



MANSFIELD DISTRICT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT May 2010



MANSFIELD DISTRICT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document looks at the landscape of Mansfield District and provides part of the evidence base for the local authority's Local Development Framework (LDF). It will be used by the planning authority to aid development control decisions on planning applications and to guide landscape enhancement where funding and opportunities allow.

Mansfield District has a core central urban area defined as Mansfield Town, Mansfield Woodhouse and Forest Town. Smaller settlements, such as Market Warsop, are in the northern areas of the District. These are surrounded by countryside including farmland, river corridors and woodland.



There are a series of gently undulating plateaus to the north influenced by past mining with a majority of colliery sites restored to woodland and other natural habitats.



Woodland is interspersed throughout the District with larger concentrated tracts within the Pleasley and western areas of the District as well as just outside the District to the south, including a mixture of natural, semi-natural and plantation woodland. Heathland is a prominent and important feature within the landscape to the south of Mansfield District at Strawberry Hill and Sherwood Forest Golf Course.

The river valleys of the Maun and Meden are features in the landscape, the Maun is in a shallow valley which has development often close to its banks, especially as it flows through Mansfield Town centre. The Meden flows through countryside in a shallow valley which becomes steeper, more wooded and flanked by sometimes vertical rock faces around Pleasley, the river forms the northern boundary of the District.



The document provides a way of assessing the varied landscape within Mansfield District and contains information about the character and condition of the landscape to provide a greater understanding of what makes the landscape within the District unique or recognisable. The study has recognised landscape distinction through the identification of 19 Landscape Policy Zones. These are:



Limestone Farmland

- ML 23 Skegby Plateau
- ML 24 Market Warsop River meadowlands and Pasture
- ML 25 Sookholme Limestone Farmlands
- ML 26 Warsop Vale and Wooded Farmland
- ML 27 Pleasleyhill Upland Plateau Farmland
- ML 28 Penniment Lane Urban Fringe Farmlands
- ML 29 River Meden Limestone Valley
- ML 30 Oxclose Wooded Hill

Sherwood Forest and Heaths

- SH 08 Vicar Water and Rainworth Heath
- SH 11 Lindhurst Wooded Farmland
- SH 12 Cavendish Wooded Estatelands
- SH 15 River Maun Meadowlands with Plantations
- SH 18 Blidworth and Rainworth Wooded Estatelands
- SH 25 Birklands Wooded Estatelands
- SH 28 Meden Vale and Church Warsop
- SH 29 Meden Vale and Church Warsop
- SH 47 Coxmoor Wooded Farmlands
- SH 50 Strawberry Hill Heath Wooded Estatelands
- SH 51 Sherwood Golf Course

A Landscape Policy Zone (LPZ) is an individual landscape area which has a unique sense of place although it shares similar characteristics to other landscapes within broader regional areas identified as part of the East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment. Please see Figure 18 for a more detailed map.

The study has identified the key features for each LPZ which need to be conserved or enhanced to ensure each one can adapt to change without severe detrimental effect on their character and integrity. Emphasis has been placed on the transition between the settlements to the wider countryside. Future changes which threaten the landscape were identified whilst surveying on site. Landscape Actions have been provided for each LPZ which provide a series of short statements of what is required to conserve, enhance or restore the local distinctiveness of each LPZ.

This information will be used to help inform the Core Strategy in Mansfield District providing a greater understanding of landscape character and will help to protect special landscapes and provides guidance on how to improve less special landscapes. It will also be useful for informing any planning conditions/obligations for planning applications that could impact upon landscape character.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Distinction in landscape is created through the interplay between people and place and encompasses all land, not just land designated for its natural beauty. It arises from unique patterns and combinations of different components and elements which make up the landscape.

1.2 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into effect in the UK in March 2007. The ELC was the first international convention on landscape and is dedicated exclusively to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe. It provides an international context for landscape and emphasises its importance alongside biodiversity and cultural heritage. The ELC definition of landscape is:

‘Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of action and interaction of natural and/or human factors’.

1.3 Landscape character assessment is an important tool for implementing the ELC within the UK. Landscape character assessment is a decision-making tool which systematically classifies the landscape into distinctive areas based on the interaction between topography, geology, land use, vegetation pattern, and human influence. Its role is to ensure that future change does not undermine the characteristics or features of value within a landscape. Landscape character assessment is an approach that can make a significant contribution to the sustainable objectives of environmental protection; prudent use of natural resources; and maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for present and future generations.

1.4 This report is a landscape character assessment of Mansfield District illustrated on Figure 1. It focuses on the District’s open countryside and urban fringe areas.

2.0 PURPOSE

- 2.1 In 1997 Nottinghamshire County Council published the 'Countryside Appraisal: Nottinghamshire Landscape Guidelines' which divided the county into 10 regional landscape character areas, further sub-divided into landscape types. The project used the method of landscape protection and provided an overview of the county's rural environment to help underpin landscape protection and enhancement. It recognised all landscapes as having their own character, and whether emphasis should be placed on conservation or enhancement. The aspiration of the project was to enrich the quality of the whole countryside. As part of this process Mature Landscape Areas were identified. These were defined as areas 'least affected by adverse change.'
- 2.2 Recent changes in government legislation (PPS7) place greater emphasis on the use of landscape character assessments to inform criteria-based policy within Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). Therefore there is a need to review and update the Countryside Appraisal to provide policy actions.
- 2.3 Nottinghamshire County Council's landscape team commenced the update of the assessment in 2003 and have undertaken the assessment of the Sherwood Regional Character Area in the southern and eastern parts of Mansfield District. This is illustrated on Figure 2.
- 2.4 In July 2009, TEP was commissioned by Mansfield District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment of Mansfield District to address the areas not yet covered by Nottinghamshire County Council's landscape team and to combine the studies into a comprehensive document on Mansfield District's landscape character.
- 2.5 Mansfield District Council is preparing its Core Strategy and this document will provide an important part of the evidence base to support that process and to inform the Local Development Framework in Mansfield District more generally. It is also intended that the document will be used to aid development control decisions on planning applications and to guide actions on landscape enhancement, where resources allow.
- 2.6 This document researches and categorises features and characteristics of the landscape and has divided the study area into detailed landscape character areas known as Landscape Policy Zones (LPZ). The study also focuses on the setting of built form within the landscape and on the transition from settlements to the wider countryside. Pressures which threaten the landscape character have been identified from regional and local planning policy and from consultation with officers of Mansfield District Council. Guidelines have been produced for positive change to ensure the preservation and where appropriate the enhancement of local landscape distinctiveness.

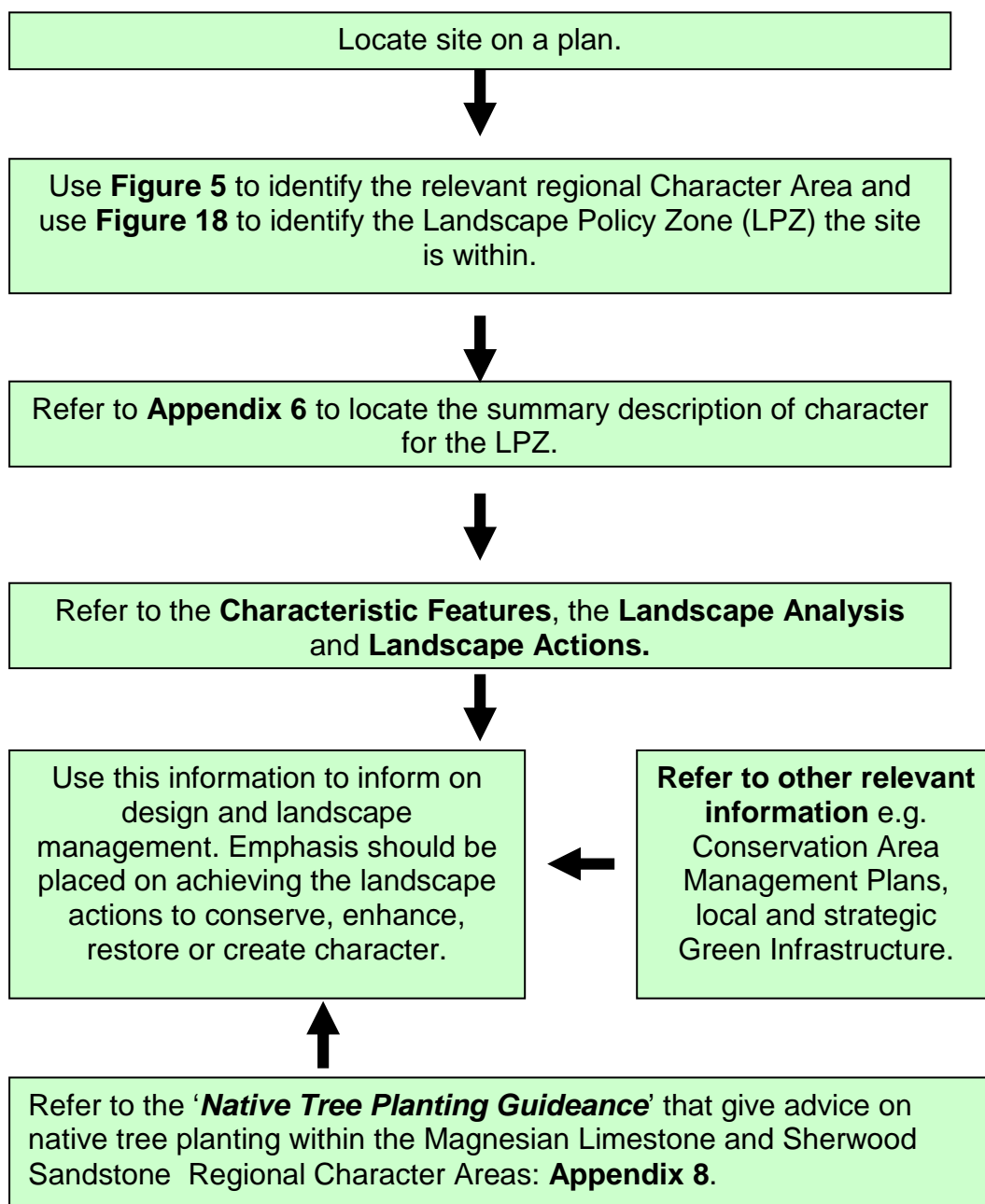
3.0 APPLICATION OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (Technical Guidance on How to Use this Document)

Who Is This Document For?

