



# Section 7

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## 7.1 Using HLC

7.1.1 Examination of the material produced through the HLC process illustrates the fact that it is possible to make a number of generalisations relating to the landscape of the project area. This is a quintessential slice of the English Midlands dominated by a rural landscape of late enclosure, much of it highly planned, and with relatively little woodland cover; settlement, in the main, comprises small to medium sized market towns and nucleated villages with the highest population densities concentrated around Leicester and on the western side of Leicestershire. Although as a general picture this may well be the case, what HLC also reveals is that across the study area the character of the landscape also displays many subtle variations and indeed some areas which contrast markedly with the overall picture. For instance; in the western part of the study area, across the National Forest area, the landscape contains far higher densities of woodland cover through a combination of new woodland plantation schemes and the survival of remnants of the woodland which formed Charnwood Forest. In the areas around Newbold, Coleorton and Griffydam there are dispersed settlement and irregular field patterns unique within the study area. Slightly more subtle variation may be discerned over the eastern side of the project area where, for example, although the field pattern may in general terms be predominantly regular, it is as one progresses further east into Rutland where much of the most recent enclosure is located that the landscape has its most deliberately planned appearance with almost no field boundaries displaying a sinuous morphology.

7.1.2 The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation project has produced a valuable baseline assessment that even before completion has been proving to be an important tool for aiding management of change within the landscape. One reading, and perhaps the most simplistic, of the HLC is to view it as a distribution map for each of the defined HLC Types; this kind of reading of the data allows for a basic quantitative analysis of HLC Types within the study area. Even looking at HLC in this simplistic form allows for an assessment of what landscape types are most rare or common, what their distribution is over the whole study area and where the most complete examples can be found. HLC is, however, a far more powerful tool than a simple distribution map. In mapping the whole of the landscape individual components are placed within a context so, for example, we are able to assess the relationship between settlements, the surrounding field patterns and woodland resources. HLC emphasises the need to view and treat the landscape in a holistic manner and to recognise that as a resource the landscape is more than just the sum of its individual parts. It is also important to remember that the LLR HLC is underpinned by an extensive and complex database allowing interrogation of the information to take many forms, for example by date or field boundary loss. The flexibility of HLC means that the mapping can be revised on an ad hoc or routine basis proving a dynamic data set that reflects the continually changing character and developing interpretation of the landscape. Further to this the HLC material may itself be manipulated and additional criteria or values may be

attributed to polygons allowing for the creation of variously themed indicative maps informed by baseline HLC data.

7.1.3 As HLC becomes more firmly embedded within the HER it is anticipated that not only will it become a tool to be consulted as a matter of course by members of the Historic and Natural Environment Team but it will also be used regularly by planners and other development control professionals. It is further anticipated that HLC will come to be seen as a core data set for use by developers, archaeological and landscape consultants and also the general public. HLC will become a vital tool for the management of landscape change across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland and provide an important springboard for future research both informing and contextualising future studies.

7.1.4 The value of HLC as a tool for outreach should also not be underestimated. Not only does the data created by the project provide interest groups and schools with an a useful starting point for initiating their own studies, but will upon wider dissemination have the potential to help promote a sense of place within communities across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

## **7.2 Landscape Character Assessment**

7.2.1 HLC is itself a form of landscape character assessment with the emphasis focusing upon time depth in the landscape. It is nevertheless as comprehensive and as systematic as more established LCA methodologies and typically, as in Leicestershire's case, is carried out at a much finer grain and is more adaptable. In addition to informing LCAs HLC will also sit as a stand alone product or rest alongside an LCA providing an alternative representation and interpretation of the landscape. Both LCA and HLC are strengthened by having the other as a complement, as well as each having some capacity for absorbing elements of the other. This potential for HLC to inform LCA has long been recognised and indeed the expectation that HLC should feed into and inform any future LCA work has long been recognised as a primary role for such projects.

7.2.2 In February 2008 Leicestershire County Council commissioned the environmental consultants TEP to carry out a Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment for Charnwood Forest, to provide baseline evidence which would inform future plans and policies for the area which has been identified as a potential Regional Park within the East Midlands Regional Plan. As a starting point the study took as its boundary the Charnwood Forest LCA defined within the *Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy*, although this boundary was revised during the course of the assessment. The study also went further and divided this newly defined area into seven landscape areas which were defined according to local distinctiveness and changes in topography, woodland cover, hydrology, land cover, land use and built form. HLC data was integrated within the TEP assessment where particular use of it was made to develop mapping showing

chronological changes to settlements from the time of the publication of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition 6" map to the present day.

