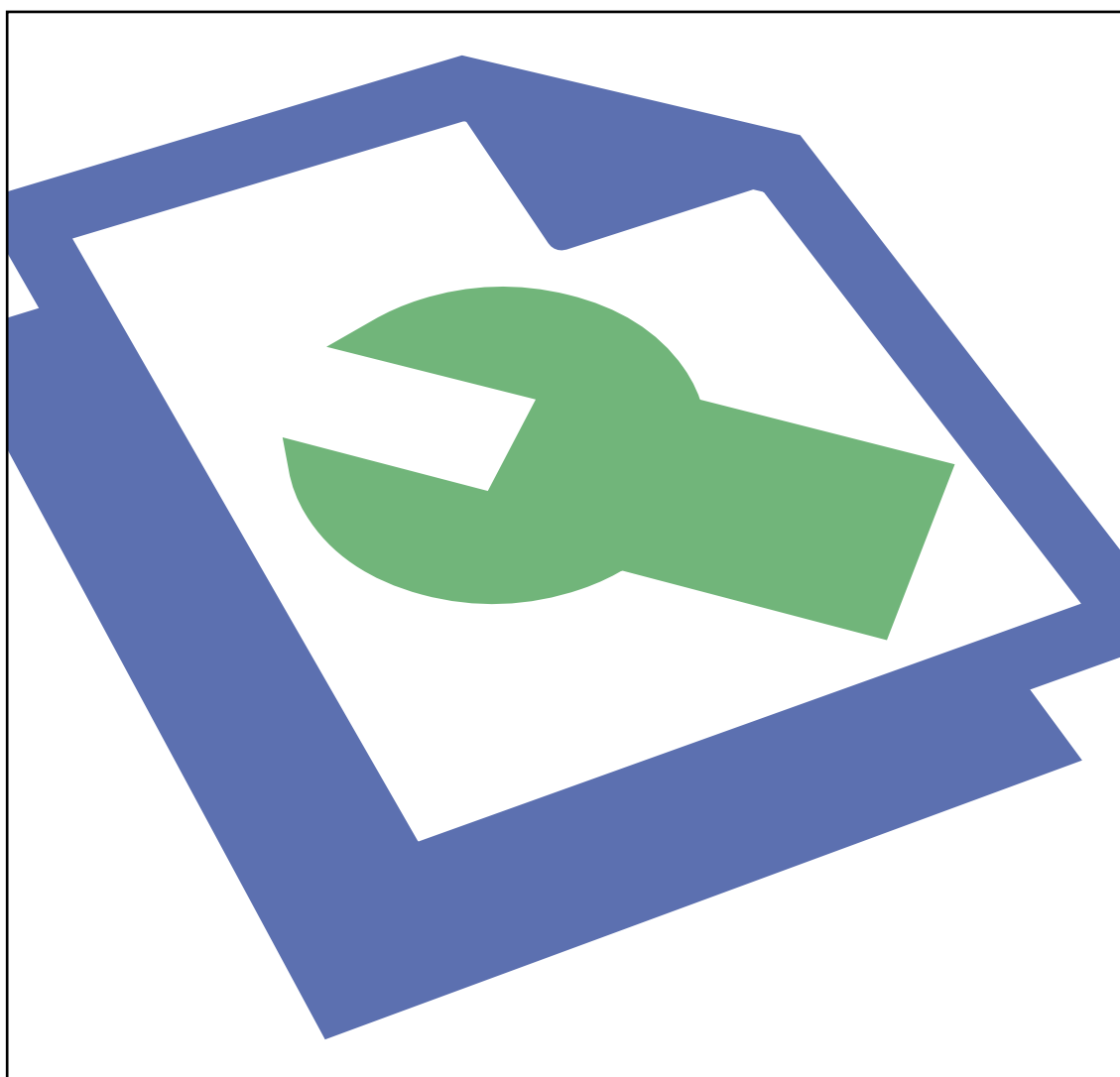


CCN Workshop

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER IN AND AROUND
URBAN AREAS**



WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

12th July 2005 • 9.30am - 3.30pm (approx)
Austin Court, Birmingham



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Countryside Character Network Workshop

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER IN AND AROUND URBAN AREAS

Austin Court, 80 Cambridge Street,
Birmingham B1 2NP

12th July 2005

9.30am - 4.00pm

Chair:

Jeremy Whitehand, The University
of Birmingham

Countryside:

Jonathan Porter,
Network Coordinator -
jonathan@countryside.org

Gavin MacDonald,
Network Administrator -
gavin@countryside.org

9.30 Registration and Refreshments

10.00 **Welcome and chair's address**
Jeremy Whitehand, The University
of Birmingham

10.10 **An Introduction to Landscape
Character In and Around Urban
Areas**

Christine Tudor, The Countryside
Agency Landscape, Access and
Recreation division

10.30 **'A Character Assessment of Oxford
in its Landscape Setting': Taking it
Forward**

Steve Pickles, Oxford City Council

10.40 Refreshments

11.00 **English Heritage, the Historic
Environment and Urban
Characterisation**

Roger M Thomas, English Heritage

11.25 **Historic Landscape Characterisation
in an Urban Context: the Black
Country**

Mike Shaw and Debbie Langley,
Wolverhampton City Council

11.55 Chaired discussion

12.30 Lunch

14.00 **From Urban Character to Urban
Form**

Penny Boyes, LDA Design

14.25 **Approaches to Urban
Characterisation: Concepts and
Applications**

Karl Kropf, Roger Evans Associates

14.50 Chaired discussion

15.30 Refreshments and close

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

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



Chair:

Jeremy Whitehand, The University of Birmingham
j.w.r.whitehand@bham.ac.uk

J W R Whitehand graduated and later took his PhD and DSc at the University of Reading. After appointments in the Universities of Newcastle upon Tyne and Glasgow, he moved in 1971 to the University of Birmingham, where he founded the Urban Morphology Research Group in 1974 and is currently Professor of Urban Geography. He was a member of the Council of the Institute of British Geographers, 1977/80, Honorary Editor of the Institute of British Geographers quarterly journal *Area*, 1977/80, Chairman of the Institute of British Geographers Urban Geography Study Group, 1981/4, Secretary of the Editorial Board of the Institute of British Geographers Special Publications, 1981/5, a member of the Editorial Advisory Committee (later the Publications Committee) of the Royal Geographical Society, 1981/95, and a member of the Council of the Royal Geographical Society, 1994/5. He is a member of the Council of the International Seminar on Urban Form and Editor of the international journal 'Urban Morphology'. He has authored over 150 papers, on such topics as the diffusion of innovations, cycles in house building, the redevelopment of city centres and, especially, urban landscapes. His books include 'The Changing Face of Cities' (1987), 'The Making of the Urban Landscape' (1993), and 'Twentieth-Century Suburbs' (with C.M.H. Carr, 2001).

Speakers:

Christine Tudor, The Countryside Agency Landscape, Access and Recreation division
christine.tudor@countryside.gov.uk

Christine Tudor is a Policy Advisor in the Countryside Around Towns Team of the Countryside Agency. Following the launch of an evidence backed vision for the countryside in and around towns, the Team is now focusing on influencing others to realise the vision by pursuing good practice, multidisciplinary working, and by site by site improvements as well as via master plans, Area Action Plans etc.

