

# LANGHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2022-2041



## Support Document SDL 7 Rural Setting

April 2022

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## Protection of the Countryside

The extent of ongoing development in Langham places increasing stresses on the natural environment. To maintain the quality of life of residents, it is necessary not only to maintain the quality of the environment but also to introduce enhancements, in parallel with new development. By doing this we will help to compensate for these stresses. In addition, climate change and finite resources demand particular action.

According to the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan everybody should have the opportunity to access, use and enjoy England's natural environment and outdoor spaces. Being outside in nature benefits people physically and mentally and helps improve understanding of the natural world. By protecting and improving access, more people can enjoy the countryside.

As well as this, more land seems to be taken out of food production – at a time when food prices are increasing, the supply chain for key food-stuffs is under threat and the need to be more self-sufficient in food production increases. An interesting statistic is that we import 8% of our energy and 80% of our food in the UK.

Rural areas are an important to us all. The natural landscape and variety of habitats in the UK provide a number of crucial services from clean air and water, to food production. Protecting natural spaces is an important aspect of UK policy and planning. Yet these areas are subject to increased pressure from developers, as the requirement for housing escalates and the land needed for renewable energy generation seems to eat up more and more land.

This places a responsibility on those with stewardship of areas that comprise significant areas of open countryside, such as Langham, to protect and conserve this land for future generations.



**Figure SDL7.1:** Typical countryside of Rutland.

## Who can help protect the countryside?

### 1. Statutory Agencies

There are a number of statutory agencies in England:

- The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC);
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
- Natural England;
- The Environment Agency;
- The Forestry Commission;
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

#### *The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)*

Established in 1990 under the Environmental Protection Act, the JNCC was reconstituted in 2006 under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC). The JNCC advises the government on UK wide and international nature conservation.

#### *Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)*

Defra is the UK government department responsible for policy and regulations on environment, food and rural issues. Their responsibilities are for policy and regulation on:

- the natural environment, biodiversity, plants and animals
- sustainable development and the green economy
- food, farming and fisheries
- animal health, welfare and biosecurity at borders
- environmental protection and pollution control
- rural communities and issues
- flooding and coastal erosion
- reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon storage in the agricultural, waste, peat and tree planting sectors.

The department's outcome delivery plan sets out its objectives and how it will achieve them. The four priority outcomes for the period 2021–2022 are as follows:

1. improve the environment through cleaner air and water, minimised waste, and thriving plants and terrestrial and marine wildlife;
2. reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon storage in the agricultural, waste, peat and tree planting sectors to help deliver net zero;
3. reduce the likelihood and impact of flooding and coastal erosion on people, businesses, communities and the environment;
4. increase the sustainability, productivity and resilience of the agriculture, fishing, food and drink sectors, enhance biosecurity at the border and raise animal welfare standards.



## *Natural England*

Natural England was established in October 2006 by amalgamating the Countryside Agency, English Nature and the Rural Development Service.

They work with farmers, town and country planners, business, researchers, scientists, conservation charities and the public on a range of schemes and initiatives. They also advise the government on the natural environment in England with the aim of protecting and restoring the natural world.

Natural England works closely with other organisation such as the Environment Agency, the Marine Management Organisation and the Forestry Commission to achieve better outcomes for the environment, and ultimately, for people.

Research has shown that people are affected by their surroundings and the better the natural environment, the better people feel.

Natural England's powers include:

- defining ancient woodlands;
- awarding grants;
- designating AONBs and SSSIs;
- managing certain National Nature Reserves;
- acting as statutory advisor to the planning process;
- overseeing access to open country and other recreation rights;
- regulator in the natural environment.



**Figure SDL7.2:** *Langham Countryside.*

Three new schemes are currently being developed that will reward land managers who manage their land for environmental benefits. For example, the schemes will pay farmers for managing land in a way that reduces climate change, or that delivers clean air. The three new Environmental Land Management Schemes are still in the trial phase, but will be launched between 2022 and 2024.

Natural England's priorities for the period 2020–2025 are as follows:

1. a well-managed Nature Recovery Network across land, water and sea, which creates and protects resilient ecosystems rich in wildlife and natural beauty, enjoyed by people and widely benefiting society;
2. people connected to the natural environment for their own and society's wellbeing, enjoyment and prosperity;
3. nature-based solutions contributing fully to tackling the climate change challenge and wider environmental hazards and threats;
4. improvements in the natural capital that drives sustainable economic growth, healthy food systems and prospering communities;
5. evidence and expertise being used by a broad range of partnerships, organisations and communities to achieve Nature recovery and enable effective regulation and accreditation;
6. being a values-led organisation that delivers excellent service standards to all partners, organisations and communities engaged in achieving Nature's recovery.



**Figure SDL7.3:** View across Langham countryside to the village church.

## *The Environment Agency*

The Environment Agency was founded in 1996 covering England and Wales, but in 2013 it became an England-only non-departmental public body of Defra. Its stated purpose, through the Environment Act 1995, is “to protect or enhance the environment, taken as a whole” and to promote “the objective of achieving sustainable development”. Its vision, as set out in its ambition to 2020 document, is for “to create a better place for people and wildlife”.

The Environment Agency is responsible for:

- regulation of major industry and waste;
- flood and coastal risk management;
- water quality and resources;
- Fisheries;
- treatment of contaminated land;
- conservation and ecology;
- inland river, estuary and harbour navigation.

The priorities for the Environment Agency are to:

1. work with businesses and other organisations to manage the use of resources;
2. increase the resilience of people, property and businesses to the risks of flooding and coastal erosion;
3. protect and improve water, land and biodiversity;
4. improve the way it works as a regulator to protect people and the environment and support sustainable growth.

## *Forestry Commission*

First established in 1919 to expand Britain’s forests and woodland after depletion during World War I, the responsibilities and powers of the Forestry Commission are derived mainly from the Forestry Act 1967 and Plant Health Act 1967.

The Forestry Commission is a non-ministerial department responsible for protecting, expanding and promoting the sustainable use of woodlands in England.

The Forestry Commission works with two agencies: Forestry England, and Forest Research.

Its purpose has broadened beyond timber production to include:

- scientific research (eg Ash dieback);
- recreation;
- protecting and improving biodiversity across Britain’s forests.

The Commission retains powers to prevent loss of tree cover and ensure that new forests and related operations do not harm the environment. It also has the powers to protect trees from pests and diseases, including prohibiting timber from abroad, while administering regulations to provide assurance of the source of tree seeds, cuttings and other planting stock.

Government forestry policy is set out in a forestry and woodland policy statement, adopted in 2013, whose objective is to enable the forestry sector to protect, improve and expand forestry through resilience. The priorities are as follows:

1. protecting the nation's trees, woodlands and forests from increasing threats such as pests, diseases and climate change;
2. improving their resilience to these threats and their contribution to economic growth, people's lives and nature;
3. expanding them to increase further their economic, social and environmental value.

### *Joint Nature Conservation Committee*

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee was established in 1991 to provide advice to the Government on nature conservation issues both for the UK as a whole and internationally. It also has responsibilities to set common standards for monitoring and research into nature conservation.

## **2. Voluntary Bodies**

There are many of these, but amongst the most significant and influential are the following:

- National Trust;
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB);
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA);
- Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE);
- The Wildlife Trusts.



### ***National Trust***

Founded in 1895 the National Trust protects historic houses, gardens, mills, coastline, forests, woods, fens, beaches, farmsteads, moorland, islands, archaeological remains, nature reserves, villages and pubs. The Trust plays a significant role through land management practices, the planning system and its wider educational role. As part of the Trust's strategy they pledge to play their part in "restoring a healthy, beautiful and natural" environment through mechanisms such as improving habitats, soils and water on their estates, working with others to conserve and renew important landscapes and developing new economic models for land use.

### ***Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)***

Founded in 1889, the work of the RSPB is driven by a responsibility to protect birds and the environment, since they reflect the health of the planet. The RSPB is the largest nature conservation charity in the UK: reserves are at the heart of what they do, and by 2030 it has the ambition of doubling its current landholding. As part of its mission it also looks to establish collaborations with industry and land managers to protect nature, and delivers schemes such as the 'Give Nature a Home' campaign and the 'Big Garden Birdwatch'.

