

A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are green fields and a cluster of trees. In the middle ground, a village is visible, featuring a prominent church with a tall, pointed spire. The background consists of rolling hills covered in golden-brown fields, likely harvested crops, under a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds.

# **RUTLAND SETTLEMENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT, 2023**

## **PART 1 INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY**

**Final Report  
July 2023**

## Acknowledgements

This landscape sensitivity assessment has been prepared by Anthony Brown of Bayou Bluenvironment Ltd. and Graham Bradford of The Planning & Environment Studio Ltd. The consultants are grateful to Rutland County Council for steering the study and in particular to Rachel Armstrong, Principal Planning Policy Officer, for managing the project and Kerry Andrews, Planning Policy Officer, for her support.



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*Cover photo: Barrowden, Rutland*

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## **PART 1 (this part) INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY**

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# **PART 2 (published separately)**

## **SETTLEMENT SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENTS**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **2. SETTLEMENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENTS:**

#### **PART 2a**

Barrowden  
Belton-in-Rutland  
Braunston-in-Rutland  
Caldecott  
Cottesmore  
Edith Weston  
Empingham  
Essendine  
Exton  
Glaston  
Great Casterton  
Greetham  
Ketton

#### **Part 2b**

Langham  
Lyddington  
Manton  
Market Overton  
Morcott  
North Luffenham  
Oakham  
Ryhall  
South Luffenham  
Tinwell  
Uppingham  
Whissendine  
Wing

# 1.INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Landscape Assessment as Evidence for the new Rutland Local Plan

Rutland County Council (RCC) began work on a new Local Plan for Rutland in 2022. The new Local Plan will replace the adopted Local Plan which comprises of the Minerals Core Strategy & Development Control Policies (adopted 2010), Core Strategy (adopted 2011) and the Site Allocations & Policies Development Plan Document (SAPDPD, adopted 2014).

RCC has commissioned various pieces of work as evidence to support the preparation of the new Local Plan; a review of the Rutland Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) published in 2003 has recently been undertaken culminating in a new Rutland Landscape Character Assessment, 2022. This is used as the basis for this Rutland Landscape Sensitivity (LS) Study, 2023, undertaken by the same consultants, utilising descriptions of key characteristics and forces for change, with reference to the main issues affecting landscape sensitivity, and overall landscape management strategies for the landscape character areas.

A number of landscape sensitivity and capacity studies were completed between 2010 and 2018, assessing the sensitivity of land to residential and employment development around Oakham, Uppingham, Stamford, seven Local Service Centres (see below), together with Great Casterton, Langham and Whissendine. This assessment updates these previous studies and assesses the sensitivity of land around 26 settlements in total, in accordance with the latest guidance from Natural England in *'An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management'*, 2019.

Section 2 below describes the methodology used in this assessment.

## 1.2 What is Landscape Sensitivity, and what is Landscape Sensitivity Assessment?

A glossary of terms is provided at **Appendix 2** (extracted from the latest guidance from Natural England in *'An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management'*, 2019).

**Landscape sensitivity** may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value – such as changes to valued attributes of baseline landscape character and the visual resource.

**Landscape sensitivity assessment** is a process that assesses the resilience / robustness of landscape character and the visual resource – and what we value - to a defined change, or changes. It can help decision makers to understand likely changes and the nature of change should particular courses of action - the development / land management scenarios – be taken forward.

## 1.3 Purpose and Scope of the Rutland Landscape Sensitivity Study, 2023

The purpose of this strategic, County-wide LS study is to assist the County Council in making an informed choice of suitable site allocations for housing, employment and renewable energy development in the emerging Rutland Local Plan. As the Local Plan is in the early stages of preparation, no decisions have been made about the amount and distribution of development, and therefore appreciation of landscape sensitivity can feed into that process at an early stage of plan making. In addition, the LS study may provide support to development management and decision making in the County.

The LS study considers the sensitivity of settlement fringes around the two towns of Oakham and Uppingham, together with the fringes of the seven villages referred to in the settlement hierarchy in the adopted Local Plan as Local Service Centres, the sixteen further Smaller Service Centres in the adopted plan, and one Restraint Village (Braunston-in-Rutland) where housing or employment development is more likely to be considered acceptable in principle. See **Table 1** below.

With regard to landscape sensitivity to the principle of renewable energy development, previous planning applications within Rutland would suggest that there may be some interest in locating solar photovoltaic development ('solar farms') within settlement fringes. **Appendix 1** provides general advice in terms of landscape & visual indicators of lower susceptibility to field-scale photovoltaic renewable energy development. Siting solar panels on commercial roof-space can make a major contribution to carbon reduction as an alternative to a green field location but could also adversely affect the character of sensitive landscapes and residential, recreational and / or visual amenity, for example by their reflective nature / glare.

