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# **Landscape Sensitivity Assessment**

## **The sensitivity of areas of pressure**

**Final Report**

**Prepared by LUC**

**September 2017**





# 1. ORTON ON THE HILL

## Summary

This assessment area is located in Landscape Character Area H: Twycross Open Farmland. It covers just over half of the character area (684.3 hectares) comprising the land to the south-west of the A444, forming an elevated area of higher land between Little Orton and Orton-on-the Hill, dropping abruptly away to the west into the adjacent district of North West Leicestershire, and more gently sloping to the east and south to the Sence Valley. It is a rural, agricultural landscape with a small ridge top village at Orton-on-the-Hill.

## Representative photographs



## Description by evaluation criteria

Criteria	Description and indication of sensitivity	Rating
Physical character	Elevated landform forming a broad ridgeline extending from Little Orton on the edge of Twycross to Orton on the Hill, providing long views contributing to a sense of exposure and vastness. Land use is predominantly arable within a medium to large scale field pattern, with occasional woodland blocks including ancient woodland at Orton Wood. It is a relatively large scale, open plateau-like landscape typical of the wider character area with occasional landscape features.	<b>M</b>
Settlement form & edge	Settlement pattern in the wider area is rural, with a dispersed pattern of hilltop villages and isolated farmsteads. The only settlements are the hamlet/dwellings at Little Orton, Twycross (Conservation Area) and the small intact village at Orton-on-the-Hill (Conservation Area), well integrated within the rural landscape. Trees and vegetation create a feeling of enclosure at Orton-on-the-Hill, although linear development extends along Main Street/Twycross Lane. Twycross Zoo is a separate commercial development, although is well-integrated into the landscape with surrounding vegetation and low-profile buildings on the plateau-top.	<b>M-H</b>

## 1. ORTON ON THE HILL

Settlement setting	The settlement (Orton-on-the-Hill) is a ridge top settlement, with the medieval church spire distinctive in views from the wider area. It was a medieval centre which commanded the farms within the wider landscape and there is a close and tangible (visual and functional) relationship between the settlement and surroundings.	<b>H</b>
Visual character	The elevated ridge landform provides extensive, distant and sometimes dramatic, panoramic views giving a sense of exposure and vastness e.g. from locations along Orton Road and the A444 with 'big skies' being a distinctive feature. It is a visual prominent landscape forming a backdrop and skyline from the lower areas within adjacent districts as well as the lower areas in Hinckley and Bosworth along the River Sence. In views it forms an important undeveloped skyline, punctuated only by the spire of St Edith of Polesworth church. However, some locations set back on the plateau tops are more contained, and woodland blocks create some sense of enclosure.	<b>M</b>
Perceptual qualities	The area is rural, with a dispersed settlement pattern with some parts away from the A444 perceived as 'remote' with a sense of exposure and vastness, plus little light pollution.	<b>M-H</b>
Historic character	Some features of historic interest including medieval organisation of the land into Granges associated with Merivale Abbey. Ancient woodland, plus areas of small assarts around Lea Grange Farm are indicative of medieval clearance and enclosure. Historic villages and Conservation Areas at Orton on the Hill and Twycross.	<b>M</b>

### Evaluation of criteria and landscape sensitivity judgement

The assessment area is considered to have overall **medium-high** sensitivity to development. This sensitivity arises from the rural and remote character, dramatic/panoramic views and its characteristic, small scale dispersed settlement pattern. The elevated landform, which provides a skyline and backdrop over a wider area, where new development could have the potential to be highly visible, also contributes to the sensitivity. Twycross Zoo provides an example of a commercial development that is well integrated into the rural landscape setting, although there is limited capacity for further developments of this scale.

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
	L	L-M	M	M-H	H
Residential housing 2-3 stories	L	L-M	M	M-H	H
Commercial development Small scale (B1/ B2)	L	L-M	M	M-H	H
Commercial development Large scale (B8)	L	L-M	M	M-H	H

### Key sensitivities and values

- Historic field pattern, including smaller fields around settlement, piecemeal reorganised enclosures and medieval assarts.

## 1. ORTON ON THE HILL

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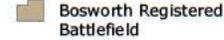
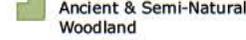
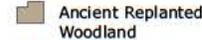
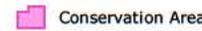
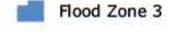
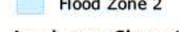
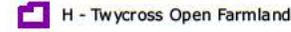
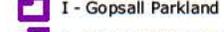
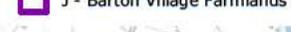
- The pattern of field boundaries and mature hedgerow trees, particularly along the elevated roads such as Orton Hill.
- Ancient woodland at Orton Wood and smaller blocks of woodland such as The Plantations which provide biodiversity and visual interest.
- Distinct sparse settlement pattern including small well integrated historic village at Orton-on-the Hill.
- The rural and remote character and lack of development and consequent dark skies and tranquillity.
- The distinctive elevated landform, dramatic panoramic views and role of this area as a backdrop and skyline.
- Church towers and spires which form prominent landmarks in the wide views across the landscape.

