Document 6.2

The West Midlands Rail Freight Interchange Order 201X
Technical Appendix 12.3 - Published Assessments – Relevant Extracts
Regulation 5(2)(a)

West Midlands Interchange

Four Ashes Ltd

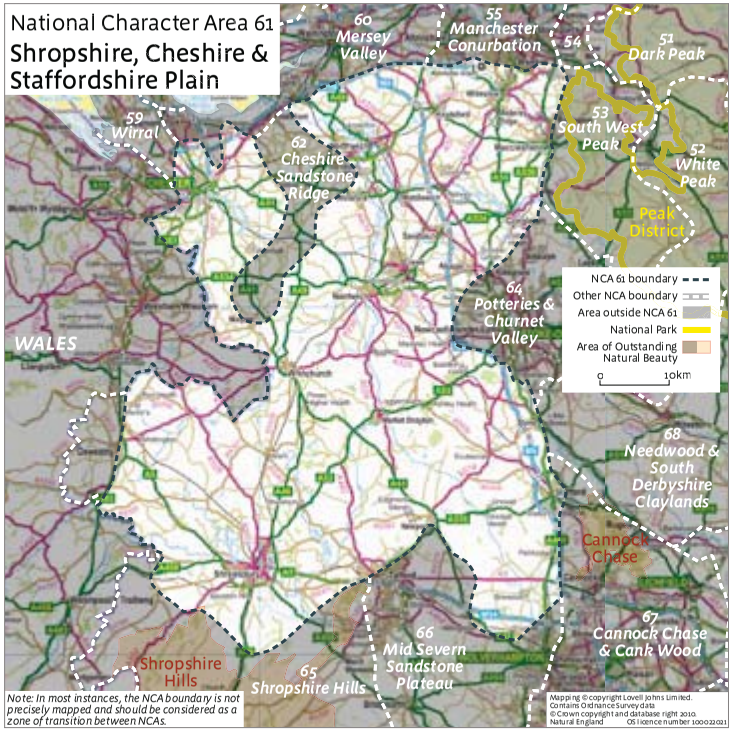
Summary

The Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain National Character Area (NCA) comprises most of the county of Cheshire, the northern half of Shropshire and a large part of north-west Staffordshire. This is an expanse of flat or gently undulating, lush, pastoral farmland, which is bounded by the Mersey Valley NCA in the north, with its urban and industrial development, and extending to the rural Shropshire Hills NCA in the south. To the west, it is bounded by the hills of the Welsh borders and to the east and south-east by the urban areas within the Potteries and Churnet Valley, Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands, and Cannock Chase and Cank Wood NCAs.

A series of small sandstone ridges cut across the plain and are very prominent features within this open landscape. The Mid-Cheshire Ridge, the Maer and the Hanchurch Hills are the most significant. They are characterised by steep sides and woodland is often ancient semi-natural woodland which is notably absent from the plain, except around Northwich.

The landscape character of the plain owes much to its glacial origins. A thick layer of glacial till covers the lower slopes of the ridge and the surrounding plain and is punctuated by numerous ponds and meres. Subsequent colonisation by vegetation has resulted in the establishment of large areas of bog, known as mosses. Some are associated with the development of schwingmoor which is an advancing, floating raft of bog moss. The meres and mosses of the north-west Midlands form a geographically discrete series of nationally important, lowland open water and peatland sites; the finest examples are considered to be of international importance.

The NCA is important for food production. Throughout the plain, the water retention and fertility of the clay soils support lush pastures for grazing dairy cattle. There are a number of dairy processors making a range of dairy products that include ice cream and Cheshire cheese. The lighter soils in Staffordshire and parts of Shropshire support more mixed farms, combinable crops and potatoes in rotation.



Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce.

The NCA contains several significant flood plains. Its flat, low-lying basins carry meandering stages of ten main rivers, a number of which have sections notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest for their nationally important geomorphological features or clough woodland and wetland habitats important to birds and insects. A section of the River Dee that flows north along the western boundary of the area is designated as a Special Area of Conservation for its vegetation communities and populations of Atlantic salmon, lamprey species, bullhead and otter.

The presence of large conurbations and the dense network of roads mean that development pressures are likely to continue. Road improvements risk the urbanisation of rural villages. The demand for mineral extraction sites and in-fill sites for waste disposal from the conurbations is likely to increase and, as the population increases, the demand for food will increase. Development will also increase water demand which, together with the effects of climate change, potentially threatens the internationally important peat wetland habitats of the NCA in terms of water availability and water quality, compounding the effects of climate change. These pressures have the potential to further fragment habitats and change settlement patterns and the vernacular, but can also provide opportunities to create a high-quality built environment with multifunctional greenspace with links to the rural area.

One of the finest examples in the country of a 'schwingmoor'. The central floating raft of sphagnum and diverse bog communities are surrounded by fen and mixed woodland. The range of habitats present at Wybunbury Moss is part of the suite of Midland Meres and Mosses Ramsar sites and is a Special Area of Conservation supporting many nationally and locally rare invertebrate species.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

SEO 1: Restore, manage and protect from diffuse pollution the rivers, streams, lakes, ponds and wetland habitats (including flood plain grazing marsh and wet woodland) and support partnerships to maintain the integrity and unique conditions for the preservation of the internationally important meres and mosses and River Dee, to benefit water availability, water quality, landscape character, biodiversity and climate regulation.

SEO 2: Protect the landscape of the plain, recognising its importance to food production and incorporating well-maintained hedgerows, ponds and lowland grassland margins within agricultural systems, to secure resource protection and maintain productivity, while reducing fragmentation of semi-natural habitats to benefit a wide range of services, such as landscape character, sense of place, water quality and biodiversity.

SEO 3: Manage and restore lowland heathland and ancient and plantation woodland, support partnerships to plan appropriately scaled new woodland cover, particularly where this will link and extend existing woodlands, restore and reinstate traditional orchards and increase biomass provision to mitigate the impact of climate change, where this will benefit biodiversity, landscape character and enhance the experiential qualities of the area.

SEO 4: Protect and manage the nationally important geological sites and heritage features demonstrating how the interaction of natural and historical factors influenced the distinctive character of its landscape and settlement patterns, and help to promote greater understanding of the link between wildlife, heritage and geodiversity, particularly the importance of former extraction sites for both geodiversity and biodiversity.

There are significant areas of lowland raised bog, for example, Fenn's and Whixall Mosses offers wide-open landscapes. Historically, these were exploited for peat, which was drained and allowed to dry before being harvested. Since being secured for conservation purposes, careful management of water has raised water levels and the sites once again support an outstanding assemblage of plants and animals and provide an important carbon sink.

Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

The extensive Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain National Character Area (NCA) extends from the broad Mersey Valley NCA in the north, to the Shropshire Hills and Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau NCAs in the south. In the west, it is bounded by the hills of the Welsh borders and Wirral and Oswestry Uplands NCAs. The eastern boundary is shared with South West Peak, Potteries and Churnet Valley, Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands, and Cannock Chase and Cank Wood NCAs. The NCA almost surrounds the small Cheshire Sandstone Ridge NCA except for its northern boundary.

The plain is visually constrained by the higher land around it. In the south, there are long views from the plain to the prominent hills of the Shropshire Hills NCA, notably the Wrekin and Wenlock Edge. The foothills of the Welsh mountains can be seen from areas in the west. In the east, the peaks of the Pennines and Peak District can be seen.

Although relatively flat, this NCA is a watershed for several major river systems. The River Severn and its tributaries, such as the rivers Perry, Roden and Tern, meander south through wide valleys of the plain and on through the neighbouring NCAs before discharging to sea via the Severn Estuary. The rivers Dane, Weaver and Gowy and their tributaries, such as the Duckow, meander north, flowing through the Mersey Valley NCA before discharging to Liverpool Bay via the River Mersey. The River Dee meanders northwards along the western boundary, through Chester, then north-westwards, through Wirral

A marina on the Macclesfield Canal, just one of the many canals that cross the Plain. Once important trade routes, canals now provide an important recreational asset for pleasure craft and walkers alike. The towpath forms part of the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk.

NCA before discharging to sea via the Dee Estuary. The rivers Penk and Sow rise in Staffordshire and flow eastwards joining the River Trent before discharging to the North Sea. These rivers contribute to their relative catchments to provide water for domestic, agriculture and industrial uses to the city of Chester and large towns within this and the neighbouring NCAs.

There are a number of reservoirs throughout the area. Almost all are canal-feeder reservoirs that maintain water levels in the many kilometres of canals that flow through the NCA. Areas of the south and west of the NCA are underlain by the Sherwood Sandstone aquifer that provides an essential source of base-flow to maintain river levels, and supplements supplies of drinking water to Warrington, in the Mersey Valley NCA. In the north, surrounding Northwich, there are numerous small lakes (meres), for example Rostherne Mere and Tatton Mere. There are several lakes directly east of Ellesmere, including The Mere which is the largest lake in Shropshire. Collectively, the meres and mosses form part of the Midland Meres and Mosses – a characteristic shared with the Mid Cheshire Sandstone Ridge NCA.

Woodland is virtually absent from the plain, being confined to the area around Northwich and to estates, cloughs and wind-swept ridges that extend into the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge NCA. The Mersey Forest Partnership is developing a network of community woodlands and green spaces that extends across Cheshire and Merseyside and covers a significant area of the NCA in the north, extending from Chester in the west, across the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge NCA, to Middlewich in the east.

An extensive transport network crosses the plain: the M6, M54 and M56, and a web of railway lines which emanate from Crewe, an important node in the national rail network. A number of National Cycle Routes cross the plain and there are nearly 5,000 km of public rights of way including the Sandstone Trail, a long-distance footpath stretching for 55 km from Whitchurch in the south, across the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge NCA, offering elevated views across the plain, before ending in Frodsham in the Mersey Valley. An extensive canal network includes the Shropshire Union Canal, the longest watercourse in the NCA which runs for 150 km through the NCA before cutting across the Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau NCA.

Species-rich fen vegetation including tufted sedge, marsh cinquefoil, marsh bedstraw, yellow iris around the edge of Shomere Pool, a dystrophic waterbody which is surrounded by bog and alder carr communities.

Key characteristics

- Extensive, gently undulating plain, dominated by thick glacial till from the late Pleistocene Period, producing productive, clay soils and exemplifying characteristic glacial landforms including eskers, glacial fans, kettle holes, moraines and a landscape of meres and mosses.
- Prominent discontinuous sandstone ridges of Triassic age, characterised by steep sides and freely draining, generally infertile soil that supports broadleaved and mixed woodland.
- Few woodlands, confined to the area around Northwich and to estates, cloughs and deciduous and mixed woods on the steeper slopes of the wind-swept sandstone ridges. Locally extensive tracts of coniferous woodland and locally distinctive orchards scattered throughout.
- Strong field patterns with generally well-maintained boundaries, predominantly hedgerows, with dense, mature hedgerow trees. Sandstone walls occur on the ridges and estate walls and Cheshire-style (curved topped) metal railing fences occur locally on estates in Cheshire.
- Dairy farming dominates on the plain, with patches of mixed farming and arable in the north and large areas in the south-east.
- Diversity of wetland habitats includes internationally important meres and mosses comprising lowland raised bog, fen, wet woodland, reedbed and standing water, supporting populations of a host of rare wildlife, including some species of national and international importance.

Kettleholes at Aqualate Mere, known as 'the spectacles'. The plain is covered by thick glacial till from the late Pleistocene Period, producing productive, clay soils and exemplifying characteristic glacial landforms including, eskers, glacial fans, kettleholes and moraines.

- Extensive peat flood plains where flood plain grazing marsh habitats support regionally important populations of breeding waders in areas such as Baggy Moor, Weald Moor and Doxey Marshes.

- Many main rivers and their flood plains lie in this area, including the Dee, Dane, Severn, Penk and Sow. Significant areas of grazing marsh, alluvial flood meadows and hay meadows associated with the rivers Dee, Sow, Gowy and Severn. The area has the highest density of field ponds in western Europe.

Eastgate Street, Chester. The original entrance to the Roman settlement and forms part of the city wall. The main part of the gateway is constructed from Triassic sandstone from the Helsby Sandstone Formation, which was also used to face the city wall.

