

Harborough Rural Centres

Houghton on the Hill

**Landscape Character Assessment and
Landscape Capacity Study**

for

Harborough District Council

April 2016

Quality control



Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study

of

Houghton on the Hill

for

Harborough District Council

Checked by Project Manager:	Approved by:
Signature: 	Signature: 
Name: Graham Farrier	Name: Jonathan Billingsley
Title: Principal Landscape Architect	Title: Director
Date: 18/03/16	Date: 15/04/16

The Landscape Partnership is registered with the Landscape Institute, the Royal Town Planning Institute, and is a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment

The Landscape Partnership

Registered office
Greenwood House
15a St Cuthberts Street
Bedford
MK40 3JB

Registered in England No. 2709001

Contents

0	Executive Summary
1	Introduction
2	Context
3	Landscape Character Assessment – Methodology
4	Landscape Character Assessment – Sub Areas <i>Houghton-on-the-Hill High Leicestershire</i>
5	Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Capacity <i>Methodology</i>

Drawings

B16007.01 - Local Landscape Character Areas (Houghton-on-the-Hill)
B16007.02 – Local Landscape Character Areas (Houghton-on-the-Hill) – Sensitivity
B16007.03 – Individual Land Parcels (Houghton-on-the-Hill) – Capacity

Appendices

Appendix A – Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal Returns for Parcels

0 Executive Summary

Introduction

- 0.1 The Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study for Houghton on the Hill was commissioned by Harborough District Council in January 2016. The study follows the same approach and methodology as used for the Harborough Rural Centres study produced by The Landscape Partnership for Harborough District Council in 2014. The 2014 study covered six Rural Centres: Billesdon, Fleckney, Great Glen, Husbands Bosworth, Kibworth and Ullesthorpe. The study for Houghton on the Hill is effectively an addendum to the 2014 study following the subsequent identification of Houghton on the Hill, as a potential Rural Centre in the new Local Plan.
- 0.2 The study describes the landscape character sub-area in the vicinity of Houghton on the Hill within the wider 'High Leicestershire' landscape character area. The study also provides a detailed analysis of the landscape sensitivity and capacity of land around the edges of Houghton on the Hill, with a view to assessing the potential suitability to accommodate future development with a focus on residential use. The Study will form part of the evidence base for the preparation of the new Local Plan for Harborough District and its findings will be considered alongside other relevant factors to assess the suitability of settlements to accommodate future development.

Context

- 0.3 This study builds on work undertaken at both the national, county and district scale. At a national level Houghton on the Hill is located fully within National Character Area 93: High Leicestershire.
- 0.4 At a regional level Houghton on the Hill falls entirely within Landscape Character Type 5C: Undulating Mixed Farmlands.
- 0.5 At a county and district level Houghton on the Hill falls within the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area.

Landscape Character Assessment

- 0.6 The methodology used for the Landscape Character Assessment is based on the national guidance found in 'Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland' (2002) and the other associated Topic Papers. The precise approach was also determined to meet the requirements of Harborough District Council in the context of the development of their emerging Local Plan.
- 0.7 The Landscape Character Assessment involved a desk based assessment of the study area using the existing Harborough District Landscape Character Areas together with Landscape Description Units (LDUs), a desk based national data set from Natural England. This was followed by a field survey to refine boundaries, identify key features, record landscape condition and incorporate the visual/aesthetic/perceptual dimension. The built up area of the village, as currently identified in the saved Policy HS/8 'Limits to Development', was not surveyed but the interface of this area with rural areas has been considered. The field survey was carried out in February 2016, visiting all land identified within the study area boundary provided by Harborough District Council.
- 0.8 The Landscape Character Assessment work has identified one local Landscape Character Area, Houghton on the Hill - High Leicestershire. A brief description has been prepared and the key characteristics identified. These form the context for the more detailed stage of work, relating to Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity. As part of the description of the Character Area, a 'Condition and Strength of Character Matrix' is included. This assesses the potential ability of a landscape to adapt to change without losing its intrinsic character, by analysing the condition of the landscape in association with its strength of character. The combined findings derive the general strategy for the Landscape Character Area. In the case of Houghton on the Hill the landscape area is assessed overall as having a moderate 'condition', exhibiting a good 'strength of character' resulting in a strategy to 'conserve and restore'. From this primary strategy the inherent sensitivity of the Houghton on the Hill High Leicestershire Character Area has been identified as Moderate/High Sensitivity.

Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Capacity

- 0.9 The methodology to assess the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development, while respecting its character, is developed from the guidance in Topic Paper 6 – ‘Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity’. This paper forms part of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Heritage ‘Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland’. Reference has also been made to the approach in the publication ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third edition’ 2013.
- 0.10 The methodology developed for this study adopts the premise that:
"existing landscape features+ visual sensitivity = Overall Landscape Sensitivity"
- 0.11 A number of criteria have been selected to evaluate the relative sensitivity of both existing landscape characteristics and visual factors. These criteria reflect both the national guidance in Topic Paper 6 and the particular circumstances for the rural landscape around the selected Rural Centres in Harborough District. The criteria selected to reflect existing landscape characteristics are:
- slope analysis
 - vegetation enclosure
 - complexity and scale of the landscape
 - condition of the landscape.
- The criteria selected to reflect visual sensitivity are:
- openness to public view
 - openness to private views
 - relationship with existing urban built form
 - prevention of coalescence
 - scope to mitigate development
- 0.12 The Overall Landscape Sensitivity provides an evaluation of the sensitivity of a Land Parcel in broad strategic terms. In order to assess the Overall Landscape Capacity of a Land Parcel, ‘landscape value’ was added to the equation, as follows.
"Overall Landscape Sensitivity + Landscape Value = Overall Landscape Capacity"
- 0.13 In the absence of any specific landscape designations at the national or district level the primary designation reflecting landscape value relevant to the Rural Centres within this study has been the Conservation Area and the consideration of any effects on its setting. It is notable that part of the landscape outside the built limits to the south and south east of Houghton on the Hill are also included within the Conservation Area. Previous studies (before the 2014 Rural Areas study) within Harborough District took into account the Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside and Green Wedges (Policy EV/2) in the assessment of landscape value. However, the Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside policy has not been saved and hence is not been included in this study. The Green Wedge Policy while saved does not relate to any areas in close proximity to the rural areas assessed.
- 0.14 To effectively assess the landscape capacity of a site, an assumption is made as to the form that the potential development will take. For the purposes of this study it is assumed that development will include in the main 2 storey residential development. Employment areas will comprise 2-3 storey buildings. It is not anticipated that there will be any taller structures in the assessment unless otherwise stated in the detailed Land Parcel Sheets.
- 0.15 Each Land Parcel identified during fieldwork was assessed against the criteria noted above, using a 5-point scale. The criteria were then scored, with 5 points being awarded to A’s (the most suitable for development) and 1 point to E’s (the least suitable for development). The scores were totalled for each Land Parcel to provide both a Landscape Sensitivity Profile and a Landscape Capacity Profile. The total score was then allocated an Overall Capacity value by using the following range,

based on the range of scores achieved in the 2014 Rural Centres Study to give comparability between all the rural centres.

