Mid Sussex
Landscape Capacity Study

July 2007

Technical Appendices

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Table A Local Landscape Character Types

GROUP		LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE (LCT)		Summary description	SUB-TYPE		Summary description
L	**WEALD**	**L1**	**Large-scale arable farmland**	• Large arable fields (cereals, oil seed rape etc)	***L1a***	***Large-scale enclosed arable farmland***	• Intensive arable farmland • Fields, often large, across relatively flat or gently undulating landform • Well developed structure of hedges, shaws, copses and woodland which break up views across it and give a sense of large-scale enclosure
					L1b	***Large-scale open arable***	• Intensive arable farmland • Relatively large fields across relatively flat or very gently undulating landform • Breaks in boundaries allow views of wider landscape. • Weak/remnant hedgerow structure in places, with few mature trees • Some long views to downs to south and High Weald to the north
					L1c	***Large-scale semi-open arable***	• At least two boundaries with little visual barrier or one completely open boundary. • Takes into consideration adjacent and nearby fields.
		L2	**Medium/small-scale arable**	• Intensive arable farmland • Medium-small fields across relatively flat or gently undulating landform • Field boundaries include ditches, fencing, hedges • Greater sense of enclosure as compared with large-scale arable farmland (L1)			
		L3	**Enclosed pasture**	• Pasture bounded by hedgerows, shaws and/or copses • Flat or gently undulating land • Field sizes vary			
		L5	**Ghyll woodland**	• Predominately deciduous woodland along steep-sided watercourse.			
		L6	**Deciduous woodland**	• Predominately native deciduous			
		L7	**Mixed woodland**	• Mixture of both deciduous and coniferous trees and understorey.			

GROUP		LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE (LCT)		Summary description	SUB-TYPE		Summary description
		L8	**Coniferous woodland**	• Predominately coniferous			
		L9	**Coppice**	• Cut and regenerated multi-stemmed, predominately native, deciduous trees. • Includes some overgrown coppice, overdue on cutting.			
		L10	**Orchard**	• Fruit trees, typically in ordered rows			
		L14	**Paddock**	• Grazing for horses • Fields sub-divided using temporary fencing (eg. post and white tape) • Stable buildings and feed/water troughs			
		L15	**Unmanaged land**	• Rough grassland • Scrub			
D	**DOWNLAND**						
		D1a	**Enclosed downland with strong structure**	• Rolling chalk uplands with a bold combination of woodland, farmland and commercial plantations • Large fields and woodlands on the ridges, smaller in the valleys • Views limited by woodland			
		D1b	**Open downland**	• Rolling chalk uplands with limited woodland and vegetated boundaries.			
		D2	**Downland scarp**		***D2a***	***Open downland scarp***	• Very steep slopes between elevated downland and foothills. • Exposed fields, widely visible from surrounding landscape.
					D2b	***Wooded downland scarp***	• Steep slopes between elevated downland and foothills. • Characterised by steeply sloping woodland which partly obscures view of scarp.
V	**VALLEY**	**V1**	**Enclosed valley floor**	• Flat, low-lying landscape which occupies the valley floor, particularly River Ouse. • Sense of enclosure provided by network of hedgerows and trees and other riparian			

GROUP		LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE (LCT)		Summary description	SUB-TYPE		Summary description
				vegetation, together with valley sides and adjoining hills. • Mainly pasture, with occasional arable			
		V2	**Enclosed valley side**	• Sense of enclosure provided by hedgerows and trees and other riparian vegetation.			
		V3	**Open valley side**	• Views of valley floor • Fields edged by drainage ditches, partial hedgerow network.			
		V4	**Narrow, pronounced valley**	• Minor feature of the Weald • Small-scale feature with recognisable riparian features which interrupts extensive area of relatively uniform character • Steep valley sides and narrow floor • Land uses typically pasture • Includes linear woodland/copses			
F	**DOWNLAND SCARP FOOTHILLS**						
		F1	**Large-scale arable farmland**	• Large arable fields (cereals, oil seed rape etc)	***F1a***	***Large-scale enclosed arable farmland***	• Intensive arable farmland • Fields, often large, across undulating foothills • Well developed structure of hedges, shaws, copses and woodland which break up views across it and give a sense of large-scale enclosure
					F1b	***Large-scale open arable***	• Intensive arable farmland • Relatively large fields across undulating foothills • Breaks in boundaries allow views of wider landscape • Weak/remnant hedgerow structure in places, with few mature trees • Views towards downs to south
					F1c	***Large-scale semi-open arable***	• At least two boundaries with little visual barrier or one completely open boundary. • Takes into consideration adjacent and nearby fields.

		F2	**Medium/small-scale arable**	• Intensive arable farmland • Medium-small fields across undulating foothills • Field boundaries include ditches, fencing, hedges • Generally greater sense of enclosure as compared with large-scale arable farmland (F1)			
		F14	**Paddock**	• Situated on undulating foothills • Grazing for horses • Fields sub-divided using temporary fencing (eg. post and white tape) • Stable buildings and feed/water troughs			
	OTHER						
		H1	**Horticulture**	• Nursery growing			
		P1	**Parkland and Estate farmland**	• Parkland with copses, woodlands and single parkland trees • Pasture predominantly, but includes arable • Boundary treatment tend to be uniform and distinctive, and typically include stone walls, metal railing or post and rail fencing			
		T1	**Amenity/recreation**	• Greenspace land used for recreational activities, such as playing fields and golf course • Amenity open space around institutions or hotels, for example • Landscapes are typically manicured, or intensively managed and often have a suburban character			
		T2	**Developed land outside settlement boundary**	• Land that has a predominantly built character, including linear low density housing, scattered housing, small holdings/workshops etc • Typically post-war development • Suburban influences of boundary treatments (walls, fences, gates, ornamental hedges), driveways and garden vegetation			
		Q1	**Quarry/landfill site**	• May include active quarries which form major landscape features and disused quarries which are now being used for landfill.			
		B1	**Churchyard/Cemetery**	• Burial ground associated with church, cemetery or crematorium • Typically mown lawns, with memorials			

				• Character of boundary treatment varies, may include formal hedging, walls, railings • Extent and character of tree cover varies (largely dependent on maturity)			
		U1	**Utilities**	• Sewerage/Water treatment works • Electricity sub-station • Typically bounded by fencing, or cypress screen-planting			
		M1	**Mobile Home / Caravan Park**	• Fixed mobile home / caravan park, both permanent residential and holiday use • Touring caravan site, where land managed for caravans year-round • Amenity open space and facilities			
		W1	**Significant waterbody**	• Often for recreational use			

Table B Local Landscape Character Areas – Summary Descriptions

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
01	**East Crawley - Copthorne Settled Woodland Matrix**	Zone 1 & 2	High Weald Plateau	L3 L5 L6 L7 L8 L14 L15 P1 T1 W1	• Matrix of largely pasture and woodland with areas of recreation, paddocks, parkland and significant water bodies. • Fields of varying time depth. • Large amounts of scattered and linear low density settlement, contained and concealed by surrounding woodland. • Dissected by busy roads. • Bounded by M23 to the west. • Contains large area of recreational use (golf course) at west end of CA. • Moderate to high boundary loss outside of woodland although few assarts. • Significant area of post-medieval gentrification (parkland) to the south of CA.
02	**Rowfant High Weald**	Zone 2	High Weald	L1a L3 L6 L7 L8 L14 P1 W1	• Patchwork of arable, pasture, paddocks, parkland and water bodies woodland. • Fields of varying time depth. • Significant blocks of ancient woodland to the south. • Bounded by Worth Way to the south. • Generally on gently sloping north facing slope. • Some heavy boundary loss. • Contains farmsteads and Rowfant House. Helga
03	**Crawley Down Northern Fringe**	Zone 2	High Weald Plateau	L1a L2 L3 L5 L6 L14 P1	• Contains varied mixture of types, generally larger field sizes than to the south of Crawley Down. • Boundary vegetation provides enclosure although some urban influence from Crawley Down exists. • Bounded by woodland to the north and west. • Sits on gently sloping land, sloping away from Crawley Down.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
04	**Crawley Down Southern Fringe**	Zone 2	High Weald	L2 L3 L5 L6 L14 P1	• Almost entirely small-medium size pasture fields from assarts (medieval). • Relatively low boundary loss (1-25%). • Some semi-open fields, but boundary vegetation gives enclosure and separation from Crawley Down. • Contains scattered settlement and expansion out from Crawley Down. • Bounded by gill woodland to the south.
05	**Major's Hill High Weald**	Zone 2	High Weald / Worth Forest	L1a L2 L3 L5 L6 L7 L8 L14 H1	• Patchwork of arable, pasture and woodland with paddocks and horticulture. • On steep north facing slope, including northern side of ridgeline. • Some areas of boundary loss and Ancient Woodland.
06	**Selsfield High Weald**	Zone 2	High Weald	L1a L3	• Area of mainly early post-medieval arable fields. • Low boundary loss, but limited boundary vegetation. • Bound by gill woodland to the east and west. • On north-west facing slope separated from Major's Hill High Weald CA by ridge to north-east. • No settlement. • Raps around southern extension of Turners Hill (Withypitts).
07	**Turners Hill High Weald**	Zone 2	High Weald	L1a L2 L3 L5 L6 L14 M1	• Mostly small-medium size pasture of varying period, broken up by woodland. • Bounded by gill woodland to north and west. • Runs along ridgeline. • Contains Turners Hill and fringes. • Low-moderate boundary loss.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
08	**Felbridge High Weald**	Zone 2	High Weald	L1a L1b L3 L6 L7 T1	• Mostly open arable fields (medieval). • Eastern end of CA (containing ancient woodland, recreation, enclose arable and pasture) abuts western end of East Grinstead. • Open views across CA. • Bounded by Worth Way to the south, which forms effective visual barrier. • Sits on gentle topography, sloping down, away from East Grinstead. • Urban influence from East Grinstead.
09	**Tilkhurst High Weald**	Zone 2	High Weald	L1a L3 L6	• Fairly large arable and pasture fields mostly from assarting (medieval) some informal fieldscapes. • Fields enclosed by boundary vegetation and woodland. • Little settlement. • Separated from East Grinstead Southern High Weald CA and East Grinstead by ridge to the east. • Bounded by gill woodland to the south, Worth Way to the north.
10	**Hill Place High Weald**	Zone 3	High Weald	L1a L2 L3 L5	• Pasture and srable fields, enclosed by boundaries and woodland blocks. • Sits on higher ground, generally sloping to the east. • CA divided along its length by gill woodland. • Largely early modern-late 20th century informal fieldscapes.
11	**Rockwood High Weald**	Zone 3	High Weald	L1a L2 L3 L5 L6 L7 L15	• Predominately pasture enclosed by boundaries and woodland blocks. • Sits on south-west facing slopes. • Largely early modern-late 20th century informal fieldscapes, with some medieval assarts to the south. • Contains significant amount of scattered and blocks of settlement.
12	**Sunnyside High Weald**	Zone 3	High Weald	L1a L3 L5 L6 L7 P1 T1 U1	• Predominately pasture but with arable, recreation and paddocks, enclosed by boundaries. • Sits on slopes down from ridges which run NW-SE. • CA divided along its length by gill woodland. • Largely assarted (medieval) fields • 0-50% boundary loss. • Minor amount of scattered settlement.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
13	**Brambletye High Weald**	Zone 3	High Weald	L1a L3 L5 L6 L8 T1 U1 V1 W1	• Mixture of mainly medium size arable and pasture but contains part of Weir Wood Reservoir and an enclosed valley feature running from the reservoir along the N-W edge of the CA to north of Forest Row. • Sits on in valley and south facing slopes below Ashurst Wood • Below average vegetation cover. • Little settlement. • Contains the remains of Brambletye Manor House and Moat.
14	**Kidbrook High Weald**	Zone 3	High Weald	L1a L3 L6 L7 P1	• Mainly small fields of pasture and arable plus parkland. • Sits on undulating land, generally north facing slopes west of Forest Row. • Good hedgerow structure and tree cover. • Significant amounts of scattered and linear settlement.
15	**Luxford High Weald**	Zone 3	High Weald	L1a L3 L6 L7 P1 T1	• Predominately pasture but with arable fields, woodland, pasture and recreation. • Sits on largely open, south-west facing slopes. • Bounded by Forest Way recreational route along south-western edge. • Bounded by settlement on ridge top along north-eastern edge. • Some medieval assarts. • Generally low boundary loss.
16	**East Grinstead Eastern High Weald**	Zone 3	High Weald	L3 L6 L7	• Largely medieval, pasture fields. • Largely north-east facing slopes. • Highly enclosed by thick boundary vegetation and woodland, largely ancient. • Bounded to the north by gill woodland. • Bounded by settlement on ridge top along south-western edge.
17	**Stonequarry High Weald**	Zone 3	High Weald	L3 L6 L7	• Largely medieval, pasture fields. • Woodland and boundary vegetation provides some containment. • Bounded to the south by gill woodland.
18	**East Grinstead Green Wedge**	Zone 3	High Weald	T1 L7	• Largely ancient woodland (including Ashplats Wood Nature Reserve), remainder recreation. • Sits in minor valley between ridges north and south which run westwards into East Grinstead. • Considerable urban influence from East Grinstead.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
19	**Pease Pottage – Handcross High Weald**	Zone 7	Worth Forest	L1a L1c L3 L7 L14 P1 T1	• Medium scale arable fields interspersed with large areas of woodland. • A23 runs N-S through the area. • Large areas of early modern period. • Generally west facing slopes.
20	**Handcross Southern High Weald**	Zone 7	High Weald	L1a L2 L3 L7 L14	• Mixture of medium size pasture and woodland with occasional arable fields. • Fairly steep south facing slopes. • Large areas of early modern period. • A23 runs N-S through area. • Low boundary loss.
21	**High Beeches High Weald**	Zone 1	Worth Forest	L1a L3 L6 L8	• Consists mainly of conifer plantation, but also contains mixed woodland and pasture. • East and north facing slopes. • Low boundary loss.
22	**Starvemouse High Weald**	Zone 1	Worth Forest	L3 L1a L14	• Predominately semi-open arable, pasture and paddocks. • Enclosed by woodland and A23. • Little boundary vegetation within CA. • Most settlement consisting of farmsteads.
23	**Worth Forest High Weald**	Zone 1	Worth Forest	L8	• Almost entirely conifer plantation to the south of Crawley and the M23. • Railway and main road run separately N-S through the CA. •
24	**Balcombe Western High Weald**	Zone 7	High Weald	L2 L3 L6 L7	• Significantly wooded with pockets of pasture. • Steeply sloping east and south slopes. • Fairly low boundary loss.
25	**Balcombe Eastern High Weald**	Zone 7	High Weald	L3 L7 L8 P1	• Steep north-east facing slopes. • Abuts Ardingly reserve to the east. • Pastoral, significant woodland. • Generally low boundary loss.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
26	**West Hoathly High Weald**	Zone 2	High Weald	L1a L1c L3	• Largely arable fields. • On higher, less sloping ground compared to surrounding character areas. • Less vegetated compared to surrounding character areas but flatter topography limits distant views from north of character area. • Low boundary loss.
27	**Gravetye Wooded High Weald**	Zone 2	High Weald	L3 L6 L7 T1	• Predominately wooded with some pasture. • North-east facing spur slopes. • Some moderate boundary loss.
28	**Newcoombe High Weald**	Zone 3	High Weald	L1a L3 Q1	• Predominately pasture with clay pit • Contains valley features • Significant woodland.
29	**West Hoathly – Sharpthorne High Weald**	Zone 2	High Weald	L1c L3 L6 L7 L14 T1	• Almost entirely small-medium scale pasture with woodland. • Generally south facing slopes. • Low boundary loss.
30	**Ardingly Show Ground**	Zone 6	High Weald	T1	• Recreation uses including show ground and recreation ground. • On top of ridge above Ardingly.
31	**Ardingly Eastern High Weald**	Zone 6	High Weald	L3 L7	• Pasture enclosed by woodland. • Steep east facing, sloping down to valley. • Low boundary loss. • Little settlement.
32	**Ardingly Southern High Weald**	Zone 6	High Weald	L3 L7 T1 U1	• Largely small scale pastoral fields with woodland and recreation. • South facing slopes. • Significant woodland cover. • Some moderate high boundary loss. • Some scattered settlement.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
33	**Ardingly Reservoir High Weald**	Zone 6	High Weald	L1c L3	• Mostly semi-open arable fields with woodland to the north. • West Facing slopes over looking picturesque reservoir. • Low boundary loss. • Areas of medieval assarts to the north.
34	**Oddynes High Weald**	Zone 6	High Weald	L1a L1c L3 L6 L7 L9 L14 W1	• Largely pasture with woodland and lakes. • North west facing slopes of ridge. • Some moderate boundary loss.
35	**Horstead Keynes High Weald**	Zone 6	High Weald	L1c L3 L6 P1	• Largely pasture with woodland and minor arable fields and parkland. • Runs northeast – southwest along ridge which Horstead Keynes sits. • Some high boundary loss.
36	**Withy High Weald**	Zone 6	High Weald	L3 L7 L8	• Highly wooded with some small pastoral fields. • South-east facing slopes of ridge. • Moderate-low boundary loss.
37	**Tremaines High Weald**	Zone 6	High Weald	L1a L3	• Large scale pastoral and arable fields. • Southwest facing slopes on end of ridge which Horsted Keynes sits upon. • Little internal vegetation but enclosed by woodland around perimeter of character area.
38	**Cockhaise Brook**	Zone 4	Ouse Valley	V1 V4	• Narrow pronounced valley. • Bounded by Ancient Woodland providing enclosure. • Mostly medieval with low boundary loss. • Bounded by Historic Bluebell Railway to east.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
39	**Packhill Weald**	Zone 4	Ouse Valley / High Weald	L1a L2 L3 L6 L7 L8 P1 T1 W1	• Mixture of relatively large fields including pasture, semi-open arable, recreation and parkland of varying period and boundary loss. • Sits on ridge outcrop which slopes down to river valleys on three sides. • Boundary vegetation and woodland limit views, however distant views of High Weald to the north are possible from higher central parts of the CA.
40	**Scaynes Hill High Weald**	Zone 6	High Weald Fringes	L1a L3 L6 L14 H1	• Largely small scale pasture fields with some arable to north of character area. • Southeast facing slopes. • Low boundary loss.
41	**Scaynes Hill Wooded Setting**	Zone 6	Ouse Valley	L3 L6	• Highly wooded with occasional pastoral fields. • On high ground. • Low boundary loss.
42	**Haywards Heath South-eastern Fringe**	Zone 6	High Weald Fringes	L1a L3 L6 L7 L14 L15	• Mostly pasture with some arable fields and woodland. • Sits on south-east facing slopes. • Significant hedgerow network and woodland. • Some medieval assarts. • Generally low boundary loss.
43	**Haywards Heath Eastern High Weald**	Zone 4	Ouse Valley	L1a L2 L3 L5 L6 L7 L14 T1	• Fairly small fields, mainly pasture, of mixed period. • Boundary vegetation provides enclosure but to a lesser extent to the north of the CA, where boundary loss is significant. • Groups of settlement in main body of CA. • Includes Eastern Road Nature Reserve. • Urban influence from edge of Haywards Heath.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
44	**River Ouse and Sides**	Zone 4	Ouse Valley	L7 L14 V1 V2 V3	• River valley, including narrow valley floor and immediate valley sides (occasionally open with views over wider valley). • Predominately informal fieldscapes with some assarts. • Boundary vegetation and woodland limits views along valley and views of valley floor from valley sides. • Fairly low boundary loss.
45	**Haywards Heath North Weald**	Zone 4	Ouse Valley / High Weald	L1a L3 L6 L7 T1	• Largely contains areas of pasture, woodland and recreation of varying period. • Heavily wooded with little boundary loss. • Sits on ridge to north of Haywards Heath. Southern part of CA slopes down towards Haywards Heath. • Bounded by railway embankment / cutting to the west.
46	**Horsgate High Weald**	Zone 4	High Weald	L1a L3 L5 L6 L7 L14 L15 T1	• Mixture of small-medium size types of varying period. • Relatively high boundary loss.
47	**Borde Hill Parkland**	Zone 4	High Weald Fringes	L3 L5 L6 L7 L8 P1	• Area of post-medieval gentrification - parkland, with blocks of woodland. • No boundary loss. • On undulating land, generally sloping north-east.
48	**Whitemans High Weald**	Zone 8	High Weald	L1a L3 L7 L14	• Mostly medium-small scale enclosed pasture with woodland and some arable and paddocks. • Moderate-good boundary vegetation. • Largely medieval assarts • Abuts northern edge of Cuckfield on falling topography below Cuckfield.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
49	**West Cuckfield Weald**	Zone 8	High Weald	L1a L3 L6 L14 P1 T1	• Predominately recreational and parkland 'designed landscape', including a post-medieval designed park. • Good hedgerow network and fairly low boundary loss. • Wraps around western side of Cuckfield on falling topography below Cuckfield.
50	**Cuckfield High Weald**	Zone 4	High Weald Fringes	L3 L6 L7 L14 T1	• Predominately arable fields and parkland. • Significant vegetation, providing enclosure. • Includes Blunts Wood and Paiges Meadow Nature Reserve.
51	**Copyhold High Weald Fringes**	Zone 4	High Weald Fringes	L1a L3 L5 L7 L15 H1 P1 T1	• Predominately pasture with mixture of horticulture, parkland and woodland. • Significant vegetation provides enclosure to the south, areas of semi-open urban edges to the north. • Contains low-density linear development through centre. • Sits on general south-west facing slope. • Mixture of periods. • Generally low boundary loss.
52	**Heaselands Weald**	Zone 4	High Weald Fringes	L1a L2 L3 L7 L8 P1	• Matrix of pasture, arable and considerable amount of woodland, all of varying period. • Lower amount of settlement compared to CA to the north. • General fairly low boundary loss. • On west facing slope falling to N-S valley feature.
53	**Fox Hill**	Zone 4	High Weald Fringes	L1a L3 L5 L6 L7 L8 L14 L15	• Surrounds south-eastern edge of Haywards Heath and largely contains pasture along with woodland, fringe settlement and some apparently unmanaged land. • On generally south-east facing slopes. • Generally low boundary loss but with below average hedgerow network.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
54	**Haywards Heath – Burgess Hill Low Weald**	Zone 4 & 5	Low Weald / High Weald Fringes	L1a L3 L5 L6 T1	• Predominantly large arable fields interspersed with some smaller pasture. • Predominately medieval assarts and late twentieth century informal fieldscapes. • Settlement largely limited to scattered farmsteads. • Broadly runs E-W within extension of wider valley to the west. • Areas of considerable boundary loss.
55	**Lunce Low Weald**	Zone 5	Low Weald	L1a L3 L5 L7 L14 T1	• Mixture of mainly medium size pasture and arable. • Abuts Ditchling Common Country Park to the south-east. • Fairly well vegetated and low boundary loss but poor hedgerow network. • Variety of periods.
56	**Bedelands Farm Low Weald**	Zone 5	Low Weald	L3 L5 L6 L14 T1 W1	• Largely asserted pasture. • Mostly medieval, but with some boundary loss. • On gently sloping land, gradually sloping away from Burgess Hill. • Contains nature reserve well used as a recreational resource. • Bounded by Ten Acre Gill to the north. • Contains small area of informal open space adjacent to the north of Burgess Hill which is uncommon in this character area overall.
57	**Foxashes Weald**	Zone 5	High Weald / Low Weald	L1a L3 L6 L8 L15 T1 W1	• Mixture of types, including large arable fields. • Mostly assarts but with low boundary loss. • Sits on south facing slopes south of Ansty. • Divided by group of low density settlement and busy road towards the centre of the CA.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
58	**West Burgess Hill Low Weald**	Zone 5	Low Weald	L1a L2 L3 L5 L6 L14 L15 H1 T1	• Mosaic of small scale fields (mostly pasture), apparently unmanaged land, paddocks and horticulture. • Varying period. • Generally low boundary loss. • Set in wider lowland between the High Weald and South Downs foothills. • Wrapped around Burgess Hill to the east. • Areas of local topography facing towards Burgess Hill.
59	**Cobb's Mill Low Weald**	Zone 5	Low Weald	L1a L3 L5 L6 L14	• Medium-large arable/pasture fields. • Variety of periods and boundary loss. • Gills/streams run E-W across CA. • Bounded along western length by A23.
60	**Bolney Sloping High Weald**	Zone 8	High Weald	L1c L3 L7 L14 H1 P1	• Matrix of Landscape Character Types, although majority pasture. • On highly undulating land, overall south facing slopes. • Bounded to the east by A23. • Medium-low boundary loss. • Well enclosed by woodland blocks and scattered vegetation.
61	**Crosspoint Southern Weald**	Zone 8	Hickstead Low Weald	L1a L1c L3 L6 L14 L15 W1	• Mixture of arable and pasture fields. • Broken up by riparian features. • Lower topography at foot of slopes within character area to the north. • Bounded by A23 to the east. • Good hedge network. • Low boundary loss.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
62	**Hickstead-Sayers Common Low Weald**	Zone 8 & 9	Hickstead Low Weald	L1a L1c L3 L6 L14 T1	• Mixture of arable, pasture, paddocks and recreation. • Bounded to the North by riparian features. • Bounded to the East by A23. • Moderate-low boundary loss. • Overall west facing slopes. • Distant views westwards. • Moderate-good hedge network.
63	**Albourne Low Weald**	Zone 9	Hickstead Low Weald	L1a L1c L3	• Predominately large scale arable field with area of smaller pastoral fields to the west. • Generally west facing slopes. • Bounded to the east by A23. • Moderate-good hedge network. • Some moderately high boundary loss.
64	**Albourne Foothills**	Zone 9	Hurstpierpoint Scarp Foothills	F1a F3 H1	• Predominately large arable fields with some smaller pastoral fields. • Relatively low boundary vegetation, although riparian feature. • North and west facing slopes and foothills. • Bounded by A23 to the east. • High boundary loss to the north, lower boundary loss to the south.
65	**Wanbarrow Downland Scarp**	Zone 9	Hurstpierpoint Scarp Foothills	F1a F3 F14	• Mixture of pasture and arable fields with some paddocks. • Set in minor valley feature below Hurstpierpoint to the north. • Mostly up to 50% boundary loss, with relatively little boundary vegetation. • Riparian feature at bottom of valley through middle of Character Area.
66	**Hurstpierpoint Low Weald**	Zone 5	Low Weald / Footslopes	L1b L3 L5 L14 P1	• Mainly small-medium size fields interspersed with larger fields. • Includes large areas of recreation including golf course and Hurstpierpoint College playing fields. • Varying period and blocks or varying boundary loss. • Open views of South Downs, only minor views of settlements to the south set below South Downs. • Low amount of woodland. • Generally set in low land running E-W between minor finger of high ground to the north and beginning of South Downs foothills to the south.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
67	**Burgess Hill Southern Fringe**	Zone 5	Low Weald	L3 L7 L8 L14 L15 T1	• Mostly small-scale pasture and apparently unmanaged land. • Relatively low containing vegetation compared to other CAs resulting in occasional visual relationship with Burgess Hill. • Some high boundary loss. • Contains green arch for recreational use. • Bounded by gill woodland to the south.
68	**Furzefield Low Weald**	Zone 5	Low Weald	L3 L14 W1	• Almost entirely small scale pasture fields bounded by good hedgerow network. • Wraps around south-east corner of Burgess Hill. • Mostly early post-medieval informal fieldscapes with low boundary loss.
69	**Whapple Way Low Weald**	Zone 5	Hickstead Low Weald	L3	• Almost entirely small-scale pastoral fields. • Generally east facing slopes. • Good network of dense hedges. • Abuts Ditchling Common along eastern edge. • Early post medieval informal fieldscapes. •
70	**Ditchling Common**	Zone 5	-	T1	• Sits on north-west facing slopes of a minor spur to the east of the character area. • Intact common land used as country park recreational resource.
71	**Hurstpierpoint Southern Fringe**	Zone 5	Hurstpierpoint Scarp Footslopes	B1 F1a F2 F3 F14 H1 P1	• Mostly a mixture of pasture parkland and paddocks. • Mostly south facing topography away from town at foot of downland foothills. • Contains intact pastoral landscape. • Some areas of high boundary loss.
72	**Danny Wooded Foothills**	Zone 9	Hurstpierpoint Scarp Foothills	B1 F1a F3 L5 L6 F14 H1 P1	• Mixture of character times but majority pasture, with considerable blocks of woodland. • On footslopes sloping down from downland scarp towards Hurstpierpoint. • Varied mixture of HLC types, period and boundary loss. • Overall low hedgerow network and boundary vegetation. • Includes fringe uses south of Hurstpierpoint towards north of Character Area.

