

Key Landscape Character Assessment Terms

Analysis: The process of dividing up the landscape into its component parts to gain a better understanding of it.

Approach: The step-wise process by which landscape assessment is undertaken.

Assessment: Term to describe all the various ways of looking at, analysing, evaluating and describing the landscape.

Character: A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

Characteristics: Elements or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to distinctive character.

Characterisation: The process of identifying areas of similar character, classifying and mapping them and describing their character.

Elements: Individual components which make up the landscape, such as trees and hedges.

Features: Particularly prominent or eye catching elements, such as tree clumps, church towers, or wooded skylines.

Land cover: Combination of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface.

Landform: Combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land surface.

Landscape: Primarily the visual appearance of the land including its shape, form and colours. However, landscape is not purely a visual phenomenon. The landscape relies on a range of other dimensions including geology, landform, soils, ecology, archaeology, landscape history, land use, architecture and cultural associations.

Objective: Method of assessment in which personal feelings and opinions do not influence characterisation.

Subjective: Method of assessment in which personal views and reactions are used in the characterisation process.

Other Technical Terms

Alluvium: Sedimentary deposits resulting from the action of rivers, including those laid down in river channels, floodplains, estuaries and lakes.

Ancient woodland: Land continuously wooded since AD 1600. It is an extremely valuable ecological resource, usually with a high diversity of flora and fauna.

Cornbrash: Name applied to the uppermost member of the Bathonian stage of the Middle Jurassic formation in England. It is an old English agricultural name applied in Wiltshire to a variety

of loose rubble or 'brash' which, in that part of the country, forms a good soil for growing corn. The name was adopted by William Smith for a thin band of shelly stone which, in the south of England, 'breaks up in the manner indicated'. Although only a thin group of rocks (10-25ft / 3.0-7.5m), it is remarkably persistent, and may be traced from Weymouth to the Yorkshire coast. The Cornbrash is a very fossiliferous formation. The fauna indicates a transition from the Lower to the Middle Oolites, although it is probably more closely related to that of the beds above than to those below.

Domesday Book: Conceived by William the Conqueror at Christmas 1085 in Gloucester, the survey was the most comprehensive and detailed record compiled anywhere in Europe in the Middle Ages. The survey's primary purpose was to provide maximum yield from land tax. The name arose in the 12th century to signify, like the day of judgement, there could be no appeal from its verdict.

Geology: The study of the origin, structure, composition and history of the Earth together with the processes that have led to its present state.

Glacial: Term used to describe a cold phase during an ice age.

Iron Age: (c. 750 BC – AD 43) A cultural phase of mankind's evolution when technical improvements in iron-working enabled iron tools and weapons to replace those of the preceding Bronze Age. Population growth led to competition for land and the development of a more territorial society. Improved farming technology and scarcity of land brought about the cultivation of heavier and poorer soils.

Jurassic: The middle period of the Mesozoic era, preceding the Cretaceous and succeeding the Triassic and named after the Jura Mountains of central Europe. It commenced about 195 million years ago and terminated 135 million years ago during which time dinosaurs reached their maximum size. Rock strata consist of varying thicknesses of clays, limestones and some sandstones that were deposited in fluctuating shallow seas, interspersed with periods of estuarine and fluvial deposition. The principal divisions present in the northern perimeter of the Cotswold Water Park study area are (in ascending order) Inferior Oolite (limestones, clays and sandstones) and Great Oolite (limestones).

Mesotrophic: Water containing a normal amount of nutrients.

Neolithic: (c. 4,000 – 2,500 BC) An archaeological term used to describe the 'new stone' age. This applies to the culture achieved during the middle Post Glacial when mankind had begun to polish and grind stone artefacts (a technological advance from the bashing and flaking of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic). The Neolithic also saw the introduction of agriculture.

Oolite: A sedimentary rock made up essentially of ooliths; spherical rock particles formed by the gradual accretion of material around an inorganic (e.g. sand) or organic (e.g. shell) nucleus. Ooliths are small and their appearance has been likened to fish roe (from where their name is derived).

Outcrop: The area where a particular rock appears at the surface.

Ridge and Furrow: A linear pattern of ridges and furrows evident in some fields is a remnant of a former medieval open field system. This well established system of land management during the medieval period was widespread across much of lowland England. The unit of cultivation was the strip (land or selion), which varied in length and width depending on local conditions. The strips were grouped together into furlongs and a number of furlongs formed the field. The up and down ploughing of the strips threw soil into the centre of the strip and over time created the distinctive ridge and furrow landform which may be used to identify remnants of open fields in the landscape today.

Ridge and furrow type landforms are also evident in water meadow landscapes and areas where steam ploughing was employed. Good examples survive where the open arable fields became permanent pasture following the black death in the 14th century and when arable land was enclosed in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Elsewhere, the act of enclosing the land, subsequent consolidation of the strips and continued ploughing for arable production, has obliterated the patterns of ridge and furrow.

Riparian: Riverbank habitats.

Topography: Term used to describe the surface features of the earth's surface.

Vernacular: Built in the local style, from local materials.

Water Meadow: Water meadows are provided with channels to carry water on to the pasture and then to drain it off again with the intention of keeping a trickle of water flowing through the roots of the spring growth to warm them and protect from frosts. The result is faster grass growth and an earlier first bite - several weeks earlier if the spring is cold. For over 300 years water meadows supplied early grazing and the first, most valuable hay crop. They have almost all ceased operation due to the cost of the labour required to maintain them and the difficulty of working them with machinery. In many instances all that remains of water meadows is the banks and ditches that controlled the water. These often only survive where pasture has endured and protected the earthworks from ploughing or development.

Abbreviations

AOD: Above Ordnance Datum

AONB: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

BAP: Biodiversity Action Plan

CWP: Cotswold Water Park

CWPJC: Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee

GIS: Geographical Information System

SAC: Special Area of Conservation; prefix 'c': Candidate;

SPA: Special Protection Area; prefix 'p': Provisional

SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest