

**St. George's Barracks, Rutland**

**Advice to Rutland County Council  
on the Landscape Visual Appraisal (LVA)  
by fabrik, April 2018**

**by  
Bayou Bluenvironment**

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LANDSCAPE PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANCY

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# **St. George's Barracks, Rutland**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Bayou Bluenvironment (BBE) is commissioned by Rutland County Council to provide an independent professional opinion of the Landscape Visual Appraisal (LVA) of the St. George's Barracks site undertaken by fabric in April 2018.

1.2 The review of the LVA has been undertaken by Anthony Brown BA (Hons) TP, MALD, CMLI, Managing Director of BBE, a landscape planning and environmental consultancy and a Landscape Institute registered practice. Anthony is a professional Chartered Landscape Architect with over 30 years' experience in landscape planning. He has been a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) for over 30 years. The advice given to the County Council in this report is based solely on Anthony's personal opinion.

1.3 It is understood that the purpose of the LVA is to inform the vision and evolving master-planning process for the future redevelopment of the St. George's Barracks site. The impending closure of the North Luffenham MoD site will provide the opportunity for brownfield redevelopment of the barracks within the western part of the site, whilst the disused airfield in the eastern part will be subject to phased mineral extraction and restoration into a country park. The LVA should ensure that landscape and visual constraints are taken into account and that landscape and visual opportunities are maximised.

1.4 It is noted that the LVA addresses landscape and visual issues associated with the redevelopment of the barracks only; it does not address future mineral extraction within the eastern part of the site (and subsequent restoration to a country park) which could have a significant effect on the landscape, views and visual amenity. Clearly there will be interactions between mineral extraction and the new built community, including the phasing of works, and the two should not be considered in isolation.

1.5 It is also noted that the site boundary in the LVA includes the separate officer's mess buildings located to the south of Manton Road and west of Edith Western Road, but this area does not form part of the site proposals in the vision document *Revised Evolving Masterplan*, November 2018.

1.6 To inform this advice a desk study review has been undertaken of the LVA by fabric, April 2018, and other documents and information on the St. George's website <https://www.stgeorgesrutland.co.uk>. The relevant national and county-wide landscape character assessments were also reviewed<sup>1</sup>. A site visit was undertaken on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019 when all of the viewpoints included within the LVA beyond the MoD site boundary were visited together with the surrounding roads and public rights of way. The weather was bright and sunny at the time of the site visit. Due to the extensive photographic coverage in the LVA of views from within the barracks and along its boundary it was deemed not essential to actually go into the MoD barracks.

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<sup>1</sup> *National Character Area profile 74 Leicestershire & Nottinghamshire Wolds*, Natural England, 2014; *National Character Area profile 93 High Leicestershire*, Natural England, 2013; *Rutland Landscape Character Assessment*, David Tyldesley & Associates, 2003.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Appendix 1 in the LVA sets out the methodology adopted in the study. It does not purport to be a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) of a specific development proposal (for which there is recognised guidance<sup>2</sup>) nor a landscape sensitivity (and /or landscape capacity) assessment (for which there is also recognised guidance that is currently being updated by Natural England<sup>3</sup>). The LVA appears to be somewhat of a mix of the two guidelines; based on GLVIA 3<sup>4</sup> whilst incorporating some of the criteria set out in Rutland landscape sensitivity and capacity assessments undertaken for the Council by Bayou Bluenvironment (BBE) in connection with the preparation of the new Local Plan.

2.2 It is understood the Council requested that the LVA refers to the landscape sensitivity and capacity studies by BBE. The LVA reproduces the BBE methodology in Appendix 2, whilst recognising that LVIA (and LVA) is a different assessment process to a landscape sensitivity and capacity study.

2.3 Although Appendix 1 describes the full LVIA process for the assessment of significant landscape and visual effects of a development proposal (in accordance with GLVIA3), the methodology used in the LVA adopts only the initial step in that process to establish the baseline landscape and visual conditions. Throughout the document the study is referred to interchangeably as an appraisal and an assessment. Clear use of terminology is a key objective of the third edition of GLVIA.