No.	Local Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Mapping zone	County Landscape Character Area	Local Landscape Types (LCT)	Description
73	**Coldharbour Downland Scarp Foothills**	Zone 9	Hurstpierpoint Scarp Foothills	F1a F3 F14	• Fairly open fields sitting at foot of downland scarp, largely bounded by woodland to the north. • Generally low boundary loss overall. • Abuts South Downs scarp to the south.
74	**Clayton Downs Escarpment**	Zone 9	Fulking and Clayton Scarp	D2a D2b	• North facing escarpment to the South Downs. • Mixture of HLC type and period. • None-low boundary loss.
75	**Pyecombe Downs**	Zone 9	Devil's Dyke and Clayton Downs	D1a D1b	• Elevated downland. • Generally low boundary loss. • Varied mixture of HLC type and period.

SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE

The Countryside Agency

Landscape Character Assessment

Guidance for England and Scotland

CHAPTER 7
MAKING JUDGEMENTS BASED ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

INTRODUCTION

7.1 The use of Landscape Character Assessment in making judgements is a fast-moving scene amongst practitioners. This chapter sets out some main principles on the subject. **Topic Paper 6**, *Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity*, will be issued in the Summer of 2002 to address one of the key areas where practitioners need to make judgements on this topic.

7.2 The main value of having a Landscape Character Assessment is to help in the process of managing change in a particular place. All sorts of change will shape future landscapes, and by applying this tool in an appropriate way, alongside other tools, we can help to ensure that such changes make a 'positive' contribution.

7.3 For this reason, most assessments will usually move beyond the characterisation stage to the stage of making judgements to inform particular decisions. Making judgements as part of an assessment should not concentrate only on the maintenance of existing character. This may be one part of the judgements made. The focus should be on ensuring that land use change or development proposals are planned and designed to achieve an appropriate relationship (and most often a 'fit') with their surroundings, and wherever possible contribute to enhancement of the landscape, in some cases by creating a new character.

7.4 Judgements based on landscape character need to take account of several factors. Most importantly it is vital to decide who is going to be involved in making the judgements. For practical reasons some assessments may still rely mainly on judgements made by professionals. It is nevertheless important to involve stakeholders in this part of the process if the judgements are to command wide support and are to be as fully informed as possible. Many different stakeholder groups need to be given opportunities to contribute, especially:

- those who manage the land, especially farmers and foresters;
- local residents and community groups;
- other users of the land, including visitors and those who take part in recreational activities.

7.5 An historical perspective is important to help understand the way in which a landscape has evolved over time to take on its present character, and how both natural forces and human intervention have contributed to its evolution. With such understanding, decisions about future change can be placed in an historical context and ideas about, for example, restoration of some earlier historic character can be well-informed and based on a sound historical rationale (see **Topic Paper 5**).

WHAT TYPES OF JUDGEMENTS ?

7.6 Ways of making judgements based on character will vary depending upon the particular issue that is being addressed. This in turn will reflect the purpose of the assessment and the type of judgements that are required. As set out in **Chapter 2 (para 2.10)**, these judgements will either:

- be specifically related to decision-making based on landscape character; or
- be designed to contribute to wider environmental decision-making tools where landscape is only one of several topics to be addressed.

7.7 A number of such environmental and sustainability decision-making tools now exist. Some, like Environmental Impact Assessment and landscape capacity studies, are well established. Others, like the Natural Heritage Futures programme (used in Scotland), and Quality of Life Capital (in England) are newer and still emerging. Landscape Character Assessment links to these tools in different ways. **Topic Paper 2** provides information about these tools. It particularly highlights the way that

these tools and initiatives can be informed by Landscape Character Assessment.

MAIN CONSIDERATIONS IN MAKING JUDGEMENTS

7.8 Approaches to making judgements that are focused on landscape character, as distinct from these broader environmental tools, have continued to evolve particularly over the last ten years as practitioners have gained more experience in the practical application of techniques. These approaches are generally based on one or more of the following considerations, namely the character, quality (condition of features), value of the landscape, and its sensitivity to change. These terms need to be understood if there is to be consistency in approaches taken. The definitions recommended by the Agencies are as follows:

- **Landscape character** means the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how these are perceived by people. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement. It creates the particular sense of place of different areas of the landscape.
- **Landscape quality (or condition)** is based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual, functional, and ecological perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements which make up the character in any one place.
- **Landscape value** is concerned with the relative value that is attached to different landscapes. In a policy context the usual basis for recognising certain highly valued landscapes is through the application of a local or national landscape designation. Yet a landscape may be valued by different communities of interest for many different reasons without any formal designation, recognising, for example, perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness; special cultural associations; the influence and presence of other conservation interests; or the existence of a consensus about importance, either nationally or locally.
- **Landscape capacity** refers to the degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or overall change of landscape character type. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed.

7.9 In deciding on the approach to making judgements there must be a clear rationale which is explained to the assessment's users. This will help make the assessment and its application more robust and accountable.

DEFINING OBJECTIVES

7.10 The rationale for judgements will need to establish the balance between the following objectives for landscape types and areas:

- **Conservation and maintenance** of existing character;
- **Enhancement** of existing character through the introduction of new elements and features or different management of existing ones;
- **Restoration** of character, where this is appropriate to current land use activities and stakeholders' preferences, and is economically viable through either public or private money or a mix of both;
- **Creation** of or accelerating change towards a new character; or
- **Some combination of these options**, especially where regeneration activity is occurring, involving much development and change.

7.11 Developing such a rationale will require careful thought about the overall character and key characteristics of the landscape today, and the dynamics of the landscape, in terms of recent change, current trends and future forces. This will help to determine both the desirability and practicability of maintaining current character.

APPROACHES TO MAKING JUDGEMENTS

7.12 The approach taken to making judgements will usually vary depending on the particular applications for which the assessment is to be used. One of the following four approaches is usually adopted.

i. Landscape strategies

7.13 A Landscape Character Assessment may lead to a strategy for the landscape based on what change, if any, is thought to be desirable for a particular landscape character type (or area) as a whole. The judgements underpinning such strategies need to be transparent but not overly complex, and will usually relate in some way to the objectives set out in **para 7.10**. To ensure they are widely owned and can be implemented, they should be devised and tested through stakeholder involvement where possible.

7.14 To date, practitioners have used landscape strategies to guide thinking on the desirability of: maintaining the existing landscape character; enhancing character; restoring some former landscape, or creating a new one.

7.15 When used in the field of planning policy, for example as a basis for structure or local plan policies, the strategy approach may be used to indicate the preferred approach for each policy zone within the plan and to provide a basis for landscape and development policies. In other circumstances, aspects of landscape value (**paras 7.21 - 7.23**) may help to identify areas for some form of landscape status or designation.

ii. Landscape guidelines

7.16 A Landscape Character Assessment will normally identify the character of an area and those factors that are particularly important in creating that character, usually referred to as key characteristics. If the distinctive character of a certain landscape is to be maintained, the assumption must be that its positive key characteristics should be protected from adverse change and, conversely, that the effects of negative characteristics will be overcome by some form of enhancement. This assumption provides the basis for judgements about the actions necessary to achieve this (**Box 7.1**).

7.17 Field survey should identify the physical state of individual elements and features, and, in combination with consultation and additional research, should indicate the probability of future change, and its nature and direction (trends or 'forces for change'). Considering all this information together should then reveal opportunities either to prevent those changes which may have adverse consequences for landscape character, or to maximise opportunities for enhancement. This requires careful thought about the importance attached to characteristic features and about the likelihood of either 'positive' or 'negative' change.

7.18 This type of analysis usually results in the drawing up of **landscape guidelines** to indicate the actions required to ensure that distinctive character is maintained or, if appropriate, enhanced. This approach has been adopted in the majority of published assessments in England and Scotland. Such guidelines are often produced in written form, and are sub-divided according to both the landscape type in question and the main pressures likely to result in landscape change, namely agriculture, forestry, settlement and built development, mineral working, tourism and recreation, and infrastructure (**Box 7.2**).

7.19 Guidelines can also be presented graphically. This is particularly useful when dealing with design issues. In the Sussex Downs AONB graphic guidelines are available in a loose-leaf folder designed

Box 7.1: Steps in developing landscape guidelines

Review from field survey

- key characteristics of the landscape;
- current state of landscape - condition of features and elements and overall intactness;
- evidence of landscape change and of its consequences.

Identify by research and consultation

- trends in land use that may cause future change;
- potential development pressures.

Predict

- consequences of land use trends and development pressures for the landscape;
- effects of predicted change on key characteristics, both negative and positive.

Define

- threats to key characteristics as a result of adverse consequences of change;
- opportunities for enhancement where scope for beneficial change;
- guidelines on intervention required for different land uses to counter threats and realise opportunities;
- priorities for action and methods of implementation.

It is often helpful to prepare guidelines at several different levels - for the whole of a study area where they are common, for each landscape character type and for individual landscape character areas where there are specific requirements for action.

Box 7.2: Example of landscape guidelines

Fife Landscape Character Assessment
Landscape character type: Lowland Dens

Agriculture
- Encourage maintenance of the relatively small-scale irregular field pattern.
- Where land is taken out of arable use encourage permanent woodland planting.
- Improving grasslands and drainage schemes could disturb the characteristic land cover and vegetation patterns and adversely affect the contours and textures of the landscape and its ecological value.

Forestry
- Encourage the planting of broadleaved trees along the river and burns to link existing woodlands and other habitats and to reinforce the semi-natural patterns of drainage and riparian vegetation and habitats.
- Encourage new planting to enhance the interlinking of new woodlands to existing plantations and semi-natural woodlands on the hills and in the lowlands.

Settlement and built development
- Concentrate new built development in the form of well landscaped extensions to existing settlements well-related to landform and of a scale appropriate to the size of the settlement.
- Encourage the use of existing building styles and materials such as grey stone with grey or dark blue slate-like roofs.

Mineral workings
- Mineral extraction in this landscape type would be inappropriate owing to its potentially adverse effects on the character of the landscape and the potential for the workings to be conspicuous bearing in mind that any effective, large-scale screening measures themselves would be inappropriate features.

Other development and structures in the landscape
- Avoid locating any high or bulky new structures in this landscape type or, where essential, they should be subject to rigorous landscape and visual impact assessment and should be sited carefully and designed to minimise their impact.

Source: David Tyldesley and Associates (1999) Fife Landscape Character Assessment, Scottish Natural Heritage, Edinburgh.

to assist in communicating ideas to farmers and land managers (**Figure 7.1**). The Skye and Lochalsh character assessment in Scotland has also taken a highly graphic approach to both the descriptions of landscape character and to the guidelines (**Figure 7.2**).

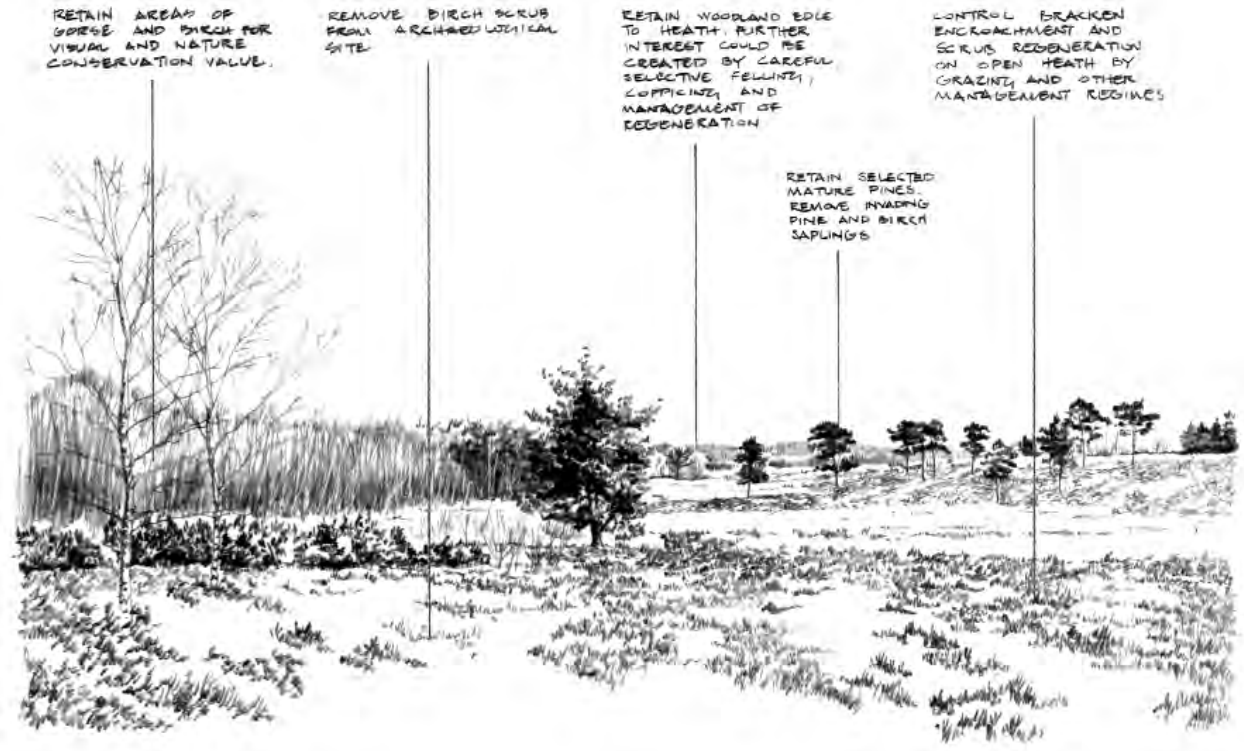
7.20 As guidelines are designed to influence the way in which landscapes are managed it is highly desirable that the many stakeholders involved in day-to-day management are actively involved in the process. This will help to ensure that the guidelines are based on a good understanding of 'real world' land uses and land management practices, and that there will be a good prospect that they can be practically implemented.

iii. Attaching status to landscapes

7.21 Where a tract of landscape is selected for special recognition, judgements need to be based on a range of different considerations. National landscape designations in England and Scotland are based on criteria that encompass much more than landscape alone. The key considerations are:

- **natural beauty**: encompasses flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features and is the term that has been used in defining AONBs and National Parks in England;

Fig 7.1 Sussex Downs AONB Landscape Design Guidelines



Source: Landscape Design Associates (1997) Sussex Downs AONB Landscape Design Guidelines. Countryside Commission and Sussex Downs Conservation Board, Cheltenham.

Figure 7.2: Skye and Lochalsh landscape guidelines

Rocky moorland landscape character type

- The introduction of ***numerous elements*** within this landscape character type often results in visual confusion, due to the difficulty in creating any kind of order and sense of relationship between elements upon a variable landform; each element, even if part of a collective group, tends to have a different relationship with the landscape.

As a result of this landscape having no distinct pattern or edges, new elements can often appear most appropriate where they either have a **direct relationship to a specific landscape characteristic**, or are **concentrated and ordered as a group**, although the latter may collectively create a dominant focus, contrasting to the undifferentiated character of this landscape.

confusion of collective elements	related to a common characteristic	distinct order and relationship of elements	dispersed elements can appear as sprawl, affecting entire area	concentration allows retention of surrounding open space

Source: Stanton, C. (1996) Skye and Lochalsh Landscape Assessment. No 71. Scottish Natural Heritage, Edinburgh.

- **recreational opportunity**: opportunities afforded for open-air recreation, having regard both to landscape character and position in relation to centres of population. (Also used in defining National Parks in England);
- **natural beauty and amenity**: a composite term, used in the founding legislation of SNH contained with The Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991. The Act defines the natural heritage as including the physical elements of flora, fauna, geology, physiographic features and natural beauty and amenity. This combination of terms covers the physical landscape, but also the less tangible aspects such as remoteness or tranquillity, and aspects of landscape experience which appeal to senses other than sight, such as the sound or smell of the sea.

7.22 In considering natural beauty and amenity, and in any other situation which requires that a landscape be identified as requiring special attention, judgements must be based at least in part on the concept of **landscape value** (**para 7.8**). This refers to the relative value or importance that stakeholders attach to different landscapes and their reasons for valuing them. The reasons may be set out according to a range of more detailed criteria that may include the following:

- **landscape quality**: the intactness of the landscape and the condition of features and elements (**para 7.8**);
- **scenic quality**: the term that is used to describe landscapes which appeal primarily to the visual senses;
- **rarity**: the presence of rare features and elements in the landscape, or the presence of a rare landscape character type;
- **representativeness**: whether the landscape contains a particular character, and/or features and elements, which is felt by stakeholders to be worthy of representing;
- **conservation interests**: the presence of features of particular wildlife, earth science or archaeological, historical and cultural interest can add to the value of a landscape as well as having value in their own right;
- **wildness**: the presence of wild (or relatively wild) character in the landscape which makes a particular contribution to sense of place;
- **associations** with particular people, artists, writers, or other media, or events in history.

There may often be a consensus of opinion about the value of an area encompassing one or more of these criteria, which can be traced over time from the views expressed by different stakeholders.

7.23 **Tranquillity**: In addition to these landscape-related criteria there is another criterion, 'tranquillity', that is a composite feature related to low levels of built development, traffic, noise and artificial lighting. Authors of Landscape Character Assessments must state their criteria for 'low levels' clearly and should also consider whether one or more of the factors needs to be addressed individually, rather than in combination. Policy makers and practitioners may find it useful to refer to the Tranquil Areas maps [54]. Tranquil area mapping is currently underway in Scotland, as is the identification of core wild land areas.

7.24 The full range of criteria set out above may be used to identify valued landscapes that merit some form of designation or recognition. They can be used, either individually or in combination, to assist the definition of nationally important areas throughout England and Scotland. These include National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Scenic Areas, and equivalent areas.

7.25 The criteria of 'natural beauty', 'recreational opportunity' and 'natural beauty and amenity' can be the starting points for selecting the broad area of search for designation or recognition of special areas. The criteria listed in **paras 7.22** and **7.23** could be used to provide a supporting statement about why a particular area is valued. Boundaries can then be determined by assessing the character and quality of the landscapes within the area of search to determine whether or not they should be included (see **Chapter 9** for further detail).

iv. Landscape capacity

7.26 Many Landscape Character Assessments will be used to help in decisions about the ability of an area to accommodate change, either as a result of new development, or some other form of land use change, such as the introduction of new features, or major change in land cover such as new woodland planting. In these circumstances judgements must be based on an understanding of the ability of the landscape to accommodate change without significant effects on its character. Criteria for what constitutes significant change need to be identified in planning policies or landscape strategies, and will usually be informed by potential effects on character and/or particular features and elements.

GOOD PRACTICE POINTERS

- It is particularly important to find ways of involving stakeholders in this part of the process if the judgements made are to command wide support.

- The approach taken to making judgements based on character will vary depending upon the issue being addressed and must be designed to meet the particular circumstances.

- Some approaches to making judgements are an integral part of the Landscape Character Assessment process. Others are wider environmental evaluation processes to which Landscape Character Assessment can make a valuable contribution.

- There must be a clear rationale behind the approach to making judgements, which will help to determine the eventual outcome. This will require careful thought about the overall character and key characteristics of the landscape, its history and origins, and the opportunities that may exist to create new landscapes to meet the emerging social, economic and environmental needs of stakeholders.

- It is particularly important that:

- the reasons for adopting a particular approach to making judgements are made clear;

- the approach (or combination of approaches) used must be clearly explained and transparent;

- the extent and nature of stakeholder involvement should be made clear.

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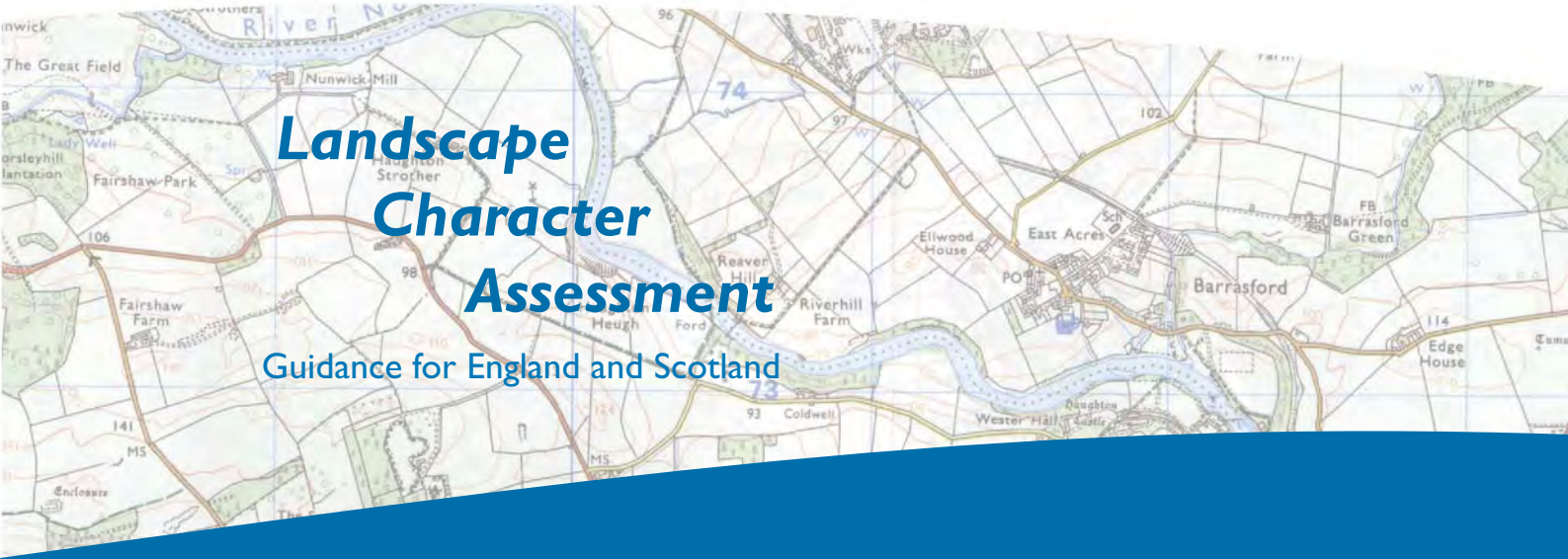


Landscape Character Assessment

Guidance for England and Scotland

TOPIC PAPER 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity

An exploration of current thinking about landscape sensitivity and landscape capacity, to stimulate debate and encourage the development of common approaches.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Countryside Agency has recently published a report [1] that looks forward to the way that the countryside might evolve up to the year 2020. It makes it clear that change in English rural landscapes is inevitable in the next 20 years, as a result of a variety of social and economic forces, including food production, housing needs, transport issues, and energy requirements. At the same time the Agency published the results of a public opinion survey suggesting that 91% of English people want to keep the countryside exactly as it is today. Clearly the two are not compatible and hard decisions are inevitably required about how the many different demands that society makes on the land can be accommodated while also retaining the aspects of the environment that we place such high value on. Although there have been no exactly parallel studies of future landscapes in Scotland and of attitudes to them, the recent report on change in Scotland's rural environment [2] shows that similar issues also arise there. Indeed Scotland has been at the forefront of efforts to consider the capacity of Scotland's landscapes to accommodate change of various types.

1.2 In both England and Scotland, Landscape Character Assessment is being widely employed as a tool to help guide decisions about the allocation and management of land for different types of development. It is being used particularly to contribute to sensitivity or capacity studies dealing with the ability of the landscape to accommodate new housing, wind turbines and other forms of renewable energy, and new woodlands and forests, as well as locally significant types of development such as, for example, aquaculture schemes in Scotland. Work of this type inevitably involves consideration of the sensitivity of different types and areas of landscape and of their capacity to accommodate change and development of particular types. If carried out effectively, Landscape Character Assessment can, in these circumstances, make an important contribution to finding solutions that allow essential development to take place while at the same time helping to maintain the diverse character and valued qualities of the countryside. Making decisions based on sensitivity and capacity is a difficult and challenging area of work and also one that is developing rapidly as more and more studies of this type are carried out. The terms themselves are difficult to define accurately in a way that would be widely accepted.

1.3 This Topic Paper provides an overview of current thinking about landscape sensitivity and landscape capacity in terms of both the concepts involved and the practical techniques that are being used. It is not intended to provide a definitive method for assessing sensitivity and capacity but rather to help those involved in such work by setting out some of the key principles, clarifying some of the issues, helping with definitions of key terms and providing examples of the approaches that are currently being used. In this way the intention is to encourage greater transparency in the thinking applied to these issues and to promote consistency and rigour in such work. The content of the paper is based on a workshop involving a small group of practitioners involved in work of this type and review of a small selection of recent studies. It was not the intention, and nor were the resources available, to carry out a comprehensive review of published reports or work in progress in this area, or a wide ranging consultation exercise.

2. WHAT EXISTING GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS SAY ABOUT SENSITIVITY AND CAPACITY

2.1 The topic of landscape sensitivity and capacity proved one of the most difficult to deal with in the main Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) guidance. This was due to both the new and rapidly developing nature of much of this work and also to the great variation in the approaches being applied and the terminology being used. In addition there were some concerns about the need for compatibility with the definitions of sensitivity being developed in the separate 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' [3] which was due to be published at the same time. As a result the published version of the LCA guidance omitted specific reference to landscape sensitivity and instead contained only a few short paragraphs on the topic of landscape capacity on the basis that the issues would be dealt with more fully in a later Topic Paper. For convenience, the current wording of the LCA guidance is summarised in Box 1.

Box 1: What the existing guidance says about capacity

"Landscape capacity refers to the degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or overall change of landscape character type. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed"

"Many Landscape Character Assessments will be used to help in decisions about the ability of an area to accommodate change, either as a result of new development or some other form of land use change, such as the introduction of new features, or major change in land cover such as new woodland planting. In these circumstances judgement must be based on an understanding of the ability of the landscape to accommodate change without significant effects on its character. Criteria for what constitutes significant change need to be identified in planning policies or landscape strategies, and will usually be informed by potential effects on character and/or particular features and elements"

Carys Swanwick and Land Use Consultants. Landscape Character Assessment Guidance. Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage. 2002.

2.2 The published Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment [3] tackle the subject of sensitivity at some length, but do not deal specifically with the topic of landscape capacity. It is, however, clear that there is much common ground between the thinking that is emerging on landscape sensitivity and capacity in Landscape Character Assessment work and the approach that is taken in Britain to Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. It is therefore particularly important to understand the links between the two and to try, as far as possible, to achieve consistency in the approaches used and particularly in the terms and definitions used. On the other hand it must also be recognised that LCA and LVIA are not the same processes and there must also be clarity about the differences between them.

3. CONCEPTS OF SENSITIVITY AND CAPACITY

3.1 The terms sensitivity and capacity are often used more or less interchangeably. Others treat them as opposites, in the sense that low sensitivity is taken to mean high capacity and vice versa. Indeed the earlier versions of the Landscape Character Assessment guidance used the term sensitivity in the definition given above but this was changed to capacity in the published version to avoid confusion with the guidance on landscape and visual impact assessment. However, as experience of the issues involved has developed, it has become clearer that the two are not the same and are not necessarily directly related. A clearer distinction therefore needs to be drawn between them. Definitions vary among those actively engaged in this work and opinions vary about the acceptability and utility of different definitions. The box below contains just two examples of current ideas of sensitivity, in the words of the authors.