Other types of renewable energy development such as wind energy<sup>1</sup>, biogas, biofuel and energy generated from burning wood, plants and other organic matter such as manure or household waste (referred to as biomass) are unlikely to be acceptable close to houses, and consequently are not included within this LS study.

## 1.4 The type and scale of development assessed

New housing development assumed for the purposes of this study has key attributes associated with conventional, domestic-scale residential development where a site might comprise an appropriate mix of housing choices including affordable and market homes. There is likely to be a mix of single storey, two, two and a half, and three storey properties. It is assumed that housing would be typically 8m-10m high, would be well designed and would use traditional or other appropriate materials, building techniques and methods of construction promoted by the County Council which provide high energy efficiency and resilience to climate change.

Key attributes of employment development refers to commercial, business, service and light industrial uses which are of an appropriate scale and nature such that they could in principle operate without unacceptable impact on local roads, residential amenity and other considerations due to being located adjacent to settlements. It is assumed that employment buildings would typically be 10m-12m high, well designed and would use conventional materials, building techniques and methods of construction promoted by the County Council which provide high energy efficiency and resilience to climate change.

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<sup>1</sup> Rutland County Council, *Rutland Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study – Wind Turbines*, 2012, suggests that wind turbines are unlikely to be acceptable within settlement fringes.

## 1.5 Mitigation

The LS study also considers whether mitigation measures could reduce the impact of development, or locations where such mitigation is unlikely to adequately integrate a development and prevent significant adverse effects on landscape character, views and visual amenity. Consideration is also given to where there may be opportunities for environmental enhancement within a new development scheme by, for example, providing wildlife corridor linkages via green (vegetation) and blue (water) infrastructure.

Government policy encourages biodiversity net gain that should deliver measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development; one of the provisions of the Environment Act (2021) is the mandatory requirement for new developments to provide 10% biodiversity net gain, either on or off site. Also, a Local Nature Recovery Strategy covering Rutland should help prioritise locally appropriate measures for tackling climate change and biodiversity decline, by creating or improving habitats with regard to requirements from new development, including potentially within settlement fringes. These measures, along with the outputs of this LS study and other considerations should help inform place-based planning, design and management, including mitigation strategies such as advance planting, and assist in the management of change.

## 1.6 Study Area

Study areas on the edge of each settlement that were assessed within the previous suite of Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Studies were either sites specified by the County Council (for example sites that had been put forward for consideration during the Issues and Options or Preferred Options stages of the Local Plan) or other land immediately adjoining the towns and villages lying between the main built up area of each settlement, as identified in the Local Plan as the Planned Limits to Development (PLD), and a 'buffer zone' extending 150m into the countryside.

This LS study adopts a similar approach to defining the extent of land around the settlements to be assessed. In the absence of specified sites, study parcels have been identified within an outer 'buffer zone' extending a distance of 150m from the inner study boundary drawn around the main built-up area of each settlement, unless land immediately beyond presents a clear and discreet parcel relating to a well-defined



landscape feature (tree belt, watercourse etc), the settlement edge or neighbouring study parcel. The inner boundary has been agreed with RCC to comprise the PLD within the adopted SAPDPD, 2014, extended where appropriate to include housing and employment sites shown within Neighbourhood Plans, together with that which has been built, allocated and permitted on the edges of the settlements up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Consequently, any planning permissions and changes to Neighbourhood Plans after this base date may affect the study parcels assessed and reported in this study.

The width of study parcels around the settlements is determined by professional judgement as to the extent of tracts of broadly similar landscape character (with reference to the Rutland Landscape Character Assessment, 2022) or significant delineation by roads or other infrastructure (whilst recognising, importantly, that sensitivity may vary across the parcel). It is important to recognise that lines on maps are typically in reality zones of transition; they very rarely represent a sudden change in character or sensitivity for example. It is important to read the descriptive text which supports each study parcel as this helps to describe areas of transition (rather than simply look at the map and table of sensitivity).

**Part 2 of the LS study** (published separately) assesses the sensitivity of the landscape to development around the following 26 settlements listed in **Table 1**:

**Table 1: Settlements Considered in the Landscape Sensitivity Study**

Towns and Villages	Settlements
<b>Towns</b>	Oakham and Uppingham
<b>Villages</b>	Barrowden, Belton-in-Rutland, Braunston-in-Rutland, Caldecott, Cottesmore, Edith Weston, Empingham, Essendine, Exton, Glaston, Great Casterton, Greetham, Ketton, Langham, Lyddington, Manton, Market Overton, Morcott, North Luffenham, Ryhall, South Luffenham, Tinwell, Whissendine, Wing.

