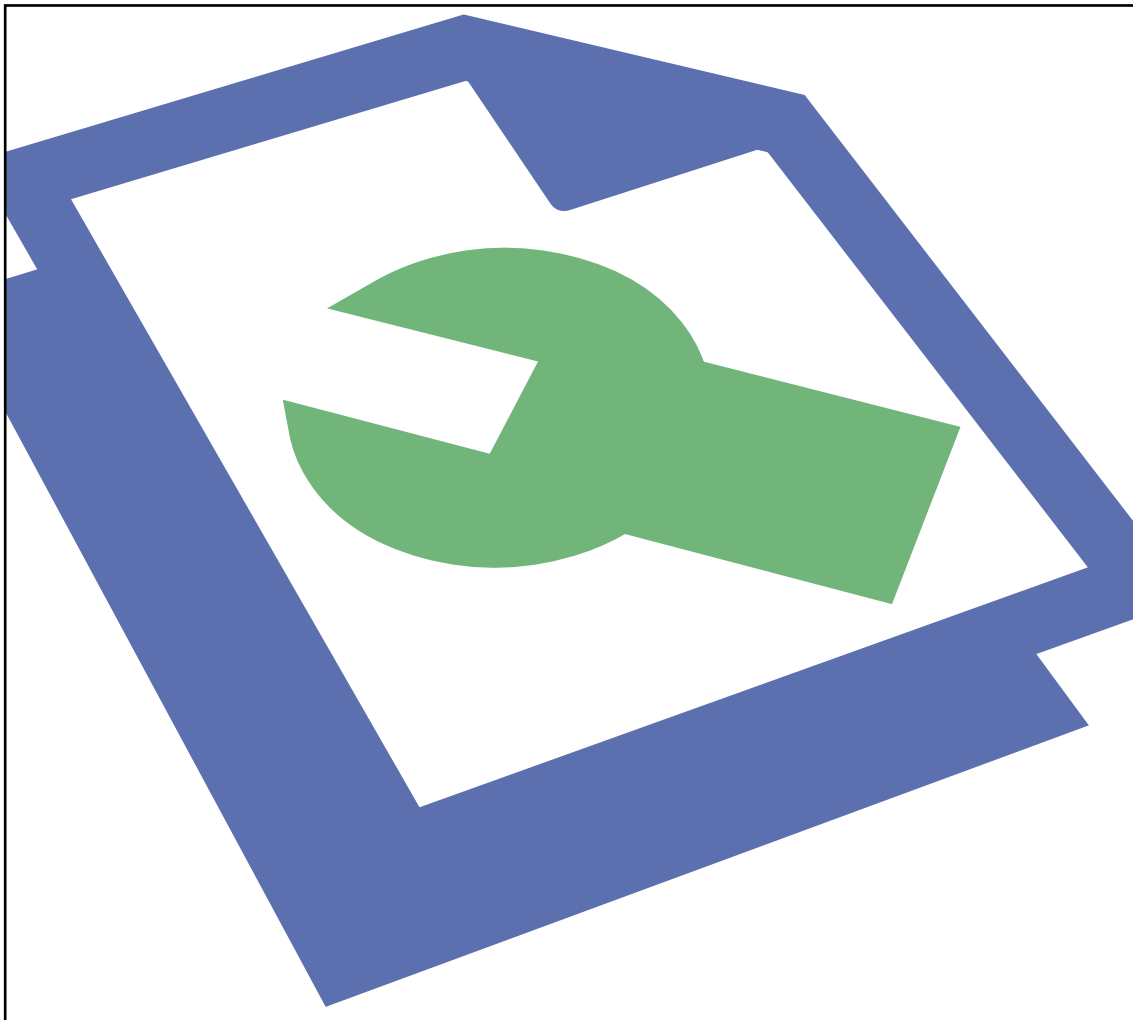


CCN Workshop

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER: A SPATIAL FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY



WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

27th January 2005 • 9.30am - 4.00pm (approx)

The Catalis Centre, Derby



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The Countryside Character Network is an informal network, open to anyone who has an interest in Landscape Character Assessment and its applications. The CCN is supported by the Countryside Agency and is co-ordinated by Countryside.

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Countryside Character Network Workshop

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER: A SPATIAL FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

27th January 2005

9.30am - 4.00pm

Catalis, Derby

Chair:

Chair: Jane Cecil,
The Countryside Agency

Countryside:

Jonathan Porter,
Network Coordinator -
jonathan@countryside.org

Gavin MacDonald,
Network Administrator -
gavin@countryside.org

9.30 Registration and Refreshments

10.00 **Welcome and Chair's address**

Chair: Jane Cecil, The Countryside
Agency

10.05 **"Landscape Character Assessment
- what shall we do with it?"**

Richard Silson, The Planning
Cooperative

10.30 **"Landscape sensitivity and local
planning: a case study from
Shrewsbury and Atcham"**

Geoffrey Griffiths, The Living
Landscapes Project at the
University of Reading

10.50 Refreshments

11.10 **"The Northamptonshire
Environmental Character
Assessment process: a spatial
framework for positive planning"**

Jason Longhurst, Northamptonshire
County Council

11.30 **"Landscape character in West
Sussex: putting vision, policies and
guidance into Local Development
Frameworks"**

Bob Connell, West Sussex County
Council

11.50 Chaired Discussion

12.20 Lunch

13.20 **Break out into working groups**

14.50 **Reconvene for reporting and
discussion**

3.40 Refreshments and Close

The Countryside Character Network (CCN) is an informal network, open to anyone who has an interest in Landscape Character Assessment and its applications. The CCN is supported by the Countryside Agency and is co-ordinated by Countryside.

To join the Countryside Character Network, visit www.ccnetwork.org.uk



Chair:

Jane Cecil,
The Countryside Agency
jane.cecil@countryside.gov.uk

Jane is the Head of Positive Planning and Finest Landscapes at The Countryside Agency. She studied for her first degree in Environment Science, majoring in ecology at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, and later for an MSc in Environmental Management at Stirling University, Scotland. She worked for the Kent Wildlife Trust and for the Instituto de Historia Natural, Chiapas Mexico, before joining the National Rivers Authority in 1990. She spent ten years working for the NRA and Environment Agency at an area, regional and national level. Her final post was as an Area FER manager running a fisheries, conservation, recreation and biology team across Sussex. She joined the Countryside Agency's National Park Designation Team in 2000, working on the designation of the New Forest and South Downs and National Parks. In 2002 she became Head of Finest Countryside responsible for National Park and AONB work nationally and took on her current role in 2003.

Speakers:

Richard Silson,
The Planning Cooperative
richard@plancoop.co.uk

Richard Silson is a director of the Planning Cooperative, a small specialist practice that he helped establish with colleagues in 1991. Prior to that he worked in local government for 12 years, with two county councils and Birmingham City where he led an information and research team.