- 3.1 This document is relevant to anyone who has an interest in landscape. The main applications for the document are considered to be:
- A technical document and evidence base to help inform landscape policies within Mansfield's core strategy and Local Development Framework;
 - Providing key information to development control officers in helping to assess whether proposals are likely to make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness or whether they are likely to be detrimental in terms of scale, style and design. It will also help them to provide targeted, landscape-related mitigation and conditions to accompany planning decisions;
 - Providing key information for use by developers to help to develop designs and proposals which make a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness of an area;
 - Providing broad guidelines which may help land managers to identify area-specific landscape management operations such as small-scale tree and woodland planting and boundary replacement;
 - A comprehensive document that is easy to use by the general public who may have a personal interest in the landscape around where they live;
 - Helping to promote what is special within the landscape of Mansfield District; and
 - Providing a framework to assist local communities and parish councils who may wish to develop detailed parish level character assessments or detailed village design statements.
- 3.2 The landscape character assessment has been undertaken at a local level and provides character based information presented at 1:25,000 scale. It is important to note that it is a strategic assessment rather than a field-by-field assessment and detailed decisions and assessments will still be required to consider specific local circumstances. For example new development proposed for a site will still require a landscape and visual assessment which includes an assessment of landscape character on a field-by-field basis.
- 3.3 The assessment has focused on the rural landscape and areas bordering urban areas; it has not assessed the character of towns or villages. The document makes reference to how settlements integrate with the surrounding landscape and any key elements or distinctive characteristics of these settlements where they are particularly evident within the landscape.

How To Use This Document

- 3.4 This document provides a detailed technical report of the landscape character of Mansfield District. It has been structured to enable users to access summarised landscape character information and suggested actions on specific areas in the District.
- 3.5 The following flow diagram shows the structure of the document and which sections need to be referenced when using the document.



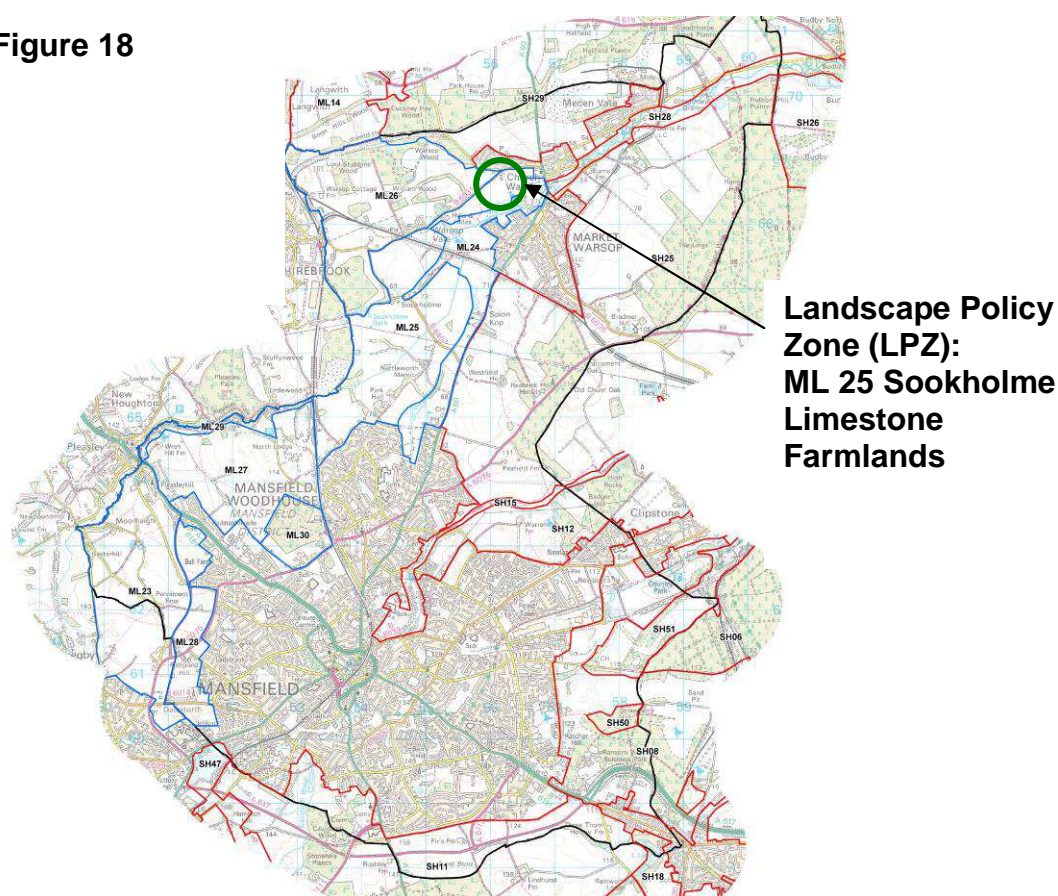
- 3.6 The main report looks at the District as a whole and highlights important planning designations, national and local designations and broad characteristics such as geology, soils, landform, hydrology, ecology and cultural heritage to build a picture of the character of the District.

- 3.7 Appendix 6 provides detailed descriptions and profiles for the Landscape Policy Zones (LPZs) covering Mansfield District. It is this appendix which should be used when looking at the local character of a specific area or site. For clarity and ease of orientation the LPZs have been grouped under the relevant Regional Character Area.

Working Example

- 3.8 For example, for somebody wishing to know more about a parcel of land on the southern fringes of Church Warsop, the first step would be to identify the sites location on a map. Referring to Figure 5 identify the Regional Character Area which it falls and review the key characteristics. This parcel of land would belong to the Regional Character Area: Limestone Farmlands. Then look at Figure 18 to identify which Landscape Policy Zone (LPZ) the land falls within.

Figure 18



- 3.9 Use Appendix 6 to identify the detailed characteristic features. The *Characteristic Features* set out what features give this area a sense of place. The landscape value judgements then explain how and why this landscape is distinct from others. This has informed the character guidelines. These guidelines in combination with the 'Characteristic Features' can be used to understand what types of change could occur on the land which would retain or enhance the landscape character and what is likely to alter or be detrimental to the landscape character.

- 3.10 The Landscape Actions for each Landscape Policy Zones (LPZ) form a useful aid for assessing proposals. For example a proposal for infill housing could be assessed on whether it might impact on the prominent village skylines and what measures it could include to minimise this impact.
- 3.11 If a particular parcel of land lies on the boundary of LPZs the following should be noted. LPZ boundaries represent 'transitional areas' where key characteristics from the two adjacent areas may be present within the landscape. In considering character for a particular field/site on a LPZ boundary it will be important to review the descriptions and characteristic features for both areas and to consider the relative landscape values and guidelines when formulating or responding to proposals.
- 3.12 It is important to note that Landscape Policy Zone information sheets should be used alongside other relevant considerations such as designated sites of natural and historical significance, protected species, conservation areas and green infrastructure linkages.

4.0 STUDY OBJECTIVES

4.1 The main objectives of this study are:

- To review and update the Countryside Appraisal: Nottinghamshire Landscape Guidelines published in 1997 as they relate to Mansfield District;
- To promote awareness of Mansfield District's landscape character;
- To carry out the work in accordance with the method developed by Nottinghamshire County Council;
- To identify discrete areas of character (Landscape Policy Zones) and describe their main landscape characteristics;
- To assess the landscape condition, quality and significance of each Landscape Policy Zone;
- To provide a series of recommendations and future strategies for the protection, conservation, enhancement and restoration of each Landscape Policy Zone;
- To identify a range of key issues and provide a knowledge base to enable informed and justified landscape related decisions; and
- To provide potential indicators that could form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) monitoring framework.

4.2 Landscape character is one of many issues which need to be taken into account in shaping the future of the area.

4.3 The identification of landscape character or its identified landscape value does not determine whether development will or will not be allowed in an area or on a site. Where development is needed to meet economic or sustainability objectives, this document will help to guide the form of development to ensure local distinctiveness and landscape quality are conserved and where possible enhanced.

5.0 METHOD

5.1 The GIS used in this assessment has been based was undertaken by Stephen Warnock of the Department of Geography at the University of Reading in 2004, using the 'Living Landscapes' Method¹ that he developed. The key stages of the process are described as follows:

- Identification of regional character areas;
- Desk study;
- Interpolation of data and initial mapping of character areas;
- Field study;
- Classification and description; and
- Recommendations.

5.2 This section summarises the main approach taken to the landscape character assessment.

Desk Study

5.3 Desk based research included a review of available relevant published documentation. This included national, regional and local planning policy, and relevant landscape and heritage documents including the Countryside Appraisal of Nottinghamshire.

5.4 Desk based research also included an assessment of relevant Ordnance Survey (OS) maps, aerial photography and Mansfield District's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data sets including landform, flood zones, ecological, landscape and heritage information.

Initial Mapping

(Carried out by Stephen Warnock on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council)

5.5 The assessment has been carried out at two levels. The first level was a broad-level identification of Regional Areas; these areas were subdivided into smaller landscape character types. These are subdivisions of the national Joint Character Areas and contain broadly similar characteristics. This was undertaken to identify patterns in physiography, ground type, settlement pattern and land cover. This has been used within the East Midlands Regional Character Assessment. The second level is the identification of distinct units of character at a local level (typically using 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey base maps). These are called Landscape Description Units (LDU).

5.6 LDUs are homogenous units of land defined by a number of attributes which are derived from a series of GIS overlays. These identify areas of common characteristics. The LDUs were defined using various key components of the landscape including:

¹ The Living Landscapes Project Landscape Characterisation Stephen Warnock, November 2002

- Physiography – expression of the shape and structure of the landscape as influenced by both nature of the underlying geology and geological processes.
- Ground Type – soil forming environment which determines the surface pattern of vegetation and land use.
- Settlement Pattern – is the structural component of the cultural landscape reflected in the distribution of settlements; historic enclosure; and size of tenure of agricultural holdings.
- Land Cover – type of vegetation (natural and man-made) covering the land surface.

5.7 These LDU components are sub-divided into the following categories: landform; geology; soils; settlement pattern; farm type and tree cover. Through the use of GIS these patterns can be overlaid to identify areas of similar character. Each LDU has a 6 figure reference code which relates to each overlay, identified followed by a short written description.

Table 5.1: Example of information within each Landscape Description Unit

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Example | LDU 382 |
| Written Description | 6 figure reference: SSD PSS Sloping undulating, soft sandstone / sandy drift, impoverished soils, low dispersal with farms, small farms, secondary woodland |
| Example | LDU 389 |
| Written Description | 6 figure reference: LFB MEP Vales and valley bottoms, other fluvial drift, deep sandy loamy soils, unsettled (meadow and marsh), large estates, estate plantations |

Interpretation of GIS Data

(Carried out by TEP)

5.8 The identification of LDUs through desk based GIS mapping identified detailed and often small units of character across the study area. After a brief familiarisation field visit in the District, it was clear that many of the LDUs displayed similar or only subtle differences in character such as the top, side and base of a hill. Often differences within LDUs were through changes in geology and soils which were often not readily identifiable as distinctive differences within landscape character during field survey work.

- 5.9 To rationalise and identify areas of similar character that could be written up as identifiable Landscape Policy Zones (LPZs) and therefore provide better representation of character across the District, Landscape Description Units (LDUs) were analysed to establish adjoining LDUs which had four or more of the same attributes. In these cases it is likely that at a local level the character within each LDU would be similar and guidelines and descriptions closely correlated.
- 5.10 This analysis enabled initial Landscape Policy Zones (LPZs) to be formulated along with specific notes of any areas of uncertainty. These areas formed the basis for the field study which verified, reviewed and refined the LPZs.

Field Study

(carried out by TEP and NCC)

- 5.11 The detailed field study was carried out by Chartered Landscape Architects, both by car and on foot from publicly accessible locations. During this assessment consideration was given to individual elements such as built form, land use, landform, vegetation, hydrology and aesthetic factors such as views, tranquillity and sense of enclosure/openness and the interaction between landscape features which cannot be determined by desk study alone. This allowed distinctions to be made between recognisable patterns in the landscape.
- 5.12 Key distinguishing characteristics were recorded on site using a standardised survey sheet, an example of which is included in Appendix 1. Representative photos were also taken for each Landscape Policy Zone and have been used to illustrate the character area descriptions. Survey locations were chosen to cover many of the LDUs which lie within each LPZ.

Classification and Description

- 5.13 Following the field survey, the initial LPZs were refined. The information was collated to provide a factual description for each of the LPZs. The text describes the key elements which create a sense of place, the landscape's intactness from a visual and functional perspective, landform, land use and field pattern, and makes reference to natural features such as vegetation composition, archaeology and cultural heritage and built form where appropriate.

Making Recommendations

- 5.14 The first part of making recommendations for each LPZ was the assessment of landscape quality. This is a judgement regarding the condition of landscape features combined with the strength of landscape character.
- 5.15 The method used by Nottinghamshire County Council for assessing landscape quality differed slightly, however the output of both methods produced similar landscape actions for each LPZ. The NCC method

uses a scoring method to identify the landscape strategy for each LPZ based upon landscape condition and sensitivity.

Strength of Character:

5.16 This is determined by a range of criteria:

- An assessment of how characteristic features and elements combine to form a sense of place; *the intrinsic character of a place*
- How distinctive and recognisable are the pattern of elements that make up the character, including both positive and negative elements;
- Presence and quantity of distinctive features; and
- Identification of landscapes containing historic patterns and features which may have declined or become fragmented thereby weakening character but which could be reinstated.

5.17 A three point scale has been used to make judgements as to strength of character: **Strong; Moderate; and Weak.**

- *Strong Character*
Strong character is defined as a consistent distribution of distinctive characteristics such as rock outcrops, hills, river floodplain, and woodland. These characteristics combine to create a strongly distinctive sense of place. Minor changes in land use or land cover would not necessarily detrimentally influence character.
- *Moderate Character*
Distinctive characteristics are consistent through the area although their distribution is less obvious or less frequent. The landscape still has a recognisable and distinctive character although it could be altered or weakened through minor changes in land use or land cover.
- *Weak/Variable Character*
A landscape where features and patterns are present which help to define character, however, there are often numerous influences none of which are overriding or consistent across the landscape; and many features show signs of alteration or decline. Even minor changes in land use or land cover could have a marked influence on the character of the area.

Landscape Condition

5.18 A judgement is made by consideration of state or intactness of landscape features, elements and characteristics and how these combine to inform a positive visual impression. This includes elements such as hedgerows, woodlands, field pattern, urban influences, infrastructure and restored landscapes. Judgements of condition are made as to how identified characteristics positively influence the appearance of the landscape.

5.19 A three point scale was used to make judgements: **Good**, **Moderate** and **Poor**

- *Good Condition*
Features are well managed and are almost always intact and of consistent quality. There is little evidence of loss or decline in the condition of features.
- *Moderate Condition*
Features are mostly well managed although in places there is evidence of decline in management and loss of features such as some fragmented hedgerows or dilapidated walls.
- *Poor Condition*
Few features are intact or well managed. Loss or decline of features is frequent. Boundaries such as hedgerows are rarely intact and other boundaries are often of variable style and condition. Such elements combine to give an untidy or disjointed appearance to the landscape.

5.20 A landscape strategy matrix, shown in Table 5.2 is used as a basis for guiding landscape judgements and forming management recommendations for the character areas. This is a useful tool as it provides a consistent basis upon which judgements can be made. From both condition and strength of character judgements, the table can be used to identify an appropriate management strategy.

5.21 The strategic categories used in this assessment for landscape quality are:

- **Conserve**
- **Enhance**
- **Restore**
- **Create**

5.22 **Conserve:** where the landscape quality is considered to be good (due to good condition and strong character) and there should be an emphasis on protecting or safeguarding the key features and characteristics of the landscape in their present form.

5.23 **Enhance:** emphasis should be to improve existing features which may not be currently well-managed or where existing features are of good quality but could be of greater benefit if improved. This may include improvements to landscape management practices or the introduction or removal of elements or features in order to strengthen character and/or improve perceived condition.

5.24 **Restore:** emphasis should be on repairing or re-establishing features that have been lost or are in a state of severe decline.

- 5.25 **Create:** where the landscape quality is poor (due to poor condition and weak character) and the original landscape pattern is no longer evident. In such places there is potential to re-create landscape features similar to the surroundings of to form new and different landscapes. An example of this is a landscape which has been heavily influenced by quarrying and industry, where field pattern and features are no longer evident the land form is markedly altered such as new mounding or large waterbodies which prevent the re-creation/restoration of the former landscape character.

Table 5.2 - Landscape Quality and Associated Landscape Strategy Matrix

| | | | | |
|---------------------|----------|--|---|---|
| Landscape Condition | Good | MODERATE <i>Enhance</i> | MODERATE - GOOD <i>Conserve and Enhance</i> | GOOD <i>Conserve</i> |
| | Moderate | POOR - MODERATE <i>Enhance and Restore</i> | MODERATE <i>Enhance</i> | MODERATE - GOOD <i>Conserve and Enhance</i> |
| | Poor | POOR <i>Restore/Create</i> | POOR - MODERATE <i>Enhance and Restore</i> | MODERATE <i>Enhance</i> |
| | | Weak | Moderate | Strong |
| | | Landscape Strength | | |

- 5.26 Using the information gathered in the desk and field studies and taking into account the overall management strategy from Table 5.2, landscape guidelines and management strategies were suggested for each Landscape Policy Zone. These are based on guidelines to conserve and protect the positive characteristics of the area and recommendations on how to enhance and restore aspects of the landscape in order to strengthen landscape character and reduce the influences of features which detract from landscape quality and condition.

6.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 6.1 This section identifies the planning policies that are of relevance to landscape and landscape character.

National Policy

- 6.2 Planning Policy Statement (PPS)1: *Delivering Sustainable Development* (2005) requires local planning authorities to adopt sustainable principles when writing Local Development Framework policies. It specifically states that high levels of protection should be afforded to the most valued townscapes, wildlife habitats, landscapes and natural resources. It emphasises the importance of good quality design which responds to local context and the protection of the character of the wider countryside within sustainable development proposals.
- 6.3 Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* (2004) sets out the Government's objectives to ensure that good quality sustainable development respects and enhances the local distinctiveness and intrinsic qualities of the countryside. It confirms the need to protect the open countryside for the benefit of all and to raise the quality of the environment in rural areas.
- 6.5 PPS 7 recognises the importance of landscapes outside designations in providing valuable landscapes at the local level. It also stresses that landscape character assessment should be used as a tool for robust criteria-based policies rather than continuing with rigid often unduly restrictive local designations.

Regional Policy

The East Midlands Regional Plan 2009

- 6.6 The current Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands was published in March 2009 as the East Midlands Regional Plan. It provides a broad development strategy for the East Midlands up to 2026. It identifies the scale and distribution of new housing and priorities for the environment, transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, energy, minerals, and waste treatment and disposal.
- 6.7 Policies of relevance to landscape character are set out below:
- 6.8 *Policy 1 Regional Core Objectives:* This policy states that to secure the delivery of sustainable development within the East Midlands, all strategies, plans and programmes having a spatial impact should meet certain core objectives. Those of relevance to this assessment are Policy c) to protect and enhance the environmental quality of urban and rural settlements and Policy g) to protect and enhance the environment.

