

I INTRODUCTION

- 1.01 The Government has made it clear that the policies in local development documents must be founded on a thorough understanding of the needs of the area and the opportunities and constraints that exist. An up to date and comprehensive evidence base must be prepared to ensure that new development required in the District takes place in locations that are compatible with the unique quality of the Staffordshire Moorlands landscape and is in sympathy with the setting of the particular settlement. The Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment Study is a vital part of this evidence base.
- 1.02 The study was commissioned by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to input into the emerging Local Development Framework for the District, in particular the Core Strategy and the Site Specific Policies and Allocations Development Plan documents. The Council will use the study to assist it in identifying general areas and specific sites which are most appropriate for development. It will inform new planning policy and be used in the determination of planning applications.
- 1.03 The overall aim of the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment Study is to provide a robust framework to guide the future development and management of the landscape of Staffordshire Moorlands, ensuring that the distinctive character of the landscape is retained and change is managed positively.
- 1.04 All the documents that make up the study should be readily understood by both the public and by professionals.
- 1.05 The study comprises 3 elements:
- Landscape character assessment
 - Settlement setting assessment
 - Review of Visual Open Space designations
- Landscape character assessment
- 1.06 The Landscape Character Assessment relates only to the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council planning area. It excludes that part of the District that lies within the Peak District National Park.
- 1.07 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's main requirements for the Landscape Character Assessment are:
- *'Provide an up to date and integrated description of Staffordshire Moorlands landscape, identifying key landscape characteristics (incorporating the Historic Landscape Characterisation carried out by Staffordshire County Council)*
 - *Identify key planning and land management issues*
 - *Identify key capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to development and change*
 - *Propose landscape planning guidelines*
 - *Suggest land management guidelines'*
- 1.08 Staffordshire County Council (SCC) is currently preparing a county wide Integrated Environmental Assessment (IEA). The original historic landscape character data available on Staffordshire County Council's website was used to inform the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment.
- Refined Historic Landscape Character data for Staffordshire Moorlands, when available from SCC, should be used in conjunction with this Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment.

Settlement setting assessment

1.09 The settlement study covers the towns of Leek, Cheadle and Biddulph, and the villages of Alton, Bagnall, Biddulph Moor, Blythe Bridge and Forsbrook, Brown Edge, Caverswall and Cookshill, Cheddleton, Endon, Ipstones, Kingsley, Oakamoor, Upper Tean, Waterhouses and Werrington, Cellarhead and Wetley Rocks.

1.10 The settlement study will further develop information gathered under the Landscape Character study to provide a more in depth assessment identifying the distinctive qualities of the individual settlements. This requires judgement about potential capacity of each settlement taking account of:

- *'Key characteristics and features of the landscape character types present in the area (e.g. views, townscape setting, visually prominent landscape features, skylines etc);*
- *Importance of landscape setting to the settlement and the relationship between the two including the presence of any 'natural' limits to development;*
- *Relationship of access routes like gateways and roads to the form of the settlement and to the landscape setting*
- *Opportunities for public access into the countryside i.e. public rights of way, bridle paths, cycle routes, links to recreation areas, country parks.*

The peripheral areas (of settlements) are to be assessed with regards to their ability to accommodate development without compromising landscape character. Consideration of principles for the siting and design of new development, suggesting the pattern, form and scale which it might take in order to reinforce and enhance landscape character should also be included.'

Review of Visual Open Space designations

1.11 The designated Visual Open Spaces in the District are to be reviewed as part of the

study. The review is required to *'ensure that important open spaces which contribute to the character of the settlements are identified and protected from development.'*

2 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Methodology and Planning Background

2.01 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's main requirements for the Landscape Character Assessment are:

- *'Provide an up to date and integrated description of Staffordshire Moorlands landscape, identifying key landscape characteristics (incorporating the Historic Landscape Characterisation carried out by Staffordshire County Council)*
- *Identify key planning and land management issues*
- *Identify key capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to development and change*
- *Propose landscape planning guidelines*
- *Suggest land management guidelines'*

2.02 The desktop review has taken account of government guidance, development plan policy, and landscape character designations and studies that impact on Staffordshire Moorlands.

2.03 In Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) the Government sets out its approach to planning for sustainable development and restates its overall aim *'to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and so it may be enjoyed by all'*.

2.04 Planning Policy Statement 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (PPS) published in 2004 sets out the Government's national policies relating to rural areas, including market towns and villages and the wider countryside that surrounds them and which extends up to the edges of larger urban areas. PPS 7 replaces Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 7, The Countryside - Environmental Quality and

Economic and Social Development that was published in February 1997.

2.05 PPS 7 outlines the government's approach to design and the character of rural settlements; to countryside protection and development in the countryside and to local landscape designations. It advises local authorities that:

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

2.06 The Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands, in Chapter 8 Quality of the Environment, recognises that the region contains a variety of natural and cultural environmental assets which should be conserved for the contribution that they make to the quality of life. In its overarching Policy QE1 Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) encourages Local Authorities to *'protect and enhance the distinctive character of different parts of the Region as recognised by the natural and character areas and associated local landscape character assessments, and through historic landscape characterisation.'*

2.07 In Policy QE4 Greenery, Urban Greenspace and Public Spaces GOWM urges local authorities to recognise the importance of green space, Policy QE5 addresses the protection and enhancement of the Historic Environment and Policy QE6 covers the conservation, enhancement and restoration of the Region's landscape.

2.08 Policy QE6 is particularly relevant to the consideration of landscape character. It reads as follows:

'Local authorities and other agencies, in their plans, policies and proposals should conserve, enhance and, where necessary, restore

the quality, diversity and distinctiveness of landscape character throughout the region's urban and rural areas by:

- i) Ensuring that a consistent approach is taken to landscape and character issues, particularly where they cross local planning authority boundaries;
- ii) Establishing a positive integrated approach to the use, management and enhancement of urban fringe;
- iii) Supporting the Community Forest and National Forest programmes;
- iv) Protecting and, where possible, enhancing natural, man-made and historic features that contribute to the character of the landscape and townscape, and local distinctiveness;
- v) Considering other factors that contribute to landscape character including tranquillity and the minimisation of noise and light pollution; and
- vi) Identifying opportunities for the restoration of degraded landscapes including current and proposed minerals workings and waste disposal sites.'

2.09 Relevant saved policies in the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 and the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan September 1998 apply to this appraisal. In accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Policies Purchase Act 2004, policies in the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan and the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan that met the criteria set out by the Government were 'saved' by the Secretary of State under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 of the Act. To be 'saved', policies needed to be in general conformity with the regional Spatial Strategy, to be necessary and not merely repeat national or regional policy. These policies form the local development plan and will be superseded in time by the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF).

2.10 The landscape character designations and studies that impact on Staffordshire Moorlands are primarily the Joint Character Areas that form part of The Character of England Map and the local landscape character types determined by Staffordshire County Council in 'Planning for Landscape Change'.

2.11 The Character of England Map was produced in 1996 by the former Countryside Commission and English Nature, with support from English Heritage. This map combines English Nature's Natural Areas and the former Countryside Commission's Countryside Character Areas into a map of 159 Joint Character Areas (JCAs) for the whole of England.

2.12 Staffordshire Moorlands falls within 4 Joint Character Areas:

- 64 Potteries and Churnet Valley
- 52 White Peak
- 53 South West Peak
- 68 Needwood Claylands

2.13 Staffordshire County Council evaluated the landscapes of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent and mapped their quality and character. The study included assessing and mapping the general sensitivity of individual landscapes to change. The outputs from this study were embodied in the document 'Planning for Landscape Change'. This policy document was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Staffordshire County Council in May 2001 to support the implementation of Policy NC2 of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011.

2.14 Policy NC2 Landscape protection and restoration states:

'Development should be informed by and be sympathetic to landscape character and quality and should contribute, as appropriate, to the regeneration, restoration, enhancement, maintenance or active conservation of the landscape likely to be affected. Proposals with landscape and visual implications will be

assessed having regard to the extent to which they would:

- (a) cause unacceptable visual harm;
- (b) introduce (or conversely remove) incongruous landscape elements;
- (c) cause the disturbance or loss of (or conversely help to maintain):
 - (i) landscape elements that contribute to local distinctiveness;
 - (ii) historic elements which contribute significantly to landscape character and quality, such as field, settlement or road patterns;
 - (iii) semi-natural vegetation which is characteristic of that landscape type;
 - (iv) the visual condition of landscape elements;
 - (v) tranquility.'

2.15 Policy NC2 was 'saved' by the Secretary of State under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as confirmed in his letter of 7 September 2007.

2.16 'Planning for Landscape Change' is Supplementary Planning Guidance consequent on policy NC2. It comprises:

- A series of maps showing the distribution of a number of distinct types of landscape that are found within the Structure Plan area;
- A series of detailed descriptions of those landscapes;
- A map showing the areas to which landscape policy objectives apply
- An explanation of the method used to generate those maps and landscape descriptions
- An appendix indicating the areas that are preferred for targeting resources

for woodland initiatives including new planting and management

2.17 The introduction and user's guide to 'Planning for Landscape Change' outlines the approach to the analysis of landscape character in the Structure Plan area.

*'The boundaries of the character areas which were broadly delineated on the Character of England map have been more broadly 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.*

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 a 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.'*

2.18 Staffordshire County Council's assessment of landscape quality also mapped proposed landscape policy objectives which ranged from landscape regeneration in areas of low quality landscape to active landscape conservation in areas of high quality landscape. The factors used to assess landscape quality also contribute towards landscape sensitivity. Those landscapes most sensitive to change, through development or land use change, may require specific development control policies.

2.19 The original survey work carried out by Staffordshire County Council as part of the County landscape character assessment used landscape description units. Landscape Description Units (LDUs) are distinct relatively homogenous units of land defined by a number of characteristic attributes. LDUs with similar characteristics are grouped to form larger areas of landscape character type.

2.20 The boundaries of the LDUs were used in conjunction with aerial photographs, GIS data, SCC's original Historic Landscape Character overview, historical Ordnance Survey data, William Yates' map of Staffordshire 1775 and geological information to develop an appreciation of the form and character of the landscape types within Staffordshire Moorlands.

2.21 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council requires the Landscape Character Assessment to relate only to its planning area. Although it excludes that part of the District that lies

within the Peak District National Park, part of the study area falls within two Joint Character Areas, 52 White Peak and 53 South West Peak, which mainly lie within the area of the Peak District National Park. As the National Park is not covered by the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, Staffordshire Moorlands only require account to be taken of the Peak Park Planning Board's approach to landscape character 'to ensure there is a seamless approach to Landscape Character Assessment' in that part of the District that abuts the Peak Park.

On-Site Review

2.22 Original Landscape Description Units (LDUs) survey sheets were used on site, in conjunction other desktop data, Ordnance Survey plans and aerial photographs to familiarise the consultants with the District and the form and character of the landscape types identified through the 'Planning for Landscape Change' Supplementary Planning Guidance. Generally the distribution of landscape types was readily identifiable on the ground although there were areas of transition from one landscape type to another, where the characteristics of the two different landscapes merged.

2.23 It was considered that the landscape types identified in the SPG for Staffordshire Moorlands were still applicable. Although local distinctiveness is of particular importance it was considered inappropriate to change the names of the landscape types to reflect local areas or landmarks, in order to remain consistent with the landscape types for the rest of the Structure Plan area.

Joint Character Areas and Landscape Character Types

2.24 Staffordshire Moorlands falls within 4 Joint Character Areas (JCAs):

- 64 Potteries and Churnet Valley
- 52 White Peak
- 53 South West Peak
- 68 Needwood Claylands

- 2.25 The following landscape character types are found in that part of the Potteries and Churnet Valley JCA that lies within Staffordshire Moorlands:
- Ancient plateau farmlands
 - Ancient slope and valley farmlands
 - Settled plateau farmland slopes
 - Settled plateau farmlands
 - Gritstone uplands
 - Dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys
 - Dissected sandstone highland fringe
 - Dissected sandstone uplands
- 2.26 There is only one landscape character type found in that part of the White Peak JCA that lies within Staffordshire Moorlands:
- Limestone highland fringe
- 2.27 There is only one landscape character type found in that part of the South West Peak JCA that lies within Staffordshire Moorlands:
- Gritstone highland fringe
- 2.28 The following landscape character types are found in that part of the Needwood Claylands JCA that lies within Staffordshire Moorlands:
- Settled plateau farmland slopes
 - Settled plateau farmlands
- 2.29 Settled plateau farmland slopes and the settled plateau farmlands are found in both the Potteries and Churnet Valley JCA and the Needwood Claylands JCA.
- 2.30 For each landscape character type the key characteristics have been identified and the following main characteristics are described:
- Geology, landform and soils
 - Vegetation
 - Land use
 - Enclosure
 - Settlement and buildings
 - Transport and access
 - Incongruous landscape features
- 2.31 Key planning and management issues are highlighted. The capabilities of the landscape to accommodate change directly follows the findings of the 'Planning for Landscape Change' Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- 2.32 Both landscape planning and landscape management guidelines are proposed for each landscape character type.

3 SETTLEMENT SETTING ASSESSMENT

3.01 The settlement study covers the towns of Leek, Cheadle and Biddulph, and the villages of Alton, Bagnall, Biddulph Moor, Blythe Bridge and Forsbrook, Brown Edge, Caverswall and Cookhill, Cheddleton, Endon, Ipstones, Kingsley, Oakamoor, Upper Tean, Waterhouses and Werrington, Cellarhead and Wetley Rocks.

3.02 The settlement study will further develop information gathered under the Landscape Character study to provide a more in depth assessment identifying the distinctive qualities of the individual settlements. This requires judgement about potential capacity of each settlement taking account of:

- *'Key characteristics and features of the landscape character types present in the area (e.g. views, townscape setting, visually prominent landscape features, skylines etc);*
- *Importance of landscape setting to the settlement and the relationship between the two including the presence of any 'natural' limits to development;*
- *Relationship of access routes like gateways and roads to the form of the settlement and to the landscape setting*
- *Opportunities for public access into the countryside i.e. public rights of way, bridle paths, cycle routes, links to recreation areas, country parks.*

The peripheral areas (of settlements) are to be assessed with regards to their ability to accommodate development without compromising landscape character. Consideration of principles for the siting and design of new development, suggesting the pattern, form and scale which it might take in order to reinforce and enhance landscape character should also be included.'

