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Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

The sensitivity of areas of pressure

Final Report

Prepared by LUC

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INTRODUCTION

1) INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT

- 1.1 Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council commissioned LUC in October 2016 to review and update the existing landscape character evidence base, and produce an updated landscape character assessment and landscape sensitivity assessment. The landscape character assessment is presented as a separate report and should be read as context to this landscape sensitivity assessment.
- 1.2 This landscape sensitivity assessment is intended to provide context for policies and proposals within the emerging Local Plan, in particular in relation to built development (both housing and commercial). It is at a landscape character area scale and therefore is intended to provide a general overview of comparative landscape sensitivity around the key settlements based on landscape character. The information within each assessment can be used to identify key sensitivities in each assessment area, and to achieve best integration of built development in each area. It is too broad a scale to make judgements on the appropriateness of specific developments on individual sites (and does not consider specific development proposals where these might exist), but can provide the context for more detailed studies of individual sites.

HOW TO ASSESS SPECIFIC SITES

- 1.3 This assessment considers sensitivity of relatively broad areas to the 'principle' of development. As well as providing an overall indication of relative landscape sensitivity of different areas, it provides guidance about what sort of locations might be most appropriate for development. This information provides useful context for a more detailed assessment of specific site options. The following questions provide a structure for appraising a specific site within each area:

Which assessment area does the site lie in and what is the sensitivity level for the assessment area?



Are there any indications of which areas would have higher or lower sensitivity and how does the site fit with this?



Would development on the site affect any of the 'key sensitivities'?



Would development on the site be in line with the 'guidance' provided for the area?



How should the development respond to the sensitivities highlighted?

INTRODUCTION

STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.4 This report comprises:
- **Section 1** (this section) which sets out an introduction and background;
 - **Section 2** which presents the methodology; and
 - **Section 3** which presents the results.
- 1.5 This report is supported by the following appendices:
- **Appendix 1** provides a glossary of terms.

METHODOLOGY

2) METHODOLOGY

IDENTIFYING THE AREAS FOR ASSESSMENT

- 2.1 A list of key areas for assessment was provided by Hinckley and Bosworth Council, based on existing and future pressures for development in the borough. This resulted in the following areas of pressure focus the assessment:
- Orton on the Hill to Twycross
 - Sheepy Magna & surroundings (north of B5000)
 - Witherley & surroundings (south of B5000)
 - Mira & surroundings
 - Higham on the Hill
 - Hinckley west & north
 - Sketchley
 - Burbage south and east
 - Land south of M69
 - Earl Shilton north and Barwell west
 - Earl Shilton east
 - Desford
 - Ratby
 - Markfield
 - Bosworth Battlefield
- 2.2 The assessment areas are shown in **Figure 2.2** and in more detail at the beginning of each assessment.

TYPES OF DEVELOPMENT TO BE CONSIDERED

- 2.3 This assessment considers sensitivity to the most likely type of development to come forward in Hinckley and Bosworth, that is:
- Residential development – defined as 2/3 storey properties;
 - Commercial development (small scale) – defined as small-scale office, light industry or small sheds (B1/B2); and
 - Commercial development (large scale) – defined as large scale distribution warehouses and open air storage (B8).
- 2.4 The assessment considers sensitivity to the 'principle' of these development types, without knowing the specific size or location of potential development. Sensitivity ratings relate to field-sized extensions rather than single houses and it should be noted that larger scale development is likely to have a higher sensitivity in landscape terms. Therefore the sensitivity score can only be an overall indication of relative landscape sensitivity. Sensitivity often varies across the area and the evaluation/ landscape sensitivity judgement sections give an indication of higher or lower sensitivity areas.

APPROACH TO ASSESSING SENSITIVITY

- 2.5 There is currently no published methodology for evaluating the landscape sensitivity of different types of landscape to development. However, the *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity*

METHODOLOGY

(Scottish Natural Heritage and the former Countryside Agency, 2002) is a discussion paper on landscape sensitivity and capacity and has informed LUC's approaches over the years. The methodology used in this study builds on LUC's considerable experience from previous and on-going studies of a similar nature.

- 2.6 Landscape sensitivity is a measure of the resilience of the landscape to change. *Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Sensitivity and Capacity* defines landscape sensitivity to a specific type of change or development as follows:

'It should be defined in terms of the interactions between the landscape itself, the way that it is perceived and the particular nature of the type of change or development in question.'

- 2.7 In this study the following definition of landscape sensitivity has been used:

Landscape sensitivity is the extent to which the character of the landscape or characteristics of the landscape are susceptible to change as a result of introducing a particular type of development, in principle.