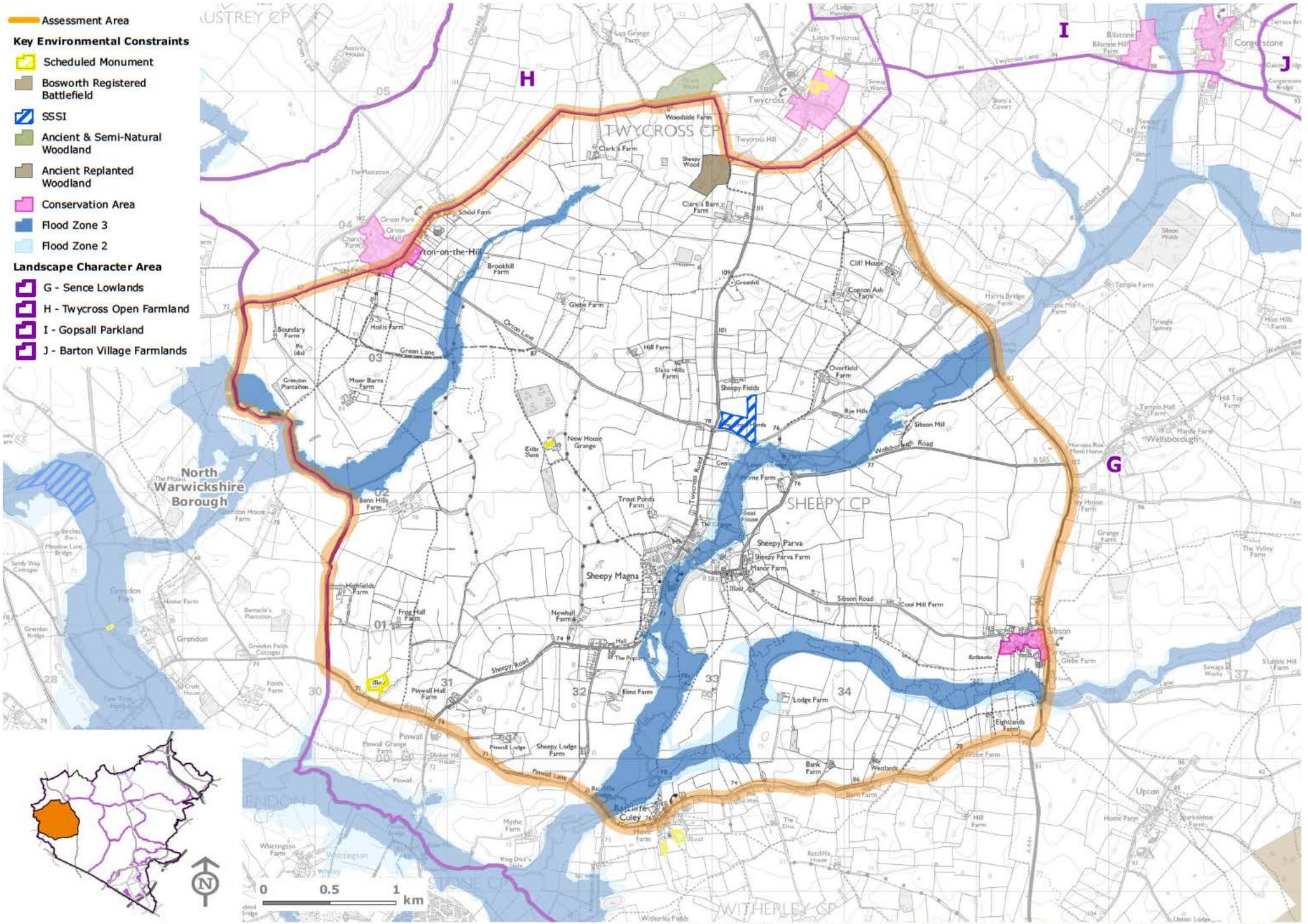
### Guidance

Any new development should:

- Seek opportunities to respect the sparsely settled, rural, remote character of this landscape.
- Seek to prioritise the conservation of dark skies by careful consideration of lighting in any new development.
- Consider the role of this area as a skyline and backdrop across a wide rural landscape in planning for any future change including maintaining uncluttered skylines and avoiding prominent vertical elements.
- Provide appropriate measures including tree planting and conservation of existing field boundaries to help integrate development within the rural landscape.

**Sensitivity Area 02: Sheepy Magna & Surrounds (north of B5000)**

-  Assessment Area
- Key Environmental Constraints**
-  Scheduled Monument
-  Bosworth Registered Battlefield
-  SSSI
-  Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland
-  Ancient Replanted Woodland
-  Conservation Area
-  Flood Zone 3
-  Flood Zone 2
- Landscape Character Area**
-  G - Sence Lowlands
-  H - Twycross Open Farmland
-  I - Gopsall Parkland
-  J - Barton Village Farmlands



## 2. SHEEPY MAGNA & SURROUNDINGS (NORTH OF B5000)

### Summary

The sensitivity assessment area is located in Landscape Character Area G: Sence Lowlands. It covers roughly one quarter of the character area (2393.2 hectares) to the west of the A444 and north of the B5000, comprising the rural lowland vale surrounding the River Sence, characterised by a relatively high density of dispersed small villages connected by a network of rural roads and lanes.

### Representative photographs



### Description by evaluation criteria

Criteria	Description and indication of sensitivity	Rating
Physical character	A flat to gently rolling lowland vale landscape with rounded clay ridges and shallow valleys draining to the River Sence (and Anker in adjacent District). Predominantly arable, with some grazed pasture fields along the floodplain. The pattern is mainly one of planned Midland enclosures, plus very large post war fields, with sparse woodland cover. The prevalence of small streams and ponds is a feature.	<b>L-M</b>
Settlement form & edge	There are a number of scattered hamlets and linear villages dispersed across the landscape including the larger villages of Sheepy Magna and Sheepy Parva, the small agricultural village of Sibson, and Ratcliffe Culey located on slight elevations within the vale. Settlements, although expanded with areas of modern residential development on the edges, generally retain an intact historic character and distinct vernacular, and are integrated into the rural landscape, although with some visibility in views.	<b>M</b>
Settlement setting	The settlements tend to be located on slight elevations of land and have some prominence as landmarks within the wider rural area including the church tower at Sibson and spire at Sheepy. Sheepy Magna and Sheepy Parva have a close relationship with their River Sence setting, being located just above the floodplain. The surroundings provide a rural setting for these former agricultural villages. To the south of Sheepy Magna there is a large area of planned enclosure containing ridge and furrow which extends eastwards to the edge of Sibson.	<b>M-H</b>

## 2. SHEEPY MAGNA & SURROUNDINGS (NORTH OF B5000)

Visual character	The area is viewed from, and has long views to, surrounding higher ground for example the Twycross/Orton ridge. Generally there are wide, long views across the agricultural landscape punctuated by hedgelines and mature hedgerow trees plus church towers and spires which signal the presence of villages.	<b>H</b>
Perceptual qualities	The area is a rural, agricultural landscape, albeit with areas of expanded/modern settlement within the villages and traffic on the rural roads and lanes. Areas of little light pollution and tranquillity persist away from the villages and roads.	<b>M-H</b>
Historic character	A historic character prevails within the dispersed villages plus field patterns including areas of ridge and furrow close to settlements.	<b>M</b>

### Evaluation of criteria and landscape sensitivity judgement

The assessment area is considered to have overall **medium-high** sensitivity to development. There may be some capacity (**medium** sensitivity) for further small scale extension to existing villages, providing these are sensitively designed and avoid features of environmental interest. Sensitivity to small scale commercial development is considered to be **medium-high**; there may be some limited capacity if well-sited due to the large scale of the landscape and existing larger development types in the form of modern farm units, however sensitivity to larger scale B8 development is considered **high** due to the rural character of the area.