7.2.3 In the event of any landscape assessments being carried out within the project area on a similar scale to the TEP project consultation of HLC data should be recommended as a matter of course.

7.2.4 On a larger scale work is currently under way by LDA Design to produce an East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment. This is a project that extends over 16,400 km<sup>2</sup> and covers the Government Office of the Region of the East Midlands. This includes the administrative counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland and the unitary authorities of Derby, Leicestershire and Nottingham. The project follows on from recommendations made by Natural England in 2008 following a review of how landscape issues are managed in the East Midlands.

7.2.5 The review noted significant variations in the aims and methodologies employed across the large number of landscape character assessments and historic landscape characterisations. Following on from this the report identified a need to develop a link between local coverage and national scale landscape character assessments. It has been argued that a regional overview would provide the basis for developing region wide character studies as part of an initiative to facilitate an integrated approach to landscape planning, protection and management across the region.

7.2.6 The key objectives for the East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment are to:

1. Implement the objectives of the European Landscape Convention, providing specific mechanisms for landscape protection, protection, planning and management.
2. Inform and underpin the regional planning policy framework.
3. Integrate with other regional strategies and initiatives.
4. Help guide sustainable development decisions.
5. Guide the production of Green Infrastructure Strategies.
6. Inform environmental capacity studies.
7. Inform ecosystem services studies that assess the interaction of organisms and habitats.
8. Bring about greater integration with other key environmental themes such as biodiversity and historic landscapes.
9. Promote the qualities and diversity of the region's landscape.

7.2.7 Landscape Character Assessments can be important documents providing local authorities with a wide ranging appraisal of the landscape that takes into consideration factors including ecology, geology, soils, topography and land use. However the historic environment has often been under-represented. Where an HLC is available it can provide a valuable aid when it comes to defining LCA Types and Areas. One example of how HLC may be used in the definition of Landscape Character Types and Areas can be seen

in Lancashire where in urban areas LCAs were taken directly from the areas defined by HLC, making HLC and LCA types one and the same (Clark *et al* 2004). In 2005 a Landscape Character Assessment was carried out for Shropshire; this integrated HLC data to the extent that the descriptions of the cultural patterning of the landscape contained within the LCA were informed by the results of HLC. It is worth noting here that the LLR HLC is similar to the Shropshire model and it would be feasible for an LCA carried out within Leicestershire or Rutland to draw upon the Shropshire experience.

### **7.3 Spatial Planning**

7.3.1 As a process HLC is primarily one of assessment; it involves the description of the historic landscape and its distinctive Character Types. From this a strategy may be developed proposing recommendations for the management of specific landscape types and of different areas. Where spatial planning is concerned further development of the HLC will be required to meet the demands of strategies that are concerned with general management objectives and which can often fall outside the planning system. Through the inclusion of planners and those responsible for landscape management in a broad debate together with historic environment professionals, HLC has the potential to inform development plans and planning policy.

7.3.2 There is an increasing recognition of the need, both at a national and a local level, for HLC to be consulted in order for it to inform Regional Spatial Strategies, Local Development Frameworks and the Supplementary Planning Documents which may support them.

### **7.4 Supplementary Planning Documents**

7.4.1 As an element of its Local Development Framework (LDF) a planning authority may prepare Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to provide greater detail on the policies in its Development Plan Documents. Supplementary guidance to assist delivery of the LDF may be prepared by a government agency, regional planning body or a county council.

7.4.2 There are many examples of the historic environment and landscape character being the subject of SPDs. These include SPDs for Bolsover District Council, Dudley Metropolitan Council and Gloucester City Council, all of which emphasise the importance of preserving and enhancing the historic character of places and provide guidance as to how historic environment issues should be addressed in the planning process.

### **7.5 Road Schemes**

7.4.3 As part of the Highways Agency's policy of minimising and mitigating against the adverse effects its road network may have upon the environment it regularly goes through the process of environmental assessment. This process is laid out in Volume 11 of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). A new sub-topic within DMRB Volume 11 was published in August

2007 aimed at understanding how historic landscape may be affected by scheme proposals. A guidance document *Assessing the Effect of Road Schemes on Historic Landscape Character* was also published by the Highways Agency in 2007 as a supplement to the Historic Landscape Sub-topic. The purpose of the guidance is to assist the Highways Agency and those organisations adopting its assessment methods on how to carry out Historic Landscape Assessments for highways projects. The guidance discusses how Historic Landscape Assessment (HLA) may be used for modelling sensitivity to highway-related change and the importance of being aware of the local context when apply a value to historic landscape character. Other topics that are discussed include how to assess the magnitude of impact a scheme may have on the historic landscape character and strategies for mitigating and managing change. Whilst this document was designed in the first instance for use by the Highways Agency, its consultants and contractors, it is recognised that it will be of particular relevance to professionals carrying out assessments in local authority highways teams.