Desktop study

3.03 A desktop study was carried out to identify the main characteristics of each settlement. These were related to general character and landscape, specific landscape features, designated areas and built environment.

3.04 The following detailed information was collated for each settlement:

general character & landscape

regional landscape character, local landscape character type, historical landscape classification, geology (including solid and drift), minerals, topography and contour range

specific landscape features

significant vegetation (including ancient woodlands, lowland heath, registered commons and parkland), historic parkland (including English Heritage Registered Parks and Gardens), water bodies/water courses, extent of floodplains, major routes, significant visual features/landmarks/viewpoints and other significant landscape features such as mineral workings

designated areas

designated areas of ecological significance (including SSSIs, SPAs, SBIs, SACs and nature reserves), RIGS, nature conservation sites (from Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan) and Scheduled Ancient Monuments

and built environment

proposed/recent development (identified using aerial photographs and local plan proposals) and conservation area appraisals.

3.05 The identification of Visual Open Spaces associated with each settlement was carried out as part of a separate exercise.

3.06 This information was largely gathered by using Geographic Information System (GIS) data supplied by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and by Staffordshire County Council, the 'magic' website (multi agency geographic information for the countryside), the development plan for the district and other hard copy documents supplied by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

On site appraisal

3.07 On site appraisal of each settlement was carried out making use of desktop data, landscape character data, aerial photographs and 1st edition Ordnance Survey maps. The assessment and review of the visual open spaces was carried out on site as part of this process.

3.08 Particular attention was paid to identify the key characteristics of the settlement and of the character of the landscape within which it sits. An understanding of the interrelationship between the settlement and its landscape setting should inform opportunities for new development and determine the natural limits to the settlement as defined by landscape character. Access links were identified showing major entrances to the settlement and pedestrian, cycle and bridle routes and links into the adjacent recreational facilities and the surrounding wider countryside.

Important Landscape Setting to Settlements

3.09 Areas of landscape setting were determined partly on the ground and with reference to the landscape character assessment, aerial photographs and OS 1st edition plans. Landscape that is identified as being important to the setting of a town or village is typical of the character of the landscape type for the locality. The original field pattern, form of enclosure, vegetation cover and scale of

the landscape is often largely intact in these areas.

Historic Parkland Landscapes

3.10 As part of the work on the setting of settlements, historic parklands and remnants of designed historic landscapes were identified. These were often clearly recognisable from the aerial photograph and from ground survey it could be seen that these contributed to the overall strength and character of the broader landscape. Reference to the OS 1st edition identifies the extent of the designed landscape at that time. Many were well established by the late 1800's. By superimposing the OS 1st edition plan over recent aerial photographs it is possible to identify original parkland trees that still exist. Parklands are also identified on SCC's original historic landscape character data.

3.11 The contribution of the parkland landscapes was not only to the property with which they were associated but in strengthening the vegetation cover of the locality and adding interest through the introduction of decorative tree species. These introduced species including conifers and evergreens that are particularly visually significant in the wider landscape during the winter. The larger parklands consisted of pleasure grounds in close proximity to the main house and avenues, rides, woodland blocks and belts contained pasture characterised by individual and groups of parkland trees. Many would contain streams and water features enlarged and remodelled as part of the design. The countryside directly around the parklands was often managed by the owners of the parklands and designed views out across that countryside were a feature of the parkland design.

3.12 There are currently 2 parklands included within the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens within Staffordshire Moorlands, they are Biddulph Grange (Grade I), north of Biddulph and north west of Biddulph Moor,

and Alton Towers (Grade I) to the north of its estate village of Alton. There are other notable parklands at Heath House, to the east of Upper Tean, and at Ashcombe Park which abutts the southern edge of Cheddleton.

- 3.13 Smaller parklands also contribute to the setting of towns and villages elsewhere in the District eg at Caverswall & Cookshill, Cheadle, Cheddleton, Endon, Leek, Oakamoor, Upper Tean, and Werrington & Cellarhead.

Strong boundary edges

- 3.14 In certain places around the edges of settlements the boundary will be visibly strong and defensible. This can be identified on the ground and with reference to aerial photographs and Ordnance Survey plans. This may occur where the edge of development follows for example a road, a well vegetated field boundary, or is enclosed by other strong vegetation. In some instances the form of the development is rectilinear and easily defined.

Boundaries requiring reinforcement.

- 3.15 In some instances the edge of the settlement is weak and requires strengthening by planting to enable it to be more readily absorbed within the surrounding landscape. This tends to happen where new development has taken little notice and consideration of the character and scale of the landscape and arbitrary boundaries have been established. This can be identified on the ground and with reference to aerial photographs and Ordnance Survey plans.

Plans

- 3.16 For each settlement a constraints plan was prepared which comprised mainly of information supplied in digital form and which was transferred onto a 1:10,000 scale Ordnance Survey base under Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's licence agreement.

Constraints Plans

- 3.17 The constraints plan information was superimposed upon a 1:10,000 Ordnance Survey base.
- 3.18 The constraints plans show: ancient woodland, Registered parks and gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Sites of Biological Interest, nature reserves, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Floodzones, the main road network, designated areas of Visual Open Space, Conservation Areas, contours at 20m intervals, the Peak Park boundary and Staffordshire Moorland District Council boundary.

Setting Plans

- 3.19 The setting plans were prepared following 'on site' appraisals. The setting plan information is superimposed on a greyscale copy of the constraints plan.
- 3.20 The setting plans show: significant public footpaths (including the Staffordshire Way), canals, cycleways, railways, remnant historic landscape, rocky outcrops, significant ridgelines, important landscape setting to settlement, individual visual open spaces within the settlement boundary, strong edges to settlements, planting required to strengthen edge of settlement or for mitigation and significant views.

4 VISUAL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

4.01 The study also includes the review of the Visual Open Space designations in the district.

4.02 Following a survey of settlements carried out as part of the background work to the September 1998 Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, a number of important areas of visual open spaces were identified and were shown as proposals on the town and village inset plans. The areas were generally open, mainly undeveloped and contribute to the visual character of the settlement. Saved Policy R5 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan refers:

‘Visual open space shall be designated where the general intention will be to retain the land’s open and undeveloped appearance. Where appropriate the District Council will seek public access agreements with appropriate landowners.’

4.03 The policy justification recognises that:

‘There may be areas of land which are not essential as part of the ‘public’ open space provision in a settlement but which perform valuable functions within towns and villages. These include forming a visual break between areas of development, contributing to local character, protecting attractive views and enhancing the setting of a public amenity such as a footpath. Such sites are considered worthy of protection from development as far ahead as can be foreseen. Paragraph 27 of PPG3 ‘Housing’ indicates that such informal open spaces can be of great importance to the character of a neighbourhood and states that planning policies should identify sites which need to be protected for amenity purposes.’

4.04 According to the local plan Visual Open Space should perform some or all of the following:

- form a break between development within a settlement;

- allow the public to enjoy significant internal views across the open area;
- allow the public to enjoy significant external views across the open area;
- be of amenity/recreational value to the public while not requiring public access to the site itself;
- contribute to the character of the surrounding neighbourhood/settlement.

4.05 Additionally the following criteria can be used but only in association with one or some of the above criteria:

- be of ecological value;
- have a significant, proven local cultural or historical association.

These criteria took account of ecological data, historical mapping and conservation area appraisals provided by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

4.06 Visual open spaces in the towns and villages previously identified by the District Council were reassessed on site by Wardell Armstrong following the above criteria. A small number of additional Visual Open Spaces that met the criteria were identified as part of this process.

5 DOCUMENT LAYOUT

5.01 The data collected in the course of this assessment is presented as follows

Landscape Character Assessment

5.02 A brief description of the Joint Character Areas (JCAs) that occur within Staffordshire Moorlands precedes the description of landscape character types. The JCA descriptions cover the regional landscape character of:

- JCA 64 Potteries and Churnet Valley
- JCA 52 White Peak
- JCA 53 South West Peak
- JCA 68 Needwood Claylands

5.03 Landscape Character Assessment covers the landscape character types that are found in Staffordshire Moorlands. They are as follows:

- Ancient plateau farmlands
- Ancient slope and valley farmlands
- Settled plateau farmland slopes
- Settled plateau farmlands
- Gritstone uplands
- Dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys
- Dissected sandstone highland fringe
- Dissected sandstone uplands
- Gritstone highland fringe
- Limestone highland fringe

5.04 A plan showing the distribution and juxtaposition of each landscape character type is located at the front of the section and the text for each landscape character type includes a small plan roughly identifying the position of the landscape character type in the District.

5.05 For each landscape character type the key characteristics have been identified and the following main characteristics are described:

- Geology, landform and soils
- Vegetation
- Land use
- Enclosure
- Settlement and buildings
- Transport and access
- Incongruous landscape features

5.06 Key planning and management issues are highlighted. The capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to accommodate change directly follows the findings of the 'Planning for Landscape Change' Supplementary Planning Guidance.

5.07 Both landscape planning and landscape management guidelines are proposed for each landscape character type.

Settlement Setting Assessment

5.08 The settlement setting assessment information comprises:

- Brief written description of the main characteristics of each settlement which also lists the Visual Open Spaces for each settlement;
- Constraints plan at 1:10,000 identifying ancient woodland, Registered parks and gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Sites of Biological Interest, nature reserves, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Floodzones, the main road network, designated areas of Visual Open Space, Conservation Areas, contours at 20m intervals, the Peak Park boundary and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council boundary;

- Setting plan at 1:10,000 identifying significant public footpaths (including the Staffordshire Way), canals, cycleways, railways, remnant historic landscape, rocky outcrops, significant ridgelines, important landscape setting to settlement, individual visual open spaces within the settlement boundary, strong edges to settlements, planting required to strengthen edge of settlement or for mitigation and significant views;
- Tabulated basic data for each settlement including general character & landscape, specific landscape features, designated areas and built environment

the settlement setting plans are suggested as a result of this review.

Review of Visual Open Space Designations

5.09 The information collated as part of the Review of Visual Open Space Designations is shown on an assessment pro forma with associated photographs of each Visual Open Space. Plans are provided for additional Visual Open Spaces identified during the review process.

5.10 Individual Visual Open Spaces are numbered using the following settlement prefixes:

AL	Alton
BA	Bagnall
BB	Blythe Bridge
BE	Brown Edge
BI	Biddulph
CH	Cheadle
CN	Cheddleton
EN	Endon
IP	Ipstones
KI	Kingsley
LE	Leek
OA	Oakamoor
UT	Upper Tean
WT	Waterhouses
WE	Werrington & Cellarhead
WR	Wetley Rocks

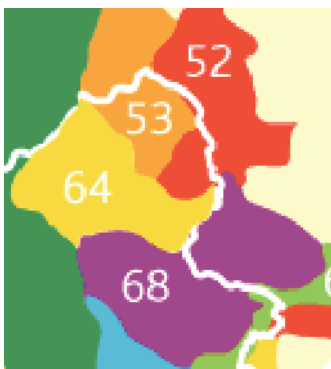
5.11 The Visual Open Space designations identified on the settlement constraints plans are designated in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan September 1998. The additional Visual Open Spaces included on

6 APPLICATION OF THE ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW FINDINGS

- 6.01 When considering development proposals in or adjacent to the settlements, all 3 data sets should be used to assess the landscape impact of the proposals.
- 6.02 When considering the landscape character data it should be remembered that the edges of the landscape character types are not always readily distinguishable on the ground and along boundaries of character types there can be a transition zone where features from both adjoining character types are present. Equally the distribution of typical landscape features will vary throughout individual character types. All the key characteristics of a character types are unlikely to be always present in each part of the area. In areas where the landscape structure is weak and eroded, areas of the original landscape can still be found intact. It is important that the landscape character descriptions are used as a guide to help articulate the features and character of the landscape.
- 6.03 Important areas of setting around towns and villages generally are of a scale and contain features that are characteristic of the original traditional agricultural landscape for that area. Towns and villages may be situated on the edge of more than one landscape character area. This may mean that the characteristics of areas of important landscape setting around the settlement are likely to differ.
- 6.04 An understanding of the interrelationship between the settlement and its landscape setting should inform opportunities for new development and determine the natural limits to the settlement as defined by landscape character.
- 6.05 There are a number of historic parklands and remnant parkland landscapes throughout the District. Parklands in proximity of the towns and villages were identified as part of the work on the setting of settlements. These were often clearly recognisable and it can be seen that these contributed to the overall strength and character of the broader landscape.
- 6.06 Within settlements areas of Visual Open Space break up the built up areas. They can visually connect urban and suburban development with the surrounding countryside through views out and across and can act as green corridors linking through into the countryside beyond. Some of these areas are accessible to the public whereas others are in private ownership.
- 6.07 Where new development is considered appropriate consideration should be given to the features of the landscape character type and to the more immediate landscape setting. The scale of the development should reflect the scale of the surrounding landscape. Careful consideration should be given to boundary treatments ensuring that the vegetation structure of the existing site and its environs are either strengthened or protected and that any new planting carried out as part of the proposals is sympathetic with the local landscape. Where the existing landscape structure is eroded and in a poor condition, new development can provide the opportunity for creating a strong new landscape structure. Plant material should where possible contribute towards local habitats and to the land management guidelines identified for the relevant landscape character type. Open space can be used to create views out to the surrounding countryside; with appropriate tree and shrub planting to act as a buffer between development and the adjacent countryside; and create a strong new defensible boundary to a settlement.
- 6.08 Choice of materials and juxtaposition of buildings should reflect local building form and character.

- 6.09 The preparation of design briefs taking account of landscape character type and the setting and character of settlements can encourage development that is sympathetic and contributes to the local scene.
- 6.10 The Council will be producing a Design SPD, 'High Quality Urban Design & Building Design' due for completion in 2009 which will give advice on layout and scale of new development in the District.

Regional Landscape Character - Joint Character Areas



In 1996 the former Countryside Commission and English Nature, with support from English Heritage, produced The Character of England Map. This map combines English Nature's Natural Areas and the former Countryside Commission's Countryside Character Areas into a map of 159 Joint Character Areas (JCAs) for the whole of England.