- Rich archaeological evidence of iron-age hill forts concentrated on the sandstone ridges and the Weald Moors. Remnant ridge and furrow and moated houses are features of the plain. The Roman road, Watling Street, crosses the plain linking London to Wales via Wroxeter. Chester was an important Roman settlement.
- Regularly spaced, large farmsteads, dispersed hamlets, market towns and many other settlements including Macclesfield and Telford. Timber-frame buildings are a distinctive feature of the plain, often highly decorated in Cheshire, for example, the moated Little Moreton Hall. The historic towns including Stafford, Shrewsbury and the city of Chester have a wealth of 17th- and 18th-century half-timber, brick and red sandstone buildings.
- Parklands and gardens associated with estates such as Chillington, Trentham, Tatton and Attingham; country houses such as Gawsworth Hall, Arley Hall and Adlington Hall; and fortified manor houses and castles such as at Shrewsbury, Stafford, Beeston, Acton Burnell and Cholmondeley.
- Nationally important reserves of silica sand and salt. Active extraction of salt has developed a locally distinctive landscape of subsidence flashes, particularly around the area of Sandbach. Adjacent to these saline flashes are areas of salt marsh rarely found at inland sites.
- The numerous canals are important for recreation as well as habitat. Several National Cycle Routes and nearly 5,000 km of public rights of way cross the plain. Six National Nature Reserves (NNRs) are scattered throughout, close to large population centres and well used for recreation.

Summary

The Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau National Character Area (NCA) is located in the central catchment of the Severn and the lower Stour rivers and is a national watershed between the north- easterly flowing River Trent and the south-westerly flowing River Severn. The Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau is predominantly rural and important regionally for food production, with large arable fields in the central and eastern areas, and remnant areas of characteristic lowland heathland. Parklands provide an estate character in places, as exemplified by Weston Park. The plateau is drained by fast-flowing tributaries of the rivers Worfe and Stour which have incised the Permian and Triassic sandstones and conglomerate resulting in many steep-sided, wooded dingles throughout the NCA. The main river is the fast-flowing Severn, entering the NCA through the Ironbridge Gorge.

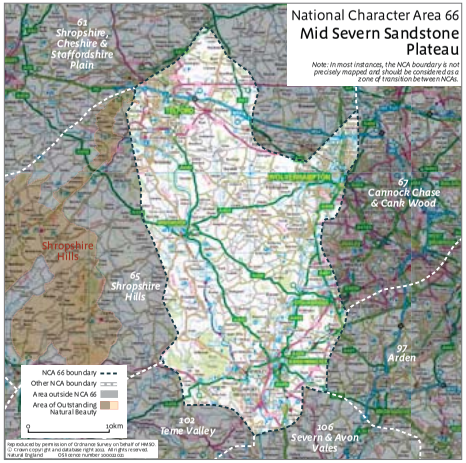
The NCA exemplifies the link between geodiversity, landscape and industrial heritage, in particular at the Ironbridge Gorge, a World Heritage Site widely recognised as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the area around the Severn Valley was recognised as being rich with raw materials: coal; iron ore; limestone to flux the slag in the blast furnaces; sand for moulding cast iron; clay to make tiles, bricks and refractory linings; and the finest clay used for the manufacture of porcelain at Coalport. The world's first iron bridge, constructed in 1779 by Abraham Darby III, spans the River Severn in the steep-sided, wooded gorge that belies its industrial past.

The NCA is regionally important for water supply. Two reservoirs, at Chelmarsh and Trimpley, store water that is abstracted from the River Severn, and the Sherwood Sandstone aquifer underlies the eastern part of the NCA. The Elan Valley aqueduct crosses the NCA, supplying water to Birmingham from the valleys in Wales.

Wyre Forest National Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest is a remnant of a once vast wildwood and one of the largest ancient lowland oak woods in England. It hosts nationally important populations of many wildlife species and also has features of historical and archaeological interest.

The M54 and a railway line cross the NCA, broadly following the route of the Roman road Watling Street. The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, Monarch's Way long-distance footpath and National Cycle Network Route 45 also cross the NCA. Development pressures for land on the urban fringe and commuter villages in the core of the NCA will continue and the demand for water and food provision is likely to increase, presenting challenges for habitat conservation and sustainable recreation, given the proximity of this area to urban populations.

In the Black Country urban areas, the demand placed on the health and community services is likely to increase, as the magnitude of climate change increases. Extreme weather events such as floods have clear impacts on ecosystems and the services that they provide and also on infrastructure adjacent to rivers, for example at Bewdley. Climate change may also alter the severity and frequency of periods of drought, presenting challenges to agriculture on the plateau.



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Statements of Environmental Opportunities:

- **SEO 1:** Protect, expand and appropriately manage the characteristic habitats of the NCA, specifically lowland heathland, acid grasslands and woodland including orchards and hedgerows, thus reinforcing the sense of history and reducing habitat fragmentation for the benefits that this will bring to resource protection, biodiversity, climate regulation and the recreational and experiential qualities of the NCA.

- **SEO 2:** Protect and manage the rivers and streams of the NCA to mitigate the extremes of drought and flood events, and protect the water quality of the River Severn and safeguard aquifer recharge areas by managing discharges to watercourses and protecting and increasing areas of semi-natural riparian habitats along river valleys, streams, canals and urban watercourses.

- **SEO 3:** Protect from inappropriate development and manage a stock of post-industrial and extractive sites around Telford and the Black Country which exemplify the strong influence that geodiversity has on the landscape, through industrial development and settlement patterns and for their often unique value to biodiversity. Protect and maintain the natural geomorphological features and exposures in the river valleys that can be used for research and education to study past environmental change as well as for recreation.

- **SEO 4:** Work in collaboration with the World Heritage Site, English Heritage and the local authorities to implement sustainable solutions to protect and manage the landscape and heritage attributes of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site and the wider historic landscape, including the canals, historic ports and bridging towns, finding sustainable solutions to manage visitor pressure, while maintaining high levels of public access for the benefits to the visitor economy and employment.

Characteristic heathland at Hartlebury Common. Heathland was once widespread in the area.

Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

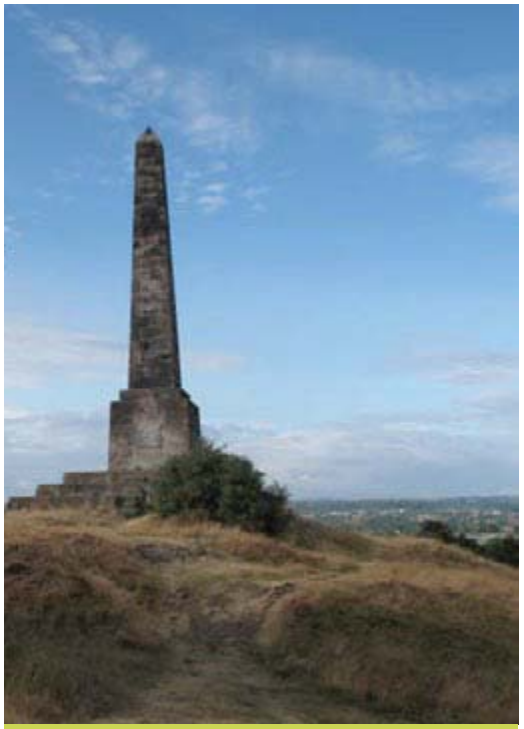
The Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau National Character Area (NCA) is located in the central catchment of the Severn and the lower Stour rivers and the plateau is a national watershed between the north-easterly flowing River Trent which flows out to sea through the Humber and the south-westerly fast-flowing River Severn which runs through the neighbouring Severn and Avon Vales NCA before flowing out to sea through the Bristol Channel.

To the west and south-west, the land rises out of the Severn Valley to afford views of the Shropshire Hills and Teme Valley NCAs. A prominent volcanic ridge at Lilleshall provides views out of and into the NCA. To the east, the land rises out of the Stour Valley and the sandstone ridge at Kinver Edge provides views across the Cannock Chase and Cank Wood and Arden NCAs. In the south, the rolling landform gradually subsides into the Severn and Avon Vales NCA while in the north there is a transition from the predominantly sandstone plateau to the clays of the Shropshire and Staffordshire Plain NCA.

Heathland and acid grassland were once widespread in the NCA, a characteristic shared with the neighbouring Arden and Cannock Chase and Cank Wood NCAs, but they now only survive in small, discrete areas, particularly in the south near Wyre Forest. Interlocking blocks of mixed woodland and old orchards provide a well-wooded landscape and conifer plantations combine with parklands to evoke an estate character in places.

The NCA has important wetland habitats and is regionally significant for water supply. The Sherwood Sandstone aquifer underlies the eastern area of the NCA and augments supply that is abstracted from the River Severn. The River Severn rises in the Cambrian Mountains in Wales and water is abstracted and stored in the reservoirs at Chelmarsh and Trimpley. The Elan Valley aqueduct crosses the NCA and supplies drinking water to Birmingham.

The M54 and a railway line broadly follow the route of the Roman road Watling Street and link the city of Wolverhampton in the east with Shrewsbury in the neighbouring Shropshire and Staffordshire Plain NCA in the west. The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal starts in Stourport-on-Severn in the south of the NCA, passing through Cannock Chase and Cank Wood NCA before joining with the Trent and Mersey Canal. The Monarch's Way long-distance footpath passes through the NCA as does National Cycle Network Route 45 from north to south on its way from Salisbury to Chester.



Lilleshall Hill, crowned by the monument to the Duke of Sutherland, provides views out the NCA.

Key characteristics

- Extensive sandstone plateau in the core and east of the NCA underpins an undulating landscape with tree-lined ridges; this contrasts with the irregular topography and steep, wooded gorges of the Severn Valley in the west.
- Plateau underlain by Permian and Triassic sandstones and conglomerate from the Sherwood Sandstone Group forming an important aquifer. Silurian limestones and Carboniferous Coal Measures of the Coalbrookdale and Wyre Forest coalfields in the west provide the source of mineral wealth which fuelled the Industrial Revolution.
- Permian and Triassic sandstones erode to free-draining, slightly acid mineral soils which historically supported extensive heathland and grassland. In contrast, marls and sandstones associated with Coal Measures erode to clayey (argillic) brown earth soils.
- The plateau is drained by the rivers Worfe and Stour and fast-flowing streams in small wooded, steep-sided streamside dells, locally known as dingles.
- The main river is the fast-flowing Severn, flowing north to south in the west of the NCA, often through steep, wooded gorges, the largest being the Ironbridge Gorge.
- Interlocking blocks of mixed woodland and old orchards provide a well-wooded landscape and conifer plantations combine with parklands to give an estate character. Wyre Forest is part of one of the largest ancient lowland oak woods in England.
- Large, open arable fields with a weak hedgerow pattern on the plateau contrast with mixed arable and pasture land with smaller, irregular-shaped fields bounded by hedgerows with hedgerow oaks in the west.
- Characteristic lowland heathland associated with acid grassland and woodland supports nationally important populations of flora and fauna, notably butterflies including the pearl-bordered fritillary.
- Post-industrial sites, disused coal mines and mineral quarries are important habitats around Telford and urban areas in the Black Country and are becoming increasingly important because of their dwindling number.
- Rich and important heritage assets have led to World Heritage status for Coalbrookdale and Ironbridge, the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.
- Traditional buildings constructed of brick vary in colour. The local Kidderminster and Bromsgrove Sandstone features extensively. Its characteristic red colouration provides local distinctiveness to many towns and villages and estate boundary walls.
- The Stour and Severn valleys contain frequent villages and there are a number of attractive historic towns, for example Bridgnorth and Bewdley with cores of Georgian and earlier buildings; there are fine individual examples of timber-framed buildings in Kinver, Bewdley and Bridgnorth.
- There is a coalfield remnant landscape along the Severn Valley.
- Important manmade features include the Roman road Watling Street, the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, the M54 and the railway line that links the urban areas of Birmingham and the Black Country in the east with Shrewsbury in the neighbouring NCA in the west.

Summary

Cannock Chase and Cank Wood National Character Area (NCA) extends north of the Birmingham and Black Country conurbation and includes a major area of this city. It is situated on higher land consisting of sandstone and the South Staffordshire Coalfield. The NCA principally coincides with the historical hunting forest of Cannock Chase, with major remnants surviving within the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which supports internationally important heathland Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and the Sutton Park National Nature Reserve.

There are no major rivers within the area, but canals are a significant feature and some major transport routes also cross the NCA. The current landscape is extremely varied, including extensive areas of urban development predominantly in the south of the NCA and extensive conifer plantations and heathlands in the north interspersed with farmland. The Forest of Mercia, a Community Forest, lies in the heart of the NCA. The NCA also has some outstanding geodiversity interest, extensive industrial archaeology and a good number of historic parks.

