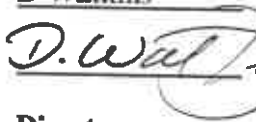


**Braintree DC, Brentwood BC, Chelmsford BC,
Maldon DC & Uttlesford DC**

**BRAINTREE, BRENTWOOD, CHELMSFORD,
MALDON AND UTTLESFORD
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS**

Approved By: D Watkins
Signed: 
Position: Director
Date: 27 September 2006

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Environment Landscape Planning
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8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 General

8.1.1 This section sets out the consultant's recommendations to the commissioning authorities for their consideration and action as appropriate.

8.1.2 Recommendations are provided for the application of the Landscape Character Assessment in relation to Local Development Framework policies for protecting and enhancing landscape character, and an outline framework for monitoring landscape change. Recommendations for further work required to enhance the evidence base on the landscape and settlement character of the Study Area are also included.

8.2 Key Applications of the Landscape Character Assessments

8.2.1 It is intended that the Landscape Character Assessments of Braintree District, Brentwood Borough, Chelmsford Borough, Maldon District and Uttlesford District can be used by all those with an interest in landscape planning, design and management within the Study Area.

8.2.2 In line with the aims and objectives set out in Section 1.2, the principal recommended application of the Landscape Character Assessments is in relation to the local authority planning process. Practical uses of the Landscape Character Assessments in this regard include:

- Raising the general awareness in the planning process of the importance of landscape character in contributing to quality of life within the Study Area by recognising:
 - * both the differences and similarities between places
 - * what gives different places their special local identity and distinctiveness
 - * the need to protect and enhance special and valued characteristics
 - * that development needs to be sympathetic to these special qualities
 - * the need to actively improve the quality of places through good design.
- Informing the formulation of character-based landscape policies in the Local Development Framework.
- Providing the spatial framework for considering the landscape character implications of options for different scales and patterns of strategic development in the Local Development Framework.
- Informing development control decisions about proposals for built development and other forms of land use change.
- Informing the Strategic Environmental Assessment and evidence base of the Local Development Frameworks of the impact of new development on landscape character.
- Providing a framework for more detailed studies to enhance the evidence base, and for the targeting of landscape enhancements in concert with development schemes.
- Informing design guidance to promote higher quality landscape design.
- Providing a baseline for monitoring the impact of new development on landscape character and quality.

- *Climate change* – reducing the causes of climate change through energy conservation/efficiency and increased use of renewable energy sources; adapting to the consequences of climate change in relation to flood risk and sea level rise.

8.3.3 In order to most effectively address these issues, it is recommended that the commissioning authorities use this Landscape Character Assessment to underpin a character-based approach to landscape protection and enhancement in their Core Strategies. This is consistent with approaches by other authorities in England where criteria-based landscape character policies, with supporting guidance, are replacing the traditional reliance on Local Landscape Designations where these are considered to be too blunt an instrument for delivering sustainable development in landscape terms. The following approaches to incorporating landscape character within the respective Core Strategy documents are recommended based on existing and emerging best practice from Staffordshire¹ and West Sussex².

Incorporating Landscape Character into the Vision

8.3.4 It is recommended that the role of landscape in contributing to quality of life should be incorporated into the Core Strategy's Vision. For example:

'The [District/Borough] will be a place where distinctive and valued natural and historic landscapes and the built environment will be protected and enhanced over time, contributing to a high quality of life.'

Incorporating Character Objectives

8.3.5 It is recommended that a landscape character objective be included in the Core Strategy. This could be drafted as:

'To protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the varied landscape character within the [District/Borough] reflecting landscape sensitivity and promoting local distinctiveness.'

8.3.6 In addition, it is recommended that a settlement character objective should also be included in the Core Strategy. This could be drafted as:

'To protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the locally distinctive and historic character of the urban and rural settlements and their settings within the [District/Borough] and to retain the separation between settlements.'

8.3.7 To support the above character objectives, it is recommended that a design objective is also included, such as:

'To promote high quality design and a rigorous design process that embodies sustainable development and management principles, takes full account of site and context, respects and enhances the character of the area, and provides for inclusive access.'

¹ Planning for Landscape Change - an Introduction and User's Guide to Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Plan 1996-2011 (Staffordshire County Council, 1999).

² Countryside Agency Demonstration Project - Criteria-based Landscape Policies and Guidance in Local Development Documents : an Approach in West Sussex, Report No.1 Policies (White Consultants, February 2006)

- Settlement character and local distinctiveness to be protected, conserved and, where possible, enhanced.
- Proposals for development within and/or on the edge of settlements to take into account settlement character including its distinct identity, historic core pattern, setting and, in appropriate places, separation from adjacent settlements.
- Development to be permitted, provided that settlement character is protected, conserved and, where possible, enhanced.