Staffordshire Moorlands falls within 4 Joint character areas:

- 64 Potteries and Churnet Valley
- 52 White Peak
- 53 South West Peak
- 68 Needwood Claylands

The majority and central area of the district falls into the Potteries and Churnet Valley. The Peak Park abuts the district on its eastern boundary, the South West Peak and the White Peak joint character areas extend from the Peak Park area into eastern edge of the District. The key characteristics of each of the joint character areas are identified as follows:

64 The Potteries and Churnet Valley

- Strongly dissected hills and small plateaux, rising up to the Pennines and cut by major river valleys.
- Strong contrast between remote uplands, urban areas, sheltered wooded valleys and hillside pastures.
- Prominent Millstone Grit and Coal Measures ridges.
- Sprawling industrial towns of the Potteries forming a major conurbation.
- Extensive former industrial and extractive sites, many now reclaimed, intermixed with settlements and open land.
- Open moorland and rough grazing on higher ground.
- Rural settlement pattern of sheltered villages on low ground with hamlets, scattered farmsteads and cottages elsewhere.
- Brick and sandstone older buildings with tile and slate roofs.
- Clear, fast-flowing rivers and streams in some dales; others are dry or seasonal.
- Nucleated villages and small towns connected by crest and valley roads
- Improved farmland for intensive dairy farming characterised by small narrow fields, often of medieval origin, around many villages and large rectangular fields away from the villages, formed by white, limestone, dry stone walls and walled up lead rakes (forming a combination of white walls and green grass).
- Poorly vegetated dew ponds, common over the whole plateau, lined with concrete, limestone or clay.
- Mosaic of herb-rich grassland, woodland and scrub along dales.
- Lack of a unifying style of architecture for buildings and settlements due to the availability of two dissimilar rock types, limestone and 'gritstone' used either singly or in combination in various parts of the area.
- Large-scale limestone quarries creating major scars in limited places in an otherwise attractive landscape.
- Long-disused workings for limestone and ores, particularly lead rakes, provide features rich in ecological, historical and cultural interest.
- Features of special archaeological interest together with strong cultural heritage dating from the earliest prehistoric past.

52 The White Peak

- Elevated limestone plateau dissected by steeply cut dales and gorges with rock outcrops, screes, and cave systems.
- Long, narrow, shelter belts of broadleaved trees on high ground and along lead rakes with semi-natural broadleaved woodland along dale sides.

53 The South West Peak

- Integrated mosaic of landform and vegetation patterns comprising tracts of wild expansive moorland with heather on hill tops and ridges and small scale enclosed farmland with herb-rich hay meadows and rushy pastures in valleys.
- Area of upland flanked by lower hills to the south and west and indented by valleys which broaden to the west into gently undulating lowland as the rivers drain to the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain.
- Isolated 'gritstone' edges at Ramshaw Rocks and the Roaches providing a dramatic contrast to rolling uplands.
- Long, uninterrupted views from margins to upland areas and vice versa, and contained and intimate around the foothills.
- Fringes to the upland dissected by river valleys with fast flowing streams which create an intricate ridge and valley landscape of distinctive pattern and character.
- Main rivers of the Goyt, Dove, Dane, Manifold, Churnet and Hamps all with their sources in the upland area.
- Economy of the area based on stock rearing (sheep and beef) with some dairy farming and grouse shooting on the moorland.
- Intricate and distinctive field patterns often with historic associations including gritstone walls at higher elevations and hedgerows at lower elevations, with holly prevalent in the lower valleys.
- Farm buildings and villages built predominantly of local stone reflecting local geology and history.
- Small nucleated settlements with extensive dispersed farm landscape, commonly with distinctive and recognisable area of intake.
- Remains of former coal mining activity particularly in the area around Flash.

68 Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands

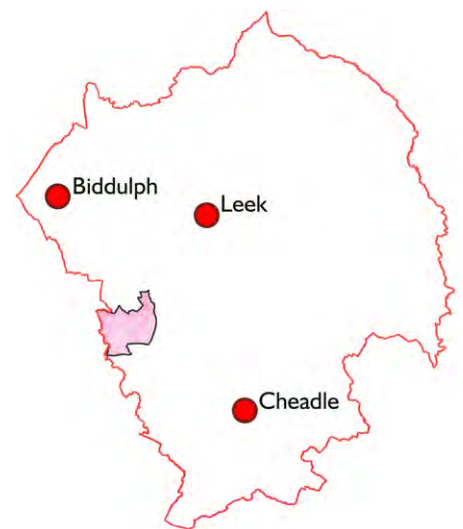
- Rolling, glacial till plateau rising to prominent wooded heights above the central valley.
- Wide, shallow central valley.
- Gently rolling landscape in the north, dissected by numerous small valleys.
- Frequent plantations and ancient woodland in former forest of Needwood.
- Varied hedgerow patterns: strongly rectilinear in Needwood Forest, irregular in the west, sub-rectangular elsewhere.
- Predominantly pasture with good hedges but some areas of more open arable with low hedges.
- Red brick and half timber villages with sandstone churches.
- Historic parks and country houses.

Landscape Character Types



Ancient plateau farmlands

This area lies on the western edge of the District north of Werrington and contains an extensive area of lowland heath.



Key Characteristics

- Gentle undulating landform with some steep slopes
- Heathland including wet heath with rushes and rough grasses
- Drystone walls with remains of unmanaged hedgerows and isolated trees
- Fields often demarcated by fencing
- Dairy farming and horse grazing
- Small woodlands, broadleaf and conifer
- Isolated stone farm houses and buildings converted to residential dwellings
- Electricity power lines and substation

Geology, Landform and Soils

Localised geology of coal measures and millstone grit has created a landform that gently undulates with some steep slopes. Non-calcareous stagnogley poorly drained soils supports wet heath and rough grasses.

Vegetation

Blocks of broadleaf and conifer plantations are mainly associated with buildings and to screen sub station, with belts of trees found along stream lines. Woodlands are dominated by birch reflecting the heathland character of the area. There are some hedgerows but they are generally in poor condition. Poorly draining soils creating acid grassland with a wet heath of rushes and rough grasses. Within the upland areas, small areas of heath still remain. Some birch and oak are present mainly along field boundaries.

Land use

Dairy farm and stock rearing are the main uses of the land, although towards the urban fringe this has been replaced with horse grazing. Power lines and electricity substation are dominant incongruous features within the landscape.

Enclosure

Hedges used as field boundaries are poorly maintained with gaps that have been replaced with post and barbed wire fence that is also in poor condition. Subdivision of fields for horse grazing has lead to damage to hedgerows and to trees. Where hedgerows have not been replaced field boundaries are often marked by isolated trees and remnant holly and thorn along wire fences. There are drystone walls on the more upland areas.

Settlement and buildings

This area has is on the outskirts of City of Stoke-on-Trent and is suffering from the neglect associated with the urban fringe. Improved properties can be suburban and out of character. Numerous isolated

properties within this area are stone built. The further development of traditional rural settlements has introduced properties constructed of brick and other modern materials such as at Washerwalls on the edge of Werrington. Buildings around Wetley Moor are scattered.

Transport and Access

The area contains a network of minor roads whilst the A52 runs along the south of the area.

Incongruous landscape features

Growth in horseculture due to proximity to Stoke on Trent conurbation. Replacement of hedges by a variety of fence materials. Evidence of over grazing. Power lines and electricity substation are dominant incongruous features within the landscape.

Key Planning and Management Issues

- Impact of the urban fringe and the spread and increase of incongruous features
- Development pressure
- Growth of horseculture
- Deteriorating hedgerows
- Fencing including replacement of field boundaries
- Powerlines and electricity substation
- Isolated properties

Loss of some semi-natural vegetation and the poor condition of those that remain

Capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to accommodate change

Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance to Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, identifies this landscape

character area as a landscape in decline that requires restoration.

Urban fringe pressures have had a particularly adverse impact on the landscape quality of this area due to the proliferation of incongruous features and the deteriorating condition of existing landscape features.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Lowland heath is a very important habitat and management and re-establishment of heathland is taking place with active local community involvement supported by the Staffordshire Heathland Partnership.
- Field boundaries should be retained, maintained and, in places, replaced to maintain the scale of the landscape. Stone walls or native hedgerows should be used as a means of enclosure dependent upon local character. Replacement of hedges and drystone walls by fencing should be discouraged.
- The growth of horse culture has caused the subdivision of fields by fencing, loss of hedges and the erections of shelters for horses. Consideration should be given to actions that can be taken to counteract the impact of this land use on land cover and landscape scale.
- This landscape requires a new vegetational structure comprising of heathlands, hedgerows, trees and woodlands to be created. Particular consideration should be given to establishing buffer areas around the lowland heath so that invasive tree, shrub and herbaceous species do not threaten the reestablishment and management of the lowland heathland.
- The new vegetational structure should link to existing remnant vegetation. It should create a mosaic of spaces, some open some wooded and of small to medium scale. Broadleaf and conifer species can be accommodated. Reference should be made to the historic field pattern which should influence the re-emergent landscape pattern.

- Planting should be used to screen the conurbation edge and other intrusive and incongruous urban features.
- Where new development is proposed, the edge of the development and public open spaces associated with it should contain appropriate tree and shrub planting to reduce the visual impact of the development and to enable it to be more readily assimilated into the landscape.
- The colour of prefabricated agricultural buildings should be determined taking careful account of position, predominant tones of adjacent vegetation, local materials and sky, so as to minimise the visual impact of the development.
- The loss of semi-natural vegetation should be checked and remaining habitats should be protected, managed and where possible extended to create sustainable communities.

Land Management Guidelines

The condition of the semi-natural vegetation characteristic of this landscape type is generally deteriorating. These habitats require protection, management and to be re-established. The main issues are as follows:

Lowland Heathland

It is of very high importance that existing heaths are protected from development and damaging activities and that previous heathland areas are re-created and new heathlands created.

Ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodland

It is highly important to the character and quality of the landscape that degraded ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodlands are restored and that new woodlands should be recreated or regenerated

Hedgerows

It is highly important that ancient and diverse hedgerows, particularly the hedgerow trees along them, are maintained and managed. Where hedgerows are planted or restored it is important that they should be species rich reflecting local indigenous hedge mixes and that the plants where

possible should be grown locally. Consideration should be given to how the current practice of the erection of stock proof fencing rather than maintenance and management of hedgerows can be checked and the retention and maintenance of hedgerows be encouraged.

Lowland Acidic Grassland

It is highly important that this habitat is maintained, enhanced and restored, and where possible by maintaining a buffer between it and other dominant/invasive habitats. Action should be taken to prevent further losses of acidic grassland other than to lowland heathland restoration. The number of such sites should be increased and support given to the linking of fragmented sites through habitat creation.

Rivers and Streams

It is highly important that the quality of all natural existing channel features is maintained. The quality and quantity of water should be improved where possible.

Reedbeds

Opportunities should be taken to maintain and create reedbeds.

Canals, lakes and ponds

The number of water bodies and catchments should be increased and existing features should be maintained and enhanced.

Unimproved and neutral grassland

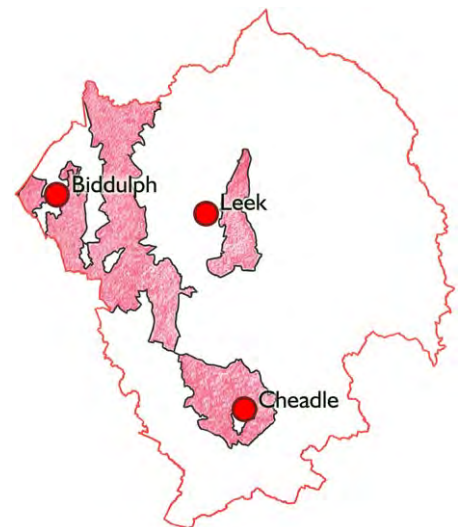
Existing sites of this habitat that are in poor condition should be restored. Unimproved and neutral grassland should be maintained and safeguarded and habitat creation should be used to link adjacent sites through the creation of new sites or re-creation of former areas.

Arable field margins

Arable field margins should be maintained, improved and restored where possible.

Ancient slope and valley farmlands

This character type covers a large proportion of Staffordshire Moorlands. The largest area extends from the northern boundary of the district, south to the A52 at Cellarhead and west to the boundary with Stoke-on-Trent. There are two isolated areas from the main block, one surrounds Cheadle to the south of the district and the other narrowly separates two areas of Gritstone Highland to the east of Leek.



Key Characteristics

- Strongly undulating or sloping landscape cut by small scale steep sided stream valleys
- Small scale mainly ancient irregular fields bounded by trees and hedgerows
- Extensive views from higher ground
- Intimate wooded valleys
- Stone buildings and drystone walls towards uplands
- Isolated properties
- Narrow winding lanes
- Parklands
- Quarrying

Geology, Landform and Soils

Undulating or sloping landscape with small scale steep sided stream valleys that interrupt slopes. Extensive views out from higher ground are contrasted with an intimate feel within the valleys. Ancient field patterns remain intact although in places due to hedgerow removal field patterns have become enlarged.

Vegetation

Woodland belts of ash, oak and alder follow the streams creating a ribbon effect on the landscape which reinforces the vegetation cover of the farmland. Hedgerows mainly form field boundaries although these can be poorly maintained, left tall with frequent gaps. Infrequent small blocks of woodland include broadleaf and conifer plantations. Tree cover within the valleys softens the landscape and limits views. Historic parklands contribute towards the character of the local landscape.

Land use

The main land use for the area is low intensity pastoral farming. The JCB industrial site to the north of Cheadle is a major land use. Electricity pylons are intrusive features visible within the landscape. Stanley Pool and Knypersley Reservoir are significant open areas of water to the west of the character area.

Enclosure

Fields are generally enclosed with hedgerows although to the north of this character area, towards the Gritstone Uplands and Highland Fringe fields are bounded by dry stone walls. Hedgerows and drystone walls are generally poorly maintained and tend to be replaced by or reinforced with post and wire fencing.

Settlement and buildings

The ancient character of the area is reflected in the form of settlement. There are numerous isolated properties with occasional rundown farmsteads linked by narrow winding lanes. To the east of Biddulph Moor buildings are generally of local

stone. Development that has been built around the original rural settlement is of varied ages and styles. Individual large halls are sited within designed parkland landscapes (e.g. Cicely Haughton School).

