

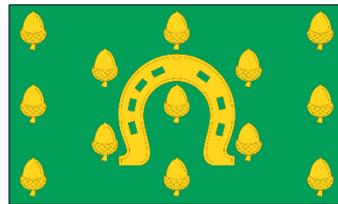
**RUTLAND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER  
ASSESSMENT 2022  
CONSULTATION DRAFT**



**PART 1  
JULY 2022**

## Acknowledgements

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



# **RUTLAND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT 2022**

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## **PART 2** (published separately)

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## Figure 1: Rutland Landscape Character Classification

### **LCT A: HIGH RUTLAND**

LCA Ai. *Leighfield Forest*

LCA Aii. *Undulating Mixed Farmlands*

LCA Aiii. *Eyebrook Basin*

LCA Aiv. *Chater Valley*

### **LCT B: VALE OF CATMOSE**

### **LCT C: RUTLAND WATER BASIN**

### **LCT D: RUTLAND PLATEAU**

LCA Di. *Cottesmore Plateau*

LCA Dii. *Clay Woodlands*

LCA Diii. *Gwash Valley*

LCA Div. *Ketton Plateau*

### **LCT E: WELLAND VALLEY**

LCA Ei. *Middle Valley West (Caldercott to Seaton)*

LCA Eii. *Middle Valley East (Seaton to Tinwell)*

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# PART 1

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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

RCC has commissioned various pieces of work as evidence to support the preparation of the new Local Plan; this document is one of them, providing an update on the landscape character of the county following a review of the Rutland Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) published in 2003. A county-wide Landscape Sensitivity Study will also be prepared, using this updated LCA as its basis.

The Council recognises that it must balance the development needs of the county with conserving, enhancing, restoring and re-creating landscape and settlement character. These two pieces of landscape assessment work will help to inform decisions about the amount, location and type of development, informing the choice of suitable site allocations, and the policy approach to protecting character. They will also provide comprehensive and up to date information to inform landscape management and development management decisions.

These two landscape evidence documents will also ensure that the new Rutland Local Plan complies with the government's overarching environmental objective within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), July 2021, to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land and improving biodiversity.

In order to meet the requirement within NPPF that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, the landscape evidence documents will help the new Rutland Local Plan to promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to meet development needs, align growth and infrastructure, improve the environment, mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects.

### **What is Landscape, and what is Landscape Character Assessment?**

A glossary of terms is provided at Appendix 1 (reproduced from the latest guidance from Natural England in *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, 2014*). Landscape reflects the relationship between people and place, and the part it plays in forming the setting to our everyday lives. It is a product of the interaction of the natural and cultural components of our environment, and how they are understood, perceived and experienced by people.

Our landscapes vary because of, amongst other variables, their underlying geology, soils, topography, land cover, hydrology, historic and cultural development, and climatic considerations.

The combination of characteristics arising from these physical and socio-economic influences, and their often complex interrelationships, makes one landscape different from another. Landscape character may be defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. Landscape Character Assessment is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive. This process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment.

Our landscapes have evolved over time and they continue to evolve. Landscape characterisation provides a snapshot in time and an updated landscape character assessment has an important role to play in managing and guiding future change.

## **Background to Landscape Character Assessment in Rutland**

Plans and policies have long sought to protect the distinctiveness of Rutland's landscapes, informed by appraisals of landscape character together with evaluation of the County's landscape quality, condition and appearance.

Between 1974 and 1997 strategic planning in the area was the responsibility of Leicestershire County Council (LCC). A landscape appraisal by LCC in 1976 (which included Rutland) identified twenty-three 'landscape character zones' based on a consideration of geology, landform, soils, land capability, vegetation, woodland, land use and field pattern. This helped to inform policies within the Leicestershire and Rutland Structure Plans, and several alterations and replacement plans. Each plan had a general theme of positive environmental conservation.

Rutland District Council began work on the Rutland Local Plan, adopted in 2001 (prepared in accordance with the Leicestershire Structure Plan, 1994) prior to it becoming a County Council following local government reorganisation in 1997 when Rutland became a unitary authority. Policies within the Rutland Local Plan were written to conserve and enhance Rutland's 'special character' including the natural and built environment and its rural character. Development was strictly controlled to minimise its impact on the natural and built environment as well as the appearance of the countryside.

In the mid-1990s Leicestershire County Council's Landscape Team began work on the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland *Landscape and Woodland Strategy*, which was published in 2001. Following best practice guidance on landscape assessment by the Countryside Commission (afterwards the Countryside Agency) <sup>1</sup>, the landscape character zones identified in 1976 (referred to above) were used as its basis for reviewing the character of Leicestershire (including Rutland). The Strategy considered significant forces for change in the landscape over the previous two decades, in particular continued housing, retail and commercial growth, new road building, continuing agricultural change, Dutch elm disease (*Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*) in the late 1970s, and development of the new landscape and tourist attraction at Rutland Water.

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<sup>1</sup> Countryside Commission (1993) *Landscape Assessment Guidance*, CCP 423.

Following consultation with other local authorities, the Countryside Commission and English Nature (now Natural England), the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland *Landscape and Woodland Strategy* identified eighteen distinctive character areas across Leicestershire and Rutland (from the previous twenty-three 'landscape character zones'). Four of these landscape character areas lie within Rutland: High Leicestershire; Vale of Catmose; Cottesmore Plateau and Welland Valley. The boundaries of these county-wide landscape character areas show a broad correlation with nation-wide Regional Character Areas identified by the Countryside Commission and English Nature in the Countryside Character Programme of the mid-1990s. The Strategy provides guidelines for conserving and enhancing the unique character, diversity and local distinctiveness of these landscapes.

Using the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland *Landscape and Woodland Strategy* as its basis, and following updated best practice landscape assessment guidance developed by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot) in 2002<sup>2</sup>, the Rutland Landscape Character Assessment was published in 2003. Covering only the county of Rutland (rather than the wider Leicestershire County Council study that had included Rutland) the 2003 Rutland Landscape Character Assessment was done at a more detailed scale (1:25 000 scale), with the specific requirement of assisting the Council in its policies and proposals in the emerging development plan and to inform the preparation of countryside design guidance. Its purpose was also to help others involved in the development and land use change in the countryside, by identifying what is important and distinctive about the Rutland landscape, so that future change could be managed to conserve and enhance, and where necessary restore, that distinctiveness and the characteristics that make Rutland special and gives the County its sense of place.

More detail on the background to landscape characterisation in Rutland is given in Appendix 2.

## Scope of this Study

This Landscape Character Assessment provides an update on the landscape character of Rutland following a review of the Rutland Landscape Character Assessment published in 2003. Consequently, it is not a new landscape character assessment but updates the 2003 LCA principally by considering a number of documents and other information including the following:

- Latest best practice guidance from Natural England, 2014<sup>3</sup>;
- Updated National Character Area (NCA) profiles<sup>4</sup>;

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<sup>2</sup> Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002), *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland*.

<sup>3</sup> Natural England (2014), *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*, NE579.

<sup>4</sup> Natural England (2014), *NCA Profile 74. Leicestershire & Nottinghamshire Wolds*.

Natural England (2014), *NCA Profile 75. Kesteven Uplands*.

Natural England (2014), *NCA Profile 89. Northamptonshire Vales*.

Natural England (2014), *NCA Profile 92. Rockingham Forest*.

- Neighbouring county and district scale Landscape Character Assessments<sup>5</sup>;
- East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment, April 2010<sup>6</sup>;
- Historic Landscape Characterisation<sup>7</sup>;
- Rutland Neighbourhood Plans<sup>8</sup> and Conservation Area Appraisals<sup>9</sup>;
- Other relevant studies within Rutland<sup>10</sup>;
- Initiatives from the Forestry Commission, Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust<sup>11</sup>;
- Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), 2016;
- Landscape change since 2003, considering built and permitted development (development with planning permission but not yet built) such as housing, commercial, business and industrial development affecting the countryside (i.e. within the countryside and on the edge of settlements); new transport and energy developments and infrastructure; minerals extraction; agricultural change including changes in land use and buildings in the countryside; woodland change; tree diseases such as acute oak decline and chalara ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*); continued development of the landscape and habitats around Rutland Water and its increased use as a tourist attraction.