Box 2 : Examples of definitions of landscape sensitivity in current use

"Landscape sensitivity... relates to the stability of character, the degree to which that character is robust enough to continue and to be able to recuperate from loss or damage. A landscape with a character of high sensitivity is one that, once lost, would be difficult to restore; a character that, if valued, must be afforded particular care and consideration in order for it to survive."

The model for analysing landscape character sensitivity is based on the following assumptions:

i) Within each landscape type certain attributes may play a more significant role than others in defining the character of that landscape.
ii) Within each landscape type, certain attributes may be more vulnerable to change than others.
iii) Within each landscape type, the degree to which different attributes are replaceable, or may be restored, may vary.

iv) The condition of the landscape - the degree to which the described character of a particular landscape type is actually present 'on the ground' - will vary within a given area of that landscape type.

By being able to appreciate and assess the significance, vulnerability and replaceability of different attributes, the relative stability or resilience of the various attributes within given landscape types can be assessed. Then, taking into account condition, or representation of character, the sensitivity of a particular area of landscape can be determined.

Chris Bray. Worcestershire County Council. Unpublished paper on a County Wide Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity. 2003.

Landscape sensitivity... is a property of a thing that can be described and assessed. It signifies something about the behaviour of a system subjected to pressures or stimuli. One system, when stimulated might be robust and insensitive to the pressure, whilst another may be easily perturbed. The system might also be thought of in a dynamic way - the pressure could send the system off into a new state or the system might be resilient and bounce back rapidly and be relatively insensitive to disturbance. Sensitivity is related here to landscape character and how vulnerable this is to change. In this project change relates to wind energy development and any findings on landscape sensitivity are restricted to this (landscapes may have different sensitivities to other forms of change or development). Landscapes which are highly sensitive are at risk of having their key characteristics fundamentally altered by development, leading to a change to a different landscape character i.e. one with a different set of key characteristics. Sensitivity is assessed by considering the physical characteristics and the perceptual characteristics of landscapes in the light of particular forms of development.

John Benson et al. University of Newcastle. Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Energy Development in the Western Isles. Report commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage for the Western Isles Alternative Renewable Energy Project. 2003

3.2 These two examples highlight one of the main debates about landscape sensitivity, namely whether it is realistic to consider landscapes to be inherently sensitive or whether they can only be sensitive to a specific external pressure. This paper argues that both are valid and useful in different circumstances. Looking at the way that the word sensitivity is used in other contexts, for example in describing the character of people, it is common and seems quite acceptable to describe someone as 'a sensitive person', without necessarily specifying what they are sensitive to. Landscape can quite reasonably be treated in the same way.

3.3 There is a greater degree of agreement about definitions of capacity with broad acceptance that it is concerned with the amount of change or pressure that can be accommodated. There is therefore a quantitative dimension to it and it needs to reflect the idea of the limits to acceptable change. The main debate here is about whether aspects of landscape value should or should not be incorporated into considerations of capacity. In general there appears to be some acceptance that it should, although some argue that this is a retrograde step and could lead to an over reliance on existing designations, which is widely recognised as an overly simplistic approach. There is also some disagreement about where visual aspects should be considered, whether as a component of landscape sensitivity, or wholly as a contributor to landscape capacity, or both.

3.4 In this paper an attempt has been made to weigh up the different arguments and as a result it is suggested that three terms can usefully be adopted as shown below. Further details of the definition and use of these terms are in the later sections of this paper.

i) **Overall landscape sensitivity**: This term should be used to refer primarily to the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, irrespective of the type of change that may be under consideration. It is likely to be most relevant in work at the strategic level, for example in preparation of regional and sub-regional spatial strategies.

Relating it to the definitions used in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, landscape sensitivity can be defined as embracing a combination of:

- the sensitivity of the landscape resource (in terms of both its character as a whole and the individual elements contributing to character);
- the visual sensitivity of the landscape, assessed in terms of a combination of factors such as views, visibility, the number and nature of people perceiving the landscape and the scope to mitigate visual impact.

ii) **Landscape sensitivity to a specific type of change**: This term should be used where it is necessary to assess the sensitivity of the landscape to a particular type of change or development. It should be defined in terms of the interactions between the landscape itself, the way that it is perceived and the particular nature of the type of change or development in question.

iii) **Landscape capacity**: This term should be used to describe the ability of a landscape to accommodate different amounts of change or development of a specific type. This should reflect:

- the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, but more specifically its sensitivity to the particular type of development in question, as in (i) and (ii). This means that capacity will reflect both the sensitivity of the landscape resource and its visual sensitivity;
- the value attached to the landscape or to specific elements in it.

The meanings of these terms and the types of factors that need to be considered in each case are summarised in Figure 1 (a) and (b).

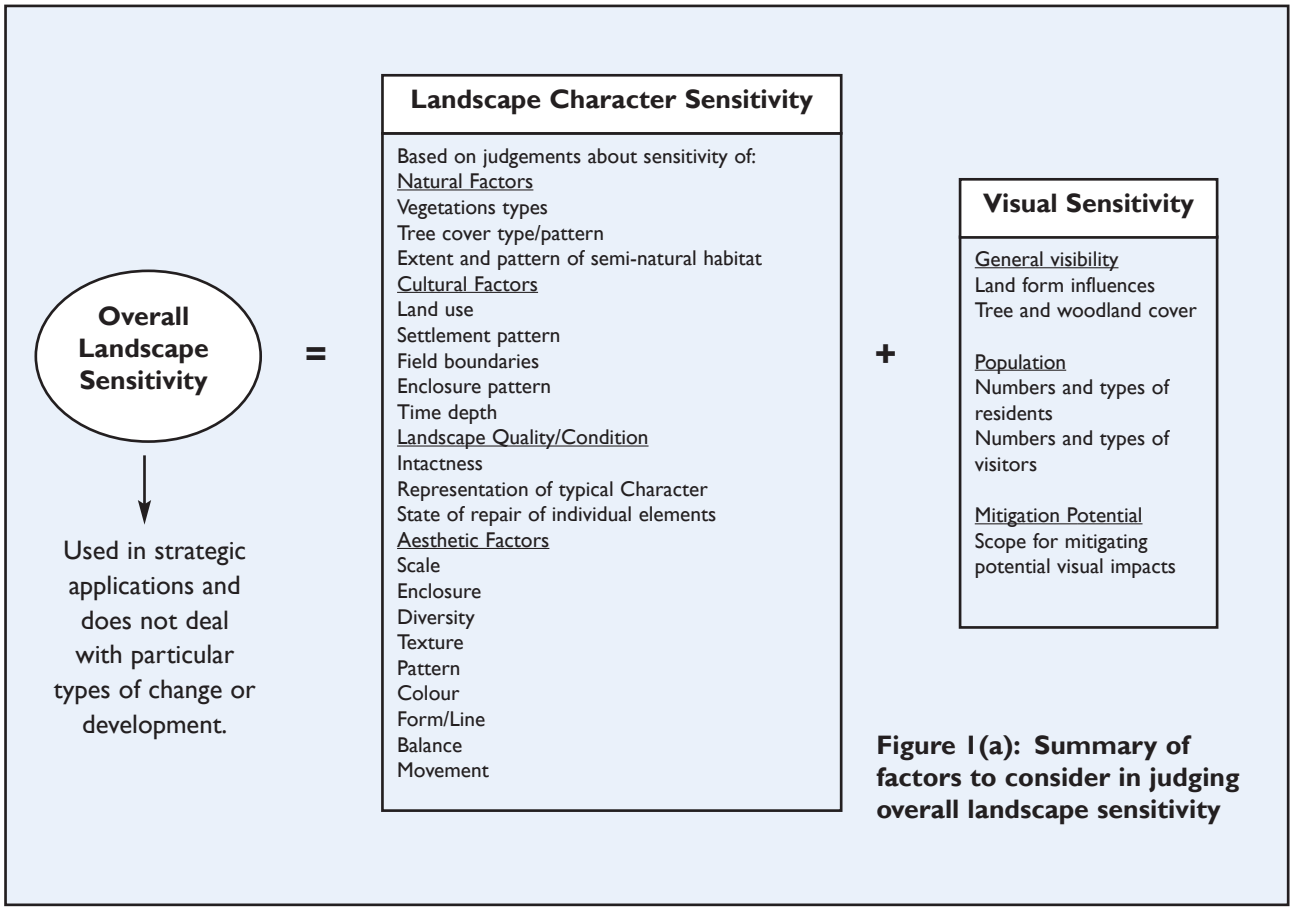


Figure 1(a): Summary of factors to consider in judging overall landscape sensitivity

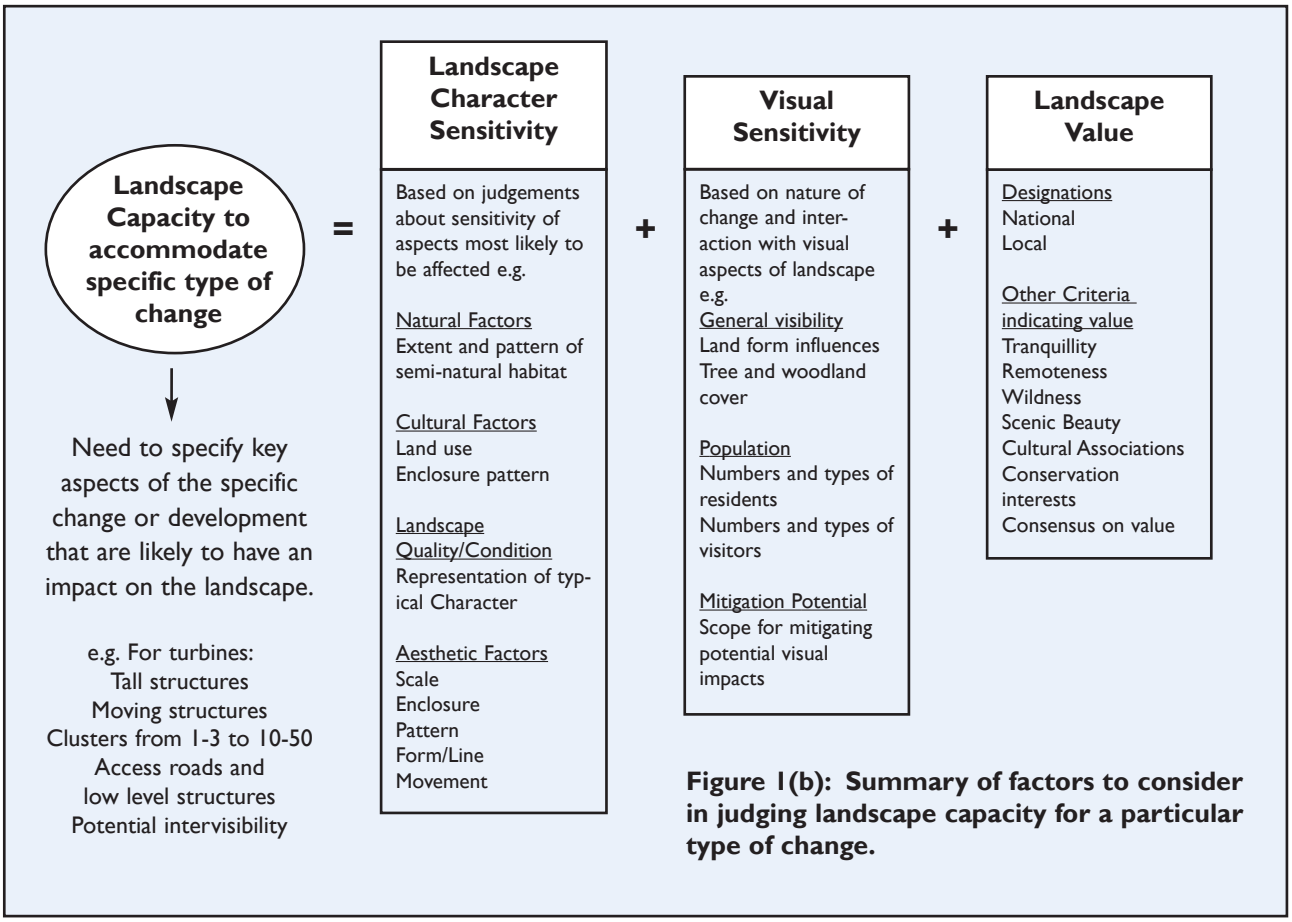


Figure 1(b): Summary of factors to consider in judging landscape capacity for a particular type of change.

3.5 The implication of this is that capacity studies must be specific to a particular type of change or development. At a strategic level, for example in work relating to regional and sub-regional spatial strategies, this means that it might be appropriate to produce a single map of general landscape sensitivity. Maps of landscape capacity, however, need to be specific so that, for example, a map showing an assessment of wind turbine capacity could be produced but would almost certainly be different from a map showing capacity for housing development or for new woodland and forestry planting. Some capacity studies are very specific in their purpose, seeking for example to assess capacity to accommodate a 1000 home settlement at a particular density of development.

4. JUDGING OVERALL LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

4.1 In making judgements about the overall landscape sensitivity of different landscape types or areas, without reference to any specific change or type of development (for example in work relating to regional and sub-regional spatial strategies), careful consideration needs to be given to two aspects:

- Judging the sensitivity of the landscape as a whole, in terms of its overall character, its quality and condition, the aesthetic aspects of its character, and also the sensitivity of individual elements contributing to the landscape. This can be usefully referred to as **landscape character sensitivity**;
- Judging the **visual sensitivity** of the landscape, in terms of its general visibility and the potential scope to mitigate the visual effects of any change that might take place. Visibility will be 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. It will also be a reflection of the numbers of people who are likely to perceive the landscape and any changes that occur in it, whether they are residents or visitors.

Landscape character sensitivity

4.2 Judging landscape character sensitivity requires professional judgement about the degree to which the landscape in question is robust, in that it is able to accommodate change without adverse impacts on character. This means

making decisions about whether or not significant characteristic elements of the landscape will be liable to loss through disturbance, whether or not they could easily be restored, and whether important aesthetic aspects of character will be liable to change. Equally, consideration must be given to the addition of new elements, which may also have a significant influence on character. These decisions need clear and consistent thought about three factors:

- the individual elements that contribute to character, their significance and their vulnerability to change;
- the overall quality and condition of the landscape in terms of its intactness, representation of typical character and condition or state of repair of individual elements contributing to character;
- the aesthetic aspects of landscape character, noting that in Scotland these are usually referred to as the 'landscape experience' or the 'scenic qualities' of the landscape. As indicated in the LCA Guidance, aesthetic factors/scenic qualities can still be "recorded in a rational, rigorous and standardised, if not wholly objective way". They include for example the scale, level of enclosure, diversity, colour, form, line, pattern and texture of the landscape. All of these aesthetic dimensions of landscape character may have significance for judgements about sensitivity. They are also distinct from the perceptual aspects of landscape character, which are much more subjective and where responses to them will be more personal and coloured by the experience and the preferences of the individual. These are also important dimensions of character and influence the ability of landscapes to accommodate change but they are best dealt with as part of the consideration of value to be incorporated in the final step of assessing capacity, as discussed in **Section 7**.

4.3 Different methods have been used to judge landscape character sensitivity in recent work. Each has its merits and it is not the role of this topic paper to advocate one approach or another. There is also much common ground between them and they are not therefore alternatives but rather different explorations of a similar approach. A common feature of these approaches in England is the analysis of landscape character in terms of firstly the natural and ecological, and secondly the cultural attributes of the landscape. Landscape sensitivity is in these cases equated broadly with ideas of ecological and cultural sensitivity and deliberately does not embrace either aesthetic aspects of character or visual sensitivity. Three recent examples illustrating this approach are summarised in Boxes 3 and 4.

4.4 There are few if any examples of studies of overall landscape sensitivity that incorporate assessment of the aesthetic dimensions of landscape character, although it would be technically possible to do this. Such considerations are more likely to be found in studies of sensitivity to particular forms of change or development and are discussed in **Section 5**.

Box 3: An approach based on ecological and cultural sensitivity

The Countryside Agency's work on traffic impacts on the landscape required a desk based rather than a field assessment using Staffordshire as the test area. The main concern was with the impact of the road network on landscape character. The Countryside Agency's National Landscape Character Types, and the Land Description Units (LDUs) on which they are based, both derived from the National Landscape Typology, were used as reporting units. The attribute maps from the national typology also provided much of the source data for the analysis. In this work landscape sensitivity is defined as the degree to which the character of the landscape is likely to be adversely affected or changed by traffic levels and network use. It is considered to consist of a combination of ecological sensitivity and cultural sensitivity where:

- **ecological sensitivity** is based on identification of areas where there are ecologically significant habitats likely to be at risk, reflecting combinations of agricultural potential, related to ground type, together with agricultural use and woodland pattern;
- **cultural sensitivity** is based on identification of areas where culturally significant elements of the landscape will be at risk, reflecting a combination of settlement pattern, land cover and the origins of the landscape in terms of whether it is 'planned' or 'organic'.

These two aspects of sensitivity are mapped using GIS and combined into an overall sensitivity matrix. Data on

the road hierarchy and road 'windy-ness' was then combined with the sensitivity classes to give an overall assessment. This desk study proves successful in highlighting areas of concern that could then be examined in more detail if required.

Babtie Group and Mark Diacono. Assessing Traffic Impacts on the Countryside. Unpublished Report to the Countryside Agency. 2003.

Box 4 : Approaches based on vulnerability, tolerance and resilience to change

Work carried out recently for structure plan purposes by Herefordshire and Worcestershire County Councils working in partnership, focuses on landscape character sensitivity rather than visual sensitivity. The work is at the detailed level of Land Description Units (the constituent parts or building blocks of Landscape Character Types and Areas). These studies also focus on individual landscape indicators and attributes - meaning the factors that contribute to character, grouped together under the headings of ground vegetation, land use, field boundaries, tree cover character, tree cover pattern, enclosure pattern, settlement pattern, spatial character and additional characteristic features, such as parkland or rivers.

These studies use a combination of several different aspects of the character of the landscape to reach an assessment of overall sensitivity, based on analysis of these attributes. The definitions of the component parts can be summarised as follows:

Vulnerability: This is a measure of the significance of the attributes that define character, in relation to the likelihood of their loss or demise. This combines assessment of the significance of an attribute with assessment of its functionality and of the likelihood of future change based on apparent trends.

Tolerance: This can be defined as the degree to which change is likely to cause irreparable damage to the essential components that contribute to landscape character. It is a measure of the impacts on character of the loss of attributes, reflecting the timescale needed for their contribution to character to be restored. This combines assessment of the replaceability of individual attributes with their overall significance in the landscape and also takes account of the potential for future change based on apparent trends.

Resilience: This combines tolerance with vulnerability to change. It is a measure of the endurance of landscape character, representing the likelihood of change in relation to the degree to which the landscape is able to tolerate that change.

Sensitivity: Relates to the resilience of a particular area of landscape to its condition.

Each of these aspects of sensitivity is assessed from a combination of desk and fieldwork. The assessments of each factor are then progressively combined in pairs using matrices, until the final assessment of individual areas emerges. In general three point numerical scores are used to combine the various aspects in pairs.

The published Herefordshire work focuses on landscape resilience , which is mapped for landscape types and forms the key summary map in the published Supplementary Planning Guidance document, leaving a final assessment of sensitivity to a more detailed stage based on individual land cover parcels, which is the fine grain at which condition has been assessed in this work. The Worcestershire work is not yet published but will take a similar approach once the County survey of condition has been completed.

Worcestershire County Council. Unpublished paper on a County Wide Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity. 2003.
Herefordshire Council. Landscape Character Assessment. Supplementary Planning Guidance. 2002.

Visual sensitivity

4.5 In a comprehensive study of landscape sensitivity account would ideally also be taken of the visual sensitivity of the landscape. This requires careful thinking about the way that people see the landscape. This depends on:

- the probability of change in the landscape being highly visible, based particularly on the nature of the landform and the extent of tree cover both of which have a major bearing on visibility;
- the numbers of people likely to perceive any changes and their reasons for being in the landscape, for example as residents, as residents staying in the area, as travellers passing through, as visitors engaged in recreation or as people working there;
- the likelihood that change could be mitigated, without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect (for example, planting trees to screen development in an open, upland landscape could have as great an effect as the development itself).

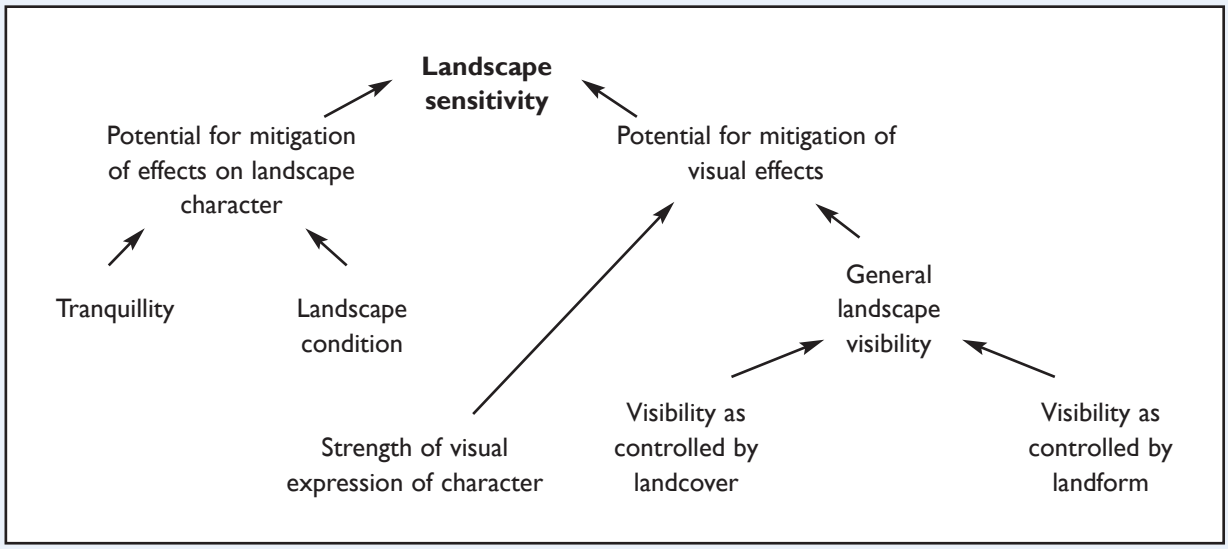
4.6 In practice visual sensitivity can be difficult to judge without reference to a specific form of change or development and that is no doubt why there are few examples of strategic assessments that incorporate this dimension. Herefordshire and Worcestershire initially intended to incorporate such considerations into their strategic work but abandoned the attempt on the basis that it was more realistically considered for specific proposed developments or change. Work by Staffordshire County Council does, however, provide a working example of an approach that combines judgements about landscape character sensitivity (as outlined above) with consideration of the issue of visual sensitivity. It is summarised in **Box 5**.

Box 5: Staffordshire County - An approach that combines landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity

Work carried out by Staffordshire County Council, published as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan , approaches landscape sensitivity by working at the Land Description Unit level and addressing the three aspects of landscape character listed below. In this work the first stage in addressing landscape sensitivity is to consider the quality (as defined in the LCA guidance, meaning condition and expression of typical character in specific areas) of individual areas of landscape in relation to their character. This is achieved by asking a series of questions about the three aspects of character:

- **Visual aspects**, dealing with the spatial distribution, pattern and condition of landscape elements. The questions cover: the presence of characteristic features for the landscape type; the absence of incongruous features for the type; and the visual and functional condition of the elements contributing to character of that particular type.
- **Cultural aspects**, which are determined by the history of human activity and are reflected in the patterns of settlement, land use, field enclosure and communications. The questions cover: demonstration of a clear and consistent pattern of landscape elements resulting from a particular course of historical development contributing to character; and the extent to which the area exhibits chronological continuity or 'time depth' in the landscape.
- **Ecological aspects**, relating to the pattern and extent of survival of the typical semi-natural vegetation and related fauna. The questions cover the presence and frequency of semi-natural vegetation characteristic of the landscape type; and the degree of fragmentation and the pattern of the semi-natural habitats.

The Staffordshire approach notes the strong relationship between the quality and sensitivity of the landscape in that one of the effects of disturbance can be the removal of characteristic landscape features. In dealing with the potential impacts of change on landscape character it asks how likely it is that significant features or characteristics of the landscape that contribute to its quality will be lost through disturbance. It also asks whether perception of landscape quality will be adversely affected.



The Staffordshire example is one of the few cases where landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity have been combined in an integrated approach. In terms of visual impact this work asks two questions:

- How likely is it that the effects of a given amount of disturbance will be visible?
- What is the potential for negating or minimising adverse visual impacts of disturbance through mitigation and compensation measures?

The idea of general visibility is used and is defined in terms of the likelihood that a given feature, randomly located, will be visible from a given viewpoint, also randomly located. It was determined in this case by theoretical and field based analysis of landform and tree and woodland cover and the way that they interact.

All these different factors, relating to both landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity are then combined by judging each on a 5 level scale and combining them sequentially, in map form, through the use of GIS, to produce a final map of landscape sensitivity.

Staffordshire County Council 1999. Planning for Landscape Change. Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Structure Plan. 1996-2011

5. JUDGING LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY TO A SPECIFIC TYPE OF CHANGE

5.1 In many studies judgements must be made about the ability of the landscape to accommodate particular types of change or development. This is where sensitivity and capacity are most often used interchangeably but it is suggested that, in line with the definitions set out above, sensitivity is the most appropriate word to use. When judging how sensitive a landscape is to some specified type of change it is essential to think in an integrated way about:

- The exact form and nature of the change that is proposed to take place;
- The particular aspects of the landscape likely to be affected by the change, including aspects of both landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity, as described in **Section 4**.

5.2 Understanding the nature of the agent of change is like specifying or describing the development project in an Environmental Impact Assessment, except that it is a generic rather than a project-specific form of change. The focus must be on identifying key aspects of the change that are likely to affect the landscape.

5.3 Defining the particular aspects of the character of the landscape that are likely to be affected by a particular type of change (landscape character sensitivity) means careful analysis of the potential interactions. These might include: impacts upon particular aspects of landscape character including landform, land cover, enclosure and settlement pattern; and impacts on aesthetic aspects such as the scale, pattern, movement and complexity of the landscape. In Scotland, for example, the wide range of capacity studies that have been carried out , although varying in their approach, usually incorporate consideration of the key physical, natural and cultural characteristics of the landscape, but also take into account the aesthetic/scenic dimensions of the landscape in judgements about the ability of different landscapes to accommodate change. So, for example, the Stirling Landscape Character Assessment, which includes consideration of a locational strategy for new development, includes criteria related to the 'landscape experience'. It considers that scale, openness, diversity, form and or line, and pattern are the most relevant aspects for this task (see **Box 6** in Section 7 for fuller examples).

5.4 Similarly the visual sensitivity of the landscape with respect to the specific type of change or development needs to be assessed. This means that the potential visibility of the development must be considered, together with the number of people of different types who are likely to see it and the scope to modify visual impacts by various appropriate forms of mitigation measures.

5.5 An overall assessment of sensitivity to the specific form of change or development requires that the four sets of considerations summarised above should be brought together so that the sensitivity of individual types or areas of landscape to that particular form of development can be judged and mapped. They are:

- impacts upon particular aspects of landscape character including landform, land cover, enclosure and settlement pattern;
- impacts on aesthetic aspects such as the scale, pattern, movement and complexity of the landscape;
- potential visibility of the development and the number of people of different types who are likely to see it;
- scope to modify visual impacts by various appropriate forms of mitigation measures.

In most cases, this is likely to be a precursor to further judgements about capacity. Studies specifically of sensitivity to a particular type of development, without proceeding to an assessment of capacity, are not likely to be common.

5.6 The outcome of a study of landscape sensitivity to a specific type of change or development would usually be a map of different categories of sensitivity, usually with either three (for example low, medium and high) or five (for example very low, low, medium, high, very high) categories of sensitivity. Such a map provides an overview of areas where there is relatively low sensitivity to the particular type of change or development but does not indicate whether and to what extent such change or development would be acceptable in these areas. This requires consideration of other factors and is best tackled through a landscape capacity study.