Work in a conventional practice in the late 1980's convinced him that there was a need for a bridge between the commercial and regulatory worlds of development. The Cooperative works with both public and private sector clients to promote better development through undertaking research, putting that into practice through consultancy with authorities and developers, and disseminating the results through training. Richard is involved with all three aspects of this work and has long held a keen interest in ways of promoting better design.

Geoffrey Griffiths,
The Living Landscapes Project at the University of Reading
g.h.griffiths@reading.ac.uk

Geoffrey Griffiths has over 20 years experience in the application of remote sensing & GIS techniques in landscape ecology and natural resource management. As a senior environmental consultant with Hunting Technical Services for 10 years he worked in the UK, Greece, Jordan, Israel, the Yemen, Zimbabwe, Kenya and the Sudan.

He joined the Department of Geography at the University of Reading in 1994 where he is Senior Lecturer with research interests in biodiversity & landscape ecology and Landscape Character Assessment. With Steven Warnock he helped to establish the "Living Landscapes Project", based at The University of Reading. He is the current Chair of the International Association for Landscape Ecology (UK). Recent projects include the development of methods for habitat restoration at the landscape scale for the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW); landscape character and biodiversity for English Nature and the establishment of national guidelines for Landscape Character Assessment for CPRE. He is also working with research students on landscape ecology projects in Brazil, Tunisia, Malta and the UK.



Speakers: (Continued)

Jason Longhurst,
Northamptonshire County Council
jlonghurst@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Until recently Jason Longhurst has been the Natural Environment Team Leader within Northamptonshire County Council's Built and Natural Environment Team. During that time he has led the development of the county's Landscape Character Assessment and pioneered a new environmental character process which is integral to the assessment. In November 2004 he was appointed as Project Director for the River Nene Regional Park. The importance and potential of developing this green space network within Northamptonshire has been identified and supported by the ODPM, in acknowledgement of the significance of the environment as an integral part of delivering sustainable communities within the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area. Jason is currently managing a team to develop the recommendations of a recently completed Feasibility Study for the Regional Park, and in particular is focusing on the identification of both strategic and local green infrastructure associated with the growth settlements within Northamptonshire. These studies will draw on the findings of the emerging Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment which Jason continues to promote as an essential tool within the planning system for guiding policy, sustainable land use planning and management, as well as informing statutory processes.

Bob Connell,
West Sussex County Council
bob.connell@westsussex.gov.uk

Bob holds degrees in Geography and Urban and Regional Planning. He received his Diploma in Town Planning from Leeds Polytechnic and is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute. He has over thirty years' professional experience in environmental and rural planning, including an enlightening stint as a gypsy liaison officer! He has worked extensively on land reclamation, nature conservation and Urban Programme delivery and the planning, implementation and management of river valley improvement schemes, in Humberside, Greater Manchester and Wigan Metro. His fifteen years with West Sussex County Council have been spent on a variety of environmental, rural planning and tourism programmes and research relating to reviews of the County Structure Plan. These have included the preparation of an environmental capacity study in 1996 for the Third Review; an environmental assessment of the second runway option for Gatwick Airport proposed in the Runway Capacity Study for the South East; and a long involvement with the work of SERPLAN. He has also led public consultation programmes in connection with successive phases of the Structure Plan and the County Waste Local Plan. Bob is currently a principal planner in the Environment and Planning directorate of the County Council. He is the project manager for the Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme and also advises on rural planning issues including regionally through the work of SEERA. He is responsible for the suite of characterisation studies being undertaken by the Partnership; putting in place policy and guidance regionally and with local authority partners; and promoting a wider understanding and appreciation of the character concept.



List of Attendees

Delegate Name	Organisation
Kay Adams	Entec UK Ltd
Miriam Addy	Landscape Planning Group Limited
Gail Adkins	Bowman Planton Ltd
Phillip Black	Scott Wilson
James Bonnor	Lincolnshire County Council
Chris Bray	Worcestershire County Council
Nigel Buchan	Scottish Natural Heritage
Andrew Canning	The Countryside Agency
Jane Cecil	The Countryside Agency
Francis Comyn	Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Bob Connell	West Sussex County Council
Robert Deanwood	Entec
Marjan Desmet	The Countryside Agency
Karen Devonport	The Countryside Agency, East Midlands
Gary Ellis	Derbyshire County Council
Pauline Goodhall	Macclesfield Borough Council
Geoffrey Griffiths	The Living Landscapes Project at the University of Reading
Rosy Eaton	The Countryside Agency
Lesley Eddleston	Leicestershire County Council
Jan Falkingham	Golder Associates
Glynis Foster	Derbyshire County Council
Fiona Fyfe	LDA Design
Andy Goode	Staffordshire County Council
Amanda Grundy	The Countryside Agency
Peter Harris	Kettering Borough Council
Nicola Hope	The Mersey Forest
Ian Houlston	LDA Design
John Howe	Joint Strategic Planning & Transportation Unit
Jenny Kamp	The Countryside Council for Wales
Bettina Kirkham	Kirkham Landscape Planning Consultants



List of Attendees (Continued)

Delegate Name	Organisation
Rebecca Knight	Land Use Consultants
Jeremy Lake	English Heritage
Jason Longhurst	Northamptonshire County Council
Gavin MacDonald	Countryside
Paul Mahony	Countryside
Nigel Mathews	Cornwall County Council
Marie McLeish	Shropshire County Council
Judith Moore	Cannock Chase AONB Unit
Jon Mullins	Jacobs Babbie
Simon Odell	Hertfordshire County Council
Jonathan Porter	Countryside
Ally Rood	The Countryside Agency
Hilary Senior	High Peak Borough Council
Richard Silson	The Planning Cooperative
Jemma Simpson	Countryside
Martin Small	Sussex Downs Conservation Board
Charmaine Smith	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Esmond Turner	West Sussex County Council
Carol Warnock	Warwickshire County Council
Andrew Wharton	The Countryside Agency
Simon White	White Consultants
Andy Wigley	Shropshire County Council
Mark Wilson	Hampshire County Council
Chris Yardley	North Norfolk District Council
Nick Young	The Countryside Agency



Landscape Character Assessment - what shall we do with it?

Richard Silson, The Planning Cooperative richard@plancoop.co.uk

Richard Silson is a director of the Planning Cooperative, a small specialist practice that he helped establish with colleagues in 1991. Prior to that he worked in local government for 12 years, with two county councils and Birmingham City where he led an information and research team.

