

# **Kington Area NDP**

## **Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment**



## **REPORT**

On behalf of Kington Parish Council

**October 2015**

# Document Version Control

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## Figures (bound separately)

**Figure 1:** Overall Sensitivity Map – Agricultural Built Form

**Figure 2:** Overall Sensitivity Map – Energy Production

**Note:** The information on the figures can be read at A4 size, but is clearer if printed at A3

## Appendices (bound at back of report)

**Appendix A:** Landscape & Environmental Designations, Receptors & Features: Value Checklist

**Appendix B:** Landscape Assessment Criteria Tables

# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 In July 2015, I was commissioned by Kington Area Neighbourhood Development Planning Group (KANDPPG) to carry out a landscape assessment of the rural areas within the boundaries of the parishes of Kington Town, Kington Rural, Lower Harpton and Huntington.
- 1.2 The aim of the study was to assess the sensitivity of Kington's rural areas to changes in landscape character and visual amenity arising from certain types of development, and their capacity to accommodate it.
- 1.3 In this case, the type of development was defined as large-scale, intensive agricultural complexes such as broiler units, and energy production schemes such as polytunnels and solar farms (wind turbines were excluded as the assessment of effects of these structures is highly specialised and different factors apply).
- 1.4 This is in response to an increasing number of applications for such developments in the region, and a concern that as yet, there is no specific policy to address the issues and control the effects arising from this type of landuse, especially cumulative effects.
- 1.5 The study would form an integral part of Kington Area Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) process. The objective was to produce an evidence-based report and sensitivity / capacity map which could be used to inform future NDP objectives and policies being determined through community consultation and involvement, and as an aid in considering and responding to planning applications of this type.
- 1.6 The scope of the commission was limited to a high-level assessment of the civil parishes of Kington (excluding the urban area), Kington Rural, Lower Harpton and Huntington.
- 1.7 The study's findings were to be summarised in a report, briefly explaining the methods used and processes followed. The sensitivity / capacity map was to be drawn up at a scale that would provide sufficient context for evaluating future proposals.

## 2 Method and Process

### Method

- 2.1 Because the scope of the commission was limited in terms of time, the assessment was carried out at a 'high' (parish-wide) level. However, it was also essential to ensure that the findings were objective, robust and evidence-based, and to use recognised / published methods and techniques.
- 2.2 The issues to be considered in this study are complex and wide-ranging. As a result, a variety of landscape assessment methods have been used for different parts of the study and combined, in order to meet the commission's objectives.
- 2.3 The three main forms of assessment used here are Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (LSCA) and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The detailed methods are not included in this report, but for clarification, some of the relevant parts of the processes and the terminology used are described and defined in the text. References are provided so that further information about them can be found if required.
- 2.4 In its recent publication *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* (October 2014), Natural England defines LCA as "... the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive (Fig. 1. What is Landscape?)... By setting down a robust, auditable and transparent, baseline, [LCA] can not only help us to understand our landscapes, it can also assist in informing judgements and decisions concerning the management of change."
- 2.5 The information gathered through LCA informs all aspects of the other types of landscape assessment. It is necessary to understand what is there and how valuable it is before making judgements about potential effects and their level of significance, or levels of sensitivity and capacity.
- 2.6 LSCA is a systematic, evidence-based process. It provides an objective, impartial and transparent system for assessing the sensitivity of the landscape and its capacity to accommodate change, whilst also retaining the aspects of the environment which – for a variety of reasons – are valued. Such change is usually in the form of social and / or economic expansion, although the method can be applied to other forms of development such as polytunnels, or changes in landuse, for example commercial forestry.
- 2.7 It has been developed in response to the growing need for people, communities and planning authorities to make informed decisions about the allocation of land for development.
- 2.8 It also responds to an increasing public interest in, and awareness of, what the term 'landscape' really means. There is a desire to understand for oneself how new development can change the landscape, and what the effects and subsequent implications of this might be, both on the landscape itself and those who experience and use it.
- 2.9 In KANDPPG's case, the focus of this study was an evaluation of the sensitivity of the landscape to change of the type specified, with a more general overview of its capacity to accommodate it. Although not always the case, the study concluded that where sensitivity to change is high, it can be inferred that capacity is low and vice versa. In the future, if planning applications are made for development on a particular site, more detailed and localised assessments of capacity may need to be carried out.
- 2.10 There is published guidance for LSCA practitioners (*Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland - Topic Paper 6: Techniques and criteria for judging sensitivity and capacity* The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002)). Whilst this still underpins the overall LSCA approach, over time more specific methods have evolved for commissions such as this, where the findings are required to inform a neighbourhood plan, for example, and will be used as a tool in future planning decisions.
- 2.11 This study therefore also considers the likelihood of new development of the type defined giving rise to adverse or beneficial effects on the landscape and visual receptors identified. This follows the principles of the current 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (Landscape Institute / Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Routledge, Oxon, UK). (Usually referred to as "GLVIA3".)

## **Process**

- 2.12 The scope and brief of this commission evolved over a period of time. The aims, objectives and key issues were discussed and agreed with members of KANDPPG and the various consultants they had engaged to assist with the NDP process.
- 2.13 Several studies were to be carried out concurrently in and around Kington Town that would help to identify sites which were either potentially suitable for new residential development, or potentially valuable spaces which may require protection. In addition, a 'greenspace' study was to be undertaken in order to identify places with the potential for local greenspace designation.
- 2.14 Although the studies were separate, it was agreed that there should be close collaboration between all the consultants so that information and findings could be exchanged and factored in.
- 2.15 The 'boundary' of this sensitivity assessment was to be the outer edges of the parishes of Kington (excluding the urban area), Kington Rural, Lower Harpton and Huntington (referred to as 'the study area'). The baseline assessment study area was, however, drawn wider, taking into account the landscape's 'area of influence' beyond the parish boundaries. A scale of 1:25,000 was found to be most practical, as it shows a good level of detail, and the parishes fit onto an A3 sheet.
- 2.16 The first stage of the assessment process is the LCA. This entails researching background and baseline material in order to gain a full understanding of the inherent character and visual amenity of the area. Sources of information include government and other websites, published books, reports and studies, historic maps and documents, local archives and historians etc.
- 2.17 The baseline study takes into account designations, features and 'receptors' which could potentially be affected by change / development. These include national and / or local landscape-related designations, strategies, policies and guidance; the landscape's natural history, geology, hydrology, topography and soils; its character; settlement and land use patterns; heritage assets and cultural heritage; public / social amenity, recreation and access; key views; biodiversity, significant vegetation and so on. These are also used to establish the landscape's value (see checklist in Appendix A).
- 2.18 The information is recorded by hand onto the base maps, usually one layer for each 'topic'.
- 2.19 Once the desktop baseline stage is complete, an 'on-the-ground' baseline survey and analysis of the landscape is carried out by car and on foot, making reference to the desktop study's findings. This stage also involves evaluating Landscape Quality, which includes noting its current condition (Landscape Quality is explained in more detail in Section 4).
- 2.20 Finally, all the baseline information which has been gathered is combined and analysed, and the findings are used to make judgements about the landscape's sensitivity to change.
- 2.21 During the course of the baseline studies, it became clear that the two main types of development identified at the outset, i.e. large-scale, intensive agricultural complexes such as broiler units, and energy production schemes such as polytunnels and solar farms, would require different approaches in the sensitivity evaluation process.
- 2.22 The reason for this is that the nature of each type of development is different.
- 2.23 Large-scale buildings used for intensive agricultural purposes tend to require large areas of flat land of a sufficient area to accommodate not just built form, but external operational requirements and ancillary development.
- 2.24 A fairly average-sized broiler complex comprises four separate 'units' which are usually around c. 120m long by c. 25m wide. With associated 'hardstanding', the total area could be c. 1.5 – 1.8 hectares. Units can be constructed on sloping ground, and can be 'terraced', but the steeper the slope, the more engineered solutions are required to create flat plateaux; embankments increase the land-take.
- 2.25 The buildings are permanent structures.
- 2.26 Polytunnels and solar farm developments are far less constrained by topography and generally, the structures can be installed on even quite steeply-sloping ground without requiring any change to the landform (although there may be localised regrading to accommodate internal access roads, parking / storage / packing areas, attenuation ponds and so on).
- 2.27 Many polytunnel and solar farm developments are considered to be 'temporary', with planning permission granted for fixed periods such as 10 or 25 years. In theory, once the structures are

decommissioned, the land can revert to its 'natural' state without any trace of development. In addition, some polytunnels are covered seasonally, protecting fruit from spring to autumn with the plastic removed in winter (when the tunnels would often be more highly visible). Having said that, there appears to be a growing trend for year-round coverage.

- 2.28 The nature of the effects likely to arise from the two types of development are also different in many respects (effects are discussed later in the report).
- 2.29 For the above reasons it was concluded that judgements about sensitivity should be divided into a) large-scale, intensive agricultural built form and b) energy production schemes (polytunnels and solar farms), with a separate sensitivity map for each.
- 2.30 For this study, a 5-point scale of sensitivity, from Very High to Very Low, was used.
- 2.31 It is to be inferred that levels of Capacity are on the same 5-point scale from Very High to Very Low, but reversed – i.e. Very High Sensitivity results in Very Low Capacity.
- 2.32 The criteria which have been used to define the levels of landscape quality, value, sensitivity and capacity are contained in Appendix B. Not all the criteria need to be met in order for a parcel to be categorised at a certain level: they simply indicate the factors which need to be taken into consideration, and professional judgement must be applied when deciding which ones are relevant. It may be the case that where two or more value factors overlap at a particular place, they combine to increase the level of value (and potentially, sensitivity) to a higher level.
- 2.33 It should be noted that areas which are currently in low condition, a factor which may reduce their level of sensitivity, should be assessed for their potential for improvement; this could increase sensitivity, especially within the context of better quality landscapes in the area. The likelihood and feasibility of such improvement taking place also has to be considered. Similarly, if an area in low condition performs an important function in the landscape, such as forming part of a setting or acting as a strategic gap, its overall sensitivity is likely to be higher, despite its current condition.
- 2.34 Issues identified in the study which may require further survey / study / clarification / action are noted, as are any recommendations.