In so doing, this new Rutland Landscape Character Assessment, 2022, highlights the characteristics, special qualities and sense of place which contribute to the distinctiveness of Rutland’s landscapes. Appropriate landscape management objectives for each landscape

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Natural England (2013), *NCA Profile 93. High Leicestershire*.

<sup>5</sup> Leicestershire County Council (2001), *Leicester Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy*.  
Northamptonshire County Council (2005), *Northamptonshire Current Landscape Character Assessment*.  
Harborough District Council (2007), *Harborough District Landscape Character Assessment*.

Melton Borough Council (2006), *Melton Borough Landscape and Historic Urban Character Assessment Report*.  
South Kesteven District Council (2007), *South Kesteven Landscape Character Assessment*.

<sup>6</sup> East Midlands Landscape Partnership (2010), *East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment*.

<sup>7</sup> Leicestershire County Council (2019), *Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation*.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Made’ Neighbourhood Plans for Barrowden & Wakerley, Cottesmore, Edith Weston, Greetham, Langham, Oakham and Barleythorpe, and Uppingham.

<sup>9</sup> Conservation Area Appraisals for Ashwell, Empingham, Ketton (including Geeston), Lyddington, Morcott, and Whitwell.

<sup>10</sup> For example:

Rutland County Council (2012), *Rutland Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study – Wind Turbines*.

Rutland County Council (2010, 2012, 2017 & 2018), *Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Studies*.

Rutland County Council (August 2019), *Landscape Review of Rutland Water Area*, and Addendum (September 2019).

<sup>11</sup> For example, The Leighfield Forest Project.

type are described to conserve, enhance, restore and re-create landscape and settlement character. Areas and landscape features with significant landscape sensitivity to new developments, including renewable energy proposals, are identified, together with those considered to have the ability to absorb new developments. Recommendations are made on positive criteria-based policies within the new Local Plan that reflect the study findings.

Rutland is a deeply rural county. The appearance of the countryside is a product of the evolution of natural processes and how the land is managed. There are unprecedented pressures on Britain's rural areas that could accelerate a change to the look of the countryside and the character of the landscape: climate change, Brexit and continuing biodiversity decline are just some of the issues of concern. In recent months the government has prioritised these issues with the aim of boosting agricultural production and making land use more environmentally friendly and resilient.

A new legal framework for UK agricultural policy received royal assent in November 2020: called the Agriculture Act 2020, it phases out basic payments made to farmers under the common agricultural policy (CAP) that will stop because Britain has left the European Union, and replaces them with a new system of environmental land management schemes (ELMs) in England and Wales. What this could mean is that uneconomical fields might be turned into wildlife habitats or woodland, or opened up for agritourism with outdoor adventure centres or holiday lets. As well as the subsidy reforms, smaller farms are particularly vulnerable to competition from food produced more cheaply abroad that together could lead to widespread consolidation to the detriment of traditional farming practices. This may be further compounded by companies investing in farmland for carbon credit schemes to offset their own carbon emissions or to sell the credits they earn from "carbon capture" land uses such as tree planting.

The new transition from basic payments to a new system of subsidies is yet to materialise, with a range of government initiatives likely that would need to be appropriate in both the short and long term. The three ELMs under which farmers can receive cash payments provide subsidies to work the land "in an environmentally sustainable way"; "for actions that support local nature recovery and meet local environmental priorities" and another that funds farmers who commit to long-term projects such as restoring wild landscapes and large-scale tree planting. Agricultural policy to enable the management of landscape features such as hedges to their maximum potential should be supported. However, modern subsidies that favour rewilding and extensive tree planting may not be what local farmers, conservationists and visitors want, or what is appropriate within a particular landscape.

Future agri-environment schemes may be informed by the new system of spatial Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), a flagship measure in the Environment Act for locally focussed action and investment to create a national Nature Recovery Network to reverse nature's decline. LNRSs will link together Environmental Improvement Plans, biodiversity net gain, Species Conservation Strategies and Protected Sites Strategies to prioritise locally appropriate measures for tackling climate change and biodiversity decline, by creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals, that align with land use planning.

These are significant areas of concern requiring wide debate beyond the scope of this landscape character assessment. However, in acknowledging the issues and potential repercussions it is hoped that this study will contribute to the debate and lead to positive outcomes in conserving, enhancing, restoring or recreating Rutland's distinctive landscapes.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### The Process

This Landscape Character Assessment has been produced in accordance with the latest guidance from Natural England in *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*, 2014. It follows a well-established process developed over many years to help in the understanding of our landscapes and to assist in informing judgements and decisions concerning the management of change. The process is the same as that set down in *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland*, 2002<sup>12</sup>, that was followed in the current Rutland Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), 2003.

There are 4 main iterative steps in this process:

Step 1 – Define the purpose and scope of the assessment

Step 2 – Desk study

Step 3 – Field survey

Step 4 - Classification and description

The current Rutland LCA has served the County well for almost twenty years. It provides valuable information mostly derived from the regional-scale Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland *Landscape and Woodland Strategy*, 2001, but at a more detailed local level. The methodology reflects the fact that the purpose and scope of this updated LCA, and the scale of the assessment, are the same as that of the 2003 LCA, without the requirement for a completely new assessment.

The aim of the desk study and field work was to identify whether changes in the landscape over the past 20 years have affected landscape characteristics and to what extent the 2003 Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas remain valid. The key component features of Rutland's landscape have been described in other studies and are not repeated in detail here: Section 4 provides an introduction to the character of Rutland's landscape and a summary of the main factors which have influenced the development of the present-day landscape character.

The information gathering process involved the use of a Geographic Information System (GIS) for the collation, management, analysis and presentation of layers of digital data. This was used to check the descriptions within the current LCA (Appendix 3 provides a list of relevant data examined). A brief description of the main physical and human influencing factors relating to geology and soils, landform and drainage, land use and land cover, settlement patterns and infrastructure, biodiversity and historic character, is given within the description of each Landscape Character Type and Landscape Character Area.

The 1:25,000 scale maps within the current Rutland LCA were compared with the latest Ordnance Survey maps at that scale, satellite imagery (such as Google Earth) and other

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<sup>12</sup> Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002), *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland*.

material used in the desk study, and marked up with features of significant landscape change (as referred to in the Introduction). Character area boundary amendments were drafted for checking in the field. The desk study and availability of information from previous assessments allowed effort to be focused during the field survey, which was also shaped by the scope and purpose of the updated assessment and the information it is to provide to decision makers (also as referred to in the Introduction), such as landscape sensitivity on the edge of settlements. Appendix 4 provides a list of the primary locations where fieldwork was initially targeted.

The initial fieldwork, which was undertaken by two experienced landscape surveyors during April and May 2022, identified issues requiring clarification by further desk study followed by further field survey stages during May. Importantly, fieldwork also enabled aesthetic, perceptual and experiential characteristics of the landscape to be captured.

The outputs of the desk study and field survey stages, including annotated maps, notes and photographs, informed the classification and description stage of the landscape characterisation process. The updated landscape classification including boundary changes and re-naming was agreed with the Council.

## **Format of the Rutland Landscape Character Assessment 2022**

The Rutland Landscape Character Assessment 2022 is divided into two sections:

**Part 1** (this section) outlines the background to landscape characterisation in Rutland, the purpose and scope of the study, explaining why and how it has been prepared. It outlines the new landscape classification across Rutland County.

**Part 2** (published separately) identifies and describes the landscape character types (LCTs) and landscape character areas (LCAs) and provides guidance for the conservation, enhancement and restoration of landscape character. Part 2 provides a straight forward reference document written in clear, plain non-technical language with a range of readers in mind: it provides information to those who live, work or visit the County, and to the general public and others with an interest in the County's rich and diverse landscape; it provides advice to applicants seeking to develop land within the County; and it provides a day-to-day working reference document to guide officers and members of the council when considering the implications of planning applications on the environment.