## **7.6 Environmental Stewardship**

7.6.1 In March 2005 the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) introduced the Environmental Stewardship Scheme. This is an agri-environment scheme set up to replace the older Countryside Stewardship and Environmentally Sensitive Areas schemes. The scheme is aimed at farmers and land managers and provides funding to assist them in delivering effective environmental management on their land. The Environmental Stewardship Scheme, originally administered directly by Defra, is now run by Natural England and lists its primary objectives as:

1. conserve wildlife (biodiversity)
2. maintain and enhance landscape quality and character
3. protect the historic environment and natural resources
4. promote public access and understanding of the countryside
5. protect natural resources.

7.6.2 HLC has relevance to objectives 2, 3 and 4 in so far as it is a data set and scheme of landscape understanding that can place many of the elements pertaining to the historic environment and the landscape in general into context and assist those advising on potential schemes what the most appropriate course of action might be. HLC has, amongst other things, the potential to be used as an educational resource and sections of the mapping could conceivably be used to produce maps or interpretation boards to help explain some of the processes of change that may be visible in the landscape. It is also possible that HLC might be able to assist with objectives 1 and 5. With some thought it may be possible to assess HLC types so that they provide an indication of the possible presence of particular habitats or species. Such outcomes will require closer working between historic and natural environment professionals in order to enhance each other's understanding of the landscape as portrayed and interpreted by HLC. This would enable those working within the Historic Environment sector to improve their awareness of the semi-natural components of HLC Types and natural

environmentalists to better understand the development and traditional management of these semi-natural/semi-cultural components. This approach would also result in benefits for Defra through more joined up thinking in the formulation of targets and in advice provided for Farm Environment Plans. HLC, when applied for this purpose, should only be used as a 'flagging up' tool that highlights the potential of a site and clearly not as a definitive map of the project area's natural resources. For some parts of Leicestershire and Rutland it may be that HLC will be one of the best indicators of the biodiversity of an area.

7.6.3 The Environmental Stewardship Scheme has three elements Entry Level Stewardship (ELS), Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). The ELS is a voluntary, non-competitive scheme aimed at encouraging farmers to carry out a basic level of environmental management. Participants may choose from a range of management options which can include hedgerow and stone wall maintenance, low input grassland, buffer strips and arable options. The OELS scheme is similar to ELS but aimed at farms already registered with an approved Organic Inspection Body. HLS is a more complex scheme which requires farmers and land managers to seek advice and support. Entry to HLS is discretionary and a wide range of management options are on offer which are targeted to support key features of the different areas of the countryside.

7.6.4 Applicants to the HLS scheme are required to submit a Farm Environment Plan (FEP). This is a structured survey of all the environmental features on a farm and involves identifying any features which may have an historic, wildlife, resource protection, access and landscape interest and assessing their condition. Natural England's guidance to those carrying out a FEP requires that the relevant Historic Environment Record be consulted at an early stage in order that key features should be identified and their condition assessed. Where it is available applicants are also required to obtain HLC data which will go some way in providing a context to the landscape from an historic environment perspective. What is more the use of HLC in FEPs need not be confined to the traditionally historic elements; it may provide guidance on semi-natural habitats, including identifying former habitats through the previous layers. Following submission of a FEP applications are assessed to see how they meet the environmental priorities identified in their local area.

7.6.1 HLC has now become firmly embedded within the Environmental Stewardship's HLS process. There is however a need for those responsible for assessing FEPs and approving HLS schemes to have a sound understanding of HLC and concepts relating to landscape character.

## **7.7 Woodland Grant Schemes**

7.7.1 The English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) is the Forestry Commission's main scheme for providing financial support. The stated primary objectives of the scheme are to create and manage woodlands and to

sustain and increase the delivery of public benefits. The scheme is supported by the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) which is a mechanism for delivering funds from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Following submission of an application for funding the Forestry Commission has agreed to consult with local authorities and other statutory organisations to gather views on what the impacts of certain types of application are likely to be. Consultees will normally include the relevant historic environment service who will examine applications against HER and HLC data and where appropriate suggest amendments or make objections to schemes.