Christine is a Landscape Architect (MLI). Her interest in landscape and environmental issues follows on from studying for a BA Hons in Geography with Geology (London Univ.), a Pg Dip in Local Planning (Lanchester Poly. Coventry), and an M Phil in Landscape Architecture (Edinburgh University). She is also a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. Before working for The Countryside Agency, Christine worked in local government, and the private and voluntary sectors.

Steve Pickles, Oxford City Council
spickles@Oxford.gov.uk

Steve Pickles has worked in Planning Policy at Oxford City Council since 1989. He deals with environmental issues; sport and recreation; health & hospitals; and education. He was a member of the steering group overseeing the production of "A Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting", and has worked closely with Land Use Consultants and Christine Tudor of the Countryside Agency on its production.

Roger M Thomas, English Heritage
RogerM.Thomas@english-heritage.org.uk

Roger M Thomas is Head of Urban Archaeology at English Heritage. Roger studied archaeology at the Universities of Southampton and Cambridge before joining the newly-formed English Heritage in 1984. He took up his present post in 1997. His current responsibilities include managing English Heritage's national programme of historic characterization studies for urban areas.

Roger is a Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and a Visiting Lecturer in the University of Oxford. He is also a barrister, having been called to the Bar in 2004 following a period of legal study.



Speakers: (Continued)

Mike Shaw and Debbie Langley, Wolverhampton City Council
mike.shaw@wolverhampton.gov.uk
debbie.langley@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Mike Shaw is the Project Manager for the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) and Debbie Langley is the Project Officer. Both come from an archaeological background. The project is based within Wolverhampton City Council but covers the whole of the Black Country.

Mike studied Ancient History and Archaeology at Birmingham University. He has been in post as the Black Country Archaeologist since 2000. Before this he undertook a survey of the historic towns of Cheshire and was for many years a Senior Archaeologist for initially Northampton Development Corporation and then Northamptonshire County Council. He is a Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

Debbie has a BA in Archaeology and Medieval Studies from the University of Wales, Lampeter and a MA in Archaeological Heritage Management from the University of York. Before undertaking the Black Country HLC she worked for Hampshire County Council as an Assistant Archaeologist.

Penny Boyes, LDA Design
penny.boyes@lda-design.co.uk

Penny Boyes BSc(Hons), DipLA, MLI, is a Principal Consultant at LDA Design and has 12 years experience in landscape architecture, landscape planning and masterplanning. Penny has a particular expertise in urban landscape planning, specifically in projects relating to sustainable communities and environmental regeneration. Currently she is project manager of key environmental infrastructure projects in the Thames Gateway and pioneering green grid planning work. Penny is also a CABI Space Enabler and has been advising Ashford on the production of their Green Space Strategy. She is also currently involved in the masterplanning the expansion of settlements including Southend-on-Sea, Lincoln and Leicester.

Karl Kropf, Roger Evans Associates
kkropf@rogerevans.com

Karl Kropf is a Senior Associate with Roger Evans Associates where he is head of spatial planning and research. He is currently involved in a number of projects applying character analysis to urban areas and is a co-author of Topic Paper 7 on Landscape Character Assessment and New Development, now in preparation.

He initially studied landscape architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, following which he undertook an MA in Urban Design at Oxford Brookes University. He subsequently completed a PhD by research in Urban Morphology focusing on the description and prescription of urban form.

He has extensive experience in settlement design and design guides for local authorities in the UK and abroad. His academic work on the theory and practice of using the built environment as a design resource is widely published and he is Associate Editor of the international journal 'Urban Morphology'.



List of Attendees

Kay Adams	Entec
Ruth Benson	Wrexham County Borough Council
Penny Boyes	LDA design
Anthony Brown	David Tyldesley and Associates
Nicola Brown	David Huskisson Associates
Eamonn Byrne	Tíros Resources Limited
David Carman	Hampshire County Council
Gary Ellis	Derbyshire County Council
Richard Elston	English Nature
Jonathan Felton	The Countryside Agency L.A.R.
John Finlay	Manchester Metropolitan University
David Green	Buckinghamshire County Council
David Green	Jacobs Babtie
Andrew Green	The Countryside Agency L.A.R.
Ian Houlston	LDA Design
John Howe	Joint Strategic Planning & Transportation Unit
Yueh-Ying Huang	Hankinson Duckett Associates
Anne Jacob	Nottingham City Council
Natasha Jones	Cooper Partnership
Louise Jones	The Landscape Partnership
Stephen Kirkpatrick	Chris Blandford Associates
Rebecca Knight	Land Use Consultants
Steve Knott	Cooper Partnership
Christoph Kratz	The Countryside Agency L.A.R.
Karl Kropf	Roger Evans Associates
Debbie Langley	Wolverhampton City Council
Emma-Jane Lee	Taunton Deane Borough Council



List of Attendees (Continued)

Gavin MacDonald	Countryside
Robert Malcomson	
Fiona McKenzie	CPM
Richard Morrish	Richard Morrish Associates
Allan Moss	Allan Moss Associates Ltd
Pantoula Nikolakaki	
Petula Neilson	Vale Royal Borough Council
Mary O'Connor	White Young Green
Peter Phillips	Test Valley Borough Council
Steve Pickles	Oxford City Council
Jonathan Porter	Countryside
Rachel Price	Oxford City Council
Charlotte Riggs	Swindon Borough Council
David Scully	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Mike Shaw	Wolverhampton City Council
Jemma Simpson	Countryside
Mike Spence	MSEnvironmental
Stas Tereszczuk	Jacobs Babbie
Roger M Thomas	English Heritage
Russell Kenny	Lovejoy London
Christine Tudor	The Countryside Agency L.A.R.
Carol Warnock	Warwickshire County Council
Andrew Wharton	The Countryside Agency L.A.R.
Jeremy Whitehand	The University of Birmingham
Mike Wilkinson	English Nature
Mark Wilson	Hampshire County Council



'An Introduction to Landscape Character In and Around Urban Areas'

Christine Tudor, The Countryside Agency Landscape, Access and Recreation division

christine.tudor@countryside.gov.uk

Christine Tudor is a Policy Advisor in the Countryside Around Towns Team of the Countryside Agency. Following the launch of an evidence backed vision for the countryside in and around towns, the Team is now focusing on influencing others to realise the vision by pursuing good practice, multidisciplinary working, and by site by site improvements as well as via master plans, Area Action Plans etc.

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Christine Tudor, The Countryside Agency Landscape, Access and Recreation division

An Introduction to Landscape Character In and Around Urban Areas'

No paper provided.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER IN AND AROUND URBAN AREAS



'A Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting': Taking it Forward

Steve Pickles, Oxford City Council
spickles@Oxford.gov.uk

Steve Pickles has worked in Planning Policy at Oxford City Council since 1989. He deals with environmental issues; sport and recreation; health & hospitals; and education. He was a member of the steering group overseeing the production of "A Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting", and has worked closely with Land Use Consultants and Christine Tudor of the Countryside Agency on its production.