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
	L	L-M	M	M-H	H
Residential housing 2-3 stories	L	L-M	M	M-H	H
Commercial development Small scale (B1/ B2)	L	L-M	M	M-H	H
Commercial development Large scale (B8)	L	L-M	M	M-H	H

### Key sensitivities and values

- Historic field pattern, including smaller fields around settlement, piecemeal reorganised enclosures and in particular areas of ridge and furrow which persists around settlements.
- The strong rural character and lack of intrusion with areas of relative tranquillity.
- Dispersed pattern of settlement and distinct historic character and vernacular of the villages.
- The extensive views and open character, with church towers and spires forming landmarks in a rural setting.
- Remnant areas of species-rich grassland including grass verges.

### Guidance

Any new development should:

- Be well related to the existing villages in terms of size, scale, form and vernacular.

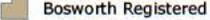
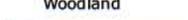
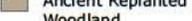
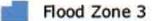
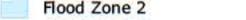


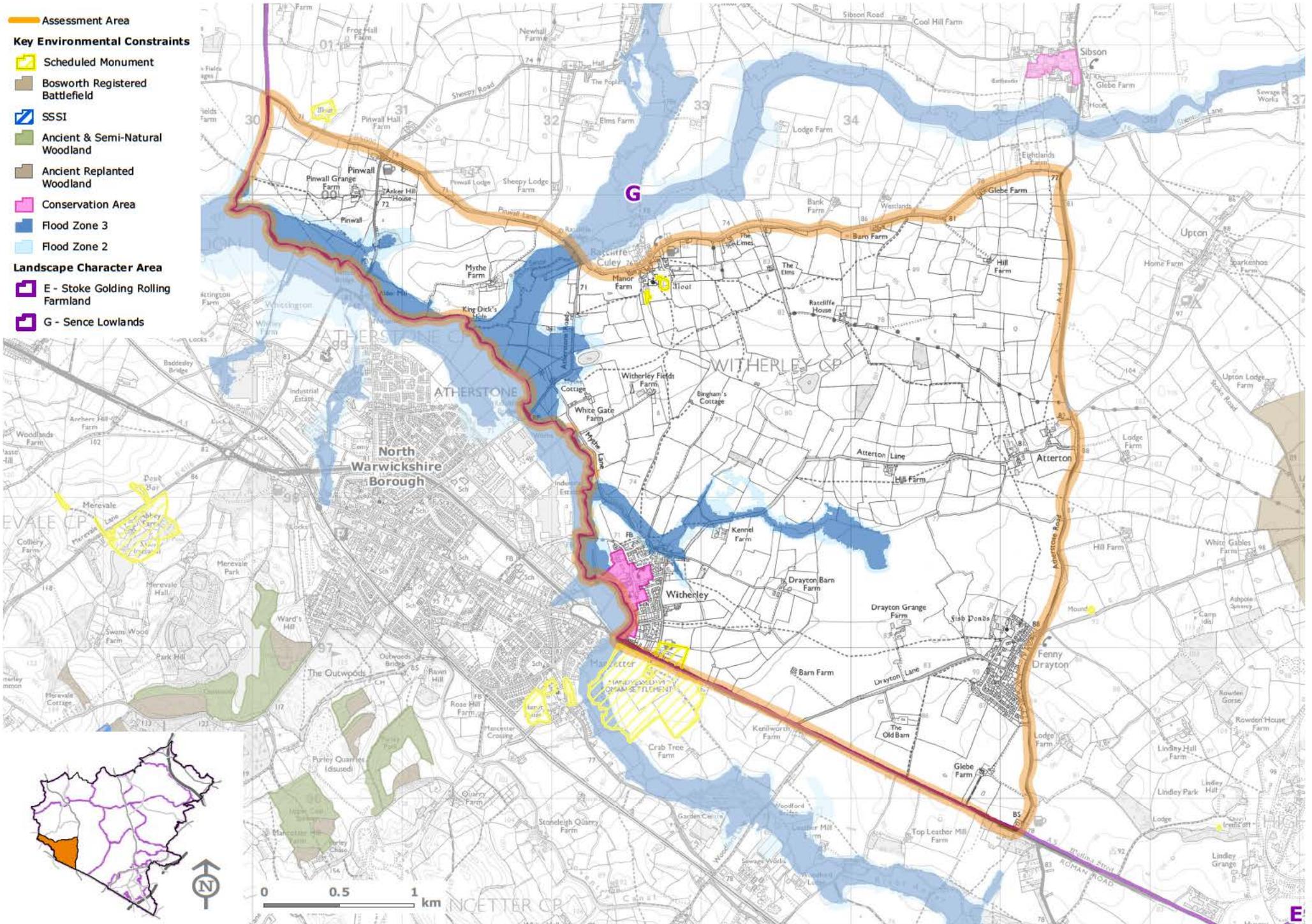
## **2. SHEEPY MAGNA & SURROUNDINGS (NORTH OF B5000)**

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- Seek to conserve areas of historic and biodiversity interest including the areas of ridge and furrow and floodplain grazing which persist around villages.
- Avoid development on the floodplain of the Sence and tributaries.
- Include appropriate measures, including tree planting and conservation of field boundaries to help integrate development into the rural landscape.

# Sensitivity Area 03: Witherley & Surrounds (south of B5000)

-  Assessment Area
- Key Environmental Constraints**
-  Scheduled Monument
-  Bosworth Registered Battlefield
-  SSSI
-  Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland
-  Ancient Replanted Woodland
-  Conservation Area
-  Flood Zone 3
-  Flood Zone 2
- Landscape Character Area**
-  E - Stoke Golding Rolling Farmland
-  G - Sence Lowlands



### 3. WITHERLEY AND SURROUNDINGS (SOUTH OF B5000)

#### Summary

The sensitivity assessment area is located in Landscape Character Area G: Sence Lowlands. It covers roughly one quarter of the character area (1260.4 hectares) to the west of the A444, south of the B5000 and north of Atherstone and the A5 which are at the district boundary. It is a rural lowland vale landscape with limited settlements apart from the large expanded villages of Fenny Drayton and Witherley. There are some urban edge influences close to Atherstone (North Warwickshire Borough).