### ***Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)***

Founded in 1824, the aim of the RSPCA is to prevent cruelty, promote kindness to, and alleviate the suffering of animals, including protecting the wellbeing of wildlife and farm animals.

### ***Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)***

Founded in 1926, the CPRE campaigns for a sustainable future for the English countryside. It has a wide remit that includes planning, as well as promoting and protecting local food and economies — its vision is to see a countryside that is protected, but one that is also part of a healthier economy and more empowered communities.

### ***The Wildlife Trusts***

Founded in 1912, there are 37 wildlife trusts in England (and more in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). They are primarily concerned with the conservation and management of nature and manage around 2300 nature reserves. Each Trust is an independent, autonomous charity, based on the old county boundaries or small groupings of such, and, since 2004, work together as 'The Wildlife Trusts' which ensures co-ordination for campaign purposes.



## Rights of Way

1. This section is concerned with bridleways and footpaths and their accessibility. This includes stiles, signage, condition, maintenance and use as part of the wider Rutland Rights of Way network. The footpaths are well used by residents and some are particularly popular with dog-walkers. The bridleways are shared between pedestrians, horse-riders and, potentially, cyclists – the number of horses in the parish is approaching 200. ***[Information from the British Horse Society and the Leicestershire and Rutland Bridleways Association.]***
2. The laws in England and Wales provide us all with the right to walk, ride, cycle and drive in public rights of way in the countryside. Public rights of way include footpaths, byways and bridleways.
3. Public rights of way in Langham are listed and described in the Rutland Definitive Maps and Statements (legal records of public rights of way).
4. The Rights of Way map of the Parish of Langham, published by the Rutland County Council, and as it stands today shows bridleways (Green) and footpaths (Purple); there are no 'byways' or 'restricted byways' in the parish. (see Figures SDL7.1 and SDL7.2).
5. There are two proposals in place to alter this map.
  - a. There is a Solar Farm being built in open countryside to the west of the village which is crossed by the D185 Right of Way. This footpath is to be re-routed to the north in order to skirt the planned limit of the field of solar panels. The community were against this, but their objections were not effective.
  - b. There is an application from the horse-riding community to make a continuous bridle way from the south of Cold Overton Road to Whissendine. This will require
    - i. the changing of the D185 (once re-routed) into a bridleway
    - ii. The linking of the E151 and the D85 through a residential part of Ranksborough called The Glade
    - iii. The routing along tarmac roads in Ranksborough, past Ranksborough Hall and along the main access road to this settlementThis application is being challenged by Langham Parish Council because of the impact on the elderly community at Ranksborough.
6. Some years ago the E145 Loudall Lane was decimated by the adjacent landowner. Trees were removed, ancient hedges ripped out and burned, to be replaced by metal fencing and, in some places, new hedging. An area of historical importance (The Drovers Rest) was also changed beyond all recognition. This is a perfect example of the conflict between those who love the countryside for its walks, and those who wish to make a living off the land. There is perhaps a way for both parties to be satisfied, but it requires that each side wishes to reach a compromise and is ready to give some ground to reach a mutually acceptable outcome.



Figure SDL7.3: Langham Parish - Bridleways and Rights of Way

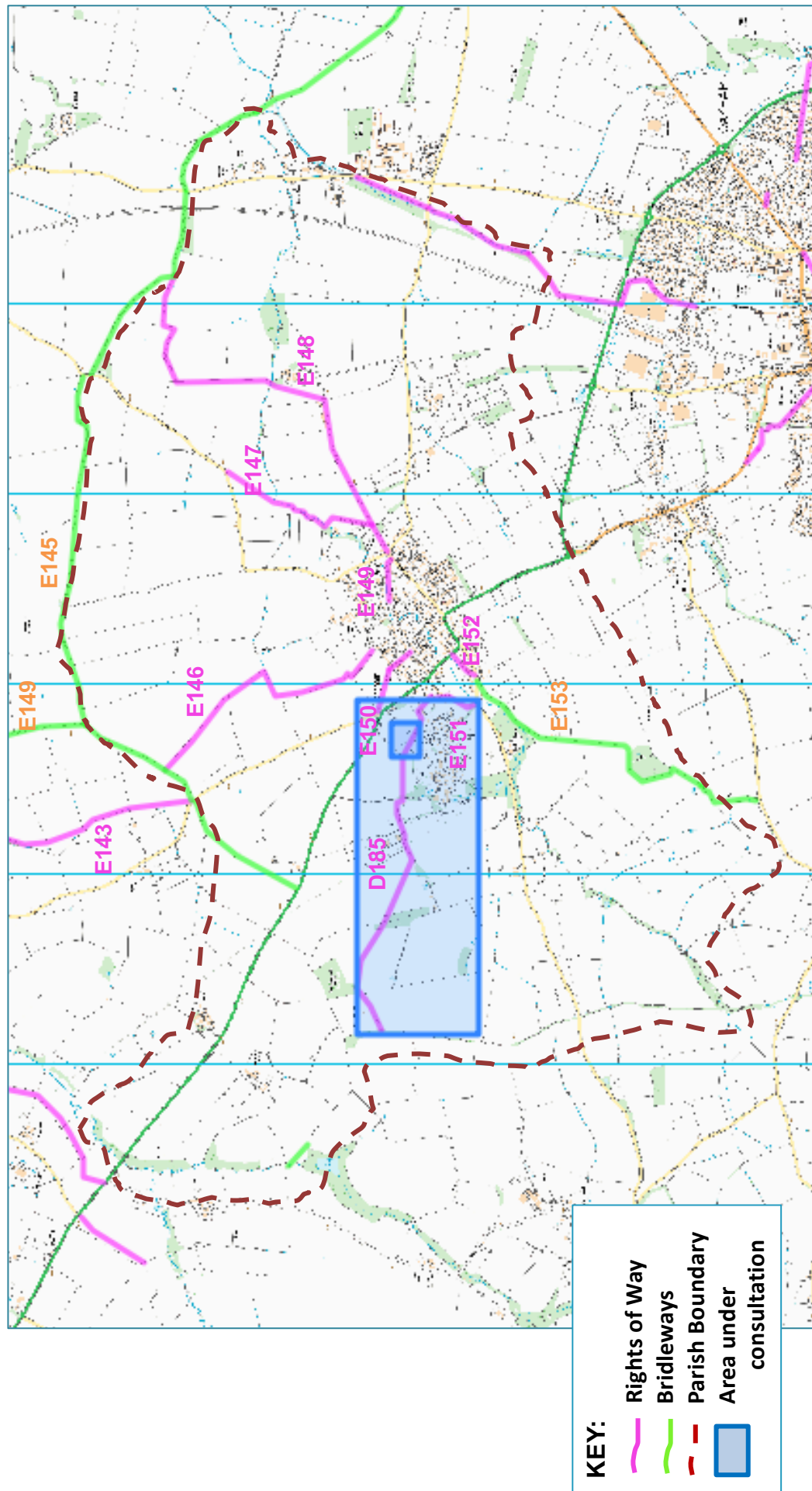
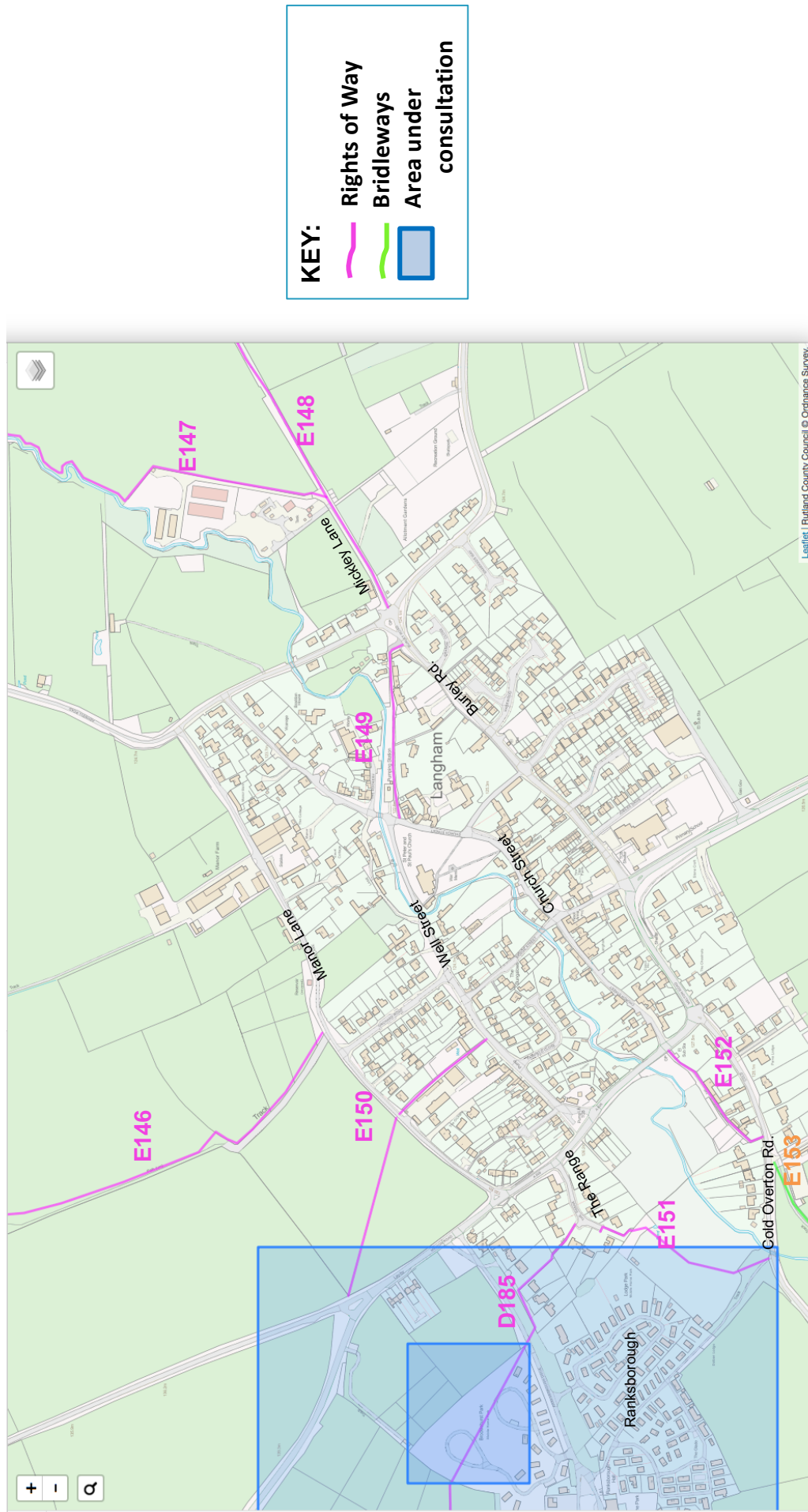
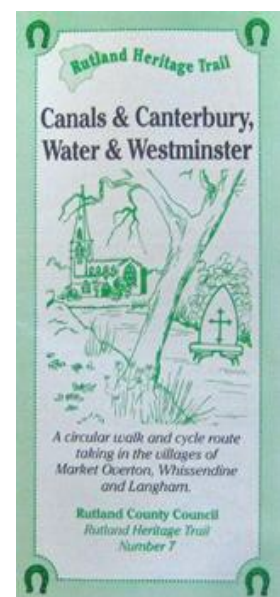


Figure SDL7.4: Langham Village - Detail of Rights of Way



7. In addition to the rights of way recognised by the RCC map, there are the following further undesignated rights of way:
  7. two paths across the churchyard: these are maintained, as is the rest of the churchyard, by Rutland County Council. These are generally in good order but edges of some of the paving stones become proud from time to time and the stone slabs around the war memorial, which form part of the pathway nearest to it, become slippery in wet weather (the algae need removing regularly) and very slippery in frosty weather. The Council provides some grit but does not spread it;
  8. a short path between Manor Lane at SK84010 11154 and the top of Squires Close at SK 84053 11090. This is in good order and is maintained when necessary by the Parish Council.
8. One major issue with these rights of way is their suitability for anyone other than walkers in stout shoes. The surface of most is not weather-proof and so gets muddy; many are very narrow meaning that mobility scooters and push chairs cannot be used; they become rutted and difficult to traverse for those less steady when walking.
9. Again there is a balance to be found where these pathways remain rural in character, but allow for a degree of access to people of all abilities and circumstance.
10. Rutland County Council is usually quick to respond when informed of maintenance requirements – the contact is via the Public Rights of Way Officer (Stuart Crook) at the RCC or by sending an email to [rightsofway@rutland.gov.uk](mailto:rightsofway@rutland.gov.uk).
11. The Parish Council also takes comments and concerns from the public about vegetation that has become overgrown and will either contact RCC to clear it or, in many cases, organise and lead a volunteer group to clear it.
12. The Travel4Rutland Proposed Cycle Infrastructure in 2017 envisaged an upgrade of the surface of Loudall Lane with a view to it becoming part of a route from Langham to Whissendine and hence contributing to the Cycling Infrastructure of Rutland. That has yet to happen. Whilst cyclists are permitted to use bridleways, there is no 'obligation to facilitate the use of the bridleway by cyclists,' [Countryside Act 1968] and cyclists should give way to pedestrians and horse riders.
13. The guidebook and leaflets for the Rutland Heritage Trail, a year 2000 initiative, are now out of print. Leaflet 7 describes a circular walk and cycle route taking in the villages of Market Overton, Teigh, Whissendine, Langham and Ashwell under the title 'Canals & Canterbury, Water And Westminster'. It includes brief historical information about Simon de Langham, and also about the Oakham to Melton Canal. The section of the 14½ mile 'cycle ride' within Langham parish is by the obvious road route. From Whissendine, the 11 mile walk joins bridleway E145 and enters Langham via footpath E146, continuing to Ashwell via E149, E147 and the Ashwell Road. The section of the canal encountered on the walk is near Market Overton. Rutland County Council is encouraged to produce an updated version of the guidebook; minor revision would now be necessary (for instance, refreshments at the Langham village shop were suggested.) Oakham library holds a full set of the leaflets in their reserve collection, for reference only, but copying or photography is permitted.



14. There are a number of walking groups in Langham who regularly follow these meandering and beautiful routes through the local landscape.
15. The Rutland Round is a 65-mile circular walk, passing through Whissendine, Langham, Oakham, Uppingham, Eyebrook Reservoir, Ketton, Empingham and Thistleton. There are also two sections along Rutland Water. The walk is waymarked with a yellow and green disc. The route from Whissendine joins E145 and approaches Langham via E146. Passing through Langham via Orchard Close, Well Street, Bridge Street and Church Street, it then heads for Mill Hill and Barleythorpe via E152 and E153. See *'GPSCycle and Walking Routes'* for more details.
16. Oakham Health Walkers value use of rights of way around Langham for out-of-town excursions.
17. Whilst Langham can boast a good network of bridleways and footpaths, and they are widely used by residents and visitors alike, they can be better maintained and improvements can be made with connectivity across the network.

**Table SDL7.1:** *Summary of challenges with Rights of Way in Langham.*

**Key Issues with Rights of Way in Langham.**

- At times, there are maintenance problems, especially with rapid seasonal growth of vegetation in the summer.
- Serious, irreversible damage was done some years ago to E145 Loudall Lane (unauthorised re-routing with damage to a site of archaeological interest; destruction of a bank and ancient hedgerow on the Parish boundary; erection of a fence impenetrable to most small mammals), leaving the surface and drainage in a state which results in it being a quagmire in wet weather. There are insufficient circular routes.
- None of the existing Rights of Way is consistently suitable for people of limited mobility.
- Given that there may be nearly 200 horses in Langham there are insufficient bridleways; however, walkers do not like horses churning up the mud where they want to walk, especially in wet weather.
- In view of concerns about the safety of the Ashwell Road for walkers and riders, and in view of the fact that it effectively forms part of circular routes using E147 and E148 with E145, a response is needed which gives effective priority to walkers and riders.
- The Rutland Heritage Trail booklets are out of print and require some revision.



## Green Spaces on the Edges of the PLD

1. Langham residents greatly value the green spaces in and around the village, but there is a perception that some of the green spaces valued for recreation, wildlife habitat, and enhancing the historic and tranquil setting of the village may be under threat. This has become apparent in recent months with permission being given for a 28MW solar farm on open countryside to the west of the village, and the threat of a 50 house development, using Presumption in Favour of Development to be accepted, on a field well outside the Planned Limits of Development.
2. Whilst within the PLD such areas have been identified and protected for many years. Areas outside the PLD have been covered only by those Policies that offer protection to the countryside.
3. It is noted that in the 2017 Addendum to RCC's 2012 Review of Open Spaces and Frontages, allotments, sports grounds and play parks were included in this assessment, even if they were situated on the outside edge of the PLD.
4. More and more it is becoming apparent that the setting of the village of Langham is under growing threat from development, and, without attention, the village's conservation areas will become an increasingly small proportion of the built area of Langham – as has happened with the neighbouring tiny village of Barleythorpe.
5. It is hoped that Langham Parish Council will push to have the setting of Langham Village protected with Conservation Status.
6. Green spaces and frontages within the Planned Limits of Development have already been identified and given protection (these are described in section 8 of the LNP), but those on the periphery are at risk of being seen not to be within the village, but also not actually in the open countryside.

**Table SDL7.2:** RCC criteria for protection of green space.

CRITERIA	
i.	is of intrinsic environmental value by virtue of its landform, vegetation and tree cover. Or the presence of any special features such as streams, ponds, important wildlife habitats and walls.
i.	enhances the attractiveness of the town or village setting when viewed from surrounding land, particularly the approaches to the built-up area.
i.	affords views and vistas, out of and within, the town or village important to its character and attractiveness.
i.	is transitional or peripheral land which should remain open to preserve the form and character of the town or village.
i.	while not in itself of particular environmental value, is an essential feature, possibly in conjunction with other areas, in creating the overall character and attractiveness of the town or village.
i.	is an essential element in the street scene, important to the form and character of the town or village in terms of the relationship of buildings and structures one to another, to other areas of open space and to natural features e.g. trees.
i.	is important in the contribution it makes to the setting of a building or group of buildings, or important natural features.

7. A number of sites in Langham were examined and, using the same criteria as is used by RCC for Open Green Spaces and Frontages (see Table SDL7.1 below), a few were highlighted as needing protection.

- a. Penman's Field – lying to the west of the A606, opposite Church Street and Well Street, this site is privately owned. It has the brook running through it and the land is low with respect to neighbouring land. This means it remains boggy and could never be used for housing – but has, over the years, become a wildlife haven.



**Figure SDL7.5: Penman's Field.**

This field should be designated as Important Green Space for the following reasons:

- it adjoins the area of woodland and hedgerow on Cold Overton Road between Ranksborough Farm and Pasture Farm;
- the brook runs through it and the banks of the stream contribute to a valuable green corridor providing a wildlife haven for birds (including barn owls), bats and a range of woodland species;
- it contributes to the tranquil rural character of the village;
- as it is flanked on three of its four sides by houses, the field meets National Planning Policy Framework guidelines for being in close proximity to the community.

- b. The woodland at Munday's Close which was planted up by the village with native species in consultation with the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust in the late 1990s, and which provides an important wildlife haven and open space for walking. It is on land left in perpetuity to the community and is managed by Langham Parish Council with the help of a very active group of volunteers.



**Figure SDL7.6: Munday's Close**



- c. The verge on the north side of Manor Lane at the Ashwell Road end, which contributes to the rural character of the village and is an important habitat for wildlife. It marks also the beginning of open countryside at that end of the village.



**Figure SDL7.7:** Manor Lane Verge.

## Biodiversity

1. The thorough and extensive Langham Parish Community Wildlife Survey in 1996 demonstrated that, at that time some twenty five years ago, there was both breadth and depth of biodiversity in the Parish. There were not any (known) great rarities found nor any Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), or Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) as classified by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust.
2. However, subsequently two small Local Wildlife Sites were registered: a length of species-rich hedgerow along the south side of Burley Road, the Langham side of the railway, and an area of species-rich grassland near Mill Hill. The former has changed hands since 2002 and the present owner, whilst having an interest in wildlife, has simply left the hedge mostly untrimmed, so that it is tall and not dense. He has also put stock-proof fencing on the inside. The latter is believed by the owner to be much as it was in 2008 and is grazed by sheep. Very probably there are other sites in other parishes that are as rich in species and so would be worthy of similar recognition.
3. The following species, specially protected, under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, have recently been observed in Langham Parish: Common Pipistrelle; Soprano Pipistrelle; Brown Long-eared Bat; Badger; Otter; Barn Owl; Red kite; Buzzard; Kingfisher; Water Vole; Grass Snake. These species, as well as otters, are designated 'Species of local importance', in Space for Wildlife (Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan 2010 – 2015).
4. Interviews with residents of the Parish with strong awareness of local wildlife, records of the Rutland Natural History Society and the book 'National Biodiversity Network' all suggest that, as regards most wildlife and wildlife habitats, there has been no great change during the past 20 years. However, certain species have, because of climate change, long-term changes in farming practice, or for some other reason, declined and some others have increased. Examples of the former seem to be Skylark, Grey Partridge, Lapwing, Plover (all ground-nesting), Thrushes, Tree Sparrow, Finches. Examples of the latter are Badger, Barn Owl, Buzzard, Red Kite, Holly Blue Butterfly. The loss of small birds is likely, at least partly, to be on account of the increase in the number of birds of prey.

4. A survey of potential wildlife havens in the Parish shows a large number of small or very small areas in which wildlife can thrive. The green infrastructure makes it just possible for separated small habitats to act as wildlife reservoirs and to inter-relate. The importance of gardens in the village should not be under-estimated.
5. In recent years there have been various regrettable losses to this biodiversity network: destruction of an ancient hedgerow on the Parish boundary beside the bridleway E145 Loudall Lane with erection of a fence impenetrable to most small mammals; the uprooting of several hedgerows on farming land, in the interests of having larger fields; removal of a hedgerow south of The Glade, Ranksborough and felling of several mature trees in The Park, Ranksborough. We are very disappointed that the RCC has been unable to provide more habitat protection in this area but, because the land is privately owned and cannot easily be viewed from the public highway, it is outside their jurisdiction.
7. Further reduction in the numbers of such small wildlife havens or disruption of the green infrastructure would seem likely to have a disproportionately negative impact.
8. Particularly valuable as potential wildlife havens are the few areas of woodland of significant size, road verges such as that of the Ashwell Road, and hedgerows, especially ancient hedgerows, provided, in each case, that they are maintained appropriately and not subjected to any potentially harmful drift from crop-spraying. In general, the problem from crop-spraying is less than in years past and we believe that most local farmers do their best to minimise damage.
9. There are very few mature trees on farmland in the Parish but there has been recent tree planting as well as planting of new hedgerows which will benefit the biodiversity in the Parish considerably in the long run. Hopefully even more trees will be planted to make the Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen.
10. We strongly endorse Commitment No. 9 in the RCC's Environment Plan to 'protect natural habitats and species to maintain and improve the wealth of biodiversity in the county.' We also fully endorse core strategy CS21; we particularly agree that 'Development should be appropriate to the landscape character type within which it is situated and contribute to its conservation, enhancement or restoration, or the creation of appropriate new features' and we strongly approve this commitment: 'The quality and diversity of the natural environment of Rutland will be conserved and enhanced. Conditions for biodiversity will be maintained and improved...' We find these commitments to be in harmony with Natural England's policies for our area, NCA 74.
11. We also strongly endorse core strategy CS23 regarding 'Green infrastructure, open space, sport and recreation', particularly noting this commitment in paragraph (c): 'Proposals involving the loss of green infrastructure will not be supported unless there is no longer a need for the existing infrastructure or an alternative is provided to meet the local needs that is both accessible and of equal or greater quality and benefit to the community'
12. The government initiative to seek Net Biodiversity Gain for any development is a welcome strengthening of the initiative to encourage attention to biodiversity.

