

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

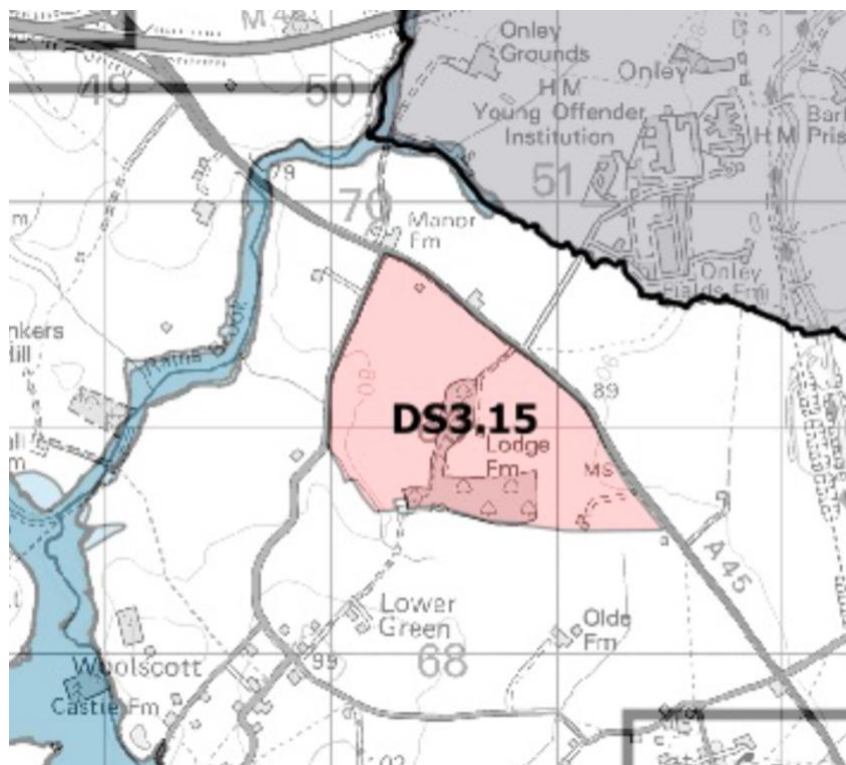
1.1.1. This strategy paper has been prepared by Define Planning & Design on behalf of St. Modwen Homes Ltd. to support representations to a Call for Sites consultation by Rugby Borough Council for a new settlement on Land at Lodge Farm. The purpose of this strategy paper is to address site-specific concerns raised by the previous Inspector to the site on landscape matters and to identify how these matters will be addressed through the emerging proposals.

1.1.2. The paper includes:

- A brief description of the planning background to the site.
- A summary of the site's baseline landscape and visual context.
- Detailed analysis of the landscape sensitivity of the site to a new garden village development.
- Commentary about how the emerging proposals have evolved to better address the Inspectors previous concerns.

1.2. Planning Background

1.2.1. Land at Lodge Farm was previously afforded a strategic allocation to provide a new settlement of 1,500 dwellings under Policy DS10 in the Publication Draft Local Plan, which was prepared by Rugby Borough Council (RBC) in September 2016 and submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination in Public in June 2017



Extract from Publication Draft (Consultation Version) Rural Proposals Map

1.2.2. At the Local Plan Examination of the Rugby Borough Local Plan the Inspector advised however that the Council's development strategy to deliver housing at Lodge Farm '*would not be soundly based*',¹ and therefore should be deleted. The Inspector's principal concern as addressed at paragraph 155 of his March 2019 Report was that there was not currently a need for the Lodge Farm allocation to meet the Plan's housing requirements with an excess supply in the Plan of 17%. Site specifically, the Inspector raised concerns regarding:

1. Its relatively poor accessibility by non-car modes.
2. Its harm to the intrinsic beauty and character of the countryside within the Leam and Rainsbrook Valleys.
3. The less than substantial harm to heritage assets.

1.2.3. The Land at Lodge Farm allocation was accordingly not included in the Local Plan that was adopted by RBC in June 2019.

1.2.4. Of relevance to the purposes of this paper, in noting the Inspector's concerns when examining the Publication Draft Local Plan (i.e. harm to the intrinsic beauty and character of the countryside within the Leam and Rainsbrook Valleys) the Inspector identified the following particular issues with regards the proposed allocation, which are considered within this paper.

1. The degree to which the proposals would contrast with the distinctive and historic settlement pattern of the Feldon Vale Farmlands.
2. The significance of the change to character that would result to the landscape of the site and surrounding area.
3. The degree to which the proposals would remain conspicuous and impose an urbanising effect on the valley, causing long-term damage to the essential character and fabric of the landscape.