In addition to the ecosystem services of food and timber production, the NCA has an extensive rights of way network and areas of open access land offering good recreational opportunities to the surrounding population. Recreational use of the Cannock Chase SAC is of some concern and needs to be managed to ensure that future housing development does not harm the biodiversity interest of the site. Changes as a result of development have been significant within the NCA for many years and are likely to continue. This provides opportunities for enhancing both the landscape quality and biodiversity value through green infrastructure and through continued local initiatives such as the Forest of Mercia and the Cannock Chase AONB.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity:

- **SEO 1**: Expand lowland heathland to increase habitat connectivity, improve resilience to climate change and improve water quality.
- **SEO 2**: Manage, enhance and expand the network of green infrastructure, such as woodlands, restored mining sites, parklands and canal routes, to increase biodiversity, access and recreational use and increase understanding of the area's rich industrial heritage, particularly geodiversity.
- **SEO 3**: Conserve and enhance the essential character of this varied landscape, which includes the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Forest of Mercia and the urban conurbation of the Black Country, to maintain food and timber production where possible; enhance landscape, sense of place and tranquillity; and increase resilience to climate change.

Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce.

Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

The National Character Area (NCA) forms an area of higher ground rising out of Shropshire and Staffordshire Plain NCA to the west. Much of this western boundary is defined by the transport corridor of the M6. Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands NCA lies to the north, separated by the Trent Valley.

The eastern edge adjoins Trent Valley Washlands NCA. The NCA lies on the watershed, with much of it draining east into the River Trent via the River Tame and a number of smaller tributaries that drain Cannock Chase. The remainder of the NCA drains west into the Severn catchment. In the south the NCA merges with Arden NCA within the Birmingham conurbation, and here there are close links through the roads, railways and canals.

From Cannock Chase there are views west over the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain and to the north-east and east over the Claylands and the Trent Valley. To the north of the NCA the plantations and heathland of the Chase create prominent views within the area. In the south of the NCA there are also significant viewpoints at Turners Hill at Rowley Regis and at Barr Beacon east of Walsall.

Distinct areas

- Cannock Chase
- Lichfield estate lands
- Black Country and Staffordshire Coalfield

View along the Dudley No.2 canal near Netherton, towards Cobb's Engine House with Rowley Hills in the distance.

Key characteristics

- A varied landscape ranging from the open heathlands and plantations of Cannock Chase, through towns, reclaimed mining sites and new developments, to dense urban areas.
- The dominant rounded central plateau is mainly formed of the Coal Measures of the South Staffordshire Coalfield, with other prominent hills in the south at Wren's Nest, Castle Hill, Rowley Hills and Barr Beacon.
- Extensive coniferous plantations, woodlands and historic parklands occur across the NCA, even within the urban areas where they are predominantly small and include lots of young plantations.
- Away from the unenclosed landscape of Cannock Chase, fields generally have a regular pattern and are frequently enclosed by mature hedgerows with some hedgerow trees. Here farming is generally mixed with arable cultivation in large fields. Livery is concentrated around the flanks of the Chase.

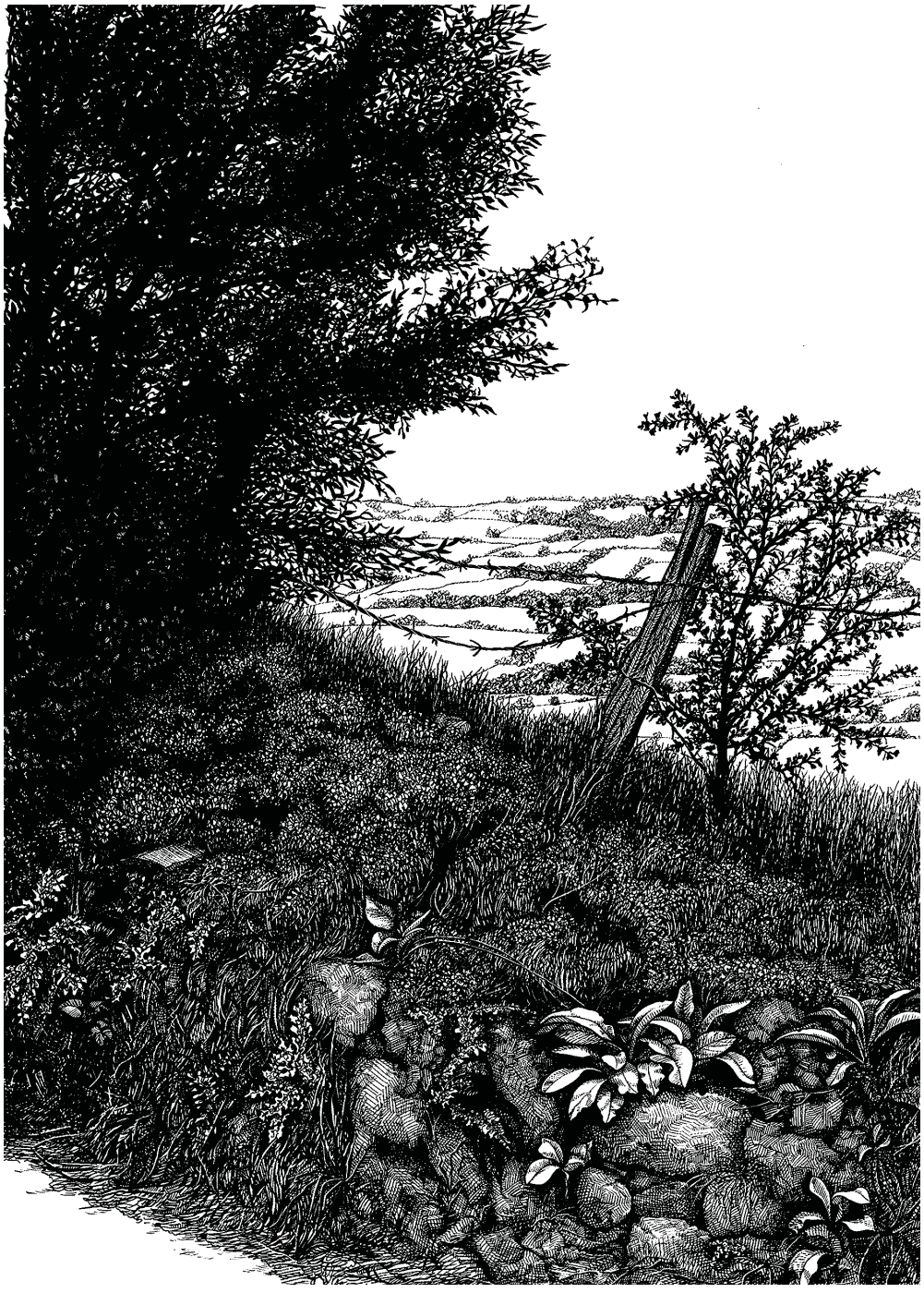
Continued on next page...

Sherbrook Valley in Autumn.

Key characteristics continued...

- Heathland and associated acid grassland were once much more extensive, although significant tracts still remain. Post-industrial sites and remnant countryside within the urban areas provide a mosaic of additional valuable habitats.
- The major rivers of the Trent and Tame lie adjacent to the NCA, both of which lie in broad flood plains. Streams and small rivers such as the Sow and the Penk drain radially from the higher ground into these rivers.
- The canal network is a notable feature and contributes significantly to the drainage of the urban areas.
- Industrial archaeology from the industrial revolution is a characteristic feature.
- The predominant building material of the 19th- and early 20th-century buildings is red brick, with more modern structures within the urban areas.
- The settlement pattern is complex and contrasting, with some areas densely populated and others relatively sparse. The conurbation includes a mosaic of urban areas, former industrial land and patches of farmland, with an extensive urban fringe.
- The extensive networks of canals and railways reflect the industrial history of the area. Major roads include the M6, the M6 Toll and the A5.

Staffordshire
County Council



Planning for Landscape Change:

An Introduction and User's Guide to

Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, 1996 – 2011

Introduction

Planning for Landscape Change is aimed primarily at planning officers in the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan area, and at developers and others who need to be informed about policy and practice for the conservation, enhancement and regeneration of the rural landscapes of the Plan area. It may also prove to be of value in a wider context, as a means of informing other decisions relating to land use and land management.

The full Supplementary Planning comprises:

- this Introduction and User's Guide (Vol. 1);
- an explanation of the method used to generate the maps and landscape descriptions that follow (Vol. 2);
- a map showing the distribution of a number of distinct types of landscape that are found within the Structure Plan area (Appendix 1);
- a series of detailed descriptions of the character of those landscapes (Vol. 3);
- a map showing the areas to which landscape policy objectives, described below, apply (Appendix 1);
- an appendix (Vol. 2) indicating the areas that are preferred for targeting resources for woodland initiatives, including new planting and management.

Planning for Landscape Change draws on government guidance on development plan policies for the conservation and enhancement of landscape character and quality, and on work undertaken by the former Countryside Commission and English Nature to map and describe the landscape character of England. It has been published having regard to the views of the Panel appointed to conduct an Examination in Public of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan 1996 – 2011. The Panel's report, published in December 1999 stated that:

> "…it seems inevitable to us that a substantial amount of information needs to be published by SCC [Staffordshire County Council] to explain the meaning of the defined landscape policy areas. What this documentation is called seems secondary to its importance in raising awareness of the approach. However, we see every advantage in it being subject to a full consultation exercise and then being adopted as SPG [Supplementary Planning Guidance]."

That consultation exercise was carried out during the autumn of 2000, and this adopted Guidance incorporates changes made as a result of representations. However, some comments on the details of the landscape descriptions in Volume 3 will only become available after the Guidance has been in use for some time. To take account of this, the County Council invites such comments from users, and will incorporate any further changes, based on them, in a revised version of this Guidance to be published in due course. Any such comments should be addressed to the Corporate Director (Development Services), Staffordshire County Council, Riverway, Stafford ST16 3TJ, for the attention of Steve Potter, Head of Environmental Planning.

A strategy based on landscape character

2.1 In the mid-1990s the former Countryside Commission recognised the need to build on a developing trend of looking wider in its strategic thinking than the areas of landscape with special qualities, such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which it had originally been charged with protecting. It needed to develop policies for the whole countryside, and as a basis for that process it needed a consistent analysis of the character of the landscapes of England. As no such analysis existed it commissioned, in partnership with English Nature and with help from English Heritage, a project that came to be called the *Character of England* project. The first output was a map which divides England into 181 discrete **Regional Character Areas** (RCAs) based on the interaction at a regional scale between the physiographic elements of landscapes and the patterns of land use and settlement characteristic of them. Written summaries of the character of each of these areas were also published. Some of the Character Areas are already familiar because of their distinctiveness, e.g. Dartmoor, the Cotswolds, the Dark Peak and the White Peak, but others including some in Staffordshire are less familiar because their character is subtle and less easily defined. Nine Character Areas fall wholly or partly within the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan Area.

2.2 A process of decision making that builds on this work, and is based on an understanding of landscape character and of the natural, historic and aesthetic factors that in combination create local distinctiveness, has come to be known as the *character approach*. It stands in contrast to the more traditional approach, which sought to identify those landscapes of the greatest scenic value or natural beauty, and to apply more restrictive planning policies within them, as a means of protecting their special qualities. At the national level this has led to the statutory designation of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and locally to non-statutory designation, in development plans, of landscapes termed variously as Special Landscape Areas, Areas of Great Landscape Value, etc. The Staffordshire Structure Plan, 1986 – 2001 and the Local Plans building on it contained policies for the protection of Special Landscape Areas.

2.3 Planning Policy Guidance note 7, *The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* (published by the Department of the Environment in 1997), requires a fundamental reassessment of local countryside designations. The guidance indicates that designations should only be maintained or extended where there is good reason to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. It also commends the character approach, which 'identifies the unique character of different areas of the countryside without making judgements about their relative worth' as a means of accommodating change without sacrificing landscape character. But how is an understanding of local character and distinctiveness to be acquired and propagated? Will every planning officer and developer have to be trained in techniques of landscape assessment, to enable them to analyse local character on a case-by-case basis? The Countryside Agency's *Countryside Character* volume for the West Midlands, published in July 1999, is helpful in this respect, but it describes character at a regional level, using mapping units that average about 280 square miles in area. It is very difficult to use this broad-brush information as a means of informing planning decisions.