## 1.7 Limitations of the Landscape Sensitivity Study

This LS study is intended to be used to inform strategic spatial planning and land management in Rutland. It provides a strategic assessment of landscape sensitivity around the urban/rural fringes of a number of settlements in the County where development could be considered acceptable in principle. The study will contribute to the identification of opportunities and constraints, and other considerations by the Council including national and local policies, community and stakeholder opinions, etc., to inform place-based decisions on the direction of land use and landscape change.

The extent to which an area is currently, or could in the future, be served well by infrastructure is an important consideration in determining where to locate development, and the type of development that may be suitable. These and other wider considerations will be taken into account by the Council when allocating sites for development but are beyond the scope of the LS study.

Alongside other considerations the LS study should help influence decisions on where, and how much, of what type of development might be located in areas of lesser landscape sensitivity, without undue negative effects on landscape character, views and visual amenity. Importantly, the LS study alone should not be used to make a judgement on how much (i.e., the capacity) of a particular type of development may be acceptable in a particular location; the findings of the study will need to be considered along with all the other factors that influence land use planning, design and management of specific locations.

The LS study should help to focus proposals for specific development in areas of lesser landscape sensitivity, where more detailed site-specific information can be obtained and landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) carried out, for example in accordance with Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA 3)<sup>2</sup>. This may be undertaken in the context of formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) where landscape sensitivity and visual sensitivity together with the assessment of magnitude of change, informs judgements on likely significance of effects of a specific development proposal within a specific landscape.

It is important to note the physical limitations to the study. Field work plays an important part, but the location and nature of study parcels means that it has not always been possible to visit and inspect every part of each parcel because of access constraints on private land and / or physical constraints. In these situations, aerial satellite imagery is relied upon.

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<sup>2</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 2013, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.

As with any landscape study, it can only represent a snapshot in time. Landscape sensitivity uses landscape character assessment as its basis; landscape characteristics, elements and features, and visual characteristics, help to define the baseline that are likely to be most affected by development, but these can change. Change can be directly within a study parcel itself, or beyond the parcel but nevertheless affecting its characteristics and sensitivity. As referred to above, the study does not take into account any planning permissions and changes to Neighbourhood Plans after the base date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 that may affect the study parcels assessed and reported in this study.

## **1.8 Current and Future Landscape Change: Housing Development in Rutland**

Rutland is an attractive place to live and work. An enhanced perception of rural life brings increasing pressure on the countryside to accommodate built development. The market towns of Oakham and Uppingham and the villages throughout the County, and in particular their undeveloped fringes, are under pressure to accommodate housing and employment.

The most recent projections for the County show that the population of Rutland is expected to increase by 13% over a 20-year period 2021 – 2041. The Rutland Local Plan will show how the County Council will meet identified current and future housing needs, including affordable housing (which is recognised as an important and pressing issue in the County) and achieve a five-year housing land supply in accordance with the Government’s sustainability requirements. The new Local Plan is likely to apportion housing growth between the towns of Oakham and Uppingham and the larger villages, which will inevitably lead to the loss of greenfield land and change to the character of the landscape around these settlements. Change may not necessarily be harmful though; development that is carefully designed for its local context has the potential to bring about environmental enhancement and strengthen local landscape character.

Unplanned, incremental growth within the fringes of rural settlements can result in the loss of distinctiveness and diminished sense of identity and historic settlement character. However, such developments can also provide opportunities to enhance the appearance of the County’s towns and villages, particularly at the settlement / countryside interface, through careful consideration of landscape and settlement character, including historic settlement and landscape patterns, to help mitigate the impact of development. The Rutland Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document provides guidance on achieving high standards of design and build quality, including the use of local materials, locally distinctive building styles, scale, massing and layouts, for example, that can help in providing an appropriate local response to a prevailing vernacular style which enhances, rather than dilutes, local distinctiveness and character.

## 1.9 Current and Future Landscape Change: Employment Development in Rutland

Employment provision is essential to the future prosperity of the County. Landscape can play an important role in attracting new businesses. With a focus on new employment activity within Oakham, Uppingham and Ketton (by allocation in the adopted Local Plan) and a low demand for additional employment, future employment provision is likely to have a lesser impact on landscape character than new housing. Nevertheless, a concentration of commercial and industrial activity on the fringes of the towns and larger villages can have a significant impact on a site's landscape and the landscape of adjoining areas. Careful consideration needs to be given to ensure new employment development is well sited, planned and designed to minimise impacts on communities and on landscape and settlement character.

## 1.10 Current and Future Landscape Change: Renewable Energy Development in Rutland

Tackling climate change by encouraging more generation of renewable energy means that Rutland could see a significant increase in renewable energy schemes. Wind energy and solar schemes, energy from waste, biogas, biofuel and biomass schemes all have the potential to change the landscape to different extents.