1.3. Lodge Farm in 2024

1.3.1. The emerging proposals for the Land at Lodge Farm includes around 151 hectares more land than was previously promoted and seeks to deliver a new settlement of up to 2,680 dwellings, formed across two neighbourhoods north and south of the A45.

1.3.2. Appreciably greater in scale than the previous scheme, the emerging proposals are being developed in recognition of a future need for growth in Rugby Borough and seek to address the Inspector's previous concerns through:

- supporting greater internalisation of trips and increased potential to support improved connectivity to the settlements of Rugby and Daventry; and
- protecting more existing vegetation, introducing additional strategic planting and setting back development from the Rainsbrook Valley.

¹ INS/13 Letter from the Inspector to the Council following the stage two hearings.

- 1.3.3. More locally however the emerging proposals include within them also various measures envisaged to help better assimilate development into its context, which are described in greater detail within Section 4.

2. Baseline Conditions

2.1. The Site

- 2.1.1. The emerging Land at Lodge Farm site is located approximately 7km south of Rugby town centre and comprises around 256 hectares of arable and pastoral farmland and plantation woodland, to the north and south of the A45 trunk road.
- 2.1.2. Set within a broad vale landscape, the site adjoins the M45 motorway, Onley Grounds Equestrian complex and Onley Prison to its north; is crossed by several rights of way; and includes a few farm dwellings and an area of low-value plantation woodland in its south.
- 2.1.3. The site is located within Rugby Borough but borders the administrative boundary with Daventry District Council to its northeast.

2.2. Visibility

- 2.2.1. Forming part of a wide, vale landscape, the site is visible locally and in elevated views from several fringe areas within the surrounding landscape, notably from the edges of Woolscott and Willoughby; in eastward facing views from footpaths near to the Rains Brook; in occasional elevated views from the edge of Dunchurch; and from routes leading down from Barby Hill, Cleves Hill and Braunston Hill to the east.
- 2.2.2. Elevated views toward the site are typically seen in combination with development associated with the A45 trunk road, M45 motorway and Onley Prison.

2.3. Rugby Borough Council's Landscape Evidence

- 2.3.1. RBC's evidence on landscape matters is set out in their '*Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Rugby Sensitivity and Condition Study*' (April 2006), hereby referred to using its Local Plan examination reference 'LP/O34'.²
- 2.3.2. A comparatively short document, which looked in greater detail at the countryside around the urban fringe of Rugby, LP/O34 sub-divides the borough into various Landscape Description Units (LDUs) – discrete tracts of land with a distinct pattern of physical, biological and cultural attributes – which it subsequently grouped into Landscape Character Types (LCTs).
- 2.3.3. The LDU in which the Lodge Farm site is located, forms part of the Feldon Vale Farmlands LCT and covers a broad tract of land (approximately 10km x 10km in size), extending northward to the urban fringe of Rugby; westward to beyond

² RBC's evidence also included their '*Landscape Sensitivity Study*' (August 2016), which reviewed the landscape adjoining seven settlements within the borough (Local Plan examination ref. LP/O35); and their '*Rainsbrook Valley Landscape Sensitivity Study*' (January 2017), which reviewed the landscape around Hillmorton and Dunchurch (Local Plan examination ref. LP/O36). These studies do not however extend into the LDU in which the Lodge Farm site is located.

Draycote Water; and southward and eastward to the authority's administrative boundary.

2.3.4. The Feldon Vale Farmlands LCT is described in LP/O34 to be an area of broad, flat, low-lying clay vales with few roads or settlements; of moderate overall sensitivity; and with the following key characteristics:

- A largely intact pattern of medium to large-sized geometric fields, bounded by hawthorn hedges.
- Sparse tree cover, allowing wide views to rising ground and giving a strong impression of sky and space.
- Despite a significant move towards arable production in recent years, extensive areas of permanent pasture still remain a feature of this landscape, together with well-preserved areas of ridge and furrow.
- Deserted medieval villages surviving in places.
- Villages are typically few and far between, often consisting of small, straggling clusters of farmsteads and dwellings, with most situated around a cross-road, and many are well off the beaten track.
- Roads are often single track, with wide grass verges, bounded by a ditch and thick hedge.

2.4. Landscape Character Assessment

2.4.1. It is recognised that RBC's evidence on landscape pre-dates Natural England's present guidance on Landscape Character Assessment³ and did not consider in detail the part of the Feldon Vale Farmlands LDU within which the site is located.