2.4 The LVA follows a process of desktop research and field work. The introduction in section 2 states: *“Any mitigation measures and assumptions which have informed the redevelopment proposals are set out together with a brief description of the proposed development. The rationale to these measures, in relation to potential effects of the proposed development, is set out”*. It is noted that section 6 includes a visual analysis and description of landscape and visual constraints and opportunities that touches on mitigation and assumptions, but these could probably have been set out more clearly in the LVA. There does not appear to be a description of the proposed development in the LVA.

2.5 The introduction in section 2 also states: *“The penultimate section of this LVIA sets out a statement on policy compliance”*. It is noted that section 4.2 provides an overview of landscape related policy but there does not appear to be discussion on policy compliance.

### Methodology to Establish the Landscape Baseline

2.6 In accordance with GLVIA3, in establishing the landscape baseline the aim should be to...:

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<sup>2</sup> *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA), 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*, Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013 (referred to as GLVIA3).

<sup>3</sup> *Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity*, Scottish Natural Heritage and The Countryside Agency, 2004, is being replaced by *An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment*, Natural England (currently at final draft, April 2019).

<sup>4</sup> See Footnote 2

- *“...provide an understanding of the landscape in the area that may be affected – its constituent elements, its character and the way this varies spatially, its geographic extent, its history (which may require its own specialist study), its condition, the way the landscape is experienced, and the value attached to it”<sup>5</sup>.*

2.7 Section A1.3 of Appendix 1 of the LVA describes the process followed to establish the landscape baseline. It includes Table A1.1 with criteria for judging landscape value and presumably townscape value (the second table isn't labelled) on a scale of high, medium and low. It appears to suggest that at the local scale a landscape / townscape can at best be of medium value (i.e. not high value) and that a landscape / townscape at the site scale can at best be of low value (i.e. not high or medium value). In reality a landscape at the local / site scale may be highly valued locally. It would appear that the references to scale within the criteria headings in Table A1.1 (national/regional; regional/local; local/site scale) are where the confusion lies.

2.8 It is noted that the table is described as setting out the criteria and definitions used in the baseline assessment to determine landscape and townscape value at the local or site level in addition to condition / quality set out separately. No reference could be found in the document setting out the criteria and definitions used in the baseline assessment to determine landscape condition / quality.

### **Methodology to Establish the Visual Baseline**

2.9 In accordance with GLVIA3, in establishing the visual baseline the aim should be to...:

- *“...establish the area in which the development may be visible, the different groups of people who may experience views of the development, the places where they will be affected and the nature of the views and visual amenity at those points”<sup>6</sup>.*

2.10 Section A1.4 of Appendix 1 of the LVA describes the process followed in establishing the visual baseline. It describes the procedure for determining the visual study area and viewpoints via a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), which in accordance with GLVIA3 can be identified either manually or digitally. The study does not make clear which procedure has been followed in establishing the ZTV (or Zone of Theoretical Visual Influence – ZTVI – as it is alternatively referred to in section 2.2). Neither the study area nor the ZTV / ZTVI are identified on a map or plan in the LVA which would be helpful, although section 2.2 does describe it as extending up to approximately 4km from the site.

2.11 Table A1.2 in Appendix 1 sets out the criteria for attributing the value attached to views on a scale of high, medium and low. It is noted that each criteria describes views from landscapes / viewpoints without referring to views to landscapes. It is normal for views to designated landscapes or other landscapes of scenic quality to be considered in a visual

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<sup>5</sup> GLVIA3, paragraph 3.15

<sup>6</sup> GLVIA3, paragraph 3.15

appraisal / assessment. Furthermore, local views from undesignated or 'unimportant' landscapes / viewpoints ('unimportant' being highly subjective and therefore requiring definition and explanation in its own right) may be highly valued and of importance to the viewer, but in accordance with Table A1.2 would be of low value.