Wind energy schemes can have the greatest impact due to their scale, but settlement fringe locations are unlikely to come under pressure to accommodate wind turbines. The County Council's *'Rutland Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study – Wind Turbines'*, 2012, states that small turbines up to 50m in height will be dominant and are highly unlikely to be considered acceptable in visual terms within 320m of an existing built up area or individual property; at the other end of the scale, large turbines up to 150m in height will be visually dominant and highly unlikely to be considered acceptable in visual terms within 920m of an existing built up area or individual property.

As wind energy technology improves, however, and the cost of installation falls, there could be growing demand from individual landowners and communities for micro-generation of renewable energy from wind turbines. Careful consideration of the incremental and cumulative effects of such schemes will be required.

The use of biomass from forestry residues and fast growing, tall energy crops in particular can dramatically change the landscape. The scale of cropping needed, and the type of plant and machinery required in bioenergy generation means that most change is likely within the wider agricultural landscape rather than the settlement fringe.

Solar energy production, in particular large scale solar farms, have the potential to have a significant effect on the landscape, views and visual amenity including on settlement fringes. Within Rutland there are currently large-scale solar arrays at Ketton and on the eastern edge of Uppingham. At the time of this study, an application has been submitted for the Mallard Pass Solar Farm near Essendine (with an expected generation capacity in the region of 350 megawatts to power the equivalent of 92,000 households - approximately the number of households in Rutland and South Kesteven combined) that would change the character of approximately 463 hectares of agricultural land either side of the East Coast Main Line, straddling the boarder with South Kesteven in Lincolnshire. The design includes 'buffer zones' to set the solar panels back from homes and other environmental mitigation and enhancement measures.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 General

This Landscape Sensitivity (LS) study follows the latest guidance from Natural England in '*An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management*', 2019. It adopts a similar approach to that used within the previous suite of landscape sensitivity and capacity studies completed between 2010 and 2018 (as referred to in Section 1), updated in accordance with the latest guidance.

Natural England's 2019 guidance provides a consistent approach to assessments of LS to inform spatial planning and land management, but stresses that differing circumstances will dictate the exact approach and the nature of the evidence gathered to inform the assessment.

Landscape Sensitivity is undertaken, often across a large area, with regard to the principle of a particular type of land use change in order to identify key attributes of that particular type of development likely to affect key landscape characteristics and values. This LS study provides an up-to-date sensitivity assessment of land around 25 settlements to conventional residential and employment development, divided into assessment units referred to as study parcels, as being most appropriate to inform the future growth of Rutland and the Council's site assessment and preparation of Preferred Options.

The previous assessments followed guidance at that time, where '*landscape sensitivity + landscape value = landscape capacity*'. The new guidance takes a different approach, suggesting '*landscape susceptibility + landscape value = landscape sensitivity*'. The key requirement now is to include relevant criteria, determined from key landscape and visual characteristics and values, and to identify indicators of relative susceptibility for each of those criteria. In doing so the study can provide a transparent and robust LS assessment as evidence base for the new Local Plan.

It is important that LS under the new approach focuses on landscape sensitivity and does not venture into landscape capacity assessment (emerging guidance from Natural England will put forward a new, separate approach to landscape capacity assessment).

The previous suite of landscape sensitivity and capacity studies include much of the evidence suggested in the latest guidance to assess sensitivity of settlement fringes to conventional residential and employment development, without focusing on the effects on landscape and visual receptors of a known development proposal for a specific site that would be assessed as part of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (often within the context of an Environmental Impact Assessment and which requires a different approach, for instance in accordance with specific guidance in GLVIA 3 from the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2013<sup>3</sup>).

## 2.2 Landscape Value

The previous assessments include consideration of landscape value, albeit to inform landscape capacity rather than sensitivity in accordance with guidance at that time. There are no nationally or locally designated landscapes (such as AONB or Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside) in Rutland and thus landscape value is recognised by consideration of a range of local factors such as sense of place, valued attributes, community values and recreational value. Visual value considerations include general visibility, skylines, types of views and the general visual amenity experienced by receptors.

Guidance is provided within a number of documents on the range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes, including GLVIA 3 and the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 02-21<sup>4</sup>. Insight into what features of the landscape are considered important and worthy of protection locally can be found within the Council's Local Development Framework documents and Conservation Area Appraisals, with Neighbourhood Plans providing insight into community values. These refer to the protection and enhancement of the County's varied and high quality environment including its natural landscapes, green infrastructure and biodiversity, as well as its rich historic built environment and cultural assets. New development should reflect local character and contribute to local distinctiveness.

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<sup>3</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013), *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition*.

<sup>4</sup> Landscape Institute (2021), *'Assessing landscape value outside national designations'*, TGN 02-21.