- 2.8 Landscape sensitivity in this study is a relative measurement of the extent to which the character of the landscape is likely to change as a result of proposed development within it.
- 2.9 For example, a higher sensitivity area would likely result in greater adverse impacts on landscape features and character while a lower sensitivity site would likely be more able to accommodate that change without such adverse effects. However, there are always cases where good development can be sensitively accommodated into high sensitivity landscapes, and cases where poor development will result in adverse impacts even in low sensitivity landscapes. The guidance provides information as to how to minimise adverse effects.
- 2.10 It should be noted that the term 'sensitivity' in this study is equivalent to term 'susceptibility' as defined in the Landscape Institute and IEMA's 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (Third Edition).
- 2.11 Landscape and visual sensitivity has been assessed for each 'assessment area' with reference to six criteria, set out in **Table 2.1** overleaf.

Table 2.1: Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Assessment Criteria

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Assessment Criteria				
Physical character				
This considers the shape and scale of the landform, landscape pattern and landscape elements in relation to the scale of potential development. It also considers the presence of landscape features if they are important to landscape character (i.e. the representation of elements which are key characteristics or valued features, with reference to the Landscape Character Assessment) because these would potentially be liable to loss.				
Lower sensitivity		→	Higher sensitivity	
<i>Eg the landscape has smooth, gently undulating or featureless landform; the area has fewer landscape features that are characteristic or valued.</i>		<i>Eg the landscape has an undulating landform and some distinct landform features within it; the area has some landscape features that are characteristic or valued.</i>		<i>Eg the landscapes has dramatic landforms or distinct landform features that contribute positively to landscape character; the area has a high density of landscape features that are characteristic or valued.</i>
Settlement form and edge				
This considers the overall settlement form and character of the settlement edge and considers whether development in the assessment area would be in accordance with the general settlement form/ pattern, and how it might affect the existing settlement edge.				
Lower sensitivity		→	Higher sensitivity	
<i>Eg development in the assessment area would have a good relationship with the existing settlement form/ pattern, and could provide the opportunity to improve an existing settlement edge.</i>		<i>Eg development in the assessment area may be slightly at odds with the settlement form/ pattern, and may adversely affect the existing edge to some extent.</i>		<i>Eg Development in the assessment area would have a poor relationship with the existing settlement form/ pattern, and would adversely affect an existing settlement edge (the settlement edge may be historic or distinctive and have an important relationship to the adjacent countryside). The area may provide an important separation between adjacent settlements.</i>

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Assessment Criteria

Settlement setting

This considers the extent to which the assessment area contributes to the identity and distinctiveness of a settlement, by way of its character and/or scenic quality, for example by providing an attractive backdrop/ setting to the settlement, or playing an important part in views from a settlement. This also considers the extent to which the area contributes to a perceived gap between settlements (the loss of which would increase coalescence).

Lower sensitivity



Higher sensitivity

Eg the area does not contribute positively to the setting of the settlement or play a separation role.

Eg the area provides some contribution to the setting of the settlement by providing, or plays some part in views from the settlement, or play a role in the perception of a gap between settlements.

Eg the area provides an important setting to the settlement by providing an attractive backdrop/ setting to the settlement, or playing an important part in views from the settlement, or an area which plays an important part in the perception of a gap between settlements.

Visual character

This considers the visual prominence of the assessment area, reflecting the extent of openness or enclosure in the landscape (due to landform or land cover), and the degree of intervisibility with the surrounding landscape (i.e. the extent to which potential development would be visible). It also considers the skyline character of the area including whether it forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline.

Lower sensitivity



Higher sensitivity

Eg the area is enclosed/ visually contained and/or has a low degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes, and the area does not form a visually distinctive or important undeveloped skyline

Eg the area is semi-enclosed or has some enclosed and some open areas. It is likely to have some inter-visibility with surrounding landscapes, and may have some visually distinctive or undeveloped skylines within the area.

Eg the area is open and/ or has a high degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes, and/ or the area forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Assessment Criteria

Perceptual qualities

This considers qualities such as rurality (traditional land uses with few modern, human influences), sense of remoteness or tranquillity. Consistently high scenic value, perceived naturalness, freedom from human activity/disturbance and 'dark skies' would all add to sensitivity in relation to this criterion.

Lower sensitivity



Higher sensitivity

Eg the area is significantly influenced by development/ human activity, where new development would not be out of character.

Eg A landscape with some sense of rurality, but with some modern elements and human influences.