### 3 Landscape and Visual Baseline

#### Landscape Context

- 3.1 Kington lies in north-western Herefordshire, on the Welsh border. Herefordshire is one of the most sparsely-populated counties of England. With only six towns of any significant size – Kington being one of the smallest of these – and a wide scatter of mostly small villages and isolated hamlets, it is the natural rather than the man-made features that dominate the landscapes of the area. Around Kington in particular, the landscape displays great diversity and contrast as a result of its complex natural and human history which, in turn, influence landuse and landcover.
- 3.2 The area has also remained relatively unspoiled by the effects of modern development, making it a very popular destination for tourists who come to enjoy the landscape's natural beauty and explore some of the most tranquil and remote corners of the county.
- 3.3 It is relevant to note that in the 1950s, potential National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) were being identified, and many were subsequently designated. The hills stretching roughly from Hergest Ridge to Ludlow were earmarked as part of an English-Welsh cross-border Radnor and Clun Forests AONB<sup>1</sup>. However, whilst considered to be a strong candidate for designation, the plan was abandoned due to cross-border 'administrative complications'.
- 3.4 Recently, proposals have been put forward which would designate an AONB on the parts of the area which lie in England only, including land which is contiguous with the Welsh border south, west and north of Kington. Whilst this would inevitably be a long-term process, the fact that the area has been a 'candidate' AONB for so long must be factored in to judgements about landscape value and sensitivity.

#### Landscape Character Types

- 3.5 Detailed descriptions of the 'landscape character types' of the study area can be found in Herefordshire Council (HC)'s Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Supplementary Planning Guidance document (updated 2009)<sup>2</sup>. For this assessment, the information was recorded on base maps along with the relevant National Character Areas<sup>3</sup>, and was factored in to the sensitivity assessment.
- 3.6 The complexity of the area's landscapes is reflected in the many different landscape types which are found throughout it. These range from the High Moors and Commons, and Wooded Hills and Farmlands which characterise most of Hergest Ridge and Bradnor Hill, to the narrow strip of Riverside Meadows along the River Arrow, and broad swathes of Ancient Timbered Farmlands south of the river. The latter stretch southwards beyond Brilley into the Herefordshire lowlands.
- 3.7 There are also areas of Enclosed Moors and Commons (on Rushock Hill and south west of Huntington), Principal Wooded Hills (locally, only occurring in the northern parts of Lower Harpton); Principal Settled Farmlands (small patches scattered north and south of Bradnor Hill, and a more substantial strip north of Hergest Ridge); Principal Timbered Farmlands (east of the B4355 north east of Kington town); and Timbered Plateau Farmlands (south of the town along both sides of the A4111).
- 3.8 Wooded Estatelands feature around Lyonshall and north east of Eardisley, but these types lie outside the Kington area parish boundaries.

#### Physical Landscape Character

- 3.9 Whilst most of Herefordshire is underlain by the 'Lower Old Red Sandstone' succession, the land west and north of Kington is characterised by Silurian rock strata which form a notable feature in the wider area, running in a north east to south west direction from Ludlow to Gladestry. The folds in the strata give rise to the distinctive ridge-and-vale topography which is characteristic in this part of the county.
- 3.10 To the west and north of Kington lies an upstanding and dramatic range of hills - Hergest Ridge (423m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)), Bradnor Hill (391m AOD), and Rushock Hill (375m AOD).

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.cpreherefordshire.org.uk/Content/CPRE\\_AONB\\_REPORT\\_2012.pdf](http://www.cpreherefordshire.org.uk/Content/CPRE_AONB_REPORT_2012.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/5787595/LCA\\_2009\\_V1\\_sec.pdf](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/5787595/LCA_2009_V1_sec.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The majority of the study area lies within NCA 98: Clun and North West Herefordshire Hills. The profile for the NCA can be found at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5932924754984960?category=587130>



- These are formed of Silurian sedimentary rocks (438-408 million years BP) – igneous intrusions pushed up along a series of fault lines – with deposits of calcareous silts and reef limestones.
- 3.11 Stone is the dominant building material in this part of the Arrow valley. Many of Kington's historic buildings are constructed from the locally-quarried pale brown and grey 'Ludlow Series' stones, and roofed with mudstone flagstones.
- 3.12 The area's landform has been greatly influenced by glacial activity. Perched on top of Hergest Ridge is the Whet Stone. This is one of many glacial 'erratics' - huge boulders carried to the top of the hill in ice during the Ice Age and dropped when the ice melted. To the south is a meltwater channel.
- 3.13 The iron oxide in the underlying Devonian rocks gives rise to the distinctive red soils which characterise much of the region. The soils of the Silurian sections are generally thin and silty.
- 3.14 The boundary between the Devonian and Silurian rock formations is marked along the valley of the River Arrow, which runs in a north-easterly direction through Kington. West and north of the river, the hills are dome-shaped, very steep-sided and deeply incised by the brooks and small streams which run into the Arrow.
- 3.15 In contrast, the land south and east of the river is lower-lying and more gently undulating, and flattens out to become the rolling Herefordshire lowlands further south and east (although the topography still remains locally varied and in places, pronounced). The tops of the rounded hills, also shaped by glacial action, are typically 200 – 230m AOD. Numerous springs give rise to small, narrow watercourses which cause shallow incisions in the landscape.
- 3.16 To the south west, around Huntington and the Hengoeds, the landscape is characterised by undulating and often complex topography, for example the rounded, incised hills between Red Hill Wood and Disgwylfa Hill, on the west side of the Arrow Valley.
- 3.17 Landuse and landcover in the area are strongly influenced by geology and hydrology, but history also has a role to play, as set out in the section below.
- 3.18 The landscape character type descriptions in HC's LCA provide a great deal of detail about each type's landuse and landcover, its characteristic elements and features, and other baseline information. Most of the types identified in the study area are good representations, and typical, of the landscape types, so these should be referred to for more information on this aspect of the study.
- 3.19 However, it is important to note that there are numerous local variations, where the landscape has its own distinctive character and has little in common with its host type. This may be a result of factors such as microclimate and history. Examples include historic parks and gardens, orchards, hopyards, plantations, and certain wildlife habitats.
- 3.20 In terms of landscape quality, today, most of the land appears well-managed and in good to very good condition. In places – especially nearer settlements – there is some erosion and loss of landscape pattern and character as a result of hedgerow removal, lack of management and intensive landuse, but in other places condition is excellent.
- 3.21 The Agricultural Land Classifications vary throughout the study area and reflect the physical conditions which give rise to the various soil types. The majority of the land is classified as Very Poor or Poor. Along the Arrow river valley and on the eastern outskirts of Kington town it is Good to Moderate, with some Very Good areas to the east of the parish. Other smaller areas of Good to Moderate are found in Lower Harpton and south and east of Huntington.

### **Historic Landscape, Heritage and Culture**

- 3.22 Kington's landscapes reflect centuries of human intervention, and considerable time-depth is evidenced by the features which remain, in particular those which demarcate the disputed and defended border lands and Marches – castles, mottes, tumps and turrets – and the later manor houses with deer parks and chase.
- 3.23 There is evidence of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic (c. 10,000 – 4000 BCE) activity in the Arrow Valley, and the area was almost certainly used and settled during the Neolithic period. Prehistoric barrows and standing stones have been recorded (the latter have been "*reported (but not seen) at Huntington*"<sup>4</sup>), and The Camp earthwork south of Chickward may be a henge.

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<sup>4</sup> The main source of information for this section was *The Arrow Valley Herefordshire – Archaeology, Landscape Change and Conservation* Herefordshire Studies in Archaeology Series 2 (2003) Paul White