#### Representative photographs



#### Description by evaluation criteria

Criteria	Description and indication of sensitivity	Rating
Physical character	A flat to gently rolling lowland vale landscape and shallow tributary valley draining to the River Anker (in adjacent District). Predominantly arable, with some pasture. The pattern is mainly one of planned and reorganised piecemeal enclosures, plus some very large post war fields with sparse woodland cover. Minor streams and tributaries are a feature.	<b>L-M</b>
Settlement form & edge	Fenny Drayton and Witherley are larger villages, close to the A5/A444, which have expanded out from their historic core to include modern residential areas with some exposed edges adjoining the rural landscape. Atherstone (in the adjacent North Warwickshire Borough area) has an area of industrial estates at the interface with Hinckley and Bosworth, with the River Sence and floodplain forming an effective limit to development northwards.	<b>L-M</b>
Settlement setting	The floodplain of the River Sence forms an effective boundary to Atherstone and limits extension of development northwards. A large area of ridge and furrow east of Witherley and north of Atherstone extends to Ratcliffe Culey along the River Sence. The areas which provide a rural setting to the settlements are particularly sensitive to change, including the setting of the Conservation Area of Witherley.	<b>M-H</b>
Visual character	The low lying, relatively flat landform allows for long views across the rural landscape punctuated by hedgerows, mature hedgerow trees. The spire of St Peter's Church at Witherley is a local landmark. The area	<b>H</b>

### 3. WITHERLEY AND SURROUNDINGS (SOUTH OF B5000)

	between Fenny Drayton and Witherley, is made up of large fields with an exposed and open character. The area forms part of the wider rural landscape valued for walking and cycling, therefore views from public rights of way are particularly sensitive.	
Perceptual qualities	The area is a rural, agricultural landscape, with areas of expanded/modern settlement at Fenny Drayton and Witherley. It is less tranquil than other parts of the wider character area (G) due to proximity to Atherstone and the A5 and a number of minor roads which link to Atherstone.	<b>M</b>
Historic character	The area retains a historic character including the cores of the settlements at Fenny Drayton and Witherley. The A5 follows a former Roman route (Watling Street) and a Roman villa and settlement complex is located adjacent to Witherley (Scheduled Monument). A large area of ridge and furrow is retained in the central part of the area, correlating roughly with the river floodplain. There are irregular field boundaries of piecemeal enclosure between Ratcliffe Culey, Sibson and Atterton.	<b>M-H</b>

#### Evaluation of criteria and landscape sensitivity judgement

The assessment area is considered to have overall **medium** sensitivity to development. There may be some capacity for further small scale extension to existing villages, providing these are sensitively designed and avoid features of environmental interest. Perceptually this area has some urbanising influences from large scale villages, and its proximity to existing development and the A5, and for this reason there is also considered to be medium sensitivity to small and larger scale commercial development.

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
Residential housing 2-3 stories	<b>L</b>	<b>L-M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M-H</b>	<b>H</b>
Commercial development Small scale (B1/ B2)	<b>L</b>	<b>L-M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M-H</b>	<b>H</b>
Commercial development Large scale (B8)	<b>L</b>	<b>L-M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M-H</b>	<b>H</b>

#### Key sensitivities and values

- Historic field pattern enclosures and in particular areas of ridge and furrow which persists around settlements and along the floodplain.
- The extensive views and open character, with church towers and spires forming landmarks in a rural setting.
- Rural character of areas without significant intrusions or light pollution.
- Dispersed, rural settlement pattern and rural lanes.
- Strong character of the historic village cores of Witherley and Fenny Drayton, with distinctive and attractive local vernacular of red brick with slate or clay tile roofs and historic buildings of

### 3. WITHERLEY AND SURROUNDINGS (SOUTH OF B5000)

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local interest.

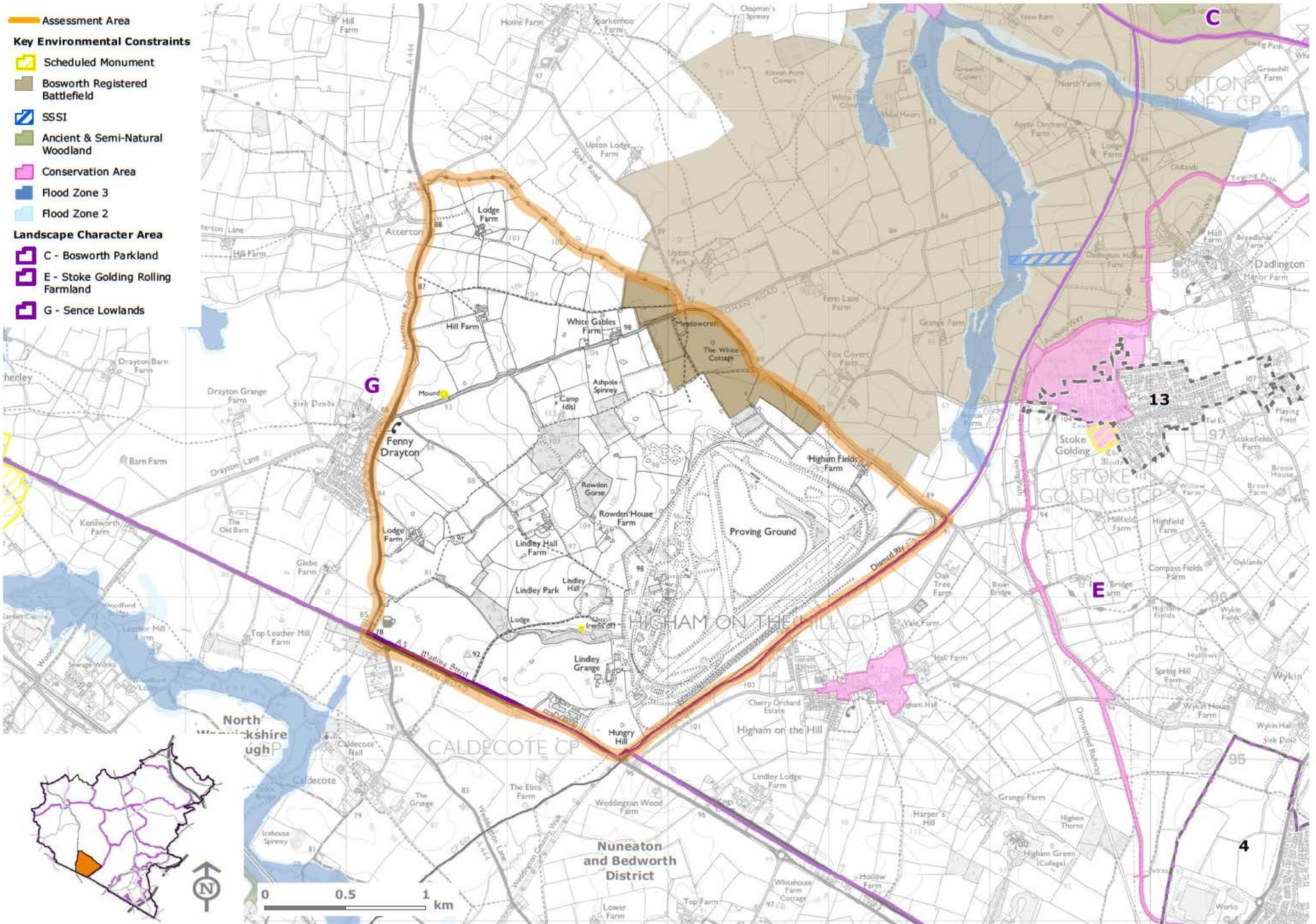
- Recreational value of the area for walking and cycling.
- Historic value associated with the Roman settlement of Manduessedum, and Scheduled Monuments south of Ratcliffe Culey.

