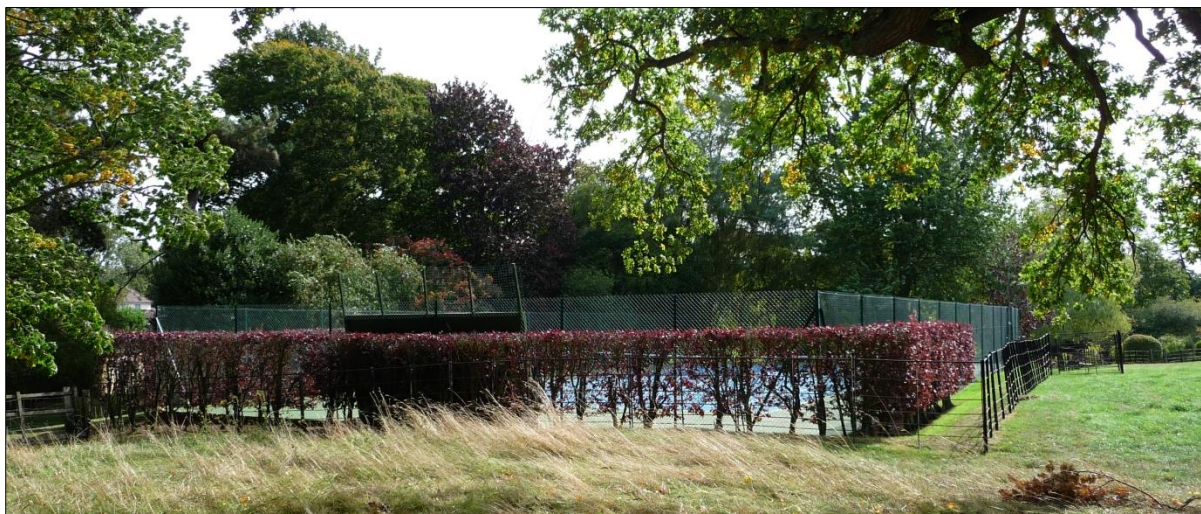
Landscape and settlement character sensitivity

As with study zone 2, study zone 4 also lies at the transition of the *North West Oakham Vale* and *High Rutland Fringe* landscape character types, where the broad flat-bottomed valley rises to the surrounding higher land and pronounced ridges and valleys. Study zone 4 comprises a small number of small scale, regularly shaped, rectangular pasture fields, and the meadows being bounded by low hedgerows with an absence of hedgerow trees except along Manor Lane. The relatively low lying, gently undulating meadows fall from the north and south at around 138m AOD to a minor watercourse that gradually runs eastwards to approximately 125m AOD. The watercourse is itself inconspicuous in the landscape but its sinuous course is emphasised by a line of denser trees contrasting with the geometric treeless field boundaries. It opens out into a series of fish ponds at its eastern end close to the village, an historic legacy of its association with Barleythorpe Hall.

A power line crosses the study zone's western end from north to south, the lines and pylons only becoming conspicuous where they break the skyline in surrounding views. The eastern end of study zone 4 exhibits an 'urban fringe' character adjacent to the western edge of Barleythorpe village; ornamental shrubbery, hedging and fencing surround a tennis court to the north of the minor watercourse, whilst to the south there are stables, a fenced horse paddock and associated equestrian paraphernalia.



Photograph K: looking south-westwards across the gently undulating meadows, showing the sinuous tree-lined minor watercourse running through the middle of study zone 4.



Photograph L: the eastern end of study zone 4 exhibits an 'urban fringe' character adjacent to the western edge of Barleythorpe village.

The study zone's key characteristics are its gently undulating pastoral land use and intact geometric field pattern of closely trimmed hedgerows with few hedgerow trees. The well vegetated watercourse and mature vegetation on the edge of the village contrast with the study zone's more open western end adjoining open countryside. These landscape characteristics combine to make a positive contribution to character and sense of place and are sensitive to development which would have a negative effect.

Settlement form and pattern

Despite its 'urban fringe' location and relatively flat topography, the study zone is highly sensitive to any form of new built development that would be out of scale and which would adversely affect its essentially open countryside character. New development within the area would be directly associated with the village of Barleythorpe and its immediate setting rather than as an extension to Oakham town.

The established form and pattern of growth in Oakham has largely restricted development to the lower lying flatter Vale landscape, mostly avoiding the surrounding rising land (although some residential development along the western edge of the town has encroached on to rising land within the High Rutland Fringe). Development within study zone 4 would go against the established settlement form and pattern, would be isolated and would not represent an appropriate extension of the town.

