

DOCTORAL THESIS

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**The ‘Landscape Character Turn’**

**An Examination of Experience**

**in the UK and Taiwan**

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# ABSTRACT

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Landscape policy in the UK has a tradition of conserving natural beauty within designated areas. As a result of both the progressive development of landscape analysis techniques, of which the most recent is the use of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), and contemporary environmental trends, landscape policy in the past twenty years has undergone a significant ‘landscape character turn’ from this focus on the ‘best’ landscapes to the wider notion of the ‘rest’ of the landscape. This poses a particular challenge for the non-statutory locally defined landscape designations. Over time questions have arisen about whether these designations should be retained or replaced by criteria-based policies informed by LCA and covering the countryside as a whole. The ‘turn’ underlines significant changes in landscape concepts and the way in which they contribute to planning policies and practice in the UK and also at a global scale.

This research explores how the character-based approach has, in the last two decades, developed into an alternative tool to the traditional local landscape designation approach. The evolution of these two approaches has been examined at both the national (England) level and the local level (English local authorities) by conducting policy document review, case study analysis and in-depth interviews. At the national level, the discourses concerning the transition between the two approaches have been extracted to scrutinise their development and interrelationships. At the local level, three sample local authorities have been identified to investigate how the approaches have been delivered. Lastly, the research examines the extent to which knowledge gained from the UK experience can be compared to the cultural context of Taiwan, where the use of local landscape designations is still prevailing.

The research shows that the character-based approach is appropriate to replace the use of local landscape designations given that certain conditions are met. Outside the UK this approach is not readily application to other planning contexts where crucial elements for carrying out this approach are absent.

**Keywords:** landscape policy, landscape character assessment, local landscape designation, policy transfer



# PREFACE

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This thesis originates from an idea which has been of long interest to the researcher in terms of applying Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) which originally emerged in the UK, to her home country, Taiwan. The method of LCA was first introduced to Taiwan by the researcher's dissertation supervisor, Prof Shin Wang from the Dept. of Geography, National Taiwan University, following his academic visit to the University of Cambridge in 1994/1995. During that time, Prof Wang approached the Countryside Agency and English Nature about landscape and nature conservation because of his research interests in these fields. The emerging use of LCA (at the time the 1993 version of Landscape Assessment guidance) and its applications like river landscape assessment, among other related nature conservation issues, were brought back to Taiwan and followed up in the form of academic studies. This knowledge started to inform postgraduate research of Prof Wang's students from the late 1990s, as well as the researcher's master dissertation under the title '*Assessment and Planning of Landscape Resources: a case study of Pingxi-Shuangxi countryside*' (Cheng, 2004). In this dissertation, the researcher conducted a regional landscape assessment based on the 2002 version of the LCA guidance to delineate landscape character types/areas and devise landscape planning strategies. An additional capacity study was also included to demonstrate how this approach can be applied to a proposed motorway scheme.

Meanwhile, because of Prof Wang's position in a policy think-tank, the concept of landscape character and the method of LCA have started to emerge in major government-led plans and are referred to by some landscape consultants in their landscape planning projects commissioned by local authorities. However, owing to the rather academic background of Prof Wang, this experience has stayed at a conceptual level for some time, without being practically applied to planning practice. A significant leap in applying this approach to landscape planning has been made in the last five years when one of Prof Wang's PhD students, Mr K.Y. Wang, who is also an experienced landscape architect, introduced LCA into the development of a county level Landscape Master Plan. This provided an opportunity for the UK experience to be probed in the context of Taiwan. Although there is a growing awareness of landscape character in Taiwan, there is still a significant lack of understanding of the way in LCA is carried out and how this method can be applied to inform landscape planning. This thesis, based on these premises and the researcher's previous experience in conducting LCA, therefore aims to investigate the theoretical and practical aspects of this approach, especially in its original context of the UK. This can be taken as a further step in drawing lessons from the UK since LCA was first introduced by Prof Wang in the late 1990s.

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## Glossary

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<b>character-based approach</b>	Planning policies (usually criteria-based) are made against the landscape contexts informed by LCA, and planning decisions are made by referring to LCA in the form of supplementary documents or evidence base. (in short from, the ‘character approach’)
<b>landscape assessment</b>	In the broad sense, landscape assessment encapsulates different methods of studying, classifying and analysing landscapes for a certain purposes, such as landscape survey, landscape appraisal and landscape evaluation. In the narrow sense, it specifically indicates the Landscape Assessment guidance published by the Countryside Commission in 1987 and 1993.
<b>landscape character</b>	Indicating the distinguishable and outstanding elements that occur in a certain type of landscape
<b>Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)</b>	Landscape character assessment is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape, and using this information to assist in managing change in the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive.
<b>landscape character tools</b>	The different forms of tools converted from landscape character assessment, such as Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Historic Landscape Characterisation and Landscape Capacity/Sensitivity Study.
<b>landscape character turn</b>	The transition between the use of local landscape designations and the character-based approach starting from the introduction of the latter in national planning policies in the late 1990s in England.
<b>Local landscape designations (LLDs)</b>	Locally important landscapes identified by local authorities on a non-statutory basis and enclosed in local planning policies as a mechanism to protect and/or regulate planning practice. In this research, LLDs can be Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) or Areas of Special Landscape Value (ASLVs), depending on the terminology used in local authorities.
<b>landscape planning</b>	The development and application of large scale strategies, policies and plans in which different aspects of landscape can contribute to the formulation of planning polices, development control and allocation of land use. Landscape planning in this thesis is not synonymous with large scale landscape design.
<b>landscape policy</b>	Landscape policies involve two levels of landscape planning regulations: site-level and strategic level. This research will focus only on the strategic level of landscape policies, which emphasis on the desired vision and general principles and strategies for landscapes
<b>landscape strategy</b>	Practical actions to deliver landscape planning, such as conservation, maintenance, enhancement, improvement and re-creation, also called ‘landscape policy objectives’ in some cases.



# PART I

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## *Research context and rationale*

This introductory part begins with an overview of the research in the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 will outline the research by defining the research topic and reviewing related literature. This background will provide an introduction to landscape planning and policy from general to specific, with the emphasis on the context in the UK and in another culture, Taiwan, as the comparator for the subsequent stage of this research. The second part of this chapter will specify the objects and research questions as well as the structure of this thesis.
- Chapter 2 will develop the conceptual framework and analytic scheme of the research, based on which three qualitative methodological approaches are employed in response to three stages of study. The principle of each one of them will be mentioned first, and particular focus will be placed on their applications to research design and procedures.



# CHAPTER 1

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## *Introduction and research background*

This research investigates the transition between two UK landscape planning approaches to explore the degree to which landscape planning practice developed in one country can be applied and transferred to another planning and cultural context, exemplified by the researcher's home country, Taiwan. By examining the intertwined discourses around the two landscape approaches over the past few decades and the underlying mechanisms of change, this thesis explores ways that the UK experience can shed light on the planning practice of Taiwan.

The two landscape approaches are the local landscape designation (LLD) approach, which features the long-standing countryside tradition of restricting or excluding development from areas of high landscape or scenic value, and the landscape character-based approach, which provides tailored policies for different landscapes based on holistic consideration of their landscape character. These two approaches have, since 1997, undergone a significant change in their relative importance in planning policy influenced by the requirements of governmental planning policy guidance. While the transition from the former approach to the latter is increasingly apparent in the UK context, planners in Taiwan are still involved in using locally defined landscape designations to underpin landscape planning, while at the same time a planning approach based on landscape character has also recently emerged. The history of the two approaches in the UK, the prevailing practice of local landscape designations and the emerging involvement of landscape character in Taiwan thus raise questions of:

- how the two UK landscape approaches emerged in response to distinctive landscape ideologies and planning practices at different periods of time;
- how the transition between the two approaches happened with regard to the changing focus of landscape planning and whether the transition will happen elsewhere outside the UK;
- the extent to which the two approaches, especially the new approach based on landscape character, can be applicable and transferable to the cultural and planning contexts of Taiwan.

As a result, this research aims to explore how the landscape character-based approach has developed into an alternative tool to the traditional non-statutory local landscape designations, which not only caused what is here called a 'landscape character turn' in the UK planning system, but also has an influence on landscape planning in Taiwan where equivalent approaches are currently being adopted. A variety of approaches will be employed to examine the implementation of the two approaches

at national and at local level in the UK, predominately in England. Furthermore, the knowledge gained from the UK experience will be compared with the current approach to landscape planning of Taiwan in order to understand how the differences between the two systems affect the transferability of the UK experience, and especially the approach based on landscape character. This research issue is crucial to bridge a gap between research and policy because this transition has not yet been investigated in any academic work, and also because it could have important implications for landscape planning beyond the context of the UK.

To provide an introduction to and context for the research, this chapter starts with a review of literature on landscape planning and its policy implementation in general, in the context of the UK and in the comparative context of Taiwan.

## **1.1 Landscape planning in theory and practice**

Landscape embraces a variety of issues, from the appreciation of scenery to the investigation of landscape resources and dynamics. When these issues are considered in planning, landscape planning becomes an interdisciplinary practice which links humans with nature as well as theory with practice, and is shaped by the cultural, historical and political background of a given society. This section will introduce the development from the theoretical understanding of landscape to the divergent perspectives of landscape studies, from which emerged different strands of practice of landscape planning. The links from landscape theories to planning practice will form the framework upon which the UK and Taiwan contexts for landscape planning can be built.

### **1.1.1 An overview of landscape theories**

It is widely recognised that the term ‘landscape’ has been established in the Anglo-Saxon language at least since medieval times (Muir, 1999, p.5). In this early sense, landscape was interpreted as a piece of land, a territory or a region with little connotation of human occupation or activities (Olwig, 1996; Muir, 1999, p.3). This initial meaning remained in the common language until the generation of the scientific implications of landscape in the Renaissance in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, causing the broadening of landscape meanings from a simple, neutral concept into different streams of specialised disciplines and subjects of study. These disciplines and their sub-fields were instrumental in forming a sophisticated structure in which distinctive aspects of landscape can be studied. Antrop (2005) gave a simple illustration of how the mainstreams and tributaries of landscape study have evolved, in which three broad strands of landscape studies can be identified (figure 1.1):

- the art and design perspective derived directly from the Renaissance;

- physical geography and the ecological study of landscape; and
- humanistic expression of landscape including the historical perspective.

Under the influence of renaissance humanism, the understanding of landscape shifted from its early meaning of ‘land’ to the scenic connotation of ‘scape’. With the emergence of landscape painting, describing and illustrating nature from the specific viewpoint of observers initiated an artistic way of looking at the world in terms of its visual and scenic features. The aesthetic appreciation of nature, first embedded in landscape painting, was then developed into cartographical and ordnance skills, visual assessment and garden design with an attempt at imitating natural scenery in human habitats (Cosgrove, 1984; Marsh, 2010, p.14). By the time the aesthetic meaning of landscape was established in literature and the arts, the original idea of landscape as a synonym of land rekindled academic discussion with the rapid development of physical geography and natural science in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The systematic exploration and description of the physical world thus caused landscape to be realised as ‘*the total character/impression of a region of the earth*’, defined by German geographer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt (1814). Especially in central Europe, this point of view was developed as a holistic way, as put by Granö (1929), to ‘*study, describe and explain landscapes and the related perceived areas composed of viewsheds and the features and spatial units they contain*’ (Cited by Antrop, 2005, p.30).

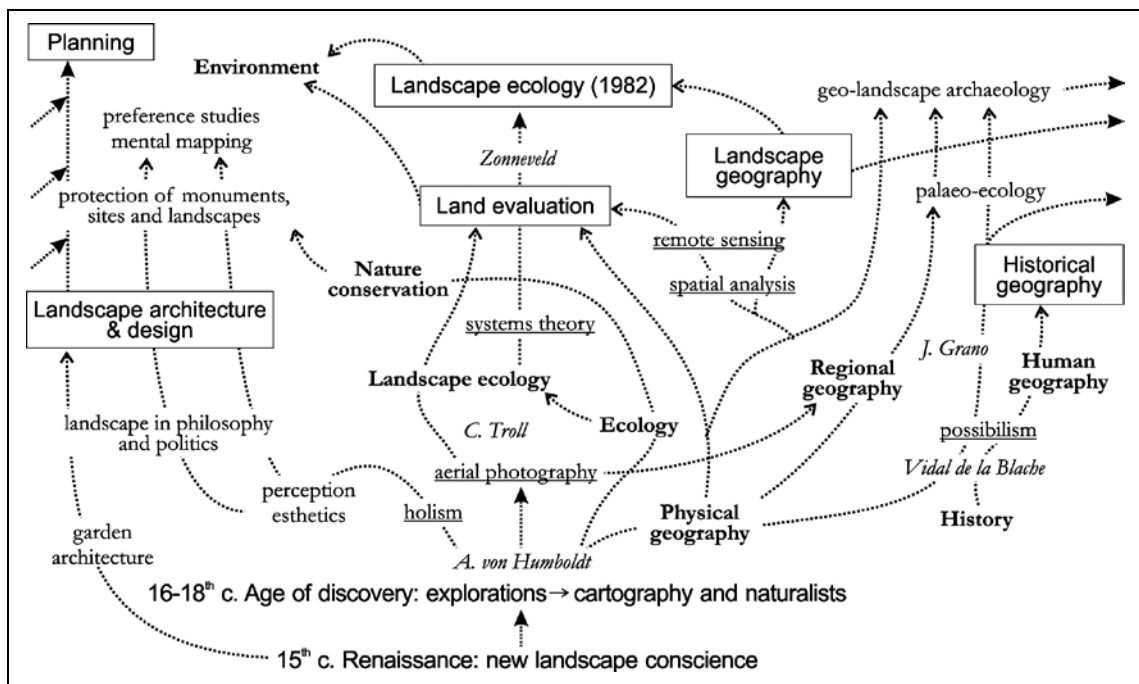


Figure 1.1 The development of landscape study (Source: Reproduced from Antrop, 2005)

Just as the physical components of landscape were explored through physical geography, the emergence of ecology in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century directed landscape study towards an interest in the relationship between organisms (including human beings) and

their surrounding environment. The two fields of geography and ecology then merged as the new discipline of 'landscape ecology'. The holistic analysis of all relevant components, including the natural and physical parts of and human influences on the landscape, gave rise to a significant advance in the spatial dimension of landscape, such as landscape patterns, system dynamics of landscape and scale issues (Klink *et al.*, 2002, p.8). Theories borrowed from ecology considerably enriched the understanding of landscape with ecological knowledge. To this research, the most important contribution of landscape ecology lies in its direct input into planning strategies, which will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter.

In parallel with the physical and ecological investigation of landscape, the discussion of anthropogenic influences also drew academic attention to supplement the historical and humanistic perspective of landscape. The cultural aspect of landscape was first explored by classifying landscape into 'cultural regions' according to the distinctive regional features caused by human agents and 'modes of life' in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Muir, 1999, p.8; Antrop, 2005, p.29). In this sense, landscape contains a powerful image of identity and character, which causes a 'sense of place' and is tied up with personal attachment and the vernacular. Later on, American geographer Carl Sauer highlighted the importance of human activities as a cultural manifestation of landscape by placing a particular emphasis on human culture and activities in reconstructing the physical environment (Coones, 1992, p.71). It is thus widely accepted that virtually all landscape can be called 'cultural landscape' since all landscapes on the earth are more or less shaped by human influences, both culturally and historically (Coones, 1992, p.72; Phillips, 2002, p.6).

### **The integrated and modern view of landscape**

The above strands of landscape study indicate how landscape has expanded from its initial use into a comprehensive field comprising visual and aesthetic, natural, cultural and humanistic perspectives. Summarising the different perspectives of landscape studies, the European Landscape Convention (2000) defined landscape on the basis of a balanced view and cross-cultural context as:

*'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'* (Article 1).

This definition indicated five integral concepts of landscape: landscape as a spatial entity, landscape perception, landscape character, landscape dynamic/change and landscape components. Firstly, the idea of landscape as a spatial entity is straightforward, developed from its earliest meaning of a physical tract of land. In parallel to the territorial and spatial meaning, the second concept of human perception, marks a more subjective reflection, involving feelings and imagination about landscape



(Tress and Tress, 2001; Swanwick, 2009). This basic dichotomy dividing landscape into ‘land’ and ‘scape’ is largely equivalent to the natural and cultural landscape studies mentioned above. However, these elements of landscape are not static, but are ever changing and interacting by natural factors and human factors, resulting in different characteristics of landscape. The concept of landscape character therefore represents the total representation of the holistic landscape in the form of distinctive and consistent patterns (Swanwick and LUC, 2002).

As figure 1.2 shows, the five concepts represent the contemporary understanding of landscape and landscape study, which is particularly important when taking landscape into consideration in planning.

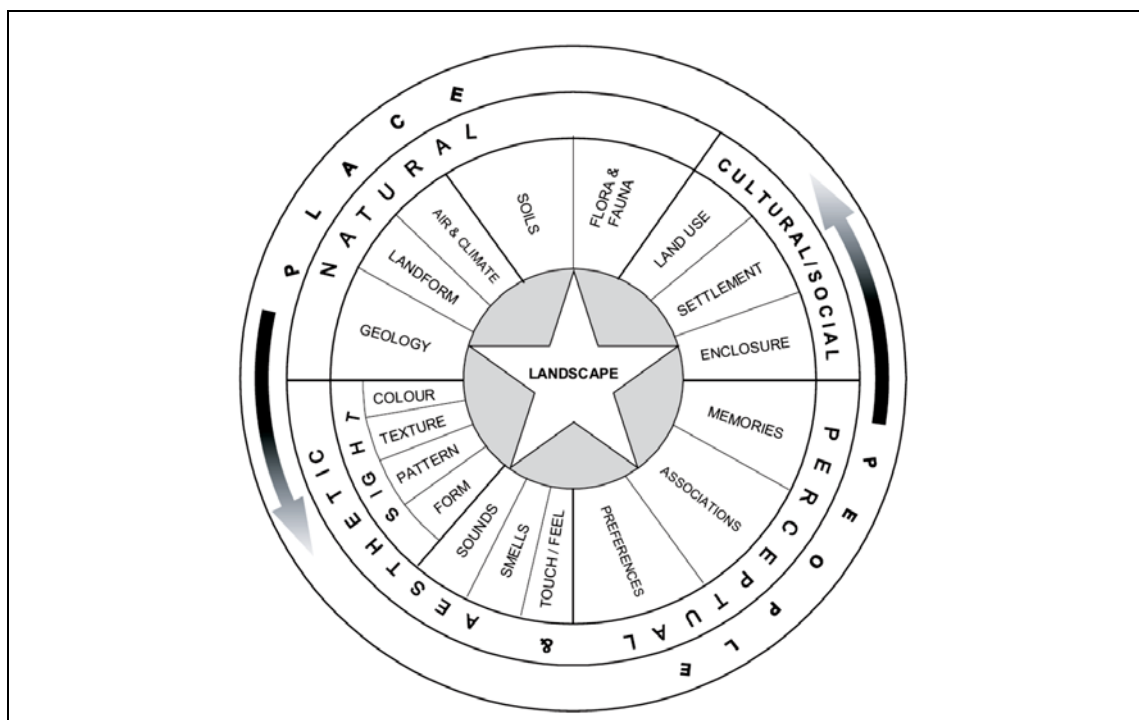


Figure 1.2 The composition of landscape (Source: Swanwick and LUC, 2002, p.2)

### 1.1.2 Landscape as a planning approach

The all-embracing nature of landscape makes it possible to integrate various perspectives into systematic and manageable activities to achieve a desired goal. Just like the diverse interpretations of landscape, landscape planning also differs according to contexts, ranging from the abstract sense of conserving the productivity and beauty of the earth’s surface<sup>1</sup> to the pragmatic definition of forward-looking actions in creating or maintaining landscape<sup>2</sup>. Although there is no universal definition of landscape planning which spans across a wide range of practice, studies still try to conceptualise landscape planning in different forms; for example, Ndubisi (1997) linked landscape

<sup>1</sup> Defined by the Landscape Planning Commission of IUCN

<sup>2</sup> Defined by European Landscape Convention

planning with substantive or procedural theories, Beer (1993) distinguished between planning for the visual aspects of landscape and planning for the human habitat, and Selman (2010) divided landscape planning according to the rural tradition and the urban tradition. Based on these considerations and also taking account of other references, the following discussion will put forward three approaches: the area-wide approach, the aesthetic/design approach and landscape designations, to illustrate the diversified methods of landscape planning relating to the following discussion of landscape planning in the UK and Taiwan .

### **The area-wide landscape planning approach**

The area-wide approach takes landscape as a holistic entity in planning. Among the main streams of landscape study indicated above, landscape ecology features an exceptionally direct link to this approach. Ecology in this context can be better termed 'land ecology' or even 'land use', which links the physical environment with the dynamic relationship between human and nature. In landscape ecology, two traditions can be identified by their theoretical and practical influence on landscape planning. Firstly, the European tradition, which grew from natural, bio-physical sciences and the analysis of man-land relationship, represents a holistic investigation of the 'natural balance and regional characteristics' of landscape and human activities (Klink *et al.*, 2002, p.18; Burel and Baudry, 2003, p.18). Landscape planning in this tradition normally begins with a thorough landscape inventory and mapping work as the fundamental building block. Based on the sound spatial information provided by landscape analysis, landscapes are assessed and evaluated for different planning purposes and, ultimately, anticipate the future directions of different decisions, guidelines, monitoring schemes and zoning suggestions. This holistic approach is still featured in the Pan-European practice of landscape analysis and characterisation in the present day (Wascher, 2005, p.1-2).

At the same time, landscape planning which gives a particular weight to ecology and conservation biology is often referred to as the American tradition, which emerged later in the 1980s and has mushroomed ever since (Klink *et al.*, 2002, p.39). The American tradition is established upon the theoretical foundation of applied ecology, such as habitat conservation, corridors and connectivity, heterogeneity, a total human ecosystem, ecosystem dynamics and hierarchy theory (Dramstad, 1996, p.14). In this light, landscape is regarded as the highest spatial scale to incorporate all physical and human factors. Unlike the algorithms and modelling required in conventional system ecological studies, this tradition significantly reduces the complexity of ecosystems into succinct concepts. For example, the diverse configuration of landscape patterns is converted into three universal elements of patches, corridors and matrix<sup>3</sup> as the building

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<sup>3</sup> Forman (1986)

block of landscape planning (Dramstad *et al.*, 1996, p.14). Moreover, indicators and conceptual models are widely employed to quantify the structure of landscape elements, flows of energy and materials and the temporal change of landscape (Leitão and Ahern, 2002). By using the simplified spatial language, landscape planning principles under the American tradition can be easily fed into other planning sectors and planning purposes.

While the two traditions take slightly different routes to interpret the landscape, they share several features in solving environmental problems (Leitão and Ahern, 2002):

- using a spatial framework to integrate abiotic, biotic and human factors and their interactions both vertically (planning phases) and horizontally (planning themes);
- using scientific tools and methods, such as scenario planning, to enable planners and designers to analyse spatial issues in a rigorous way;
- recognising the position of human activities and the complexity of the man-made landscape;
- requiring a complete process of landscape analysis, diagnosis and prognosis to inform development decisions.

### **Landscape aesthetics and design approach**

The second approach of landscape planning emphasises the visual quality of landscape to make places better and creates landscape through deliberate site analysis and evaluation, a design process and capacity assessment (Swaffield, 2002, p.33). This approach features a strong influence from the visual tradition and garden design from the 15<sup>th</sup> century on (see figure 1.1), in which the medieval fear and suspicion of nature was turned into a positive apprehension. With the emergence of the Romantic Movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this attitude was further enhanced by the affection for and enjoyment of nature and natural status (Marsh, 2010, p.14). With the emergence of landscape gardening, the reproduction of nature and its pleasant settings was realised in artificial space, firstly in private gardens and then expanded to the public domain in terms of land use allocation and city/urban planning (Turner, 1987, p.5). Pioneer work adopting this approach to landscape planning was substantially enlightened by the garden city movement in late 19<sup>th</sup> century England and the concurrent idea of linking Boston's urban parks and wetlands as an 'emerald necklace' in the transatlantic counterpart (Selman, 2010). The term 'landscape architecture' as an equivalent of this approach emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, thereby confirming its mission to create and manage the ecosystem and natural resources as 'the picturesque' (Turner, 1987, p.2).

The approach and the ideology of landscape aesthetics can be applied on a wide spatial scale, from site-specific design to regional planning. On the small scale, the approach is closely related to architecture with regard to the use of physical structure to

facilitate human activities, whereas at the larger scale, it is similar to land use allocation in focusing on the relationship, opportunities and constraints between human and nature (Murphy, 2005, pp.13, 76). Although each level may contain different planning issues, several common themes can be identified in practice. Firstly, the approach borrows ecological principles and methodologies as design concepts to formulate a certain way of interpreting the landscape. Ecological methods in this approach are adopted to create or re-create the visual form and symbolic meaning of landscape in the manmade environment, such as ‘*Design with Nature*’ or ‘*Design for Human Ecosystem*’ (Punter, 1982; Swaffield, 2002, pp.5). Landscape is no longer a neutral object for analysis, but also conveys social, cultural and political meanings. Therefore, landscape in this approach can be treated as a separate planning sector in which, alongside other planning considerations, certain values can be presented.

### **Landscape designation approach**

Compared to the above two approaches, the designation approach is the most straightforward measure to execute land use control and target financial and administrative resources on a tract of land with special landscape assets. The approach of designation normally involves two opposite goals: promoting positive landscape management and restricting negative landscape impacts, and sometimes an additional function of being functional areas for administrative or educational purposes (Selman, 2009). An awareness of the need to designate areas with natural assets derived from the concern for land and environmental degradation since the 19<sup>th</sup> century Conservation Movement. The notion were soon realised, as the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 in the US, and then designated areas of different forms and for a variety of purposes, immediately gained worldwide popularity. In the UK (England and Wales only), the network of landscape designations is formed by the use of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) at the national level as statutory designations, which is supplemented by local landscape designations on a non-statutory basis. Also in Taiwan, National Parks have also been established from 1984, in which Special Landscape Districts as a land use control type are defined as strict no-development areas where valuable **natural landscapes** cannot be found and reproduced elsewhere.

Although the designation approach is relatively easy to apply, increasing political, socio-economic and environmental concerns also arose regarding isolating designated areas from their surroundings and preventing them from being included in wider land use policies (Selman, 2009). Also, since designation is a static land use mechanism in terms of offering restriction rather than guidance, this area-based approach has been considered out of date, especially under the heightened call of sustainability (Kelly *et al.*, 2004). More recent approaches to establishing landscape designations in different

parts of the world, now focus more on the broader characteristics of landscapes as exemplified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) protected area Category V: Protected Landscapes/Seascapes. In this type of protected landscape the designation expresses the '*distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value*', which are typical of 'lived-in, humanised landscape' (Phillips, 2002, pp.24, 111). This type of protection is achieved not by strict regulation, but by guiding the human processes which shape the landscape and maintain their natural and cultural values (Phillips, 2002, p. xv).

### **Landscape planning in the modern context**

Although the concept of landscape has long been applied to planning practice, the traditional method of landscape planning, such as splitting designations from their peripheral areas, dividing rural and urban planning and dealing with landscape under a single planning sector, proved problematic (Selman, 2010). Since landscape in the modern context gradually becomes an interdisciplinary issue, it also functions as an integrating framework to accommodate a variety of knowledge and techniques. For example, the convergence of the two traditions of landscape ecology forms a sound ecological basis in contemporary landscape planning, whereas a high degree of correlation also exists between the American tradition of landscape ecology and the ecological approach to landscape design. Landscape designations, on the other hand, can also be converted to buffer zones between protected and unprotected areas as well as the linkage between green corridors and different land uses (Phillips, 2002, p.25).

In addition to the advance and progress of landscape planning within the broad field of landscape itself, the influences from wider social and environmental contexts also extend the scope of landscape in several ways (Selman, 2010, Conrad *et al.*, 2011):

- the expansion of scope to include all aspects of landscape and landscape types for linking humans with the wider world;
- the shift of perspective from preservation to conservation and from strict control to active management and capacity-building; and
- the notion of extending the use of landscape and natural resources to tackle and reconcile conflicting interests in land use planning.

### **1.2 Landscape planning and policy implementation in the UK**

The previous section outlined the general development from landscape theories to their applications in planning. Although in the modern context, landscape planning is moving towards an integrated framework to encompass as many aspects of landscape and relevant issues as possible, the selection of landscape approaches still differs according to cultural and social contexts. As far as the UK is concerned, the

development of landscape planning is more shaped by the nation's historical background and cultural preferences, which together contribute to the use of specific landscape approaches in planning policies. The following section will investigate these features in detail to understand how landscape is derived and conceptualised from this particular context.

### **1.2.1 The conceptual origins of landscape planning in the UK**

#### **Landscape preference and the scenery tradition**

All landscapes today are more or less shaped by human activities and interpreted differently from culture to culture; as Jackson (1986) put it:

*'A German "landschaft (landscape)" can sometimes be a small administrative unit... Americans tend to think that landscape can mean natural scenery, whereas in England a landscape almost always contains a human element (cited by Muir, 1999, p.2).'*

Divergent semantic origins, not only the word landscape in English, but also in other languages, such as *landschaft* in German, *landschap* in Dutch and *pays/paysage* in French, imply that landscape has different connotations according to the underlying cultures. Moreover, the difference also exists in the multi-layered human footprints, traditional activities and characteristics, which are particularly obvious in the 'old world' (Selman, 2008). As a result, the underlying associations of landscapes eventually result in specific 'tastes', or preferences for landscape. In the UK, landscape preference is strongly influenced by the tradition of scenery, which rests mainly on the visual aspect of landscape (Beer, 1993). An exclusively 'English landscape', in this tradition, is best known as rustic, picturesque, tamed and nature-resembling scenery shaped by past and present human traits (Lowenthal & Prince, 1965; Muir, 1999, p.191).

The scenery tradition follows directly from the long-standing romantic and artistic view of nature in the UK (Bunce, 1994, p.28). The rise of industrialisation and urbanisation since the 18<sup>th</sup> century reshaped the traditional landscape considerably through discordant and undesirable land uses, especially in visual terms. As a reaction to the rapid growth of the industrialised world, the awareness of seeking human values and identity within the domain of nature first emerged as a philosophical ideology against the manmade environment. The desire to return to nature soon shifted towards the sentimental celebration of nature through the fine arts, known as the Romantic Movement, which arose in the late Victorian era (Bunce, 1994, p.26). In the view of romanticists, nature contained the same essence of beauty as was expressed in artistic works. To demonstrate the appreciation of nature in poems, paintings and literature, landscape was thus described by artistic expressions such as 'picturesque', 'sublime' and 'wilderness scenery' (Selman and Swanwick, 2010). Furthermore, beyond the

recognition of natural scenery in philosophy and arts, the continual pressures from industrial development and urban encroachment eventually resulted in social and political actions to protect and preserve nature and its resources (Bunce, 1994, p.176). The campaign to preserve countryside resources and pre-industrial heritage was eventually instrumental in finding legal ways of protecting the amenity of landscape by using the term ‘natural beauty’.

### **Natural beauty and the emergence of landscape designations**

The concept of natural beauty, as opposed to the manmade infrastructure, resonates with the scenery tradition by emphasising the aesthetic value of landscape in a relatively unspoiled state. The use of natural beauty first appeared in the official language in the 1907 Act for establishing the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty<sup>4</sup>, in which natural beauty was broadly connected to wildlife, natural aspects and natural features (Selman & Swanwick, 2010). This preliminary use gained support from planning professionals in the interwar period and, among other effects, broadened the meaning of natural beauty into concepts such as *remarkable landscape beauty*, *landscape character and pattern*, *characteristic landscape beauty* and *high scenic value* (Swanwick *et al.*, 2006). At the same time, growing campaigns for the protection of and access to countryside scenery, as proposed in the Countryside Movement at the turn of 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century, later contributed to the government’s commitment to establish National Parks in the inter-war period as a measure to protect valued countryside landscape from urban encroachment. Two crucial stimuli to the establishment of national parks, the Dower report (1945) and Hobhouse report (1947), pointed out the linkage between the concept of natural beauty and landscape designations. In the Dower report the term ‘national park’ was clarified as ‘*an extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild countryside*’, within which the ‘*characteristic landscape beauty has to be strictly preserved*’ (Cullingworth, 1988, p.228). The Hobhouse report, in its recommendation of selecting proposed national parks and other ‘secondary’ landscape designations, also identified the protection of landscape beauty as one of the primary criteria (Swanwick *et al.*, 2006, p.50).

These antecedents justified the use of natural beauty as the preliminary consideration for the selection of landscape designations. The 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act proposed two types of landscape designation, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) to realise the concept of natural beauty. In the 1949 Act, natural beauty gained its first official definition as ‘the aesthetic value of an area with the reference to its specific natural features and wildlife<sup>5</sup>’ (Selman and Swanwick, 2009). While the premise of unspoiled rural areas and the notion of visual

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<sup>4</sup> Now widely known as the National Trust

<sup>5</sup> Section 114(2)

quality remain an integral part of natural beauty, its meaning in the policy context is not static. With advances in exploring landscape from different angles, the contemporary definition of natural beauty is almost equivalent to the all-embracing nature of landscape and in line with landscape character (Swanwick *et al.*, 2006, p.6).

### **Landscape designations in the early planning system**

Alongside the enshrinement of statutory landscape designations exemplified by National Parks and AONBs, a parallel pathway of dealing with landscape issues emerged through planning control policies, especially in the context of countryside planning. Concurrently with the inter-war campaigns for national parks, there were moves to develop a planning system to appropriately direct and restrict development in the countryside as an alternative to, or at least a counterpart to, protected or designated areas (Bunce, 1994, p.186). Among the interwar planners, Patrick Abercrombie was noteworthy not only because of his influential contribution to early town and country planning, but also for his incorporation of areas of landscape importance into planning considerations. In his 'landscape survey' of the regional planning framework, Abercrombie employed terms like '*remarkable country*', '*rural special*<sup>6</sup> – *for landscape amenity*', '*remarkable landscape beauty*' and '*special landscape reservation*' to represent the aesthetic aspect and amenity of the countryside (Dehaene, 2005). These concepts were further mapped out alongside other types of land use in order to apply preservation measures (figure 1.3).

While Abercrombie's work was also considered one of the roots of natural beauty and resonated with the emergence of national parks later on, it showed a strong recognition that preserving landscapes of particular importance could also be achieved through planning strategies. He established in his planning schemes the mapping of landscapes of special amenity, which was considered the origin of locally defined landscape designations. A number of preliminary local landscape designations were identified during this period, such as the first Area of Great Landscape Value established in Surrey in the 1930s (Department of Environment, 1995, p.60). This notion was later on addressed in the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 in terms of entrusting country councils with statutory duty to delineate the best landscapes (Jensen, 2007, p.129). In response to the post-1945 planning paradigm of using policy areas to preserve countryside and restrict urbanisation and industrialisation (Dwyer, 2011), designating statutory (national) and local landscapes thus became the earliest landscape approach in the planning system.

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<sup>6</sup> As opposed to 'rural normal' or agricultural land



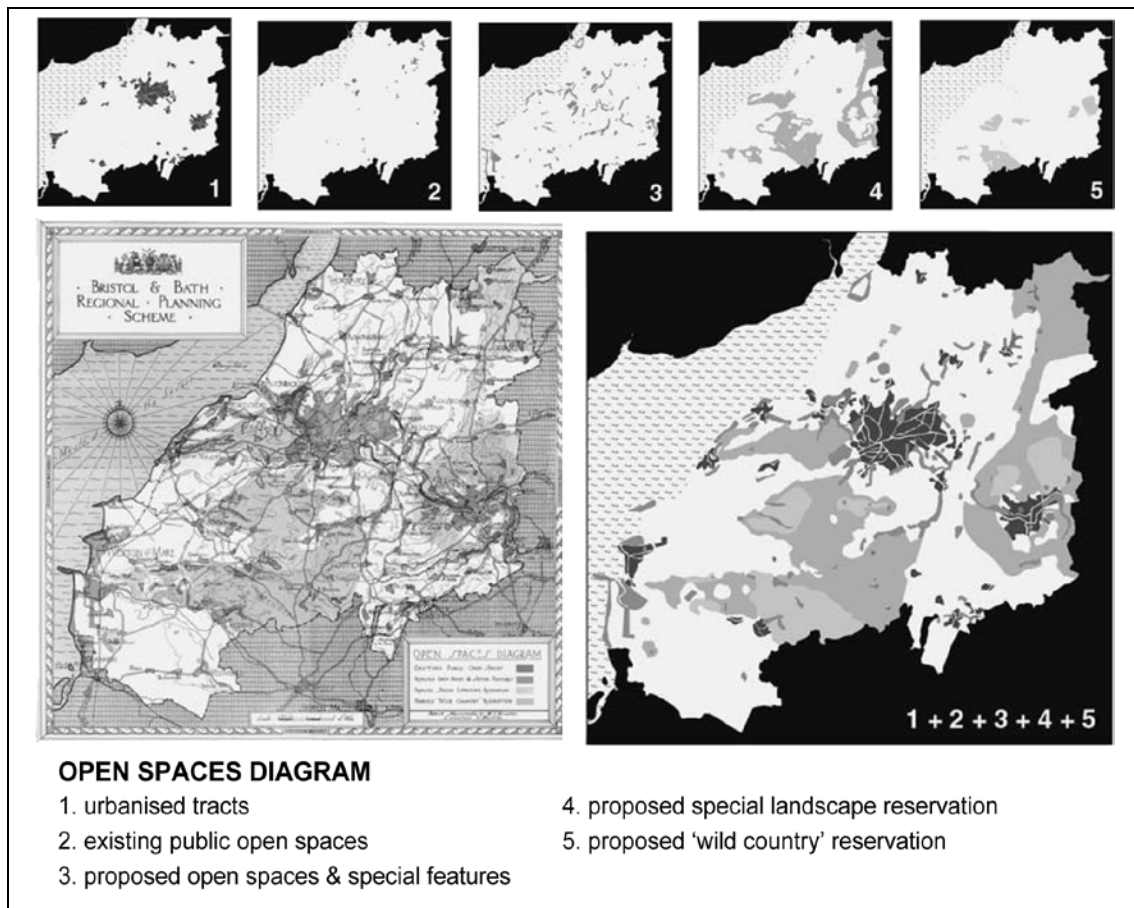


Figure 1.3 Analysis of open spaces diagram from the Bristol and Bath Regional Planning Scheme (source: Dehaene, 2005, figure 7)

### 1.2.2 The emergence of landscape issues in the planning system

The early practice of landscape planning in the UK, as indicated in the foregoing, was exemplified by the establishment of statutory landscape designations including National Parks and AONBs as well as the locally defined landscape designations which came into planning practice even earlier. During this period, landscape designations were recognised as a central theme with regard to regulating agricultural elements and excluding urban influences (Jensen, 2007, p.345). By the time landscape designations were prevalent in the countryside, another thread of applying landscape concepts in response to the huge need in post-1945 regeneration also arose in the form of architecture and design guidance, especially in city and urban areas. Landscape architecture and landscape design were widely adopted to safeguard the provision of open space and amenity, namely ‘townscapes’, and at the same time to improve and reconstruct the post-war environment (Selman, 2010).

Later on, in the 1970s, the scope of landscape planning was broadened by several changes. Firstly, the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act and the 1974 government reorganisation enabled local authorities to include locally defined landscape designations, which were believed to have a strategic function in planning, in the

emerging county Structure Plans (Scott and Bullen, 2004; Swanwick *et al.*, 2006, para 4.3). In order to identify landscapes worthy of special attention, a process of systematic landscape survey resembling Abercrombie's work in the 1930s was reinforced through the prevailing scientific and quantitative approaches (Selman, 2010). Blanket landscape evaluation in terms of statistics and scoring methods were widely applied to the whole landscape, with landscapes being ranked according to the priority of their need for protection. Although the rationale of evaluating landscape in the numerical way was questioned and criticised, which made the approach only ephemeral, the evaluation approach allowed factual landscape outputs to be incorporated in the planning system alongside other planning considerations (Selman, 2010). Secondly, on the thread of landscape architecture and design, the preliminary interest in small scale cosmetic exercises, had by this time moved to more creative works. Publicly employed landscape architects at this stage also made significant contributions to landscaping projects, such as formulating large-scale landscape plans and involvement in tree planting and forestry issues (Gilg, 1798, p.216; Punter and Carmona, 1997).

Although landscape planning at this stage was realised by the two routes of landscape designations in the countryside and planting/landscape design in urban areas, there were growing concerns about the lack of coherence of landscape issues in development plans. Firstly, there was very little guidance for development control officers and developers on how new landscape should be created and landscape change should be managed (Beer, 1987). Since landscape designations or landscape design were still confined to the scenic aspect of landscape, a comprehensive landscape appraisal, assessment or survey was urgently required to take account of the whole character of the landscape (Beer, 1987; Punter and Carmona, 1997). The lack of guidance was solved by the introduction of Landscape (Character) Assessment (LCA)<sup>7</sup> in the late 1980s as a planning tool approved by both academics and practitioners (Punter and Carmona, 1997; Hodge, 1999, p.99). Unlike the scenery tradition in landscape planning, LCA took account of the holistic characteristics of landscape as area-wide attributes, which was later on called an 'all landscapes' approach as opposed to designations (Selman, 2009). Planning practices, as a result, were no longer based on the aesthetic aspect of landscape only, but on the distinctive and recognisable character expressed in each particular landscape (Swanwick and LUC, 2002).

With the adoption of new landscape approaches marked by LCA as well as the incorporation of contemporary issues like sustainability and climate change, landscape planning in the UK is now becoming more comprehensive and in line with international trends. The improvement can be seen in several features (Selman, 2010):

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<sup>7</sup> Landscape (Character) Assessment in this thesis indicates both Landscape Assessment and its successive version of Landscape Character Assessment

- attitudes towards landscape designations have changed from protectionism to sustainable management, while the once neglected non-designated areas are now re-emphasised by the new approach based on all landscapes;
- the division between countryside and urban landscape planning, as indicated by landscape designations and landscaping measures, is blurred and bridged by strategic open space policies;
- landscape is no longer be treated as a sector separated from other planning considerations. Rather, landscape considerations have gradually merged into other planning fields like forestry, transport and housing and make contributions to providing holistic viewpoints.

In summary, current UK landscape planning can be related to all the three approaches mentioned in section 1.1.2. Traditionally, the use of designations as well as design and landscaping, as indicated by the landscape designation approach and the aesthetics/design approach, were the predominant ways of addressing landscape issues in planning practice. More recently, the emergence of landscape character assessment features the transition from scenery and an aesthetic perspective to a comprehensive understanding of landscape. The use of LCA in informing planning policies and practice, called the character-based approach in this research, resembles the area-wide landscape approach. However, no matter in what form or on which scale landscape planning is presented, its delivery still relies heavily on the planning control system. This distinguishes UK landscape planning from that of countries in which the approach of zoning is widely used.

### 1.2.3 The legal-administrative framework of landscape planning

The particular landscape preference and planning traditions set the conceptual background to landscape planning in the UK, while the delivery of landscape planning is totally dependent on the planning system and mechanisms. In the UK, the modern planning system is built upon the concept of individual discretion in terms of making decisions on development and land use allocations. In contrast to another widely used practice, zoning, in which planning control is carried out by zoning regulations, in the UK system local planning authorities are granted discretionary power and freedom to make judgements and decisions by referring to statutory development plans and other material considerations. The UK planning system involves the following features and elements (Davies, 1999, pp.45, 59; Booth, 2003, p.2):

- the control over **development**, defined as ‘*the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations, in, on or over the land*’ or ‘*the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land*’<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Section 55, Town and Country Planning Act 1990

- **development plans** as the main source of planning policies proposed by a planning authority for the provision of strategic guidance and regulations
- the mechanism of **development control** for local planning authorities to give planning consent based on planning policies and the acceptability of development proposals
- the right of **appeal** for applicants and the power of **enforcement** for planning authorities where applicable

### **Landscape planning in development plans**

In the planning process, land use visions, objectives, schemes and policies are first set out in development plans. When new development comes into the planning system in the form of planning applications, theoretically the applications should be in accordance the development plan in order to obtain permission. With the emphasis on use of development plans as the foundation for determining planning applications after the 1990s, the British system is now also called the plan-led system, in which local authorities are given a mandate to articulate their own development plans (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006, pp.109, 113). The current practice, since 2004, marks the reform of the planning system by changes in the structure and policy contents, such as evidence base informed development plans, which further enable local authorities to make policies based on sound scientific research and knowledge (Nutley *et al.*, 2007, p. 13).

The general practice of dealing with landscape issues in planning policies also follows the way in which development plans are set out. Firstly, landscape issues are incorporated in development plans in terms of landscape policies which planning applications and development control decisions should follow. At national level (England), landscape policies can be found in planning policy statements and guidance notes primarily in those dealing with countryside/rural issues (PPG/PPS7), and secondly in Green Belts (PPG/PPS2), biodiversity and geological conservation (PPG/PPS9), renewable energy (PPS22) and so on<sup>9</sup>. Government agencies, especially the Countryside Commission and its successors, also provide guidance or planning positions/statements to help underpin the handling of landscape issues in development plans, such as *Conservation Issues in Strategic Plans* (1993), *Conservation Issues in Local Plans* (1996) and *Natural England's Position on Spatial Planning* (2009). At local level, according to Punter and Carmona (1997), landscape issues addressed in development plans<sup>10</sup> in the early 1990s largely fell within several fields:

- large scale landscape considerations like open space policies and strategic planting
- small scale landscape design, such as planting, screening and laying out

<sup>9</sup> See policies relating to landscape planning from Natural England website(Accessed 09/29/11):

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/landscape/protection/planning/default.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> Data collected from 73 local authorities

- hard landscaping works

This finding suggested that local landscape policies can be found on two scales: large scale landscape planning for wider areas, and small scale ‘hard and soft’ landscaping for site-based design and maintenance. While the small scale landscaping or landscape improvement policies are outside the scope of this research, they are worth mentioning as the complementary perspective for large scale landscape considerations. The use of landscape character assessment in informing large scale landscape planning emerged from the late 1980s onwards and became increasingly important as an overarching framework, the detail of which will be expanded in the following chapters.

### **Landscape planning in development control**

In terms of applying development control to planning applications, development control officers are guided, but not necessarily bound by development plan policies. As a result, other material considerations, such as public lobbying, specific land use proposals, higher level policy statements and emerging policies, become supplementary information to be taken into account in decision making in relation to unconditional/conditional permission and refusal (ODPM, 2005; Gilg, 2005, p.38). If a decision to refuse is not accepted by the applicant, the application can be brought to the appeal stage, dealt with by the Planning Inspectorate, to make the final decision.

In development control, landscape issues are almost always raised alongside the application for new development. Control over landscape matters can also be found on the two scales mentioned above. Large scale, or strategic scale landscape control used to be executed by referring to area-based landscape policies, such as landscape designations, the boundaries of which provide the reference of the range of influence to decision making. On the small scale, particularly in urban areas, the acceptability of planning applications depends on whether the design, external appearance and landscaping of a development are in line with local planning policies (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2000, p.61). As landscaping and design are more abstract ideas, developers are advised to prepare landscape schemes or design statements alongside their planning proposals from the early preparatory stage (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2000, p.66). For major developments like highways, pipelines and large-scale land works, where conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is either obligatory or required in certain circumstances, landscape and a host of other issues in the EIA are normally presented in the form of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) (Landscape Institute, 2002). Whilst LVIA deals mainly with identifying and mitigating the landscape and visual effects caused by development, the emerging use of landscape character assessment provides local authorities with a comprehensive overview suitable both for

large scale landscape strategies, for input to LVIA and for small scale design guidance (Landscape Institute, 2002; Swanwick and LUC, 2002, para8.23, 8.27).

### **1.3 Landscape planning and policy implementation in Taiwan**

In order to examine the transferability of the UK experience with the two approaches to landscape policy, Taiwan, will be used as a comparator in the research process owing to its recent claim of establishing designations equivalent to LLDs and the gradual awareness of landscape character in planning considerations. Although in this research the most attention will still be on UK practice, it is also necessary to introduce the parallel development of landscape planning in Taiwan at the outset for the follow-up research and comparison.

Taiwan contains a wide variety of natural landscapes ranging from high mountains to coastal plains. Over time diverse ethnic communities and land uses have shaped the landscape into distinctive cultural patterns. Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation led to the homogenising of land use and eroded traditional character and value. As a result a focus has gradually emerged among planners and the public on the importance of the recognition and maintenance of landscape character. This section will elaborate on the emergence of landscape planning in Taiwan in the light of the country's specific historical, cultural and planning background. A brief overview will be provided of landscape planning at different scales, the emergence of Special Landscape Areas under the requirements of the draft Landscape Act and the use of the landscape master planning approach.

#### **1.3.1 Landscape in traditional Chinese culture and the modern context**

Landscape planning and policies, in western culture and more specifically in the UK context, arose directly from the changing interpretation of the relationship between humans and nature in past centuries. In contrast, the concept of landscape in traditional Chinese culture is very different from its conception in contemporary planning practice. The traditional ways of defining landscape in Chinese culture can be expressed at two levels (Wang, 2011):

- **representation in philosophy and literary:**

The cognition of landscape in Chinese culture is best exemplified by the philosophy of 'holding communion with nature', which emerged more than two thousand years ago in Confucianism and Taoism. The pursuit of harmony between humans and nature gradually developed into the celebration of landscape in poems and the fine arts since the second century, representing the philosophers' and literati's immersion in natural scenery and their consciousness of life through the appreciation of nature. However,

this early awareness of landscape, in traditional Chinese philosophy and literature, has never become the object of systematic and scientific studies.

- **technical representation:**

The dominant concept of complying with nature also fed into the technical realm of mimicking nature in gardening and landscaping. The desire of nature and landscape was converted into garden design by using natural materials to construct a 'cultured nature', which was actually for personal cultivation and identification.

Although the concept of landscape is not new to Chinese culture, there is a distinct gap between its traditional meaning and the modern practice of landscape planning. Instead of deriving from the traditional thinking on landscape (or nature), the modern understanding of landscape has its roots in the western influences of landscape architecture and environmental conservation (Kou, 2006). Since the modern meaning of landscape was introduced from foreign contexts, when the same term is translated into Chinese, at least three usages can be found in theory and practice (Wang, 2008):

- gardening/landscaping at development sites where landscape is totally shaped by artificial works
- small scale planning, such as road systems and greenery design to achieve the creation of the appearance and image of landscape
- large scale landscape planning, such as urban/rural, regional or national planning, encapsulating land use concepts and land ethics

These three different ways and scales of interpreting landscape indicate the involvement of people from various professional backgrounds, which inevitably led to multiple perspectives of involving landscape in policy and planning contexts.

### **The emergence of landscape planning**

Modern landscape planning emerged in the 1970s, when the rise of the economy in Taiwan caused heightened awareness of environmental quality. Landscape at this stage was mainly considered as improving scenic quality through planning legislation and building control regulations, or by being fed into public infrastructure (Lee *et al.*, 2005). However, owing to the government's focus on developing industries and infrastructure, landscape was not taken seriously as a planning issue until the late 1990s. The emergence of landscape initiatives, projects and programmes since then was instrumental in the widespread application of landscape concepts in academic studies, planning and legislation in the last two decades. Since the awareness of landscape cannot be disassociated from the improvement of the living environments, landscape planning affairs in Taiwan were assigned to construction or economic development departments/agencies from the very beginning.

The first statutory involvement of landscape planning was the ‘Urban-Rural Landscape Reform Plan<sup>11</sup>’, which has provided an annual government funding source for landscape infrastructure since 1997. The intention of this plan is not to provide direct landscape guidance or develop any landscape planning tools. Instead, the way in which landscape is ‘reformed’ is achieved by granting financial aid to local authorities to propose landscape projects and programmes which contribute to landscape infrastructure. The emergence of landscape planning under the umbrella of the ‘Urban-Rural Landscape Reform Plan’ shapes the understanding of landscape and landscape planning in Taiwan in several ways:

- emphasising landscape architecture derived from the root of the urban tradition of landscape planning;
- highlighting the need of site-level landscape improvement and physical construction;
- setting the pattern for incorporating landscape considerations into public infrastructure;
- the interchangeable use of landscape, ecology and environment in the planning terminology.

### **1.3.2 Landscape in legislation and planning practice**

Since the Urban-Rural Landscape Reform Plan came into being in the late 1990s, the growing emphasis on landscape initiated the public interest in landscape planning. It was at the turn of the century that both the public and private sectors became more aware of the need to address or even enforce landscape in planning practice. Major public administrative issues, such as the ‘National Development Plan: Water and Green Infrastructure (2003-2008)’, the draft of the National Land Use Act (2004) and the revision of Regional Plans (2008), all took landscape into planning considerations. It was also during this period that landscape in Taiwan started to be embedded not only in plans and initiatives, but also came to have more of a role in the land use system and legislation.

### **Landscape and land use planning**

The current land use planning system of Taiwan has encompassed foreign experience from the US, Japan and the UK (Lin, 2002, p.199). The first land use plan in Taiwan was conducted under the colonisation by Japan in the form of urban plans. After the Second World War, regional plans, non-urban area plans and their related legislation came into being by introducing the zoning system from the US. Under the zoning system, both urban areas and non-urban areas are divided into different order classes to apply control over different types of land use. In order to gain more flexibility in rural land use, the use of development permits, which is similar to the UK

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<sup>11</sup> Also translated as the ‘Townscape Renaissance Project’ on the official website



system, has been initiated in non-urban areas since 1988. Under this system, in non-urban areas development sites of more than 10 hectares must be examined by local authorities and committees to obtain planning permits, development permits and building permits, whereas those less than 10 hectares are only controlled by class order. The hybrid system of urban and non-urban land use also causes different landscape planning focuses and strategies in the land use system (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Land use and landscape planning in urban and non-urban areas in Taiwan

	Urban areas	Non-urban areas
<b>legislation</b>	Urban Planning Act	Regional Planning Act Regulations on Non-urban Land Use Control
<b>land use system</b>	zoning	1. zoning & land use class order 2. development permits (conditional)
<b>landscape planning</b>	visual elements control, such as the type and colour of buildings and signs	for development sites, general attention should be given to the wider landscape
<b>landscape contents</b>	(site scale) landscape design control	(site scale & strategic scale) landscape design control landscape character
<b>deficiencies</b>	a marginal consideration compared to infrastructural issues	applicable only to development, not the wider landscape as a whole

One piece of sub-law on development permits, ‘The Directions for Examination Operations of Non-Urban Development<sup>12</sup>’, specified the consideration of landscape factors for both general and specific types of development as:

- applying landscape design to development sites and road systems
- being sympathetic to the wider landscape of development sites, such as landform, viewshed and physical landscape settings
- building buffer zones, screening and planting schemes for development types which may cause impacts on the surroundings
- conducting landscape visual assessments for sites adjacent to railways, motorways and scenic roads
- developing landscape maintenance schemes for sites within riparian areas

However, because a comprehensive framework to assess the effectiveness of these factors is absent, in practice they are of little use to decision making and nor do the decisions take too much account of local character and the environment (Wu, 2002). Although the concept, mechanism and assessment of landscape factors in the

<sup>12</sup> first promulgated in 1994

development permit system is not satisfactory, this still shows a tentative way for landscape issues to be included in decision making.

In addition to these Directions, the issue of landscape was scattered across three types of legislation: building administration and control of advertisements, environmental protection, and maintenance and environmental pollution control (Lin, 2006). However, there were no universal regulations on landscape or landscape planning, so it was considered a secondary issue attached to other types of legislation.

### **The emergence of the Landscape Act**

To integrate the scattered sources of reference to landscape from different legislation and also to respond to the growing awareness of landscape in planning matters, the government of Taiwan started to articulate an act specifically on landscape by combining two draft laws: the Regulation of Urban Visual Elements Control and the Environmental Landscape Act (Lin, 2006, p.30), resulting in the emergence of the Landscape Act in late 2002/early 2003. Although the Act has been suspended in draft form until now, because of disputes over practical aspects concerning the position of landscape architects, the compatibility between the Act and other legislation, and the violation fines<sup>13</sup>, it is still a milestone in landscape planning in Taiwan which builds on previous experience and outlines a future vision.

The Landscape Act aims to maintain natural and human landscapes, improve urban and rural landscapes, and establish a high quality living environment (Article 1). Landscape in this Act is defined as *'the visual manifestation of natural or manmade environment, as perceived by human, including natural landscapes, human landscapes and cultural landscape'* (Article 3). This is largely in line with the definition in the ELC. The Act specifies the practice of landscape planning on two levels. On the larger scale, local authorities are required to develop Landscape Master Plans to conserve, maintain and improve general landscape quality. On the smaller scale, there is a need to articulate and apply detailed design regulations to public green space, advertisement banners and wall/hedge beautification. Only landscape planning at the higher level is of relevance to this research, so the following discussion will only cover the use of the Landscape Master Plans and related applications and planning tools.

### **1.3.3 Landscape Master Plans and Special Landscape Areas**

#### **Landscape Master Plans**

Among the landscape matters addressed in the draft Landscape Act, the leading theme is to articulate county level Landscape Master Plans to structure landscape

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<sup>13</sup> According to the minutes of public hearing of the Act (02/04/2011)

planning and direct follow-up implementation. Master planning is a landscape planning approach which is similar to the landscape aesthetics and design approach defined in 1.1.2. Marsh (2010) indicated that the role of master planning is to provide conceptual guidance and a blueprint to consider land use changes in a comprehensive way. This approach follows a process from vision and context setting, to resource inventory, to condition analysis and to formulation of alternative plans. The common structure of master plans includes (Marsh, 2010, p.26):

- programme proposals
- physical plans or design schemes
- implementation schemes for practical matters.

Landscape Master Plans in the Act provide the basis for comprehensive landscape plans for local authorities to examine and integrate planning issues from the perspective of landscape. The Act specifies the contents of Landscape Master Plans as (Article 5):

- plan aims and the connection with the planning system and legislation
- the identification of landscape resources and key landscape issues
- the construction of ‘landscape systems’ (i.e. literally means ‘landscape types’)
- the principles of landscape planning, conservation and management
- the identification of Special Landscape Areas.

There is also a particular connection between landscape planning and urban planning because Landscape Master Plans are equivalent to the Master Plans in urban planning in terms of their legal status and also because developing and executing Landscape Master Plans falls within the remit of construction or town/county development departments in local authorities.

From the publication of the draft Landscape Act in 2002, most of the 26 cities and counties in Taiwan have developed their own landscape master plans since 2003. However, as the contents of Landscape Master Plans are only mentioned in principle in the Act, not only have the plans been conducted in different ways and written in different formats, but the contracted consultants also included a variety of different professions, including landscape architects and town and country planners. Some local authorities<sup>14</sup> which show a particular interest in landscape even set out Self-Government Ordinances to regulate landscape planning even before the Act is enacted (see Appendix E). This indicates that although a common framework is set out in the Landscape Act, local practice in developing Landscape Master Plans and their detailed contents still differs from place to place.

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<sup>14</sup> e.g. Taipei City, Taoyuan County

## Special Landscape Areas and landscape designations

According to the Landscape Act, the most crucial issue for inclusion in Landscape Master Plans is the identification of Special Landscape Areas<sup>15</sup> (SLAs) as a form of local landscape designation. SLAs are defined either as **areas of abundant landscape resources** that merit planning measures like conservation, management and maintenance, or **areas of degraded landscape** that require improvement (Article 3). According to the Act, when appropriate SLAs are identified, local authorities are required to develop Special Landscape Area management plans to outline their planning strategies for landscape resources. Within SLAs, special attention to landscape is also required for major developments. For areas outside SLAs, landscape considerations are also expected to be achieved through landscape control regulations in urban areas, and in the development permit system in non-urban areas (Article 14).

Although SLAs are regarded as the main type of designation for landscape, in Taiwan there have also been other pre-existing statutory designations and protected areas which are landscape relevant. In the protected area system, Special Landscape Districts in National Parks, as mentioned previously, can be regarded as a type of statutory landscape designations in Taiwan. National Scenic Areas, as the opposite of protected areas, advocate the development of landscape as a form of **tourism and leisure resource**, which normally involves active improvement of landscape infrastructure as a tourist attraction. The use of landscape can also be seen in different forms of non-statutory designation. For example, in the land use system, landscape sensitive areas are included as a form of Environmentally Sensitive Areas, in which it is suggested that both important natural landscapes and cultural landscapes be identified in regional/local development plans. These examples of landscape-relevant designations again indicate how different notions and interpretations of landscape result in different concepts of how and to what degree it is regulated in planning policies.

### 1.3.4 Early involvement of Landscape Character Assessment

Outside the mainstream of master planning approach, the UK experience of developing and using landscape (character) assessment first came to the attention of researchers in the field of geography in 1994/95. This method started to be applied to geographical studies in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a methodology for regional landscape survey<sup>16</sup>. Since the mid 2000s, LCA has gradually been recognised by a few planners and landscape architects in terms of using it as a planning tool to inform their

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<sup>15</sup> According to the policy text, Special Landscape Areas here should be translated as 'Key Landscape Areas'. In order to simplify the terminology and make the concept comparable between UK and Taiwan, the former is used instead.

<sup>16</sup> See: Cheng & Wang (2004). An Application of Landscape Character Assessment for Regional Landscape Analysis, *Journal of Landscape (Chinese)*, 10(1):1-18.

land use and landscape plans/projects. Although there has not been any work developed entirely upon the basis of LCA, at least the concept of landscape as spatial units for planning has started to play a role in landscape and spatial planning alongside other existing landscape-relevant considerations like ecological networks and heritage conservation. Several plans/projects published in the second half of the 2000s can provide illustrations of the ways in which LCA and landscape units have been realised in the Taiwan context.

### **1. National level: National Landscape Ecological Master Plan (2006)**

This consultation report cross-referred to LCA and the European Landscape Character Assessment Initiative project, among other examples of building ecological networks, to develop a National Landscape Ecological Network for Taiwan based on the 'character types' of landscapes. It should be noted that this report only developed a spatial structure based on a landscape typology rather than an area-based characterisation.

### **2. Regional level: Regional Development Plans (2<sup>nd</sup> revision) (2005-2008, depending on the given region)**

In this second revision of Regional Development Plans during 2005-2008, landscape was for the first time separated from other planning issues and became an independent chapter. Here the regional landscape was divided into several 'landscape development units', each of which was broadly described by the development mechanisms, landscape resources and landscape visions.

### **3. County level: Structure Plans for the Rural Landscape Management (2005-2009, depending on the given county)**

These Structure Plans, initiated by the Soil and Water Conservation Bureau, Council of Agriculture, encouraged local authorities to conduct rural character surveys to underpin rural development (Tseng, 2005). The application of LCA in these Plans went a little further as some counties did identify preliminary landscape units/areas rather than using merely descriptive landscape typology, and there is even a case that developed a simple landscape policy objective map in terms of conservation, maintenance and improvement. However, the way in which the landscape units/areas and policy objectives were developed was not specified in any of these plans, and the boundaries between landscape areas (if applicable) were blurred and unjustified.