- 3.24 By the Iron Age, hillforts and enclosures were becoming relatively common features in the wider landscape. Burfa Camp and Hindwell in Old Radnor are both hillforts, and there is evidence that there could also have been one on Bradnor Hill (although the construction of the golf course may have destroyed much of the visible evidence, at least).
- 3.25 The use of hillforts continued into the Romano-British period. Clear traces of Roman roads still exist (for example Bollingham Road south west of Lyonshall, although this is considered by some also to have been a Bronze Age route).
- 3.26 Probably the most well-known historic feature in the area is Offa's Dyke, the longest earthwork in Britain and one of the few extant monuments of the period in which it was constructed (8<sup>th</sup> century CE). Much of the Dyke is still traceable along the 80 miles from the Wye valley to Wrexham: in places it still retains most of its original dimensions while in other parts it has disappeared due to 1200 years of farming activity and its presence can only be detected by archaeological work. Several sections of the Dyke are designated Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs).
- 3.27 The Dyke originally marked the border between England and Wales. In the Kington area, the Dyke lies over 2km east of the town whereas the border is now some 3km to the west, and Kington has been in England for over 1000 years.
- 3.28 Land at Kington (described in the Domesday Book as "non-tax paying waste land") was taken over from the Saxon community by the Normans and then passed to the Crown. Subsequently a new Marcher barony was established, one of several strategically-placed boroughs established by the Marcher lords. A castle was built in the town at the beginning of the 12th century but is believed to have been destroyed in 1216.
- 3.29 Good examples of motte and bailey castles dating from this period can be found in the study area, for example Turret Tump, Turret Castle, Huntington Castle, and Castle Twts.
- 3.30 By the 14th century the landscape was reflecting the influence of estate development, managed by the manorial lords for agriculture and hunting. By the 16th century there were extensive deerparks and chases. Abundant evidence of medieval farming can be found in the local landscape. Besides the earthwork and stone castles, there are many small, agricultural settlements (some of which have subsequently been abandoned), and clear traces of strip-fields, boundary hedges and lynchets.
- 3.31 There are several designated Ancient Semi-Natural Ancient Woodlands scattered throughout the study area. However, it is interesting to note that fieldwork carried out by Herefordshire Archaeology determined that many of the woodlands they surveyed in the area were not, in fact, on sites of ancient wildwood as previously thought, but had "*the remnants of earlier landscapes contained within their boundaries*<sup>5</sup>"; much of the present-day woodland may therefore date to the late-medieval and post-medieval period. Some has been replanted with commercial forestry plantations.
- 3.32 Although the manorial influence declined after the 16th century, the area continued to develop as part of a small but thriving community. Kington became a popular market town. Huntington, Upper and Lower Hengoed are noted on a 1754 map (although as 'Hongwood' not 'Hengoed', which it became at some time before 1832 and is derived from the Welsh for 'Old Wood'); 'Middle Hongwood' appears for the first time on maps in 1789, suggesting that the local population in this part of the county was increasing. New, isolated farmsteads began to appear.
- 3.33 The uplands and moorlands were also owned and managed by these landowners, and transhumance was practiced. The dominant landuse at that time would have been pasture for sheep. However tithe maps show that towards the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, all of the slopes of Hergest Ridge were under arable cultivation, with grassland located only on the lower parts of the valley floor. The 1754 map records several mills along the River Arrow.
- 3.34 The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries saw significant changes in the landscape: the Enclosure Acts permanently changed the traditional feudal field patterns that would have existed in many areas, and new roads were built to transport an increasingly diverse range of products from Kington and neighbouring towns and villages to markets further afield. Such products included cast iron, lime, flour, malt, and textiles and clothing from the woollen mills. In addition, materials needed to be imported, for example coal and iron from South Wales for both fuel and raw material.

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<sup>5</sup> Idem

- 3.35 In 1815 a new tramroad was built between Eardisley and Kington, and by 1857 the Leominster and Kington Railway was running. Although the railways and tramroads in the area are no longer operational, they have left discernible physical traces.
- 3.36 On Hergest Ridge there is an abandoned race course. In the 1770s the course was located on Bradnor Hill but it was moved to Hergest Ridge in 1825 before being abandoned in 1880. Traces of the track and associated facilities are still visible on the ground and it is noted in the Sites and Monuments Record.
- 3.37 Several registered and unregistered historic parks and gardens were identified within the study area, although only one registered park lies within the parishes: Hergest Croft (Grade II\*) on the west side of Kington town. It was laid out in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The other registered parks and gardens are Eywood and Nieuport House, both beyond the parish boundaries. They both date from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and reflect the aspirations of wealthy landowners of the time. Many of these were drawn to the wild and beautiful border landscapes but preferred to site their properties in the more fertile and profitable lowlands, creating ornamental grounds for pleasure.
- 3.38 Some of the 18<sup>th</sup> century parks and houses were sited where there was previously a manor and hunting forest / chase. The unregistered historic park and garden at Huntington Park (post-medieval, although first mentioned in 1265) is associated with Huntington Castle.
- 3.39 A mid-20<sup>th</sup> century land utilisation survey of the area shows that the landscape alongside the River Arrow was still dominated by meadow, with small patches of arable cultivation remaining on higher ground at Hergest and Huntington; the river appears to have formed a divide between farming regimes.
- 3.40 Several Grade I listed buildings were identified within the study area: all are churches. The Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Church Road, Kington, is a 14th century church with later alterations; its lychgate is Grade II\* listed. The other churches are beyond Kington's parish boundaries, in Gladestry, Michaelchurch-on-Arrow, Eardisley and Almeley.
- 3.41 There are also several Grade II\* buildings within, and on the outskirts of, the parish; these comprise mainly churches, chapels and farmhouses. Grade II listed buildings were also noted and factored in to judgments about value and sensitivity.

### **Biodiversity**

- 3.42 Biodiversity issues are an important factor in landscape assessment, as different habitats have different characteristics and features which are visible in the landscape and contribute to its character.
- 3.43 Loss or erosion of habitats can therefore lead to adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity. Changes to landscape features, elements and landcover can also result in changes to these habitats and the species of flora and fauna they support.
- 3.44 Erosion and loss can occur as a result of new development, management practices, accidents, pollution of soils and watercourses, pest and diseases and so on.
- 3.45 Designated sites of nature conservation importance were recorded on the 1:25,000 base maps.
- 3.46 There is only one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the parishes, but several lie just outside the boundaries.
- 3.47 All SSSIs have 'Impact Risk Zones' within which there may be the potential for the receptor to be negatively affected by development, change etc. Potential effects on SSSIs well beyond the parish boundaries must therefore also be considered in detailed assessments of potential effects.
- 3.48 There are several other designated sites in the study area, many within the parishes, such as Special Wildlife Sites (SWSs), UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) Habitat and Priority Inventory Habitat (PHI) sites. As set out above, effects on those which lie outside the parish boundary should also be considered.
- 3.49 Guidance recently published in Northern Ireland states that all developments which emit ammonia should be assessed for their potential to impact on designated sites within 7.5km, or priority habitats within 2km<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/advice/northern\\_ireland\\_environment\\_agency\\_guidance/standing\\_advice\\_19\\_-\\_livestock\\_installations\\_and\\_ammonia\\_-\\_issue\\_01\\_june\\_2015.pdf](http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/advice/northern_ireland_environment_agency_guidance/standing_advice_19_-_livestock_installations_and_ammonia_-_issue_01_june_2015.pdf)

- 3.50 It is important to note that just because a habitat is not designated, it is not valuable as a resource. Undesignated habitats must be considered for their potential to support flora and fauna, especially protected species.
- 3.51 The assessment noted that whilst there are several designated habitats in the study area, many are fragmented. Creating / restoring connections between them could have significant benefits for wildlife. At the same time, if such proposals are taken forward, it is important that potential effects on landscape character and visual amenity are taken into account: any scheme design would have to be appropriate in terms of the landscape's qualities and characteristics.
- 3.52 Other biodiversity-related issues factored in to the baseline study were the location of Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs); these are areas designated as being at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution. It is also relevant to note that poultry manure contains phosphates, and this is considered to be a significant contributor to the contamination of watercourses.

### **Recreation and Access**

- 3.53 Kington's diverse landscapes, its heritage, and its wildlife, draw visitors from far and wide. There are many, varied opportunities for both formal and informal recreation in the area, although walking is probably the most popular activity.
- 3.54 There is a significant amount of Open Access Land on the hills north and west of Kington Town. Offa's Dyke Path is one of the country's best-known National Trails, and it runs through this Open Access Land, crossing Hergest Ridge west of Kington and descending eastwards into the town before heading north across the lower slopes of Bradnor Hill and Rushock Hill (Bradnor Hill includes some 200 hectares of common land and is managed by the National Trust).
- 3.55 Several popular long-distance trails and other public rights of way (PRsoW) form a dense network of interconnecting routes which criss-cross throughout the study area. The Herefordshire Trail runs through Eardisley and joins a path along the Arrow valley near Hergest Court, cutting through Kington and following the river before heading in a north-easterly direction towards Titley. The Mortimer Trail from Ludlow zig-zags across the south-east-facing slopes of Rushock Hill, joining the Herefordshire Trail just east of Kington.
- 3.56 The 'Black and White Village Trail' follows the A4111 from Eardisley to Kington town centre, and continues eastwards along the A44 towards Lyonshall and Pembridge.
- 3.57 Horse-riding and cycling are also popular activities. National Cycle Network National Route 82 runs through Gladestry and into Kington via Upper and Lower Hergest, leaving the town in a north-easterly direction, along the B4355 towards Titley.
- 3.58 Hergest Croft Gardens and Arboretum, which lies on Kington's western edge, is a nationally-important and popular destination. Outside the town itself, there are a few pubs, campsites and visitor attractions, including a small breeds farm south of Kington, Cwmmau Farmhouse (National Trust), and of course the various historic and wildlife sites, and the other parks and gardens.
- 3.59 Tourism brings economic benefits to local communities throughout the parishes; it also means that it is important to keep the area as unspoiled as possible so that people will continue to come.

### **Views and Visual Amenity**

- 3.60 The extensive public access available throughout the area means that many people would be likely to experience changes arising from new development. Many of the routes are of national or regional importance, popular and well-used, and the level of sensitivity of visual receptors is mainly High.
- 3.61 One of the main attractions is walking along the high hills' ridges and slopes, from which dramatic, extensive and often exceptional views can be gained across the different landscapes spread out below in all directions.
- 3.62 The ridges and slopes are prominent, exposed, and predominantly devoid of vegetation. They are highly visible from most parts of the study area, except in places where localised topography, dense vegetation and / or built form screen views.
- 3.63 Parts of the area are more intimate and enclosed, especially where topography forms small, rounded hills and shallow, wooded valleys such as those in parts of the Hengoeds. Elsewhere, even though there is limited woodland cover, there are hedgerows and trees which, at lower levels, give the impression of a densely-wooded landscape and screen many views even in winter.

- 3.64 The assessment identified key views throughout the study area, as well as features and functions such as 'gateways' and 'approaches', landscape context and setting.

**Existing and Proposed Development**

- 3.65 An important part of the assessment's baseline process was mapping the location of existing and proposed large-scale, intensive agricultural development and energy production schemes such as polytunnels and solar farms (wind turbines were excluded as the assessment of effects of these structures is highly specialised and different factors apply).
- 3.66 This information can be used in the future when assessing potential cumulative effects of new development in combination with what already exists.
- 3.67 No existing or proposed solar farms were identified within the parish boundaries, but in August 2015 HC granted planning permission for a 450kWp photovoltaic ground mounted solar array on land at Yeld Farm, Lyonshall (despite an objection from the landscape officer on historic landscape grounds).
- 3.68 Within the parishes, there are currently three polytunnel sites (Penrhos Farm, east of the A4111, Lower House Farm east of Huntington, and at Lower Hengoed).
- 3.69 It was not possible to specifically identify 'intensive agricultural developments' per se; instead, those which were known to exist were marked on the map base, along with other large-scale built form visible on the 1:25,000 scale map and Google Earth. Several large, old farmsteads with large areas of outbuildings were included. This is because they are an integral part of the landscape's character, and their nature and scale can help to inform decisions about the appropriateness or otherwise of adding new large-scale built form either close by or in the wider landscape.
- 3.70 In early September 2015 KPC asked HC whether they were aware of any similar developments at pre-planning or planning application stage, and they said they were not.

## 4 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity

- 4.1 Although landscape assessments involve what may appear to be technically complex language and processes, they are nonetheless carried out in an objective and logical way. It is often helpful to be familiar with the process, and use the same terminology, when commenting on planning applications for example.
- 4.2 The process of evaluating a landscape's sensitivity to change of the type which is proposed, and its capacity to accommodate it, involves a series of steps which are set out and explained below, with a summary of the Kington area landscape assessment's findings alongside.

### Landscape Quality

- 4.3 From a landscape character perspective, LCA guidance states that "*Landscape quality (or condition) is based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual, functional, and ecological perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements which make up the character in any one place.*"
- 4.4 The term 'Quality' also reflects "... *the value that is placed on landscapes which appeal primarily to the visual senses, but this value is not absolute and tends to reflect prevailing ideas about which landscapes are of special value. Although quality is a separate issue from evaluation it is often linked because landscapes of higher quality may be more valued and more likely to be designated.*" [Scottish Natural Heritage]
- 4.5 Quality in landscape terms may reflect a place which is considered beautiful because it is unspoilt, or because it is well-managed and cared-for, and the features which make it special are in good condition and intact. It may also be a judgement, varying from person to person, about the aesthetic and / or perceptual quality, or qualities, of the landscape, and how it 'makes them feel'.
- 4.6 It is also important to note that unmanaged places which are in what may be categorised as 'poor' condition can in fact be important and valuable habitats for flora and fauna.
- 4.7 In many cases, loss of condition is reversible.
- 4.8 The study concluded that most of the landscapes in the study area appear well-managed and in good condition. In places – especially nearer settlements – there are detractors and some erosion and loss of landscape pattern and character as a result of hedgerow removal, lack of management and intensive landuse, but in other places condition is very good or excellent.
- 4.9 Overall, the level of Landscape Quality is judged to be between **Moderate** and **High**, with large areas (especially the high hills) of **High to Very High** quality and localised areas of **Low**.
- 4.10 Inevitably there is a certain amount of subjectivity in evaluating Landscape Quality, but methods have been developed to quantify it objectively. In Table 1 Appendix B the criteria applied to determine levels of Landscape Quality in this assessment are set out.

### Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 4.11 "*Landscape [character] sensitivity... relates to the stability of character, the degree to which that character is robust enough to continue and to be able to recuperate from loss or damage. A landscape with a character of high sensitivity is one that, once lost, would be difficult to restore; a character that, if valued, must be afforded particular care and consideration in order for it to survive.*" [LCA Guidance Topic Paper 6]
- 4.12 LCA Guidance also emphasises that "*A landscape is sensitive if it is likely to be adversely affected by the type of change proposed*".
- 4.13 A judgement concerning sensitivity is an outcome resulting from the testing of proposals against natural, cultural and aesthetic factors and features which may be sensitive, and factoring in Landscape Quality. It is not a 'baseline attribute' but a combination of baseline factors.
- 4.14 Small changes in a landscape of high sensitivity could be very damaging, whereas large changes in a landscape of low sensitivity may be acceptable.
- 4.15 The model for analysing landscape character sensitivity is based on the following assumptions:
- i) Within each landscape type, certain attributes may play a more significant role than others in defining the character of that landscape;
  - ii) Within each landscape type, certain attributes may be more vulnerable to change than others;

- iii) Within each landscape type, the degree to which different attributes are replaceable, or may be restored, may vary; and
  - iv) The condition of the landscape – the degree to which the described character of a particular landscape type is actually present 'on the ground' – will vary within a given area of that landscape type.
- 4.16 This assessment concludes that whilst there is evidence of some localised loss and erosion of landscape elements and features in the study area, others are in good or very good condition, and are very good representations of the landscape type. These elements and features make a highly important contribution to both the local and the wider landscapes.
- 4.17 Some of the features are part of the area's ancient historic heritage as well as reflecting the more recent landuses and practices described earlier. Together they illustrate the considerable time depth which is both evident and buried in and around Kington.
- 4.18 Many of them are extremely vulnerable to change. Modern farming methods can result in loss of hedgerows and enlarged fields, uncharacteristic shelterbelt planting, intensification of crop-growing, and erosion of natural habitats. Intensive horse-keeping can also give rise to adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity, disrupting the landscape's traditional and complex patterns and textures.
- 4.19 The county-wide landscape character types in the study area have varying levels of tolerance of change; this is also factored in to judgements about sensitivity, capacity and potential effects. The checklist in Appendix A sets out the levels of value / sensitivity attributed to the landscape types in this study, determined by their inherent character and whether the type of change proposed would be appropriate / could be accommodated.
- 4.20 The key attributes that define the landscape character of the study area, their important functions and the contributions they make to both the local and wider area mean they are of high value. As set out above, they are at risk of erosion and / or loss. This means that these are mostly landscapes with Moderate to High, and in places, Very High, vulnerability to further detrimental changes.
- 4.21 They also have a Moderate to Low, and in places Very Low tolerance of change in the form of new intensive agricultural / energy development, which could cause a high degree of irreparable damage to the essential components that contribute to the area's landscape character. Many of these could not be restored or replaced if lost.
- 4.22 Taking into account the levels of Landscape Quality reported above, the assessment concludes that the level of most of the study area's Landscape Character Sensitivity is between **Moderate** and **High**, although there are large areas (especially the high hills) of **High to Very High** and localised areas of **Low** (see Table 2 Appendix B for the criteria applied to determine levels of Landscape Character Sensitivity in this assessment).

#### **Visual Sensitivity**

- 4.23 Visual Sensitivity refers to both places and people, but it is the people who are the 'receptors', sensitive or otherwise.
- 4.24 Judging the visual sensitivity of the landscape involves considering its general visibility and the potential scope to mitigate the visual effects of any change that might take place.
- 4.25 Visual sensitivity is also reflected in the numbers of people who are likely to perceive the landscape and any changes that occur in it, whether they are 'ordinary' residents or visitors. The more highly valued a particular view or viewpoint is, and the more people who visit it for the purpose of enjoying the view, the greater the level of sensitivity.
- 4.26 The level of Visual Sensitivity is established after the baseline assessments have been carried out and all the issues previously identified taken into account. The visual issues flagged as potentially significant at the desktop stage are adjusted in the light of the on-the-ground work.
- 4.27 The Visual Sensitivity criteria in Table 3, Appendix B and Visual Receptor Sensitivity criteria in Table 4 Appendix B are applied, along with professional judgement. The evaluation is made on the basis of how visible a place is; whether the view is valued and by whom; whether the landscape in the view performs, or contributes to, an important function; whether development could be accommodated into the wider landscape without unacceptable visual intrusion; and whether adverse effects could potentially be mitigated.

- 4.28 The hills and slopes west and north of Kington are predominantly between **High** and **Very High** visual sensitivity due to their popularity with walkers; from these high-level viewpoints, many of which are along Offa's Dyke national trail and long-distance footpaths, any mitigating screen planting on lower-lying land is unlikely to be effective. The level of effect would, however, be likely to decrease with distance from these viewpoints, and selecting the right colours and materials can also go a long way towards mitigating adverse visual effects.
- 4.29 The visual sensitivity of large parts of the LSCA study area is judged to be **High**, partly because they are clearly visible from the prominent ridges and slopes of Hergest Ridge and Bradnor Hill.
- 4.30 In some of these lower-lying areas, particularly along the Arrow Valley, around Huntington and in the Hengoeds, there is localised screening by topography and tree cover, but this often gives rise to a sense of tranquillity and remoteness. There are several places where the landscapes – rural / pastoral / semi-natural / designed – are unspoiled, sparsely-settled and of high quality, displaying a strong sense of place and local distinctiveness and reflecting the area's rich history and natural resources.
- 4.31 The public rights of way and winding rural lanes which run through these areas are popular with both locals and visitors, the latter being categorised as High sensitivity receptors (as are people living in residential properties with clear views towards a development site). Factors such as these add to visual value and result in a **High** overall visual sensitivity to the type of change proposed.
- 4.32 In some parts of the study area there are detractors which lower levels of visual sensitivity to a certain degree: these include modern development (residential / commercial / light-industrial / intensive agricultural etc.) the location and design of which does not always respect landscape / townscape / villagescape character; infrastructure (roads / pylons); and erosion and loss of landscape elements and features as described above. In some of these areas, visual sensitivity was judged as being **Low**. However other matters such as landscape setting and context, and whether the current situation is potentially reversible, also had to be factored in, which resulted in other areas having a **Moderate** level of visual sensitivity.
- 4.33 The landscape assessment concluded that whilst it was possible to make very generalised judgements about levels of visual sensitivity, there was so much localised variation in each area that it was not feasible – within the limited scope of the study – to arrive at a satisfactory judgement about precisely where the levels should be applied.
- 4.34 Instead, it is strongly advised that any future development proposals are subject to a thorough visual assessment, in accordance with published guidance, once the location and details of the scheme are known.