The landscape can feel urbanised in places due to the high population density of the scattered farms, the expansion of nearby settlements and previous mining activities.

The character area adjoins Leek along its eastern boundary, extends around Biddulph in the west and contains Cheadle in the south. The villages of Brown Edge, Endon, Bagnall and Stanley are located in the west of the character area and Wetley Rocks lies along its Eastern boundary.

Transport and Access

The busy main roads A52, A53 and A521 pass through this area connected to a network of minor roads. Minor roads can be narrow, incised and steep linking small farms. Caldon Canal crosses through the character area.

Incongruous landscape features

Electricity pylons are intrusive features visible in the landscape. Replacement of hedgerows and drystone walls by replacement by fences that are often poorly constructed. Busy roads. Quarrying and mining activities. Localised industrial and residential development.

Key Planning and Management Issues

- Powerlines
- Quarrying and mineral extraction past and present
- Replacement of hedgerows and drystone walls by fencing.
- Busy roads
- Parklands

- Expansion of neighbouring settlements and localised industry
- Loss of some semi-natural vegetation (ancient woodland, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands and wet heathland)

Capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to accommodate change

Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance to Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, identifies this landscape character areas as an area requiring landscape maintenance although that part of the character type around Cheadle requires landscape enhancement. It is not identified as an area that is particularly sensitive to change.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Urban fringe pressures can have an adverse impact on landscape quality with the proliferation of incongruous features and the deteriorating condition of existing landscape features. Although this is generally a well structured landscape the impact of urban expansion needs to be monitored.
- Woodland planting of a small to medium scale is generally appropriate in this landscape, from field corner to field size, tying into the existing woodlands and hedgerows with attention to edge detail and predominantly of a broadleaved character.
- Planting, both trees and woodlands can be used effectively to reinforce the existing vegetational structure to enable it to more readily absorb new development and to screen the edges of existing settlement and industrial/commercial uses.
- The planting of small woodlands, hedgerows with associated trees and tree groups can help to restore the vegetational cover and re-articulate the scale of the landscape following its gradual erosion due to lack of maintenance of the hedgerow pattern;
- Woodland planting should be used to mitigate the impact of sand and gravel workings and in site restoration.
- Although both broadleaves and conifer species occur in this landscape some earlier coniferous plantations were unsympathetic to the scale and character of the landscape. New plantings should be used to reduce the visual impact of tree older plantations.
- New woodland planting should follow best practice advice provided by the Forestry Commission. The scale of woodland planting needs to reflect its position within the landscape, with small-scale tree planting schemes more appropriate in the valley bottoms, increasing in scale up the slope.
- New native woodland planting should be used to reduce the effects of fragmentation and isolation of ancient woodland through careful layout and design.
- Care needs to be taken to avoid obscuring important viewpoints and maintaining the interrelationship of open areas to woodland blocks relating to local landscape scale and field pattern.
- Development and new tree planting should take account of the setting of the historic parklands, of the setting of important buildings and of important local views. Any proposals for development or land use change which impacts upon the setting of an historic parkland must take account of the unique character of that designed landscape.
- Any proposals for development or land use change within an historic landscape should be informed by a detailed historic landscape appraisal.
- Historic landscapes contain introduced decorative tree species that are inherent to the design of the parkland and pleasure grounds and to its setting. It may be appropriate to introduce some of these species into the area identified as the setting of the parkland. Consideration should be given to protecting, in particular, individual specimen and groups of trees that are significant historically or visually to this landscape or to local settlement.

- Care should be taken not to introduce unnecessary urban features into the rural scene (e.g. signage, urban road kerbs)
- The grouping and form of new buildings should reflect the juxtaposition, scale, form, enclosure and materials of traditional local buildings characteristic of this area.
- The colour of prefabricated agricultural buildings should be determined taking careful account of position, predominant tones of adjacent vegetation, local materials and sky, so as to minimise the visual impact of the development.
- The loss of semi-natural vegetation should be checked and remaining habitats should be protected, managed and where possible extended to create sustainable communities.

Land Management Guidelines

The loss of some semi-natural vegetation, particularly ancient woodland, wet heathland, hedgerows and semi-natural grasslands, is one of the key planning and management issues for this landscape character type.

Ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodland

It is of very high importance to the character and quality of the landscape that degraded ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodlands are restored and that new woodlands should be recreated or regenerated.

Ancient and semi-natural broadleaved woodland is generally particularly important to the form and character of historic parkland landscapes. Similarly the maintenance, safeguarding and restoration of wood pasture and parkland is also important. It is also likely that a number of veteran trees will be found within an historic parkland.

Lowland Heathland (particularly wet heathland)

It is of very high importance that existing heaths are protected from development and damaging activities and that previous heathland areas are re-created and new heathlands created.

Hedgerows

It is highly important that ancient and diverse hedgerows, particularly the hedgerow trees along them, are maintained and managed. Where hedgerows are planted or restored it is important that they should be species rich reflecting local indigenous hedge mixes and that the plants where possible should be grown locally. Consideration should be given to how the current practice of the erection of stock proof fencing rather than maintenance and management of hedgerows can be checked and the retention and maintenance of hedgerows be encouraged.

Lowland Acidic Grassland

It is highly important that this habitat is maintained, enhanced and restored, and where possible by maintaining a buffer between it and other dominant/invasive habitats. Action should be taken to prevent further losses of acidic grassland other than to lowland heathland restoration. The number of such sites should be increased and support given to the linking of fragmented sites through habitat creation.

Peat Bogs

It is highly important that existing peat bogs are maintained and enhanced and that former raised bogs are restored.

Rivers and Streams

It is highly important that the quality of all natural existing channel features is maintained. The quality and quantity of water should be improved where possible.

Canals, lakes and ponds

It is highly important that water bodies and catchments be maintained and enhanced and the number of existing features be increased.

Reedbeds

Opportunities should be taken to maintain and create reedbeds.

Unimproved and neutral grassland

It is highly important that existing unimproved and neutral grasslands that are in poor condition should be restored. These habitats should be maintained and safeguarded and habitat creation should be used

to link adjacent sites through the creation of new sites or re-creation of former areas.

Arable field margins

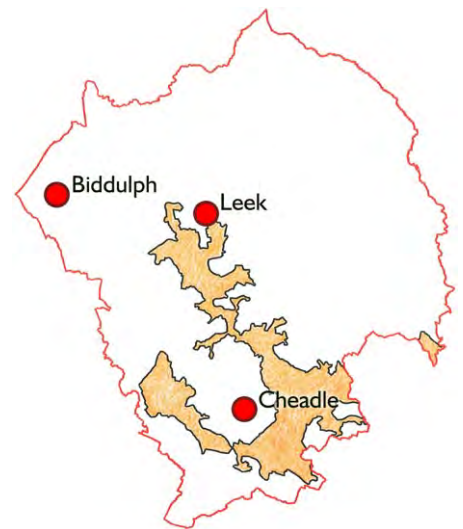
Arable field margins should be maintained, improved and restored where possible.

Wet Woodland

It is important that wet woodland is maintained, enhanced, restored and that further losses are prevented. Opportunities should be sought to increase the number of these woodlands.

Dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys

This landscape character type follows the main valley of the River Churnet and its tributaries that run on a north-west south-east axis through the centre of Staffordshire Moorlands. Sandstone Cloughs and Valleys cut through by tributaries of the River Tean and the River Dove, running along the same axis, are also found within the south western part of the district.



Key Characteristics

- Deeply incised wooded valleys with narrow winding watercourses
- Historic Parkland
- Stone buildings and walls
- Sheep and cattle farming with smallholdings
- Large broadleaf woodlands with newer conifer plantations
- Narrow sunken lanes with hedgebanks and tall hedges that limit views
- Dominant views to higher ground
- Lowland heathland

Geology, Landform and Soils

Deeply incised wooded valleys of the River Churnet and connecting streams associated with Carboniferous and Permo-Triassic sandstones. Strongly undulated with pronounced rounded landform above valley sides. The acid soils, brown earths and stagnogley soils originally supported vegetation communities between lowland and upland heath. These now support extensive woodland areas.

Vegetation

Extensive woodland blocks and belts of deciduous and conifer. Birch oak woodlands characteristic of the area are being added to by the introduction of conifer plantations on the flatter higher slopes. Roads are lined with tall hedgerows and hedgebanks limiting views. Historic parklands are characterised by woodland belts containing open grassland with parkland trees, formal pleasure grounds with introduced species are located close to the main house. The area of this landscape character type that lies to the south west of the district is less wooded than the Churnet valley.

Land use

Farming varies from large intensive sheep and cattle farms to smallholdings. Sand and gravel quarries are incongruous features of the area. There are a number of tourism attractions including country parks, steam railway, golf courses and Alton Towers theme park.

Enclosure

Sunken lanes with extensive hedge banks and tall hedges confine views and create a sense of enclosure. In places the small intimate wooded valleys contrast with the glimpses of wider distant views.

Settlement and buildings

Building styles are mainly of traditional sandstone, characteristic of the surrounding geology although red brick properties are also found. In some villages

such as Kingsley Holt and Toot Hill brick properties associated with newer developments dominate. Alton associated with Alton Hall is influenced by its proximity to the historic parkland at Alton Hall, with Italianate style properties mixed with traditional stone dwellings. Stone buildings and dry stone walls predominate in the higher parts of this character area closer to the Sandstone Uplands.

This character type abuts the south and eastern outskirts of Leek and encloses the settlements of Alton, Cheddleton, Froghall, Oakamoor, Hollington and the northern side of Cookshill and Caverswall.

Transport and Access

Deeply cut, narrow lanes often tree lined. Churnet Valley Railway, a steam railway and tourist attraction, runs along the bottom of the Churnet valley with stations at Cheddleton, Consall and Kingsley/Froghall. Two arms of the Caldon Canals pass through this character area generally following the line of the River Churnet.

Incongruous landscape features

Sand and gravel quarries and associated industrial areas. Alton Towers Theme Park. Busy roads. Stock proof fencing and deteriorating hedgerows

Key Planning and Management Issues

- Quarrying and associated industrial areas.
- Alton Towers Theme Park/historic parkland.
- Busy roads.
- Stock proof fencing and deteriorating hedgerows
- Loss of some semi-natural vegetation: ancient woodland, semi-natural grasslands and heathland

Capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to accommodate change

Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance to Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, identifies this landscape character type as locally very sensitive to the impacts of development and land use change.

The Churnet valley is identified as an area of active landscape conservation. The remainder of this character type, with the exception of that part of the area that lies further west of Cheadle and to the east of Blythe Bridge, is identified as an area of landscape maintenance. The area further west of Cheadle is closer to the influence of the conurbation and is identified as an area of landscape enhancement.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Hedgebanks which are significant local feature should be protected and maintained
- Field boundaries should be retained, maintained and, in places, replaced to maintain the scale of the landscape. Stone walls or native hedgerows should be used as a means of enclosure in order dependent upon local character. Replacement of hedges and drystone walls by fencing should be discouraged.
- The grouping and form of new buildings should reflect the juxtaposition, scale, form, enclosure and materials of traditional local buildings characteristic of this area. The influence of the building style associated with the historic parkland at Alton Towers extends into adjacent settlements.
- New planting should take account of landform, landscape scale and field pattern. In the valley bottoms small to medium scale planting is appropriate taking account of the smaller scale. Towards the upper areas where agriculture is in decline larger sized plantations are more appropriate, linking with existing coniferous plantations. In both areas consideration should be given to the spatial relationship between woodland blocks and open areas.
- Both broadleaves and conifer species occur in this landscape and new plantings should reflect this mix. However woodland plantings should follow best practice advice provided by the Forestry Commission. Care should be taken not to interrupt important views across the landscape.
- Some additional larger scale planting may be required to mitigate the impact of quarrying on the landscape.
- New broadleaved woodland planting could be used effectively to counteract the effects of fragmentation and isolation of ancient woodland.
- Development and new tree planting should take account of the setting of the Registered Parkland at Alton Park, of the setting of important buildings and of important local views. Any proposals for development or land use change which impacts upon the setting of an historic parkland must take account of the unique character of that designed landscape.
- Any proposals for development or land use change within an historic landscape should be informed by a detailed historic landscape appraisal.
- Historic landscapes contain introduced decorative tree species that are inherent to the design of the parkland and pleasure grounds and to its setting. It may be appropriate to introduce some of these species into the area identified as the setting of the parkland. Consideration should be given to protecting, in particular, individual specimen and groups of trees that are significant historically or visually to this landscape or to local settlement.
- Care should be taken not to introduce unnecessary urban features into the rural scene (e.g. signage, urban road kerbs)
- The colour of prefabricated agricultural buildings should be determined taking careful account of position, predominant tones of adjacent vegetation, local materials and sky, so as to minimise the visual impact of the development.

Land Management Guidelines

The loss of some semi-natural vegetation, particularly ancient woodland, semi-natural grasslands, hedgerows and heathland, is one of the key planning and management issues for this landscape character type.

Ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodland

It is highly important to the character and quality of the landscape that ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodlands are maintained and enhanced. Degraded sites should be restored and new woodlands should be recreated or regenerated.

Ancient and semi-natural broadleaved woodland is generally particularly important to the form and character of historic parkland landscapes. Similarly the maintenance, safeguarding and restoration of wood pasture and parkland is also important. It is also likely that a number of veteran trees will be found within an historic parkland.

There should be more emphasis on conservation and restocking of existing woodlands, and the restoration of semi-natural character to plantations on ancient sites, to maintain the present well wooded character of the landscape.

Unimproved and neutral grassland

It is of high importance that this habitat is maintained and safeguarded and that habitat creation is used to link adjacent sites through the creation of new sites or re-creation of former areas. Existing sites that are in poor condition should be restored.

Lowland Acidic Grassland

It is highly important that this habitat is maintained, enhanced and restored, and where possible by maintaining a buffer between it and other dominant/invasive habitats. Action should be taken to prevent further losses of acidic grassland other than to lowland heathland restoration. The number of such sites needs to increase and support should be given to the linking of fragmented sites through habitat creation though this is of lesser importance.