2.4.2. Recognising the previous Inspector's concerns regarding the degree to which proposals may contrast with the distinctive and historic settlement pattern of the Feldon Vale Farmlands LCT, and may cause long-term damage to the essential character and fabric of the valley landscape, this paper therefore draws on descriptions contained within the more detailed and recently published '*Daventry Landscape Character Assessment*' (May 2017) to provide its own assessment of landscape character within the Feldon Vale Farmlands LDU (refer to Appendix A), which was verified through fieldwork conducted in June 2023.

2.4.3. This more detailed character assessment recognised particularly:

- that the Feldon Vale Farmlands LDU merges seamlessly with adjoining vale areas in Daventry to the northeast;
- that several urban areas are evident in distant views from within the northern part of this LDU, notably Rugby and warehouse development on the edge of Rugby (DIRFT) and Daventry; and,

³ '*An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*' prepared by Christine Tudor and published by Natural England, October 2014.

- that significant communication routes evident in the northern part of the LDU generate noise, traffic movement and light sources at night which distract from the otherwise quiet rural landscape.

3. Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

- 3.1.1. Recognising the previous Inspector's comments regarding the significance of change to character, this paper includes also an assessment of the landscape sensitivity of the emerging Lodge Farm site to a new settlement within Rugby Borough, delivering approximately 2,500 dwellings that would typically be 2-3 storeys in height. The sensitivity assessment relates to the existing attributes of the site and its capacity to accommodate change of the form proposed rather than any specific development layout. It also does not presume the pre-existing presence of any specific landscape-based mitigation measures.
- 3.1.2. The methodology used to conduct the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment reflects guidance set out by Natural England,⁴ with overall sensitivity determined by combining judgements on the site's level of sensitivity to various landscape and visual, susceptibility and value criteria, as detailed in Appendix B to this paper.
- 3.1.3. Judgements for each of the 20 criteria are made using a five-point scale (ranging from High to Low) and afforded a weighting, which is in turn used to guide an overall judgement of landscape sensitivity.

3.2. Landscape Susceptibility Criteria

Landform

- 3.2.1. The site is set within a generally broad and flat landscape with minor undulations. The rising landform of the surrounding fringe areas provides a backdrop to the broad vale. Development is unlikely to particularly interrupt the relationship with the more distinct landform features beyond the edge of the LDU. (Medium-Low)

Landscape Pattern / Landcover / Scale

- 3.2.2. Landcover within the site is typical of the vale landscape, displaying a mixture of arable cereals and horticulture and improved pastures with grazing sheep and horses in fields of varying size. The management of most hedgerows at a low height gives rise to an expansive landscape in places, although local variations occur where fields are smaller in size and hedgerows are taller. A plantation woodland to the south and west of the Lodge Farm buildings forms a distinctive feature in the landscape – as do the vegetated corridors adjoining the M45 motorway and A45 trunk road – and serves to enclose the site to a greater extent than other parts of the LDU. (Medium)

Intactness of Field Boundaries

- 3.2.3. Whilst the majority of the hedgerows within the site retain a well-managed appearance, others have become gappy or overgrown and show evidence of

⁴ 'An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment' prepared by Christine Tudor and published by Natural England, June 2019.

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decline. In a few locations also enclosure is achieved through the use of post and wire fencing or there is no boundary treatment at all. The occurrence of hedgerow trees within the site varies, with trees relatively abundant near to the existing farm buildings and A45 but sparser elsewhere. There are few, if any, historic hedgerows understood to be present within the site. (Medium-Low)

Sense of Place / Rural Quality

3.2.4. The landscape within the site is typically well maintained and managed, containing some intact hedgerows of value. There is also evidence of ridge and furrow to the southwest of the site, associated with mediaeval settlement at Woolscott. The M45 motorway, A45 trunk road and prison however form notable detractors to the area's rural quality within the immediate setting of the site and the plantation woodland also forms a notably incongruous feature. (Medium-Low)

Tranquillity

3.2.5. Whilst the levels of tranquillity across the site varies, the M45 motorway and A45 trunk roads form significant manmade features in the landscape which are locally unsettling, intrusive and noisy. (Medium-Low)

Settlement Pattern and the Nature of the Adjoining Settlement Edge

3.2.6. Settlement within the site is sparse, limited to isolated farms and dwellings. The adjoining prison development to the immediate north of the site forms a locally distinctive feature, which detracts from the otherwise sparsely settled surroundings. Development would be at variance with the existing settlement form / pattern. (Medium)