Steve Pickles, Oxford City Council
'A Character Assessment of Oxford
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English Heritage, the Historic Environment and Urban Characterisation

Roger M Thomas, English Heritage

RogerM.Thomas@english-heritage.org.uk

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Roger is a Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and a Visiting Lecturer in the University of Oxford. He is also a barrister, having been called to the Bar in 2004 following a period of legal study

Roger M Thomas, English Heritage English Heritage, the Historic Environment and Urban Characterisation

- Current English Heritage (EH) approaches to the historic environment have their roots in Power of Place (2000) and The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future (2001).
- Both documents take a holistic view of the historic environment, and advocate characterisation as a way of approaching the historic environment.
- 'Historic' characterisation has links with the philosophy of sustainability.
- Characterisation can be contrasted in certain important respects with designation (e.g. listing of historic buildings and scheduling of ancient monuments).
- EH has invested heavily in urban characterisation in recent years.
- EH's 'Extensive Urban Survey' programme has looked particularly at 'small towns', focussing especially on how their character is shaped by the evolution of their topography.
- The Cornwall and Scilly Urban Survey (part-funded by Objective 1) has defined character areas for eighteen Cornish towns, and illustrated and described the character of each area.

- The extensive Urban Survey reports are beginning to be made available over the Internet by the Archaeology Data Service: <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>
- Especially for large industrial towns, a modified version of EH's Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) approach is proving valuable, in Lancashire for example.
- Work on whole metropolitan areas (Merseyside, the Black Country, South Yorkshire) is also under way.
- Analysis of the relationship between the 'pre-urban' agricultural landscape and the urban landscape has revealed interesting contrasts between different parts of Liverpool.
- Work is also taking place on the environs of existing urban areas: areas which are likely to become urban in the future.
- Analysis of the historic landscape in the London-Stansfeld-Cambridge growth area has helped to indicate the character, time-depth, value and sensitivity to change of the landscape. This kind of analysis can help to indicate where future growth might be placed.
- Other similar work is looking at the environs of Milton Keynes.
- Historic urban characterisation helps us to understand the evolution of the urban landscape, and enables us to contribute to shaping its future.

For more information, see:

www.english-heritage.org.uk/characterisation (the web pages of EH's Characterisation Team)

www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.4907

Or contact:

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July 2005



Historic Landscape Characterisation in an Urban Context: the Black Country

Mike Shaw and Debbie Langley, Wolverhampton City Council

mike.shaw@wolverhampton.gov.uk

debbie.langley@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Mike Shaw is the Project Manager for the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) and Debbie Langley is the Project Officer. Both come from an archaeological background. The project is based within Wolverhampton City Council but covers the whole of the Black Country.

Mike studied Ancient History and Archaeology at Birmingham University. He has been in post as the Black Country Archaeologist since 2000. Before this he undertook a survey of the historic towns of Cheshire and was for many years a Senior Archaeologist for initially Northampton Development Corporation and then Northamptonshire County Council. He is a Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

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Mike Shaw and Debbie Langley, Wolverhampton City Council

Historic Landscape Characterisation in an Urban Context: the Black Country

Introduction

- The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) covers the area of the four Black Country authorities (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton), around 36,000ha
- It is funded by English Heritage
- The project commenced in April 2004 and is due for completion in October 2006.

The landscape of the Black Country

- Geological background
- A landscape of extraction...
- ...and industry...
- ...led to a distinctive settlement pattern
- Changes in the 20th century

The project

- Is a desk-based exercise based upon a sophisticated purpose-built database and computerised mapping (GIS)
- The area is being divided into a series of character types. We estimate that around 12,000 character types will have been defined by the end of the project
- The data can be queried in a wide variety of ways and the results of the query displayed spatially within the computerised mapping (GIS)
- Once the Character Types have been completed areas of similar character types are divided into Character Areas. Wolverhampton has been divided into fifteen Character Areas.

Analysis

- Four pilot areas were studied in the initial part of the project revealing similarities but also significant differences in land use and settlement pattern
- Differences can still be recognised today but are more pronounced in the earlier periods

The next step...detailed HLC

- It is hoped that the Black Country HLC will act as a catalyst for more detailed historic landscape characterisation of areas where major changes are proposed.
- The first such detailed study - of the All Saints and Blakenhall Community Development Area in Wolverhampton - has recently been completed
- Also included was a Community consultation.

Influencing Change

- The Black Country HLC is not a purely academic exercise; the region is undergoing change and the intention is to ensure that the historic environment is embedded within this process



From Urban Character to Urban Form

Penny Boyes, LDA Design

penny.boyes@lda-design.co.uk

Penny Boyes BSc(Hons), DipLA, MLI, is a Principal Consultant at LDA Design and has 12 years experience in landscape architecture, landscape planning and masterplanning. Penny has a particular expertise in urban landscape planning, specifically in projects relating to sustainable communities and environmental regeneration. Currently she is project manager of key environmental infrastructure projects in the Thames Gateway and pioneering green grid planning work. Penny is also a CABE Space Enabler and has been advising Ashford on the production of their Green Space Strategy. She is also currently involved in the masterplanning the expansion of settlements including Southend-on-Sea, Lincoln and Leicester.

Penny Boyes, LDA Design

From Urban Character to Urban Form

1.0 Background

LDA Design has been at the forefront of the use of integrated landscape and townscape assessment since undertaking one of the first studies of its kind: the Gosport Study in 1996. This project illustrated how key features in the town within the landscape setting can be protected, enhanced and managed without the artificial distinction between 'landscape' and 'urban area'. This was at a time when there was no way of recognising special buildings that did not have special listings as part of the planning system. The assessment project gave all landscapes and townscapes at least some value that should be respected.

We believe that integrated landscape and townscape assessment has a strong role to play in the process of creating sustainable places. We have been advising clients on how development should take place in various parts of the country. In undertaking Thames Strategy East we used integrated characterisation by embracing the language and principles of urban design we used integrated characterisation as the basis for urban and landscape guidelines.

In association with the government's agenda for growth, we have also been involved in providing the evidence basis for how and where development should be located. At Cambridge we have used integrated landscape and townscape assessments as the basis for this.

2.0 Gosport

Gosport is located on the south coast of England, immediately west of Portsmouth. LDA Design was appointed by Gosport Borough Council and Hampshire County Council to integrate landscape and urban assessment methodologies and through this process to develop a new approach for analysing the landscape and townscape structures of complex urban areas and associated countryside and open land. This was on the basis that beyond the special buildings recognised by listings and the planning system there was a gap. It was recognised that 'the rest' was where most people lived and that this received no recognition.

2.1 Methodology

The methodology undertaken was as follows:

- Study of Statutory Plans
- Study of the historical development of Gosport
- Survey of landscape and townscape to produce landscape and townscape character types and areas; and assessment of urban form to achieve integrated understanding of the whole area.
- Identification of key areas: areas of special townscape and landscape; potential areas of special townscape and landscape; and special initiative areas to target for enhancement programme.

The outputs of the study recognised the importance of local distinctiveness and sense of place. The study was approved as supplementary planning guidance by Gosport Borough Council and its main use is for assisting the development control process in terms of relevant design considerations and the local context.

Resources could now target areas which had the greatest potential for benefiting from the limited resources of time, people and budgets.

3.0 Thames Strategy East

The Government has designated the Thames Gateway as a national and regional growth area and is committed to creating sustainable communities. The River Thames sits at the heart of the Thames Gateway. With the projected growth in population and jobs and the need for housing (one million new homes are required by 2016 in London and the South-east) and related infrastructure there is a unique opportunity to transform the Thames Gateway into a model of sustainable development for the 21st Century.