Eg A tranquil or highly rural landscape, lacking strong intrusive elements. Dark skies and a high perceived degree of rurality/ naturalness with few modern human influences. High scenic value.

Historic character

This considers the extent to which the landscape has 'time-depth' (a sense of being an historic landscape, with reference to the Historic Landscape Characterisation) and/or the presence of heritage assets that are important to landscape character (i.e. Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, listed buildings or other features listed in the landscape character assessment such as ancient routeways and historic farmsteads).

Lower sensitivity



Higher sensitivity


Eg A landscape with relatively few historic features important to the character of the area and little time depth (i.e. large intensively farmed fields).


Eg A landscape with some visible historic features of importance to character, and a variety of time depths.

Eg A landscape with a high density of historic features important to the character of the area and great time depth (i.e. piecemeal enclosure with irregular boundaries, ridge and furrow)

Hinckley and Bosworth Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 2.2: Assessment Areas

 Hinckley and Bosworth District boundary

 Urban Character Area

1: Burbage

2: Desford

3: Groby

4: Hinckley

5: Markfield

6: Market Bosworth

7: Newbold Verdon

8: Ratby

9: Barwell

10: Earl Shilton

11: Bagworth

12: Barlestone

13: Stoke Golding

14: Thornton

 Landscape Character Area

A - Charnwood Forest Settled Forest Hills

B - Charnwood Fringe Settled Forest Hills

C - Bosworth Parkland

D - Newbold and Desford Rolling Farmland

E - Stoke Golding Rolling Farmland

F - Burbage Common Rolling Farmland


G - Sence Lowlands


H - Twycross Open Farmland


I - Gopsall Parkland

J - Barton Village Farmlands


Assessment Area


 01. Orton on the Hill to Twycross


 02. Sheepy Magna & Surroundings (north of B5000)


 03. Witherley & Surroundings (south of B5000)


 04. Mira


 05. Higham on the Hill


 06. Hinckley West & North


 07. Sketchley


 08. Burbage South and East


 09. Land south of M69

 10. Earl Shilton north and Barwell west

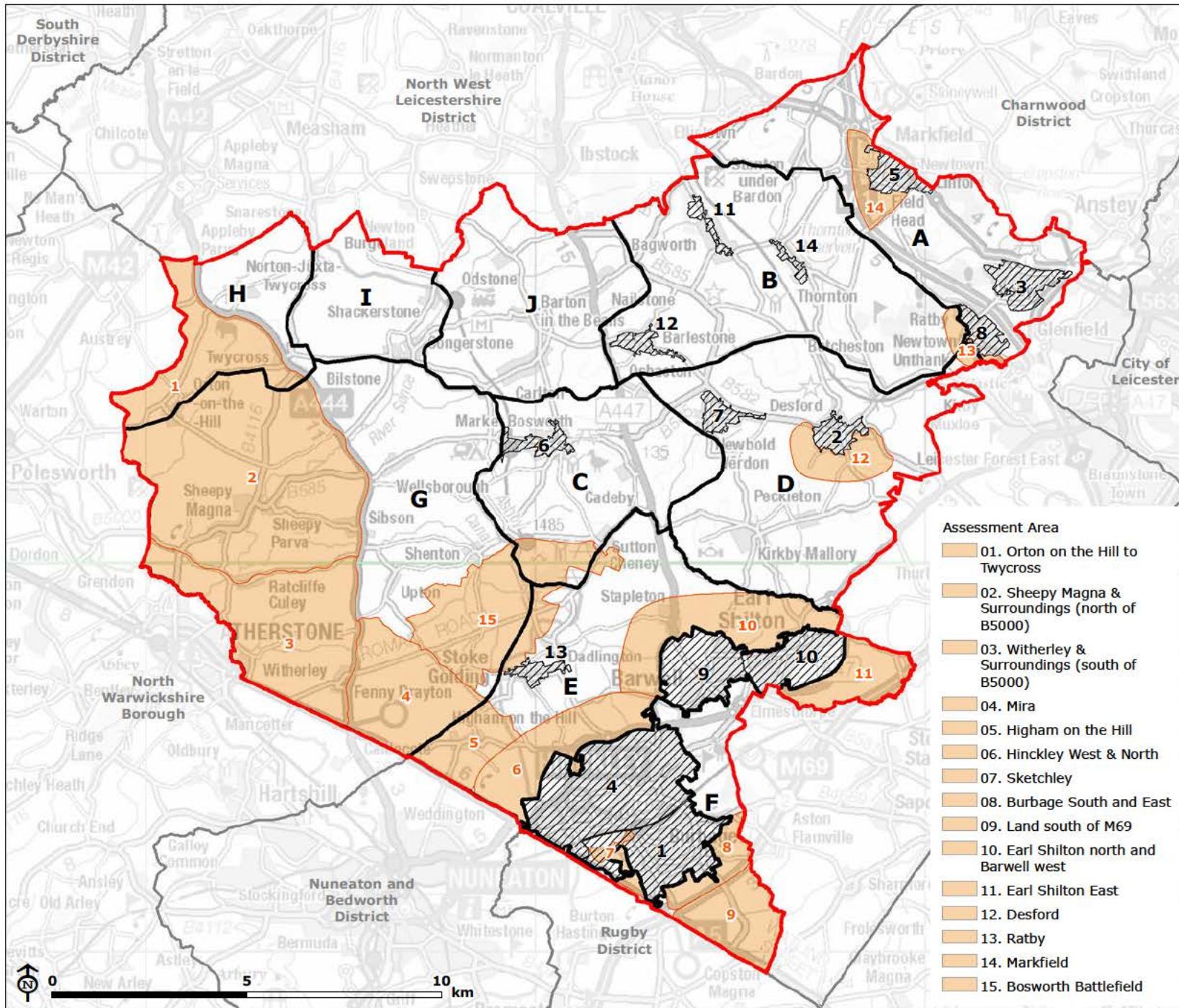
 11. Earl Shilton East

 12. Desford

 13. Ratby

 14. Markfield

 15. Bosworth Battlefield



Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

METHODOLOGY

SENSITIVITY JUDGEMENTS

- 2.12 A rating for landscape sensitivity has been provided in relation to each of the development types, according to the five point scale set out below:

Table 2.2: Sensitivity Rating Definitions

Sensitivity	Definition
High	The character and quality of the landscape or characteristics of the landscape are highly susceptible to being changed as a result of introducing the development type, in principle.
Medium-high	The character and quality of the landscape or characteristics of the landscape are moderate-highly susceptible to being changed as a result of introducing the development type, in principle