Work in a conventional practice in the late 1980's convinced him that there was a need for a bridge between the commercial and regulatory worlds of development. The Cooperative works with both public and private sector clients to promote better development through undertaking research, putting that into practice through consultancy with authorities and developers, and disseminating the results through training. Richard is involved with all three aspects of this work and has long held a keen interest in ways of promoting better design.

Landscape Character Assessment - what shall we do with it?

In 2001 Pendle District Council had a variety of local countryside designations, all severely restricting development. They faced a threat in the revised PPG7 to ban their use. The Planning Cooperative was commissioned to draw up alternatives based on Landscape Character Assessment (LCA).

The Countryside Agency at the time were evolving their new planning policy for the countryside. The union with the Rural Development Commission had required the Agency to address social and economic challenges faced by rural communities. The new approach was based on two simple premises:

1. The countryside needed development in pursuit of social and economic progress, the level of need was more acute than had been assumed, and was growing.
2. The countryside needed protecting from inappropriate built form that would harm its appearance and character.

Design guidance was needed that would ensure that development in the countryside supported rather than eroded its essential character. The project was an opportunity to explore the potential of LCA to provide that guidance.

The methodology was based on the emerging

advice on LCA from the Countryside Agency, modified to reflect its purpose, which was to identify areas of the District where the defining attributes of the countryside could be identified and used to guide the siting, form and design of new development.

The new policy required all development to support rather than erode landscape character. It also required the development to demonstrate a positive contribution to quality of life in the countryside.

Zones were identified through field work, using standard assessment methods, that nested into the broader zones of the Lancashire LCA. The information relating to each zone was set out to a common format on 2 sides of A4 as a mixture of discursive text and bullet points, structured as follows:

- sensitivity - a description of the countryside in the zone explaining the origin of building forms and types, the pattern of farming, tree cover, field boundaries etc.
- development guidelines - an explanation of the kind of development sought and the overriding principles that should be followed in its design
- character of the zone - bullet points divided into four sections: visual, environmental, farming and trends
- enhancement objectives - opportunities to restore landscape character
- a set of detailed criteria to be followed in development proposals

The above information would apply to any development in the zone.

In addition, a specific site assessment was required in the context of the above, to prioritise the issues for that site and to shape the design of the proposals accordingly.

The aim was to produce practical guidance to help applicants prepare proposals that would add to the attributes of the countryside, and to give development control officers a clear means of measuring their design quality.



"Landscape sensitivity and local planning: a case study from Shrewsbury and Atcham"

Geoffrey Griffiths, The Living Landscapes Project at the University of Reading g.h.griffiths@reading.ac.uk

Geoffrey Griffiths has over 20 years experience in the application of remote sensing & GIS techniques in landscape ecology and natural resource management. As a senior environmental consultant with Hunting Technical Services for 10 years he worked in the UK, Greece, Jordan, Israel, the Yemen, Zimbabwe, Kenya and the Sudan.

He joined the Department of Geography at the University of Reading in 1994 where he is Senior Lecturer with research interests in biodiversity & landscape ecology and Landscape Character Assessment. With Steven Warnock he helped to establish the "Living Landscapes Project", based at The University of Reading. He is the current Chair of the International Association for Landscape Ecology (UK). Recent projects include the development of methods for habitat restoration at the landscape scale for the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW); landscape character and biodiversity for English Nature and the establishment of national guidelines for Landscape Character Assessment for CPRE. He is also working with research students on landscape ecology projects in Brazil, Tunisia, Malta and the UK.

"Landscape sensitivity and local planning: a case study from Shrewsbury and Atcham"

Background

The aim of the study was to identify the capacity of the landscape in and around Shrewsbury and the surrounding settlements, to accommodate new residential or employment/industrial development. Although guidance is available for the assessment of landscape character¹, the problems of assessing landscape sensitivity and capacity have only recently been described in a Countryside Agency Topic Paper². One of the principal aims of this project therefore, was to build upon the Topic Paper and to develop a robust and repeatable method for the assessment of landscape sensitivity and capacity with the potential to be applied nationally.

Character based decision making

The challenge for planners and land managers is to find new ways of accommodating change, whilst

at the same time retaining and, where possible, strengthening regional character and local distinctiveness. In order to meet this challenge the process of landscape evaluation needs to do more than identify important or "high quality" landscapes. It must also be capable of making reasoned judgements, based upon data, about the relative sensitivity of different types of landscape and their capacity to absorb change.

This study has provided the opportunity to build on recently developed methods to assess landscape sensitivity and capacity and to provide a strong landscape character input into the Shrewsbury & Atcham Local Plan Review.

Landscape sensitivity and capacity

Landscape sensitivity is a difficult concept to define and is frequently confused or used interchangeably with concepts such as "capacity" and the "ability to accommodate change". The recent Topic Paper has sought to clarify this, and to consolidate much of the common ground in current thinking. The Paper suggests that landscapes may be considered to have an inherent sensitivity (i.e. sensitivity which may be considered independently of external pressures), or that may be considered in the light of specific forces for change.

Landscape capacity should, however, as the Topic Paper notes, 'describe the ability of a landscape to accommodate different amounts of change or development of a specific type'. The approach in this project reflects this, defining capacity as an impact related concept to give a measure of relative levels of acceptable change in a particular landscape, in relation to the specific source of change.

It follows, therefore, that the measure of landscape sensitivity is constant regardless of any proposed development, as the measure refers only to the inherent character of the landscape itself: capacity is likely however, to vary for different forms of development as each development type has its own range of impacts.

Existing landscape assessment work in the study area

Shropshire County Council had previously requested the Living Landscapes Project to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment. The building block of the character framework is the Landscape Description Unit (LDU) - a discrete tract of land defined by a distinct pattern of physical,



"Landscape sensitivity and local planning: a case study from Shrewsbury and Atcham" (Continued)

biological and cultural attributes. However, the study was undertaken at a more detailed level of assessment beneath the LDU - that of the Land Cover Parcel (LCP). LCPs provide a finer grain of resolution at the sub-landscape level for assessing the "condition" of the wider landscape. LCPs are discrete areas of land bounded by roads, railways, water courses and parish boundaries, where similar patterns of land use, field pattern and tree cover are evident.

Methodology

The approach is divided into a number of stages:

- Review the landscape character work at LDU level
- Undertake a desk-based study to assign an ecological, cultural and visual sensitivity to each selected LDU located close to Shrewsbury and outlying settlements
- Sub-divide LDUs into Land Cover Parcels (LCPs) and identify those required for survey
- Carry out field survey to establish the condition and functionality of each selected LCP; verify and refine the desk based sensitivity findings
- Relate the LCP field survey findings to both the desk study and the LDU field survey context to derive outline capacity statements for each LCP
- Assess the applicability of the method to similar work elsewhere

Deriving landscape sensitivity

Sensitivity is closely related to the nature and pattern of key elements that define the character of a particular landscape. Landscapes with "time depth" (i.e. those that display a long and continuous history of evolution), together with those that are characterised by a clear and consistent pattern of key elements, tend to be more sensitive to change than landscapes of more recent origin, or those that have fewer distinguishing features. Any analysis of sensitivity needs to look separately at the inherent character of the landscape, both ecological and cultural, and the experiential aspects - the potential visual impact of new development, as well as implications for tranquillity.

Ecological sensitivity

The oldest (and by implication most sensitive) landscapes are those that still survive in a semi-natural state (i.e. heathland, moorland, etc). Most landscapes in the lowlands, however, have been

settled and improved for agricultural production and, as a result, any surviving semi-natural habitat is almost invariably associated with the cultural pattern (i.e. woodlands, field boundaries and other "man made" features). Thus, a settled arable landscape associated with good soils is likely to have fewer patches of semi-natural habitat than a pastoral landscape associated with marginal (wetland, heathland, chalk & limestone or moorland) soils. The analysis therefore, was based upon three main assumptions:

- agriculturally marginal land is more likely to be of ecological interest than good agricultural land
- pastoral land is more likely to support ecological interest as a result of less intensive use than arable
- landscapes with woodland of ancient character are the more ecologically valuable than other woodland character, and those characterised by fragmented woods and hedgerow remnants are more sensitive than larger woodland blocks (largely due to lack of protection/awareness).

Cultural sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity largely reflects the relative time depth (or continuity) of a landscape, and the degree to which its characteristics are exhibited in the landscape (consistency). Thus, small scale agricultural landscapes tend to be more sensitive to change than their larger scale counterparts. The continuity analysis has two main assumptions:

- smaller scale, more organic landscapes are an indication of age, and therefore likely to be of higher cultural interest and sensitivity
- organic landscapes are more culturally sensitive than planned landscapes as their time-depth implies that they are non-replaceable.

The combination of continuity and consistency provides a measure of the sensitivity of each LDU. The landscapes that are most sensitive to change are those that are "ancient" and/or strongly unified, whilst those that are variable in character and/or more recent in origin are likely to be less sensitive.

Visual

Visual sensitivity or "visibility" is the third component of landscape sensitivity, and is a measure of the degree to which change is likely to cause a visual impact within a particular landscape.



"Landscape sensitivity and local planning: a case study from Shrewsbury and Atcham" (Continued)

A visibility measure can be defined, as outlined in the recent Topic Paper as, 'a function particularly of the landform of a particular type of landscape and of the presence of potentially screening land cover, especially trees and woodland'. Thus, an upland landscape with little tree cover would have a high visibility score whereas a well-wooded lowland landscape would have a very low score.

Tranquillity

The Topic Paper recommends the consideration of "landscape value" in deriving landscape capacity. A number of possible criteria are suggested, including designations, wildness, tranquillity and consensus on value. Given the nature and scope of the project it was felt that tranquillity was the most important aspect of these to assess, with many of the other potential criteria within the realm of public consultation.

Analysis of condition and functionality

The condition of a landscape, which should be clearly distinguished from its character, indicates how far removed that landscape is from its inherent character, where all the key characteristics are present and consistent throughout the LDU and retain their function. Although landscape character can change over time, such changes are usually gradual and measured in decades rather than years. Condition, on the other hand, can change much more rapidly, due to the impact of external factors, such as significant land use change, agricultural intensification or neglect.

Deriving landscape capacity

As the Topic Paper notes, 'reaching conclusions about capacity means making a judgement about the amount of change of a particular type that can be accommodated without having unacceptable adverse effects on the character of the landscape, or the way it is perceived, and without compromising the values attached to it'. Four parameters of sensitivity were assessed as part of the project: cultural, ecological, visibility and tranquillity. Deriving a composite sensitivity index, while offering an indication of the overall sensitivity of the landscape, often serves to mask subtleties rather than illuminate the nature of a landscape's sensitivity. Therefore, rather than generating a single sensitivity index, each sensitivity parameter was used to derive an indicative capacity for each LCP surveyed: high, moderate and low to give an outline capacity statement for each LCP. A landscape capacity map was produced by an

equally weighted combination of all four aspects of sensitivity: the inherent sensitivity (cultural and ecological), and the experiential aspects (visibility and tranquillity).

Limitations of the study and future work

The assessment of landscape sensitivity and capacity has historically been a problematic one, only recently addressed in the Countryside Agency Topic Paper as a supplement to the national Landscape Character Assessment Guidance. This study was undertaken in an attempt to develop a robust and transparent method based on mapped and field data that could be applied at national and regional levels.

However, it should be noted that when considering other types of development (industrial, wind turbine etc) differing capacity statements may well result. Visibility and tranquillity impacts are the two aspects particularly likely to vary, as impacts on cultural and ecological aspects primarily relate to the development's footprint rather than its type. In addition, the method does not account for cumulative development over time.

Where there is some capacity for development it is important to recognise that this need not imply detrimental impacts on an already degraded landscape. In this situation there is an opportunity to identify potential benefits, for example, by reinforcing a weakened cultural pattern.

Phase 2 of this project seeks to derive a Supplementary Planning Document that creates a positive planning framework for LCA. The wealth of LDU and LCP survey information now available, combined with the indices of landscape capacity derived for the selected settlements, will assist with policy for new development in the District.

Footnotes

- 1 Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland, The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 2002
- 2 LCA Guidance for England and Scotland - Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity, The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 2004



“The Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment process: a spatial framework for positive planning”

**Jason Longhurst,
Northamptonshire County Council
jlonghurst@northamptonshire.gov.uk**

Until recently Jason Longhurst has been the Natural Environment Team Leader within Northamptonshire County Council's Built and Natural Environment Team. During that time he has led the development of the county's Landscape Character Assessment and pioneered a new environmental character process which is integral to the assessment. In November 2004 he was appointed as Project Director for the River Nene Regional Park. The importance and potential of developing this green space network within Northamptonshire has been identified and supported by the ODPM, in acknowledgement of the significance of the environment as an integral part of delivering sustainable communities within the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area. Jason is currently managing a team to develop the recommendations of a recently completed Feasibility Study for the Regional Park, and in particular is focusing on the identification of both strategic and local green infrastructure associated with the growth settlements within Northamptonshire. These studies will draw on the findings of the emerging Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment which Jason continues to promote as an essential tool within the planning system for guiding policy, sustainable land use planning and management, as well as informing statutory processes.

“The Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment process: a spatial framework for positive planning”

Introduction

The Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment process is an important milestone in the evolution of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). This new and innovative approach to recording and understanding the County's environmental baseline has adopted a holistic approach through the development of separate but parallel environmental baseline assessments. These complement and integrate to provide a comprehensive set of baseline data and a transparent and robust basis for interpretation. The project process is designed to meet the new

environmental planning policy requirements, to inform, guide and proactively inform the new planning structure.