13. The areas adjacent to the Cold Overton Road, shaded green in Figure SDL7.8 form an exceptionally valuable wildlife haven for bats, birds including Barn Owls, and a range of woodland species.



**Figure SDL7.8:** Green corridor along Cold Overton Rd. showing proposed route of Bypass in yellow

13. In the event of a by-pass being reconsidered, it is highly desirable that it should pass further to the south-west than was outlined in 1990. Indeed, as far as this area is concerned one would look to minimize noise and air pollution to protect this habitat. That said, a Solar Farm immediately to the west of this land received planning permission earlier this year
14. The wide borders of woodland on each side of the canal and the canal itself (in each case only partly in the parish) are of exceptional value in terms of biodiversity and deserve protection. The following protected species are known to be in residence: Barn Owl, Otter, Water Vole.
15. The whole green corridor comprising the brook and its banks, with a margin on either side of it, up to about 25m, together with trees and scrub on the banks, are of exceptional importance for biodiversity, especially for species associated with this nature of habitat. The following protected species are present in this corridor: Bats, Barn Owl, Otter, Kingfisher, Water vole.

## Biodiversity Net Gain

16. Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. Where a development has an impact on biodiversity it encourages developers to provide an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features over and above that being affected in such a way it is hoped that the current loss of biodiversity through development will be halted and ecological networks can be restored.
17. Defra has recently consulted on making biodiversity net gain a mandatory element of the English planning system however many developers are already designing net gain into their development projects and national planning policy frameworks already encourage the net gain approach. Quite simply, a policy of no net loss has not worked and we need to do something different if we are to make any progress towards reaching our biodiversity targets.
18. Biodiversity net gain still relies on the application of the mitigation hierarchy to avoid, mitigate or compensate for biodiversity losses. It is additional to these approaches, not instead of them. Put simply, it involves the use of a metric as a proxy for recognising the negative impacts on habitats arising from a development and calculating how much new or restored habitat, and of what types is required to deliver sufficient net gain.
19. The CIEEM Biodiversity Net Gain Best Practice Principles for Developers is a recommended reference document by Natural England, for all developers to help them move from having a neutral impact on the biodiversity of their site, to producing a net positive impact.
20. In order to determine whether there is indeed a net gain, it needs to be measurable, in line with NPPF paragraph 179, which states:  
*'To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:...*  
*...b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity'*
- 22.. The new and improved Biodiversity Metric 3.0 has recently launched, alongside the Small Sites Metric (Beta Test Version) and the Environmental Benefits from Nature Tool (Beta Test Version). The tools can be accessed via the Natural England website and include user guides and technical supplements.
23. With the launch of the Small Sites Metric, it should now be much more manageable for the net gain approach to be taken for smaller developments. The advantage of using a recognised metric to deliver net gain is that it provides a clear, transparent and evidence-based approach to assessing a project's biodiversity impacts that can assist with "de-risking" a development through the planning process and contribute to wider place-making.

## Habitat Protection

24. Rutland County Council has produced a Local Plan Habitats regulations Assessment which gives guidance and best practice for the management and conservation of species and habitats.
25. Rutland is also part of the District Licensing Scheme which offers quicker and less onerous process for developers to ensure any Great Crested Newt population on land they wish to develop is made safe
26. This is paid for by the developer and tasks a body such as the Wildlife Trust to:
  - Select an appropriate new habitat
  - Relocate the newts and ensure they become established
  - Monitor their welfare over the next 25 years
  - Maintain that habitat for 25 years

## Appendix 1: Condition of Footpaths and Bridleways (Reports from walkers)

**E145** Loudall Lane. Ashwell Road to junction with E146.

- Having lost much of the shrubbery, the ancient hedge and some of the trees some 5 years ago, Loudall Lane is not what it used to be. It is maintained by the neighbouring farmer who uses it for his quad bike and has changed the nature of this footpath – many say to its detriment. –

**E145 & E148.** Sewage Works to Ashwell Road at Langham Spinney (SK85633 12827), via Mickley Lodge.

- Shady Lane a bit overgrown. Churned up by horses near Langham Spinney; otherwise good condition.
- There is a new stile at SK 85512 11589 after which the footpath crosses three well-grazed fields: the owner has made it easy to go to the left round these fields if this route is preferred as an alternative (there is a polite suggestion to this effect posted) and many walkers have evidently followed this path. The final section, being part of Bridleway E145, can get churned up by horses and so rather muddy. The final length, nearest the road, has a hardcore surface to great advantage.
- East from Ashwell Road, then E148 to Sewage works is usually in good condition.

**E145** from near the Ashwell Garden Centre to the junction with E148.

- The easternmost section of E145 and usually in good condition.

**E146** Manor Lane to Loudall Lane

- In good condition
- The stile to the lane is acceptable. However it is often overgrown such that the grass can be almost waist high at times. This means that the official route across the field as well as the unofficial route around the edge are often very unclear.

**E147** Sewage Works to Ashwell Road at SK85125 12098

- In good condition.
- The stile has been recently replaced by a kissing gate which is easier for all walkers.
- The path just over the footbridge beside the brook can become almost impassable as nettles and brambles grow across what is a very narrow path.

**E149 & E152.** Short sections of footpath within the village.

- Usually in good condition although E149 can get somewhat muddy.

**E150** from Well Street at SK84172 11130 to the junction, at SK83864 11300, of the Whissendine Road and the Melton Road

**E151 & D85** Footpaths from Cold Overton Road, via The Range and Ranksborough Hall Drive to Ranksborough Hill.

- Generally in good condition, although part of E151 can become muddy with cyclist use
- The path passes several good wildlife havens in the form of spinneys, ancient hedgerow and ponds.
- There is ambiguity about the official route through or beside Brocklehurst Park.
- Past here, the D85 is under threat from a proposed Solar Farm. The developers intend to obliterate the views and the fields with a 28MW Solar Farm which will ruin the walk to Ranksborough Hill and views from it.

**E153** Bridleway, Cold Overton Road to Mill Hill.

- Generally in good condition, passing near several wildlife havens.

**E154** along the east side of the canal (only partly in the Parish of Langham).

- The Northern section has ongoing maintenance needs with fallen trees and overgrown shrubbery; the Southern section is generally in good condition.
- Anglers have done a great job with gravel. Official path both sides of road mostly dry and passable.