#### **Landscape Value**

- 4.35 Levels of Landscape Value are factored in to the LSCA process once levels of Landscape Character Sensitivity have been established.
- 4.36 Understanding Landscape Value is essential, as it plays a major role in most environmental, landscape and social planning policies.
- 4.37 Para. 109 of the NPPF sets out how the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. The first item on the list is "**protecting and enhancing valued landscapes**".
- 4.38 Para. 110 states: "*In preparing plans to meet development needs, the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment. Plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework*".
- 4.39 Landscape Value has been defined in LVIA guidance as "*The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society, bearing in mind that a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons*".
- 4.40 The Council of Europe has published a useful document (Naturopa No. 98 2002) which explains the concept of Landscape Value and why it is so important. It describes the different types of Landscape Value, including economic, social and heritage. The function or role that a particular area or site performs in the wider landscape context, and the contribution it makes, is also a factor in establishing its value.



- 4.41 Guidance for landscape assessments set out in some detail methods for establishing Landscape Value; however in LVIA, Landscape Value determines Landscape Sensitivity, whereas in LSCA, it is also used to determine Landscape Capacity.
- 4.42 As with Landscape Quality (and the two are related), there will always be a degree of subjectivity in value judgements, but again, methods have been developed to quantify Landscape Value objectively, such as the Quality of Life Capital (QoLC) approach<sup>7</sup>. In Table 5 Appendix B the criteria applied to determine levels of Landscape Value in this assessment are set out.
- 4.43 The checklist in Appendix A also sets out the various landscape and environmental designations and features which contribute to Landscape Value and grades them from Very High to Very Low. This should be cross-referenced with Table 5.
- 4.44 Not all of these features were found within the study area, but where identified they were marked on the maps.
- 4.45 The levels of Landscape Value arrived at from an analysis of the baseline desktop studies are considered further and may be adjusted once the on-the-ground assessments are complete and any other factors which have come to light during the process identified.

### **Potential Effects**

- 4.46 Part of the process of judging a landscape's sensitivity and its capacity to accommodate change is to consider the effects which could potentially arise, both positive and negative, and their likely level of significance. If potentially significant adverse effects are identified, it is possible that the proposed development would have to be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- 4.47 Although an in-depth assessment of specific effects is beyond the scope of this study (this is normally done when preliminary details of a proposed development are known), it is possible to identify the key landscape and visual receptors which are most likely to be affected in some way. Many of the receptors identified are described in the baseline section of the report. They are also set out on the checklist in Appendix A. In summary, a more generalised list of the types of receptors likely to be affected includes:
- Landscape character (national / county / local)
  - Historic landscape character
  - Townscape / villagescape (character, setting, context etc.)
  - Function (gap, buffer, gateway etc.)
  - Heritage assets
  - Cultural heritage
  - Biodiversity
  - Water quality
  - Visual amenity
  - Public / Social amenity.
- 4.48 It is also necessary to consider the nature of the effects that new development is likely to have on the environment, features, flora and fauna, people, views, amenity and so on.
- 4.49 Some effects are direct and obvious, for example a change in character from rural to urbanised / industrial or the loss of landscape elements and features such as grassland, hedgerows and trees.
- 4.50 Some are direct but not immediately obvious and require analysis – examples include loss of key functions which land may perform; loss of / change to key views; changes to the setting of a building or feature; and changes to an area's general context and sense of place / local distinctiveness.

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<sup>7</sup> QoLC approach guidance was developed jointly by the Countryside Agency, English Nature, English Heritage and the Environment Agency to 'provide a consistent and integrated way of managing for Quality of Life'. (<https://www.google.co.uk/#q=Quality+of+life+capital+overview+report+2001>).

- 4.51 Other effects are indirect, such as those arising from human activity, noise, smell, lighting, glare etc., and which may also affect landscape features, the quality of a view, wildlife, heritage assets, recreation / amenity, water quality and so on.
- 4.52 On the whole, the more highly sensitive the receptor and the larger the magnitude of change, the larger the overall level of effect will be.
- 4.53 However, sometimes changes are on a very small scale and in the wider context, barely noticeable. The problem is that many small changes over a wide area accumulate incrementally, until there comes a point where the inherent character of the landscape is changed altogether.
- 4.54 New developments normally require safe access built to published standards. Surfacing, breaks in hedges for new entrances and / or to achieve sightlines, engineering works to achieve specified gradients, lighting, signage and other paraphernalia, all can potentially give rise to adverse effects. Some sites may not have direct access from a public highway and new roads may have to be built across the landscape to get to them.
- 4.55 Building large-scale agricultural complexes on steep slopes may require significant engineering and large amounts of land-take to achieve the required flat plateaux to build on. This can look artificial and out of place in a softly-flowing natural landscape. Proposed development sites would have to be carefully considered in this respect.
- 4.56 Conversely, solar farms and polytunnels are more 'flexible', and can be more easily constructed on steeply-sloping land. They can also be designed to 'fit' in with local landscape patterns by retaining / restoring elements and habitats such as field boundaries and woodland within the development site.
- 4.57 An important point to factor in is that many solar farm and polytunnel developments are only granted 'temporary' planning permission (albeit long-term – often between 10 and 25 years). In theory, once the structures are decommissioned, the land can revert to its previous state (or be restored to a more 'natural' type of landcover) without leaving any trace of the development on the landscape.
- 4.58 Adverse effects on social and public amenity, and the health and well-being of both people and the environment should be considered in assessments, although this is often beyond the scope of landscape commissions.
- 4.59 New development can adversely affect the local economy: one of the main reasons why people visit the Kington area is its scenic beauty. They come to enjoy the tranquillity of unspoilt, well-cared for landscapes which have a strong sense of place. The effects which can arise from intensive / industrial-scale development may deter tourists.
- 4.60 There is always the need for balance, of course, and part of any landscape study should be an evaluation of both positive and negative effects, not just on the landscape but on the people who live and work there, and come to visit it.
- 4.61 Effects of development can arise not just during the operational phase but during construction, for example when large vehicles may be highly visible in the landscape, or may not be able to access the site without damage to roadside and overhanging vegetation especially where lanes and tracks are narrow.
- 4.62 In most places, road widening would result in adverse landscape and visual effects, especially if hedges have to be removed. If there is a large change in level between the site and the access road, the effects could extend over a considerable area of the frontage.
- Mitigation / Enhancement / Compensation**
- 4.63 It is important to understand the difference between the terms 'mitigation', 'enhancement' and 'compensation'.
- 4.64 Mitigation may be required / proposed in order to avoid, reduce, and if possible, remedy identified adverse effects (especially if the development is subject to EIA and the effects are judged to be 'significant').
- 4.65 Enhancement is often proposed to replace, or improve the condition of, landscape elements and features, or to provide new habitats for wildlife for example. However it should not be described as mitigation if it isn't performing that function, nor should it be described as enhancement when it is, in fact, compensation.

- 4.66 Compensation (or 'off-setting') should generally be regarded as measures of last resort, offering an alternative where adequate mitigation is not possible.
- 4.67 The term 'Biodiversity Offsetting' is used to describe measures intended to compensate for the loss of elements and features such as those described above. For example, it can be argued that the loss of a small area of traditional orchard or even a veteran tree can be compensated for by planting several hundred trees elsewhere. However many of these features are irreplaceable simply because of the conditions which existed at the time they began to evolve, and how they were used and managed. It may be possible to plant native bluebell bulbs in a new woodland, for example, but the complex biological and other processes and relationships which give ancient woodland habitats such high value is the result of factors which would be almost impossible to replicate in modern times.
- 4.68 So long as the baseline landscape / villagescape character is properly understood, then it may be possible to mitigate some of the adverse effects identified through sensitive location, siting and design which respond to both the wider and local areas' key characteristics. It may not be possible to mitigate others, and as stated previously, apparently insignificant, localised effects may accumulate to the point where they affect a much wider area.
- 4.69 In some cases, land which is currently visible could potentially be screened from view with planting (so long as it was locally-appropriate and its implementation secured if on third party land, for example). However it may not be possible to screen successfully from viewpoints on higher ground, where the land is read more in plan-form and even tall trees may be ineffective.
- 4.70 Potential effects must also be considered in the light of both existing and proposed vegetation and the fact that there is no guarantee that what is there now, or what is planted in the future, will survive. Vegetation which currently or potentially screens views, defines landscape character and provides habitats for flora and fauna, is vulnerable. Loss can occur through pests and diseases, pollution, accidents, compaction / severance of roots, human intervention and so on.
- 4.71 If sites are proposed for development, consideration should be given to what level of effect is predicted without vegetation, as well as with it. This could affect future decisions about which sites are more suitable than others. It is also relevant in the assessment of cumulative effects and coalescence.
- 4.72 Adverse effects arising from built form can be mitigated by selecting the 'right' colours (for example by carrying out an Environmental Colour Assessment (ECA)) and materials (avoiding those which reflect / 'glare'). There is currently little that can be done to reduce the effects arising from the white plastic which is used to cover polytunnels and the reflective surfaces of solar panels, although both have been slightly modified over time to try to minimise effects as far as possible.

#### **Other Constraints**

- 4.73 Many of the designations and features identified in the assessment are constraints to development at one level or another. Other likely physical constraints to certain types of development include topography, access and land liable to flooding. Whilst not precluding development *per se*, they have to be factored in to judgements about whether development of a site is feasible, and whether it can be achieved without giving rise to significant adverse effects as a result of the measures required to overcome them.

