

2.0 SETTING ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

2.1 General Approach

2.1.1 The general approach to assessing the existing character of the landscape and townscape follows guidance set out by the former Countryside Agency², and the techniques used for assessing landscape sensitivities and development capacity broadly reflect the principles set out in the supplementary topic paper to the main guidance³. The methodology for assessing the role and function of landscapes and townscapes is based on approaches developed for setting studies of other historic towns – including for the Mendip Towns⁴. Winchester⁵, Oxford⁶ and Cambridge⁷ studies. In particular, the assessment has been shaped by the ‘Cambridge Approach’ as adapted to suit the specific objectives of the Salisbury study.

2.1.2 In line with the Study’s objectives and intended applications, it should be noted that the Settlement Setting Assessment has been carried out at a 1:25,000 scale. The findings of the assessment are intended to be used to inform consideration of general directions of growth as part of the Core Strategy Preferred Options stage of the LDF process. In many cases, further studies at 1:10,000 or other more detailed scales of assessment will be needed to examine site-specific sensitivities and development capacity issues.

2.1.3 In overview, the structure of the assessment methodology comprises three distinct but related stages:

- **Baseline Assessment** – involving desk-based studies and field surveys to establish an understanding of the factors that contribute to the character of the landscape setting for each settlement;
- **Analysis of Landscape Sensitivities** – involving analysis of the baseline assessment findings to identify the key landscape sensitivities within the setting of each settlement;

² Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).

³ Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland : Topic Paper 8 – Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity’ (Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002)

⁴ Mendip Towns Landscape Setting Study (Chris Blandford Associates, 1995)

⁵ Winchester City and its Setting (Landscape Design Associates, 1998)

⁶ A Character Assessment of Oxford City in its Landscape Setting (Land Use Consultants, 2002).

⁷ Cambridge Green Belt Study (Landscape Design Associates, 2002)

- ***Development Capacity Recommendations*** – involving providing guidelines that identify how and where new development might best be accommodated within the landscape setting of each settlement to safeguard special qualities from harm and mitigate potential adverse effects.

2.1.4 These stages are outlined below.

2.2 Baseline Assessment

2.2.1 The initial baseline assessment involved undertaking desk-based studies and field surveys to establish an understanding of the factors that contribute to the character of the landscape setting for each settlement. The factors that were considered included:

- ***Historical development of the settlement*** (the locational influences and evolution of the settlement over time in relation to its landscape setting, as defined by a review of key documentary sources);
- ***Environmental, cultural and access policy designations*** (the relative values attached to different aspects of the landscape and townscape, and their accessibility, as defined by the adopted Salisbury District Local Plan);
- ***Topography and geology*** (the underlying physiographic features that shape the character of the settlement as defined by review of relevant mapping);
- ***Townscape character*** (the composition of generic townscape character types that give each settlement its particular character, as defined by desk-based assessment of urban form /structure and historical origins using available historic maps, aerial photographs and current OS mapping. Townscape character types comprise broadly similar patterns of building types and street patterns, and their boundaries have been only broadly defined for the purposes of this study);
- ***Landscape character*** (the composition of landscape character types and areas that provide the landscape context for each settlement, as defined by the emerging district-wide assessment work being undertaken in parallel by CBA. Landscape character types are generic units of land with broadly similar patterns of physical and cultural attributes such as landform, geology, land cover and land uses. Landscape character areas are

geographically unique examples of a landscape type that have a distinctive pattern of physical and cultural attributes that is unlike anywhere else);

- **Visual character** (the visual prominence and intervisibility between townscape and landscape that gives a settlement and its setting its distinctive visual character, as defined by field surveys. This includes identification of key views and their character; key landmarks and distinctive/memorable features; and the townscape/countryside interface in terms of elevation, foreground character and built edge character as seen in immediate views from settlement setting).

2.2.2 The approximate extent of the landscape setting of each settlement was defined by an analysis of the interactions of the above factors, particularly in relation to visual prominence and intervisibility considerations based on topography and woodland/tree cover.

2.3 Analysis of Landscape Sensitivities

2.3.1 The analysis of landscape sensitivities draws on the baseline assessment findings to identify the key landscape sensitivities within the setting of each settlement. Three main analyses were undertaken to understand the factors that contribute to landscape sensitivities and inform judgements about development capacity and mitigation requirements. These are outlined below.

Townscape and Landscape Analysis

2.3.2 This analysis considers how settlements are experienced in their landscape settings as seen from key approach routes. This involved defining and mapping the positive and negative qualities/features that contribute to the landscape setting around each settlement, such as:

- First views of the settlement
- Urban gateways
- Gateways to distinctive historic cores
- Approaches between first views and distinctive historic cores
- Character of key approaches
- Selected features on approaches (green fingers/corridors; relationship with distinctive townscapes/villages/landscapes; open countryside separating settlements)

- 2.3.3 This analysis provides an essential understanding of how the character of routes to and through a settlement plays an important role in giving a settlement its distinctive character.