This is the first Strategy for the River Thames to



From Urban Character to Urban Form (continued)

provide integrated urban and landscape design guidelines that is underpinned by townscape, landscape and riverscape assessment. This assessment uses the language of urban form to provide guidance on how existing and proposed communities are to build over this vast area.

We were appointed to undertake this work in 2003 by Thames Estuary Partnership. The strategy is currently out to public consultation.

3.1 Methodology

Character of the River Thames

The river was divided into reaches based on character. Character was informed by studying a wealth of material including: topography, biodiversity, archaeology, built form and heritage, river crossings, access to the foreshore, flood areas, flood barrier locations, flood defences and public transport. The character types were based on land uses. Urban form was primarily studied through historic development plans, views/panoramas/river prospects, and landmarks.

The upper reaches of the river are urban and contained in character and the lower reaches are less constrained and estuarine in character. Some waterfront towns such as Gravesend and some villages of the marshes have strong character and association with the river. Other have very little latent character and little association with the river. The areas having the least sense of place have the greatest opportunity in design terms.

Production of Design guidance

The objectives of urban design used in the Strategy were taken from By Design, Urban Planning in the Planning System, Towards Better Practice, DETR/CABE, 2000. These objectives are: character, continuity and enclosure, quality of public realm, ease of movement, legibility, adaptability, and diversity. The purpose of the design guidance was to ensure that existing and proposed communities are built on the basis of the existing character and that all opportunities are sought to reinforce this. The other urban design objectives were similarly reflected in the design guidance.

The design guidance has produced sound guidance and visioning on creating sustainable places which not only promotes the form that new development should take but also how to adapt existing development so that it contributes to the image, legibility and sense of place.

4.0 Cambridge Setting Study

Cambridge has been protected by its green belt since 1940's. It is undoubtedly one of England's finest historical cities; however some qualities are fragile and irreplaceable. Whilst embracing the challenges posed by pressure for change and development, (RPG6 states that the Cambridge sub-region should plan for 22,000 new homes by 2016) the need to safeguard the special qualities of Cambridge is given very high weight when facing the planning challenges of the future.

The aim of the study was to provide information on the setting and special character of Cambridge in order to inform green belt release. LDA Design was appointed in 2002 by South Cambridge District Council to undertake this work.

4.1 Methodology

The first stage of the methodology was to describe and illustrate the factors that contribute to the special character of Cambridge. This included undertaking integrated character assessment to produce character types and areas with identifiable coherence and identity. An assessment of urban form was also made. Townscape and landscape role and function was assessed, using the Winchester Study methodology, which has been described in and implicitly endorsed by the Countryside Agency in their guidance. It was demonstrated that the separate character types and areas have a variable influence on the city and its settings.

The second stage of the methodology was to outline qualities to be safeguarded, and the third stage was to produce a vision for the city. The Vision was established as 'safeguarding the qualities and setting of the special character of Cambridge as a primary objective'.

The study identified a diversity of townscape, landscape and village character which is fundamental to the setting and special character of the City of Cambridge. It was demonstrated through character assessment work that there is a great deal of interdependence between landscape and townscape and development should occur in a positive and creative way to manage the balance between the two.

5.0 Summary

Urban characterisation has filled a gap which existed to provide a clear methodology to recognise every urban place, not only those areas that have special planning designations. Townscape

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER IN AND AROUND URBAN AREAS



From Urban Character to Urban Form (Continued)

and landscape assessment is also an invaluable tool for planning sustainable places and urban expansions to ensure a holistic development and management of resources. Integrated assessment and in particular townscape assessment should be integral to the urban design language and become part of the creative process of developing whole settlement and area visions.



Approaches to Urban Characterisation: Concepts and Applications

Karl Kropf, Roger Evans Associates kkropf@rogerevans.com

Karl Kropf is a Senior Associate with Roger Evans Associates where he is head of spatial planning and research. He is currently involved in a number of projects applying character analysis to urban areas and is a co-author of Topic Paper 7 on Landscape Character Assessment and New Development, now in preparation.

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He has extensive experience in settlement design and design guides for local authorities in the UK and abroad. His academic work on the theory and practice of using the built environment as a design resource is widely published and he is Associate Editor of the international journal 'Urban Morphology'.

Karl Kropf, Roger Evans Associates Approaches to Urban Characterisation: Concepts and Applications

Dimensions of Character

Characterisation should provide a multi-dimensional description that draws on a number of different disciplines.

Potential Dimensions

- Site/environment
- Form/space/fabric
- Use/activity/movement
- Control (ownership and occupation)
- Perception/response
- Construction
- Process/transformation

Key Dimensions

- Site/environment (Landscape Character Assessment)
- Form/space/fabric (urban morphological analysis)
- Use/activity/movement (land use and 'space syntax' analysis)
- Perception/response (Lynch, Cullen and others)

The Urban Fringe

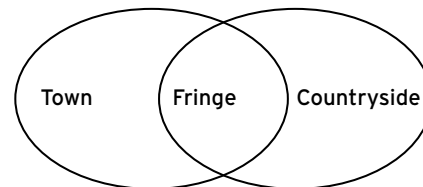
Characterisation should recognise the distinction between the town and its fringe elements that together form a major component of urban form.

The fringe is not simply the edge but is composed of a range of elements, for example:

- schools
- playing fields
- recreation grounds
- golf courses
- allotments
- nurseries
- cemeteries
- hospitals
- goods yards
- depots
- industrial estates

These tend to be located at the periphery and along linear features in periods of low growth. Historic fringe 'belts' and 'corridors' become embedded in the urban fabric after periods of growth.

The fringe is part of both countryside and town and mediates between the two.



Extended Attributes Of Urban Characterisation

The similarities between urban morphological analysis and landscape character assessment provides a means of extending the two and bringing them together.

LCA Attribute	Urban morphological Pattern
Geology	
Soils	
Topography/landform	
Settlement pattern	
	street/block pattern
	plot series/route pattern
Field pattern	plot pattern
	building pattern
	building type
Building details	constructional type
Building materials	material pattern

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER IN AND AROUND URBAN AREAS



Approaches to Urban Characterisation: Concepts and Applications (Continued)

Associations between landscape attributes and settlement attributes are key aspects of settlement character. An example is the topographic position of a settlement such as hilltop, hillside or valley

bottom. A range of potential associations is generated by setting landscape and settlement attributes against each other in a matrix.

settlement pattern						
street/block pattern						
plot pattern						
building pattern						
building type						
materials and details						
	energy budget/ climate	geology	soils	topography/ drainage	field pattern	land cover

Process and Application

The process of urban characterisation follows the same fundamental procedure as Landscape Character Assessment

- Desktop study
- Field survey
- Identification of character types and areas
- Written descriptions
- Report with plans and illustrations

The time dimension

Urban morphological analysis explicitly includes the time dimension through map regression analysis. A working hypothesis is that development from different periods will have different physical characteristics. Use of regression analysis helps in the identification of character types and area both for development of a particular period and for areas that have undergone significant transformation. The analysis also provides a basis for setting out the process of growth and historical significance of areas and features.

Application

Urban characterisation can aid the design process by:

- providing part of a base description of the site, surroundings and key features for consideration in exploring designs
- contributing to an understanding of the relationship between settlement and countryside and between areas within a settlement and the settlement as a whole
- identifying specific features and characteristics that new development should share with the existing settlement to maintain character
- identifying local design solutions within the settlement that can be adapted for new, planned development, accommodating contemporary needs and maintaining character

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER IN AND AROUND URBAN AREAS

**Discussion session notes**

Morning session

A delegate asked Christine Tudor at what stage in the production of the Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting study had public perception been used.