Applying the most up to date GIS data sources, the Environmental Character Process is the most advanced environmental tool available. It takes forward national and regional guidance and presents the opportunity to establish a permanent environmental process that informs, guides and delivers sustainable environmental land use and planning. Importantly, in the context of the new planning system and the emphasis on “people and place”, it moves current landscape and environmental guidance from a reactive position to a proactive baseline tool.

The project and the evolution of the Environmental Character Process has involved many partner organisations, consultants and individuals working together towards a unified goal. The comprehensive digitally resourced baseline data and process is now gaining acknowledgement as a “best practice” model. It delivers a suite of tools that can be used to take forward a character led approach to determining a spatial framework for application across a wide range of planning issues within Northamptonshire, and an objective approach for the delivery of sustainable environmental management and positive planning.

The Northamptonshire Environmental Character Process has been evolving over the past two years. During that period there have been significant developments in the wider understanding and recognition of LCA as a valuable planning tool. This “coming of age” of LCA has been achieved in particular by:

- The promotion of the process, role and application of Landscape Character Assessment through the Countryside Agency's and Scottish Natural Heritage's Guidance on Landscape Character Assessment;
- The statutory reform of the planning system with the greater emphasis on spatial planning and overarching requirement to address sustainable development principles;
- Government policy guidance for the countryside, and in particular PPS7, which identifies the importance of landscape character and local distinctiveness;
- The emergence of a range of statutory



“The Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment process: a spatial framework for positive planning” (Continued)

processes that require a comprehensive environmental baseline and understanding of landscape character, notably Sustainability Appraisals, Strategic Environmental Assessment, as well as State of the Environment reporting and monitoring.

To meet the challenges of using LCA within the planning system, however, and to ensure its continuing integrity as a recognised tool, it is essential that the findings are accurate, accessible and comprehensible. This is where the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Process is so important since it depends on the availability of rigorously researched and comprehensive data sets that withstand full interrogation to a detailed level, as well as guiding the identification of patterns of landscape character at strategic level down to locally distinct places.

What is different about the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Process?

Traditionally, Landscape Character Assessments have been confined to assessments of landscape character. Although these have often been informed by analysis of a particular landscape's historic or ecological character, descriptive text and analysis of these latter aspects has tended to provide only a brief overview. In some notable exceptions, separate Historic Landscape Character Assessments have been undertaken and their findings incorporated into a Landscape Character Assessment. However, frequently these are not co-ordinated to any great degree. Furthermore, the undertaking of comprehensive county wide Biodiversity Character Assessments that are capable of standing alone, as well as informing the wider Landscape Character Assessment, have not been widely developed.

The Northamptonshire Environmental Character Process differs from previous approaches in that separate detailed assessments of the current landscape, historic landscape and biodiversity character were first of all undertaken concurrently. These were carried out independently by specialists to ensure their validity and ability to withstand close scrutiny. As a unifying baseline, all were guided by a number of core digitally resourced GIS datasets including physiography, encompassing geology and topography, and land cover, and undertaken within the strict parameters of an agreed scale and glossary of terms to ensure consistency and compatibility across the assessments.

The three individual assessments were undertaken

at 1:25,000 scale, and map and describe recurring current landscape, historic landscape or biodiversity character types, within which geographically discrete character areas have been identified. The findings of these separate but co-ordinated studies were then brought together to create a composite environmental character map of the county. Baseline data was also interrogated to resolve boundary issues and ensure best fit. County environmental character Areas were identified and mapped at 1:50,000 scale and highlight broad differences in environmental character across the county.

Throughout the assessment, GIS provided a key tool in the sourcing and interrogation of the data, and ensured a seamless, accurate and fully integrated process.

The hierarchy of specialist studies which contribute to the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment process are:

- Physiography Assessment - common environmental baseline
- Land Use Assessment - common environmental baseline
- Historic Landscape Character Assessment
- Current Landscape Character Assessment
- Biodiversity Character Assessment

The three character assessments and maps of the county can be interrogated as stand alone documents with capacity for full interrogation to a detailed level, down to field parcels where appropriate, as well as identifying broad scale strategic patterns. This ensures that data and interpretation of the environmental character assessment is given equal weight and consideration across the planning process.

How is it being used?

The Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment Process is already proving to be an essential planning tool throughout the county and is essential for the delivery of a range of statutory as well as non-statutory processes.

The project is informing the development of an emerging suite of criteria-based planning policies and specialist guidance that contribute to the statutory requirement to deliver sustainable development objectives. It provides a solid foundation for developing proactive recommendations on key environmental issues, and making informed judgements and decisions



“The Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment process: a spatial framework for positive planning” (Continued)

regarding advisory guidance and quality issues, development planning, environmental monitoring, and strategic county wide projects such as the River Nene Regional Park and Green Infrastructure. It also provides an essential environmental baseline data resource to inform a range of statutory instruments such as Strategic Environmental Assessments, Sustainability Appraisals, and State of the Environment reporting as well as the wider spatial and area based planning process that is integral to the new planning system.

By way of example, the findings of the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment are currently informing the emerging North Northamptonshire Joint Local Development Framework, which encompasses the four District and Borough Councils in the north and east of the county. These are working together to prepare a Spatial Plan and Joint Strategy Vision. Tiering down from this strategic framework, the Borough and District LDFs will develop their own suite of Local Development Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents, with the latter prepared either as shared documents for themes applicable to the whole of the Local Delivery Vehicle, as well as individual documents that are tailored to specific issues affecting the separate authorities. Within this context, the findings of the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment will provide an essential source of environmental baseline data and guidance. This ensures that landscape character is given due weight in the emerging documents both at a strategic and local level ranging from the Proposals Maps and Core Strategies through to Site Specific Allocations and Area Action Plans. The development of both positive and criteria based planning policies will also be central to this process.

A similar process is also commencing for West Northamptonshire, which will lead to a county-wide integration of landscape character issues and policies within the emerging local development planning frameworks.

The Environmental Character Process and Assessment findings have already been tested at recent public inquiries at which local landscape character has been successfully upheld as a principal determining factor in the decision. The rigour and transparency of the process, and the ability to retrieve and accurately interrogate relevant data through GIS has been acknowledged and positively affirmed by the Planning Inspectors.

Positive Environmental Planning

In tandem with the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Process, guidance on Positive Environmental Planning is being developed. Initially, a toolkit and digital proforma is being prepared to guide planning officers in the process of using the resources available within the county wide assessment. In due course this process will be extended for use by wider groups, including developers and the community, to ensure that the process is fully inclusive.