## 5 Summary of Overall Sensitivity and Capacity

- 5.1 Using the LSCA process described above, judgements about the sensitivity of the landscape to a certain type of change and its capacity to accommodate it are arrived at by combining the levels of Landscape Character Sensitivity, Visual Sensitivity and Landscape Value.
- 5.2 In this case, the nature of the change is in the form of a) large-scale, intensive agricultural complexes such as broiler units, and b) energy production schemes (polytunnels and solar farms).
- 5.3 The results are set out on Figure 1: Overall Sensitivity Map – Agricultural Built Form and Figure 2: Overall Sensitivity Map – Energy Production.
- 5.4 The maps were coloured to show the areas which are considered most and least sensitive to the type of change identified, with levels of sensitivity ranging from Very High to Very Low.
- 5.5 As explained previously, it is to be inferred that levels of Capacity are on the same 5-point scale from Very High to Very Low, but reversed – i.e. Very High Sensitivity results in Very Low Capacity

### Agricultural Built Form

- 5.6 The assessment concluded that the landscapes of the Kington area have very limited capacity to accommodate change in the form of large-scale, intensive agricultural complexes.
- 5.7 The high hills and slopes of Hergest Ridge, Bradnor and Rushock Hills are judged to be of High to Very High Landscape Quality, Landscape Character Sensitivity, and Landscape Value. There are several factors which contribute to these areas' High to Very High Value, which, when combined, result in a **Very High** level of Overall Sensitivity. These include:

#### VERY HIGH

- Registered Historic Park and Garden
- Open Access Land / Registered Common Land
- National Trust land
- National Trail

#### HIGH

- Candidate AONB
  - Certain landscape character types (see checklist in Appendix A for details)
  - Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands
  - National Inventory of Woodland and Trees
  - Highly visible / prominent / exposed location
  - Landscape of high quality, in very good condition
  - HER features of landscape importance / interest
  - Special Wildlife Sites
  - Priority Habitat Inventory sites
  - Potential for protected species of flora and fauna
  - Local Geological Site
  - Long-distance trails
- 5.8 The steeply-sloping topography in these areas also means that large-scale built form would be difficult to accommodate without significant engineering.
- 5.9 The assessment concluded that the majority of the remainder of the study area was of **High** overall sensitivity to change in the form of large-scale agricultural buildings, apart from a SSSI south east of Kingswood on the edge of the study area, and several Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) / Grade II\* listed buildings (all **Very High**).
- 5.10 The area is categorised as being of High overall sensitivity due to a variety of factors. One factor which has an important influence on this judgement is the 'candidate AONB' status of the greater

part of the study area – only a swathe along the eastern edges is not included. Another important factor is that almost all of the landscape character types in the area are highly sensitive to change of the type proposed.

- 5.11 There is one area north east of Kington, south of the B4355, where the character type (Principal Timbered Farmlands) is of Moderate sensitivity, and few features of landscape value or importance exist; however, it is within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (Groundwater), and it is visible from Bradnor Hill which is used by High sensitivity visual receptors. In addition, the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) of some of the land in this area is Very Good to Excellent (i.e. Very High value), and the rest is Good to Moderate (High value). When combined, these increase the level of overall sensitivity of this area to **High**.

#### **Energy Production**

- 5.12 In terms of the areas which were judged to have either **Very High** or **High** sensitivity to change in the form of energy-production, most of the factors set out above in terms of overall sensitivity to change in the form of intensive agricultural development apply, and the geographical areas covered are the same.
- 5.13 The assessment also concluded that certain landscape types are of lower sensitivity to change in the form of polytunnels and solar farms, mainly due to the 'nature' of these types of development as described previously.
- 5.14 In the areas east of the boundary of the candidate AONB the landscape types are judged to have Moderate sensitivity and therefore a Moderate capacity to accommodate this type of development. Also, NVZs and high ALCs are not usually receptors which give significant cause for concern in terms of effects arising from energy production.
- 5.15 There are some exceptions to this, for example the SSSI south east of Kingswood, a SAM further north and Grade II\* listed buildings (**Very High**); and several Local Wildlife Sites and Priority Habitat Inventory sites, Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands, National Inventory of Woodland and Trees sites, places where the landscape is of high quality, HER features of landscape importance / interest (all **High**).
- 5.16 The area north east of Kington, south of the B4355, is visible from Bradnor Hill, so there is the potential for adverse visual effects depending on the location. However, with the exception of the Very High / High value features noted above, the eastern edges of the study area are considered to be of **Moderate** Overall Sensitivity to polytunnel and solar development.
- 5.17 No areas of Low or Very Low sensitivity were identified.
- 5.18 Clearly, if specific sites and projects come forward, more in-depth site-specific assessments would need to be carried out to take into account localised variations in landscape character, quality and visual sensitivity, but the baseline information and criteria used in this study can be applied.

**CARLY TINKLER**

October 2015

# **APPENDIX A**

## **Landscape & Environmental Designations, Receptors & Features: Value Checklist**

## Landscape and Environmental Designations, Receptors and Features: Value Checklist (Kington)

<b>VERY HIGH</b> Esp. International / National / Unique	
<u>LANDSCAPE &amp; VISUAL</u>	
AONB / National Park	Site / direct effect
AONB 'Exceptional' or 'Special' VP / view corridor	
Green Belt	Site / direct effect
<u>HISTORIC LANDSCAPE &amp; HERITAGE ASSETS</u>	
Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)	Site / direct effect
Grade I and / or II* listed building	Site / direct effect
Registered Historic Park and Garden	Site / direct effect
<u>BIODIVERSITY</u>	
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Site / direct effect
Special Protection Area (SPA)	Site / direct effect
Ramsar	Site / direct effect
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) [NB check Impact Risk Zones]	Site / direct effect
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Site / direct effect
<u>GEOLOGY</u>	
Geological Conservation Review (GCR) Site NB The Geological Conservation Review (GCR) is the register of known nationally and internationally important Earth science (geological and geomorphological) sites in Great Britain. The GCR underpins designation of Earth science features in Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The majority of GCR sites therefore now have statutory protection through designation as notified features in SSSIs... GCR sites, however, remain unnotified and are known as unnotified GCR sites. National Park Authorities and some Local Authorities treat these as candidate SSSIs and afford them the same protection as SSSIs. Some unnotified GCR sites are also Local Geodiversity Sites (LGS), and as such they are afforded levels of protection appropriate to locally important sites (though they are, themselves, considered to be of national or international importance). The remaining unnotified GCR sites have no statutory protection, although they are considered to be sites of national or international importance	Site / direct effect
<u>PUBLIC, SOCIAL &amp; VISUAL AMENITY, ACCESS, RECREATION</u>	
Open Access Land	
Registered Common Land	
Public Open Space / designated Greenspace / school fields / planning policy	
National Trust property / land	
National Trail	Site / direct effect
National Cycle Route	Site / direct effect
<u>OTHER</u>	
ALC Very Good to Excellent	
Potentially, a combination of 2 or more 'High' sensitivity receptors	

<b>HIGH</b> Esp. Regional / County	
<u>LANDSCAPE &amp; VISUAL</u>	
AGLV / ASLV	
AONB	Setting / view corridor
AONB (candidate)	
Country Park	
Enclosed Moors and Commons LCT	
High Moors & Commons LCT	
Principal Settled Farmlands LCT	
Principal Wooded Hills LCT	
Riverside Meadows LCT	
Ancient Timbered Farmlands LCT	Large built units only
Timbered Plateau Farmlands LCT	Large built units only
Wooded Hills and Farmlands LCT	Large built units only
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland	
TPO / inventoried (NIWT) / some veteran trees	
Highly visible / prominent / exposed location	
Local Key VP / view corridor	
Landscape of high quality, in very good condition	
Landscape of good quality and in good condition but could be improved	
<u>HISTORIC LANDSCAPE &amp; HERITAGE ASSETS</u>	
Conservation Area	
Grade II listed building	Site / direct effect
Unregistered Historic Park and Garden	Site / direct effect
HER features of landscape importance / interest	Site / direct effect
Registered Historic Park and Garden	Setting
Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)	Setting / intervisibility
Grade I and / or II* listed building	Setting
<u>BIODIVERSITY</u>	
Nitrate Vulnerable Zone	Certain types of development only
Special Wildlife Site (SWS)	
Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)	
UK BAP Priority Habitat / PHI site	
Wildlife site with planning policy protection	
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Indirect effect
Special Protection Area (SPA)	Indirect effect
Ramsar	Indirect effect



Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) / candidate / Impact Risk Zones	Indirect effect / direct effect
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Indirect effect
Known or likely presence of protected species	
<u>GEOLOGY</u>	
Local Geological Site (LGS) (but see 'Very High')	
<u>PUBLIC, SOCIAL &amp; VISUAL AMENITY, ACCESS, RECREATION</u>	
Important but informal recreational use / greenspace	
Long-distance / themed trails / well-used PRsoW	Site / direct effect
Clearly visible from National Trail or NCR	
<u>OTHER</u>	
ALC Good	Large built units only
Steep topography requiring significant engineering to accommodate dev.	Large built units only
Adverse effects unlikely to be adequately mitigated	
<b>MODERATE</b> Esp. Local Interest / Value	
<u>LANDSCAPE &amp; VISUAL</u>	
Landscape of mod. to good quality, in mod. to good condition, irreversible	
Landscape of mod. to low quality & in mod. to poor condition but reversible	
Principal Timbered Farmlands LCT	Large built units & poly / solar
Wooded Estatelands LCT	Large built units & poly / solar
Ancient Timbered Farmlands LCT	Polytunnel / solar only
Timbered Plateau Farmlands LCT	Polytunnel / solar only
Wooded Hills and Farmlands LCT	Polytunnel / solar only
Moderate visibility	
<u>HISTORIC LANDSCAPE &amp; HERITAGE ASSETS</u>	
Grade II listed building	Setting
<u>BIODIVERSITY</u>	
Undesignated habitat but good potential for flora & fauna	
<u>GEOLOGY</u>	
N/A	
<u>PUBLIC, SOCIAL &amp; VISUAL AMENITY, ACCESS, RECREATION</u>	
Clearly visible from long-distance trail or well-used PRoW	
Locally-important informal recreational use / greenspace	
<u>OTHER</u>	
ALC Moderate	
Adverse effects could potentially be mitigated (without 3 <sup>rd</sup> party land)	