Christine Tudor replied that the public had been involved at three stages in the study process; early on to consult them on what they perceived as their neighbourhood and what made it distinctive, that is, its boundaries and the characteristics, with more consultations mid-way and at the end of the study. She stressed the importance of consultation in character studies.

A delegate who had been involved with the study, and had attended the public consultations, explained that Land Use Consultants had initially produced draft character areas, and these had been tested at public consultation. In some cases, suggestions for amendments to these maps that had emerged at public consultation had been taken on board.

Christine Tudor added that the workshops had been assisted by professional, independent facilitators from Berkshire Community Council.

Jeremy Whitehand commented that the issue of how a characterisation study incorporates the views of the general public is an important one, relating to points made by Roger M. Thomas in his presentation regarding the educational role of historic characterisation.

Christine Tudor stated that a GIS database had been produced by Land Use Consultants in parallel with the characterisation study, with the intention that Oxford City Council could use it with community groups in producing further, detailed studies on the city's character areas, for example Supplementary Planning Guidance, or Supplementary Planning Documents under the new planning system. Oxford City Council had publicized the GIS database in the local newspaper to try to stimulate interest in it among the local community.

A delegate asked Roger M. Thomas whether English Heritage has any intention of revisiting the urban areas covered in the earlier stages of their Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) programme. From the delegate's knowledge of Extensive Urban Surveys in Hampshire, these surveys have evolved from studies of archeological potential to something approaching characterisation studies: they are different projects from what they were originally.

Roger M. Thomas responded that English Heritage needs to survey all the places which have not had an EUS before any of the early studies are revisited. He added that the new generation of EUS projects do what the old ones did as well as characterisation, rather than being totally different. The lack of characterisation in the older studies will have to be addressed at some stage, but he could not say when.

A delegate asked Roger M. Thomas if it was worthwhile campaigning for the updating of already completed EUSs in particular areas, where the existing survey is of the older sort and does not include characterisation.

Roger M. Thomas replied that many local authorities wish to conduct local urban characterisation studies, often in connection with their Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), and this has meant that English Heritage has received many ad hoc requests for funding for work of this sort. English Heritage are trying to focus on large strategic programmes, and as such cannot accommodate requests of this sort. However, there are other possible sources of funding, like the Planning Delivery Grant, for projects connected with LDFs.

A delegate asked Roger M. Thomas about English Heritage's characterisation work in the Growth Areas, and whether or not gone as far as suggesting the way in which the form of new development should relate to historic development and the processes that had shaped it. Have they, for example, suggested that new development should retain the existing road pattern in order to maintain the character of the area, or would this be considered too prescriptive?

Roger M. Thomas responded that he has not been closely involved with the Growth Areas work, and as such did not know of any examples of this occurring. He added that a lot of the debate at the moment is about the growth pattern of urban areas, that is, where development should be located, rather than the finer details of individual schemes. However, he felt that now is the right time to press home the principle that by absorbing elements of existing character you can ensure distinctiveness and diversity in new development.

Christine Tudor added that the Countryside Agency is in the process of commissioning a visioning exercise as part of its Vision for the Countryside In and Around Towns. The Vision uses ten different themes to articulate the different

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Discussion session notes (Continued)

functions of the countryside in and around towns (for example 'bridge to the country', 'gateway to the town', 'recycling and renewable energy centre') and the new contract will explore how these areas might look, balancing issues like landscape character, permeability and sustainable transport networks. She added that Alan Ruff's 1970s work on ecological Landscapes has informed the way in which she sees the countryside in and around towns developing: ecologically rich, with green infrastructure and an interesting new architecture which rejects the homogenous styles of development seen in recent years.

A delegate commented that Government pressure for certain densities of development may make it difficult to ensure that new development always reflects local character.

Christine Tudor encouraged delegates to visit the Countryside In and Around Towns section of the Countryside Agency L.A.R. website, as all of the research commissioned is available there for download¹. Particularly she described a literature, policy and regulatory review on the urban fringe, produced for the Countryside Agency by the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London². This project looked at a number of specific themes in relation to the countryside in and around towns. When addressing housing, this report describes highly sustainable examples of terraced housing: this raises interesting questions about whether or not it is more appropriate to restore existing buildings or to demolish them and begin again.

Jeremy Whitehand commented that this relates to the wider issue of how we go from 'is' to 'ought' - 'this is the situation - what ought to be the situation?' He asked Mike Shaw and Debbie Langley if they had any examples from the Black Country which illustrate how a Historic Landscape Characterisation study can inform new development.

Mike Shaw responded that there was a prevalent lay opinion in the Black Country that much of the built environment could be torn down and started anew. However, he and his colleagues are working to ensure that the Black Country survey considers the environment as a whole, and that the historic environment is considered within that.

The industrial settlements he used to illustrate his presentation have coalesced, and people driving through the Black Country will perceive it as one massive urban sprawl, but detailed inspection reveals that these areas do still retain local character and distinctiveness, and evidence has shown that local people do appreciate that character.

Christine Tudor responded that it is important to consider the views of the public. It is a matter of concern that most of the conferences about growth areas, area renewal, pathfinder areas and so on are priced in such a way that members of the communities who will actually be affected by these initiatives will be unable to attend. She described how she regretted that the predominately urban area she had grown up in, an area of late Georgian / early Victorian terraced housing in Stoke, had been largely demolished in the 1970s as a consequence of the 1957 Housing Act, without any form of public consultation. She felt that this type of housing and the community it had catered for would have been considered highly sustainable by the terms of the recent Bartlett School of Planning study, previously referred to. She felt also that there was currently a danger that ODPM's Sustainable Communities Plan might lead, similarly, to the demolition of existing housing that has value to the communities, and that is important to the character and sense of place in these areas. She indicated that although much of Bath has been conserved, some areas were lost in the push to "modernize".

Roger M. Thomas responded that a great deal of artisan housing in Bath had in fact been lost: most of what was retained was grander, affluent terraces.

Jeremy Whitehand remarked that these comments highlight the fact that previously what has been preserved and what has been demolished has often been a question of social class. Birmingham had also suffered the loss, on a massive scale, of the sort of housing Christine Tudor had described as being sustainable.

Christine Tudor stated that the views of the public should be paramount, and that hopefully the characterisation process and GIS technology will be able to help the public to articulate their opinions about development.

¹ <http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/CIAT/Index.asp>

² Gallent et al (2003) [Urban Fringe - Policy, Regulatory and Literature Research: 2003/2004](#).

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Discussion session notes (Continued)

A delegate asked the panel about their experience of working on urban fringe initiatives with development agencies, whose agendas are very much economically driven. Had the panel found development agencies to be receptive or resistant to characterisation?

Roger M. Thomas replied that although he was not directly involved in the development process, he had observed that the approach is gaining widespread acceptance with development and regeneration agencies: he described a recent meeting with English Partnerships where they had proved very responsive to characterisation, asking how they could best work with it rather than whether or not it was worth doing. He felt that there was a growing recognition amongst development and regeneration agencies that new development, whilst necessary, should not repeat the mistakes of the 1960s and 1970s and eradicate what was there previously. Characterisation is possibly seen by such agencies as a way of brokering that dilemma, of creating new places while respecting history and distinctiveness.