22 – 25 = Low Landscape Capacity

26 – 29 = Medium-Low Landscape Capacity

30 – 33 = Medium Landscape Capacity

34 – 37 = Medium-High Landscape Capacity

38 – 41 = High Landscape Capacity

- 0.16 A total of 20 different Land Parcels were assessed for Houghton on the Hill. The completed Land Parcel sheets and associated Overall Capacity values identified areas with relatively higher and lower landscape capacity to accommodate new development. For Houghton on the Hill there were no parcels identified as having High or Medium-High capacity. This is partly a reflection of the relatively higher sensitivity of the character area overall.
- 0.17 The Parcels of Low capacity are all located to the south of the village (Parcels 11, 12, 14, 15) and all except Parcel 11 are located within the Conservation Area. Parcels 2, 4, 6, 10 and 19 are assessed as having Medium-Low capacity and are both detached from the village and on steeper slopes. Parcel 16 is adjacent to the village but within the Conservation Area and is also assessed as Medium Low capacity.
- 0.18 Parcels of Moderate capacity are mainly to the west and north of the village (Parcels 1, 3, 5, 7, 8 and 9). Parcel 18 to the east was also assessed as having moderate capacity. Parcel 20 is assessed as having Medium capacity due to visual enclosure but is detached from the village. Parcels 13 and 17 are assessed as having Medium capacity despite being within the Conservation Area. However, both of these Parcels include sports facilities that if developed would need to be provided elsewhere and are therefore less likely to come forward.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Landscape Partnership was commissioned in January 2016 to undertake the preparation of an outline Landscape Character Assessment and a Landscape Capacity Study for the settlement of Houghton-on-the-Hill. The approach followed the format of previous studies undertaken by The Landscape Partnership for Harborough District Council including the Harborough Rural Centres Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study produced in July 2014. The brief for the project required the following main outputs, which will be used to inform the Council's emerging Local Plan:
- An assessment of the landscape character and sensitivity of the landscape character around Houghton-on-the-Hill, building on work undertaken at a county, district and local level; and
 - A detailed analysis of the sensitivity of land around the perimeter of Houghton on the Hill to assess its capacity to accommodate future development, particularly residential.
- 1.2 The assessment work has been undertaken in two stages. Stage One involved the identification of the Landscape Character Area of Houghton-on-the-Hill and the key characteristics present. The areas identified are effectively 'sub areas' of the character areas already established in the Harborough District Council Landscape Character Assessment which in the context of this study include 'High Leicestershire'. This stage does not constitute a fully detailed Landscape Character Assessment, but was sufficient to provide context, at an appropriate scale, for Stage Two.
- 1.3 Stage Two involved a more detailed consideration of the landscape sensitivity and landscape capacity of Houghton-on-the-Hill. This was considered at a smaller scale of 'Land Parcels' based around individual fields or aggregation of similar fields or uses and sharing similar characteristics. The assessment used a consistent method that evaluated the Land Parcels against a number of criteria, to test both the sensitivity of a unit and its capacity to accept development in the context of the character of the wider landscape within which they are situated. Stage Two considered areas that were close to the periphery of the existing settlements, as this is where future growth is likely to be targeted. The extent of the study area was guided by Harborough District Council.

2 Context

National Context

- 2.1 The process of landscape characterisation and assessment has been promoted at a national scale in England by the work of Natural England (formerly Countryside Agency). England is divided into 159 National Character Areas (NCAs) based on the characteristics of their natural and man-made landscape. Houghton-on-the-Hill is located within NCA 93: High Leicestershire. Fuller details are available at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/587130>.
- 2.2 The value of understanding the Landscape Character of all landscapes in England is recognised in one of the Core Planning Principles within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF para 17) which states that planning should “take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it.” Landscape Character Assessment is the process which can identify these intrinsic values and unique characteristics of the diverse landscapes in the UK and its use is highlighted in the online Planning Practice Guidance (<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/landscape/>)

Regional Context

- 2.3 A Regional Landscape Character Assessment for the East Midlands was completed in 2010. This document identifies the 31 regional landscape character types present across the whole East Midlands Region. It describes the major forces for change that the Regional landscapes are experiencing and where these are being experienced. It also provides broad level guidance to inform policy across the Region, by identifying distinctive, rare or special characteristics.
- 2.4 Within this Regional Assessment Houghton-on-the-Hill falls entirely within Landscape Character Type 5C: Undulating Mixed Farmlands. The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are described as:
- Varied landform of broad rolling ridges, steep sided valleys, rounded hills and undulating lowlands;
 - Well treed character arising from abundant hedgerow trees, copses and woodlands;
 - Upland areas mark a major watershed in Middle England and are the source of major rivers;
 - Mixed farming regime with mainly arable land uses on hills and ridges and in fertile lowlands; intact hedgerow networks generally associated with pastoral land uses;
 - Sparse settlement patterns with limited modern development; widespread use of local limestone and ironstone in vernacular buildings and churches;
 - Network of quiet country lanes linking rural communities;
 - Remote, rural and sometimes empty character; and
 - Frequent and prominent ridge and furrow and evidence of deserted or shrunken medieval settlements.