BOX 5: South West Region Renewable Energy Strategy - an example of using landscape sensitivity to forms of renewable energy development to inform draft targets

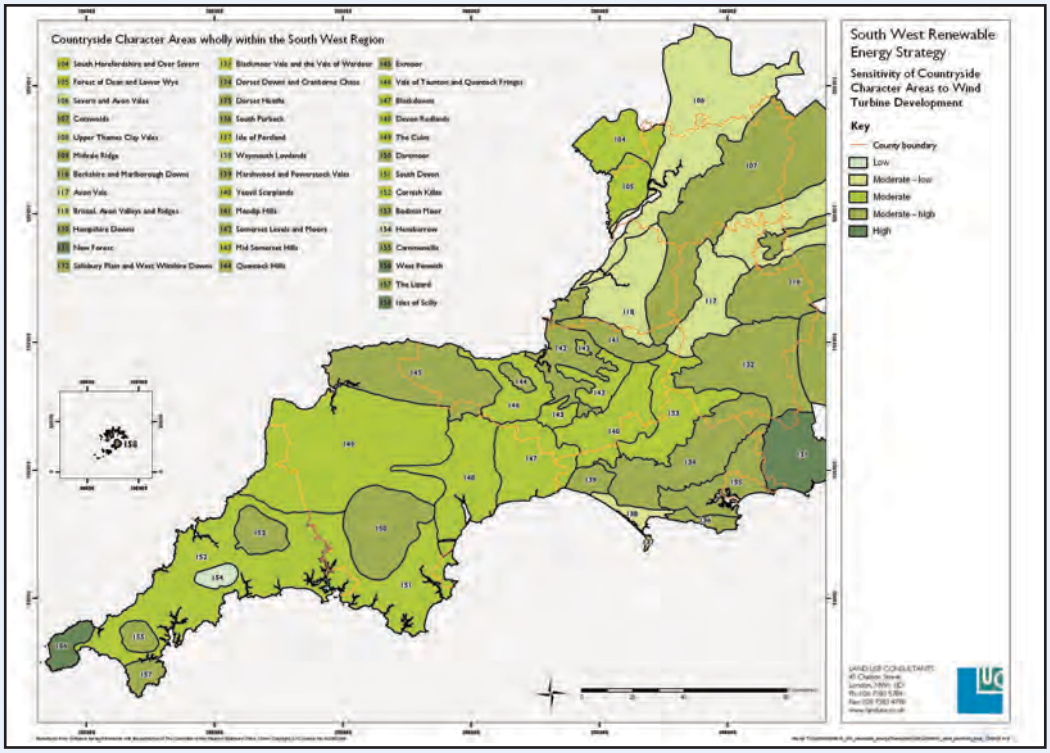
This is a consultant's study, carried out by Land Use Consultants for the Government Office for the South West. It focussed on providing information on the sensitivity of different landscape character areas to wind turbines but also assessed whether a similar approach could be used for biomass crops. Key features of this work, which is still in progress, are:

- It is a strategic study of landscape sensitivity to a specific type of change/development. The Countryside Character Area framework is adopted as suited to the needs of regional scale work, though there has also been subsequent discussion of the scope to use the new National Landscape Typology to provide a more refined level of assessment.
- A range of attributes contributing to landscape character are identified as likely to indicate suitability to accommodate wind turbines. Scale and form of the landscape, landscape pattern, settlement pattern and

transport network relate to the elements and attributes giving character to the landscape; skylines and inter-visibility relate to the visual sensitivity of the landscape; sense of enclosure, sense of tranquillity and remoteness relate to perceptual aspects and value; while sensitive/rare landscape features relates to aspects of landscape value. These distinctions are not referred to in the study where all are referred to simply as 'landscape attributes'.

- A shorter list of attributes is considered to indicate suitability of a landscape to accommodate biomass crops. They are: landscape pattern, land cover/land use, sense of enclosure and settlement pattern/ transport network.
- Using these attributes, a series of sensitivity classes are defined in relation to both wind turbines and biomass crops. In each case a five level verbal scale of sensitivity is used - low, moderate/low, moderate, moderate/high and high.
- For each level of sensitivity the influence of the landscape attributes in relation to that type of develop ment is summarised. For example, landscapes judged to be of low sensitivity to wind turbines are "likely to have strong landform, a strong sense of enclosure that reduces visual sensitivity, to be already affected by man made features, to have reduced tranquillity, little inter-visibility with adjacent landscapes and a low density of sensitive landscape features. Similarly, for biomass crops, areas of high sensitivity are defined as those where monocultures of biomass crops would prejudice landscape pattern, where transport infra structure is dominated by narrow rural lanes (or is absent), and where buildings are uncharacteristic of the landscape (e.g. moorland). The scale of possible wind turbine development is considered, predominantly in relation to landform scale, though it is acknowledged that at more detailed levels of assessment other factors such as landscape pattern and enclosure will also be relevant.

Overall the assessment of landscape sensitivity is considered to provide just one 'layer' of information relevant to the process of regional target setting. The study is clearly based on professional judgement within a clear and reasonably transparent framework. There is no explicit scoring or use of matrices but rather a common sense approach to combining the nature of the landscape with the nature of the development to derive sensitivity classes.



Land Use Consultants. South West Renewable Energy Strategy: Using Landscape Sensitivity to set Draft Targets for Wind Energy. Unpublished report to the Government Office for the South West. 2003.

6. JUDGING LANDSCAPE CAPACITY

6.1 Turning a sensitivity study into an assessment of capacity to accommodate a particular type of change means taking a further step. The assessment of the sensitivity of different types or areas of landscape to the type of change in question must be combined with an assessment of the more subjective, experiential or perceptual aspects of the landscape and of the value attached to the landscape. There are, perhaps inevitably, some reservations amongst practitioners about the incorporation of value in work on landscape sensitivity and capacity because this is seen as the return to the now largely discredited thinking about landscape evaluation. It cannot be denied, however, that society does value certain landscapes for a variety of different reasons and this has, in some way, to be reflected in decision making about capacity to accept change.

6.2 As the Landscape Character Assessment guidance indicates (**Paragraph 9.5**), value may be formally recognised through the application of some form of national landscape designation. Where this is the case the implications of the designation need to be taken into account. This means, in particular, understanding what aspects of the landscape led to its designation and how these might be affected by the proposed change. The consultation draft of Planning Policy Statement 7, which is due to replace Planning Policy Guidance Note 7, requires that Local Planning Authorities no longer refer to local landscape designations in Development Plans. Local landscape designations are proposed to be replaced by criteria-based policies, underpinned by robust Landscape Character Assessments.

6.3 The absence of designation does not mean that landscapes are not valued by different communities of interest. This means that in such cases other indicators of value will need to be considered to help in thinking about capacity. Judgements about value in such cases may be based on two main approaches. One is to address value by means of the Quality of Life Assessment approach, seeking to address the question of 'What Matters and Why?' (see Topic Paper 2 - 'Links to Other Sustainability Tools'). In this approach value will be judged in an integrated way, with considerations of landscape and sense of place set alongside other matters such as biodiversity, historic and cultural aspects, access and broader social, economic and environmental benefits.

6.4 Alternatively judgements can be made in terms of the relative value attached to different landscapes by a range of different communities of interest. This can be based on the range of criteria set out in the Landscape Character Assessment guidance (**Paragraphs 7.8 and 7.22**). These include landscape quality and condition; perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity, rurality, remoteness or wildness; special cultural associations; the presence and influence of other conservation interests. There may also be a long established consensus about the importance of particular areas. Weighing up all these factors may allow the relative value of particular landscapes to be assessed as an input to judgements about capacity.

6.5 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 that it is perceived, and without compromising the values attached to it. This step must clearly recognise that a valued landscape, whether nationally designated or not, does not automatically, and by definition, have high sensitivity. Similarly and as already argued in Section 3, landscapes with high sensitivity do not automatically have no, or low capacity to accommodate change, and landscapes of low sensitivity do not automatically have high capacity to accept change. Capacity is all a question of the interaction between the sensitivity of the landscape, the type and amount of change, and the way that the landscape is valued.

6.6 It is entirely possible for a valued landscape to be relatively insensitive to the particular type of development in question because of both the characteristics of the landscape itself and the nature of the development. It may also be the case that the reasons why value is attached to the landscape are not compromised by the particular form of change. Such a landscape may therefore have some capacity to accommodate change, especially if the appropriate, and hopefully standard, steps are taken in terms of siting, layout and design of the change or development in question. For example, a capacity study may show that a certain specified amount of appropriately located and well-designed housing may be quite acceptable even in a highly valued and moderately sensitive landscape. This is why capacity is such a complex issue and why most capacity studies need to be accompanied by guidelines about the ways in which certain types of change or development can best be accommodated without unacceptable adverse effects.

6.7 Clearly at this stage of making judgements about capacity there can be considerable benefit in involving a wide range of stakeholders in the discussions since there is likely to be a strong political dimension to such judgements. On the other hand clear and transparent arguments are vital if decisions are to be well founded and this is where well constructed professional judgements about both sensitivity and capacity are extremely important.

6.8 In Scotland a wide range of capacity studies have been carried out to look at the ability of different areas to accept development of different types. They have covered housing and built development in general, as well as wind turbines and aquaculture. The detailed approach taken varies as the studies have been carried out by different individuals or consultancies working to different briefs for different clients. Box 6 contains a summary of the approach taken in a recent example.

BOX 6 : Stirling Landscape Capacity Assessment for Housing and Small-scale Industrial, Retail and Business Development

Carried out by David Tyldesley Associates for Scottish Natural Heritage and Stirling Council in 1999, this study seeks to ensure that development around Stirling is directed towards those landscapes which can best accommodate it. The work developed an approach pioneered at St Andrews in 1996 and also ran in parallel with a settlement capacity evaluation in the neighbouring area of Clackmannanshire. The Stirling study assessed 15 specific locations of settlements and their settings and three larger general areas of search. The purpose of the study was to define: settlements and areas of high landscape sensitivity judged to have little capacity to accommodate growth; settlements and areas judged to be able to accommodate minor growth and settlements or areas judged to be suitable for major settlement expansion or new settlement. The work assumed that the buildings in question would be well-designed and would use traditional building techniques and materials. It also assumed that it would include a strong framework of structural landscape treatment including ground modelling where appropriate and tree planting of appropriate scale, area, design and species composition to ensure that the development achieves a good fit in the landscape. This study embraces both sensitivity and capacity, as defined in this Topic Paper, although they are not separately considered. The assessment is clearly made with respect to particular specified forms of development. The assessment is based on five criteria which are applied to the landscape types previously identified in a Landscape Character Assessment. The five criteria address aspects of Landscape Character Sensitivity, Visual Sensitivity and Landscape Value, as discussed in this topic paper. The criteria are derived from the key characteristics and features of the landscape character types and can be grouped as follows in relation to the structure of this Topic paper:

Related to Landscape Character Sensitivity

Effects on the Landscape Resource: examines the effects of development on the key physical features and characteristics and judges whether that development of the kind described could be accommodated and whether the character of the landscape would be sustained, enhanced or diminished. Only the important characteristics relevant to the type of development are assessed.

Effects on the landscape experience: assesses the potential effects of development on aspects of landscape experience relating to scale, openness, diversity, form and/or line and pattern and makes an overall assessment of whether these aspects would be affected positively or negatively.

Related to Visual Sensitivity

Visual effects: considers possible visual effects of the forms of development on: views and approaches to the settlements from the principal approach roads; possible effects on strategically significant outward views from the settlements; potential effects on distinctive skylines; and potential effects on visually conspicuous locations such as open, flat ground or open, high or rising ground.

Mitigation: considers whether the development would require long-term mitigation to reduce the effects of the development. It also considers how feasible any desirable mitigation would be and whether the mitigation itself would be appropriate.

Related to Landscape Value

Other Important Effects: considers whether the development would affect the integrity of an important designed landscape or its setting and whether the development would affect the amenity of other important cultural or historical elements or features of the landscape, including their settings.

The criteria under these five categories are applied systematically to each settlement and area of search in terms of the different landscape character types that occur. Professional judgments are made and for each criteria a three point graphical scale is used to express the findings. An overview is taken of the judgments for each of the criteria for each landscape type, and an overview assessment is made of the whole. The three point scale applied to each criteria covers: no impact or positive enhancement; neutral or average effect; and significant negative effect or diminishing of landscape character. An overall judgment is then made based on the profile of the area/settlements and relevant landscape type based on a table of judgments under each criteria.

David Tyldesley Associates. Stirling Landscape Character Assessment. Report for Scottish Natural Heritage and Stirling Council. 1999

7. RECORDING AND PRESENTING INFORMATION

7.1 Approaches to judging sensitivity and capacity can be made at different levels of detail. Much depends on the time and resources available and on the problem to be addressed. For example, capacity studies for housing may need a finer grain of assessment because of the particular nature of the development. Where time and resources are limited quick assessments are needed and it is likely that overall judgements will need to be made about the whole of a landscape type or area without necessarily making individual assessments of the constituent aspects of sensitivity or capacity. Consultants working to tight timescales and with limited budgets often carry out short sharp studies of this type. In such cases it is rarely possible to assess each of the relevant factors individually in great detail and the emphasis is often on overall judgement of sensitivity. It is nevertheless still extremely important that the thinking that underpins these judgements is clear and consistent, that records of the field judgements are kept in a consistent form and that the decisions reached can be explained easily to an audience of non-experts.

7.2 Local authorities carrying out such work in house are likely to work in a different way and may sometimes have longer periods of time for desk study, survey and analysis. Permanent staff can be more fully involved in such studies and have a greater opportunity to become familiar with and to understand their landscapes and to develop real ownership of the work. In these cases it may be possible to take a much more detailed and transparent step-by-step approach to assembling the judgements that ultimately leads to an overall assessment of landscape sensitivity or capacity. The Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire studies, for example, provide demonstrations of what can be achieved by officers working on assessing their own areas, often over a reasonably long period of time.

7.3 Whoever carries them out, all assessments of sensitivity and capacity inevitably rely primarily on professional judgements, although wherever practically possible they should also include input from stakeholders. The temptation to suggest objectivity in such professional judgements, by resorting to quantitative methods of recording them is generally to be avoided. Nevertheless dealing with such a wide range of factors, as outlined in the paragraphs above, does usually require some sort of codification of the judgements that are made at each stage as well as a way of combining layers of judgements together to arrive at a final conclusion.

7.4 The first step is to decide on the factors or criteria that are to be used in making the judgement and to prepare a clear summary of what they are and what they mean. The second step is to design record sheets that

allow the different judgements that need to be made to be recorded clearly, whether they are to be based on desk study or field survey. The time and resources available will influence the level of detail of this record sheet and the level of detail required of the work. Ideally separate records should be made of each component aspect of the final judgement. So for example in the case of a comprehensive capacity study for a particular type of change or development, a record should be made of the judgements made about:

i) **the Landscape Character Sensitivity** of each landscape type or area to that type of change, which will reflect the sensitivity of individual aspects of landscape character including landform, land cover, enclosure form and pattern, tree cover, settlement form and pattern, and other characteristic elements, and the aesthetic aspects of landscape character, including for example, its scale, complexity, and diversity;

ii) **the Visual Sensitivity** to that type of change, which will reflect, for each landscape type or area; general visibility, influenced by landform and tree and woodland cover, the presence and size of populations of different types, and potential for mitigation of visual impacts, without the mitigation in itself causing unacceptable effects.

iii) the **Value** attached to each landscape, which will reflect:

- national designations based on landscape value;
- other judgements about value based either on a 'Quality of Life Assessment', or on consideration of a range of appropriate criteria relating to landscape value.

7.5 These different aspects need to be judged on a simple verbal scale, either of three points - high, medium or low, or of five points - for example very high, high, medium/average, low and very low, or equivalents. A three point scale is much easier to use but a five point scale allows greater differentiation between areas. These scales can easily be translated into shades or colours for graphic display and are well suited to use as layers within a GIS of the type now widely employed in landscape character work.

7.6 The question remains of how layers of information can then be combined to arrive at a final assessment of either sensitivity or capacity, depending on which is required. There are three possible methods: firstly the construction of an overall profile combined into an overall assessment of sensitivity and capacity; secondly the cumulative assessment of sensitivity and capacity by sequential combination of judgements; and thirdly a scoring approach. They are briefly outlined below.

An overall profile

7.7 In the first approach individual assessments are made of the constituent aspects of sensitivity or capacity using a three or five point verbal scale, as outlined above. The amount of detailed assessment that goes into the judgements of each of these factors will depend on the time and resources available and the overall approach taken. These assessments are arranged in a table or matrix to provide a profile of that particular landscape type or area. An overview is then taken of the distribution of the assessments of each aspect and this is used to make an informed judgement about the overall assessment of sensitivity or capacity. **Figure 2** gives a hypothetical example:

Figure 2: Building up the overall profile

Landscape Type/Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity	Sensitivity of Individual Elements	Sensitivity of Aesthetic Aspects	Visual Sensitivity	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY	Value of Landscape	LANDSCAPE CAPACITY
Type 1	High	Medium	Medium	High	HIGH	Low	MEDIUM
Type 2	Low	Medium	Low	Low	LOW	Low	HIGH
Type 3	High	High	High	Medium	HIGH	High	LOW
etc							

Cumulative assessment

7.8 In the second approach individual assessments are similarly made but in this case the more detailed lower-level assessments are combined in pairs sequentially until an overall assessment is reached. The number of layers combined in this way depends upon the level of detailed information collected in the survey. This must of course be done for each landscape type or area being assessed. Based on the framework and definitions set out in this paper some simplified and purely illustrative possible combinations (and there are of course others) might be:

- Sensitivity of ecological components + Sensitivity of cultural components = Landscape character sensitivity
- General visibility (related to land form and land cover) + Level and significance of populations = Visual sensitivity
- Landscape character sensitivity + Visual sensitivity = Overall landscape sensitivity
- Presence of designations + Overall assessment of value against criteria = Landscape value
- Overall landscape sensitivity + Landscape value = Landscape capacity

7.9 The difficulties with this approach are that it may be somewhat cumbersome and time consuming to apply, especially for large areas, and that decisions must be made about how the individual assessments are to be combined. So, for example, while two HIGHS clearly give a HIGH in the matrix, what about a HIGH and a MEDIUM? Is the highest level used in which case the answer is also HIGH, or is a judgement made on the combinations? There is no single answer but again the emphasis must be on transparency. **Figure 3** illustrates this process for two hypothetical combinations. Both could also be shown with a five point scale, as discussed above, to give a more refined assessment.

Landscape Character Sensitivity	Low	Medium	High
High	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
Medium	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
Low	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH

Visual Sensitivity

Figure 3(a): Combining Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity to give overall Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape Sensitivity	Low	Medium	High
High	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Medium	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
Low	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM

Landscape Value

Figure 3(b): Combining Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Value to give Capacity

Scoring

7.10 In this type of approach the word scales must be combined in a consistent way with appropriate rules applied as to how the combined layers are further classified. This may require that they are converted into numerical equivalents for ease of manipulation. Shown graphically, these 'scores' will take the form of different colours or shades, which is generally preferable to presenting the numerical figures themselves. There are certainly examples of work that do take a scoring approach to the layers of information in the assessment, although they may not appear in the final published material.

7.11 While scoring overcomes the difficulty of how individual assessments of each aspect are combined (for example by multiplication within matrices and by adding different matrices) and makes the process transparent, it does lead to a greater emphasis on quantitative aspects of such work. If overemphasised as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end, numerical representation may run the risk of generating adverse reactions because it suggests something other than professional judgement and can suggest a spurious scientific rigour in the process. It was, after all, the overly quantitative nature of landscape evaluation in the 1970s that led to a move away from that approach.

The role of Geographic Information Systems

7.12 Today most sensitivity and capacity studies, whichever approach they take, are likely to rely on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to manipulate the layers of information. This brings several advantages and notably:

- Consistency of approach, in that appropriate matrices or algorithms can be defined once and then applied consistently throughout a study;
- Transparency, in that it is easy to interrogate the base datasets used and also to visualise and communicate intermediate stages of the process if required;
- Efficiency and effectiveness in the handling of data, allowing explorations of the information and alternative approaches to combining it which would simply not be achievable in a manual paper based exercise.

8. CURRENT PRACTICE AND ISSUES IN ASSESSING SENSITIVITY AND CAPACITY

8.1 There is a wide range of work, either in progress or completed, which tackles the issues of landscape sensitivity and capacity. Most of it is quite complex and difficult to summarise meaningfully in a short paper like this and there are few if any examples as yet which demonstrate all the principles set out here. Where possible examples have been included in the boxes in the text to illustrate particular aspects of such work, including examples of overall landscape sensitivity studies carried out by local authorities, studies to assess sensitivity to particular types of change or development and capacity studies aimed, for example, at exploring wind turbines or housing, among other types of development. It is hoped that more examples may be available in future and may be included on the Countryside Character Network website (www.ccnetwork.org.uk).

Transparency and Presentation

8.2 It is clear from examination of the strategic studies of overall landscape sensitivity, such as those conducted by Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire, that they are enormously detailed and very transparent in describing the approach to analysis and judgements. It is also apparent that they are very detailed and demanding of time and resources, and also quite complex because of the desire to explain each step in the process. However, even experienced practitioners who have not been involved in this work may struggle to understand fully the terminology used, the subtleties of the definitions and the judgements that are made at every level of the assessment, as well as the way that the different factors are combined. They may also disagree with some of those definitions - replaceability, for example, is in itself a very complex term open to different interpretations, especially when used in relation to ecological habitats. A lay audience could well be completely baffled by the complexity of the whole process. So although the arguments are logical, consistent and fully explained this can in itself open up potentially important areas of misunderstanding or debate.

8.3 On the other hand some of the consultants' studies of sensitivity and capacity are often short on transparency and rely on professional judgements, the basis of which is often not clear. It could be argued that there has to be a trade-off between complete transparency in the methods used and the accessibility of the findings to a non-specialist

audience. Reasoning must always be documented as clearly as possible and the reader of any document should be able to see where and how decisions have been made. Different content and presentation techniques may be needed to tailor the findings of studies for particular audiences. Officers of Worcestershire County Council, for example, intend ultimately to produce the findings of their overall sensitivity analysis in a more accessible form for a wider audience. The complexities in the full explanation of the method are considered necessary to provide the essential degree of transparency and justification but it is recognised that this is only likely to be suited to a specialist audience.

Continuing debates and questions

8.4 Whatever the approach adopted there are likely to be continuing debates on several questions. The main ones that require further exploration as experience grows are:

a) Is it reasonable to make assessments of overall landscape sensitivity without considering sensitivity to a specific type of change? In what circumstances will this approach work?
b) To what extent should considerations of 'value', as discussed in Section 6 of this paper, be taken into account in landscape capacity studies? This paper argues that they should be, provided that these considerations are clearly thought through and appropriately incorporated in the judgements that are made. Simply relying on designa tions is to be avoided as this is an oversimplification of complex issues but the issue remains of whether there is agreement about the way that value can be defined. At present it seems that this approach to defining capac ity, by combining sensitivity and aspects of value, is reasonably well accepted in Scotland, particularly in recent wind farm capacity studies, but less so in England.
c) How can transparency about the approach to making judgements be achieved without the explanations becoming unnecessarily complex and inaccessible?
d) To what extent is quantification of assessments of sensitivity or capacity either necessary or desirable, as discussed in Paragraph 7.11? Both quantification and consideration of value suffer from the spectre of the 1970s approaches to landscape evaluation which hangs over them. This needs to be recognised when deciding on and presenting an appropriate approach, in order to avoid unnecessary arguments about its suitability.

Future developments

8.6 This Topic Paper is not intended to be a definitive statement about issues of landscape sensitivity and capacity. Nor is it the intention to recommend or promote a single method. This is a rapidly developing field in which practi-tioners are actively exploring different approaches in different circumstances. The Topic Paper may be amended in future as experience accumulates and the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches become more apparent as they are applied in practice. In the meantime comments on the content of the Topic Paper are invited to assist in this evolutionary process. The discussion forum on the Countryside Character Network website should be used for this purpose if you want to share your views with the wider practitioner community. Alternatively you can send your views by post to the coordinators of the network. Web site address and network contact details are provided in the 'Further Information' section.

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[2] Scottish Natural Heritage (2001) *Natural Heritage Trends - Scotland 2001*. Scottish Natural Heritage. Battleby, Perth.

[3] Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2002) *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.* Spon Press, London.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Countryside Character Network
www.ccnetwork.org.uk

Landscape Character Assessment Guidance (available on line)
www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/countryside_character
or www.snh.org.uk/strategy/LCA

The Countryside Agency

SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE

The full *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland* and related topic papers can be viewed and downloaded from **www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/countryside_character** and **www.snh.org.uk/strategy/LCA**

Free copies of the guidance are also available from:

Countryside Agency Publications
Tel: 0870 1206466
Fax: 0870 1206467
Email: countryside@twoten.press.net

Scottish Natural Heritage
Tel: 0131 446 2400
Fax: 0131 446 2405
Email: carolyn.dunnett@snh.gov.uk

The Landscape Institute
Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Second Edition

SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE
The Countryside Agency
ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
National Grid
SPON PRESS

2.12 Judgement should always be based on training and experience and be supported by clear evidence and reasoned argument. Accordingly, it is recommended that suitably qualified and experienced landscape professionals carry out landscape and visual impact assessments.

Landscape and visual effects are assessed separately

2.13 Landscape and visual assessments are separate, although linked, procedures. The landscape baseline, its analysis and the assessment of landscape effects all contribute to the baseline for visual assessment studies. The assessment of the potential effect on the landscape is carried out as an effect on an environmental resource, i.e. the landscape. Visual effects are assessed as one of the interrelated effects on population [2, 3].

2.14 Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape, which may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced. This may in turn affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape. The description and analysis of effects on a landscape resource relies on the adoption of certain basic principles about the positive (or beneficial) and negative (or adverse) effects of change in the landscape. Due to the inherently dynamic nature of the landscape, change arising from a development may not necessarily be significant.

2.15 Visual effects relate to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes, and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.

Assessment of effects on the landscape resource considers the different aspects of landscape

2.16 In order to reach an understanding of the effects of development on a landscape resource, it is necessary to consider the different aspects of the landscape, as follows:

- **Elements** The individual elements that make up the landscape, including prominent or eye-catching features such as hills, valleys, woods, trees and hedges, ponds, buildings and roads. They are generally quantifiable and can be easily described.
- **Characteristics** Elements or combinations of elements that make a particular contribution to the character of an area, including experiential characteristics such as tranquillity and wildness.
- **Character** The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how this is perceived by people. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement. It creates the particular sense of place of different areas of the landscape. Character is identified through the process of characterisation, which classifies, maps and describes areas of similar character.

The process of landscape character assessment can increase appreciation of what makes the landscape distinctive and what is important about an area, and can also improve the understanding of change both in urban areas and the countryside. It thereby contributes to our understanding of the form and pattern of the landscape at a range of scales (national, regional or district). However, to undertake a project-based landscape impact assessment as part of an EIA, it will be necessary to undertake more detailed localised studies. 2.17

Environmental impact assessment and landscape design are iterative processes

An iterative design approach enables the site planning and detailed design of a development project to be informed by and respond to the ongoing Environmental Impact Assessment, as the environmental constraints and opportunities are taken into consideration at each stage of decision making. Experience indicates that this approach can result in more successful and cost-effective developments, and can reduce the time required to complete the assessment. The iterative approach is appropriate to any new development of whatever scale or type, whether or not it requires a full EIA. The iterative approach is illustrated in Figure 2.2. 2.18

Landscape and visual impact assessments are important parts of the iterative design process because they can help to avoid or minimise potential negative effects of the development and, where appropriate, can also help in seeking opportunities for landscape enhancement. During site selection and the initial design of the layout for the development, the landscape architect may produce: 2.19

- land use/landscape strategies to evaluate and address constraints, taking advantage of environmental opportunities for each of the options available;
- comparative appraisals of alternative options, to identify those with least overall adverse environmental effect on the landscape and visual amenity.