Mike Shaw responded that from his experience in the West Midlands, development and regeneration agencies are interested in particular designated areas of renewal, like housing market renewal areas. For example, Advantage West Midlands put money into a study of the housing market renewal area in Sandwell, but that study couldn't be extended out to cover the whole of Sandwell or the whole of the Black Country.

Christine Tudor added that the Countryside Agency North West office has commissioned a study on the functional characterisation of urban fringe areas in the transpennine corridor, with a view to developing a methodology³.

A delegate responded that this raised an important issue regarding the creation of green access and recreation networks that link open spaces whilst also achieving biodiversity goals. The delegate asked the panel if this holistic approach is being incorporated into existing urban characterisation methodologies.

Mike Shaw responded that the Black Country HLC covers only the historic environment, but the HLC team are forming an environment group for the Black Country with other environmental bodies.

Christine Tudor responded that there is a great deal of activity nationally in the area of green networks. For example, the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW/CCGC) has produced a toolkit concerning green infrastructures and access and the Countryside Agency East Midlands Regional Office has commissioned "Planning Sustainable Communities - A Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes and the South Midlands", which promotes landscape characterisation as part of the green infrastructure toolkit: hard copies of this guide are available from the Countryside Agency⁴. She asked Steve Pickles if Oxford had progressed with their intention to conduct a green waterways strategy on the back of the Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting.

Steve Pickles responded that as far as he knew there hasn't been a lot of progress with the green waterways strategy in Oxford, but Oxford City Council are separately conducting a green spaces strategy which shortly be producing a draft report, and this will hopefully build on the character assessment.

Christine Tudor added that detailed character assessments and similar studies should pick up on where open spaces are, and from this data it should be possible to support green space strategies.

Roger M. Thomas commented that this demonstrated the versatility of using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to superimpose other datasets onto characterisation studies: he cited a project which had mapped indices of social deprivation onto historic character maps of Lancashire towns, producing useful patterns and correlations.

Christine Tudor added that the work that Bartlett School of Planning had conducted for the Countryside Agency had shown that there was a great deal of transport poverty in the Rural Urban Fringe, linked to areas of multiple deprivation. The edges of the cities now need attention, because of the poor planning policies of the 1960s and 1970s.

Jeremy Whitehand commented that the key word is integration: one of the great flaws with planning in the 1960s and 1970s was that it did not involve integrated thinking.

³ Martin Moss is the contact at the Countryside Agency North West office for the study on the functional characterisation of urban fringe areas in the transpennine corridor. This work is being taken forward, with a view to developing a methodology, in the St. Helens Project.

⁴ Jim Lennon is the contact at the Countryside Agency East Midlands Regional Office for 'Planning Sustainable Communities - A Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes and the South Midlands'.

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Discussion session notes (Continued)

Christine Tudor commented that multi-disciplinarity is key to integrated thinking.

A delegate commented that much of the discussion had been from the policy-making side of the equation. Private practitioners working for developers often have to respond to policies that have requirements for characterisation studies, or landscape and visual impact assessments, but there do not appear to be any effective mechanisms for implementing the results of characterisation into the design of developments, and integrating development into the existing landscape character of an area. From the examples of development in Oxford described in the morning presentations, it was not obvious how developers are being required to respond to the results of the Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting study. The delegate added that she thought one of the problems with characterisation is that it can be a force for conservatism, leading to top down, prescriptive development policies based on existing landscape and historic character. This is not useful at the individual development scale, particularly in those de-industrialised areas, such as the Black Country and South Wales, where the essential character of the area was created by industries that have now disappeared. The delegate commented that she felt developers should instead be required to give reasons and justification for what they are proposing, for how they draw on and respond to characterisation studies, rather than imposing character from the top down.

Jeremy Whitehand asked the delegate if she meant that in situations like the Black Country and parts of South Wales, where there has been very extensive clearance and the residuals coming up from the past are very slight, that more initiative should be with the developer to come up with creative responses.

The delegate responded that this was not necessarily what she meant, rather that it is a matter of how policies derived from characterisation are framed.

Steve Pickles replied that the Oxford study had assessed each character area's sensitivity to change, but it also fully recognizes that change is inevitable in all character areas.

Furthermore, while Oxford City Council's local plan policy states that the character of new development should relate to its context, it does not seek to rule out innovative developments. There is a focus in some areas towards conservatism, but there is also the need to accept change, sometimes radical and innovative change.

Christine Tudor cited Cambridge as a good example of an urban area balancing the accommodation of innovative new development whilst respecting existing character. She added that characterisation is about managing change, working with the grain rather than against it. Regarding the previous point about working with characterisation at the individual development scale, landscape character can feed into the creation of design briefs and Concept Statements.

A delegate asked the panel how GIS information can be made available beyond the authorities and bodies that produce it: for example, many of the LANDMAP studies of Wales are in GIS format, but they are not easily accessible. With all the emphasis on GIS representation of the information, how can it be made more easily available to the people who are required to respond to it?

Mike Shaw responded that the Black Country survey, when completed, could be made available through websites such as the Archeology Data Service⁵. However, he agreed that the point that GIS data is often difficult to obtain is well made. It is possible to present a certain number of searches and queries available via an interactive website, but it is important to make the entire database available to anyone who has the expertise to interrogate it.

Roger M. Thomas commented that GIS access over the web is becoming easier and more feasible. Equally, there is no reason why the GIS shape files should not be put on a CD and supplied to developers and consultants. He added that he would encourage anybody who held GIS information to be prepared to share it.

A delegate commented that The Freedom of Information act may have implications for the availability of GIS information.

⁵ <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>

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**Discussion session notes (Continued)**

Christine Tudor stated she had made the GIS data for the Oxford in its Landscape Setting study available to parties that had requested it.

A delegate stated that many HLCs, EUSs and urban characterisations are available on-line, embedded in sites and monuments records with county and district councils. He added that there has been a Heritage Lottery Fund initiative to put this type of data online, including GIS maps in a form that can be interrogated. To his knowledge, Devon and Buckinghamshire have recently put their HLC maps on line.

A delegate commented that with the wide range of spatial assessments that local authorities need to conduct, there is perhaps a danger of information overload, and in her experience it is increasingly difficult to integrate, interpret and summarise the different assessments in order to produce a simple message for decision makers. There is often limited officer time and expertise for GIS analysis. This will be a continuing and increasing problem, and generally there are no new resources being put into place within local authorities to deal with it.

A delegate commented that characterisation studies should perhaps develop in such a way that they define zones of transition, where major change may or may not take place.

Roger M. Thomas replied that rigidly defined lines are inevitable in surveys and assessments, as studies must terminate at some point. The rural-urban fringe is perhaps a continuum of the sort described, a supposed zone of transition, but even within the rural-urban fringe there will be discrete character areas. He stressed that it is vital to articulate the reasons for placing a boundary on a map: he cited the example of the Mendips where the AONB boundary follows the A39, the result of an apparently arbitrary decision as the landscape has the same character and quality both sides of the boundary. He added that at some scales, character areas will themselves be zones of transition: in the case of the Black Country HLC some of the character areas were mixes of terraced and detached housing. However, technologically there is a need for definite lines in a GIS to link to the polygons. He also felt that archaeologists are not as sophisticated at displaying uncertainty and fuzziness cartographically as they are in language.