The early involvement of LCA, as indicated by the above cases, was only in the form of consultation plans/projects without the underpinning of any legislative basis. Because of the limited time and resources, not surprisingly the concept of landscape

characterisation was realised in a very basic way and was only valid within the context of those plans/projects.

## **1.4 Defining the research problem**

This section sets out the overarching aim of the research and develops research questions based on the understanding of the two approaches and the broad context of landscape planning in both UK and Taiwan, as described above. An overview of the thesis structure will be presented lastly as a short summary of the content of the research.

### **1.4.1 Overarching aim of research**

Local landscape designations (LLDs), as suggested by their title, are a type of local-level and most of the time non-statutory protected area for landscapes of special qualities and values. This long-standing approach used to be considered a straight forward method of delivering special control of development within several designated areas and protecting these areas from disturbance and development pressures. However, this approach tends to create a disparity in planning control inside and outside these areas, which has raised considerable criticism alongside their non-statutory status and diverse and sometimes ambiguous selection criteria. Also, in the light of contemporary planning trends, especially sustainability, this approach may become a hindrance to acceptable development which may even benefit the local character. Among the alternatives to the continued use of the LLD approach, the most influential one is the approach based on the use of Landscape Character Assessment.

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a landscape planning tool devised to understand the distinctive characteristics of different landscapes and translate that into tailored policies and strategies for different planning purposes. LCA has been developed into a planning tool, in the UK (mainly England and Scotland) for over 20 years and is now widely adopted by planning authorities on different scales to inform their policies. Outside the UK, the concept of landscape character and similar approaches to incorporating that into planning practices can also be seen in several European countries where cultural identities are strongly emphasised. Denmark for example, has undertaken LCA in sample areas and developed landscape strategies and policy objectives based on that<sup>17</sup>. The approach has also been applied in a Pan-European project in which 14 participating countries produced preliminary LCAs as the foundation of further applications (Wascher, 2005). In Taiwan, as stated earlier, LCA has been introduced to inform the justification of Landscape Master Plans.

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<sup>17</sup> See: Denmark report on Landscape Characterisation and Planning, available from: [www.lancewadplan.org/Conference/Presentation-Nellemann.pdf](http://www.lancewadplan.org/Conference/Presentation-Nellemann.pdf)

The early use of LCA was mainly as a descriptive way of providing landscape context for planning and management in the countryside at large. The adoption of a 'character-based approach' was advocated in Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 (PPG7) in 1997, which recommended using the information provided in LCA to inform planning policies. Hence, a so called 'landscape character turn' in planning in England occurred, in which entailed moving from the LLD approach to a character-based one. This enabled the key characteristics of landscapes to be included in planning strategies and guidelines instead of thinking only about the good or more valued ones. Encouraged by the advocacy in PPG7, more and more locally conducted LCAs have emerged in the past decade, and their applications have ranged from informing area-based policies to guiding the interpretation of landscape factors in planning control.

As the use of LLDs has fallen out of favour in planning to some degree, the character-based approach has been brought closer to the heart of the planning system and has been suggested as an alternative to supplement and even replace the former in due course. The emphasis to be placed on the use of either one or both approaches has provoked considerable debate in the past 20 years, during which their relationship and priority in planning considerations has also changed according to the wider planning context. This transition matters not only in landscape planning in the UK, but also in Taiwan and those countries/regions which adopt the approach of landscape designations and/or incorporate the idea of landscape character in their planning system.

This research, which began with the identification of the two landscape approaches, will investigate their making, implementation, outcomes and transferability. Against this background the overarching aim of this research is to explore whether:

*the shift from the use of local landscape designations to a planning approach based on landscape character is explicitly shown in the UK (England), and is applicable and transferable to another planning and cultural context where equivalents to the two approaches are adopted.*

In order to answer to what extent the UK experience can contribute to the equivalent practice in Taiwan, the use of the two UK landscape approaches will first be examined in their own cultural, historical and political context and then examined in terms of the potential to transfer this experience to the planning context of Taiwan. This enquiry is also crucial for bridging the gap between academic research and planning practice, a type of enquiry which is rarely seen in the field of landscape (Conrad *et al.*, 2011). In particular, although the two landscape approaches have been reviewed separately in a few landscape studies, the transition between them has not yet been critically examined in any academic research.

### 1.4.2 Objectives and research questions

The exploration of the transition between the use of local landscape designations and the character-based approach can be further specified by the following research objectives and questions. Owing to the qualitative nature of this research, the research questions will mainly focus on the process of knowledge generation (questions begin with ‘how’) rather than the variations which cause certain consequences (questions begin with ‘does’ or ‘whether’) (Maxwell, 2005, p.74). However, since the research aims to examine both of the approaches, it is necessary to compare the similarities/differences and strengths/weaknesses between the two approaches. Therefore, some of the questions will still be addressed in the form of finding out the features or factors in relation to some research questions.

Research objectives and questions are set out in three categories: theory, practice and transferability. A theoretical exploration of the two approaches provides the foundation for understanding the shift between the two approaches in the UK practice. The landscape character-based approach will also be of particular interest in terms of its verifiable benefits and potential transferability to Taiwan.

- **Theoretical basis: to explore the making of landscape policy by tracing the theoretical origins, cultural interpretations and historical backgrounds of the two landscape approaches.**

The two approaches feature two different systems of landscape policy constructed by a specific combination of landscape theories, perspectives, internal and external factors. As academic exploration of their origin and emergence is still scarce, the knowledge gap between theory and practice needs to be filled. In order to understand the meaning and importance of the transition, theoretical issues regarding the two approaches will be explored through these research questions:

- **RQ1: How has landscape become a planning issue and what types of landscape theories and external factors contribute to its development and practice in policies?**
- **RQ2: How has UK landscape planning evolved from the country’s own planning tradition and developed into different planning approaches?**

These questions aim to clarify the background of the making of these two approaches mainly in the light of landscape planning history. The first question investigates the transition from landscape theory to landscape planning and policy, whilst the second one specifically explores the relationship between the general practice of landscape planning to that of the UK planning system.



- **Application in practice: to investigate the application of the two approaches in terms of the use, development and dynamics of each approach in planning policies, and the shift between both approaches at national and local level under changing policy contexts.**

Having explored the theoretical underpinnings and changing planning contexts, the two approaches will then be examined in detail in terms of their chronological development in the UK (mainly England). This objective has a dual mission – to explore the development and implementation of each approach individually and at the same time to examine the influences on planning practice arising from their interaction and relationship.

- **RQ3: How do planning authorities carry out landscape planning by referring to either or both approaches, and how has landscape character been translated into a planning approach and delivered in planning policies?**
- **RQ4: How do the landscape approaches support landscape arguments in development control and how do planning authorities make decisions by consulting the evidence provided by these approaches?**
- **RQ5: How has the transition between the two landscape approaches occurred in relation to their strengths and weaknesses in planning practice and other wider considerations?**
- **RQ6: How has the changing relationship between the two approaches caused the ‘landscape character turn’?**

These questions reflect the way in which the two approaches are expressed in policy documents and delivered in planning practice. The answers will be based on the verifiable facts, opinions, attitudes and debates concerning either one or both approaches when they were put forward in practice. These questions can all be explored at both national and local level—the former provides the general answers to these questions, and the latter draws more specifically on the empirical evidence of real cases.

- **Potential for transfer: to examine how the variations in cultural and planning contexts may affect the adoption of different approaches to landscape planning.**

Although the two approaches are studied under the landscape traditions and planning practice of the UK, the final goal of this research is to examine whether the transitional pattern of the two approaches can be observed elsewhere and the character-based approach can be applied to other planning contexts. The researcher’s home country, Taiwan, will be used for assessing the transferability because of the country’s current involvement with both approaches.

- **RQ7: What are the similarities and differences in landscape planning and landscape policies between the UK and Taiwan?**
- **RQ8: In which ways can the character approach make a difference to the way in which landscape is dealt with in Taiwan?**
- **RQ9: What factors can affect the transferability of the character approach both in the context of Taiwan and elsewhere?**

To answer the first two questions, a number of comparisons between the two countries will be conducted in chapters 6 and 7 in terms of landscape theories, landscape approaches, planning systems and policy deliverance. The third question will focus on assessing the feasibility of the character approach in Taiwan, but at the same time will also explore the degree to which the approach can be generalised elsewhere. As LCA has already been referred to in some planning documents in Taiwan, there is an urgent need to examine the degree to which current practice in Taiwan is informed by the strengths, weaknesses and value of the character-based approach.

### **1.4.3 Thesis structure**

The research is presented in three parts and eight chapters:

- **Part I** sets the general scene for this research, including the overall research rationale and contexts in chapter 1 and research design/methodology in chapter 2. Part I provides the basic structure and approaches to this research in preparation for the following discussion in the main body of this thesis.
- **Part II** presents the main part of this research by investigating the development of the two approaches and the transition between them based on empirical studies, firstly in general national (England) policy contexts in chapter 3 and then specifically in case study local authorities of England in chapter 4. Results gained from the two levels will be summarised and compared to identify the general features of the two approaches and the transition between them, namely the ‘landscape character turn’, in England in chapter 5. Chapter 5 provides an intermediate conclusion on the practice in England on one hand, while also paving the way for the follow-up investigation of transferability on the other.
- **Part III** will present the conclusion of the research, firstly in chapter 6 by extending the research into the context of Taiwan to compare the landscape planning system and policy implementation, and considering the feasibility of using the emerging approach based on landscape character. Its results as well as the previous findings from chapter 5 will be brought together in a cross-national comparison and policy transfer assessment in chapter 7. Chapter 8 will summarise the overall discussion, conclusions and reflections on the two approaches and their practices in the UK and Taiwan.

# CHAPTER 2

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## *Research design and methodology*

In response to the research issue concerning the theory, practice and transferability of the two landscape approaches, this chapter outlines the research design by developing a conceptual and procedural framework for the whole project and choosing appropriate methodological approaches for its different stages. Research limitations and validity will be discussed lastly, to ensure the robustness and coherence of research design and methodology.

### **2.1 Research design**

This research focuses on how the two landscape approaches developed and were implemented over time, which requires an investigation into both landscape and policy. However, not only are landscape studies rarely conducted in the form of policy research, but also there is little consistency in terms of research design and methods among the few academic works that do exist on landscape policy<sup>18</sup>. In spite of the relative scarcity of landscape policy studies, the investigation of policy development is popular in cognate environmental fields. For example, Hezri *et al.* (2006) identified four stages of environmental policy in Malaysia, Eisinger & Wathern (2008) evaluated the US air quality policy, Ballinger and Stojanovic (2010) traced the development of estuary policy in the southwest UK, whilst Kim (2010) reviewed the policy evolution of coastal wetland in Korea. Those studies exemplify how disciplinary knowledge can be gained through interpreting policy development, without involving overcomplicated policy analysis methodologies. Likewise, this research will focus on the empirical evidence on using landscape approaches in planning policies, while the wider social and political factors will simply provide the background context.

#### **2.1.1 Research perspectives**

The first step in developing the research design is positioning this research between landscape study and policy analysis. In terms of the formation of landscape policy, this research resonates with what Selman (2006, p.98) called the *normative perspective* in landscape planning study in terms of applying scientific knowledge to planning practice<sup>19</sup>. In terms of the implementation of landscape policy, this research adopts the

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<sup>18</sup> Punter & Carmona (1997) adopted content analysis of local development plans in exploring how landscape design policies were realised in the UK; Scott & Bullen (2004) and Scott & Shannon (2007) conducted questionnaire survey and interviews to investigate the practice of LLDs; Jensen (2007) took a historiography approach to the chronological development of LCA.

<sup>19</sup> This perspective is in contrast to the participatory perspective of making planning decisions based on stakeholder involvement.

*rational perspective* which suggests that there is a linear route from the setting out of plan goals to the development of policies and methods. This perspective, according to Laurin *et al.* (2010), represents the planners' perspective of investigating the '*observable causal linkages between planning goals, activities and outcomes*'. These two perspectives therefore provide the overarching scope for examining the origins and implementation of the two approaches from a top-down point of view.

Based on the understanding of different perspectives of landscape planning studies, this research will examine the issue based on two positions.

### **1. Official and planner's viewpoint**

- Research materials will be collected to explore the official point of view on the issue, which means the data sources are the publications of central/local government and government agencies. Interviewees with an affiliation with local authorities (including landscape consultants working on central or local government projects) are also selected;
- The analysis of research materials will reflect the official interpretation and implementation of the two approaches, such as the way in which they are addressed in planning policies and their execution by local authorities.
- Results will be developed to demonstrate whether and how the two approaches had any impact on the planning system and policy implementation.

### **2. Researcher-researched relationship**

- A landscape researcher's role in analysing landscape planning approaches;
- An outsider's role in distancing the subjective concepts from data collection and analysis, aiming to find a balance between various sources of research materials;
- A foreign researcher's role in exploring the history of conducting landscape planning in another country's practice, and transferring this experience to the researcher's own country.

A key issue for the researcher is the shift in position between studying policy in an overseas country (UK) and policy in the state of domicile (Taiwan) at different stages in this research. Normally this issue is of more importance to ethnography researchers in dealing with cross-cultural settings. However, since this research also involves a cross-national comparison, it is still necessary to consider the positionality of insider/outsider throughout the research. More discussion on this topic will be presented in the last chapter.

## 2.1.2 Research framework

### Conceptual framework

In the simplest sense, this research investigates the interface between landscape and policy in terms of:

- **three components:** local landscape designations, the character-based approach and the wider policy context; and
- **the outcome:** the ‘landscape character turn’.

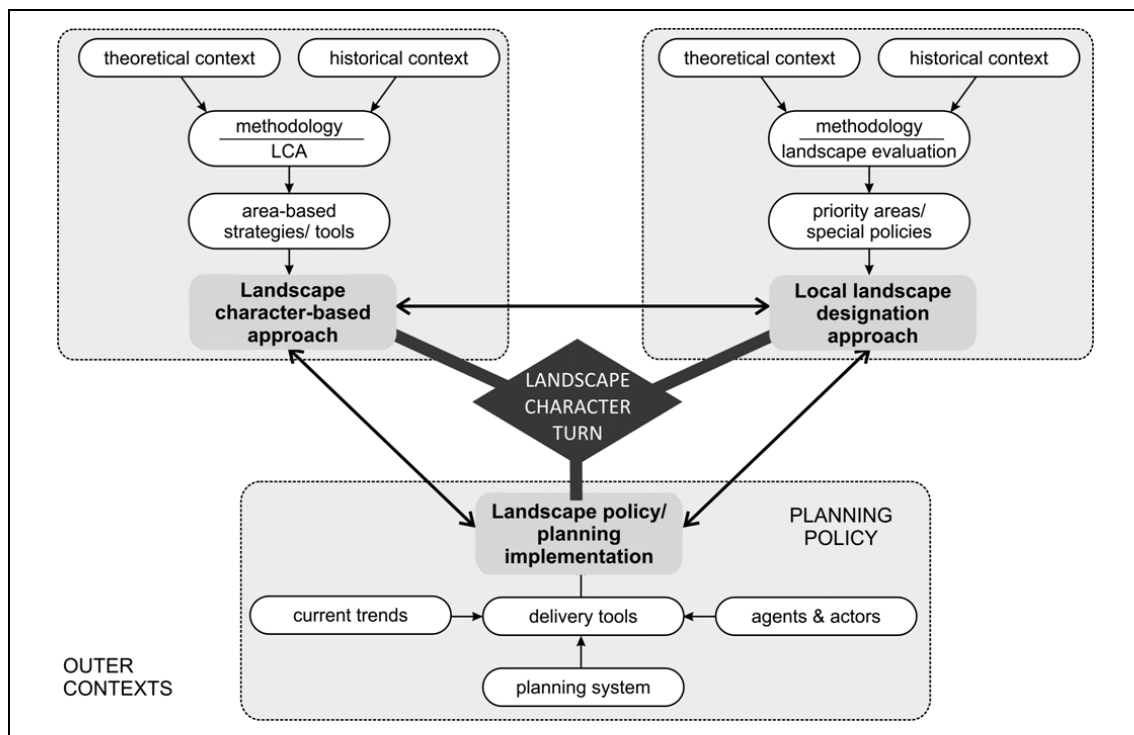


Figure 2.1 Research conceptual framework

The relationships will be explored in both temporal and spatial dimensions. The temporal dimension involves the evolving use of landscape approaches in planning policy from the post-war period (after the year 1945) to the present. The spatial dimension includes the practice of the approaches at national (England) and local (county/district) level, and issue of transferability to Taiwan. The three components and one outcome are illustrated by the conceptual structure in figure 2.1. In this figure, the two landscape approaches are taken as two components comprised of similar sets of factors in terms of ideology and methodology. The policy context is dealt with by another set of factors concerning the planning system and planning processes. The interaction between the three components results in the outcome, here called the ‘landscape character turn’, which indicates the transition from the use of LLDs to the character-based approach. Theoretically the landscape character turn should be the

outcome of the interaction between the three components. Whether the ‘turn’ is complete or not requires further investigation in this research.

## Procedural framework

The research process largely follows the sequence of chapters. As figure 2.2 shows, the two empirical studies on the UK and Taiwan constitute the backbone of this research with different weighting between them. The bold arrows indicate the main loop of the research process from the conceptualisation of the research, through the study of UK practice, to the final discussion and conclusion. On closer inspection, the UK study is comprised of two levels: national and local. Basically these two levels span the same timeframe, from the early formation of landscape designations in the post-war period to the present, while the two levels of study are slightly different in their focus and evidence base:

- the national level study identifies the sequence of policy change mainly from written policy documents; and
- the local level study draws on the practical experience in the sample areas by using data such as interview transcripts and local development cases.

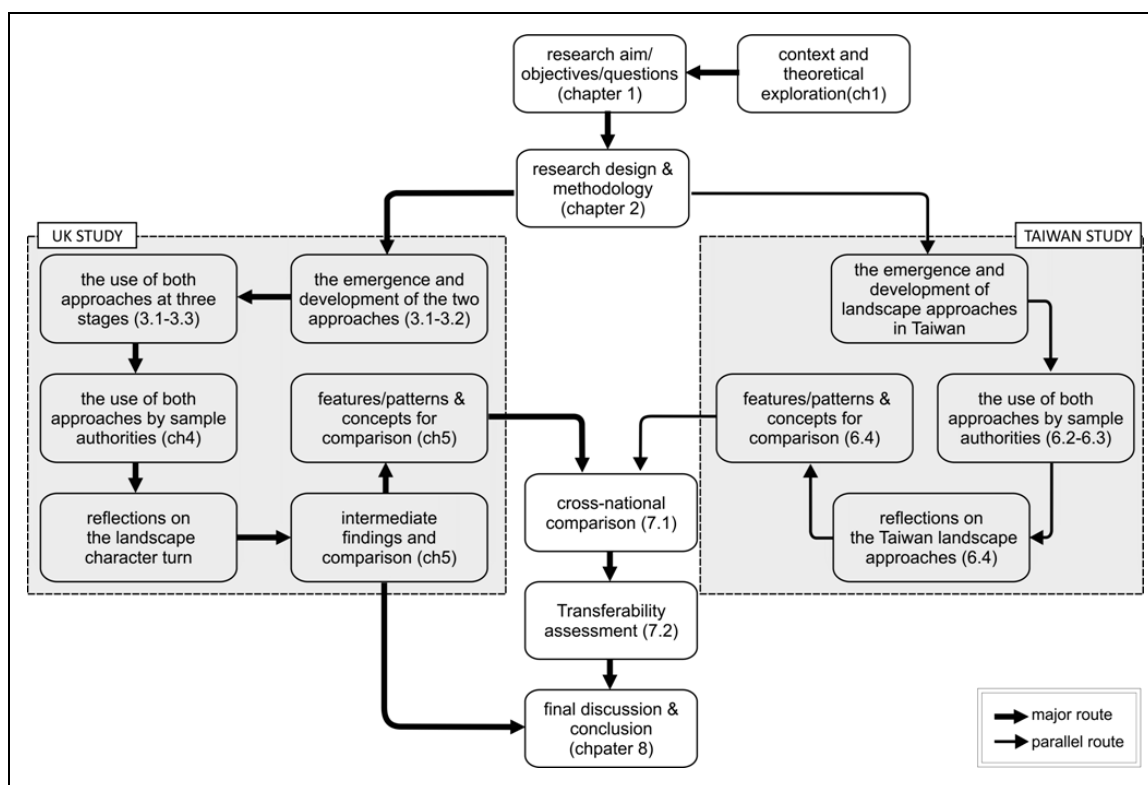


Figure 2.2 Research process

The parallel loop of the Taiwan study is for the exploration of the equivalent practice in its cultural and planning context. The outcome of the two empirical studies will be

assessed in terms of comparison and transferability, and then fed into the final discussion and conclusion.

### **2.1.3 Research settings**

The basic spatial and temporal settings of this research, as stated previously, relate to the national and local practice of the two approaches in the UK (England) in the past few decades. These settings establish where the data should be collected and the extent to which this research can be generalised. The detailed spatial and temporal settings are defined as follows.

#### **Spatial setting**

The major part of this research focuses on practice in England owing to its leading role in developing the two landscape approaches and implementing landscape policies. A few relevant points from Scotland and Wales are, however, also included where appropriate. As the official ‘top-down’ perspective is employed for data collection and interpretation, the hierarchical relationship among written documents influence the priority and importance attached to the planning discourses. In this research, the hierarchy of the publishers and types of written materials is set out as three tiers:

- **1<sup>st</sup> tier—central government/government agency:**  
legislation → national planning policy guidance/statement/White Paper → non-statutory guidance, position statements and methodology guidance made by government agencies → commissioned projects and reports
- **2<sup>nd</sup> tier—local government:**  
development plans of local planning authorities → supplementary planning guidance/documents → commissioned projects and reports
- **3<sup>rd</sup> tier—academia, consultants and non-government organisations (NGOs):**  
academic research → projects/reports and consultation responses made by non government parties

In the second part, assessing the transferability to Taiwan, the priority attached to written documents will be similar to the above setting. However, in Taiwan there are no equivalent government agencies which have responsibility for developing landscape approaches, so the written documents will only contain a two tier system of government (central/local) and academia, consultants and NGOs.

#### **Temporal setting**

The main time span of this research is the last 25 years from the first publication of landscape (character) assessment guidance in 1987 to the present. However, in order to incorporate the full development of the two approaches, especially the use of local

landscape designations, which emerged as early as the inter-war period, written documents prior to 1987 will also be included. The time span for data collection will stop at around the year 2010/2011, when some, but not all local authorities completed their Core Strategies documents in the Local Development Framework. It is hoped that by doing this the final versions of Core Strategies of the case study authorities which contain the latest information on landscape policies, will be incorporated. The Taiwan study will not be fixed to a specific time span, since this part of the research is not particularly amenable to chronological analysis. The majority of documents collected for this part date from around and after the year 2003, when the first draft of the Landscape Act came into being.

### 2.1.4 Methodological approaches

Mixed methodological approaches, rather than a single methodology, will be used in response to the three parts of the empirical study in this research: the UK policy development as a whole, the UK case study at local level and the Taiwan study as a comparison. Table 2.1 summarises the three approaches, policy history narratives, case studies and cross-national comparison/policy transfer according to the research objectives, functions and expected outcomes.

Table 2.1 The objective, function and outcomes of methodological approaches

<b>Objective (see 1.4)</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Methodological approach</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>
Theoretical basis	argument building	adopt <b>policy history narratives</b> to trace the chronological development of the two landscape approaches and understand which factors contributed to the process of policy development	the overall pattern at national level
Application in practice	argument testing	conduct <b>case studies</b> to investigate the practice and effectiveness of the two approaches by empirical studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• three UK sample local authorities</li> <li>• two Taiwan local authorities</li> </ul>	parallel patterns/ concepts for comparison at local level
Potential for transfer	argument validation/ generalisation	use <b>cross-national comparison</b> and <b>policy transfer</b> to assess the degree of generalisation, in particular the scope for transfer of the character-based approach	the degree of policy transferability

The three approaches progress from interpretive to analytic and explanatory, as well as from theoretical to empirical. The combined use of these approaches also forms a triangular relationship between the three parts of the study. Firstly, policy narratives build the overall picture of the two approaches in the national planning system of UK (England), the detailed investigation of which is supplemented and examined by case



studies. The cross-national comparative study then provides the basis to test the degree to which the same policy can be transferred elsewhere.

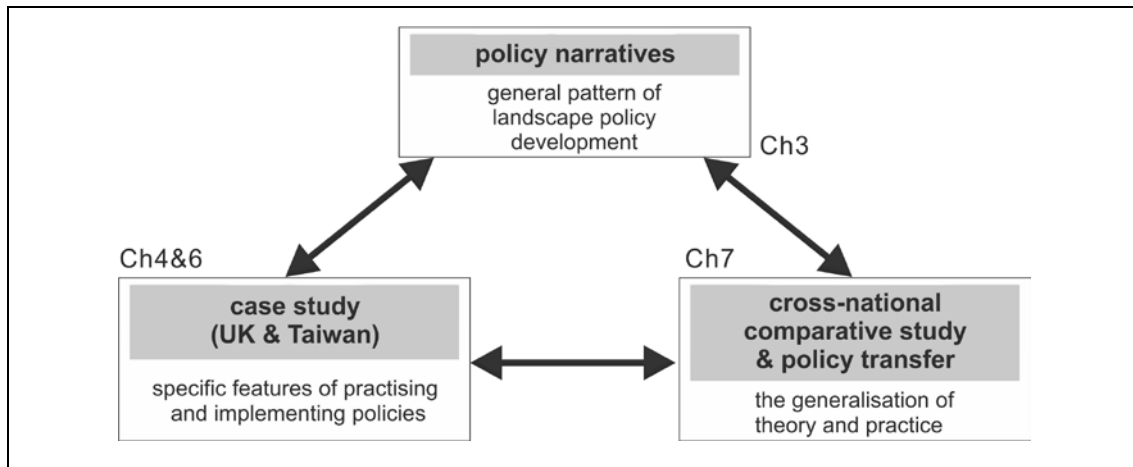


Figure 2.3 Triangulation of methodological approaches

The following discussion of methodological approaches will firstly explain the three methodologies in brief, and then link to their application in the detailed research design. In particular, to avoid being overcomplicated and blurring the research issues, the theoretical underpinnings of each approach will only simplified as the basic principles which are related to the research design.

## 2.2 Historically-informed policy research

The first stage of the research aims to examine the chronological development and transition between the two landscape approaches in the UK. This premise poses two methodological questions concerning policy study: how has each approach emerged and developed into successive landscape policies, and how have the two approaches been realised and applied in the planning system. Two (out of four) types of political study identified by Sabatier (1991) are helpful for clarifying these questions and positioning this part of the research:

- *substantive area research* deals with policy implementation within a specific field with less involvement of theoretical exploration; and
- *policy process research* traces the procedure of policy formulation, implementation and outcomes to find out the relationship between political behaviours and wider settings.

In this sense, the substantive knowledge of landscape policy can be simply defined as the exploration of the two landscape approaches proceeds with the research. However when it comes to the issue of policy process, an analytic framework has to be applied in order to highlight the relevant policy discourses and develop arguments. With regard to tracing the chronological development of the two approaches, a historically-informed

framework of policy process study is the most appropriate way to meet the research aim. This notion will now be explained in more detail and used to inform the first part of the policy study of the two landscape approaches.

### 2.2.1 Policy history and policy process

In the study of policy development and dynamics, the exploration of the sequence of policy-relevant events usually emerged from ignorance of historical settings, which has subsequently caused a 'historic turn' in policy study since the 1990s (Howlett and Rayner, 2006). Historical perspective-informed policy study can also be termed as policy development, policy evolution, policy history, etc. which have in common the notion of a chronological examination of a given policy from the past to the present. This notion is further presented by Howlett and Rayner (2006), and in their follow-up work, by identifying different patterns of studies with different degrees of historical consideration.

- The classic policy study approach, which takes no account of the historical aspect of policy development, is known as the '*stochastic process model*'. It adopts a linear route of analysing policy in which the policy-making process is taken as the consequence of a set of randomly-combined social driving forces and parameters.
- In contrast to this perspective, using policy narratives to build the causal sequence of policy development and is known as the '*historical narratives model*'. As Howlett and Rayner (2006) put it, the historical development of policies is totally decided by the sequence of previous policy events regardless the changing outer context.
- In between the two extremes, there are two more models of policy development studies (Howlett, 2009): the '*path dependency model*' and the '*process sequencing model*'. Both models claim that history matters, but their approaches to using the historical perspective to inform policy development are different. The former simply identifies antecedent policy events at the outset while the follow-up policy change is rather randomly developed. The latter recognises policy change in terms of a set of punctuated stages, each of which is shaped by the earlier ones and influences the later ones (Howlett, 2009).

With regard to the research issue, the 'historical narratives model' and the 'process sequencing model' are of relevance to this research. In fact, in the eyes of policy researchers, the second model of process sequencing is considered more reflective of the real world and the wider socio-economic context. For example, this approach suggests that the introduction of new policies actually interrupts the rather static status quo and bring about changes by incorporating different feedback. This model, although it is more convincing and advanced in policy analysis, requires plenty of knowledge and understanding of the political contexts, which makes it less suitable for this research. As indicated by the example of environmental policy studies at the outset of

this chapter, researchers outside policy studies but who had a similar interest still tended to focus on the narrative nature of the policy history with less consideration of the theoretical underpinnings. In order to keep the whole research coherent, the historical narrative approach is of greater help in focusing landscape policy itself as understanding the sequence and causality of policy development are the focus of study.

### **2.2.2 Applying policy narratives to this research**

In the studies concerning policy history and narratives, there are two distinct approaches inside and outside the realm of social/political science study. For the social scientist and policy analyst whose aims are the better understanding of the ‘truth’, policy narratives are usually treated as discourses, through which the theory-informed analytic framework can guide the policy analysis according to a set of rules. In this sense, epistemological (narrative positivism or narrative post-positivism) and methodological strategies become particularly important prerequisites (Abbott, 1992; Howlett and Rayner, 2006). For scientists in other fields, texts are usually treated as neutral information for building a picture of the long term development of a given policy. Although work of this type is sometimes still supplemented by certain theories of policy analysis, the main focus is not the sophisticated relationship between texts and contexts, but rather the policy development itself.

#### **Research design for policy narratives**

With regard to unfolding policy narratives in terms of the narrative linkage of causality, sequence order, starting and end points and the final steady state, Abbott (1992) pointed out three ‘story properties’ to help in analysing policy texts:

- *enchainment*: the causal links between narratives
- *order*: the particular sequence of events for making sense of the overall story and outcome
- *convergence*: the final stable consequence achieved by putting events in order

In addition, other insights into building policy narratives, such as time divides, defining events and their birth and end points, and linking policy texts to policy contexts, are also proposed by various researchers (Gale, 2001; Howlett and Rayner, 2006). Taking these methodological considerations together, the first part of this research concerning the policy development of the two landscape approaches in the UK context can be depicted as in figure 2.4. In this diagram, the two landscape approaches are treated as two strands of policy development progressing from conceptualisation through consolidation to implementation across different time periods. During the development of the two approaches, a series of policy events (defined as follows) was identified for their contribution to either one or both approaches.

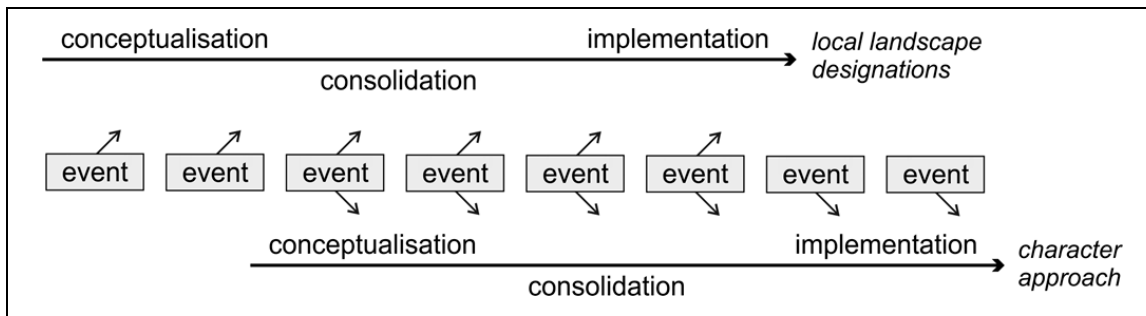


Figure 2.4 The conceptual framework of policy narratives

### 1. policy story

The two landscape approaches, local landscape designations and the landscape character-based approach, are represented by two strands of a policy story. Each story is constructed according to the process: conceptualisation, consolidation and implementation. Conceptualisation indicates the conceptual and technical origins as well as the preliminary practice of one approach; consolidation means the approach being addressed in planning policies; implementation investigates the delivery and practice of the approach.

### 2. policy events

In this research, policy events are occurrences or policy contents which contribute to the development of either approach no matter whether in a positive or negative sense. Events are triggered by one or more policy documents, or alternatively they are the incremental consequences of earlier events. In this research, the start and endpoint of events were not highlighted unless they had significance for the development of the landscape approaches and their use in planning policy. However, for development plans which specify the advocacy/diminution of an approach, their start and endpoints was of particular importance.

### 3. time divide

Although the policy story of both landscape approaches was covered equally, more weight of analysis fell upon the use of the character approach. Therefore the time divide for the whole research into UK national policy focused on the change between phases of the character approach including its:

- emergence from the prevalent practice of LLDs;
- being proposed in planning policies
- major implementation in the reformed planning context and afterwards

The three stages, while not equal in length, form the time divide for the empirical study and the follow-up discussion.

### 4. thick description

Thick description is a popular method of textual presentation in anthropology and ethnography research, but it can also be used in policy studies to ‘allow historical

*context to guide analysts' exploration of potential future states'* (Thompson, 2001). This method was used to construct the rich contexts of policy narratives by describing the characteristics, intentions and meanings, evolution and development of the two approaches extracted from policy documents.

## **5. policy actors**

This research took an official and planner's perspective of analysing the evidence, so the struggle between the voices of policy actors has not been deliberately identified. However in practice, in order to draw conclusions on how the two approaches are applied to the planning system, it has still been necessary to distinguish between different roles of policy actors, such as central government, local authorities, government agencies and landscape consultants.

## **2.3 Case studies and sample area analysis**

The case study is one of the most common and versatile research methods in social science to explain, describe, illustrate, explore and evaluate different issues (Yin, 2003, p.15). It is also widely used in landscape architecture research for describing and/or assessing landscape plans/projects and even policy-oriented studies (Francis, 2001). Although case studies can mean virtually any theoretical or empirical phenomena bounded by particular places and time periods, to some researchers in the pursuit of methodological rigor, even the definition of 'cases' can lead to a sophisticated inquiry into the philosophical nature of cases and their degree of generality (Ragin, 1992, p. 8). However, in the second part of this research, cases are used in a more self-evident way in terms of local authorities with experience in applying both landscape approaches. The discussion below draws more attention to the rationale of research design and analytic strategies. It is particularly important that this stage of study involves both UK cases and Taiwanese cases, the research design for which will be slightly different in response to the different research questions attached to them.

### **2.3.1 Basic principles of case studies**

#### **Type of case studies and number of cases**

There are different ways of defining types of case study according to research purposes. Yin (2003, p.5) suggested a general way classification of case studies as *exploratory*, *descriptive* or *explanatory* according to the characteristics of the research questions. According to the objective of this research, the use of case studies is more descriptive and explanatory in nature. By describing the policy development of both landscape approaches in their practical application, this research was expected to explain *how* the two approaches emerged in different settings and *how* landscape planning policies have been shaped in different ways. Furthermore, cases (local

authorities) who have used both approaches and where good practice in using the character approach can be observed are identified as representative cases, which means the cases are typical of the phenomenon under study. Secondly, the number of cases depends on the nature of the research. Generally speaking, qualitative research usually involves examining single or fewer cases (small-N) in considerable depth, in comparison to quantitative research, which applies statistical methods to a large-number of cases. Although a single case can also be adopted to express the uniqueness and representativeness of a phenomenon, the use of multiple cases allows more flexibility and the possibility of gaining replicable and robust outcomes (Yin, 2003, pp.40, 47). In this research, the ‘landscape character turn’ is investigated by using 2 to 3 cases, which was expected to generate replicable results from them (Yin, 2003, p.47).

### Case study process

The case studies in this research were conducted in a similar way to that generally used in social science studies rather than that used in site level landscape projects. Case studies were structured by referring to the framework of multiple-case replication set out by Yin (2003, p.50, figure 2.5). Following this diagram, the study began by setting the aim, which was defined in chapter 1. The aim was examined by using case studies to demonstrate the overall practice in the UK. The outcomes of the UK case studies then became the basis to develop the Taiwan case studies for the subsequent comparative study and policy transfer.

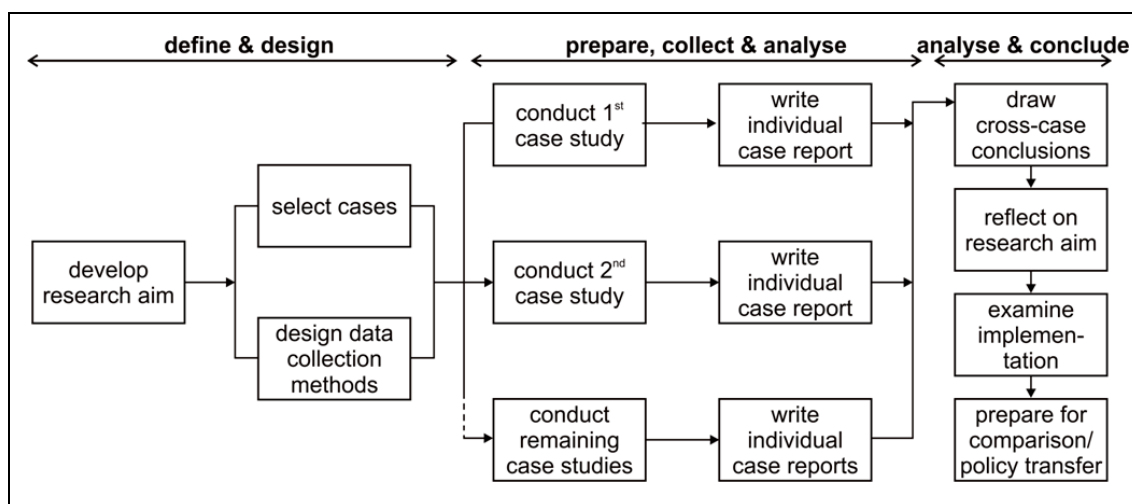


Figure 2.5 Case study process

(Based on Yin, 2003, p.50)

### 2.3.2 Data collection methods

The data collection methods in this part of the research involved both primary and secondary methods:

- in-depth interviews provided primary information on the use of both approaches across all cases;

- policy documents were the main source of secondary data for building the development of both approaches for each local authority, and written materials concerning the use of the character approach further revealed how the approach was carried out in planning arenas.

Table 2.2 summarises the two parts of the case study and the key issues. In particular, the Taiwan case study plays a dual role, contributing to both the comparative studies and policy transfer. Although its main function relates to the last research objective of assessing the transferability, in practice the building of the Taiwan case study also follows the principles of a typical case study in order that the two examples of practice, UK and Taiwan, can be compared on a common basis. The methods adopted for constructing each case are described as follows:

Table 2.2 Case study issues and methods

	<b>UK case study</b>	<b>Taiwan case study</b>
<b>definition</b>	An explanatory study to demonstrate the two approaches by referring to the pattern (theory) established in the policy narratives at the previous stage	A comparative study to test the transferability of the UK experience of applying the character approach to another cultural context
<b>issues to be explored</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the practice of LLDs</li> <li>• the practice of the character approach</li> <li>• the effectiveness of the character approach</li> <li>• the pattern of landscape policy change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the practice of current landscape planning</li> <li>• the practice of LLDs</li> <li>• the initial involvement of the character approach</li> </ul>
<b>methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• document survey</li> <li>• interview</li> <li>• examples of planning applications/decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• document survey</li> <li>• interview</li> </ul>

### **Document survey**

The way of using policy documents to establish the main features of the two approaches at local level is similar to that in the national policy narratives. Because the research focus here is not the conceptual change between the two approaches but the application in practice, the policy documents used in the case study focused on local authority development plans at different stages, and relevant work concerning landscape planning and the use of the two approaches, such as landscape supplementary planning guidance/documents and landscape survey/assessment reports. The documents were analysed by highlighting the statements relevant to a particular research question, such as the effectiveness of the character approach, and then organising these ideas into arguments. Figures and tables which are helpful for explaining the issue were also used as appropriate.

## **In-depth interviews**

In order to understand how the two landscape approaches are applied in local authorities, semi-structured interviews with landscape officers, decision makers and landscape consultants were conducted in the form of conversations. Interview participants also gave full consent, in order to meet the University's research ethics requirements. Generally speaking, interview questions were designed to explore opinions, viewpoints and establish the practical use of the two approaches from the perspective of planners and landscape officers. Each interview contained five to seven broad questions focused on certain set of research questions. These broad questions were also supplemented by follow-up questions to prompt the interviewee. In comparison to the document survey, which traced the long term development of the two approaches, the interviews were more to do with the participants' current experience of using the two approaches. Interviews were transcribed and then sent back to the participant for confirmation. Apart from the interviews, it was also expected that additional materials concerning the use of the character approach in specific cases (planning applications) would be gained from the interview participants.

Interview transcripts were used in two ways:

- the majority of them were coded by key concepts of interest for further analysis and drawing conclusions (see below);
- some key statements were quoted directly in the case descriptions (chapter 4&6) for providing the insights into specific topics.

A full list of interview participants, including their affiliations and the interview dates can be found in Appendix A. Sample interview questions and transcripts for one of the case study areas are included as Appendices B and C at the end of this thesis.

### **2.3.3 Modes of case analysis**

After the data are collected and organised, a number of analytic strategies and explanatory frameworks can be applied to the case study outcomes. The process of case study analysis, according to Yin (2003, p.111), starts with general strategies such as comparing the theoretical propositions and finding alternative explanations. In this research, the theoretical proposition (research aim) is defined by the landscape character turn, which is the shift between the two approaches. The next step in data analysis involves the development of explanatory frameworks to display, compare and interpret the outcomes in detail. In making qualitative case analysis, Miles and Huberman (1994) give more specific illustrations of using the outcomes in a more informative way by using tables, matrices, networks and charts to display and explain the outcomes. The data can be further analysed in different ways, including checklists,



time-ordered displays, conceptual-ordered displays, thematic displays and causal networks. To address the research questions, the following tactics were applied:

- **thematic displays**

A coding system was used to analyse textual materials firstly by identifying unstructured (free) codes and then grouping into structured (tree) codes. The coding system then integrated the (structured) codes into themes with individual concepts and conclusions presented in tabular or charted forms.

- **causal networks**

Causal networks can help to identify the relationships between variables, including events, factors, processes and outcomes. For example, in this research the causal links or network for the development of each landscape approach can be established by linking policy documents and policy events according to their relevance.

- **time-ordered displays**

Chronological perspective was an important factor in conducting this research at both the national or local level. Placing the development of the two approaches into a timeline or in sequential segments all form time-ordered displays.

### **Coding system and the use of NVivo**

All the primary and secondary data, as described above, were converted into text formats to be analysed by the qualitative software NVivo. This software was used to store and analyse the codes identified manually by the researcher for a better organisation of textual data. Codes, which are termed as nodes in NVivo, are firstly identified as *free nodes* and then grouped into hierarchical *tree nodes* according to certain concepts relating to the research questions or to critical issues emerging. Other basic techniques, such as memos, annotations and hyperlinks, were used as appropriate. Further descriptions of ways in which codes are structured for case studies are included at the beginning of chapters 5 and 7.

## **2.4 Cross-national comparative study and policy transfer**

The final part of the research adopts a combined approach of cross-national comparative study and policy transfer to validate and generalise from the previous findings. The combined approach was used here because of the close relationships between the case study, cross-national comparison and policy transfer. Firstly, cross-national comparison as an extension of case study will involve both UK and Taiwan cases, which can help to increase the validity and reduce the risk of using single country studies alone. Secondly, the generalisation from case studies can also be termed 'case transferability' (Gomm *et al.*, 2000), and comparative study can also be a strong basis for policy transfer analysis (Evans, 2004, p.18). So in brief, this final part of the

study involves two successive stages which finalise the whole research and reflected on the findings in the previous chapters:

- comparative study of landscape planning between the UK and Taiwan provides a bridge between case study and policy transfer, and
- assessing the transferability of the landscape character-based approach, including landscape character-informed policies and the use of LCA.

The first stage of cross-national comparison addresses the same issue, landscape planning in policy contexts—by comparing concepts and principles from the two countries, whereas the second stage of policy transfer adopts the same policy, landscape character-informed policy, as the framework to test the potential transferability of the UK experience to Taiwan.

#### **2.4.1 Cross-national comparison of planning and policy studies**

Strictly speaking, the approach to cross-national comparative study adopted here is atypical since this research does not aim to compare the outcomes within the context of either the most similar or most different cases (Hantrais, 2009, p.59). Rather, the comparative method in this research is best viewed as an extension of cross-case comparison and a transitional step to policy transfer. The key ideas concerning the practice of landscape planning in both the UK and Taiwan have to be converted into comparable forms, and then the transferability of the UK experience to the ‘recipient country’ of Taiwan can be assessed.

The cross-national comparison in this research was grounded in factual and descriptive evidence also known as ‘case-oriented’ or ‘case-based’ qualitative comparison (Landman, 2008, p.69). Like the case study approach, cross-national comparative study can be applied to virtually all comparable issues between countries or societies, and there is no standard pattern or ‘checklist’ for making comparisons. Since the contents for comparison may vary, the identification of phenomena or elements to be compared is the fundamental consideration. This is what Rose (1991) called the use of ‘concepts’, namely variables or parameters, to be the analytical units of cross-national comparative studies (Hantrais, 2009, p.85). Quilgars *et al.* (2009) also mentioned the need for equivalency and standardisation of concepts in terms of conceptual relativism across the societies under examination. This highlights the importance of translation of languages and wordings in order to keep the comparability of concepts in terms of what Hantrais (1999) called ‘cultural-boundedness’.

#### **Cross-national comparison research design**

Taking account of the above notions, the first stage of comparing the two landscape planning and policy contexts will be conducted in the following way as summarised in

figure 2.6. **Concepts** will be defined as the structured codes generated from the **coding system** to represent the variables and principles which contribute to the research issue. The same concepts from both countries will be defined and arranged in parallel with reference to their contexts to ensure they are comparable. For example, the same codes such as ‘planning system’ or ‘landscape interpretation’ will be compared to find any differences between the two countries. Then the similarities and differences can be highlighted and developed into the discussion of policy transfer at the next stage. The practical way of linking these considerations together will largely follow the process suggested by Carmel (1999) for comparing cases, first through identifying contexts and concepts, then conducting textual analysis and contextual analysis, and lastly integrating the outcomes.

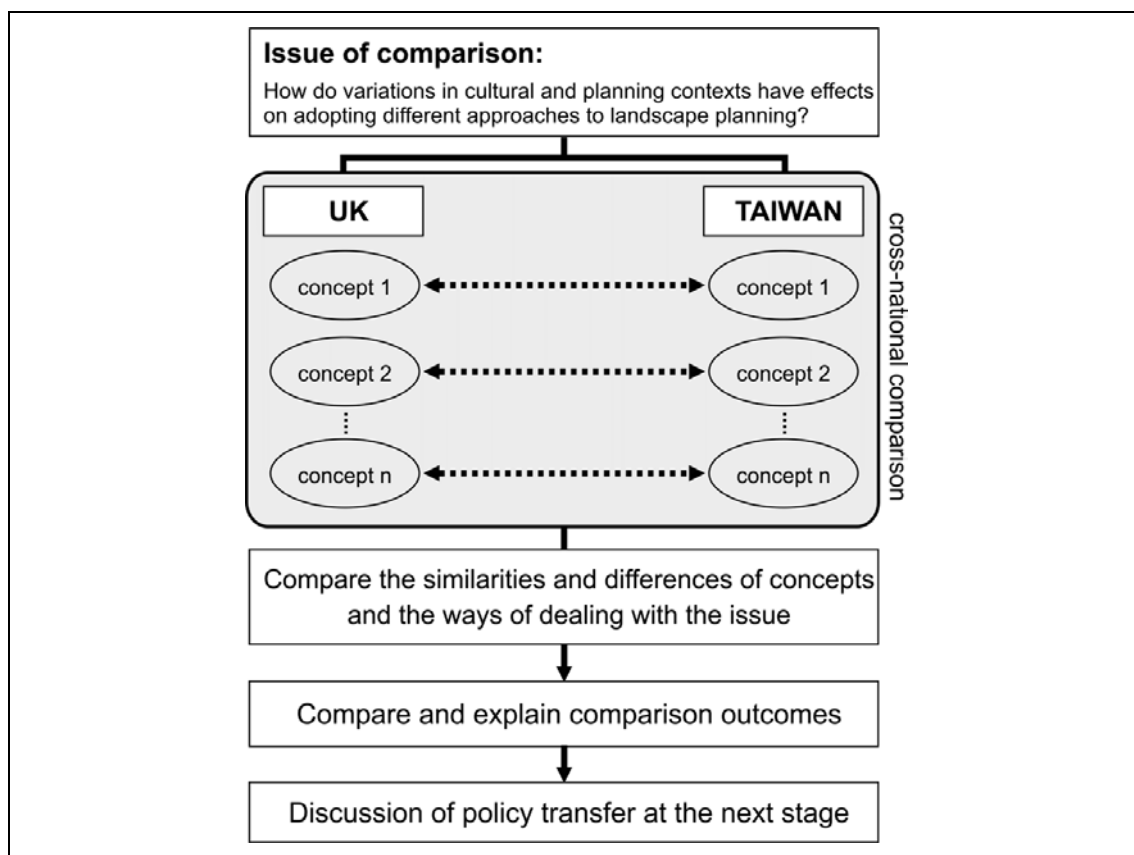


Figure 2.6 Conceptual framework of comparative study

### 2.4.2 Policy transfer and generalisation

The last part of this research is to use policy transfer to answer the last two research questions:

- can the UK experience be applied to other cultural contexts, and
- which factors would affect the potential for transferability?

According to Dolowitz and Marsh (2000), the issue of policy transfer itself is a subset of comparative policy analysis to assess the ‘adaptation of policies’ in terms of ‘a

*process in which knowledge about policies...in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies... in another time and/or place*'. To clarify policy transfer in a simplified yet comprehensive way, they also set out a framework for analysing policy transfer based on the causes, mechanisms, actors, extent and consequences of transfer (table 2.3). This framework was used for assessing the transferability of the character-based approach.

Table 2.3 Policy transfer framework

Factors affecting transferability	Explanation			
<b>1. Why transfer</b>	<b>have to</b> (coercive)	←.....→		<b>want to</b> (voluntary)
	direct imposition	(mixture)	lesson drawing (bounded rationality)	lesson drawing (perfect rationality)
<b>2. Who is involved in transfer</b>	elected officials/ civil servants	political parties/ pressure groups	policy makers/ exports	consultants/ think tanks
<b>3. What is transferred</b>	policies (goals, content, instruments)	programmes/ methods	institutions/ ideologies	attitudes/ cultural values
<b>4. Degrees of transfer</b>	copying	←.....→	emulation	←.....→ inspiration
<b>5. Constraints on transfer</b>	policy complexity	Structural/ institutional feasibility	practical factors (ideology, technology, economic, language)	
<b>6. How transfer leads to policy failure</b>	uninformed transfer<.....> incomplete transfer<.....> inappropriate transfer			

(Source: based on Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000)

Table 2.3 identifies the six dimensions of analysing policy transfer, each of which will be discussed individually to examine the degree to which the character-based approach can be applied in the context of Taiwan. The first three dimensions are descriptive in terms of setting the general scene for policy transfer. In this research these dimensions can be easily identified from the context of the Taiwan part study. The last two dimensions are more analytical, and were used to assess the transferability of landscape character-based policies. The last dimension of 'how transfer leads to policy failure' actually involves two possible outcomes: successful policy transfer and

policy failure (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). Since total success in transferring policy into another society, as indicated by the outcome of policy transfer, is nearly impossible in the real world, it is particularly useful to identify the factors which would limit the degree of transferability as a reflection on the previous stages of research. Evans and Davies (1999) also point to two situations which can be defined as non-transfer:

- the involvement of domestic antecedents or ideas which are not borrowed from the society exporting the policy;
- the disregarding of parts of the ideas from the programme which is borrowed from the society exporting the policy.

There is scope for further discussion of the convergence or divergence of policy in the light of the mechanisms of globalisation (Ladi, 2005, p.27), which will be discussed at the end of this thesis.

## **2.5 Research limitations and validity issues**

The above research design and methodology indicate this research is about landscape policy analysis, based on case studies, concluded with policy transfer analysis alongside a comparison of the two systems of UK and Taiwan. The last step in therefore to identify the limitations to the research and ensure the whole research can be conducted in a valid way. This step is crucial to the follow-up empirical studies in terms of:

- before the research: being aware of the pitfalls that can threaten the reliability and credibility of this research;
- during the research: taking precautionary actions to avoid and overcome these pitfalls during the research process;
- after the research: reflecting on the relationship between the methodological approaches and research design and ways of improvement.

### **2.5.1 Research limitations**

Regardless of the carefully designed research process, there are still factors which cannot be fully controlled, or, even if they can be solved in some way, it is far from cost-effective to do so. These factors in terms of research limitations are identified here in order to minimise their impacts on the validity of this research.

#### **Data availability**

The data source for this research relies mainly on official publications on the two approaches. Therefore, the availability of written materials is the primary limitation to the development of the arguments. As indicated by the three-tier data sources identified

in section 2.1.3, documents produced by central/local governments and government agencies are the most available ones, especially in England, where official records are available to the public. The same situation is largely true of the third tier of academic works. However, projects and reports prepared by private consultancies, commissioned by either local governments or government agencies, are not always as accessible. For example, the reviews of local landscape designations for Kent (1993) and South Gloucestershire (1999) may contain valuable information on what the use of LLDs was like at that time, yet these documents are location specific and it may not be useful to collect them from the local authorities. In contrast, collecting consultancy projects/reports relevant to the case studies is essential to construct relevant arguments.

Another issue in using written documents is to maintain the same degree of quality and quantity of data for issues of a similar nature because of the multiple sources of research materials. The most obvious example is that among the three versions of English national planning policy in 1992, 1997 and 2004, was only available for the 1997 version a complete record of consultation responses valid for analysis. However, this did not significantly affect the final outcome because it is only the 1997 version of planning policy that is really significant in the evolution of the character-based approach. Likewise, in the case studies it is nearly impossible to collect identical sets of policy documents for each case. Limitations like this do have some influence on the research, but awareness of the possible limitations indicates that ways of mitigating the impacts and finding alternative materials could be developed where necessary.

### **Assessing the effectiveness of the character-based approach**

Research question 4 relates to the implementation and delivery of the character-based approach, which means examining the effectiveness of the new approach in planning practice. The best evidence of policy effectiveness is the quantity of development control decisions in terms of their refusals and approvals and the role played by landscape considerations (Morrison and Pearce, 2000). A crude survey of application decisions from the websites<sup>20</sup> of the sample local authorities showed that landscape character (or related) policies are not normally the factor which determines whether an application is accepted or refused. Even if some planning decisions on major developments (normally at county level) do refer to the character approach, it is still hard to tell whether this approach is the main consideration in decision making. In contrast, from the interviews with landscape officers, it was possible to identify real cases which directly demonstrated how the character approach informed planning applications (although not on an equal basis for each case). These cases are actually a better illustration of how the approach has been taken into account in making judgements or decisions than the number of applications.

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<sup>20</sup> The online application database for tracking application progress and decisions

## **The use of grey literature**

In order to examine the making and implementation of the two approaches, a considerable part of this research has to build upon non-academic works in terms of the so-called grey literature, including legislation and planning policies, policy documents (statements, consultations, meeting minutes) and reports commissioned by landscape consultants. The use of grey literature was also adopted in Scott & Bullen (2004) and Scott & Shannon (2007) in tracing the policy review of LLDs in Wales and Scotland. Jensen (2007) also developed her historiography of landscape character assessment based on a copious amount of documents published by the Countryside Commission and related consultation reports. Although use of grey literature is inevitable and also necessary to build arguments, as indicated in the research design on spatial settings, identifying the hierarchy relationships between different tiers of documents can help to improve the credibility of using these documents. In discussion sections and the concluding chapter, academic references will also be used to underpin the findings from the grey literature.

### **2.5.2 Validity issues**

At each stage of study there are also key points that require careful consideration in order to guard against invalid arguments and misguided conclusions. Concerning the validity of qualitative research in general, Miles and Huberman (1994) and Maxwell (2005) gave detailed illustrations of using different strategies to improve the plausibility of research findings as listed in Table 2.4. The items listed in this table may not be applicable to all types of qualitative research. Rather, they can be regarded as reminders that may be relevant at different stages. In fact, most of the requirements on the checklist have been met in the research design in one way or another. The most explicit of all, the use of three methodological approaches to triangulate different parts of study, helps to ensure the validity and coherence of this research. Other examples like collecting policy documents at different planning levels for at least 20 years, double checking the interview transcripts with the participants, and using several UK and cross-national cases to increase reliability, all suggest that validity has been seriously taken account of.

The main deficiency, which is also one of limitations to the research, is the incapacity to examine the negative evidence or what is called by Miles and Huberman (1994) 'unpatterns'. Limited by the number of cases and the purpose of the case studies, it is hard to show the sample areas where the use of the character approach has failed to replace local landscape designations. However, this does not indicate that the opposite view of using the two approaches will be ignored throughout the research. Similar experiences outside England, including the investigation of policy

transfer in Taiwan, will supplement the discussion of the two approaches in the context of England.

Table 2.4 Validity checklist for qualitative research

Miles and Huberman (1994, p.262-277)	Maxwell (2005, p. 109-114)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• checking for representativeness:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– checking for researcher effects</li> <li>– triangulating</li> <li>– weighing the evidence</li> </ul> </li> <li>• looking at ‘unpatterns’               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– checking the meaning of outliers</li> <li>– using extreme/negative cases</li> </ul> </li> <li>• testing explanations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– make if—then tests</li> <li>– ruling out spurious relations</li> <li>– replicating a finding</li> <li>– checking out rival explanations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• getting feedback from informants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• intensive, long-term involvement with data</li> <li>• rich data</li> <li>• respondent validation (systematic feedback to data source)</li> <li>• minimal interventions from researchers</li> <li>• discrepant evidence and negative cases</li> <li>• triangulation</li> <li>• quasi-statistics</li> <li>• comparison</li> </ul>

### Validation of policy narratives

Although the use of policy narratives fits the aim of this research, the approach in itself, is not necessarily advocated by policy scientists because of its lack of ability to generate replicable results. The limitation comes from the way the approach deals with events which have already happened rather than generating predicable theories and knowledge like most social science studies do. This ‘hindsight view’ embedded in policy narratives can, according to Howlett and Rayner (2006), only be plausible when the outer policy context is stable enough to reflect the policy change. Since in this research the UK policy environment only serves as the wider context rather than being examined as one of the variables, although it is important to define the stability of policy contexts, it is not necessarily an issue in this research.

Another issue concerns the use of ‘thick description’ to construct the development of landscape policy, Thompson (2001) claimed the validity is not necessarily embedded in this research procedure, but the acceptability and plausibility of the findings is valid: ‘*if the policy makers find the research useful*’. Although it is too early to discuss the usefulness of this research at this stage, generating practical knowledge about the use of different landscape approaches is undoubtedly one of the main goals of this research.

### Validation of case studies

Validity issues in use of case studies are well-presented by Yin (2003, p.34) in linking four general notions to general social science. These notions include the **construct validity** of the research design and concepts to be studied; the **internal**



**validity** of making plausible explanations and causal links; the **external validity** of generalising the research findings, and the **reliability** of replicating the findings to other cases. The four tests of validity and the tactics suggested by Yin (2003, p.34) are listed in Table 2.5 against their application to this research.

Table 2.5 Case study tactics for four design tests

<b>Tests</b>	<b>Suggested case study tactics</b>	<b>Tactics applied to this research</b>
<b>construct validity</b>	use multiple sources of evidence	document survey & interview
	establish chain of evidence	
	have key informants review draft case study report	transcripts sent back to interview participants and materials reviewed by supervisor
<b>internal validity</b>	do pattern-matching/	multiple strategies used to display and explain the findings
	do explanation-building	
	do time-series analysis	
<b>external validity</b>	use replication logic in multi-case studies, assess generalisation	similar analytical framework set out for all cases
<b>reliability</b>	use case study protocol	a full list of policy documents/ interview participants
	develop case study data base	

(Based on Yin, 2003, p.34)

### **Validation of comparative studies/policy transfer**

Examination of the validity of the cross-national comparative studies is similar to that in case studies. Hantrais (2009, p.50) also suggested that the general validity of this type of study derives from operational rigor, such as the choice of cases and indicators, in order to obtain consistent and replicable results. For policy transfer, Evans and Davies (1999) mentioned several factors relevant to examining validity which provide four types of validity tests:

- clear understanding of the subject under study (construct validity)
- identification of policy transfer agents (internal validity)
- evidence of non-transfer and why this happens (internal validity)
- nature and extent of transferability (external validity and reliability)

Among these factors, the examination of reasons for limiting transferability is of particular importance to this research, in order to reflect on the previous stages of studies and draw the final conclusions for the whole research.

### 2.5.3 Summary of methodological approaches and methods

Table 2.6 provides a list combining the research questions, methodological approaches and research methods which will be adopted in the different chapters of this thesis.

Table 2.6 Research questions and corresponding methods

	<b>Research questions (short form)</b>	<b>methodological approach</b>	<b>method(s)</b>
<b>RQ1</b>	wider contexts of landscape policies	(document survey)	
<b>RQ2</b>	emergence of the two approaches	(document survey)	
<b>RQ3</b>	character approach in planning policies	policy narratives	document survey textual analysis
<b>RQ4</b>	character approach in development control	policy narratives case study	document survey textual analysis interview
<b>RQ5</b>	character approach in practice	policy narratives case study	document survey interview
<b>RQ6</b>	drivers of change in landscape policies	case study	textual analysis interview
<b>RQ7</b>	comparison of the two countries	case study cross-national comparison	textual analysis interview
<b>RQ8</b>	influence of the character approach on Taiwan landscape planning	cross-national comparison	textual analysis interview
<b>RQ9</b>	assessment of transferability	policy transfer	textual analysis

# PART II

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## *The 'landscape character turn' in the UK*

Part two as the main body of this research, will explore the relationship between the two approaches in the following chapters:

- Chapter 3 will focus on the development of the planning discourse of the two approaches along the timeline, namely the chronological analysis of the two approaches in relevant documents and discussions. A national picture will be generated by investigating the evolution of and relationship between these approaches.
- Chapter 4 will provide insight into the practice of these landscape approaches by elaborating on three local authorities in England. This chapter, while it will also address the transition of these two approaches over time, will focus more on the actual implementation of both approaches through the evidence of policy documents and interviews.
- Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter for presenting and comparing the findings and results in chapters 3 and 4. The conclusion gained from the UK experience will also be linked to the next chapter to examine the transferability of the character approach.