3.3. Visual Susceptibility Criteria

General Visibility / Types of Views / Intervisibility

3.3.1. Development is likely to be visible locally, and may be evident in more distant views from the edges of Woolscott and Willoughby; in eastward facing views from footpaths near to the Rains Brook; in occasional elevated views from the edge of Dunchurch; and from routes leading down from Barby Hill, Cleves Hill and Braunston Hill to the east. Existing intervisibility exists between the site and elevated settlements beyond the LDU to the east and west. Vegetation within the site (notably the intact hedgerows and plantation woodland) and adjoining primary infrastructure corridors (M45, A45, Oxford Canal and dismantled railway line) would however reduce views from some locations. (Medium)

Skylines and Other Focal Points

3.3.2. Development is unlikely to entirely impede visibility to surrounding skyline features (e.g. hilltop villages or church spires) but is likely to reduce views to some undeveloped skylines, focal points and skyline features to some extent. (Medium)

Typical Receptors

3.3.3. Those likely to experience views towards development at the site include users of rights of way and residents of nearby settlements (particularly those at the edges

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of Woolcott and Willoughby). Those most frequently likely to be affected by development are however local road users, particularly users of the A45 trunk road. Views experienced by users of footpaths adjoining and leading toward the Rains Brook from the west are also likely to be sensitive. (Medium)

Level of Access and Relative Number of People Likely to be Affected

3.3.4. Development is likely to be seen in views experienced by users of the public rights of way that cross the site; in more distant views, from within the LDU, experienced by those using footpaths to the north of Woolcott and Willoughby; in views experienced by those on footpaths near to the Rains Brook, to the west of the site; and in views experienced by those moving on public rights of way in fringe areas beyond the LDU, which presently benefit from open views across the landscape of the site. Public access in the surrounding landscape from which the site can be viewed is however typically quite limited. (Medium-Low)

Nature, Composition and Characteristics of the Existing Views Experienced

3.3.5. Existing views principally overlook agricultural farmland, containing some locally valued landscape features. The surrounding landscape is not however designated for its natural beauty, considered to be of particularly strong character or thought to be especially scenic. Urbanising and detracting features (e.g. the A45 trunk road, the M45 motorway, Onley Prison and DIRFT) are also evident alongside the site in views from a number of locations. (Medium-Low)

3.4. Landscape Value Criteria

Strength of Landscape Character / Quality and Condition

3.4.1. The landscape within the site is in reasonable physical condition and contains some features worthy of conservation. It is not however considered to be of particularly strong and positive character, containing several urbanising features (e.g. the A45 trunk road and M45 motorway) and features that are incongruous to the wider LDU (e.g. Onley Prison and the plantation woodland). (Medium-Low)

Distinctiveness / Rarity

3.4.2. The site area has a relationship to nearby settlements. Land within the site however contains few features that are not commonly found elsewhere within the surrounding LDU, and principally comprises low-grade agricultural land. (Medium-Low)

Geological, Topographical and Geomorphological Value

3.4.3. The site reflects the generally broad and flat landscape characteristics of the vale, with minor undulations and shallow valleys formed in association with the minor watercourses that drain the area. The site contains no features understood to be of particular geological or geomorphological value. (Medium-Low)

Cultural Heritage Value / Associations

3.4.4. The site borders to the north, and contains in its southwest corner, land recorded as having mediaeval ridge and furrow; contains some minor features recorded to

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be of archaeological interest; and is likely to sit within the wider setting of the abandoned mediaeval village of Onley, which is a scheduled monument. The land within the site does not however contain any designated heritage assets, nor is it understood to be associated with any artistic or literary references. (Medium-Low)

Natural Heritage Value

3.4.5. The site contains some hedgerows, hedgerow trees and watercourses that would be worthy of conservation, but principally comprises agricultural farmland of limited ecological value. (Medium-Low)

Recreational Value

3.4.6. The site is crossed in its west by public bridleway Grandborough 179/R178/1; through its centre by public footpaths Grandborough 179/R241/1, 179/R242/1 and Willoughby 308/R242/1; and in its east by public bridleway Willoughby 308/R243/1. The site does not however contain any other features or recreational value. (Medium-Low)

Scenic and Other Aesthetic and Perceptual and Experiential Qualities

3.4.7. The site is located in countryside and accordingly has a degree of remoteness, particularly in its south and southwest. Land management activities, transport corridors and land uses within and adjoining the site (e.g. Onley Prison) have however eroded perceived naturalness, had an urbanising influence on much of the site and impacted on local dark skies. (Medium-Low)