Objectives within countryside design guidance for Rutland refer to siting buildings away from ridge tops, below the skyline, within lower valleys but away from watercourses, and sympathetically with the natural landform. On the edge of settlements, buildings should reflect the historic settlement pattern and be consistent with the form and shape of a settlement. Particular aims to protect Rutland's landscapes are to:

- Safeguard exposed ridges and slopes, and valley floors, from conspicuous development,
- Safeguard village setting and views,
- Protect the setting and edges of villages particularly in exposed locations, protect approaches to villages,
- Ensure new development is sympathetic to small scale landscapes, and
- Conserve and enhance landscape heritage assets such as parks, avenues and other heritage features in the landscape.

## 2.3 Stages of Assessment

The following stages have been followed in preparation of this LS study:

**Stage 1. Desk study** to gather information on the landscape and visual baseline to identify draft assessment units / land parcels of landscapes of broadly similar landscape and historic characteristics. Study parcels are defined by the character of the landscape and settlement edge, derived primarily on differences in landform, land use, land cover and field pattern. Information was gained from a number of sources but in particular:

- the suite of previous landscape sensitivity and capacity studies;
- Rutland Neighbourhood Plans and Conservation Area Appraisals;
- constraints information from the adopted Rutland Local Plan, on the historic environment (Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens), biodiversity and geodiversity conservation (SPA / RAMSAR, SSSI, Local Wildlife Sites and Candidate LWS, RIGS, Ancient Woodland), landscape quality / value (Rutland Water Area, Important Open Space and Important Frontages), and access (public rights of way, recreational trails / routes, cycle routes and public access land);



- OS maps and aerial imagery;
- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)<sup>5</sup>;
- National Character Area (NCA) profiles; and
- the new Rutland Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), 2022, including character area key characteristic descriptions, forces for change, and landscape management strategies to conserve / enhance / restore / re-create landscapes.

**Stage 2. Identification of key attributes** of conventional housing and employment development types, as described in Section 1, and refinement of previous **landscape, visual and value criteria**, defining **indicators of susceptibility** for each of the criteria. **Table 2** shows the indicative landscape, visual and value criteria with indicators of susceptibility to housing and employment development. The criteria are based on the key characteristics, elements and features likely to be affected by this type of development.

**Stage 3. Field survey** by two highly experienced landscape surveyors (including a chartered Landscape Architect) with excellent knowledge of the landscapes of Rutland, to confirm the extent of study parcels and to gather information to inform the sensitivity assessment. The study parcels were visited on several occasions during the course of the study.

**Stage 4. Assessment of the sensitivity** of each study parcel to the key attributes of the type of development being assessed, with reference to the criteria and indicators of relative susceptibility (i.e. relative to the other study parcels within the study area around each settlement) shown in Table 2, using a 5- point scale as shown in **Table 3**. Professional judgement is then applied to describe the overall landscape sensitivity (landscape, visual and value) of each study parcel. Narrative is provided to summarise the assessment, including areas of greater or lesser sensitivity within a study parcel, with reference to potential mitigation measures, the relevant National Character Area (NCA) profile, the relevant Rutland Landscape Character Type (LCT) and Landscape Character Area (LCA) and the forces for change and landscape management strategy for that LCT / LCA (taken from the Rutland Landscape Character Assessment, 2022).

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<sup>5</sup> Leicestershire County Council (2019), *Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation*.

It is important to recognise that professional judgement is made after consideration of the range of factors and criteria that are often interlinked. The assessment is not based on a simple mathematical adding up of assessment levels; some factors will be more important than others in different areas. For instance, the function of an area in separating settlements may be considered very important and make it susceptible and therefore sensitive to development even if it is of limited landscape value. The summary highlights the particular sensitivity of the study parcel.

It is also important to note that there may be variations in sensitivity within a given study parcel. For instance, a study parcel which is assessed as medium sensitivity may have some opportunity for development within it without significant character change or adverse effects. This is specifically defined in the study parcel summary text together with reference to other land within the parcel considered to be an area of constraint in terms of landscape and visual factors. For areas of high/medium sensitivity there may be land which has high sensitivity with other parts which may be able to accommodate small scale development in specific areas.

Overall, high and high/medium levels of sensitivity are considered to be a constraint on housing or employment use allocation in terms of landscape and visual factors. In areas with low sensitivity, development would generally be acceptable, whilst some development may be acceptable with areas of medium or medium/low sensitivity.

**Stage 5. Preparation of a Draft Rutland Settlement Landscape Sensitivity Assessment**, comprising two parts: **Part 1: Introduction and Methodology** (this part); and **Part 2: Settlement Sensitivity Assessments**, reporting the assessment of each settlement within a series of assessment tables for each study parcel and including a map indicating the location of each parcel (recognising that lines on maps are typically in reality zones of transition and sudden changes in character and sensitivity are very rare).