<b>LOW</b>	
<u>LANDSCAPE &amp; VISUAL</u>	
Landscape of low quality, in poor condition, unlikely to be reversible	
Landscape of very low quality and in very poor condition but reversible	
LCT key characteristics eroded / lost but could be restored	
Low visibility	
<u>HISTORIC LANDSCAPE &amp; HERITAGE ASSETS</u>	
None likely to be affected, or effects acceptable	
<u>BIODIVERSITY</u>	
Low potential for biodiversity	
<u>GEOLOGY</u>	
N/A	
<u>PUBLIC, SOCIAL &amp; VISUAL AMENITY, ACCESS, RECREATION</u>	
Limited visibility	
Little or no amenity value	
<u>OTHER</u>	
Adverse effects could be effectively and adequately mitigated with certainty	
<b>VERY LOW</b>	
<u>LANDSCAPE &amp; VISUAL</u>	
Industrial / contaminated land	
Landscape of very low quality and in very poor condition, not reversible	
LCT characteristics absent, not possible to restore	
Very low visibility	
<u>HISTORIC LANDSCAPE &amp; HERITAGE ASSETS</u>	
None	
<u>BIODIVERSITY</u>	
Very low potential for biodiversity	
<u>GEOLOGY</u>	
None	
<u>PUBLIC, SOCIAL &amp; VISUAL AMENITY, ACCESS, RECREATION</u>	
None	
<u>OTHER</u>	
None	

# APPENDIX B

## Landscape Assessment Criteria Tables

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**Table 1: Landscape Quality**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Very High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscapes of an 'awe-inspiring' or 'sublime' nature and which are important and valued on an international and national level (DMRB)</li> <li>• Unspoilt areas comprising a strong, clear and highly aesthetically-pleasing composition of elements and features in excellent condition, intact and distinctive</li> <li>• Excellent representation of the landscape area / type</li> <li>• Very high level of management, or care, or pristine natural / semi-natural environment</li> <li>• Exceptional scenic integrity</li> <li>• Very strong sense of place</li> <li>• Negligible or no atypical or incongruous features or detractors</li> </ul>
<b>High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very attractive landscapes which are of high value nationally and can be defined as highly scenic (DMRB)</li> <li>• Areas with components combined in an aesthetically pleasing composition, in very good condition</li> <li>• Very good representation of the landscape area / type</li> <li>• High level of management, or care, or natural / semi-natural environment in very good form and health</li> <li>• Very good scenic integrity</li> <li>• Strong sense of place</li> <li>• Few atypical or incongruous features or detractors</li> </ul>
<b>Moderate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good landscape containing areas that, although still attractive, have less significant and more common landscape features (DMRB)</li> <li>• Areas of some value for their landscapes, components combined in an aesthetically pleasing composition but showing signs of erosion and loss, in good to fair condition</li> <li>• Good to fair representation of the landscape area / type</li> <li>• Good to fair level of management, environment in good to fair form and health</li> <li>• Good to fair scenic integrity</li> <li>• Some loss of, or change to, intrinsic sense of place</li> <li>• Some atypical or incongruous features or detractors</li> </ul>
<b>Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ordinary landscape containing areas that have only common landscape features and some intrusive elements such as conspicuous infrastructure with scope for improvement in management (DMRB)</li> <li>• Areas of limited landscape value, disturbed and lacking coherence and structure. Limited aesthetically-pleasing composition. Signs of urbanisation and / or erosion, landscape elements and features degraded and / or lost</li> <li>• Limited representation of the landscape area / type</li> <li>• Limited management, or care, environment in fair to poor form and health</li> <li>• Poor scenic integrity</li> <li>• Little if any sense of place</li> <li>• Several atypical or incongruous features or detractors</li> </ul>
<b>Very Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor landscape with areas that contain frequent detracting aspects and/or lack of management which results in a degraded landscape with very few valued features (DMRB)</li> </ul>

<b>Level</b>	<b>Definition</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Areas with few or no valued landscape components or comprising degraded and / or lost elements and features, making negative contribution to aesthetic composition</li><li>• Poor or no representation of the landscape area / type</li><li>• Little or no management, or care, environment in very poor form and health</li><li>• Little or no scenic integrity</li><li>• Negative sense of place</li><li>• Widespread atypical or incongruous features or detractors</li></ul>

**Table 2: Landscape Character Sensitivity**

Level	Definition
<b>Very High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscapes of very high quality as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Landscapes of very high value as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Landscapes which make a significant contribution to the special qualities of internationally or nationally-designated landscapes</li> <li>• Highly distinctive elements and combination of features in excellent condition which are irreplaceable, and make a significant contribution to land-, town- / villagescape character and sense of place</li> <li>• An excellent example of the landscape type</li> <li>• Significant intervening open land between settlement/s, or perceived as such, which may be preventing coalescence</li> <li>• Of significance to the setting of a settlement, for example, by providing an essential break between built form and countryside</li> <li>• Open space essential to the appearance, form and character of the built environment</li> <li>• Extremely limited resilience and very high vulnerability to change</li> <li>• Development site completely divorced from other built form / settlement and / or in very high quality and value open countryside</li> </ul>
<b>High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscapes of high quality as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Landscapes of high value as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Distinctive elements and combination of features in very good condition and a very good representation of the landscape type. Limited potential for restoration if lost - they make an important and positive contribution to character and sense of place</li> <li>• Important intervening open land between settlement/s, or perceived as such</li> <li>• Important to the setting of the settlement by providing a distinctive break between built form and open countryside</li> <li>• Open space important to the appearance, form and character of the built environment</li> <li>• Development would be isolated from other built form / settlement and / or would detract from important aspects of settlement form and pattern</li> <li>• Area has very limited resilience and high vulnerability to change</li> <li>• Development site may be adjacent to settlement edge, but lies outside clear and important boundary features defining extent of built form</li> </ul>
<b>Moderate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscapes of moderate quality as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Landscapes of moderate value as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Commonplace elements and combination of features present, generally in good to fair condition, some of which could not be replaced but which are a good to fair representation of the landscape type but common: generally unremarkable character, albeit with some sense of place</li> <li>• Forms part of larger area of intervening open land between settlement/s, or perceived as such</li> <li>• Of some importance to the setting of the settlement but the break between built form and countryside is less distinctive</li> <li>• Open space of some importance to the setting, appearance, form and character of the built environment</li> <li>• Area has some resilience to, and tolerance of, change</li> </ul>

Level	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development would have close physical and / or visual association with the settlement</li> </ul>
<b>Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscapes of low quality as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Landscapes of low value as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Several or many elements / features are discordant, derelict, in decline or lost altogether, resulting in little or no positive contribution to landscape character and / or visual amenity. Limited sense of place. However, potential for improvement</li> <li>• Of limited importance as intervening open land between settlement/s</li> <li>• Of limited importance to the setting of the settlement as the break between built form and countryside is indistinct</li> <li>• Open space of limited importance to the appearance, form and character of the built environment</li> <li>• Area relatively resilient to, and tolerant of, change</li> <li>• Development could be an appropriate extension of, or infill to, other built form / settlement.</li> </ul>
<b>Very Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscapes of very low quality as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Landscapes of very low value as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Most elements / features are discordant, derelict, in decline or lost altogether, resulting in negative effects on character with all intrinsic sense of place lost. Little prospect of improvement</li> <li>• Is not important intervening open land between settlement/s</li> <li>• Of little or no importance to the setting of the settlement as there is little or no distinctive break between built form and countryside</li> <li>• Open space of little or no importance to the appearance, form and character of the built environment</li> <li>• Area very resilient to, and tolerant of, change</li> <li>• Development could be absorbed into other built form / settlement without detriment to its character and visual amenity, and could improve the current situation</li> </ul>



**Table 3: Visual Sensitivity**

Level	Definition
<b>Very High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly visible in wider area</li> <li>• Forms part of exceptional / iconic / very highly valued views</li> <li>• Internationally / nationally important visual function (context, setting, gateway, gap, screen, buffer, transition zone, skyline, panorama, vista, focal point, cultural association etc.)</li> <li>• Very open to public or private views of the countryside or open space which are significant</li> <li>• Development would create unacceptable visual intrusion into the wider landscape that could almost certainly not be mitigated</li> </ul>
<b>High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visible in wider area</li> <li>• Highly visible in local area</li> <li>• Forms part of wider important / highly valued views</li> <li>• Forms part of views of significant local value</li> <li>• Important wider visual function</li> <li>• Significant local visual function</li> <li>• Very open to public or private views of the countryside or open space which are of wider importance</li> <li>• Development would be uncharacteristically conspicuous in the wider area and mitigation unlikely to reduce adverse effects</li> <li>• Development would create unacceptable visual intrusion into the local landscape that almost certainly could not be mitigated</li> </ul>
<b>Moderate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not visible from wider area or of no influence</li> <li>• Locally visible but limited influence</li> <li>• Views are of some wider importance but there is scope for mitigating potential adverse visual effects</li> <li>• Locally highly-valued views</li> <li>• Limited wider visual function</li> <li>• Important local visual function</li> <li>• Partially open to public or private views of the countryside or open space which are of wider importance</li> <li>• Open to views public or private views of the countryside or open space which are of local importance</li> <li>• Development likely to be perceptible in the wider area but would not significantly alter the balance of features or elements within the existing view</li> <li>• Development would be uncharacteristically conspicuous in the local area and mitigation unlikely to reduce adverse effects</li> </ul>
<b>Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not visible from wider area</li> <li>• Limited local visibility</li> <li>• Views of limited importance</li> <li>• Development could be integrated into the land- / town- / villagescape although possibly only with mitigation</li> <li>• Site is fairly well-screened from public and private views</li> <li>• Development may be discernible in the wider area but would not result in loss of, or change to, important views or wider visual amenity</li> </ul>