3.5. Visual Value Criteria

Presence of Views Recognised in Guidance for their Particular Importance

3.5.1. The site is recognised to be visible from the grade II* listed property of Dunchurch Lodge (and may be visible from other heritage assets at the edge of Dunchurch) and is also recorded as being visible from some locations within the listed estate of Shuckburgh. The site is not however understood to form part of a view recorded as being of importance in relation to any heritage assets, nor is it understood to form part of any view recorded in art, literature or other media for its particular special qualities. (Medium-Low)

Nationally, Regionally or Locally Valued Views and Views Valued by the Community

3.5.2. The site forms part of a landscape that is visible from within the surrounding area, but is not visible from any locations well known, well frequented and/or promoted as visitor attractions or beauty spots; and is understood not to form part of any views which appear in Ordnance Survey, tourist maps or guide books. (Medium-Low)

3.6. Overall Landscape Sensitivity

3.6.1. Table 1 overleaf summarises and combines judgements regarding the site's level of sensitivity to the various landscape and visual, susceptibility and value criteria set out above. The table determines that the site would result in a weighted score of

25 out of 80 against the identified criteria, which suggests it would be of a Medium-Low overall sensitivity to the type of development proposed.

Table 1: Combination of Landscape Sensitivity Judgements

CRITERIA	SENSITIVITY				
	H	MH	M	ML	L
SUSCEPTIBILITY – Landscape					
Landform					
Landscape Pattern / Landcover / Scale					
Intactness of Field Boundaries					
Sense of Place / Rural Quality					
Tranquillity					
Settlement Pattern and the Nature of the Adjoining Settlement Edge					
SUSCEPTIBILITY – Visual					
General Visibility / Types of Views / Intervisibility					
Skylines and Other Focal Points					
Typical Receptors					
Level of Access and Relative Number of People Likely to be Affected					
Nature, Composition and Characteristics of the Existing Views Experienced					
VALUE – Landscape					
Strength of Landscape Character / Quality and Condition					
Distinctiveness / Rarity					
Geological, Topographical and Geomorphological Value					
Cultural Heritage Value / Associations					
Natural Heritage Value					
Recreational Value					
Scenic and Other Perceptual and Experiential Qualities					
VALUE – Visual					
Presence of Views Recognised in Guidance for their Particular Importance					
Nationally, Regionally or Locally Valued Views and Views Valued by the Local Community					
TOTAL NUMBER OF INSTANCES	0	0	5	15	0
WEIGHTED SCORE*	0	0	10	15	0
Overall Landscape Sensitivity to Specific Change: Medium-Low					

* Where an area is assessed to be of High sensitivity against a criterion it is given a value of 4. This weighted value then reduces to 3 where criteria are scored to be Medium-High; 2 where criteria are scored to be Medium; 1 where criteria are scored to be Medium-Low; and 0 where criteria are scored to be Low.

The below scoring is then used to help inform the overall landscape sensitivity to the specific change:

Low: < 11
 Medium-Low: 11 – 30

4. Addressing the Previous Inspector's Concerns

4.1.1. As noted in Section 1 of this paper, the Inspector identified the following particular concerns with regards the proposed allocation, when advising his second main reason for refusing its inclusion within the Local Plan.

1. The degree to which the proposals would contrast with the distinctive and historic settlement pattern of the Feldon Vale Farmlands.
2. The significance of the change to character that would result to the landscape of the site and surrounding area.
3. The degree to which the proposals would remain conspicuous and impose an urbanising effect on the valley, causing long-term damage to the essential character and fabric of the landscape.

4.1.2. The emerging proposals have evolved to address these concerns and to allow development to be more readily assimilated into the landscape of the site, with specific measures including:

- Restoring and strengthening existing field boundaries, gapping up areas in decline, introducing additional hedgerow trees and adjusting management regimes to encourage taller growth.
- Partially retaining the plantation woodland to the south of Lodge Farm, to retain its screening value, but over a period of 15–25 years gradually adjusting its management to encourage greater species diversity in accordance with local character.
- Avoiding introducing development within land to the south of the plantation woodland, where it may be overlooked from the edges of Woolscott and Willoughby (and seen in long-distance views from within the listed estate of Shuckburgh).
- Where appropriate protecting of historic ridge and furrow land and other features of archaeological interest within the site.
- Setting back development in the southwest part of the site and introducing strategic planting along this edge to help reduce its appearance from lower-lying parts of the Rainsbrook valley.
- Retaining and strengthening public access across the site and introducing new connections between the existing rights of way.
- Conserving and increasing public access to the Rains Brook and its tributaries within the site and strengthening their value for recreation and biodiversity.
- Avoiding introducing development into land to the west of public bridleway Grandborough 179/R178/1 and strengthening woodland screening to the west of this route.