The future

It is intended that the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment will be taken forward for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document. To ensure that it accords with the statutory requirements under the new planning system for comprehensive community involvement, the Assessment will undergo wide consultation and will be critically assessed by communities of both interest and place, including both the public and private sector. This is a positive process as it will encourage the wide acceptance and understanding of its relevance and value.



“Landscape character in West Sussex: putting vision, policies and guidance into Local Development Frameworks”

Bob Connell,
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Bob holds degrees in Geography and Urban and Regional Planning. He received his Diploma in Town Planning from Leeds Polytechnic and is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute. He has over thirty years' professional experience in environmental and rural planning, including an enlightening stint as a gypsy liaison officer! He has worked extensively on land reclamation, nature conservation and Urban Programme delivery and the planning, implementation and management of river valley improvement schemes, in Humberside, Greater Manchester and Wigan Metro.

His fifteen years with West Sussex County Council have been spent on a variety of environmental, rural planning and tourism programmes and research relating to reviews of the County Structure Plan. These have included the preparation of an environmental capacity study in 1996 for the Third Review; an environmental assessment of the second runway option for Gatwick Airport proposed in the Runway Capacity Study for the South East; and a long involvement with the work of SERPLAN. He has also led public consultation programmes in connection with successive phases of the Structure Plan and the County Waste Local Plan.

Bob is currently a principal planner in the Environment and Planning directorate of the County Council. He is the project manager for the Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme and also advises on rural planning issues including regionally through the work of SEERA. He is responsible for the suite of characterisation studies being undertaken by the Partnership; putting in place policy and guidance regionally and with local authority partners; and promoting a wider understanding and appreciation of the character concept.

“Landscape character in West Sussex: putting vision, policies and guidance into Local Development Frameworks”

West Sussex County Council and its partners in the Character of West Sussex Partnership are well-placed to pioneer a demonstration project translating landscape character and other types of character assessment into criteria-based policies and guidance in Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). The Partnership is developing a character-

based approach to the management of change in the fields of planning and land management as part of the wider design and sustainability agenda. The Demonstration Project will help develop this work and contribute to good practice.

The timing is right. New Landscape Character Assessments have recently been completed or are under way at county, district and AONB levels. The Pan-Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation and Extensive Urban Surveys of historic towns are underway with English Heritage, and a Local Distinctiveness Study is being pioneered. A 4-year Action Plan has been drawn up seeking policy, guidance and information on character at district level, soundly based on landscape characterisation. This will feed into the ambitious and rapid programme of District LDF preparation.

Aim of the project

The Aim of the Demonstration Project is to use Landscape Character Assessment and other characterisation techniques as an evidence base, within Horsham and Mid Sussex Districts, to inform the drafting of criteria-based planning policies and guidance on landscape character and local distinctiveness in new Local Development Frameworks, seeking to integrate development planning with conservation and land management.

Objectives of the project

The objectives of the demonstration project are to:

- assemble an integrated landscape character and local distinctiveness evidence base for the LDFs
- draft criteria-based landscape and local distinctiveness policies to be included in the Vision and Core policies of the District LDFs
- prepare criteria-based policies for certain areas where special considerations of landscape character apply (eg. strategic gaps)
- prepare Supplementary Planning Documents that give further guidance on the conservation and enhancement of landscape character
- make appropriate linkages between the planning policy work in the LDFs and guidance at the County level for land management
- disseminate this practice to other local planning authorities, locally and nationally.



Report from the Discussion Sessions

CCN Workshop: Notes from the morning discussion session

A delegate asked the panel what they thought the priority should be for landscape character policies, including urban landscape character, within Regional Spatial Strategies, bearing in mind that Regional Spatial Strategies are not supposed to duplicate either national planning policy or the detail of Local Development Frameworks.

Bob Connell replied that the Character of West Sussex Partnership was advising SEERA on core character policies for the protection and enhancement of character areas in the region within the South East Plan. This involved forwarding basic policy wording for inclusion within that plan: he stressed that it is a matter of getting the right words into regional planning documents. He stated that he would expect the use of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) to be operated effectively at the district or sub-regional planning study level.

A delegate commented that part of the problem with landscape character is that it is essentially an operative tool. Attempting to write policies at either regional or sub-regional level tend to result in catch-all policies that attempt to capture everything but end up meaning very little. It's a common problem with drafting planning policy at the strategic level.

Jane Cecil asked Jason Longhurst if the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment had been used at a regional Level.

Jason Longhurst replied that the NECA has informed various levels of planning strategy in the East Midlands, including planning at the regional level.

A delegate stated that what is obvious from the presentations is that local authorities appear to be using different levels of information and different ways of using LCA within their Local Development Frameworks. How much of a problem is this variation when developing Regional Spatial Strategies and other initiatives which involve multiple local authorities with very different understandings of how to conduct LCA and apply it within the planning system?

Richard Silson responded that every problem is an opportunity, and that it is a question of how these differences are handled. There is a great

debate within the planning profession over the meaning of spatial planning: the view that seems to be emerging is that it is fairly easy to agree some broad objectives and principles. One of those might be that LCA, an understanding and a feel for the landscape of the area, ought to in some way guide the design and form of new development. Another might be that the way in which it guides development ought to be accessible and transparent. This is the sort of policy that is needed at regional level, particularly because the new Regional Spatial Strategies are now going to be statutory: there has never been that weight behind a regional planning policy before.

Richard Silson continued that at the local level, the diversity of approaches is probably a valuable thing: local authorities are different from their neighbours, and arguably they should adopt whatever approach best suits the landscape issues and rural development pressures that they are dealing with. However, what is needed is a clear policy structure that sets simple aims derived from sustainable development, that interprets what that aim means locally, describes clearly how that aim is going to be achieved, and produces useful, easily understood guidance that enables applicants to be able to achieve that aim.

Richard Silson stated that, as a planner, what he would want is a concise document which will be easily understood by all parties involved in development, a document that will prompt a design exercise on the part of the applicant and an idea of a baseline and a checklist in the mind of development control officer. That checklist will be different for every scheme. It's not a question of writing down the definitive rules and detail, as in the old planning system: what is important is to encourage developers to engage in a thinking process, to consider what they are trying to achieve. The job of planning policy is to set that context and prompt that thinking, stimulating design rather than closing it down.

Jason Longhurst responded that what is needed is an easily understandable, transparent and repeatable methodology that sets a benchmark, one that will only need tweaking to reflect local character. A large part of the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment involved the development of its methodology, and should not need to be carried out again. This methodology is now available for other parties to use, as long as they acknowledge its copyright.



Report from the Discussion Sessions (Continued)

A delegate asked Richard Silson how helpful he thought LCA is in guiding the location and nature of development, particularly the expansion of large settlements as opposed to guiding development in rural areas.