- 6.9 *Policy 7 Development in the Northern Sub-area:* The economic, social and environmental regeneration of this sub-area is a priority. One aim to achieve this is to protect the natural and historic assets.
- 6.10 *Policy 26 Protecting and enhancing the Region's Natural and Cultural Heritage:* Sustainable development should ensure the protection, appropriate management and enhancement of the Region's natural and cultural heritage.
- 6.11 *Policy 28 Regional Priorities for Environmental and Green Infrastructure:* Local authorities, statutory environmental bodies and developers should work with the voluntary sector, landowners and local communities to ensure the delivery, protection and enhancement of environmental infrastructure across the Region. Such infrastructure should contribute to a high quality natural and built environment and to the delivery of sustainable communities.
- 6.12 *Policy 30 Regional Priorities for Managing and Increasing Woodland Cover:* Local authorities' should work with voluntary sectors and landowners to increase woodland cover which respects landscape character. Impact on landscape character should be carefully considered. Any woodland lost should be replaced with new woodland of equivalent value.
- 6.13 *Policy 31 Priorities for the Management and Enhancement of the Region's Landscape:* The Region's natural and heritage landscapes should be protected and enhanced by the establishment of criteria-based policies in Local Development Frameworks to ensure that development proposals respect intrinsic landscape character in rural and urban fringe areas. Local Development Frameworks should develop principles for landscape and biodiversity protection and enhancement objectives through the integration of Landscape Character Assessments with historic and ecological assessments. Local planning authorities should prepare landscape character assessments to inform the preparation of Local Development Frameworks. These can also be used to develop Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 6.14 *Policy 33 regional Priorities for Strategic River Corridors:* The natural and cultural environment of strategic river valleys of the Nene, Trent, Soar, Welland, Witham and Derwent, their tributaries and rivers which contribute to river corridors of a strategic nature in adjoining regions should be protected and enhanced. The multi-functional importance of strategic river corridors as part of the region's Green Infrastructure which includes landscape and townscape as one of the many factors should be enhanced.
- 6.15 There are specific policies relating to the Northern Sub-Regional Strategy (SRS) which includes Mansfield District.

- 6.16 *Policy Northern SRS 4 Green Infrastructure Through Development:* This policy states that the Local Development Framework and other strategies will ensure that consideration is given to where the greatest benefit to the public would be gained through the enhancement of Green Infrastructure, when identifying the location and nature of development or infrastructure provision.
- 6.17 *Policy Northern SRS 5 Sherwood Forest Park:* This policy states that local authorities and other agencies should work together to promote the creation of Sherwood Forest Park which will generate environmental, economic and social benefits of national and local significance by protecting and enhancing the distinctive landscape, natural, cultural, and historic assets.

Nottinghamshire Minerals Local Plan (adopted 2005)

- 6.18 The Nottinghamshire Minerals Local Plan was adopted in 2005 and is the primary guidance for the assessment and determination of mineral development proposals within the Mansfield District Study. Policies in the Local Plan seek to protect the Nottinghamshire landscape by only granting permission for mineral developments where visual impact can be kept to an acceptable level. These policies also allow the Council to impose appropriate screening and landscaping measures to protect visual amenity. Under policies M3.18-20 proposals for mineral developments that would destroy national or locally important nature conservation sites will not be allowed unless a need case is successfully demonstrated and suitable mitigation or compensation for the loss is provided. M3.22 states that operators must demonstrate that landscape distinctiveness and local distinctiveness is fully taken into consideration. Policies also make reference to restoration taking account of landscape character and natural habitats where appropriate such as heathland and acid grassland.

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham Waste Local Plan (adopted 2002)

- 6.19 The Nottinghamshire Waste Local Plan was adopted in 2002. Policies in this Local Plan highlight the need to consider the impact of the development of waste management facilities on landscape character. Development proposals for waste facilities that would destroy landscape features such as woodland or important nature conservation sites will not be allowed unless a need case is successfully demonstrated. Policies in the Local Plan also seek to ensure that the design and layout of waste facilities are such that they minimise visual impact and appropriate screening measures are imposed.

Local Policy

- 6.20 Mansfield District Council's Local Plan has policies of relevance to this document, particularly in relation to the protection of local landscape areas and urban expansion within the countryside.

Local Development Framework

- 6.21 In accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 current Local Plans are to be replaced by Local Development Frameworks (LDF). Mansfield District has commenced preparation of its LDF which will comprise a portfolio of documents covering issues such as housing, employment and retail as well as environment and landscape protection

Mansfield District Council Local Plan

- 6.22 At present the statutory plan for Mansfield District is Mansfield District Local Plan, adopted November 1998.
- 6.23 There are no national landscape designations in the study area, such as National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Mansfield District's landscape is valued and protected by various local plan policies. Policies of relevance are listed below and illustrated on Figure 12.
- 6.24 *Development in the Countryside (Policy NE1):* Within the local plan emphasis is placed on concentrating development within the built up area, however if development is permitted within the countryside it should respect the rural character of the landscape. The policy also states what is considered appropriate development. The policy aims to prevent the loss of open countryside and to encourage the re-development of vacant sites within the urban area.
- 6.25 *Agricultural Land (Policy NE2):* Within Mansfield District the best and most versatile land is predominantly Grades 2 and 3a. Permission will not be granted for development which affects the best and most versatile agricultural land.
- 6.26 *Mature Landscape Areas (Policy NE8):* A Mature Landscape Areas (MLAs) assessment has been carried out by Nottinghamshire County Council to ascertain the areas which are worthy of special protection. These areas often contain features such as mature deciduous woodland, intact field patterns, permanent grassland/heathland/parkland and mature rivers and streams which make these areas distinctive. There are three MLAs within the Mansfield District area:
- River Maun;
 - River Meden; and
 - Nettleworth Manor, Mansfield Woodhouse.
- 6.27 *Greenwood Community Forest (Policy NE 11):* Greenwood Community Forest was established in 1991 by the Countryside Agency, Forestry Commission, and covers a large part of the District excluding Warsop. Community forests are intended to provide well-wooded landscapes for wildlife, living and working, recreation and education within urban fringe areas.

- 6.28 *Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows (Policies 9, 10 and 11):* The District has many areas of amenity woodland and trees which contribute to the character of the area, and provide valuable wildlife habitats. Policies seek to ensure that development would not have adverse effects on woodlands which have value for amenity or as wildlife habitats.
- 6.29 There are seven recognised ancient woodlands in Mansfield District and development policies are set to ensure that no loss or damage would occur to these woodlands. These woodlands have significant value in ecological terms and policy aims to protect these. (There may also be other forms of protection which apply such as the designation of Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).)
- 6.30 *Conservation Areas (Policy BE6):* The Local Plan has a policy to ensure the preservation of Conservation Areas. This policy emphasises the importance of the distinctive character of Conservation Areas, many of which retain examples of traditional and locally distinctive built form and use of materials. Any new development where permitted should be high quality and respect the distinctive character of the Conservation Area.
- 6.31 *Sensitive Gaps (Policy NE4):* The Local Plan includes policies referring to 'Sensitive Gaps' which are of value to prevent the coalescence of urban settlements along the urban fringe. The aim is to preserve the openness of the character in the areas listed below:
- Land between Sutton-in-Ashfield and Mansfield, from Fishpond Hill to Skegby Lane;
 - Land between Mansfield and Rainworth from Ratcher Hill Quarry and the Ransom Hospital site to Three Thorn Hollow Farm;
 - Land between Forest Town and Clipstone; and
 - Land between Market Warsop, Church Warsop and Meden Vale.
- 6.32 *Green Wedges (Policy NE5):* Green Wedges are important for their landscape value and opportunities for recreation. They add quality to the environment often creating a mosaic of woodland and other habitats which link the countryside and the urban centre. The policy seeks to ensure that the openness of such areas and their landscape quality is not diminished by development.
- 6.33 There are three Green Wedges in the Mansfield District:
- Along the Maun Valley;
 - Land between Radmanthwaite and Mansfield Woodhouse; and
 - Along the Cauldwell Brook.

- 6.34 *Sherwood Forest Heritage Area (Policy NE 6)*: This is an area in the north east of the District and is of high landscape and nature conservation value. The policy states that this area is unlikely to be able to accommodate any major new tourist or recreational facilities.
- 6.35 *Sherwood Forest Special Landscape Area (Policy NE7)*: This is an area on the eastern edge of the District where management is focused on the promotion of acceptable forms of recreational and tourist development whilst respecting the special landscape and ecological value of the area.
- 6.36 *Heathland (Policy NE15)*: This policy states that development will not be permitted as it would lead to the loss of heathland. The Council will also seek to promote the restoration of existing and creation of new heathlands. The District has two of the most important heathland sites in the County: Strawberry Hill and Sherwood Forest Golf Course as well as other smaller sites to the east of Mansfield District.

Mansfield District Green Infrastructure Interim Planning Guidance (IPG) Note 11

- 6.37 This strategy has been prepared for use as material planning consideration in the interim period before new policy documents are brought forward as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) process. It is a strategic framework for the Mansfield District Council Green Infrastructure Action Plan. The document provides guidance to ensure that the environmental, social and historical importance of green space networks within Mansfield District is taken account of in the future. The vision for Green Infrastructure (GI) in Mansfield District is:

‘Protect, enhance and create a diverse, accessible and multi-functional network of green spaces that links landscape, biodiversity, and heritage assets with the social, economic and environmental needs of all people living, working and visiting Mansfield District.’

- 6.38 The Green Infrastructure of Mansfield District has been mapped as part of the GI study and is illustrated on Figure 13. In addition to other landscape features, GI sets the context and provides a broad understanding of the different components which combine to form distinct patterns of landscape character.

7.0 EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDIES

- 7.1 This section provides a summary of existing information relating to the landscape character of Mansfield District. This includes broad scale, national and regional information. Where relevant, more localised studies have been consulted and reviewed. This information provides a broad introduction to the landscape character of Mansfield District and highlights the main features of importance that may be present within the landscape. The assessments are within a hierarchy with more local level fitting within the broader level assessments. It is important to review national and regional documents as they set the context for landscape character. It is also important to ensure that this local level assessment fits and integrates with this hierarchy.
- 7.2 A national assessment provides broad character areas such as The South Magnesian Limestone which provide a very broad indicator of where character changes. Regional or county level assessments are at a slightly finer grain than the national level but still provide a broad indicator of where character varies within a region or a county. These are useful for landscape planning and providing guidance at national or regional scales. Local district level assessments provide a more detailed context and are useful for district wide planning projects and providing information on what the landscape is like within a local planning authority area. Character assessments can also be undertaken at a finer level again such as on a field-by-field basis although these tend to be undertaken for proposals at specific sites and are at a very fine grain.
- 7.3 National and regional landscape assessments provide a broad context to the overall landscape character of the area. These studies include Natural England's (former Countryside Agency) National Character Areas as well as more detailed regional and county character assessments. The table below sets the context for the character assessment with the summary descriptions of the key characteristics for each provided within Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Landscape Character Summary Table