4.1.3. As advised within Sections 2 and 3 of this paper, the RBC's landscape evidence base does not adequately assess the character or sensitivity of the landscape in proximity to the site. With reference the previous Inspector's concerns, it is Define's view also:

- that the distinctive and historic settlement pattern of the Feldon Vale Farmlands has been locally eroded within the vicinity of the site by other developments, (notably the M45 motorway, A45 trunk road and adjoining Onley Prison) which form distinctive features in conflict with the character of the wider LDU; and,
- that the sensitivity of the landscape within the vicinity of the site is less than in other parts of the LDU (i.e. Medium-Low not Medium⁵), suggesting the overall significance of landscape impact on the landscape of the site and the surrounding area could be less than major adverse.

4.1.4. Recognising the changes encompassed to better assimilate development into the landscape of the site noted above, it's Define's view further that the urbanising effect development would have on the valley would be localised; and would be unlikely to cause long-term damage to the essential character and fabric of this landscape.

⁵ The Feldon Vale Farmlands LCT is described in LP/034 to be of 'moderate' overall sensitivity

Appendix A – Detailed Feldon Vale Farmlands LDU Character Assessment

Key Characteristics

- Extensive landscape defining the south-eastern boundary of the borough and merging seamlessly with the wider vale areas to the northwest of Daventry in Northamptonshire. Expansive long distance, panoramic views across the open vale landscape.
- Landscape drained by numerous small watercourses that flow within shallow undulations into the rivers and streams. The subtle valley forms and other minor undulations gain prominence in an otherwise broad, flat landscape, and provide diversity and interest at a local scale within the otherwise simple, open and unified vale.
- Limited woodland cover, with tree cover confined mainly to hedgerow trees and overgrown hedgerows.
- The general absence of woodland contributes to the open and sometimes exposed character across much of the vale. However linear woodland along transport corridors and woodlands within adjacent character areas contribute to the perception of woodland presence in this landscape type.
- Productive arable and pastoral farmland in generally equal proportions in fields of varying size contributes to a changing mosaic of patterns and textures and a generally well managed and productive agrarian character.
- Hedgerows of mixed appearance, frequently low and well clipped but also tall and treed, and with some sections showing evidence of decline, with reinforcing post and wire fences visible. These more neglected sections detract from an otherwise generally well managed hedgerow network and character.
- Sparsely settled with small villages and isolated farms and dwellings prevalent contributing to the quiet and in places (particularly to the north of the landscape type) remote character of this simple agrarian landscape.
- Large urban areas are evident in distant views, notably Rugby and warehouse development on the edge of Rugby (DIRFT) and Daventry, which distract from the otherwise generally rural character.
- Significant communication routes evident in the northern part of the LDU, including motorways and major 'A' roads. These generate noise, traffic movement and light sources at night and distract from the otherwise quiet rural landscape.

Description

The Feldon Vale Farmlands LDU in which the site falls is distinguished by its generally flat and open character, formed by the shallow valleys of the Rains Brook in the north and Leam and its tributaries, in the centre and south. Minor undulations occur, particularly at the transition with the adjacent fringe landscapes, but also in association with the watercourses that drain the vale, which have eroded shallow valleys. In addition to the watercourses, the Grand Union Canal forms part of the southern boundary to the LDU and the Oxford Canal extends into the east; both are designated as Conservation Areas.

The vale is generally intensively managed with a mix of arable and pasture that create a patchwork effect across the landscape. The size of fields and heights of hedgerows plays an

important role in determining the openness of the landscape, with localised enclosure generally where fields are smaller.

Woodland cover is very limited with the exception of hedgerows and hedgerow trees to field boundaries and tree-lined watercourses, canals, railway lines and major roads. Where present these trees provide localised enclosure. The general lack of woodland allows open views towards the higher often wooded ground in the adjacent fringe landscapes. Rural lanes are typically lined by hedgerows and hedgerow trees, in places the trees are set a few metres behind the hedgerows.

Settlement within the LDU is generally sparse, limited to the small villages of Willoughby, Grandborough and Caldecote, and the hamlets of Woolscott, Kites Hardwick, Sawbridge and Clay Coton. Onley Prison, within the adjoining district, is also noticeable on the northeast edge of the LDU.

There is no overriding character to built form but the centre of villages include properties from a range of periods creating a varied streetscene. Grandborough is the largest of the villages and is a clustered settlement centred along High Street. Views of All Saints Church and a large manor house in a mature tree and garden setting form a distinctive approach to the village from the south east. Willoughby has a similar character, although slightly smaller, with a varied streetscene and a similar tree and garden setting.