#### Guidance

Any new development should:

- Seek to avoid development on the floodplain of the Sence and tributaries.
- Include appropriate edge and boundary treatments to ensure any development is well integrated into the rural landscape including conservation/reinforcement of the field boundary network and tree planting where appropriate.
- Retain hedgerows and wide grass verges where possible and take opportunities to enhance biodiversity where possible.
- Ensure any new development is sensitively sited, seeking to avoid significantly affecting areas of strong rurality or tranquillity and rural character, and ensure new development responds sensitively to the rural context.
- Respect and enhance the strong character of the villages, ensuring new development complements existing context with regards to scale, form, materials and boundary features.
- Seek to conserve the open rural views where possible, paying particular regard to views to church spires and towers in their rural setting.
- New larger scale development associated with existing developed areas should favour low heights and dark or muted colours, with associated screening measures.

-  Assessment Area
- Key Environmental Constraints**
-  Scheduled Monument
-  Bosworth Registered Battlefield
-  SSSI
-  Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland
-  Conservation Area
-  Flood Zone 3
-  Flood Zone 2
- Landscape Character Area**
-  C - Bosworth Parkland
-  E - Stoke Golding Rolling Farmland
-  G - Sence Lowlands



## 4. MIRA

### Summary

This assessment area is located in Landscape Character Area G: Fen Lanes. It comprises an area of 740.3 hectares including the existing Mira Technology Park and is adjacent to Landscape Character Area E: Stoke Golding Rolling Farmland, at Higham on the Hill. The A5 forms the southern boundary of the area as well as the borough boundary of Hinckley and Bosworth, and the A444 forms the western boundary of the assessment area.

Mira Technology Park lies within the assessment area. It is an existing Employment Site and an Enterprise Zone for businesses operating in the transport research and development sector. A masterplan providing the vision for current and future development within the site was approved in 2011. Development has occurred at the site continually over the last 10 or more years and the site is currently 353 hectares. Planning applications for plots within the overall masterplan are continuing to come forward. The masterplan includes a vision for a state of the art engineering centre which is sensitively integrated into the surrounding landscape. Proposed development is focussed to the south and west of the existing vehicle proving ground and technology park, with proposed development located along the A5 up to the public footpath, and spreading northwards up to the edge of Lindley Park and Rowden Gorse/ Ashpole Spinney.

### Representative photographs



### Description by evaluation criteria

Criteria	Description and indication of sensitivity	Rating
Physical character	Landform is flat to gently undulating and low lying. Key features in the area include the vehicle proving ground and MIRA technology park, agricultural fields and large blocks of woodland including Ashpole Spinney, Lindley Wood and Rowden Gorse as well as spinneys surrounding Lindley Park. There are a number of scattered farms and fields bounded by low hedgerows and trees and water features, typical of the wider character of the area.	<b>L-M</b>
Settlement form & edge	The settlement pattern in the wider character area is rural, characterised by dispersed villages and scattered farmsteads. The sensitivity area occupies the landscape between the settlements of Fenny Drayton (west) and Higham on the Hill (east) and contains some scattered farms including Lodge Farm and Lindley Hall Farm. The existing development at Mira is well-integrated in the landscape. It is	<b>M</b>

## 4. MIRA

	not attached to an existing settlement and is currently distinctly separate from both Fenny Drayton and Higham on the Hill as a result of the vegetated railway line, the A444 and intervening land.	
Settlement setting	The assessment area contributes to the rural settings of Fenny Drayton and Higham on the Hill and provides separation between them. Although there is currently development at the Mira Technology Park it is well-screened and therefore the landscape currently retains a rural character. However, further development could affect the settings of these settlements and could contribute towards the loss of the perceived gap between them.	<b>M</b>
Visual character	Due to the gentle undulations in landform and large woodland blocks parts of the assessment area are relatively visually enclosed evidenced by the well-integrated existing development at Mira Technology Park. Views towards the area from Higham on the Hill are well-screened by vegetation along the existing dismantled railway line. However, there are more open fields within the assessment area (particularly in the north and south of the area) which are extensively visible across the wider landscape.	<b>M</b>
Perceptual qualities	The assessment area retains a relatively rural character as a result of the dispersed pattern of settlement, open agricultural fields and rural roads in the surrounding area. However the A5 to the south of the assessment area, and existing development at MIRA technology park introduce modern elements and human influences.	<b>M</b>
Historic character	The assessment area lies adjacent to the designated Bosworth Battlefield and there are two Scheduled Monuments within the area: Bowl Barrow at Fenny Drayton and Remains of Chapel in Lindley Park. Lodge Farm and Hill Farm in the northern part of the area are listed buildings and there is evidence of former parkland at Lindley Park which provides a sense of time-depth. An area of piecemeal enclosure around Higham Fields Farm in the north-east of the area also provides a sense of time-depth.	<b>M-H</b>

### Evaluation of criteria and landscape sensitivity judgement

The assessment area is considered to have overall **medium** sensitivity to residential and small-scale commercial development due to its essentially rural character and the role it plays in the settings of surrounding villages despite existing development on the site. There are also a number of features of historic value and historic time-depth in and near to the assessment area. However, the flat to gently undulating landform and blocks of woodland provide opportunities for development to be accommodated within the landscape if sited and designed sensitively, although it would be more difficult to integrate larger scale commercial development which would therefore have **medium-high** sensitivity.

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
Residential housing 2-3 stories	<b>L</b>	<b>L-M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M-H</b>	<b>H</b>
Commercial development Small scale (B1/ B2)	<b>L</b>	<b>L-M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M-H</b>	<b>H</b>



## 4. MIRA

Commercial development Large scale (B8)	L	L-M	M	M-H	H
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### Key sensitivities and values

- Generally, rural character with a lack of significant intrusions or light pollution.
- Rural setting the area provides to Fenny Drayton and Higham on the Hill.
- Dispersed settlement pattern of small historic villages in the wider character area.
- The extensive views, flat and open character of parts of the assessment area, meaning that vertical features are likely to be visually prominent.
- Blocks of woodland, hedgerows and trees which screen existing development at the MIRA Technology Park.
- Historic value associated with the nearby nationally important Bosworth Battlefield, historic farmsteads and Scheduled Monuments as well as historic interest associated with the former parkland at Lindley Park.