# CHAPTER 3

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## *The 'landscape character turn' at national scale*

In this chapter, the landscape character turn caused by the transition between the two landscape approaches will be explored in the national practice of England from the post-1945 to the present. There will be a review of the justifications for each of the approaches, their interrelationship and, most important of all, the drivers of change which caused this turn. The evidence will be examined in three successive stages in terms of interrelated key events or key documents, representing the different ideologies and methodologies in landscape planning which caused the evolution of the two landscape approaches:

- Stage 1, covering the period from the consolidation of local landscape designations in the post-1945 period to the first official advocacy of Landscape Assessment in 1987;
- Stage 2, covering the development of Landscape Assessment from a landscape analysis tool to a planning tool in terms of the character approach, and the changing relationship between the use of local landscape designations and the new approach in national planning discourses, notably in the mid 1990s;
- Stage 3, covering the period from 1997 to 2010, in which the use of the character approach was further strengthened by the advanced application of Landscape (Character) Assessment in the reformed planning system.

In these three stages, conceptual and practical changes both within the two approaches and in the wider planning context will be described by using thick descriptions of relevant policy events to examine how the transition happened and what role both approaches have played in planning considerations at different points in time .

### **3.1 Landscape planning approaches in transition**

Chapter 1 briefly introduced the two approaches of local landscape designations (LLDs) and the character-based approach. Here the discussion will be expanded to give a more detailed account of the emergence and practice of the approaches, with particular emphasis on the corresponding historical background. In the 1970s and 80s, the introduction of landscape issues in county level Structure Plans marked a key stage in incorporating landscape into planning considerations. During this period, landscape evaluation was widely developed to underpin the justification of LLDs in the emerging Structure Plans. However at the same time, the concerns about the landscape evaluation raised the need for understanding of the holistic characteristic of landscape, which was instrumental in an alternative approach based on landscape character. The key factors

subsumed in the transition, including the use of LLDs, quantitative landscape evaluation and the emergence of Landscape (Character) Assessment, will be examined to explore their role of and contribution to the transition.

### **3.1.1 The origin, function and use of local landscape designations**

#### **The origin of local landscape designations**

The rising concerns for countryside protection and landscape planning, as mentioned in chapter 1, were realised firstly in town and country planning proposals in the interwar period and later on in designating important landscapes as National Parks and AONBs since 1949. Compared to the clear origin of National Parks and AONBs, the establishment of local landscape designations (LLDs) is harder to trace since the practice of locally defined designations was not addressed in any of the planning laws. While the establishment of LLDs varied from place to place among local authorities, it has been suggested that the trigger must be associated with their national counterparts as well as the growing conflicts of urban sprawl (Scott and Bullen, 2004). With the introduction of National Parks and AONBs and also the preliminary idea of local or secondary landscape designations<sup>21</sup>, the use of LLDs was first brought in at local planning level in the 1950s (Department of Environment (DoE), 1995, p.60). There are also a few other scattered records: Derbyshire County Council, for example, has been involved in the use of LLDs since 1958, and some LLDs date back as early as 1954 (Chris Blandford Associates (CBA), 2006; Countryside, 2009). The second wave of designating LLDs happened when local authorities were drafting the first round of Structure Plans after the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act. Given this impetus, local authorities were seeking to establish more LLDs as a strategy to help prioritising the emerging development plans and policies (Scott and Bullen, 2004). Ever since then the use of LLDs has been prevalent and is most of the time regarded as the ‘second tier’ of landscape designations below the statutory ones.

While protecting landscapes falling outside the system of statutory designations was the overarching aim, the nomenclature of LLDs, on the other hand, was highly varied. Five titles of local landscape designations were referred to in the consultation paper on the 1986 Rural White Paper ‘*The Future of Development Plans*’, namely ‘Areas of Landscape Quality’, ‘Areas of Great Landscape Value’, ‘Landscape Conservation Areas’, ‘Coastal Preservation Areas’ and ‘Areas of Semi-natural Importance’ (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006, p.328). In the sample survey of development plan studies commissioned from Elson *et al* (1995) by the Department of Environment, 18 different titles of LLDs were identified across 28 local authorities of England. In Scotland and Wales, at least twenty more different equivalents of each could also be

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<sup>21</sup> Arising out of Abercrombie’s landscape survey work and the Hobhouse report (see section 1.2.1).

found (table 3.1). Certainly the plethora of terms for LLDs expressed the awareness of taking locally important landscapes into account in planning, whereas a more significant message it conveyed was the confusion and uncertainty of defining these areas among local authorities, which eventually led to the claim that there should be another more robust approach to ‘replace the mass of “local” non-statutory designations in development plans (Elson *et al.*, 1995)<sup>22</sup>’.

Table 3.1 Titles of LLDs and related designations in development plans

<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>
– Areas of Great Landscape Value	– <i>Historic gardens and designed landscapes</i>	– <i>Green Wedge</i>
– Special Landscape Areas	– Areas of great landscape value	– Local Landscape Area
– Landscape Conservation Areas	– Regional scenic areas	– Areas of Landscape Importance
– Areas of High Landscape Value	– <i>Greenspace</i>	– Areas of Outstanding Beauty
– Areas of Amenity or Character Importance	– <i>Green wedges</i>	– Environmental Space
– Ancient Landscapes	– Areas of landscape significance	– <i>Green Barrier</i>
– Areas of Landscape Value	– Areas of local landscape priority	– <i>Green Belt</i>
– Areas of Particularly Attractive Countryside	– Areas of special landscape control	– <i>Historic Landscapes</i>
– Landscape Areas	– Areas of panoramic quality	– Important Landscape Features
– Areas of Special County Value	– Scenic areas	– Landscape Conservation Areas
– Locally Important Landscapes	– Local protection areas	– Landscape Improvement Areas
– Areas of Special Landscape	– Sites of local landscape character	– Landscapes of Outstanding Historical Importance
– Mature Landscape	– Sensitive landscape character areas	– Landscape Protection Areas
– Heritage Landscape	– Remote landscapes of value for recreation	– Landscapes/Gardens/Parks of Historic Importance
– Areas of Best Landscape	– Sites of special landscape importance	– <i>Local Sites of Nature Conservation Value</i>
– Special Landscape Value	– Areas of landscape quality	– Outstanding Landscape Areas
– Areas of Attractive Landscape	– Sensitive landscape areas	– <i>Parks and Gardens</i>
– Local Landscape Areas	– <i>Areas of special agricultural importance</i>	– <i>Sites and Landscapes of Archaeological or Historic Interest</i>
	– Areas of special landscape control	– <i>Sites of Nature Conservation Value</i>
	– <i>Rural protection areas</i>	
	– <i>Countryside around towns</i>	

\* The England designations were identified by case studies (Elson *et al.*, 1995). The Scotland and Wales designations were identified by local officers through questionnaire surveys (Scott and Bullen, 2004; Scott and Shannon, 2007), those which in italic are not really the equivalent of LLDs.

<sup>22</sup> See also: Elson, M. (1996) Planning good things for the countryside?. *Town and Country Planning*. 65(1): pp. 14-16.

## **General practice of LLDs and its position in the protected landscape hierarchy**

As the use of LLDs is not regulated by any statutory measures nor guided by any general instructions, there has always been a lack of an agreed standard on the practice of LLDs. Generally speaking, LLDs were normally initiated by local authorities on an ad hoc basis (Scott and Bullen, 2004). It was county councils that took the lead in identifying priority landscape areas in their Structure Plans and then passed the proposals through detailed examination in terms of delineating boundaries and articulating specific policies to district councils (Countryside Commission, 1990). In terms of policy wording, the typical way of addressing LLDs tended to be restrictive, such as *'development will not be permitted'*, under a set of given criteria. A preoccupation with a 'no development' ethic was explicitly shown in their primary function, to *'safeguard areas of the countryside from inappropriate development'* as an additional layer of protection (Scott and Bullen, 2004; Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006, p.328).

In the planning hierarchy, LLDs are widely regarded as a lower level landscape designation which in theory can complement their national counterparts to form a complete system of protected landscape. Table 3.2 summarises the three types of landscape designations according to their planning hierarchy and management basis. The largest difference between national designations and LLDs is their legitimate status in law, while at the same time the disparity in official guidance also demonstrates the divide. Although the importance of and attention to National Parks and AONBs has been emphasised repeatedly in policy guidance notes and government agency suggestions, almost no guidance was given on LLDs specifically. A sharper distinction was brought in during the consultation stage of Planning Policy Guidance 7 in 1997. As the use of 'special designation' was replaced by 'statutory designation', there was a connotation that the divide between statutory and non-statutory landscape designations was even made clearer. Furthermore, while National Parks and AONBs have their own administrative authorities or conservation boards and produce management plans<sup>23</sup>, LLDs can only be dealt with within the planning system by relevant policies. This indicates that while the use of LLDs fits well in the designation hierarchy, the lack of any legislative basis became a hindrance to its practice and effectiveness as is proven by one of the concerns of using this approach emerged later on.

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<sup>23</sup> According to the Environmental Act 1995 & Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000



Table 3.2 Administrative structure of landscape designations in England

	National Parks	AONBs	Local landscape designations
central government/ agencies	Department of Environment		none
	Government agency: the Countryside Commission /Agency, Natural England		none
local authority	National Park Authority	conservation board	County Council
			District Council
planning and management approach	management plan + planning policy	management plan + planning policy	planning policy

### 3.1.2 From landscape scenic quality to landscape evaluation

Since the establishment of landscape designations in the post-1945 planning system, the early way of identifying valuable landscapes for protection was to compare the (scenic) quality of different landscapes in terms of the presence of specific features and the absence of human interference (Robinson *et al.*, 1976, p.20). As the method relied on a few observers and surveyors working on site, the high degree of subjectivity and the inconsistent practice among local authorities provoked criticism and was especially called into question when computing techniques was prevailing in the 1960s-70s academia (Selman, 2010). The need to develop a systematic and rather sophisticated way of quantifying the relative levels of ‘beauty’ became increasingly important with the introduction of landscape issues in Structure Plans under the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act. These considerations eventually led to growing emphasis on evaluating landscapes in the late 1960s to 1970s among local authorities (Robinson *et al.*, 1976, p.22; Beer, 1993; Jensen, 2007, p.80).

According to the understanding of the time, landscape evaluation was defined as ‘*the comparative relationships between two or more landscapes in terms of assessments of visual quality*’ (Muir, 1999), which means the use of the records of visual quality to appreciate the aesthetic aspect of the landscape. In taking landscape quality as a measurable variable, landscape evaluation was carried out through a value system with a strong emphasis on quantitative survey and statistical methods in order to weigh one quality against another. Three stages of landscape evaluation work identified by Penning-Rowell (1981) provide an overview of the emergence of practice:

- *first, an early emphasis on intuitive methods (1967-1971)*

- second, the development of complex **statistical** approaches to landscape quality prediction (1971-1976)
- third, an emphasis on landscape **preference** and...personal feelings and attachments toward valued landscapes (1973-1980)

While the third stage of evaluating landscape preference related to public perceptions which were not necessarily relevant to planning practice (Landscape Research Group, 1988, para3.28), the work of the former two stages was largely initiated by county planning authorities in an attempt to incorporate landscape issues into development plans (see Penning-Rowse, 1975, table 1). Landscape evaluation at the first stage started with a simple scoring system, sometime more qualitative, in which landscapes were classified according to their quality of being good or bad landscape by intuitive and subjective judgements (Gilg, 1975, p.209; Penning-Rowse, 1981). This preliminary ranking of so called 'landscape value' then became increasingly complex as quantitative methods were added, until it reached its height in the Coventry-Solihull-Warwickshire (C-S-W) Method (1970) and the Manchester Method (1970-1974).

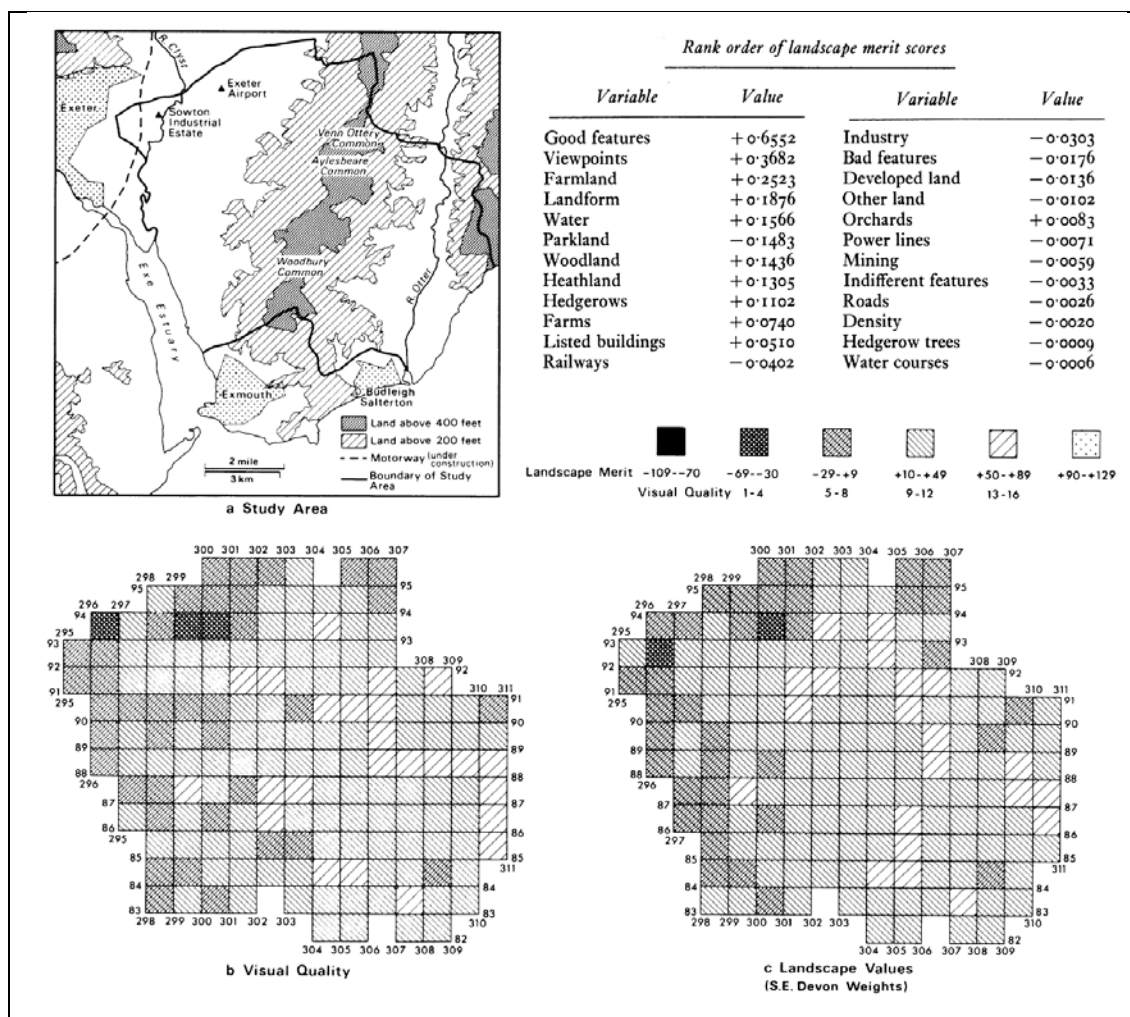


Figure 3.1 Landscape evaluation in south-east Devon

(Source: Reproduced from Blacksell and Gilg, 1975, combined table 1 & figure 2)

Figure 3.1 shows a study conducted by Blacksell and Gilg (1975) in south-east Devon using the C-S-W Method. This method divided the study area (a) into grid squares and gave a specific rank of ‘visual quality’ (b) to each grid according to their land use type. Lastly a ‘landscape value’ (c) map was produced to show the relative scores of the landscape. A concurrent study carried out by the University of Manchester also used grids as basic units to score landscape according to the scenic value of different types of elements. The measurement of the relative weight among grid squares caused by different factors was further applied to rank the values of elements (figure 3.2).

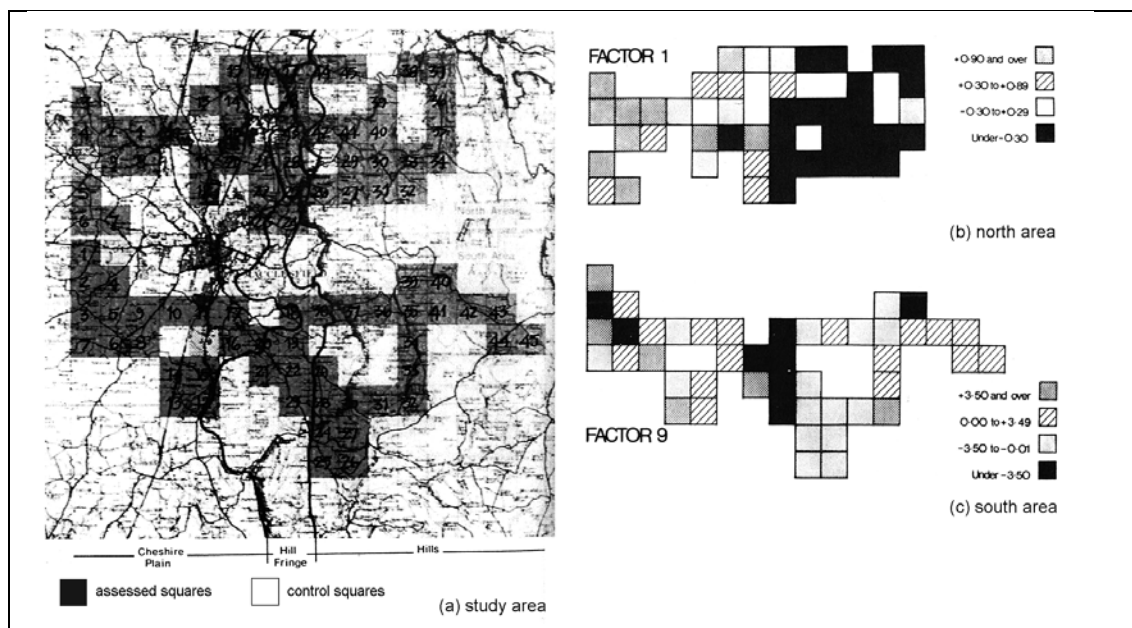


Figure 3.2 The ‘Manchester method’

(Source: Reproduced from Robinson *et al.*, 1976, p.226-228, combined fig.6 & fig.7)

### Criticism and reflection

The original idea of conducting landscape evaluation was, according to Penning-Rowsell (1975), to help local authorities with regard to *landscape preservation* (in relation to designated areas), *landscape protection* (general development control), *landscape improvement* (individual elements) and *recreation policy* in planning considerations. In the case of the objective of landscape preservation in particular, it was hoped that the method could enable local authorities to identify priority areas, including LLDs, and determine their boundaries (Penning-Rowsell, 1975; Landscape Research Group, 1988). Although the evaluation placed many expectations on local authorities, in the light of the present understanding, this endeavour was far from satisfactory. Criticism arose firstly concerning the methodology itself, including flaws in the statistical base, ignorance of human perception and cost-effective problems (Landscape Research Group, 1988; Muir, 1999). Moreover, as local authorities devoted effort to advancing the technical aspects and creating an over-complex methodology,

the method was found to be of little worth and not necessarily fit for planning purposes to which it was applied (Penning-Rowsell, 1975). The opposition to the approach suggested landscape could not be easily reduced to numerical form and computation output, nor could the question of why one landscape was more valued than another be answered by using this approach (Swanwick, 2006, para 4.3). Despite the burgeoning of several landscape evaluations conducted by local authorities during this period, landscape evaluation was not acknowledged by the Countryside Commission nor further referred to in its policy guidance and publications. The largely unfruitful practice of landscape evaluation then led to two divergent directions for dealing with landscape issues. On the academic side, statistical evaluation was largely replaced by landscape perception and preference studies, as indicated by the third stage of landscape evaluation. On the planning side, the Countryside Commission 'abandoned' landscape evaluation and even stepped back to rely on the earlier intuitive judgement of landscape professionals. This left a vacuum for landscape planning, as no new method was proposed by the Commission for the next few years (Swanwick, 2006; Jensen, 2007, p.132).

The rise and fall of landscape evaluation also underlined the long-standing debate between subjectivity and objectivity in conducting landscape assessment. As the main belief of 1970s landscape evaluation was to rule out human bias, non-quantitative landscape assessments were objected to by some, mainly because they were not conducted in a seemingly objective way. This was also true for other concurrent studies based on landscape description contracted by the Countryside Commission. In contrast, the quantitative approach, did not necessarily mean the method was totally value free. In the Manchester Method, for example, the scoring of visual quality and the choice of field sample and landscape elements still depended on the presumptions of the observers (Landscape Research Group, 1988).

### **3.1.3 The emergence of Landscape Assessment**

#### **Early stages of landscape assessment**

Although disillusionment with landscape evaluation resulted in a methodology vacuum and a loss of interest in landscape matters in the early 1980s (Jensen, 2007), landscape evaluation was still influential in initiating a new era in landscape planning (Selman, 2000):

- firstly, landscape evaluation made it possible for landscape to be taken into account in policy-making by providing landscape parameters;
- more importantly, landscape evaluation had, alongside progress in other strands of the landscape assessment approach, raised awareness of the importance of the wider landscape beyond designations.

The second influence was realised as the conservation and enhancement of the countryside was addressed in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Gilg, 1996, p.111). This Act introduced a broader view which allowed the concept of ‘the wider countryside’ to be taken into account, as opposed to the previous notion which focused on the special parts of the countryside (Jensen, 2007, p.138).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s a number of events and projects shed much light on the holistic idea of landscape. The use of **landscape character** in particular emerged as a crucial concept and specific term to encapsulate the assessment of landscape and even helped to define natural beauty in a new way (Selman and Swanwick, 2010). The most important catalyst for urging the Countryside Commission to pursue a new approach to landscape was the public inquiry into designation of the proposed North Pennines AONB in 1985. In order to try to balance subjectivity and objectivity, the inquiry introduced a new interpretation of landscape assessment by differentiating the meaning of ‘landscape quality’ and ‘landscape character’. According to the record of the inquiry, ‘landscape quality’ was officially defined as the updated meaning of ‘natural beauty’, in which visual quality and aesthetic taste were the dominant factors, whereas ‘landscape character’ referred to ‘*an understanding of the nature, distribution and extent of differing types of landscape*’, which ‘*makes no attempt to compare the quality of one type of landscape with another*’ (Swanwick, 2006, cited from the original report). The differentiation of landscape character from landscape quality and the discussion of landscape perspectives in the North Pennines AONB inquiry immediately fed into developing a new approach to underpin this notion.

In the mid 1980s, following the North Pennines Inquiry, the Countryside Commission continued to contract out more work to explore this issue in more depth. These works were exemplified by three studies conducted concurrently in 1986 (Landscape Research Group, 1988; Swanwick, 2006):

- the *Mid Wales Uplands Landscape Assessment* (also known as the Cambrian Mountains) identifying a framework of landscape types and areas, and concluding this with written evidence to identify the conservation priority for different **landscape types**;
- the *River Valley Survey and Assessment* in establishing a descriptive approach to landscape elements, features and detractors which contribute to a specific **landscape character area** (rivers);
- the guidelines on *Section 3 Conservation Maps of National Parks* in setting out **criteria** for the factors influencing landscape and natural beauty.

The progress in concepts and methodology, especially the embryonic structure of landscape assessment established in the Mid Wales Upland Project, were finally consolidated in the publication of new guidance in 1987. Under the title of ‘*Landscape*

*Assessment: A Countryside Commission approach*, the guidance embraced a ‘*broad, multi-dimensional approach based on aesthetic taste operating within the context of informed opinion, the trained eye and common sense*’. It was initially aimed only at Countryside Commission internal staff but was quickly adopted by local authorities and then to help in their work.

### **First Countryside Commission guidance on Landscape Assessment**

The 1987 guidance defined Landscape Assessment as ‘*an umbrella term to encompass all the different ways of looking at, describing, analysing and evaluating landscape*’. Although this guidance still emphasised a rather narrow approach of assessing landscape in terms of natural beauty (Countryside Commission, 1987, para3.1&3.2), it was the first time that a standardised procedure for landscape assessment work was established. This guidance not only provided a methodology for landscape assessment, but also showed how the assessment could be further applied to decisions on:

1. *the selection of special areas and the determination of their boundaries (e.g. AONBs)*
2. *investment decisions (e.g. grant aid for land acquisitions)*
3. *impact analyses (e.g. required for major development control cases)*

(*ibid*, para1.2)

Leaving aside the second purpose of making investment decisions, the first and third purposes related to the two pathways of landscape planning mentioned repeatedly in this chapter: through a designation mechanism and through planning control and related regulation. Firstly, referring to the selection of landscape designations, the guidance stressed that outstanding landscape quality should be the primary consideration in choosing and delineating landscape designations. Based on the instructions outlined in this guidance, a number of proposed and existing landscape designations, especially AONBs, were reassessed or revisited later in the 1990s to strengthen the previously intuition-based selection (Swanwick, 2006, para 4.24; Jensen, 2007, p.219). Secondly, on development control in the countryside, the guidance made mention of taking into account ‘*the impact of any proposal upon a specific place*’ and ‘*the ability of that place to accommodate the proposal*’ (Countryside Commission, 1987, para 4.19). Although the guidance as an introduction to a new approach did not elaborate too much in demonstrating such analysis, it did give a clue to the further application of the assessment around this specific topic.

The introduction of the Landscape Assessment guidance undoubtedly started to fill the policy vacuum in landscape planning practice and successfully drew attention to this new tool among practitioners (Swanwick, 2006, para4.29). Grounded in this new

perspective, assessing landscape by its character was fully approved by the Countryside Commission as a potential planning tool, and more studies were commissioned to advance its technical and practical uses. Interestingly, although the 1987 Assessment was intended to justify landscape designations such as AONBs, the contribution it made in the next decade was more on the opposite side in terms of non-designated areas (Jensen, 2007, p.220). By differentiating landscape character from landscape (scenic) quality in the follow-up practice, the notion of the wider countryside was made more apparent.

### **3.2 Consolidation of the character-based approach**

The emergence of Landscape Assessment as an alternative to landscape evaluation caused a major change in landscape planning over the following decades. However, the use of a ‘systematic landscape evaluation technique’ was still to a degree popular among local authorities in the late 1980s (Jensen, 2007, p.156) and the Countryside Commission’s new approach to Landscape Assessment was rather unfamiliar to practitioners. Therefore, the next task was to disseminate it more widely and seek to encourage more input into planning practice. The period from the first publication of the Landscape Assessment guidance in 1987 until the reformed planning system came into effect in early 2000 was the key phase of incorporating this new approach into planning policies. As the early practice of Landscape Assessment was mainly confined to internal projects in pilot local authorities in partnership with the Commission, more influences at this stage came from the involvement of national planning policies. The emergence of the ‘character-based approach’ (or the character approach in short form), indicating planning policies informed by landscape (character assessment), caused a significant change in landscape planning, which is the ‘landscape character turn’ mentioned previously.

This innovation was particularly important because from this point on, landscape planning approaches have shifted from the notion of designated landscapes to that of the non-designated wider countryside. During this period, the use of local landscape designations and the use of the newly introduced character approach were co-evolving under the planning system and in a sense competing with each other. Changes in the relative importance of these two approaches will be traced from planning guidance and official documents, especially the publications of the Countryside Commission in confirming the use and position of landscape character assessment and the character approach. Table 3.3 summarises the parallel development of key references to be discussed in this section based on two main discourses:

- how these two approaches were introduced and developed in planning policies; and
- how Landscape Assessment was realised as a planning policy tool.

Table 3.3 Policy documents for the two landscape planning approaches (1987~1997)

National planning legislation/ policy/ guidance	Planning position/ guidance from the Countryside Commission (CoCo)	Guidance on Landscape Assessment and landscape tools from CoCo
		<b>CCD18 (1987) Landscape Assessment: A Countryside Commission approach</b>
	CCP264 (1989) Planning for a Greener Countryside	
Local agenda 21	<b>CCP317 (1990) Countryside and Nature Conservation Issues in District Local Plans</b>	
	CCP351 (1991) Caring for the Countryside: A policy agenda for England in the 90s	
(1992) Planning Policy Guidance 7: The countryside and the rural economy		<b>CCP332 (1992) Assessment and Conservation of Landscape Character: The Warwickshire Landscapes Project</b>
	CCP420 (1993) Conservation Issues in Strategic Plans	<b>CCP423 (1993) Landscape Assessment Guidance</b>
		CCP444 (1994) The New Map of England
		CCD418 (1994) Design in the Countryside
<b>(1995) Rural White Paper: Rural England</b>	CCP470 (1995) Quality of Countryside: Quality of life (draft)	
	CCP485 (1996) Conservation Issues in Local Plans	CCP501 (1996) Village Design: Making local character count in new development
<b>(1997) PPG 7: The countryside quality and economic and social development</b>		
		CCP535 ~CA14 (1998/99) Countryside Character (Vol.1~8)

\* references in bold are given more emphases in the following discussion



### 3.2.1 The advance of Landscape Assessment in the early 1990s

Landscape Assessment has, since its first introduction in 1987, distinguished itself as a planning tool by making the linkage between landscape matters and planning practices. It was also recognised by the Countryside Commission as a measure for local authorities and developers to embed *natural beauty* and *landscape diversity*<sup>24</sup> in the planning process:

*'This approach extends far beyond the traditional definition of areas of landscape value and would move rural planning into a positive era in which the countryside comes first.'*

(Countryside Commission, 1989)

From this point on, Landscape Assessment gradually developed into one of the main considerations in planning, with the same weight as other countryside issues. This approach continued to develop in the next few years by incorporating conceptual and technical changes for the purpose of improving policy applications, and finally led to the publication of the next version of Landscape Assessment guidance published in 1993.

The rapid development of Landscape Assessment was also facilitated by the wider planning context in terms of the emphasised use of development plans and the concept of sustainability. Under the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, the UK planning system in the 1990s underwent a fundamental change in prioritising the use of plans in the planning process. The emphasis on the use of development plans, known as the plan-led system, provided more opportunities for landscape issues to be taken into account in the emerging district wide local plans. At the same time, sustainable development significantly shaped the vision of planning in which planning policies, according to Agenda 21 (1992), had to be in line with the principle of sustainability. These factors enabled the use of Landscape Assessment to have more involvement in planning considerations, especially in two perspectives: the increased emphasis on landscape character and the divide between objective and subjective views of landscape.

#### Conceptual advance on defining landscape character

At the stage of conceptualising landscape assessment in the few years prior to 1987, there was an emerging thought of using 'landscape character' to encapsulate the diverse aspects of landscape in contrast to the traditional narrow focus on visual aspects of the landscape. However, it was not a new invention in the terminology of landscape assessment as in the 1930s, Patrick Abercrombie had already adopted the use of 'character zones' in his method of landscape survey (Dehaene, 2005). In his conception,

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<sup>24</sup> 'Landscape diversity' in this guidance was not clearly defined, which might indicate the concept of 'landscape character'




character zoning could be identified by overlaying different land uses including built areas, industrial areas, coalfield, open space and agricultural areas. In this early sense, the use of the character zone was similar to and confused with the contemporary practice of land use zoning. Even in the Manchester Study of landscape evaluation, the term ‘landscape character assessment’ was also mentioned as a synonym for baseline description of the landscape which contributed to landscape visual quality. However, under the prevalence of landscape aesthetics and the scoring system in this study, the use of landscape character was not given too much emphasis as it ‘*cannot be expected to provide a consistent guide to aesthetic quality*’ and was ‘*not given a high rating*’ (Robinson *et al.*, 1976, p.35). Therefore, it was not until the North Pennines public inquiry that the ambiguous understanding of landscape character was improved by differentiating the use of descriptive **landscape character** from that of **landscape quality** with its connotation of subjectivity (see 3.1.4).

The clarification of landscape character also underlines the significant leap in defining and capturing the wider countryside beyond designations. For example, in the Countryside Commission’s policy guidance for local authorities, the concept of landscape character was applied to planning practice as ‘*an approach to landscape conservation based on landscape character – the characteristics and features that make one landscape different from another, rather than necessarily better or worse*’ (Countryside Commission, 1990, p.13). Landscape character was further defined in the Warwickshire Study (1992) on developing the methodology of Landscape Assessment, to represent the distinct and consistent pattern of landscape (Countryside Commission, 1992, p.3). This definition was expanded in the next version of *Landscape Assessment Guidance*, published in 1993, in which landscape character was further defined as ‘*a distinct pattern or combination of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape*’ (Cobham Resource Consultants, 1993, p.5), as opposed to landscape quality which was mainly applied to designated landscapes. From this point on, landscape character became increasingly important to encapsulate the all-embracing nature of the wider countryside, and eventually lent itself to the title of the third version, Landscape Character Assessment, later in 2002 (see: next section).

In parallel to the recognition of landscape character as the realisation of the wider context, another concept of ‘local distinctiveness’ has also been extensively mentioned in planning practice since the 1990s. The exact wording was first promoted by a charity and lobby organisation, Common Ground, on an informal basis in 1993 in response to the equivalent idea of ‘sense of place’ in academic work. As respecting the sense of place was mentioned successively in the 1993 Landscape Assessment guidance and the Countryside Commission’s policy recommendations for local authorities in 1995 and 1996 within the context of landscape character, there was an implication that landscape

character could also help achieving local distinctiveness by identifying place-specific characteristics.

Table 3.4 The evolution of Landscape Character Assessment

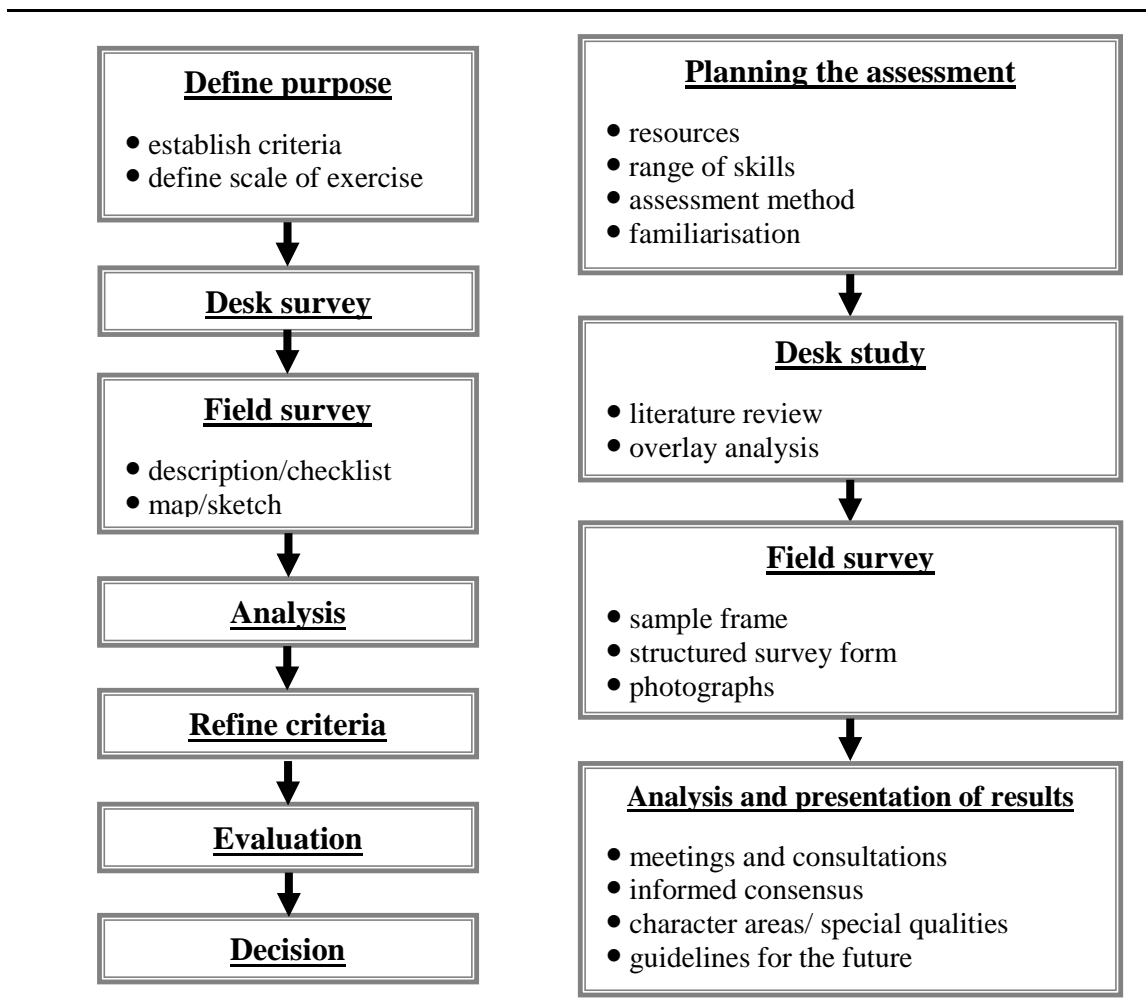
Landscape Evaluation	Landscape Assessment	Landscape Character Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focused on landscape value</li> <li>• claimed to be an objective process</li> <li>• compared value of one landscape with another</li> <li>• relied on quantitative measurement of landscape elements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognised roles of both subjectivity and objectivity</li> <li>• stressed differences between inventory, classification and evaluation of landscape</li> <li>• provided scope for incorporating other people's perceptions of the landscape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focuses on landscape character</li> <li>• divides process of characterisation from making judgements</li> <li>• stresses potential for use at different scales</li> <li>• links to Historic Landscape Characterisation</li> <li>• more recent emphasis on need for stakeholders to be involved</li> </ul>
<p>Early 1970s</p> 	<p>Mid 1980s</p> 	<p>Mid 1990s</p> 

(Source: Swanwick and LUC, 2002, p.2)

### Methodological advance and planning applications

The second version of Landscape Assessment not only incorporated and clarified new concepts like landscape character, a significant improvement on methodology was also shown in this document. On the methodology side, Landscape Assessment was improved as more and more studies were conducted after the prototype, the leader among which was the ‘Warwickshire approach’ developed on the basis of a three year project (1988-91) in Warwickshire. This study was particular influential in making a clear distinction between objective steps and subjective steps, which were rather ambiguous in the preliminary design of the 1987 guidance (figure 3.3). The desk survey step, for example, in the 1987 guidance was merely suggested as ‘*mak[ing] use of whatever has already been said about an area*’ such as written materials and maps. The Warwickshire study, based on the methodology developed in the *Mid Wales Uplands Landscape Assessment* (1986), gave more instruction on assessment techniques including landform mapping, landcover mapping and historical review. By making the analytic techniques transparent and repeatable, consistent terminology also emerged to be applied to the mapping process and outcomes. A second feature of the Warwickshire study was the establishment of a nested mapping hierarchy in terms of ‘regional character areas – landscape types’. In this way, the whole landscape could be broken down, first into **regional character areas** and second into **landscape types** based on

map analysis and field surveys. Landscape types, in particular, were suggested as the descriptive unit on which subjective proposals and priorities could be made.



(a) assessment steps in the 1987 guidance (b) assessment steps in the 1993 guidance

Figure 3.3 The procedure of Landscape Assessment

(Source: Countryside Commission, 1987; Cobham Resource Consultants, 1993)

Another leap was made by converting the objective classification and description of landscape into practical actions in the form of **guidelines** and **landscape (management) strategies**. As the 1993 guidance pointed out,

*‘They (the stages of classification and description) must be **translated** into action on the ground, whether this be through planning policies, countryside management, or initiatives to create new landscapes’*

(Cobham Resource Consultants, 1993, p.25)

The process of ‘translation’ indicated the conversion of the descriptive facts of each landscape type or character area into landscape strategies or landscape guidelines. As the former simply meant giving instructions for managing landscape features such as trees and woodlands, settlements, highways and forestry, the latter were particularly

important in informing planning policies and development control decisions in the light of area-specific character. The concept of using landscape strategies was first established in the 1991 Countryside Commission guidance for local plans in terms of using a dichotomy of **conservation strategy** or **enhancement strategy**. The two strategies, alongside one more type of **restoration strategy** set out in the Warwickshire Study, the complete structure of using landscape strategies was established in the Landscape Assessment Guidance (1993):

- **conservation strategy**: indicating the traditional landscape character is strong and landscape features are notable and of interest, applicable for areas with strong character which required extra protection and special care by limiting inappropriate development in policy settings
- **enhancement strategy**: indicating landscape character or landscape features are in decline and require positive improvement, including the sub-class of *restoration* (to repair the landscape), *reconstruction* (to re-create a former landscape) and *creation* (to form a new and different landscape)

(Cobham Resource Consultants, 1993, p.26)

The same set of strategies was then continued to be advocated in the Countryside Commission's guidance 'Conservation Issues in Local Plan' published in 1996 as a measure to strengthen the character and avoid the unification of the countryside (Countryside Commission, 1996, p.15).

### 3.2.2 The emergence of the Countryside Character programme

#### The initiation of the Countryside Character programme

After the publication of the 1987 and 1993 Landscape Assessment guidance, the method was widely recognised as one of the major planning considerations among local authorities. As more and more local level assessments emerged, the next task was to demonstrate the approach by building a common framework and developing a consistent methodology. This framework was first proposed in the Countryside Commission's policy agenda for the 1990s (published in 1991) as the project 'A New Map of England' to bring Landscape Assessment up to the regional level to provide a wider context for landscape strategies and the use of designations (Countryside Commission, 1991, p.15). A pilot study of this project with its detailed process and methodology was then pioneered in southwest England under the title of 'New Map of England' in 1993/94. With support from the Department of Environment and English Heritage, the original New Map pilot was expanded by collaborating with the 'Natural Areas' project initiated by English Nature, which was similarly pursuing the wider environmental context beyond protected sites. An all-embracing approach called the 'Countryside Character programme' therefore emerged to *'identify, describe and*

analyse, from a regional perspective, the character of the English landscape’ (Brooke, 1994). From its conceptualisation to the publication of final reports, this programme spanned nearly a decade in the 1990s as the core work of the Countryside Commission (Jensen, 2007, p.275).

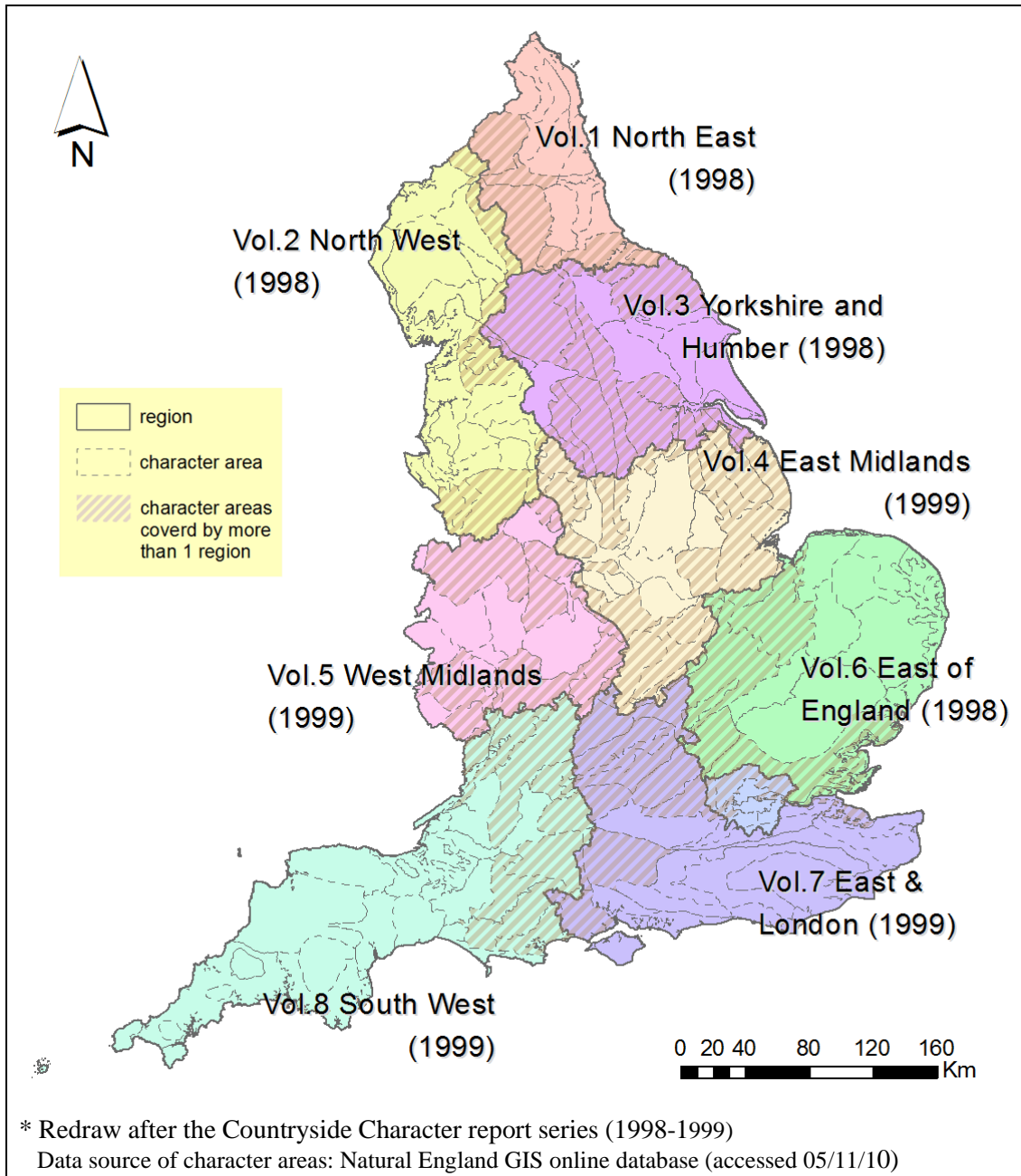


Figure 3.4 The Countryside Character Map and the publication years of each region

Generally speaking, the programme involved collective work including (Jensen, 2007, p.273):

- the programme itself<sup>25</sup> of conducting regional-wide Landscape Assessments;

<sup>25</sup> Sometimes called the ‘Countryside Character initiative’ alternatively

- the output map of the ‘*Character of England: landscape, wildlife & natural features*’ produced jointly by the participating agencies;
- detailed description of each character area, published by the Countryside Commission/Agency; and
- the website forum of the ‘Countryside Character Network<sup>26</sup>’ .

The procedure according to which this programme was conducted largely followed the methodology established in the Landscape Assessment guidance in 1993, but was more delicate in the mapping process and the selection of landscape parameters with the help of GIS techniques. The outcome of the programme was a nation-wide map (figure 3.4) finalised in late 1996 resulting in a total of 159 character areas. This Countryside Character map was later supplemented by a series of detailed landscape descriptions published in 1998-1999 in the form of eight regional volumes. Each of the volumes described the character areas by addressing its landscape character, natural and cultural settings, land cover and built environment and landscape change. This information about the formation and changing trends were summarised into several key characteristics of that area to be a value-free context as a policy tool for decision making (Brooke, 1994).

### **From landscape/countryside character to the character approach**

The Countryside Character Programme was not only the first national/regional level Landscape Assessments, but also contributed to the integration of landscape/countryside character into higher level planning policies. Before the emergence of the Programme, although the use of Landscape Assessment<sup>27</sup> was mentioned in the Planning Policy Guidance 7 (DoE, 1992)<sup>28</sup> on countryside to inform the preparation of development plans as Supplementary Planning Guidance, little detail was given on the practical use of this emerging tool. Only the term ‘landscape resources’ was referred to as a criterion to be considered in countryside development alongside other features like settlement patterns and wildlife (para1.10).

The Countryside Character programme as well as its underlying concept of landscape/countryside character was first recognised, among other rural environment issues, in the Rural White Paper (1995) – ‘*Rural England*’ in terms of ‘*provid[ing] the comprehensive and consistent analysis of the **character of the English Countryside** which our conservation efforts have hitherto lacked*’ (DoE, 1995, p.106). The advocacy concerning the Countryside Character programme and the Countryside Character Map attracted significant attention among practitioners as addressed in the discussion memorandum of the White Paper. In the memorandum, the programme was explained

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<sup>26</sup> Later on relaunched as ‘Landscape Character Network’ in 2006

<sup>27</sup> Indicating the document ‘Landscape Assessment: a Countryside Commission approach (1987)’

<sup>28</sup> *The Countryside and the Rural Economy*, published in 1992

to ‘help planning authorities to take a new look at their whole countryside... and perhaps then refocus their own assessment of the countryside’ (House of Commons, 1996a, p.xxxiii). By using this approach, the previous notion of landscape protection could be broadened to developing strategies for countryside improvement and enhancement as appropriate.

Following the claim in the White Paper, the introduction of Countryside Character Programme in Planning Policy Guidance 7 (DoE, 1997, hereafter used the short form of PPG7-97) was considered one of the major breakthroughs<sup>29</sup> with regard to the strong claims of sustainable development and the accommodation of change in planning trends. In PPG7-97, ‘maintaining or enhancing the **character of the countryside** and conserving its natural resources’ (para 1.4) was one of its main objectives, against which development plans were required to consider ‘how any acceptable development would best **respect or enhance the character of the countryside**’ (para 2.4). The Programme itself was particularly introduced in the section on ‘the character of the countryside’ as one of the guiding principles for countryside planning:

*‘The priority now is to find new ways of **enriching the quality of the whole countryside whilst accommodating appropriate development** in order to complement the protection which designations offer’ (para 2.14)*

The above statement on countryside character as well as a separate box briefly introducing the Countryside Character Programme pointed out the characteristics and functions of this new perspective. This was also the beginning of the use of the ‘character approach’ in official terms, indicating the planning policies informed by this programme and Landscape Assessments conducted in a similar way. Three main functions of the approach were particularly raised by the Countryside Commission in the consultation response to the draft PPG7:

- *the countryside character approach should be used to **assist in accommodating necessary change** without sacrificing local character: it is **not** inherently a protective mechanism;*
- *the national countryside character framework (of 159 broad character areas across England) should **inform finer grain landscape assessments** by local authorities, as part of the background to plan preparation; and*
- *the character approach currently being developed by the Commission and English Nature will provide valuable information for local authorities.*

(National Archive, D11-144, 1996)

These functions made it clear that the approach provided a consistent way of analysing the landscape to inform other countryside guidance, such as Countryside Design

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<sup>29</sup> See: PPG7 preamble



Summaries, Village Design Statements, and finer local level Landscape Assessments. Secondly, it also helped to accommodate changes by identifying the way in which new developments could positively contribute to the character of the countryside. Notably, both the White Paper and PPG7-97 did not use the approach as an extra layer for countryside protection. Rather, local authorities were encouraged to review their local countryside designations and could also use the approach as a supplementary guidance for non-designated areas.

In its passage through the development of concepts, techniques and applications over a decade, Landscape Assessment was finally embedded in national planning policies in the form of the 'character approach'. The immediate challenge to this emerging approach, as a result, was its compatibility with the existing use of local landscape designations in the same planning context.

### **3.2.3 Discourses on the use of local landscape designations**

#### **Guidance from the Countryside Commission**

With the emergence of Landscape Assessment and the character approach, the role of LLDs in the last two decades has changed dramatically from a prevalent practice to a problematic approach. In the 1989 Countryside Commission policy guidance, LLDs were discussed together with other statutory designations as one of the main objectives of countryside planning: *'to protect areas of special environmental importance'* (p.7). While the statutory designations were confirmed as one of the guiding principles for countryside planning, no instruction was given on the use of LLDs. A little more guidance could be found in the Commission's 1990 guidance on local plans. In this document the LLD policies were simply included as a measure to protect the character, qualities and distinctiveness of landscape from developments and changes. Instead being adopted as a long term practice, the use of LLDs was suggested to continue *'as long as county councils place emphasis on special areas in their structure plans'* (Countryside Commission, 1990, p.13). This implied that the use of LLDs may well cease in due course, given the emphasis on special areas no longer existed in development plans. From this point onwards, no further reference has been made to LLDs in the policy guidance from the Commission and its successors, despite the fact that LLDs were to an extent still popular among local authorities and conservation groups.

Arguably, while the Countryside Commission was not in favour of giving more policy guidance on the use of LLDs, the need to justify these LLDs was nevertheless mentioned in the first two versions of Landscape Assessment guidance. In addition to the primary purpose of selecting special areas in the 1987 guidance (see 4.1.4), the next version of the guidance (1993) also gave a clear illustration of how Landscape

Assessment could inform the justification of LLDs. In practice, the 1993 guidance showed a strong attempt to supplement the rationale of selecting tentative LLDs and reviewing existing ones, especially on the matter of drawing boundaries. An example of the Review of Special Landscape Areas in Kent informed by a Landscape Assessment study was illustrated in this guidance. In this case a close relationship was established between the character areas and the designated areas, and additional LLDs were also selected by using the assessment (p.41-42) (figure 3.5). This marked an important relationship of complementarity between the two approaches in the early 1990s.

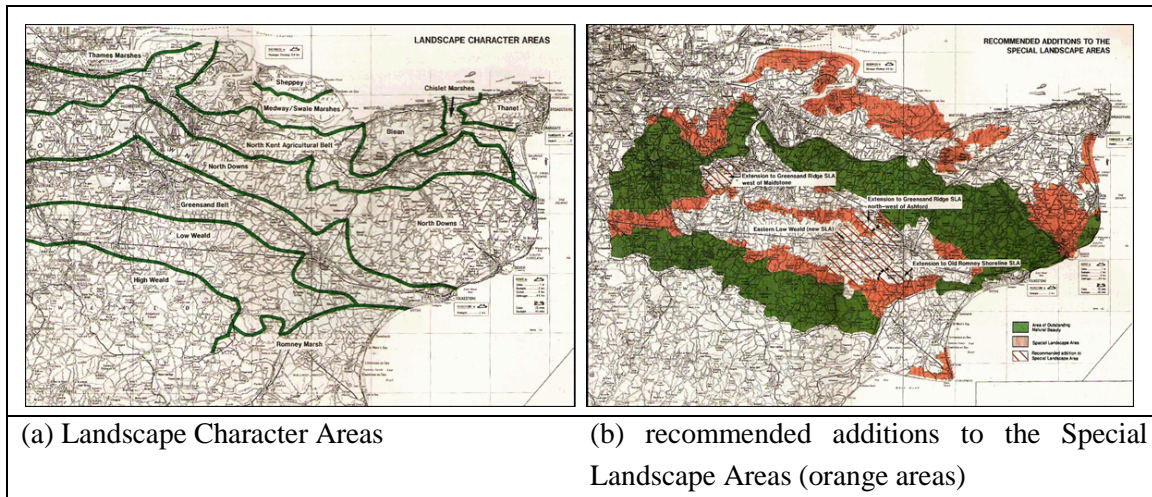


Figure 3.5 Review of Special Landscape Areas in Kent

(Source: Cobham Resource Consultants, 1992; cited by Cobham Resource Consultants, 1993, p.42)

Moreover, by the time the 1993 guidance was published, the use of LLDs still referred to the corresponding section in PPG7-92. As LLDs in PPG7-92 were considered an important feature of the countryside, the need for justification for selecting designations was therefore included in the 1993 guidance. The selection criteria in this guidance, originally derived from the Countryside Commission's studies on AONBs, were also applicable to LLDs. Compared to the early establishment of LLDs, the criteria set out in the 1993 guidance featured a more holistic view informed by Landscape Assessment combining of both the objective and subjective aspects of the landscape (table 3.5).

Table 3.5 Criteria for evaluating landscapes for designation

<p><b><u>Landscape as a resource</u></b> The landscape should be a resource of at least national (regional, county, <b>local</b>) importance for reasons of rarity or representativeness.</p> <p><b><u>Scenic quality</u></b> It should be of high scenic quality, with pleasing patterns and combinations of landscape features, and important aesthetic or intangible factors.</p> <p><b><u>Unspoilt character</u></b> The landscape within the area generally should be unspoilt by large-scale, visually intrusive industry, mineral extraction or other inharmonious development.</p>	<p><b><u>Sense of place</u></b> It should have a distinctive and common character, including topographic and visual unity and a clear sense of place.</p> <p><b><u>Conservation interest</u></b> In addition to its scenic qualities, it should include other notable conservation interests, such as features of historical, wildlife or architectural interest.</p> <p><b><u>Consensus</u></b> There should be a consensus of both professional and public opinion as to its importance, for example as reflected through writings and paintings about the landscape.</p>
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(Source: Cobham Resource Consultants, 1993, p.25)

### **The use of LLDs in national planning contexts in the 1990s**

As the use of local landscape designations fell within the remit of local authorities, it was rarely addressed in higher level policies and guidance before the national planning policy guidance came into being in England in 1988. In PPG7 (DoE, 1992), LLDs in terms of Areas of Great Landscape Value were discussed as ‘other designations’ to apply special policies which could ‘*highlight particularly important features of the countryside that should be taken into account in planning decisions* (para3.17)’. Although the use of LLDs at this stage seemed more favourable in the policy context, this attitude was soon challenged by a review on the use of LLDs. Elson *et al.* (1995) sampled 28 development plans and found several shortcomings of the practice of LLDs:

- there was no distinctive degree to which control criteria were stated between statutory and non-statutory landscape designations, leaving the latter an inadequate status in the planning hierarchy and most of the time excessively protected;
- the variety of titles and policy wording on LLDs suggested confusion and uncertainty in implementing planning policies in a consistent way; and
- a growing claim that the countryside should be conceived as a whole as well as a need to improve degraded landscape and enhance local character.

These concerns were fed into the Rural White Paper in 1995, which initiated a significant change of attitude to the prevailing use of LLDs. In the light of local character and distinctiveness, the Rural White Paper pointed out the deficiency of the designation approach:

*'[Using ] special areas is not, on its own, an adequate mechanism for conserving the quality of landscape... We can no longer afford to view designated areas in isolation from the rest of the countryside' (p.105).*

While in this statement there was no intention to weaken the conservational priority for statutory designations, when it came to the context of local (landscape) designations, discouragement was strongly expressed:

*'Over the years local authorities have introduced a multiplicity of local countryside designations. These may **unduly discourage development** without identifying the particular characteristics of the local countryside which need to be respected or enhanced... authorities should only apply local countryside designations where normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection' (p.107).*

This statement pointed out that traditional restrictive policies applied to special areas were no longer practical in the light of countryside character. LLDs in particular, owing to their non-statutory nature and the overlapping competition with other interests, were by far the most vulnerable category of designation in need of reconsideration.

The same position continued well into the follow-up PPG7-97, where it was again considered that LLDs may *'unduly restrict acceptable development and economics without identifying the particular features of the local countryside which need to be respected or enhanced'* (para4.16). The consultation remark on the draft PPG7 explained that this statement was not necessarily an attack nor a claim to eliminate the use of LLDs. Rather, the emphasis here was on *'providing an opportunity to establish more sophisticated and effective local countryside designations and policies'* in the face of their poor justification (National Archive D11-144, 1996). According to the final text of PPG7, an urgent need was placed on making clear justifications which stated the reason why these designations could not be fully protected through existing planning measures. Moreover, when reviewing the adequacy of the designations, local authorities were also asked to conduct formal assessments to ensure the designations were properly underpinned (DoE, 1997, para4.16).

### **3.2.4 Debates and reflections on the two approaches**

The introduction of Landscape Assessment to the Rural White Paper and PPG 7 in the form of the character approach initiated a 'landscape character turn' which made countryside character the primary consideration in planning policies from the mid-1990s onwards. It seemed that the use of the character approach was advocated by the government to carry out the dual commission of providing a whole picture for countryside planning and justifying some poorly defined LLDs. In effect, with more examination from the consultation responses and discussion over this issue, the seemingly welcome approach actually provoked a wide scepticism among the interest

groups since none of them were fully convinced by this approach. As was stated in the memorandum of reviewing the Rural White Paper, the use of the character approach was not as favoured as was shown in the policy texts:

*'We are concerned that too much is expected of the Countryside Character Map... We are not convinced that the Countryside Character Map will provide this reassurance, or indeed, sufficient information to enable authorities to use their powers of protection wisely and effectively'*. (House of Commons, 1996a, p.xxxiv)

As the same concern was raised again during the consultation stage of the draft PPG7-97, an explanatory meeting was held during the later stages of consultation in order to deflect criticism and, more importantly, to resolve the *'important gap in the logical flow from countryside character areas as a strategic framework to the practicalities of how they should be considered as part of the local plan process'* (National Archive D11/144, 1996). Although the meeting minute is untraceable, the uncertainty of practising the new approach was revealed in the questions to be discussed (National Archive D11/144, 1996):

- *How would the broader-brush character approach feed into the planning process locally?*
- *How exactly would the character approach be applied in formulating development plan policies and proposals?*
- *How successfully would the approach assist in accommodating change while protecting local distinctiveness?*
- *How would it relate to local countryside designations?*
- *Would it provide more certainty to developers?*
- *Overall, would the character approach help or hinder housebuilders?*
- *Should any modifications be made to improve the approach or its proposed application to planning?*

Although Landscape Assessment was widely applied in the previous studies of the Countryside Commission on different planning issues, the above questions still exposed a lack of understanding among non-professionals. From the memorandum of the draft review and consultation comments, debates over the intertwined use of LLDs and the character approach mainly arose from the concern about their effectiveness in performing protection and their legitimacy in planning practice.

### **The mismatched mechanism of protection**

The restrictive role of local landscape designations in planning control was explicit and could not be overemphasised *per se*. Nevertheless, the character approach from its initial proposal was explicitly stated as not *'inherently a protective mechanism'*, nor should it be taken as another form of designation applied to the whole countryside. The

Countryside Commission made it clear that the main expectation of the approach was to provide planning authorities with a broader view of the wider countryside with its character beyond the boundaries of designations, especially the local ones (House of Commons, 1996b, p.53). However, from the discussion concerning the two approaches, the idea of mismatching the character approach purely with conservation was discernible. This position was most favoured by environmental groups such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE). As countryside conservation and protection were in their view not sufficient, they fully accepted the inclusion of countryside character and even considered it a better solution than the sole use of the designations in terms of ‘levelling up the level of protection’ (House of Commons, 1996b, p.33). However, for other groups which held an opposite view, the misunderstanding of the conservational use of the character approach was interpreted as a threat, an additional layer of designation which might ‘lead to greater protection over a wider area thus spreading the impact of constraints’ and ‘inhibited development and undermined significant features which do merit protection (National Archive D11/144, 1996)’.