Richard Silson replied that it has some value, but it has to be set aside alongside other considerations. He referred to the final map of Shrewsbury and Atcham in Geoffrey Griffith's presentation, which showed that there were some low sensitivity areas immediately adjacent to Shrewsbury: this, he stated, is good because Shrewsbury and Atcham is likely to expand into urban fringe areas. When considering development of this sort, there are diverse other planning policies relating to the distribution of new development that must be considered before or alongside landscape character.

Richard Silson continued that PPG3 identifies the expansion of existing urban areas as the second most sustainable way to achieve new housing development after development on brownfield sites. One of the things that emerged from the Pendle study conducted by the Planning Co-operative was that there were areas of rural Pendle where development would have less of an adverse impact than further accretions on urban Pendle, and this ran counter to everything the Pendle local authority intuitively believed in. LCA has a definite role to play in the expansion of larger settlements, but there will always also be other factors that might, at the end of the day, determine development in spite of landscape character. A useful example is the greenfield/brownfield debate, where brownfield sites are usually developed in preference to greenfield sites even if the landscape implications, and importantly the nature conservation implications, of that development are severe. This preference is hardwired into the planning system, independent of landscape or biodiversity impact.

Richard Silson continued that location issues aside, LCA has an important part to play in the 'how', rather than the 'where', of development. Planning policies have recently begun to give specifications for development that is good enough to be sustainable. LCA can inform that process very powerfully.

A delegate commented that, from the perspective of an urban designer, LCA has not yet satisfactorily established the relationship between landscape and the settlement, and the interaction of the two.

Richard Silson agreed that LCA often doesn't consider issues to do with built form sufficiently.

Jason Longhurst replied that using other mechanisms, such as green infrastructure, can underpin the expansion of existing urban areas and the way in which new development relates to both the landscape and existing development. He added that he would like to widen the debate over the use of greenfield sites in favour of brown field sites of high biodiversity within development areas.

A delegate asked the panel for their views on the issue of sensitivity, using the Shrewsbury and Atcham study as an example. He asked them if they thought that the nature of the process and methodologies automatically tends to lead to the areas of lowest sensitivity being adjacent to the existing urban areas, and the further away from existing development you are the higher the sensitivity? Is this tendency built in to landscape character-derived methods of judging sensitivity?

Geoffrey Griffiths (The Living Landscapes Project at the University of Reading) replied that this was not necessarily true. In the case of Shrewsbury and Atcham there was no *a priori* reason why the low sensitivity landscapes should be adjacent to urban areas, because of the distinction that the study made between character and condition. The maps used in his presentation had demonstrated this. When it comes to capacity, of course, the focus moves to condition: clearly there are urban impacts upon condition which will result in the loss of inherent sensitivity, that is, the loss of the important features that originally made that landscape sensitive, so in effect there is arguably a bias in favour of the urban edge.

A delegate pointed out that the Shrewsbury and Atcham study had defined areas of no or low capacity close to the urban edge.

Jason Longhurst commented that sensitivity and capacity had been dropped from the core part of the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment, purely because it was being designed for use in planning and it was felt that sensitivity and capacity are very subjective issues open to judgement and methodological variation. A biodiversity hotspots map had been produced as part of the study, but it was Northamptonshire's experience that care is needed when showing these kinds of studies to developers, as there is a danger that they will interpret them as giving them *carte blanche* in the 'white areas'. He stressed the



Report from the Discussion Sessions (Continued)

need for strategies to provide tools to consider new developments on a case by case basis and provide advice that is relevant to the type of development in question.

Geoffrey Griffiths responded that the Shrewsbury and Atcham project was related to a very specific kind of development, that is, housing and light industrial development: the map would look different if it was a different kind of development, wind farms for example. There is a case for taking it as far as sensitivity mapping and then stopping, because of the dangers of pinpointing areas of low or high capacity.

A delegate commented that he was impressed by the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment's clarity and vision. He asked Jason Longhurst how the political will to produce the study had been achieved.

Jason Longhurst responded that political will of this sort is hard won: traditionally the countryside service in Northamptonshire has been seen as unconnected with development. The new planning system has created the opportunity to make that connection. Ultimately, the political will to produce a study like the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment is perhaps less important than getting the study right and promoting it.

A delegate told the meeting that local authorities in Scotland have been successful in developing a range of supplementary guidance for different types of development, including housing, aquaculture and telecommunications, but there have been difficulties in producing supplementary guidance for wind farms, because the cumulative effects of this kind of development result in the key characteristics of landscapes changing over vast tracts of country. He asked the panel if they have had any experience of foreseeing changes in landscape character in this way.

Geoffrey Griffiths responded that this is a capacity issue. It is conceivable that over the next twenty years, as the public become more and more concerned about the impacts of global warming, that attitudes toward wind farms will change. This returns to the issue of community participation in evaluating levels of capacity - what do we actually mean by capacity at a local level? It may be that whilst there is general antagonism towards windfarms at the moment, that changing political and public attitudes will actually change capacity for this particular type of development.

The delegate responded that the opposite is true at the moment. There was initial complacency in Scotland, but as more and more wind farms are being built the degree of antagonism seems to be rising.

Jason Longhurst told the meeting that there are different levels of community engagement with topics like landscape character, but contentious issues like wind farms or new motorways will often inspire local communities to engage with the process fully.

A delegate told the meeting that Shropshire County Council are looking at this idea through a major developments framework study based on the Shropshire County LCA. They are trying to identify criteria to create a spatial policy for assessing applications for major developments, including areas such as capacity, tranquillity and appropriateness. There will be more information about this project available at a later stage.



Report from the Discussion Sessions (Continued)

Notes from the afternoon reporting session

The questions posed for the afternoon's working group sessions were as follows:

1. What should be the essential elements of landscape character policies in the core strategy of a local development framework?
2. How can we ensure that Supplementary Planning Documents are welcomed and used effectively by a) development control staff; and b) developers?
3. It is often not possible or desirable to copy historic forms of development. How can Landscape Character Assessment help to guide the design and location of new and innovative forms of development?
4. For the new approach to landscape planning to be truly sustainable then surely we must consider landscape character as the bedrock of policy, so that all policies are made in response to the landscape. How can this be achieved?

The delegates had been divided into three groups, each group containing around 20 people. In order to ensure that all delegates could contribute to the discussion, each group of 20 had been subdivided into mini-groups of 3-4 people. Questions 1 and 2 had been addressed to these mini-groups. Questions 3 and 4 had been addressed to the entire group.

Rapporteurs from each of the three working groups presented the responses to the questions posed for the afternoon sessions.

Responses have been grouped below by broad themes where it has been appropriate.