County Council Context

- 2.5 The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan 1996 to 2016 (adopted in 2005) embraced the concept of landscape character assessment through Strategy Policy 8. The Structure Plan (now expired), made reference to the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy, which was adopted as supplementary planning guidance and essentially defined the current county scale character areas. This Strategy is therefore of relevance to Harborough District. Houghton-on-the-Hill falls within the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area.

Local Context

- 2.6 In order to assist with policy development, Harborough District Council commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment of the whole district, which was completed in September 2007. This study identified five different Landscape Character Areas, based on those defined in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy:
- Welland Valley
 - Loughton Hills
 - Lutterworth Lowlands
 - High Leicestershire
 - Upper Soar
- 2.7 Within the District Landscape Character Assessment, each Landscape Character Area is described and Key Characteristics are defined. The capacity of the landscape to accommodate change is then discussed and key issues facing the integrity of the character area are identified. Houghton on the Hill falls within the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area where the key characteristics of are described as:
- Steep undulating hills
 - High concentration of woodland
 - Parkland areas with narrow gated roads
 - Rural areas with a mix of arable farming on lowlands and pasture on hillsides
 - Scattering of traditional villages and hamlets through the area
 - Encroachment of Leicester to the west of the area
- 2.8 In 2009 a Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study for the rural areas of Harborough District in the vicinity of the Leicester Principal Urban Area was undertaken by HDC. The focus of the study was the land within Harborough District that immediately fringed Leicester, Oadby, Scraftoft and Thurnby and Bushby. However, as part of the character assessment work a number of local landscape character areas forming the subdivisions of the district scale LCA units were also identified. Two of the local LCAs were identified as the Leicester Fringes LCA and the High Leicestershire-Central LCA. The boundary of these local LCAs was shown to the western edge of Houghton on the Hill, with land to the west included within the Leicester Fringes LCA (which was ascribed a Medium sensitivity) and the land including Houghton on the Hill and land to the east within the High Leicestershire-Central LCA (which was ascribed a High sensitivity).
- The approach to boundaries between LCAs was noted within the 2009 report as follows, '*the boundary line marks more a watershed of character, where the balance of the defining elements has shifted from one landscape type to another*' and also that the location of boundaries, '*cannot in every instance be regarded as definitive, but rather as indicative of a transition.*' The focus of this specific study is the settlement of Houghton on the Hill and its immediate area. It is therefore justifiable that the sensitivity of the area around the village may represent more of a transition between the Leicester Fringes LCA and the High Leicestershire-Central LCA. This is considered to be a valid approach at this scale and context of the current study for the individual settlement as opposed to utilising character areas from the 2009 study that were focused more on the urban edge of greater Leicester.

3 Landscape Character Assessment – Methodology

- 3.1 The methodology used in the study is based on the national guidance found in 'Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland' (2002) and the other associated Topic Papers. The methodology in the 2002 document is also consistent within the subsequent Natural England publication 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (Oct 2014).
- 3.2 The precise approach for the study was also determined to meet the requirements of Harborough District Council in the context of the development of their emerging Local Plan. A fuller version of the methodology is available in the 2014 Rural Centres Study which is available at http://www.harborough.gov.uk/directory_record/490/landscape_character_assessments.

Desk Based Stage

- 3.3 The initial stage of the Landscape Character Assessment involved the assessment of the study area using the existing Harborough District Landscape Character Areas. Desk-based information was also gathered from Harborough District Council and through research into landscape and environmental designations. This data was reviewed to begin to identify the pattern of features that would help define the District Landscape Character Areas at a finer grain.