**Stage 6. Final LS Reporting.**

**Consultation** will be undertaken by RCC as part of the Local Plan process.

**Table 2: Indicative Landscape, Visual and Value Criteria, with Indicators of Susceptibility**

CRITERIA	INDICATORS OF SUSCEPTIBILITY
<b>Landscape</b>	
Landform	<p>Open, prominent ridge tops, distinctive escarpments, upper slopes, shoulders, and crests of high land up valley slopes, are more likely to be susceptible to development than flat and indistinct landforms. Where settlements are located on higher ground, susceptibility to development that is generally in keeping with settlement location and which avoids abrupt changes in level will be lower.</p> <p>This criterion also considers whether development would affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strong relationships between distinctive landforms such as escarpments or steep slopes, and flat landforms such as open vales and valley bottoms, and</li> <li>• skyline character.</li> </ul>
Landscape pattern, landcover & scale	<p>Small scale, intimate landscapes with an intricate pattern arising from landcover elements including intact field boundaries (hedgerows, stonewalls or fences) or other vegetation cover, are more likely to be susceptible to development than larger scale, more open landscapes with a simple landcover pattern. Historic hedgerows and remnant ridge and furrow are particularly susceptible to irreplaceable loss.</p> <p>This criterion also considers whether land enclosed by buildings, hedgerows, trees and woodland could provide opportunity to accommodate development without affecting landscape character.</p>
Sense of place, rural character and quality & landscape quality	<p>Landscapes with a strong and positive rural character, in good condition and with features worthy of conservation, are more susceptible to change that affects their legibility or impacts upon features and combinations of elements which may be difficult to replace. This applies to landscapes with semi-natural habitats and valued natural features such as woodland and hedgerows, with good connectivity providing wildlife corridors and important elements of green infrastructure.</p> <p>This criterion also considers whether development would affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• settlements that retain a typical Rutland historic character, with a strong degree of coherence and harmony of building materials which emphasise their strong sense of place,</li> <li>• areas recognised for their landscape quality, or which form the setting to such landscapes, such as Rutland Water Area,</li> <li>• the setting of historic landscape assets such as a Scheduled Monument, Registered Park &amp; Garden, Conservation Area or Listed Building, and</li> <li>• areas of Important Open Space and Important Frontages (such as stone walls, high hedges, tree belts or other linear features) within settlements that are an integral part of the built environment and add to their open rural character and setting.</li> </ul>
Tranquillity	<p>Landscapes with a strong sense of tranquillity are more likely to be susceptible to development than areas disturbed by noise, for example from nearby development and roads.</p>
Settlement pattern	<p>Simple, linear villages predominantly along a single main street, and intimate, enclosed, compact, nucleated village layouts, are</p>

CRITERIA	INDICATORS OF SUSCEPTIBILITY
& character	<p>more likely to be susceptible to development that alters or compromises the distinctive pattern and traditional character, than settlements with a more complex, random or extended pattern.</p> <p>This criterion also considers whether development would affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• historic village cores and historic street patterns,</li> <li>• villages that retain a strong agricultural / estate village character or are otherwise largely unaffected by modern development,</li> <li>• the nature of the settlement edge, whether it is smooth, indented, positive (well-designed or screened / softened by vegetation) or negative (poorly designed or open and abrupt),</li> <li>• the relationship of the settlement and the surrounding countryside, considering the transition between settlement and different landscape character areas,</li> <li>• landscapes that provide an important function of separation between settlements, and</li> <li>• landscapes that lie beyond features that provide a strong boundary to current Planned Limits to Development (such as road, railway, watercourse).</li> </ul>
<b>Visual</b>	
Visibility, intervisibility & types of views	<p>Landscapes that are visually contained by landform, buildings, hedgerows, trees and woodland, with limited inward and outward views, are likely to be less susceptible to development than open landscapes where there are extensive or important inward and outward views.</p> <p>This criterion also considers whether development would affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the visual relationship of the landscape with the settlement edge and whether there are any visual detractors which may reduce its susceptibility,</li> <li>• areas of Important Open Space and Important Frontages (such as stone walls, high hedges, tree belts or other linear features) that contribute to the openness and setting of a settlement, and the views and/or vistas out of and within a settlement, and when viewed from surrounding land,</li> <li>• intervisibility between landscapes, where landscapes with a high degree of intervisibility lying within or forming a backdrop to important views are more likely to be susceptible to development, and</li> <li>• landscapes located on approaches / gateways to settlements which are more likely to be susceptible to development.</li> </ul>
Skylines and focal points	<p>Skylines are generally susceptible to development, particularly where it is seen in relief against a light sky. Undeveloped rural skylines and skylines forming a backdrop to settlement are particularly susceptible.</p> <p>This criterion also considers whether development would affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• views to distinctive or historic landscape features such as church towers / spires or other built development within historic rural villages, and</li> <li>• landscapes that form part of or have a strong visual link to a distinctive skyline.</li> </ul>
Scenic quality	Landscapes with recognised scenic quality, and valued landscapes with a concentration of special scenic qualities such as Rutland