Steve Pickles responded that if an area is a transitional zone then the character areas and their descriptions should take full account of this, so that any recommendations will consider the transition.

Jeremy Whitehand added that the issue of transitional characteristics within a character area depends on what scale the assessment is conducted. Detail picked up at a fine scale will become a blur at a coarse scale. This raises interesting questions regarding what landscape ecologists describe as nested hierarchies or containment hierarchies, so that within a character area there will exist sub-areas which may contain within them other sub-areas.

Roger M. Thomas replied that the HLC studies of Lancashire are a good example of this kind of approach: a county-scale assessment which deals with the urban areas at a large scale, and nested within that a more detailed representation of the towns.

A delegate asked Steve Pickles and Christine Tudor if the Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting had defined the rural-urban fringe as a distinct character area.

Christine Tudor replied that the study had defined several different character areas within the rural-urban fringe of Oxford.

Jeremy Whitehand agreed that there will be subdivisions within the urban fringe as a whole. He added that the forms of built development and characteristics of many urban areas derive from the fact that at some point, if not now, they were at the urban fringe.

A delegate who had worked for Land Use Consultants on the Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting stated that in her opinion, zones of transition are usually evident in rural Landscape Character Assessments over large areas where boundaries aren't necessarily obvious, whereas in urban characterisation boundaries are usually very clear cut: for example, in the case of the Oxford study there were very few difficulties defining boundaries around areas which were generally not zones of transition, and these were agreed at public consultation with little debate. She stated the project team had conducted a two-tier assessment where a large-scale characterisation of the whole of the landscape setting had been overlaid over the top of an urban characterisation, setting the urban in its landscape context. Responding to earlier points about the diversity of geographical information and the way in which it should be taken forward into guidance, she stated that there is definitely a role for integrated character assessments of urban areas that take into account extensive and intensive urban survey information, biodiversity information and the

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**Discussion session notes (Continued)**

underlying landscape. Integrated assessment of this sort will provide a format for guidance for managing change in urban areas, enabling developers to respond and produce developments that are forward looking but also respect sense of place.

A delegate asked Steve Pickles what methodology the Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting had been based on.

Steve Pickles responded that it had been based on the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritages 2002 Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland and the 1998 Winchester and its Setting study, conducted by Landscape Design Associates.

Christine Tudor added that the methodology for the Oxford study had evolved during the course of the study. The study had had two aims: firstly, to provide information that Oxford City Council could use in its draft local plan and development control, and secondly, to further the LCA methodology that the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage had produced so that it could be used for urban characterisation. She added that the Highways Agency and the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges had been considering townscape in producing guidance for strategic road infrastructure, but she was not sure what progress had been made.

A delegate asked the panel if the methodology for HLC was the same for both rural landscape and townscape areas.

Roger M. Thomas responded that broadly the methodology was the same for both types of areas, but not in the detail. Furthermore, HLCs differ from county to county because they have been produced over a decade or more. However, in broad terms they all do the same thing, that is, they define polygons on the basis of the historic character of the present day landscape.

Mike Shaw added that in his experience there was not a lot of difference other than the finer scale required for the historic characterisation of urban areas.

A delegate asked if two different data capture forms would be needed for assessing rural and urban landscapes.

A delegate responded that, from her experience, rural assessment data capture forms need adaptation for application in urban situations. She added that the two types of assessment should be complementary, but different in the detail.

Christine Tudor added that the Oxford Study had involved the development of data capture forms to consider key characteristics of urban areas such as street and block pattern, public/private realm interface, massing and enclosure. She recommended that assessors should not be constrained by form templates, and should be prepared to develop them when looking at complex urban areas.

A delegate commented that the project designs for both the urban and the rural HLCs are available from the English Heritage website, so it is possible to see the differences between those studies.

A delegate commented that while the principles behind LCA and urban character assessment are very much the same, and rural methodologies can be adapted by professionals for use in urban assessments, rural LCA has the 2002 Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland, whereas there is no single body of guidance for urban assessments. Work in this area is evolving quickly in different ways, and there is a need to pool together the various different methodologies being used, in order to develop guidelines for the character assessment of urban areas.

Jeremy Whitehand added that although a key factor in the development of urban characterisation has been rural characterisation, it should be remembered that there are many other ways of approaching and understanding urban areas.



Discussion session notes (Continued)

Afternoon session

A delegate asked Penny Boyes how characterisation relates to guidance in the Thames Strategy East. The Thames Strategy East comes up with some striking, impactful ideas, notably the suggestions for cable car crossings of the Thames, and it is difficult to see how this relates to the characterisation element of the study. Furthermore, there was no evidence provided that there was a need amongst locals for additional crossings. The delegate added that he thought that Thames Strategy East was very successful, and an example of good practice in urban characterisation.

Penny Boyes responded that some aspects of the Thames Strategy East are aspirational. There is a pronounced lack of connectivity between north and south bank in the area between Tower Bridge and Tilbury, and the cable car proposals reflected this. The first proposal, to have a cable car crossing linking the Millennium Dome and the Lee Valley, relates to considerations as to how people will get between venues during the 2012 Olympics. The second, aspirational, proposal is to link the Dartford Marshes with the London Riverside Conservation Park on the north bank. By thinking bigger it is possible to come up with creative solutions for the Thames Gateway's problems that would have been impossible thinking inwardly at the borough scale. Should these aspirational proposals be accepted, a full transport assessment would be carried out to see what the needs base would be.

A delegate asked Penny Boyes how Landscape Design Associates had balanced the brief and the client's aspirations for the Thames Strategy East with the actual budget set for the project.

Penny Boyes responded that it is a matter of working closely at the outset with the steering group to apportion time for each part of the project. Although factors will emerge as a project progresses, it is important to establish a solid base at the start and to then work to it. The Thames Strategy East project was well funded, but it was still important to spend time at the outset focusing on the desired outcomes and designing the project accordingly.

A delegate asked the panel what would constitute an ideal team for a characterisation exercise.

Karl Kropf replied that conducting an integrated urban and landscape characterisation, requires both a landscape professional and someone familiar with the urban environment and the history of

urbanisation: typically urban environments change in terms of period, so that is the simplest way to characterise them. Beyond these two key areas there may be a need to extend the team to include specialists within the fields of landscape or the urban environment: for example, there may be a need for a landscape ecologist, or someone whose expertise lies in movement within urban areas, or activities and uses.

Beyond this there is the potential for involving the local community, which may be dependant on budget and accessibility of information, that is, whether the study has been conducted by a local authority or as part of the development process on the part of the landowner or applicant. To a certain extent it is necessary to cut your cloth to suit your purpose: a study can expand exponentially in scope and become unworkable, so there is a balance that must be struck between the size of the team and purpose of the study.

A delegate asked if there was a role for graphic design and media specialists within characterisation teams.

Karl Kropf responded that he assumed that there would be graphic design and media specialists involved in the production of a characterisation study, and that many consultancies also have a graphics team, whose role is to ensure that the information contained in a characterisation study is put across in the most effective way. There has been a tendency in the past to rely on GIS outputs for the visual elements of a characterisation, but although GIS is an important tool it has its limitations graphically, so there is a role for designers in presenting complex GIS information in order to say something concise.