The misunderstanding of the use of the character approach may well be attributed to the insufficient information provided by the Countryside Commission during the consultation stage. By the time the Rural White Paper and the draft PPG7 were examined in 1995/96, the whole programme of Countryside Character was still on the way, so that the only justification that the Commission provided was a brief introduction and a sample extract from a preliminary character map and a short description in the south east region (figure 3.6). The prematurity in policy implementation and lack of guidance to provide equivalent power in protection thus caused the character approach a questionable alternative since its position in planning policies was not as clear as LLDs at this point in time.

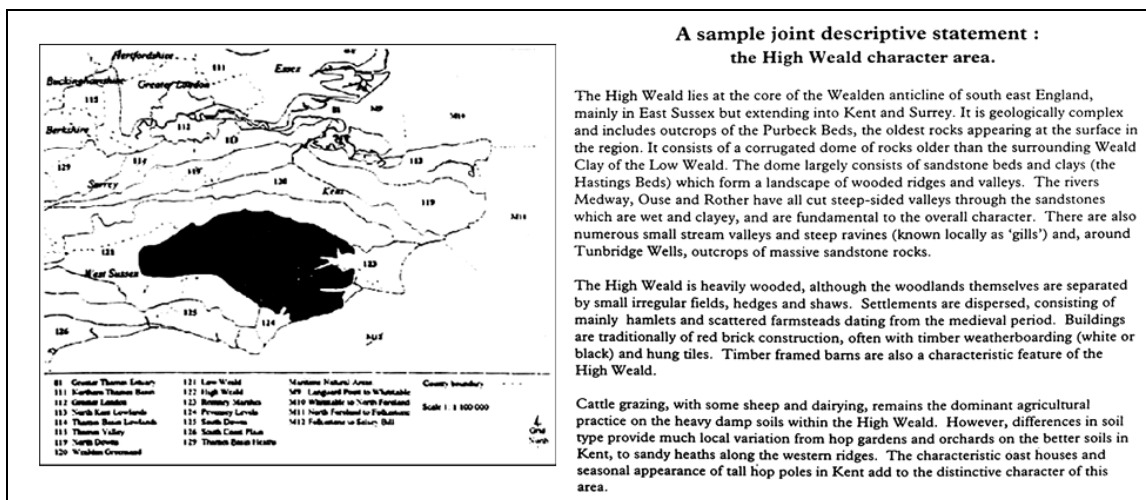


Figure 3.6 Sample information of the Countryside Character programme

(Source: National Archive D11-144, 1996)

## **The lack of executive legitimacy**

The limited information and the insufficient understanding of the character approach aroused another concern that the approach *'had no power to protect those features it identifies as distinctive; nor does the listing of a characteristic in planning guidance of itself confer protection'* (House of Commons, 1996a, xxx). As many of the examiners perceived the new approach as a landscape descriptive method rather than a planning tool, when this approach was advocated, its legitimacy in the planning practice was made the subject of criticism. Although the use of LLDs was not statutorily embedded, at least it could be legally executed through the planning process and development control. In comparison, as the delivery mechanism of the character approach in the planning system was still vague at that point in time, the character approach could only be effective if local authorities recognised it, were willing to include it in the development plans or reviewed their local designations by using the method. As the character approach was new to the majority of examiners and local authorities, *'[they] may be expected to continue to use designations for locally important areas, unless they are persuaded that the proposed alternative provides unambiguous guidance in favour of protection'* (House of Commons, 1996a, xxx).

Another legitimacy problem of using the new approach was centred on its capability to provide consistent guidance in planning practice. Since the full information on Landscape Assessment was not satisfactorily presented, the statement concerning the character approach (figure 3.6) was not convincing enough to inform the planning process. Even the Countryside Commission itself admitted that since the whole Countryside Character Project had not yet been accomplished by the time the PPG7 was drafted, the character approach could only provide a conceptual framework and broad-brush understanding of the countryside (National Archive D11-144, 1996). This ambiguity may well lead to the above conclusion of taking the approach as a purely descriptive tool with little guidance on its practical use, and the misunderstanding of adopting this approach as a blanket strategy of protection.

Apart from the major scepticism of using the character approach, some minor criticism such as possible errors in the mapping process, little reference to the economic and social conditions, its fixed point of time and insufficient validation, were also raised in the consultation responses. These uncertainties further caused a mixed attitude of approach was considered more appropriate in the late 1990s.

### 3.3 Landscape Character Assessment as a policy delivery framework

The introduction of the character approach in national planning policies provided a benchmark by which the approach could be embedded in policy contexts at all levels. Since the main weakness of the approach was its descriptive nature with no actual power given for execution, the focus for the next step was to find practical ways of involving policy implementation.

Prior to the initiation of the Countryside Character programme, plenty examples of adopting Landscape Assessment in county and district planning policies were already established<sup>30</sup>. However, as the majority of the studies ended with providing landscape guidelines and management suggestions, explicit ways of embedding these consequences as part of planning policies were not fully specified. In national policies, only a passing reference was given in PPG7-92 concerning the adoption of Landscape Assessment into Supplementary Planning Guidance. Even in the key document of PPG7-97, the character approach was merely suggested as helpful for local authorities without giving further policy instruction.

In the ‘post PPG7’ period at the turn of the century, a considerable improvement in executing the approach was achieved by a series of events. This improvement started from the updated version of Landscape Character Assessment in 2002 which addressed more planning suggestions, to the emergence of the reformed planning system which justified the character approach at the local level. Challenges and opportunities at this stage lay in how to properly convert Landscape Character Assessment into practical tools to inform the planning system and involve different planning issues. At the same time, the outer planning context in the new century was profoundly influenced by sustainable development. The issue of acknowledging changes and accommodating changes was directly linked to the preferred use of the character approach in contrast to the stagnant policies of LLDs. The following table 3.6 again summarises the key documents for follow-up discussion by time sequence from the consolidation of the character approach from 1997 to the present day.

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<sup>30</sup> See: Landscape Assessment guide 1993, in terms of forest assessments, river catchment assessments and review of special areas



Table 3.6 Policy documents for the two landscape planning approaches (1998-present)

<b>National planning legislation/ policy/ guidance</b>	<b>Planning position/ guidance from CoCo</b>	<b>Guidance to Landscape Character Assessment and landscape tools from CoCo</b>
(1998) Planning for Sustainable Development (DETR)	CCP (1998) Planning for Countryside Quality	
		(1999) Interim Landscape Character Assessment Guidance
<b>(2000) Rural White Paper</b>	<b>CA60 (2000) Planning Tomorrow's Countryside</b>	
		<b>(2002) Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland</b>
		CA149 (2003) Concept Statements and Local Development Documents
(2004) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act		
<b>(2004) PPS 12: Local Development Frameworks</b>		CA180 (2004) Towards a 'New Vernacular': Promoting high quality, sustainable new development in the countryside
	(2005) Environmental Quality in Spatial Planning & Supplementary Files	
	(2006) Planning Position Statements: Incorporating landscape, access and recreation into RSS/ LDF	(2006) <b>• Projects on translating the character approach</b> <b>• Review of LLDs</b>
		<b>(2007) European Landscape Convention – A framework for implementation</b>
(2008) PPS 12	(2008) Natural England Policy Position Statement: Landscape	
(2009) New PPS		
	(2010) Natural England's Position on: <b>1) All Landscapes Matter</b> 2) Future Landscape	

\* references which are of particular importance in the following discussion are in bold

### **3.3.1 New perspectives of the character approach in practice**

The recognition of the character approach in PPG7 brought in an innovation in landscape planning, but there was also an urgent need to ensure it was being used properly. This was raised in a countryside character workshop held in 1999:

*‘PPG7 endorses the potential value of the countryside character approach. But consultation on the draft showed that the approach was considered insufficiently mature to provide a robust alternative to local designations’.*

(Countryside Agency, 1999)

In order to diminish the scepticism and clarify the concept of the character approach, much effort was made by the Countryside Commission and its successor the Countryside Agency (after 1999) in investigating and disseminating the use of the approach. In the few years after the publication of PPG7, the Commission/Agency significantly bridged the knowledge gap in terms of providing more policy suggestions and good practice. With the full publication of the eight volumes of countryside character description in 1998/1999, the character approach was made more secure and underpinned by a national framework of practice. The approach in its ideological and technical perspectives was thus becoming increasingly mature.

#### **Policy suggestions in the light of the character approach**

After its inclusion in PPG7, the character approach became an emerging term to encapsulate planning policies and planning considerations informed by Landscape Assessment. Further clarification of the suggestion in PPG7 concerning the use of the approach was given by the Commission and its home department DETR (Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions) in terms of two practical issues:

- reviewing local landscape designations in the light of the character approach; and
- finding practical ways to inform planning policies.

Firstly, on the issue of conducting a critical review of LLDs in development plans, according the DETR policy guide *‘Planning for Sustainable Development’* (1998), all existing local designations should be revisited by rigorous assessment with cogent reasons for their retention. While at this stage a hybrid use of both approaches was still prevalent, at least on the official side, the use of LLDs was declining as no further information was given on this approach in the policy guide.

In contrast, adopting the character approach to underpin planning policies was strongly advocated by the DETR and the Countryside Commission in their policy

guides<sup>31</sup>. In these guides the character approach was considered the key to achieving countryside sustainability and quality in the long run. The approach was advocated as providing a primary baseline on which the local character can be taken into account in developments and planning decisions, especially in statutory plans and local plans. Firstly, local authorities were encouraged to conduct local Landscape Assessment according to the framework set out in the Character Map of England. Finer scale assessment could be used as Supplementary Planning Guidance to inform Countryside Design Summaries and Village Design Statements, and even the criteria for the scale, design and location for new developments (Countryside Commission, 1998, p.13; DETR, 1998, p.73). Secondly, in developing policies on countryside character strategies, the '*specific objectives and targets for countryside character, quality and accessibility*' should be addressed (Countryside Commission, 1998, p.11; DETR, 1998, p.87). This indicated that clear statements concerning what the countryside character was like, how and to what extent countryside changes happened and the implementation and monitoring pathways needed to be included in development plans. Good practice was also demonstrated in the DETR guide, including using a list of characteristics to formulate landscape guidelines, attaching enhancement priorities based on landscape analysis, and differentiating between policies for each landscape character zone.

In addition to implementation suggestions, perspectives on the strategic use of the approach in directing future changes were given in the Countryside Agency<sup>32</sup> planning guidance *Planning Tomorrow's Countryside* (2000). The premise, firmly based on sustainability, was that today's countryside should be regarded as a multifunctional space, where the preservation of amenity and the active uses were of the same importance. In this sense, the traditional method of excluding countryside from disturbance and intervention would be of no help in achieving sustainability. Rather, the approach based on countryside character and local distinctiveness could not only minimise the impacts of change on the environment, but at the same time meet social and economic needs through well informed planning and design. Therefore, the guidance illustrated three ways in which the character approach could be incorporated in Structure Plans and Local Plans.

- '*Us[ing] positive objectives as the basis of planning*'. This asserted that policies and decisions should take a positive attitude to changes and not be confined by designated boundaries. Therefore, the combination of general countryside character policies and supplementary planning guidance on landscape character could give insights into where developments could be accommodated and how their influences could be minimised. This may also strengthen or even replace the traditional area-

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<sup>31</sup> *Planning for Sustainable Development* (DETR) and *Planning for Countryside Quality* (the Commission)

<sup>32</sup> The Countryside Commission was succeeded by the Countryside Agency in 1999

based concept, which *'usually does nothing to protect the character of the landscape'* (p.14).

- *'High quality applications ... on the basis of are they good enough to approve, rather than are they bad enough to refuse'*. A criteria-based policy wording was suggested here as it could help to ensure a certain development was *'good enough to approve'* rather than *'bad enough to refuse'*, to which the character approach could make a contribution by involving high quality design.
- *'Respect the character of all landscape, and protect and enhance the best'*. In this sense, the prominent focus on the *'best'* landscapes, such as designation, needed to be shifted to the notion of *'rest'* and wider landscapes. Decisions involving general landscapes and the relevant assets should be made on the basis of the recognition that *'every part of the countryside...is precious to someone, somewhere'* by using Landscape (Character) Assessment.

The above claims then fed into the Rural White Paper *'Our Countryside: the future (2000)'* as the claim to *'a more holistic approach [which] takes better account of all landscapes in planning decisions'* (p.103). This claim, again, can be achieved by Landscape (Character) Assessment to meet the need to conserve and enhance the countryside, while at the same time recognising landscape changes. In contrast, in the White Paper no more reference or guidance was given to local (countryside/landscape) designations as had been seen in the previous White Paper 1995. This indicated that the use of local designations was out of favour in government considerations whilst stronger protection for the statutory protected landscapes was still required.

### **Landscape Character Assessment—interim (1999) and final (2002)**

The prior groundwork of Landscape Assessment and the completion of the Countryside Character programme were succeeded by the updated Landscape Character Assessment guidance. This guidance summarised the most detailed and practical instruction on how the approach can be applied to planning considerations. The guidance first made a clearer and tighter link between LCA and its application in planning practice by distinguishing the stage of characterisation from the stage of making judgements (stages 1 & 2 in figure 3.7). In the stage of making judgements, *'Step 5: deciding the approach to judgements'* and *'Step 6: making judgements'* were particularly crucial to show how value-free landscape characterisation can be translated into a series of actions attached to different planning considerations, making a clearer distinction between the objective and subjective stages of conducting the assessment.

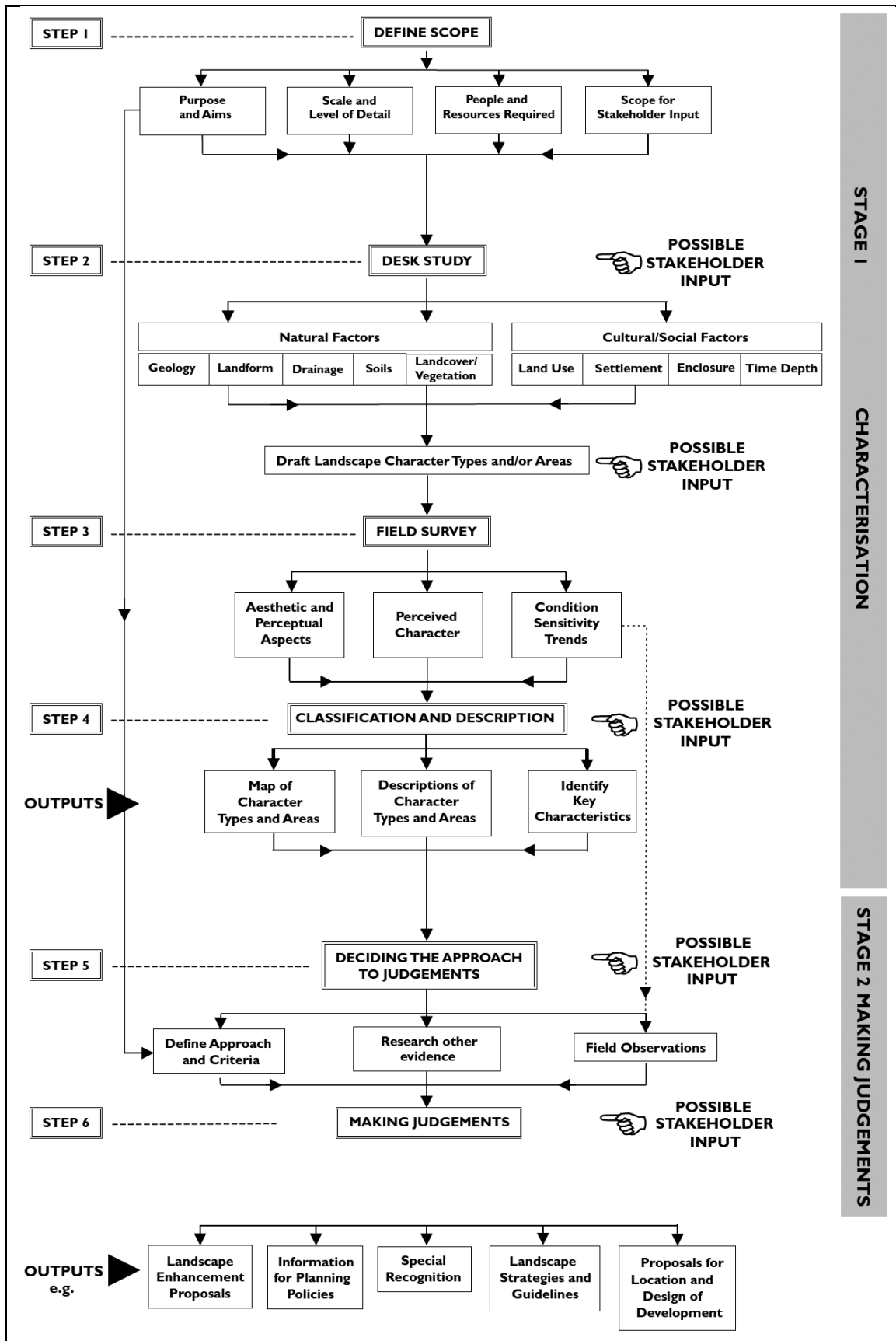


Figure 3.7 Flow diagram of LCA methodology

(Source: Swanwick & LUC, 2002, figure 2.4)

The two stages of landscape characterisation and making judgements were connected by converting four objective landscape features to their respective planning considerations (Swanwick and LUC, 2002, p.53):

- landscape character to guidelines;
- landscape quality to strategies;
- landscape value to designation; and
- landscape sensitivity to capacity.

Firstly, by identifying the distinctive elements and patterns of the landscape, as indicated by the collective term **landscape character**, landscape guidelines can be generated to guide relevant actions (e.g. agriculture, forestry, mining, etc.) in respect of the key characteristics. Next, the degree to which the condition and completeness of a certain landscape character was expressed can be described by the use of **landscape quality**. With reference to landscape quality, specific strategies can be applied to (landscape character) areas which exhibit various quality statuses. The two broad strategies of conservation and enhancement mentioned in the 1993 Landscape Assessment were expanded into a series of actions: *conserve, strengthen/reinforce, restore, reconstruct and create*, which can be used solely or in combination (Swanwick and LUC, 1999). Thirdly, the previous use of landscape scenic/visual quality is replaced by '**landscape value**', referring to the relative value and interests given to landscapes, no matter whether they were applied to designated areas or not. This is particularly important because this guidance distinguished 'value' from 'scenic value' by adding more considerations which may be crucial to defining the value of landscape, such as natural beauty in a broad sense, recreational potential and amenity. Finally concerning the ability to accommodate changes within the acceptable range of **landscape sensitivity**, landscape capacity can be useful for deciding the type, degree and allocation of changes. Landscape capacity is exceptionally important to development and land use change proposals in the current practice under the requirement for sustainable development.

In terms of addressing the concept of landscape character as well as the above issues in planning policies, this guidance indicated two methods of policy wording: a more succinct character-based wording and a more detailed strategy-based wording. The former indicated using a short passage of landscape character-informed policy accompanied by a full LCA as supplementary planning guidance, to which the detailed principles of development and design were attached. The latter converted landscape strategies into (landscape character) area-based policy objectives, based on which policies and practical actions could be applied to each area. In parallel, on the side of development control, the LCA guidance stated that decisions should be made on the basis of 'acceptability'. This indicated that decisions should be made in line with the

policies informed by landscape character, namely whether the new development would cause any adverse impact to the surrounding landscape, or could positively contribute to local distinctiveness (Swanwick and LUC, 2002). At this stage, the guidance did not specify the degree to which acceptability was decided. This issue will be explored in the following development of the character approach and in the UK case studies.

### **3.3.2 Landscape approaches in the reformed planning system**

Conceptual and technical advances in the character approach after the publication of PPG7 provided much more clarification of the use of this approach. In fact, it was the initiation of a reformed planning system that the key factor which enabled the character approach can be fully realised and applied. It was also through this reformation that local authorities gained the opportunity to review the traditional use of LLDs and replace it with the incorporation of the character approach in the new era of planning practice. The following discussion will investigate how the character approach has been made possible in the planning system through different pathways.

#### **Local Development Framework**

The Structure Plan—Local Plan/Unitary Plan framework in the planning system of England before the 1990s underwent a significant change initiated by the Planning Green Paper *Planning: delivering a fundamental change* (2001). In order to solve the over-complex, inconsistent, inefficient and inflexible policies in the existing system (para 4.5), the new planning framework proposed that the plethora of planning policies in Local Plans and Unitary Plans should be replaced with a set of coherent planning documents in the form of Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). At the same time, owing to the increasing need to solve trans-boundary planning issues, a single county was no longer considered appropriate to provide strategic planning policies. The removal of Structure Plans was thus suggested, and only mineral and waste plans would remain at the county level. Instead, the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs)<sup>33</sup> were proposed to provide high level support for the execution of LDFs on a regional or sub-regional scale (para 4.42). The new planning system received its legal grant in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act in 2004, with its executive details further expanded in Planning Policy Statement 12: *Local Development Frameworks* later on in the same year.

In PPS12, the term Development Plan, which used to be the hierarchy of Structural Plan – Local/Unitary Plan, changed to the reformed use of Regional Spatial Strategy – Local Development Framework. While the former was a single document including full policies of area-wide planning issues, the latter, in its simplest sense, was like a folder comprising several statutory and supplementary documents that can be updated

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<sup>33</sup> previously known as the Regional Planning Guidance

individually in the face of any change in policy orientations or planning strategies. The basic structure of the LDF was composed of two categories of policy documents, development plan documents and supplementary documents.

- **development plan documents** were largely the equivalent of the previous local plans. The leading part of development plan documents is the Core Strategy, in which the principal planning policies were specified
- **supplementary documents** included other minor or detailed planning guidance in the new system, which could be more flexible and ready for change.

Most important of all, the structure of the LDF enabled the character approach to be involved in the planning system through three channels: **evidence base, core strategies and supplementary planning documents**. Firstly, local authorities were required to develop planning policies on the basis of sound area information on social, economic and environmental characteristics (ODPM, 2004, para4.8). Landscape character assessment, as the comprehensive understanding of environmental issues, could undoubtedly provide a valuable evidence base throughout the early phase of policy preparation to the later phase of reviewing and monitoring. Secondly, the core strategy, as an integral part of the LDF, set out the key themes in the LDF in terms of spatial visions, objectives, policies and implementation (ODPM, 2004, para 2.9). Policies in the core strategy should be addressed in the form of criteria-based policy wording in order to set out the conditions for assessing upcoming proposals. This statement was in line with what had been suggested in PPS7 (2004) regarding the use of criteria-based policies underpinned by landscape character assessment, which will be specified in the next section. This also indicated a third way in which the character approach could have a much more direct influence in the planning policy by adopting LCA as supplementary planning documents (SPDs). While SPDs may not have the same weight as the core strategy or other statutory documents in the LDF, they were still crucial to the planning framework and can work as another form of material consideration in development control (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006, p.161). The deeper involvement of the character approach in the changing context of planning system will be explored in more detail by three cases in the following chapter.

### **The character approach in Planning Policy Statement 7**

The updated Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7), drafted in 2003 and published in 2004, reviewed and updated PPG7 (1997) to fit the new planning framework as stated above (ODPM, 2004, para 4.61). PPS7 did not provide further explanations for the use of countryside character and the character approach, which were already established in PPG7-97. Rather, PPS7 specified the practical aspects of the character approach:



*‘Planning authorities should continue to ensure that the quality and character of the wider countryside is protected and, where possible, enhanced’ (para 15).*

At the same time, more clarity on the transition of the two landscape approaches was given in the context of local landscape designations in this PPS. Compared to the parallel paragraph in PPG7, which merely pointed out the deficiency of using these designations and the need for review, PPS7 further suggested:

*‘The Government believes that carefully drafted, **criteria-based policies**... utilising tools such as **landscape character assessment**, should provide sufficient protection for these areas, **without** the need for rigid local designations’ (para 24) .*

The use of the above two measures, criteria-based policies together with LCA, resonated with the new LDF, in which the character approach can be realised through planning policies, evidence base and SPDs. The remainder of the paragraph on LLDs continued to state that only when criteria-based policies fail to provide adequate protection should local authorities consider keeping or even extending LLDs. As for the existing ones, more limitations such as rigorous assessments of the landscape were mandatory to rationalise their retention if local authorities still want to do so (para25).

Moreover, considering the same section on local landscape designations in both PPS7 and its draft published in the previous year 2003, the latter strongly stated that local countryside designations were *‘not necessary’* and any existing ones *‘should be removed’* and replaced by the character approach. This clue indicated that there must have been considerable debates on the position of local landscape designations during the consultation stage. However, since no public open records, like the one on PPG7 in the National Archive, were available by the time the thesis was written up, valid opinions could only gathered from a few piecemeal response papers to PPS7<sup>34</sup>. Even in these fragmentary sources, it was evident that none of these responses wholeheartedly supported the suggestion that LLDs should be completely removed from the present planning practice, regardless of whether the responses were made by a consensus of non-government groups or local authorities. Although the responses did object strongly to the credibility of the character approach as raised in the consultation stage of PPG7, scepticism still remained on the seemingly weak protection mechanism of the approach. The overall opinion revealed in the consultation responses on the use of the two approaches can be simplified as: *‘LLDs can be improved, but should not be removed’*. Whereas some responses thought that criteria-based policies might be feasible in a certain way provided that LCA was properly interpreted, there were still people who showed total disagreement with the new approach and did not even mention LCA in their responses. Based on these debates, although the whole picture of consultation

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<sup>34</sup> Such as the response from Wildlife and Countryside Link which included the opinions from CPRE and the Council for National Park, and responses from local authorities.

responses cannot be fully illustrated, a more balanced attitude to justifying rather than replacing the use of LLDs was shown in the final text of PPS7.

### **3.3.3 Delivering the character-based approach in planning practice**

In order to put landscape character into planning practice, the translation of pure landscape characterisation/description was always considered the key to the successful implementation of the character approach. While the importance of translation had been raised repeatedly in PPG7/PPS7, different versions of LCA guidance and the Countryside Commission/Agency publications, the ways of translating LCA into planning policies and considerations remained unclear and confusing to most local planning authorities (CBA, 2006, p.22). During the transitional period after the proposal of the new planning system in the early 2000s until 2010/11 when most local authorities published their LDF, the Countryside Agency and its successor Natural England (after 2006) continued to play a key role in directing and demonstrating the use of the character approach in different practical planning considerations. Especially in the years 2005 and 2006, a series of policy suggestions, demonstration projects and workshops were conducted concurrently by the Countryside Agency to make a clearer link between the approach and its planning applications. More importantly, the UK's ratification of the European Landscape Convention enabled the character approach and its underlying concept of all landscapes to be further involved in planning considerations. On one hand, the affair caused the approach to develop rapidly into different forms of landscape tools to carry out the approach. However, confusion about the adequate use of these landscape tools may also nullify the advantages brought in by the character approach.

#### **European Landscape Convention and UK implementation**

In England the encouragement of the use of the character approach in PPG7/PPS7 used to be the highest level of policy suggestions for delivering the approach. However, as the character approach has never been enshrined in law and made mandatory, a distinct lack of legal regulation was always considered the fatal flaw in the approach. It was just at the right time when the UK's ratification of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) in 2006 provided the approach with perhaps the most robust underpinning at an international level. Published in 2000 as the first international treaty on landscape matters, the ELC came into force in the UK in 2007 through an implementation framework established by Natural England in response to the claims and requirements in the ELC. As the UK experience was largely compliant with the ELC and even contributed to its conceptualisation, strictly speaking there were no brand new ideas on landscape issues proposed in the implementation framework. Rather, it was used to reinforce, facilitate and add value to what had been established in UK policy and practice in the light of a comprehensive and overarching view in the ELC

(Natural England, 2007, para1.4). While the exact wording of the character approach was not specified in the implementation framework, several premises and actions set out in the framework still resonated with the concepts of the approach in terms of:

- the recognition of **all landscapes**: urban and urban fringe, towns, villages and rural areas, coastal and inland areas no matter whether they are outstanding, ordinary or even degraded;
- the claim to strengthen **landscape protection, landscape management and landscape planning** as mainstream political concerns by legal and regulatory mechanisms; and
- the need to capitalise on the current use of **LCA** in improving the knowledge of landscape and monitoring changes.

In this sense, the use of the character approach was further secured in the planning system as a favourable way to deliver landscape policies underpinned by an international agreement.

### **Linking the character approach to general planning practice**

As the new planning system generally enabled the character approach to be incorporated in the planning system in various ways, major efforts were made by the Countryside Agency to provide operational suggestions by holding workshops and producing guidance. At the initial stage of applying the character approach in the emerging RSS and LDF, practical questions, as discovered in a LCA workshop held in 2005, included:

- how the spirit of landscape character can be incorporated into core strategy;
- how the landscape SPD can be helpful for the development control process; and
- how this approach can contribute to policies concerning sustainable development.

(Countryside Agency *et al.*, 2005)

The answers to the above questions were set out in the policy guidance '*Environmental Quality in Spatial Planning*', published jointly by the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature and the Environment Agency. The contents concerning the use of the character approach were principally covered in:

- **objective 6**: *Respecting the ability of the environment to accommodate change* regarding landscape capacity, and
- **objective 9**: *Facilitating locally distinctive, valued and more sustainable development* on the issue of landscape enhancement.

Whereas the character approach was particularly stressed in:

- **objective 8:** *Plans and strategies that are spatially varied, prioritised, firm and flexible*, where LCA was suggested as a tool to underpin policies in order to present the specific character of areas.

Notably, although in this guidance local landscape designations were still raised alongside other material considerations, the guidance clearly specified that:

*‘In the future planning authorities should look to **replace** local landscape designations with criteria based policies’.* (Countryside Agency *et al.*, 2005, p.22)

In the last two sections of the supplementary files of the guidance regarding the checklist for the preparation of RSSs and LDFs, the use of the character approach was presented as practical actions. At regional level, RSS should make mention of LCA as the underpinning of all landscape policies, and should advise local authorities to undertake their own LCA. At local level, LCA should be used to inform policy objectives for individual landscape character types, derived from which a SPD could be produced. The urge for local authorities to move from local landscape designations to a character based approach was also on the checklist (table 3.7).

This guidance set out the potential use of the character approach in the new planning system alongside the overall environmental considerations, whereas more insight was provided in another planning position statement published by the Countryside Agency (Landscape, Access and Recreation Division) in the next year, 2006. For both RSS and LDF, a landscape character-based approach was again encouraged to inform the policy framework in both countryside and urban landscapes. The incorporation of the character approach in the LDFs could be delivered in two ways. Firstly, local authorities should shift their policies from protecting only the best landscape to considering all landscapes on their own merits. Secondly, local level LCAs should be made the basis which informs strategies and policies on landscape design and conservation, and generate guidance for different types and scales of development. If the character approach was fully applied, then *‘local landscape designations should **not be necessary**, provided robust Landscape Character Assessments are in place to underpin criteria based policies for different character areas* (Countryside Agency, 2006)’. This statement fully expressed the Countryside Agency’s determination not to continue the use of LLDs.

Table 3.7 Checklist for Regional Spatial Strategies/Local Development Framework on landscape character

<b>Objective/ Delivery Mechanism</b>	<b>Does Regional Spatial Strategy:</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Comments</b>
<b>Regionally distinctive and valued environment</b>		
Landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote <b>landscape character assessment</b> as the underpinning element of landscape policy?</li> <li>• Encourage LDF to carry out detailed <b>landscape character assessments</b>?</li> </ul>	
<b>Locally distinctive and valued development</b>		
Landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use <b>landscape character assessment</b> and historic landscape characterisation as the <b>underpinning</b> element of landscape policy?</li> <li>• Review <b>local landscape designations</b> and move towards a <b>character based approach</b>?</li> <li>• Adopt or propose <b>SPD</b> so as to provide character analysis at an appropriate level of detail to inform planning policies and decisions?</li> <li>• Provide clear <b>policy objectives for landscape character types</b> within the plan area, e.g., conserve, enhance, restore, replace?</li> <li>• Have <b>criteria based policies</b> setting out the conditions for conservation and change in different character areas?</li> </ul>	
<b>Objective/ Delivery Mechanism</b>	<b>Does the Local Development Framework:</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Comments</b>
<b>Locally distinctive and valued environment</b>		
Landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use <b>landscape character assessment</b> and historic landscape characterisation as the underpinning element of landscape policy?</li> <li>• Review <b>local landscape designations</b> and move towards a <b>character based approach</b>?</li> <li>• Adopt or propose SPD so as to provide character analysis at an appropriate level of detail to inform planning policies and decisions?</li> <li>• Provide clear <b>policy objectives for landscape character types</b> within the plan area, e.g., conserve, enhance, restore, replace?</li> <li>• Have <b>criteria based policies</b> setting out the conditions for conservation and change in different character areas?</li> </ul>	

(Source: Based on Countryside Agency *et al.*, 2005, Supplementary File 14&15)

## **Demonstrations of translating LCA into planning considerations**

In addition to the guidance on the preparation of RSS/LDF, the Countryside Agency also conducted a series of demonstration projects with selected local authorities, two of which were particularly helpful for pinning down the use of character approach. The first project, undertaken by White Consultants in 2004-2006, was to explore how the use of LCA could inform the new LDF by using the three ways mentioned above: evidence base, criteria-based policies in core strategy and the landscape SPD. The study firstly established an evidence base by listing all materials relevant to LCA from 1994 to 2005, including the county level and district level LCA and several LCAs from other districts and AONBs nearby. In this way, key changes emerged from the transition between different versions of LCA were identified and could be included in planning policies and supplementary planning documents. On the issue of core strategy, the concept of landscape character was converted into criteria-based policies in alternative forms, with clear-stated landscape strategies such as protection, conservation, and enhancement. Lastly, for the supplementary planning documents, a landscape character SPD was suggested in the form of settlement character or design SPDs to supplement the implementation of the character approach.

The second study carried out by Countryside and the Planning Cooperative in 2006 further explored the way in which landscape SPDs were produced from the county level LCA. In the context of the district's shift from local landscape designations to the character approach, this study first assembled a stakeholder workshop to find out the desired landscape policies and the public expectations for the forthcoming landscape SPD. Based on the feedback of the workshop which showed a strong local attachment to the highly valued landscapes, the study developed a spatial framework for the SPD according to landscape character types. Relevant landscape character types were first extracted from the original county LCA and more detailed surveys were later on conducted for each type to identify key landscape characteristics according to the policy requirement of the district<sup>35</sup>. This information was then structured into landscape guidance for individual types, which enables development to be sympathetic to the local character and at the same time to express diversified character across different zones. That demonstrated how LCAs could be translated to fit the new LDF in the form of landscape SPD.

## **Landscape planning tools and the future of the character approach**

Based on the update understanding and practice concerning the character approach in the 2000s, a comprehensive perspective of landscape was expressed in Natural England's position statement under the title of *All Landscapes Matter* alongside other

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<sup>35</sup> By the time it was policy **OC4: Landscape character and design** in High Peak Local Plan (2005), see 4.1.3 for more details

landscape considerations, including protected, future and historical landscapes, in 2010. In this statement, the fundamental ideas embedded in the character approach were stated from several positions:

- an ‘all landscapes’ approach which involves landscapes at all scales and in all contexts;
- landscape as an integrative policy framework developed on the basis of the comprehensive understanding of its present status—qualities, character and functions— and future change;
- good design as the key to successful landscape management, protection and planning, respecting and even enhancing landscape character and local distinctiveness; and lastly,
- the continual promotion of using landscape characterisation and National Character Areas to build the context of strategies, plans and inform decision making.

The above positions rephrased and concluded what had been practised in terms of Landscape (Character) Assessment in the past twenty years. This indicated that the use of the character approach at this stage was grounded in both the comprehensive knowledge of landscape and strong support from the government and government agencies.

On the practical side, the character approach at this stage was already addressed in development plans in the form of (CBA, 2006, para2.5.2):

- landscape SPDs referred directly to landscape character;
- other types of SPDs with indirect links to landscape character, such as design guidance SPDs and green space SPDs;
- an evidence base to inform other development documents and site allocation documents;
- an evidence base to inform strategic initiatives and planning decisions.

Especially on the use of LCA related planning documents, the approach has also been developed into a wide range of landscape tools in at least 27 forms (LUC, 2009, pp.9 &11):

- **forward planning tools** as an evidence base to underpin development plans, including— Landscape Management Guidelines, Landscape Strategies, Landscape Capacity/Sensitivity Studies, Historic Landscape Characterisations, Concept Statements and Open Space Strategies; and
- **development control tools** for validating or verifying whether or not planning proposals were properly informed, including—Design Guides; Design and Development Briefs; Master Plans; Landscape Guidelines, etc..

The pace and enthusiasm for the adoption of landscape tools on one hand enabled the character approach to be realised more thoroughly, but on the other hand also highlighted a certain degree of complexity and ambiguity which may not necessarily contribute to the effectiveness of the approach (ibid, p.viii). As landscape tools and techniques have been getting more and more detailed and refined, clear and transparent guidance for use become particularly important. Otherwise, even if the character approach is firmly addressed and widely adopted, its effectiveness may still be lessened as some planners felt '*national and local landscape designations result in more secure landscape settings... [and] it was difficult to make the transition between landscape designations to landscape character*' (ibid, p.8). This strongly indicates, although the trend of using the character approach to replace LLDs was evident in policies and practice, it was still hard to see a complete 'landscape character turn' and a full stop of using LLDs.

### **3.3.4 The updated context of LLDs in the light of landscape character**

The conceptual and technical advances seemingly led the character approach at its height in the new planning system since the use of the approach in the LDF was expected to replace LLDs completely in the future. In fact, when local authorities were keen on producing landscape SPDs and relevant tools, the LLD approach was still favoured by some and a hybrid use of both approaches proved to be more popular (CBA, 2006). As the competition between the two approaches was going on at this stage, it seems that there is still a gap between policy suggestions and the actual practice of the two approaches. In fact, the use of LLDs outside England was even marked by counter-discourses by which the government and government agencies even strengthened the use of LLDs rather than discouraging them. Although the same situation did not happen in England, this was still a reflection to the future development of the character approach.

### **Review of LLDs in England**

In order to understand how the transition between the two approaches was realised by local authorities during the preparation of the new LDFs, a review of LLDs was commissioned by the Countryside Agency in 2005/06. The overall responses showed that the combined use of both approaches was still proving popular, even if a number of local authorities had taken account of the government's suggestion of abandoning LLD policies. By the time the review was conducted, more than half of the sample authorities still had LLDs in their planning policies; and it was a matter of widespread concern that the character approach was not clear and robust enough to totally replace the old one (CBA, 2006, pp.19, 22). In fact, the choice of adopting either one or both the



approaches highlighted the advantages and disadvantages embedded in the two approaches in the view of local authorities (table 3.8).

Table 3.8 Advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches in the CBA review

	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<b>LLDs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear-cut concept and definite boundaries</li> <li>• highlight important landscapes outside national designations</li> <li>• the relative effectiveness to turn down inappropriate development well perceived by officers, the public and inspectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the difficulty of contributing to local distinctiveness and good design</li> <li>• not robust enough as the primary consideration in planning decisions</li> <li>• lack of guidance on appropriate landscape strategies and not in line with other policy contexts</li> <li>• putting development pressure on surrounding areas</li> <li>• in some cases excessive control</li> </ul>
<b>The character-based approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the notion of the wider countryside/ landscape character</li> <li>• landscape SPDs can help raise the considerations of landscape in decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• complexity in conducting the approach</li> <li>• lack of confidence/guidance in using the approach</li> <li>• may not provide sufficient protection for highly valued local landscapes</li> </ul>

(Source: Based on CBA, 2006)

Although the majority of local authorities did address the character approach in one way or another, as they were halfway through preparing the emerging LDFs, the final consequences of adopting which approach remained uncertain. Local authorities, while struggling to comply with the higher level policy guidance, still found it difficult to completely move to the character approach when the advocacy of adopting the character approach was confronted by practical considerations, as indicated by the disadvantages listed in table 3.8.

### **The reinforced use of LLDs outside England**

Compared to the dilemma of choosing between either one or both approaches, the Scottish and Welsh authorities in contrast acknowledged the retention of LLDs in the context of landscape character-informed policies. In Scotland, the use of LLDs, since its first establishment in 1962, remained prevalent and was made even firmer in their National Planning Policy Guidance 14 (1999) by the underpinning of LCA methodologies (Scott, 2007). This notion was further confirmed in the guidance on LLDs published by Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland (SNH/HS) in 2005. Differing considerably from the traditional way of perceiving LLDs in terms of

landscape value, LLDs in this context were established on the premise of ‘all-landscapes’, indicating the comprehensive justification based on landscape characterisation<sup>36</sup>:

*‘An all-landscapes approach is not itself a substitute [for LLDs]...Within this all-landscapes approach, local landscape designations can continue to play an important role in protecting and enhancing those landscapes.’* (SNH/HS, 2005, para 2.7)

The all-landscapes approach in this guidance was to provide the wider context for LLDs, from the selection of designating criteria to the formation of planning policies and management. The practice of LLDs would be framed according to the same concepts of the wider landscape as the character approach does, where LLDs and ‘special attentions’ were considered in the context of all landscapes (table 3.9). Therefore, the use of LLDs in Scotland was not only well compatible with the character approach, but the latter would also help to achieve the future success of the former ‘*as accolade, as a means to identify policy priorities and objectives and as a tool for management*’ (ibid; Scott, 2007).

Table 3.9 Comparison between landscape characterisation and landscape designation

	<b>Characterisation</b>	<b>Designation</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Describes <b>all landscape</b> character types in the local authority area.	Identifies <b>special landscapes</b> in the local authority area.
<b>Scope</b>	Provides a basis for distinguishing different landscape character types and identifying landscape sensitivity.	Identifies more discrete areas of landscape considered to be of <b>higher merit</b> .
<b>Approach</b>	Based on assessment of defined <b>landscape features</b> .	Based on an assessment of <b>landscape importance</b> .
<b>Outcomes</b>	Informs development of <b>general</b> landscape policies and guidelines for <b>all landscape</b> character types.	Informs development of <b>specific</b> planning policies geared towards enhanced protection and management of <b>particular areas</b> .
<b>Treatment of boundaries</b>	Boundaries are based on landscape character areas and are more transitional in nature.	More precisely drawn boundaries are defined by a range of criteria, including landscape character, visual envelopes and topographic features.

(Source: SNH/HS, 2005, Box 7)

At the same time in Wales, there was the same discourse on using the character approach to inform the use of LLDs. The use of LLDs was advocated in Welsh planning policies<sup>37</sup> as a way to add value to special landscapes in the planning process

<sup>36</sup> Based also on Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland published jointly by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage in 2002

<sup>37</sup> Planning Policy Wales (2002), Section 5.3.11&5.3.13

by conducting robust assessments (CCW, 2008). This assessment in Wales was carried out by using another GIS-based landscape characterisation methodology called LANDMAP developed by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) in 2003. Like the character approach in England, using LANDMAP assessment to inform criteria-based policies was also advocated by the CCW and considered in line with the ELC. However, the CCW did not deliberately abandon the use of LLDs, as some Welsh authorities still viewed these designations an integral part of planning and landscape management. Since it was inevitable that a hybrid use of both approaches would be more favourable than that of any single one, a particular effort was made to provide a clear and transparent scientific procedure on which SLAs could be soundly based.

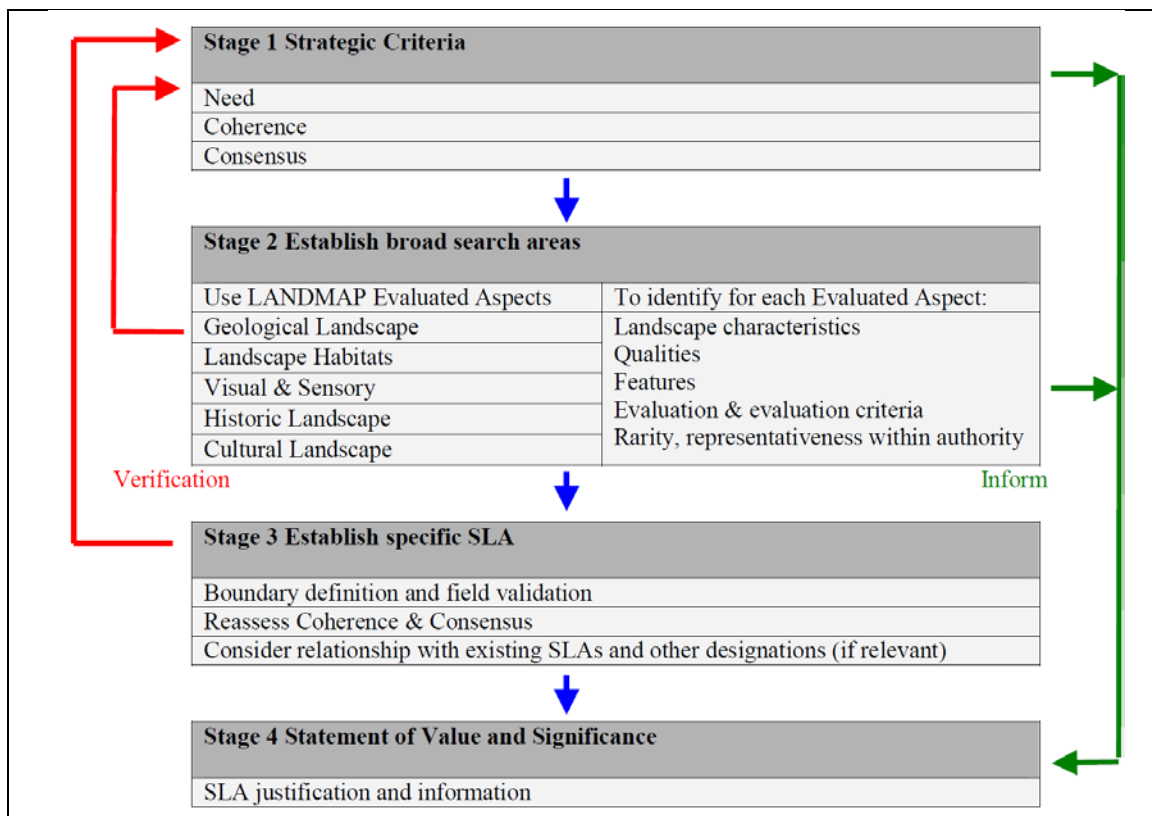


Figure 3.8 Model for identifying potential LLDs by using LANDMAP

(Source: CCW, 2008, Figure 1)

### The overall development and changes of LLDs

To sum up, from its first establishment in the inter-war period to the late 2000s, the use of LLDs in England progressed in four stages (table 3.10).

- In the first stage, the inter-war period (1930s-40s), the preliminary idea of protecting countryside/landscape of special value was proposed by Abercrombie and affected by the concurrent preparation of designating National Parks/AONBs.

- In the second stage, the post war period (1950s-60s) when the early planning system was established, some local authorities started to consider LLDs as secondary landscape designation in a similar sense to their national counterparts.
- In the third stage, marked by the government reorganisation in the early 1970s, myriad surveys and evaluations were conducted by local authorities to identify landscape of special (visual) quality and address landscape issues in structure plans.
- In the fourth stage (1990s-2000s), the emergence of LCA and the character approach exerted huge pressure on the justification of LLDs, but at same time provided a wider context to review or even in some cases enhance the use of LLDs.

Table 3.10 Evolution of local landscape designations

	1930s-40s	1950s-1960s	1970s-1980s	1990s-2000s
<b>Main task</b>	preliminary idea of protecting landscapes	1 <sup>st</sup> wave of designation	2 <sup>nd</sup> wave of designation	review in the light of Landscape Assessment
<b>Originator</b>	Inter-war planning studies	National Park Act 1949	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• government reorganisation</li> <li>• first round of Structure Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape Assessment 1987/93</li> <li>• PPG7 1997</li> </ul>
<b>Selection method</b>	intuitive method	intuitive method	landscape evaluation	Landscape (Character) Assessment
<b>Selection criteria</b>	N/A	(intuitive methods)	good/poor landscape scenic quality	distinctiveness, scenic quality, intactness public interest

In addition to the progress in concept and practice, the suggested criteria for LLD selection also shifted from the predominant scenic quality of landscape to a wider notion of non-visual landscape factors and cultural/social associations. Nevertheless, among practical considerations, *landscape quality*, *scenic quality* and *contrasting topography* were still ranked the most-used criteria among local authorities (CBA, 2006).

With their policy context enriched by LCA and contemporary planning trends such as sustainability, LLDs are now more like accolades to centre planning resources and priority by working as (Scott & Bullen, 2004; CBA, 2006; Scott & Shannon, 2007; CCW, 2008):

- a **landscape management** tool for landscape quality, key features and local assets;
- a controlling factor of **landscape design** for new development; and
- an additional layer of **landscape protection** to safeguard valuable landscapes.

While the contemporary use of LLDs is rather positive, Scott & Shannon (2007) still found that the practice of LLDs did not guarantee that they were managed as systematically and consistently as their national counterparts. As a result, although the future use of LLDs still continues, they should build upon the basis of public involvement and sustainable management principles within the context of a transparent designating process, comprehensive consideration of landscape character and clear policy guidance (Scott & Shannon, 2007, CCW, 2008).

### **Concluding thoughts**

This chapter reviewed the development of the two landscape approach from their methodological origins to policy implementations, especially their intertwined 'storylines' in policy and practice. Since the initiation of the 'landscape character turn' in the late 1990s, the debate over the most suitable landscape planning approach has never come to a full stop, as each one of the two approaches has its strengths and weaknesses. Virtually all the international trends and national (England) guidance favour the comprehensive scope provided by the character approach, while in practice the approach has never satisfactorily covered the full role and function of LLDs. Rather, when the use of LLDs is supplemented by the rigorous assessment of landscape, it would be of great help in raising the credibility of landscape arguments. The hybrid use of both approaches, therefore, still seems to provide the most sufficient treatment of all landscapes as well as the ones with special quality and meaning. The divergence between government policy and local practice will be developed by case studies in the next chapters, in which the competing discourses of both approaches will be examined in real planning scenarios. The most up-to-date policy context which will affect the future use of the two approaches will be discussed at the end of the thesis.



## CHAPTER 4

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### *The landscape character turn at local scale: case studies of English local authorities*

Based on the policy narratives of the development of the two landscape approaches at national level, this chapter continues with the examination of case studies at local level. More insights can be gained from how the two approaches have been interpreted within different local contexts and how different planning visions cause variations in applying these concepts. Local authority practice in this chapter will be illustrated by using three case studies of two-tier and unitary planning authorities. In this research, cases were chosen mainly on the basis of the following criteria:

- scientific/theoretical
  - demonstration of the ‘landscape character turn’ at both county and district level
  - demonstration of good practice in adopting the character approach
  - a mixture of different environmental features and development orientation
- practical
  - availability of and access to suitable research materials (e.g. policy documents, reports)
  - supportive and helpful interviewees willing to participate
  - accessible distance from the research base of the City of Sheffield

Three sample areas were chosen according to the above criteria. Two of them belonged to the two-tier planning hierarchy, namely Derbyshire County—High Peak Borough and Staffordshire County—South Staffordshire District. The other one is the Unitary Authority of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough. The location, administrative structure and data sources of the three cases are presented in figure 4.1 and table 4.1.

With regard to the timeframe of the data, policy documents were collected from the earliest period after the use of LLDs came into existence in the 1970s to the final version of the new system based on the Local Development Framework around 2010. In addition to formal planning documents, written statements, including previous LLD plans, meeting minutes, policy consultations and official comment, were also used to development arguments. To gain further insights other than the documented evidence, seven interviews were conducted between May and November 2009. For each case, landscape or planning officers were the necessary participants who shared experiences on how the two landscape approaches were carried out in their authority. Additional information on the use of the character approach was supplemented by interviews with

landscape consultants who conducted the LCA or prepared planning documents relevant to landscape for the authorities under study.

Each case study in this chapter will be described in a similar format:

- an overview of the environmental features and planning issues;
- a descriptive analysis of the use of the two landscape approaches within their respective historical background and policy contexts;
- the investigation of the practice and effectiveness of the character approach.

The focus will be on the investigation of the transition from special landscapes to all landscapes in both planning concepts and policy wording, and the translation from Landscape (Character) Assessment into policy tools such as landscape supplementary planning guidance/documents.

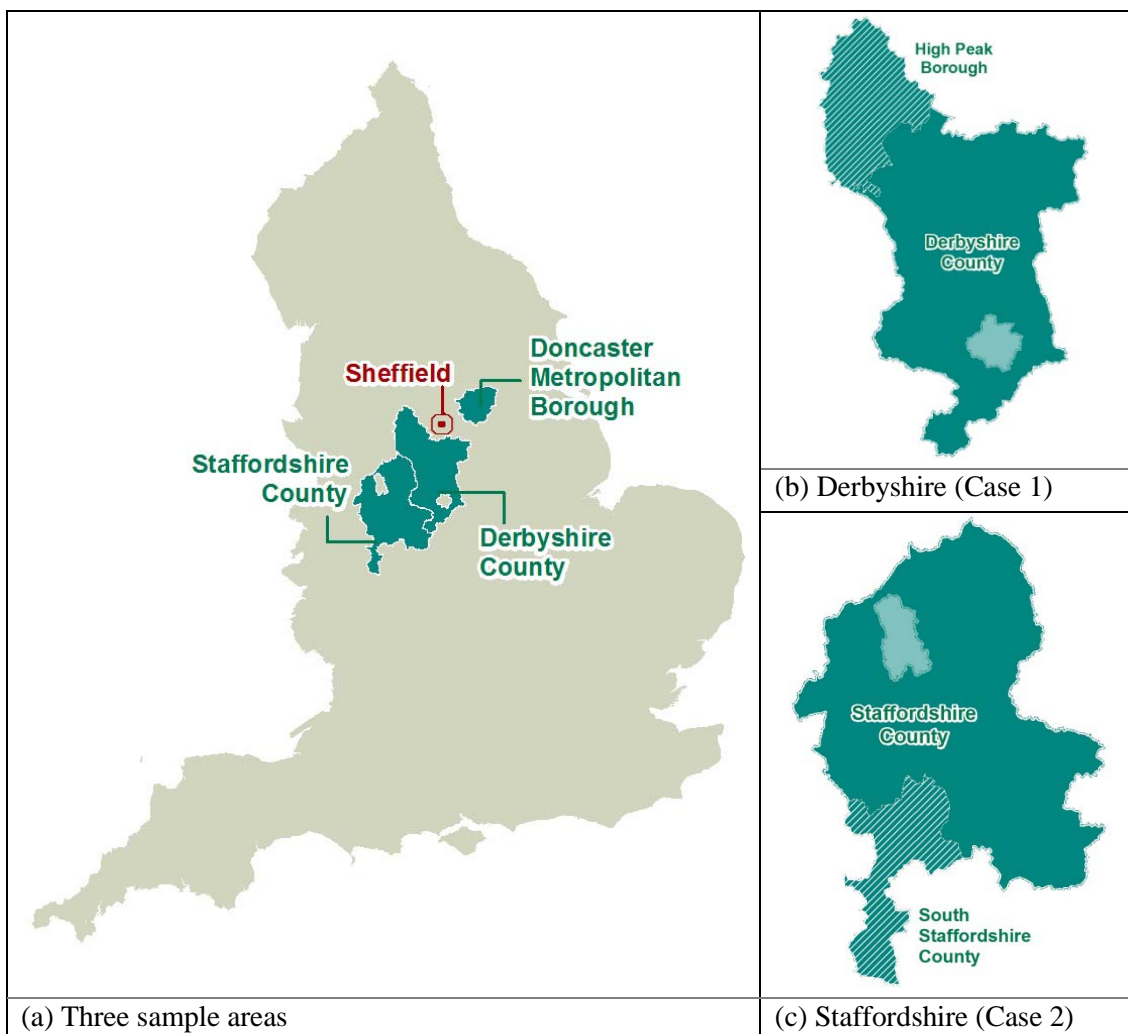


Figure 4.1 Case study areas



Table 4.1 Basic information about each case

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
<b>Administrative structure</b>	East Midlands Region	West Midlands Region	Yorkshire & Humber Region
	Derbyshire County	Staffordshire County	Doncaster Metropolitan Borough
	High Peak Borough	South Staffordshire District	
<b>Environmental character</b>	National Park & small country towns	urban fringe & rural farmland	urban fringe
<b>Data sources –</b>	Regional Spatial Strategy	Regional Spatial Strategy	Regional Spatial Strategy
<b>(1) Development plans</b>	Structure Plan Local Plan/LDF	Structural Plan Local Plan/LDF	Structural Plan UDP/LDF
<b>(2) LCA</b>	Derbyshire LCA (03)	Staffordshire LCA(00)	LCA (94/07)
<b>(3) interviewee</b>	landscape officers (CC) planning officer (DC) landscape consultant	landscape officers (CC/DC) landscape consultant	landscape officer landscape consultant

\* RSS = Regional Spatial Strategy, LDF = Local Development Framework, UDP = Unitary District Plan  
 (--)= year of publication, (CC) = County Council, (DC) = District Council

#### 4.1 Case study 1: Derbyshire County—High Peak Borough

The first case of Derbyshire County—High Peak Borough features a diverse landscape ranging from the countryside around the periphery of the Peak District National Park to densely populated urban and industrial areas. Its proximity to the Peak District led to an early emphasis on landscape designation in Derbyshire, while at the same time, the county and borough have also conducted pilot work on developing the character approach in the last ten years. These two seemingly contrasting experiences will be explored by:

- written documents, including county and local development plans ranging from 1951 to 2011 (table 4.2),
- landscape designation review report,
- consultation reports on developing the character approach and meeting memoranda,
- insights from three interviews conducted from September to November 2009 concerning the two approaches in transition.

Two County landscape officers, who developed the county LCA, and also the coordinators of landscape affairs, were interviewed together to explore their personal experiences. Additional email interviews were conducted afterwards to confirm the contents of the previous interview and request more written references. As High Peak

Borough Council has no landscape officer, the Head of Regeneration, previously the Head of both planning policy and development control, was interviewed instead to explore the linkage between landscape character and planning practice. In addition to council officers, a landscape planner from the consultancy Countryside was also interviewed. He carried out fieldwork for the Derbyshire LCA and led the project to develop the character based approach to planning for High Peak.

Table 4.2 Policy documents for Case 1

<b>Year</b>	<b>Derbyshire County</b>	<b>High Peak Borough</b>
1951	A Development Plan for the County of Derby: Analysis of survey	
1972	Countryside Plan: Landscape	
1977	Derbyshire Structure Plan (V.1)	
1985	Derbyshire Special Landscape Areas Local Plan	
1990	Derbyshire Structure Plan (V.2)	
1995		High Peak Local Plan
2001	Derby and Derbyshire Joint Structure Plan 1991-2011 (V.3)	
2003	The Landscape Character of Derbyshire	
2005	E. Midlands RSS	High Peak Local Plan (saved policies)
2006		Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document
2009		Derbyshire Dales and High Peak Joint Core Strategy – Issues and Options
2010		Derbyshire Dales and High Peak Joint Core Strategy (1 <sup>st</sup> draft)

#### **4.1.1 Landscape and planning contexts for Derbyshire**

##### **Geographical features and landscape character**

Derbyshire is the easternmost shire county in the East Midlands region surrounded by a number of Yorkshire and Midlands counties. From the highpoint in the northwest of the county, its elevation declines gradually to the east and south, featuring transitional landscapes from highland, hills and moorlands, plains and river valleys formed upon the geological compositions of limestone, sandstone and mudstone. The exploitation of limestone led to local quarrying, while coalfields developed upon the coalfield belts. As a result there is a long history of mining industry in this county. The River Derwent originates from the northwest corner, drains across the county southwards and joins the Trent on the south eastern border. The Derwent and its tributaries used to perform important communication functions in the industrial period, and now provide the county with considerable water power and with recreational

resources. The interaction between nature and human influences creates distinctive patterns of landform and land use throughout different parts of Derbyshire.

High Peak Borough is located in the northwest Derbyshire (see figure 4.1). Most of the area of the Borough overlaps with the Peak District National Park and the landscape is exceptionally attractive owing to its extensive semi-natural wilderness merged fittingly with human activities developed for millennia. The high quality landscape is also formed by the contrasting relief among plateaus, moorlands and dales, as well as the diversity in the colour of soil and vegetation. Dairy farming has prevailed since medieval times, and has contributed to a unique farming character of walls and facilities made from dry stone, whereas mining and quarrying, which emerged in later centuries, brought about the major alterations of the original landscape. The linear distribution of the towns of Glossop, Chapel-en-le-Frith and Buxton are separated from the rest of the county by the Pennines to the west, the economic activities of which are more linked to Greater Manchester rather than the county itself.

Ten landscape character areas of Derbyshire were first established in the Countryside Character Programme in the late 1990s and then divided into 39 character types by the County in the first county level LCA published in 2003. Landscape character types are now considered the basic units of dealing with landscape planning so that further classification into sub-types or character areas has not been developed in this County.