| National Level Assessment (Figure 3) | Regional Level Assessment (Figure 5) | Country Level Assessment (Figure 4) | |
|--|--|--|-------------------|
| <i>This document was published in 1999 and divides the whole of England into broad landscape character areas. It recognises key overriding characteristics and identifies key pressures and forces for change within the landscape. There are seven national character areas within the study area. The areas are summarised as follows and illustrated on Figure 3.</i> | <i>LDA Design was commissioned to complete the Regional Character Assessment of East Midlands. The landscape assessment was produced in August 2009, landscape guidelines to accompany them are currently being prepared to help protect, manage and enhance the landscape. This assessment sits between the National Character Assessment, which identifies broad national character areas, and the local level assessment, which examines landscape character at a finer grain. It is useful for projects which are based at a regional level such as strategic planning projects.</i> | <p><i>This county level assessment was published in 1997. Closely linked with the Countryside Commission's Countryside Character Programme, the guidelines were intended to provide a framework to conserve and enhance the character of the countryside.</i></p> <p><i>The Guidelines used the National Character Map of England (as produced by the Countryside Commission) as a basis, and sub-divided some areas to give greater regional detail. Each of the character areas was then described in detail in the report, including information such as physical and human influences on the landscape, the visual character of the landscape, landscape evolution and forces for change. A summary of the guidelines is provided in Appendix 2.</i></p> | |
| <u>South Magnesian Limestone</u> | <u>Limestone Farmland</u> | <p><u>Magnesian Limestone Ridge</u></p> <p><i>'A gently rolling, in places urbanised, agricultural landscape with a regular pattern of large fields and distinctive stone villages.'</i></p> | Village Farmlands |
| <i>This character area covers an area stretching north from Nottingham into Derbyshire. This area is described as a landscape formed by the two escarpments of the Upper and Lower Magnesian Limestone. The escarpments form quite a narrow ridge feature which acts as a distinct barrier between the industrial coalfields to the west and the lowland vales to the east. Throughout the length of the limestone belt are large fields and well wooded estates. River valleys and gorges cut through the ridge exposing the underlying rock.</i> | <i>West facing escarpment and gently rolling limestone dipslope. The landscape contains a series of incised alleys and gorges. Fertile soils support arable farmland set within a regular pattern of large hedged fields. Large and medium woodland and belts of trees are common. The landscape contains a nucleated pattern of small stone villages and large industrial age towns. In areas the influence of coal mining is evident as large mining settlements and restored pit heaps. There are long distance views from the scarp slope westwards over the neighbouring landscape character type.</i> | | River Meadowlands |
| <u>Sherwood</u> | <u>Sherwood Forest and Heaths</u> | <p><u>Sherwood</u></p> <p><i>A well-wooded, and in places industrialised region characterised by semi-natural woodlands and heaths, historic country estates, large pine plantations, mining settlements and a planned layout of roads and fields.'</i></p> | Forest Sandlands |
| <i>This character area covers an area stretching north from Nottingham to the east of the Magnesian Limestone Ridge. Sherwood is described as an area which contains a wide range of landscapes including the historic heartlands of Sherwood Forest. Large areas of woodland and enclosed fields divided by treeless hedgerows lie to the west, whilst more open fields lie to the east adjacent to the Trent and Belvoir Vales. The landscape is also characterised by extensive parklands and estates of the Dukeries. The area is well known for its historic and cultural associations, including Lord Byron at Newstead Abbey, the Pilgrim Fathers and the legend of Robin Hood.</i> | <i>Undulating landform of low rounded hills overlying sandstone geology. The landscape has a mosaic of broadleaved, mixed and coniferous woodlands creating wooded skylines and enclosing extensive tracts of open arable farmland with large scale geometric fields with neatly trimmed often treeless hedgerows. Free draining acid soils support heathland often associated with woodland or on marginal land and roadsides. Narrow river corridors with pasture, flood meadows and woodland contrast with the adjacent arable farmland. Frequent large estates and parkland. Frequent evidence of coal mining industry and sandstone quarries are often locally conspicuous.</i> | | River Meadowlands |

8.0 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

8.1 The study area covers the whole of Mansfield District which is situated within north-west Nottinghamshire. It shares common borders with Bolsover District in Derbyshire and with the districts of Bassetlaw, Newark and Sherwood and Ashfield in Nottinghamshire.

8.2 This section addresses the physical factors which have an important influence on the landscape.

Geology and Landform

8.3 Geology is illustrated on Figure 6. Mansfield District has 15 Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS). RIGS are sites which are regionally or historically important and are designated for their educational value, aesthetic value and historical significance in terms of important advances in earth sciences.

8.4 The District is roughly divided into 2 main geological formations: Magnesian Limestone Ridge and Sherwood Sandstone. The Magnesian Limestone Ridge covers the western part of the District and the Sherwood Sandstone covers the eastern part.

8.5 The Magnesian Limestone Ridge has two types of rock: Magnesian Limestone and Permian Marl. The hardness of Magnesian Limestone informs the landform with a low escarpment. The landform of the escarpment is notable within the landscape particularly landform changes of 90m from the western edge of the slope to the junction with the Sherwood Sandstones. The Permian Marl gives rise to a gentle landform within the northern part of the District around Church Warsop and Pleasley and is more gently rolling with a series of narrow valleys cut into the underlying limestone. The most prominent example of this is the River Meden on the northern boundary of the District. The most prominent example of this is to the west of Mansfield District where a series of rolling hills are distinctive features at around 170m AOD.

8.6 The Sherwood region is to the east of the Magnesian Limestone Ridge and extends through Nottinghamshire to the lowlands of the River Idle. This region comprises Permo-Triassic sandstones which rise as low hills along the eastern edge of the Magnesian Limestone ridge. An outcrop of Permo-Triassic sandstones cover nearly a quarter of the Nottinghamshire County. This sandstone formation is visible throughout the Sherwood region at points where it is exposed in cuttings, sites of mineral extraction and natural breaks in the landform such as rivers. To the south of Mansfield the sandstone forms a 'tableland' known as the Robin Hood Hills which is some of the highest land in the County.

Soils

- 8.7 The variety of landform and geology in Mansfield District contributes to a variety of different soils types. Within the west and north of the district the Magnesian Limestone results in fertile free-draining calcareous soils which support a range of crops. Where the soils are over Permian Marl the land tends to be heavier and of more limited agricultural use. The Sherwood Sandstone area to the east of Mansfield comprises well-drained loamy soils particularly on the lower slopes of dry valleys. Acidic well-drained soils are present under woodland, lowland heath areas and acid grassland.
- 8.8 The Agricultural Land Classification analyses soils for their intrinsic quality and value. Grade 1 indicates excellent soils which have minor limitations to agricultural use. Grade 5 indicates poor soils with a limitation in suitable crops, these are generally suited to permanent pasture and rough grazing.
- 8.9 The quality of the soils across Mansfield District is either Grade 2 to the north and west or Grade 3 to the east of Mansfield. There are pockets of land not graded which are generally woodland areas. This is illustrated on Figure 7. It should be noted that at present the Agricultural Land Classification for Mansfield District is incomplete and the District includes soils graded 1 to 3a.
- 8.10 Whilst the agricultural grade of land has not been used as a key attribute in defining character it is useful in providing possible indicators of what vegetation may be present on such land and for helping to inform landscape guidelines. For example poorer soils may be suitable for supporting heathland or wildflower meadows.

Hydrology

- 8.11 The study area has two main rivers the River Meden and River Maun. The District also includes a number of lakes, reservoirs, streams, ditches and wetlands through the landscape. This is illustrated on Figure 8.
- 8.12 The River Meden is a prominent river which flows mostly through countryside in the north of the District. It is in a narrow river valley and flows through woodland and is associated with water meadows along its banks. Lees Brook flows north from Mansfield Woodhouse and joins the River Meden.
- 8.13 The River Maun flows from Kings Mill Reservoir (in Ashfield District) through Mansfield where it is culverted in two places and flows north east through Countryside to Edwinstowe. It is a shallow valley and less pronounced than the River Meden. Tributaries to the River Maun include: Cauldwell Brook, Vicar Water, Rainworth Water and Foul Evil Brook.

- 8.14 There are a number of other small tributaries of these streams and associated lakes and ponds which are sometimes surrounded by mature trees. Smaller field ponds are scattered throughout the area within fields and as part of reclamation schemes on former colliery sites. Mature natural and semi-natural woodland is often closely associated with the Rivers Meden and Maun.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 8.15 The distribution of habitats and natural features throughout Mansfield District is influenced by the landform, geology, land uses both current and past and hydrology across the area. The range of habitats include, for example: farmland, planted and natural/semi-natural woodland (e.g oak-birch and lime woodland), wetlands, heathland and acid grassland, limestone (calcareous) grassland, species-rich hedgerows, farmland, wetlands and post-industrial brownfield farmland gives the Mansfield District area a wide diversity of wildlife. Ecological designations are illustrated on Figure 9.

Natural Areas

- 8.16 Natural England has identified Natural Areas covering the whole of England at a broad scale. These provide summaries of landscape character and broad flora and fauna variations across the country. The characteristics of these areas may manifest in distinctive landscapes although landscape is not the basis of their identification. Each Natural Area is unique and created through the interaction between natural and human influences. The following areas are of relevance to the Mansfield District study area: Natural Area 23: Southern Magnesian Limestone and Natural Area 32: Sherwood. The summaries of these natural areas are provided within Appendix 3.

Nature Conservation

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

- 8.17 There are 6 sites within the study area that are of interest for their scientific and natural features. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are designated under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These sites cover wetland, oak-birch woodland, and calcareous and neutral grassland.

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)

- 8.18 Mansfield District has 80 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) designated for their local contribution to ecology SINCs within Mansfield District are recognised as being of at least county-level importance for the wildlife and habitats they support. SINCs within Mansfield District support many rare and scarce species, some represent the last few fragments of habitats that were once widespread and typical across Nottinghamshire. SINCs are protected in Mansfield District's Local Plan; development will not be permitted on such sites unless reasons for development clearly outweigh the intrinsic value of the site or the contribution it makes to the local network of such sites.

Local Nature Reserves (LNR)

- 8.19 There are 9 Local Nature Reserves across the study area. These are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to preserve features of interest and to provide opportunities for further research and to encourage people to appreciate nature. These sites represent easily accessible natural sites and are particularly beneficial for education.