Field Survey

- 3.4 The field survey provided the opportunity to: identify the visual/aesthetic/perceptual dimension, record landscape condition, assess areas of particular pressure or sensitivity and to note distinctive features, local materials, plant species etc.
- 3.5 Field survey record sheets were used to record data. Additional notes and photographic records supplemented the use of forms. Both notes and photographs informed the process of drafting a description of and illustrating each character area in the final report.
- 3.6 The field survey was carried out in February 2016, visiting all land identified within the study area boundary provided by Harborough District Council. The survey team consisted of pairs of Landscape Architects, who were also responsible for drafting the text.

Landscape Character Areas

- 3.7 One Landscape Character sub area, Houghton on the Hill – High Leicestershire was identified as shown on Drawing B16007.01. A brief description is provided including the key characteristics identified (see Section 4). These form the context the next stage of work, relating to Landscape Capacity, as described in Section 5.
- 3.8 As part of the description of the Character Areas, a 'Condition and Strength of Character Matrix' has been included. In order to assess the potential ability of a landscape to adapt to change without losing its intrinsic character, it is necessary to analyse the functional integrity or condition of the landscape and compare this with the strength of character as demonstrated by the more permanent or robust elements of the landscape. Landscape condition is determined from an evaluation of the relative state (poor/moderate/good) of elements within the landscape that are subject to change, such as survival of hedgerows, extent and impact of built development. Strength of character is determined from an evaluation of the impact of relatively stable factors, such as landform, pattern of land cover, the continuity of an historic pattern, the degree of visibility and its rarity.
- 3.9 Six factors were considered for condition and six different factors were considered for strength of character in relation to each area (see matrix for any area). Each factor was evaluated in the field, with a record made on the survey sheet against a three-point scale and entered in the matrix table. Values for the factors on each axis were then aggregated and a majority total applied.
- 3.10 The resulting intersection on the matrix derived the general strategy for the Landscape Character sub-area. Once this primary strategy is established, an approximation of the relative sensitivity of the landscape can also be applied (see Drawings B16007.02).

4 Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Area is shown on Drawing B16007.01

4.1 Houghton on the Hill - High Leicestershire

Location

This area is located in the northern part of Harborough District approximately 8km from the centre of Leicester and 2km east of Thurnby and Bushby. The High Leicestershire character area surrounds the village of Houghton on the Hill. As its name indicates the settlement is located on higher ground forming one of the elevated sections of the undulating landscape.

Key Characteristics

- Strongly undulating landform with tributary valleys radiating from the more elevated plateau
- Treed farmland combining small to medium grazed fields to the south east and west and larger arable fields to the north and south-west
- Areas of historic ridge and furrow now grazing pasture within sub-regular field patterns
- Low clipped and laid hedgerows and scattered individual trees mainly to east. Some taller hedges along roads and watercourses
- Springs and ponds
- Houghton on the Hill is a traditional linear nucleated village on higher ground centred on Main Street. Early 20th development followed the A47 with more extensive residential estates in 1970s.
- Public Rights of Way radiate from the settlement apart from to the north / north east
- Variable sense of enclosure to landscape, with parts widely visible from surrounding undulating landscape and areas of plateau more contained
- Long distance views over undulating High Leicestershire
- Largely tranquil except in close proximity to the A47
- Localised areas of disturbance by low voltage pylons and some exposed built edges

Distinctive Features

- St Catharine's Church with Leicestershire spire
- Houghton on the Hill Conservation Area including traditional village core along Main Street and ridge and furrow pasture to south east