Part 2 follows the following format:

- A map to illustrate the general location of the landscape character types (LCTs) and landscape character areas (LCAs);
- A general description of the landscape character type, including its landscape character, physical and cultural influences, and aesthetic and perceptual qualities;

- The description of each landscape character area (and landscape character types B. Vale of Catmose and C. Rutland Water Basin that are not sub-divided) includes:

- A detailed map illustrating its location and a general description of its location and boundaries;
- Description of key landscape characteristics;
- Description of the main forces for landscape change, with reference to key issues affecting landscape sensitivity;
- The overall landscape management strategy for the LCA, with guidelines for the type of measures that should be taken to achieve the overall strategy, expressed as either one or more of:

Conserve - where the main objective is to conserve the existing character of the landscape;

Enhance - where opportunities should be taken to enhance existing character through introduction of new landscape elements and features (for example the planting of new hedgerows and hedgerow trees to restore historic field patterns) or by managing existing landscape elements and features differently (for example increasing the biodiversity of intensively managed grassland and arable land by managing and linking buffer strips along linear features such as hedgerows to create a continuous network of wildlife corridors);

Restore / Re-create - where opportunities should be taken to restore/re-create some key aspects of the landscape (for example orchards) or create new landscapes through landscape restoration.

- Photographs are provided at the end of the descriptions to illustrate some of the key landscape characteristics and other features of the landscape. Annotations are provided in Part 2 Section 3 corresponding to each photograph number.

Throughout Part 1 and Part 2, the names of each of the landscape character areas (LCAs) are given in *italics* to help the reader to differentiate them from the landscape character types (LCTs).

## Consultation

It is recognised that it is important to involve stakeholders and other interested parties in the process of providing an updated characterisation of Rutland's landscapes. As Natural England states in their '*Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*', "The involvement of people in the process of LCA is key. Both communities of place and communities of interest must be engaged in LCA".

As referred to above, the current Rutland LCA has served the County well for almost twenty years. Based predominantly on the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland *Landscape and Woodland Strategy*, 2001, that had involved extensive consultation, the current Rutland LCA

has been widely consulted on as an important part of the background evidence to each Local Plan review since its publication in 2003.

This Consultation Draft report has been sent to a range of stakeholders and interested parties for comment on the proposed changes to the current landscape classification prior to finalising the new Rutland Landscape Character Assessment. The new LCA will be available as part of the evidence base supporting the new Local Plan as it progresses to the Examination in Public and adoption.

### 3. LANDSCAPE CHANGE

An important part of the study was to identify changes in the landscape that had occurred over the past twenty years and to evaluate whether these have affected the character of the landscape since the previous Rutland Landscape Character Assessment was written in 2003.

The type of change considered includes built and permitted development (development with planning permission but not yet built) such as housing, commercial, business and industrial development affecting the countryside (i.e. within the countryside and on the edge of settlements); new transport and energy developments and infrastructure; minerals extraction; agricultural change including changes in land use and buildings in the countryside; woodland change; tree diseases such as acute oak decline and chalara ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*); continued development of the landscape and habitats around Rutland Water and its increased use as a tourist attraction.

Overall, there has been relatively little landscape change in Rutland over the past twenty years. The change that has occurred has been limited in extent and has not significantly changed the character of the landscape that might otherwise have led to a change in the classification of Rutland's landscapes. Changes that have occurred are referred to in the descriptions of each landscape character area and are principally:

- Growth of the principal county market town of Oakham to the north and east, including completion of the A606 northern bypass linking the A6003 south of the town to join Oakham Road to the north between Barleythorpe and Langham. Growth of roadside planting creates a significant landscape corridor separating the town from the Showground and rugby pitches within the countryside north of the bypass;
- Expansion of the market town of Uppingham to the north and west;
- Limited new building in some villages including use of unsympathetic standardised materials and landscape treatments eroding architectural and historic character;
- Closure of HM Prison Ashwell and conversion into Oakham Enterprise Park;
- Wireless Hill Industrial Estate at South Luffenham;
- Conversion of RAF Cottesmore to Kendrew Army Barracks, with resulting limited use of the airfield;
- Increase in telecommunications and mobile phone masts throughout more elevated parts of the landscape;
- Removal of overhead power line and pylons from the Gwash Valley;

- Renewable energy developments, including solar farms at Uppingham and Ketton, and small scale wind turbines (there are no large turbines or wind farms in Rutland);
- Large equestrian enterprises creating well-managed landscapes, for example at Langham and Great Casterton, and an increase in horse paddocks especially on the edge of villages;
- Continuation of crushed rock (limestone) quarrying at Clipsham, Greetham, and Woolfox (where there is also permission for processing of construction waste to produce recycled aggregates), the re-opening of a previously inactive ironstone quarry at Thistleton for limestone extraction (including construction of a dedicated haul road), quarrying of limestone for building stone at Stretton, and limestone and clay extraction for the manufacture of cement at Ketton;
- Restoration of disused ironstone quarry at Exton;
- Maturing of the roadside planting along the A1 and A47 creating significant landscape corridors;
- New woodland planting and management, including Woodland Trust community woodlands at Oakham and Braunston-in-Rutland, Stretton, North Luffenham (commercial Christmas tree enterprise), Stoke Dry Wood, Wardly Wood, Lyddington and Caldercott;
- Other tree planting including field shelter belts and small copse management for field sports;
- Maturing golf course landscapes at Greetham, Luffenham and Woolfox;
- Agricultural intensification leading to increase in prominent agricultural buildings, hedgerow and hedgerow tree removal, enlargement of arable fields, and deterioration and loss of drystone walls, for example on the Rutland Plateau;
- Tree diseases in particular ash dieback, for example in the vicinity of Ashwell;
- Increased leisure facilities throughout the countryside, including camping sites, recreational (footpath / cycleway) trails;
- Increase in use of Rutland Water reservoir as a leisure destination and maturing of boundary planting and habitats of international importance for nature conservation.

## 4. INTRODUCTION TO THE CHARACTER OF RUTLAND'S LANDSCAPES

In England there is a hierarchy of landscape character assessments, from the broad scale national character assessments through regional and county scale assessments to those at the district scale. At the most detailed scale, site-specific landscape character assessments are sometimes undertaken. At each level in the hierarchy more detail is added, in principle, with the broader national scale providing a context for the district scale assessments.

The character of Rutland's landscapes is described at the national scale within four National Character Area (NCA) profiles by Natural England (updated in 2013 and 2014). Figure 2 provides an overlay map showing the NCA boundaries against the 2022 revised landscape classification. At the national level, most of the western and southern parts of the county lie within High Leicestershire NCA. The southern fringe of the county along the River Welland falls within the Northamptonshire Vales NCA, whilst immediately beyond the county boundary is Rockingham Forest NCA. To the north is the Leicestershire & Nottinghamshire Wolds NCA, and to the east the Kesteven Uplands NCA.

The character of Rutland's landscapes is also described at the regional level in the *East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment* (2010), and at the county scale in the *Leicester Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy* (2001), the *Rutland Landscape Character Assessment* (2003), and the *Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation* (2019).

These assessments show that the variety of Rutland's landscapes changes across a relatively small geographic area. Several areas of distinctively individual landscape character are identified across England's smallest (both in population and area) and most rural county. This diversity and complexity have been created by the varied physical and human influences that have acted on the land over time and by the underlying variations in the land itself.

### Geological and Physical Influences

The underlying geology is particularly influential on the localised pattern of Rutland's landform, land cover and land use. Rutland is a moderately hilly and rolling county cut by rivers flowing predominantly west to east from the uplands of Leicestershire to the Lincolnshire fenlands, in valleys of varying width, reflecting the underlying, relatively simple, Jurassic geology. The Eye Brook and smaller streams flow southwards to the River Welland, with less incised streams to the north-west of the county flowing from south to north to the River Witham. Rutland's highest point reaches 197m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) close to the county boundary to the west of Oakham, with the lowest point of 17m AOD on the county's eastern boundary between Essendine and Ryhall.