Level	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development likely to be perceptible in the local area but would not significantly alter the balance of features or elements within the existing view</li> </ul>
<b>Very Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not visible from wider area</li> <li>• Little or no local visibility</li> <li>• Views of little or no importance</li> <li>• Development would not lead to unacceptable visual intrusion into the landscape, or adverse effects on the settlement, with or without mitigation</li> <li>• Site is very well-screened from public and private views</li> <li>• Development would not be discernible or would enhance views or existing visual amenity</li> </ul>

**Table 4: Visual Receptor Sensitivity**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
<b>Very High</b>	Visitors to very high value landscapes and townscapes, and internationally or nationally designated sites such as World Heritage Sites, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Special Landscape Areas, National Trails, and other areas where the landscape is one of the main reasons for the visit.
<b>High</b>	People in high value landscapes and townscapes, which may be part of a very high value landscape setting. Receptors in sites of national and / or regional importance which may or may not be designated, including Registered Parks and Gardens and Conservation Areas, and other important / valued / well-used public sites and recreation areas and long-distance trails / rights of way used by many people where the view is an important reason for the visit. People living in residential properties with clear views towards the development.
<b>Moderate</b>	People who appreciate the view for short periods of time while passing through the landscape / townscape (e.g. walkers, riders, cyclists, boat users, motorists) and who are likely to be in that location to enjoy the view. Users of public rights-of-way, touring routes including cycle paths and canals, public open spaces and other locations where the view is part of the reason for the visit, but not used by substantial numbers of people. Viewpoints usually in areas of medium to high value, but typically not primarily orientated towards the development. People living in residential properties and / or working in offices with oblique or partially screened views,
<b>Low</b>	Receptors in commercial and industrial premises, schools, playing fields etc. where the view is not central to the use. People using main roads, rail corridors, infrequently used / inaccessible public rights of way and likely to be travelling for a purpose other than to enjoy the view. Usually in landscapes / townscapes of medium to low value. People living in residential properties with limited views of the development.
<b>Very Low</b>	People moving past the view often at high speed (e.g. on motorways and main line railways); usually in degraded landscapes / townscapes of low value. Residential properties with no views of the development.

**Table 5: Landscape Value**

Level	Definition
<b>Very High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outstanding landscapes (ELC)</li> <li>• Internationally and / or nationally-designated landscapes</li> <li>• Internationally and / or nationally-designated areas of nature conservation, archaeological, historic, geological and / or other importance</li> <li>• Landscapes of very high quality as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Significant cultural associations</li> <li>• Significant time-depth</li> <li>• Significant natural or semi-natural character</li> <li>• Exceptional representation of landscape type and / or rare</li> <li>• Landscapes of exceptional quality and in excellent condition</li> <li>• Landscapes, elements and features of exceptional significance</li> <li>• Elements and features intact with no loss or erosion of key characteristics</li> <li>• Exceptional aesthetic attributes with significant scenic quality, iconic views</li> <li>• Negligible or no detractors</li> <li>• Exceptional perceptual qualities (sense of place, scenic beauty, wildness / remoteness, tranquillity etc.)</li> <li>• Significant wider landscape / visual function</li> <li>• Significant contribution to settlement of international or national importance</li> <li>• The quality of the landscape is likely to be the primary purpose of the visit</li> <li>• Significant potential for biodiversity (for example known EPS or other protected species)</li> <li>• Significant contribution to wider public access and recreation</li> <li>• Significant Green Infrastructure assets</li> </ul>
<b>High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscapes between 'Outstanding' and 'Everyday' (ELC)</li> <li>• Regionally / locally-designated landscapes</li> <li>• May be subject of strategy and / or guidance</li> <li>• Nationally or county-wide designated areas of nature conservation, archaeological, historic, geological and / or other importance</li> <li>• Landscapes of high quality as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Important cultural associations</li> <li>• Important time-depth</li> <li>• Very good natural or semi-natural character</li> <li>• Very good representation of landscape type and / or uncommon</li> <li>• Landscapes of very good quality and in very good condition</li> <li>• Landscapes, elements and features of wider importance or local significance</li> <li>• Elements and features widely intact with limited loss or erosion of key characteristics</li> <li>• Very good aesthetic attributes with important scenic quality &amp; key views</li> <li>• Few detractors</li> <li>• Very good perceptual qualities</li> </ul>

Level	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important wider landscape / visual function</li> <li>• Significant local landscape / visual function</li> <li>• Very good contribution to settlement of national or county-wide importance</li> <li>• The quality of the landscape is likely to be one of the main reasons for the visit</li> <li>• Very high potential for biodiversity (for example likely presence of EPS or other protected species)</li> <li>• Important contribution to wider public access and recreation</li> <li>• Significant contribution to local public access and recreation</li> <li>• Important wider Green Infrastructure assets</li> <li>• Significant local Green Infrastructure assets</li> </ul>
<b>Moderate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyday landscapes (ELC)</li> <li>• Locally-designated or undesignated landscapes</li> <li>• May be subject of strategy and / or guidance</li> <li>• Locally-designated areas of nature conservation, archaeological, historic, geological and / or other importance</li> <li>• Landscapes of moderate quality as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Good to fair cultural associations</li> <li>• Good to fair time-depth</li> <li>• Good to fair representation of landscape type but common</li> <li>• Landscapes of good to fair quality and in good to fair condition</li> <li>• May be areas with semi-natural character</li> <li>• Landscapes, elements and features of local importance</li> <li>• Elements and features contributing to key characteristics showing signs of erosion and / or loss. May still make positive contribution to local landscape and local visual amenity</li> <li>• Good to fair aesthetic attributes and scenic quality, but not contributing greatly to key views</li> <li>• Some detractors</li> <li>• Good to fair perceptual qualities</li> <li>• Limited landscape / visual function in wider context but potentially of local importance</li> <li>• Good to fair contribution to settlement of local importance</li> <li>• The landscape is unlikely to be one of the main reasons for the visit but makes a positive contribution to the experience</li> <li>• Good to fair potential for biodiversity (for example possible EPS or other protected species &amp; their habitats)</li> <li>• Important contribution to local public access and recreation</li> <li>• Good to fair local Green Infrastructure assets</li> </ul>
<b>Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscapes between 'Everyday' and 'Degraded' (ELC)</li> <li>• Undesignated landscapes</li> <li>• Unlikely to be subject of strategy and / or guidance</li> </ul>

Level	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little if any nature conservation, archaeological, historic, geological and / or other interest</li> <li>• Landscapes of low quality as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Few if any cultural associations</li> <li>• Limited time-depth</li> <li>• Areas which have lost their intrinsic landscape character due to urbanisation, lack of management, changes in pattern and scale etc.</li> <li>• Poor representation of landscape type</li> <li>• Landscapes of poor quality and in poor condition but with potential for improvement</li> <li>• Landscapes, elements and features of limited importance</li> <li>• Erosion and / or loss of elements and features, few examples of key characteristics. Makes little or no positive contribution to local landscape and / or visual amenity</li> <li>• Poor aesthetic attributes and scenic quality, little or no contribution to key views</li> <li>• Several detractors</li> <li>• Few if any perceptual qualities</li> <li>• Little or no landscape / visual function in wider context</li> <li>• Little or no contribution to settlement</li> <li>• The landscape is unlikely to be one of the main reasons for the visit</li> <li>• Limited potential for biodiversity (no habitats likely to support EPS or other protected species)</li> <li>• Little or no contribution to public access and recreation</li> <li>• Limited Green Infrastructure assets</li> </ul>
<b>Very Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degraded landscapes (ELC)</li> <li>• Undesignated landscapes</li> <li>• Not subject of strategy and / or guidance (unless for restoration)</li> <li>• Negligible or no nature conservation, archaeological, historic, geological and / or other interest</li> <li>• Landscapes of very low quality as defined by appropriate criteria</li> <li>• Negligible or no cultural associations</li> <li>• Negligible time-depth</li> <li>• Despoiled / urbanised / industrial areas where change is likely to be long-term or permanent</li> <li>• Not representative of landscape type</li> <li>• Landscapes of very poor quality and in very poor condition with little or no potential for improvement</li> <li>• Landscapes, elements and features of little or no importance</li> <li>• Widespread erosion and / or loss of elements and features, as well as key characteristics. Make negative contribution to local landscape and / or visual amenity</li> <li>• Negative aesthetic attributes and scenic quality, negative contribution to key views</li> </ul>

Level	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widespread detractors</li> <li>• Negative perceptual qualities</li> <li>• Negligible or no landscape / visual function in wider context (gap, gateway, buffer, transition zone, setting, context, focal point, view corridor, panorama etc.)</li> <li>• Negative contribution to settlement</li> <li>• The landscape is unlikely to be a reason for the visit</li> <li>• Negligible or no potential for biodiversity</li> <li>• Negligible or no contribution to public access and recreation</li> <li>• Few if any Green Infrastructure assets</li> </ul>