Local Biodiversity Targets

- 8.20 The Nottinghamshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) identifies a number of habitats which are important within Mansfield District. These reflect the varied natural conditions present within the District and range from heathland, grassland, woodland, rivers, streams, wetlands and industrial habitats. Table 8.1 presented at Appendix 4 highlights all the habitats in the Nottinghamshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan which are of importance to Mansfield District.
- 8.21 Different habitats have been recognised as landscape features where they manifest and have an influence on character within a LPZ. Where this is the case it is reported within the LPZ descriptions. However, landscape quality judgements within LPZs and biodiversity values may not coincide. The value of habitats for landscape, whether designated or not, does not necessarily reflect their biodiversity value (designation status). The nature conservation value has not been used in the assessment of landscape quality within this landscape character assessment.

Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
Heritage*Scheduled Monuments*

- 8.22 Scheduled Monuments are nationally designated under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. The historic feature and its immediate landscape setting are included within this designation and must be preserved, where possible in-situ and in good condition. There are 4 Scheduled Monuments within the study area. Some of the areas of high archaeological or cultural value have distinctive landscapes. However it is not necessarily the case that high heritage value equates to high landscape value or distinctive views. The presence of cultural heritage interest has only been described with character descriptions where it is a distinctive component of the landscape character of a particular area.

Listed Buildings

- 8.23 Mansfield District has 244 buildings of architectural, historical, or landscape interest which provide social, cultural and aesthetic history, including 3 entries that are Grade 1 of outstanding interest, and 10 Grade II* listings. Where present they contribute to the character of settlements within or adjoining the countryside. Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Historic Parks and Gardens are designated under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990.

Conservation Areas

- 8.24 Areas with high concentrations of listed buildings or where the collective built form contributes strongly to the character and heritage of a place are often designated as Conservation Areas. The designation of a Conservation Area is based upon the contribution of buildings, historic layout of roads, paths and boundaries; characteristic building and paving materials; a particular combination or style of building uses; public and private spaces, such as gardens, parks and greens; and trees and street furniture, which contribute to a distinctive character or street scene. Conservation Areas give broader protection than listing individual buildings: all the features within the area are recognised as integral parts of its character and are therefore protected. Conservation Areas can provide important linkages and have an influence on character within urban fringes and the wider countryside.
- 8.25 Mansfield District has 10 Conservation Areas designated as having special architectural and/or historical interest. These are: Mansfield Market Place; Bridge Street, Mansfield; Westgate, Mansfield; Nottingham Road, Mansfield; Crow Hill Drive, Mansfield; The Park, Mansfield; Mansfield Woodhouse; Market Warsop; Church Warsop; and Pleasley Park and Vale.
- 8.26 Heritage features are vulnerable to change. It is important that the most valuable sites and structures are protected and local planning policies seek to preserve sites of historical importance and ensure that the case for preservation is fully considered when assessing all proposals for new development. Archaeological designations are illustrated on Figure 10.

Historic Parks and Gardens

- 8.27 There is 1 registered historic park with Mansfield District: Nottingham Road Cemetery which is Grade II listed. Policies within the Local Plan seek to ensure that the special character of historic parks and gardens, together with their setting, are protected from inappropriate development.

The Character of Mansfield District's Historic Landscape

- 8.28 The Nottinghamshire Historic Landscape Character Assessment (HLCA) was completed in September 1999 by Nottinghamshire County Council in partnership with English Heritage. The primary output was the production of the Nottinghamshire Historic Landscape Character Map. This breaks down the landscape into urban areas, woodland, military area, mineral site and distinguishes field patterns. There are six different field patterns in the report: unenclosed open fields; fossilised open fields; reflecting open fields; regular geometric fields; irregular geometric fields; semi-regular field and unenclosed river meadows. The accompanying report discusses method of assessment and the findings of the mapping. It also discusses the meanings and uses of the information gathered. The result of the HLCA was a

quantifiable overview of the historic landscape of Nottinghamshire. This is illustrated on Figure 11.

- 8.29 The information in the HLC report has been taken into consideration in the assessment of the landscape character undertaken through this project. The historic landscape such as field patterns and parkland where evident was considered in the desk study and field assessment and reported within each LPZ. The findings of the HLCA report contributed to the landscape quality judgements and also to the landscape guidelines produced for each LPZ. The HLCA is illustrated on Figure 11.

Landscape Evolution

- 8.30 The Nottingham Landscape Guidelines published in 1997 provided detailed summaries of the landscape evolution of each regional character area. The evolution of the landscape within Mansfield District is presented at Appendix 5.

9.0 FORCES FOR CHANGE WITHIN MANSFIELD DISTRICT

- 9.1 Mansfield District's landscape is changing through human activity and natural processes. These include natural colonisation of grassland and heathland to woodland; urban expansion; infill development; restoration of former mines and quarries; and rural diversification. The cumulative effects of these processes can considerably alter the character of the landscape.
- 9.2 The descriptions of character at each survey point within the GIS dataset include reference to key pressures derived from a review of relevant planning policies and consultation with policy officers at Mansfield District Council. The pressures relate primarily to land use, agricultural trends and development pressures.
- 9.3 The main pressures that were identified that have potential to influence the landscape character of Mansfield District are:
- Climate change;
 - Agriculture;
 - Housing development;
 - Employment;
 - Tourism;
 - Infrastructure;
 - Minerals and waste management; and
 - Renewable energy.

Climate Change

- 9.4 Research has identified trends and emerging patterns of climate change across the world. Within the UK the implications for climate change that are relevant to the East Midlands by 2050 include²:
- Annual temperature rises by up to 2.3 degrees;
 - Increasing temperatures resulting in milder winters and high summer temperatures;
 - Changes in rainfall patterns with wetter winters (increase of 13%) and drier summers (decrease by 18%) with the greatest changes anticipated for the south and east of the UK where summer rainfall could reduce by 50%.
- 9.5 These changes may manifest themselves in changes within the natural environment. These may include changes in habitats and a decline of flora and fauna which are unable to adapt quickly enough to the changing habitat conditions. Some of the changes that may affect landscape character^{3 4} include:

² www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/about/ukeffect

³ www.jncc.gov.uk

⁴ *The Potential Impact of Climate Change in the East Midlands (2004)*

FORCES FOR CHANGE ON LANDSCAPE: CLIMATE

- Alterations to wetland habitat as a result of more extreme and increased high water events leading to a greater emphasis on new wetlands as part of sustainable urban drainage systems;
- Decreased summer rainfall may increase pressure for retaining winter rainfall encouraging investments in new reservoirs;
- River defences and engineering to rivers to reduce flooding during wetter winters;
- Damage to natural wetland ecosystems which may dry out during drier summers;
- Shifts in agriculture as a result of longer drier summers resulting in growth of more drought tolerant planting and increased focus on biomass fuel planting to increase renewable forms of energy production;
- Potential increases in the risk of fire during longer drier summers affecting heathland and potentially woodland; and
- Increases in housing adaptations for improved energy efficiency and changes in building design to improve energy efficiency such as photovoltaic cells.

Agriculture

- 9.6 Agriculture is of considerable significance in terms of its effect on the local landscape. A change in focus within farming may result in future changes in land management including amalgamation of farms and field expansion which will have a continued influence over the countryside.
- 9.7 Equestrian activities are an increasingly popular form of countryside recreation and, coupled with commercial livery services, are often considered acceptable within an agricultural setting. Whilst offering opportunities for diversification of the rural economy, the cumulative effect of equestrian activities and farm diversification can redefine the agricultural landscape, particularly through the division of existing fields into individual paddocks defined by post and wire or more substantial fencing and provision of stables and liveryes. This is evident along some urban fringes across Mansfield District.

Agricultural Land Management

- 9.8 The Environmental Stewardship Scheme is a key component of the EU funded Rural Development Programme for England 2007-2013. Its primary objectives are to support sustainable agriculture in the countryside.⁵ The scheme helps landowners to: conserve wildlife; maintain and enhance landscape quality and character; protect the historic environment and natural resources; and promote public access and understanding of the countryside. The scheme is split into three elements: Entry Level Stewardship (ELS), Organic Level Stewardship (OLS) and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). There are large areas of

⁵ www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/funding/es/default.aspx

the countryside around Pleasley, Shirebrook, Church Warsop, Market Warsop, Clipstone and north of Rainworth which are subject to ELS schemes.

FORCES FOR CHANGE ON LANDSCAPE: AGRICULTURE

- Developments associated with farm diversification;
- The loss of traditional buildings and the re-use of existing buildings;
- Increased levels of road traffic;
- Change to patterns of land ownership with a move towards larger land holdings;
- Conversion of former farmhouses and agricultural buildings into private residences;
- Decline in the maintenance and condition of hedgerows;
- Increasing use of fencing, particularly post and wire;
- Pressure for new uses related to livery and equestrian activities;
- Increase in the cultivation of bio-fuel crops;
- Decline in traditional land management practices;
- Loss of ponds through drainage or lack of management; and
- Continued pressures on urban fringe farmland from recreational activities, trespass, vandalism and fly tipping.

Housing Development

9.9 Housing is one of the elements with the potential to have the greatest effect on the landscape. The Regional Spatial Strategy adopted in March 2009 sets the housing provision for the region. Mansfield District needs to provide 10,600 dwellings in the period between 2006 - 2026. This is approximately a 25% increase in housing numbers in the District.

9.10 A Strategic Development discussion paper which looks at how major urban extensions may help to deliver the District's high housing requirements was taken to Full Council in October 2009. This paper identified a number of possible locations within the District for major development. Using figures contained within the 2009 Housing Monitoring report, the Authority has already provided for 4,256 dwellings leaving a further 6,344 dwellings to find. Even though a proportion of the balance will be able to be accommodated within the urban area, there is no doubt that the vast majority can only be provided by allocated large amounts of greenfield land outside the current urban boundaries. The Strategic Development discussion paper went out for public consultation in June 2009 and identified 8 potential locations for growth:

- West Mansfield Area Relief Road (MARR);
- West of Mansfield Woodhouse;
- North of Mansfield Woodhouse;
- Peafield Lane;
- Forest Town/Clipstone Road West area;

- Land off Jubilee Way South;
- South MARR; and
- West of Warsop.

9.11 The viability and suitability of these locations is to be assessed as part of the LDF process.

FORCES FOR CHANGE ON LANDSCAPE: HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

- Loss of large areas of Greenfield land to provide urban extensions around the urban fringe of Mansfield; and
- New green infrastructure associated with large scale urban extensions as well as small scale development.