Hedgerows

It is of very high importance that ancient and diverse hedgerows, particularly the hedgerow trees

along them, are maintained and managed. Where hedgerows are planted or restored it is important that they should be species rich reflecting local indigenous hedge mixes and that the plants where possible should be grown locally. Consideration should be given to how the current practice of the erection of stock proof fencing rather than maintenance and management of hedgerows can be checked and the retention and maintenance of hedgerows be encouraged.

Lowland Heathland

It is of high importance that existing heaths are protected from development and damaging activities and that former heathland areas are re-created and new heathlands are created.

Canals, lakes and ponds

It is highly important that water bodies and catchments are maintained and enhanced and the number of water bodies increases.

Reedbeds

It is highly important that opportunities are taken to maintain and create reedbeds.

Rivers and Streams

It is highly important that the quality of all natural existing channel features is maintained and that the quality and quantity of water should be improved.

Wet Woodland

It is highly important that wet woodland is maintained, enhanced, restored and that further losses are prevented. Opportunities should be sought to increase the number of these woodlands.

Lowland wet grassland

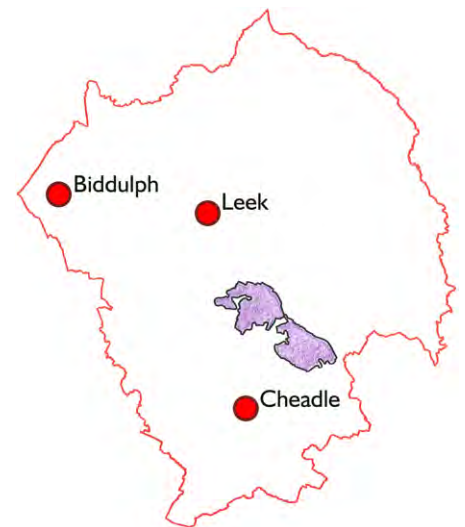
It is important that existing sites of this habitat should be maintained and enhanced. Existing sites that are in poor condition should be restored and new sites created.

Arable field margins

Arable field margins are a lower priority but they should be maintained, improved and restored where possible.

Dissected sandstone highland fringe

The dissected sandstone highland fringe is generally at higher elevations than the dissected sandstone uplands. It lies between the dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys of the Churnet Valley and the gritstone highland fringe that extends through into the Peak Park.



Key Characteristics

- Steep sided valleys and rounded dissected landform
- Narrow wooded stream valleys
- Small to medium scale pastoral landscape
- Fields hedge lined or bounded by dry stone walls
- Scattered hedgerow trees
- Stone built farmhouses
- Narrow, steep and winding lanes
- Wide and distant views

Geology, Landform and Soils

Steep sided valleys with small streams create a rounded dissected landform with wooded valleys leading from an open highland edge. Wide and distant views extend out to other character areas. Stream valleys break up scale into smaller areas.

Vegetation

The area is not as vegetated as Sandstone Cloughs and Valleys although the valleys remain wooded. The broadleaved woodlands of the valleys has been extended by the introduction of large blocks of conifer. The condition of hedgerows is variable. Hedgerows contain small plots with isolated trees to the boundaries that reduces the scale of the landscape. In places poor maintenance has resulted in overgrown remnant hedgerows often consisting of single lines of trees. Broadleaved woodland tree species comprise oak, rowan, birch, beech and sycamore. Holly can be locally significant as a hedge species.

Land use

This is mainly a pastoral landscape with sheep and cattle farming. Commercial forestry. Golf course is located at Whiston. Extensive quarrying south east of Whiston abutting the edge of the landscape character area.

Enclosure

Fields are smaller in scale and generally enclosed by hedges. However the hedges are poorly maintained displaying large gaps, giving a larger sense of scale. Post and wire fencing has replaced the hedgerows for stock control. Along the boundaries of the gritstone character area, drystone walls are used more widely to enclose fields.

Settlement and buildings

Small villages and individual properties have developed along the lanes. Properties are mainly constructed of stone or red brick. Farms are generally in poor condition with signs of dilapidation.

The main settlements are Ipstones, Upper Cotton and Whiston

Transport and Access

The busy A52 and the B5053 cut across the character area. Minor roads around the area are narrow, steep and winding.

Incongruous landscape features

Run down isolated farms and buildings. Post and wire fencing has replaced the hedgerows for stock control. Busy roads. Quarrying.

Key Planning and Management Issues

- Run down and isolated farms and buildings
- Replacement of field boundaries by fencing
- Busy roads
- Quarrying

Capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to accommodate change

Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance to Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, identifies this landscape character type as locally very sensitive to the impacts of development and land use change. It is identified as an area of landscape maintenance.

This is one of few landscapes within Staffordshire that is identified in the Supplementary Planning Guidance as sensitive to woodland planting.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- The open character of the upland edge must be maintained.

- Field boundaries should be retained, maintained and, in places, replaced to maintain the scale of the landscape. Stone walls or native hedgerows should be used as a means of enclosure in order dependent upon local character. Replacement of hedges and drystone walls by fencing should be discouraged.
- Improvements to run down and isolated farms and buildings should be encouraged but changes that detract from local character and over urbanise properties and their settings should be avoided
- The grouping and form of new buildings should reflect the juxtaposition, scale, form, enclosure and materials of traditional farm buildings characteristic of this area.
- There are limited opportunities for additional woodland planting. Planting should be generally restricted to the valleys where additional small scale plantings can reinforce the existing vegetational and landscape structure. Some additional larger scale planting may be required to mitigate the impact of quarrying on the landscape
- Both broadleaves and conifer species occur in this landscape and new plantings should reflect this mix. However woodland plantings should follow best practice advice provided by the Forestry Commission. Planting design must respond to landform and units should be in scale with field sizes.
- The colour of prefabricated agricultural buildings should be determined taking careful account of position, predominant tones of adjacent vegetation, local materials and sky, so as to minimise the visual impact of the development. The scale of these buildings should be minimised where possible to reflect the scale of the landscape. Planting may also be used to reduce visual scale.

Land Management Guidelines

Semi-natural vegetation characteristic of this landscape type contributes significantly to the overall character of this landscape type. These habitats

require protection and management. The main issues are as follows:

Lowland Heathland

It is of very high importance that existing heaths are protected from development and damaging activities and that previous heathland areas are re-created and new heathlands created.

Hedgerows

It is highly important that ancient and diverse hedgerows, particularly the hedgerow trees along them, are maintained and managed. Where hedgerows are planted or restored it is important that they should be species rich reflecting local indigenous hedge mixes and that the plants where possible should be grown locally. Consideration should be given to how the current practice of the erection of stock proof fencing rather than maintenance and management of hedgerows can be checked and the retention and maintenance of hedgerows be encouraged.

Lowland Acidic Grassland

It is highly important that this habitat is maintained, enhanced and restored, and where possible by maintaining a buffer between it and other dominant/invasive habitats. Action should be taken to prevent further losses of acidic grassland other than to lowland heathland restoration. The Council should seek to increase the number of such sites and support the linking of fragmented sites through habitat creation though this is of lesser importance.

Rivers and Streams

It is highly important that the quality of all natural existing channel features is maintained. The quality and quantity of water should be improved where possible.

Wet Woodland

It is highly important that wet woodland is maintained, enhanced, restored and that further losses are prevented. Opportunities should be sought to increase the number of these woodlands.

Unimproved and neutral grassland

It is of high importance that existing sites of this habitat that are in poor condition should be restored. Unimproved and neutral grassland should

be maintained and safeguarded and habitat creation should be used to link adjacent sites through the creation of new sites or re-creation of former areas.

Canals, lakes and ponds

The maintenance and enhancement of water bodies and catchments, and increasing the number of water bodies, is a lower priority.

Reedbeds

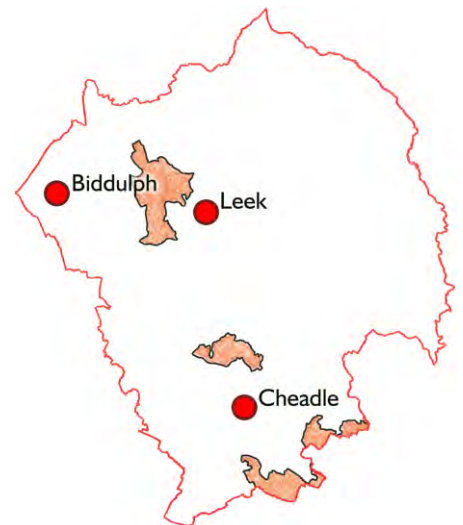
Opportunities should be taken to maintain and create reedbeds.

Arable field margins

Arable field margins are a lower priority but they should be maintained, improved and restored where possible.

Dissected sandstone uplands

This character type occurs to the west of Leek adjoining the gritstone highland fringe, north of Cheadle above the dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys of the Churnet river valley and to the south east of the river valley on the edge of the district.



Key Characteristics

- A transitional landscape of rolling hills dissected by wooded small scale valleys
- Small to medium scale hedged field pattern, with hedgerow trees, some drystone walls
- Low intensity pastoral farming
- Dispersed isolated settlement with red brick and stone buildings
- Blocks of woodland
- Views restricted by vegetation and limited in extent
- Winding sunken lanes
- Banked hedgerows
- Rudyard Reservoir

Geology, Landform and Soils

Rounded undulations lead into the Churnet River valley and tributary streams. Acid sands, brown earths and stagnogley soils supported transitional communities between lowland and upland heath replaced with grazing and forestry. Views are generally restricted through gaps in hedges, and are limited to surrounding hillsides.

Vegetation

Hedges are dominant in the landscape and limit views. Hedges are banked with scattered hedgerow trees. Small blocks of woodland are also significant within the area.

Land use

The majority of land use is low intensity pasture farming with some forestry. Farm intensification has locally increased the scale of the landscape. Rudyard Reservoir attracts tourism to the area.

Enclosure

Small to medium sized fields are enclosed with hedges although these are substituted with dry stone walls near to other character areas. Some hedgerows are poorly maintained displaying large gaps. Post and wire fencing has replaced the hedgerows as stock control. Descending into the valley some lanes are sunken and enclosed.

Settlement and buildings

There are many isolated farms and buildings often rundown in nature. Smaller settlements and traditional dwellings are mainly constructed of stone with some brick. Some settlements have a mixture of construction styles. Kingsley is an old mining village and consequently has a different character to the area with terraced red brick houses on the main road, some stone cottages and more modern dwellings on side roads. The centre of Upper Tean has a number of large scale stone constructed buildings along a Roman Road. It has lost a lot of its traditional character and the majority of surrounding

development is more recent. Upper and Lower Tean and Checkley which lie along the A522 have benefitted from the construction of the A50 taking traffic away from the village. Rudyard which lies adjacent to Rudyard lake is a linear settlement that contains both traditional and modern properties.

Transport and Access

The main roads A52 and A523 run through this character area and are busy routes. The main A53 runs along the boundary of this character area with Dissected Sandstone Cloughs and Valleys. There are numerous winding minor lanes within this area some sunken in nature.

Incongruous landscape features

Post and wire fencing has replaced the hedgerows as stock control. Run down isolated farms and buildings.

Key Planning and Management Issues

- Run down and isolated farms and buildings
- Farm intensification has locally increased the scale of the landscape.
- Replacement of hedgerow boundaries by fencing
- Busy roads
- Loss of some semi-natural vegetation: heathland, ancient woodland, and semi-natural grasslands

Capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to accommodate change

Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance to Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, identifies this landscape character type as locally very sensitive to the impacts of development and land use change.

The area to the north of Cheadle has been identified as a 'landscape at risk' of sudden loss of quality in Section 7.18 of the Supporting documentation to the Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance. Measures to meet the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan targets are considered to be critically important in preventing such a loss.

The remainder of this landscape character type is identified as an area of active landscape conservation.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- The open character of the upland landscape must be maintained.
- Consideration should be given to strengthening the vegetation and hedgerow cover in areas where agricultural intensification has led to an increase in scale of the landscape through loss of hedgerows, trees and other small scale landscape features.
- New native woodland planting should where possible be used to improve the distribution of and links to existing ancient woodlands, counteracting isolation of these woodlands.
- Small scale tree planting is appropriate around settlements linking into and strengthening the existing vegetational. It may also be used to extend existing woodlands particularly on the lower slopes.
- Planting of steeper slopes should relate to the landform where the hedgerow pattern is weakened or where there are larger plantations.
- Both broadleaves and conifer species occur in this landscape however future plantations should follow best practice advice provided by the Forestry Commission and broadleaved edges to new plantations will link into existing vegetation. Planting design must respond to landform and increase in scale on upper slopes.
- Where possible native hedgerows should be used as a means of enclosure in order to reflect

and maintain local character. Replacement of hedges by fencing should be discouraged and the maintenance and replanting of hedges should be supported

- The grouping and form of new buildings should reflect the juxtaposition, scale, form, enclosure and materials of traditional brick and sandstone old farm buildings characteristic of this area.
- The colour of prefabricated agricultural buildings should be determined taking careful account of position, predominant tones of adjacent vegetation, local materials and sky, so as to minimise the visual impact of the development. The scale of these buildings should be minimised where possible to reflect the scale of the landscape. Planting may also be used to reduce visual scale.

Land Management Guidelines

The loss of some semi-natural vegetation, particularly heathland, ancient woodland, and semi-natural grasslands is one of the key planning and management issues for this landscape character type.

Lowland Heathland

It is of very high importance that existing heaths are protected from development and damaging activities and that previous heathland areas are re-created and new heathlands are created.

Ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodland

It is highly important to the character and quality of the landscape that ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodlands in this character type are maintained and enhanced. Degraded sites should be restored and these generally small scale woodlands should be recreated or regenerated

Lowland Acidic grassland

It is highly important that this habitat is maintained, enhanced and restored, and where possible by maintaining a buffer between it and other dominant/invasive habitats. Action should be taken to prevent further losses of acidic grassland other than to lowland heathland restoration. The Council should seek to increase the number of such sites and support the

linking of fragmented sites through habitat creation though this is of lesser importance.

Rivers and Streams

It is highly important that the quality of all natural existing channel features are maintained. The quality and quantity of water should be improved where possible.