2.12 It is unusual for a study of the visual baseline to include judgements on the value attached to views. It is assumed that this is included in response to the Council's request that the LVA refers to the landscape sensitivity and capacity studies by BBe. In accordance with GLVIA 3 judging the value attached to particular views is part of predicting and describing the visual effects of a proposed development whereby the sensitivity of visual receptors is assessed by considering their susceptibility to the proposed change and the value attached to particular views. Judgements about susceptibility are usually recorded as either high, medium or low, with those receptors most highly susceptible to change being residents at home, people engaged in outdoor recreation, visitors to attractions and communities where views are important, and travellers on scenic routes.

2.13 Judgements made about the value attached to views usually include consideration of whether views are recognised as being of value, for example in relation to heritage assets or through planning designations, or where there are indicators of value attached to views on OS maps, in guide books, through provision of interpretive material, etc.

2.14 For example, in a LVIA of the landscape and visual effects of a proposed new garden village on the St. George's Barracks site, the value attributed to views from residents in the MoD married quarters on Pennine Drive and Welland Road into the site may not be considered especially high but as residents at home they would be highly susceptible to changes in the view. It is noted that Table 5.1 Summary of Visual Receptors attributes low value to these receptors.

2.15 Similarly, residents of Wytchley Warren Farm would be highly susceptible to changes in their view, and the value attributed to views from this Grade II listed farmhouse may be relatively high where the view is important to the setting of the listed building. It is noted that Table 5.1 Summary of Visual Receptors does attribute a high value to this receptor.

2.16 The visual assessment element of the LVA includes an extensive photographic survey from a number of representative viewpoints that were apparently agreed with the Council. These help to illustrate the view but because they are stitched panoramas reduced in scale from their original size they cannot give a true representation of the actual view. The LVA should provide details of how the photography complies with best practice advice, such as Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/11 *Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment*, March 2011. (The Landscape Institute is in the process of updating the guidance and has produced a Technical Guidance Note<sup>7</sup> with updated advice within a public consultation draft document; although draft guidance at this stage, the LVIA methodology could also refer to compliance with this document).

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<sup>7</sup> *Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note, Public Consultation Draft 2018-06-01

### 3. BASELINE LANDSCAPE

3.1 The LVA establishes the baseline landscape by firstly considering the wider study area (summarised in Table 4.1) and secondly within the site area itself (summarised in table 4.2). With regard to the wider study area, the LVA recognises that the site lies on the edge of the Rutland Plateau landscape character type, bordering the rolling ridges and valleys of High Rutland to the south and west. Landscape and townscape character is generally assessed as medium or medium-high value in the LVA, recognising the complexity of the landscape around the site which lies where three national and county-scale landscape character types / areas meet.

3.2 Figure 4.2 in the LVA shows heritage assets including listed buildings and conservation area boundaries at Edith Western and North Luffenham, although they are difficult to decipher at the scale of the mapping within the LVA. These are not described in section 4 in the description of baseline conditions, but the proposed re-development of the St. George's Barracks site has the potential to effect (positively or negatively) the setting of these heritage assets.

3.3 It is uncertain how the values of each of the contextual landscape elements have been established. For example, the LVA assigns a value to each landscape character type such as 'medium' value for the Rutland Plateau. This appears to be based on an appraisal of the relevant description in the Rutland Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), 2003, but this is sixteen years old. The LVA identifies three separate landscape / townscape character areas and sub-areas within the site but there is no detailed description of these or how they relate to the descriptions in the Rutland LCA.

3.4 Nine of the 11 contextual landscape receptors have a value in the LVA of at least medium, and mostly medium-high. The highest value (high) is afforded to skyline features recognising the importance of ridgeline built form and woodland within the landscape around the site. Broad land use in the study area is given a value of low/medium, whilst detracting features such as Ketton Quarry, boundary fencing and large scale MoD buildings associated with the barracks have the lowest (low) value. Redevelopment of the site will provide the opportunity to improve the baseline landscape in this regard.

3.5 With regard to the baseline value of the site itself, it is noted that in contrast to landscape values attributed to the wider landscape, site landscape receptors are all considered to be of low or low/medium value in the LVA with the exception of views which are recorded as high value. This recognises that despite a degree of visual enclosure to the core of the site, there are views out from a number of locations some of which are extensive and panoramic.