Once the preferred development option has been selected, the landscape professional works with the design team to: 2.20

- identify and develop measures to further reduce residual adverse environmental impacts, taking into account the landscape management implications;
- indicate how the landscape strategy will work in practice, on completion of the development and throughout the lifetime of the project;
- prepare landscape and visual impact assessments to address in detail the residual landscape and visual effects of the proposed development.

Landscape baseline analysis

6.14 The analysis draws upon the information gathered during the desk study and field survey work, supported by illustrations and documentary evidence. The baseline studies section of the report covers the existing elements, features, characteristics, character, quality and extent of the landscape. The baseline studies and analysis must be clearly explained in the assessment. The findings should be presented in a clear and structured fashion as they form a key component of the landscape and visual impact assessments. A distinction is made between:

- the description and assessment of the individual elements, features, and characteristics of a landscape and their value or importance; and
- analysis of the way in which these components interact to create the character of the landscape.

Landscape character and characterisation

6.15 Landscape character assessment and particularly the stage of characterisation is the basic tool for understanding the landscape and is the starting point for baseline surveys. There is a well-established methodology developed in the UK by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage [4]. The baseline report provides a concise description of the existing character of the site and its surrounding landscape, including the physical and human influences that have helped to shape the landscape and any current trends for change. This will often include, as appropriate, a classification of the landscape into distinct character areas or types, which share common features and characteristics. It may also take into account other landscape character assessments that may have been prepared for the study area. The description of character may be illustrated by photographs or analytical sketches, or both, showing representative views.

Landscape condition

6.16 The condition of the landscape refers to the state of an individual area of landscape and is described as factually as possible. Reference to the maintenance and condition of individual elements or features such as buildings, hedgerows, woodland or drainage systems can be helpful. It should be recognised that landscapes in poor condition, such as degraded or damaged landscapes, can be still be highly locally valued (see paragraph 6.18), for example, if open land is scarce or possibly because of cultural associations, as in the case of sites of industrial archaeological value. The assessment therefore sets out what weight has been attached to the condition of the landscape and may also consider the scope for the development to contribute to the restoration or enhancement of the landscape.

Box 6.2 Landscape character assessment

On a broad scale, the Countryside Agency's and English Nature's joint **Character of England map** (1996) illustrates the natural and cultural characteristics of the English countryside based on biodiversity and landscape. The character map also includes contributions from English Heritage on the historic features of the landscape.

The approach identifies the unique character of different areas of the countryside without making judgements about their relative worth. Broad areas of cohesive character have been identified, which can be described in terms of their landscape character, sense of place, local distinctiveness, characteristic wildlife and natural features, and nature of change [12].

New guidance on *Landscape Character Assessment*, jointly produced by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, is due to be published in 2002 [4].

In Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) has completed the national programme of **landscape character assessments**. The series of 29 individual reports, mostly at a scale of 1:50,000, was produced in collaboration with local authorities and other relevant bodies. SNH has also identified **Natural Heritage Zones**, which provide a comparable strategic framework, of 21 zones defined on the basis of a combination of aspects of natural heritage and landscape character [13].

On a similar basis the Forestry Commission has developed a method of landscape assessment for use in the preparation of Indicative **Forest Strategies** and the Environment Agency has a closely-related approach for the assessment of river corridors. This includes a **'Macro' scale assessment** of the wider river valley and a **'Micro' scale assessment** of the immediate river corridor. This has also been extended to the assessment of the whole river catchment area in a number of studies in the Thames and Midlands regions of the Environment Agency [14].

The Countryside Council of Wales is currently promoting **LANDMAP**, a method of mapping and evaluating the rural landscape, in terms of the aspects that contribute to the whole. Landmap is used by Welsh planning authorities as the basis for countryside policy making and strategies for development or protection. All these methods provide vocabularies to describe the wider countryside and are important starting points in investigating the landscape resource [15].

Landscape value

6.17 A judgement needs to be made on the value or importance to society of the affected landscape. This will be based on and take into account views of

Countryside Character

Volume 7:
South East & London

The character of England's natural and man-made landscape

The Countryside Agency

Character Area

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Low Weald

Key Characteristics

- Broad, low lying and gently undulating clay vales underlie a small-scale intimate landscape enclosed by an intricate mix of small woodlands, a patchwork of fields and hedgerows.
- Topography and soils vary locally in relation to higher drier outcrops of limestone or sandstone, which are commonly sites of settlements.
- The Low Weald generally includes an abundance of ponds and small stream valleys often with wet woodlands of alder and willow.
- Tall hedgerows with numerous mature trees link copses, shaws and remnant woodlands which combine to give the Low Weald a well-wooded character. Field trees, usually of oak but now declining, are characteristic of the area south-east of Dorking.
- Grassland predominates on the heavy clay soils while lighter soils on higher ground support arable cropping in a more open landscape.
- Rural in character with dispersed farmsteads, small settlements often include many timber and brick-built traditional buildings where not now dominated by recent urban development.
- Historic settlement pattern was dictated by a preference for higher drier outcrops of limestone or sandstone with moated manor houses being a characteristic feature.
- Urban and airport related development sprawl in the flat plain around Gatwick, and in the Horley-Crawley commuter settlements, contrast with the pleasant, wet, woody, rural character of the area and as such are less distinctively Wealden.
- Hop growing and orchards are still a distinctive land use in the east.
- The Kentish Low Weald is traversed by numerous narrow lanes with broad verges and ditches; these are continuous with the drove roads of the North Downs.

Landscape Character

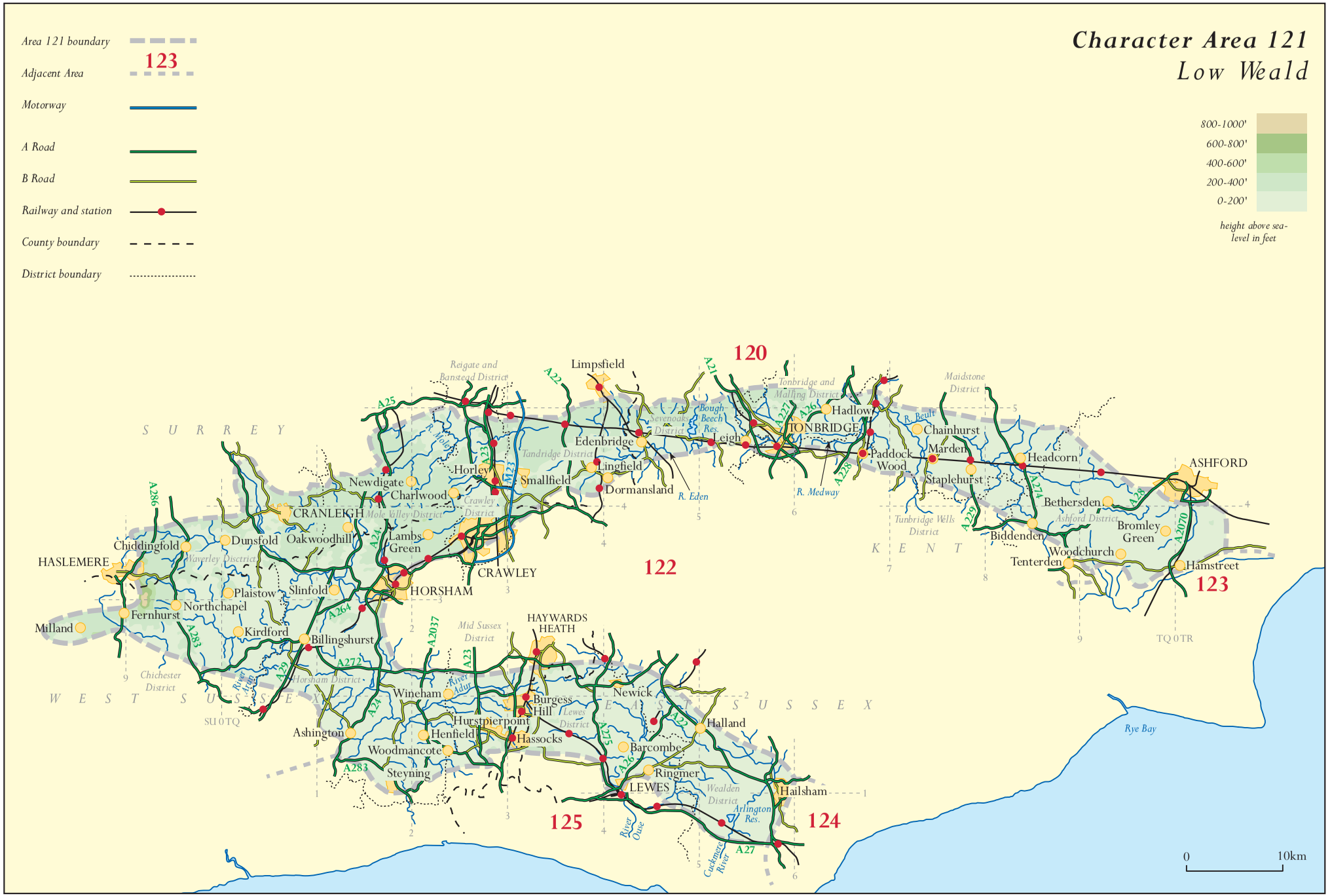
The Low Weald is a broad low-lying clay vale which runs around three sides of the High Weald through Kent, Sussex and Surrey, bounded for much of its length by the Wealden Greensand. Topography and soils vary with higher drier pockets of land on the outcrops of limestone or sandstone - which are commonly the sites of settlements – within the often flat and wet soils of the vale.

MARTIN JONES/COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY

Many small towns and villages have been targeted for new housing development. Much is being constructed to national standards and has little in common with local characteristics.

The area is well-wooded, with many of the fields created by woodland clearance. It is also rich in ponds and small streams with riparian willows and alders reflecting its wet nature. Ponds are also evidence of a history of brickmaking, marl pits and the iron industry. Where major river valleys, notaby the Arun, Adur, Beult and Medway, cross the Low Weald this wet character is accentuated by wet grazing lands with willow and sallow scrub. The Adur in particular has extensive wetland habitats in this character area, including marshes with water levels controlled by complex sluice systems.

Hedgerows are tall with many mature trees and run between small copses of oak and birch. Chestnut and hornbeam coppice is also frequent, in many places a relic of the Low Weald's industrial history of charcoal burning for iron and glass production. The area is also characterised by remnant


Character Area 121
Low Weald
Area 121 boundary
123
Adjacent Area
Motorway
A Road
B Road
Railway and station
County boundary
District boundary
800-1000'
600-800'
400-600'
200-400'
0-200'
height above sea-level in feet
120
122
123
124
125
SURREY
WEST SUSSEX
EAST SUSSEX
KENT
Limpsfield
Reigate and Banstead District
Edenbridge
Lingfield
Dormansland
Smallfield
Horley
Newdigate
Charlwood
Crawley District
Tandridge District
Sevenoaks District
Bough Beech Res.
Leigh
R. Eden
R. Medway
TONBRIDGE
Hadlow
Tonbridge and Malling District
Paddock Wood
Chainhurst
Marden
Staplehurst
Maidstone District
Headcorn
ASHFORD
Bethersden
Ashford District
Bromley Green
Hamstreet
Biddenden
Tenterden
Woodchurch
Tunbridge Wells District
R. Beult
CRANLEIGH
Mole Valley District
Lambs Green
CRAWLEY
HORSHAM
Dunsfold
Oakwoodhill
Chiddingfold
HASLEMERE
Waverley District
Plaistow
Slinfold
Northchapel
Fernhurst
Milland
Kirdford
Billingshurst
Horsham District
Chichester District
River Arun
Wisborough Green
HAYWARDS HEATH
Mid Sussex District
Burgess Hill
Wineham
Ashington
Henfield
Woodmancote
Steyning
Hurstpierpoint
Hassocks
Lewes District
Newick
Halland
Barcombe
Ringmer
LEWES
Wealden District
Hailsham
Arlington Res.
River Ouse
Cuckmere River
Rye Bay
A21
A22
A23
A24
A25
A26
A27
A228
A229
A271
A272
A264
A283
A286
A2037
A2070
SU 0 TQ
TQ 0 TR
0
10km

strips of cleared woodland or 'shaws' which combine with the generally small, densely hedged field enclosures to enhance the woody nature of much of the vale. Other parts of the Low Weald to the south-west, in Sussex for instance, are often more open and exposed in character.

MARTIN JONES/COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY

Traditional orange-red brick and tile hung buildings reflect the use of local Weald clays and provide vivid contrast with rich green vegetation.

Agriculture in the Low Weald is largely pastoral due to the heavy clay soils with either forage or grazed grassland. However, where there are lighter soils on slightly higher ground a more mixed farming is found, including arable and fruit growing on the drift deposits of brickearths in Kent. Arable cropping is often associated with larger fields, a much more sparse hedge pattern and fewer trees in contrast to the characteristic well-wooded pastoral appearance of the Low Weald.

Much of the Low Weald is essentially, rural in character and has a pleasant wet woody character. Settlements are mainly villages or small hamlets and usually built of brick reflecting the use of local Weald clays, or more locally (as at Horsham) of stone for roofs, providing islets of very local character. Timber-framed buildings are common at the eastern (Kent) end of the Weald, with oast houses and weather-boarding in the fruit and hop growing areas close to Romney Marsh.

The most notable variation in the Low Weald character is provided by the contrast of the urban and airport sprawl in the flat plain around Gatwick, including the Horley-Crawley area. The natural character of this area is flatter and less-wooded, ie less distinctively Wealden, and the airport and associated road and rail developments have destroyed its rural feel. Major settlements at Crawley and Horley have resulted in suburban sprawl within the rural character of the Low Weald.

The clay soils produce rich green grassland and woodland vegetation which provide a vivid contrast to the intense orange-reds of the locally produced Wealden clay bricks characteristic of many of the Low Weald villages.

The well-wooded character restricts many views within the area although even small rises in terrain permit longer views. Parts of the Low Weald have an unusual remote quality, especially in Kent. Elevated landforms outside the character area such as the Wealden Greensand, the North and South Downs and the High Weald form important backdrops in many views.

Physical Influences

The Low Weald area coincides with the outcrop of the Weald Clay, below the irregular escarpment of the Greensand belt and the Chalk. It gives rise to a broad vale that is typically lowlying and undulating, rarely, exceeding more than 30 m - 40 m AOD, with many areas as low as 15 metres. Towards the south, the undulations become rolling and larger in scale.

STEPHEN DAVIS

Carpets of bluebells are typical of the significant areas of semi-natural woodland. The characteristic oak standard over hazel coppice reflects past management.

Localised deposits of limestone and sandstone form gentle ridges and high points throughout the Low Weald. In many places, these are the sites of farmsteads, hamlets or larger settlements. The Weald Clay produces heavy, poorly-drained soils which are nutrient-poor and are largely used as pastureland, with arable crops less common. Drift deposits of brickearths in the Kent area give rise to good quality soils suitable for hop and fruit growing. It also supports a prosperous brick and tilemaking industry, producing a wide range of bricks from numerous sites. As the deposits extend to deep levels, surface disturbance and visual impact caused by excavations are relatively minimal.

The Low Weald is heavily dissected by river floodplains and many small, narrow and commonly sunken streams cut into the heavy clays locally forming flat lowlying areas, such as the plain around Gatwick. Ponds are frequent on the edges of fields and in woodlands although they tend to be small and are often silted up. Some are the result of past quarrying for brick-making, marl pits or the early iron industry. Much of the area is subject to localised flooding.

Historical and Cultural Influences

A Roman iron industry that once thrived in the Low Weald was revived from the late 15th century. It left old hammer ponds, which are now valuable archaeological and wildlife sites, and has also ensured the management and survival of large areas of woodland.

The wild and wooded appearance of the Wealden area led the Romans to call this area *Sylva Anderida* which the Saxons later amended to *Andredsweald*. Deforestation in subsequent centuries, mainly for shipbuilding and charcoal smelting, has left only remnants of the original wood in existence today. The Low Weald retained a high woodland cover until Domesday, when about two-thirds of the area was still wooded. Clearance was very piecemeal, often leaving belts of wood known as 'shaws' between fields. Today many fields are still bounded by these shaws while other fields are formed from cleared land along woodland edges (assarts), typically resulting in woods with very irregular shapes. This led to the characteristic settlement pattern of small hamlets and ancient farmsteads. Many hedges may also have originated as remnant woodland strips as reflected by their often species-rich composition, including ancient woodland indicator species.

The Low Weald has inspired poets such as Edmund Blunden and 20th century, artists such as Rowland Hilder. The Low Weald landscape is also the setting for H E Bates' *Larkin* books dramatised as *The Darling Buds of May*.

Buildings and Settlement

Owing to the original wooded nature and heavy clays of the Low Weald, settlements tend to be very small and scattered and are often just linear groups of houses along roadsides following transport corridors through the Weald. Many villages are centred on greens or commons. The majority of rural buildings are traditional in character with the common use of local brick weatherboarding and tile-hung buildings. Older houses are half-timbered, locally with slate roofs. The muted colours of the soft grey of the timber, the gentle ochre or white-washed walls and the massive greeny-grey stone tiles (Horsham slabs) provide contrast with the greens of their rural settings. Black weather-boarded barns with half-hipped roofs are also common features.

Although many lanes are narrow and enclosed between hedges, with occasional views from gateways, the poor ground conditions for early travellers resulted in broad trackways to allow horse-drawn vehicles to avoid water-logged areas. This is still reflected today, in the many country roads with wide verges and attendant ditches that cross the area.

Land Cover

The heavy clay soils are notoriously difficult to cultivate so that permanent pasture is the main farming use. Arable farming is associated with the lighter soils on higher ground and there is fruit farming in the east in Kent. Fields are generally small and irregular, divided by a dense network of hedges and shaws that create a small-scale landscape, except where hedges have been removed. Occasional lines of single trees mark out vanished field hedges while small copses and tree groups frequently occur within the fields and as part of the hedgerow pattern. Hedges are generally species-rich with oak, ash, field maple and holly also occurring as hedgerow trees. Many of these hedges typically occur as low, square-cut or tall, uncut hedges. Many were still woodland strips as recently as the late 19th century.

The extent of woodland cover varies depending on the original level of clearance for agriculture, yet a good deal remains. Broadleaved woodland is common and significant areas of semi-natural ancient woodland occur, particularly below the Wealden Greensand. The ancient character of many woods is reflected by their large coppice stools, banks and ditches. Oak is the principal tree of the Low Weald and the characteristic woodland often has oak standards over hazel coppice. Areas of base-rich soil on limestone outcrops support ash with field maple and hazel. In addition to these woodland types there are pockets of older coppice with mosses and sedges often invaded by birch. Coppiced woodland varies between chestnut, hornbeam or hazel, with goat willow, hawthorn and holly as shrub species. Shaws are remnants of more extensive woodland and therefore have similar species and have often been managed in similar ways. For example, the wider shaws are often coppice, with standards.

The courses of the many small rivers and streams that meander across the Low Weald are marked by numerous riparian trees. In many cases, the ponds, unimproved permanent pastures, road verges, small rivers and streams of the Low Weald are habitats of high value for nature-conservation.

The Changing Countryside

- Urban influences have affected many large parts of the rural area, especially around Gatwick Airport and Horley, owing to the accessibility and popularity of the character area.
- Development pressure is focused mainly on the towns and the area on the boundary between the Low Weald and the High Weald (an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

JOHN TYLER/SUSSEX DOWNS CONSERVATION BOARD

Views from the South Downs show the low lying gently undulating Low Weald with its mosaic of pasture, arable and mature woodland linked by hedgerows.

- Continuing creeping fragmentation of farmland around houses into gardens or pony paddocks, sometimes with conifer hedges.
- Past pressures on ancient woodland arising from past conversion to conifer plantations, damage through neglect, and/or damage through old consents for the working of clay pits.
- Loss and decline of hedges and hedgerow trees, and consequential fragmentation of landscape structure, due to lack of management and farm diversification.
- Riparian landscapes under pressure from decline and neglect, including loss of farm ponds, as agricultural practices have intensified.
- Loss of traditional hop gardens, orchards and associated wind-break features.

Shaping the Future

- Conservation of characteristic shaws, ancient woodlands and coppice should be considered.
- New woodland planting of shaws and hedgerows would help integrate existing and proposed developments.
- The conservation of farm woodlands, riparian landscape features and ponds would be beneficial.
- The retention of the character of rural lanes is important.
- The restoration, conservation and re-creation of hedges within the Low Weald, including new planting of hedgerow trees, would improve the landscape structure.

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Glossary

AOD: Above Ordnance Datum

islet: little island or small piece of land markedly different from its surroundings

shaws: strip of trees or bushes forming the border of a field

STEPHEN DAVIS

Damp grassland is characteristic of the whole area, occurring on poorly drained heavy clays. Where the land has not been agriculturally improved, species such as green winged orchid and meadow saxifrage can be found. The densely hedged fields enhance the wooded character of the area.

Character Area

122

High Weald

Key Characteristics

- A well-wooded landscape rising above the Low Weald and deeply incised in many places to give a complex pattern of ridges and steep stream valleys.
- Distinctive and scattered sandstone Outcrops or 'bluffs' rise above the farmland and woodland.
- The Ashdown Forest, in contrast to the more intimate green woods and pastures elsewhere, is a high, rolling and open heathland lying on the sandstone ridges to the west of the area.
- Main roads and settlements are sited along the prominent ridge-lines with a dense network of small, narrow, and winding lanes linking scattered villages, hamlets and farms. Large reservoirs are significant features within the High Weald landscape adding to the area's interest and variety.
- The legacy of the early iron industry, based on sandstone, ore, water and timber, has left extensive areas of coppice woodland and the characteristic 'hammer ponds' which provided power.
- High forest, small woods and copses, and a network of hedges and shaws link small, irregular fields created from cleared woodland. Many of these contain flower-rich meadows bordered by species-rich hedgerows. Heavy clay soils have reduced the impact of agricultural change in the area and it is still, in the main, a quiet pastoral landscape with mixed farming predominating.
- The cultivation of fruit and hops, together with the associated distinctive oast houses and the seasonal appearance of hop poles, are still a characteristic feature of the eastern High Weald.
- Distinctive red tile, brick, local stone and timber building materials, often including hung tiles and white weatherboarding, are characteristic of the historic settlements, farms and cottages. Local building materials characterise the area but recent 'suburbanisation' of farmstead buildings is eroding the distinctive local style in many places.

JOHN TYLER/COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY

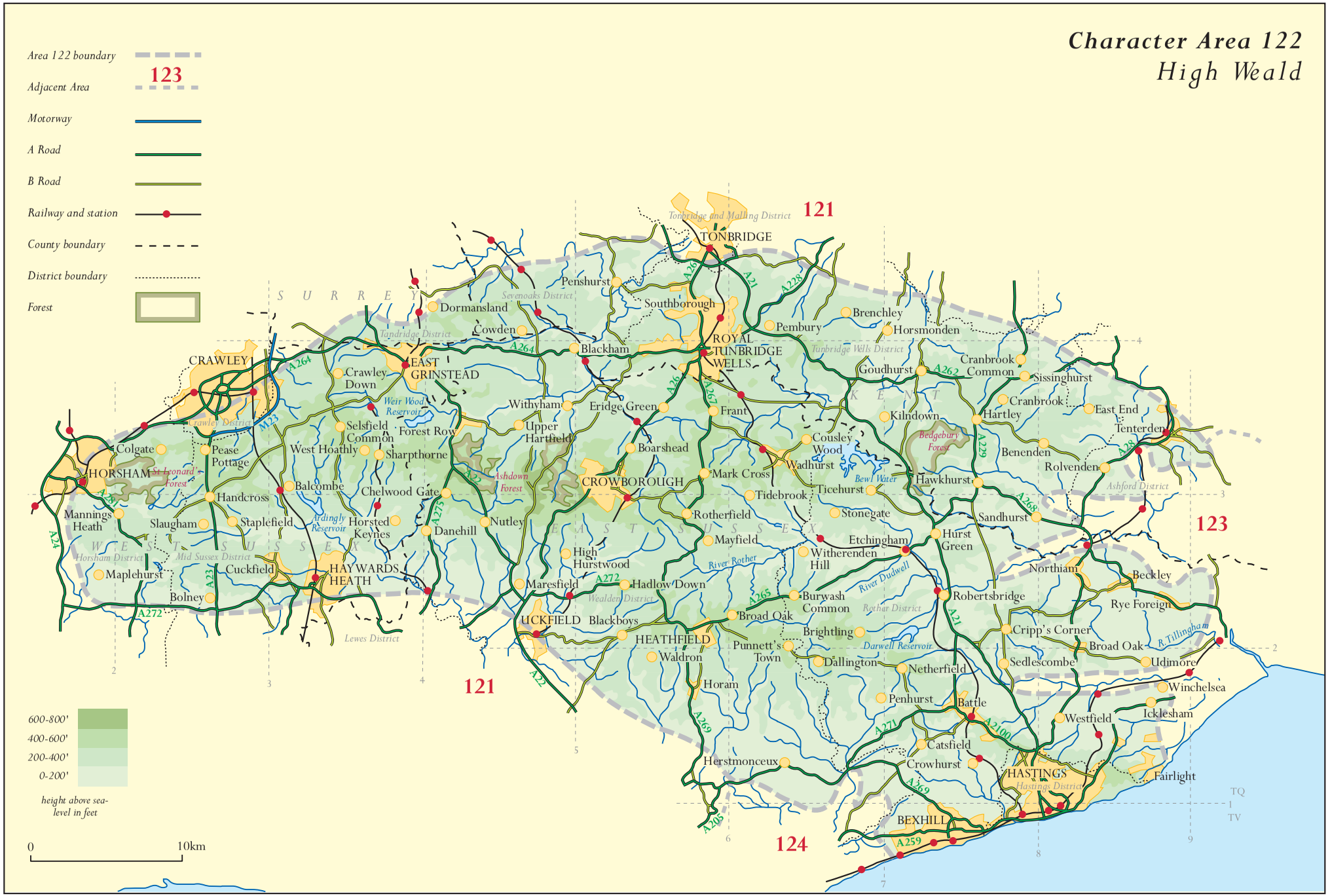
Settlements were traditionally sited on the drier ridge tops whilst the slopes and valley bottoms form a mosaic of pasture, arable and woodland linked by hedgerows and shaws.

Landscape Character

The High Weald character area lies at the core of the Wealden anticline. The Greensand, Chalk and Wealden Clay to the north, south and west surround the sandstones and clays which underlie the forested ridges of the High Weald. The central sandstone core is strongly dissected by many major rivers, the headwaters of which have cut numerous steepsided valleys or 'ghylls', several of which are heavily wooded. From a distance, the appearance of the High Weald is one of a densely wooded landscape although closer inspection reveals a patchwork of fields, hedges and woods forming both open and enclosed landscapes along the rolling ridges and within the valleys.

Even more enclosed than the neighbouring Low Weald, the High Weald is – or feels – very secretive. The mosaic of small hedged fields and sunken lanes, together with the wooded relief and comparative inaccessibility, provides a sense of remoteness which is rare within lowland England landscapes.

Character Area 122
High Weald



HIGH WEALD AONB

Ashdown Forest consists of open rolling heathland, birch woodland and scattered Scots pine on the sandstone ridge of the High Weald. The Forest forms the literary landscape much loved by readers of 'Winnie the Pooh'.

Typically, the roads, towns, villages and farms are sited on the ridges, with the damper, wooded valleys mainly unsettled. Vernacular buildings have a strong local character influenced by a variation in locally available, building materials and there. is an abundance of weatherboard, brick, tile, stone or plaster buildings. Numerous oast houses add to the local distinctiveness with stone church towers and spires located on ridges standing as major local landmarks.

Within the forested ridges and ancient countryside, hidden reservoirs constitute significant local features in the landscape. These reservoirs have a distinctive branching or winding character as a result of their creation from small Wealden river valleys.

Along the English Channel coast, the High Weald gives way to eroded sandstone and clay sea cliffs around Fairlight and disappears under the urban areas of Bexhill and Hastings to the south east. The eastern end of the High Weald is characterised by a series of broad, often flat-bottomed, river valleys opening out towards the coastal levels of Romney Marsh between Tenterden and Fairlight.