Hedgerows

Where hedgerows are planted or restored it is of high importance that they should be species rich reflecting local indigenous hedge mixes and that the plants where possible should be grown locally. Consideration should be given to how the current practice of removal of hedgerows for field enlargement or for the erection of stock proof fencing rather than maintenance and management of hedgerows can be checked and the retention and maintenance of hedgerows be encouraged. Ancient and diverse hedgerows, particularly the hedgerow trees along them, should be maintained and managed.

Unimproved and neutral grassland

It is of high importance that existing sites of this habitat that are in poor condition should be restored. Unimproved and neutral grassland should be maintained and safeguarded and habitat creation should be used to link adjacent sites through the creation of new sites or re-creation of former areas.

Canals, lakes and ponds

The maintenance and enhancement of water bodies and catchments, and increasing the number of water bodies, is a lower priority.

Reedbeds

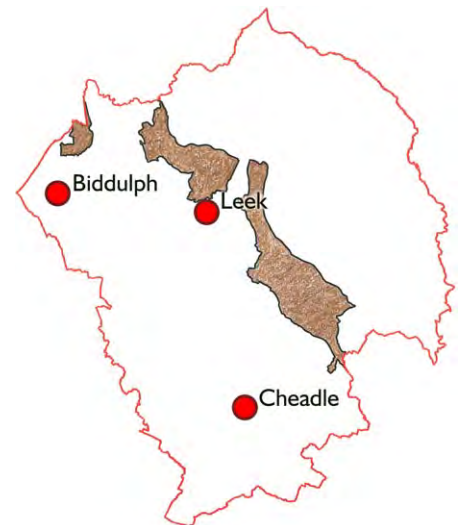
Opportunities should be taken to maintain and create reedbeds.

Arable field margins

Arable field margins should be maintained, improved and restored where possible.

Gritstone highland fringe

The gritstone highland fringe is mainly found in the South West Peak Joint Character Area (JCA) where it extends into the north east edge of the district. It is also found in the Potteries and Churnet Valley JCA adjacent to the gritstone uplands, to the north of Biddulph.



Key Characteristics

- Large scale, steeply sloping, smooth rolling upland landscape with plateaus and steep slopes and valleys
- Skyline ridges with long distance panoramic views
- Large rectangular fields enclosed in the main with gritstone walls, with some hedgerows
- Heathland areas encroached by sparse scrubby woodland
- Conifer plantations and broadleaf woodland following narrow valleys
- Tittesworth Reservoir

Geology, Landform and Soils

Palaeozoic sandstones or millstone grit create a dissected plateau with long distance panoramic views across the Cheshire Plain including Jodrell Bank and Beeston Castle to the south west and across the Peak District National Park to the Roaches and the South West Peak. The area has a steeply sloping, smooth rolling landform with flatter plateaus and steeply sided valleys. Stagnogley and peat soils support upland grassland and moorland species in large fields.

Vegetation

Hedgerows, not the main form of field enclosure, are generally in poor condition. There are few woodland blocks of broadleaf and conifer trees other than on steep sided slopes. The woodland blocks act as individual features but do not create enclosure. Unprotected scattered trees on the uplands are stunted and ill formed. Sycamore and beech predominate the broadleaf copses. There is some ash but alder and thorn are dominant in the bottoms of valleys. Poor quality upland grassland with other moorland species supports grazing.

Land use

The main land use for the area is stock rearing. Tittesworth Reservoir and its visitor centre attracts tourism and recreation. Camping sites. Quarrying.

Enclosure

Hedgerows and dry stone walls enclosing fields are poorly maintained with gaps replaced by post and wire fence for stock control. Woodland blocks do not create enclosure within the area.

Settlement and buildings

Traditional buildings are constructed of stone. Newer developments in hamlets such as Meerbrook are constructed of stone in-keeping with the village. Individual dwellings are scattered along roads. Dwellings that are in proximity to settlements have been improved and have urbanised some rural

parts, in particular around Biddulph. Property improvements and the affects of urbanisation are noticeable around Waterhouses and along A523 into the valley. The character area encloses the northern edge of Leek. Smaller settlements include Thorncliffe and Winkhill.

Transport and Access

The roads are generally wide with a network of lanes lined with dry stone walls. The main A523 cuts through the area following the valley, whilst minor roads follow the ridgeline. Roadsides generally do not have edging kerbs and pavements or are lined with stone setts. However, in proximity to Tittesworth Reservoir, the introduction of pavements with concrete edging kerbs detract from the rural character of the area creating a more suburban feel.

Incongruous landscape features

Urbanised improved commuter dwellings. Quarrying and busy roads. Camping. Introduction of fencing for stock control. Introduction of roadside pavements with concrete edging kerbs detracts from the rural character of the area creating a more suburban feel.

Key Planning and Management Issues

- Urbanisation of improved commuter dwellings and settlements.
- Quarrying with significant traffic movements.
- Replacement of walled and hedgerow field boundaries by fencing
- Camping.
- Loss of some semi-natural vegetation (i.e. moorland, acidic grasslands and clough woodlands)

Capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to accommodate change

Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance to Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, identifies this landscape character type as very sensitive to the impacts of development and land use change.

The western area centred on Biddulph Common and Biddulph park has been identified in as 'a landscape at risk' of sudden loss of quality and measures to meet the BAP targets will be critically important in preventing such a loss'. The most critical factor is the loss of some of the typical semi-natural vegetation (i.e. moorland, acidic grasslands and clough woodlands). It is identified as an area of landscape enhancement.

The area to the east, within the South West Peak Joint Character Area (JCA), has been identified as generally high or very high quality landscapes, with few limiting factors to accommodate change. The most critical of which is 'the incipient decline in the condition of some of the characteristic landscape features'. Ipstones Edge within this area is 'one of the Structure Plan's few landscapes which are regarded as sensitive to woodland planting, which could erode existing character and quality'. In the west the area is identified as an area of landscape maintenance and to the east as an area of active landscape conservation.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Planting should avoid the heathland occurring on upper slopes.
- Both broadleaves and conifer species occur in this landscape however future plantations should follow best practice advice provided by the Forestry Commission. Planting design must respond to landform and increase in scale on upper slopes. The landscape cannot easily accommodate large scale plantations and the interrelationship between larger plantations and the open spaces that they frame must be identified and repeated in the siting and layout of any significant woodland plantings.
- New native woodland planting should where possible be used to improve the distribution of and links to existing ancient woodlands, counteracting isolation of these woodlands. The planting of whole fields should link visibly to existing woodland and take account of small scale landform features.
- Planting could be used to mitigate the visual impact of quarrying. It is generally most effective when positioned closer to the viewer, between the viewer and the quarry. Where possible planting should reinforce and be linked to the existing vegetational framework of the locality. Where extensions to quarrying activity are planned, sensitively located advanced planting should be carried out to minimise the impact of the proposals on the landscape and local settlements.
- Excluding Ipstones Edge, new woodland in the eastern area within the South West Peak could be used to reduce the scale of the landscape where it is desirable and could increase vegetation cover where there are acceptable recreational demands than cannot be absorbed within a more open landscape.
- A range of scales of new planting can be accommodated within valley bottoms where the field sizes are generally smaller. New planting should relate to field pattern and size and it should tie into existing planting, particularly where it is of a small scale.
- In general the open skyline should be maintained – both new development and planting blocks should be positioned so as not to impact upon the skyline and wide open views.
- The grouping and form of new buildings should reflect the juxtaposition, scale, form, enclosure and materials of traditional stone buildings characteristic of this area.
- The colour of prefabricated agricultural buildings should be determined taking careful account of position, predominant tones of adjacent vegetation, local materials and sky, so as to minimise the visual impact of the development.

- Where possible gritstone walls should be used as a means of enclosure in order to reflect and maintain local character.

Land Management Guidelines

The loss of some semi-natural vegetation, particularly ancient woodland, heathland and semi-natural grasslands, is one of the key planning and management issues for this landscape character type.

Heathland/moorland

It is of very high importance that existing heaths are protected from development and damaging activities and that previous heathland areas are re-created and new heathlands are created.

Acidic grassland

It is highly important that this habitat is maintained, enhanced and restored, and where possible by maintaining a buffer between it and other dominant/invasive habitats. Action should be taken to prevent further losses of acidic grassland other than to heathland/moorland restoration. The Council should seek to increase the number of such sites and support the linking of fragmented sites through habitat creation though this is of lesser importance.

Ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodland

Many ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodlands in this character type are Clough woodlands. It is highly important to the character and quality of the landscape that these woodlands are maintained and enhanced. Degraded sites should be restored and these generally small scale woodlands should be recreated or regenerated.

Unimproved and neutral grassland

It is of high importance that this habitat is maintained and safeguarded and that habitat creation is used to link adjacent sites through the creation of new sites or re-creation of former areas. Existing sites that are in poor condition should be restored.

Hedgerows

Where hedgerows are planted or restored it is of high importance that they should be species rich reflecting local indigenous hedge mixes and that

the plants where possible should be grown locally. Consideration should be given to how the current practice of erection of stock proof fencing rather than maintenance and management of hedgerows can be checked and the retention and maintenance of hedgerows be encouraged. Ancient and diverse hedgerows, particularly the hedgerow trees along them, should be maintained and managed.

Rivers and Streams

It is highly important that the quality of all natural existing channel features are maintained. The quality and quantity of water should be improved where possible.

Canals, lakes and ponds

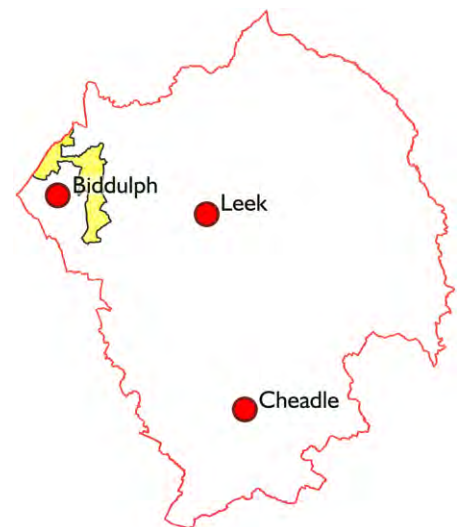
The maintenance and enhancement of water bodies and catchments is highly important. Increasing the number of water bodies is of medium priority.

Other landscape features

The rebuilding of gritstone walls, particularly towards the upland areas, is particularly important to retain the distinctive character of the area. Consideration should be given to how the current practice of erection of stock proof fencing rather than repairing the gritstone walls can be checked and the repair of gritstone walls be encouraged.

Gritstone uplands

The gritstone uplands are closely related to the gritstone highland fringe but lie on lower elevations. It follows the ridgeline that runs north-south at Biddulph Moor, extending west, north of Biddulph to bound the gritstone edge that extends north-east from Mow Cop along the boundary with Cheshire.



Key Characteristics

- Upland ridge landscape comprising strongly undulating slopes with localised steep sided valleys
- Open upland plateau with extensive views
- Scale of the landscape varies from small in the valley bottoms to medium on higher ground
- Varying sized fields with deteriorating boundaries of hedgerows and some dry stone walls
- Scattered large farms with stone buildings which along with local settlements are becoming more urbanised
- Trees groups around dwellings and vegetation along stream lines
- Historic Parkland at Biddulph Grange

Geology, Landform and Soils

Upland gritstone landscape with strongly undulating slopes and localised steep sided valleys. The upland plateau is bleak in character with open aspect and extensive views out. Views extend out eastward towards the Manifold Valley although Leek is hidden within the Churnet valley.

Vegetation

The area has an open, moorland feel with sparse vegetation. Hedgerows define some field boundaries although these are poorly maintained with large gaps. Gorse is often used as a hedgerow species reinforcing the moorland feel. Trees are generally associated with buildings although there are linear woodlands associated with streams. Species include beech, ash and sycamore,

Land use

This is mainly low intensity pastoral farming of sheep and cattle. Some large farms. Biddulph Grange, Registered Park and Garden and the Council managed Country Park adjoin the character area boundary north of Biddulph.

Enclosure

Fields are enclosed with scrappy hedges. Gaps in hedges have been replaced with post and wire fencing for stock control. Drystone walls are also used as field boundaries although these are generally poorly maintained and are supported with post and wire for stock control.

Settlement and buildings

Poor quality farms and smallholdings are seen throughout the area. Individual farmhouses and barns have been converted from working farmsteads to residential dwellings creating a suburban feel to the area. Biddulph Moor sits on top of the ridge where traditional stone dwellings are mixed with newer brick development.

Transport and Access

A network of narrow lanes follows the ridge and extends into the villages. There are no major roads through this area.

Incongruous landscape features

Large farm buildings. Hedges are being replaced with post and wire fencing for stock control. Improvement of properties by commuters.

Key Planning and Management Issues

- Individual farmhouses and barns have been converted from working farmsteads to residential dwellings creating a suburban feel to the area.
- Urbanisation of local settlements
- Deteriorating boundaries of hedgerows and stonewalls and their replacement by post and wire fencing
- Large agricultural buildings
- Relatively poor survival of characteristic semi-natural vegetation (i.e. ancient woodland, heathland and semi-natural grasslands)
- Historic Parkland and its setting

Capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to accommodate change

Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance to Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, identifies this landscape character type as a landscape requiring restoration.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- To restore this landscape it is necessary to strengthen the vegetational structure of the

area through appropriate woodland, tree and hedgerow planting and management.

- New woodlands, of varying scale, should be sited so as to link with existing woodland and tree blocks, reducing the effects of fragmentation and isolation of ancient woodland. Planting should be designed on a site by site basis, with small scale planting more appropriate in the valley bottoms and plantings increasing in scale up the hillsides to large scale planting on the upper slopes.
- Detailed design of woodlands should take account of edge treatments to tie into existing woodlands and field pattern, the shape should respond to landform and care is needed over the shape of lower edges and the effect on the ridge skyline.
- Broadleaved species are most appropriate in this landscape however future plantations should follow best practice advice provided by the Forestry Commission taking account of and reflecting the interrelationship between plantations and the open spaces that they frame. Care should be taken not to interrupt important views across the landscape.
- In general the open skyline should be maintained – both new development and planting blocks should be positioned so as not to impact upon the skyline and wide open views.
- Where possible stone walls and/or native hedgerows should be used as a means of enclosure in order to reflect and maintain local character. Replacement of hedges and drystone walls by fencing should be discouraged and the maintenance and replanting/rebuilding of hedges/dry stonewalls should be supported
- The grouping and form of new buildings should reflect the juxtaposition, scale, form, enclosure and materials of traditional stone buildings characteristic of this area.
- Care should be taken not to introduce unnecessary urban features into the rural scene (e.g. signage, urban road kerbs)
- The colour of prefabricated agricultural buildings should be determined taking careful account of

position, predominant tones of adjacent vegetation, local materials and sky, so as to minimise the visual impact of the development.