3.6 It is also noted that the LVA considers there to be few distinguishing landscape features within the site. Although it recognises that the tree planting throughout the area contributes to landscape structure, it assigns this a low value. However, the photographs illustrate the importance of semi-mature and mature individual trees, tree groups, lines and roadside avenues of trees within and immediately around the site which soften and reduce



the scale and impact of the somewhat utilitarian MoD buildings and other on-site structures in the landscape. The site visit to inform this report also noted that the mixed deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs within the golf course are also of similar landscape value, particularly in contrast to the open featureless character of the disused airfield.

3.7 Since the visual analysis later in the LVA recognises the importance of the site vegetation in creating a planted framework and landscape and visual containment, it is a little surprising that a higher landscape value is not attributed to these features. However, the LVA does recognise that the opportunity should be taken to retain site vegetation. It was clear from the site visit that the value of these landscape features is such that their retention is a key opportunity to provide an instant mature framework to the new garden village, to integrate the new development into the landscape and to reduce its landscape impact, for example by providing an important backcloth to development on the skyline that would potentially otherwise be uncharacteristically prominent on high ground.

3.8 All of the 9 landscape / townscape character areas identified at the site level are assigned a low or low-medium landscape value except the historic structures at the eastern end of the disused airfield which are recorded as of high value. It is noted that the golf course is considered to be of low-medium value in the LVA, but as referred to above the retention of vegetation within the golf course would add instant value to the new community.

3.9 In accordance with GLVIA3<sup>8</sup> it would be helpful for the LVA to include a judgement on the overall relative landscape value of the site, to include all factors considered to influence value such as landscape quality, scenic quality, etc. This could include reference to the former designation of Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside (APAC) (in the Leicestershire Structure Plan and Rutland Local Plan 2001 with policies for the protection of the special character and appearance of the landscape) of land to the north of Wytchley Road and west of Edith Western Road i.e. the landscape around the site but specifically not including the barracks, which has been recognised in subsequent local plans as a feature detracting from the considerable landscape value of the Rutland countryside.

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<sup>8</sup> GLVIA paragraph 5.28 and Box 5.1

## 4. VISUAL BASELINE

4.1 The LVA includes a visual assessment of internal views within the site, views from the immediate and local surrounding areas, and from mid-distance and distant receptors. Viewpoints are described as either open views, partial views or truncated (meaning an obscured view of the site or where the site is difficult to perceive). Following the site visit to inform this report it is considered that the range of viewpoints including photographic coverage in the LVA is sufficient to provide an appreciation of the visual baseline within the study area.

4.2 The visual study area is described in the LVA as extending up to approximately 4km from the site which is relatively accurate. It was noted on the site visit that there are views from the A43 south of Collyweston (acknowledged in the LVA) at approximately 4.5km from the site.

4.3 The value of the view is assessed as either high, medium or low (or mid-ranges between these such as medium/high) presumably based on the criteria descriptions in Appendix 1 Table A1.2. As discussed in section 2 above in the consideration of the methodology used in the LVA, it is unusual for a study of the visual baseline to include judgements on the value attached to views. Furthermore, some of the values appear questionable; for example, the value of transient views when travelling along Wytchley Road / Empingham Road close to the northern site boundary, as represented in viewpoints 23 to 29, is low in the LVA. The definition of low value in Table A1.2 is "*Views from landscapes / viewpoints with no designation, not particularly important and with minimal or no cultural associations. This may include views from the rear elevation of residential properties*". 'Important' is a highly subjective term that requires definition and explanation. Wytchley Road is a narrow rural lane with relatively wide grass verges and low cut or medium height roadside hedgerows with hedgerow trees in places, allowing views out across predominantly small to medium sized arable fields, occasional farmsteads and cottages. Spinneys, copses and mature trees generally curtail views across the plateau farmland although there are distant views to higher ground to the south. Vegetation mostly screens views of the site although the large commercial sheds in the north of the site are conspicuous. The view westwards includes Rutland Water (as recognised within the visual analysis at section 6 of the LVA). The lane is part of the Rutland Round recreational trail, with other PRow to the north. Overall the nature of the view is of a pleasant, scenic country lane.