View from area of open space off St. Catharine's Way road, looking west

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
S1 Impact of landform* S2 Impact of landcover* S3 Historic pattern* S4 Tranquillity S5 Distinctiveness/rarity S6 Visual unity	Insignificant Insignificant Insignificant Discordant Frequent Incoherent	Apparent Apparent Apparent Moderate Unusual Coherent	Dominant/ Prominent Dominant/ Prominent Dominant/ Prominent Tranquil Unique/rare Unified
Totals * Prime character categories if tie	1	2	3
CONDITION	POOR	MODERATE	GOOD
C1 Landcover Change C2 Age Structure of Tree Cover* C3 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival* C4 Management of semi-natural habitats C5 Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges) C6 Impact of built development*	Widespread Over mature Relic Poor Declining/Relic High	Localised Mature or young Scattered Not obvious Interrupted Moderate	Insignificant Mixed Widespread/ Linked Good Intact Low
Totals * Prime condition categories if tie	1	3	2

MATRIX	Condition	Good	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
		Moderate	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
		Poor	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
			Weak	Moderate	Strong
			Strength of Character		



View Stretton Lane looking north across Conservation Area towards St Catharine's church

5 Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Capacity

- 5.1 The methodology to assess the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development, while respecting its character, is based on the guidance in Topic Paper 6 – ‘Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity’. This paper forms part of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Heritage ‘Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland’.

The methodology developed for this study adopts the following premise that:

"existing landscape features + visual sensitivity = Overall Landscape Sensitivity"

- 5.2 A number of criteria have been selected to identify both existing landscape features and visual sensitivities. These criteria reflect both the national guidance in Topic Paper 6 and the particular circumstances for the rural landscape of Harborough District.

- 5.3 The criteria were grouped into primary factors (representing features that are more permanent in the landscape, such as landform) and secondary factors (representing features that are of a more temporary or transient nature). However, no weighting has been given to primary or secondary factors in the numerical scoring of the criteria for each Land Parcel.

- 5.4 The following criteria have been selected to reflect existing landscape features:

- slope analysis (primary)
- vegetation enclosure (primary)
- the complexity and scale of the landscape (secondary)
- the condition of the landscape (secondary)

- 5.5 The following criteria have been selected to reflect visual sensitivity:

- openness to public view (secondary)
- openness to private views (secondary)
- relationship with existing urban built form (primary)
- prevention of coalescence (primary)
- scope to mitigate the development (primary)

- 5.6 The Overall Landscape Sensitivity provides an evaluation of the sensitivity of a land parcel in broad strategic terms. In order to assess the Overall Landscape Capacity of a land parcel, landscape value was added to the equation, as follows.

"Overall Landscape Sensitivity + Landscape Value = Overall Landscape Capacity"

- 5.7 In the absence of any specific stakeholder consultation, previous studies have taken into account the Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside (Policy EV/4 - now deleted) and Green Wedges (Policy EV/2) in the assessment of landscape value. However, given that EV/4 no longer exists and that EV/2 does not apply to the landscapes around Houghton on the Hill this approach was not felt appropriate to be included in the study. Instead Landscape Value now takes into account the landscape’s relationship to designated Conservation Area.

- 5.8 To effectively assess the landscape capacity of a site, an assumption is made as to the form that the potential development will take. For the purposes of this study it is assumed that development will include in the main 2-3 storey residential development. Employment areas will comprise 2-3 storey buildings. It is not anticipated that there will be any taller structures in the assessment unless otherwise stated in the detailed Land Parcel Sheets.

- 5.9 Each site was assessed against the criteria noted above, using a 5-point scale from A to E (guided by a definitions/descriptions that have been devised for this particular study to reflect local characteristics). These definitions are contained in Table A below.

- 5.10 The criteria were then scored, with 5 points being awarded to A’s (the most suitable for development) and 1 point to E’s (the least suitable for development). The scores were totalled for

each Land Parcel to provide both a Landscape Sensitivity Profile and a Landscape Capacity Profile. Parcels with an overall higher score are considered to be relatively less sensitive to change and to also have a relatively higher capacity. The total score is then allocated an Overall Capacity value by using the following range. The bandings between categories have been defined based on the range of scores achieved in the 2014 Rural Centres study and thereby to provide a measure of relative capacity around these six particular settlements. (NB. The range of scores is different from those in the previous Market Harborough, the Leicester Principal Urban Area and the Lutterworth and Broughton Astley studies. For this reason the capacity maps for the Rural Centres should not be directly compared with those for Market Harborough, the Leicester Principal Urban Area and Lutterworth and Broughton Astley).