There is only one minor folding and faulting of the geological strata of Rutland deposited during the Lower and Middle Jurassic Periods, running north-south through the middle of

the county along a line approximately from Market Overton in the north to south of Morcott. Thin irregular and unconsolidated spreads of Boulder Clay and some superficial sands and gravels, which were deposited during the Pleistocene glaciations, conceal the solid geology over large parts, mainly in the hilly areas in the southwest and northeast, of the county. This has the effect of creating landscapes where character area boundaries are not always clearly defined because of the lack of strong physical features.

To the west of the county are the underlying sedimentary mudstones and limestones, with ironstones and clay, of the Lower Jurassic period, where the lowland area abuts the outliers of hard Precambrian crystalline rocks which form the prominent hills in the neighbouring county of Leicestershire. Harder bands of limestone tend to stand out as small ridges, cut by radiating watercourses. Warm red-brown hued ironstone is a common and distinctive building material in the west of the county.

To the east of the county, the Middle Jurassic strata dip gently eastwards producing characteristic north-south scarp lands (similar to those of the Cotswolds). The scarps are predominately formed by limestones, with ironstones and sandstones. The lower beds of the Middle Jurassic are sandy and iron rich and are less resistant to weathering than the overlying limestones. Where they crop out in east and central Rutland they produce rich red soils. By contrast the overlying limestones show little change in character over the length of their outcrop. They comprise the Lincolnshire Limestone Formation and Siliceous Clay (Rutland Formation) which underlies much of the eastern half of the county. The limestones form a relatively flat, open plateau landscape which dips gently away to the east. Supporting predominantly arable farming with large fields, there are also numerous large blocks of woodland on the plateau, many being of significant ecological value. Calcareous grasslands including roadside verges are of important nature conservation value on the limestones of eastern Rutland.

The Vale of Catmose comprises a broad, relatively flat-bottomed valley basin surrounded by higher land of High Rutland to the west, the Wolds to the north and the Rutland Plateau to the east. This is a generally open landscape which supports mixed farming. Little treescape is present although woodland on the higher ground around Burley is visually significant.

Some isolated pockets of glacial, sub-alluvial and river terrace sand and gravel deposits exist around the edge of the county, particularly in the Welland Valley, although there is no history of sand and gravel extraction in Rutland. The wide shallow river valley supports pasture and meadows on the floodplain and arable on the valley sides. With the exception of waterside willows and old pollards, the Welland Valley has little woodland.

Rutland's ferruginous sandstones and ironstones (containing iron oxides) have commonly been used for building throughout the county, while limestone (at Ketton and Clipsham) is of both local and national importance. In the past, when the county of Rutland came under ownership of the two great estates of Ancaster and Burghley, almost every town and village had its own quarry, consequently many of the buildings reflect their immediate underlying geology. This, together with relatively limited industrial growth and constrained expansion of the two main market towns of Oakham and Uppingham, has meant that much of the county's stone-built village character has been retained.

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century technological improvements enabled the extraction of iron previously difficult to obtain from the stone. This meant that the lower quality 'iron' stone could now be used by the industry. Large open surface mines were created in the ironstone outcrops around Pilton and Market Overton. This resource is now virtually exhausted both as an ore and as a building stone source.

Rutland has traditionally been renowned as a rural, green county, well known for its grasslands and sheep grazing, with an extensive network of hedgerows, field ponds and fox coverts, although much of this pattern of landscape dates only from the enclosures of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Pasture usually occupies the lower lying clay soils on the slopes and in the valleys, more difficult to work than the lighter and more loamy limestones and ironstones that are thus more suited to arable usage and found capping the higher ground. The proportion of land in arable cultivation has increased at the expense of pasture since World War II, with many hedgerows and field ponds lost over the same period.

Much of the original natural woodland across the county was cleared but local concentrations of deciduous woodland and spinneys provide significant landscape and wildlife interest within the agricultural landscape. The notable concentration of surviving natural and semi-natural ancient woodlands that comprise Leighfield Forest along the western side of the county between Oakham and Stockerston over the border into Leicestershire, mark the remnants of the medieval royal hunting lands of the Forest of Rutland.

## **Cultural Influences**

Although Rutland in Roman times was a predominantly agricultural landscape, with the population distributed mainly in dispersed farmsteads, evidence of large villas has been discovered, and the Roman fort at Great Casterton was later expanded to create a town. This occupied a strategic location on the River Gwash and alongside Ermine Street which ran along much of the line of the present day A1.

A pattern of settlement of predominantly villages and hamlets surrounded by a collective open field farming system was mostly in place by Domesday after the Norman invasion and conquest of England in 1066. Evidence of ridge and furrow is an indication of the ploughing of land during the medieval period. At this time the Royal hunting forests were in existence.

With the division of England into ecclesiastical parishes during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the parish church arose as a visible symbol and centre of a new community. In Rutland there are small and unpretentious churches but others are far grander with spectacular spires built from local stone (Ketton's church tower and spire is a particularly good example) and prominent landmarks in the Rutland landscape.

Rutland's landscape was significantly altered by the enclosure of land by dividing fields with hedge planting over several centuries. Early enclosures often have more irregular fields than the Parliamentary Enclosures of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with local variations including

field ponds for watering stock and fox coverts created on poorer pasture areas to replace natural cover that had been cleared. Enclosure was accompanied by the realignment of minor roads and their construction to a standard width, giving characteristically straight rural roads with wide verges, and in places limestone walls. Enclosure also led to the loss of villages as private landlords rearranged their land holdings (other small villages and hamlets on marginal land, for example Pickworth, had been abandoned by successive epidemics in the Middle Ages such as the Black Death). The building of large country houses with extensive formal parkland, including Exton and Burley (a mansion built for the 'prospect' commanding a wide view over the Vale of Catmose), and the amalgamation of farms into large Estates, also influenced the historic pattern of settlement across the county. The *Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation* (2019) identifies the predominant field patterns in Rutland today as Planned Enclosure and Very Large Post War Fields, most of which have a previous character of Planned Enclosure.

Whilst Oakham and Uppingham have grown from agricultural settlements to market towns, most villages retain a strong association with agriculture with a legacy of good stone-built farmhouses, cottages and outbuildings. The style of many buildings dates back to a period of transformation in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that reflected wider economic prosperity, based on growing demand and improvements in agriculture, notably in crop rotation and the wealth generated by sheep farming. This transformation established the distinctive vernacular character with a mix of house types and styles but with a number of common features influenced by the use of a limited range of materials which give a uniformity of appearance.

Most villages are compact and nucleated, well integrated into the landscape. Modern extensions are often linear or with some depth whilst still reflecting historic layouts of a main street and back lane with linking tracks or lanes. Together with Oakham and Uppingham, of the 51 villages or hamlets in Rutland, 34 have designated Conservation Areas (and numerous Listed Buildings) recognising their historic character and appearance. However, historic use of many settlements as working farming villages has been lost, although many retain a working farm in the village. Similar to most rural areas of England, agricultural mechanisation, amalgamation of farms into larger units and improvements in transport and personal mobility mean that the majority of residents are no longer reliant on the village for employment.

Rutland has been associated with fox hunting with hounds for hundreds of years, up until the Government ban in 2005. The Cottesmore Hunt continues to meet to hunt using a combination of laid trails and bird flushing with its equally famous neighbours the Quorn Hunt and the Belvoir Hunt. Miles of tracks, untracked grassland, hedges, coverts and woodland are maintained for the purpose by the Hunt, farmers and other landowners. Similarly, the large farming estates maintain hedges and game cover copses for pheasant and partridge shoots.

The Rutland countryside is also attractive and popular for equestrian uses, including racing stables. Stable buildings, horse fencing, exercise yards, lunge rings, turn-out paddocks, all weather gallops, as well as modern indoor facilities (horse walkers and therapy swimming pools) in purpose made buildings, are distinctive features within the county's landscape.