8.3.12 It is recommended that the supporting text for the settlement character policy should include reference to the following:

- Settlement pattern of separate settlements with intervening countryside is highly valued by local communities.
- Retaining the separate identity, character and the visual and functional amenity of settlements and preventing coalescence is a key objective.
- The intended preparation/facilitation of studies to contribute to the evidence base for the preparation of a joint Supplementary Planning Document (if appropriate) to provide guidance on how the overall character of towns and villages within the Study Area can be protected, conserved and enhanced.
- Studies include Urban Archaeological Surveys, Conservation Area Appraisals, Settlement-Edge Studies, and Local Distinctiveness Studies, and Town/Village Design Statements and Parish Plans developed by local communities.
- Encouragement for landscape enhancement schemes, submission of landscape design statements with planning applications and provision of landscape-scale management plans/strategies.

8.3.13 Based on the advice set out in paragraphs 8.3.8 to 8.3.12 above, a recommended draft policy for consistent use across all the local authorities' Core Strategies is included as Appendix F.

Incorporating Landscape Character into Other Core Policies

8.3.14 To support the above landscape/settlement character policies, it is recommended that local character considerations should also be incorporated into the following policies:

- *Design Policy* - to include reference to character, local distinctiveness, design process and use of design statements.
- *Nature Conservation Policy* - to include reference to European, national and locally designated wildlife sites, meeting BAP targets in ways that reinforce local landscape character, etc.
- *Heritage Policy* - to include reference to listed buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, etc.

Developing a Joint Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document

8.3.15 Building on the partnership approach to the preparation of the Landscape Character Assessments, it is recommended that consideration is given to developing a joint Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford. The aims of this 'Landscape Character SPD' would be to:

- Develop a co-ordinated approach or 'toolkit' for using the Landscape Character Assessment and other characterisation information to inform criteria-based planning policies and guidance in Local Development Documents (LDDs).

Developing Monitoring Objectives

- 8.4.4 Taking into account the suggested components of the landscape and settlement character policy in Section 8.3, the overall objective is to monitor the effectiveness of policies and proposals in protecting, conserving and enhancing elements that contribute to the character, quality and local distinctiveness of landscapes and settlements within the Study Area. This should use the relevant strategy objectives for each Landscape Character Area set out in Sections 3.0 to 7.0 of this report as the basis against which to monitor change.

Developing Monitoring Targets

- 8.4.5 In line with the suggested policy approach, the target against which the monitoring should be carried out is for development to have no net significant adverse affect on the character or quality of landscape character as described in the relevant Landscape Character Area descriptions, and wherever possible development should contribute positively by enhancing landscape character through high quality and innovative design.

Developing Monitoring Indicators

- 8.4.6 The Countryside Agency⁵ advise that specific features or attributes need to be selected from the key characteristics of individual Landscape Character Areas to act as indicators for monitoring changes within different areas. In relation to this Study, the criteria for selection of features or attributes as indicators include that they must be:

- central to the distinctive character of the individual Landscape Character Areas;
- liable to experience change either in extent or in their condition;
- capable of being measured against the key objectives for individual Landscape Character Areas and the overall monitoring target.

- 8.4.7 The selection of indicators also needs to consider the following:

- they need to be defined precisely in terms of desired trends;
- the desired direction of change (target) of the chosen indicator must be known;
- where possible, local stakeholders should be involved in the choice of indicators, particularly where their participation is needed to collect information to monitor changes.

- 8.4.8 Taking the above considerations into account, suggested indicators for monitoring changes to individual Landscape Character Areas include:

- change in the extent of existing characteristic elements in the landscape;
- change in the condition of existing characteristic elements in the landscape;
- change in the extent and form of new elements in the landscape;

⁵ Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland : Topic Paper 2 – Links to Other Sustainability Tools (Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).

- ***Area-based Regeneration Initiatives*** – detailed character appraisal studies to inform and underpin masterplans and design frameworks for the renewal and reuse of brownfield sites around settlement edges.
- ***Green Infrastructure Network Plans*** – long-term plans to establish networks of multi-functional green infrastructure sites, corridors and areas within the countryside in and around the District's/Borough's main settlements in concert with expansion proposals.
- ***Green Space Strategies*** – detailed strategies for delivering high quality parks and other public open spaces, based on PPG17⁶ open space audits and need assessments, prepared in line with CABE Space guidance⁷.
- ***River Corridor Environmental Strategies*** – including a coherent vision, objectives and an action plan for the long-term conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of key river corridors within the Study Area.

⁶ PPG17 - Open Space, Sport and Recreation (HMSO, 2002).

⁷ Green Space Strategies - a Good Practice Guide (CABE Space, Undated).