Employment

9.12 The 2008 Employment Land Monitoring Report identified the potential employment land to be 98.07ha which is in excess of the identified requirements from the 2007 Employment Land Study. Strategic sites include Shirebrook which is adjacent to Mansfield within Bolsover District and around the hospital and parking site which is adjacent to the A38 on the western boundary. Other sites may come forward as part of sustainable urban extensions along the fringes of Mansfield. Whilst employment uses are likely to be accommodated within brownfield sites and in the urban areas, there may be a requirement for new greenfield sites. Other changes may be through expansion of existing employment sites; those on urban fringes or existing as larger developments within the countryside are likely to have the greatest effect on landscape character.

FORCES FOR CHANGE ON LANDSCAPE: EMPLOYMENT

- The requirement to provide land for the expansion of existing businesses;
- The redevelopment of agricultural buildings for new employment uses;
- Continued employment development close to strategic roads; and
- The need to provide additional employment land at appropriate sites to meet the future employment needs in Mansfield District.

Tourism

9.13 The District is likely to experience minor changes and initiatives to improve tourism which will have localised effects on landscape character. Officers of Mansfield District Council reported that the main change related to tourism is likely to be through applications for new golf courses and through restoration of colliery sites to community woodland areas.

FORCES FOR CHANGE ON LANDSCAPE: TOURISM

- Demand for additional recreational facilities e.g golf courses at popular locations having a localised effect on the landscape;
- New open spaces associated with reclamation of colliery sites;
- Alterations to views associated with car parks and visitor centres;
- Increased recreational activity leading to risk of erosion and disturbance to sensitive habitats and species;
- Recreational links and improvements associated with Sherwood Forest Park in the adjacent authority; and
- Increased levels of traffic.

Transport Infrastructure

- 9.14 Council officers reported that there are no current plans for any new roads or railways in the District. However there are plans for improvements to existing cycle and walking trails including the Mansfield Way/Timberland Trail and Meden Trail. Although no new trails are currently proposed this will be reviewed as part of the Green Infrastructure Action Plan which is currently being prepared. Disused railways are likely to be reviewed as part of this for their feasibility to become long distance trails. This is likely to have a very localised influence on the landscape character only evident to users of these railway routes.

9.15

FORCES FOR CHANGE ON LANDSCAPE: TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

- Improvements to discussed railways to create new long distance trails

Minerals and Waste Management

- 9.16 Mansfield District has a close historic association with the coal mining industry although much of the land has since been restored or is brownfield land in the process of being restored. Nottinghamshire County Council is currently preparing its waste and minerals Core Strategies. The Waste issues and options paper is due for public consultation shortly and the Minerals Core Strategy is due for public consultation later in 2009.
- 9.17 In Mansfield District Wellbeck Colliery is due to close in early 2010. The area is likely to be subject to development pressure. Shirebrook Colliery is currently undergoing restoration to woodland, trees and limestone grassland. Once completed this will be public open space although part may be considered for its development potential. A small quarry at Littlewood Lane has its permission extended and part of the land is due for restoration shortly. Other quarries have been developed for housing and there continues to be pressure to do so.

FORCES FOR CHANGE ON LANDSCAPE: MINERALS AND WASTE

- Effects on the viability of agricultural holdings through the loss of land if minerals are worked; and
- Alterations to the landscape through restoration, such as increase in woodland and grassland.

Renewable Energy

- 9.18 National policy is placing a greater emphasis on the promotion of renewable energy sources such as wind farms. Regional policy emphasises that by 2020 at least 20% of electricity supplied in the East Midlands should be provided from renewable energy sources; currently the figure is just 2%.⁶ The East Midlands Regional Plan recognises that this is an ambitious target but states that it is achievable and that the figure is not static and will be kept under continuous review.
- 9.19 Regional policy encourages planning authorities to develop plans and strategies to promote and encourage, rather than restrict, the use of renewable energy resources. Criteria should be developed specifically relating to wind turbines to guide development to locations with anticipated acceptable effects on local amenity, views and the character of the surrounding landscape.
- 9.20 Council officers reported no noticeable trends in renewable energy development within the District. There may be future requirements for wind farms although the nature of this is currently unknown.

FORCES FOR CHANGE ON LANDSCAPE: RENEWABLE ENERGY

- Changes in the nature of views towards facilities;
- Changes to the appearance of buildings and new development through local energy sources on buildings;
- Increase in monitoring masts and possibly wind farms which effect or become new features within the landscape; and
- Possible local level industrial developments such as Combined Heat and Power (CHP).

⁶ The East Midlands Regional Plan to 2021

10.0 SUMMARY OF THE DESK STUDY FINDINGS

10.1 Following the collation of detailed baseline information and interpolation, the identified desk-based landscape characteristics of the District are described as:

Landform

- Undulating landform with a series of more prominent hills to the north and east of Mansfield District;
- Prominent restored colliery spoil tips;
- Strawberry Hill prominent in the landscape at 135m AOD;
- Prominent rock outcrops along the River Meden in the northern part of the District;

Hydrology

- Narrow river valleys along the northern boundary of the District following the River Meden as it flows through Pleasley;
- Wider shallower river valley of River Maun;
- Frequent smaller tributaries such as Cauldwell Brook, Vicar Water, Rainworth Water and Foul Evil Brook;

Land use

- Broad-scale intensive arable farmland within the countryside to the north, south and east of Mansfield District;
- Land heavily influenced by current and past mining operations such as at the former Sherwood Colliery and Shirebrook Colliery where the land has been restored to public open space (woodland and grassland);
- Field pattern is mostly of modern origins although pockets of older enclosure are present, the largest concentrations are to the south of Market Warsop and South of Pleasley;

Landscape Features

- Ancient woodlands present within the northern part of the District to the north of Church Warsop and along the River Meden around Pleasley and Pleasley Vale;
- Large scale plantation and ancient woodlands within the Sherwood region (southern and eastern parts of the District);
- Parkland features within the landscape around Pleasley Vale;
- Heathland present within Sherwood Forest Golf Course and influences surrounded woodland South of Clipstone and East of Mansfield;
- Heathland a feature to the south of Mansfield at Strawberry Hill (it is the largest remaining in Nottinghamshire);
- Mature woodlands often associated with the main watercourses: River Meden and Maun
- Extensive Coniferous Forest the largest being Rainworth Plantation within the southern part of the district.

- Includes natural broadleaved woodland which is part of the historic and well-known Sherwood Forest
- Calcareous and neutral grassland present throughout the District although concentrations are found along the River Meden at Pleasley, around Warsop Vale (Hills and Holes SSSI), Welbeck Colliery and the disused railway to the north of Lord Stubbins Wood

Built Form

- Prominent urban fringes around Mansfield and Mansfield Woodhouse;
- Small villages often with red brick or Mansfield stone and red clay tile roofs such as Church Warsop, Pleasley and Pleasley Park and Vale;

Other Features

- Land influenced by mining and quarrying; and
- Active Sand Quarry Ratcher Hill.

10.2 The summary characteristics arising from the desk study were checked and verified during the field surveys.

11.0 LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 11.1 This section includes a commentary of the differences between the key features of the landscape character identified as part of the desk based research and those noted within the field study. It then goes on to provide a broad overview of the character of Mansfield District. A summary of the Regional Character Area and detailed descriptions and landscape guidelines for each Landscape Policy Zone are presented at Appendix 6.
- 11.2 The field study confirmed and verified the boundaries of the LPZ, in many cases they followed the Landscape Description Units identified through GIS work in the desk-based assessment although some required some minor amendments.

Regional Character Areas

- 11.3 These are distinct geographically unique areas that share common physical associations which impart a strong sense of unity and place within an area. These areas have been identified as part of the East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment undertaken by Landscape Design Associates.

Landscape Policy Zones

- 11.4 A Landscape Policy Zone (LPZ) is an individual discrete area of character. It has a unique identity although it shares similar characteristics to other areas within the broader regional area. This report identified 19 LPZ within Mansfield. These are listed below, grouped into the relevant Regional Character Area:

Limestone Farmland

ML 23 Skegby Plateau
ML 24 Market Warsop River meadowlands and Pasture
ML 25 Sookholme Limestone Farmlands
ML 26 Warsop Vale and Wooded Farmland
ML 27 Pleasleyhill Upland Plateau Farmland
ML 28 Penniment Lane Urban Fringe Farmlands
ML 29 River Meden Limestone Valley
ML 30 Oxclose Wooded Hill

Sherwood Forest and Heaths

SH 08 Vicar Water and Rainworth Heath
SH 11 Lindhurst Wooded Farmland
SH 12 Cavendish Wooded Estatelands
SH 15 River Maun Meadowlands with Plantations
SH 18 Blidworth and Rainworth Wooded Estatelands
SH 25 Birklands Wooded Estatelands
SH 28 Meden Vale and Church Warsop
SH 29 Meden Vale and Church Warsop
SH 47 Coxmoor Wooded Farmlands
SH 50 Strawberry Hill Heath Wooded Estatelands

SH 51 Sherwood Golf Course

Landscape Description Units

- 11.5 Landscape Description Units are identified through the patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement form and farm type. At the local level these units represent more local patterns of character that contribute strongly to a 'sense of place'. A summary of character for each landscape description unit is provided within a mapped GIS dataset which describes the different components of character from which the unit was derived. LDUs are illustrated on Figure 14. LDUs were used during the desk based mapping to identify LPZs. LPZs are usually an amalgamation of LDUs where 4 or more of the 6 aspects used for their identification are similar and the changes in character are not evident during field study. Summary information on the LDUs is held within a GIS dataset.
- 11.6 The interpolation of LDUs is illustrated on Figure 15 and LPZs are illustrated on Figure 18. Field survey points are illustrated on Figure 16 and photograph locations are illustrated on Figure 17.

12.0 CONCLUSIONS

Purpose

- 12.1 This study was undertaken to provide evidence to inform Mansfield District Council's Core Strategy and Local Development Framework (LDF). It is also intended to help development control decisions on planning applications; to inform negotiation of planning obligations; and to guide actions on landscape enhancement where resources allow.
- 12.2 The study has demonstrated that there is a range of landscapes in Mansfield District. The study builds upon the long-standing excellence of landscape assessment in Nottinghamshire and the resulting character assessment, which has reviewed and updated the original Nottinghamshire Landscape Guidelines, provides a strong basis for planning and landscape management. The study was surveyed by both Nottinghamshire County Council's Landscape team and TEP. The surveyed areas by each are illustrated on Figure 2.