Analysis of Townscape and Landscape Role and Function

- 2.3.4 The purpose of this analysis is to identify and map, in a fully integrated way, the role and function that different areas of townscape and landscape play in contributing to the distinctiveness and setting of each settlement.

- 2.3.5 The area of landscape that contributes to the distinctiveness of the settlements and their settings is defined as ‘visual envelope’. This includes the areas of the surrounding landscape from where the settlement is visible, or where it forms part of the foreground to key distant, isolated view points. This visual envelope is sub-divided into areas of townscape and landscape that contribute to different roles and functions in defining or supporting the distinctiveness of the settlement and its setting. The boundaries of these areas were defined by making judgements in the field from accessible public routes (footpaths/cycle paths, roads, railway). They are approximate boundaries, reflecting gradual transitions where views of the settlements become progressively less or more distinct as the view moves through the landscape; or where there is only a gradual change in the character of the townscape or landscape.

- 2.3.6 The townscape and landscape is classified in relation to the role and function it performs in contributing to the distinctiveness of the settlement and its setting. The classification, which is based on the categories established by the Cambridge Study, is described below:

- ***Visually Cohesive Historic Core*** - this is typically the compact Saxon or Medieval core of the settlement. Elements such as historic street pattern, building type, scale, architectural style, detailing and materials all generate a strong sense of history for each settlement. The area may include subsequent 19th and 20th century development, but the depth of historic character and the street pattern remains clearly visible. Areas of visually cohesive historic core also function as distinctive townscape/landscape;
- ***Distinctive Townscape/Landscape*** - these are areas defined as specifically recognisable and distinctive to the settlement. They include townscape and landscape components such as quintessential views, the interaction of buildings forming spaces or the setting to local events, landform, setting and backdrops to the settlement, areas of rich biodiversity,

historic approach routes and landmarks of distinctive character. These areas, frequently contiguous with the historic core, often borrow from or bestow character to them;

- ***Supportive Townscape/Landscape*** - these are areas of townscape/landscape which support the character of the historic cores and areas distinctive to the settlements. They provide the backdrop and ambience, and bolster the sense of place of the settlement and its approaches;
- ***Connective Townscape/Landscape*** - these are areas of townscape/landscape which are an integral part of the settlements and their environs, but lack individual distinction, or do not play a significant contribution to the setting of the settlement. This classification does not render these areas unimportant, or lacking in their own identity. Rather, they are often areas divorced from or weakly attached to their landscape setting, or from landmarks within the landscape or historic cores. The use of mass-produced building materials, standard suburban layouts, styles and details are also contributing factors in the lack of local identity;
- ***Weak Townscape/Landscape*** - these are areas or elements that detract from the distinctive and special character of the settlements and their setting. These may include routes, edges, built elements or districts, or degraded landscapes that contribute to an area of weak townscape/landscape;
- ***Other Rural Areas*** - these are areas of landscape from which distinctive views of the settlement are scarce or absent. The function of this landscape is in providing a backdrop to views of the settlement, and in providing a setting for approaches to connective, supportive and distinctive areas of townscape and landscape.

Analysis of Special Qualities to be Safeguarded

- 2.3.7 This stage of the analysis identifies the particular qualities within the setting of each settlement that are (i) key to its distinctive character, (ii) sensitive/vulnerable to harm through development and other types of land use change and (iii) desirable to safeguard. Whilst this analysis draws logically from the preceding baseline studies and analyses, it involves a strong degree of professional judgement in distilling out the qualities that should be safeguarded in order to protect the setting of settlements.

2.4 Development Capacity Recommendations

- 2.4.1 The development capacity recommendations identify how and where new development might best be accommodated within the landscape setting of each settlement to safeguard the defined special qualities from harm and to mitigate potential adverse effects. Both general (settlement-wide) and area-specific recommendations are made. Where appropriate, the general recommendations include consideration of strategic scale opportunities for mitigating the adverse impacts of planned development through enhanced greenspace provision, tree and woodland planting and other environmental improvements. The more detailed area-specific recommendations provide guidance on how development impacts can be mitigated within the setting of each settlement in these areas. The definition of the areas was informed by the extent of the landscape setting of each settlement, and relate to the particular role and function of the relevant townscape and landscape.
- 2.4.2 It should be noted that the potential opportunities for mitigating development impact identified by this study would need to be verified on the ground through more detailed assessment as appropriate.