Study Zone 4 is assessed as **High landscape and settlement character sensitivity** in accordance with the following criteria in Table 2:

- Distinctive elements and combination of features present that could not be replaced and which make a positive contribution to character and sense of place.
- Important to the setting of the village by providing a distinctive break between village and countryside.
- Development would be isolated from the town and village and would detract from important aspects of settlement form and pattern.

Visual considerations

There are views into study zone 4 from the surrounding higher ground in the west from where any development would generally be visually prominent and which could not be successfully mitigated. Study zone 4 is relatively well screened by surrounding vegetation on the edge of the village and by tall hedgerows and trees along Manor Lane to the north. Consequently views into the area from lower lying ground are limited to glimpses from Manor Lane, which is also part of the Rutland Round recreational route.



Photograph M: looking eastwards down from Manor Lane across the pastoral fields, showing the well vegetated watercourse and western edge of Barleythorpe village.

Study Zone 4 is assessed as **Moderate to High visual sensitivity** in accordance with the following criteria in Table 3:

- Provides important views into and out of the village which could not be mitigated.
- Important to the setting of the village where development would create unacceptable visual intrusion into the countryside that could not be mitigated.
- The area is partially open to public views where views of the countryside are important.
- Development would be uncharacteristically conspicuous and could not be successfully mitigated.

Conclusion on overall landscape sensitivity

A judgement has been made on overall landscape sensitivity by using the matrix shown in Table 4 to consider the interactions between landscape & settlement character sensitivity and visual sensitivity; **overall landscape sensitivity for Study Zone 4 is judged as HIGH.**

Study Zone 4 is assessed as **Moderate to High landscape value** in accordance with the following criteria in Table 5:

- Lies wholly within a previously locally designated landscape (Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside) where localised character and scenic value is distinctive.
- Presents locally distinctive landscape characteristics with some scenic interest.
- Presents some public amenity value by way of views and opportunity for quiet enjoyment (relative tranquillity).

Conclusions on landscape capacity

A judgement has been made on landscape capacity by using the matrix shown in Table 6 to consider overall High landscape sensitivity and Moderate to High landscape value; **landscape capacity for Study Zone 4 is judged as Low.**

A low to medium capacity would also be a possible result of using the matrix, but on balance a slightly lower capacity has been allocated because development on the study zone would be isolated from the town and village against established settlement form and pattern, it would be uncharacteristically conspicuous and could not be successfully mitigated.

Recognising the sensitivity of the study zone is in keeping with the recommended landscape objectives within the 2003 Landscape Character Assessment *'to safeguard the landscape setting of Oakham'* and *'to protect the landscape setting and conserve and enhance the edges of villages'*.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment of Study Zone 4

Study Zone	Landscape & Settlement Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Value	Overall Landscape Capacity
4	High	Moderate to High	High	Moderate to High	Low

4. Area of Separation between Oakham and Barleythorpe

- 4.1 A requirement of the Council's brief for the study is that it considers whether an area of separation needs to be maintained between Oakham and around Barleythorpe village, and to make recommendations.
- 4.2 The 2010 landscape sensitivity and capacity study¹⁰ included consideration of a number of specified sites between Oakham and Barleythorpe:
- Site No's. 6A, 6B and 6C to the east of the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road;
 - Site No. 5A to the west of the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road.
- 4.3 The land to the east of the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road referred to in the 2010 study as Site No.'s 6A, 6B and 6C has now been developed (or is in the process of being built) as a sustainable urban extension of Oakham northwards to the A606 bypass. This includes the Farriers Reach and Buttercross Park residential developments. This has inevitably weakened the gap between Oakham and Barleythorpe, however Barleythorpe retains its separate identity largely because of the screening function of roadside vegetation alongside the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road and because the recent residential development is set back from the road and has been designed to include an open linear roadside buffer. Whilst the sustainable urban extension of Oakham has consumed some historic features of the village to the east of the B640 there remains the perception of a settlement gap along the road. See photographs N and O below.



Photograph N: looking north along the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road approaching the village from Oakham. Residential development is set back behind the tall roadside hedge to the right.

¹⁰ David Tyldesley and Associates, May 2010, 'Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study'



Photograph O: looking south along the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road approaching the village from Langham and the A606 bypass. Residential development is set back behind the tall roadside hedge to the left.

- 4.4 The land to the west of the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road referred to in the 2010 study as Site No. 5A remains open and undeveloped. In the 2010 study overall landscape sensitivity of Site No. 5A is High and overall landscape capacity is Low due in part because the lower reaches (the lower lying land in the eastern part of the site closer to Main Road as opposed to the elevated land that rises westwards to Cold Overton Road) present an important landscape and townscape function in maintaining a perceptual gap between Oakham and Barleythorpe. The area retains an intimate pastoral character which is important to the immediate setting and perception of the town's context which development of two storeys or more would seriously disrupt.
- 4.5 The 2010 study recognises that planned major re-development of the college grounds to the 'inner' boundary of the site (i.e. to the south) will eventually further weaken that separation. The college grounds have now been re-developed which includes a fenced and floodlit games area, retaining an element of 'openness' that allows views out from Main Road to the high ground to the west. See photograph P below.



Photograph P: showing views out from Main Road across the college grounds to the west.

- 4.6 This study has not considered further the landscape and visual sensitivity and capacity of Site No. 5A in the 2010 report. However, since it represents the last remaining area of land between Oakham and Barleythorpe south of the village its development would clearly diminish further if not completely erode the perception of a gap leading to the coalescence of the settlements. The 2010 study suggests that by way of mitigation to the lower reaches of Site No. 5, additional planting could be relatively effective in combination with existing hedge and tree cover outside its boundaries. Further consideration would need to be given to whether mitigation by way of the setting back of any new development from Main Road to the west, to mirror that to the east, would be successful in maintaining the perception of a settlement gap. This should include consideration of the impact of development on views to the high ground to the west.
- 4.7 This study has considered the landscape and visual sensitivity and capacity of land immediately to the north of Barleythorpe, referred to as study zone 1. It is recognised that containment of recent development within land between the A606 bypass and the B640 Main Road / Barleythorpe Road is important to the established settlement form and pattern. Development within the study zone would breach recognised settlement limits and whilst it could be argued that any development would be physically closely associated with the recent urban extension there would be a strong perception that it was isolated from the town and outside clear and important boundary features defining settlement extent.
- 4.8 Designing any new development to mirror the sustainable urban extension to the east by setting it back from the road may help to reduce its visual impact, but not its landscape impact. The parkland character of study zone 1, sensitive views across it to the high ground to the west and the wooded parkland to Barleythorpe Hall are important to the setting of the village. New development within study zone 1 to the north of the village would significantly affect its setting and further erode its separate identity.

5. Recommendations for Prioritising Development

- 5.1 As described in paragraph 1.6, in order for the Council to compare the suitability of land around all of Oakham on a consistent basis, this landscape sensitivity and capacity study of land to the north west of Oakham and Barleythorpe has been undertaken following the same methodology and study outputs to the 2010 landscape study. To help guide the direction of the future growth of Oakham, it is a requirement of the study brief to include recommendations to the Council for each of the areas as to prioritising land for development, in landscape and visual terms, and any mitigation measures that might be required should development take place.
- 5.2 In keeping with the 2010 landscape study, study zones in this assessment considered to be highly sensitive with low or low to medium capacity to accommodate development are not prioritised for development. This applies to study zones 1, 2 and 4. These are marked in Table 7 below with 'X' for this reason.
- 5.3 Consequently Table 7 shows only study zone 3 as having some capacity to accommodate development. The key factors from the assessment influencing this judgement are summarised after the table.
- 5.4 It is stressed that a range of other environmental considerations will need to be taken into account, such as ecology and nature conservation, heritage and archaeology, water quality and flooding potential, etc. by others to determine the potential wider environmental and cumulative impacts of development on a particular site. Other site considerations, including access and drainage issues for example, will also need to be considered by decision makers but which do not form part of this assessment.

Table 7: Recommendations for Prioritising Development

Order of Priority	Study Zone	Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Overall Landscape Capacity
1	3	Moderate	Medium
X	2	High	Low
X	4	High	Low
X	1	High	Low to Medium

- 5.5 The key factors influencing the judgement of landscape and visual sensitivity and capacity of study zone 3 are as follows:

Study Zone 3

- Moderate landscape and visual sensitivity to limited development that is in scale with the location and which does not affect its intimate character and sense of place. Only very small scale development by way of a limited number of residential properties may be appropriate within the study zone where detailed design ensured the use of appropriate materials and style(s) and a successful landscape fit.
- Its character is derived from its flat topography, mix of 'urban fringe' land uses within the study zone and to the east around Barleythorpe Hall, absence of distinctive landscape elements or features, and boundary screening vegetation.
- In this location the break between village and countryside is not particularly distinctive.

- Views into the study zone are limited. Small scale limited development may be appropriate that would be unlikely to affect any views of importance. Mitigation by way of detailed design, that may include, for example, setting any buildings back from the study zone's northern boundary and enhancing site boundaries by planting with appropriate species, could be considered.