Table 4.3 Landscape character types of Derbyshire

<b>National Landscape Character Area</b>	<b>Derbyshire Landscape Character Types</b>
Dark Peak	Open Moors Moorland Fringe Enclosed Moorland Settled Valley Pastures Riverside Meadows
White Peak	Plateau Pastures Limestone Moorland Limestone Slopes Limestone Dales
Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent	Enclosed Moors and Heaths Wooded Slopes and Valleys Wooded Farmlands Gritstone Heaths and Commons Settled Farmlands Riverside Meadows
Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and	Wooded Hills and Valleys Coalfield Village Farmlands Estate Farmlands Wooded Farmlands Coalfield Estatelands

<b>National Landscape Character Area</b>	<b>Derbyshire Landscape Character Types</b>
	Riverside Meadows Plateau Estate Farmlands
Yorkshire Coalfield	Limestone Farmlands Limestone Gorges
Southern Magnesian Limestone	Settled Farmlands Settled Plateau Farmlands Sandstone Slopes and Heaths Estate Farmlands Riverside Meadows
Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands	Lowland Village Farmlands Wet Pasture Meadows Riverside Meadows
Trent Valley Washlands	Estate Farmlands Wooded Estate lands Sandstone Slopes and Heaths Riverside Meadows
Melbourne Parklands	Coalfield Village Farmlands
Leicestershire and South Derbyshire	Village Estate Farmlands Riverside Meadows

(Source: Derbyshire County Council (DCC), 2003, p.6)

## **Landscape planning in the context of countryside development**

Countryside policy concerning the conservation and protection of the environment is closely associated with the diversified landscape and traditional land uses in Derbyshire, such as dairy, arable farming and quarrying. In order to apply appropriate strategies to landscapes of different character, value and special features, a County Landscape Appraisal was conducted in the late 1960s alongside a series of countryside surveys. This Appraisal, which will be explained in detail in the next section, was fed into the first county Structure Plan (1977) in the form of three policy issues: landscape conservation, landscape change and landscape improvement. In the preliminary considerations, landscape conservation implied the best valued and highest quality landscapes, which largely correspond to the areas adjoining the Peak District and the rolling farmland in the west and south. The attempt to protect these best landscapes was developed into the county's landscape designation policies for Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) until the demise of the county Structure Plan after the year 2005. Landscape improvement, in contrast, indicated land which had been despoiled by human activities, especially mine working, which were detrimental to landscape quality. Between landscape conservation and improvement, the issue of landscape change was at the same time raised in areas of above average quality. As these areas sit primarily in typical countryside, particularly intensive farming areas, increasing pressures from housing, industry, mining and recreation were in conflict with the existing agriculture or forestry and caused irreversible changes. Precautionary land use strategies were

suggested to guide and control development proposals to ensure the characteristic landscape features were retained (Derbyshire County Council (DCC), 1977, para12.31, 12.53). The three issues of landscape policy in the earlier versions of the Structure Plan are summarised in table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Landscape planning strategies in the 1970s Derbyshire development policies

	<b>landscape conservation</b>	<b>landscape change</b>	<b>landscape improvement</b>
<b>Priority areas</b>	highest landscape value	above average quality	poor landscape quality
<b>Distribution</b>	areas bordering the Peak District	intensive farming activity in the south and northeast	areas affected by mineral workings
<b>Landscape strategies</b>	special protection	conservation renewal	improvement reclamation

(Source: Summarised from DCC, 1977)

In parallel, countryside development outside the main towns and villages has long been dealt with by separating Green Belts and other rural areas. Green Belts in Derbyshire were first established in 1960 to prevent urban sprawl from the Manchester, Sheffield and Derby-Nottingham areas by using strict regulations on building development and change of use of land or buildings. The rest of the countryside was subject to the general policy on rural development as well as considerations for countryside priority areas, such as the county's SLAs.

In High Peak Borough, countryside used to be defined as '*all land beyond the built-up area boundaries...including the Green Belt and Special Landscape Area*' (High Peak Borough Council (HPBC), 1995, p.34). As the majority of the Borough is covered by the Peak District National Park, the countryside area in the High Peak can also be taken as the transitional zone from the National Park to the towns and villages (built-up areas). In the past, development in the countryside was restricted to agricultural facilities, whereas in the more up-to-date context, there has been a premise of ruling out development with excessive urban character (HPBC, 2005, p.37). In recent practice, especially with the abolition of the use of Special Landscape Areas in the latest Core Strategy, the distinction between Green Belt, priority areas and the remaining areas has been fused. Instead, emerging issues like sustainable development, landscape character and green infrastructure have become the overarching context within which rural policies have been developed.

Table 4.5 Countryside and landscape policies of Derbyshire County/High Peak Borough

Derbyshire County (before 2001)			Derbyshire County (2001~2005)				
Countryside policy areas		Landscape	Countryside policy areas		Landscape		
Green Belt/ Green Wedge	SLA	general countryside	landscape conservation	Environmentally Priority Areas (Green Belt)	SLA	general countryside	Landscape character
			landscape change				
			landscape improvement				

High Peak Borough (before 2005)			High Peak Borough (after 2005)			
Countryside policy areas		Landscape	Countryside policy areas		Landscape	
Green Belt	SLA	general countryside	N/A	Green Belt	general countryside	Landscape character

#### 4.1.2 Special Landscape Areas and the emergence of the character-based approach

##### Landscape Appraisal and the emergence of SLAs

Influenced by the establishment of the Peak District National Park in 1951, landscapes issues were at the same time incorporated into planning considerations in the 1951 Development Plan of the County of Derby. In the preliminary consideration, areas<sup>38</sup> *‘divergent in character and interest’* were proposed to be included in development plans with regard to conserving their *‘general scene’* (County of Derby, 1951, p.90). This suggestion was put forward in the County Development Plan in the 1960s by designating Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLVs) as the embryonic local landscape designation (DCC, 1972, p.1). While this type of designation was suggested in the early 1960s, it was formally established through a comprehensive survey conducted from 1967-69 for the preparation of the county’s first-round Structure Plan. Under the title of ‘County Landscape Appraisal’, this appraisal aimed to generate different landscape policies or strategies suitable for planning purposes to:

*‘Identify those areas of the County worthy of protection on landscape grounds, and areas where other landscape policies (such as landscape improvement or rehabilitation) would be appropriate.’* (DCC, 1972, para18)

Since the Landscape Appraisal was conducted in the late 1960s, which corresponded to the early stage of landscape evaluation (see 3.1.3), it adopted the method of intuitive judgement carried out by in-house landscape officers (table 4.6). While the grid system

<sup>38</sup> The lower Dove Valley, the Derwent Valley between Matlock Bath and Ambergate, and Repton Village

was also employed to present the evaluation outcome (figure 4.2a), the Appraisal itself deliberately ruled out the purely objective or quantitative evaluation, such as attaching weighting values to the occurrence of positive and negative elements, as several concurrent practices did.

Table 4.6 Sample of Derbyshire County Landscape Appraisal scoring system

Country side Unit	Landscape character			Landscape value			Number of eyesores						
	open country	true countryside	urban/ dominated/ despoiled land	local landscape significance	landscape value	high landscape value	caravans	shacks hutments	derelect buildings	scrap yards	tipping, rubbish	workings	minor mineral
Moss Valley	ha	1349.7	257.4	209.6	852.3	497.4	4	-	2	-	1	-	-
	ac	3385	636	518	2106	1229							
	%	84.0	16	13.0	53.0	30.9							
Matlock Hills	ha	6709.9	265.5	-	5050.7	1810.6	7	-	3	1	2	-	-
	ac	16580	656	-	12480	4474							
	%	93.8	3.7	-	70.6	25.3							
Eastern Moors	ha	6262.7	41.3	-	3590.5	2126.3	10	4	2	-	3	1	1
	ac	15475	102	-	8872	5254							
	%	98.6	0.3	-	56.5	33.5							
Glossop Area	ha	1093.9	994.8	-	420.1	-	3	15	5	1	5	1	1
	ac	2703	2458	-	1038	-							
	%	52.4	47.6	-	20.1	-							
Total Derbyshire	ha	114303.3	51225.5	6190.4	58015.4	22080.0	77	58	67	26	87	16	16
	ac	282440	126576	15296	143354	54559							
	%	68.8	30.8	3.7	34.9	13.3							

(Source: Extracted from DCC, 1972, combined appendices A&B)

On the other hand, the Appraisal adopted a classification system that firstly divided the whole county into five ‘Country-side Zones’<sup>39</sup>, according to their natural boundaries and landscape types<sup>40</sup>, and then sub-divided the five zones into 23 ‘Country-side Units’ of largely unified landscape characteristics. Then three basic factors, **landscape character**, **landscape quality** and **special landscape features**, were adopted to analyse each Country-side Unit (table 4.7). With the overall aim to ‘*maintain the essential character and quality of the best landscape, and improve, renovate and restore those areas which are less attractive*’ (DCC, 1972, para156), three policy suggestions were formulated concerning the degree of protection and planning control (DCC, 1972), to:

<sup>39</sup> East Derbyshire, Central Derbyshire, Trent and Lower Dove Valleys, South Derbyshire and North-West Derbyshire

<sup>40</sup> In this Appraisal: areas of landscape value/ true countryside/ urban-dominated and despoiled areas

- reduce the impact and minimise the number of development in the countryside;
- ensure that developments are properly located and well-designed ‘*in sympathy with the landscape and rural character*’; and
- exclude any unessential development in areas of high landscape value, and enforce planning control over undesirable uses in the countryside.

Table 4.7 The definition and category of landscape factors in the Landscape Appraisal

Factors	Landscape character	Landscape quality	Landscape features
<b>Definition</b>	the dominant land uses of an area	positive or negative to: striking local relief/ water/trees	significant features which would enhance or detract from the landscape
<b>Category</b>	<p><b><u>Open countryside</u></b> little evidence of human activity</p> <p><b><u>True countryside</u></b> agricultural or forestry lands</p> <p><b><u>Urban-dominated areas</u></b> areas <i>visually</i> dominated by urban uses</p> <p><b><u>Urban areas</u></b> built areas including villages</p>	<p><b><u>High landscape value</u></b> quality resembles that of national designations</p> <p><b><u>Landscape value</u></b> quality to a lesser extent than the previous one</p> <p><b><u>Local landscape significance</u></b> positively contributing to the local quality, mainly in urban-dominated areas</p> <p><b><u>Degraded/Despoiled land</u></b> dominated by derelict or despoiled land/buildings</p>	<p><b><u>positive features</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• viewpoints/focal points</li> <li>• ridgelines or skylines</li> <li>• important woodlands</li> <li>• rivers and water bodies</li> <li>• attractive villages</li> </ul> <p><b><u>negative features</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eyesores</li> <li>• obtrusive development</li> </ul>

(Source: Summarised from DCC, 1972, p.1-3)

These policy suggestions were then fed into the landscape policy context of the Structure Plan (1977) in terms of landscape conservation, landscape change and landscape improvement, as depicted in the previous section. In particular, under the consideration of landscape conservation, high quality landscapes were converted into landscape priority areas (figure 4.2b) by replacing the preliminary AGLVs with the overarching title of Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) in the Structure Plan. At this stage, the overall aim of SLAs was to safeguard the ‘*significant amenity value because of the high quality of their landscape*’ (DCC, 1977, p.118). According to the first Structure Plan, new development or major alterations of existing development were normally prohibited in SLAs, whereas minor alterations like recreation facilities and necessary development like mineral workings were subject to strict controls. Attention was also given to high amenity features which might be visible from viewpoints both inside and outside of SLAs.



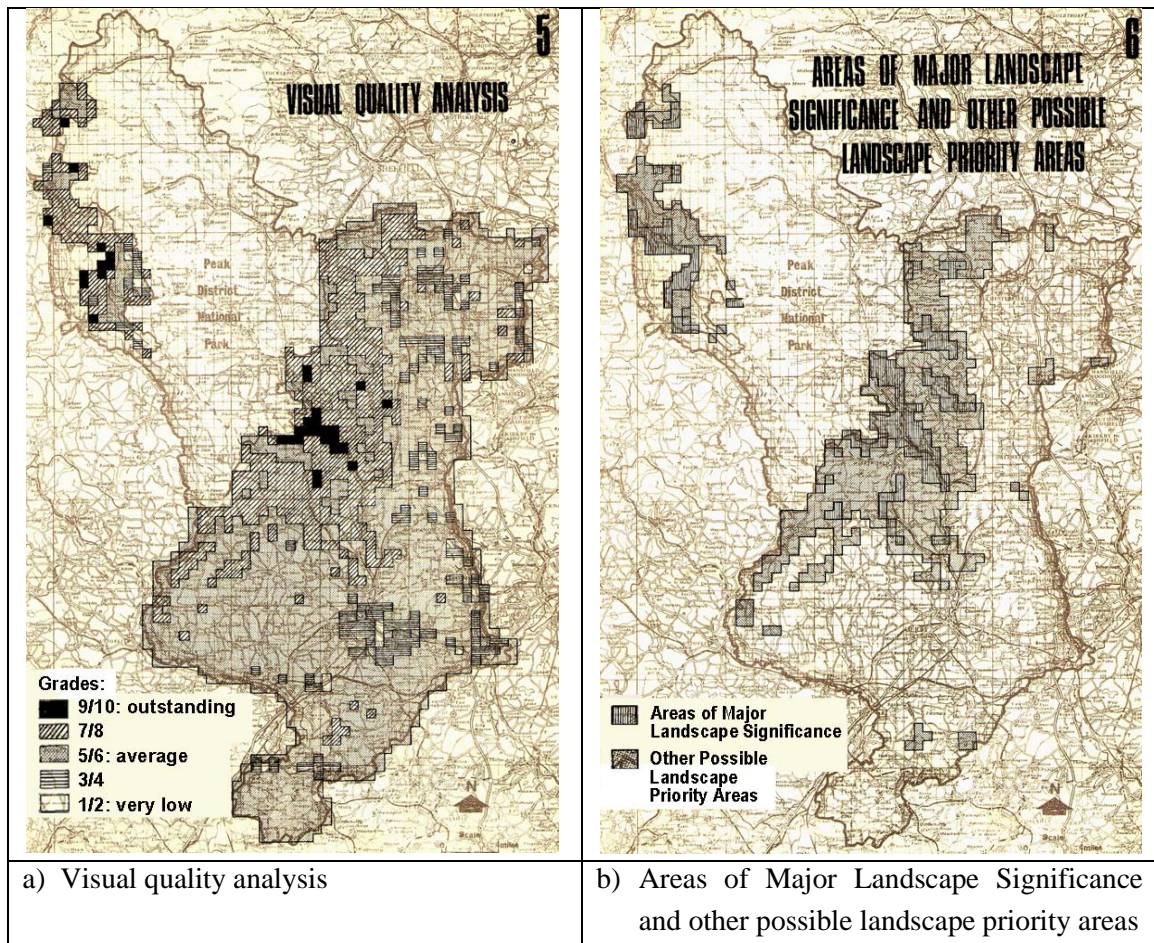


Figure 4.2 Landscape policy areas in the Landscape Appraisal

(Source: Based on DCC, 1975a)

### The practice of Special Landscape Areas

Unlike most counties which only addressed landscape designation policies in development plans, Derbyshire took a further step in developing a specific development plan for those SLAs, the SLA Local Plan (1985). The study aimed to define the precise boundaries of SLAs, which were crudely described in the Structure Plan (see figure 4.3a), and at the same time give amplified development control policies and landscape strategies (DCC, 1985). As figure 4.3b shows, the original rough boundaries in the Structure Plan were redrawn according to physical and artificial lines, such as stream courses, road and railway lines, field boundaries, and then underwent public consultations for finer adjustments.

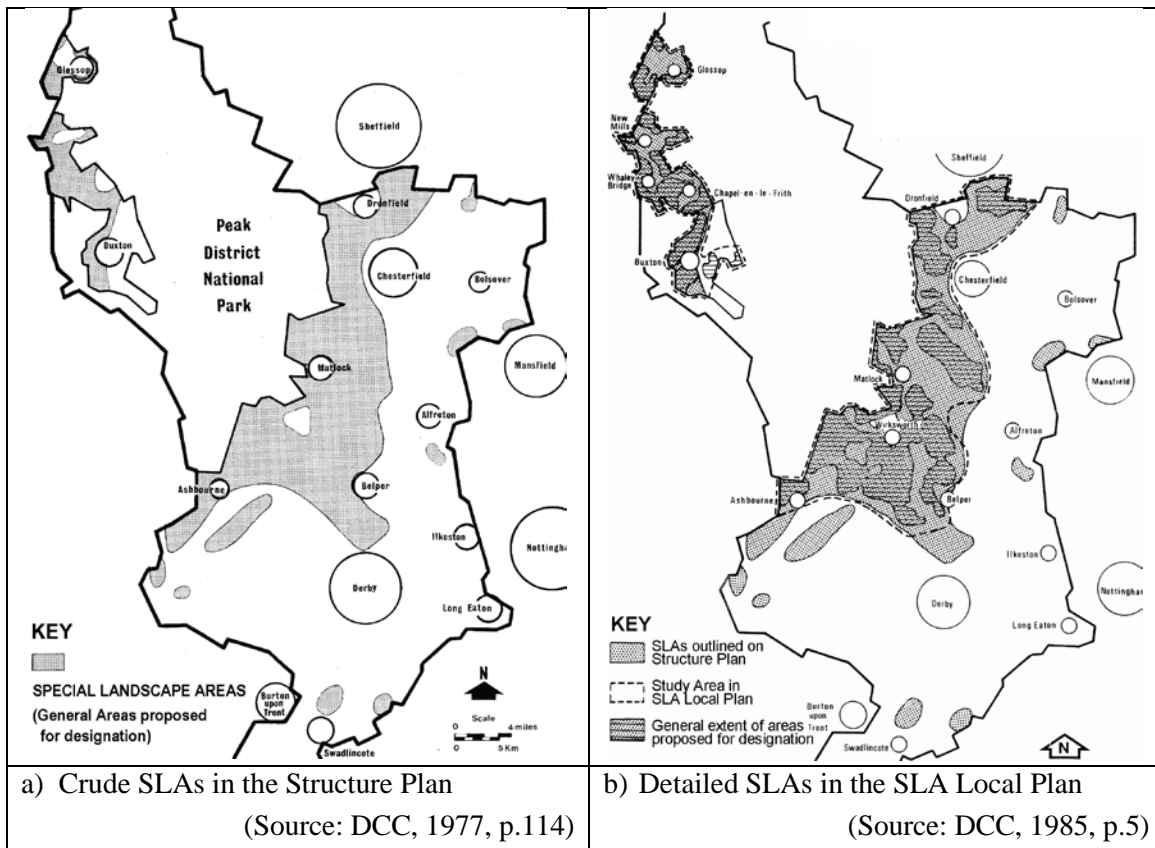


Figure 4.3 Progress in defining Derbyshire SLA boundaries

With their definite boundaries further delineated on 1/25000 Proposal Maps, the original SLA policies addressed in the Structure Plan (1977) were revised and enhanced in this Local Plan. Policies and regulations for different types of development were specified in more detail alongside the proposed strategies of conserving or enhancing the landscape (table 4.8). From the publication of the SLA Local Plan onwards, the justification, scope and implementation details of SLAs were confirmed and remained well into the successive County Structure Plans in 1990 and 2001. In High Peak Borough, considerable tracts outside towns and villages were designated as SLAs as addressed in the County Structure Plan (figure 4.4b). Similar policies concerning SLAs were also embedded in the Borough’s first Local Plan (1995).

A general attitude against development was expressed under the premise of preserving and enhancing the quality of the landscape, whereas small scale development that would contribute to the rural character was conditionally open.

Table 4.8 Policies for different types of development in SLAs

Types of development	Policy	Conditions and strategies
General development	will not normally be permitted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strict control over its detailed siting and design, materials of construction, colour and any landscaping work</li> </ul>
Housing development	will not normally be permitted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the detailed siting, scale, design, use of materials and colour, and landscape treatment are in keeping with the <b>character</b> of the area</li> </ul>
Other development (industrial, commercial, retailing)	will not normally be permitted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the scale, siting, design, use of materials and colour, and landscape treatment are sympathetic to the <b>character</b> of the area</li> <li>• the impact on the landscape is minimised</li> </ul>
Change of existing buildings	will not normally be permitted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not materially detract from the <b>character</b> of the area, and where appropriate landscaping is carried out</li> </ul>
Recreational development	will normally only be permitted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not materially detract from the surrounding landscape</li> <li>• the siting, design, landscape treatment, and the use of materials and colour are in keeping with the <b>character</b> of the area</li> <li>• not unduly disturb or detract from the visual amenity of an area</li> </ul>
Agricultural development	will normally be permitted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the scale, siting, design, use of materials and colour, and landscape treatment are sympathetic to the <b>character</b> of the area</li> <li>• the impact on the landscape is minimised</li> </ul>
Mineral development	will be subject to rigorous examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• preserve the <b>physical characteristics</b> and visual amenity of the area</li> </ul>

(Source: Summarised from DCC, 1985)

In practice, since the use of SLAs has been established for decades in this county, this easily understandable approach was recognised and respected both by the council officers and the public. Since SLAs occupied a large proportion of the Borough, the use of SLAs in High Peak was indicated by the planning officer as generally successful, and is sometimes still referred to in the present planning practice:

*‘That (SLA) has been a successful planning policy for almost twenty years in effect, and it has been good at maintaining the quality of development in respecting certain landscapes.’*

(Interview with HPBC planning officer, 16/10/09)

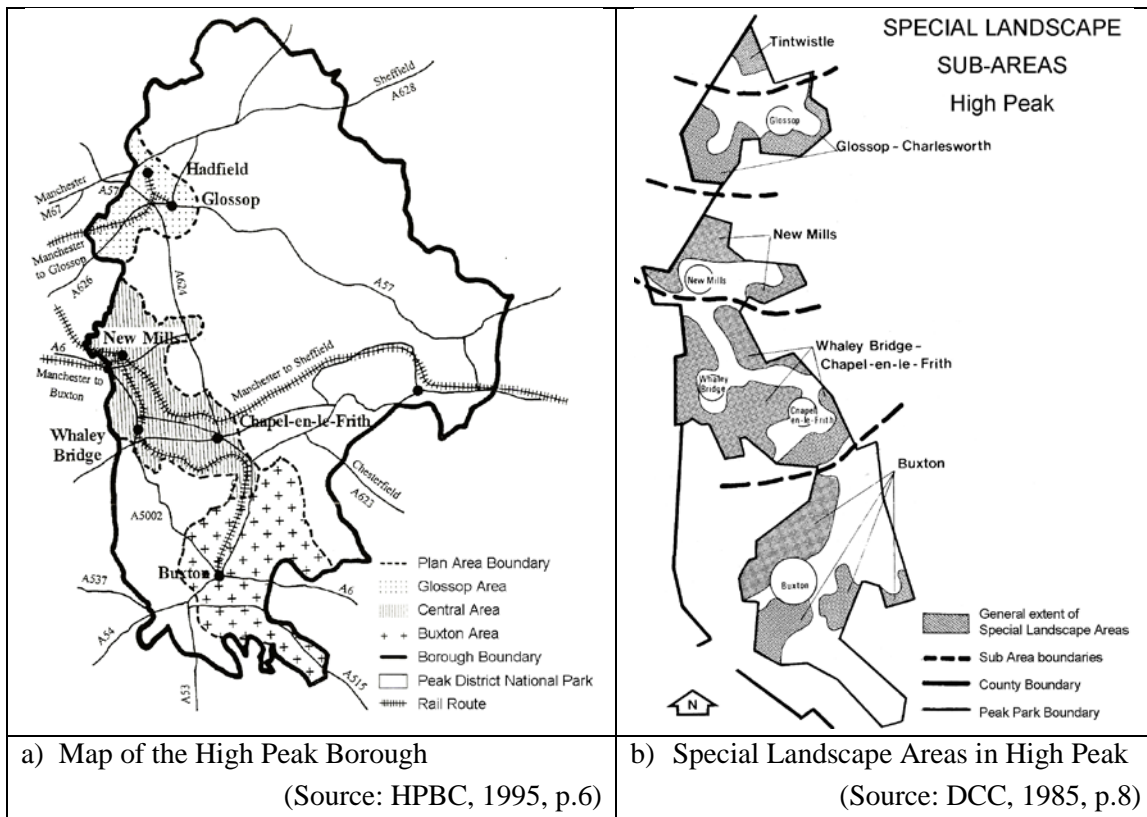


Figure 4.4 High Peak Borough administrative map and SLAs

### The early use of the concept of landscape character

Strictly speaking, the concept of landscape character in Derbyshire has already existed as early as in the Landscape Appraisal, in which the term ‘landscape character’ was used as one of the factors that contributed to the formation of landscape. Although the fundamental objective of the Landscape Appraisal was to provide underpinnings to AGLVs which had been initially established, the focus was not confined to identifying these best valued landscapes. Rather, the way in which landscape policies were formulated was on the basis of an overall consideration, including landscape character:

*‘This requires not only a definition of areas of landscape value or degraded land, but also an appreciation of the **character of the landscape** related to its topography, geology and dominant land uses.’* (DCC, 1972, para18)

While the meaning of landscape character, defined as the ‘dominant land use of an area’ in the Appraisal, is not in accordance with the present understanding, it was evident that at least landscape in the county was not perceived as merely visual quality and scenery from the outset. In addition, the use of the spatial structure of Countryside Zones – Countryside Units and the descriptive analysis of each Countryside Unit, were surprisingly similar to the first stage of landscape characterisation in LCA, despite the fact that a mapping system was not developed in the Appraisal.

The concept of landscape character was then kept in the policy contexts of SLAs, countryside development and relevant issues in the subsequent planning policies. For example, the Structure Plan stated that the main aim of rural development was ‘*to protect the landscape and character of the countryside and to conserve agricultural land*’ (DCC, 1977, para12.71). Concerning rural development, policies were also informed by the concept in terms of ‘*not adversely affect[ing] the landscape and the character of the area*’ and ‘*not adversely affect[ing] the surrounding countryside*’ (ibid). The SLA Local Plan likewise addressed the claim in nearly all policies for different developments to be sympathetic to countryside character (see table 4.8). While the term ‘landscape (and) character’ was widely used in the policy wording, its definition and meaning at this stage were not immediately clear, nor was any sole policy on landscape character addressed. As a result, in the second version of Structure Plan published in 1990, which to a large extent simplified and restructured the previous policies, the concept of landscape character was missed in this transition. Even when the county conducted its first LCA study in the late 1990s, it was originally perceived as providing justification for SLAs rather than having the intention of developing a new approach based on landscape character (Interview with DCC landscape officers, 20/11/09).

#### **4.1.3 The character-based approach in practice**

##### **From Landscape Character Assessment to the character approach**

The input of landscape character in its present-day context resumed when the county was involved in a pilot study of ‘The Living Landscape Project’ in the late 1990s. With the help of external landscape specialists and support from the Countryside Agency, the LCA running from 1998 to 2001 was conducted on the basis of the most up-to-date methodology at the time involving a complete characterisation through desktop study and fieldwork (DCC, 2003; interview with DCC landscape officers, 20/11/09). The study also established a landscape spatial hierarchy by dividing the 10 existing National Character Areas which fall within Derbyshire into 39 landscape character types. For each type, key characteristics were established from the descriptive analysis of its geology and landform, soils and land use, ecology, tree cover, enclosure, transport and built environment.

Compared to other counties, more than 80% of which had already conducted LCA before the year 1997 (Swanwick, 2004, p.111), the Derbyshire LCA actually came into being at a later stage. However, the county’s late involvement in LCA nevertheless marked this study out as a strong link between landscape characterisation (LCA stage 1) and making judgements and decisions (LCA stage 2). Namely, the Derbyshire LCA did not merely stagnate at the stage of the identification and description of landscape character types; rather, they were immediately fed into planning implementations. Each



type was adopted as a spatial unit for the further development of area-specific 'landscape management guidelines' on the basis of three broad strategies: conservation, enhancement and restoration/recreation (figure 4.5). Management guidelines are presented in the simple form of a summary table in order to target the appropriate measurements which underline the key characteristic of type. The same principle was also applied to another table of biodiversity management by matching landscape character type with habitat types. Habitat types that naturally occurred, such as parkland, marsh, heaths and river corridors, were identified for each landscape character type to ensure that development applications and management plans fit both landscape character and habitat type.

*'we broke it down in layman's terms so that you could understand which biodiversity action plan related to which landscape type...people who didn't understand the landscape were promoting habitats that shouldn't go in that landscape.'*

(Interview with DCC landscape officers, 20/11/09)

	Dark Peak	Riverside Meadows	White Peak	Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent	Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire Coalfield	SML	Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands	Trent Valley Washlands	Matbourne Parklands	L & SDC	Messe & Sence Lowlands
<b>Settlement and Buildings</b> Conservation of rural character Conservation of settlement pattern Conservation of vernacular character											
<b>Land management</b> Conservation of historic features Conservation of pastoral character Maintenance of ponds Management of field margins Restoration of unimproved permanent pasture Management of river and stream corridors Management of roadside vegetation Management of semi-natural habitats Habitat creation/ restoration											
<b>Field boundaries</b> Conservation of historic field pattern Conservation of primary field boundaries Hedgerow replanting and management*											

SML Southern Magnesian Limestone  
 L & SDC Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield  
 -1 Habitat creation is not applicable because this landscape character type is already considered to comprise of extensive areas of semi-natural vegetation. The management would be to conserve this existing habitat.  
 \* Refer to the relevant Biodiversity Action Plan - (BAP) and the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Habitat Creation Guide

**THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF DERBYSHIRE**  
**SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES**

Figure 4.5 Landscape Management Guidelines in the Derbyshire LCA

(Source: DCC, 2003, p.215)

Comparing between the two county-level landscape assessment studies conducted in the late 1960s (Landscape Appraisal) and 1990s respectively, a significant achievement has been made in the second study of Derbyshire LCA. Firstly, on the conceptual side, the previous understanding of landscape value in the narrow sense has turned to be the notion of all landscapes. The Derbyshire LCA made it clearly that the premise of the study was not to distinguish areas of attractiveness or unattractiveness, nor high quality

or low quality, but aiming at identifying the features that would have positive or negative impacts on a particular landscape. In contrast, the Landscape Appraisal, limited to the knowledge of the time, held a sharply contrasting view which indicated that *'landscape conservation must begin with the definition of good and poor landscape* (DCC, 1972, para153)*'*. Secondly, in practice, while the 1970s Landscape Appraisal initiated the use and description of Countryside Units as well as landscape policies for different types of landscape, the explicit link between these two was nevertheless not established. In the Derbyshire LCA, by linking the landscape character types to landscape management guidelines and biodiversity management, the two stages of landscape characterisation and making judgements, as proposed in the LCA guidance, were combined appropriately on account of the county's planning considerations.

### **Policy context and the use of LCA at county level**

During the preparation of the Derbyshire LCA, the County Council was at the same time updating its Structure Plan 1991-2011 (adopted in 2001). Unlike the previous versions of Structure Plan, in which the concept of landscape character was only attached to other policies or mentioned in passing, in the updated Plan the importance of landscape character was clearly recognised so that it was put forward as the leading consideration across the environmental policies. A single policy on landscape character stated that new developments were not allowed to affect landscape character and diversity, but rather needed to *'conserve, enhance and restore the local distinctiveness, character and diversity of the landscape* (Environment Policy 1)*'*. This policy, supplemented by the above LCA, then formed the character approach in Derbyshire, based on which the county has been enabled to promote and develop the approach in planning considerations. For example, the most highlighted feature at the present is the use of landscape character types as spatial planning units on a strategic scale:

*'We firmly believe that these units of landscape can look at any planning issue. Whether you're looking employment land or housing land or recreational facilities and access, biodiversity, historic environment, green infrastructure – they can all be considered in a context of these units.'*

(Interview with DCC landscape officers, 20/11/09)

This consideration also feeds into the High Peak landscape SPD as development guidelines are developed on the basis of each landscape character type, and applicants are advised to look at their sites according to the wider context of the corresponding type.

In addition, the character approach also contributes to the county's mineral and waste planning, which are the two planning commitments that still remain with counties under the new system. Two development cases involving the use of the character

approach in informing landscape management and restoration were provided by the landscape officers (figure 4.6). The first case is a limestone quarry restoration in an open landscape. In order to be sympathetic to the farmland character, the previous restoration work of tree planting was reshaped into pasture and limestone walls, and is now managed alongside the surrounding agricultural landscape. The second case is the relocation of a sewage works in the bottom of a limestone dale. With careful design according to the natural vegetation and colour system, this case is considered to have successfully enhanced and restored the local character by installing a deliberately designed new development. The same principle also informs particularly the restoration of opencast mining sites, on the use of which the landscape officers concluded:

*‘As a result we are able to design a new landscape using characteristic features such as an appropriate landuse, new hedgerows, woodlands and habitats such as wetland and grassland’*

(Email interview with DCC landscape officers, 27/11/09)

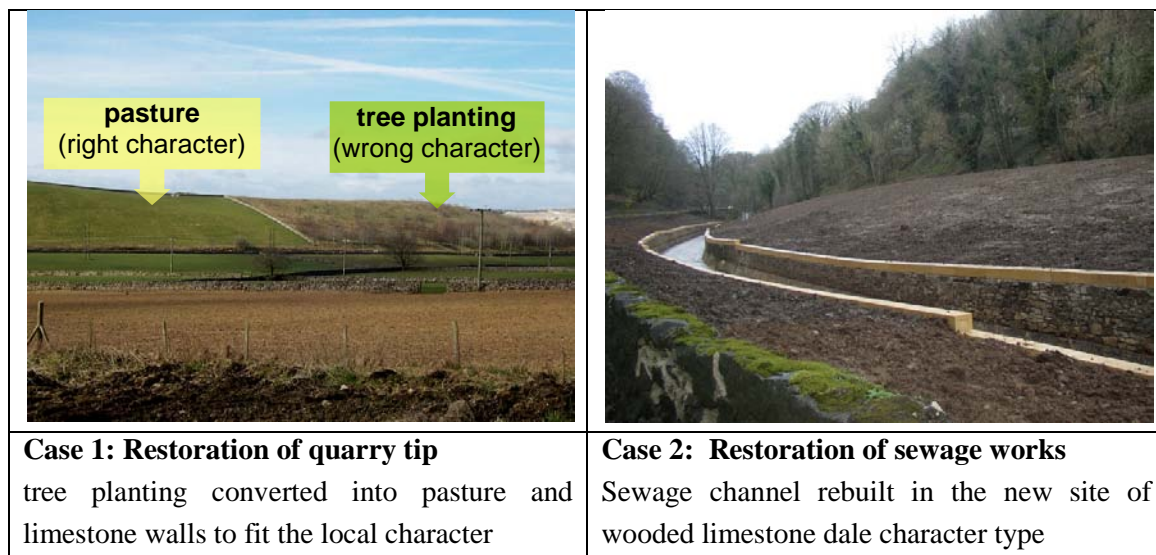


Figure 4.6 Development cases informed by the character approach

(Source: photos provided by DCC landscape officers)

### The development of the character approach at district level

While the county LCA set the scene of incorporating landscape character into planning considerations, more details of using the character-based approach can be found at the district level in terms of preparing and translating the approach into the new LDF. In response to the county’s advocacy, the concepts of landscape character and landscape character types were for the first time fed into the revised High Peak Local Plan (2005). The notion of being sympathetic to landscape character was first addressed in the general development policy (GD4) and then emphasised in the environmental policy (OC4). The latter in particular specified the landscape characteristics which needed to be included in development considerations, such as



landform, river patterns, trees and woodland, wildlife habitats, field boundaries and historical and vernacular building styles. The Local Plan was also strongly informed by the use of the character approach had already been established in the county practice. For example on design guidance for residential development, the landscape contexts for landscape character areas addressed in the County LCA were fed into the housing design considerations. The linkage between landscape character and development principles was further developed in the Borough's landscape Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which will be discussed immediately. At the same time, while the awareness of replacing the use of SLAs with the character approach was also mentioned in the Local Plan, as the time was not yet ripe for removing SLAs, the two approaches still coexisted in the Local Plan until the new LDF took effect.

While having been heavily involved in the use of SLAs for decades, High Peak has also gone through a rigorous process in developing the use of the character approach on the basis of the county LCA work. After the publication of Derbyshire LCA, this concept was strongly approved by the borough planning officer:

*'We thought that was a very helpful piece of work because it actually...formalise[d] the landscape, [so] that we couldn't instantly recognise what it was trying to say.'*

(Interview with HPBC planning officer, 16/10/09)

The borough immediately found an opportunity to work with the Countryside Agency in developing the approach, especially for the new planning system, which was the project of *'From Special Landscape Areas to Landscape Character'* already mentioned in Section 3.3.3. This project eventually developed into the Landscape Character SPD adopted in 2006 as part of the upcoming LDF. In the SPD, each of the landscape character types was allocated a 'logical leap' between landscape character and development issues made by referring to the original contexts of the county LCA and supplementary field survey (interview with Countryside consultant, 10/09/09). A simple four-step 'users' guide' was provided in the SPD:

- Firstly, locating the development sites in the corresponding landscape character type;
- secondly, considering the linkage between development and the wider landscape setting;
- thirdly, following the suggestions addressed for the given landscape type to develop construction details
- lastly, presenting their applications informed by the consideration of landscape character.

Further than developing the landscape SPD, the Borough Council went on to contract out a study in 2009, *High Peak Landscape Policy Framework*, on translating specific key characteristic into criteria-based policies as an evidence base in the LDF.

Based on the premise that ‘*development of any sort must deliver elements of landscape benefit*’ (Countryside, 2009, p.6), the study formulated the overall and detailed policy criteria according to different development issues and different landscape character types to tailor ‘*different policy responses in the different landscapes*’ (interview with Countryside consultant, 10/09/09). While developing policy criteria for individual landscape character types may be too detailed to be included in the Core Strategy, it demonstrated how the character-based approach can be achieved by developing area-specific policies based on LCA (interview with HPBC planning officer, 16/10/09). Finally, in the draft Core Strategy (2010) and its preparatory work, not only was the use of SLAs totally removed, but the concept of landscape character, landscape character types and the use of the SPD were all fed into a policy on ‘Landscape Character’ (CS3) and relevant issues like design quality (CS4).

### Summary of the development of the character approach

Table 4.9 summarises the formation of the character-based approach in Derbyshire and High Peak by listing the landscape information contents provided for each landscape unit (Countryside Units or Landscape Character Types) from four Landscape (Character) Assessment works from 1970s until now.

Table 4.9 Landscape information for landscape units

<b>Countryside Plan: Landscape (1972)</b>	<b>Derbyshire LCA (2003)</b>	<b>High Peak Landscape SPD (2006)</b>	<b>High Peak Landscape Policy Framework Study (2009)</b>
Countryside Units	Landscape Character Types	Landscape Character Types	Landscape Character Types
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• area description</li> <li>• land cover/ landuse</li> <li>• protection potential</li> <li>• viewpoint analysis</li> <li>• visual &amp; scenic quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• key characteristics</li> <li>• geology and landform</li> <li>• soils and land use</li> <li>• ecology/tree cover</li> <li>• enclosure</li> <li>• transport</li> <li>• built environment</li> <li>• planting and management guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• key characteristics</li> <li>• recent landscape impacts</li> <li>• development principles</li> <li>• development and the landscape</li> <li>• planting and biodiversity guidance</li> <li>• building form of development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• key characteristics</li> <li>• development characteristics</li> <li>• landscape character criteria</li> <li>• biodiversity opportunities</li> <li>• landscape enhancement opportunities</li> </ul>

In this table two types of progress can be identified from the comparison:

- from the 1970s Landscape Appraisal to the 2003 LCA, there was conceptual progress in understanding the landscape by its holistic character

- from county level LCA to district level LCA, there was practical progress in converting landscape information into policy criteria and landscape strategies/guidelines.

In addition to High Peak Borough which demonstrates the full process of developing the character approach, this approach has generally had a positive reaction among other Derbyshire districts as all of them conceptually or financially supported the county in developing the LCA work and the follow-up implementation (Interview with DCC landscape officers, 20/11/09). Good practice at the district level was particularly raised during the interview and in relevant written records. Bolsover District, for example, developed a robust landscape character policy that was borrowed by many other Derbyshire districts. Derbyshire Dales District also produced a landscape SPD based on the County LCA, which gained positive feedback from in-house training and raised awareness among applicants.

#### **4.1.4 Landscape approaches in transition**

##### **Drivers of change**

Derbyshire has had an early involvement of landscape in planning considerations since the 1950s because of the proximity to the Peak District National Park. From the first designation under the title of Areas of Great Landscape Value to its abolition under the new planning system after 2004, the use of SLAs used to be well-established and highly-recognised by both officers and the public in the county. By the time the SLA Local Plan was produced in 1985, the County may have missed the opportunity to incorporate the emerging idea of landscape character into the justification of SLAs since the development of Landscape (Character) Assessment was still at the embryonic stage. While Derbyshire's application of the new approach in the late 1990s was later than most of the pioneering counties in England, the positive attitude towards the concept and application of landscape character still mark the Derbyshire LCA as good practice recognised by the Countryside Agency<sup>41</sup>. High Peak Borough was particularly keen to develop policies informed by landscape character in the new LDF to fill the possible policy vacuum of the removal of SLAs. Whereas the county's attention used to be devoted to high quality landscapes and the use of SLAs in development control for decades, the transition from the old to the new approach, in contrast, is surprisingly proactive and well-received by both the county and High Peak Borough.

Apparently the requirement to review the justification of LLDs in PPG7 was the main reason for introducing the new approach based on landscape character; there are still a number of passive and active drivers that contribute to the change between landscape approaches. At county level, the passive driver of change comes from the

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<sup>41</sup> See: Countryside Character Network Newsletter (Aug 2005)

deficiency in conducting SLA policies in the light of landscape character. Since the Landscape Appraisal and the SLA Plan were produced before LCA came into existence, their selection and delineation were out of date and did not match landscape character types, which failed to meet the requirement of retaining LLDs in PPG7 in terms of robust justification. The same opinion was also put by the landscape expertise that the ‘no development’ policy of SLAs contributed nothing to landscape character and landscape management at all.

*‘Instead of placing a limit on harm, saying you shouldn’t harm the environment in this way, it was more saying this is the minimum benefit you should try and achieve...which is the idea that the development is good enough to approve.’*

(Interview with Countryside consultant, 10/09/09 )

Moreover, although within SLAs unacceptable development was ruled out, it would eventually put more development pressures on the surrounding areas, which may also be important landscapes in other ways. This is more true for the districts containing no SLA at all, whose landscapes tended to be ignored as planning considerations under the old system. In contrast, the active driver of change mainly results from the active engagement of the LCA work once the landscape officers were aware of this approach. With the establishment of the first landscape character policy in the Structure Plan (2001) and the publication of Derbyshire LCA (2003), the landscape officers thought that they were ‘brave enough’ to eliminate the SLA policies (interview with DCC landscape officers, 20/11/09).

In High Peak, the transition between the two approaches largely followed the county’s experiences, but more related to the change from Local Plans to the LDF, as a result of which retaining the old policies on SLAs would have had difficulty in going through planning examination.

*‘The Special Landscape Areas policies were under threat...because national policy guidance from the government was questioning the appropriateness of SLA policies’*

*‘We were worried that the inspector wouldn’t support the policy around Special Landscape Area development.’*

(Interview with HPBC planning officer, 16/10/09)

The awareness of the turn of planning systems and the county’s work on LCA eventually fostered the development of the character approach in High Peak in order to fit different planning purposes in the new LDF.

## Debate over the two landscape approaches

The uses of SLAs and the character approach in Derbyshire originate from the two stages of landscape assessments conducted in the late 1960s and 1990s respectively (see table 4.9). The Landscape Appraisal, which adopted the intuitive method of landscape evaluation, quantified the landscape character (land use patterns), qualities and features for the identification of priority areas. The differentiation between good and poor landscapes in the Appraisal eventually formed the system of SLAs, the policy context of which was then expanded in the SLA Local Plan. The Derbyshire LCA, on the other hand, was based on the methodology of landscape character assessment and the notion of all landscapes. The characterisation of different landscape character types immediately developed into policy tools in terms of landscape management guidelines and district level Landscape SPD.

During the transition between the two approaches, as the previous execution of the SLA approach was largely satisfactory, the removal of SLAs inevitably aroused opposition.

*'We did get a lot of resistance from some people who weren't keen to see the end of landscape designations...and there is a reluctance, I think, by planners to move to a different system.'* (Interview with DCC landscape officers, 20/11/09)

The same concern also rose when High Peak introduced the policy on landscape character into the Local Plan (2005):

*'Because it (SLA) worked very well...people were nervous about abandoning the Special Landscape policies...and we (the council) still use it to some extent.'* (Interview with HPBC planning officer, 16/10/09)

As the transition was highly recommended in the national policy, in order to avoid the abrupt end of SLAs and make the process smoother, a hybrid system of the two approaches existed in the county Structure Plan (2001) and High Peak Local Plan (2005). However, while the use of SLAs was still advocated, in the Local Plan an 'announcement' was made about the foreseeable substitution of SLAs for the emerging character approach, even though at the time the preparation work was not robust enough to do so (HPBC, 2005, para 4.18).

Although the character-based approach has been well developed in Derbyshire and is considered as a 'huge success' by the county landscape officers, there is still a fundamental concern in terms of its complexity in applying different measures to different landscapes, especially when people were apt to apply a simple ideology of designations. Even the county landscape officers, who themselves developed the

character approach, sometimes found it not easy to create an argument for refusal on account of landscape character.

*‘Having been involved in a public inquiry a few years ago, it really highlighted the difficulties of using just landscape character.’*

*‘We struggle with getting the idea across and the importance across to chief planning officers and inspectors...It’s sometimes more difficult to create an argument why something shouldn’t go.’*

(Interview with DCC landscape officers, 20/11/09)

The High Peak officer also encountered difficulties using the approach to achieve a better quality of design. However, compared to the benefits to the landscape brought, the flaws of conducting the character approach are likely to diminish, as the county landscape officers have been endeavouring to make the approach simpler and ready to use by holding internal and external trainings and workshops. Since the use of the character approach is a relatively new concept, these difficulties are regarded as transitional problems, which may well be resolved as more fruitful outcomes appear.

### **Future direction**

In summary, the fundamental concern of landscape planning in Derbyshire has always been the provision of the best treatment of landscapes, no matter whether through the former regulations on SLAs and landscape improvement, or through the recent advocacy of the use of the character approach. Since the County Landscape Plan (1972) aimed to *‘maintain the essential character and quality of the best landscape, and to improve, renovate and restore those areas which are less attractive and even despoiled or derelict (para156)’*, a similar consideration still remains true today, but in a more all-embracing and up-to-date sense. Considering the current practice of the character approach, it is very likely to be more influential under the supportive atmosphere of the county and its districts. Although under the new planning system the county Structure Plan was obsolete after the year 2004, the same recommendation, to take account of landscape character in the planning system, has still remained in the East Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (2005) as a higher level requirement. At district level, according to the information on LDF published on the website (accessed 22/06/11), most of the Derbyshire districts have now included landscape character-based policy in their Core Strategies, and the county LCA is also widely referred as evidence base by district authorities.

Table 4.10 The use of the character-based approach in the LDF of Derbyshire districts

	<b>Landscape character-informed core policy</b>	<b>Landscape SPD</b>	<b>LCA– evidence base</b>
Amber Valley Borough	N/A	N	N/A
Bolsover District	Y (Countryside and Landscape Character)	N	N
Chesterfield Borough	Y (full policy n/a)	N	Y (Derbyshire LCA)
Derbyshire Dales District	Y (Landscape Character)	Y (Landscape Character and Design)	(Natural and Historic Environment study)
Erewash Borough	Y (Landscape Character)	Y (Landscape)	Y (Derbyshire LCA) (Greater Nottingham LCA)
High Peak Borough	Y (Landscape Character)	Y (Landscape Character)	Y
North East Derbyshire District	N/A	N	N
South Derbyshire District	Y (Landscape, Countryside Character and Green Belt)	N/A	Y (Derbyshire LCA)

\* words in parenthesis are the title of the policy/SPD/evidence base document

For the future use of the approach, at the present stage the County Council does not intend to update the LCA work, since no significant change has occurred within the past few years. What the county landscape officers have been actively involved is the dissemination of this approach, especially for upcoming local implementations. Regular meetings with district planning officers are held by the landscape officers to tackle landscape issues, including the use of the character approach. This is believed to generate positive feedback among the county and its districts to bring the new approach forward.

## 4.2 Case study 2: Staffordshire County – South Staffordshire District

The second case is the two-tier planning authority of Staffordshire County and one of its eight districts, South Staffordshire. The county itself features a long-term involvement with LCA and execution of the character approach, which was even

included in the 2002 LCA guidance as good practice. Among the districts, South Staffordshire was chosen on account of the interviewee's previous position in the District Council. Research materials used in the case of Staffordshire involve two face-to-face interviews conducted in September and November 2009, and written materials ranging from the 1970s to 2010. The first interviewee is the leader of the natural environment group in Staffordshire County Council, who was originally the landscape architect in the planning department and was also the main developer of the character approach for this County. The second interviewee was the one-time Head of Landscape in South Staffordshire District and is now working in a private consultancy as the Head of Architecture and Landscape Service. The second interview was mainly based on her previous work in South Staffordshire. At the same time, one additional e-mail interview with the first interviewee and an informal consultation with the current district landscape officer will also be included to provide supplementary viewpoints. On the other hand, written materials include development plans and landscape relevant policy documents. Development plans were collected for both levels, starting from the first version of the Structure Plan in 1973 to the new LDF which has emerged in the last five years. Landscape policy documents include the county level Supplementary Planning Guidance and district-level Landscape Assessment as well as the SPD informed by landscape character.

Table 4.11 Policy documents for Case 2

<b>Year</b>	<b>Staffordshire County</b>	<b>South Staffordshire District</b>
1973	Staffordshire Structure Plan (v.1)	
1981	Staffordshire Structure Plan (v.2)	
1991	Staffordshire Structure Plan (v.3)	
1996		South Staffordshire Local Plan
2000	Planning for Landscape Change (Structure Plan SPG)	
2001	Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 (v.4)	
2003		South Staffordshire Local Plan (deposit) Landscape Assessment
2006		Development Plan Document Issues and Options Paper
2010		Policy Choices Consultation Document (1 <sup>st</sup> draft)
2011		Core Strategy Development Plan Document (final draft)



## 4.2.1 Landscape and planning contexts for Staffordshire

### Geographical features and landscape character

The county of Staffordshire is located in the north of the west Midlands. The county is bounded by the southwest Pennines to the northeast, while the majority of the remainder lies in the floodplain of the Trent with a small portion of the northern and western fringe covered by the Rivers Weaver and Severn (Staffordshire County Council (SCC), 1973, para3.2). Generally speaking, Staffordshire represents a transition from the highly urbanised West Midlands Conurbation to the strictly protected National Park, within which the county itself exhibits a strong rural character.

The county can be largely divided into four zones: northeast, northwest, southwest, and central and southeast, according to their environmental features and industrial development. Southwestern Staffordshire is the area where the South Staffordshire District is located. Apart from the northern part, which is the continuation of the Staffordshire Plain, the remainder belongs to sandstone plateau with gently rolling landform. This area is rural in nature and is dominated by three types of land use: the bold relief and well-wooded Kinver Forest, typical landscape of arable and mixing farming, and the areas of industrial heritage near the South Staffordshire Coalfield (SCC, 1973, para 3.6). As the area is adjacent to West Midlands Conurbation, considerable movements of population and traffic from the Black Country have also resulted in rigorous policy on Green Belts on the edge of this area (SCC, 1981b, para 4.35).

According to the National Character Areas identified by the Countryside Commission, nine character areas fall within Staffordshire. Owing to the early involvement of LCA work in the county in the early 1990s, the classification system of landscape character types and subtypes (i.e. specific land use types contained within a landscape character type) was already in place in the county before the National Character Areas came into existence in the late 1990s. Therefore, instead of forming a nested hierarchy, landscape character types and subtypes in the Staffordshire system can reappear and cross-refer in different national character areas (table 4.12; figure 4.7).

Table 4.12 Landscape character areas/types of Staffordshire

National Character Areas	Landscape character types	Subtypes
52 White Peak	Ancient clay farmlands	Estatelands
53 South West Peak	Ancient plateau farmlands	Farmland
61 Staffordshire Plain	Ancient redlands	Forest
64 Potteries and Churnet Valley	Ancient slope and valley farmlands Coalfield farmlands	Heathland Parkland
66 Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau	Dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys Dissected sandstone highland fringe	Minerals working and restoration

National Character Areas	Landscape character types	Subtypes
67 Cannock Chase and Cankwood	Dissected sandstone uplands	
68 Needwood Claylands	Gritstone highland fringe	
69 Trent Valley Washlands	Gritstone uplands	
72 Mease Lowlands	Limestone highland fringe	
	Lowland village farmlands	
	Riparian alluvial lowlands	
	Sandstone estatelands	
	Sandstone hills and heaths	
	Sandstone terrace estatelands	
	Settled farmlands	
	Settled heathlands	
	Settled plateau farmland slopes	
	Settled plateau farmlands	
	Surveyor-enclosed plateau farmlands	
	Terrace alluvial lowlands	

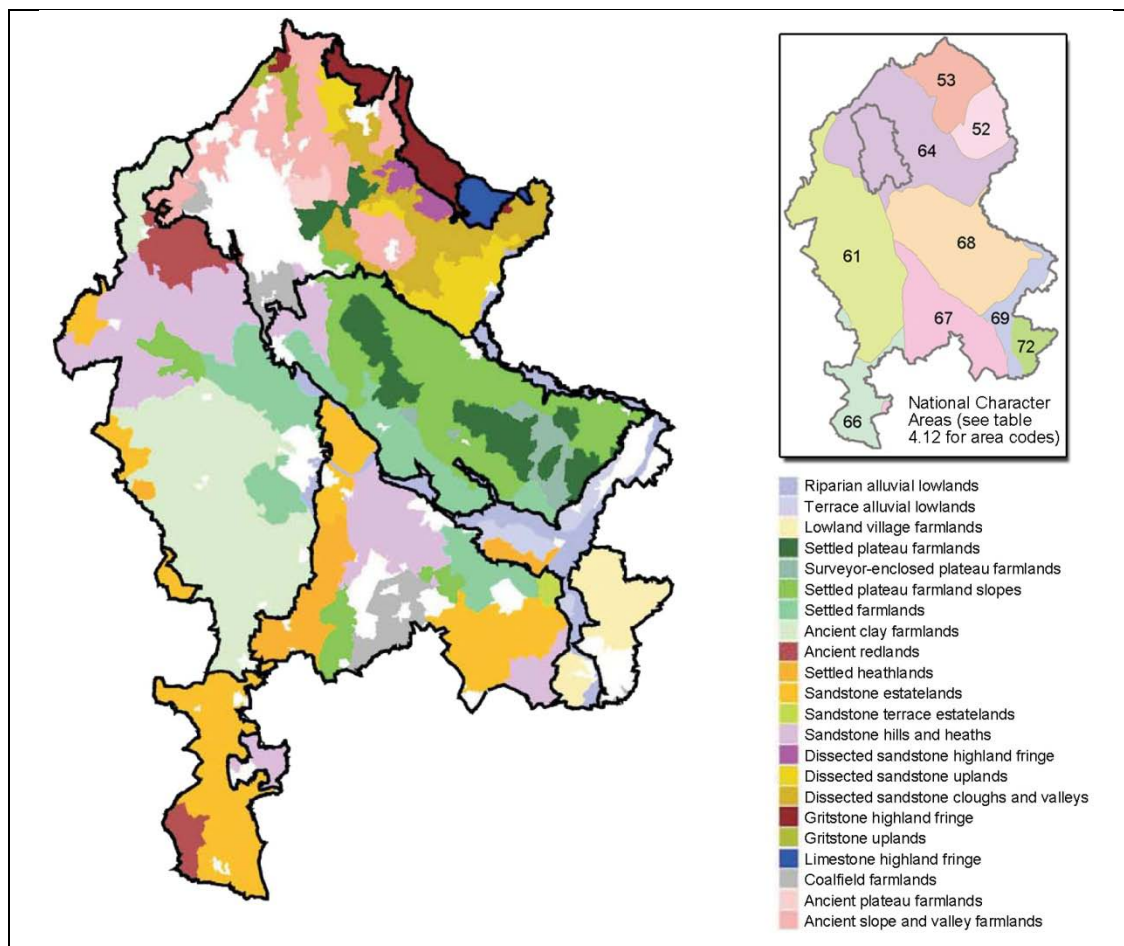


Figure 4.7 Landscape character types of Staffordshire

(Source: Based on SCC, 2000b, map 4)

## Rural land use and landscape planning issues

Despite the encroachment from the Potteries Conurbation in the northwest and the West Midlands Conurbation in the south of the county, the majority of Staffordshire remains rural in character. In order to safeguard the rural landscape against undesired urban impacts, Green Belts have long been a primary measure to control urban sprawl and at the same time provide ‘green services’ to urban areas in terms of ecology and recreation. In the county as a whole, three Green Belts are identified around the major urban areas (Staffordshire County Council, 2001, p.41):

- *around the North Staffordshire Conurbation;*
- *to the north and west of the West Midlands Conurbation; and*
- *the small area to the east of Burton upon Trent*

In South Staffordshire District, where the designation of the West Midlands Green Belt occupies 80% of the District, strict regulations on Green Belt have been established since the District’s first Local Plan in 1996 (para 2.1-2.18) and continued to be fed into the LDF. Outside the Green Belt boundary, the rest of the rural areas of the District are retained as ‘Open Countryside’, where the general regulations on ‘*the character and openness of the countryside and the local distinctiveness of villages*’ are applicable (South Staffordshire District Council, Core Strategy 2010). Considering the increasing housing need from the adjacent West Midlands Conurbation, the above notion of preserving the attractiveness and characteristics of villages also becomes a key theme in South Staffordshire (South Staffordshire District Council (SSDC), 2009, para2.5).

At the same time, landscape policies emerged from a landscape quality survey carried out alongside the preparation of the first draft of Staffordshire County Structure Plan in the early 1970s (which will be elaborated in the next section). Based on the identification of landscape quality, priority in dealing with landscape matters was given to the two extremes of landscape conservation and landscape improvement. For the most attractive or good quality landscapes like the Cannock Chase AONB and Special Landscape Areas (SLAs), a presumption against development has been given to those which would have adverse effects on the general quality. While the use of SLAs has been removed since the latest version of the Structure Plan 1996-2011, a continuous protection priority is still given to the AONB until now. For the unattractive landscapes, land renewal and enhancement were applicable to improve the quality of the poorer landscape by means of removing unsightly elements, especially in the areas around the Potteries Conurbation and the northern fringes of the West Midlands Conurbation. Apart from these two approaches, for new development the general requirement of being sympathetic to and reflecting the local character of the site has also been embedded in development policies.

Table 4.13 Countryside and landscape policies of Staffordshire County/South Staffordshire District

Staffordshire County (before 2001)			Staffordshire County (2001-2005)				
Countryside policy areas			Landscape	Countryside policy areas			Landscape
Green Belt	NP/AONB	general countryside	landscape conservation	Green Belt	NP/AONB	general countryside	Landscape character/ quality, Design and environment quality
	SLA		landscape renewal				

South Staffordshire District (before)			South Staffordshire District (after)				
Countryside policy areas			Landscape	Countryside policy areas			Landscape
Green Belt	AONB	Open countryside	landscape conservation, landscape features, landscape improvement	Green Belt	AONB	general countryside	landscape character and appearance, landscape design and landscaping

#### 4.2.2 Special Landscape Areas and the emergence of the character-based approach

##### Special Landscape Areas and the involvement of landscape quality survey

Landscape conservation in Staffordshire used to include a complete hierarchy of statutory and non-statutory designations: part of the Peak District National Park on the northeast edge, Cannock Chase AONB in the south, and local landscape designations under the title of Special Landscape Areas scattered across the county. Apart from the Peak District National Park, which is outside the county's administration, the latter two designations were all established on the basis of the 'best quality' of landscape. In the County Development Plan in 1958, six preliminary LLDs, including Cannock Chase, were first designated under the title of Areas of Great Landscape Value (SCC, 1973, para 13.8-9, wide grey diagonals in figure 4.8b). With the immediate re-designation of Cannock Chase into an AONB in the same year, the remainder were kept as representing the landscapes of county importance. When the County was preparing its Structure Plans in the early 1970s, five more Areas of High Landscape Quality (fig 4.8b) were added into this type of designation and later on renamed as Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) in the 1978 version of the Structure Plan. From this time onwards, the use of SLAs was embedded in county level policy until their removal in the last the version of Structure Plan 1996-2011 (adopted in 2001). In South Staffordshire, the southernmost area adjoining Kinver Forest was designated as the only SLA in this District, the detailed boundary of which was identified in the 1982 Southern Area Local Plan (SSDC, 1996, para 8.22, see figure 4.10a).

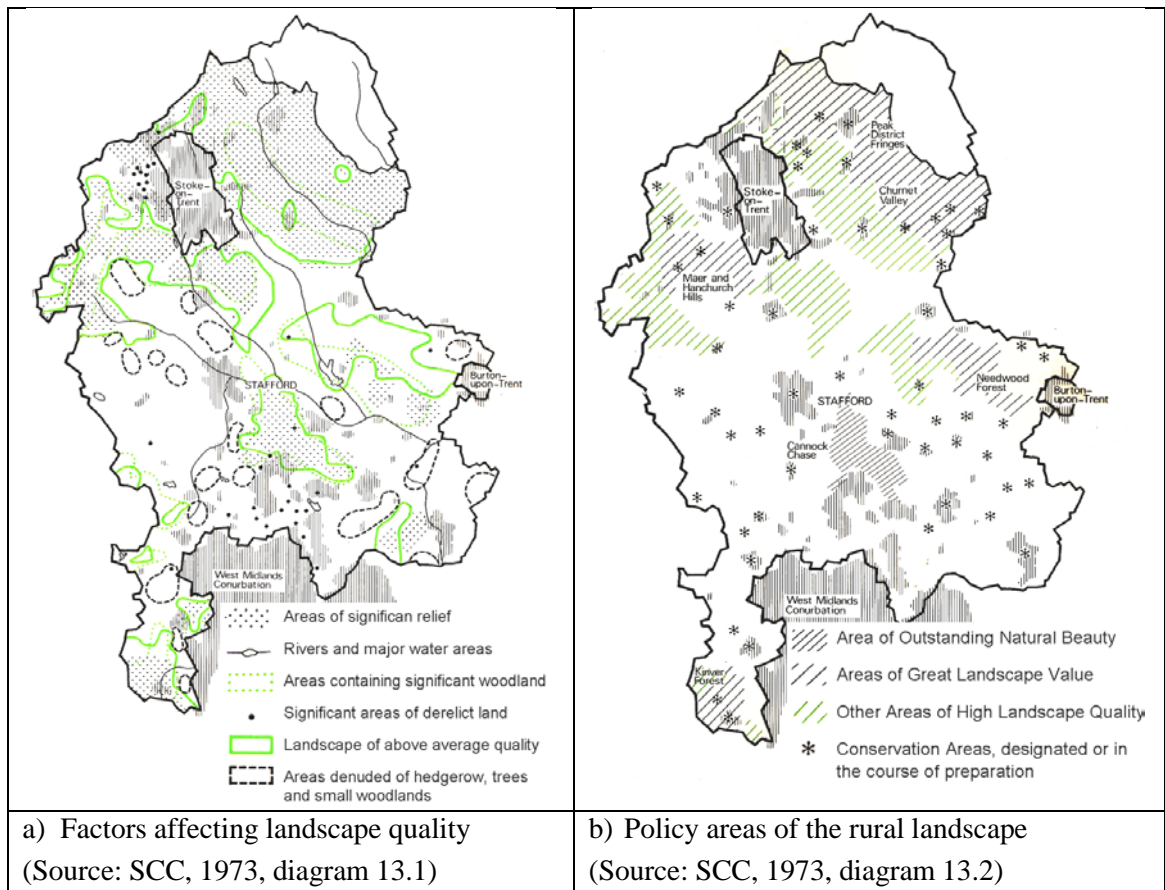


Figure 4.8 Landscape quality and policy areas in the 1970s landscape survey

SLAs in Staffordshire were identified by taking account of ‘landscape quality’ in terms of their contribution to or detracting from landscape quality established in the landscape quality survey as stated above (Staffordshire County Council, 2000b, para 7.2). In accordance with the concurrent practice of landscape evaluation in the 1970s, the methodology of the landscape survey was informed by the Coventry-Solihull-Warwickshire Study of 1971 (SCC, 2000b, para 7.1). As the methodology was totally quantitative in nature, the landscape survey conducted in the county was also based on the similar concept of scoring a number of landscape factors. The results of the survey were presented as a scale of landscape quality in terms of above average, average and below average. Landscape with bold relief, the presence of woodlands or a body of water, iconic houses or buildings were considered high quality, whereas detractors like communication facilities, mineral workings and derelict land were categorised into low quality. The middle range of the landscape quality spectrum was considered the average quality in terms of ordinary agricultural landscape (SCC, 1973, para 13.3-13.6, figure 4.8a). As is shown in figure 4.8a and b, most of the landscapes ‘of above average quality’ were actually converted into ‘Areas of Great Landscape Value’ and ‘Other Areas of High Landscape Quality’, which were later on merged under a unified title of SLAs, as described in the foregoing.