Smaller scale pastoral fields are often present around the fringes of the settlements and often contain more mature hedgerows and trees which provides enclosure and helps to limit the prominence of the villages in the wider and more open landscape beyond. Ridge and furrow is a feature around villages such as the northern fringes of Woolscott.

The remainder of the LDU includes intermittent and often isolated farms with many areas accessed via long tracks. The prominent large warehouses of the DIRFT Development, to the east of Rugby has an urbanising effect, although the southern edges of Rugby and Dunchurch are relatively well screened by a combination of small pastoral and recreational fields and mature trees.

The M45 and A45 roads in the north of the LDU have a busier character, which contrasts with the more remote areas. The combination of undulating landform and linear woodlands along these major roads mean that their visual influence is relatively localised. They do however form audible features in this part of the landscape.

Views are typically open across the vale, although local variations occur where fields are smaller in size and hedgerows are taller.

The overriding character is that of a broad, expansive flat or very gently sloping agrarian landscape with limited settlement and a generally quiet rural character except in close vicinity to the main road network.

Appendix B – Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criteria

Level of Sensitivity

Judgements on the ‘level’ of sensitivity determined for each of the landscape and visual criteria are made against a five-point scale as set out below:

- *High* – Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the site are very susceptible to change and / or its values are high or high / medium and it is unable to accommodate the relevant type of development without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are very low.
- *High / Medium* – Landscape and /or visual characteristics of the assessment unit are susceptible to change and / or its values are medium through to high. It may be able to accommodate the relevant type of development but only in limited situations without significant character change or adverse effects if defined in the relevant land parcel summary. Thresholds for significant change are low.
- *Medium* – Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the site are susceptible to change and / or its values are 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 are intermediate.
- *Medium / Low* – Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the site are resilient and of low susceptibility to change and / or its values are medium / low or low and it can accommodate the relevant type of development in many situations without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are high.
- *Low* – Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the assessment unit are robust or degraded and are not susceptible to change and / or its values are low and it can accommodate the relevant type of development without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are very high.

Landscape and Visual Susceptibility and Value Criteria

Indicative landscape and visual criteria for susceptibility and value are provided in Tables A1 and A2 below:

Table A1: Landscape and Visual Susceptibility Criteria

CRITERIA	INDICATORS OF SUSCEPTIBILITY
LANDSCAPE	
Landform	Open, highly prominent and distinctive or intricate and complex landforms with sharp changes in level are more likely to be susceptible to change arising from development than flat and indistinct landforms. This criterion also considers whether potential development would interrupt the relationship between distinctive landform features such as escarpments, or prominent hills or open plains. In some locations development would affect skyline character.
Landscape Pattern / Landcover / Scale	Landscapes with a small scale, complex and intricate landscape pattern arising from landcover elements including settlement, field pattern or vegetation cover are more likely to be susceptible to change arising from larger scale development than landscapes with a simple landcover pattern. Landscapes enclosed by buildings, trees and woodlands can

CRITERIA	INDICATORS OF SUSCEPTIBILITY
	offer more opportunity to accommodate development without affecting landscape character.
Intactness of Field Boundaries	Considers the scale and integrity of field boundaries whether hedgerows, stone walls or fences. Intact field boundaries can help screen development but can also be susceptible to loss or degradation from development. Historic hedgerows are particularly susceptible to loss.
Sense of Place / Rural Quality	Landscapes with a strong and positive rural character in good condition and with features worthy of conservation, 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. This applies to landscapes with semi-natural habitats and valued natural features such as woodland and hedgerows with good connectivity.
Tranquillity	Landscapes with a strong sense of tranquillity will be more susceptible to development as this is likely to introduce disturbance and loss of this valued rural quality.
Settlement Pattern and the Nature of the Adjoining Settlement Edge	This considers the overall settlement pattern within the LDU and the nature of any settlement edge, that is whether it is positive or negative, smooth, linear or indented. Importantly it considers whether potential development would integrate with the general settlement form/ pattern and how it may affect the character of the existing settlement edge and its functioning relationship with the surrounding countryside.
VISUAL	
General Visibility / Types of Views / Intervisibility	The likelihood of a development being visible depends on the scale of the development, the landform in which the development is sited and the screening opportunities afforded by the land cover, particularly buildings, trees and woodlands. Landscapes which are visually contained with limited inward and outward views are likely to be less susceptible than open landscapes with extensive inward and outward views. The visual relationship of the LDU with any existing settlement edges and whether there are any visual detractors which may reduce its susceptibility influences whether new development is likely to be well accommodated into its surroundings. Intervisibility between landscape types is also important. A landscape with a high degree of intervisibility with/ or forming a backdrop to nearby areas of acknowledged landscape sensitivity are more susceptible to development as they are unique and irreplaceable. Similarly, a landscape located on approaches/gateways to these sensitive landscapes are more susceptible to development.
Skylines and Other Focal Points	Skylines are susceptible to development as they are generally widely visible with features on them typically being seen in relief against a light sky. Undeveloped rural skylines are particularly susceptible as are attractive skylines which form a backdrop to settlement. The presence of distinctive or historic landscape features such as hilltop monuments, church spires/ towers or historic villages also increases susceptibility. Sensitivity Parcels may form part of, or may have a strong visual link to a distinctive skyline.
Typical Receptors	This is a function of the occupation or activity of people experiencing a view at a particular location, and therefore the extent to which their attention or interest may be focussed on the views and the visual amenity they experience. The most susceptible receptors are residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience, visitors to landscape whose interest is focussed on natural and built heritage assets and users of scenic routes. Each location brings with it