Figure 1: Local Landscape Character Setting

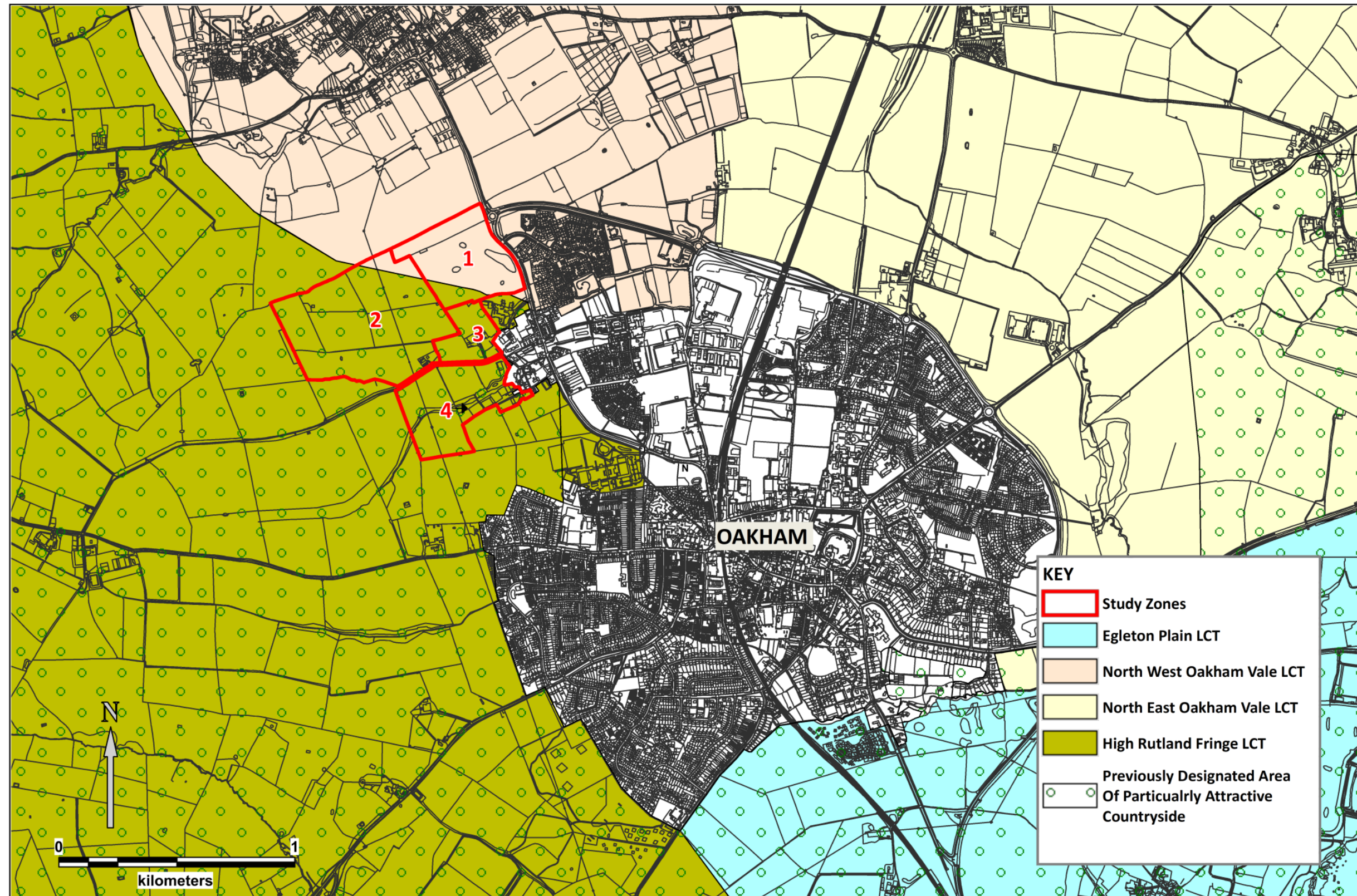
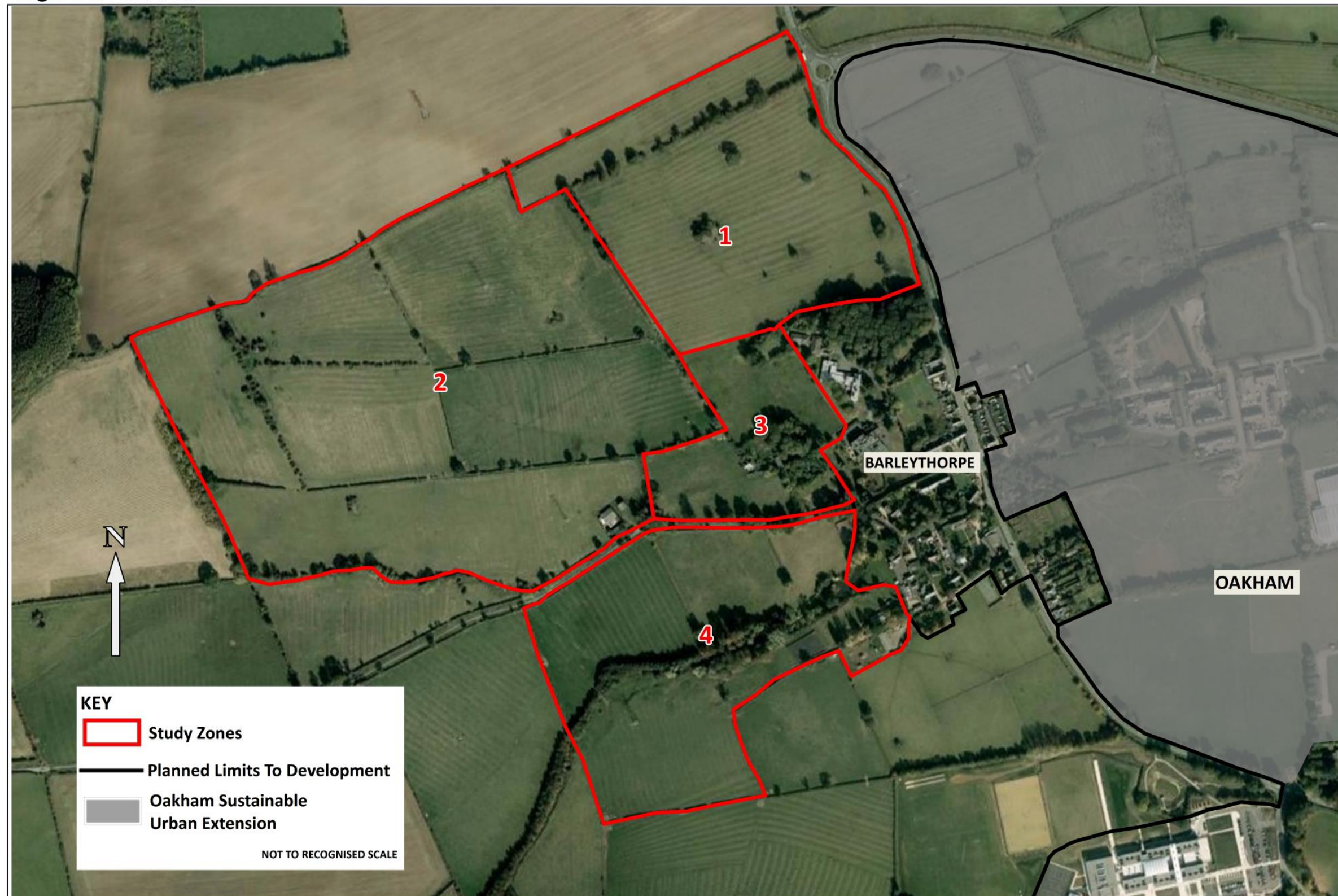