Physical Influences

The High Weald is underlaid by the Hastings Beds which comprise interbedded sands, soft sandstones and clays which give rise to the high, broken ground. Although not exceeding 240 m AOD, the High Weald is a hilly country of ridges and valleys. Numerous major ridges run mainly cast to west, for example the Ashdown Forest Ridge and the Battle Ridge.

These major ridges are deeply dissected by many tributaries of rivers which rise in the High Weald producing a network of small, steep sided ridges and valleys (ghylls). Low lines of sandstone often line these valleys, as at Eridge, where they provide the only inland rock climbing in South East England. The major rivers draining the High Weald are the Rother, Brede, Ouse and Medway which flow in broad valleys running roughly east to west.

North-west of Battle, Jurassic Purbeck Limestone contains gypsum beds which were formerly mined.

Historical and Cultural Influences

Clearance of the Wealden forest on a significant scale did not begin until the 9th century, reaching a peak in the 13th and 14th centuries. From the mid-14th century until the first world war the High Weald was relatively unchanged and even today many of the traditional field patterns and woodlands associated with the essentially medieval landscape still remain.

Medieval farmers were responsible for shaping the present day landscape of small fields and scattered farmsteads, with woodland and shaws left amongst them. Steep valleys were left unfelled to form 'ghyll woodlands'. The river valleys and the higher, drier ridge tops were important lines of communication on which early settlements were located.

The medieval pattern of dispersed farms, small hamlets and villages is associated with the practice of cultivating small parcels of land for rent – 'assarting' – which gave rise to the pattern of ad hoc rural settlement. These early, isolated, agricultural settlements later evolved into the characteristic High Weald hilltop villages such as Mayfield, Wadhurst and Hawkhurst.

The influence of the Wealden iron industry extended over 2000 years, features of which such as the hammer ponds – have survived to the present clay. These consist of a stairway of ponds created by damming a 'ghyll'. This produced a head of water which worked the bellows for smelting and the forges' tilt hammers. From the 15th to the 17th century, the High Weald was the foundry of England. Extensive, woodland management in the form of coppicing (for charcoal for the forges) accompanied the industry and little clearance was undertaken. The wealth generated by the iron industry funded grand houses and parklands, many of which still stand today.

Heathland was historically more widespread in the High Weald than it is today. Cessation of grazing, together with new conifer planting has led to the loss of open heathland, the only sizeable heathland remaining in the High Weald being Ashdown Forest, a former Royal Hunting Forest.

Buildings and Settlement

The High Weald is characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads dating from the medieval period, with large towns such as Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough, East Grinstead, Bexhill, Hastings and Horsham.

The High Weald consists of many examples of high-quality vernacular architecture with distinct local variation. Oak grown as standards in coppice and used green, is found in surviving timber framed houses and barns. Stone tiles from Horsham, used for the roofs of larger homes and farm buildings, were typical before red clay plain tiles became ubiquitous. Brick and stone walls are common, usually clad in characteristic softwood weatherboarding and tile. Timber-framed barns are also a particularly notable and characteristic feature of the High Weald.

HIGH WEALDAONB

Traditional buildings reflect the use of local materials, such as redbrick and tiles,

A network of lanes, many of which are sunken between high hedges, links the numerous villages, and towns. Ribbon development along the network of lanes has, in many places, brought a suburban feel to the well-wooded landscape. Typically the towns, villages and farmsteads are sited on the ridges such as at West Hoathly, Battle, Mayfield and Burwash.

Many new housing developments on the fringes of towns such as Heathfield, Crowborough and Horsham are a contrast to the traditional character of the High Weald's small villages and farmsteads.

Due to the wealth created by the Iron Industry and the intricate wooded topography, the High Weald contains many grand houses and estates, such as Repton's Bayharn Abbey landscape. Gardens, such as those at Penshurst and Sissinghurst are a feature of the area and the parkland at Eridge is one of the oldest deer parks in the area.

Land Cover

The dominant land-use is grassland supporting mainly sheep grazing with some cattle and pigs. Within this complex small-scale agricultural landscape there are variations in local land use. These are due to subtle changes in the soils and range from hops and orchards on the better soils of the Kent river valley bottoms to the sandy heaths of Ashdown Forest in the west. The generally nutrient-poor soils, all prone to waterlogging, have meant that the High Weald has retained much of its woodland cover. Remnants of former hunting forests dating back from the time of the Norman conquests are present today, surviving as ancient oak and beech pollards with associated elaborate systems of boundary banks and ditches.

The patchwork landscape of small woodlands, small fields and hedgerows dissected by river valleys, wide roadside verges, ponds and old churchyards, support a wealth of plant species across a wide range of habitats. Relic heathland, ancient semi-natural woodland, wooded ghylls and some remaining unimproved herb-rich meadows are all characteristic High Weald habitats. The overriding character of the woodland is broadleaved, often ancient in origin, with a few large blocks and many smaller woodlands interconnected by hedgerows and broad strips of woodland or shaws. Numerous conifer plantations such as at St Leonard's Forest are locally dominant features and contribute to the overall wooded character.

Healthy areas occur in open spaces and along rides in the woodlands on lighter soils in the western area. Mature hedgerow trees within the well-established hedge network reinforce the illusion of a well-wooded landscape with the notably high number of ponds, characteristic of the High Weald creating interesting variety and contrast.

HIGH WEALD AONB

Diversification on farms has introduced features more appropriate to a suburban landscape.

The Changing Countryside

- Development around built-up areas throughout the region, but particularly in the north and west related to the location of railway lines and stations and on the ringes between the Low and High Weald areas.
- Loss of characteristic landscape features such as hedgerows, meadows, wooded ghylls, hammer ponds and parklands due to inappropriate management.

- Loss of heathland due to cessation of grazing, notably in Ashdown Forest.
- Fragmentation of agricultural holdings due to the marginal nature of farmland – renovation of farm buildings by urban-based owners and the associated introduction of non-characteristic materials, details, designs and exotic tree species – also other forms of diversification of marginal farmland to new uses such as fish farms, craft workshops, etc.
- Decline in use of vernacular building materials in new developments and introduction of urban features such as lighting and alarms.
- Decline in traditional management and neglect of small coppice woodlands, traditional orchards and hop gardens.
- An increase in road traffic above levels acceptable for the rural nature of the generally small roads and winding lanes with subsequent increase in conflicts between motorised traffic, pedestrians, horse-riders and cyclists.
- Pressures on the landscape from new main roads and improvements.
- Incipient forces for change from new land uses such as pony paddocks and associated clutter, tennis courts, street lighting and from golf courses.
- Loss of remoteness and erosion of local character by suburban type development and materials.
- Replacement of characteristic hedges with conifers, concrete or close-boarded fences around urban edges.

Shaping the Future

- Appropriate management measures would prevent a further decline in the extent and quality of coppice woodlands and shaws. New native broadleaved woodland planting should be considered.
- Heathland restoration in Ashdown Forest, St Leonard's Forest and Broadwater Forest is important.
- The conservation and restoration of traditional orchards and hop gardens where appropriate should be addressed.
- Hammer ponds, meadows and parklands are important aspects of the history of the area.
- Vernacular styles and building materials should be an important aspect of new developments.
- The replacement of conifers, concrete and close-boarded fences with new hedges would be beneficial in many areas.
- The character of more remote areas needs to be safeguarded.

HIGH WEALD AONB

The area is well wooded and contains a high proportion of ancient semi-natural woodland which usually has extensive carpets of bluebells and wood anemones.

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Glossary

shaws: strip of trees or bushes forming the border of a field

South Downs

Key Characteristics

- Prominent Chalk outcrop rising gently from the South Coast Plain with a dramatic north-facing scarp and distinctive chalk cliffs formed where the Downs end abruptly at the sea. A chalk landscape of rolling arable fields and close-cropped grassland on the bold scarps, rounded open ridges and sculpted dry valleys.
- Lightly settled landscape with scattered villages, hamlets and farmsteads – flint is conspicuous in the buildings, walls of villages, farms and churches.
- Roman roads and drove roads are common and characteristic features and the area is rich in visually prominent prehistoric remains, particularly Neolithic and Bronze Age barrows and prominent Iron Age hillforts.
- In the east, rivers from the Low Weald cut through the Downs to form river valleys and broad alluvial floodplains with rectilinear pastures and wet grazing meadows – a contrast with the dry uplands. Above these valleys, the high, exposed, rounded uplands of white chalk have a simple land cover of few trees, an absence of hedgerows, occasional small planted beech clumps, and large arable areas and some grassland.
- The eastern Downs have a distinctive escarpment which rises prominently and steeply above the Low Weald. It is indented by steep combes or dry valleys.
- Woodlands – both coniferous and broadleaved – are a distinctive feature of the western Downs.
- In the west, large estates are important features with formal designed parkland providing a contrast to the more typical farmland pasture.

Landscape Character

The South Downs are a long prominent spine of chalk which stretches from the chalk downland of Hampshire, eastwards across West Sussex until it is sheared off at precipitous coastal cliffs in East Sussex. The steep, northward-facing chalk escarpment of Sussex overlooks the patchy mosaic of fields, woods and heathlands of the Low Weald and, further west in Sussex, the Wealden Greensand. The western edge of the Downs flows into the chalk of the Hampshire Downs and, to the south, the Downs dip giving way to the narrow wedge of coastal plain and farmland which separate them from the English Channel.

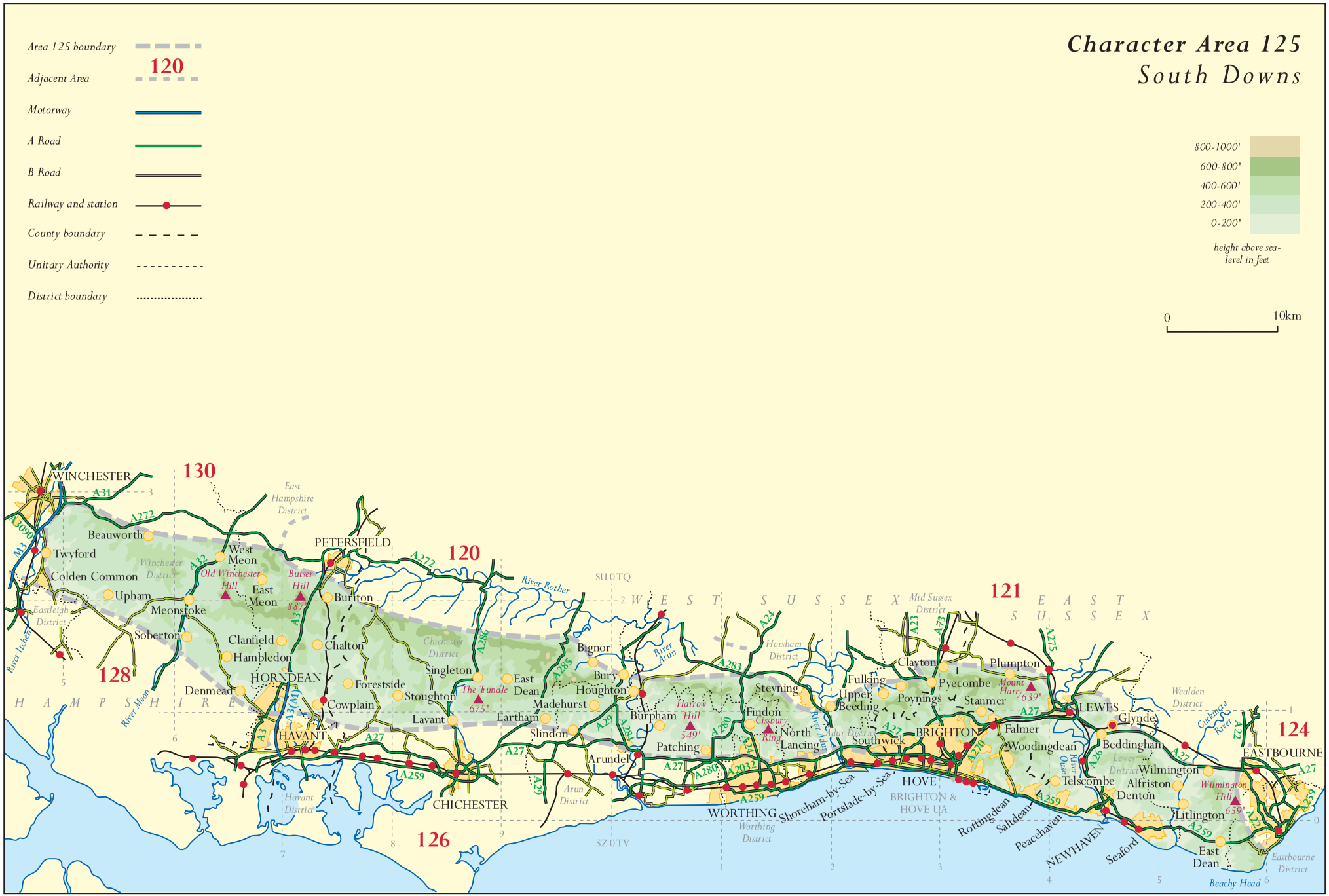
JOHN TYLER/DOWNS CONSERVATION BOARD

The white cliffs of the Severn Sisters, Beachy and Seaford Heads mark the spectacular eastern end of the South Downs where they join the sea.

The Downs are a dramatic and well defined Chalk outcrop with an elevated, open and expansive character. Traditionally the Downs have been an important arable asset with, now in limited places, a sweep of rolling close-cropped chalk grassland or woodland on many of the scarp slopes. This uniform and informal landscape is often covered in a large-scale pattern of grass leys and cereals, giving a regular but often fragmented appearance. The Downs still have a 'wild', exposed, and remote character, greatly valued in the heavily populated south.

Within this simplified overall pattern there are important contrasts. In the west in Hampshire, the landscape is open and dominated by agriculture and grassland. The steep

Character Area 125
South Downs



scarp slopes fade in prominence beyond Beacon Hill to St Catherine's Hill and Twyford Down where they meld into the open chalk landscape of the adjoining Hampshire Downs. The axis here of the ridge is less noticeable and the east/west alignment is visibly lost and becomes more complex as the Downs diminish. Moving east, extensive woodland creates a more enclosed character as the Downs pass into West Sussex. Further east still, the dry, rolling uplands are cut through with major valleys as the rivers from the Low Weald meander through wet meadow pastures to the English Channel.

On the main scarp in the east, mature woodland sits on the lower slopes while the rough texture of chalk downland turf, often patchy with scrub, dominates the landform and contrasts strongly with the pastoral lowlying patchwork pattern of the Low Weald. The scarp face has few articulating features (although Mount Caburn and Beddingham Hill are noted exceptions) and dominates in southerly views from the Low Weald. In the west the scarp is often clothed in continuous woodland which enhances the linear landform and disguises undulations in landform. The trees on the skyline give scale and definition to the scarp face which means that the deceptive sense of great height is lessened.

Physical Influences

The east-west Chalk ridge of the South Downs is the southern remnant of a once extensive dome of Chalk. The central Wealden portion was eroded during the Tertiary period leaving two ridges – now known as the North Downs and the South Downs. The South Downs have a gentle but broad rolling dip-slope inclined to the south, with a dramatic north-facing escarpment.

Butser Hill, Beacon Hill and Old Winchester Hill form prominent ridges in Hampshire before the South Downs gradually diminish to the west. The escarpment in Sussex forms an undulating ridge along the northern margin of this character area, broken only where the principal river valley systems have eroded a route through to the coast. In other places, steep combes, as at Devil's Dyke, slice into the scarp. It is a steep but rounded slope, with combes cut back into the ridge line, whilst in other places spurs and chalk outliers protrude into the Low Weald below. Southwards from the main scarp, lines of hills and ridges form an intermittent but prominent secondary escarpment which result from variations in the resistance of the different Chalk outcrops. Ancient wave platforms, features of the dip slope, are also common and finally at the Seven Sisters - a range of white chalk cliffs between Eastbourne and Brighton - the South Downs drop abruptly to the sea.

The mass of Chalk in Sussex has been cut into separate blocks by the valleys of the principal rivers – Arun, Adur, Ouse and Cuckmere – which flow through to the sea. Flat valley bottoms and a meandering river course enclosed by steep-sided slopes with minor cliffs, are, in many places, typical features of these river valleys. The valley floors provide a strong contrast to the surrounding open fields on the higher ground. The river Meon in Hampshire follows a similar course and cuts through the South Downs, the valley broadening in the adjoining coastal plain, until it reaches the sea.

JOHN TYLER/SUSSEX DOWNS CONSERVATION BOARD

Broad alluvial floodplains, such as the Cuckmere Valley pictured here, consist of fertile pasture used for dairy cattle. Other river valleys such as the Ouse, Arun, Meon and Adur cut through the Downs and provide contrasting narrow belts of flat land within the rolling landscape of the chalk.

Historical and Cultural Influences

Extensive clearance of forest for grazing, and the first introduction of domestic animals and crops, occurred during the Neolithic period. The Chalk Downs were favoured for their light, easily cultivated soils, defensive advantages and relative accessibility as shown by evidence of Neolithic tracks. Clearance was aided by the locally available flint (from the chalk) for tools as evidenced by the Neolithic flint mines at Cissbury Ring and evidence at Old Winchester Hill. The Trundle, a causewayed camp of concentric rings and ditches prominently sited on the dip slope, is one of the best examples of Neolithic enclosure in the country used for holding stock, for ceremonies and trading.

There is evidence to suggest that, during the Bronze Age, there was a temporary change to a nomadic pastoral system, before a return to general mixed farming. The increase in woodland clearance and active management would have created open landscapes and extensive grasslands on the ridge of the Downs. The round barrows

of the Bronze Age are among the most common archaeological features found on the Downs including, for example, the burial mounds of the Devil's Jumps near Hooksway and those on Bow Hill above Kingley Vale and at Old Winchester Hill.

As agricultural communities became more nucleated and widespread in the Iron Age, the south facing dip-slope became covered with well-defined field systems (of small geometric fields bounded by lynchets), managed woodlands and pasture. Hillforts sited prominently in strategic locations, such as Cissbury Ring and Old Winchester Hill, reflected political and economic centres while other remaining earthworks such as cross dykes represented boundary demarcations or stock enclosures.

JOHN TYLER/SUSSEX DOWNS CONSERVATION BOARD

The South Downs consist of an archetypal chalk landscape of rolling hills, steep scarp slopes with dry valleys and a rich archaeological character. Centuries of sheep grazing on steep slopes have produced a network of tracks following the contours of the hills.

The Romans, further exploiting the light soils, created large arable estates and agricultural trade increased. By the 10th century, the availability of pasture on the Downs coupled with the fertile soils of the South Coast Plain enabled further enrichment of the estates. In some cases, these early estates gave rise to the large and rich estates of later centuries. The latter included impressive country houses, which were to share in the influencing of the English Landscape Movement, and the spread of parkland with its expansive pasture, clumps and follies.

By the 19th century, beech plantations had begun to appear and prosperous mixed farming of cereal and fodder together with sheep pasture characterised the Downs. However, this period was followed by a depression caused by cheap imports from abroad which led to a decline in grazing and cereal production. Farm buildings, hedgerows and woodlands all became neglected.

The present day concentration of woodland in the central part of the Downs is partly due to land ownership by large estates, coupled with the more sheltered inland location. Large-scale timber production had historically been linked to the navy at Portsmouth and had tended towards the thinner soils of the upper slopes, thus changing the inherent vegetation pattern.

Buildings and Settlement

With the exception of the major north-south routes which cut through the open Downs, there are few roads within the Downs themselves and, where they do occur, they are small and rural. Settlement is sparse, being confined to scattered villages, hamlets and moderately large, isolated farms with traditional barns.

The eastern end of the Downs is hemmed in by the coastal plain conurbations; these are less intrusive in the west, but pylons, telecommunications masts, road traffic, glass houses and recreation grounds are widespread throughout the area. The urban area itself is visually very intrusive in the east, along the southern edge of the dip-slope, particularly where there are densely built-up areas on relatively elevated land.

On the lower parts of the Downs there are scattered groups of modern farm buildings tucked into the dry valleys of the dip slope, or clustered along the foot of the escarpment. The remainder of the Downs has limited settlement and few buildings.

The traditional buildings are of brick or flint, brick quoins and window details and roofs, of tile or slate. Apart from the large flint barns on the open sites in the Sussex Downs, there are generally few buildings or roads on the open spurs and the often isolated farm buildings are reached by long chalky tracks.

Many villages nestle in the valleys, alongside a stream. They tend to be small clusters of traditional flint and brick buildings, set within mature trees and sometimes surrounding a village pond. Such villages are commonly associated with the parkland estates which are evidenced by the presence of well-built enclosing walls of flint. Single farmsteads, many with large modern buildings, are common here. On the south margins of the dip slope, villages tend to have a more diverse mix of buildings, the traditional flint interspersed with rendered and brick houses.

Notable exceptions to the traditional built character include the urban extension of Worthing, Brighton and Peacehaven, and the dual carriageways of the, M3, A24, A3 and A23. One of the more recognisable, recent developments in the area is the ridgetop grandstand of Goodwood Racecourse which breaks the saddle of the skyline above Goodwood. Arundel Castle is an imposing building, sitting high above the Arun floodplain, it is one of the most distinctive landmarks in the area. Much of it is a relatively new

structure, though the original castle was a Norman motte and bailey.

Windmills with huge white sails were once a regular feature in the South Downs landscape. Now only a few remain such as the Jack and Jill windmills perched on the crest of the Chalk near Clayton and also the prominent Halnaker Windmill, above Goodwood, which can be seen from parts of the South Coast Plain.

JOHN TYLER/SUSSEX DOWNS CONSERVATION BOARD

The A27 cuts through the downland on the northern fringes of Hove, introducing development pressures from the encroaching town.

Land Cover

The land use pattern of the South Downs is predominantly centred on cereals and sheep, and also woodland that has survived on the steeper slopes which were traditionally difficult to clear. However, extensive plantations exist on the enclosed uplands of the dipslope in western Sussex. Cereals are grown predominantly on the deeper soils of the less exposed lower slopes. The vivid colours of the crops and the texture of the chalk fragments in ploughed soils are a particularly noticeable feature on the Downs.

The grazing of sheep maintains open and homogeneous semi-natural chalk grassland habitats that are noted for their particularly rich botanic diversity. The chalk downland turf is seen as the traditional clothing of the Downs, especiallY those steeper scarp slopes in the east and far west where it has developed over centuries without cultivation or chemicals. The appearance of naturalness is enhanced by the diversity of plant species, some of them rare flowering herbs, which combine to form the soft springy turf. However, due to a decrease in sheep farming, chalk grassland now only remains in small areas which are often isolated and difficult to manage. As a result, downland farming is now mainly a combination of arable crops and improved grass leys. The lack of grazing has led to the invasion of scrub in most of the chalk grassland areas which detracts from the traditional smooth appearance of the South Downs landscape.

There are scattered copses on the skyline but generally there are few trees or woods in the eastern Downs. Hedgerows are rare but, where they occur, they tend to be sparse, narrow and sporadic, with a few stunted trees. They tend to be near isolated upland farmsteads or alongside ancient chalky tracks.

Tree cover creates a much more enclosed atmosphere in the centre of the Downs with intensive farming, enclosed by hedgerows with hedgerow trees, and scattered woodland. A number of designed parklands, sometimes altered by cultivation, are also found to the west.

The present day tree cover is either broadleaved woodland, with beech, ash and sycamore, or is mixed with conifers. There are also some large plantations of Corsican pine and western red cedar and isolated remnants of yew forest. The chalk ash or beech hangers on the escarpment of East Hampshire are notable features. English elm is now largely confined to areas around the coastal towns of East Sussex and the Cuckmere Valley.

The vegetation of the river valleys is markedly different. There are permanent semi-improved pastures providing grazing for cattle in late spring and summer. The pasture at the edges of the valleys is often enclosed by hedges and copses, lines of alder, and willow and poplar, some of which are pollarded. The alluvial soils – some of the most productive in the area – support crops and intensive dairying.

Many of the Downland footpaths and bridleways follow drove roads and transport routes which have been used for centuries along the accessible downland tops. The high parts of the Downs, including the South Downs Way, are the most important recreational features of the Downs. The escarpment tops and the coastal headlands are particularly popular places due largely to the panoramic views, ease of access and apparent sense of remoteness.

The Changing Countryside

- Past expansion of arable cropping, improved grass leys, intensive livestock systems and scrub encroachment have reduced the extent of chalk grassland since 1945. Most of what remains are isolated remnants restricted to the steep scarp slopes.
- More recently, there has been a reversion of significant arable areas to grassland and restoration of sheep grazing. Also fencing of significant areas of the Downs under the South Downs Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme.
- Afforestation, both coniferous and beech, has occurred since the 19th century but is less of an issue today.
- Loss and decline in quality of beech hangers/woodland in the central part of the Downs landscape due to lack of management and storm damage.

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Brick and flint cottages are characteristic of the few scattered villages and hamlets to be found in the South Downs.

- Modern drainage of the river valleys alters the traditional character, producing a more formal, regularly patterned landscape of arable fields – for example, significant areas of wet grassland in the Cuckmere, Arun and Ouse valleys are under pressure from drainage and lowering of the water table.
- The open landscape is vulnerable to change from new farm buildings, urban edge pressures extending from the heavily built-up coastal fringe onto the Downs and from prominent communication masts on exposed skylines.
- Pressures for road improvements often associated with major cuttings and/or tunnels in the Downs.
- Increasing recreational pressures including greater demands on public rights of way by walkers, horse riders, mountain bikes and from off-road vehicles. Visitors to honey pot sites and demand for formal recreation such as golf courses, are also increasing within the Downs.
- Damage to, and loss of, archaeological remains from agricultural and recreation uses.
- Winterbournes are becoming increasingly dry from continued over-abstraction of the chalk aquifer and lack of recharge due to successive dry years.
- Disused chalk quarries are visually prominent features within the downland slopes and have been utilised as major landfill sites.
- Loss of traditional boundaries such as hedgerows and flint walls to the increase in use of different types of fencing.

Shaping the future

- The management of wetlands and river valleys, possibly by use of natural processes, needs to be addressed.
- The protection of existing chalk grassland from agriculture or scrub invasion can be achieved through sympathetic grazing and scrub management regimes. This might include targeted reversion of arable to permanent pasture, in particular the creation of species-rich chalk grassland on the upper and the steeper slopes of the Downs and in parkland.
- The conservation and restoration of beech hangers and valley woodland on the escarpment needs to be considered.
- There is scope for tree planting on the edge of settlements adjacent to downland farms.
- There are opportunities to protect archaeological remains within their setting.

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Glossary

hanger: a wood on the side of a steep hill

leys: land put down to grass or clover for a limited period of years

Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister
Creating sustainable communities

Planning shapes the places where people live and work and the country we live in. It plays a key role in supporting the Government's wider economic, social and environmental objectives and for sustainable communities.

PLANNING

Planning Policy Statement 7:
Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister
Creating sustainable communities

Planning Policy Statement 7:
Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

Planning Policy Statements (PPS) set out the Government's national policies on different aspects of land use planning in England. The policies in this statement apply to the rural areas, including country towns and villages and the wider, largely undeveloped countryside up to the fringes of larger urban areas. **These policies complement, but do not replace or overrule, other national planning policies and should be read in conjunction with other relevant statements of national planning policy.** This PPS replaces Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 7, *The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development*, published in February 1997.[1]

The policies set out in this PPS will need to be taken into account by regional planning bodies in the preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies, by the Mayor of London in relation to the Spatial Development Strategy in London and by local planning authorities in the preparation of local development documents. They may also be material to decisions on individual planning applications.

[1] However, Annex E to PPG 7 which provides further guidance on permitted development rights for agriculture and forestry, will remain extant, pending completion of a review by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of the General Permitted Development Order 1995, and subsequent issue of any updated guidance to replace this annex.