- Any proposals for development or land use change which impacts upon the setting of an historic parkland must take account of the unique character of that designed landscape.
- Any proposals for development or land use change within an historic landscape should be informed by a detailed historic landscape appraisal.
- Historic landscapes contain introduced decorative tree species that are inherent to the design of the parkland and pleasure grounds and to its setting. It may be appropriate to introduce some of these species into the area identified as the setting of the parkland.
- Historic landscapes contain introduced decorative tree species that are inherent to the design of the parkland and pleasure grounds. These trees should be protected by Tree Preservation Orders and consideration should be given to the designation of a Conservation area to protect the designed landscape.

Land Management Guidelines

The loss of some semi-natural vegetation, particularly ancient woodland, heathland and semi-natural grasslands, is one of the key planning and management issues for this landscape character type.

Ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodland

It is highly important to the character and quality of the landscape that ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodlands are maintained and enhanced. Degraded sites should be restored and new woodlands should be recreated or regenerated.

Ancient and semi-natural broadleaved woodland is generally particularly important to the form and character of historic parkland landscapes. Similarly the maintenance, safeguarding and restoration of wood pasture and parkland is also important. It is

also likely that a number of veteran trees will be found within an historic parkland.

Heathland/moorland

It is of high importance that existing heaths are protected from development and damaging activities and that former heathland areas are re-created and new heathlands are created.

Unimproved and neutral grassland

It is of very high importance that this habitat is maintained and safeguarded and that habitat creation is used to link adjacent sites through the creation of new sites or re-creation of former areas. Existing sites that are in poor condition should be restored.

Acidic grassland

It is highly important that this habitat is maintained, enhanced and restored, and where possible by maintaining a buffer between it and other dominant/invasive habitats. Action should be taken to prevent further losses of acidic grassland other than to heathland/moorland restoration. The Council should seek to increase the number of such sites and support the linking of fragmented sites through habitat creation.

Hedgerows

Where hedgerows are planted or restored it is of high importance that they should be species rich reflecting local indigenous hedge mixes and that the plants where possible should be grown locally. Consideration should be given to how the current practice of erection of stock proof fencing rather than maintenance and management of hedgerows can be checked and the retention and maintenance of hedgerows be encouraged. Ancient and diverse hedgerows, and the hedgerow trees along them, should be maintained and managed.

Rivers and Streams

It is highly important that the quality of all natural existing channel features are maintained. The quality and quantity of water should be improved where possible.

Canals, lakes and ponds

The maintenance and enhancement of water bodies and catchments is important. Increasing the number of water bodies is of lower priority.

Reedbeds

Opportunities should be taken to maintain and create reeds.

Arable field margins

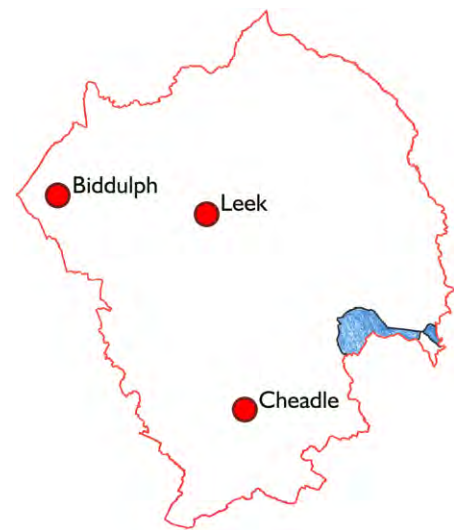
Arable field margins should be maintained, improved and restored where possible.

Other landscape features

The rebuilding of gritstone walls, particularly towards the upland areas, is particularly important to retain the distinctive character of the area. Consideration should be given to how the current practice of erection of stock proof fencing rather than repairing the gritstone walls can be checked and the repair of gritstone walls be encouraged.

Limestone highland fringe

This landscape character area lies within the edge of the White Peak joint character area and extends through into the Peak District National Park. The area is dominated by the limestone quarrying and processing plant centred on Caudon Lowe.



Key Characteristics

- Smooth upland landscape
- Uninterrupted extensive views
- Localised steeply incised valleys
- Limestone walls enclosing large regular shaped fields
- Sparse tree cover
- Incongruous limestone quarries and processing plant
- Pastoral farming

Geology, Landform and Soils

Calcareous soils provide for a smooth pastoral landscape. The upland rolling landform has localised steeply incised valleys. Broad open and uninterrupted views extend outwards. The landform is visible from the surrounding character areas as are the incongruous limestone quarry workings.

Vegetation

Vegetation is sparse with few trees characteristic of limestone scenery. Trees are scattered along drystone walls. More vegetation, including coniferous and broadleaved plantations, exists in the valleys and around the scattered farmsteads and settlements. Mature single and small groups of trees are clearly visible and prominent on the upland landscape.

Land use

The limestone quarry workings and cement works are a major land use at Cauldon Lowe. Elsewhere the land is mainly used for pasture with sheep and cattle grazing.

Enclosure

There is little visual enclosure within this area. Large scale regular field patterns are enclosed by dry stone walls but these do not impede views. Towards the upland landform enclosure reduces further and there are fewer signs of field boundaries. Fencing is replacing walled field boundaries. Trees in the valleys do not restrict views.

Settlement and buildings

Buildings within villages are mainly constructed of stone, in particular limestone. Individual dwellings and farmsteads are generally hidden within the incised valleys.

Waterhouses is the main settlement that bounds the northern edge of the character area and extends into the adjacent gritstone highland fringe and north into the Peak District National Park.

Transport and Access

The main A523 cuts through this character area and the A52 forms its boundary to the north. Roads within this area are incongruously busy with quarry associated traffic.

Incongruous landscape features

Introduction of fencing for stock control replacing walled field boundaries. Large scale quarrying.

Key Planning and Management Issues

- A high quality landscape characterised by open uplands, dissected by incised wooded valleys
- No trees on uplands – sensitive to planting
- Large scale limestone quarries with significant traffic movements.
- Replacement of walled field boundaries by fencing
- Loss of some semi-natural vegetation: calcareous, neutral, and rarely, acidic grasslands

Capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to accommodate change

Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance to Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, identifies this landscape character type as very sensitive to the impacts of development and land use change. It is also identified as an area requiring landscape maintenance

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- The open character of the upland landscape must be maintained.
- Outside of the wooded valleys, proposals for woodland plantings should be considered particularly carefully as planting of inappropriate scale or location could erode the character and quality of the landscape. Proposals should be considered on a site by site basis taking account of the scale and form of the fields or other landscape units in the vicinity.
- Within the wooded valleys, the landscape is less sensitive and can more readily accommodate small to medium sized blocks or shelterbelts, planted to shelter farmland or residential properties. Account should be taken of the scale and form of landscape units and open areas that lead into the uplands should be avoided.
- Both broadleaves and conifer species occur in this landscape however future plantations should follow best practice advice provided by the Forestry Commission.
- Limited planting could be used to mitigate the visual impact of limestone quarrying. Planting is generally most effective when positioned closer to the viewer, between the viewer and the quarry. Where possible planting should reinforce and be linked to the existing vegetational framework of the locality. Where extensions to quarrying activity are planned, sensitively located advanced planting should be carried out to minimise the impact of the proposals on the landscape and local settlements.
- In general the open skyline should be maintained – both new development and planting blocks should be positioned so as not to impact upon the skyline.
- Where possible dry stone walls hedgerows should be used as a means of enclosure in order to reflect and maintain local character. Replacement of drystone walls by fencing should be discouraged and the maintenance and rebuilding of dry stonewalls should be supported

- The grouping and form of new buildings should reflect the juxtaposition, scale, form, enclosure and materials of traditional stone buildings characteristic of this area. This is particularly important in the upland landscape areas.
- The colour of prefabricated agricultural buildings should be determined taking careful account of position, predominant tones of adjacent vegetation, local materials and sky, so as to minimise the visual impact of the development.

Land Management Guidelines

The loss of some semi-natural vegetation, particularly calcareous, neutral, and acidic grasslands, is one of the key planning and management issues for this landscape character type.

Calcareous grassland

It is of very high importance that the remaining areas of this habitat and the adjoining land are safeguarded and that areas of semi-improved grassland are restored in order to increase the extent and sustainability of this habitat. Habitat creation should be used to link adjacent sites through the creation of new or the restoration of former areas.

Unimproved and neutral grassland

Very high importance that this habitat is maintained and safeguarded and that habitat creation is used to link adjacent sites through the creation of new sites or re-creation of former areas. Existing sites that are in poor condition should be restored.

Acidic grassland

It is important that this habitat is maintained, enhanced and restored, and where possible by maintaining a buffer between it and other dominant/invasive habitats. The Council should seek to increase the number of such sites and support the linking of fragmented sites through habitat creation. Action should be taken to prevent further losses of acidic grassland other than to heathland restoration.

Hedgerows

Where hedgerows are planted or restored it is of high importance that they should be species rich reflecting local indigenous hedge mixes and that the plants where possible should be grown locally.

Ancient and diverse hedgerows, particularly the hedgerow trees along them, should be maintained and managed.

Rivers and Streams

It is highly important that the quality of all natural existing channel features are maintained. The quality and quantity of water should be improved where possible.

Canals, lakes and ponds

Water bodies and catchments should be maintained and enhanced. Increasing the number of water bodies is a lower priority.

Arable field margins

Arable field margins should be maintained, improved and restored where possible.

Ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodland

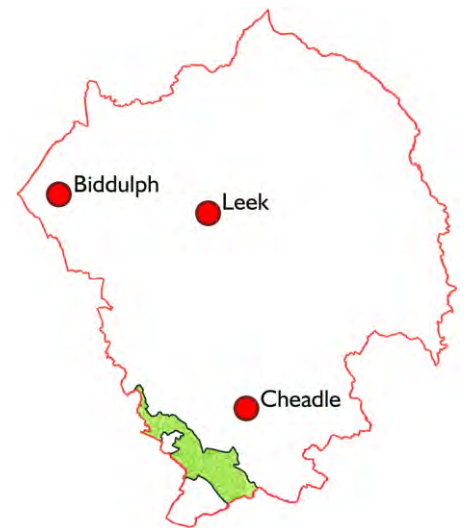
Ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodland should be maintained and enhanced. But the priority to restore degraded sites and recreate/regenerate new sites is of lower priority in this landscape character type than in others.

Other landscape features

The rebuilding of stonewalls, particularly in the upland areas, is particularly important to retain the distinctive character of the area. Consideration should be given to how the current practice of erection of stock proof fencing rather than repairing the stonewalls can be checked and the repair of stone walls be encouraged.

Settled plateau farmland slopes

This character type is found in both the Potteries and Churnet Valley Joint Character Area, to the central west of the District south of Werrington and Cellarhead, and in the Needwood and Claylands Joint Character Area, in the south western corner of the District. The landscapes are rolling plateaux with dispersed scattered hamlets and farmsteads.



Key Characteristics

- Gentle undulating landform with flat open valleys
- Small scale ancient hedgerow field pattern
- Low lying wet fields with ponds and well vegetated streams
- Views limited by hedgerow pattern and dense tree cover
- Urban fringe farming with horseculture
- Incongruous A50 dual carriageway corridor and mainline railway

Geology, Landform and Soils

A gentle undulating landform with small scale valley features. Glimpses of distant views extend through vegetation with Stoke-on-Trent skyline viewed from higher ground. Low lying wet fields with ponds extend around the River Blithe and tributary streams with ancient hedgerow patterns.

Vegetation

Ancient hedgerows line field boundaries with mature hedgerow trees creating a dense cover. A generally small scale landscape comprised of irregular fields. Oak and ash are predominate trees in this area, although lines of alder and willow are found along streams and rivers. New tree and shrub planting lines the A50 creating a green corridor through the area. Tall hedgerows. Loss of hedgerows close to conurbation edge due to the impact of horse culture and marginalisation of farming.

Land use

The area is mainly used for low intensity pastoral farming and in proximity to settlements and close to the conurbation edge informal recreation. Increasingly land is being used for horse grazing.

Enclosure

Ancient hedgerows and trees limit views and create visual enclosure. Roadside hedges appear to be well maintained. Close to the conurbation field boundary hedges, however, are poorly maintained and gaps have been replaced with post and wire fences for stock control often in disrepair. The large scale feature of the A50 dual carriageway has in parts been cut into this small scale landscape limiting views out and creating a sense of enclosure. Scale of landscape and enclosure increases within the road corridor and close to the edge of the conurbation.

Settlement and buildings

The proximity of this area to Stoke-on-Trent and its good accessibility has increased pressures on the surrounding landscape. Isolated farms are either

in disrepair or have been improved and converted to residential creating a more suburban feel to the area. Villages within this area are commuter areas for surrounding towns and city. Blythe Bridge is contained within this character type but abuts and is strongly linked with the conurbation. Forsbrook is a typical commuter village with a mix of old and of new properties of brick construction. Cresswell is visually separated from the rest of the district by the A50 trunk road.

Transport and Access

The very busy main A50 Stoke-Derby trunk road runs through the centre of the entire character area bypassing a number of settlements. The original line of the A50 Uttoxeter Road which is a Roman road connects these settlements. This remains a busy road particularly during incidents on the main A50. Other lateral minor roads lead off this roman road. A main line railway from Stoke to Derby runs through this character area with a number of disused railway lines leading from it. There is a railway station at Blythe Bridge and the Foxfield Steam Railway terminates at the north of the village.

Incongruous landscape features

A50 dual carriageway corridor and mainline railway. Adverse impact of the conurbation edge. Use of post and wire fences for stock control.