CRITERIA	INDICATORS OF SUSCEPTIBILITY
	certain expectations. Transport users (particularly of high-speed roads) are usually considered less susceptible receptors, unless the road is considered to be a scenic route or important gateway.
Level of Access and Relative Number of People Likely to be Affected	The greater the number of sensitive visual receptors in an area, the more susceptible the area will be to change from development. This includes receptors within the LDU and also includes receptors that may lie further away but in locations which have direct and open views towards the LDU (such as views from elevated hill forts/ trig points etc.)
Nature, Composition and Characteristics of the Existing Views Experienced	Landscapes of attractive scenery, character, quality, integrity, strong sense of place and local distinctiveness will typically be more susceptible to development than less scenic areas. This includes landscapes that are designated for their natural beauty, but also areas of undesignated landscape, including areas that are scenic and have strong character.

Table A2: Landscape and Visual Value Criteria

CRITERIA	INDICATORS OF VALUE
LANDSCAPE	
Strength of Landscape Character / Quality and Condition	Landscapes with a strong and positive character in good condition and with features worthy of conservation, 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 / Rarity	Landscapes which are commonplace are less likely to be valued than landscapes which are unique or rare as these are often irreplaceable.
Geological, Topographical and Geomorphological Value	This considers the shape and scale of the land and the extent that there may be distinctive and valued geological, topographical or hydrological features. Such features may be distinctive in their own right or may have influenced the creation of areas of distinctive and valued landscape character.
Cultural Heritage Value / Associations	The extent to which a landscape displays historic continuity and time depth – reflected in the presence of nationally or internationally designated historic landscape components and their settings. May also be a reflection of artistic or literary references. Also, whether a landscape is important to the setting and identity of designated landscapes and heritage assets
Natural Heritage Value	Landscapes with a strong and positive character in good condition and with features worthy of conservation, 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. This applies to landscapes with semi-natural habitats and valued natural features such as woodland and hedgerows with good connectivity.
Recreational Value	The extent to which the experience of the landscape makes an important contribution to the recreational use and enjoyment of an area. Indicators include the presence of such features as nature reserves, country parks, allotments, outdoor sports facilities, public rights of way, green infrastructure corridors, scenic routes and promoted viewpoints. Also includes recognised scenic or promoted tourist routes.
Scenic and Other Perceptual and Experiential Qualities	Defined by the presence of distinctive, dramatic or striking patterns of landform or land cover, or by strong aesthetic response to qualities such as rural character (traditional land uses with few human influences), perceived naturalness, sense of remoteness or tranquillity and dark skies.

CRITERIA	INDICATORS OF VALUE
VISUAL	
Presence of Views Recognised in Guidance for their Particular Importance	Views that are important in relation to the special qualities of a designated landscape, the cultural associations of which may be recognised in art, literature or other media; or views from and within the setting of designated landscapes, historic and cultural sites where views are recorded as important in relation to that asset.
Nationally, Regionally or Locally Valued Views and Views Valued by the Local Community	Iconic views understood to be of national or international importance; views which are identified in the Local Plan and/ or of regional or particular local importance (including views from regionally and locally promoted trails); views which appear on an Ordnance Survey, tourist map or within guide books; views from locations where there is provision of facilities for their enjoyment, such as parking and interpretation; or views which are locally well known, well-frequented and/ or promoted as a beauty spot / visitor destination and may have relevant cultural associations.