22 – 25	Low Landscape Capacity
26 – 29	Medium Low Landscape Capacity
30 – 33	Medium Landscape Capacity
34 – 37	Medium High Landscape Capacity
38 – 41	High Landscape Capacity

- 5.11 It should be emphasized that no absolute conclusion should be drawn from the numerical totals. The influence of individual criteria in a given Land Parcel and in the context of the wider Landscape Character should also be given due consideration. There may be individual criteria, particularly where the primary criteria are in the 'E' category, where it is possible that development may be incompatible unless it can be effectively mitigated. It is also important that the overall spread and balance of the profiles is fully considered rather than just the total Landscape Capacity value. In other words, each proposal will still need to be considered on its merits. To aid these considerations a commentary of the key points has been provided for each land parcel.
- 5.12 A general commentary is provided for each land parcel based on the key characteristics and distinctive features. This is followed by a statement on the suitability for development and overall capacity. For parcels that have medium, medium-high or high capacity for development a further description of mitigation measures is provided to guide the principles for development. An overview of the main findings for each Rural Centre is also provided below.
- 5.13 The detailed returns for each of the 20 Land Parcels at Houghton on the Hill is provided at Appendix A.

Summary of Land Parcels at Houghton-on-the-Hill

- 5.14 Houghton on the Hill is a village located within the western part of the characteristic High Leicestershire landscape. The village is approximately 8km from the centre of Leicester and 2km from the eastern edge of the associated built up area where the village of Thurnby and Bushby form the outer extents. The historic core of Houghton on the Hill is centred on Main Street which includes a number of vernacular buildings. St Catharine's church is the most notable landmark in the village and from the surrounding landscape being most readily seen from the west, south and east. The core of the village together with the pattern of small scale fields to the south-east are designated as a Conservation Area. In the early/mid 20th century, the village grew along the A47 corridor including a number of larger detached houses set back from the main road that links Leicester to Peterborough. In the late 1960's and 1970's two areas of estate development, typical of that period, were established to the north-west and east of the village. Since this time there has been relatively limited development.
- 5.15 A total of 20 different Land Parcels were assessed at Houghton on the Hill. The completed Land Parcel sheets and associated Overall Capacity values identified areas with relatively higher and lower landscape capacity to accommodate new development.

- 5.16 At Houghton on the Hill there were no parcels identified as having either High or Medium-High capacity. This is a reflection of: the medium /high sensitivity of the surrounding character area overall, the presence and extent of the Conservation Area and the location of the settlement on a hill. The Parcels assessed as having Low capacity are located to the south of the village (Parcels 11, 12, 14, 15) where the traditional rural character is evident and there is minimal intrusion from modern development. Parcels 2, 4, 6, 10 and 19, are assessed as having Medium-Low capacity being more detached from the village and located on relatively steeper slopes. Parcel 16 is also identified as Medium-Low capacity and is located within the Conservation Area.
- 5.17 Parcels of Moderate capacity are mainly located to the west and north of the village (Parcels 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 18). The three Parcels with the highest individual scores are Parcels 1, 5 and 20 adjacent to the A47. Parcel 5 is located on a relatively flat area and noted as the only parcel with potential suitability for commercial development. Parcel 1 is a sub-division of a single large field but at the top of the slope and more associated with the built edge of the village or A47. Parcel 20 is detached from the main part of the village but is well enclosed. Parcels 13 and 17 are both assessed as having moderate capacity despite being within the Conservation Area. However, both of these Parcels provide sports facilities, which, if developed, would need to be provided elsewhere and are therefore less likely to come forward.