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Contents

1 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

The Government's Objectives

The Government's objectives for rural areas that are relevant to this Planning Policy Statement (PPS) are:

(i) **To raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas through the promotion of:**
- thriving, inclusive and sustainable rural communities, ensuring people have decent places to live by improving the quality and sustainability of local environments and neighbourhoods;
- sustainable economic growth and diversification;
- good quality, sustainable development that respects and, where possible, enhances local distinctiveness and the intrinsic qualities of the countryside; and
- continued protection of the open countryside for the benefit of all, with the highest level of protection for our most valued landscapes and environmental resources.

(ii) **To promote more sustainable patterns of development:**
- focusing most development in, or next to, existing towns and villages;
- preventing urban sprawl;
- discouraging the development of 'greenfield' land, and, where such land must be used, ensuring it is not used wastefully;
- promoting a range of uses to maximise the potential benefits of the countryside fringing urban areas; and
- providing appropriate leisure opportunities to enable urban and rural dwellers to enjoy the wider countryside.

(iii) **Promoting the development of the English regions by improving their economic performance so that all are able to reach their full potential** – by developing competitive, diverse and thriving rural enterprise that provides a range of jobs and underpins strong economies.

(iv) **To promote sustainable, diverse and adaptable agriculture sectors** where farming achieves high environmental standards, minimising impact on natural resources, and manages valued landscapes and biodiversity; contributes both directly and indirectly to rural economic diversity; is itself competitive and profitable; and provides high quality products that the public wants.

Planning authorities have an important role to play in delivering the Government's objectives for rural areas, through their operation of the planning system and the application of the policies set out in this and other PPS and Planning Policy Guidance Notes.

National Planning Policies

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning land use planning. **The following key principles should be applied in combination with all the policies set out in this PPS:**

   (i) Decisions on development proposals should be based on sustainable development principles, ensuring an integrated approach to the consideration of:
   - social inclusion, recognising the needs of everyone;
   - effective protection and enhancement of the environment;
   - prudent use of natural resources; and
   - maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

   The approach to planning for sustainable development is set out in more detail in Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1).

   (ii) Good quality, carefully-sited accessible development within existing towns and villages should be allowed where it benefits the local economy and/or community (e.g. affordable housing for identified local needs); maintains or enhances the local environment; and does not conflict with other planning policies.

   (iii) Accessibility should be a key consideration in all development decisions. Most developments which are likely to generate large numbers of trips should be located in or next to towns or other service centres that are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, in line with the policies set out in PPG13, *Transport*. Decisions on the location of other developments in rural areas should, where possible, give people the greatest opportunity to access them by public transport, walking and cycling, consistent with achieving the primary purpose of the development.

   (iv) New building development in the open countryside away from existing settlements, or outside areas allocated for development in development plans, should be strictly controlled; the Government's overall aim is to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and so it may be enjoyed by all.

   (v) Priority should be given to the re-use of previously-developed ('brownfield') sites in preference to the development of greenfield sites, except in cases where there are no brownfield sites available, or these brownfield sites perform so poorly in terms of sustainability considerations (for example, in their remoteness from settlements and services) in comparison with greenfield sites.

(vi) All development in rural areas should be well designed and inclusive, in keeping and scale with its location, and sensitive to the character of the countryside and local distinctiveness.

SUSTAINABLE RURAL COMMUNITIES, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICES

2. Planning policies in Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Local Development Documents (LDDs) should facilitate and promote sustainable patterns of development and sustainable communities in rural areas. This should include policies to sustain, enhance and, where appropriate, revitalise country towns and villages (including through the provision of affordable housing) and for strong, diverse, economic activity, whilst maintaining local character and a high quality environment. To ensure these policies are relevant and effective, local planning authorities should be aware of the circumstances, needs and priorities of the rural communities and businesses in their area, and of the interdependence between urban and rural areas. Where there is a lack of up to date, robust information, local authorities should consider commissioning surveys and assessments of rural economic and social conditions and needs, including local housing needs.

Location of development

3. Away from larger urban areas, planning authorities should focus most new development in or near to local service centres where employment, housing (including affordable housing), services and other facilities can be provided close together. This should help to ensure these facilities are served by public transport and provide improved opportunities for access by walking and cycling. These centres (which might be a country town, a single large village or a group of villages) should be identified in the development plan as the preferred location for such development.

4. Planning authorities should set out in LDDs their policies for allowing some limited development in, or next to, rural settlements that are not designated as local service centres, in order to meet local business and community needs and to maintain the vitality of these communities. In particular, authorities should be supportive of small-scale development of this nature where it provides the most sustainable option in villages that are remote from, and have poor public transport links with, service centres.

Economic development and employment

5. Planning authorities should support a wide range of economic activity in rural areas. Taking account of regional priorities expressed in RSS, and in line with the policies in paragraphs 2-4 above, local planning authorities should:

   (i) identify in LDDs suitable sites for future economic development, particularly in those rural areas where there is a need for employment creation and economic regeneration;

   (ii) set out in LDDs their criteria for permitting economic development in different locations, including the future expansion of business premises, to facilitate healthy and diverse economic activity in rural areas.

Community services and facilities

6. People who live or work in rural areas should have reasonable access to a range of services and facilities. Local planning authorities should:

   (i) through their LDDs, facilitate and plan for accessible new services and facilities, particularly where;
   - planning permission is granted for new developments in country towns or other local service centres; or
   - settlements, or the population of their rural catchments, are expanding; or
   - there is an identified need for new or expanded services to strengthen the role of a particular local service centre.

   (ii) where possible, ensure that new development in identified service centres is supported through improvements to public transport, and to walking and cycling facilities, provided in partnership with the developer where appropriate;

   (iii) identify suitable buildings and development sites for community services and facilities to meet the needs of the whole community, including disabled users;

   (iv) support mixed and multi-purpose uses that maintain community vitality; and

   (v) support the provision of small-scale, local facilities (e.g. childcare facilities) to meet community needs outside identified local service centres, particularly where they would benefit those rural residents who would find it difficult to use more distant service centres. These local facilities should be located within or adjacent to existing villages and settlements where access can be gained by walking, cycling and (where available) public transport.

7. Planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to planning proposals designed to improve the viability, accessibility or community value of existing services and facilities, e.g. village shops and post offices, rural petrol stations, village and church halls and rural public houses, that play an important role in sustaining village communities. Planning authorities should support the retention of these local facilities and should set out in LDDs the criteria they will apply in considering planning applications that will result in the loss of important village services (e.g. as a result of conversion to residential use).

Housing

8. The Government's planning objectives and policies for housing are set out in PPG3, *Housing*. The key aim is to offer everyone the opportunity of a decent home. The needs of all in the community should be recognised, including those in need of affordable and accessible, special needs housing in rural areas. It is essential that local planning authorities plan to meet housing requirements in rural areas, based on an up to date assessment of local need. To promote more sustainable patterns of development and make better use of previously developed land, the focus for most additional housing in rural areas should be on existing towns and identified service centres. But it will also be necessary to provide for some new housing to meet identified local need in other villages.

9. In planning for housing in their rural areas, local planning authorities should apply the policies in PPG3. They should:

   (i) have particular regard to PPG3 guidance on the provision of housing in villages and should make sufficient land available, either within or adjoining existing villages, to meet the needs of local people; and

   (ii) strictly control new house building (including single dwellings) in the countryside, away from established settlements or from areas allocated for housing in development plans.

10. Isolated new houses in the countryside will require special justification for planning permission to be granted. Where the special justification for an isolated new house relates to the essential need for a worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside, planning authorities should follow the advice in **Annex A** to this PPS.

11. Very occasionally the exceptional quality and innovative nature of the design of a proposed, isolated new house may provide this special justification for granting planning permission. Such a design should be truly outstanding and ground-breaking, for example,

in its use of materials, methods of construction or its contribution to protecting and enhancing the environment, so helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas. The value of such a building will be found in its reflection of the highest standards in contemporary architecture, the significant enhancement of its immediate setting and its sensitivity to the defining characteristics of the local area.

Design and the character of rural settlements

12. Many country towns and villages are of considerable historic and architectural value, or make an important contribution to local countryside character. Planning authorities should ensure that development respects and, where possible, enhances these particular qualities. It should also contribute to a sense of local identity and regional diversity and be of an appropriate design and scale for its location, having regard to the policies on design contained in PPS1 and supported in *By Design*[2]. Planning authorities should take a positive approach to innovative, high-quality contemporary designs that are sensitive to their immediate setting and help to make country towns and villages better places for people to live and work.

13. Local planning authorities should prepare policies and guidance that encourage good quality design throughout their rural areas, in accordance with Annex C to PPS1, and utilising tools such as Landscape Character Assessments and Village or Town Design Statements, and the design elements of Village or Parish Plans prepared by local communities.

THE COUNTRYSIDE

14. The policies in this section apply to the largely undeveloped countryside that separates cities, towns and villages. Whilst much of the land use activity in the countryside is outside the scope of the planning system, planning has an important role in supporting and facilitating development and land uses which enable those who earn a living from, and help to maintain and manage the countryside, to continue to do so. RSS should recognise the environmental, economic and social value of the countryside that is of national, regional or, where appropriate, sub-regional significance. Policies in RSS and LDDs should seek to maintain and enhance these values, so enabling the countryside to remain an important natural resource, contribute to national and regional prosperity and be enjoyed by all.

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[2] *By Design*, a better practice guide published May 2000 by the former Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and the Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment.

Countryside protection and development in the countryside

15. Planning policies should provide a positive framework for facilitating sustainable development that supports traditional land-based activities and makes the most of new leisure and recreational opportunities that require a countryside location. Planning authorities should continue to ensure that the quality and character of the wider countryside is protected and, where possible, enhanced. They should have particular regard to any areas that have been statutorily designated for their landscape, wildlife or historic qualities where greater priority should be given to restraint of potentially damaging development.

16. When preparing policies for LDDs and determining planning applications for development in the countryside, local planning authorities should:

(i) support development that delivers diverse and sustainable farming enterprises;

(ii) support other countryside-based enterprises and activities which contribute to rural economies, and/or promote recreation in and the enjoyment of the countryside;

(iii) take account of the need to protect natural resources;

(iv) provide for the sensitive exploitation of renewable energy sources in accordance with the policies set out in PPS22; and

(v) conserve specific features and sites of landscape, wildlife and historic or architectural value, in accordance with statutory designations.

Re-use of buildings in the countryside

17. The Government's policy is to support the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside where this would meet sustainable development objectives. Re-use for economic development purposes will usually be preferable, but residential conversions may be more appropriate in some locations, and for some types of building. Planning authorities should therefore set out in LDDs their policy criteria for permitting the conversion and re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic, residential and any other purposes, including mixed uses.

These criteria should take account of:

- the potential impact on the countryside and landscapes and wildlife;
- specific local economic and social needs and opportunities;
- settlement patterns and accessibility to service centres, markets and housing;
- the suitability of different types of buildings, and of different scales, for re-use;
- the need to preserve, or the desirability of preserving, buildings of historic or architectural importance or interest, or which otherwise contribute to local character.

18. Local planning authorities should be particularly supportive of the re-use of existing buildings that are adjacent or closely related to country towns and villages, for economic or community uses, or to provide housing in accordance with the policies in PPG3, and subject to the policies in paragraph 7 of this PPS in relation to the retention of local services.

Replacement of buildings in the countryside

19. The Government is also supportive of the replacement of suitably located, existing buildings of permanent design and construction in the countryside for economic development purposes. The replacement of buildings should be favoured where this would result in a more acceptable and sustainable development than might be achieved through conversion, for example, where the replacement building would bring about an environmental improvement in terms of the impact of the development on its surroundings and the landscape. Local planning authorities should set out in their LDDs the criteria they will apply to the replacement of countryside buildings. These should take account of the considerations set out in paragraph 17 that apply to the conversion and re-use for economic purposes of existing buildings in the countryside. Authorities should also set out the circumstances where replacement would not be acceptable and clarify the permissible scale of replacement buildings.

20. The replacement of non-residential buildings with residential development in the countryside should be treated as new housing development in accordance with the policies in PPG3 and, where appropriate, paragraph 10 of this PPS.

Nationally designated areas

21. Nationally designated areas comprising National Parks, the Broads, the New Forest Heritage Area and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), have been confirmed by the Government as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should therefore be given great weight in planning policies and development control decisions in these areas. The conservation of wildlife and the cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas. They are a specific purpose for National Parks, where they should also be given great weight in planning policies and development control decisions. As well as reflecting these priorities, planning policies in LDDs and where appropriate, RSS, should also support suitably located and designed development necessary to facilitate the economic and social well-being of these designated areas and their communities, including the provision of adequate housing to meet identified local needs.

22. Major developments should not take place in these designated areas, except in exceptional circumstances. This policy includes major development proposals that raise issues of national significance. Because of the serious impact that major developments may have on these areas of natural beauty, and taking account of the recreational opportunities that they provide, applications for all such developments should be subject to the most rigorous examination. Major development proposals should be demonstrated to be in the public interest before being allowed to proceed. Consideration of such applications should therefore include an assessment of:

    (i) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

    (ii) the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and

    (iii) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

23. Planning authorities should ensure that any planning permission granted for major developments in these designated areas should be carried out to high environmental standards through the application of appropriate conditions where necessary.

Local landscape designations

24. The Government recognises and accepts that there are areas of landscape outside nationally designated areas that are particularly highly valued locally. The Government believes that carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in LDDs, utilising tools such as landscape character assessment, should provide sufficient protection for these areas, without the need for rigid local designations that may unduly restrict acceptable, sustainable development and the economic activity that underpins the vitality of rural areas.

25. Local landscape designations should only be maintained or, exceptionally, extended where it can be clearly shown that criteria-based planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. LDDs should state what it is that requires extra protection, and why. When reviewing their local area-wide development plans and LDDs, planning authorities should rigorously consider the justification for retaining existing local landscape designations. They should ensure that such designations are based on a formal and robust assessment of the qualities of the landscape concerned.

The countryside around urban areas

26. While the policies in PPG2 continue to apply in green belts, local planning authorities should ensure that planning policies in LDDs address the particular land use issues and opportunities to be found in the countryside around all urban areas, recognising its importance to those who live or work there, and also in providing the nearest and most accessible countryside to urban residents. Planning authorities should aim to secure environmental improvements and maximise a range of beneficial uses of this land, whilst reducing potential conflicts between neighbouring land uses. This should include improvement of public access (e.g. through support for country parks and community forests) and facilitating the provision of appropriate sport and recreation facilities.

AGRICULTURE, FARM DIVERSIFICATION, EQUINE-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND FORESTRY

Agricultural development

27. The Government recognises the important and varied roles of agriculture, including in the maintenance and management of the countryside and most of our valued landscapes. Planning policies in RSS and LDDs should recognise these roles and support development proposals that will enable farming and farmers to:

(i) become more competitive, sustainable and environmentally friendly;

(ii) adapt to new and changing markets;

(iii) comply with changing legislation and associated guidance;

(iv) diversify into new agricultural opportunities (e.g. renewable energy crops); or

(v) broaden their operations to 'add value' to their primary produce.

Best and most versatile agricultural land

28. The presence of best and most versatile agricultural land (defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification), should be taken into account alongside other sustainability considerations (e.g. biodiversity; the quality and character of the landscape; its amenity value or heritage interest; accessibility to infrastructure, workforce and markets; maintaining viable communities; and the protection of natural resources,

including soil quality) when determining planning applications. Where significant development of agricultural land is unavoidable, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land (grades 3b, 4 and 5) in preference to that of a higher quality, except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations. Little weight in agricultural terms should be given to the loss of agricultural land in grades 3b, 4 and 5, except in areas (such as uplands) where particular agricultural practices may themselves contribute in some special way to the quality and character of the environment or the local economy. If any undeveloped agricultural land needs to be developed, any adverse effects on the environment should be minimised.

29. Development plans should include policies that identify any major areas of agricultural land that are planned for development. But local planning authorities may also wish to include policies in their LDDs to protect specific areas of best and most versatile agricultural land from speculative development. It is for local planning authorities to decide whether best and most versatile agricultural land can be developed, having carefully weighed the options in the light of competent advice.

Farm diversification[3]

30. Recognising that diversification into non-agricultural activities is vital to the continuing viability of many farm enterprises, local planning authorities should:

(i) set out in their LDDs the criteria to be applied to planning applications for farm diversification projects;

(ii) be supportive of well-conceived farm diversification schemes for business purposes that contribute to sustainable development objectives and help to sustain the agricultural enterprise, and are consistent in their scale with their rural location. This applies equally to farm diversification schemes around the fringes of urban areas; and

(iii) where relevant, give favourable consideration to proposals for diversification in Green Belts where the development preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. (Where farm diversification proposals in the Green Belt would result in inappropriate development in terms of PPG2, any wider benefits of the diversification may contribute to the 'very special circumstances' required by PPG2 for a development to be granted planning permission).

[3] The research report, *The Implementation of National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG7) in Relation to the Diversification of Farm Businesses*, published in October 2001 by the former DTLR and now available from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, sets out a number of recommendations for local planning authorities, and contains some examples of 'good practice'.

31. A supportive approach to farm diversification should not result in excessive expansion and encroachment of building development into the countryside. Planning authorities should:

(i) encourage the re-use or replacement of existing buildings where feasible, having regard to paragraphs 17-21; and

(ii) have regard to the amenity of any nearby residents or other rural businesses that may be adversely affected by new types of on-farm development.

Equine-related activities

32. Horse riding and other equestrian activities are popular forms of recreation in the countryside that can fit in well with farming activities and help to diversify rural economies. In some parts of the country, horse training and breeding businesses play an important economic role. Local planning authorities should set out in LDDs their policies for supporting equine enterprises that maintain environmental quality and countryside character. These policies should provide for a range of suitably located recreational and leisure facilities and, where appropriate, for the needs of training and breeding businesses. They should also facilitate the re-use of farm buildings for small-scale horse enterprises[4] that provide a useful form of farm diversification.

Forestry

33. Whilst forestry operations mostly lie outside the scope of planning controls, the planning system is the principal means for regulating the rate at which land is transferred from woodlands to other rural and urban uses. The Government's forestry policy, set out in the England Forestry Strategy (1999) has two main aims:

(i) the sustainable management of existing woods and forests; and

(ii) a continued steady expansion of woodland area to provide more benefits for society and the environment.

Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should have regard to these aims, the forthcoming Regional Forestry Frameworks and forest areas of regional or sub-regional significance (e.g. the National Forest), when preparing RSS and LDDs, and deciding planning applications.

[4] That is, enterprises involving up to ten horses.

TOURISM AND LEISURE

34. Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should recognise through RSS and LDDs that tourism and leisure activities are vital to many rural economies. As well as sustaining many rural businesses, these industries are a significant source of employment and help to support the prosperity of country towns and villages, and sustain historic country houses, local heritage and culture. RSS and LDDs should:

(i) support, through planning policies, sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and which utilise and enrich, but do not harm, the character of the countryside, its towns, villages, buildings and other features[5];

(ii) recognise that in areas statutorily designated for their landscape, nature conservation or historic qualities, there will be scope for tourist and leisure related developments, subject to appropriate control over their number, form and location to ensure the particular qualities or features that justified the designation are conserved; and

(iii) ensure that any plan proposals for large-scale tourism and leisure developments in rural areas have been subject to close assessment to weigh-up their advantages and disadvantages to the locality in terms of sustainable development objectives. In particular, the policy in PPG13 should be followed in such cases where high volumes of traffic may be generated.

Tourist and visitor facilities

35. The provision of essential facilities for tourist visitors is vital for the development of the tourism industry in rural areas. Local planning authorities should:

(i) plan for and support the provision of general tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres. Where new or additional facilities are required, these should normally be provided in, or close to, service centres or villages;

(ii) allow appropriate facilities needed to enhance visitors' enjoyment, and/or improve the financial viability, of a particular countryside feature or attraction, providing they will not detract from the attractiveness or importance of the feature, or the surrounding countryside.

[5] In line with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's strategy document *Tomorrow's Tourism*.

36. Wherever possible, tourist and visitor facilities should be housed in existing or replacement buildings, particularly where they are located outside existing settlements. Facilities requiring new buildings in the countryside may be justified where the required facilities are needed in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction; they meet the criteria in paragraph 35(ii); and there are no suitable existing buildings or developed sites available for re-use.

Tourist accommodation

37. The Government expects most tourist accommodation requiring new buildings to be located in, or adjacent to, existing towns and villages.

38. The conversion of suitable existing rural buildings to provide hotel and other serviced accommodation should be allowed, taking into account the policies on the re-use of rural buildings in paragraphs 17 and 18. Similarly, planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to proposed extensions to existing tourist accommodation where the scale of the extension is appropriate to its location and where the extension may help to ensure the future viability of such businesses.

39. In considering planning policies and development proposals for static holiday and touring caravan parks and holiday chalet developments, planning authorities should:

    (i) carefully weigh the objective of providing adequate facilities and sites with the need to protect landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites, and examine the scope for re-locating any existing, visually or environmentally-intrusive sites away from sensitive areas, or for re-location away from sites prone to flooding or coastal erosion;

    (ii) where appropriate (e.g. in popular holiday areas), set out policies in LDDs on the provision of new holiday and touring caravan sites and chalet developments, and on the expansion and improvement of existing sites and developments (e.g. to improve layouts and provide better landscaping); and

    (iii) ensure that new or expanded sites are not prominent in the landscape and that any visual intrusion is minimised by effective, high-quality screening.

40. Local planning authorities should support the provision of other forms of self-catering holiday accommodation in rural areas where this would accord with sustainable development objectives. The re-use and conversion of existing non-residential buildings for this purpose may have added benefits, e.g. as a farm diversification scheme.

Annex A

AGRICULTURAL, FORESTRY AND OTHER OCCUPATIONAL DWELLINGS

1. Paragraph 10 of PPS7 makes clear that isolated new houses in the countryside require special justification for planning permission to be granted. One of the few circumstances in which isolated residential development may be justified is when accommodation is required to enable agricultural, forestry and certain other full-time workers to live at, or in the immediate vicinity of, their place of work. It will often be as convenient and more sustainable for such workers to live in nearby towns or villages, or suitable existing dwellings, so avoiding new and potentially intrusive development in the countryside. However, there will be some cases where the nature and demands of the work concerned make it essential for one or more people engaged in the enterprise to live at, or very close to, the site of their work. Whether this is essential in any particular case will depend on the needs of the enterprise concerned and not on the personal preferences or circumstances of any of the individuals involved.

2. It is essential that all applications for planning permission for new occupational dwellings in the countryside are scrutinised thoroughly with the aim of detecting attempts to abuse (e.g. through speculative proposals) the concession that the planning system makes for such dwellings. In particular, it will be important to establish whether the stated intentions to engage in farming, forestry or any other rural-based enterprise, are genuine, are reasonably likely to materialise and are capable of being sustained for a reasonable period of time. It will also be important to establish that the needs of the intended enterprise require one or more of the people engaged in it to live nearby.

Permanent agricultural dwellings

3. New permanent dwellings should only be allowed to support existing agricultural activities on well-established agricultural units, providing:

   (i) there is a clearly established *existing* functional need (see paragraph 4 below);

   (ii) the need relates to a *full-time* worker, or one who is primarily employed in agriculture and does not relate to a part-time requirement;

   (iii) the unit and the agricultural activity concerned have been established for at least three years, have been profitable for at least one of them, are currently financially sound, and have a clear prospect of remaining so (see paragraph 8 below);

   (iv) the functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit, or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned; and

   (v) other planning requirements, e.g. in relation to access, or impact on the countryside, are satisfied.

4. A *functional test* is necessary to establish whether it is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise for one or more workers to be readily available at most times. Such a requirement might arise, for example, if workers are needed to be on hand day and night:

   (i) in case animals or agricultural processes require essential care at short notice;

   (ii) to deal quickly with emergencies that could otherwise cause serious loss of crops or products, for example, by frost damage or the failure of automatic systems.

5. In cases where the local planning authority is particularly concerned about possible abuse, it should investigate the history of the holding to establish the recent pattern of use of land and buildings and whether, for example, any dwellings, or buildings suitable for conversion to dwellings, have recently been sold separately from the farmland concerned. Such a sale could constitute evidence of lack of agricultural need.

6. The protection of livestock from theft or injury by intruders may contribute on animal welfare grounds to the need for a new agricultural dwelling, although it will not by itself be sufficient to justify one. Requirements arising from food processing, as opposed to agriculture, cannot be used to justify an agricultural dwelling. Nor can agricultural needs justify the provision of isolated new dwellings as retirement homes for farmers.

7. If a functional requirement is established, it will then be necessary to consider the number of workers needed to meet it, for which the scale and nature of the enterprise will be relevant.

8. New permanent accommodation cannot be justified on agricultural grounds unless the farming enterprise is economically viable. A *financial test* is necessary for this purpose, and to provide evidence of the size of dwelling which the unit can sustain. In applying this test (see paragraph 3(iii) above), authorities should take a realistic approach to the level of profitability, taking account of the nature of the enterprise concerned. Some enterprises which aim to operate broadly on a subsistence basis, but which nonetheless provide wider benefits (e.g. in managing attractive landscapes or wildlife habitats), can be sustained on relatively low financial returns.

9. Agricultural dwellings should be of a size commensurate with the established functional requirement. Dwellings that are unusually large in relation to the agricultural needs of the unit, or unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income it can sustain in the long-term, should not be permitted. It is the requirements of the enterprise, rather than those of the owner or occupier, that are relevant in determining the size of dwelling that is appropriate to a particular holding.

10. Local planning authorities may wish to consider making planning permissions subject to conditions removing some of the permitted development rights under part 1 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 for development within the curtilage of a dwelling house. For example, proposed extensions could result in a dwelling whose size exceeded what could be justified by the functional requirement, and affect the continued viability of maintaining the property for its intended use, given the income that the agricultural unit can sustain. However, it will always be preferable for such conditions to restrict the use of specific permitted development rights rather than to be drafted in terms which withdraw all those in a Class (see paragraphs 86-90 of the Annex to DOE Circular 11/95).

11. Agricultural dwellings should be sited so as to meet the identified functional need and to be well-related to existing farm buildings, or other dwellings.

Temporary agricultural dwellings

12. If a new dwelling is essential to support a new farming activity, whether on a newly-created agricultural unit or an established one, it should normally, for the first three years, be provided by a caravan, a wooden structure which can be easily dismantled, or other temporary accommodation. It should satisfy the following criteria:

    (i) clear evidence of a firm intention and ability to develop the enterprise concerned (significant investment in new farm buildings is often a good indication of intentions);

    (ii) functional need (see paragraph 4 of this Annex);

    (iii) clear evidence that the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis;

    (iv) the functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit, or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned; and

    (v) other normal planning requirements, e.g. on siting and access, are satisfied.

13. If permission for temporary accommodation is granted, permission for a permanent dwelling should not subsequently be given unless the criteria in paragraph 3 above are met. The planning authority should make clear the period for which the temporary permission is granted, the fact that the temporary dwelling will have to be removed, and the requirements that will have to be met if a permanent permission is to be granted. Authorities should not normally grant successive extensions to a temporary permission over a period of more than three years, nor should they normally give temporary permissions in locations where they would not permit a permanent dwelling.

Forestry dwellings

14. Local planning authorities should apply the same criteria to applications for forestry dwellings as to those for agricultural dwellings. The other principles in the advice on agricultural dwellings are equally relevant to forestry dwellings. Under conventional methods of forestry management, which can involve the use of a peripatetic workforce, new forestry dwellings may not always be justified, except perhaps to service intensive nursery production of trees.

Other occupational dwellings

15. There may also be instances where special justification exists for new isolated dwellings associated with other rural-based enterprises. In these cases, the enterprise itself, including any development necessary for the operation of the enterprise, must be acceptable in planning terms and permitted in that rural location, regardless of the consideration of any proposed associated dwelling. Local planning authorities should apply the same stringent levels of assessment to applications for such new occupational dwellings as they apply to applications for agricultural and forestry workers' dwellings. They should therefore apply the same criteria and principles in paragraphs 3-13 of this Annex, in a manner and to the extent that they are relevant to the nature of the enterprise concerned.