2.4 To overcome this difficulty the analysis of landscape character in the Structure Plan area has been taken to a more detailed level, through a comprehensive assessment of landscape character. The boundaries of the Character Areas which were broadly delineated on the *Character of England* map have been more precisely defined, and

the descriptions of landscape character have been taken to a finer grain, with the mapping and description of 22 **landscape character types** (LCTs). These descriptions make up the greater part of the Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Structure Plan.

2.5 No judgements about the relative worth of such landscape types have been made, but the approach does acknowledge that any given landscape type will be represented by some areas in which the underlying landscape character is strongly expressed and the constituent elements are in good condition, and other areas where this is not the case. Landscape quality can be defined in these terms: it is quite distinct from scenic beauty, but it is strongly linked to character. It is essentially an indicator of how clearly that character is expressed, and of how the state of repair of landscape elements contributes to an overall impression of an intact and unified landscape. Landscape quality can be assessed with respect to the following factors:

i) the presence or absence of landscape elements which have had some permanence over time, and which are characteristic features of that landscape type;

ii) the presence or absence of relatively novel features which are incongruous in that landscape type;

iii) the condition of landscape features, and the likelihood of their continuing survival as functional landscape elements;

iv) the extent to which the landscape exhibits a clear and consistent pattern of components resulting from a particular course of historical development;

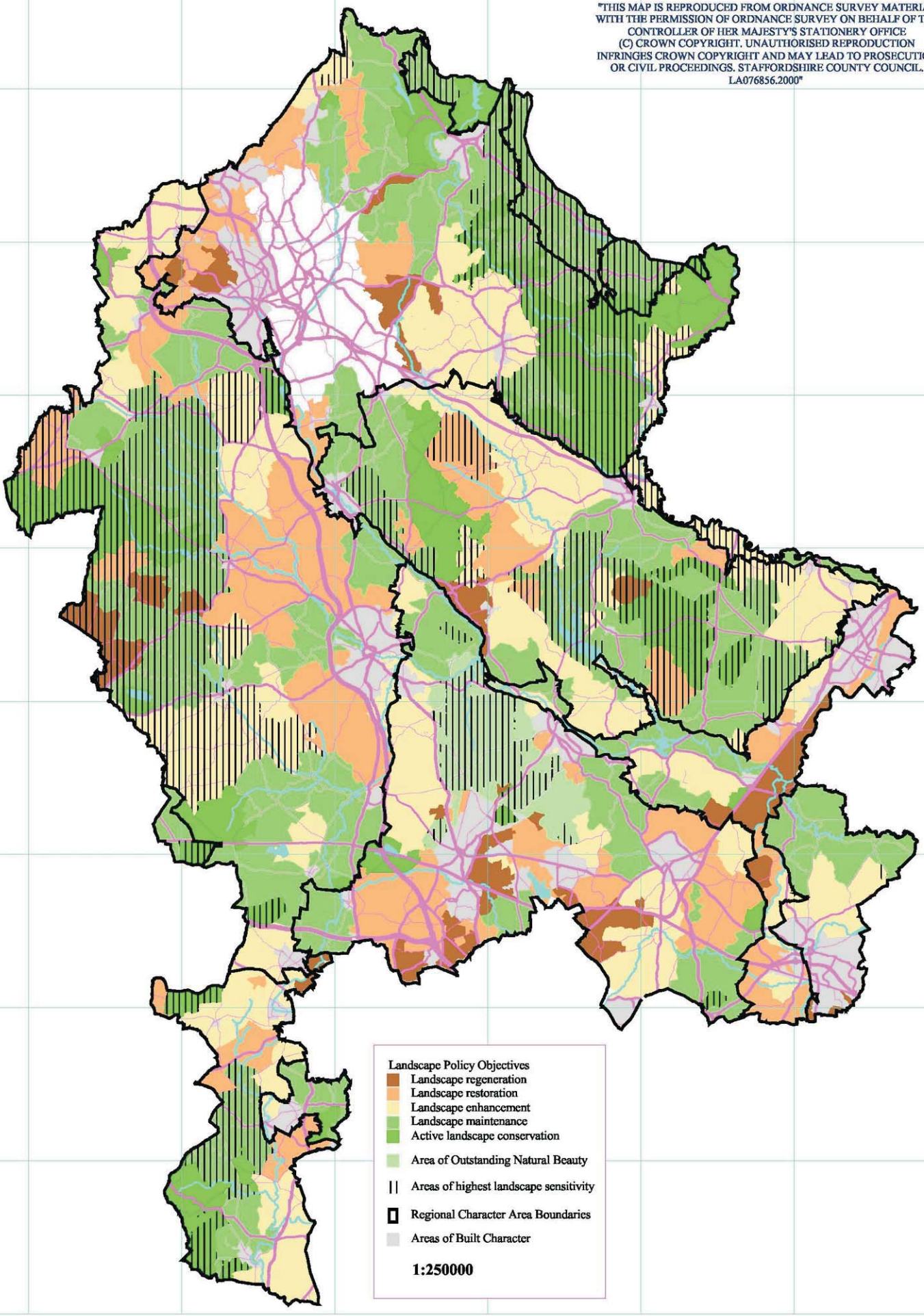
v) the continuity or 'time depth' of the landscape, which is a function of the length of time since the last major change of land use that contributed significantly to current landscape character;

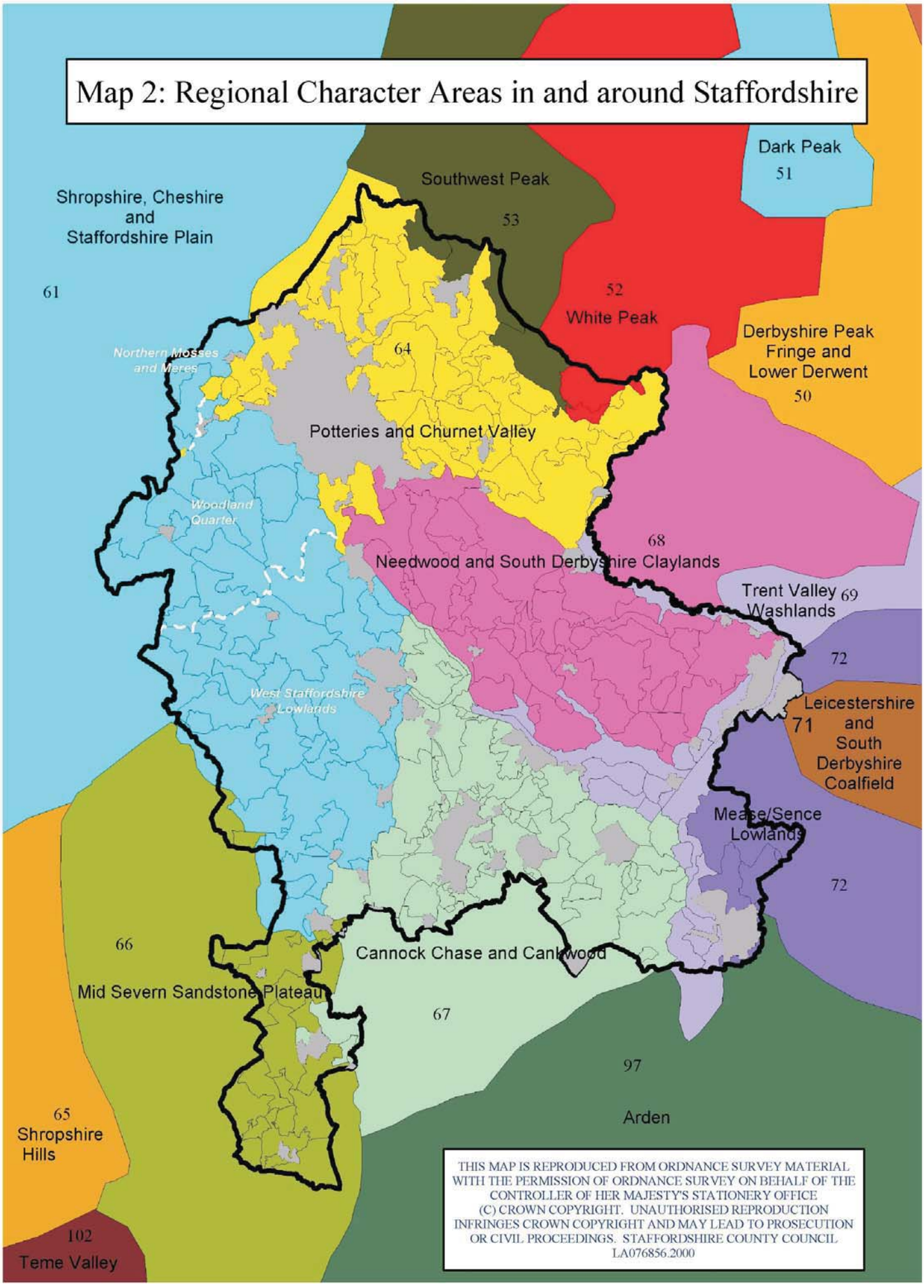
vi) the extent of survival of semi-natural habitat that is characteristic of the landscape type.

2.6 The assessment of landscape quality, as defined above, has led to the mapping of landscape policy objective zones (Map 1). Those areas of the highest quality fall within the zones in which 'active landscape conservation' is the objective, and those of the lowest quality in the 'innovative landscape regeneration' zones. See the box on page 8 for more details.

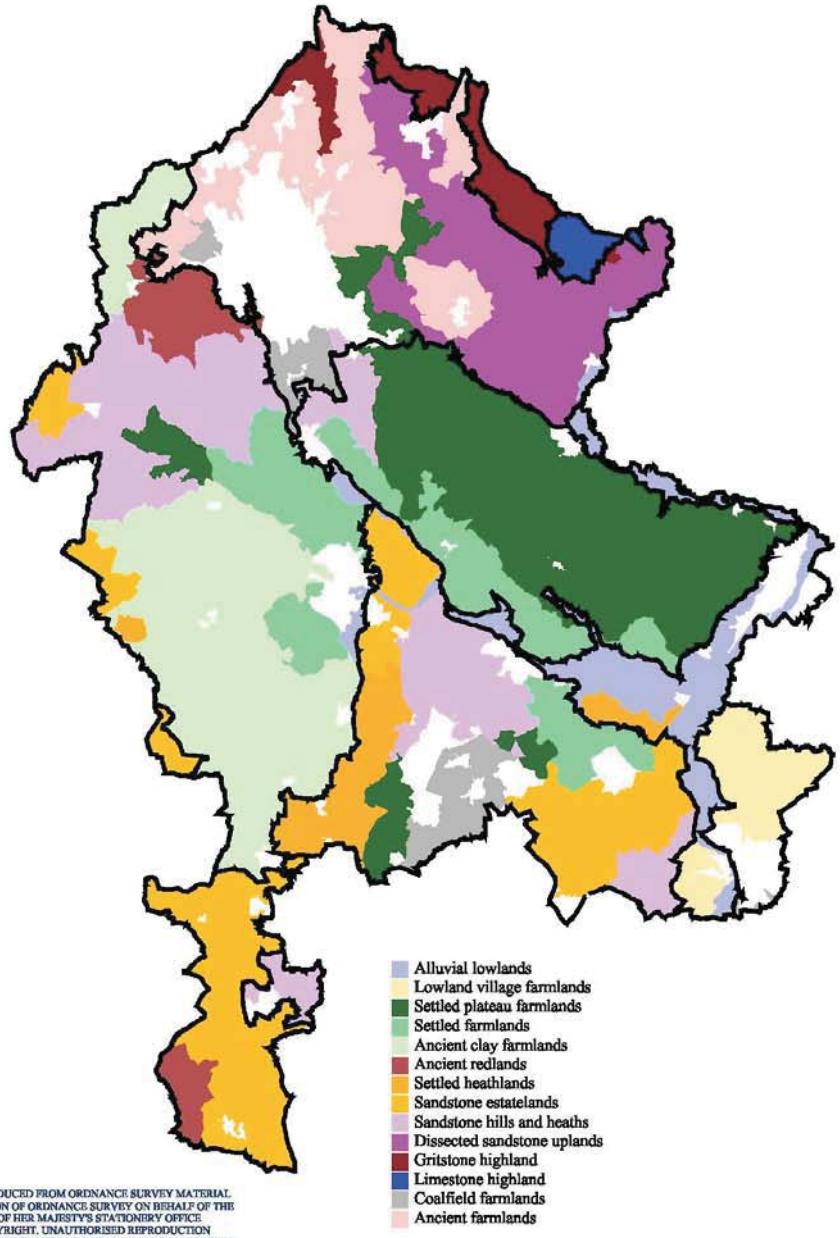
2.7 These factors also contribute to landscape sensitivity, along with the landscape's general visibility and its tranquillity, which is a function of its isolation from factors contributing to visual or noise intrusion. The landscapes which are most sensitive to the impacts of development or land use change may justify more restrictive Local Plan development control policies than those of lower sensitivity.