The building of the Oakham Canal (1804) and railways in the following century had localised impacts on the landscape that continue today. Although the canal and many of the railways have been closed or fallen into disuse they often remain as local landscape features with associated lines of trees, small woodlands and concentrations of sites of ecological value. Today the East Midlands Railway crosses the River Welland on the impressive Welland Viaduct near Seaton, running north-south through Oakham. A Cross Country Rail Service runs west – east between Birmingham and Cambridge, and the East Coast Mainline cuts across the eastern edge of the county at Essendine.

The character and appearance of the middle Gwash valley, passing west-east through the middle of the county to the south and east of Oakham, changed significantly during the 1970s. The construction of the dam wall to the west of Empingham in 1974 where the valley narrowed and the northern and southern arms of the River Gwash met, was followed (contentiously at the time) by the flooding of the valley to create Rutland Water, the largest man-made water reservoir in England (by surface area) and one of the largest artificial waterbodies in Europe. The north and south bays are separated by the Hambleton peninsular rising to around 125m AOD. This area occupying the heart of the county was recognised as part of the Vale of Catmose landscape character area in the *Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy* (2001), which continued northwards; however, the *Rutland Landscape Character Assessment* (2003) recognised the basin of Rutland Water as a distinctive landscape character type in itself, rather than a sub-division of the Vale of Catmose.

Former military airfields at Cottesmore, Edith Weston and Woolfox are characteristic of the Rutland Plateau.

## 5. THE NEW RUTLAND LANDSCAPE CLASSIFICATION

Table 1 shows the updated landscape classification compared with the previous 2003 classification. The new classification is shown in Figure 1.

**Table 1: Rutland Landscape Classification 2003 and 2022**

Landscape Character Types 2003 & 2022	Landscape Character Sub-Areas 2003	Landscape Character Areas 2022
A. High Rutland	Ai. Leighfield Forest	<i>Ai. Leighfield Forest</i>
	Aii. Ridges and Valleys	<i>Aii. Undulating Mixed Farmlands</i>
	Aiii. Eyebrook Valley	<i>Aiii. Eyebrook Basin</i>
	Aiv. Chater Valley	<i>Aiv. Chater Valley</i>
B. Vale of Catmose		
C. Rutland Water Basin		
D. Rutland Plateau	Di. Cottesmore Plateau	<i>Di. Cottesmore Plateau</i>
	Dii. Clay Woodlands	<i>Dii. Clay Woodlands</i>
	Diii. Gwash Valley	<i>Diii. Gwash Valley</i>
	Div. Ketton Plateau	<i>Div. Ketton Plateau</i>
E. Welland Valley	Ei. Middle Valley West (Caldecott to Seaton)	<i>Ei. Middle Valley West (Caldecott to Seaton)</i>
	Eii. Middle Valley East (Barrowden to Tinwell)	<i>Eii. Middle Valley East (Seaton to Tinwell)</i>

Desk study and field survey has revealed that the five landscape character types (LCTs) A to E identified within the 2003 Rutland Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) are still valid, although some of the boundaries have been refined and re-mapped. These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character, sharing broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historical land use, settlement pattern, and perceptual and aesthetic attributes.

As in the 2003 LCA, three of the LCTs are sub-divided into unique landscape character areas (LCAs) as discrete geographical areas of LCTs A, D and E. Landscape character types B. Vale of Catmose and C. Rutland Water Basin are recognised as distinct types of landscape that are not sub-divided into smaller landscape character areas.

Two landscape character areas, Aii and Aiii are renamed to better reflect their key landscape characteristics.

## Boundary Changes

The key boundary changes to the landscape character types (LCTs) and landscape character areas (LCAs) previously identified within the 2003 Rutland Landscape Character Assessment are as follows:

### LCT A. High Rutland

**Ai. Leighfield Forest** landscape character area extended to the north, east and south to incorporate the majority of the area of the former Medieval Royal Hunting Forest recognised by the same name by the Forestry Commission, Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and Leicestershire County Council. Its distinctive, steeply rolling landform with ridges higher and narrower than the rest of High Rutland, intimate to medium scale, and mosaic of landscapes including woodland (including Wardley Wood and Stoke Dry Wood previously lying within the Eyebrook Valley), streams, marshes, meadows, tree-lined hedges, small villages and farms and predominantly pastoral land use, together form an area of high landscape, nature conservation and historical importance to be conserved and restored. In extending the *Leighfield Forest* LCA, emphasis is placed on the important role of landscape character assessment in informing judgements and decisions concerning the management of change; along the lines of The Leighfield Forest Project initiative, a partnership of organisations<sup>13</sup> committed to encouraging the appropriate management of the wildlife, landscape and traditions of the area.

**Aii. Ridges and Valleys renamed *Undulating Mixed Farmlands*** landscape character area to better describe the varied landform of broad rolling ridges, steep sided valleys, rounded hills and undulating lowlands, and to distinguish it from the more dramatic ridges and valleys of *Ai. Leighfield Forest*. Slight amendment to its boundaries with LCT B. Vale of Catmose to the east of Whissendine and west of Oakham, and LCT E. Welland Valley.

**Aiii. Eyebrook Valley renamed *Eyebrook Basin*** landscape character area to recognise its reduced size now centred on the Eyebrook Reservoir since the Eyebrook Valley north of the reservoir is now incorporated into *Ai. Leighfield Forest*. Re-naming provides consistency of terminology with LCT C. Rutland Water Basin.

**Aiv. Chater Valley** landscape character area is extended to the east to include the intimate river valley landscape at Aldgate and south Ketton, and to the west of Geeston. The River Chater continues to the east of Ketton where it joins the valley of the River Welland.

### LCT B. Vale of Catmose

As in the 2003 Rutland LCA this landscape character type has not been further divided into smaller landscape character areas. Slight amendment to its boundary with *Aii.* to the east of Whissendine and west of Oakham. The boundary with LCT D. Rutland Plateau to the east is drawn to follow the 125m AOD contour which for most of its length follows the bottom of the steep scarp slope marking the edge of the plateau.

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<sup>13</sup> The Leighfield Forest Project was supported by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, English Nature, Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, Forestry Commission, Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust, and the Rural Development Scheme.

**LCT C. Rutland Water Basin** is retained as existing, with no division into smaller landscape character areas.

#### **LCT D. Rutland Plateau**

**Di. *Cottesmore Plateau*** landscape character area is reduced in size to comprise only the northern half of the previous area, recognising the more conventional flat, open, plateau character than the area to the south and east, its more open character with large arable fields and limited woodland cover, more man-made influences (especially around the former airfield, and quarries) and limited historical importance.

**Dii. *Clay Woodlands*** landscape character area is extended to include the current southern area of Di. *Cottesmore Plateau*, as referred to above, recognising the similarity in woodland cover, parkland, farmed estates, large to medium scale, nature conservation and historical importance in particular.

**Diii. *Gwash Valley*** landscape character area is extended to include the river and valley that continues to the east and south of Ryhall, as the River Gwash flows southwards to join the River Welland to the east of Stamford.

**Div. *Ketton Plateau*** landscape character area boundary amended to the south to follow the main A6121 road through Ketton, recognising that the higher landscape to the north lies within the Rutland Plateau whilst to the south is the more intimate river valley landscape of the Chater and Welland. The isolated 'island' area between LCT Diii. *Gwash Valley* and Stamford is now included within LCA Div. *Ketton Plateau* because of its similar characteristics.

#### **LCT E. Welland Valley**

**Ei. *Middle Valley West (Caldecott to Seaton)*** landscape character area boundary slightly amended to the north to follow the top of the river valley slope and recognising that land to the north of the valley lies within Aii. *Undulating Mixed Farmlands* landscape character area.