### Guidance

Any new development should:

- Aim to be distinctly separate visually and in character, from nearby settlements.
- Seek to retain hedgerows, trees, woodlands and water features wherever possible.
- Seek opportunities to respect the rural character of the wider area particularly with regard to siting and design of any new development.
- New larger scale development associated with existing developed areas should favour low heights and muted colours where they are likely to be prominent in wider rural views.



## 5. HIGHAM ON THE HILL

### Summary

This assessment area is located in Landscape Character Area G: Sence Lowlands. It comprises an area of 315.0 hectares including the existing MIRA Technology Park and is adjacent to Landscape Character Area E: Stoke Golding Rolling Farmland, at Higham on the Hill. The A5 forms the southern boundary of the area and the borough boundary of Hinckley and Bosworth, and the A444 forms the western boundary.

Mira Technology Park extends over 335 hectares and is an automotive technology campus which has Enterprise Zone status. The site continues to expand and includes a vehicle proving ground, office buildings and workshop facilities.

### Representative photographs



### Description by evaluation criteria

Criteria	Description and indication of sensitivity	Rating
Physical character	The settlement of Higham on the Hill is located on a distinct hilltop and is surrounded by gently undulating landscape. Hilltop villages with rural settings are characteristic of the wider character area. Red brick cottages provide human scale features and are typical of the character of the area, with the surrounding landscape a regular pattern of agricultural fields bounded by hedgerows.	<b>M</b>
Settlement form & edge	Higham on the Hill has a distinct hilltop form, closely related to the landform. Any new development that departs from this pattern would therefore be at odds with the settlement form.	<b>M</b>
Settlement setting	The landscape surrounding Higham on the Hill is important to its rural setting. The core of the village is designated a Conservation Area and rural views to the surrounding countryside are important to its rural, village character, including views towards Nuneaton, Atherstone, the Ashby Canal and Stoke Golding. The area also provides an important contribution towards the gap between Higham on the Hill, Hinckley and Stoke Golding.	<b>H</b>
Visual character	Due to its hilltop location the village is easily seen in views from the surrounding countryside, particularly in distant views although the	<b>M-H</b>

## 5. HIGHAM ON THE HILL

	historic core is generally screened by modern development or thick vegetation. Views to Higham Hall are particularly important. The church forms a prominent landmark in views from the surrounding landscape, and the view from the north-eastern corner of the village towards the church in Stoke Golding is also important.	
Perceptual qualities	Despite its proximity to Hinckley the area retains an essentially rural character and dispersed settlement pattern of isolated farms (e.g. Lindley Lodge Farm, Hall Farm, Vale Farm) outside the village of Higham on the Hill.	<b>M-H</b>
Historic character	Higham on the Hill is designated a Conservation Area and contains a number of listed buildings. Former farmhouses and landmark buildings of significant architectural importance contribute to the sense of place and provide historic time depth. The fields surrounding the settlement are typically planned enclosure with a lesser sense of time-depth although a characteristic of the wider landscape.	<b>M</b>

### Evaluation of criteria and landscape sensitivity judgement

The assessment area is considered to have overall **medium-high** sensitivity to residential and small scale commercial development, and **high** sensitivity to large scale commercial development. The area is particularly sensitive due to its role in providing a rural setting to Higham on the Hill and the rural character of the landscape despite its proximity to Hinckley. The prominent hilltop landform also means that any development is likely to be widely visible.

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
Residential housing 2-3 stories	L	L-M	M	M-H	H
Commercial development Small scale (B1/ B2)	L	L-M	M	M-H	H
Commercial development Large scale (B8)	L	L-M	M	M-H	H

### Key sensitivities and values

- The rural character of the landscape, despite its proximity to urban areas.
- Low hedgerows and mature trees are important elements because of the relatively low level of woodland in the landscape.
- Distinctive character and local vernacular of Higham on the Hill and its Conservation Area including red brick and traditional buildings with links to the agricultural history of the settlements. Former farmhouses and landmark buildings of significant architectural importance contribute to the sense of place and provide historic time depth.
- Uncluttered rural views of church spires (including Higham on the Hill and the church in Stoke Golding) are sensitive to change and are valued for the sense of local distinctiveness they provide.

## 5. HIGHAM ON THE HILL

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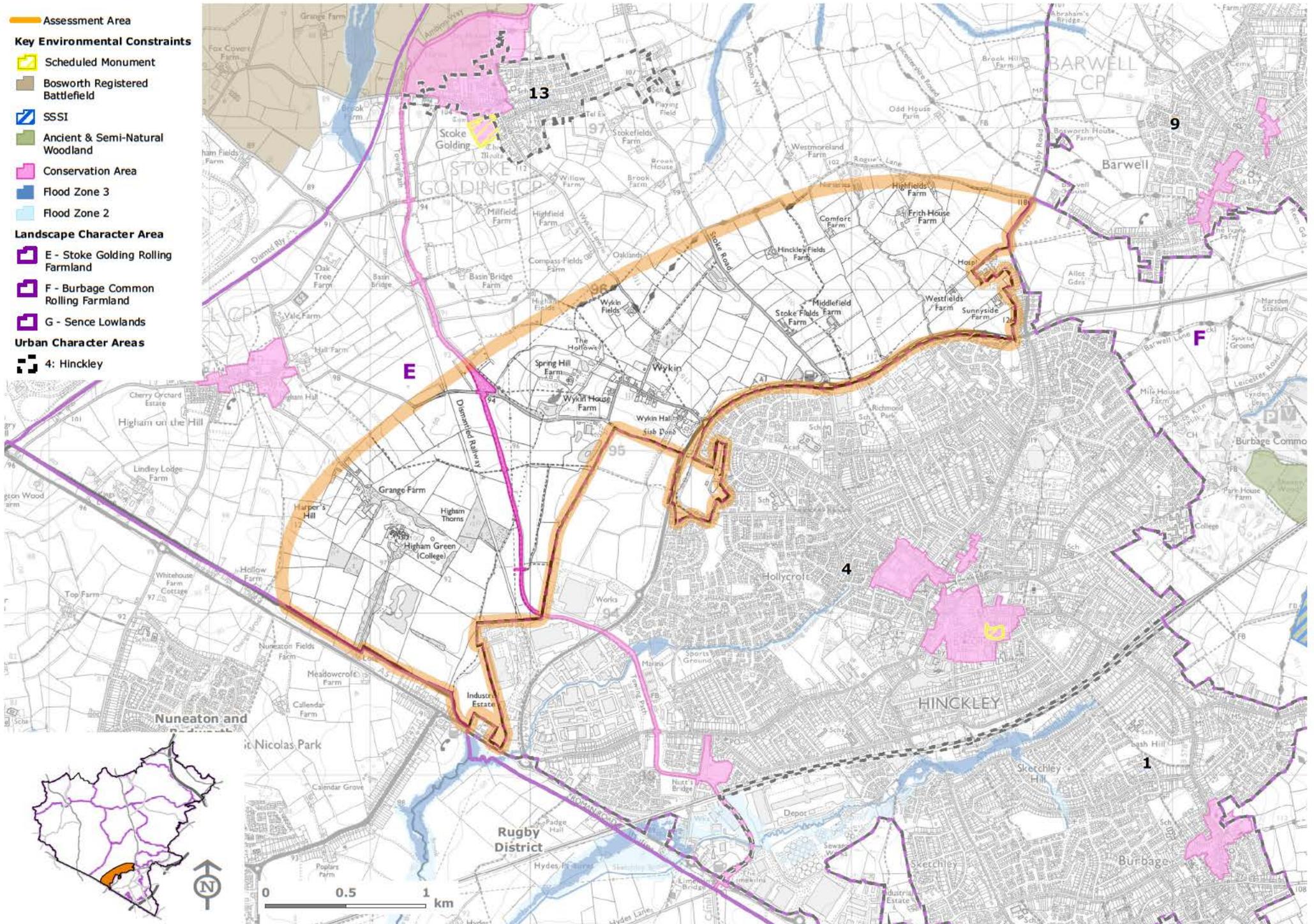
### Guidance