Map 1: Landscape policy objectives





Map 3: Warnock Land Character Types



Map 4: Landscape Character Types

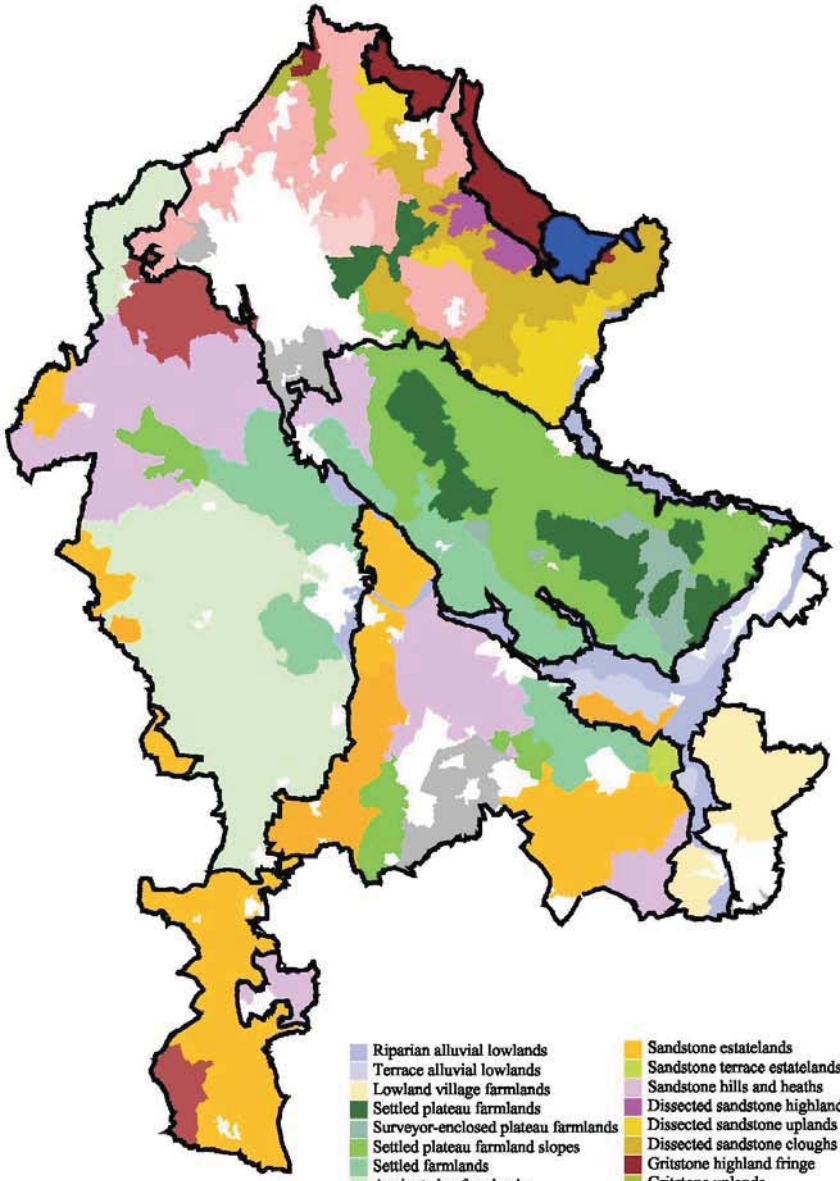
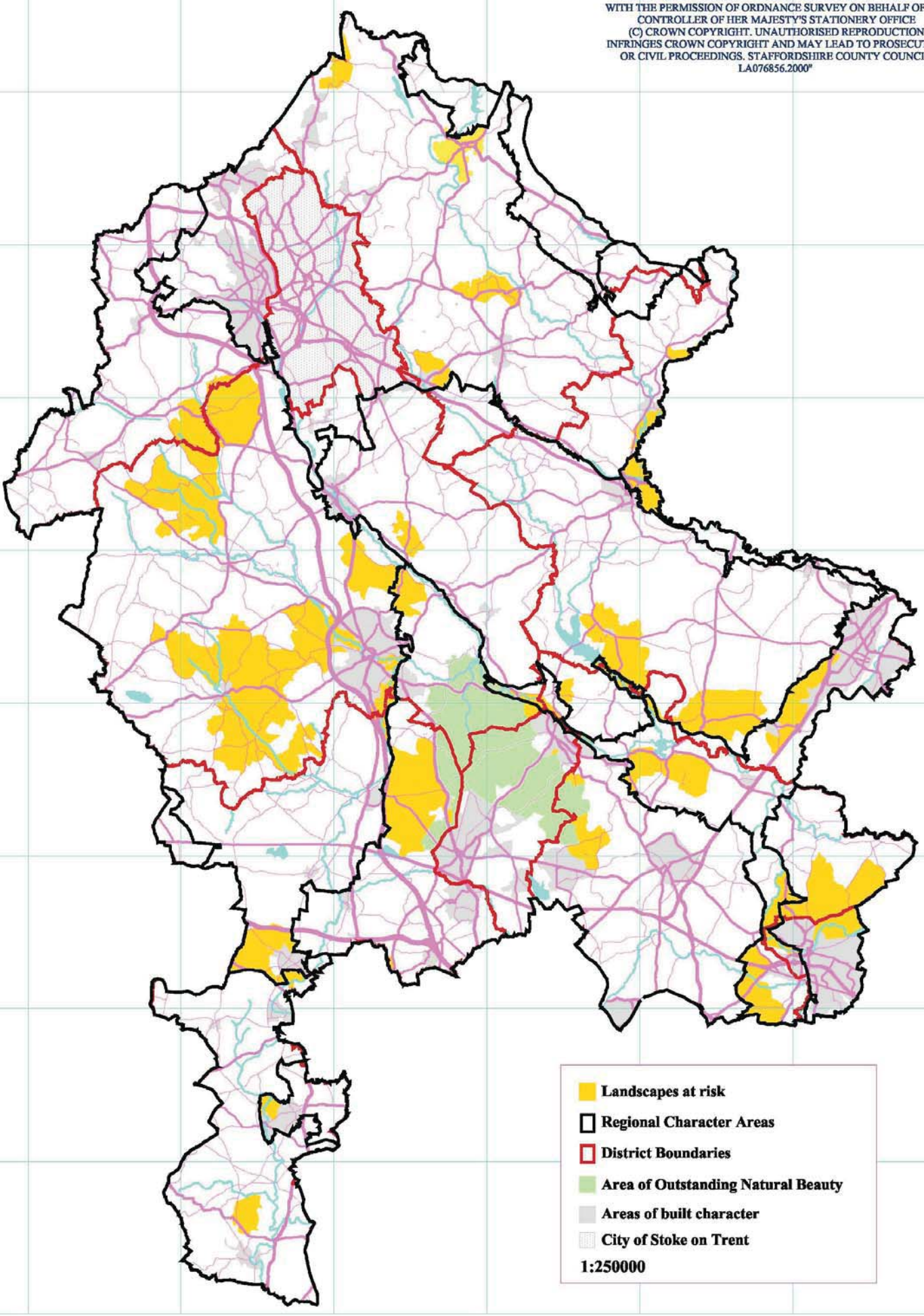


Table 1. The Derivation of Landscape Character Types and Sub-Types

Dominant solid geology	Elevation	Drift deposits	Principal soils	Characteristic semi-natural vegetation	Main farming activity	Settlement pattern	Pattern of field enclosure	Tree cover	Warnock Land Character Type	Landscape Character Type	Sub-Types
Triassic mudstones	Upland	Boulder clay	Non-calcareous stagnogleys	Ancient woodland and heathland	Dairying with some mixed farming	Dispersed, sometimes urbanised, hamlets and farmsteads	Semi-regular, hedged	Scattered woods and copses	Settled plateau farmlands, type 11	**Settled plateau farmlands**	Estatelands
											Forest
										Surveyor-enclosed plateau farmlands	
										Settled plateau farmland slopes	
	Lowland		Non-calcareous stagnogleys with sandy pockets	Ancient hedgerows and heathland	Dairying with some stock rearing	Dispersed with small rural towns	Irregular, hedged	Sparsely wooded	Ancient clay farmlands, type 14	**Ancient clay farmlands**	Estatelands
											Parklands
		Alluvium and terrace deposits	Alluvium with some peat	Neutral grassland	Cropping with stock rearing	Large nucleated villages	Regular, large, hedged		Alluvial lowlands, type 1	**Riparian alluvial lowlands**	
										Terrace alluvial lowlands	
		None	Non-calcareous brown soils		Mixed farming with cropping	Large nucleated villages and towns	Semi-regular, medium to large, hedged	Scattered small woods and coverts	Lowland village farmlands, type 4	**Lowland village farmlands**	Parklands
				Ancient woodland	Dairying with some mixed farming	Densely settled, often urbanised, mixed	Varied, small to medium, hedged	Many small woods and copses	Settled farmlands, type 12	**Settled farmlands**	Parklands
Coal measures	Upland	Some boulder clay	Non-calcareous stagnogleys	Acid grassland and wet heath	Mainly stock rearing	Urbanised, many mining villages		Sparsely wooded	Coalfield farmlands, type 24	**Coalfield farmlands**	Minerals working and restoration
					Dairying and stock rearing	Densely settled, dispersed	Irregular, small, hedged	Many small ancient woodlands	Ancient farmlands, type 25	**Ancient plateau farmlands**	
										Ancient slope and valley farmlands	Parklands
											Minerals working and restoration
			Non-calcareous brown soils	Ancient woodland	Stock rearing with mixed farming	Dispersed hamlets and scattered farmsteads	Irregular, medium, hedged	Many woods and copses	Ancient redlands, type 15	**Ancient redlands**	Estatelands
											Parklands
Palaeozoic and Triassic sandstones	Lowland	Boulder clay	Acid sands and brown soils	Heathland	Cropping and mixed farming	Dispersed, often urbanised	Regular, small and large, hedged	Varied, often heavily wooded	Settled heathlands, type 17	**Settled heathlands**	Estatelands
											Parklands
		None	Varied: acid sands, brown soils, stagnogleys		Mainly cropping	Sparsely settled, wayside cottages and expanded hamlets	Regular, large, hedged	Estate woodlands and parkland	Sandstone estatelands, type 18	**Sandstone estatelands**	Farmlands
											Parklands
											Forest
										Sandstone terrace estatelands	
	Upland		Acid sands and brown soils		Mainly stock rearing	Dispersed, with many expanded hamlets		Varied, often heavily wooded	Sandstone hills and heaths, type 19	**Sandstone hills and heaths**	Farmlands
											Estatelands
											Parklands
											Forest
											Heathlands
			Acid sands with some stagnogleys			Dispersed, often densely settled	Regular and irregular, small to medium, hedged and walled	Heavily wooded valleys	Dissected sandstone uplands, type 20	**Dissected sandstone highland fringe**	
										Dissected sandstone uplands	
										Dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys	Parklands
											Forest
	Highland		Stagnogleys and peat soils	Moorland and upland grassland	Stock rearing with some rough grazing	Low density dispersed farmsteads	Regular, medium to large, walled	Few woods: in cloughs only	Gritstone highlands, type 21	**Gritstone highland fringe**	
										Gritstone uplands	
Carboniferous limestone			Rankers, free draining brown soils.	Calcareous grassland	Stock rearing: some mixed farming	Nucleated, small stone villages	Geometric, large, walled		Limestone highlands, type 22	**Limestone highland fringe**	

Map 5: Landscapes at risk of a rapid loss of character and quality



SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT

FOR EMPLOYMENT SITE ALLOCATIONS

Final Report

for

South Staffordshire District Council

December 2015

Email: sw@whiteconsultants.co.uk
Web: www.whiteconsultants.co.uk
Tel: 029 2043 7841

In association with

Steven Warnock

1. Introduction

1.1. White Consultants were appointed in October 2015 to undertake landscape sensitivity assessment for areas potentially accommodating employment sites in South Staffordshire District. The project offers an important opportunity to protect the most sensitive landscapes whilst identifying where development may be accommodated.