Occupancy conditions

16. Where the need to provide accommodation to enable farm, forestry or other workers to live at or near their place of work has been accepted as providing the special justification required for new, isolated residential development in the countryside, it will be necessary to ensure that the dwellings are kept available for meeting this need for as long as it exists. For this purpose planning permission should be made subject to appropriate occupancy conditions. DOE Circular 11/95 gives further advice and provides model occupancy conditions for agricultural dwellings and for other staff accommodation.

17. Changes in the scale and character of farming and forestry may affect the longer-term requirement for dwellings for which permission has been granted subject to an agricultural or forestry occupancy condition. Such dwellings, and others in the countryside with an occupancy condition attached, should not be kept vacant, nor should their present occupants be unnecessarily obliged to remain in occupation simply by virtue of planning conditions restricting occupancy which have outlived their usefulness. Local planning authorities should set out in LDDs their policy approach to the retention or removal of agricultural and, where relevant, forestry and other forms of

occupancy conditions. These policies should be based on an up to date assessment of the demand for farm (or other occupational) dwellings in the area, bearing in mind that it is the need for a dwelling for someone solely, mainly or last working in agriculture or forestry in an area as a whole, and not just on the particular holding, that is relevant in the case of farm or forestry workers' dwellings.

Information and appraisals

18. Planning authorities should be able to determine most applications for occupational dwellings in the countryside, including cases involving the imposition or removal of occupancy conditions, on the basis of their experience and the information provided by the applicant and any other interested parties. If this is not the case, agricultural or other consultants may be able to give a technical appraisal. This should be confined to a factual statement of the agricultural, or other business considerations involved and an evaluation of the specific points on which advice is sought; no recommendation for or against the application should be made.

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SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: 7 December 2005

Subject: **Strategic Gaps in the South East Plan**

Report of: Planning Implementation Director

Recommendation:

That the Committee agree the revised wording for policy CC10 of the South East Plan regarding strategic gaps, and recommend this to the Assembly Plenary meeting on 1 March 2006 for approval.

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1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This paper relates to Policy CC10 (Green Belts and Strategic Gaps) in the Draft South East Plan[1]. This was one of a limited number of policies where the Regional Assembly agreed that further work should be undertaken, for consideration by members and possible inclusion in the final Plan submission in March 2006.

1.2 Members agreed wording for the part of the policy relating to Green Belts at the Plenary on 13 July 2005. However in the absence of consistent national guidance on the subject of strategic gaps, and variations in approach taken by a number of existing Structure and Local Plans, members asked that further work be undertaken to develop criteria for the identification of strategic gaps, which could be included in the South East Plan.

2. Suggested Policy Wording and Supporting Text

2.1 Officers at the Assembly have examined an extensive range of material[2], and have discussed the issue with the Cross Cutting Group and Strategy Advisory Group.

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[1] This was formally Policy CC9 of the Draft for Public Consultation South East Plan, January 2005

[2] This has included Government policy and guidance, existing Structure Plan policies, Examination in Public (EiP) Panel Reports, representations to the draft South East Plan, sub-regional advice and independent research [most notably Elson, M (2000) Strategic gap and green wedge policies in structure plans: main report, Oxford Brookes University, http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_606698-02.hcsp].

2.2 The primary purpose of a strategic gap is to prevent the coalescence between two substantial urban settlements. It is important that both settlements are substantial to ensure that the nature of the gap is justifiably strategic in the regional spatial context. It is acknowledged that strategic gaps have the potential to provide other environmental and health benefits; as do all areas of open countryside, Green Belt or rural fringe. However, these benefits are coincidental and whilst important, strategic gaps should not be assessed on these factors.

2.3 The appropriate width of a strategic gap is subjective. We consider that a gap greater than five miles between the settlements concerned is unlikely to represent a gap that is truly under threat of coalescence within the lifetime of a Local Development Document. This view was endorsed by the Strategy Advisory Group.

2.4 There is a presumption against development within strategic gaps. However, limited small-scale development in accordance with other policies within the South East Plan should be permitted as long as such development would not compromise the fundamental integrity and purpose of the gap.

2.5 We set out in Annex 1 proposed revised wording for Policy CC10, and associated supporting text, for members' consideration.

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Planning Implementation Director
23 November 2005

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Annex 1

Suggested Revised Policy CC10 wording: Green Belt and Strategic Gaps

1.22 The Government has confirmed its continuing commitment to the Green Belt as an instrument of planning policy, and consultation has confirmed very strong public support for the concept. Green Belts fulfil five main functions: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another; to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; to preserve the special character and setting of historic towns; and to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. All of these functions are consistent with the Assembly's vision for the South East, and the Assembly considers that there is no case for any strategic review of Green Belt within the region.

~~1.23 For most of the region, Green Belt policy does not apply. In some counties, policies to identify and protect gaps between settlements have been developed, in order to maintain identity and provide some longer-term spatial flexibility. Analysis has, however, shown that the definition of these gaps varies widely and there is little locational consistency. The Assembly believes in principle that a statement of consistent criteria on the identification and definition of gaps in the Plan would be appropriate and would overcome the present inconsistency. Further consideration of the option is therefore being undertaken so that a statement may be incorporated in the final Plan submission to Government.~~

1.23 For most of the South East, Green Belt policy does not apply. In some parts of the region Structure Plans and Local Plans have included policies to identify and protect gaps between settlements, to avoid coalescence of specific urban areas and maintain their identity. However there is no national guidance on the issue of strategic gaps, and definition of these gaps has varied considerably.

1.24 Therefore it is appropriate and necessary for the South East Plan to include a policy on this subject, identifying criteria to ensure a more consistent approach is taken by those authorities who wish to identify gaps, and to ensure those gaps are strategic, rather than what may be more correctly regarded as 'local', in function.

1.25 Where necessary, local authorities should identify strategic gaps in their Local Development Documents that fulfil the criteria set out in Policy CC10. The primary purpose of these gaps must be to prevent coalescence of settlements and maintain their identity. Where a gap crosses local authority boundaries, the Local Authorities should prepare a joint LDD for the gap.

1.26 Limited small-scale development in accordance with other policies within the South East Plan, principally Countryside and Landscape Management Policies C1–C3, should be permitted as long as such development would not compromise the fundamental integrity and purpose of the gap.

1.27 Strategic gaps have the potential to increase biodiversity and provide other environmental and health benefits, in the way that other areas of countryside or urban rural fringe do (see Chapter D6 policies C1 - C4, and Chapter D7 policy BE4), and full opportunity should be taken to maximise these benefits where gaps are adopted. However these benefits are coincidental to the primary purpose of strategic gaps, and decisions about whether gaps should or should not be adopted must be solely based on the criteria set out in Policy CC10.

1.28 If a local authority wishes to identify a gap that does not fulfil the policy criteria, they must assess whether it is appropriate to designate it as a local gap in keeping with the guidance in Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7): Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.

POLICY CC10: GREEN BELTS AND STRATEGIC GAPS

The existing Green Belts in the region will be retained and supported and the opportunity should be taken to improve their land-use management and access as part of initiatives to improve the urban rural fringe. If there are any cases for small-scale local review these can be pursued through the Local Development Framework process.

Elsewhere in the region, where there is a need to prevent the coalescence of settlements in order to retain their separate identity, local authorities may identify the location and boundaries of strategic gaps in a Local Development Document (or joint LDD where the gap crosses more than one local authority) if the following criteria are met:

(a) the gap will prevent the coalescence of settlements each with a resident population greater than 10,000 persons;
(b) the gap must be no greater in size than is necessary, and in all cases no greater than five miles at its widest point.

Development should only be permitted in a strategic gap where it would not compromise, individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development, the fundamental integrity and purpose of the gap.

~~Elsewhere in the region, strategic gaps and corridors will be protected from inappropriate development with the purpose of maintaining the character of the region by retaining the separate identify and preventing the coalescence of settlements.~~

~~If there are any cases for small-scale local review these can be pursued through the Local Development Framework process.~~

~~Local authorities should identify, in Local Development Frameworks, strategic gaps and corridors that will protect the character and pattern of development and prevent coalescence.~~

West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016

February 2005

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environment is minimised. Development outside but near to an AONB should not detract from the natural beauty, distinctive character and remote and tranquil nature of the Area. This includes development which would be unduly prominent in the Area, or detract from views into or out of the Area, particularly when viewed from roads, rights of way or other public places.

Settlement pattern and strategic gaps

Policy CH3

(a) In order to ensure that West Sussex continues to be a county with a network of small to medium-sized towns and villages, the separate identity and character of all settlements will be maintained and, where possible, enhanced. Development which would undermine this objective or lead to the actual or perceived coalescence of settlements should not be permitted.

(b) Development should not be permitted unless the strategic settlement pattern of the County will be maintained. The following gaps between settlements within West Sussex are of strategic importance and development should not be permitted which would undermine their fundamental purpose and integrity:

- **(1) Emsworth and Chichester;**
- **(2) Chichester and Lavant;**
- **(3) Chichester and Bognor Regis;**
- **(4) West Wittering and East Wittering;**
- **(5) Bracklesham Bay and Selsey;**
- **(6) Selsey and Pagham;**
- **(7) Middleton-on-Sea and Littlehampton;**
- **(8) Arundel and Littlehampton;**
- **(9) East Preston and Ferring;**
- **(10) Ferring and Worthing;**
- **(11) Worthing and Sompting/Lancing;**
- **(12) Lancing and Shoreham;**
- **(13) Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint/Keymer/Hassocks;**
- **(14) Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath;**
- **(15) Haywards Heath and Cuckfield;**
- **(16) Haywards Heath/Lindfield and Scaynes Hill;**
- **(17) Crawley and East Grinstead;**
- **(18) Crawley and Gatwick Airport/Horley;**
- **(19) Crawley and Pease Pottage;**
- **(20) East Grinstead and Ashurst Wood;**
- **(21) Horsham and Crawley; and**
- **(22) Horsham and Southwater.**

(c) District planning authorities will:

- **(1) identify how the separate identity and character of all settlements will be maintained and, where possible, enhanced;**
- **(2) define in local plans, the boundaries of the strategic gaps identified in (b) and, where appropriate, of any gaps identified in the structure or local plans of adjoining authorities; and**

(3) include policies in local plans to:

(i) ensure that the separate identity and character of all settlements will be maintained and, where possible, enhanced and prevent their perceived or actual coalescence;

(ii) ensure that development within strategic gaps:

- **is consistent with, or is necessary to meet the requirements of, this Plan and local plans;**
- **would not compromise, either individually or cumulatively with other development, the objectives and fundamental integrity of the gaps; and**
- **would maintain and enhance the predominantly open and undeveloped character of gaps; and**

(iii) where appropriate, allocate land within gaps for uses which will maintain and enhance their predominantly open and undeveloped character.

323. The County is typified by a pattern of mainly closely-spaced small and medium-sized towns and villages. The loss of gaps between settlements would threaten not only the separation and setting of the settlements on both sides but also the overall character of the County. The need to avoid the loss of separate identity continues. Therefore, in order to maintain the overall character of the County, this Plan seeks to maintain the separate identity and character of all settlements and prevent them coalescing. Policy CH3 seeks to achieve this by placing greater restraint on development within gaps than is usually applied in the countryside to prevent creeping coalescence, for example, through the proliferation of development which would otherwise be acceptable outside built-up area boundaries under Policy LOC2.

324. Coalescence does not mean exclusively the physical joining of settlements but also includes a perceived joining of settlements due to physical development and/or a level of activity which reduces their visual separation and the sense of travelling between settlements. The towns and villages of the County have their own distinctive character which derives partly from the relationship between the settlements and the open areas and countryside around them and the relationship between the towns and villages. In order to protect their separate identity, the predominantly open and undeveloped character of the land between settlements should be maintained to ensure that there is an actual and perceived visual break between the settlements. Attention will need to be paid to the impact of development either on its own or cumulatively with other development in reducing this visual separation and diminishing the sense of an absence of activity. The essential feature of gaps is the relative absence of development not their landscape quality.

325. Some gaps between settlements are of strategic importance. Accordingly, strategic gaps are planning policy designations which are applied to areas between certain settlements which should be kept apart in order to maintain the strategic settlement pattern of the County. In general, these areas are the gaps between the main settlements and the main settlements and adjoining settlements. The concept of strategic gaps has been important to West Sussex for many years and is well-understood within the county. The essential feature of them is the relative absence of development rather than their landscape quality.

326. Policy CH3 lists the gaps which are of strategic importance. Some of the Strategic Gaps include existing villages and small towns within them which should be kept apart, for example, Southbourne, Nutbourne, Chidham, Bosham, and Fishbourne within the Emsworth to Chichester Gap and Copthorne and Crawley Down in the Crawley to East Grinstead Gap. There is a need to protect the separate identity of the settlements within gaps as well as the identity of the settlements which they lie between.

327. Local plan reviews must consider how the character, separate identity and separation of all settlements will be maintained, and where possible, enhanced, for example, through the designation of local gaps. They must also consider the function of, and justification for, the designation of the strategic gaps when they define their boundaries which should follow physical features on the ground, taking into account the need to accommodate the

development requirements of this Plan and local plans. Strategic gaps should not necessarily include all the land between the settlements; only land which is necessary to secure the objectives of strategic gaps on a long-term basis should be included within them. Continuity with strategic and local gaps designated in adjoining districts and counties must be maintained. This includes the Emsworth Strategic Gap, identified in the Hampshire County Structure Plan 1996-2011 (Review), predominantly between Havant and Emsworth but which extends into West Sussex to Westbourne (in Chichester District).

328. Once a gap has been defined, development within it which would undermine or erode the fundamental purpose and integrity of the gap should not be allowed except in exceptional circumstances (see paragraph 329). Individual developments which do not undermine the fundamental purpose of strategic and other gaps may be acceptable within them, such as agricultural or informal recreational use, such as playing fields. However, regard must be had to the cumulative effects of such development in reducing visual separation and diminishing the sense of an absence of activity.

329. Once the boundary of a strategic gap has been defined taking into account the development requirements of this Plan and local plans, the siting of major development within a strategic gap is unlikely to be consistent with the aims of designation. A lack of alternative sites and the fact that the need cannot be met in any other way could justify an exception.

330. In considering land allocations and proposals for new development, the district planning authorities should consider ways in which to maintain and enhance the predominantly open and undeveloped character of all gaps and the land between all settlements: for example, by allocating land for uses such as woodland, which would have an environmental benefit, or informal recreation, which would have a social benefit. They should also look at ways of improving the landscape and amenity of strategic gaps to enhance their value as open countryside and improve the environment in particular local habitat especially where this may have been lost or harmed due to other nearby development.

District planning authorities should:

- *identify settlements which are at risk of actual or perceived coalescence and identify how the character, separate identity and separation of those settlements will be maintained and, where possible, enhanced for example, through the designation of local gaps;*
- *review the boundaries of the strategic gaps identified in Policy CH3 taking into account the development requirements of this Plan and local plans and the need to secure the objectives of the strategic gaps on a long-term basis; and*
- *ensure a consistent and co-ordinated approach to the treatment of land across administrative boundaries taking into account any gaps identified in the development plan of adjoining authorities.*

Conservation areas and historic towns and villages

Policy CH4

(a) Development should not be permitted unless conservation areas will be preserved and, where possible, enhanced. Development should not be permitted unless the character of the historic towns and villages of the County will be protected and, where possible, enhanced and provided that the overall perception of each historic town or village as an entity, including Arundel and Chichester which are of national importance, will be retained.

(b) Local plans will include policies to ensure that:

(1) the character and appearance of conservation areas is preserved and, where possible, enhanced; and

(2) the setting, character, fabric (including open space), public views in and out, and general ambience of historic towns and villages as a whole are protected and, where possible, enhanced.

331. Some areas or groups of buildings make a significant contribution to the character of the County. Many are designated as conservation areas recognising their special architectural or

Landbank: A stock of land intended for a particular purpose. In minerals planning, a stock of planning permissions for the winning and working of minerals.

Landfill: The disposal of waste material by tipping into voids (holes in the ground): may be used to landscape or reclaim excavated or despoiled land.

Listed building: A building officially listed as being of special architectural or historic interest as defined in the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Local gap: Areas of largely open land between smaller settlements, listed in local plans, which help to maintain their separate identity and prevent their coalescence (see also Strategic gap)

Local Nature Reserve (LNR): A statutory designation of a site of local nature conservation significance, declared by local planning authorities under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949. Other non-statutory local nature reserves are established and managed by a variety of public or private bodies (e.g. county wildlife trusts, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds).

Local plan: A detailed district or borough-wide land-use plan, prepared and adopted by a district planning authority, which is part of the statutory development plan. Consists of a written statement which sets out the district planning authority's development control policies and proposals for land use and transport over a period of about 10 years and an Ordnance Survey-based proposals map. Required to conform generally with the Structure Plan. Under the new planning system, local plans will be replaced by local development frameworks which are portfolios comprising development plan documents and, if required, supplementary planning documents. The use of the term 'local plan' in this document includes the new development plan documents that will be prepared to replace adopted local plans.

Local planning authority: In West Sussex, the County Council and the District and Borough Councils are the local planning authority. See entry for District planning authority.

Local Transport Plan: A five-year plan, which is drawn up by the Transport Authority in association with the local authorities and subject to widespread consultation. It includes future investment plans and proposed packages of measures to meet local transport needs.

Low-cost housing: Housing for sale or rent on the open market at the lower end in terms of price.

Minerals Planning Authority: The local planning authority responsible for planning control over mineral working and other minerals-related development (the County Council in West Sussex).

Minerals Planning Guidance (MPG): Guidance issued by the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions relating to minerals planning.

Nature conservation: The conservation of the abundance and diversity of habitats, species and geological/geomorphological features

National Park: Areas designated by the Countryside Agency, subject to confirmation by the Secretary of Sate, under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The statutory purposes of designation are to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and to promote opportunities for public understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities. In 1999, the Government signalled its intention to establish a National Park within the general area of the Sussex Downs and East Hampshire AONB.

National Nature Reserve (NNR): A site of national nature conservation importance, managed by English Nature and established under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Net site density: Based on the net developable area, that is, only those areas which will be developed for housing and directly associated uses. Includes access roads, private open space, car parking areas, incidental open space and landscaping, and children's play areas. Excludes major distributor roads, schools, open spaces serving wider areas and significant landscape buffers.

Park and ride: Facilities which seek to reduce urban congestion by encouraging motorists to leave their vehicles at a car park on the edge of towns and proceed into the centre by public transport, usually buses direct from the parking area.

Restoration: In minerals and waste planning, the return of land to its former condition using subsoil, topsoil and/or soil making material.

Safeguarding: Protecting a resource, such as mineral deposits, or an allocated route, site or area by preventing building or other development. May refer to landfill capacity such as worked-out pits, other man-made voids or natural small depressions which could be used for waste disposal.

Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM): A nationally important archaeological site included in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments maintained by the Secretary of State under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Semi-natural habitats: Areas where plant and animal species are determined primarily by physical characteristics (such as soil type and drainage) and by the interaction between species (such as grazing by deer). Such habitats are generally recognised as being of high nature conservation value.

Semi-natural woodland: Woodland which does not originate obviously from planting. Includes sites which are considered 'ancient', secondary woods on ancient sites, and woods which may have developed on former settlements or quarries.

Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI): A non-statutory designation covering sites in West Sussex which have a significant wildlife value.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): A site statutorily notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) as being of special nature conservation interest. SSSIs include wildlife habitats, geological features and landforms.

South East Economic Development Agency (SEEDA): A Regional Development Agency established by the Government in April 1999 to take the strategic lead in promoting the sustainable economic development of the South East region.

South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA): This is the regional chamber for the South East and represents the South East's interests. It took over responsibility for regionally important land-use and transportation matters from SERPLAN (the London and South East Regional Planning Conference) in April 2001.

South Coast Multi-Modal Study (SoCoMMS): The Government has commissioned a transport study of a 150-mile arc between Southampton and Ramsgate (East Kent). The study will make recommendations for a long-term strategy to address passenger and freight transport movement needs on the key transport corridors.

Special Area of Conservation (SAC): A site of international importance designated under the EU Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (the Habitats Directive).

Special Protection Area (SPA): A site identified as an important habitat for rare and vulnerable birds under the EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

Strategic Gap: Area of largely open land between settlements, listed in the Structure Plan, which helps to maintain the separate identity and amenity of major settlements and prevent their coalescence with each other or with very close small settlements. The boundaries are defined in local plans (see also Local Gap).

Strategic Road Network (SRN): A road network designated in the West Sussex Structure Plan, comprised of the M23 motorway, the trunk roads, and some other class A roads of more than local importance. These are the main routes which are best able to cater for trips starting or ending outside West Sussex.

Strategic Locations: Broad locations for major mixed-use development, including housing, identified within the Structure Plan. The precise locations and boundaries, mix of uses, and phasing of development will be identified in the relevant local plan

Structure Plan: Sets out the County Council's general strategy, policies and main proposals for land use and transport over a period of about 15 years. Consists of a statutory written statement (the policies) and key diagram together with non-statutory explanatory memorandum. Under the new planning system, structure plans will no longer be prepared and

Mid Sussex District Council

Local Plan

Adopted May 2004.

Policies and Proposals for the Countryside

The Distinction Between the Countryside and the Built-up Areas

3.21 In this Local Plan the countryside is defined as all land which falls outside the built-up area boundaries. It is, therefore, important to establish at the outset the clear distinction between the built-up areas and the countryside since this is fundamental to the effective application of the land use policies in this Plan. The West Sussex Structure Plan Deposit Draft 2001 - 2016 defines the built-up area boundary as the line which separates urban land, identified as being able to accommodate a limited amount of growth, from the countryside, which is subject to development restraint. It is thus a policy boundary rather than an indication of what currently exists. The precise definition of built-up area boundaries is a matter for Local Plans.

3.22 Built-up area boundaries have been defined around the towns and larger villages in the District by the application of a number of criteria. A number of technical reports have been produced which explain these criteria more fully. Those settlements with built-up area boundaries are shown on the Proposals Map and its Insets. Villages and smaller settlements which have no built-up area boundary will be treated for policy purposes as being within the countryside. The boundaries defined in this Local Plan are based on those already determined in the District's five predecessor Local Plans. These existing boundaries have been altered where a firmer boundary has been identified as a result of objections to the Local Plan and where new allocations are proposed.

Protection of the Countryside

3.23 The primary objective of this Local Plan with regard to the countryside is to secure its protection by minimising the amount of land taken for development and preventing development which does not need to be there. At the same time it will seek to enhance the countryside, and support the rural economy by accommodating well-designed, appropriate new forms of development and changes in land use where a countryside location is required and where it does not adversely affect the rural environment. Where a countryside location is not essential, development will be directed towards the built-up areas. Development outside the built-up area boundaries will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances and where it does take place, the Council will exercise strict control over its siting and design.

C1 Outside built-up area boundaries, as detailed on the Proposals and Inset Maps, the remainder of the plan area is classified as a Countryside Area of Development Restraint where the countryside will be protected for its own sake. Proposals for development in the countryside, particularly that which would extend the built-up area boundaries beyond those shown will be firmly resisted and restricted to:

(a) proposals reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture or forestry;

(b) proposals for new uses in rural buildings of a scale consistent with the building's location;

(c) in appropriate cases, proposals for the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;

(d) in appropriate cases, proposals for quiet informal recreation and/or tourism related developments;

(e) proposals for facilities which are essential to meet the needs of local communities, and which cannot be accommodated satisfactorily within the built-up areas;

(f) proposals for which a specific policy reference is made elsewhere in this Plan; and

(g) proposals which significantly contribute to a sense of local identity and regional diversity.

3.24 One of the key functions of built-up area boundaries around settlements, as defined on the Proposals Map and its Insets, is to protect the adjoining countryside from unnecessary development. All proposals for development in the countryside will therefore be considered against the above policy. In certain locations, however, additional policies of protection are required. These are set out below.

Areas with Special Qualities

3.25 Those areas of countryside which have special qualities are the Strategic and Local Gaps, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land and Areas of Importance for Nature Conservation.

Strategic Gaps

3.26 The setting of towns and villages are as important as the buildings and spaces within them to their overall character. A clear visual break between settlements gives them a recognisable structure. If development was to occur in such areas it could lead to the coalescence of settlements and the loss of their individual identity and amenity. Retaining these gaps is, therefore, an important objective of both Local and Structure Plan policy.

3.27 Policy CH6 of the West Sussex Structure Plan Deposit Draft 2001 - 2016 lists those gaps which are strategically important in the County. In this District seven such gaps have been identified. It is for the Local Plan, however, to define the precise boundaries.

3.28 The Secretary of State has previously made it clear that the purpose of strategic gaps is to prevent coalescence of settlements and to retain their separate identity and amenity and that, in order to achieve these objectives, their boundaries need not necessarily coincide with the boundaries of the built-up areas. A thorough review of every gap has been undertaken in preparing this plan. A Technical Report has been prepared which identifies the detailed assessment criteria and boundaries. The areas included within the strategic gaps are those which the Local Planning Authority considers should be generally kept free from development in the long term in order to secure the objectives of strategic gaps. Intervening villages which have built-up area boundaries are excluded from the strategic gaps, but the gaps between these villages themselves are vital components of the overall strategic gap. Hamlets or groups of buildings, where such boundaries have not been defined will be considered as part of the countryside within the gap.

3.29 Development proposals within the strategic gaps will be subject to the most rigorous examination because of the possible impact of such development on the objectives of strategic gaps. Strict control will be applied to ensure that the openness of the strategic gaps will not be compromised by the cumulative impact of such developments. Where possible the Local Planning Authority will seek opportunities to conserve and enhance the landscape and amenity of the strategic gaps.

C2 Strategic gaps have been defined and will be safeguarded between:

- **Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint/Keymer/Hassocks;**
- **Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath;**
- **Haywards Heath and Cuckfield;**
- **Haywards Heath/Lindfield and Scaynes Hill;**
- **Crawley and East Grinstead;**
- **Crawley and Pease Pottage; and**
- **East Grinstead and Ashurst Wood**

as defined on the Proposals Map and its Insets, with the objectives of preventing coalescence and retaining the separate identity and amenity of settlements.

Development will not be permitted within the strategic gap areas unless:

(a) it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture, or some other use which has to be located in the countryside;

(b) it makes a valuable contribution to the landscape and amenity of the gap and enhances its value as open countryside; and

(c) it would not compromise individually or cumulatively the objectives and fundamental integrity of the gap.

Local Gaps

3.30 In addition to the strategic gaps, the District Council has identified other areas of countryside between towns and villages which are particularly vulnerable to development pressure, and the loss or erosion of which would have a harmful effect on the character of the rural areas and the amenity and setting of villages. The Local Plan designates these as local gaps, and, as in the case of strategic gaps, they are given specific policy protection in order to prevent coalescence and retain the separate identities and amenity of the settlements. Four such gaps and an area to the east of Burgess Hill (which warrants the same level of protection as these local gaps) have been identified in this District. The boundaries of the local countryside gaps mainly follow the built-up area boundaries of the adjacent settlements.

C3 Local Gaps have been defined and will be safeguarded between:

- **West Hoathly and Sharpthorne;**
- **Hurstpierpoint, Albourne and Sayers Common;**
- **Keymer/Hassocks and Ditchling; and**
- **Keymer/Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint**

as defined on the Proposals Map and its Insets with the objectives of preventing coalescence and retaining the separate identity and amenity of settlements.

In addition, the area which is within Mid Sussex between Burgess Hill and Ditchling Common is afforded the same status as a local gap in order to protect the local amenity and landscape importance of Ditchling Common.

Development will not be permitted within the local gap areas or the area between Burgess Hill and Ditchling Common unless:

(a) it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture, or some other use which has to be located in the countryside;

(b) it makes a valuable contribution to the landscape and amenity of the gap (or as in the case of the land between Burgess Hill and Ditchling Common) and enhances its value as open countryside; and

(c) it would not compromise individually or cumulatively the objectives and fundamental integrity of the local gap.

BOX 1: Approach and Methodology