7.7.2 To ensure such advice is as reasonable as possible, it might be appropriate for the Historic Environment Team to use HLC and any supporting material, such as landscape histories that have included appraisal of woodland development. In addition to the forests, chases and parks this would include hunting coverts, spinneys and farmland woods and would assist in the development of strategies for woodland creation that are sensitive to the potential of the county's historic landscape.

## **7.8 Parish Plans**

7.8.1 Many rural communities have over recent years been involved in the production of parish plans. In Leicestershire the parish plan process will typically receive support through the Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland) (RCC) to which Leicestershire County Council provides financial support. The formulation of these plans will often involve an extensive consultation process with the intended purpose being to identifying the needs of a community. By recognising and articulating these needs an intelligently constructed parish plan may serve as an initial stepping stone and a basis for further grant applications.

7.8.2 Parish plans should include a concise action plan that prioritises the issues raised during the consultation process. The plan should then produce proposals as to how local groups may form partnerships, either with each other or with outside bodies, outlining a strategy for tackling these issues. The parish plan process, where successful, has led to direct action by many communities seeking ways to improve their local area and improve the way that services are managed.

7.8.3 A good parish plan will include and be informed by a Village Design Statement the purpose of which is to act as an aid in managing change appropriately. The Village Design Statement sets out to influence the way in which the statutory planning system operates at a local level, though their approval as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The Village Design Statement provides a context for any new development based on an identification and analysis of local character. It is in this provision of context that HLC can prove to be an essential data set. Many Village Design Statements have in the past, quite understandably, focused upon the areas of settlement within a parish. Whilst the LLR HLC will help in providing a thorough examination of areas of settlement it can also place these into a

wider context giving us a detailed examination of the surrounding area. With the support of a Village Design Statement a parish plan can address many social, economic or environmental issues, including housing, transport, local parks and green spaces and building projects.

## **7.9 Conservation Areas: Appraisals and Management**

7.9.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local authorities to designate as conservation areas any ‘...areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’. Best Value Performance Indicators (BV 219 a, b and c) introduced in 2005/6 require that conservation area appraisal and management of conservation areas be consistent with guidance published by English Heritage. English Heritage’s current guidance regarding conservation area appraisals explicitly states that characterisation studies should be used to assist in the identifying and analysing the character of an area.

7.9.2 English Heritage’s *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas* (2006) notes that

Understanding an area’s distinctive historic character and how it came to be as it is, is one of the starting points for deciding its future. Characterisation can help to develop an appreciation of an area as the basis for making sustainable decisions on managing change within it. The aim of most historic landscape characterisation studies is to define the distinctive historic dimension of today’s urban and rural environment within a given area and its capacity for change, through mapping, describing, analysing and understanding the landscape. Characterisation can assist with conservation area appraisals by providing the landscape context of settlements and helping to identify and analyse different ‘character areas’ or zones within large and/or complex areas.

7.9.3 It is likely that the input of HLC mapping will become increasingly important in the formulation and revision of conservation area appraisals since its use provides the ability to furnish an area with a wider landscape context. It is often the case that the character of an historic settlement HLC will be useful not simply for proposing new conservation areas but also for amending the boundaries of existing ones and for monitoring change within them. HLC may also encourage those responsible for managing the conservation area to consider more pro-active management to enhance historic character.

## **7.10 Capacity or Sensitivity Mapping**

7.10.1 One of the potentials for HLC is the use of the mapped data to produce capacity or sensitivity maps. Landscape capacity has been defined as “...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” (Swanwick 2002). Landscape sensitivity on the other hand “...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” (Swanwick 2004).

7.10.2 Through a process of scoring individual HLC Types with reference to particular types of landscape change it is possible to produce a suite of capacity or sensitivity maps. Each of the maps would relate to a particular form of landscape change such as built development, minerals extraction, windfarms or woodland plantation schemes and work probably on a three or five point scale indicating the most to least suited areas for a scheme to take place. Sensitivity or capacity maps using the HLC as base data should be treated as indicative rather than prescriptive so that even in areas indicated as being particularly sensitive or having a low capacity for change there may be cases where an appropriate mitigation strategy might enable development to take place.

7.10.3 Some trial work on capacity mapping using LLR HLC data has taken place in relation to the woodland plantation schemes sponsored by the National Forest. The methodology employed for this exercise drew heavily from one outlined within *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity* produced by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage. The trial appears to have produced positive results although some further work ground truthing of the validity of the results is likely to be required.