1. What should be the essential elements of landscape character policies in the Core Strategy of a Local Development Framework?

Policy needs to positively address all landscapes, not just the most valued. This should be underlined within the core strategy.

Core Strategies should carry a long term landscape vision, one that is pro-active rather than reactive. Policy needs to encourage vision and be aspirational - to stimulate designers to be responsive to landscape character.

Core Strategies should stipulate that all development needs to provide positive benefit in terms of landscape character and local distinctiveness.

Landscape cuts across themes and is therefore a useful tool within a Local Development Framework. Landscape can be used to inform transport and communications, recreation, biodiversity etc. It is important for Core Strategies to recognise landscape's versatility and value as a planning policy tool.

There should be clear links from landscape character policies to overarching sustainable development policy.

Core landscape character policies should be simple and strategic, related to more detailed local policy and guidance for developers.

Core Strategy must show an understanding of what landscape character is: a definition of character drawn from the 2002 CA/SNH guidance was recommended.

Core landscape character policies should consider historic landscape character.

Core landscape character policies should consider landscape sensitivity.

It was felt that policy can be backed up with checklists to be used when assessing applications. However, concern was expressed that too strong a focus on checklists, can discourage people from thinking holistically about development.

Core strategy must contain clear 'hooks' to Supplementary Planning Documents.

Given that today's countryside is often tomorrow's town, there may be merit in closer integration of urban and rural core policies. Development in the urban fringe should acknowledge both landscape and townscape character.

There is a need for clarity over terminology, and particularly what is meant by the words landscape, countryside and environment.

2. How can we ensure that Supplementary Planning Documents are welcomed and used effectively by a) development control staff and b) developers?

Production process recommendations

Teamwork in the development of Supplementary Planning Documents is very important. Fostering ownership among the groups that have to implement and use them will mean they have a better chance of achieving their objective. Involving stakeholders such as planners and developers in the development of Supplementary



Report from the Discussion Sessions (Continued)

Planning Documents will help ensure that they are user-friendly, and encourage good design

Supplementary Planning Documents must be subject to regular updates, so that they are current and responding to change and pressure.

Wording, format and presentation recommendations

Supplementary Planning Documents should be defensible and clearly worded to prevent disagreements over ambiguous wording.

Supplementary Planning Documents should be informative, simple and easy to use. Simplicity of presentation, brevity and clarity of language will influence how well the Supplementary Planning Document is taken up.

Supplementary Planning Documents can take the form of short non-technical summaries, backed up by more detailed documents which a developer can draw upon when needed.

Checklist formats can be useful, but they need to be underpinned by detail which can be easily accessed when necessary.

Case studies should be included in the SPD to illustrate how design for a new development can respond to the challenges of the Core Policy and SPD.

Illustrations were felt to be an important part of SPDs. It was noted that illustrations can have the effect of stifling creativity and so care must be taken that illustrations provide ideas, not prescriptions. For legal reasons, great care needs to be taken when illustrating "bad" examples of design.

Dissemination recommendations

The Supplementary Planning Document should be as accessible as possible, using a variety of media to reach end-users. Interactive maps are a good way of communicating a Supplementary Planning Document, but traditional print media should be used as well as electronic formats, as IT capabilities can be an issue.

Training in how to use and interpret Supplementary Planning Documents should be offered to planners and developers.

Other recommendations

Supplementary Planning Documents should encourage the application of the Concept Statement methodology developed by the Countryside Agency in the design of appropriate development.

However brief or detailed the Supplementary Planning Documents are, they must be transparent.

There is a need for a clear hierarchy of Supplementary Planning Documents to avoid conflict between them.

3. It is often not possible or desirable to copy historic forms of development. How can Landscape Character Assessment help to guide the design and location of new and innovative forms of development?

Landscape Character Assessment can be used as a framework for monitoring change to inform the development of new policies, and to inform how change is managed in the landscape.

Landscape Character Assessment is a tool to understand landscape and its ability to accommodate new development within its setting. It should take into account that innovative design has a role to play in an evolving landscape.

There is a need to inform and influence key groups, that is, practitioners, the public and politicians, about welcoming change and innovative design. The best way to do this is by identifying good practice examples.

Landscape Character Assessment provides information that can inspire innovative development within certain boundaries, for example, historic patterns of settlement. Respecting the grain and scale of existing development is also very important.

Landscape Character Assessment provides scope for new development to explore the innovative use of materials, motifs and elements that are characteristic of its landscape setting.

There should be interaction between the built form and its setting, a response to landscape character that goes beyond the token inclusion of selected features from the current landscape.



Report from the Discussion Sessions (Continued)

There is a need for development to respond to new challenges, for example climate change. Landscapes in the future will need to support new functions (e.g. accommodating energy efficient buildings; producing energy crops) and so design needs to respond to new functions.

Landscape character policies should avoid the use of restrictive language, so as to allow for more innovative development. Similarly, any design guidance should not be prescriptive, but rather it should encourage and help developers think about how they interpret the local landscape within a new development.

In more sensitive landscapes, or in conservation areas, there may be a need for a more conservative approach to design of new development and very detailed design guidance. Conversely, the least sensitive landscapes may provide opportunities for ambitious visions and designs.

4. For the new approach to landscape planning to be truly sustainable, then surely we must consider landscape character as the bedrock of policy, so that all policies are made in response to the landscape. How can this be achieved?

There is a need for areas to have clear long term visions in order to manage change positively. Landscape Character Assessment provides a rich source of information about the development of the present day landscape to inform the development of visions for the future.

It is essential that the landscape is considered in the context of social, economic and global environmental issues to ensure that policies achieve the overarching aim of sustainable development.

It is essential to promote good practice and demonstrate the benefits of using Landscape Character Assessment. Furthermore there is a continued need to communicate a clear message that the landscape is more than a visual concern, it is a term that encompasses all of the diverse interactions between people and place.

Chair's closing comments

The chair identified key points emerging from the day's presentations and discussions. She identified the importance of visions and ambitions for the landscape character within Local Development Frameworks, and of encouraging the development of an acceptance of change. She underlined the

importance of remembering, and convincing others that Landscape Character Assessment is not a preservation tool, but a tool to inform how change is managed. She stressed the importance of stakeholder involvement and partnership working, particularly with developers and their institutions: there is also a need for clear, concise, user friendly expressions of landscape character within LDFs to aid partnership. In conclusion she emphasised the need for a complete, national picture of LCA. There are still local authorities and other organizations who need to enter or update information in the national Database of Landscape Character Assessment (housed on the Countryside Character Network website: www.ccnetwork.org.uk), and work is constantly ongoing in this area. The chair wished to record as an action, that all those involved in LCA must ensure that their work is recorded in the national Database of Landscape Character Assessment and updated whenever necessary.