Penny Boyes responded that it is important to appoint a good project manager who can recruit and work with the various specialists required, and identify and involve key stakeholders. She added that for urban assessments it is vital to involve townscape and urban design input as well as landscape expertise.

A delegate asked the panel if urban and landscape characterisation would be an important tool in the Sustainability Appraisal process.

Karl Kropf responded that character is an important indicator for Sustainability Appraisals. Character is beginning to be built into the planning

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Discussion session notes (Continued)

process through Local Development Frameworks and Regional Spatial Strategies, and as such it will feed into sustainability objectives and indicators. He cited the example of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England as one in which character is well-placed. He stressed that in order to make character statements as useful as possible they need to be specific rather than generalized.

Penny Boyes responded that the new planning system as outlined in PPS1 requires a spatial basis for all planning policies. Townscape or landscape assessments are the most effective way of providing an evidence base for Local Development Frameworks.

Roger M. Thomas agreed that characterisation will be an important tool for sustainability appraisals. He added that sustainability appraisals are also required to consider the likely evolution of the landscape without the implementation of the plan under appraisal: it is necessary to understand the past evolution of a landscape or urban area in order to project this kind of scenario.

Christine Tudor agreed that characterisation, whether rural or urban, will provide a baseline against which to assess the environmental impact of plans and programmes.

A delegate commented that it is possible to interpret environmental baselines as not referring to current conditions, but the future condition of the environment if the existing policy is not altered.

Christine Tudor stated that it is still important to understand current conditions as a baseline, because even alternative future scenarios must be assessed against what currently exists.

A delegate commented that one of the problems of making characterisation an essential baseline component within LDFs is the timescale for their production. Those local authorities that do not already have a LCA and are in the process of producing a LDF will be unable to use characterisation within their sustainability appraisals or to incorporate landscape character within their planning policies.

A delegate asked Jeremy Whitehand about the urban morphology study of Ludlow he had referred

to earlier in his introduction. What was the nature of the characterisation process and are copies of the study available?

Jeremy Whitehand confirmed that the Ludlow study, by M. R. G. Conzen (1988), was available in print⁶. Although well known amongst urban morphologists, it is little known among planners. The idea of process was fundamental to the study, and it was embodied in the character areas it defined. Process, rather than referring simply to periodisation, relates to the way in which the town was created. This relates to earlier comments about older urban fringes, embedded and identifiable within urban areas. By articulating the process of development in a characterisation study it is possible to understand how societies in different points in time have contributed to that landscape. This has a significance beyond simply understanding how an urban area has developed in the past, it can help us plan for the future: the issue of how we go from 'is' to 'ought'.

Christine Tudor commented that this process might be described as evolution.

Jeremy Whitehand replied that he is cautious about the use of the word evolution as a metaphor within urban assessment, because of its strict biological sense.

Karl Kropf added that there is an important distinction between the process of an urban area's development and evolution: in biology, evolution operates on species, which can be thought of as analogous to landscape types, whereas development is something that occurs to an individual organism. Just as Landscape Character Assessment makes the distinction between Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas, so there is a distinction to be made between the process of growth or change in a particular area or town and the evolution of the types of ideas used when implementing development or change, that is, the processes by which particular urban environments develop. Ideas circulating at a particular time will be those that shape development on the ground, for example, current ideas held by highway engineers regarding what is an appropriate form of geometry for the street.

⁶ Conzen, M. R. G. (1988) 'Morphogenesis, morphological regions and secular human agency in the historic townscape, as exemplified by Ludlow', in Denecke, D. and Shaw, G. (eds.): *Urban Historical Geography: Recent Progress in Britain and Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 252-272

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Discussion session notes (Continued)

A delegate asked if it was possible to draw any conclusions from the day's presentations and discussion about the relationship between landscape characterisation and urban characterisation, and whether there are any identifiable actions to take forward in terms of different disciplines working together.

Jeremy Whitehand responded that Penny Boyes's reference to 'tweaking the methodology' of rural Landscape Character Assessment had caused him to consider whether something more fundamental was required. There may be inherent differences between rural and urban areas that make it necessary to do more than 'tweak' an existing methodology, perhaps even requiring the development of a different approach. Urban morphology's consideration of the processes of development, as outlined by Karl Kropf, may provide another direction with which to approach urban characterisation.

Penny Boyes agreed that rural and urban areas are very different, but added that there is no accepted guidance for townscape assessment. Rural Landscape Character Assessment provides a standard and respected method that can be adapted by professionals, using their judgement and understanding of the nature of urban areas.

Karl Kropf observed that this lack of a standard methodology for urban characterisation had been touched upon at several points in the days' discussion. He added that there is a need within the planning process to have a recognised methodology to refer to in case there is an appeal, such as Landscape Character Assessment can provide for rural areas. There is a self-reinforcing process where something that is recognised is increasingly referred to, thus become more recognised. From an urban design perspective there are a wide variety of approaches that can be referred to, but no one single approach has been identified as being the right one. He asked Roger M. Thomas whether English Heritage had a view about approaches to urban characterisation.

Roger M. Thomas that he was not in a position to say what the right answer is, but from his experience there is a disciplinary division within the study of the historic environment, between on the one hand the disciplinary tradition that deals with historic architecture, with a tendency to focus on the visual and aesthetic properties of architecture, and another tradition that approaches the historic environment on a landscape scale, with

a concern for plan and broad structure. These are very different mindsets, and they substantially have different people working in them. Within English Heritage there are groups of people who are very much inclined towards either the geographical or the art-historical traditions. There is a need to bring these two strands closer together before there is any approach to characterising the historic environment that won't be contested by conservation parties at public inquiry.

A delegate asked if an agreed methodology for urban characterisation fell within the scope of the Countryside Agency's LCA Topic Paper 7, currently under preparation, and whether Topic Paper 7 would include examples of good practice, for example the Thames Strategy East.

Karl Kropf responded that the material he had presented at the workshop drew on case studies and methodologies that are being included in Topic Paper 7. Regarding Thames Strategy East, he added that an employee of Landscape Design Associates is one of the authors of Topic Paper 7, so it will be informed by their work.

A delegate commented that landscape is commonly equated to countryside, hence the Countryside Agency's use of the term 'Countryside Character' to describe their LCA initiative. The delegate told the meeting that she preferred to not draw that distinction, preferring to consider countryside as rural landscapes and towns as urban landscapes. From this perspective, there is perhaps no need for a different approach when considering towns. The fundamental principles of analysis and design remain the same in rural and urban environments. Landscape Character Assessment is a specific methodology for conducting analysis and design, as is the Welsh LANDMAP methodology. The delegate also recommended the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment as another approach, one that describes guidelines for practitioners rather than a rigid methodology.

Christine Tudor agreed that it is important that such guidance documents are not mandatory or rigid methodologies: they are about encouraging good practice. She stressed the importance of developing methodologies that use such good practice guidance to produce assessments that are systematic and transparent.

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**Discussion session notes (Continued)**

A delegate told the meeting that the production of the second edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment had involved agreement on terminology with the Countryside Agency and SNH. The delegate hoped that a common, transparent language for urban characterisation would emerge from further discussion amongst practitioners. There is an emerging need for guidance for urban assessment: the Landscape Institute should perhaps be encouraged to produce such guidance, following a similar process to that which had produced the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. As the discussion and presentations at the workshop had demonstrated, there is obviously a large body of work available to draw on.