7.10.4 English Heritage will, during 2010, be issuing guidance on the use of HLC in assessing sensitivity and capacity of the historic landscape to accommodate change. It is anticipated that the method outlined above and used for the National Forest will fit well with the main elements of this guidance. Sensitivity and capacity should be judged on the basis of the predictable effects or impacts of a scenario (such as woodland planting) the vulnerability of an HLC type to those effects (or the capacity of an HLC type to benefit from them) and finally the significance or value of the HLC type in relation to those effects.

## **7.11 Green Infrastructure**

15.11.1 Green infrastructure is a term which has been gaining popularity in recent years and is used to refer to the “...network of greenspaces and natural element that intersperse and connect our cities, villages and towns” (East Midlands Green Infrastructure Network). The cities of Leicester, Derby and Nottingham along with the surrounding counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire collectively form the 6Cs Growth Point which is one of 29 areas nationally proposed under the Sustainable Communities Plan for significant growth. The 6Cs Growth Point Green Infrastructure Strategy has the objective of protecting, enhancing and extending networks of green spaces and natural elements within the 6Cs area. To achieve this

objective it is envisaged that there will be a need to create new assets to link with river corridors, woodlands, nature reserves, urban spaces, historic sites and other existing assets. It would probably be beneficial at the initial stages of such projects to recognise that they will sit within the context of the wider landscape in general and that they are not just connecting cultural assets but passing through one. HLC can aid in the provision of this context and inform how projects might relate to or affect (including enhancing) the character of the historic landscape.

## **7.12 Outreach**

7.12.1 The information that has been produced through the HLC process has significant potential within the sphere of heritage outreach. Within the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland HLC project area there is a significant number of active local history and archaeological interest groups. Many of these groups undertake their own research projects often focused upon a single parish. For any group wishing to gain a better understanding of their parish origins and of the landscape history of the surrounding area then HLC data coupled with information from the Historic Environment Record will provide an extremely useful starting point or framework for more particular research. HLC is easily presentable at a parish level and providing local interest groups with a relevant set of HLC maps combined with HER output should be a relatively simple task. It should also be possible to produce some form of information pack or “toolkit” explaining characterisation, and how anyone who is interested, may be able to recognise features in the landscape that reveal or provide clues to the various processes of landscape change. Any information pack could also suggest ways in which groups or individuals could carry out their own research or fieldwork; this might include documentary research, earthwork survey, mapping of ridge and furrow, fieldwalking or a hedgerow species count.

7.12.2 It should be expected that the larger scale and more detailed work undertaken at parish and other local levels would lead to some revision of interpretation of the HLC and perhaps also division of types as appropriate. Researchers should be encouraged not to regard HLC as an inviolable or fixed set of historic truths, but instead as a set of initial interpretations that should stimulate further work that may either reinforce those interpretations or lead to their adjustment.

7.12.3 The development of such an initiative is likely to achieve positive dividends in so far as it will help people achieve a more developed and informed understanding of their local environment and enrich their sense of place. It should be expected that this would in turn feed into closer involvement in the place’s future, perhaps through parish plans and Village Design Statements. Facilitating local research is also likely to result in new information being fed back to the HER which in turn can have benefits in informing the planning process.

7.12.4 The potential of HLC as an educational resource has also yet to be fully realised. In a similar vein to the information packs or ‘toolkits’ outlined

above it might also be possible to produce a set of documents that could act as an educational resource for schools and youth groups including the Young Archaeologists Club. These packs might typically focus upon the area around a school and through the use of HLC and other supporting maps demonstrate the processes of change that the landscape has been through.

7.12.5 At Key Stage 2 within the National Curriculum when studying history pupils are asked to investigate "...how an aspect of their local area has changed over a long period of time or how the locality was affected by a significant national or local event or development" (Department for Education and Employment 1999). At Key Stage 3 pupils learning geography are required to develop a knowledge and understanding of places and be able to explain the "...physical and human features that give rise to the distinctive character of places" and "...explain how and why changes happen in places, and the issues that arise from these changes" (Department for Education 1999). These are just two examples of areas in which HLC may be incorporated at a local level into the National Curriculum. In 2000 English Heritage produced *Power of Place: The Future of the Historic Environment*; contained within the document are a number of recommendations seeking to place the historic environment at the heart of education. These recommendations include the need to place an emphasis on the role of the historic environment in teacher training and to develop the relevant skills in the subject. *Power of Place* also notes that the study of history should take into account the physical environment and that the historic environment is also related to geography, environmental science, art and design. It is argued that teachers need to be provided with resources for field study; A "toolkit" focusing upon the historic environment with HLC information at its heart could well be one such resource.