CRITERIA	INDICATORS OF SUSCEPTIBILITY
	Water Area, or which form the setting to such landscapes, are more likely to be susceptible to development than landscapes strongly influenced by intrusive man-made structures and human activity which have lower scenic quality.
Visual receptors	<p>Residents at home and communities (where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area), people (whether residents or visitors) who are engaged in outdoor recreation including use of public rights of way and other scenic routes and whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views, and visitors to heritage assets or other attractions where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience, are visual receptors most susceptible to change. Less susceptible to change are views from people engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape, and people at work who are not focussed on their surroundings. This criterion also considers whether development would affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the number of visual receptors in an area, since the greater the number the more susceptible the area will be to change from development,</li> <li>• not only visual receptors within a study parcel but also those further away in locations which have a direct and open view towards it, such as views from elevated land,</li> <li>• the nature, composition and characteristic of the existing views experienced, since landscapes of attractive scenery, character, quality, local distinctiveness with a strong sense of place will be typically more susceptible to development than less scenic areas, and</li> <li>• visual amenity, that is the overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through the County.</li> </ul>
<b>Landscape Value</b>	
Strength of landscape character and condition	Landscapes with a positive character and strong structure (such as intact historic field patterns) in good physical condition and intactness of individual elements (such as hedgerows, trees, walls, parkland) will be more susceptible to change because of the potential impact on their legibility and upon features and combinations of elements which may be difficult to replace.
Distinctiveness	The presence of distinctive, rare or unusual features individually or that combine to form strong landscape character and sense of place or identity. Also, landscapes which make an important contribution to the character or identity of a settlement, including gateways / approaches (including areas recognised in this way as Important Open Space or Local Green Space).
Landform	Consideration of the shape and scale of the land and the extent of distinctive and valued geological, topographical or hydrological features. These may be distinctive in their own right or may have influenced areas of distinctive and valued landscape character.
Natural ecological heritage	The presence of habitats of wildlife or ecological interest that contribute to sense of place, including semi-natural habitats and valued characteristic natural features such as hedgerows and woodland, especially those that form the basis of ecological / nature recovery / green infrastructure networks.
Cultural heritage	The presence of historic assets or elements of designed landscapes (such as boundary walls, avenues of trees), landscapes important to the setting of heritage assets (such as Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings) and

CRITERIA	INDICATORS OF SUSCEPTIBILITY
	landscapes that provide a time depth dimension (such as the presence of historic field patterns, ridge and furrow, historic drove roads and tracks, relic farmsteads and other remnants of lost villages).
Recreational	Landscapes offering recreational opportunities (such as public rights of way, particularly long-distance national trails and other named recreational routes) where experience of the landscape is important, areas with good accessibility that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation (such as open access land, woodland with public access, allotments) and landscape that forms part of a view that is important to the enjoyment of a recreational activity.
Associations	Connections with notable people, events and the arts that contribute to perceptions of the landscape (where known).
Scenic, aesthetic, perceptual and experiential	Distinctive or striking patterns of landform or harmonious patterns of landcover, strong aesthetic qualities (such as scale, form, colour, texture, perceived naturalness, sense of remoteness or tranquillity), the presence of natural features (such as ridgelines, woodland edges and river valleys) or other scenic qualities such as strong rural character (traditional land uses with few human influences), and landscapes which contribute to distinctive views and landmarks. Also, landscape which is transitional or peripheral land and recognised in this way as Important Open Space, and Local Green Space which should remain open to preserve the form and character of the settlement, and land that provides important separation function as open land between settlements.
<b>Visual Value</b>	
Views related to landscapes and assets of recognised value	Views which are related to landscapes recognised for their quality, such as Rutland Water Area and Registered Parks & Gardens, views associated with areas of Important Open Space within settlements as identified in the Local Plan, where the views and/or vistas out of and within the settlement contribute to the character and attractiveness of the settlement, and views to and from heritage assets (such as churches). Views recognised in Neighbourhood Plans and Conservation Area Appraisals as being important to the setting of a settlement will be more susceptible to development.
Regional and local views	Views from public rights of way, particularly long-distance national trails and other recreational routes where experience of the landscape is important, views from locations where there is provision of facilities for their enjoyment (such as parking or interpretive material), and other views which are locally well known and valued by the community. Open landscapes where there are extensive or important inward and outward views are likely to be more susceptible to development than enclosed landscapes that are visually contained.