1.2. The brief states that the study is to *'produce a landscape sensitivity analysis of the land parcels which are under consideration to accommodate the expansion of the four strategic employment sites at i54, ROF Featherstone, Hilton Cross and Four Ashes. This analysis will form part of Local Plan evidence base and the findings should be set out in a report accompanied by maps clearly showing the relative sensitivity of accommodating the proposed development type on each of the identified sites.'*

1.3. A previous landscape sensitivity assessment for potential housing sites has been carried out and published separately. This worked within the published county landscape character assessment undertaken by Staffordshire County Council. This has been updated by a study in the last couple of years which has refined the landscape description units and the derived landscape character types. The updated version, though not currently widely available, is used as the context to this assessment as it is expected to become the preferred basis for landscape studies in the area in the future.

1.4. The land description units (LDUs) around existing developments act as the context for the study. Within these broadly defined areas land cover parcels (LCPs) for assessment have been defined. Information on each LCP has been set out in a summary matrix using a range of information sources.

1.5. The report is divided into two parts. In Part A we discuss the method (2.0) and briefly set out a summary of sensitivity findings (3.0). The sensitivity assessments for each identified LCP are set out in Part B in alphabetical area order.

3. Summary of sensitivity findings and conclusions

3.1. Overall, the study has found that there is capacity for employment around each of the areas defined in the site allocations document.

3.2. Areas of higher sensitivity have tended to be those with strong positive and rural character, those in open countryside not closely associated with existing employment development, areas on rising slopes and skylines, areas acting as part of a wider green corridor between development, areas acting as context or setting to listed buildings or canals, and floodplain corridors. There is a need to protect and maintain green fingers of open space penetrating into settlements to maintain the quality of life for residents and those areas that act as recreational and wildlife corridors.

3.3. Some development edges present an unattractive boundary with the countryside. In these cases, and combined with where the landscape itself has lower sensitivity, the opportunity is taken to note the potential for development. This is with the proviso that the development itself will present a positive edge with significant planting in order to integrate and enhance the landscape. This is best achieved by a design or development brief including landscape, nature conservation and urban design objectives.

3.4. The landscape sensitivities of each LCP to each development type are summarised in Table 1 and are shown in the summary Figure 1.

3.5. In summary, there is:

- Four medium/low landscape sensitivity LCPs in the i54 and ROF Featherstone areas.
- Six medium landscape sensitivity LCPs in the i54, Four Ashes and ROF Featherstone areas.
- Five high/medium landscape sensitivity LCPs in the Four Ashes, Hilton Cross and ROF Featherstone areas.
- Six high landscape sensitivity LCPs in the Four Ashes and Hilton Cross areas.

3.6. It is recommended that these findings are taken into consideration in the preparation of the final Site Allocations Document and allocation of sites for employment development.

Table 1 Landscape Sensitivity summary

Development Area	Reference	Employment development sensitivity
Bilbrook/i54 South Staffordshire	BKE01	Medium/low
Bilbrook/i54 South Staffordshire	BKE02	Medium/low
Bilbrook/i54 South Staffordshire	BKE03	Medium
Four Ashes	FAE01	High/medium
Four Ashes	FAE02	Medium
Four Ashes	FAE03	Medium
Four Ashes	FAE04	Medium
Four Ashes	FAE05	High
Four Ashes	FAE06	High
Four Ashes	FAE07	High
Four Ashes	FAE08	High
Four Ashes	FAE09	Medium
Hilton Cross	HCE01	High/medium
Hilton Cross	HCE02	High
Hilton Cross	HCE03	High
Hilton Cross	HCE04	High/medium
ROF Featherstone	RFE01	High/medium
ROF Featherstone	RFE02	High/medium
ROF Featherstone	RFE03	Medium
ROF Featherstone	RFE04	Medium/low
ROF Featherstone	RFE05	Medium/low

FIGURE

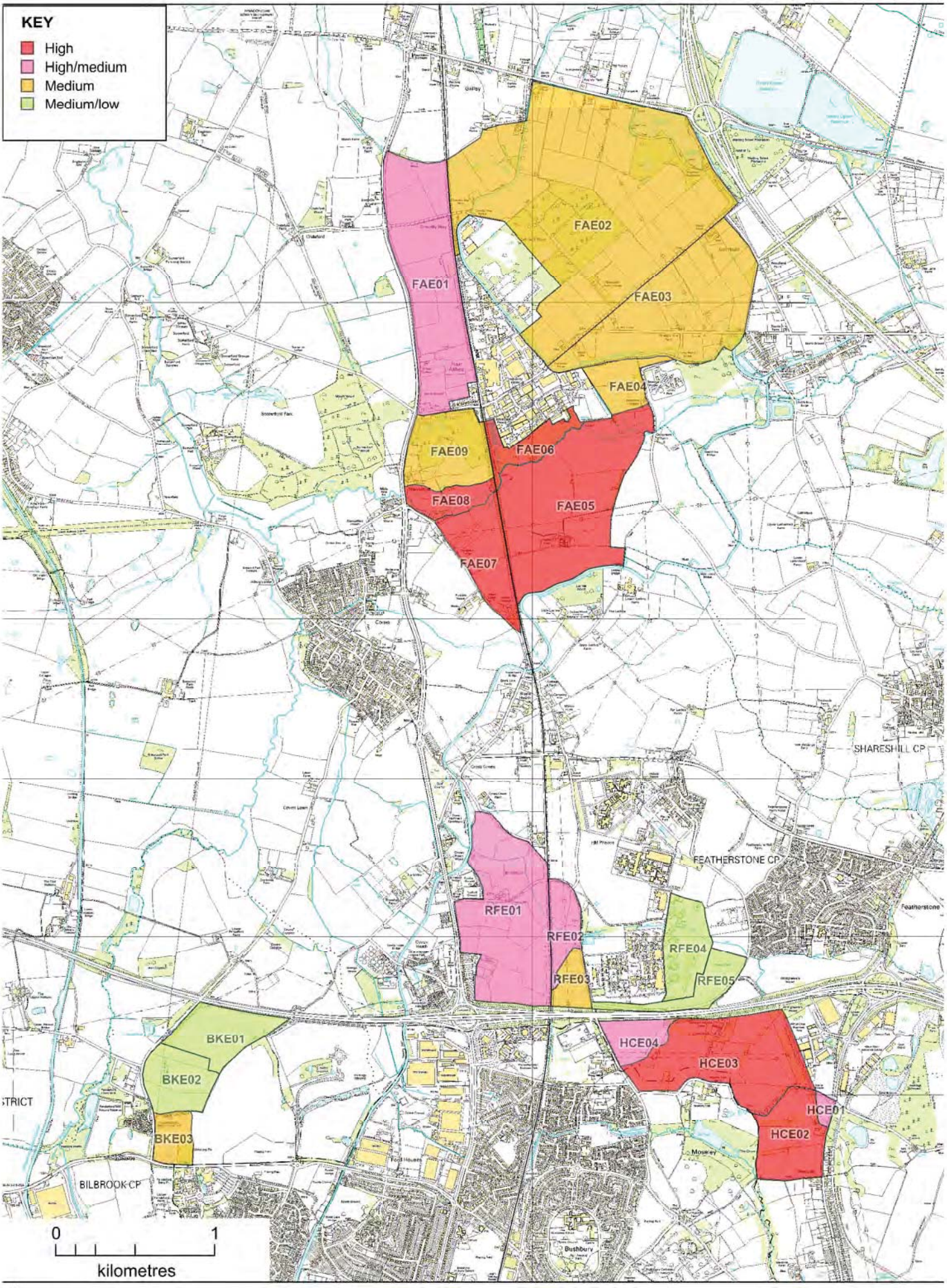


Figure 1
Summary of Landscape Sensitivity to Employment Development

PART B

LAND COVER PARCEL SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENTS

4. Explanation of sensitivity assessment forms

4.1. The sensitivity of each LCP is set out on the following pages. This is structured into summaries using full prose and then supporting desk study and site assessment information which is in note form for directness and brevity. The purpose of each section is set out below.

Summary Description and Landscape Sensitivity

4.2. This section summarises a description of the LCP and evaluates and justifies its overall landscape sensitivity to employment development.

Landscape character

4.3. This section sets out the landscape character context for the LCP. It sets out the description and key characteristics of the landscape character type (LCT) in which the LCP lies. This is derived from the separate county study.

Land cover parcels (LCPs)

4.4. The LCP information relates to desk study information collated as part of the definition of each LCP. It includes its land use, field pattern [where relevant] and field size.

Designations

4.5. Landscape/planning designations are listed in this section and comments made as to the specific features. Designations can indicate that the area is sensitive although Green Belt is not taken as a value designation.

4.6. Biodiversity designations are listed in this section and comments made as to the specific features. Designations can indicate that the area is sensitive.

4.7. Historic/archaeology designations are listed in this section and comments made as to the specific features. Designations can indicate that the area is sensitive.

Characteristics

4.8. The broad characteristics of the landscape description unit (LDU) are briefly described- landform, which describes the topography, and landcover, which describes the uses of the area. Simple land use can indicate strong consistency of character of either positive or negative nature. Diversity can indicate a rich, varied landscape which might be affected adversely by large-scale development but in which sensitive small-scale development may be able to be accommodated.

4.9. The detailed patterns of the fields, trees, patch survival, ecological corridors and intensity of use record observations in the field. They give an indication of the condition and function of elements of the landscape, contributing to intrinsic sensitivity.

4.10. The presence of water is noted and commented upon. Water bodies such as streams or ponds can be sensitive and valuable features.

Key views

4.11. Key views are those views from publicly accessible places [which are used regularly or to enjoy scenic quality] towards features of interest. Generally, these are sensitive to change and development. Any landmarks in the LCP or visible from the LCP are noted. Any detractors, or unsightly features, are also noted.

Intervisibility

4.12. The degree to which the LCP is visible to the surrounding area is noted through site observation i.e. a visit to the LCP. Any views of key features visible or key places within the LCP are also recorded. If the area has high intervisibility it is likely to be more sensitive to development than if it is hidden.

Skyline

4.13. The prominence and importance of any skyline in the LCP is noted and its complexity described. Skylines are sensitive features as they are generally widely visible and any feature on them is brought out in relief against a light sky. Varied skylines can be more attractive and valued although they may be able to accommodate small-scale change. Simple skylines may be less attractive although maybe the more sensitive to any change as it may be more noticeable. As a general rule, all development should avoid breaking the skyline.

Tranquillity

4.14. Tranquillity is broken down into the noise sources within an area, the number of views of development and the presence of people. Views of development are defined by the amount that can be seen. The more and louder the noise sources, the less the tranquillity. The more the views of development or the number of people, also the less the tranquillity. Tranquillity is a valuable commodity, particularly in areas accessible to larger settlements, and contributes to sensitivity.

Functional relationship of area

4.15. The relationship of the LCP with the adjacent settlement, if relevant, with the wider landscape and with an adjacent assessed LCP in terms of function is recorded. The function can range from land use such as agriculture through to the nature conservation function e.g. as a wildlife corridor. Some LCPs may be interdependent with others and change in one may affect all adversely.

Visual relationship of area

4.16. The relationship of the LCP with the adjacent settlement, if relevant, with the wider landscape and with an adjacent assessed LCP in terms of visual connection is recorded. Some areas can be important to the settlement in terms of providing a setting. Other areas can provide a visual link out into the wider landscape. These links can be important and make an area more sensitive to change.

Are adjacent assessed areas mutually reliant?