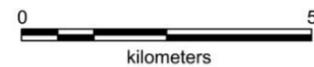
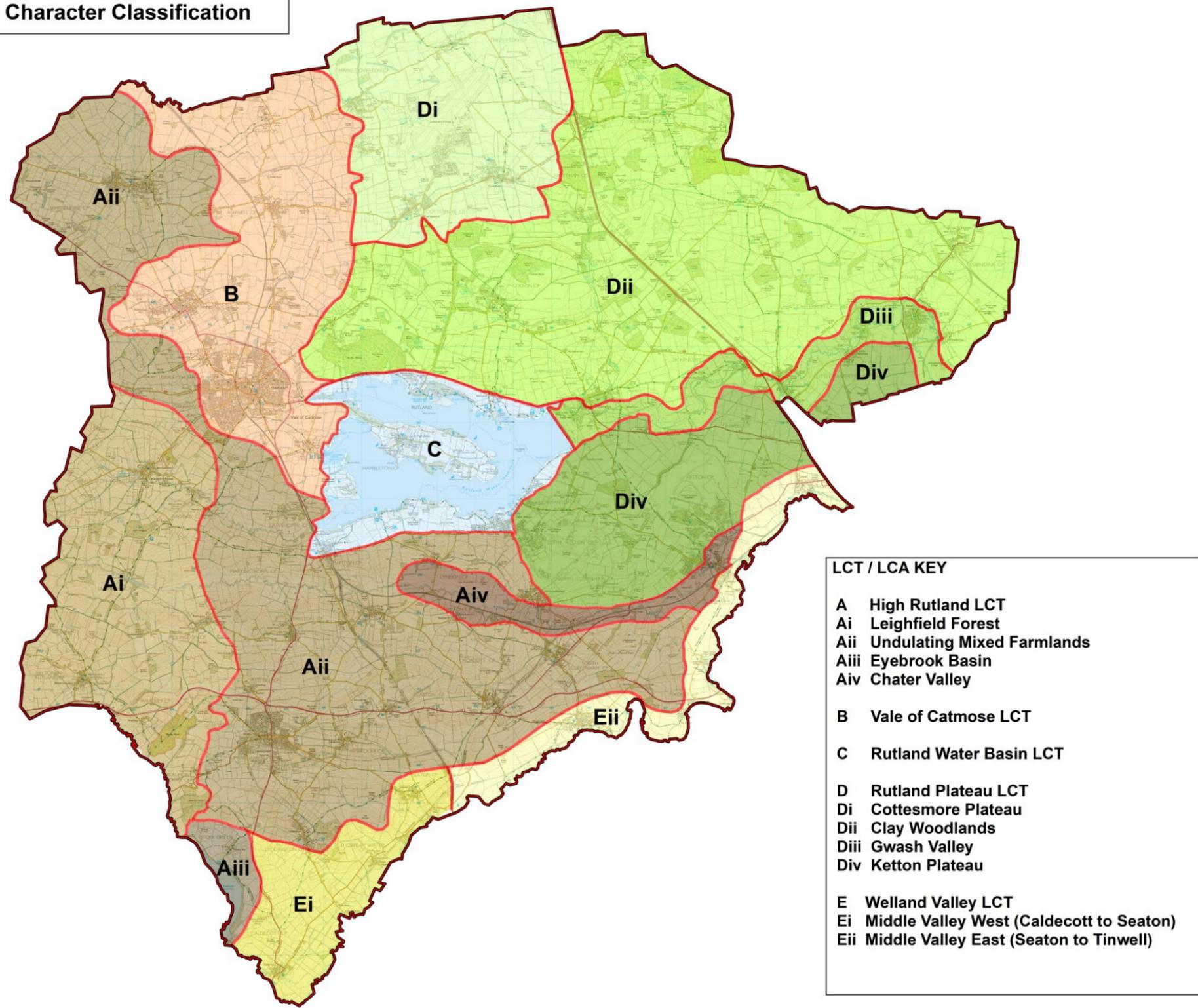
**Eii. *Middle Valley East (Seaton to Tinwell)*** landscape character area, as above, boundary slightly amended to the north to follow the top of the river valley slope and recognising that land to the north of the valley lies within Aii. *Undulating Mixed Farmlands* landscape character area and Aiv. *Chater Valley* landscape character area.

#### **Note:**

It is important to note that even at a relatively detailed scale of 1:25,000 the boundaries around each landscape character type and landscape character area are not precise and should be regarded as representing zones of transition from one landscape to another (character rarely changes abruptly). To ensure consistency in mapping the boundaries the following decisions were made:

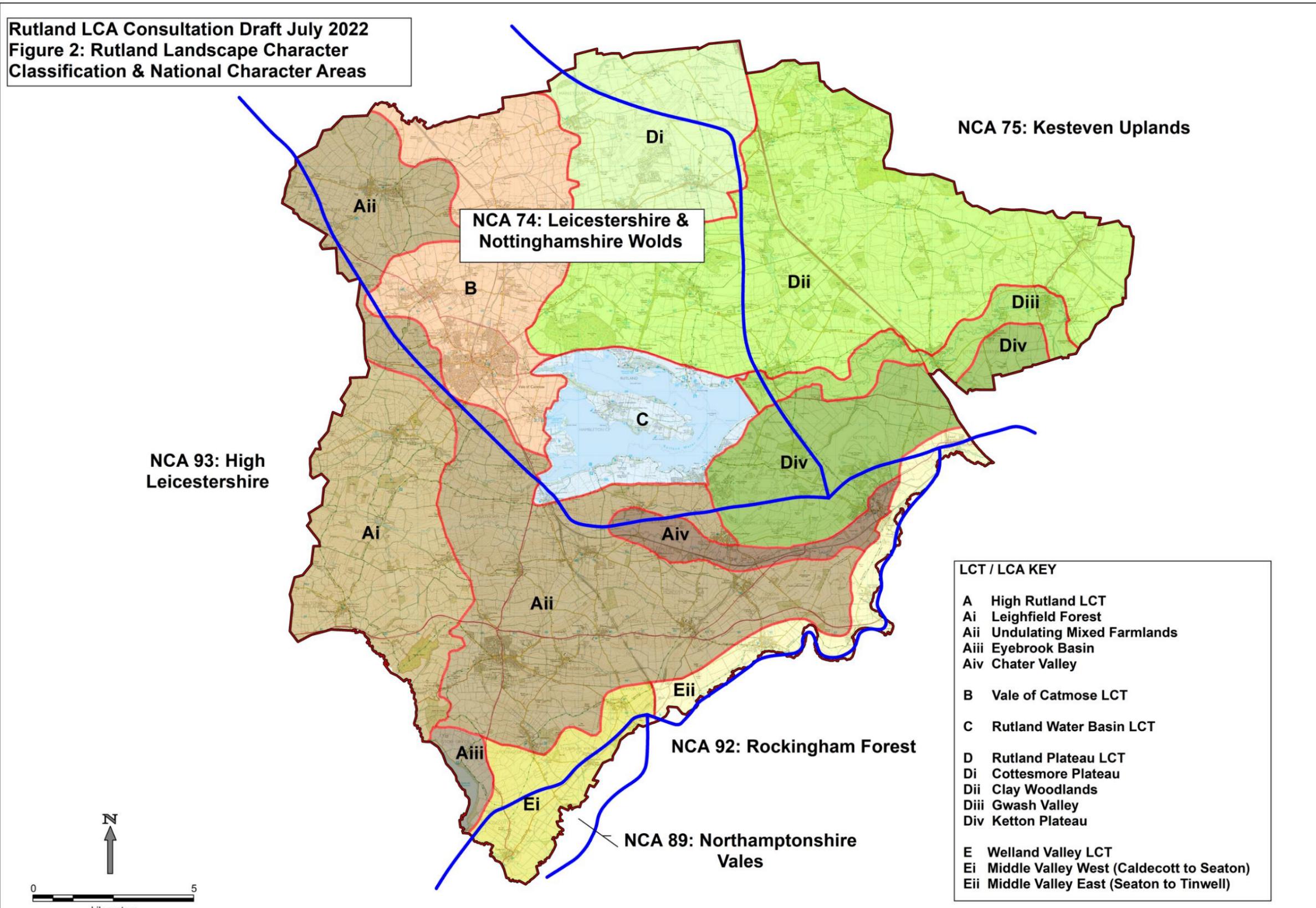
- To include the steep scarp slope within the Rutland Plateau separating it from the Vale of Catmose (by following the 125m AOD contour between landscape character types D and B).
- In general, to include the river valley sides as well as the valley floor in defining river valleys, by drawing the boundary at the top of the slope whilst identifying land beyond the slope as lying within a different landscape type.