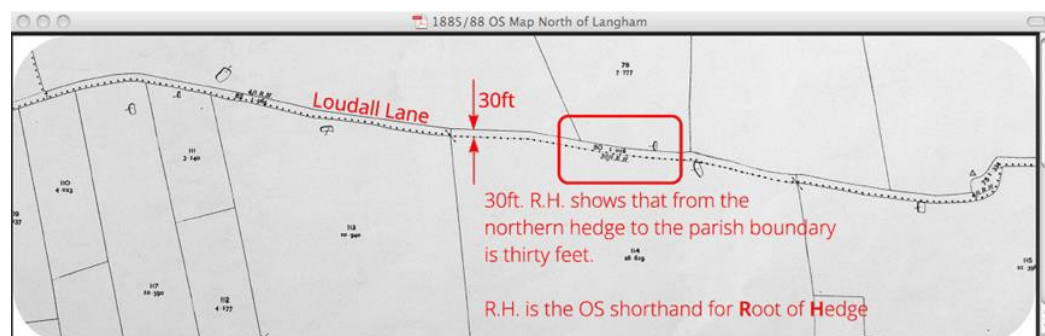
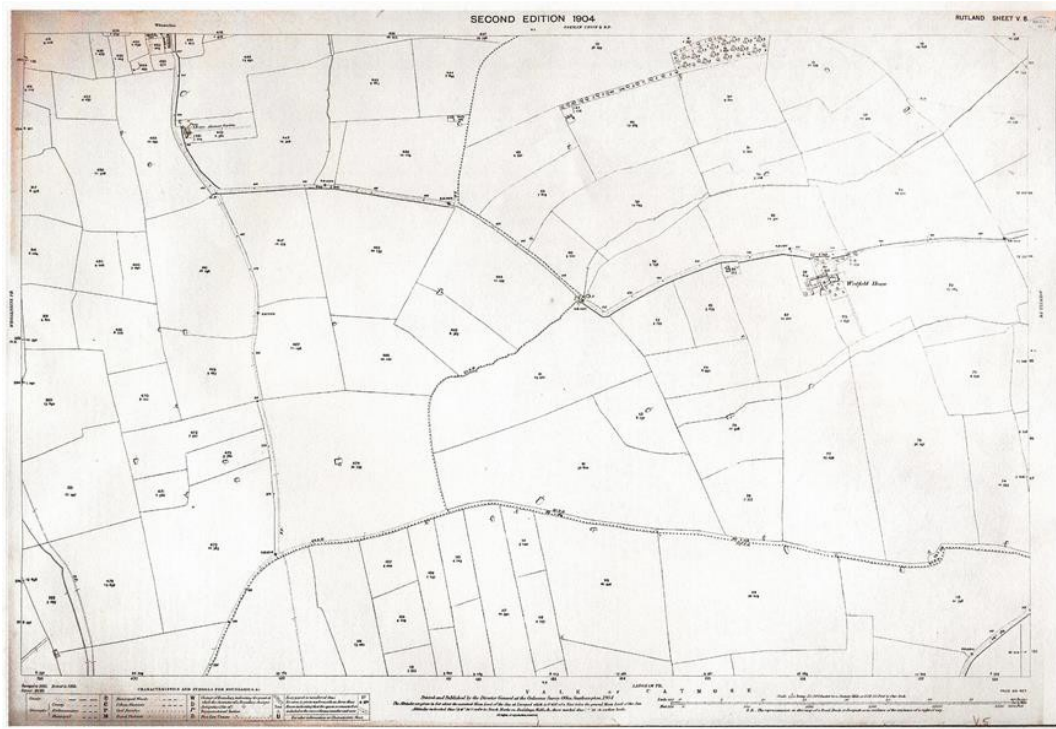


## Appendix 2: Loudall Lane: Background (research by Mike Frisby)

Loudall Lane is the longest unobstructed bridleway in Rutland. It starts at OS Ref SK82938 11726 to the east of the A606, roughly half way between the Langham to Whissendine junction and Holbeck farm. After 500m it follows the Langham/Whissendine/Ashwell parish boundaries, crossing the Langham to Ashwell road at OS SK856344 12854. Continuing to follow the parish boundary, it crosses both Tambourine Bridge, over the Oakham/Melton Railway, and the Oakham/Ashwell Road.

The route leaves the parish boundary at its most easterly point and crosses the Oakham/Melton canal at SK87081 11841 terminating at the Langham to Burley Road SK87831 10806, a total length of 6.7Km.

On early C19th OS mapping, the lane is shown to be similar to other main thoroughfares in the locality and subsequent editions clearly show the lane to be 30ft in width. This was verified on the ground by the width between the two rows of hedgerow trees.



Much of the lane was enclosed by ancient boundary hedgerows which contained a wide variety of species. Where not enclosed there was a hedge to one side of the carriageway. The trees supported a diverse population of birds and mammals. The older trees provided nest and roosting holes for owls and bats with the hedgerows providing a habitat for significant insect populations.



The part of the carriageway which followed the ridgeline between the parishes of Langham, Whissendine and Ashwell had been well used for many hundreds of years and contained a wide variety of grasses and flora. The hedgerows on either side had not been maintained for many years but still clearly showed the lane's boundary. When the hedgerow was illegally removed from the northern side of the lane, a new fence and metal gates were installed reducing the width of the public carriageway. The carriage bed was also mechanically damaged, not only destroying the flora but making it impassable during the winter months or after periods of heavy rain. This makes it difficult for foot traffic and dangerous for those on horseback. The mechanical damage also resulted in the removal of a section of medieval bank; a bank which provided safety for pedestrian traffic and an enhanced view of Ashwell, Ashwell Grange, Langham and the Vale of Catmose.

Little or no thought was given to the protection of this public amenity by either the County Council or the landowner. Whilst I was given to understand that the landowner was interviewed under caution for removing the hedgerow without planning approval, it was decided that prosecution would be counterproductive. The replacement hedgerow does not contain the wide variety of the original species nor has it the maturity to support the bird and mammal population.

The new and inappropriate fencing remains in place, and whilst we have an assurance made by the ROC CEO that it will be removed when the new boundary matures sufficiently to retain livestock, (something the land has not seen since the destruction of the old boundary,) it continues to be in use as arable land.

## Appendix 3: RCC Map of Langham Parish Rights of Way



## Appendix 4: Bodies Responsible

- Stiles and gates across Public Rights of Way are the responsibility of the land manager who is also expected to keep the Right of Way clear of obstructions and accessible.
- There are specific regulations as regards ploughing and crops, and the keeping of bulls in fields crossed by Rights of Way.
- Overall responsibility for and general maintenance of the Rights of Way are, however, the responsibility of the County Council as the local highway authority. [See *Natural England: Public rights of way: local highway authority responsibilities, 2014*]
- Problems with the condition of Rights of Way should be reported, straight away, by the person finding the problem, to the Public Rights of Way Officer (Stuart Crook) at the RCC. This can be done by ringing up the RCC and speaking to him, if he is there, or leaving a message, or, probably better than that, by sending an email to [rightsofway@rutland.gov.uk](mailto:rightsofway@rutland.gov.uk).
- There has, however, been a tendency for some walkers to grumble but to fail to report problems. When specific problems are reported, they are normally dealt with fairly quickly.

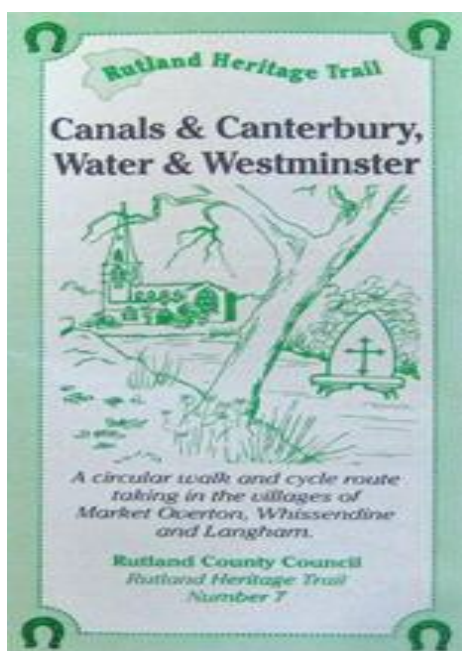
The RCC Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007

[\[http://www.rutland.gov.uk/transport\\_and\\_streets/public\\_rights\\_of\\_way/improvement\\_plan.aspx\]](http://www.rutland.gov.uk/transport_and_streets/public_rights_of_way/improvement_plan.aspx)

- Core Action 1 includes a survey of 20% of the network per annum and consequent maintenance of signage and waymarking, as well as improved seasonal vegetation clearance.
- Whilst cyclists are permitted to use bridleways, there is no 'obligation to facilitate the use of the bridleway by cyclists' and cyclists should give way to pedestrians and horse riders. [Country Side Act 1968]
- The Travel4Rutland Proposed Cycle Infrastructure 2013 envisaged upgrade of the surface of Loudall Lane with a view to it becoming part of a route from Langham to Whissendine and hence contributing to the Cycling Infrastructure of Rutland.