## Special Landscape Areas in practice

While the use of SLAs in Staffordshire was underpinned by the rationale of conserving landscapes of good quality, the function and justification of the approach was not explicitly shown in the Structure Plan, as more weight was given to the higher level designation of Cannock Chase AONB. In the context of different versions of the Structure Plan, policies on SLAs were simply stated as:

- *'be[ing] treated with special attention'* (1979);
- *'a presumption against building or other forms of unsuitable development'* (1981);
- *'a presumption against development which would adversely affect the general quality'* (1991).

Except for the 1970s landscape survey and the SLA policies above, no further explanations or studies were made in relation to the use of SLAs. While at county level, the use of SLAs was defined in a broad-brush way, more details and ways of implementation were specified in Local Plans. In the South Staffordshire Local Plan (1996), the policy on SLAs was addressed in a criteria-based way to examine whether development would have adverse effects on **special landscape character** and **nature conservation value** (Policy LS7). Alongside the SLA policy, a derivative policy also addressed the identification, protection and management of **special landscape features** such as waterside land, old meadows and pastures, wetland and woodland (Policy LS8) (SSDC, 1996).

The lack of information on the use of SLAs exists not only in the policy context, but also in practical use. According to the interview contexts, it was felt that the policy on SLA was considered strong and restrictive. The presumption against development was usually perceived as a 'no development' policy, the function of which was mainly enabling people to fight against undesired development. Although the use of SLAs had stayed firm for nearly forty years, in recent planning practice it was no longer favourable as SLAs were entirely replaced by the character approach in the last version of Structure Plan 1996-2011 (2001). In this Plan, while the decision on the retention or removal of SLAs was left to district authorities, the landscape character-informed Supplementary Planning Guidance was still recommended by the County Council as robust enough to provide better guidance (SCC, 2001, para9.5). In the case of South Staffordshire, from its first draft of the Core Strategy in 2006, the use of SLAs was totally removed from the policy contexts.

## The emergence of landscape character assessment

Staffordshire had an early involvement in Landscape Assessment by participating in a project for the development of forest management strategies. This project, initiated by the Forestry Commission in 1991, borrowed the methodology established in the

Warwickshire Landscape Project (see chapter 3.2.1) to conduct a similar assessment in Staffordshire. This assessment underwent an iterative process of desk survey and field survey to generate landscape types by taking into account different elements and aspects of landscape (figure 4.9a). Unlike the top-down characterisation suggested later in the LCA guidance (2002), the study firstly broke down the whole of Staffordshire into homogeneous small units. Then, through observation in field surveys, these small landscape units were clustered into larger landscape types with the consideration of homogeneity of geology, elevation, soil, vegetation and tree cover, farming activity, settlement pattern and field pattern (see SCC, 2000b, table 1). For each landscape type, a description sheet was produced alongside woodland guidelines according to its character (figure 4.9b). The whole assessment was conducted from 1991-92 as one of the pilot local authorities in England in developing this emerging method.

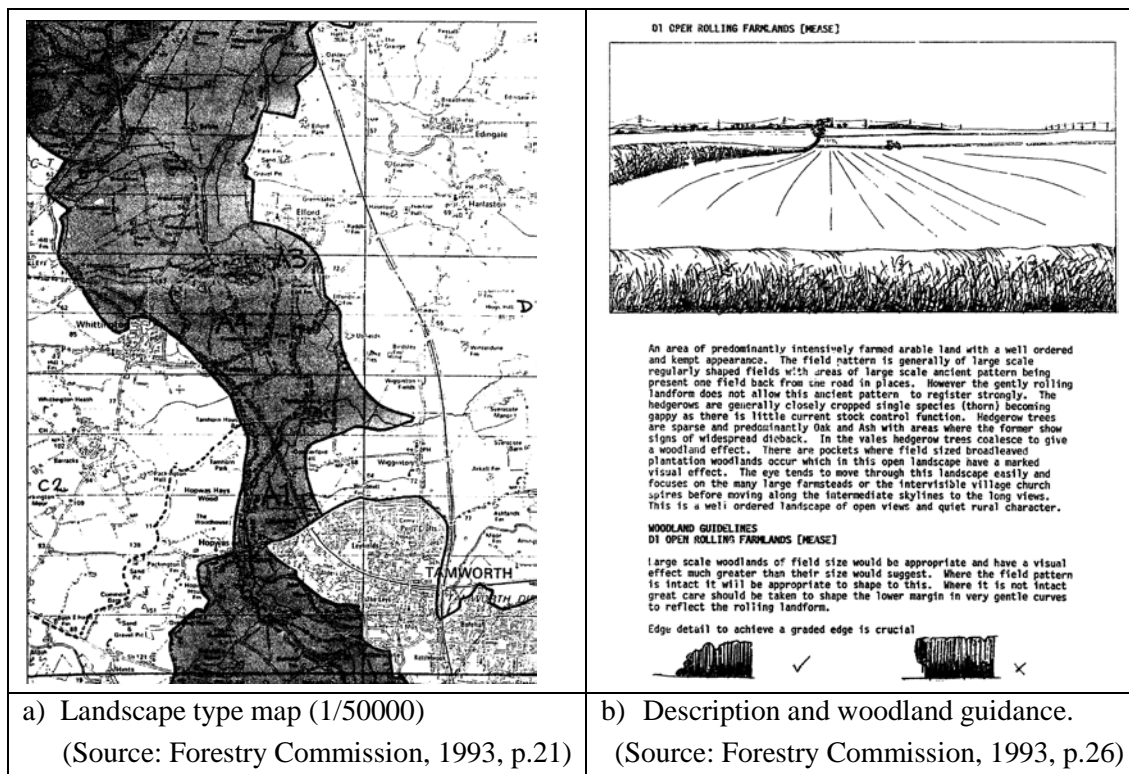


Figure 4.9 Pilot Staffordshire Landscape Assessment

While the Staffordshire LCA was conducted in a rigorous and comprehensive way and even influenced the later work of the Countryside Character Programme, it did not come into full use in terms of having a further influence on planning practice. According to the landscape officer, since the Forestry Commission changed its operation halfway through and withdrew its input from the LCA project, the final results of LCA were not used to inform the forestry strategies. Rather, the study was simply adopted by the landscape officer himself to inform his planning comments on an informal basis for several years afterwards.

*‘So very quickly we had a landscape character assessment sitting on our shelf and I was using it on a day to day basis for the planning work instead.’*

(Interview with SCC landscape officer, 29/09/09)

This situation was also true for other authorities which were involved in the early development of LCA at that time.

*‘Most landscape assessments in the country stop at a description of the character of the landscape without going to the extra step of identifying the quality of those landscapes, which makes it very limiting and difficult to offer planning advice on how applications should respond to a particular landscape.’*

(ibid)

### **From LCA to landscape policy objectives**

The turning point happened when the County was initiating a new version of its Structure Plan in the late 1990s. Also under advocacy of using the character-based approach in PPG7, the council landscape officers realised that the purely descriptive nature of the previous LCA work was not sufficient to form a strategic landscape policy context. It had to be converted in some way to form an all-embracing planning tool. Firstly, the early use of ‘landscape quality’, which used to be misleading as a synonym for ‘scenic quality’, was re-defined as:

*‘A function of the clarity with which the distinctive character of a landscape type is expressed in a given area, and of the condition of the landscape elements that contribute to that character’.*

(SCC, 2000b, p.34)

Within the new context, each landscape character type identified in the previous LCA was then assessed against a comprehensive set of factors, including characteristic landscape elements, incongruous features, landscape pattern and historical and ecological dimensions of the landscape (SCC, 2000a, para 2.5). The outcomes of landscape quality were then classified and mapped into five ‘landscape policy objectives’: *landscape regeneration, landscape restoration, landscape enhancement, landscape maintenance* and *active landscape conservation* (figure 4.10b). The use of these five landscape policy objectives then becomes the key concept for carrying out the character approach afterwards. By attaching the appropriate objective to each landscape character type, developers can obtain an idea of which measures should contribute to the landscape of development sites as appropriate.

In addition to the identification of landscape policy objectives, the original LCA was expanded by assessing the visual character, positive and negative landscape features and landscape quality of each landscape character type to provide descriptive guidance for each landscape character type. The preliminary woodland guidelines were also



combined with the county's Biodiversity Action Plan to form the assessment of habitat management on a landscape scale (table 4.14).

Table 4.14 Sample of habitat management principles

<b>Character Area:</b> The Staffordshire Plain		<b>Character Type:</b> Riparian alluvial lowlands
<b>Habitat type</b>	<b>Objective or target</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Ancient/semi-natural broadleaved woodland	recreate/regenerate	lower
Ancient/diverse hedgerows	maintain and manage	lower
	maintain trees	lower
Hedgerows	plant species-rich hedges	lower
Arable field margins	maintain, improve and restore	medium
Canals, lakes and ponds	maintain and enhance water bodies and catchments	medium
	increase the number of such features	medium
Lowland wet grassland	maintain and enhance existing areas	high
	restore degraded areas	high
	create new areas	high
Reedbeds	maintain and create	high
Rivers and streams	maintain and improve the quality and quantity of water	high
	maintain the quality of all natural existing channel features	high
Wet woodland	maintain, enhance and restore	high
	prevent further loss	high
	increase the number of such woodlands	high

(Source: Reproduced from SCC, 2000c, p14)

Although the above work was based on the understanding of the overall characteristics of landscape, the basic concept was quite similar to the previous 1970s landscape survey in terms of ranking landscape according to its quality (table 4.15). As shown in the comparison between figure 4.10 a and b, landscape designations (AONB, SLAs) and well-wooded areas largely correspond to the policy objective of active conservation and management, whereas the renewal areas and scarcely-wooded ones are in need of landscape regeneration or restoration. As the presence of pleasant/unpleasant features used to be perceived as the main contributor of 'landscape quality', the previous policy only dealt with the two ends of high quality and low quality landscapes, which left a policy vacuum around the 'average' quality. This gap, namely the blank areas on the map, has been bridged by attaching every landscape character types to its area-specific landscape policy objectives.

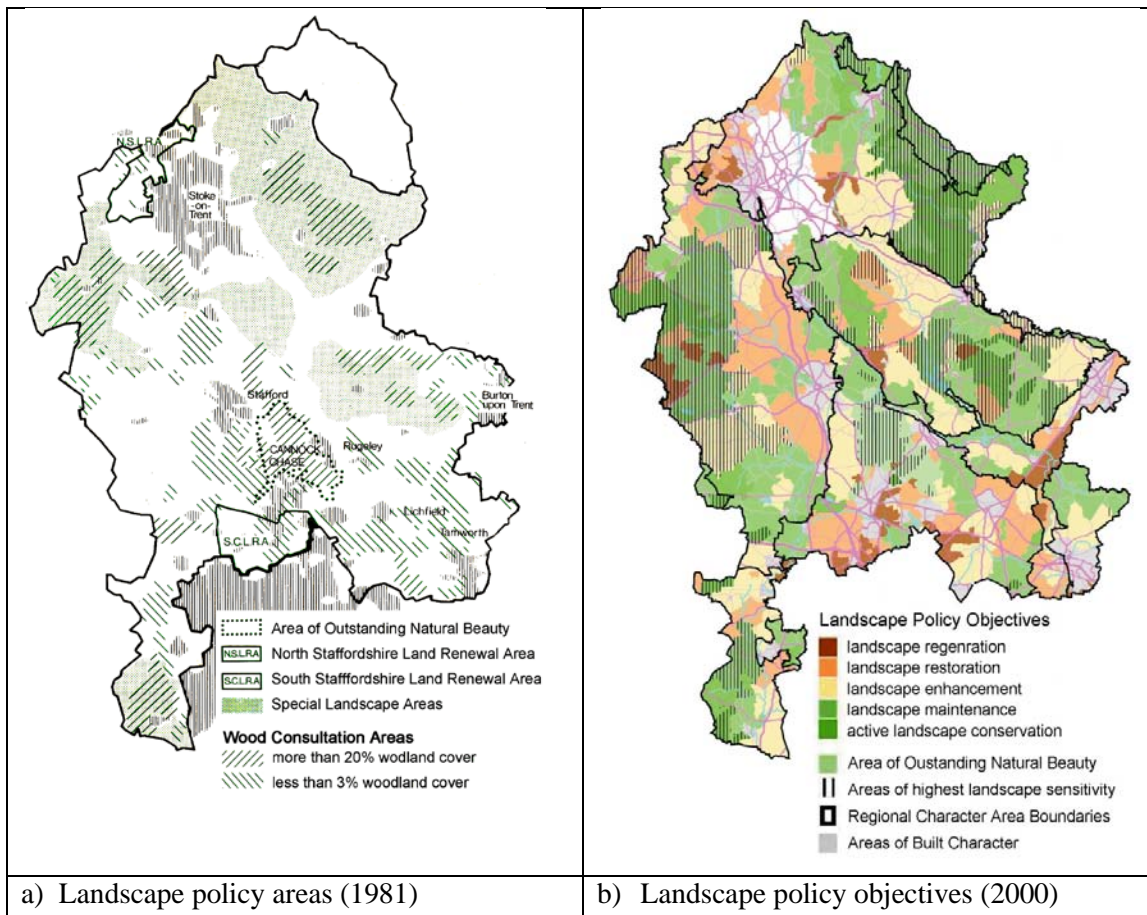


Figure 4.10 Landscape approaches in the old and new planning contexts

(Source: Reproduced from SCC, 1981b; SCC, 2000b)

Table 4.15 ‘Landscape quality’ in the old and new planning contexts

Landscape Survey (1970s)	Relative Landscape Quality	Landscape Policy Objectives (2000)
AONB	very high	active conservation
Special Landscape Areas	high	maintenance
not specify (the majority of rural areas)	moderate	enhancement
landscape improvement/renewal areas	low	restoration
	very low	regeneration

### 4.2.3 The character-based approach in practice

#### The policy context of the character approach at county level

Having done the ground work of converting LCA to landscape policy objectives, the County were then well-prepared for carrying out the character approach. Firstly, all the

written underpinnings regarding the use of this approach were combined into three volumes of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): *Planning for Landscape Change* (2000). This SPG contained underpinnings of the character-based approach, including:

- the emergence and methodology of LCA and landscape policy objectives,
- detailed guidance for each landscape policy objective
- landscape descriptions of each landscape type

This information provided a comprehensive justification that fully covered the previous policies on SLAs and landscape improvement. With the assistance of the SPG, the Council was able to move on using the landscape character-informed policy in the updated Structure Plan under the title of ‘landscape protection and restoration’:

*‘Development should be informed by and be sympathetic to **landscape character and quality** and should contribute, as appropriate, to the **regeneration, restoration, enhancement, maintenance or active conservation of the landscape likely to be affected**’ (Policy NC2).*

Following this overarching idea of landscape character and quality as well as the use of different landscape policy objectives, Policy NC2 continued to set out the criteria of potential harm and disturbance to landscape elements and visual quality, against which the development proposal had to be examined. These criteria were explained in the SPG in terms of a list of ‘tests’ against which development has to pass through (table 4.16). A simple matrix was provided at the same time to help developers grasp and take into account different aspects of landscape character (table 4.17).

Table 4.16 ‘Tests’ for developers to comply with Policy NC2

<b>Content of test</b>	<b>Suggested solution</b>
1) Are the development proposals adequately informed by an understanding of the landscape character of the area?	make reference to the SPG or Countryside Character, Vol.5 (West Midlands) or carry out individual LCA
2) Is there evidence that the proposal has taken account of local landscape character?	make good choice of building materials, design, siting and scale
3) Will the proposed development contribute to the appropriate landscape policy objective for the area?	refer to the map and the explanation of different landscape policy objectives
4) To what extent would the proposed development be visually intrusive?	refer to the general visibility and sensitivity of each landscape
5) To what extent will the proposed development lead to the introduction of incongruous features, or are there proposals for the removal of such features?	refer to examples of incongruous features in the detailed descriptions of landscape types

Content of test	Suggested solution
6) Will the proposed development have an adverse impact on the evidence of human interaction with the landscape over time, and to what extent?	good design can minimise its negative impact
7) Will the proposed development lead to the loss of characteristic semi-natural vegetation, or contribute to its conservation, restoration or reintroduction?	do not create vegetation in a landscape that has not contained it historically
8) To what extent will the proposed development affect other characteristic landscape features?	refer to the characteristic features in the descriptions of landscape types
9) Will the proposed development have any impact on the visual condition of all of the elements that contribute to the distinctive character?	use management plans to improve the visual condition
10) Will the proposed development have any impact on the tranquillity of the area?	refer to Appendix 1 about tranquillity of the area

(Source: Summarised from SCC, 2000a, para3.2)

Table 4.17 Table for assessing possible impacts on landscape character

Landscape policy objective appropriate to the area: (e.g. landscape restoration)					
Impact with respect to	Nature and strength of the impact				
	strongly negative	negative	neutral	positive	strongly positive
Incongruous landscape elements					
Historic landscape elements					
Characteristic semi-natural vegetation					
Visual condition of landscape elements					
Tranquillity					
Visual impact					
Overall contribution to the landscape policy objective					

(Source: SCC, 2000a, para3.3)

When it comes to the execution of this approach in development control, the landscape officer for Staffordshire firstly pointed out that Policy NC2 was not inherently against development, but provided flexibility from case to case.

*‘If you wanted to develop, you’ve got to take a lot of care, and the care is different; either the care is to produce another landscape of a good quality, or to improve the quality of the landscape you’ve got.’*

(Interview with SCC landscape officer, 29/09/09)

The procedure for using the SPG to inform development is that developers are expected to consult the SPG or county landscape officers to find out what the landscape character type and policy objective of the development sites are. With the assistance of landscape architects if necessary, developers then need to feed landscape character into their design and landscaping details. After the proposals are sent to the council for internal consultation, the landscape officers can make specific comments on landscape character and examine whether the proposals comply with relevant policy not. Although the county level Structure Plan has been abolished under the current planning system, the suggestion of consulting the landscape SPG still remain valid in the County's planning guidelines (SCC, 2008).

### **The policy context of the character approach at district level**

In South Staffordshire, the involvement of policies on landscape character was first set out in the District's Local Plan (1996) as Policy LS1: *Landscape Character—protection and enhancement*. In this early context, landscape character policy was articulated in a similar way to that of SLAs in terms of objecting to development that would affect landscape character. However, this otherwise allowed the policy on SLAs to be articulated within a broader context by paying attention to the '*potential effect of the proposals on the **natural beauty and particular landscape characteristics of the area***' (SSDC 1996, para 8.22). Although at this stage a hybrid use of both approaches was addressed in the Local Plan, it was not until the new planning system came into being after 2004 that a complete structure of using the character approach was realised in the Core Strategy. From the first consultation paper on policy issues and options of the core policies in 2006, landscape character was raised as an individual topic and kept being fed into the following drafts of the Core Strategy and consultation papers.

In the final draft Core Strategy 2011, the all-embracing core policy, '*Protecting and Enhancing the character and Appearance of the Landscape*', unveils the wide range of applications contributed by the concept of landscape character. In comparison to the previous policy (LS1) in the Local Plan, the new policy (EQ4) includes different policy issues concerning landscape under the broad consideration of landscape character with reference to landscape policy objectives (words in bold) and the use of LCA (words in italic) as shown in table 4.18.

Table 4.18 Summary of Policy EQ4 in final draft Core Strategy 2011

<b>Policy targets</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Criteria for landscape character</b>
Trees, woodland and hedgerows	protection and management	<b>maintain</b> and <b>enhance</b> rural character and local distinctiveness
New development	design and location	take account of the <i>characteristics and sensitivity</i> of the landscape
	siting and scale	use <i>landscape character analysis</i> to establish the key features
Development proposals	<b>retain</b> and <b>strengthen</b> landscape character in existing buildings, features and vegetation	1) the County Council's <i>Landscape Character Assessment</i> will provide an informed framework 2) be consistent with the SPDs on <i>Landscape Character</i> , Village Design and Biodiversity
	<b>add</b> character and distinctiveness to new features and degraded landscapes	
the Cannock Chase AONB	general development	<b>conserve</b> and <b>enhance</b> the landscape, nature conservation and recreation interest
	management plan	proposals contributing to <b>enhancing</b> landscape character will be supported

(Source: Summarised from SSDC, 2011, p.64)

Regarding the use of LCA in South Staffordshire, in 2003 the council published a similar study under the title of '*Landscape Assessment: study of land surrounding key settlements*'. While this study stood on the basis of National Character Areas and the county SPG, it is more like a landscape tool informed by LCA as its focus was on providing detailed visual assessment around villages rather than comprehensive planning guidance. The same focus of settlement also reflected on the district's Village Design Guide SPD. In this SPD, three National Character Areas falling into this District were identified and based on their character the corresponding design principles were devised (table 4.19). According to an informal inquiry with the current landscape officer in South Staffordshire, there is a plan to publish a landscape character SPD in due course together with the final publication of the Core Strategy. However, by the end of the research, the SPD has not appeared yet, and the county landscape SPG is still referred as an evidence base for providing this District with general information on landscape character.

Table 4.19 Design principles for three National Character Areas

Staffordshire Plain (61)	Cannock Chase and Cankwood (67)	Mid-Severn Sandstone Plateau (66)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dispersed settlement pattern</li> <li>• distant views</li> <li>• low-lying structures</li> <li>• containment of settlements</li> <li>• rustic, earthy material colours</li> <li>• landscape restoration</li> <li>• contributing to the network of green spaces</li> <li>• impact of archaeology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• containment of settlements</li> <li>• emboldening distance views</li> <li>• legibility of post-war settlements</li> <li>• focus for distribution along transport corridors</li> <li>• landscape restoration</li> <li>• accommodation of large agricultural/industrial units</li> <li>• impact of archaeology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• distant views</li> <li>• fragmentation of landscape features</li> <li>• intensification of arable production</li> <li>• proximity to urban areas</li> <li>• impact of industrial archaeology</li> </ul>

\* for area codes, see table 4.12 & figure 4.7

(Source: Summarised from SSDC, 2009, p.28-33)

### Landscape character in district level development control

On the issue of executing development control, the judgement made by the landscape officers was very much informed by landscape character:

*‘You would assess the character of what the landform was, what the landscape character was, whether the original landscape structure has been eroded by minerals or whatever’.*

(Interview with previous SSDC landscape officer, 09/11/09)

It is worthy of note that South Staffordshire is a very exceptional case among the district level authorities for its large group of landscape officers. It seems that when making judgements, the district landscape officers relied not merely on the landscape character information provided by the County, but to a large extent their own experience and understanding of the District.

*‘We would work in an area for quite a long time; we had quite a sense of local knowledge of landscape character. We knew what the policy areas were’.* (ibid)

Based on the capability to conduct landscape planning independently, it was not surprising that the local application of the character approach was led in the slightly different direction of village assessment according to the District’s own need, rather than following exactly the county experience.

## Effectiveness of the character approach

In the policy context, the use of the character-based approach has been firmly embedded in both the Structure Plan and the Core Strategy for the last ten years. Practically, as both the LCA and the landscape SPG were developed by the county landscape officers, the character approach was designed particularly to inform the planning process. At the pre-application stage, the county landscape officer stated that this approach has made significant contributions to the planning process and the communication between the Council and applicants.

*‘Before we had this (the SPG), we were probably fighting a public inquiry once every couple of years to persuade the developers to take a more even approach to provide improvements to the landscape.’*

*‘Since we had this, we haven’t had any public inquiries...on landscape grounds. We’ve been able to deal with all of the issues at the outset to say to the developer...on how [they] are going to fulfil the requirements of that policy.’*

(Interview with SCC landscape officer, 29/09/09)

One development case was put orally by the officer concerning the use of landscape character type and policy objectives to turn the potential negative impacts into positive contributions to the landscape. In this case, a large country house was supposed to be built on the top of a hill where the high quality landscape was subject to active conservation. By negotiating with the developer, the country house was then moved down to the valley in order to be sympathetic to the surrounding character.

On the other hand, the character-based approach is also proven useful in informing decision-making. By using the landscape SPG, landscape officers found it easier and more effective to communicate with development control officers and thus influence the decision making process (Email interview with SCC landscape officer, 26/10/09).

*‘They [development control officers] would come to us and query, ask our advice on policy rather than taking their own decisions on that policy. In a sense they like this policy (NC2) because they’re getting a very definite answer from us about whether it complies with the policy or not, and they know what to do to refuse that application.’*

(Interview with SCC landscape officer, 29/09/09)

As a result, the carrying out of the approach in the County is considered generally successful in informing both the policy contexts and practical implementations.

The practice of the approach in South Staffordshire District, according to the information gained from the interview, is rather patchy compared with the county experience. Generally speaking, the use of the character-based approach is still



positively supported by the interviewee based on her previous experience. As the county LCA and the SPG were actually produced later than the date when the interviewee started her position in South Staffordshire, the use of the character approach at district level to some extent relied more on personal experience than the county's guidance.

*'I took on landscape character work in the mid 70s. [In her first job of another local authority] there was a lot of work being done on landscape character; I just brought it with me when I came to this authority (South Staffordshire) [in 1979]'.*

*'We had quite a sense of local knowledge of landscape character [and] we knew what the policy areas were...We used the SPG from the County as another layer which probably reinforced to what we were doing already'.*

(Interview with previous SSDC landscape officer, 09/11/09)

On one hand, no matter whether the use of the character approach originated from the county or from the officer's own exposure, it has been incorporated in planning practice since the 1996 Local Plan. On another hand, the interviewee raised a fundamental concern about the lack of outsiders' ability to understand the character-based approach and properly use the county SPGs. As a result, the role of landscape professionals was particularly raised by the interviewee:

*'They needed another landscape architect working on behalf of the developer to interpret actually what this document meant. The development control officers equally, if they had to use it themselves, would have had difficulty in that they actually need a landscape officer to interpret it'.* (ibid, 09/11/09)

Because of the strong influence of the team of landscape officers in the District and the early introduction of landscape character policy in the Local Plan, it seems that the approach is also effective on the district scale. However, the premise is that there has to be competent people who can execute the approach in a proper way; otherwise the approach may not be readily feasible even with the presence of landscape character-informed policies and landscape SPG.

#### **4.2.4 Landscape approaches in transition**

##### **Drivers of change**

The development and transition from the use of SLAs to landscape policy objectives in Staffordshire very much correspond to the pattern concluded from the national level. Firstly, SLAs identified by using landscape evaluation in the 1970s demonstrated the way in which landscape (visual) quality was used as the dominant factor in landscape planning. As the methodology of landscape evaluation drew considerable criticism in

the following decades, the use of SLAs was also found problematic owing to three main shortcomings (SCC, 2000b, para 7.4):

- *taking no account of landscape character*
- *measuring landscape beauty rather than its quality*
- *choosing landscape factors on a subjective basis*

These disadvantages reflected the demand for an alternative with a broader and more objective view of the landscape. Consequently, the emerging practice of Landscape (Character) Assessment became a timely approach which the Council could elaborate on.

*'The reason why we did it this way (produced the SPG) was to get away from the Special Landscape Areas and to find a justification because otherwise we wouldn't... replace it with anything like this map that says, these are the good area and these are not good areas.'* (Interview with SCC landscape officer, 29/09/09)

The significant leap from LCA to landscape policy objectives was stressed repeatedly by the county landscape officer in terms of overcoming the danger of staying at the descriptive stage and going further to planning applications. The transition between the use of SLAs to the character-based approach was also made smoothly by using the landscape SPG.

This transition, on one hand, arose partly out of the landscape officers' reflection on SLAs, and the early involvement of landscape character at both the county and district level. At the same time, the transition was also initiated by the positive response to national planning policy and the close cooperation with government agencies (SCC, 2000b, para 1.5).

*'That really fell out of the changing government policy...there is no reason why you should have any Special Landscape Areas that weren't based on Landscape Character Assessment. It gave us a good excuse to what we wanted to do anywhere.'*

(Interview with SCC landscape officer, 29/09/09)

As also shown in the foregoing, the first county level LCA, which became the basis of all the follow-up applications, was initiated by the Forestry Commission in 1991. To be in line with PPG7 concerning the reviewing of SLAs and the incorporation of the character approach, the pre-existing LCA was further developed into the landscape SPG with the assistance of the Countryside Commission.

### **Debate over the two landscape approaches**

In its first initiation into the Structure Plan, the character approach in terms of the main policy (NC2) and the supporting document of landscape SPG was put forward to

public examination in 1999, before its publication. According to the memorandum, while the use of SLAs was still proposed by some delegates, as the concept of landscape character was well-accepted in the county, debates over the removal of the SLAs were not actually heard. Rather, the legitimacy and practical concerns of conducting the approach were expressed with a fear that it would be (SCC, 1999):

- either too protective in terms of extending designations to the whole county, or too permissive to development
- too detailed and prescriptive, which would restrict district councils' ability to formulate their own policies

Apart from these uncertainties of practising the new approach, most District Councils supported the approach and welcomed its being fed into the preparation of their local plans in the same form or another.

The above concerns and uncertainties were attributed as 'a reflection of a system in transition (SCC, 1999, para6.19)'. In recent practice, there has still been some hesitation and lack of knowledge in using the new approach.

*'We did get some animosity, some feelings against that policy because...they found that their protection had been brought down. In actual fact we haven't because we still had policies to protect them, but they felt they no longer had this really strong [policy on SLAs]'.* (Interview with SCC landscape officer, 29/09/09)

In the officer's opinion, the way to fill the policy vacuum of the removal of SLAs is to facilitate more communications between the Council and developers.

*'Now, it's not one hundred percent used by everybody to give us an easy line, but it works on that basic level. It enables us to talk to the developer right from the word go, and say, this (landscape policy objectives) is what you need to think'.* (ibid)

According to the interview and written materials, it does not seem that serious debates over the transition between the two approaches have ever happened in both Staffordshire County and South Staffordshire District. This may well be because the higher level protection of Cannock Chase AONB remains unchanged and the lower level SLAs were satisfactorily covered by the landscape policy objective of active landscape conservation.

### **Future direction**

As the character approach has proved to be generally successful and effective in this County, it is unlikely the use of SLAs would reappear in planning policies in the foreseeable future. At district/borough level, according to the latest information published on the local authority websites, the use of SLAs has been totally removed and

the character-based policies are widely adopted instead (table 4.20, accessed 01/06/11). Although the County Council has been fully involved in disseminating the use of SPG and landscape policy objectives, since the SPG was an auxiliary guidance rather than a compulsory requirement, some districts relied heavily on this work whereas some merely referred to it in passing (Interview with SCC Landscape Officer 29/09/09). Even if the degree to which the character approach is adopted in the LDF may vary among the districts/boroughs, it is evident that the ground work from the County Council still laid the basis for the execution of the character approach at district/borough level.

Table 4.20 The use of the character-based approach in Staffordshire districts

	<b>Landscape character based core policy</b>	<b>Landscape SPD</b>	<b>LCA– evidence base</b>
Stoke-on-Trent & Newcastle under Lyme	(Rural Area Spatial Policy/ Design Quality)	N	N
Staffordshire Moorlands District	Y	N	Y (Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment)
Staffordshire Borough	Y (Landscape Character)	N	refer to county LCA
East Staffordshire District	N/A	(Design Guide SPD)	N
South Staffordshire District	Y	scheduled	scheduled
Cannock Chase District	Y (Landscape Character and Cannock Chase AONB)	Y (Design and Characterisation SPD)	Y (Character Area Descriptions)
Lichfield District	Y (Countryside Character)	Y (Biodiversity and Landscape SPD)	Y (Strategic Biodiversity and Landscape Assessment)
Tamworth Borough	(design/development character)	N/A	N

\* words in parenthesis are the title of the policy/SPD/evidence base document

At the same time, the county landscape officer is also planning to update the existing work and provide more up-to-date information. As the LCA was conducted nearly twenty years ago and the landscape change SPG has been used for over ten years, further work will focus on improving the accuracy of the landscape policy objective map. Landscape factors that were adopted to build the map will be re-assessed, the emerging issues like Historical Landscape Characterisation and ecological considerations will also be taken into account (Interview with SCC landscape officer,

29/09/09). In Staffordshire, the continual development of the character approach is definitely the way forward.

### 4.3 Case study 3: Doncaster Metropolitan Borough

The third case study explores the practice in the unitary authority of Doncaster, which streamlined landscape planning and execution of the character approach may exhibit a different pattern from the two-tier authorities. Research materials in this case include two interview transcripts and written policy documents. Interviews were conducted with the landscape officer in Doncaster and the author of the 2007 Landscape Character and Capacity study from ECUS<sup>42</sup> in September and May 2009 respectively. Written policy documents are comprised of two categories: development plans and related references. Development plans include county level Structure Plans of the previous South Yorkshire County before its abolition in 1986, local level Unitary Development Plans and the Local Development Framework of the Unitary Authority of Doncaster. As the LDF is still in preparation, two versions of the Core Strategy will be taken into account. The first draft of preferred options (2005) illustrated the preliminary policies for consultation as a new planning system began. Between this first draft and the final version of Core Strategy (2011-2016) published in 2011, the Borough Council produced an interim consultation for further core strategy options in 2007. This consultation report together with the adopted Supplementary Planning Document ‘*Landscape Planning on Development sites in Doncaster (2008)*’ will also stand as a basis of discussion. References other than the development plans include two versions of Landscape (Character) Assessment, a landscape capacity study on housing and employment sites, and landscape comments on four development cases provided by the landscape officer.

Table 4.21 Policy documents for Case 3

<b>Year</b>	<b>South Yorkshire Metropolitan County</b>	<b>Doncaster Metropolitan Borough</b>
1973	Doncaster Area Joint Structure Plan	Doncaster Area Joint Structure Plan
1977	South Yorkshire Structure Plan	
1993		Landscape Assessment of Doncaster Borough
1998		Doncaster Unitary Development Plan
2005		Core Strategy: Preferred Options
2007		Landscape Character & Capacity Assessment of Doncaster Borough
2007		Core Strategy: Further Options
2008		Landscape SPD
2010		Landscape Character and Capacity Study: further investigations –

<sup>42</sup> Environmental Consultancy of University of Sheffield

<b>Year</b>	<b>South Yorkshire Metropolitan County</b>	<b>Doncaster Metropolitan Borough</b>
2012		Employment and Housing Sites Doncaster Council Core Strategy 2011- 26

### **4.3.1 Landscape and planning context for Doncaster**

#### **Geographical features and landscape character**

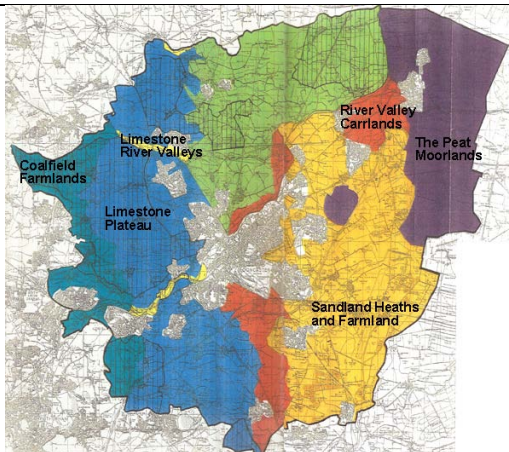
Doncaster is a metropolitan borough in South Yorkshire and also the largest one in the country. Historically, the area of Doncaster belonged to the West Riding of Yorkshire since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1974 the County was reorganised and succeeded by several new authorities, within which Doncaster was included in the Metropolitan County of South Yorkshire. The abolition of metropolitan counties in 1986 brought about the uplift in administrative hierarchy of Doncaster into a unitary authority, although conceptually, Doncaster today is still referred as part of South Yorkshire in a regional context.

The topography of Doncaster is generally flat and unified, whereas different geological compositions underlies divergent surface landscape and land use pattern between the west and east of Doncaster. From the slopes of the Pennines in the west, the topography gradually declines to an undulating landform, creating a series of long views over the open countryside. The underlying magnesian limestone also contains coal measures and limestone outcrops, based upon which the Borough's mining industry was formed. The low-lying eastern part, including the town centre of Doncaster, on the other hand, is highly developed with widespread settlements and industrial facilities which form a rather fragmented land use. From the geometric centre of the Borough, an extensive built-up area around the town centre of Doncaster constitutes the main commercial and residential district. To the north side of the central area, large and scattered mining communities witnessing the heyday of the mining industry still stand as local centres. Outside these areas are extensive countryside and rural space, with agriculture as the leading land use.

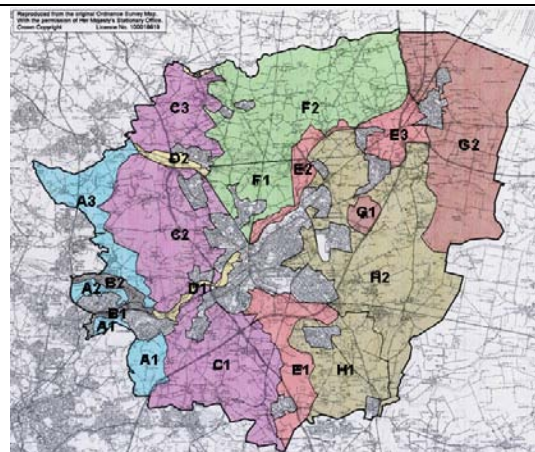
Doncaster contains three National Character Areas: Yorkshire Southern Pennine Fringe, Southern Magnesian Limestone and Yorkshire Coalfield from west to east. Two successive versions of local Landscape (Character) Assessment commissioned by Doncaster Council in 1994 and 2007 further identified more landscape character types ('landscape character area' in the 1994 report) (table 4.22). The classification of landscape types/areas based on the Borough's surface geology, landform and dominant land use, was first set out in the 1994 study and then slightly revised in the later version.

Table 4.22 Landscape character types/areas of Doncaster

Landscape Assessment (1994)		Landscape Character and Capacity Assessment (2007)		
Landscape Character Area	Landscape Character Sub-Areas	Landscape Character Type	Landscape Character Areas	
<b>The Coalfield Farmlands</b>	A The Coalfield North	<b>A. Coalfield Farmlands</b>	A1 Conisborough and Denaby Coalfield Farmlands A2 Mexborough Coalfield Farmlands A3 Barnborough to Hooton Pagnell Coalfield Farmlands	
	B Coalfield around Mexborough		<b>B. Coalfield River Corridor</b>	B1 Don Coalfield River Corridor B2 Dearne Coalfield River Corridor
	C Coalfield South			
<b>The Limestone Plateau</b>	D/E Limestone North	<b>C. Limestone Plateau</b>	C1 Stainton to Edlington Limestone Plateau C2 Cadeby to Adwick Limestone Plateau C3 Carcroft to Norton Limestone Plateau	
	F/G Limestone Central			
	H Limestone South-west			
	I Limestone South			
	J Limestone Roche Abbey			
<b>The Settled Clay Farmlands</b>	K Claylands West	<b>F. Settled Clay Farmlands</b>	F1 Tollbar Settled Clay Farmlands F2 Owston to Sykehouse Settled Clay Farmlands	
	L Claylands Central			
	M Claylands North East			
<b>The Peat Moorlands</b>	N Peatlands	<b>G. Peat Moorlands</b>	G1 West Moor Peat Moorlands G2 Thorne and Hatfield Peat Moorlands	
	O Throne Moors			
	P West Moor, Outlier			
<b>The River Valley Carrlands</b>	Q Carrlands North East	<b>E. River Carrlands</b>	E1 Torne River Carrlands E2 West Don and Don River Carrlands E3 East Don and Don River Carrlands	
	R Carrlands North			
	S Carrlands South			
<b>The Sandland Heaths &amp; Farms</b>	T Sandlands	<b>H. Sandland Heaths &amp; Farmland</b>	H1 Bawtry to Finningley Sandland Heaths and Farmland H2 Blaxton to Stainforth Sandland Heaths and Farmland	
	U Bawtry Forest			
<b>The Limestone River Valleys</b>	V Went Valley	<b>D. Limestone River Valleys</b>	D1 Don Limestone River Valley D2 Hampole Limestone River Valley D3 Went Limestone River Valley	
	W Ea Beck Valley			
	X Don Gorge			



(source: DTA and Ashmead Price, 1994, fig2)



(source: ECUS, 2007, figure 5 in Appendix)

## **Planning issues and landscape planning**

Planning issues in Doncaster are closely related to its industrial foundation since the modern manufacturing and mining industry came into being. However, as soon as the Borough faced the decline of the mining industry in the 1980s, concern over environmental deterioration raised the dual considerations of landscape improvement and conservation in the early landscape planning policies. The policy concerning landscape improvement can be traced back to the 1974 Doncaster Area Joint Structure Plan in terms of the removal of ‘unattractive elements’. Improvement strategies were subject to places with ‘no inherent attractiveness’, such as motorway visual corridors and strategic industrial sites, by regulating and/or minimising their visual impacts (County of Doncaster, 1973). This longstanding notion of improving the unsightly elements also highlights the mindset of mitigating visual impacts in Doncaster continued and expanded in the subsequent development plans. Policies on ensuring the design and quality of new development can be found in the Unitary Development Plan (1998) and the Core Strategy (2012), and a SPD is also written on the issue of landscape design.

Landscape conservation policies are normally area-based and are differed between the two parts of Doncaster according to their environmental features. Early policies on conservation zones, including green belts and attractive landscapes (later on Areas of Special Landscape Value), had been established when Doncaster belonged to the former West Riding before 1974 (County of Doncaster, 1974, para5.1). In the present day, the countryside to the east, which is generally flat and poorly wooded, is now designated into Countryside Policy Areas, whereas much stricter regulations in terms of the designation of Green Belts are applied to the west part of the countryside owing to the diverse features and relatively unspoiled nature of the environment.

In general, landscape policies in Doncaster are applied to two spatial scales. On the larger scale, the successive use from local landscape designations to the character-based approach highlights the Borough’s attention on landscape conservation in development control. On the finer scale, landscape improvement measures, such as design principles, landscaping and planting, are also promoted by the planning authorities, especially on account of new development and along major traffic corridors.



Table 4.23 Countryside and landscape policies of Doncaster

South Yorkshire County (1974-1986)		
Countryside policy areas		
Green Belt	Areas of Country Landscape Value	other smaller-scale designated areas/sites

Unitary Development Plan 1998		Core Strategy 2012	
Countryside policy	Landscape policy	Countryside policy	Landscape policy
Green Belt	general countryside policy area	Green Belt	general countryside policy area
Areas of Special Landscape Value	<p><b>larger scale:</b> landscape conservation</p> <p><b>finer scale:</b> landscape quality in new development</p>		<p><b>larger scale:</b> landscape conservation/landscape character</p> <p><b>finer scale:</b> design/construction</p>

### 4.3.2 Areas of Special Landscape Value and the emergence of the character-based approach

#### The emergence of local landscape designations in Doncaster

The emergence of local landscape designations in Doncaster came under the title of ‘Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLVs)’ identified in the West Riding County Development Plan<sup>43</sup> (first review) in 1966, when Doncaster belonged to this County. During the reorganisation from West Riding to South Yorkshire in 1974, a County Environment Study was carried out to grade the county landscapes into a spectrum from the best (exceptional/great) to the poorest (featureless/blighted) according to their attractiveness (Yorkshire and Humberside Economic Planning Council and Board, 1969, p.90). The first level of ‘exceptional’ and the second level of ‘great’ landscapes, as well as the pre-existing AGLVs, were then fed into a similar form of designation, Areas of County Landscape Value (South Yorkshire County Council, 1977, para 4.31). The policy on this designation in the newly-formed Structure Plan expressed strict control regulations with particular weight put on visual quality:

*‘In Areas of County Landscape Value, development will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. Strict control will be exercised over any development that does take place to ensure that the **visual character** of these areas is not adversely affected’ (Policy 23).*

<sup>43</sup> County Council of the West Riding of Yorkshire. Town and Country Planning Act, 1962. The County Development Plan (First Review). As approved by the Minister of Housing and Local Government.

With the abolition of South Yorkshire County in 1986, two county level Areas of County Landscape Value which fell within the boundary of Doncaster still remained in the development plans of the subsequent administrative authority of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough. At this stage, the previous titles of local landscape designations were replaced by the use of Areas of Special Landscape Value (ASLVs). During the consultation stage for its first Unitary Development Plan (UDP) in the early 1990s, five more ASLVs were identified by internal assessment by Borough officers. Even in the second round of LCA conducted in 2007, two new ASLVs were still proposed, despite the fact that the use of ALSVs was abolished a few years later (figure 4.11). The increasing number of ASLVs indicates there was an inclination to use this approach to protect the best valued countryside in this Borough.

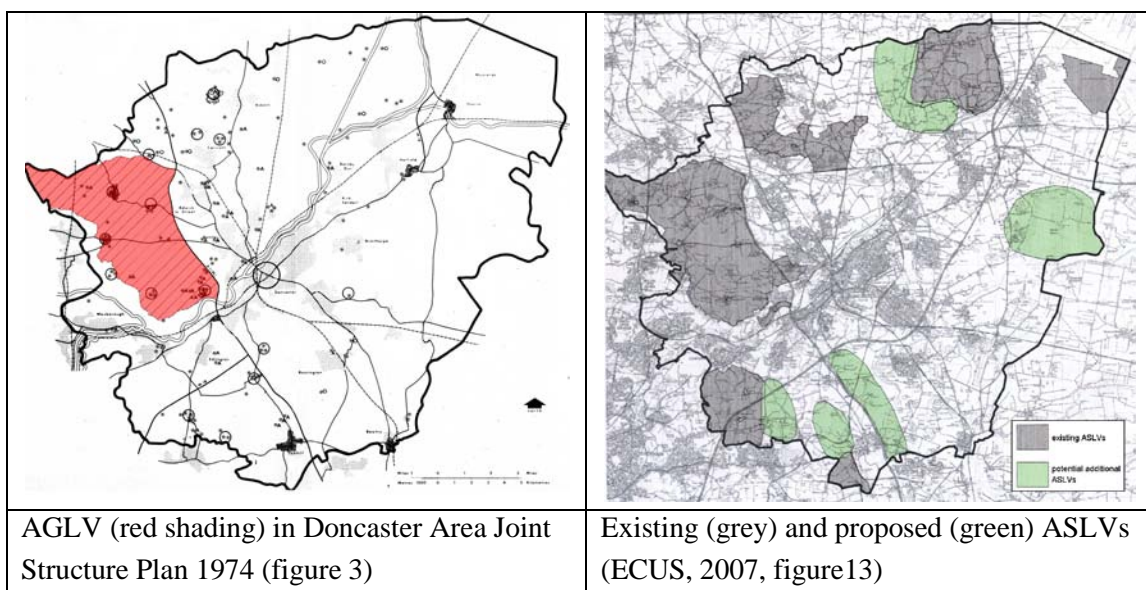


Figure 4.11 AGLVs/ASLVs of Doncaster

Table 4.24 The evolution of titles and number of LLDs in Doncaster

<b>West Riding County Development Plan (1960s)</b>	<b>South Yorkshire County Structural Plan (1970s)</b>	<b>Doncaster Metropolitan Unitary Plan (1980s)</b>
Areas of Great Landscape Value (2)	Areas of County Landscape Value (2)	Areas of Special Landscape Value (7)

### Areas of Special Landscape Value in the UDP

Although landscape attractiveness used to be the overriding consideration for Areas of Great Landscape Value and Areas of Countryside Value in the 1970s, the establishment of ASLVs, after Doncaster became a Unitary Authority, was remarkably informed by using Landscape Assessment conducted jointly by DTA Environment and Ashmead Price Landscape Architecture Consultants in 1994. The 1994 Landscape Assessment clearly stated that all landscape types represented a unique combination of landscape characteristics and should all be taken into account in designation. 24

landscape character sub-areas identified in this assessment (see table 4.22) were all scored against a set of criteria to rank their priority for designation in terms of *high quality, distinctiveness, typicality (representativeness), public value, worthiness of protection and potential for management priorities* (DTA and Ashmead Price, 1994, p.29, table 4.25). By the end of the assessment, seven ASLVs were established and addressed later in the UDP (1998) to provide these areas with protection and enhancement mechanisms.

Table 4.25 Grading system for ASLVs in the Landscape Assessment study

Criteria	Brief	Grading scale for tentative ASLVs
distinctive-ness/ typicality	Typical of the type and distinctive, worthy of having their distinctiveness protected, conserved and enhanced	1. generally typical and distinctive landscape character 2. generally typical, distinctive in most places, some loss of distinction elsewhere 3. generally untypical, uncharacteristic
Integrity	The degree to which the distinctiveness or typical characteristics have been eroded by inappropriate change or affected by intrusive features	1. high integrity, largely intact 2. modified but significant areas of integrity 3. poor integrity, extensively and/or
Potential	Referring to conservation and management potential, which means intrusive features should not invalidate tentative ASLVs if there are opportunities to remedy defects.	1. high potential for conservation and management 2. some potential for conservation and management 3. low potential, modifications not generally restorable, management not sufficient
Heritage	The presence of important local natural and cultural heritage attributes, such as Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas.	1. many or very significant natural and/or cultural heritage attributes 2. several attributes relative to size of area 3. few attributes of significance

\* grey shaded grades are minimal requirements for ASLVs

(Source: Summarised from DTA and Ashmead Price, 1994, p.29-33)

As the Borough covers no statutory landscape designations, ASLVs in Doncaster used to be perceived as ‘the most outstanding areas’, ‘the best and most typical remaining areas of high quality landscape’ and ‘the most valuable landscapes’ and thus should receive the highest degree of protection (DTA and Ashmead Price, 1994, p.27). According to the UDP policy SENV3 on ASLVs, ‘*additional protection will be afforded to areas of special landscape value [and] priority for landscape improvement will be given to the urban edges of settlement*’ (SENV3). This indicates that when new developments were proposed within ASLVs, landscape was the overriding factor in decision making where the highest standards of design and landscaping were

mandatory. As for making judgements on the acceptability of development, the two criteria of visual character and design were highlighted in the UDP:

*‘Such development [in the ASLVs]...will only be permitted where it would not detract from the **visual character** and where the highest standards of **design and landscaping** are employed’ (ENV17).*

Although no specific references were made on the practice of ASLVs, messages from the landscape officer showed that they were *very effective* in protecting the countryside from inappropriate development:

*‘The ASLVs have the additional level of protection. For example, [developments like] communication masts won’t take place in Areas of Special Landscape Value.’*

(Interview with Doncaster landscape officer, 15/10/09)

The reason why ASLVs used to work effectively was their simplicity and clarity. As the boundaries and regulations for these designations are explicitly addressed in the UDP, they were well understood and respected by both council officers and developers in terms of where the areas of highest value are located (Interview with Doncaster landscape officer, 29/09/09; ECUS consultant, 21/05/09; Doncaster Borough Council (DBC), 2007, p.78).

As ASLVs were favoured in Doncaster’s planning system despite discouragement from PPS7 (2004), the use of ASLVs was still proposed in the first draft of the Core Strategy 2005. What distinguished the updated ASLV policy from its previous context in the UDP was the appreciation of local distinctiveness, mitigating development impacts and applying active management. Along with the preparation of the LDF, ASLVs underwent a second review under the Landscape Character and Capacity study in 2006/07. Although the review of ASLVs was merely an appendage to the main objective of investigating landscape capacity, it still became a rationale for retaining and even expanding these designations, as cited in the Core Strategy consultation report:

*‘The existing Areas of special Landscape Value are still the best examples of relatively unspoilt local landscape types’.* (DBC, 2007, p.77)

Even though the use of ASLVs used to attract a great deal of attention in this Borough, under the change of planning system after 2004, and especially the pressure from national planning guidance, the practice of ASLVs still came to an end and was replaced by the use of the character approach in the final version of Core Strategy (2012).

## LCA and the use of the character approach

The Borough's first involvement of LCA was the 1994 Landscape Assessment. Although its main focus was on providing justification for ASLVs, this assessment also contributed to introducing the character-based approach in a preliminary way '*as a basis for development control decision and presented at public inquiries where the designation of an area has had a bearing upon the planning decision*' (DTA and Ashmead Price, 1994, p.1). Based on the assessment, the policy on landscape conservation in the UDP was also informed by the concept of landscape character:

*'The Borough Council will promote the conservation and enhancement of the Borough's landscape and seek to maintain **local variations** in that landscape...'* (ENV18)

*'The Borough will develop a **landscape strategy** to provide a co-ordinated approach to conserving and enhancing the urban and rural landscape of the Borough.'* (ENV19)

The two policies was made on the basis of using the 1994 Landscape Assessment to set out the Borough's landscape context, which provided the preliminary involvement of the character-based in the UDP. However, since the planning focus at the time was still on designations, the application of the 1994 assessment was limited to the context of ASLVs, such as identifying priority areas and generating landscape strategies and action plans for these areas. Whether the concept of landscape character has had any input into decision-making at this stage is unknown. It might also because the use of ASLVs was so prevalent that the first landscape character-informed policy did not emerge until the Borough was preparing its first draft of Core Strategy in 2005.

Although the first Landscape Assessment only informed the planning system in a limited way, the growing attention to landscape character assessment at higher levels raised the need for the Council to update the 1994 assessment.

*'[After] a study was published by Countryside Agency 2002 on landscape character, it was felt appropriate at that stage...to commission further work to bring previous study of Doncaster landscape evaluation up to date'*

(Interview with Doncaster landscape officer, 15/10/09)

This 'further work' was the second round landscape character assessment under the title of 'Landscape Character & Capacity Assessment (LCCA)' (2007). This work not only reassessed landscape character and the spatial hierarchy established in the 1994 report, but took a step forward to convert landscape character into two main applications:

- assessing the capacity to accommodate development, and
- developing appropriate measures to mitigate development impacts.

In this study, eight pre-identified types of development were assessed against landscape character: housing, employment, land raising, mineral workings, compost facilities, wind power, biomass and large scale forestry. These eight types were examined in each of the landscape character areas to decide their capacity, ranking from high, moderate, low to none. This information on landscape capacity was proved helpful for decision making, which will be elaborated later by using real cases.

As the study was adopted as ‘*a useful evidence base for assessing the allocation of development sites and the determination of planning applications* (DBC, 2007, p.77)’, a significant leap was made by taking into account the concept of landscape character in the Core Strategy. In the final version of Core Strategy 2012, even if no sole policy on ‘landscape character’ is articulated, the use of ‘character’ is clearly defined and can be seen across relevant policies and is particularly stressed in Policy CS16 on the natural environment (table 4.26). Other relevant policies on biodiversity, geodiversity and heritage assets are also to some extent informed by landscape character.

Table 4.26 Core policies concerning the use of the character approach

<b>CS2: Growth and Regeneration</b>	D) Distinctive and vibrant communities will be supported through: preservation and enhancement of the <b>distinctive local character</b> of the historic built and natural environment, a commitment to high quality design
<b>CS3: Countryside</b>	B) Proposals will be supported where they would be appropriate to a countryside location and would protect and enhance the countryside for the sake of its <b>intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes...</b> to ensure it may be enjoyed by all.
<b>CS14: Design and Sustainable Construction</b>	All proposals in Doncaster must be of high quality design that contributes to <b>local distinctiveness</b> , reinforces the <b>character of local landscapes</b> and building traditions, responds positively to existing site features and integrates well with its immediate and surrounding local area.
<b>CS16: Valuing our Natural Environment</b>	D) Proposals will be supported which enhance the borough’s <b>landscape</b> and trees by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. being appropriate to the <b>landscape’s character</b>, sensitivity and capacity;</li> <li>2. including measures to <b>mitigate any negative impacts</b> on the landscape;</li> <li>3. ensuring designs are of high quality, include appropriate hard and soft landscaping, a long term maintenance plan and <b>enhance landscape character</b> while protecting its <b>local distinctiveness</b>.</li> </ol>
<b>CS19: Renewable Energy</b>	B) Proposals for stand-alone renewable energy schemes will be directed towards areas with <b>highest relative landscape capacity (as indicated in the landscape character and capacity studies)</b> which are practicable for the development proposed.

(Source: Summarised from DBC, 2012)

## Debate over the two landscape approaches

In Doncaster, ASLVs used to represent the integral part of landscape planning, especially for conserving landscapes of special value, as indicated in table 4.25. Although the designation approach was considered understandable, its fundamental flaw in terms of ignoring the wider landscape character was put by the landscape officers:

*'The disadvantage of them is the areas which are outside the ASLVs may be a similar character and similar value as the areas within the ASLVs but they wouldn't have the same level of protection.'*

(Interview with Doncaster landscape officer, 15/10/09)

The same problem was also observed by the landscape consultant when conducting the field survey of the Landscape Character and Capacity Study (2006/07), showing the disparity in degrees of protection inside and outside of an ASLV. As a result, using the approach would *'in some ways...[undermine] protection of areas outside the ASLVs'*, which caused the council to consider whether *'having an assessment of landscape character is better [because] it provides better understanding, and ultimately you can get a fairer system'* .

(Interview with Doncaster landscape officer, 15/10/09)

Even during the consultation period of the Landscape Character and Capacity Study when the use of LLDs had already been declining, the author indicated that they had an intense debate with the Council over the issue of whether or not to retain ASLVs:

*'They (the Council) felt if those were taken away, there was a danger those areas would be irreversibly damaged in some way'* .

(Interview with ECUS, 21/05/09)

As a result, since landscape policies in the UDP were informed by the 1994 Landscape Assessment and were addressed in a broader context of covering both ASLVs and non-designated areas, the withdrawal of the use of ASLVs did not really become a policy issue until the Borough was heading for the new planning system after 2004.

The transition from the use of ASLV to the character-based approach can be explicitly seen by comparing the corresponding policies in first draft (2005) and the final version of Core Strategy (2011/12). Evidence showed that the Council first favoured a combination of the two approaches as addressed in the Core Strategy consultation report (table 4.27). According to the table, neither the sole use of ASLVs nor the character approach (options 1 and 2) was considered robust enough, especially on the issue of identifying the areas of highest value. This also implied that the primary driver which caused the Borough to abandon the use of ASLVs seems to be the requirement of higher level policy rather than the Council's awareness of the demerits of the old approach.

Table 4.27 Core Strategy consultation question on the two approaches

NEQ8 What policy approach should there be to Areas of Special Landscape Value in the future?		
Option	Strengths	Weaknesses
1) no additional policy is required (do nothing)		
2) produce a criteria based policy based on the LCCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• simplicity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of clarity in terms of where the areas of highest value are located</li> </ul>
3) produce a criteria-based policy based on the LCCA supplemented by the designation of Areas of Special Landscape Value which are worthy of special protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provides clarity to potential developers, in terms of where the areas of highest value are located</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government Guidance (PPS7) indicates that local landscape designations should not generally be used</li> </ul>

(Source: DBC, 2007, p.78)

### 4.3.3 The character-based approach in practice

#### Landscape issues in development control

In the UDP era, the involvement of landscape issues in the planning system was mainly through the designation of ASLVs, and partly through the visual control of new developments. With the removal of the use of ASLVs from the Core Strategy, the character approach has expanded into an overarching consideration of landscape issues in the LDF. In addition to landscape character-informed core policy and the Landscape Character and Capacity Assessment (LCCA) as an evidence base, two more pathways, the use of the Landscape SPD and a detailed LCA on site selection, also contribute to the further application of the character approach.

Whereas the LCCA study provides the overall strategy and background information for each landscape character area, the Landscape SPD, *'Landscape Planning on Development Sites in Doncaster'* gives more credit to the role of landscape as a measure to guide new development at site level. Strictly speaking, this landscape SPD was not developed on the basis of landscape character, as the SPD only referred to the LCCA study as a broad setting for developing landscape schemes. In relation to the development pressure and regeneration needs in this Borough, it is reasonable that this SPD focused more on providing guidelines on small-scale 'soft landscape' (planting, seeding) and 'hard landscape' (physical construction) (DBC, 2008, p.8).



While the landscape SPD emphasises design, landscaping and planting for individual development, using the LCCA study to inform finer scale development sites was also considered necessary by the Council.

*‘Quite often you have to assess the small units within the landscape to get a more representative view because you get variations within landscape character areas,...you need to try to identify some more diverse areas which perhaps a lot more disturb where development can take place, which then requires further study’.*

(Interview with Doncaster landscape officer, 15/10/09)

As a result, a further work of finer scale LCA for employment and housing sites (Landscape Character and Capacity Study: Further investigations – employment and housing sites) was carried out to inform development site allocation<sup>44</sup>. Based on the existing information from the LCCA study, this further work assessed 11 employment sites and 12 housing sites pre-identified by the Council in terms of their landscape capacity and visual impact of surrounding areas. The final conclusion was drawn from the degree<sup>45</sup> to which a site could contribute to/distract from the local landscape character based on visual sensitivity, landscape sensitivity and landscape value. Table 4.28 below extracted from the study illustrates how the assessment took landscape character issues into account in the potential sites.

Table 4.28 Sample of landscape character assessment for employment and housing sites

<b>Employment site 1</b>				
<b>landscape value</b>	<b>visual sensitivity</b>	<b>landscape sensitivity</b>	<b>mitigation potential</b>	<b>comments</b>
medium	low	medium	Opportunities to provide landscape buffer and green corridors. Restrict development from the western area.	Focus development on the eastern edge of the site near to the spoil heap and electricity transmission lines. Capacity on the western side of the site would be lower.
<b>landscape capacity</b>				
medium				
<b>Housing site 1</b>				
<b>landscape value</b>	<b>visual sensitivity</b>	<b>landscape sensitivity</b>	<b>mitigation potential</b>	<b>comments</b>
medium	medium	medium	Restrict development from the avenue field area. Restrict development from the Roman Ridge.	The eastern edges of the site would be more sensitive to development. Focus development in the following areas: 1. Avenue Field – <b>negligible capacity</b> 2. Broad Axe Field/ Green Lane/ Scawsby Lane – <b>high capacity</b>
<b>Landscape capacity</b>				
medium				

(Source: Based on Golder Associates, 2010, pp.51&95, tables 6&7)

<sup>44</sup> The Site Allocations Development Plan Document

<sup>45</sup> Very high/ high/ medium/ low or negligible

## The character approach in development application cases

Four development application comments which involved the use of the character-based approach were provided by the landscape officer in terms of official comments and judgement on landscape matters. While the comments on landscape matters were apparently not necessarily sufficient to reach the final decision of approval or refusal, they were still valuable in providing the grounds for developing the character approach. The approximate locations of the application sites are illustrated below (figure 4.12), among which case 1&2 are on the urban fringe and the other two are remaining in more rural space. In each case, the officer's comments and judgement were made on the bases of the landscape character context in the LCCA study, the Visual Impact Assessment and landscape scheme enclosed in the applications.