Rutland LCA Consultation Draft June 2022  
 Figure 1: Rutland Landscape Character Classification



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Rutland LCA Consultation Draft July 2022  
 Figure 2: Rutland Landscape Character Classification & National Character Areas



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## APPENDIX 1

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

(reproduced from *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*, Natural England, 2014)

**Characterisation\*** -The process of identifying areas of similar character, classifying and mapping them and describing their character.

**Characteristics\*** -Elements, or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to distinctive character.

**Classification\*** -Is concerned with dividing the landscape into areas of distinct, recognisable and consistent common character and grouping areas of similar character together.

**Elements\*** -Individual components which make up the landscape, such as trees and hedges.

**Features\*** -Particularly prominent or eye-catching elements, like tree clumps, church towers, or wooded skylines.

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

**Landscape Capacity\*\*** -The degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without unacceptable adverse effects on its character. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of the change being proposed.

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

**Landscape Character Areas\*** -Single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type. Each has its own individual character and identity, even though it shares the same generic characteristics with other types.

**Landscape Character Assessment** -The process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive. This process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment.

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

**Landscape Quality (or condition) \*\*** -is based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual, functional, and ecological perspectives. It

also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements which make up the character in any one place.

**Landscape Sensitivity\*\*** -The extent to which a landscape can accept change of a particular type and scale without unacceptable adverse effects on its character.

**Landscape Value\*\*** -The relative value or importance attached to a landscape (often as a basis for designation or recognition), which expresses national or local consensus, because of its quality, special qualities including perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness, cultural associations or other conservation issues.

Sources:

\* Countryside Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (CAX 84)*

\*\* Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2002), *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Second Edition.*

\*\*\* Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013), *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition.*

## **Definitions from the European Landscape Convention, Florence, 20th October 2000**

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

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

**Landscape quality objective** - for a specific landscape, the formulation by the competent public authorities of the aspirations of the public with regard to the landscape features of their surroundings.

**Landscape protection** - actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity.

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

**Landscape planning** - strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes.

## APPENDIX 2

### BACKGROUND TO LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION IN RUTLAND

Plans and policies have long sought to protect the distinctiveness of Rutland's landscapes, often merging landscape evaluation, in terms of its quality, condition and appearance, with assessment and description of landscape character.

#### Pre 2000

Between 1974 and 1997 strategic planning in the area was the responsibility of Leicestershire County Council. A landscape appraisal by Leicestershire County Council in 1976 (which included Rutland) identified twenty-three 'landscape character zones' based on a consideration of geology, landform, soils, land capability, vegetation, woodland, land use and field pattern. This helped to inform policies within the Rutland Structure Plan as prepared by Leicestershire County Council to cover the period 1976 to 1991 (approved in 1979) and Alteration No. 1 for the period 1981 to 1996 (approved in 1987). Both plans had a general theme of positive environmental conservation, in response to the high housing growth of the 1960s and early 1970s, and the increasing numbers of tourists and day visitors due to the perceived attractive character of the area and the presence of visitor attractions, most notably Rutland Water, as well as the close proximity of large population centres. Whilst this was of benefit to the local economy, there was a concern to protect the character of the area.

The Leicestershire and Rutland Structure Plans were superseded by the replacement Leicestershire Structure Plan in 1994 and the Rutland Local Plan in 2001 (both covering the period 1991 to 2006). The policies and proposals of the Rutland Local Plan were drafted to help achieve the objectives identified in the Council's Corporate Strategy as follows:

*"To pursue the conservation of Rutland's special character in a manner which satisfies the need and potential for development, including the strengthening and diversification of the local economy, in a way that wherever possible enhances the quality of the environment for the benefit of the local community and does not prejudice the needs of the future".* Amongst other objectives, this was to entail:

- *Providing for development which minimises the impact on the natural and built environment, as well as the appearance of the countryside.*
- *Conserving and enhancing Rutland's heritage, its rural character and the natural and built environment.*
- *Minimising development in the countryside.*

Development in the countryside (defined as the area beyond the planned limits of development of settlements) was strictly controlled in the Rutland Local Plan, 2001, with the countryside safeguarded for its own sake. Under Policy EN26, planning permission

would only be granted for essential, appropriate development in the countryside, as specified under the policy, provided that, amongst other criteria:

- *The development itself, or cumulatively with other development, would not be detrimental to the character and appearance of the landscape and the setting of towns and villages.*
- *The development would not reduce the intervening open land between settlements so that their individual identity is compromised, would not erode the visual perception of the separateness of settlements and would not adversely affect the character of the intervening land so that the distinctiveness of the settlements is undermined.*

The Leicestershire Structure Plan, 1994, had classified much of Rutland as comprising Areas of Particularly Attractive Countryside (APAC) principally in the southern and central parts of the County. The delineation of these broad tracts of countryside was based on a survey undertaken by Rutland District Council in 1990. The Rutland Local Plan, 2001, defined more precisely the boundaries of these APACs, as shown on the proposals map, and formulated policies for their protection and enhancement. In addition, the Local Plan identified smaller Areas of Local Landscape Value (ALLV). Under Policy EN28 planning permission would only be granted for development in these areas of 'special landscape value' (as so described in the Local Plan, i.e. APACs and ALLVs) where it complies with Policy EN26 and does not adversely affect the special character and appearance of the landscape.

Furthermore, it was recognised that it was particularly important that development proposals in these areas of special landscape value should identify and acknowledge features and characteristics of importance to the landscape and use them to advantage. This could comprise the tree cover and hedgerow pattern of an area, the local landform, whether open and flat, undulating or hilly and incised, the presence of water in the landscape e.g. lakes, ponds, streams and rivers and the character, form and appearance of existing development.

It was around this time, in the early to mid-1990s, that the technique of landscape assessment was developed by the (then) Countryside Commission (afterwards the Countryside Agency), expanding its long association with areas designated as being of national importance to include concerns about the active management of the wider countryside. Its work highlighted the need for a consistent and comprehensive understanding of what gave the countryside of England its character, culminating in the publication of Landscape Assessment Guidance in 1993<sup>14</sup>. Jointly with English Nature (afterwards Natural England), the Countryside Commission undertook its Countryside Character Programme of the mid-1990s and published the Character of England Map in 1996, identifying and describing 159 Joint Character Areas across the whole of England at the strategic, national scale.

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<sup>14</sup> Countryside Commission (1993) Landscape Assessment Guidance, CCP 423.

This was accompanied by summary Regional Character Area descriptions, each including characteristic features of nature conservation and landscape interest. Four Regional Character Areas covered Rutland and its neighbouring counties:

- Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds, in the northern and central areas of Rutland, and extending into Leicestershire to the north;
- High Leicestershire, in the western and southern parts of Rutland, and extending into Leicestershire to the west;
- Kesteven Uplands, in the extreme northern and eastern areas of Rutland, and extending into Lincolnshire;
- Northamptonshire Vales, in the extreme southwestern part of Rutland, and extending into Northamptonshire.

The Regional Character Areas were aggregated by English Nature into larger Natural Areas having similar types of wildlife and natural features. Three Natural Areas cover Rutland and its neighbouring counties:

- Trent Valley and Rises, incorporating the Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds and High Leicestershire Regional Character Areas, and extending into Leicestershire to the north and west;
- Leicestershire and Rutland Limestone, corresponding with the Kesteven Uplands Regional Character Area, and extending into Lincolnshire to the north and east;
- West Anglian Plain, corresponding with the Northamptonshire Vales Regional Character Area, and extending into Northamptonshire to the southwest.