## Appendix 5: Other Users

- The guidebook and leaflets for the Rutland Heritage Trail, a year 2000 initiative, are now out of print. Leaflet 7 describes a circular walk and cycle route taking in the villages of Market Overton, Teigh, Whissendine, Langham and Ashwell under the title *Canals and Canterbury, Water and Westminster* and includes brief historical information about Simon de Langham and also the Oakham to Melton canal.
- The section of the 14½ mile 'cycle ride' within Langham parish is by the obvious road route.
- From Whissendine, the 11 mile walk joins bridleway E145 and enters Langham via footpath E146, continuing to Ashwell via E149, E147 and the Ashwell Road.
- The section of the canal encountered on the walk is near Market Overton.
- It is regrettable that the ROC has not produced an updated version of this guidebook; minor revision would now be necessary (refreshments at the Langham village shop are suggested). Oakham library holds a full set of the leaflets in their reserve collection, for reference only, but copying or photography is permitted.



- The Rutland Round is a 65 mile circular walk. passing through Whissendine, Langham, Oakham, Uppingham, Eyebrook Reservoir, Ketton, Empingham and Thistleton. There are also two sections along Rutland Water. The walk is waymarked with a yellow and green discs. The route from Whissendine joins E145 and approaches Langham via E146. Passing through Langham via Orchard Road, Well Street, Bridge Street and Church Street it then heads for Mill Hill and Barleythorpe via E152 and E153. [See *GPSCycle and Walking Routes*]
- Oakham Health Walkers value use of Rights of Way around Langham for out-of-town excursions. [Oakham Health Walkers: Glenys Laidler, 724361]
- The Langham Village History Group's history walk around Langham is available with its maps from the church or online at <http://www.walk4life.info/walk/langham-village-history-walk>.



## Appendix 6: What the Community Said

A survey was carried out in 2014 to find out just how important these Rights of Way are to the people of Langham.

**Question:** 'How important are (walks and bridleways)?'

219 regarded them as 'very important', 29 as 'fairly important' and none as 'not important'.

**Question:** 'How effectively are (walks and bridleways) managed?'

39 ticked 'very well'; 133 ticked 'fairly well'; 40 ticked 'not well'.

There were ten specific comments, eight complaining of inadequate maintenance, one complaining of re-routing of footpaths and one complaining of fouling by dogs.

**Question:** 'How important are country walks?'

217 believed them 'very important'; 37 'fairly important'; 4 'not important'.

**Question:** 'How important is dog walking?'

163 said 'very important'; 60 'fairly important'; 21 'not important'.

**Question:** 'How important (is horse riding)?'

9 said 'very important'; 89 said 'fairly important'; 45 said 'not important'.

**Question:** 'How accessible are country walks?'

108 said 'very easy'; 108 said 'fairly easy'; 23 said 'not easy'.

**Question:** 'How accessible is dog walking?'

100 said 'very easy'; 97 said 'fairly easy'; 23 said 'not easy'.

**Question:** 'How accessible is horse riding?'

66 said 'very easy'; 108 said 'fairly easy'; 12 said 'not easy'.

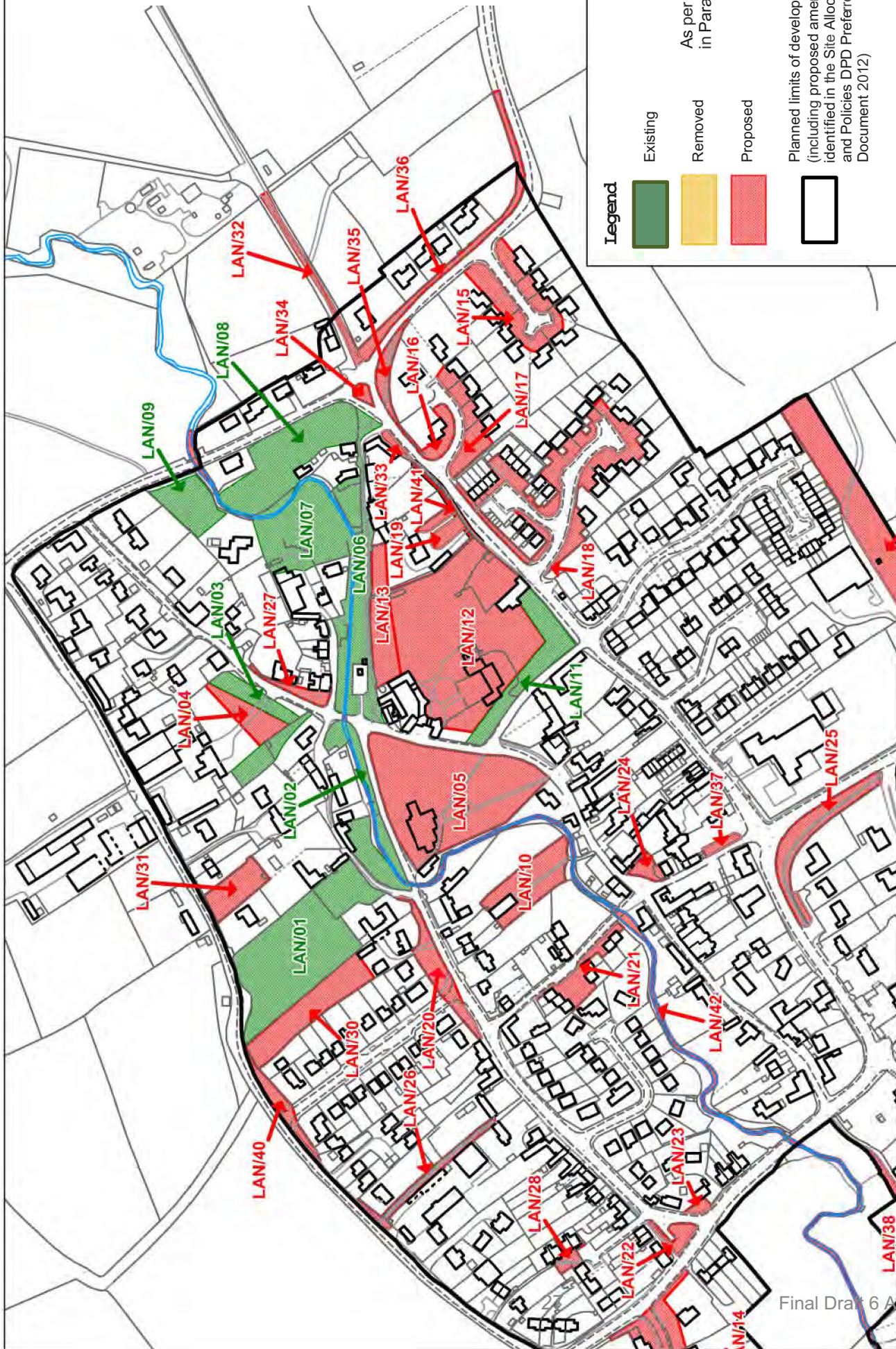
**Question:** 'What are the three key things you would do to improve Langham Parish?'

Four people mentioned walks, hoping for yet more of them and better maintained; one specifically asking for gritting of Loudall Lane to make it usable by walkers all the year.

- Eighteen Comments were made regarding country walks: these are valued but more can be done to improve maintenance of rural footpaths; two comments were concerned with danger from cyclists or cars on roads without pavements.
- Of sixteen comments about dog walking, 7 proposed a designated dog-walking area where dogs could be let off the lead safely; 4 were worried about danger from cars on the Ashwell Road (2) or other roads; 4 were concerned about fouling; more walks, notably circular walks would be appreciated.
- Eight comments concerned with horse riding indicated that it was neither easy to have access to it nor as easy as previously to find safe places to ride.