4.4 Descriptions within the LVA of the view from most of the viewpoints are accurate although from some of the mid distance and distant viewpoints the descriptions appear to downplay the nature of the view in terms of the extent of views of built form / structures within the site. For example, from viewpoint 53 looking north-east from North Luffenham Road west of South Luffenham (where public bridleway E279 crosses the road) at approximately 1.8km from the site, the LVA describes *partial views and glimpses of built form / structures within the part of the site to the east of Edith Western Road, as well as boundary vegetation*. Photograph 1 below shows the view where the light coloured hangers and large flat roofed MoD buildings within the barracks appear as obvious prominent

structures on the plateau, breaking the skyline, and out of scale with the houses in North Luffenham on the valley slopes below :



**Photograph 1**

4.5 There are views of the site from several locations on the ridgelines and north-facing valley slopes between North Luffenham, South Luffenham, Morcott and Pilton. This is not directly apparent in the LVA although this area does form part of a key line of intervisibility identified in the study. In these views a number of flat roofed, utilitarian red brick MoD buildings and towers along the western site boundary including the officer's mess appear as incongruous prominent features on the plateau, breaking the skyline, and out of scale with the houses in North Luffenham on the valley slopes below. The example in Photograph 2 below is taken from Pilton Road to the east of Pilton:



**Photograph 2**

4.6 From viewpoint 59 looking south-east to south from the Hambleton peninsular across Rutland Water the LVA suggests the site is obscured from view by the rising landform, vegetation and buildings in the intervening areas. There is in fact a view of the tall

water tower structure within the site, and the rooflines of houses within the MoD married quarters on Pennine Drive and Welland Road immediately to the north of the barracks are visible, as shown in Photographs 3 and 4 below. Tall dense vegetation within the site's northern areas forms an important backcloth in these views and largely screen the site:



**Photograph 3**



**Photograph 4**

4.7 Section 6 in the LVA provides a visual analysis, landscape and visual constraints and opportunities. It is considered that this section provides a useful analysis that has informed the vision document *Revised Evolving Masterplan*, November 2018 (see section 6 below).



## 5. ASSESSMENT BEYOND ESTABLISHING THE BASELINE

5.1 LVA Appendix 1 Sections A1.5 to A1.15 describe the methodology in accordance with GLVIA3 for undertaking a full landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA), to be undertaken at a later stage in the process (probably as part of an Environmental Statement (ES) in support of a planning application). Since the LVA only considers the baseline landscape and visual conditions, it is assumed that these sections on pages 113 to 118 of the LVA are included for information only.

5.2 To more fully inform the evolving master-planning process, and as a basis for any future assessment of effects of the proposed development on the landscape, views and visual amenity, a study that goes the next step in accordance with GLVIA3 would be most helpful. The next step comes after the establishment of the baseline landscape and visual conditions and before the assessment of significant effects. It is understood that this may be beyond the scope of the LVA.

5.3 With regard to landscape assessment, the next step would<sup>9</sup>:

- (a) Identify the landscape receptors likely to be affected by the development, negatively and positively, such as overall character and key characteristics, individual elements and features, and specific aesthetic or perceptual aspects; and
- (b) Identify interactions between these landscape receptors and the different components of the development at its different stages.

5.4 With regard to visual assessment, the next step would<sup>10</sup>:

- (a) Identify interactions between the development and visual receptors, with consideration in particular on the nature of the change in view due to the development, such as changes in the existing skyline profile, creation of a new visual focus in the view, introduction of new man-made objects, changes in visual simplicity or complexity, alteration of visual scale, and changes to the degree of visual enclosure. As with landscape effects the visual effects may be positive or negative (or neutral), based on a judgement about whether the changes will affect the quality of the visual experience for those groups of people who will see the changes, given the nature of the existing view.

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<sup>9</sup> In accordance with GLVIA paragraphs 5.34 – 5.37

<sup>10</sup> In accordance with GLVIA paragraphs 6.27 – 6.29

## 6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Despite some concerns at the methodology used in the LVA, it is considered that overall the landscape and visual analysis of the St. George's Barracks site should ensure that landscape and visual constraints and opportunities inform the vision for the new community and can be fully considered within the evolving master-planning process.