Key Planning and Management Issues

- Impact of conurbation; urban fringe farming and increase in horse culture
- Replacement of hedgerows by fencing.
- Busy roads and mainline railway
- Loss of some semi-natural vegetation (ancient woodland, hedgerows and semi-natural grasslands)

Capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to accommodate change

Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance to Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, identifies this landscape character area as in the area to the north west of Blythe Bridge as a landscape requiring regeneration; and the remaining area including that part of the landscape character type within the Needwood Claylands as requiring landscape enhancement.

Urban fringe pressures have had a particularly adverse impact on the landscape quality of in the west of this area due to the impact of the urban fringe and the resultant deteriorating condition of existing landscape features.

The small area to the north and east of Forsbrook has been identified as a 'landscape at risk' of sudden loss of quality in Section 7.18 of the Supporting documentation to the Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance. Measures to meet the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan targets are considered to be critically important in preventing such a loss.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- In the area in the west of this landscape character type large scale woodland planting would screen and contain the edge of the conurbation reducing its visual influence. Plantations should be largely broadleaved and need to take account of the flatter landscape of the river valley. The re-establishment of hedgerows and/or small tree groups redefining small field enclosures will combine with the larger tree blocks to reduce the scale of the landscape.
- The growth of horseculture has caused the subdivision of fields by fencing, loss of hedges and the erections of shelters for horses. Consideration should given to actions that can be taken to counteract the impact of this landuse on landcover and landscape scale.
- The area to the north and east of Forsbrook still retains its ancient small field pattern which is well defined by hedgerows and hedgerow trees. In view of its proximity to the A50 corridor and the main line railway it is vulnerable to pressure for development. The character and form of this landscape is extremely important to the setting of the settlement and new development and adverse changes to management of this area should be avoided. Active management of BAP habitats will help to maintain and reinforce the landscape elements that contribute to the high quality of this small scale landscape.
- Planting along stream lines is an important feature of this landscape character type. Reinforcement of streamline planting with native wetland tree and shrub species is to be encouraged.
- Reinforcing the existing vegetational structure of the area away from the urban fringe should consist of small scale planting of small field size, field corners and hedgerow trees. The character of floodplains should remain more open.
- New native woodland planting should where possible be used to improve the distribution of and links to existing ancient woodlands, counteracting isolation of these woodlands.
- Conifers should be used sparingly and dominate as broadleaves are the more typical tree type.
- Where new development is proposed, the edge of the development and public open spaces associated with it should contain appropriate tree and shrub planting to reduce the visual impact of the development and to enable it to be more readily assimilated into the landscape.
- The grouping and form of new buildings should reflect the juxtaposition, scale, form, enclosure and materials of traditional local buildings characteristic of this area.
- The colour of prefabricated agricultural buildings should be determined taking careful account of position, predominant tones of adjacent vegetation, local materials and sky, so as to minimise the visual impact of the development.

- The loss of semi-natural vegetation should be checked and remaining habitats should be protected, managed and where possible extended to create sustainable communities.

Land Management Guidelines

The condition of the semi-natural vegetation characteristic of this landscape type is generally deteriorating. These habitats require protection, management and to be re established. The main issues are as follows:

Hedgerows

It is highly important that ancient and diverse hedgerows, particularly the hedgerow trees along them, are maintained and managed. Where hedgerows are planted or restored it is important that they should be species rich reflecting local indigenous hedge mixes and that the plants where possible should be grown locally. Consideration should be given to how the current practice of the erection of stock proof fencing rather than maintenance and management of hedgerows can be checked and the retention and maintenance of hedgerows be encouraged.

Canals, lakes and ponds

The maintenance and enhancement of water bodies and catchments is highly important as is increasing the number of water bodies.

Reedbeds

Opportunities should be taken to maintain and create reedbeds

Rivers and Streams

It is highly important that the quality of all natural existing channel features is maintained and that the quality and quantity of water is improved.

Wet Woodlands

It is highly important that further losses of wet woodlands are prevented and that existing woods are maintained, enhanced and restored. Efforts should be made to increase the number of wet woodlands in the area particularly within the flatter valley bottoms.

Ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodland

It is of high importance to the character and quality of the landscape that degraded ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodlands are restored and that new woodlands should be recreated or regenerated. Existing woodland should be maintained and enhanced.

Lowland Acidic Grassland

It is highly important that action should be taken to prevent further losses of acidic grassland other than to lowland heathland restoration. This grassland habitat should be maintained, enhanced and restored, where possible by maintaining a buffer between it and other dominant/invasive habitats. The number of such sites should be increased and support given to the linking of fragmented sites through habitat creation.

Lowland Heathland

It is of high importance that new heathlands are created and that areas previously heathland are re-created. Existing heaths should be protected from development and from damaging activities.

Lowland Wet Grassland

Existing lowland wet grassland should be maintained and enhanced. Degraded areas should be restored and opportunities taken to create new areas.

Unimproved and neutral grassland

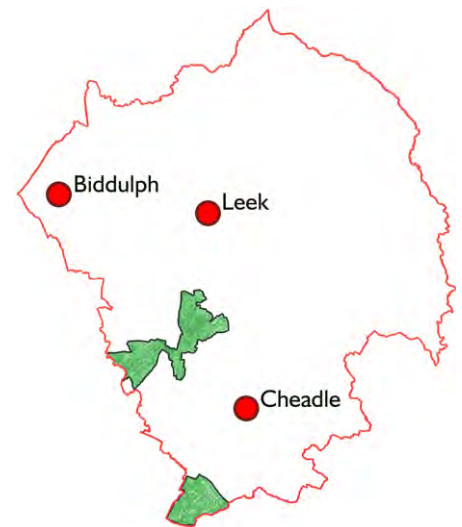
Existing unimproved and neutral grasslands that are in poor condition should be restored. These habitats should be maintained and safeguarded and habitat creation should be used to link adjacent sites through the creation of new sites or re-creation of former areas.

Arable field margins

Arable field margins should be maintained, improved and restored where possible.

Settled plateau farmlands

This character type is found in both the Potteries and Churnet Valley Joint Character Area, to the central west of the District south of Werrington and Cellarhead, and in the Needwood and Claylands Joint Character Area, in the south western corner of the District. The landscapes are rolling plateaux with dispersed scattered hamlets and farmsteads.



Key Characteristics

- Open large scale landscapes with extensive views from a rolling plateau
- Low grade pasture farmland with overgrazed poorly drained fields with rushes and rough grass
- Large scale regular and irregular field patterns with hedges and dry stone walls
- Hedges deteriorated to the extent that field boundaries marked by isolated trees, fencing and remnant thorn and holly
- Some blocks of mature broadleaf woodland
- Heathland
- Parkland
- Dispersed settlements
- Developing urban fringe character due to proximity to Stoke-on-Trent
- Busy road network surrounds the area; railway line

Geology, Landform and Soils

Gentle slopes to the Churnet Valley edge with a rolling plateau lies on boulder clay overlying Triassic mudstones. In more northerly area views extend over Stoke on Trent and towards Biddulph. Non calcareous stagnogley soils are poorly drained and overgrazed. Hedgerows and some dry stone walls are aligned in a regular field pattern. Stone outcrops in higher areas.

Vegetation

A regular pattern of hedged fields have deteriorated in parts with isolated beech, birch, oak and holly trees demarcating field boundaries. Overgrazed, poorly drained fields have resulted in rushes and rough grass predominant in fields. Heathland is present in isolated areas on higher ground with stunted oak and birch trees. Blocks of woodland are associated with Consall Hall historic parkland. Bromley Wood on the southernmost part of the district is ancient semi natural woodland. Some introduction of exotic species.

Land use

The main land use is dairy farming although gradually replaced with horse grazing. Consall Hall and gardens provides a tourist attraction within the area. A number of fish ponds are associated with Consall Hall. Major overhead power lines crossing the southernmost tip of the district within Needwood Claylands Joint Character Area.

Enclosure

Hedges and dry stone walls are in a poor state of repair and have been replaced extensively with poorly maintained post and barbed wire fence. Where hedgerows exist regular field patterns are clearly defined. Some lanes have banked hedgerows restricting views and creating a sense of enclosure.

Settlement and buildings

This area is generally urban fringe to the City of Stoke-on-Trent. Old stone dwellings are

intermixed with new style properties. A number of individual isolated properties have been improved creating a suburban feel to the area. Werrington, Cellarhead and Wetley Rocks are the main settlements within this character type. Major overhead power lines crossing

Transport and Access

The busy A52, A520 and A522 run through and alongside the boundaries of the character area with a network of busy minor roads within the area. Railway line crosses area.

Incongruous landscape features

Horseyculture and over grazing associated with urban fringe farming. Increasing use of post and wire fencing for stock control. Busy roads. Mainline railway line. Overhead power lines.

Key Planning and Management Issues

- Impact of conurbation; urban fringe farming and increase in horseyculture
- Powerlines
- Replacement of hedgerows and drystone walls by fencing.
- Busy roads and mainline railway
- Parklands
- Loss of some semi-natural vegetation (ancient woodland, heathland hedgerows and semi-natural grasslands)

Capabilities and sensitivities of the landscape to accommodate change

Planning for Landscape Change Supplementary Planning Guidance to Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, identifies this landscape character

area, the area south of Werrington and the area in the south west corner of the district as landscapes requiring regeneration; and the area east of Wetley Rocks as a landscape that requires restoration.

Urban fringe pressures have had a particularly adverse impact on the landscape quality of this area due to the proliferation of incongruous features and the deteriorating condition of existing landscape features.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Urban fringe pressures can have an adverse impact on landscape quality with the proliferation of incongruous features and the deteriorating condition of existing landscape features. The landscape structure has deteriorated with the loss of vegetational features and the impact of the urban fringe. There are open views to the conurbation. This landscape requires a new vegetational structure to be created comprising of woodland, hedgerows and trees which will screen the conurbation and soften the impact of larger scale obtrusive features such as overheadlines and major transport routes.
- The planting of small woodlands, hedgerows with associated trees and tree groups can also help to restore the vegetational cover and re-articulate the scale of the landscape. The new vegetational structure should link to existing remnant vegetation and field pattern. It should create a mosaic of spaces, some open some wooded and of small to medium scale.
- Where new development is proposed, the edge of the development and public open spaces associated with it should contain appropriate tree and shrub planting to reduce the visual impact of the development and to enable it to be more readily assimilated into the landscape.
- Field boundaries should be retained, maintained and, in places, replaced to maintain the scale of the landscape. Stone walls or native hedgerows should be used as a means of enclosure dependent upon local character. Replacement of hedges and drystone walls by fencing should be discouraged.
- The growth of horseyculture has caused the subdivision of fields by fencing, loss of hedges and the erections of shelters for horses. Consideration should be given to actions that can be taken to counteract the impact of this landuse on landcover and landscape scale.
- Landowners should be encouraged to diversify land use away from the current low grade farming.
- Heathland areas should be protected. Planting in the vicinity of heathland should avoid invasive species and create a transitional area of a heathland character around the edges that should aim to link visually with nearby heathland and extend heathland character out into the surrounding landscapes.
- Development and new tree planting should take account of the setting of the historic parklands, of the setting of important buildings and of important local views. Any proposals for development or land use change which impacts upon the setting of an historic parkland must take account of the unique character of that designed landscape.
- Any proposals for development or land use change within an historic landscape should be informed by a detailed historic landscape appraisal.
- Historic landscapes contain introduced decorative tree species that are inherent to the design of the parkland and pleasure grounds and to its setting. It may be appropriate to introduce some of these species into the area identified as the setting of the parkland. Consideration should be given to protecting, in particular, individual specimen and groups of trees that are significant historically or visually to this landscape or to local settlement.
- The grouping and form of new buildings should reflect the juxtaposition, scale, form, enclosure and materials of traditional local buildings characteristic of this area.
- The colour of prefabricated agricultural buildings should be determined taking careful account of position, predominant tones of adjacent vegetation,

local materials and sky, so as to minimise the visual impact of the development.

- The loss of semi-natural vegetation should be checked and remaining habitats should be protected, managed and where possible extended to create sustainable communities.

Land Management Guidelines

The condition of the semi-natural vegetation characteristic of this landscape type is generally deteriorating. These habitats require protection, management and to be re established. The main issues are as follows:

Hedgerows

It is highly important that ancient and diverse hedgerows, particularly the hedgerow trees along them, are maintained and managed. Where hedgerows are planted or restored it is important that they should be species rich reflecting local indigenous hedge mixes and that the plants where possible should be grown locally. Consideration should be given to how the current practice of the erection of stock proof fencing rather than maintenance and management of hedgerows can be checked and the retention and maintenance of hedgerows be encouraged.

Ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodland

It is of very high importance to the character and quality of the landscape that degraded ancient/semi-natural broad leaved woodlands are restored and that new woodlands should be recreated or regenerated. Existing woodland should be maintained and enhanced.

Ancient and semi-natural broadleaved woodland is generally particularly important to the form and character of historic parkland landscapes. Similarly the maintenance, safeguarding and restoration of wood pasture and parkland is also important. It is also likely that a number of veteran trees will be found within an historic parkland.

Wet Woodlands

It is highly important that further losses of wet woodlands are prevented and that existing woods

are maintained, enhanced and restored. Efforts should be made to increase the number of wet woodlands.

Lowland Heathland

It is of high importance that new heathlands are created and that areas previously heathland are re-created. Existing heaths should be protected from development and from damaging activities.

Lowland Acidic Grassland

It is highly important that action should be taken to prevent further losses of acidic grassland other than to lowland heathland restoration. This grassland habitat should be maintained, enhanced and restored, where possible by maintaining a buffer between it and other dominant/invasive habitats. The number of such sites should be increased and support given to the linking of fragmented sites through habitat creation.

Reedbeds

It is highly important that opportunities are taken to maintain and create reedbeds.

Rivers and Streams

It is highly important that the quality of all natural existing channel features is maintained and that the quality and quantity of water should be improved.

Lowland Wet Grassland

Existing lowland wet grassland should be maintained and enhanced. Degraded areas should be restored and opportunities taken to create new areas.

Unimproved and neutral grassland

Existing unimproved and neutral grasslands that are in poor condition should be restored. These habitats should be maintained and safeguarded and habitat creation should be used to link adjacent sites through the creation of new sites or re-creation of former areas.

Arable field margins

Arable field margins should be maintained, improved and restored where possible.