4.17. Some LCPs may be interdependent with others and change in one may affect all adversely.

Settlement edge

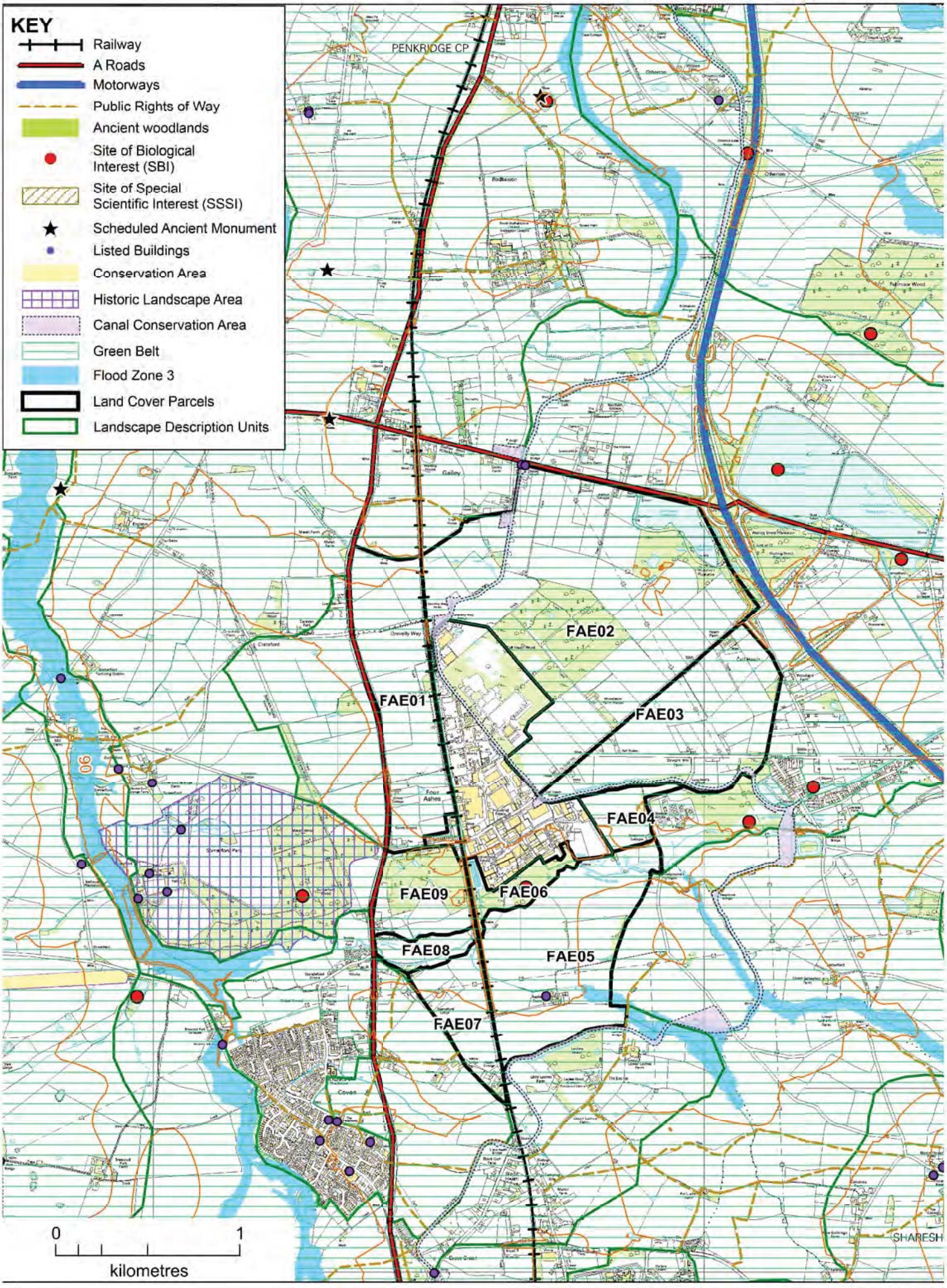
4.18. The age of the settlement or development edge is defined as either being pre-20th-century or more recent 20 to 21st century. Often, where the older core of a settlement meets an open area it is likely to be more sensitive than a later development. The nature of the edge is recorded i.e. whether it is positive or negative and its form noted i.e. whether it is smooth, linear or indented. The latter tends to be more attractive and is often symptomatic of an older edge. It can be more sensitive towards proposed development than a linear, bland edge or an edge with detractors.

Receptors and sensitivity

4.19. Receptors are people in a variety of different situations who can experience views within an area and who may be affected by change or development. Receptors can include urban or rural residents, users of public footpaths, roads, rail or cycleways. Those residents within a settlement [even a small village] are classified as 'urban', while those outside the settlement are classified as 'rural' for simplicity. Some receptors are more sensitive than others. The same person driving a delivery van for work may be less sensitive to a view than when he or she is looking out of their living-room window or taking a walk in the countryside. The more the number of sensitive receptors in an area, the more sensitive the area will be to change or development.

4.20. Potential for mitigation and improvement of settlement/development edge

4.21. If an existing settlement/development edge has a number of detractors or a poor relationship with the adjacent landscape there may be opportunity for improvement. This improvement can either take the form of mitigation such as woodland planting or screening. It could also mean that further development may be desirable provided it was carried out in a sensitive manner and provided a positive edge itself. Where such opportunities exist a comment is made. If no such opportunity exists, this is stated as a dash.



N

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Four Ashes: Constraints and land cover parcels

Site: FAE01 **Location: Four Ashes**

Summary description:

A series of flat fields with pasture and a playing field to the south and larger more regular fields to the north. The hedges tend to trimmed with a few scattered trees to the north creating a degree of openness, with stronger lines of trees and outgrown hedges to the south increasing enclosure. The busy A449 dual carriageway, Stafford Road, runs on the western boundary with trimmed hedges and lighting and fairly strong avenue tree planting with gaps in the verge. The eastern boundary is the railway which lies at grade to the south and in cutting to the north as the land rises imperceptibly. This boundary forms a strong edge of trees, some evergreens, and hedges, although the industrial estate is exposed to viewing places. The settlement is concentrated to the south off Station Drive with a pub on the corner with the main road and playing field ne☒t to linear housing. A cottage lies on the main road. Beyond to the south lies Mixed woodland and to the north the arable fields continue. To the west of the A449 there is similarly flat arable land with large scale woodlands associated with the historic Somerford Park and estate. The main receptors are users of the A449, sports ground, pub garden and residents to the south and on the main road. The tranquillity is limited by the road, railway and presence of settlement and industry nearby. The LCP lies in the Green Belt.

Landscape sensitivity to employment development: High/medium

Evaluation justification:

The sensitivity of the LCP lies in its openness, especially to the north, its rural character and its visibility to users of the A449. Residents and users of the sports ground to the south are sensitive. In the context of the wider area the arable part of this LCP reads as part of the landscape to the west, with the railway forming a strong boundary, and the A449 only filtering views. Within the LCP, the hedgerows and hedgerow trees are important elements in defining the landscape pattern. Employment uses would appear to be out of character and may impinge on Somerford Park's wider setting.

Landscape character

Settled Heathlands - a planned, Mixed farming landscape associated with impoverished, sandy soils, where numerous heath names reflect the former Extent of commons and heath. This is a gently rolling, low-lying landscape with a regular pattern of small and large hedged fields, straight roads with uniform verges and a densely dispersed pattern of roadside dwellings. Much of the area is fairly well wooded, with a scattering of hedgerow trees.

Key characteristics

- Gently rolling lowland topography
- Glacial till with sands and gravels creating poor soils with a relic heathy character
- Mixed farmland with extensive areas of grazing land and pony paddocks
- Discrete blocks of secondary Mixed woodland
- Dispersed settlement pattern with numerous roadside dwellings
- Straight, planned enclosure highway network with uniform verges
- Numerous heath names reflecting presence of former commons

Land cover parcels (LCPs)

Land use: Farmland

Field pattern: Planned enclosure

Field size: Small-medium

Designations

Landscape / planning

Green Belt ☒ AONB ☐ Amenity Greenspace ☐ Ancient Woodland ☐ TPO ☐

Biodiversity

SAC ☐ SSSI ☐ Local Wildlife Sites ☐ LNRs ☐ SBIs ☐ BAS ☐

Historic

Cons. Area ☐ SAMs ☐ Historic Parks/Gardens ☐

Other

Floodplain ☐

Characteristics

Landform: Gently rolling vale

Landcover: Secondary wooded farmland

Field boundaries

Type	Hedgerows ☒	Hedgebanks ☐	Wet ditches ☐	Estate fencing ☐
Species	Thorn ☒	Elm ☐	Mixed ☐	Ancient ☐
Condition	Good ☐	Poor ☐	Redundant ☒	Relic ☐
Management	Trimmed ☒	Overgrown ☐	Mixed ☐	

Hedgerow trees

Extent	Dense ☐	Scattered ☒	Insignificant ☐	None ☐
Age	Mixed ☒	Overmature ☐	Immature ☐	

Watercourse trees

Extent	Dense ☐	Scattered ☐	Insignificant ☐	None ☒
Age	Mixed ☐	Overmature ☐	Immature ☐	

Field trees

Extent	Prominent ☐	Apparent ☐	Insignificant ☐	None ☒
Age	Mixed ☐	Overmature ☐	Immature ☐	

Patch survival

Extent	Widespread ☐	Localised ☐	Relic ☒
Management	Intense ☐	Traditional ☐	Neglected ☐

Ecological corridors

Condition	Intact ☐	Declining ☒	Fragmented ☐

Intensity of use

Impact	High ☒	Moderate ☐	Low ☐

Water

Presence of water: Pond ☒ Lake ☐ Brook ☐ River ☐

Comments: field pond to the south

Key views

To settlement: Y ☐ N ☒ From settlement: Y ☐ N ☒

Landmarks: none Detractors: industrial estate chimneys

Intervisibility

Site observation: High ☐ Med. ☒ Low ☐ …to key features ☐ …from key places ☐

Comments: visibility from the north and west and from A449, but in a flat landscape with trees

Skyline

Prominence/importance: High ☐ Med. ☐ Low ☐ N/A ☒ Complexity: N/A

Comments: N/A

Tranquillity

Noise sources: AA49, railway

Views of settlement: to the south and of chimney stacks to the east

Presence of people: Frequent ☒ Infrequent ☐

Summary: High ☐ Med. ☐ Low ☒

Comments: the A449 and railway significantly reduce tranquillity

Extent of functional relationship

With settlement: sports ground

With wider landscape: possibly managed as part of wider unit

With adjacent LCP: possibly managed as part of wider unit

Comments: arable to the north possibly managed as part of wider unit with pasture to the south appearing to be managed on its own.

Extent of visual relationship

With settlement: the southern fields only relate to the settlement

With wider landscape: the arable land to the north relates to the wider landscape to the north and west but the southern part is more enclosed

With adjacent LCP: some limited relationship to the north

Comments: the arable land to the north relates to the wider landscape to the north and west but the southern part is more enclosed and relates to the settlement

Mutual reliance with adjacent LCPs

Visual ☐ Functional ☐

Comments: the LCPs do not appear to be reliant on each other

Settlement edge

Pre 20th C. ☐ 20th-21st C. ☒

Nature of edge:	Positive ☐	Negative ☒	Neutral ☒
Form of edge:	Smooth ☐	Linear ☒	Indented ☐

Comments: the residential settlement to the south is very discreet and the industrial estate to the east is only apparent through the chimney stacks

Receptors and sensitivity

Receptors	Sensitivity
Rural residents ☒	High ☒ Med. ☐ Low ☐
Urban residents ☒	High ☒ Med. ☐ Low ☐
Public Rights of Way ☐	High ☐ Med. ☐ Low ☐
Roads/rail/cycleways ☒	High ☐ Med. ☒ Low ☐
Canal ☐	High ☐ Med. ☐ Low ☐

Comments: residents to the south and west, users of the A449 and users of the sports ground and pub.

Potential for mitigation and improvement of settlement edge

Comments:

If the area was selected for development a strong Mixed tree belt buffer would be needed to the west along the A449 to screen views from the wider landscape and to the north along Gravally Way.

Site: FAE02 **Location: Four Ashes**

Summary description:

A very gently rolling landscape comprising of a series of rectilinear fields of arable to the north, pasture to the south with blocks of Mixed plantation, secondary woodland and Calf Heath reservoir in the north eastern corner. The arable fields to the north have trimmed hedges and occasional trees and bound the straight A5 Watling Street Roman Road which has occasional settlement along the road, particularly at Gailey Wharf where the road crosses the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal. The buildings here are distinctive red brick and listed. The canal itself heads south through the well managed rural western part of the LCP forming the boundary to the south west. It appears to be well used with moorings around Gailey Wharf. The reservoir is enclosed by a secondary woodland edge to the east, which continues along the M6, and to the south but is open to the A5 to the north. This means that traffic noise is highly audible and traffic is also visible to the sailors. Further south west there are sand and gravel workings with an access road off the A5 and a power line. These workings further reduce tranquillity. The pastures and arable land to the south along the straight Vicarage Road 'cut through' are hedged with some hedgerow trees- mainly oaks. These deteriorate to fallow/rough grassland to the south west, close to the industrial estate. There is one farm here. The core of the LCP is formed by Calf Heath Wood plantation which appears dominated by conifers with deciduous tree edges to the north west and south east. These trees form a strong edge in views across the area. The main receptors are users of the canal, A5, reservoir and Vicarage Road, and scattered residents. The tranquillity is limited by the roads and presence of settlement the industrial estate nearby. The LCP lies in the Green Belt and the Canal Conservation Area runs through the area.