Any new development should:

- Seek to be sensitively sited using existing landform and vegetation to aid integration into the landscape.
- Seek to maintain the rural character of the landscape. Ensure development is sensitively designed in the context of the rural landscape.
- Seek to maintain views to church spires and towers e.g. on the wooded skyline at Stoke Golding and Higham on the Hill, and maintain/ enhance views to the surrounding countryside where possible.
- Take opportunities to improve the integration of existing settlement edges where possible, such as the recent development north of Higham on the Hill.

# Sensitivity Area 06: Hinckley West & North

-  Assessment Area
- Key Environmental Constraints**
-  Scheduled Monument
-  Bosworth Registered Battlefield
-  SSSI
-  Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland
-  Conservation Area
-  Flood Zone 3
-  Flood Zone 2
- Landscape Character Area**
-  E - Stoke Golding Rolling Farmland
-  F - Burbage Common Rolling Farmland
-  G - Sence Lowlands
- Urban Character Areas**
-  4: Hinckley



## 6. HINCKLEY WEST AND NORTH

### Summary

This assessment area is located in LCA E: Stoke Golding Rolling Farmland along the northern and western edge of Hinckley comprising the rural area beyond the A47 perimeter road. It covers 578.8 hectares of small to medium scale rectilinear fields divided by low hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees. A number of farms and dwellings are located throughout the landscape. Field ponds are also common around the farms, the River Tweed runs from south to north in the eastern part of the area and the Ashby de la Zouch Canal is to the west.

### Representative photographs



### Description by evaluation criteria

Criteria	Description and indication of sensitivity	Rating
Physical character	An undulating landform of gentle valleys that slope from the settlement edge of Hinckley towards the Tweed River and its associated tributaries. The area is characterised by small to medium mixed arable and pasture farmland arranged in a rectilinear field pattern divided by low hedgerows and frequent mature hedgerow trees. Semi-natural tree cover defines the course of the River Tweed.	<b>M-H</b>
Settlement form & edge	Hinckley is the main urban area in the borough and is located on a ridge of higher ground. The A47 runs along the northern edge of Hinckley wrapping around to the west and is generally well-treed, in cutting for some of its route. This creates a strong distinction and boundary between the assessment area and the settlement.	<b>M-H</b>
Settlement setting	The landscape within the assessment area has a strong rural character with low hedgerows and hedgerow trees providing unifying features. Low hedgerows and grass verges characterise the rural lanes which connect Hinckley to outlying rural settlements.  The area also forms approximately half of the open landscape between Hinckley and Stoke Golding and so plays a role in maintaining the separation and rural gap between these settlements.	<b>H</b>
Visual character	The low hedgerows forming the field boundaries result in long open views across the vast expanse of farmland continuing to the north and	<b>M-H</b>

## 6. HINCKLEY WEST AND NORTH

	<p>west with mature hedgerow trees punctuating an uninterrupted flow of agricultural fields. Local high points allow for greater intervisibility with the surrounding landscape.</p> <p>Hinckley occupies an elevated position to the south with some limited views of buildings available from the landscape in this area. Tall hedgerows and tree planting along the A47 screen most close views of the settlement.</p>	
Perceptual qualities	The area is sparsely settled with only isolated farms and rural dwellings in this agricultural landscape. Despite its proximity to the built up area of Hinckley, the area has a relative sense of remoteness, tranquil character with little light pollution.	<b>M-H</b>
Historic character	<p>The Ashby Canal runs north-south through the landscape and is designated as a Conservation Area. Wykin Hall Farmhouse which is Grade II listed and Wykin Hall is identified as a late post-medieval country house within the HLC, as too is Higham Green, which are characterised by large attractive mansions in designed landscapes.</p> <p>The HLC identifies the majority of the farmland in the area as large expanses of post medieval piecemeal and planned enclosure. The piecemeal enclosure is recognised by its small to medium sized irregular fields with at least two s-curved or dog legged boundaries, whilst the planned enclosure demonstrates small or large field with geometric boundaries.</p>	<b>M</b>

### Evaluation of criteria and landscape sensitivity judgement

The assessment area is considered to have overall **medium-high** sensitivity to residential and small scale commercial development due to the strong rural and tranquil character, its strong separation from the settlement edge of Hinckley by the well-treed A47 and the intervisibility with the wider countryside with long views over low hedgerows across undulating farmland. It provides an attractive agricultural setting to the settlement and contributes to the open land between Hinckley and Stoke Golding. Some historic features also still remain in the landscape and contribute to the character of the area.

Generally, development in the area would have a poor relationship with the settlement however, there are smaller areas particularly in the south that have a stronger relationship with the settlement, are more visually contained and are influenced by adjacent urban development.

The landscape is considered to have overall **high** sensitivity to large scale commercial development as development is likely to result in the loss of historic field boundaries which would impact on the rural character.