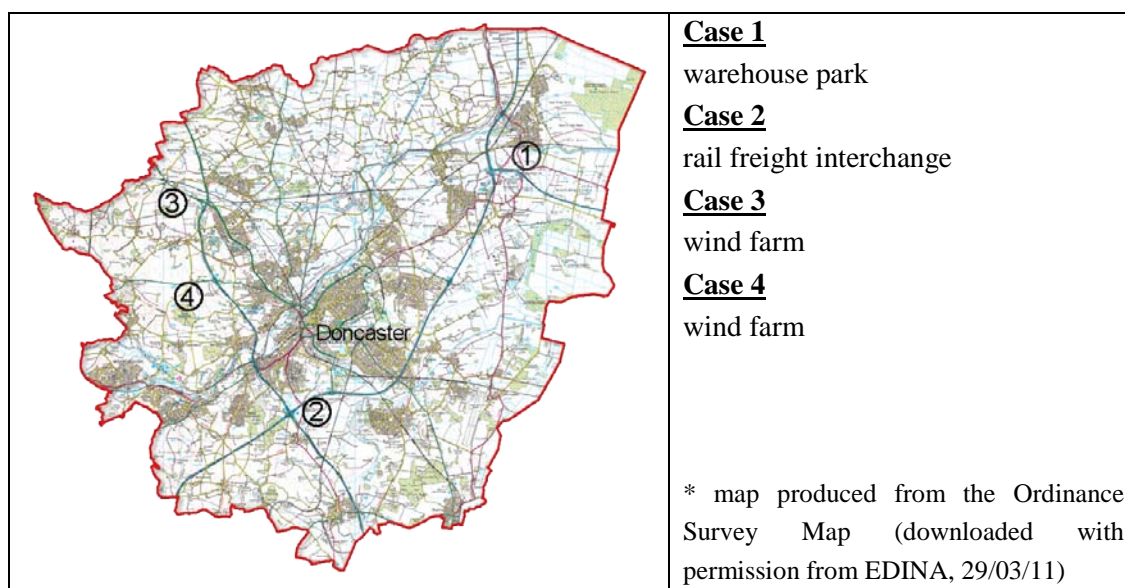


Figure 4.12 Development cases provided by the landscape officer

The character approach applied in those cases was in the context of the Landscape Character and Capacity Assessment study, in which the **landscape character** context, **landscape capacity** and **mitigation measures** were the leading considerations for both the landscape officer to make judgement and the developers to devise their proposals. In terms of making judgement, each of the sites was scrutinised under its corresponding landscape character area in order for the landscape officer to build the relationship between the site and its surrounding landscape. For example, in case 1 the warehouse was considered not to fit with the scale of the existing buildings and likely to cause a negative impact to the rural character. Also in case 3, although the windfarm would result in a change of character, with careful design the wind turbines could still be 'absorbed' into the landscape.

From the starting point of landscape character, the comments went on to determine whether the development proposals were properly informed by the landscape capacity

attached to that type of development. The most explicit example is windfarm development. The two cases of windfarms just fell within one of the three areas regarded as having moderate capacity to accommodate windfarms, as addressed in the LCCA study. For developers, the identification of landscape capacity enabled them to gain prior knowledge for their application so that mitigation measures could be taken to minimise the impact that a development may cause. In case 2, the mitigation strategy proposed by the developer was to provide a compensatory countryside area outside the site due to the large scale alteration. In case 3, mitigation strategies suggested in the LCCA were also fed into the development proposal. As a result, strategies like the proximity to adjacent developed areas, better layout and screening, and the ingenious combination of existing landscape elements were enclosed in the proposal.

Apart from the input of landscape character and landscape capacity, the same or even greater emphasis was placed on examining the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) prepared alongside the development proposal. This requirement of assessing visual impact has been established in this Borough since the previous Structure Plan and the UDP by using strict conditions on the scale and appearance of the new development. Essential information provided by the LVIA, such as visual receptors and visual envelope, was the criteria used to judge whether the development would cause a negative impact on the visual quality. While visual impact assessment may not necessarily be the core theme of conducting the character-based approach, in these four cases the LVIAs prepared by the developers were all informed by the LCAA study in terms of providing the broad landscape character setting. For example, in case 4 the windfarm was considered well-designed because *'the topography of the area combined screening elements such as tree belts and hedges or the built form of settlements limits the visibility of the windfarm such that its main adverse impact on visual amenity is restricted'*. The LVIA conducted for case 1 further suggested that the development site should fall into the adjacent landscape character area rather than its character area identified by the LCCA study.

### **Effectiveness of the character approach**

Based on the comments of the four application cases, it is evident that the reference to the LCCA study and even the earlier version of the 1994 assessment has satisfactorily fed into both the pre-application and post-application stages. In the pre-application stage of each case, key features of the corresponding landscape character type were recognised and respected when conducting LVIA, launching landscape scheme and developing design and mitigation measures. In case 2, the design of the development was considered *'sympathetic to the landscape character of the area and accentuates the height of existing spurs in the landscape to create natural features rather than artificial mounds'*, which resulted in the creation of the compensatory area

into carrland in reference to the original character. In the post-application review of the development proposal, the judgement made from the landscape officer was also well informed by landscape character as shown in the following statements:

- *I feel that the site is predominantly rural in character and that the landscape capacity for a strategic warehouse is low rather than moderate. (case 1)*
- *There would be a substantial change in the character of the area from a partly disturbed agricultural landscape to a highly industrialised landscape. (case 2)*
- *Whilst [the windfarm] would significantly change the character of the landscape in the vicinity of the windfarm, it would not have significant visual effect. (case 3)*
- *I [would] not [be] convinced that the view would necessarily be detrimental to the character of such areas. (case 4)*

The landscape comments for the four cases also demonstrated whether or not changes in landscape character are acceptable in decision making against two criteria: baseline landscape setting and type and scale of development. Firstly, baseline landscape setting means taking into account the internal quality and capacity indicated by the key characteristics of the given landscape character type/area, and the external appearance of urbanised infrastructure. For example, the four developments were considered suitable for their surrounding landscapes in terms of their proximity to developed areas, which retained the rural character for the wider areas. Secondly, the type and scale of development decided the sphere of influence, namely, the visual impact that the development would cause. Virtually all the major development will to some extent cause a change in character. Therefore, the standard of judgement lies in whether the impact can be reduced or minimised by using design and mitigation measures like screening.

While the above discussion exemplifies how landscape character has been fed into the judgement, this concept alone, however, seems still not as prevalent as other aspects of landscape planning as more weight was given to visual impact and design details in these cases. Also notably, although the policy on ASLVs was about to diminish by the time these comments were made, the consideration of ASLVs was still adopted as a rationale for judgement. In case4, as the development site was located to the east of an ASLV, extra examination was made in case the development would cause an impact to the high quality landscape nearby. This shows that as a representation of the highest grade of landscape conservation, at least in short term, the use of ASLVs will still be influential in some way.

#### **4.3.4 Landscape approaches in transition**

##### **Features and drivers of change**

From the previous discussion, it can be concluded that transition from the designation approach to the character approach in Doncaster was rather passive. This can be seen from the fact that the UDP published in 1998 still highlighted the use of ASLVs, despite the suggestion of reviewing local landscape designations had been made earlier in PPG7 1997. Even after the character approach was introduced in Doncaster under the new planning system and PPS7 after 2004, reviewing and extending the existing ASLVs were still proposed in development plans. Although the concepts of landscape character and landscape capacity have been significantly involved in judgements and decision making, as shown in the development application cases in the previous section, the adoption of the character approach in the LDF does not fully comply with the requirement in PPS7. Firstly, while the wording of landscape character, local distinctiveness and landscape capacity is frequently mentioned in relevant core policies, an overarching criteria-based policy stressing landscape character does not exist. Secondly, as PPS 7 supported the use of LCA to underpin planning policies, the LCCA is adopted as an evidence base rather than in a higher status of Supplementary Planning Document, since the official landscape SPD focuses mainly on providing design guidance.

As a result, although the transition did happen in Doncaster, the process was more reactive than proactive. Referring back to the consultation report on Core Strategy concerning the preferred landscape approach, the hybrid use of both approaches was favoured above another two options of using either approach alone. The main driver of change is likely to be the requirement from national level policies, as '*Government Guidance indicates that local landscape designations should not generally be used (DBC, 2007, see table 4.27)*'. During the interview, the landscape officer also indicated that '*the Areas of Special Landscape Value would probably not be included within the core strategy or any DPDs because it would be out of line with PPS7*'. This suggests that if it had not been for the requirement from the higher level policy, the use of ASLVs would have been likely to remain.

##### **Reflections on the use of the character approach**

The use of the character approach in Doncaster originated from the 1994 Landscape Assessment alongside the initial policy on landscape conservation in the UDP. Considerable advances have been made in the past 15 years through the development of the methodology and application of the approach, especially in the form of landscape character and capacity. While scepticism was still raised during the transitional period concerning whether or not the use of ASLVs should be totally abolished, under the

requirement of the higher level policy guidance and the Council's continuous involvement of the new approach, it finally came to override the old approach. In terms of planning policy, the replacement of ASLVs by the character-based approach has been accepted by official and public examinations as addressed in the final Core Strategy 2012. As for the practical side, the new approach is also approved by the landscape officer as a helpful tool for examining applications and even assessing finer scale site allocation.

During this transition, the emergence of the Landscape Character and Capacity Assessment played a key role in bridging the gap between the two approaches. While the incorporation of landscape character into planning decisions was proposed in the 1994 Landscape Assessment, at least from the contexts in the UDP and the first draft of the Core Strategy in 2005, the assessment was more like background information to underpin landscape policies rather than raising strong landscape argument in planning practice. Since the publication of the LCCA study in 2007, not only has it considerably informed the preparation of the LDF, but the landscape officer has also recognised that he felt it was sufficiently rigorous to be a tool for making development judgements. With the further study on housing and employment sites, the current practice of conducting the character approach in the form of landscape capacity is very much likely to be the way forward.

# CHAPTER 5

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## *Reflections on the 'landscape character turn'*

In the two previous chapters, the landscape character turn and the related issues were investigated by means of document analysis and case studies. Since the findings have so far been presented in a descriptive way, this chapter will focus on the explanatory features of case studies and at the same time make intra-/inter-case comparisons. Findings from the interviews and from secondary document analysis will in this chapter be reorganised and presented in different forms:

- thematic conclusions emerging from the coding system will be presented to draw out the broad ideas underlying the 'landscape character turn'
- identifying drivers of change from the perspective of policy and planners to examine the factors which caused the turn and affected the development of the two approaches;
- the performance of the character approach in practice, particularly at local level, will be explored by comparing the three UK cases;
- chronological analysis of the two approaches will plot crucial events along the timeline to show the sequential and causal relationships.

As a basis for all these reflective viewpoints, the coding system from which the results were drawn will be discussed at the outset as the methodological underpinning for the rest of this chapter.

### **5.1 The coding system and the analytic framework**

NVivo software was employed to store the research materials and build the coding system by reorganising key phrases and statements into an analytical structure. The coding method involved particularly the case studies of UK local authorities. The seven interview transcripts as the first hand data, among other written materials, were manually reviewed by the researcher to generate unstructured free codes through textual analysis. They were then grouped together according to relevant and hierarchical relationships between codes to form a nested system comprising a broad heading and its sub-codes up to 4 tiers. The full list of codes can be found in Appendix D.

In order to ensure the consistency of coding analysis, the ways of identifying and structuring codes were constantly checked when moving between the three cases. At last, a similar structure of grouping codes was applied to each case study under the following headings:

Table 5.1 Definition of concepts identified in the UK part of study

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Definition</b>
actors	individuals or institutions which involve the practice of landscape planning both in public and private sectors
landscape ideal, meaning and interpretation	the different ways of conceptualising the term landscape
countryside and environmental planning	planning policies or measures in relation to countryside and/or environmental issues
plan-led system	the UK planning system of using development plans to guide planning practice
development	any building, engineering or mining operation, or the making of a material change of use in any land or building, as defined in the Town and Country Planning Act
landscape planning approach	the specific set of tools for executing landscape planning, which specifically indicate the master planning approach in this case
character-based approach	the landscape planning approach informed by the concept of landscape character and the method of LCA
landscape strategies	the practical actions/action plans to deliver landscape planning in detail

These headings provided the basis for comparing the same ideas in each case, while the slight variation of codes identified in each case allows further discussion in terms of similarities and differences in ideas. The same structure will be used again in the Taiwan case studies and cross-national comparative study in chapters 6 & 7.

## **5.2 Themes of the landscape character turn**

Themes are the further combination of codes according to their relevance and relationships, which can be regarded as the secondary coding process. After the codes were extracted from their original contexts and grouped into a hierarchical structure (see Appendix D), the relationships between some of the codes became more apparent, such as codes which appeared repeatedly throughout all the cases, and the sub-codes under a heading which is of particular interest to this research. Thematic features emerging in this way represent crucial logical flows concerning the landscape character turn from different points of view which are applicable both to national practice and all case studies. These themes in this section will be presented in the form of a title, explanatory statements and a diagram which presents the logical flow between codes. In most cases, key words shown on the diagrams/title of tables are the codes which contribute to the formation of the theme.



## 5.2.1 Theme 1: the transition between the two approaches

### The evolution of landscape ideologies and assessment methodologies fostered the transition between the two landscape planning approaches

The development of a landscape planning approach underlies the specific combination of landscape ideology and landscape interpretation, from which the corresponding methodologies are developed to analyse the landscape in different ways. In the UK, landscape value used to stand for a perception of landscape in terms of its outstanding (scenic) quality. Distinguishing different degrees of landscape value thus involved the subjective score of landscape features according to their contribution to or distraction from the visual quality of landscape. Priority areas identified in this way formed a system in planning policies comprised of both statutory and non-statutory landscape designations, in which the most common way to ensure their integrity is applying strict regulations. As policies based solely on the identification of non-statutory landscape designations were fraught with criticism on account of its ignorance of the wider landscape context, a new ideology emerged to provide a broader scope for landscape planning. The new ideology, which started from the notion of the wider countryside in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, looked at the landscape in terms of its intrinsic and holistic characteristics rather than a certain landscape quality. Having been endorsed by national planning policies and in line with the European Landscape Convention at a higher level, this new ideology is now clearly defined as Natural England's planning position on 'All Landscapes Matter'. At the same time, the previous focus on designated areas also gradually moved to the whole landscapes and the character of different areas by using LCA. While the notion of statutory landscape designations, such as National Parks and AONB, remains firmly in the planning context, a consensus on the importance of the 'rest' of countryside is now well established in policy contexts and planning practice.

Table 5.2 The comparison between two landscape approaches in the UK

	<b>Before</b>	<b>Now</b>
Ideology	natural beauty (narrow sense), landscape visual quality	Landscape character, all landscapes
Origin of ideology	Romanticism in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) ELC (2000)
Policy orientation	priority areas	priority areas (the best) wider countryside (the rest)
Assessment methods	value system, ranking →landscape evaluation	characterisation →Landscape Character Assessment
Key features	visual quality, landscape amenity	comprehensive character, distinctiveness

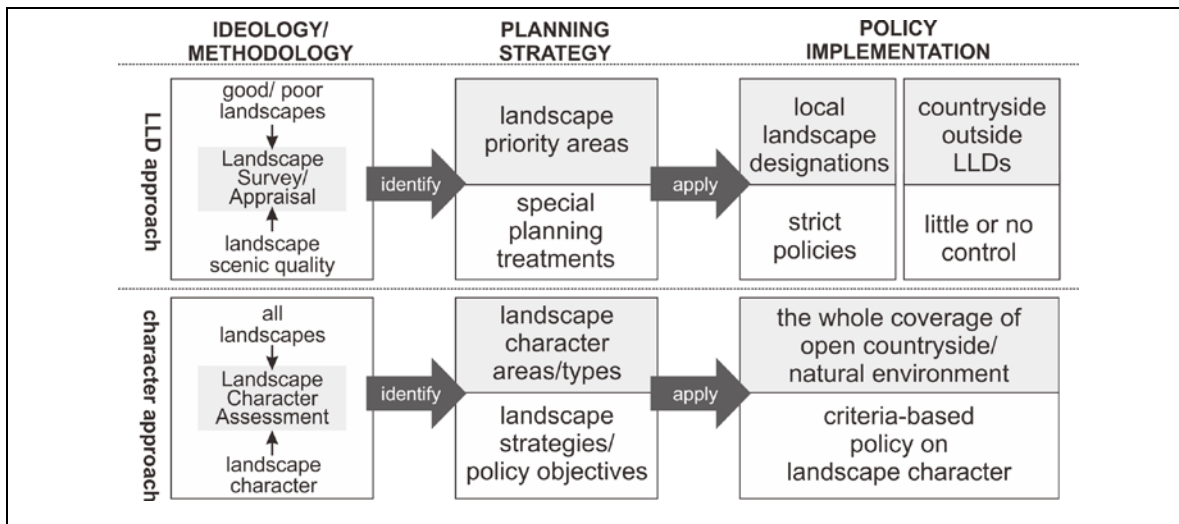


Figure 5.1 Theoretical and practical transition between the two approaches

In practice, this transition was explicitly shown in the change in landscape assessment methods of the three local cases. In the past, landscape surveys/appraisals conducted in the 1960s~70s used to provide the justification for the establishment of LLDs in the first round Structure Plan. Regardless of whether the surveys/appraisals were undertaken by quantitative or non-quantitative methods, they had a common objective of grading landscapes according to their (visual) quality and identify priority areas as either good or poor. By using strict regulations and additional requirements to confine development, the LLD approach tended to create a two-tier system inside and outside these areas. In the light of landscape character, a transition on the interpretation and assessment of landscape arose by giving tailored policy guidance to specific landscape character types/areas. Different ways of converting LCAs into planning tools and strategies have also been developed at local scale to fit different planning needs and purposes.

### 5.2.2 Theme 2: the relationship between the two approaches

**The relationship between the two approaches has changed from complementary to competitive**

Since the late 1990s, the interaction between the existing prevalent LLD policies and the newly-introduced character-based approach has formed four patterns of attitudes among practitioners. As shown in figure 5.2, the x and y axis form a dichotomy of using LLDs and the character approach, and the attitude towards their use stretches from negative to positive. The four quadrants indicate four patterns of using the two landscape approaches: neither (of both approaches), retention (of only the LLDs), replacement (of the old by the new approach) and lastly, complementarity (use of both).

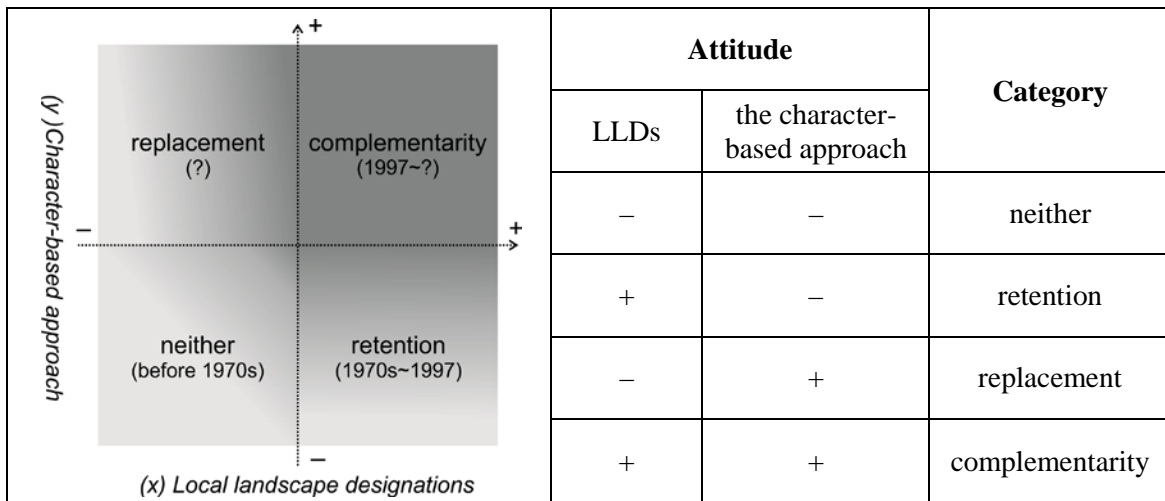


Figure 5.2 Four patterns of attitude concerning the use of the two approaches

### 1. No landscape policy

The double negative quadrant means using neither of the approaches in planning policies. Since the emergence of LLDs in the 1960-70s, this pattern has never existed, as development plans always include at least one or both approaches.

### 2. Retention of LLDs

The pattern of retention means only the use of LLDs exists in planning policies and no landscape character-informed policy is referred to, which was the prevailing practice before LCA came into existence. This pattern also disappeared since the notion of wider countryside and the character approach were introduced in PPG7. Although the use of LLDs has always preferred by some and its influence cannot be totally dismissed even now, there has not been any voice which embraced the sole use of LLDs without considering the wider context of landscape character.

### 3. Complementarity

One of the leading features of the early use of LCA was to provide the justification for designated areas as mentioned in the Landscape Assessment guidance in both 1987 and 1993. Similarly, when the character approach was first raised in PPG7 (1997), its preliminary idea was also to justify some poorly established LLDs, as the Countryside Commission itself also stated clearly that the new approach would not become a substitute for LLDs (National Archive D11-144). The hybrid system of using both approaches therefore prevailed, especially by the time the character approach was first introduced into the planning system. During the consultation stage on PPG7, the preference for combining both approaches was most referred to by the majority of interest groups with slight different weight between the two approaches. If more weight was put on protecting the countryside, the continued use of LLDs justified by Landscape Assessments was considered the best solution, such as CPRE's suggestion of using

landscape designation underpinned by the character approach (House of Commons, 1996b, p.26). In contrast, when more weight was put on opening up the countryside for development opportunities, as suggested by the National Farmers Union, although landscapes of local importance were still acknowledged, the use of Landscape Assessment was expected to have more influence in planning policies (National Archive, D11-144, 1996). Although these opinions were more or less shaped by underlying interests of different groups, it was evident that the character approach had successfully drawn the planning attention from LLDs to the wider context.

This point of view also held true in the few years followed by the publication of PPG7. At least in the late 1990s, the complementary use of both approaches was still proposed by the Countryside Agency. The Agency indicated that the two approaches were ‘*compatible and complementary*’ because of their different functions: ‘*designation is a mechanism, but landscape character assessment is a tool which can be used to inform and refine the criteria for designations*’ (Countryside Agency, 1999).

#### **4. Replacement**

Although there was no explicit clue which suggested LLDs could in some ways be replaced by the character-based approach, the latter’s introduction did initiate the reflection on the growing discouragement of designating new LLDs and criticism of the unjustified use of LLDs as time went by. Actually in the consultation responses of PPG7 when the character-based approach was introduced, some interest groups already recognised that the approach could totally replace the existing local designations provided it was clear and effective enough (National Archive, D11-144, 1996). As the use of the character approach became more influential in the policy context, draft PPS7 (2003) first considered LLDs not necessary and that their use should be removed. While this claim was not eventually fed into the final text of PPS7, evidence at this stage all pointed to the idea of replacing LLDs with policy contexts informed by landscape character. At first, the consideration of locally defined landscape designations was withdrawn entirely from the work of the Countryside Agency/Natural England in terms of the policy position publications, from ‘*Planning Tomorrow’s Countryside*’ in 2000 to ‘*All Landscapes Matter*’ in 2010. In the LCA guidance (2002), the implementations of the method also made no link to providing a justification for LLDs. The previous complementary relationship between the two approaches eventually came to a turning point after the introduction of the new planning system in 2004. In the new context, policies were required to be informed by a solid evidence base. Compared to the LLDs, a majority of which were identified in the 1970s or even earlier, the character approach is undoubtedly more favourable and up-to-date. However, although in the current planning system most local authorities in England have withdrawn the use of LLDs, it has not been totally diminished in the wider planning context like Scotland and Wales.

### 5.2.3 Theme 3: the facilitators of the character-based approach

**The conceptual and technical advances of Landscape (Character) Assessment facilitate the making of landscape arguments in planning practice and policy contexts**

The changing role of the character approach in fostering landscape arguments in planning practice can be found in the conceptual and technical progress in the three versions of LCA guidance published in 1978, 1993 and 2002. These ideas, which enabled LCA and the character approach to become robust landscape justifications, fall into three categories:

- the perspective on Landscape (Character) Assessment
- landscape strategies and policy objectives
- the provision of landscape references/guidance for planning policy and practice

Table 5.3 Comparison between three versions of LCA guidance

Landscape Assessment 1987	Landscape Assessment 1993	Landscape Character Assessment 2002
<b>1. Perspective on landscape</b>		
natural beauty	landscape quality landscape character	landscape character landscape quality landscape value landscape sensitivity
<b>2. Landscape strategies/ policy objectives</b>		
1) selection of special areas 2) investment decisions 3) impact analysis	1) <b>conservation strategy</b> for landscapes with strong and distinctive character 2) <b>enhancement strategy</b> for landscapes with a decline in character through: ①restoration, ②reconstruction ③creation	1) <b>conservation and maintenance</b> of existing character 2) <b>enhancement</b> of existing character by introducing new elements or management measures 3) <b>restoration</b> to current land use states 4) <b>creation</b> of a new character 5) combination of the above
<b>3. Ways of providing landscape references/grounds for planning practice</b>		
[to PPG7 1992] SPG	[to PPG7 1997] character approach SPG	[to PPS7/PPS12 2004] character approach evidence base Core Strategy SPD

Firstly, with regard to the perspective on Landscape Assessment, the 1987 guidance still took natural beauty as one of its fundamental considerations, whereas from the 1993 guidance onwards, the context of landscape has been broadened in terms of character, quality, value and sensitivity. This wider context indicates that the concept of landscape character was no longer confined to countryside or landscape conservation, but was being applied extensively to relevant planning issues where relevant. Secondly, with the advance of landscape definition, more landscape strategies, such as conservation and enhancement, emerged for landscape concepts to be applied to practical planning considerations. Compared to the 1987 guidance, which did not specify any landscape strategies, the 1993 guidance mentioned the two categories of conservation and enhancement strategies for landscapes of different characters. The two broad strategies in the 2002 guidance were developed into four with more accurate definitions, showing the establishment of consistent landscape terminology at this stage. Finally, in ways of involving planning practice, a stronger connection to planning policies can be seen in the latest planning system. In the current context, not only is the character approach itself still advocated, its implementations to inform the evidence base, Core Strategy and SPD are expected to strengthen landscape arguments in planning practice and decision making.

#### **5.2.4 Theme 4: the effectiveness of the character-based approach**

**The effectiveness of the character approach is determined by the degree to which LCA can be translated into landscape policies, and its ability to generate plausible landscape arguments**

Landscape character assessment is the foundation of executing the character approach. Not only the abstract idea of landscape and landscape elements can be translated into practical considerations and manageable strategies by using this method, but the spatial hierarchy of landscape character areas/types can also be related to planning tiers, from regional level to site level. Case study findings show that LCAs of different planning levels now provide tailored information for planning needs. For Regional Spatial Strategy, National Character Areas identified by the Countryside Commission/Agency are widely adopted as the context for landscape planning, based on which more applications at lower planning tiers can be developed. At county level, the sub-divisions of landscape character types identified by county landscape officers or landscape professionals, are widely used as spatial planning units to devise planning strategies. District-level LCAs further use these broad strategies to develop practical suggestions on development in terms of policies on landscape character, landscape SPD and evidence base. Finer scale applications, such as site level LCAs, can also be found for specific planning purposes within the landscape context for site allocation.

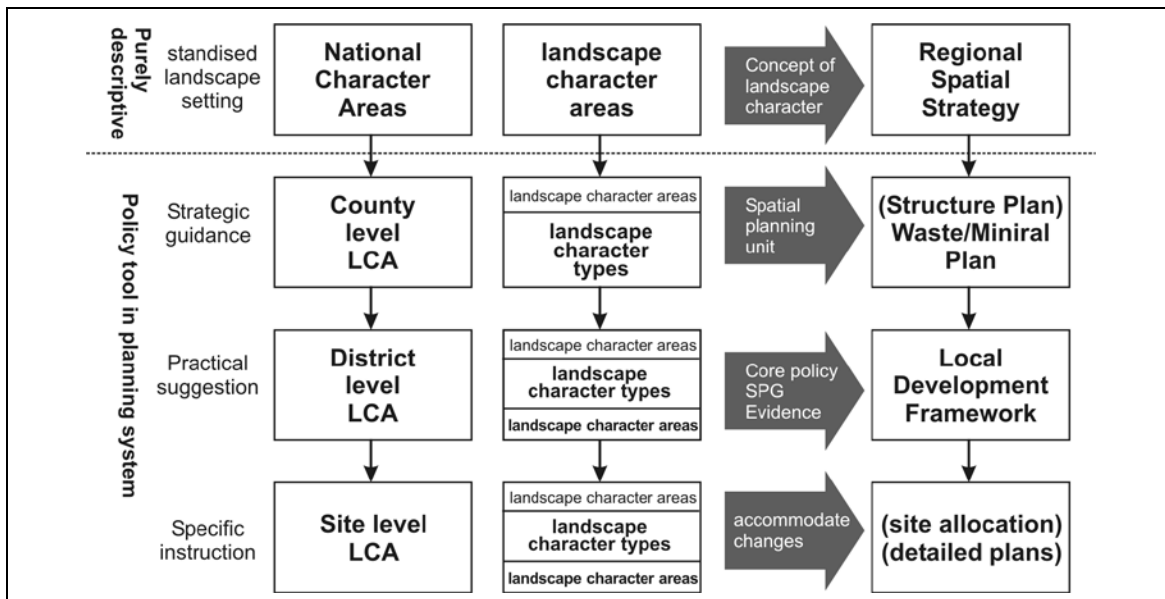


Figure 5.3 Spatial relationship between LCA and planning

In addition to development plans and planning policies, the character approach also informs the process of development control and decision making. The way in which LCA informs development control is realised by the professional judgement of landscape officers in landscape schemes/statements enclosed in development applications. Firstly, landscape schemes/statements are suggested to be in line with the landscape information provided in the county/district LCA, preferably prepared with the help of landscape expertise. Issues relevant to landscape in proposals are then reviewed by the county landscape officers or district development control (management) officers to decide whether or not the development would have any adverse impact on landscape character. Professional judgements are made on the basis of the nature of the changes caused by the development, which can be fed into the final decision to approve or refuse.

Another crucial issue in development control is the acceptability of changes made to existing landscape. In terms of landscape-informed policy, this concept is often expressed by having new developments ‘be sympathetic to the character of the area’, ‘assimilate into the landscape’ and ‘fit unobtrusively into the scene’. Therefore, when it comes to development applications, information about landscape character, such as landscape types and their key characteristics, becomes the criteria based on which landscape officers can make judgement. Improvements can also be made on this basis to mitigate the impacts caused by change of land use. If incongruous features or inappropriate development may have irreversible negative impact on landscapes, they are normally categorised as unacceptable changes. Although the final decision on whether a development is approved or not still depends on the overall consideration of all relevant factors, by using the character-based approach the arguments on landscape ground have been made more robust as shown in case studies.

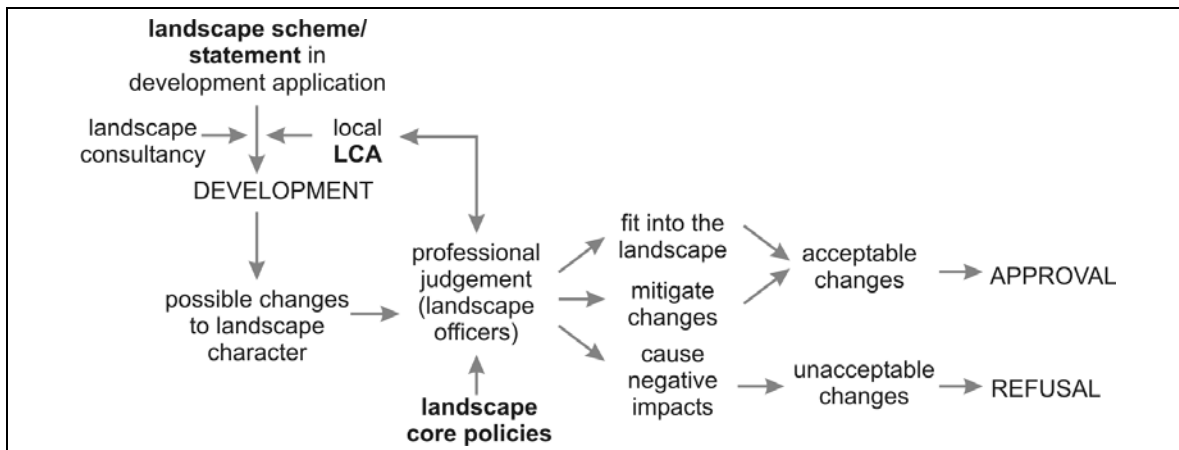


Figure 5.4 The character-based approach in development control

### 5.3 Drivers of change of the landscape character turn

In the context of this research, the identification of the drivers of change will be focused on the factors in relation to landscape and planning. Codes in relation to the identification of the drivers and analyse the causality of the transition include:

- drivers of change: the mechanisms contributed to the transition
- clues to change: the inexplicit factors that may have effects on the transition
- actors: people/groups who are involved in using different landscape approaches

The transition, or the landscape character turn, is a gradual process from the mid 1990s to the late 2000s initiated by the interaction between different landscape and planning mechanisms. This period can be divided into two stages according to the planning trends and influences from both the planning and landscape contexts. The first stage is the timeframe around the publication of PPG7 in 1997, whereas the later stage is marked by the introduction of PPS7 (2004) as well as the change in planning system in the same year. In addition to the planning context, Natural England and its predecessors also played an integral role in leading and facilitating the long-term implementation of the character approach from the field of landscape itself. The relationship between the two categories of mechanism and the content of the change is summarised in table 5.4 and then specified in the following discussion.



Table 5.4 Drivers of change of the transition at two stages

	1990-2000: conceptual change		2000-2010: practical change
<b>policy</b>	PPG7 (1997)/ELC (2000)		PPS7 (2004)/PPS12 (2004)
<b>drivers (external)</b>	sustainable development wider countryside local distinctiveness		sustainable development localism evidence base
<b>Landscape drivers (internal)</b>	Countryside Commission (1968-1999)	Countryside Agency (1999-2006)	Natural England (2006~)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LCA (V.1, V.2)</li> <li>• Countryside Character Programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LCA (V.3)</li> <li>• Studies on the LDF implications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LCA (updated version)</li> <li>• ELC implementation framework</li> </ul>

At the first stage of the transition, when PPG7 came into effect in 1997, the character approach was first proposed as an alternative to the traditional practice of LLDs. The statements on both the character approach and LLDs addressed in PPG 7 paragraph 2.14 and 4.16 clearly pointed out the key drivers (in bold) which initiated the transition:

*‘The priority now is to find new ways of enriching the **quality of the whole countryside** whilst **accommodating appropriate development** in order to complement the protection which designations offer’* (para2.14)

*‘[Local designations] may unduly restrict **acceptable development and economics** without identifying the particular **features of the local countryside** which need to be respected or enhanced’* (para4.16)

These statements indicate that there was progress in planning concepts in the first stage in 1990-2000. The drivers of change mainly came from the conceptual changes in attitude towards development and countryside planning. For development, the emergence of sustainable development since the 1990s opened more opportunities for appropriate/acceptable development which could create economic and environmental benefits. This also became a strong underpinning of the character approach in terms of accommodating changes from necessary development. For countryside planning, both the ‘whole countryside’ and ‘local features’ were mentioned in the policy context to reveal an all-embracing yet place-specific vision. Planning issues were no longer considered in a piecemeal way, but were considered under the perspective of ‘planning the countryside for its own sake’. Also, the notion of local distinctiveness and vernacular diversity further claimed that any changes to the landscape and introduction of new elements should be sympathetic to the original local character.

Compared to the initial stage, during which changes most happened at the conceptual level, the later stage was marked by practical changes with the advance of the planning system. At this stage, the concept of landscape character has already been consolidated and incorporated into different forms of policy guidance. Therefore, in PPS7 there was a

rephrasing and further confirmation of what had been said about the character approach in PPG7. What actually improved the practical aspect of the landscape planning approach was its being attached to the reform in development plans in terms of the LDF. In the new planning system after the year 2004, the abolition of the county level Structure Plans and the district/borough level Local Plans made it possible for local authorities to review the justification of LLDs which mostly established in the 1970s. It was also in the new policy context that the deep-seated practice of LLDs could be minimised and more room left for the character approach to gain its influence in Regional Spatial Strategy and the Local Development Framework.

Whereas the above drivers of change arose mainly from the external planning contexts, the Countryside Commission and its successors' continuing involvement of landscape affairs equally played a vital role in triggering internal changes from the field of landscape. The three successive agencies caused the transition by giving continuous instructions in terms of the methodology of LCA, guidance on policy implementation and the follow-up dissemination. From the first version of LCA, this method kept progressing and expanding its methodological rigour and applications in the following two decades. Meanwhile, the agencies also advocated LCA and the character approach by demonstrating policy suggestions for different planning issues. The policy implementations of LCA in the first half of the 1990s was an important originator of the character approach proposed in the Rural White Paper (1995) and again in PPG7 (1997). Lastly, the agencies also actively involved in themselves the dissemination of LCA and the character approach by organising workshops, initiating partnerships or financial grants to local authorities and establishing platforms for information exchange, such as the Landscape Character Network. These dissemination strategies clarified the use of the new approach and improved its usefulness and effectiveness in planning considerations.

### **Drivers of change at local scale**

In addition to the general drivers of change, the three case studies also suggest that the major drivers at local level are slightly different and worthy to be explored. For local authorities, the requirement and guidance from higher planning levels are no doubt the primary causes which give rise to the transition. It is explicit that the changes in the planning system and the succession of development plans provide the best opportunity for the removal of the old approach and incorporation of the new. However, at the same time, the obstacles encountered by local authorities when executing LLD policies are equally important to cause the turn. Three main problems of executing the LLD approach are identified from case studies:

- 1) Strategically, higher level policy guidance, including the ELC, PPG7 and PPS7, fosters the transition towards the character-based approach no matter whether the use of LLDs was effective or not. This phenomenon was firstly shown at county level

after PPG7 in the late 1990s, and at district/borough level after PPS7 under the new planning system.

- 2) Conceptually, the policy vacuum on landscapes outside designations can only be filled by applying the concept of all landscapes. The recognition of local distinctiveness and a new vernacular are also emerging among local practice.
- 3) Practically, the execution of LLDs is called into question, especially on their outdated justification and ambiguous boundary delineation. In contrast, the character approach is more favourable in up-to-date planning context under a consistent methodology and support from planning authorities.

The problems of the use of LLDs also relate to the introduction of the character-based approach in shifting the planning scope from the scenery and countryside tradition to an all landscapes view. More details concerning their interrelationship will be explored in the following section.

## **5.4 The performance of the landscape character approach**

This section will explore the performance and efficiency of the landscape character-based approach by referring to case study findings to examine the degree to which the landscape character turn is accomplished. Generally speaking, both the national planning trend and the three case studies indicate that there has been a transition from the use of LLDs to the character approach, as LLD policies are hardly seen in the current planning context. Although the new approach is generally effective and widely-adopted in the LDFs, it is still questionable whether the use of the character approach is robust enough to replace the old method. In other words, it is still unclear whether the ‘landscape character turn’ has been completed or is only halfway through. Codes used for analysing this issue include:

- advantages/disadvantages of using both approaches
- character-based approach in practice
- effectiveness of the character-based approach

### **5.4.1 Advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches**

In section 3.3.4, the LLD Review conducted in 2006 identified the advantages and disadvantages of the two landscape approaches at a national scale. More insights can be obtained from case studies by examining interview transcripts and written references. Similar and divergent opinions arising from the comparison can further suggest possible directions to improve the effectiveness of the character approach.

Table 5.5 Advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches

<b>LLD</b>	<b>Advantages of the LLD approach</b>	<b>Disadvantages of the LLD approach</b>
Case1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• simple, clear and understandable</li> <li>• easily defensible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• almost no control outside LLDs</li> <li>• creating a two-tier system of landscape policy</li> <li>• taking no account of landscape character</li> <li>• boundaries not sufficiently justified</li> </ul>
Case2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tightly controlled</li> <li>• conserve high quality landscapes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• subjectivity in measuring landscape quality</li> <li>• taking no account of landscape character</li> <li>• creating a two-tier system of landscape policy</li> </ul>
Case3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• simple, clear and understandable</li> <li>• best examples of relatively unspoilt and distinct landscape types</li> <li>• extra level of protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• too restrictive</li> <li>• undermining the protection for areas outside LLDs</li> </ul>
<b>Character approach</b>	<b>Advantages of the character-based approach</b>	<b>Disadvantages of the character-based approach</b>
Case1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scientific and holistic</li> <li>• covering all landscapes</li> <li>• identifying positive impacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not easy to defend itself</li> <li>• not easy for non-professionals</li> </ul>
Case2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• structured, rigorous and objective</li> <li>• covering all landscapes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disagreement about character area boundaries</li> <li>• not easy for non-professionals</li> </ul>
Case3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• simplicity</li> <li>• extra level of protection</li> <li>• flexibility about accommodating development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not fitting the scale for site development</li> <li>• lack of clarity in identifying the best valued landscape</li> </ul>

A common attitude towards the advantages and disadvantages of using both approaches can be found across all three cases. For the use of LLDs, the most common advantage is its conservation and protection of high quality landscapes. Although the clearly defined boundaries of LLDs provides ready clarity for the execution of development control, it is just these rather artificial lines that create a ‘two-tier system’ of planning policies inside and outside LLDs. The concerns of no control and lack of appropriate planning for areas outside LLDs were widely mentioned during the interviews in all cases. Also, in the light of the present planning context, LLDs identified at the earlier stage took no account of landscape character. Instead, they were selected either on the basis of subjective preference or from statistical grading of landscape. In contrast, the main advantage of the character approach is its inclusion of all landscapes in a systematic way. It is also recognised as an approach which can positively reinforce landscape characters according to tailored strategies rather than simply protection or

restriction. In addition to these general advantages, the case of Doncaster exhibits a particular attention to improving the compatibility between development and local character, as reflected on the Borough's conducting landscape capacity studies. However, since the approach itself is not as clear-cut as the concept of LLDs, the prerequisite of successful implementation depends heavily on sufficient information of using the approach and professional assistance.

Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that several key factors can improve the effectiveness of the character-based approach:

- a wide involvement of LCA in planning policies;
- a 'translated' form of SPG/SPD which makes LCA applicable in planning practice;
- internal support from other officers within the authority and external support from government agencies and relevant organisations;
- external support from the government and government agencies;
- professional assistance and appropriate methods of dissemination.

In contrast, challenges arising from the development control process may well diminish the effectiveness of this approach:

- insufficient understanding/training of the approach by both the public and local authorities outside landscape expertise;
- the lack of ability to make consistent judgement on the possible changes and impacts a development may have on landscape character;
- failure to regard landscape arguments as a material consideration in development control decisions (too little weight is given to landscape issues).

#### **5.4.2 Similarities and differences of the two approaches**

This section discusses the similarities and differences of putting the two landscape approaches in practice by firstly making comparison at three stages according to whether one or both approaches were addressed in the policy context: the use of LLDs, the hybrid system and the use of the character approach (table 5.6).

Table 5.6 Case comparison of similarities and differences

		<b>Derbyshire</b>	<b>Staffordshire</b>	<b>Doncaster</b>
<b>LLD</b>	<b>justification</b>	landscape appraisal (non-quantitative)	landscape survey (quantitative)	landscape survey (quantitative)
	<b>Detailed boundary</b>	1985 SLA Local Plan	N/A	1994 Landscape Assessment
	<b>designation criteria</b>	high landscape quality	high landscape quality	representativeness of landscape character
		boundaries in question	boundaries in question	boundaries drawn according to LCA
<b>Transition</b>	<b>reaction</b>	proactive	proactive	reactive
	<b>primary driver of change</b>	conceptual	practical	legal
<b>Character Approach</b>	<b>operational concept</b>	landscape character	landscape character & quality	landscape character & capacity
	<b>key features</b>	landscape character types	landscape policy objectives	landscape capacity landscape mitigation
	<b>policy title in Structure Plan</b>	landscape character	landscape protection and restoration	N/A
	<b>policy title in Core Strategy</b>	landscape character	protecting and enhancing the character and appearance of the landscape	countryside policy area and relevant policies
	<b>title of SPD</b>	Landscape Character	Village Character	Landscape Planning on Development Sites
	<b>future work</b>	dissemination among districts	updating the LCA methodology framework	site-based applications

### **The stage of using local landscape designations only**

The emergence of policies on LLDs in the three cases can all be found in the first round Structure Plan, which came into existence in the early 1970s. Firstly, concerning the new development within LLDs, although strict control and protection were the common requirements, the conditions against which new developments were scrutinised varied greatly among cases (table 5.7). Compared to Derbyshire and Staffordshire, which took account of the broad sense of landscape, or even the exact phrase ‘landscape character’ in the policy wording, Doncaster emphasised particularly on visual character and landscaping and design. This specific viewpoint will be explained in more detail later.

Table 5.7 Landscape features under regulated in LLD policies

	<b>Derbyshire</b>	<b>Staffordshire</b>	<b>Doncaster</b>
County Structure Plan (70s~90s)	significant amenity value	general quality of the areas	visual character
Local Plan/ UDP (90s)	special quality and character	special landscape character and nature conservation value	visual character

Secondly, with regard to the criteria of selecting LLDs, at county level the preliminary LLDs were all originated from ranking landscapes according to their value or (mainly visual) quality. The criteria at the time were nothing more than the attractiveness factors such as striking relief, the presence of water or trees and visual elements, against which the rough extent of a LLD was identified. Among the three cases, only the ASLVs in Doncaster which emerged at a later stage were informed by Landscape Assessment and were more comprehensive in nature. As for the delineation of the detailed boundaries for LLDs, both Derbyshire and Doncaster carried out further study to review the LLDs established in the county Structure Plan. Detailed boundaries of Derbyshire SLAs were specified in the Special Landscape Area Local Plan (1985) derived from the judgement of landscape officers in terms of physical or artificial lines on the surface. Doncaster, in parallel, conducted a Landscape Assessment to inform boundary delineation of ASLVs. Even if Staffordshire shows no record of an investigation specifically on defining SLA boundaries, the location and extent of SLAs were generally acceptable to the public (SCC, 2000b, para7.2).

### **The transition between the two approaches**

During the transitional period when both approaches existed together in development plans, Derbyshire and Staffordshire featured strong proactive attitudes to the introduction of LCA and also actively engaged in developing relevant planning tools, such as landscape SPGs. Staffordshire, as one of the pilot counties in conducting LCA in the early 1990s, was well-prepared to convert its existing LCA into specific policies and the SPG on landscape change when the use of the character approach was first indicated in PPG7. In Derbyshire, although the SLA Local Plan to a large extent justified the prolonged use of SLAs until the late 1990s, as soon as the county was involved in LCA, the method was immediately fed into the county's planning considerations in the form of management principles and guidance for each landscape character type (see: figure 4.5). In contrast, Doncaster reflected a rather reactive attitude towards this change, as debate on whether or not to retain ASLVs still occurred during the preparation of the Core Strategy. This reactive attitude may well result from the justification for ASLVs provided by the Landscape Assessment in 1994, which to a large extent met the condition of retaining or even extending LLDs by having a '*formal and robust assessment* (PPS7, 2004, para25)'.

Although the three cases all involve the three types of drivers of change as mentioned in section 5.2, the primary drivers that caused the turn are slightly different. In Doncaster, if there had been no requirement from national planning policy, the use of ASLVs may well have stayed in planning policies alongside the character approach. In contrast, in Staffordshire the early involvement of LCA provoked immediate reflection on the robustness of SLAs and the underlying methodology of landscape evaluation. Therefore, the primary driver of change came from practical concerns in terms of questioning the traditional use of SLAs and embracing the benefits of the new approach. The case of Derbyshire features another pathway started from the conceptual change initiated by the landscape officers' involvement in a LCA workshop, which subsequently enabled them to develop the approach into a wide application.

### Variations in developing the character-based approach

Although specific policy and planning tools informed by landscape character exist in all three cases in one form or another, variations can still be found when it comes to the interpretation and application of the character approach (table 5.8). Generally speaking, Derbyshire focuses on the integrated effect caused by key characteristics, Staffordshire applies the approach by providing different landscape policy objectives, whereas Doncaster particularly emphasises the application of accommodating development. As both its policy context and landscape SPD adopted the exact phrase 'landscape character', Derbyshire developed their approach in a way which is more compliant with the original idea in the Countryside Character Programme. Landscape character types, in particular, are adopted as spatial planning units, based on which both county level guidelines and district level applications can be developed. In Staffordshire, the emphasis is placed not only on the descriptive character of landscape, but the delivery of landscape strategies and policies according to different degrees of landscape quality. South Staffordshire further scales down the sole use of landscape character into more diverse policy applications for different types of development and landscape management strategies. The use of the character approach in Doncaster is highlighted as the capacity of landscape to accommodate different types of development according to the Borough's planning needs.

Table 5.8 Ways of disseminating the character-based approach

	<b>Derbyshire</b>	<b>Staffordshire</b>	<b>Doncaster</b>
<b>County SPG/ LCA</b>	management guidance for each landscape character type	landscape policy, objective map	landscape capacity assessment for development types and strategic sites
<b>District SPD/ supporting documents</b>	landscape policy criteria for each landscape character type	(village) design principles	



Simply put, there is no universal rule for carrying out the character approach. It is also not adequate to say which case exhibits the best practices as the implementation of the character approach depends on different planning contexts and orientations among local authorities. The wide variety of developing landscape character tools on one hand features the flexible nature of the approach; but on the other hand, according to some of the interviewees, these tools should be designed as simple as possible. Otherwise, the efficiency of the approach would be unduly weakened by its complexity, as was also suggested in a national level study on the use of these tools (see Section 3.3.4).

### **Coherence of landscape concepts between two planning phases**

It seems that the two phases of conducting landscape approaches, namely the 1960s-70s landscape survey/appraisal and 1990s-2000s LCA were based on totally different ideology and methodology. However, comparing the landscape planning contexts in the two phases, it is suggested that the landscape terminology established in the earlier phase are still adopted in the subsequent development of landscape planning practice, but in an updated context. In Derbyshire, the notion of ‘landscape character’, which originally indicated the primary land use pattern, was embedded in the Landscape Appraisal and the first Structure Plan in the 1970s. As the meaning of ‘landscape character’ has changed to its modern context, the word ‘landscape character’ is still applicable to the present practice. In Staffordshire, the identification of landscapes in terms of their quality was the main theme in the landscape survey in the 1970s. When the Planning for Landscape Change SPG was developed according to the new ideas in Landscape (Character) Assessment, the same use of ‘landscape quality’ also remained as a key concept in deciding the appropriate landscape policy objective (see 4.2.2, table 4.15). Similarly in Doncaster, the early policy context (South Yorkshire County Structure Plan) graded landscapes according to their (visual) attractiveness, and the importance of safeguarding the visual character. The particular emphases on landscaping and design have therefore remained firmly in place in this Borough, no matter whether they were applied directly to the policy on ASLVs or developed later on into the ‘Landscape Planning on Development Sites’ SPD.

## **5.5 Chronological examination of the landscape character turn**

The development of a certain landscape approach can also be examined by plotting the changes of key factors and events in time sequence. The chronological examination of the landscape character turn will be presented according to the two planning tiers, national level and local level. At national level, the formation and development of both approaches will be illustrated to show the overall trend and causality between events (figure 5.5). A more exact timeframe will be applied to local practice, where the key factors which contributed to the turn will be arranged according to their temporal sequence and spatial hierarchy (figure 5.6).

### 5.5.1 Chronological examination of the national practice

The factors or events which contributed to the landscape character turn were clustered according to five historical stages (t1~t5) divided by four key time points at which either one or both approaches underwent major changes. From the viewpoint of the policy development of the character approach, the five stages can also be labelled as:

- t1~t3: the **consolidation stage** of the concept of landscape character, during which 3 sub-stages were divided according to the different periods of conducting the LLD approach;
- t4: the **confirmation stage** of the character-based approach in planning policies, which means the approach was formally introduced into planning policies;
- t5: the **implementation stage**, during which the approach is currently undergoing a wide range implementations, especially in the local context

Table 5.9 Temporal divides of the national practice of landscape approaches

Consolidation stage	t1 (1949~1974)	from the establishment of landscape designation policy to the major establishment of LLDs
	t2 (1974~1987)	from the major establishment of LLDs to the first publication of Landscape Assessment
	t3 (1987~1997)	from the first publication of Landscape Assessment to the PPG7 1997
Confirmation stage	t4 (1997~2004)	from PPG7 1997 to the reformed planning system
Implementation stage	t5 (2004~)	from the reformed planning system to now

Although this pattern was plotted according to the time sequence and spatial hierarchy, more focuses were placed on presenting the interrelationships and logic flows among key factors and events rather than arranging them according to exact timeframe. Therefore, these factors/events were further divided into two groups:

- legislation/policy documents (grey rectangles)
- events/ideas/consequences (white circles)

In the upper part of figure 5.5 lie the key factors of the higher planning tier, such as government planning policies, whereas in the lower part are those which issue from government agencies or consultation reports. Among these factors, three types of relationship are specified: cause-effect, inputs/outputs and conflicting ideas. Cause-effect relationships indicate there is a direct causal relationship between two factors. Inputs/outputs mean the non-causal, and sometimes inexplicit influences coming from antecedent ideas or a trajectory of policy documents. Conflicting ideas are simply two opposite ideas or factors.

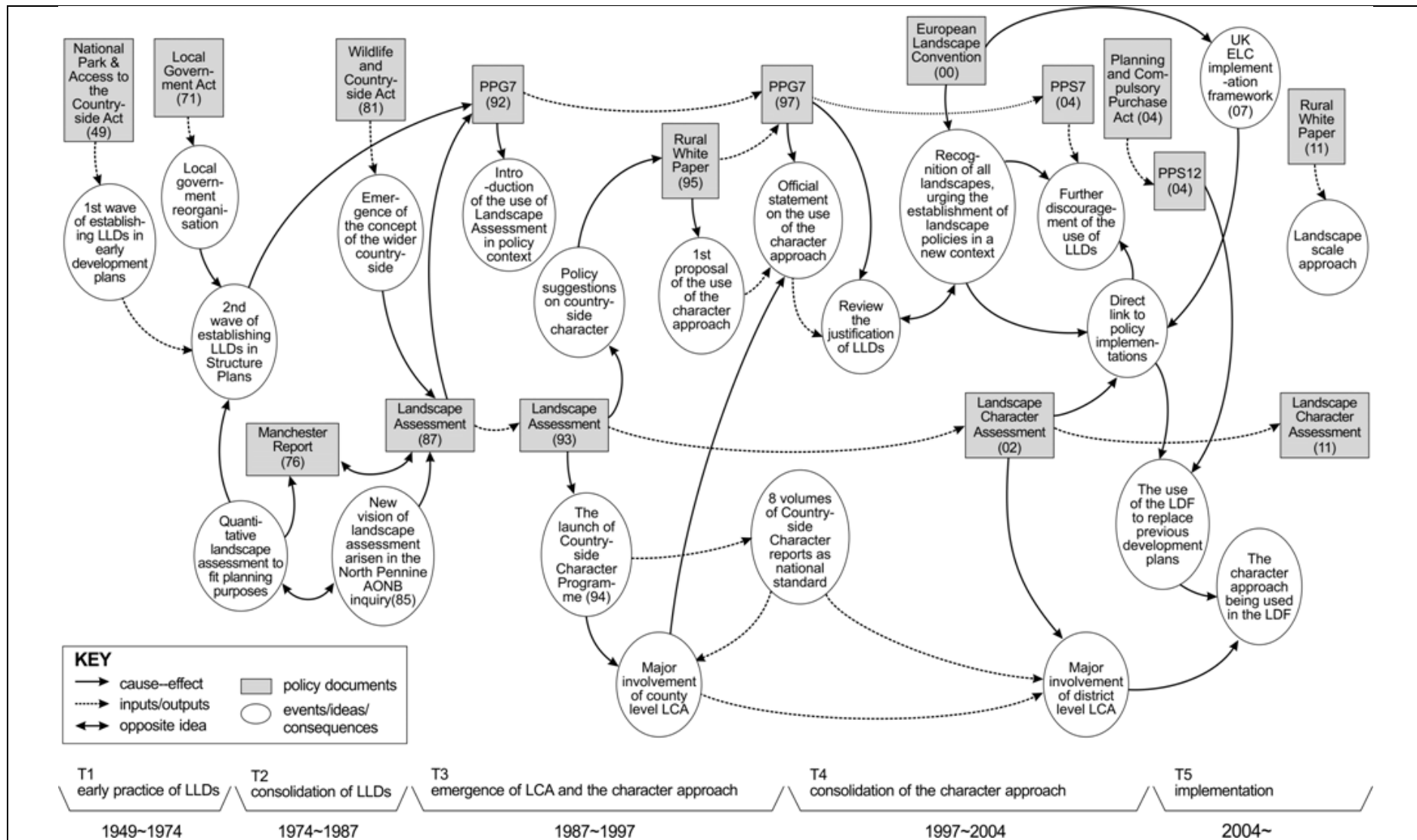


Figure 5.5 Development of the landscape character turn at national level

## **The formation of the two approaches**

Looking separately at each approach and the shaping factors, the formation of the LLD approach at t1/t2 is relatively simple and less affected by the outer planning context. In contrast, the character approach was much more complicated in terms of receiving inputs and producing outputs from various conceptual, technical and policy factors. Firstly, the emergence of the character approach (t3), namely the publication of Landscape Assessment in 1987, is an explicit consequence of multiple inputs. The role of multiple factors in shaping the practice of the character-based approach can also be seen from examining the links to and from individual events/ideas/consequences (white circles). For example, the idea ‘direct link to policy implementations’ at the turn of t4/t5, receives inputs from the ELC implementation framework and LCA guidance, and then produces outputs to ‘the character approach being used in the LDF’ and ‘further discouragement of the use of LLDs’, which features a significant phase change to the implementation stage t5. The key position which the LCA plays during its progress, as discussed in theme 3, is also clearly shown in the diagram in terms of having continuous influences on both higher level policy and lower level practice. The discussion of the use of the two approaches, particularly in stage t5 after the year 2004 in England, again shows no evidence that the current practice is likely to be bounced back to the use of LLD alone.

By putting the key factors and events together, there is generally trend of a top-down relationship of landscape planning in terms of using higher level policies/legislation to guide landscape practice. At the same time, the progress of the character-based approach also exhibits a reverse feedback from lower level practice, namely the publication of Landscape Assessment guidance the experiences of conducting LCA. This most is evident in PPG7 97 when the character approach was first introduced into the policy texts based on the Countryside Character Programme and the publication of Landscape Assessment guidance.

### **5.5.2 The chronological examination of local practice**

A similar chronological examination is also illustrated in figure 5.6 by using the three cases at local level. The transition between landscape approaches is plotted on the bar over each case. Policy documents involving either one or both approaches are highlighted as triangles (development plans) and rectangular boxes (landscape relevant publications). Key inputs from the national and international level are also marked at the top of the timeline. As the development of LLDs and the character-based approach have been described in case studies, the following discussion will focus on the features of the transitional period and the influences from higher planning tier on local practice.

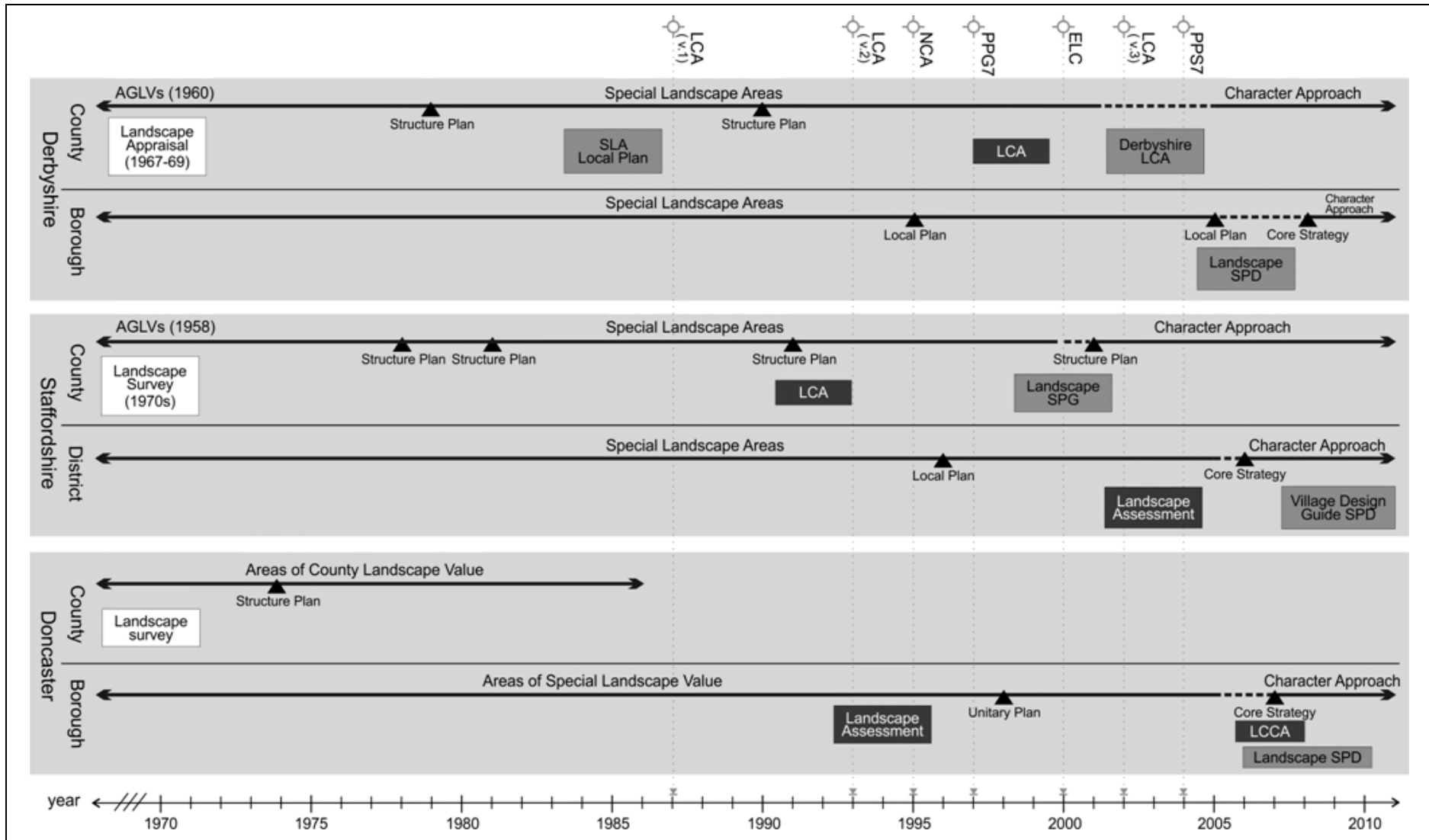


Figure 5.6 Development of the landscape character turn at local level

## Features of the transitional period (overall comparison)

The general trend shows that the transition was initiated by county councils in terms of incorporating policies on landscape character, which was later succeeded in district/borough Local Plans. At county level, the transition mainly happened in early 2000, when the last version of the county Structure Plan was produced. However, at district/borough level, it was not until the new planning system after 2004 that the use of the character approach formally came into existence and is expected to continue in future policies. Since the carrying out of landscape planning approaches in planning considerations depends on their being incorporated into planning policies, the change of landscape policies has to be made when local authorities update their development plans. This is why the transition of landscape approaches in figure 5.6 always happened in accordance with specific development plan. On closer inspection, the transitional periods of the three cases are slightly different:

- In Derbyshire County the transition began with the last version of the Structure Plan in 2001, and ended when the Plan was replaced with the publication of the East Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy around 2005. In High Peak Borough, the transition happened from the publication of the Local Plan for saved policies (2005) to its being replaced by the first draft Core Strategy three years later (2008). Meanwhile, the SPD on landscape character and relevant studies on the new approach were produced based on the county experience.
- In both Staffordshire County and South Staffordshire District, the transitional period was more implicit. A ‘sharp turn’ can rather be found when Staffordshire County updated the last version of the Structure Plan (2001) and when South Staffordshire formulated the first draft of Core Strategy Option (2006). Although in South Staffordshire the issue of landscape character was already mentioned in the Local Plan (1996), this cannot be taken as a complete planning approach, as the execution measures of the character approach were not yet developed.
- In Doncaster, the first introduction of the policy on landscape character in the UDP (1998) was justified by the 1994 Landscape Assessment. However, it was not until the preparation of the Core Strategy that the new approach was made secure in the planning system, accompanied by the LCCA study and landscape SPD. It is likely that the later involvement of the approach in Doncaster results from the lack of guidance from county level authorities.