Figure 2: Aerial View



SOURCE - COURTESY GOOGLE EARTH

Figure 3: Landscape & Visual Context

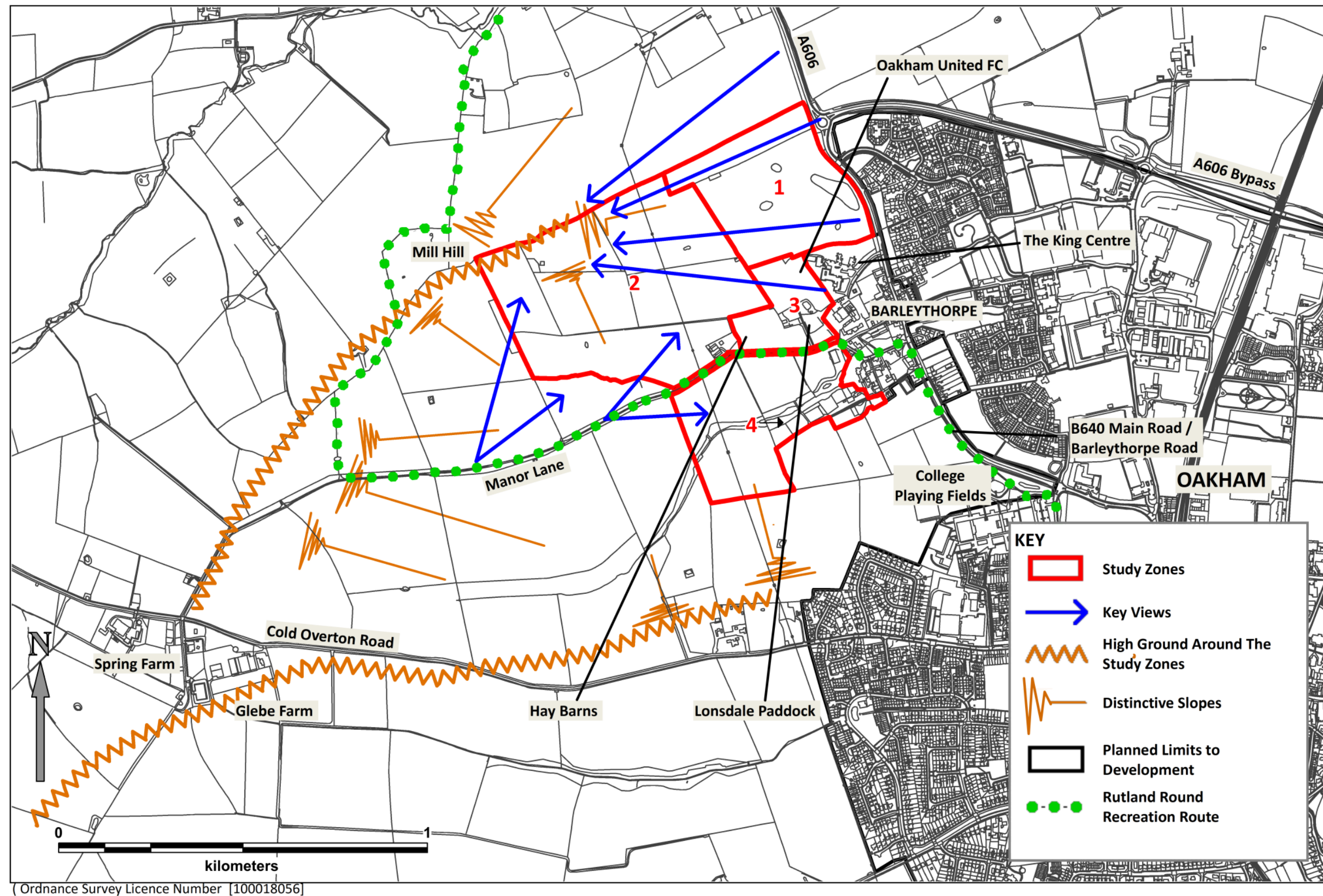