# Appendix 7: Maps of Protected Spaces within Langham Village



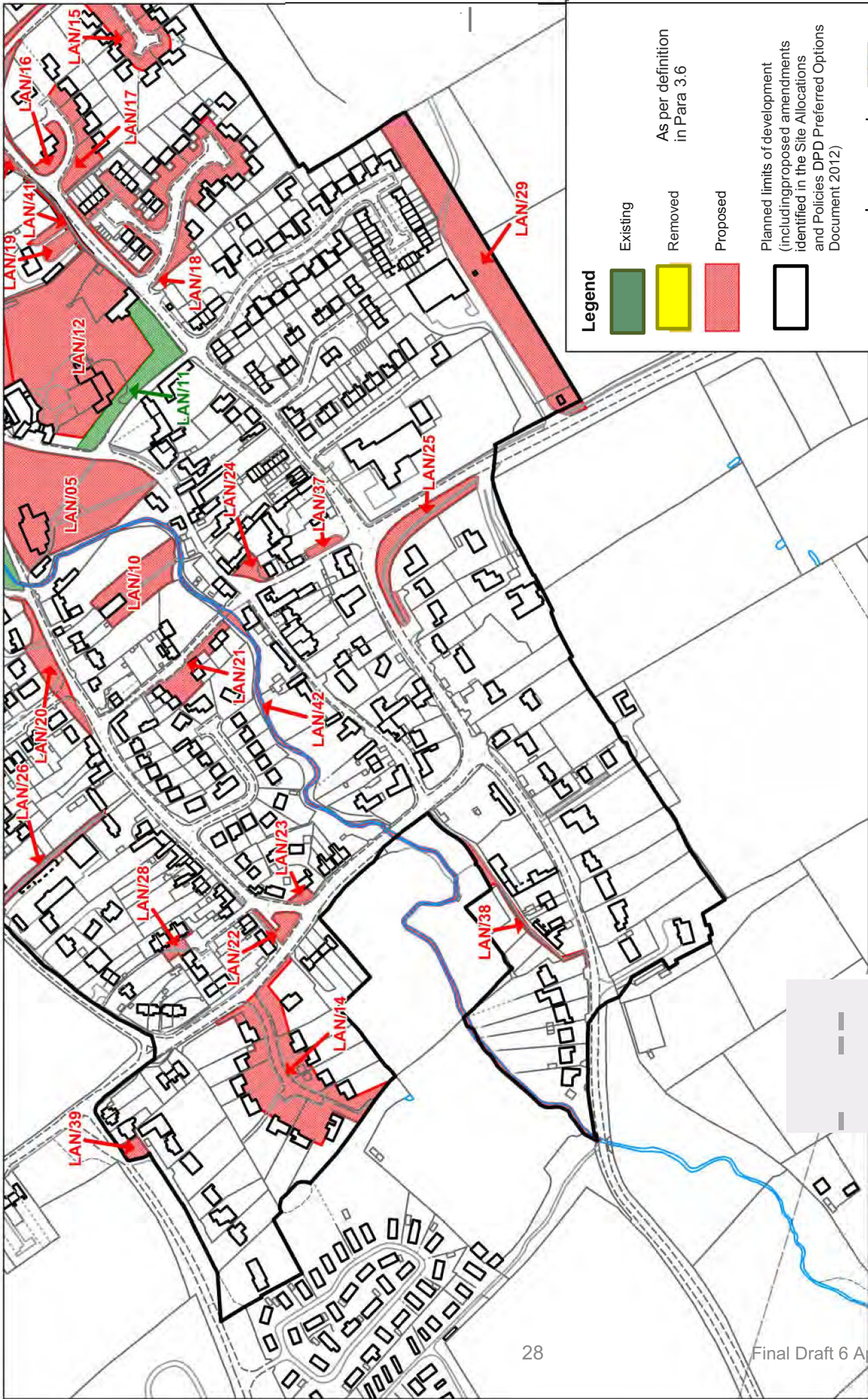
Review of Important Open Space and Important Frontages  
 Langham (east)  
 All sites assessed  
 June 2012

Rutland County Council  
 Places Directorate

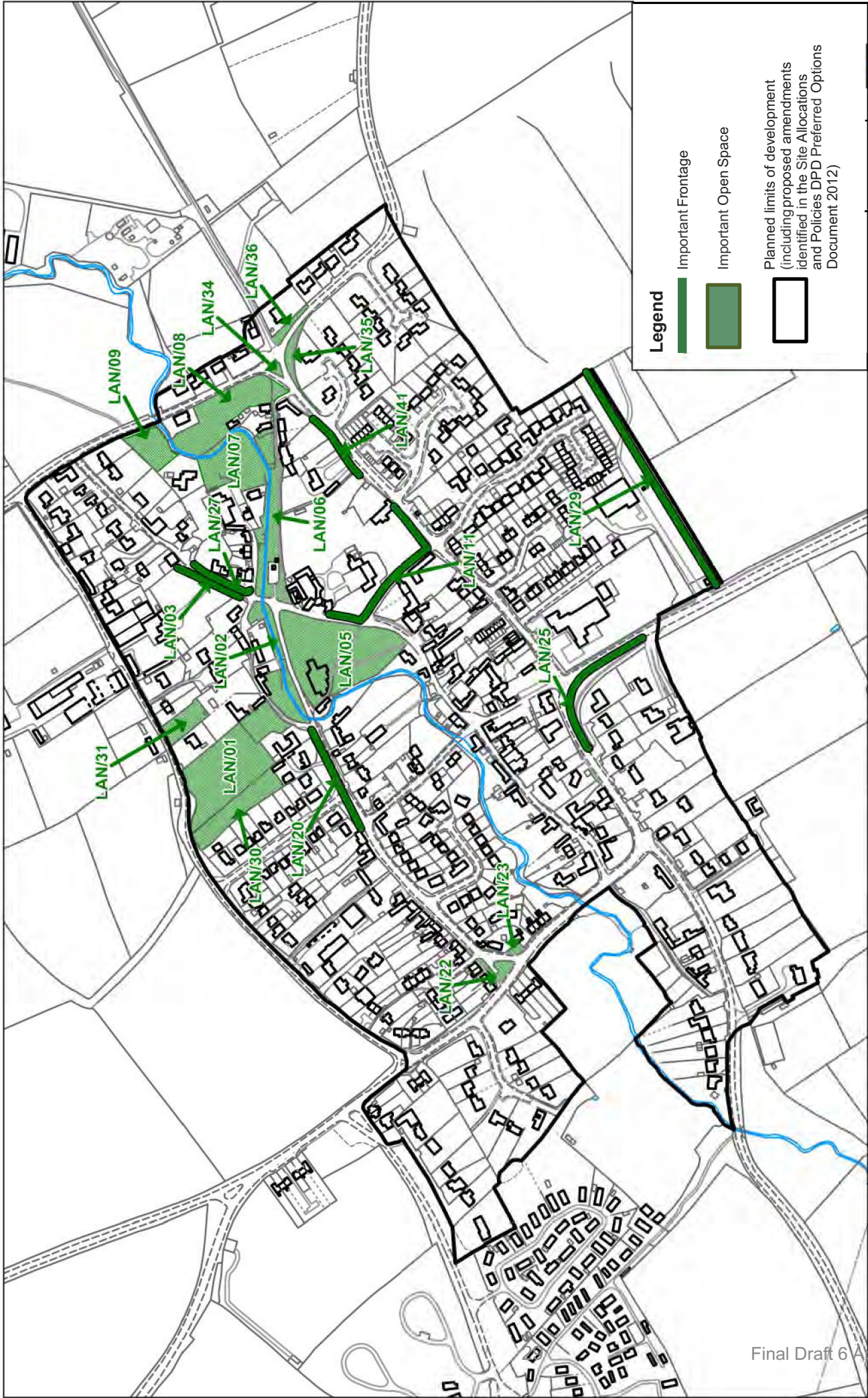


N S










Final Draft 6 April 2012

<p>Rutland County Council Places Directorate</p>	<p>Review of Important Open Space and Important Frontages Llangham Final proposed sites June 2012</p>		<p>N S</p>	 <p>Rutland County Council</p>
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## **Appendix 8: Bibliography/Reference sites**

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**Conservation - Natural Habitats** - Regulations 1994)  
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**Green Lanes (Jersey)**  
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**Hedgelinek**  
**Home Energy Conservation Act 1995: progress report for Rutland**  
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**Langham Brook History**  
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**Rural Payments Agency** - Basic Payment Scheme 2015 for farmers

**Rutland County Council – Rutland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**

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**Rutland County Council Public Rights of Way**

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