**Table 3: Definitions of Landscape Sensitivity**

<b>LEVELS OF SENSITIVITY</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b> (informed by susceptibility and value criteria)
<b>High</b>	Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the assessment unit are very susceptible to change, and / or its values are predominantly high or high / medium, and / or it is unable to accommodate the relevant type of development without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are very low.
<b>High / Medium</b>	Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the assessment unit are susceptible to change, and / or its values are predominantly medium through to high, and / or it may be able to accommodate the relevant type of development but only in limited situations without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are low.
<b>Medium</b>	Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the assessment unit are susceptible to change, and / or its values are predominantly medium / low through to high / medium, and / or it may have some potential to accommodate the relevant type of development in some defined situations without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change lie between low and high (intermediate).
<b>Medium / Low</b>	Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the assessment unit are resilient and of low susceptibility to change, and / or its values are predominantly medium / low or low, and / or it can accommodate the relevant type of development in many situations without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are high.
<b>Low</b>	Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the assessment unit are robust or degraded and are not susceptible to change, and / or its values are predominantly low, and / or it can accommodate the relevant type of development without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are very high.

## APPENDICES



### **APPENDIX 1: General landscape & visual indicators of lower susceptibility to field-scale photovoltaic renewable energy development**

- Larger scale arable fields (low grade) with a simple, regular / uniform field pattern and a large proportion of unmanaged / high field boundary hedgerows, fences and/or walls;
- Flat or gently sloping, south facing, uniform / indistinct landform;
- Developed character with man-made influences such as modern housing / industry / infrastructure, and human activity;
- Weak rural character and sense of place, in poor condition;
- Low scenic / aesthetic, perceptual and experiential qualities;
- Landscapes confined / contained / enclosed by intact, overgrown hedgerows / woodland / trees, with limited inward or outward views and/or intervisibility;
- Low natural / recreational / historic and/or community landscape value;
- Low visual value with no visual relationship to iconic / valued views of national / regional / local community importance.



## **APPENDIX 2: Glossary**

(based on 'An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management', Natural England, 2019)

**Capacity** – The maximum amount that something can contain. \*\*\*\*

**Elements** - Individual parts which make up the landscape, such as, for example, trees, hedges and buildings. \*

**Feature** - Particularly prominent or eye-catching elements in the landscape, such as tree clumps, church towers or wooded skylines or a particular aspect of the project proposal. \*

**Key characteristics** - Those combinations of elements which are particularly important to the current character of the landscape and help to give an area its particularly distinctive sense of place. \*

**Landscape** - An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. \*\*\*

**Landscape capacity** - The amount of specified development or change which a particular landscape and the associated visual resource is able to accommodate without undue negative effects on its character and qualities. \*\*\*\*\*

**Landscape character** - A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. \*

**Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)** - Single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type. \*

**Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)** - The process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape, and using this information to assist in managing change in the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive. The process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment. \*

**Landscape Character Types (LCTs)** - Distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, and historical land use and settlement pattern, and perceptual and aesthetic attributes. \*

**Landscape management** - Action, from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes. \*\*\*

**Landscape planning** – Strong, forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes. \*\*\*

**Landscape policy** - An expression by the competent public authorities of general principles, strategies and guidelines that permit the taking of specific measures aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscapes. \*\*\*

**Landscape Sensitivity** - Within the context of spatial planning and land management, landscape sensitivity is a term applied to landscape character and the associated visual resource, combining judgements of their susceptibility to the specific development type / development scenario or other change being considered together with the value(s) related to that landscape and visual resource. Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value. \*\*\*\*\*

**Landscape Susceptibility** - Within the context of spatial planning and land management, landscape susceptibility is the degree to which a defined landscape and its associated visual qualities and attributes might respond to the specific development type / development scenario or other change without undue negative effects on landscape character and the visual resource. \*\*\*\*\*

**Landscape value** - The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons. \*

**Overall sensitivity** - A term applied when landscape sensitivity reporting is generalised across the assessment unit (even though it must be accepted that such sensitivity to particular developments is likely to vary within the assessment unit). \*\*\*\*\*

**Sensitive** – Quick to detect, respond to, or be affected by slight changes or influences. \*\*\*\*

**Susceptible** – Likely to be influenced or harmed by a particular thing. \*\*\*\*

**SOURCES:**

- \* Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013), Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition, Routledge.
- \*\* Defra 'An introductory guide to valuing Ecosystem services' (2007).
- \*\*\* Council of Europe (2000), European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe, Florence, Oct 2000.
- \*\*\*\* Oxford University Press (2005), Compact Oxford English Dictionary.
- \*\*\*\*\* Natural England (2019), An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management.