Medium	The character and quality of the landscape or characteristics of the landscape are moderately susceptible to being changed as a result of introducing the development type, in principle
Low-medium	The character and quality of the landscape or characteristics of the landscape are low-moderately susceptible to being changed as a result of introducing the development type, in principle
Low	The character and quality of the landscape or characteristics of the landscape have a low susceptibility to being changed as a result of introducing the development type, in principle

- 2.13 An area rated as having *high* sensitivity may do so because it has a relatively high sensitivity to a number of different criteria but it may also do so because of a particularly high sensitivity to just one criterion.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

- 2.14 Each assessment area starts with a map showing the area being assessed and its relationship with the landscape character areas and key environmental constraints. Following this is a short summary of the landscape character and a couple of representative photos from the area.
- 2.15 This is followed by an evaluation of the assessment area using the sensitivity assessment criteria set out in the methodology, and then an overall evaluation of sensitivity with reference to these criteria, providing an assessment rating on a five point scale. The assessment reports on overall sensitivity for the majority of the area, but also includes details of higher and lower sensitivity areas where this can be determined at this scale.
- 2.16 This is followed by key landscape sensitivities to development which aims to set out those features and characteristics that are most sensitive to built development, and this is followed by guidance for any potential development.

RESULTS

3) RESULTS

SUMMARY TABLE OF RESULTS

3.1 The table below gives a summary of the comparative landscape sensitivity of each assessment area for residential and commercial development. It should be noted that this reports on overall sensitivity for the majority of the area but does not include variation of sensitivity within the area.

Table 3.1 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Summary

Area No.	Area Name	Residential development	Commercial development (B1/B2)	Commercial development (B8)
1	Orton on the Hill to Twycross	M-H	M-H	H
2	Sheepy Magna & surroundings (north of B5000)	M	M-H	H
3	Witherley & surroundings (south of B5000)	M	M	M
4	MIRA & surroundings	M	M	M-H
5	Higham on the Hill	M-H	M-H	H
6	Hinckley west & north	M-H	M-H	H
7	Sketchley	L	M	M
8	Burbage south and east	L-M	M	M-H
9	Land south of M69	M-H	M-H	M-H
10	Earl Shilton north and Barwell west	M-H	M-H	H
11	Earl Shilton east	L-M	L-M	M
12	Desford	M	M-H	H
13	Ratby	M	M	H
14	Markfield	M	M-H	H
15	Bosworth Battlefield	H	H	H