Landscape sensitivity to employment development: Medium

Evaluation justification:

The sensitivity of the LCP lies in the canal corridor, the openness to view from the A5, and better managed rural character to the north, and its visibility to users of the reservoir. The scattered residents are sensitive. Within the LCP, the hedgerows and hedgerow trees are important elements in defining the landscape pattern and Calf Heath Wood is a strong presence, especially when viewed from the north. However, it appears to have limited intrinsic biodiversity or historic value. The main opportunities for employment use appear to be to the south, preferably screened by the plantation.

Landscape character

Settled Heathlands - a planned, Mixed farming landscape associated with impoverished, sandy soils, where numerous heath names reflect the former Extent of commons and heath. This is a gently rolling, low-lying landscape with a regular pattern of small and large hedged fields, straight roads with uniform verges and a densely dispersed pattern of roadside dwellings. Much of the area is fairly well wooded, with a scattering of hedgerow trees.

Key characteristics

- Gently rolling lowland topography
- Glacial till with sands and gravels creating poor soils with a relic heathy character
- Mixed farmland with extensive areas of grazing land and pony paddocks
- Discrete blocks of secondary Mixed woodland
- Dispersed settlement pattern with numerous roadside dwellings
- Straight, planned enclosure highway network with uniform verges
- Numerous heath names reflecting presence of former commons

Land cover parcels (LCPs)

Land use: Farmland

Field pattern: Planned enclosure

Field size: Small-medium

Designations

Landscape / planning

Green Belt ☒ AONB ☐ Amenity Greenspace ☐ Ancient Woodland ☐ TPO ☐

Biodiversity

SAC ☐ SSSI ☐ Local Wildlife Sites ☐ LNRs ☐ SBIs ☐ BAS ☐

Historic

Cons. Area ☐ SAMs ☐ Historic Parks/Gardens ☐

Other

Floodplain ☐

Characteristics

Landform: Gently rolling vale

Landcover: Secondary wooded farmland

Field boundaries

Type	Hedgerows ☒	Hedgebanks ☐	Wet ditches ☐	Estate fencing ☐
Species	Thorn ☒	Elm ☐	Mixed ☐	Ancient ☐
Condition	Good ☐	Poor ☐	Redundant ☒	Relic ☐
Management	Trimmed ☒	Overgrown ☐	Mixed ☐	

Hedgerow trees

Extent	Dense ☐	Scattered ☒	Insignificant ☐	None ☐
Age	Mixed ☒	Overmature ☐	Immature ☐	

Watercourse trees

Extent	Dense ☒	Scattered ☐	Insignificant ☐	None ☐
Age	Mixed ☒	Overmature ☐	Immature ☐	

Field trees

Extent	Prominent ☐	Apparent ☐	Insignificant ☐	None ☒
Age	Mixed ☐	Overmature ☐	Immature ☐	

Patch survival

Extent	Widespread ☐	Localised ☐	Relic ☒
Management	Intense ☐	Traditional ☐	Neglected ☐

Ecological corridors

Condition	Intact ☐	Declining ☐	Fragmented ☒

Intensity of use

Impact High ☐ Moderate ☒ Low ☐

Water

Presence of water: Pond ☐ Lake ☒ Brook ☐ River ☐

Comments: Reservoir, canal

Key views

To settlement: Y ☐ N ☒ From settlement: Y ☐ N ☒

Landmarks: none

Detractors: industrial estate to the south west, gravel workings infrastructure, M6 (although not visible)

Intervisibility

Site observation: High ☐ Med. ☒ Low ☒ …to key features ☐ …from key places ☐

Comments: visibility from the north from the A5, but in a flat landscape with trees

Skyline

Prominence/importance: High ☐ Med. ☐ Low ☐ N/A ☒ Complexity: N/A

Comments: N/A

Tranquillity

Noise sources: M6, A5, railway

Views of settlement: industrial estate to the south west

Presence of people: Frequent ☒ Infrequent ☐

Summary: High ☐ Med. ☐ Low ☒

Comments: the M6, A5 and railway, along with the industrial estate significantly reduce tranquillity

Extent of functional relationship

With settlement: none

With wider landscape: possibly managed as part of wider unit

With adjacent LCP: possibly managed as part of wider unit

Comments: arable to the north possibly managed as part of wider unit with pasture/arable to the south appearing to be managed on its own.

Extent of visual relationship

With settlement: none

With wider landscape: the arable land to the north relates to the wider landscape to the north and west but the southern part is more enclosed and relates to the pastures to the south

With adjacent LCP: some limited relationship to the north and south

Comments: the arable land to the north relates to the wider landscape to the north and west and the southern part relates to the pastures to the south

Mutual reliance with adjacent LCPs

Visual ☐ Functional ☐

Comments: the LCPs are not reliant on each other

Settlement edge

Pre 20th C. ☐ 20th-21st C. ☒

Nature of edge:	Positive ☐	Negative ☒	Neutral ☒
Form of edge:	Smooth ☐	Linear ☒	Indented ☐

Comments: the industrial estate to the south west is apparent and detractive

Receptors and sensitivity

Receptors	**Sensitivity**
Rural residents ☒	High ☒ Med. ☐ Low ☐
Urban residents ☐	High ☐ Med. ☐ Low ☐
Public Rights of Way ☐	High ☐ Med. ☐ Low ☐
Roads/rail/cycleways ☒	High ☐ Med. ☒ Low ☐
Canal ☒	High ☒ Med. ☐ Low ☐

Comments: canal users are the most sensitive receptors but also rural residents. Users of the A5 and Vicarage Road also have views in.

Potential for mitigation and improvement of settlement edge

Comments:

If the area was selected for development care would be needed to avoid or mitigate impacts on the canal corridor and its users, and on the broad strip of landscape to the north south of the A5, including the reservoir and its users. It would be desirable to maintain parts of the Calf Heath Wood plantation to act as a screen and buffer, as well as a strong landscape element. Hedgerow trees, especially oaks should be maintained where possible.

Site: FAE03 **Location: Four Ashes**

Summary description:

A relatively flat landscape comprising of a series of rectilinear fields of pasture with small blocks of secondary woodland and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal on the southern boundary. The pasture is grazed by varied livestock including sheep and horses. The hedges are a mi☒ of trimmed and outgrown with gaps and fencing apparent. Hedgerow oaks form an important component of the landscape and these with woodland in surrounding areas create a degree of enclosure. Some gates are in disrepair and there are informal structures for storage in the 'horsiculture' fields. Settlement is limited to isolated dwellings on the roads such as the Straight Mile and small farms. The canal appears to be well used and well maintained and has a strong deciduous tree buffer between it and the area for the majority of its length. A power line is a detractor. The tranquillity of the area is reduced by noise from the nearby M6 to the north east, views of the adjacent industrial estate and Energy from Waste building to the south west and the urban fringe character of the area. The LCP lies in the Green Belt and the Canal Conservation Area runs along the southern boundary.

Landscape sensitivity to employment development: Medium

Evaluation justification:

The sensitivity of the LCP lies in the canal corridor, and the scattered dwellings. Within the LCP, the hedgerow trees are important elements in defining the landscape pattern and the canal trees belt is a strong southern boundary. The opportunities for employment use may be limited by residents and the canal environs should be avoided if possible.

Landscape character

Settled Heathlands - a planned, Mixed farming landscape associated with impoverished, sandy soils, where numerous heath names reflect the former Extent of commons and heath. This is a gently rolling, low-lying landscape with a regular pattern of small and large hedged fields, straight roads with uniform verges and a densely dispersed pattern of roadside dwellings. Much of the area is fairly well wooded, with a scattering of hedgerow trees.

Key characteristics

- Gently rolling lowland topography
- Glacial till with sands and gravels creating poor soils with a relic heathy character
- Mixed farmland with extensive areas of grazing land and pony paddocks
- Discrete blocks of secondary Mixed woodland
- Dispersed settlement pattern with numerous roadside dwellings
- Straight, planned enclosure highway network with uniform verges
- Numerous heath names reflecting presence of former commons

Land cover parcels (LCPs)

Land use: Farmland

Field pattern: Planned enclosure

Field size: Small-medium

Designations

Landscape / planning

Green Belt ☒ AONB ☐ Amenity Greenspace ☐ Ancient Woodland ☐ TPO ☐

Biodiversity

SAC ☐ SSSI ☐ Local Wildlife Sites ☐ LNRs ☐ SBIs ☐ BAS ☐

Historic

Cons. Area ☒ SAMs ☐ Historic Parks/Gardens ☐

Other

Floodplain ☐

Characteristics

Landform: Gently rolling vale

Landcover: Secondary wooded farmland

Field boundaries

Type	Hedgerows ☒	Hedgebanks ☐	Wet ditches ☐	Estate fencing ☐
Species	Thorn ☒	Elm ☐	Mixed ☐	Ancient ☐
Condition	Good ☐	Poor ☐	Redundant ☒	Relic ☐
Management	Trimmed ☒	Overgrown ☐	Mixed ☐	

Hedgerow trees

Extent	Dense ☐	Scattered ☒	Insignificant ☐	None ☐
Age	Mixed ☒	Overmature ☐	Immature ☐	

Watercourse trees

Extent	Dense ☒	Scattered ☐	Insignificant ☐	None ☒
Age	Mixed ☒	Overmature ☐	Immature ☐	

Field trees

Extent	Prominent ☐	Apparent ☐	Insignificant ☐	None ☒
Age	Mixed ☐	Overmature ☐	Immature ☐	

Patch survival

Extent	Widespread ☐	Localised ☐	Relic ☒
Management	Intense ☐	Traditional ☐	Neglected ☐

Ecological corridors

Condition	Intact ☐	Declining ☒	Fragmented ☐

Intensity of use

Impact	High ☐	Moderate ☒	Low ☐

Water

Presence of water: Pond ☐ Lake ☐ Brook ☐ River ☐

Comments: Canal

Key views

To settlement: Y ☐ N ☒ From settlement: Y ☐ N ☒

Landmarks: None Detractors: pylons, EWT to the south

Intervisibility

Site observation: High ☐ Med. ☐ Low ☒ …to key features ☐ …from key places ☐

Comments: intervisibility is limited by flat terrain and tree cover

Skyline

Prominence/importance: High ☐ Med. ☐ Low ☐ N/A ☒ Complexity:

Comments: N/A

Tranquillity

Noise sources: M6

Views of settlement: industrial estate to the south west

Presence of people: Frequent ☒ Infrequent ☐

Summary: High ☐ Med. ☐ Low ☒

Comments: the M6, presence of chimneys and industrial estate and urban fringe character reduce tranquillity

Extent of functional relationship

With settlement: none

With wider landscape: parts to the north possibly managed as part of wider unit

With adjacent LCP: parts to the north possibly managed as part of wider unit

Comments: pastures to the north possibly managed as part of wider unit with pasture to the south appearing to be managed on its own.

Extent of visual relationship

With settlement: none

With wider landscape: intervisibility with area to the north

With adjacent LCP: intervisibility with area to the north

Comments: as above

Mutual reliance with adjacent LCPs

Visual ☐ Functional ☐

Comments: the LCPs do not appear to be reliant on each other

Settlement edge

Pre 20thC. ☐ 20th-21stC. ☒

Nature of edge:	Positive ☐	Negative ☒	Neutral ☐
Form of edge:	Smooth ☐	Linear ☒	Indented ☐

Comments: industrial estate partially mitigated by canal corridor trees but chimneys visible

Receptors and sensitivity

Receptors	Sensitivity
Rural residents ☒	High ☒ Med. ☐ Low ☐
Urban residents ☐	High ☐ Med. ☐ Low ☐
Public Rights of Way ☐	High ☐ Med. ☐ Low ☐
Roads/rail/cycleways ☒	High ☐ Med. ☒ Low ☐
Canal ☒	High ☒ Med. ☐ Low ☐

Comments: canal users and rural residents are the most sensitive receptors. Users of Vicarage Road and Straight Road also have views.

Potential for mitigation and improvement of settlement edge

Comments:

If the area was selected for development care would be needed to avoid or mitigate impacts on the canal corridor and its users, and on rural residents. Hedgerow trees, especially oaks should be maintained where possible.