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
Residential housing 2-3 stories (C3)	L	L-M	M	M-H	H
Commercial development Small scale (B1/ B2)	L	L-M	M	M-H	H
Commercial development Large scale (B8)	L	L-M	M	M-H	H



## 6. HINCKLEY WEST AND NORTH

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### Key sensitivities and values

- The rural and sparsely settled character of the landscape with a relative sense of tranquillity.
- Low hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees define historic field patterns and form part of the overall ecological network.
- The remaining historic country houses and associated designed landscape which create a sense of historic time depth and visual amenity.
- The open countryside that forms much of the separation between the settlements of Hinckley and Stoke Golding.
- The character of the rural lanes.
- The River Tweed and local tributaries and associated habitat values.
- The Ashby de la Zouch Canal – historic character and role as part of the Green infrastructure network.
- The uninterrupted views over undulating farmland which contribute to the high scenic quality and attractive setting to Hinckley.

### Guidance

Any new development should:

- Seek opportunities to maintain the rural character of the landscape and, where possible, conserve rural views and the setting of Hinckley, avoiding change that would disrupt the rural character.
- Aim for successful integration of potential new development in the landscape through sensitive design and siting, including use of appropriate materials and landscape mitigation to enhance sense of place.
- Seek to retain the pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and encourage the use of traditional Midlands-style hedgelaying for management.
- Promote opportunities to protect areas of semi-natural vegetation and encourage tree planting to replace mature/veteran trees in hedgerows as they begin to deplete.
- Seek to conserve and manage the River Tweed corridor and associated tributaries.
- Aim to conserve the character of the rural lanes which extend through this area linking to Hinckley.
- Seek to maintain and enhance historic assets and their surrounding environment including restoration and management of the parkland.
- Consider opportunities to create and promote an integrated green infrastructure network around the Hinckley urban edge.



## 7. SKETCHLEY

### Summary

This area is located between the urban extents of Hinckley and Burbage settlements and covers some 72.6 hectares extending south to the A5. It includes Sketchley Grange Hotel and a sewage works within the existing established settlement edge to the west, and an area within LCA F: Burbage Common Rolling Farmland comprising well-defined, small rectilinear fields outside the settlement edge to the east and new areas of deciduous woodland and meadow grassland abutting residential development. A new residential development is in the process of being built along the A5 to the south of Sketchley House.

### Representative photographs



### Description by evaluation criteria

Criteria	Description and indication of sensitivity	Rating
Physical character	<p>The area is predominantly of small rectilinear pasture fields defined by hedgerows and post and wire fencing on a gently undulating landform. It is influenced by small streams that slope from north to south away from the adjacent settlement whilst the Ashby de la Zouch canal passes close to the western boundary.</p> <p>Semi-natural woodland and mature trees provide strong definition to the watercourses as they meander through the industrial estate and contrast with smaller specimens and low amenity planting around the hotel. An area of new deciduous woodland planting also occupies a relatively large area to the north east of the industrial estate.</p>	<b>L-M</b>
Settlement form & edge	<p>The area is largely contained by existing development which falls within the established settlement boundary. This includes large scale warehouse development to the west and the back gardens of residential development to the east. The settlement of Sketchley has effectively merged with the urban areas of Hinckley and Burbage although historic farm buildings and paddocks still remain within the historic core. The A5 forms a strong southern boundary separating this area from the wider rural landscape so that much of this area is essentially perceived as part of the existing settlement.</p>	<b>L</b>

## 7. SKETCHLEY

Settlement setting	The hotel and sewage works, together with the adjacent industrial estate restricts the positive contribution that the site makes to the settlement setting. The area of well-defined pasture fields does however contribute to the rural setting to some degree, for example it includes footpaths which connect to the rural area. The A5 forms an effective boundary for the urban area separating it from the wider rural landscape.	<b>L-M</b>
Visual character	Tree planting along the A5 provides strong visual containment from the wider landscape to south. New planting associated with the development around the industrial estate helps to soften the built edge although the settlements of Hinckley and Burbage are situated on higher ground which creates a developed backdrop in short views across pasture fields within the area.	<b>L</b>
Perceptual qualities	The industrial estate, sewage works and associated infrastructure have strong urbanising influences over the area with the usual flow of traffic in and around the area including heavy goods vehicles as well as noise intrusion from the A5 creating a busy landscape.  The fields in the east retain some rurality, particularly around Sketchley Grange Hotel, where well-treed field boundaries combine with mature specimens within the field to create a distinctive local landscape from the rest of the area.	<b>L-M</b>
Historic character	The A5 (Watling Street) along the southern boundary is a major Roman Road. The HLC identifies Sketchley House as a Country House which is well-contained by mature trees. It retains a parkland character with mature specimen trees scattered within the surrounding pasture field.	<b>L</b>

### Evaluation of criteria and landscape sensitivity judgement

The assessment area is considered to have an overall **low** sensitivity to residential development due to the strong relationship it has with the settlement edge with the back gardens of adjacent properties backing on to the eastern area. It has strong visual containment and also fits largely within the settlement form with existing development in and around the area to the north, east and west.

The landscape is considered to have overall **medium** sensitivity to further commercial development because the existing commercial development in the area has some visual containment from tree planting, while new development to the east would be likely to be more exposed on sloping land. The undeveloped fields in the east are smaller scale and have a greater relationship with the adjacent residential development and are also located further away from the major infrastructure associated with the industrial estate and hence have higher sensitivities.

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
Residential housing 2-3 stories (C3)	<b>L</b>	<b>L-M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M-H</b>	<b>H</b>
Commercial development Small scale (B1/B2)	<b>L</b>	<b>L-M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M-H</b>	<b>H</b>
Commercial development Large scale (B8)	<b>L</b>	<b>L-M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M-H</b>	<b>H</b>

## 7. SKETCHLEY

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### Key sensitivities and values

- Hedgerows with some mature hedgerow trees to field boundaries forming part of the overall ecological network.
- Small streams defined by woodland and tree planting providing 'green fingers' through large scale development and connecting with the wider ecological network.
- The Ashby de la Zouch Canal as a historic asset (Conservation Area) and role as Green Infrastructure providing a connected recreational network.
- Historic paddocks and farm buildings in and around the historic core of Sketchley.
- Semi-natural woodland planting at the centre of the industrial estate provides some visual containment and softens views of built development.

### Guidance

Any new development should:

- Plan for successful integration in the landscape through sensitive design and siting, including use of appropriate materials and landscape mitigation to enhance sense of place.
- Seek to retain the pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and incorporate further buffer planting to the A5 and A41 transport corridors.
- Seek opportunities to maintain and enhance the network of rights of way and consider opportunities to create and promote an integrated green infrastructure network around the Burbage and Hinckley urban edge, including along the Ashby de la Zouch Canal corridor.
- Conserve and enhance the historic character of the Canal and its use for recreational boating.
- Protect localised areas of semi natural woodland and consider opportunities for further woodland creation around built edges and the A5.