Table A

Criteria group	Criteria	Measurement of criteria	Comments
Existing Landscape Features	Slope analysis	A= Plateau/gently undulating B= Rolling /undulating landform providing some enclosure C= Tributary valleys/lower valley slopes/gentle side slopes D= Elevated landforms, plateau edge, ridges E= Prominent steep slopes on valley sides	
	Enclosure by vegetation	A= Enclosed by mature vegetation – extensive treebelts/woodland B= Semi-enclosed by vegetation - moderate woodland cover, good quality tall hedgerows/ hedgerows with hedgerow trees C= Fragmented vegetation - scattered small woodlands, fragmented shelterbelts and/or clipped hedgerows D= Limited/poor hedges (with no trees) and/or isolated copses E= Largely open with minimal vegetation	
	Complexity/ Scale	A= Extensive simple landscape with single land uses B= Large scale landscape with limited land use and variety C= Large or medium scale landscape with variations in pattern, texture and scale D= Small or medium scale landscape with a variety in pattern, texture and scale E= Intimate and organic landscape with a richness in pattern, texture and scale	
	Landscape Character Quality/ Condition	A= Area of weak character in a poor condition B= Area of weak character in a moderate condition or of a moderate character in a poor condition C= Area of weak character in a good condition or of a moderate character in a moderate condition or of a strong character in a poor condition D= Area of moderate character in a good condition or of a strong character in a moderate condition E= Area of strong character in a good condition	The condition of the landscape partially reflects the active management of the landscape for agriculture, amenity uses or nature conservation.

Criteria group	Criteria	Measurement of criteria	Comments
Visual Factors	Openness to public view	A= Site is well contained from public views B= Site is generally well contained from public views C= Site is partially contained from public views D= Site is moderately open to public views E= Site is very open to public views	Public views will include views from Roads, Rights of Way and public open space. The evaluation considers a summer and winter evaluation. However due to the time of the study the winter evaluation was estimated based on the character of the vegetation. This criterion is also considered in association with 'Scope to mitigate the development' criteria. Score will depend on the extent of the visibility from all the site perimeters and the rights of way through site.
	Openness to private view	A= Site is well contained from private views B= Site is generally well contained from private views C= Site is partially contained from private views D= Site is moderately open to private views E= Site is very open to private views	This relates to private views from residential properties. The evaluation considers a summer and winter evaluation. However due to the time of the study the winter evaluation was estimated based on the character of the vegetation. This criterion is also considered in association with 'Scope to mitigate the development' criteria. The score will depend on the extent of visibility from all the site perimeters and the number of properties with views.
	Relationship with existing urban built form	A= Location where built development will form a natural extension of an adjacent part of urban fabric B= Location where built development will form some close associations with the existing parts of urban fabric C= Location where built development will form some moderate associations with existing urban fabric D= Location where built development will only form some limited associations with the existing urban fabric due to major obstacles E= Location where development will be isolated from and not form any relationship with existing urban fabric	

Criteria group	Criteria	Measurement of criteria	Comments
	Prevention of coalescence	A= Development would not compromise any separation B= Development would have slight impact on separation C= Development would have moderate impact on separation D= Development would significantly compromise separation E= Development would cause complete coalescence	
Potential Landscape Features	Scope to mitigate the development	A= Good scope to provide mitigation in the short to medium term in harmony with existing landscape pattern B= Good scope to provide mitigation in the medium term and in keeping with existing landscape pattern C= Moderate scope to provide mitigation in the medium term broadly in keeping with existing landscape pattern D= Limited scope to provide adequate mitigation in keeping with the existing landscape in the medium term E= Very limited scope to provide adequate mitigation in the medium to long term	This is an assessment based on landscape character, aesthetic factors - scale, enclosure, pattern, movement – overall visibility of site and consideration of existing viewpoints
Landscape Value	Local Landscape Designations	A= Location where built development will have no impact B= Location where built development will have slight impact C= Location where built development will have moderate impact D= Location where built development is adjacent to designated area, and /or will have high impact E= Location fully within a designated area of landscape value	This criteria is used as a proxy for Landscape Value in the absence of specific stakeholder consultation, and includes consideration of local landscape designations (Areas of Particularly Attractive Countryside, Green Wedges)