6.2 The LVA, as far as it goes, should be helpful to the local planning authority in informing a decision on whether the site should be allocated in the local plan, in terms of landscape and visual considerations. The acceptability of any development proposal in these terms will depend upon detailed LVIA (for example to accompany a planning application as part of an EIA within an ES).

6.3 It would be helpful for the study area and ZTV to be identified on a plan. Furthermore, the LVA should describe how the ZTV and study area have been determined.

6.4 In accordance with GLVIA3<sup>11</sup> it would also be helpful for the LVA to include a judgement on the overall relative landscape value of the site, to include all factors considered to influence value such as landscape quality, scenic quality, etc.

6.5 It is unusual for a study of the visual baseline to include judgements on the value attached to views. This aspect is usually considered during the assessment of effects of the development. It is assumed that this is included in response to the Council's request that the LVA refers to previous landscape sensitivity and capacity studies by BBe. The approach adopted doesn't appear to add anything to the appraisal that a recognised study to establish the visual baseline in accordance with GLVIA3 would do.

6.6 The LVA should provide details of how the photography complies with best practice advice, such as Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/11 *Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment*, March 2011.

6.7 To more fully inform the evolving masterplan and the local planning process, and as a basis for any future assessment of effects of the proposed development on the landscape, views and visual amenity, a study that goes the next step in accordance with GLVIA3 to identify interactions between the proposed development and the identified landscape and visual receptors would be most helpful. This would consider, amongst other things, the change in view as a result of the development taking into account any mitigation measures.

6.8 Overall the LVA provides an understanding of the landscape and visual baseline of the study area as required by GLVIA3. Further detailed LVIA will be required of the effects of any specific development proposal on the site.

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<sup>11</sup> *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013 (referred to as GLVIA3).

6.9 It is understood that the purpose of the LVA is to inform the vision and evolving master-planning process for the future redevelopment of the St. George's Barracks site. In that respect, and should the site be allocated in the new local plan, key landscape and visual considerations with any redevelopment of the site could be set out as a series of development principles (and possibly included within planning policy) to include:

- (a) Retention of as much existing vegetation within the site as possible, to provide an instant landscape framework and minimise the visual impact of new buildings;
- (b) Careful consideration is required of likely impacts of development in key views, especially from the south and west. The revised evolving masterplan should ensure that adverse impact of new development on the skyline is avoided;
- (c) Redevelopment of the barracks provides the opportunity to replace the existing buildings and other structures with others in-keeping with the character of the surrounding landscape and townscape, for example using local building stone, with positive benefits. The removal of a number of large incongruous flat roofed, utilitarian MoD buildings, towers and hangers prominent on the plateau skyline will provide particular landscape and visual benefits;
- (d) Removal of other detracting elements, such as boundary security fencing, will also provide positive landscape and visual benefit;
- (e) Redevelopment of the entire site including mineral extraction requires careful programming to minimise impact on surrounding landscape and settlements and on the new community, but offers the opportunity to provide early planting and establishment of landscape buffers. This will be important to any phasing plan;
- (f) Opportunity to provide views out from the new community and parkland should be taken, especially to the higher ridges to the south and west, and to Rutland Water. The proposed viewing mound, to provide views of the listed missile launchers, could also potentially provide views along one of the former airfield runways north-westwards to Rutland Water;
- (g) The proposed new accesses off Wytchley Road could provide the opportunity to introduce new planting to help screen views of the commercial buildings in the northern part of the site, for example by offsite planting within field corners and alongside the access roads;
- (h) Opportunity to improve the setting of heritage assets including a number of listed buildings and conservation areas at Edith Western and North Luffenham;
- (i) Opportunity to provide accessible open green spaces and wildlife corridors, and integrate multi-functional greenspace into the design, with links to the surrounding countryside and opportunities for community recreation with associated health benefits – to meet environmental opportunity as described in National Character

*Area profile 74 Leicestershire & Nottinghamshire Wolds.*