Desk-study

- 12.3 The desk-based aspect of this study analysed available GIS mapped data and published documents to establish the landscape context of the study area and identify elements considered of value. GIS interpretation of this information was carried out to identify any recognisable patterns of similar character across the study area under the themes of geology, landform, soils, settlement pattern and form and vegetation pattern. This identified Landscape Description Units (LDUs) which show detailed variations in character often not readily identifiable within field surveys. LDUs are illustrated on Figure 14. Where 4 or more attributes within Landscape Description Units were similar, they were amalgamated to form individual Landscape Policy Zones (LPZs). The interpretation of LDUs is illustrated on Figure 15.

Field Study

- 12.4 Field surveys have been used to verify these findings and to enable minor adjustments to LPZ boundaries to be made based on aesthetic aspects and the visual interaction between landscape features which were not evident from the desk based study. Field survey record sheets were filled in for each LPZ and their locations are shown on Figure 16.
- 12.5 The assessment has identified 19 LPZs which all have a unique and distinctive character. These are illustrated on Figure 18.

Landscape Character

- 12.6 Each LPZ identifies and lists the key features which make it special/distinctive and provides a judgement on the condition of the landscape and its strength of character. These enable judgements to be made regarding what landscape quality and therefore what actions are required to conserve, enhance, restore or create distinctiveness within each LPZ. These are presented at Appendix 6. Representative

photographs were taken within each LPZ, their locations are shown on Figure 18. The relevant landscape actions are shown on Figure 19.

Table 12.1 LPZ Names and Landscape Strategy Judgement

| LPZ Reference Nr | LPZ Name | Landscape Strategy |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Limestone Farmland | | |
| ML 23 | Skegby Plateau | CONSERVE |
| ML 24 | Market Warsop River meadowlands and Pasture | CONSERVE AND ENHANCE |
| ML 25 | Sookholme Limestone Farmlands | CONSERVE AND ENHANCE |
| ML 26 | Warsop Vale and Wooded Farmland | CONSERVE AND ENHANCE |
| ML 27 | Pleasleyhill Upland Plateau Farmland | ENHANCE |
| ML 28 | Penniment Lane Urban Fringe Farmlands | ENHANCE AND RESTORE |
| ML 29 | River Meden Limestone Valley | CONSERVE AND ENHANCE |
| ML 30 | Oxclose Wooded Hill | CONSERVE AND ENHANCE |
| Sherwood Forest and Heaths | | |
| SH 08 | Vicar Water and Rainworth Heath | CREATE |
| SH 11 | Lindhurst Wooded Farmland | CONSERVE AND CREATE |
| SH 12 | Cavendish Wooded Estatelands | RESTORE AND CREATE |
| SH 15 | River Maun Meadowlands with Plantations | CONSERVE AND REINFORCE |
| SH 18 | Blidworth and Rainworth Wooded Estatelands | CONSERVE AND CREATE |
| SH 25 | Birklands Wooded Estatelands | CONSERVE AND REINFORCE |
| SH 28 | Meden Vale and Church Warsop | CONSERVE |
| SH 29 | Meden Vale and Church Warsop | CONSERVE |
| SH 47 | Coxmoor Wooded Farmlands | CONSERVE AND CREATE |
| SH 50 | Strawberry Hill Heath Wooded Estatelands | CONSERVE |
| SH 51 | Sherwood Forest Golf Course | CONSERVE |

Future Monitoring

- 12.7 A monitoring framework has been recommended to ensure that changes over time can be properly assessed against the LPZ descriptions included at Appendix 8 of this report. The framework suggests using the key characteristics and baseline photographs to determine whether change through new development, management plans and agricultural schemes conserves, enhances or restores landscape character and the effect of change on the integrity of the LPZs described within the report. It should be noted that this approach does require some elements of subjective judgement based upon how the assessor records the measure of change and whether it has retained or altered landscape character.

13.0 MONITORING FRAMEWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 This section provides recommendations for the establishment of key indicators to monitor change.
- 13.2 The Rural White Paper for England⁷ emphasised the need to have good information about the state of our countryside and how it is changing. The Rural White Paper set out ambitious aims which committed the government to publishing a measure of change for the countryside. Since this document was published emphasis has been placed on ensuring that criteria-based policies within local planning policy are effective in ensuring that the quality of the countryside is maintained or enhanced.
- 13.3 Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning places emphasis on ensuring that core strategies have clear arrangements for monitoring and reporting.
- 13.4 The target of monitoring should be to demonstrate that any change within a landscape does not adversely affect the strength of character or condition of landscape features set out within each landscape character area. New sustainable development should make a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness of an area and should conserve or enhance the quality of the rural environment.
- 13.5 Policies and development proposals could affect the landscape in two ways:
- Through subtle cumulative effects of small-scale development which changes over time or alters landscape character; or
 - Through changes in management or development which cause the loss or degradation of features which are of value or which define the local distinctiveness which leads to a reduction in landscape quality.⁸
- 13.6 To successfully monitor the effectiveness of criteria-based policies the key objective is to identify how the policies perform in conserving, enhancing and restoring landscape elements that contribute to the key characteristics of each landscape character area.
- 13.7 In May 2002, the former Countryside Agency (now Natural England) commissioned the Countryside Quality Counts project (CQC)⁹ which gives guidance on the most appropriate way of monitoring change within the landscape.

⁷ Our Countryside: The Future: A Fair Deal for Rural England, 2000

⁸ Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment. Chris Blandford Associates: September 2006

⁹ Countryside Quality Counts Tracking change in the English countryside, Nottingham University Consultants Ltd (June 2004)

- 13.8 The report recommended that a single indicator of change be devised which encompassed both landscape quality and landscape character. It was identified through extensive stakeholder research that the contribution landscape character makes to the countryside informs the overall quality of the land.
- 13.9 The CQC report sets out the best practice approach to monitoring. It is recommended that this approach should be used and adapted to suit local circumstances to monitor change within each landscape character area. The document identified the main attributes which contribute to landscape character and provided guidance on how change within these attributes could be assessed.
- 13.10 These themes were broadly used as the basis upon which analysis of change on landscape character areas could be assessed. The assessment incorporated these themes into judgements of character change.
- 13.11 The CQC report recommended that the analysis should be based on the key characteristics for each landscape character area. It highlighted that landscape character is an important part of the general framework for decision-making on environmental issues. It explained that the concept of character provides a robust foundation for the development of a more general indicator of change in countryside quality. The report identified seven themes which combine to define landscape character and are the most appropriate to use for identifying landscape change:
- Woodland;
 - Boundary features;
 - Agriculture;
 - Settlement Pattern;
 - Semi-natural habitats;
 - Historical Features; and
 - River and Coastal.
- 13.12 The Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment recommended an approach based on the CQC project. It also recommended that the key characteristics chosen should be:
- Central to the distinctive character of each landscape character area (LPZ);
 - Likely to experience change either in their coverage or condition; and
 - Capable of being monitored against the recommendations and landscape descriptions within each character area (LPZ).

- 13.13 This recognised that each landscape character area is likely to be different and not all of the seven themes listed within paragraph 13.11 above may be relevant in an individual character area.
- 13.14 To be able to usefully use characteristics as key indicators, they need to be expressed in terms of desired trends and the desired direction of the chosen indicator must be known. The report recommended seeking assistance from local stakeholders to play a role in choosing appropriate indicators and to potentially help to monitor change.
- 13.15 The key characteristics within each character area should be evaluated based on the following¹⁰:
- The extent or stock of characteristic elements;
 - A measure of whether these are in good condition and appropriately managed;
 - The extent and form of new elements within the countryside; and
 - A measure of key factors affecting the 'countryside experience'.
- 13.16 The first two criteria above have been addressed within each LPZ's description and highlighted within the landscape judgements. These should be evaluated during the monitoring process to determine whether they are still fundamental to the character of the area. The judgements on strength of character and condition for each LPZ should also be reviewed. It is important to note how the features have changed and whether change has reinforced or weakened landscape character or quality. Baseline photographs provided within the LPZ sheets can be used to provide the baseline character. Judgements can then be grouped into the following three categories:
- Category A: LPZs which show that change has been consistent with conserving or enhancing landscape character. Some of the key features may show change which is inconsistent but which could be judged to have not affected the strength of character;
 - Category B: LPZs which show some change which is inconsistent with character. More than one of the key features of change is inconsistent with the published character description. These are judged as having altered the existing character; and
 - Category C: LPZs which show a marked change in the key characteristics which contribute to the character and that the change is different to what is recommended to conserve, enhance or restore landscape character. This may include areas which are currently in a degraded state which have been positively restored but that restoration has altered the nature and character of the land.

- 13.17 In addition process indicators which could be used to monitor change could include¹¹:

¹⁰ Countryside Quality Counts Tracking change in the English countryside, Nottingham University Consultants Ltd (June 2004)

¹¹ Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment. Chris Blandford Associates: September 2006

- Identification and monitoring of change within uptake/coverage of landscape enhancement schemes;
- Quality and coverage of landscape in design and access statements. These should demonstrate how a proposal positively contributes to landscape character of an area;
- Change in the coverage/completion of landscape-scale management plans which make a positive contribution to achieving the recommendations provided within each character area.

13.18 The CQC report identified that the national review of countryside change should be undertaken every 5 years. It is proposed that the review and monitoring at a local scale be undertaken after the publication of the national review of countryside change. However, to undertake the same level of monitoring at a local level is likely to be a resource intensive process. It is recommended that a brief field-based assessment be carried out to determine whether key characteristics and descriptions remain valid for each area, particularly along character area boundaries. This should be done in combination with the process indicators to assess the effectiveness of landscape character policies in maintaining local countryside character and distinctiveness within each character area.

13.19 There may also be scope to include some monitoring during determination of planning applications, for example during review of Design and Access Statements. A simple record of whether landscape issues were presented may be made by a short scoring system (such as zero for not relevant; 1 for acceptable; 2 for good; and 3 for excellent). Trends in coverage of landscape matters could then be reviewed over periods of time. This form of monitoring involves greater officer time but provided it is kept simple and as part of the overall determination process may be able to be accommodated relatively easily.