Also, during the mid to late 1990s Scottish Natural Heritage undertook a national programme of landscape character assessments throughout Scotland.

Using the Countryside Commission's Landscape Assessment Guidance and the growing experience of preparing landscape character assessments throughout the UK, Leicestershire County Council's Landscape Team began work on the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland *Landscape and Woodland Strategy*, which was published in 2001. This used the landscape character zones identified in 1976 (referred to above) as its basis for reviewing the character of Leicestershire (including Rutland) taking into account significant forces for change in the landscape over the previous two decades, in particular continued urban, retail and commercial growth, new road building, continuing agricultural change, Dutch Elm Disease in the late 1970s, and development of the new landscape around Rutland Water (constructed during the early to mid-1970s to meet part of the nation's increasing demands for water, the reservoir was bringing significant dramatic and rapid change to the rural character of central Rutland; the potential of the vast water resource covering some 3100 acres was quickly being realised as it was fast becoming a major focus in the region for sailing and

fishing and of international importance for nature conservation, as well as for casual recreational pursuits such as picnicking, walking, cycling and sight-seeing).

Following consultation with other local authorities, the Countryside Commission and English Nature, the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland *Landscape and Woodland Strategy* identified eighteen distinctive character areas across Leicestershire and Rutland (from the previous twenty-three 'landscape character zones'). Four of these landscape character areas lie within Rutland, showing a broad correlation with the nation-wide Regional Character Areas although with boundary differences to be expected at the finer county level:

- High Leicestershire, in the western and southern parts of Rutland, largely corresponding with the High Leicestershire Regional Character Area and extending into Leicestershire to the west;
- Vale of Catmose, in the northern and central areas of Rutland, largely corresponding with the Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds Regional Character Area;
- Cottesmore Plateau, in the northern and eastern areas of Rutland, largely corresponding with the Kesteven Uplands Regional Character Area, and extending into Lincolnshire to the north and east;
- Welland Valley, along the southern and extreme southwestern parts of Rutland, corresponding partly with the Northamptonshire Vales Regional Character Area, and extending into Northamptonshire to the south.

The Strategy provides guidelines for conserving and enhancing the unique character, diversity and local distinctiveness of these landscapes, including identifying appropriate opportunities for new woodland planting and to encourage the sustainable management of existing woodland resources.

## **Post 2000**

Over the years the early landscape assessment guidance evolved to culminate in the best practice approach in *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland*, developed by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot) in 2002.

Around about the same time the Council of Europe meet in Florence and produced the *European Landscape Convention* (ELC), in October 2000 (the UK Government signed up to the ELC in 2006). The ELC definition of "landscape" is:

*"....an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and / or human factors."*

The scope of the ELC applies to natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas and includes land, inland water and marine areas. As the ELC acknowledges, *"the landscape is an important*

*part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas”.*

With this wider understanding of what landscape character is, and updated guidance and experience on how landscape character assessment should be undertaken, Rutland County Council commissioned a County-wide Landscape Character Assessment in 2003. This used the 2001 Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland *Landscape and Woodland Strategy* as the basis for a Rutland Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) at a more detailed scale (1:25 000 scale), with the specific requirement of assisting the Council in its policies and proposals in the emerging development plan and to inform the preparation of countryside design guidance. Its purpose was also to help others involved in the development and land use change in the countryside, by identifying what is important and distinctive about the Rutland landscape, so that future change could be managed to conserve and enhance, and where necessary restore, that distinctiveness and the characteristics that make Rutland special and gives the County its sense of place.

Subsequent Local Plans setting out the spatial strategy and planning policies for Rutland (within Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Documents) have sought to conserve and enhance the quality and diversity of Rutland’s natural environment by requiring development to respect and be appropriate to the landscape character type within which it is situated (as identified and described in the Rutland LCA) and contribute to its conservation, enhancement or restoration, or the creation of appropriate new features.

Policy SP23 in the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document (DPD), adopted October 2014, states:

*“Proposals to develop on land in the countryside will only be permitted where the development complies with either Policy SP6 (Housing in the countryside) or Policy SP7 (Non-residential development in the countryside) and Policy SP15 (Design and amenity) and Policy SP19 (Biodiversity and geodiversity conservation).*

*New development in and adjoining the countryside will only be acceptable where it is designed so as to be sensitive to its landscape setting. Development will be expected to enhance the distinctive qualities of the landscape character types in which it would be situated, including the distinctive elements, features, and other spatial characteristics as identified in the Council’s current Rutland Landscape Character Assessment.*

*Proposals will be expected to respond to the recommended landscape objectives for the character area within which it is situated.”*

Policy SP26 in the Site Allocations and Policies DPD, 2014, replaced eight separate policies in the 2001 Rutland Local Plan relating to development in the Rutland Water Area. The intention was to continue the largely successful previous policy approach in protecting the nature conservation interests of the reservoir and retaining the unspoilt and tranquil nature of the area, while accommodating recreation and tourism needs.

Similarly, Policy SP27 in the Site Allocations and Policies DPD, 2014, retained the previous Policy LE22 within the 2001 Rutland Local Plan for the Eyebrook Reservoir Area. The intention was to continue the largely successful previous policy approach in protecting the tranquil and unspoilt character of the area around Eyebrook Reservoir.

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **GIS DATA COLLATED DURING THE DESK STUDY**

#### **Man-made Features**

Main roads, railways, rivers, and settlements  
Rutland Water & Eyebrook Reservoir

#### **Landscape Designations**

APAC & ALLV  
Registered Parks & Gardens  
Rutland Water Area

#### **Nature Conservation Designations and Habitats**

RAMSAR  
SPA  
SSSI  
SAC & CSAC  
LWS & CLWS  
RIGS  
BAP Habitats  
Nature Reserve

#### **Landform and Drainage**

Topography  
Main Rivers  
Rutland Water & Eyebrook Reservoir

#### **Geology and Soils**

Solid and Drift Geology  
Agricultural Land Classification (ALC)

#### **Land Use and Land Cover**

Land use (include quarries and airfields)  
Woodland, including Ancient Woodland (Semi-Natural and Replanted)

#### **Heritage Assets and Historic Character**

Scheduled Monuments  
Registered Historic Parks & Gardens  
Conservation Areas  
Listed Buildings  
Undesignated Heritage Assets  
Historic Landscape Character

#### **Tranquillity and Intrusion**

From CPRE mapping

#### **Recreation and Access**

National Trails and Promoted Routes  
Sustrans National Cycle Network routes  
Access Land (managed by the NT / FC / WT)  
Recreation Areas

## APPENDIX 4

### TARGETED FIELDWORK

- Boundary between High Rutland & Vale of Catmose to N & E of Whissendine (a transitional landscape between the Vale and High Rutland)
- Boundary between High Rutland & Vale of Catmose to W of Oakham (High Rutland 'fringe' is more High Rutland than Vale?)
- Boundary between Vale of Catmose & Rutland Plateau along the scarp slope between Market Overton & Burley (should the scarp slope be included within the Plateau or the Vale? Currently the boundary seems to be halfway down the slope)
- Boundary of A(i) *Leighfield Forest* with A(ii) *Ridges & Valleys* & A(iii) *Eyebrook Valley* (Forestry Commission and Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust restoration plans for Leighfield Forest is relevant; is *Eyebrook Valley* a separate landscape character area or part of a wider *Leighfield Forest*?)
- Boundary of Vale of Catmose & Rutland Water Basin at Gunthorpe (some high ground at Gunthorpe currently shown within the Vale)
- Northern boundary of E(i) & E(ii) (should river valley boundary be at the top or bottom of the valley slope? Currently the boundary seems to be halfway down the slope)
- Should D(i) *Cottesmore Plateau* be split into two LCAs, north & south? (area to south around Exton is now restored former ironstone workings?)
- Boundary of D(i) & D(ii) LCAs within High Rutland LCT
- Should the discrete area between Little Casterton & Stamford be an extension of D(iv) *Ketton Plateau* (lies between the River Gwash to N & E and River Welland to S) and not part of D(ii) as currently shown?