Figure 4: Photograph Viewpoints

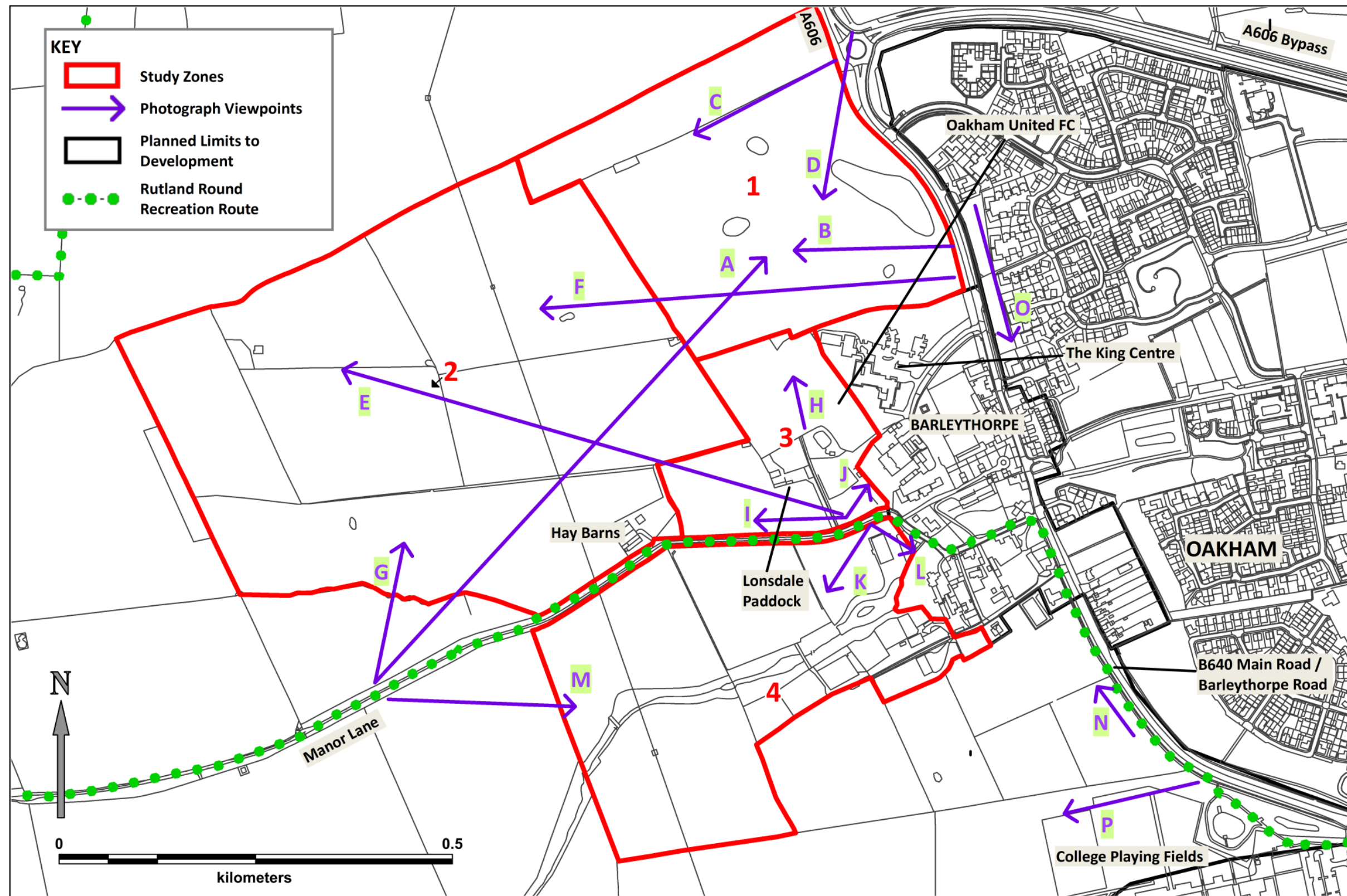
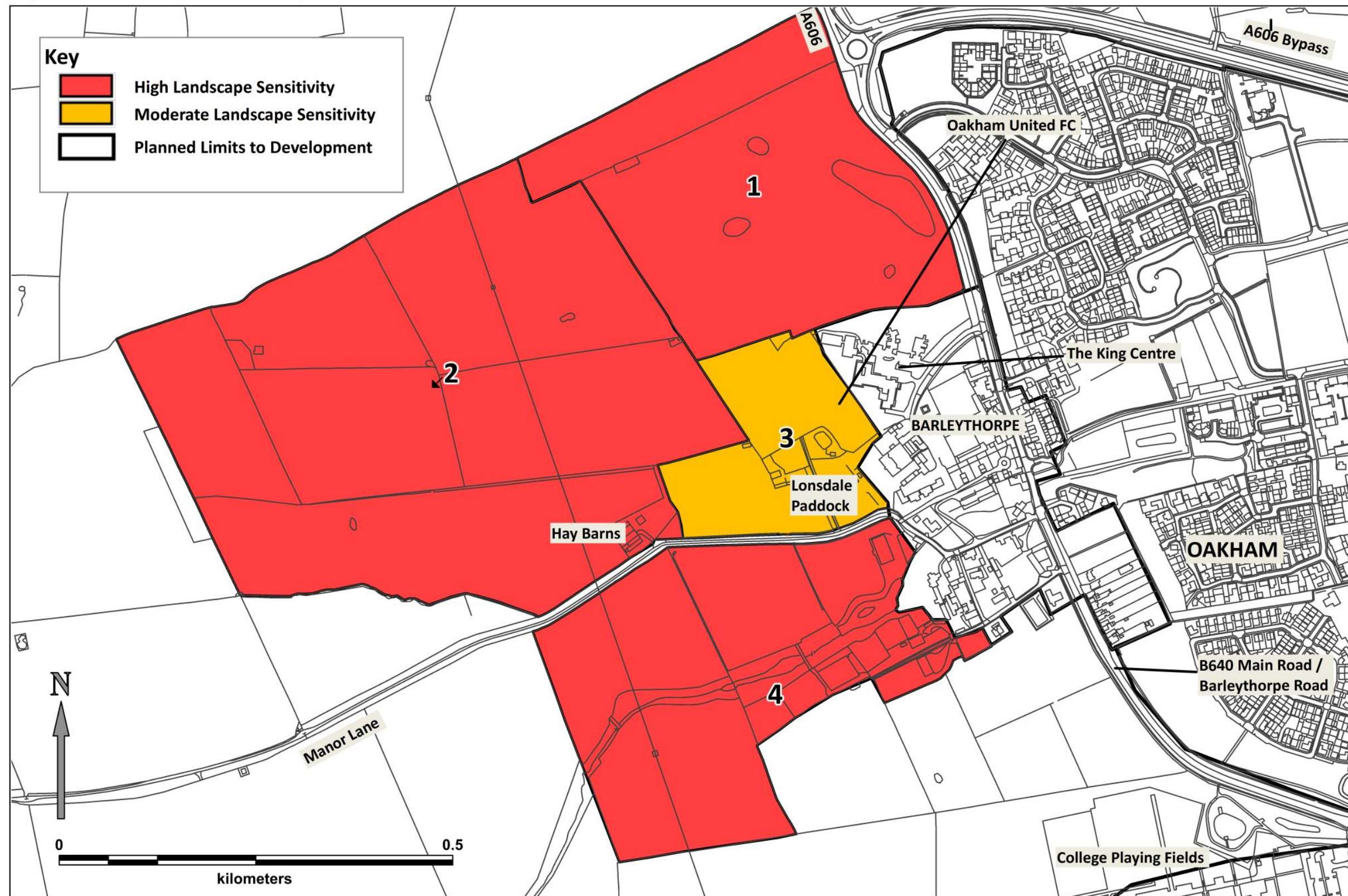
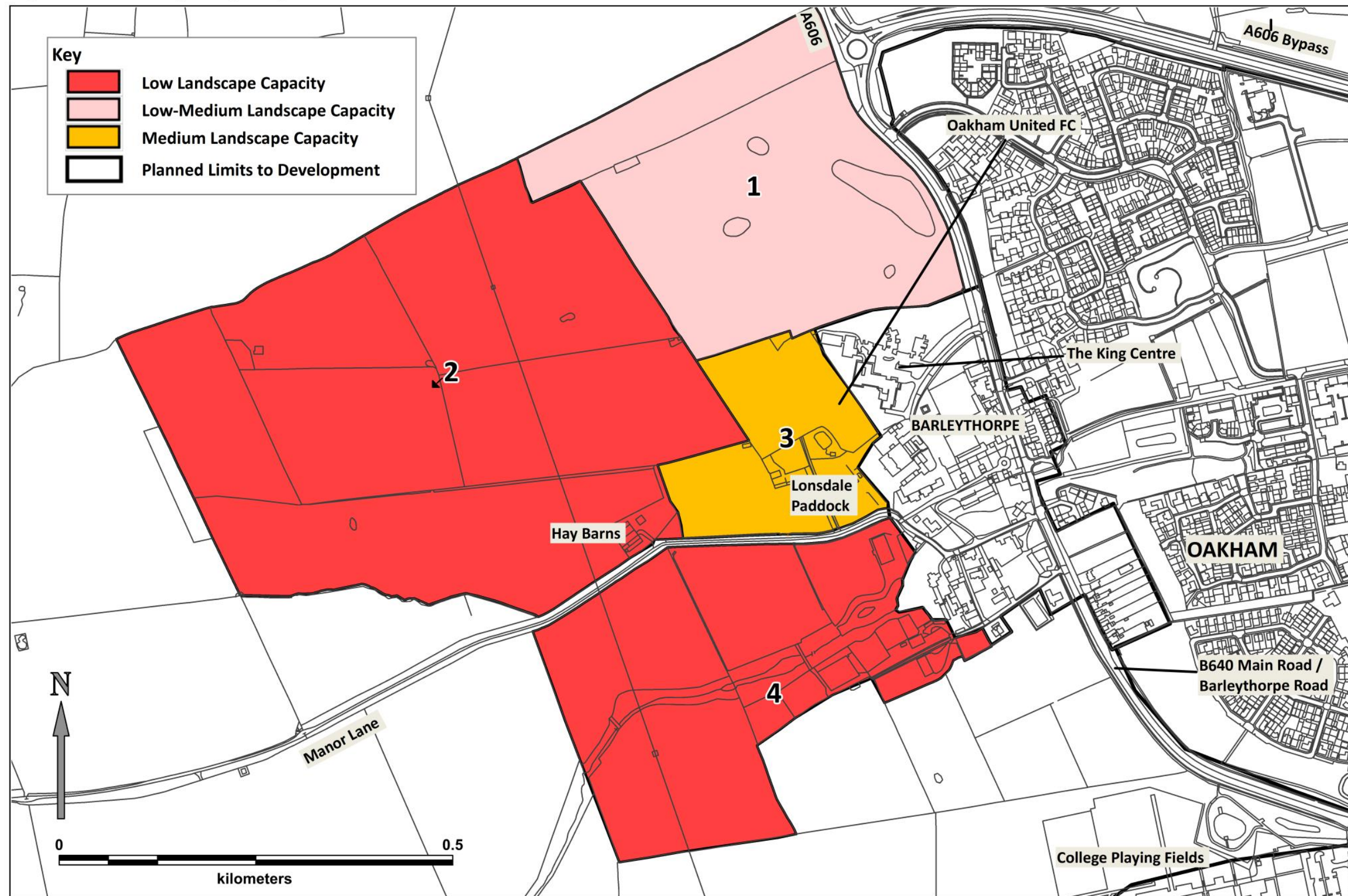


Figure 5: Landscape Sensitivity



(Ordnance Survey Licence Number [100018056])

Figure 6: Landscape Capacity



(Ordnance Survey Licence Number [100018056])