The discussion of the transitional features reemphasise the role county councils play in facilitating the character-based approach to be realised at district level as nearly all district LCAs are developed on the basis of county practice, such as the hierarchy of landscape characterisation. Therefore, the future use of the character approach under the LDF still requires more involvement from the county practice in terms of updating LCAs

and coordinating landscape planning issues across counties. For Doncaster where a higher tier authority is absent, it is noteworthy the Borough's subsequent use of the approach and how the landscape capacity study informs future planning practice.

### **Influence from the national practice**

The development of the character approach is also shaped by the national practice in two ways: the methodology of LCA and government policy guidance. The three versions of LCA and the Countryside Character Programme all had an input into the local practice at different points in time:

- The first guidance on Landscape Assessment (1987) contributed to the early LCA work in Staffordshire. Since the Staffordshire LCA was first developed for woodland guidance, at this premature stage the work was still some way from being developed as a planning tool.
- The second version of Landscape Assessment guidance (1993) contributed to the production of Doncaster Landscape Assessment (1994). The justification for the use of ASLVs in the Doncaster Assessment was just one of the suggested applications in the 1993 guidance. The Derbyshire LCA demonstrated a more consistent hierarchy of character areas/types based on the landscape classification system established in the Countryside Character Map. In contrast, LCAs conducted before the Countryside Character Programme, such as the Staffordshire and Doncaster LCAs, exhibited rather mixed and confused ways of landscape classification.
- LCA undertaken after the third version of Landscape Character Assessment (2002), including the final publication of Derbyshire LCA (2003), High Peak landscape SPD (2006) and Doncaster Landscape Character and Capacity Assessment (2007) and its further work on site-level assessment (2010), derived more benefit from the advanced implementation suggested in the 2002 guidance. For example, the logical link between key characteristics and development, different landscape strategies and the concept of landscape capacity and sensitivity can all be found in studies generated during this stage.

Insofar as the influence came from policy guidance, since PPG7 (1992) only made a passing reference to the emerging technique of Landscape Assessment, landscape character in development plans was at best adopted as a wider context for countryside policies. At this stage, only South Staffordshire Local Plan (1996) broadly mentioned the concept of landscape character. However, after PPG7 (1997) introduced the character approach, it significantly contributed to the last version of the Structure Plan of Staffordshire and Derbyshire, and partly the Unitary Development Plan of Doncaster (1998). From PPG7 onwards, there was an explicit trend of converting LCAs into policy tools such as landscape SPG or SPD at both county and local level. In PPS7 (2004), the use of the character approach was further encouraged in the form of criteria-based

policies as a substitute for LLD policies, where appropriate. In this light and also under the reformed system, specific policies on landscape character (or similar titles) are now widely addressed in the Core Strategy. At the higher level, the ELC (2000) and its UK implementation framework (2007) also underpin the approach in terms of the holistic definition of landscape and policy delivery measures. However, as the ELC is currently not legally binding, there has not been any evidence which shows the UK implementation framework has been taken account of in local planning policies. In fact, the ELC is only referred to by landscape officers principally to support the use of the character approach.

### **Generalisation of case studies**

The last issue to be explored is whether the local practice of the two landscape approaches, exemplified by the three sample areas, can be generalised into other local authorities in England. According to table 4.10 and 4.20 which summarised the current adoption of the character-based approach among local authorities, at least in Derbyshire and Staffordshire there is a general trend of incorporating character-based approach policies in the Core Strategy regardless of the different degree of involvement. Under the requirement of PPS7 (2004) and the widespread use of county level LCAs in England, it is very likely that all other districts/boroughs will incorporate the new approach into LDFs in one way or another. Although the three cases all show a positive response to using the new approach in planning control, the same pattern may more likely to be found where the key factors to success, such as sufficient professional knowledge, are present. The uncertainty of conducting the approach actually exists in whether other local authorities are capable of making robust landscape arguments to inform development control decisions. To sum up, it is very likely that the character-based approach will continue to be put forward in England as a number of examples are developed concurrently elsewhere, including the demonstrative project of the character approach (White Consultants for West Sussex), the investigation of landscape tools (LUC for the South West) and good practice orally put by interview participants (like Shropshire and the Peak District).



# PART III

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## *Examination of the 'landscape character turn'*

Part III will present the conclusion of the whole research in three chapters:

- Ch6 as the second stage of theory testing will use case studies to examine the landscape planning approaches in two Taiwan local authorities by using the similar structure for the UK local practice established in chapter 4.
- Ch7 as the theory validation study will firstly compare the key concepts between the two countries and then examine the transferability of the UK experience to Taiwan to finalise the research.
- Ch8 draws findings from the previous chapter and integrates them in the form of summary of discussions, reflections on different parts of the research and conclusions.



## CHAPTER 6

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### *Landscape approaches in comparison: case studies of Taiwan local authorities*

The third step in the research, comparing the UK experience with another planning context, is based on a case study in the researcher's home country Taiwan. In cross-national comparative studies, there is always an advantage in using the researchers' 'local' knowledge to bridge the gap between theory and practice and to give a better explanation of outcomes (Hantrais, 2009, p.88). There is a further advantage to taking Taiwan as the comparison unit in terms of the country's involvement in both local landscape designations and landscape character assessment in the last 10 years. First, the trend towards establishing Special Landscape Areas in Taiwan, which is in some way the reverse of the UK (England) experience of abandoning the use of LLDs, is worth discussing in the light of knowledge transfer and drawing lessons. Second, the recent introduction of LCA in planning concepts and county level Landscape Master Plans also provides an opportunity to test the generalisation of the UK experience.

Having set the overall scene of landscape planning in Taiwan in chapter 1, this chapter presents the use of landscape planning approaches in Taiwan in parallel to the UK case studies in chapter 4 to build the context for the subsequent comparative analysis. Two local authorities in Taiwan were selected to demonstrate the current practice of county level landscape planning and the involvement of LCA. The first case, Taipei County, features contrasting landscapes, from the densely built areas of the Taipei Metropolitan Area to rural villages and countryside of mountain and coastal areas. The second case, Yilan County, is predominately rural in character and relatively less influenced by urbanisation owing to its enclosed topography. The two cases were chosen firstly on account of the accessibility of research resources, especially the interview participants, and secondly because of the same author of their Landscape Master Plans, which enabled the two cases to be described in a similar form. In addition, the five-year time difference between the two Landscape Master Plans could demonstrate the progress in landscape planning concepts and techniques. The two sample authorities will be described and analysed in separate sections, the findings of which will be then used to build the overall practice of landscape planning in Taiwan in the last section.

## 6.1 Case study design and analysis

### Research design for Taiwan case study

Research materials used for the Taiwan case study were policy documents and interview transcripts (table 6.1). Policy documents included county level Landscape Master Plans, Special Landscape Area management plans and relevant consultation reports. Landscape Master Plans in particular were the main sources for constructing the sample authorities' approach to landscape planning owing to their role in integrating county-wide landscape affairs. The methods for assessing landscape, the use of Special Landscape Areas and the delivery of landscape planning were the key issues for analysis. It should be noted that, by the end of data collection the Yilan Landscape Master Plan is still in progress, so the discussion in this chapter were based on the interim draft of the Plan published in December 2011. Interviews were conducted with government officers, landscape academics and landscape architects for both cases. In order to gain a complete view of the current status and nature of landscape planning in Taiwan, four unstructured interviews were also carried out to provide background knowledge, but without being fed into textual analysis and coding. The content of the interviews was in two parts:

- a short introduction to this research and the character-based approach in the UK
- questions on the attitude, opinion and experience of conducting landscape planning in each local authority mainly based on the use of the Landscape Master Plan


The interview structure used questions on several broad issues supplemented by minor questions (see Appendix B). For interviews conducted with landscape architects, the justifications of developing Landscape Master Plans were particularly emphasised.

Field surveys were conducted for two separate periods of time, February/March 2010 and December 2011 owing to the researcher's schedule and the delayed publication of the Landscape Master Plan of Yilan County.

Table 6.1 Data sources for Taiwan case studies

Source	Case 1: Taipei County	Case 2: Yilan County
<b>Policy documents</b>	1. County-level Comprehensive Plan (1993, 2002) 2. Landscape Master Plan (Feb 2006) 3. Two Key Landscape Area Plans	1. County-level Comprehensive Plan (2002) 2. Landscape Master Plan (interim report, Dec 2011)
<b>Interviews</b>	2 council officers from Urban/Rural Development Dept, Taipei County Council 1 landscape architect	1 council officer from Economic Affairs Dept, Yilan County Council 1 landscape architect (the same person as case 1)

Table 6.2 Information about sample Taiwan local authorities



	Taipei County*	Yilan County
Area	2052.6km <sup>2</sup>	2143.6 km <sup>2</sup>
Population	3,911,833**	459,296
Environmental features	Urban urban fringe rural space	Town/village rural space
Industrial features	commerce manufacture	agriculture tourism

\* Taipei County was granted the status of metropolitan city (New Taipei City) in the 2011 government reorganisation. However in this research its original title is still used

\*\* the most populous county in Taiwan

Area/population: based on Oct 2011 National Statistics  
<http://www.stat.gov.tw> (retrieved: 29 Nov 2011)

## Coding system and analytic framework

The way in which documents and interview transcripts were analysed is similar to the case studies in the UK. In Section 6.2 and 6.3, case description and policy documents will be the main source of evidence to build the picture of landscape planning in each authority, with the practical aspects supplemented by interview contents. Section 6.4, the conclusion, will be built upon intra (within) and inter (between) case analysis. The process of case analysis will begin with grouping the codes identified from interview transcripts into a hierarchical framework. The headings of the hierarchy will be the building blocks for presenting findings in the forms of patterns, drivers of change and the use of landscape approaches in the context of Taiwan.

### 6.2 Case study 1: Taipei County

Taipei County is the most populated administrative area in Taiwan. The County has long been the hinterland of the country's capital Taipei City, providing land, labour and other types of resources. The rapid industrialisation and urbanisation for the last fifty years have resulted in a bipolar development of the County's landscape. For areas adjacent to Taipei City, the high degree of development means that the landscape is considerably shaped by human activities and urban land use types. However for areas far from the development cores, the wide diversity of mountains, hills, open fields, river and coastal landscapes give a strong rural character. These areas, most of which

are non-urban, provide important tourism resources for people living in nearby urban areas.

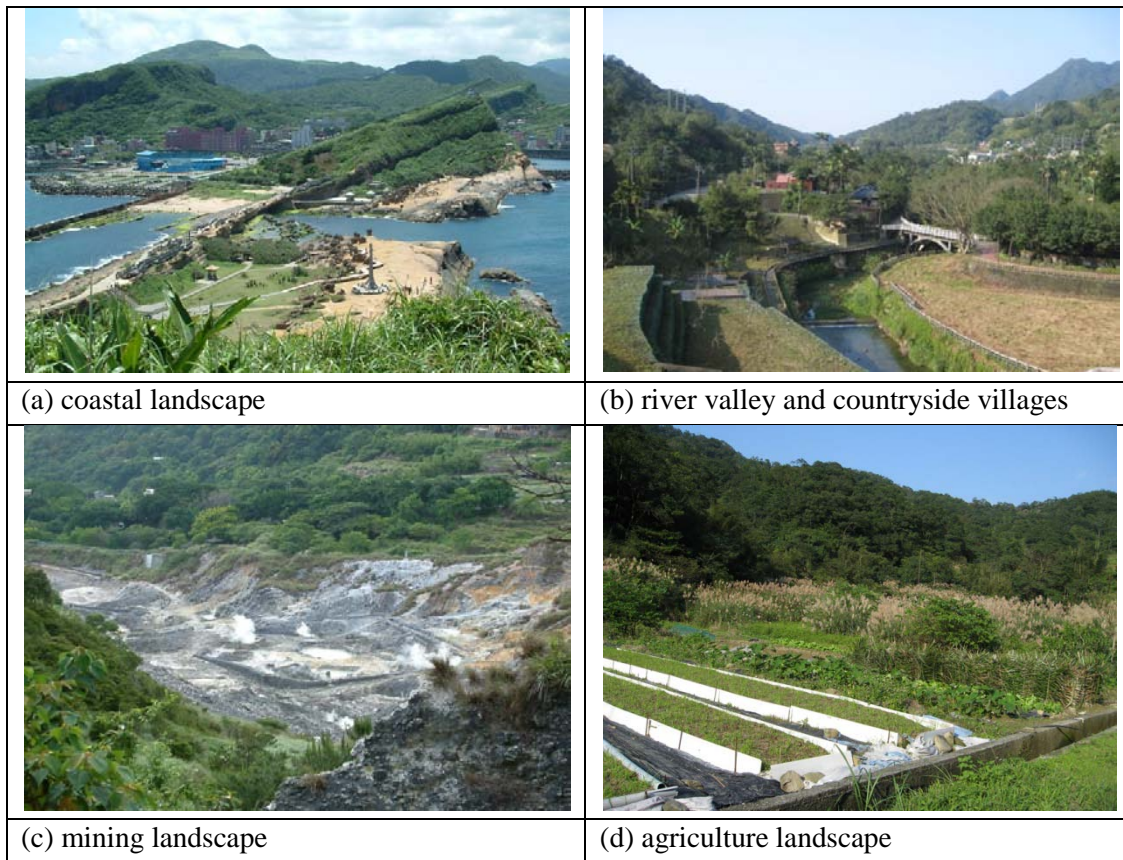


Figure 6.1 Characteristic landscapes of Taipei County

### 6.2.1 Landscape planning in Taipei County

#### Landscape issues in development plans

Spatial plans have been prepared for Taipei County since the 1960s. Until the 1990s, the development issues in the County used to be considered together with the adjacent cities/counties in the form of northern Taiwan<sup>46</sup> regional plans (Taipei County Council (TCC), 1993). The first comprehensive county level plan of Taipei County came into effect in 1993. In this plan, the issue of landscape was not mentioned specifically, but was dispersed throughout two sections: tourism and environment. In the tourism section, landscape was taken to mean vernacular cultures, such as aboriginal culture, folk culture and industrial culture, which can contribute to tourism development (TCC, 1993). The concept of taking landscape as a form of tourism resource was also reflected in the advocacy of sight-seeing tourism and the construction of scenic road systems. In contrast, the environment section, where the issue of landscape was supposed to be stressed, focused mainly on pollution control with only a passing reference to planting or other landscape issues. Similar perspectives were again raised in the revision of the

<sup>46</sup> The regions of Taiwan normally indicate four parts: northern, middle, southern and eastern

Plan in 2002, in which landscape was viewed as a scenic resource in the tourism section and in terms only of planting works in the environment section.

Table 6.3 Spatial development plans of Taipei County

Year	Title of development plans
1965/67	Taipei-Keelung Metropolitan Plan (台北基隆都會區計畫)
1969	Northern Taiwan Regional Development Plan (台灣北區區域建設計畫)
1979	Northern Taiwan Regional development Plan (北區區域計畫)
1991	Taipei Metropolitan Physical Construction Plan (台北都會區實質規劃)
1993	Taipei County Comprehensive Plan (台北縣綜合開發計畫)
2002	Taipei County Comprehensive Plan (2 <sup>nd</sup> ver.)
2011	The Cross-boundary Spatial Strategic Plan for Northern Taiwan (北北基生活圈跨域空間發展整體策略規劃)

Major change occurred in 2011 when revolutionary ideas of ‘landscape units’ and ‘landscape character classification’ were introduced in the latest Spatial Strategic Plan for Northern Taiwan (2011). This Plan, prepared by the Institute for Physical Planning & Information<sup>47</sup>, included these ideas based on their prior study on National Landscape Master Plan, which was inspired partly by LCA and the European Landscape Character Areas Initiative (see Section 1.3.3). Instead of mentioning environmental pollution and nature conservation, the identification of areas with different natural and cultural landscape characteristics was recognised as one of the two most crucial environmental issues alongside the need to build ecological networks (Table 6.4). Although the notion of landscape character in this plan was only at a preliminary stage of development and further steps were not specified, it resonated well with the concepts and methods in LCA and is likely to be developed fuller in the near future.

Table 6.4 Two environmental issues in the Spatial Strategic Plan for Northern Taiwan

Spatial issue	The fragmentation of ecological network	The loss of local character
<b>Spatial strategy</b>	improve the connectivity of habitats in blue/green corridors	conserve and enhance the character of landscape units
<b>Practical solution</b>	Construct, conserve and restore the environment of blue/green corridors	Conduct survey on landscape units and conserve/enhance their local character

(Source: Based on Taipei City Council, 2011)

### Landscape Master Plan

Landscape planning in Taipei County is normally conducted in three main ways (Interview with Taipei County planning officer, 09/03/10):

<sup>47</sup> A non department government agency funded in 2002, initially specialised in property market and later on expanded the remit to providing national level planning suggestions.

- landscape improvement schemes carried out by district and township councils, which are normally a part of tourism development projects;
- landscape architectural design in major development carried out by the County Council;
- planting and landscaping schemes initiated by both public and private sectors

Since landscape planning is rather scattered in development plans, the main function of the Landscape Master Plan was to integrate landscape-relevant planning issues by providing a comprehensive framework and delivery mechanism. The Landscape Master Plan of Taipei County, produced in 2005/06, addressed landscape issues in three sections: plan context, landscape resource inventory and operational mechanisms. The first section, **plan context**, established the link between landscape and wider planning contexts and existing policies, from which the aims and objectives of the Plan were derived. This strongly indicates that the use of the Landscape Master Plan is not just for providing landscape information, but is related to other forms of spatial plans and action plans (Interview with Head of Urban/Rural Development Dept, 01/03/10; K.Y. Wang, 20/12/11). It is noteworthy that the competent authority for landscape planning is the Urban and Rural Development Department, previously the Urban Planning Division under the Public Works Department. Therefore, it is not surprising that the aim of addressing landscape issues in the Plan is to involve and improve planning strategies and public infrastructure by using landscape concepts and techniques. Also, as the planning officer put it, landscape provides the aesthetic element for city marketing, which is particularly explicit in Taipei County as the provider of the landscape resource for the urban population.

The second section, **landscape resource inventory**, was primarily the review of the county's landscape resources as required in the Landscape Act in terms of constructing of landscape systems (which literally means the identification of different types of landscape resource). Landscape systems in this Plan were established according to two steps. Firstly, seven homogenous areas, called 'landscape character systems', were mapped by overlaying different landscape themes (e.g. geology, ecosystems, protected areas, historical development, industries, etc.) (figure 6.2). Following the construction of the landscape character system which merely took account of landscape factors, planning and spatial development issues identified from the outset of the Plan were converted into six indicators for the establishment of another 'landscape value systems' with regard to:

- international and national importance
- designated areas
- ecological value
- industrial development value



- cultural/historical value
- landscape image, landmark and visual corridor value

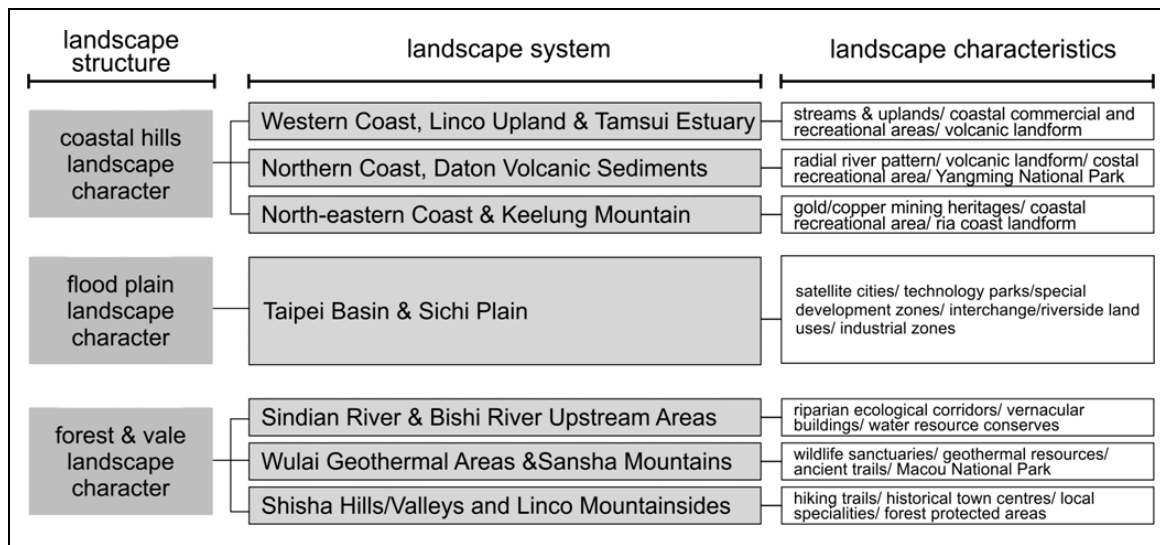


Figure 6.2 Homogeneous areas and landscape classification in Taipei County Landscape Master Plan

(Source: Based on Taiwan Institute of Landscape Architects (TILA), 2006, p.2-3-7)

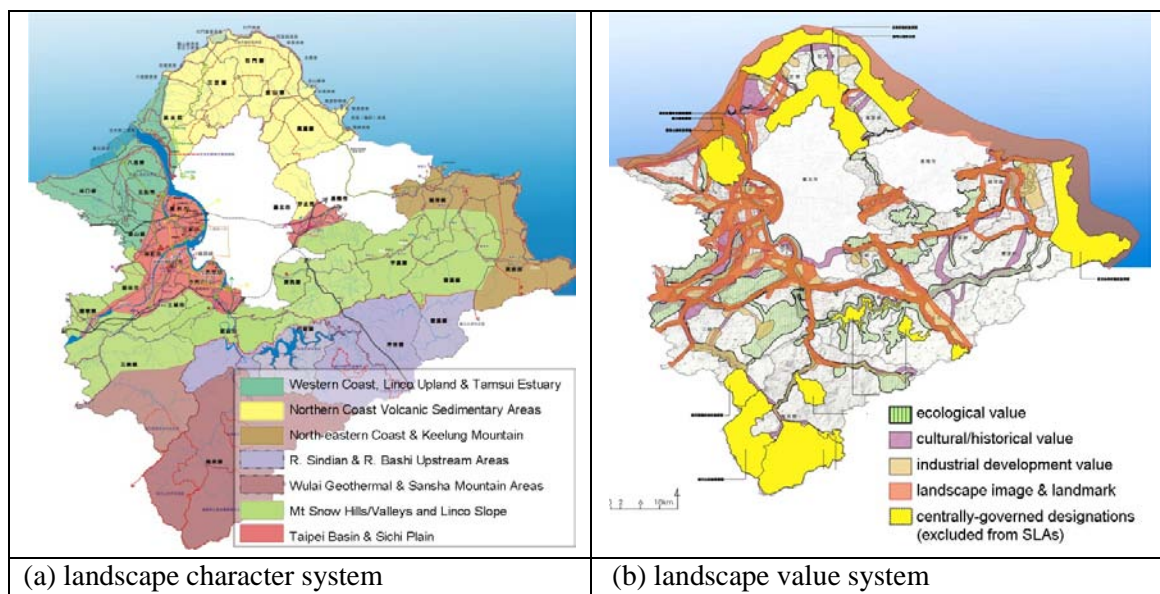


Figure 6.3 Landscape resource systems (Source: Based on TILA, 2006, p.2-4-2)

### 6.2.2 The use of Special Landscape Areas

The third section of the Landscape Master Plan and also its outcome is the identification of Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) as the key units for future landscape management. In this Landscape Master Plan, 27 SLAs of nine categories emerged by overlaying the maps of the pre-identified landscape character system and landscape value system (see figure 6.3). Each SLA was briefly introduced in terms of its landscape resources, development visions and practical strategies with reference to the

existing and future spatial plans. Notably, the locations of SLAs were defined by rough boundaries and textual descriptions rather than real lines on the map to avoid practical problems like land ownership or land use legislation.

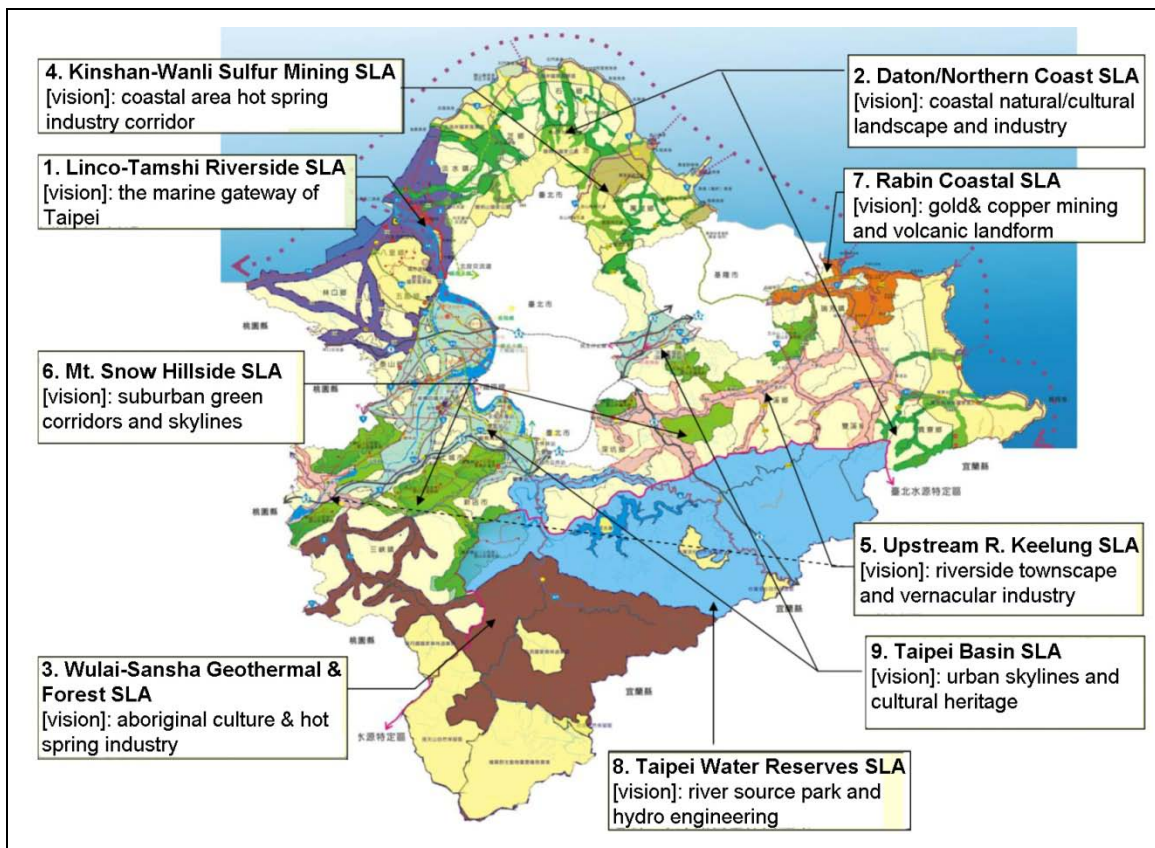


Figure 6.4 Nine SLA categories of Taipei County

(Source: Based on TILA, 2006, p.2-4-2)

The practical issue of selecting appropriate SLAs, in addition to their landscape value as described above, were closely linked to administrative factors (Interview with K.Y. Wang, 11/03/10):

- planning priority and the relevance to the existing/future spatial plans, such as urban regeneration or tourism development; and
- the accessibility of government funds and public and private grants

These factors indicate that although originally all types of landscapes were eligible to be chosen as SLAs, the final selection of SLAs depended very much on practical considerations rather than landscape character itself.

### SLA management plans

In addition to briefly listing each SLA in the Landscape Master Plan, four preliminary SLA management plans were developed in 2010 for five districts/townships, to address further management issues and action plans. Two of

them were made available by the planning officer to demonstrate the tentative delivery strategies for the SLA approach. These two management plans are about devising waterfront landscape improvement strategies. They did not place too much stress on landscape analysis and assessment, but rather on physical design principles and landscape architectural schemes in the forms of comprehensive master plans and detailed site plans. Forward-looking landscape improvement schemes constitute the main part of the management plans with several sites highlighted for development of landscape design proposals (figure 6.5).

Ways of achieving landscape management, according to these plans, were largely coupled with the mechanisms of urban planning, such as through changes in land use class and coordination with urban renewal schemes. This resonates well with what most interview participants mentioned about the tendency to identify SLAs within urban areas where planning regulations and mechanisms are more robust. This also raised another fundamental concern for planning officers, namely the time span for delivering Landscape Master Plans and SLAs management plans. Since landscape plans are highly reflective of the current planning needs and decision makers' expectations, landscape plans, including SLA management plans, tend to be short-term and fragmented in nature.

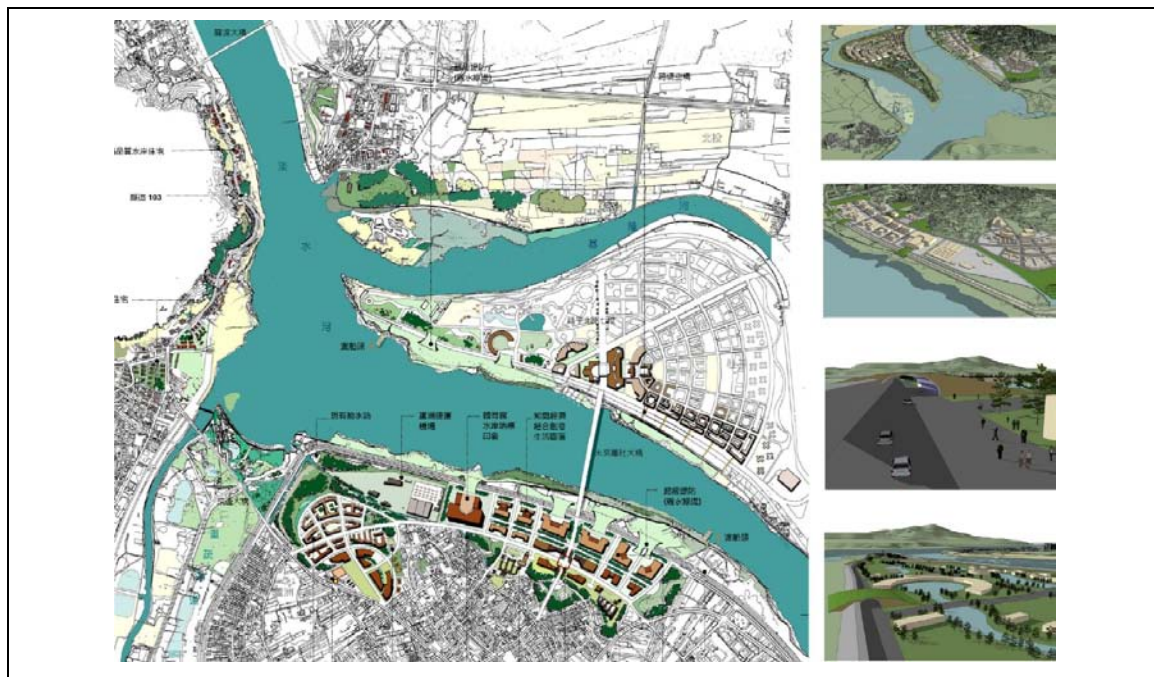


Figure 6.5 Design simulation for the northern section of Tamshi riverbank

(Source: ECG Consultants, 2009, p.6-53)

### Landscape planning in non-urban areas

Since the current practice of landscape planning focus mainly on urban areas where regulations on landscape are enshrined, landscape planning issues in non-urban areas or

the wider countryside are largely ignored, not only for Taipei County but also for other counties in Taiwan. Considering the mechanism for development control in non-urban areas, as the interview participant (planning officer) put it, the degree to which landscape arguments are taken into decision making depends on whether the issue of landscape is of interest to the development control committee. Since the development permit regulation (i.e. the Directions for Examination of Operations of Non-urban Development) does not specify the degree and extent to which landscape should be addressed, there is always vagueness for both developers and development control commissions to decide how much weight should be given to landscape. However, there is currently no guidance on or reference to landscape in planning control, nor did the Landscape Master Plan of Taipei County include this issue.

### **6.3 Case study 2: Yilan County**

Yilan County lies in the northeast part of Taiwan. The County is a triangular basin surrounded by high mountains with the east end opened to the Pacific Ocean. The County's topographic structure causes a variety of landscapes ranging from mountains, hills, alluvial fans and coasts. The surrounding mountains divide the County from the adjacent parts of the northern region of Taiwan, which made the county relatively remote and inaccessible in the past. The reliance on agriculture and the exclusion of heavy industry further protected the County from urbanisation and industrialisation in comparison to most other counties in Taiwan. With the completion in 2006 of the motorway which cuts through the mountains, the distance between Yilan and northern Taiwan has been shortened considerably, causing significant changes to traditional industry and land use, and making landscape planning an urgent issue.

#### **6.3.1 Landscape planning in Yilan County**

##### **Landscape issues in development plans**

As far as regional planning is concerned, Yilan County belongs to the northern region of Taiwan and traditionally shared the same planning considerations (see table 6.3). The first county level Comprehensive Plan of Yilan came into effect in 1987 and was revised in 2002 in response to the possible impacts caused by the motorway indicated above. The 2002 Plan covered the issue of landscape from three perspectives: environment, tourism and culture. In the tourism and cultural sections, landscape was simply referred as a type of resource in terms of tourist attractions and historical heritage. In parallel, the environmental section mentioned landscape with particular regard to the County's environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) by using the term 'natural landscape' to indicate physical features like coast, rivers and lakes and vegetation. Sensitive natural landscapes in this sense were comprised of the statutory



designations and Scenic Areas in this county (National Taiwan Uni. Inst. of Building and Planning, 2002).

In addition to the county level Comprehensive Plan, in which landscape issues were not clearly covered, there are still county level plans developed specifically for landscape planning, including the Park and Greenery Plan (2002) and Green Corridor Plan (2005). These two plans focused on the analysis and construction of green networks based on landscape ecological principles, such as green corridors, buffer zones, scenic roads and planting guides. In terms of land use and spatial planning, a study on landscape control in 2000 specified landscape regulatory strategies in terms of street beautification, building appearance control and planting guidelines. However, although these plans and studies stressed the importance of landscape in spatial planning and construction, they still failed to capture the holistic nature of landscape. A more comprehensive view of landscape was first presented in the county’s master plan on rural character directed by the Soil and Water Conservation Bureau. Parts of the outcomes in terms of identifying rural characteristics were fed into the literature review in the later work of Landscape Master Plan.

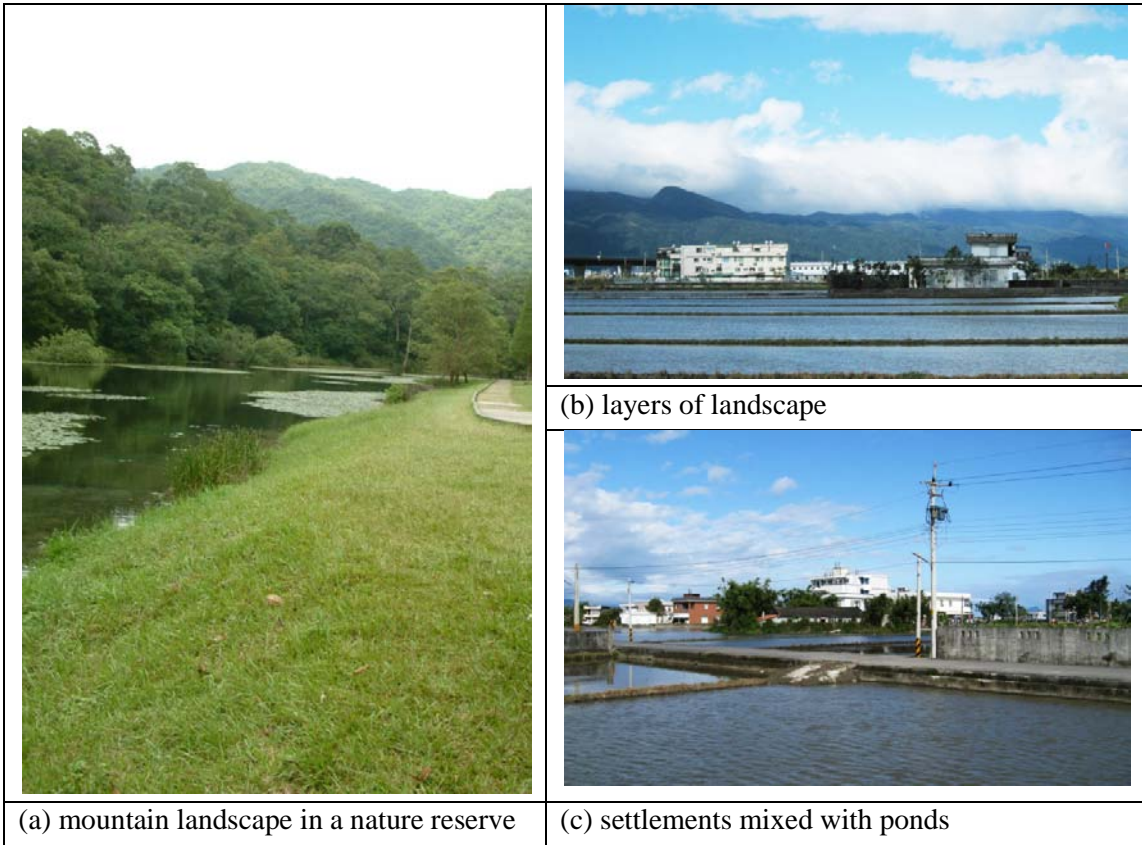


Figure 6.6 Characteristic landscapes of Yilan County

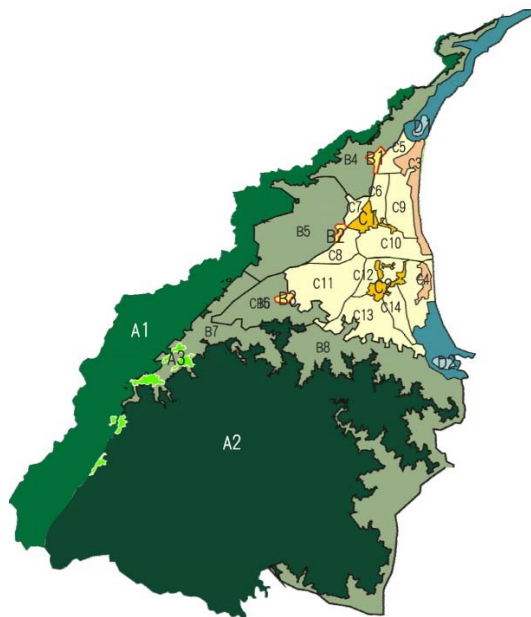
## Landscape Master Plan

The basic structure of the Yilan Landscape Master Plan is similar to that of the Taipei Plan in terms of dividing the study into the three sections of plan context, landscape resource inventory and classification and SLA-relevant applications. Since the Yilan Plan was developed much later than most other counties, more advanced concepts and ways of defining and analysing landscape were stressed in this Plan than elsewhere. Firstly, the Plan pointed out that landscape was not just scenery or individual landscape elements, but rather the harmonious interaction between humans and nature, which was in line with the concept of ‘lived-in landscape’ defined by IUCN and the ELC definition of people and place (see Section 1.1.2). This recognition in the Plan suggested any excessive improvement or enhancement would unduly damage the balance between humans and the environment and damage the County’s character.

The Plan continued with the identification of landscape systems by classifying the topography into four main types: mountains, hills, alluvial fans and transitional zones<sup>48</sup> as the basic building blocks. The next step was particularly important in terms of introducing the use of Landscape Character Assessment in the form of a hierarchy of landscape character types and areas. As can be seen in table 6.5, a simple system was developed to classify landscape character types in terms of forest, rural and town landscapes, and landscape character areas according to their administrative boundaries (such as parishes).

Table 6.5 Landscape characterisation of Yilan County

Topographic areas	Landscape character types	landscape character areas
mountains	forest landscape	A1 A2
	rural landscape	A3
hills	town landscape	B1 B2 B3
	rural landscape	B4- B8
alluvial fan	town landscape	C1 C2
	rural landscape	coastal areas
		inland areas
transitional zones	town landscape	D1 D2
	rural landscape	D3



\* landscape character areas (A1-D3) are all local place names, translations are omitted here

(Source: ECG Consultants, 2011, p.5-3)

<sup>48</sup> transitional zones indicate areas where mountains merge with coasts

However, instead of moving forward to further applications of LCA, the Landscape Master Plan merely adopted the landscape characterisation as an additional step in landscape inventory and immediately turned back to the similar establishment landscape systems as was the case in Taipei County. In this Plan, ten general landscape systems were identified to encapsulate different natural and cultural features like mountain, coastal and industrial landscapes (table 6.6). Each landscape system was then described in terms of its spatial extent, a list of landscape resources, site-based landscape features of both good and poor quality and planning strategies. The generation of the ten systems did not exhibit a direct relationship to the previously identified landscape character types/areas since the boundaries of these systems did not match that of the character areas. Also according to the contents of the Plan, there was no explicit evidence which showed that landscape characterisation had in any way informed the description of each landscape system. There seemed to be a gap between the preliminary use of LCA and the other parts of the Landscape Master Plan.

### **6.3.2 The use of Special Landscape Areas**

#### **The selection of SLAs**

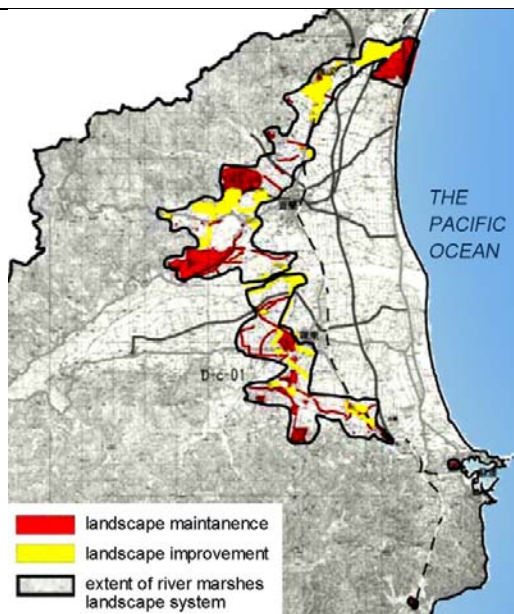
Regardless of the rather complicated process of landscape inventory and classification, the most expected outcome by the planning officers was the identification of SLAs (Interview with K.Y. Wang, 20/12/11). However, from the previous stage of the identification of landscape systems to the selection of SLAs was a lengthy process because of values and expectations of planning officers and the plan examiners. Different evaluation methods, such as ratings and checklists, also prevented the process from focusing on landscape information but rather on the practicability of SLAs (Interview with Yilan planning officer, 11/01/12; K.Y. Wang, 20/12/11). The ten general landscape systems identified previously were thus converted into another ten systems called the 'SLA systems', which literally means the types of SLAs. 33 preliminary SLAs were selected in the interim report, which were later on reorganised into 65 SLAs belonged to twelve 'strategic landscape areas' by the time the interview was conducted (11/01/12).

By comparing the two systems in table 6.6 below, it is clear that the ten types of landscape systems do not coincide the SLA systems. The difference between the general landscape systems and SLA systems again underlines the influence of practical planning and management considerations. According to the planning officers, SLAs have to be sites which are small and definite enough to concentrate financial and administrative resources, otherwise even areas with specific and extraordinary landscape character have to be excluded. The system of high mountains, for example, was excluded because of their relative inaccessibility. Farming landscape was also intentionally ruled out owing to the private land ownership despite the fact that it is a

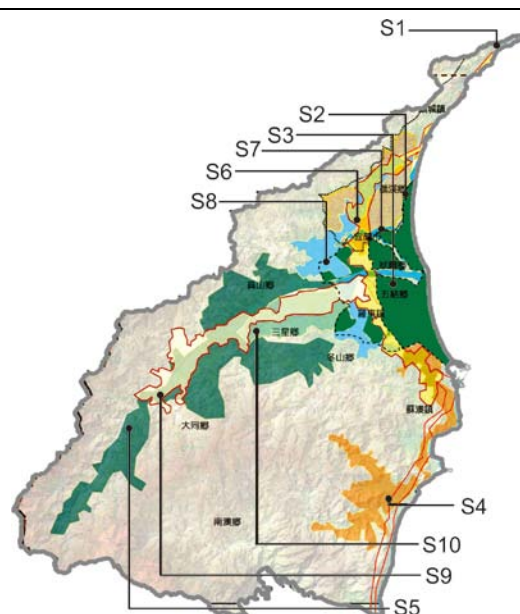
crucial part of Yilan landscape (Interview with Yilan planning officer, 11/01/12; K.Y. Wang, 20/12/11).

Table 6.6 General landscape systems and SLA systems

General landscape systems	SLA systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high mountains (&gt;500m)</li> <li>• hills (&lt;500m)</li> <li>• <b>river system/ marshes</b> (example map as belows)</li> <li>• ponds/alluvial-fan springs</li> <li>• hot spring</li> <li>• arable farming landscapes</li> <li>• towns &amp; villages</li> <li>• cultural landscapes</li> <li>• industrial landscapes</li> <li>• coastal landscapes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Touchen-Jiaoci green networks ( S1)</li> <li>• Greater Ilan green networks ( S2)</li> <li>• Greater Lodong green networks ( S3)</li> <li>• Suao-Nanao ancient trails ( S4)</li> <li>• Lanyan river valley and settlements ( S5)</li> <li>• Railway networks ( S6)</li> <li>• Canal networks ( S7)</li> <li>• Alluvial-fan springs and settlements ( S8)</li> <li>• Forest railway and timber industry ( S9)</li> <li>• Annon Stream green networks ( S10)</li> </ul>



(a) landscape system example: river marshes  
(Based on ECG Consultants, 2011, p.5-20)



(b) distribution of SLA systems  
(Based on ECG Consultants, 2011, p.6-3)

### The potential use of SLAs

The proposed use of SLAs, as defined in the Yilan Landscape Master Plan, was to develop landscape strategies and control guidelines based on their characteristics. As the spatial units for concentrating planning resources and strategies, SLAs in practice were also expected by the County planning officers to be helpful for:

- informing spatial plans where landscape issues are important;
- identifying the sites where the Urban-Rural Landscape Reform Plan (the government funded plan for landscape infrastructure, see 1.3.1) can be implemented;



- raising the awareness of landscape issues relevant to development within SLAs.

These possible functions suggest that SLAs are expected to be executed in such a way that landscapes are improved and enhanced rather than being regulated and causing controversies. Therefore in the SLA descriptions, any landscape strategies and management guidelines were largely devised according to the principles of landscape architectural design and practical planning needs. For example, in the 5<sup>th</sup> SLA system: Lanyan river valley and settlements, landscape strategies included the enhancement of local character and leisure activities along riverside settlements, the conservation and restoration of river habitat and the development of geothermal tourism. The implementation of each one of the strategies was further linked to given national and county level plans, projects and initiatives. This strongly indicates that physical spatial plans were the necessary mechanism to carry out landscape planning in SLAs.

### **Landscape planning in non-urban areas**

In terms of the implementation of the Landscape Master Plan, the same gap between urban areas and non-urban areas is also true for Yilan County, as it was shown in Taipei. According to the planning officer, the issue of landscape was rarely discussed in non-urban planning applications unless the development sites themselves were environmentally sensitive and the public were aware of them. For example, it was natural to take account of landscape issues for developments near tourist attractions, while it was not necessarily the case for developments in farming landscapes. If developments are within the area limit (10ha) in terms of granting development permits and are in line with the land use class order, it is hard for landscape issues to be realised. Moreover, the pre-existing Master Plan on rural character mentioned in the beginning of this section was found of little relevance of the main considerations in the Landscape Master Plan, which again highlights the dichotomy of dealing with landscape issues in urban and non-urban areas.

## **6.4 Discussion of landscape planning in Taiwan**

This section presents the analysis of these case studies of county level landscape planning by organising and interpreting the codes extracted from research materials, especially on the use of SLAs and the emerging issue of landscape character. The findings will be discussed in the form of thematic description and cross-case comparison in order to draw out general points on the overall landscape planning practice in Taiwan.

### **6.4.1 The coding system and the analytic framework**

The textual analysis of the Taiwan study was analysed by a hierarchical coding system, in which the codes were labelled and structured in an equivalent way to that in

the UK study, as preparation of the subsequent cross-national comparison. The top-level code headings, generated by combining a set of relevant codes, represent the emergent properties of landscape planning in Taiwan. These headings are also called ‘concepts’ in terms of their later use in the comparative study. The uses and definitions of the major headings/concepts are as follows:

Table 6.7 Definition of headings/concepts in Taiwan case studies

Concept	Definition
actors	individuals or institutions which involve landscape planning in both public and private sectors
landscape interpretation	the different ways of conceptualising the term landscape
landscape legislation	statutory requirements on landscape, such as acts and laws
landscape planning	the measures by which landscape issues are delivered in the planning system
landscape approach	the specific set of tools for executing landscape planning, which specifically indicate the master planning approach in this case
Landscape Master Plan	county level plans addressing landscape resource systems, Special Landscape Areas and other relevant landscape planning issues
Special Landscape Areas (SLAs)	areas of abundant landscape resources that merit planning priority or areas of degraded landscapes that require particular improvement
landscape strategies	the practical actions/action plans to deliver landscape planning in detail

The logical and causal links between these concepts, alongside several other minor considerations, can be further structured by a conceptual map as follows.

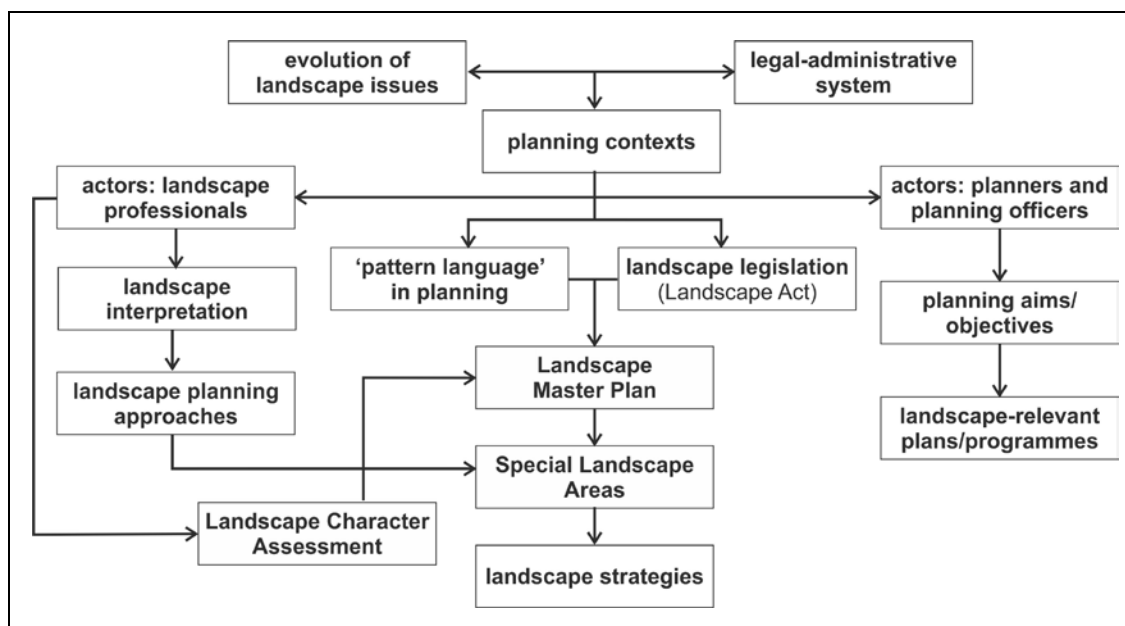


Figure 6.7 Conceptual map of landscape planning concepts in Taiwan

### **6.4.2 Key themes of landscape planning in Taiwan**

Based on the conceptual map in figure 6.7 and also taking account of the underlying contexts of each concept, several themes emerged and are discussed below. They can be summarised as:

- the broad trends in landscape planning are determined by landscape professionals;
- the more detailed aims and objectives of specific landscape plans are determined by planning needs and contexts;
- landscape planning is not just a matter of landscape, but includes wider consideration of architecture, ecology, spatial planning and public affairs;
- the use of SLAs is for active management rather than protective purposes, and
- the involvement of LCA is so far limited and basic.

#### **The influence of landscape professionals**

Landscape planning in Taiwan is very much influenced by the involvement of different actors. The first type of actor, landscape professionals, engages in landscape planning by providing knowledge and interpretation of landscape issues. In other words, the development of landscape approaches depends on the training backgrounds and personal experiences of landscape professionals. In terms of training backgrounds, the advocacy for using the master planning approach implies that the landscape expertise in Taiwan is generally dominated by the landscape aesthetic and design approach from the North American school of landscape architecture (Interview with M. Kou, 17/03/10). This approach has a strong connection to the urban tradition and a direct link to spatial planning. This results in the practice of Taiwan landscape planning mainly within the urban context in the form of public infrastructure. Beyond the landscape aesthetic and design approach, professionals with different backgrounds can also have influences on landscape planning. For example, consultation committees provided the council with planning suggestions on landscape and/or environment can comprise a contested area, including landscape, architecture, cultural heritage and urban design. The involvement in landscape affairs of people from different professional backgrounds on one hand reflects the multi-disciplinary nature of landscape, but on the other hand can also confuse understanding and lessen the importance of landscape in planning considerations.

Secondly, the personal experiences landscape professionals are influential in introducing new ideas and good practice of abroad. Since landscape professionals are sometimes working as contracted landscape researchers for local authorities, their importing theories and practice from overseas also shapes the practice of landscape planning in Taiwan. For example, the Japan Landscape Act and that country's urban landscape planning experiences are widely mentioned in landscape projects owing to

the similar development background and cultural contexts. Similarly, although LCA was first used by academics in the field of geography in the late 1990s, it was not until this method was approached by landscape professionals ten years later that it started to influence the practice of landscape planning.

### **The influences of planners, planning officers and the planning context**

In comparison to landscape professionals who set the broad scene for landscape planning, planners and planning officers tend to shape the way in which landscape issues should be dealt with according to planning needs and policy provisions. The influence of planning considerations is most explicitly shown in the identification of SLAs, which rules out the landscape types or areas considered to be of low planning priority so that planning measures can be concentrated on tracts of land thought more important. In this sense, landscape planning in Taiwan serves planning purposes in terms of creating attractive scenery which benefits to local development. This phenomenon was also emphasised by the landscape consultant when negotiating with local planning officers concerning the Landscape Master Plan, stating the following facts:

- the strong link between Landscape Master Plans and other forms of spatial plans;
- an exceptional interest in the identification of SLAs above other landscape issues;
- the understanding of 'landscape character' as a synonym of scenic quality.

Among the various planning considerations, landscape is most related to tourism resources in terms of tourist attractions, scenic roads and parks and greenery, so that landscape consultants often found that their landscape plans turned out to be tourism plans (Interview with Taipei County planning officer, 09/03/10; K.Y. Wang, 11/03/10, 20/12/11).

There are therefore both positive and negative sides on the matter of using landscape planning to serve planning purposes. On the positive side, landscape planning can be conducted in a pragmatic and effective way to inform public infrastructure. On the negative side, landscape plans developed in this way are mostly short-lived in time scale and dispersed in spatial scale, which prevents them from providing consistent and objective guidance for long term planning. Once the wider context changes, some of the considerations for landscape planning can also become invalid.

### **Translation from landscape into planning practice**

Translating landscape concepts into planning practice firstly involves the interpretation of landscape according to the changing planning context. Since the introduction of landscape issues began with awareness of the degraded and deteriorating quality of the environment in the 1970s, the early interpretation of

landscape was very much related to visual quality in terms of landscaping and environmental improvement. This partial understanding caused landscape to be a secondary consideration attached to other planning issues like tourism. With progress in landscape concepts and techniques, such as the emergence of landscape ecology and sustainable development, the all-embracing nature of landscape became more apparent to practitioners. The most evident example is the definition of landscape in the Landscape Act (draft), which is close to the phrasing in the ELC<sup>49</sup>. In Taipei County, the concept of landscape addressed in the Landscape Master Plan reflected the advance from ideas about landscape as scenery and tourist attraction to a more holistic understanding in terms of the physical and cultural meaning of landscape. The Yilan Landscape Master Plan specifies that landscape should not be confined to the traditional scope of constructing individual elements to improve visual quality. The uses of the Landscape Act and Landscape Master Plans to a degree also integrate the various understandings of landscape and offer a modern and unified way of interpreting landscape.

Translating landscape into planning practice involves not only concepts and interpretation but also means devising landscape tools and delivery mechanisms. According to the Landscape Act, landscape tools and strategies should be developed on the basis of ‘landscape systems’. In the two case studies and also in other local authorities, the construction of landscape systems, does not simply involve objective landscape analysis, but depends heavily on the subjective judgement of planners and other officers, as indicated by the ‘landscape value systems’ in Taipei and the ‘SLA systems’ in Yilan. Here the translation of landscape into ‘pattern language’ for planning purposes is strongly mediated by factors such as planning needs and policy directions, in which the objective landscape analysis only takes a small part.

Moreover, the two Landscape Master Plans of Taipei and Yilan County both recommended ways of delivering landscape planning, including:

- making linkages to national level planning policies to gain financial aid;
- establishing cross-sector committees for the implementation of SLAs;
- executing design control both inside and outside SLAs;
- using relevant existing legislation to regulate landscape planning affairs before the promulgation of the Landscape Act.

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<sup>49</sup> The Landscape Act defines landscape as: ‘*the visual manifestation of natural or manmade environment, as perceived by human, including natural landscapes, human landscapes and cultural landscape*’, whereas ELC defines landscape as: ‘*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*’.

Since these delivery strategies were merely suggestions from landscape consultants rather than actual steps which have been carried out, further observations on the practical aspects of SLAs are needed to see the full picture of using this approach.

### **Expectations of using SLAs**

According to the Landscape Act, SLAs have two purposes: the planning, conservation, management and maintenance of areas where landscape resources are abundant, and the improvement of areas where landscape is degraded. Therefore, the complete functions of SLAs should include:

- landscape ‘accolades’ for concentrating funding and identify planning priorities;
- design control for development in both urban and non-urban areas;
- informing planning strategies where appropriate.

SLA is, by definition, a type of local landscape designation, but in practice, use of the approach tends to be primarily as a planning incentive. Nearly all the discussion of SLAs in the case studies was around the first function of informing positive and physical infrastructure so as to concentrate administrative and planning resources. According to the interviews, the most discussed and controversial part of the Landscape Master Plans was the identification and delineation of SLAs. Because of the involvement of planning considerations, SLAs in both Taipei and Yilan Plans were not identified on landscape grounds, but rather on the basis of planning priorities and their tentative contribution to local infrastructure. Similarly, although multiple strategies of conservation, management, maintenance and improvement of landscape were all mentioned in the Act, landscape improvement is the most preferred strategy for landscape plans and projects in the case studies.

Another feature of emphasising the active planning of SLAs is the use of descriptions or conceptual territories to define the spatial extent SLA. The first reason is that this provides planners with flexibility in feeding landscape concepts and guidelines into other land use plans and development schemes, in case the plan/scheme areas would stretch beyond SLAs. More importantly, the mixed land use types and blurred boundaries between urban and rural areas make it difficult to draw solid lines around SLAs since legislative bases to justify the delineation of SLA are currently lacking (Interview with K.Y. Wang, 11/03/10; M. Kou, 17/03/10). Even if there were laws that can solve this issue, once real boundaries are drawn around SLAs, they may become a limitation objected to by the public rather than a welcoming incentive to active planning.

## **The involvement of LCA**

The case of Yilan and other related literature suggest that LCA is used in two ways in current practice:

- as overseas experience referred to in the literature review, but not necessarily informing the creation of landscape plans
- as a method of landscape analysis adopted alongside existing methods like map overlays

In Yilan, when LCA was first mentioned in the Landscape Master Plan, it seemed that it might provide the methodological underpinning to analyse the study area and establish the follow up applications. In fact, landscape characterisation and the use of a landscape character map only informed the preliminary part of establishing landscape systems, and there was no further translation of landscape concepts/characteristics into follow-up guidelines, strategies and capacity studies as suggested in the LCA guidance. Even though a spatial hierarchy of landscape character types/areas was developed, there was still a lack of clarity concerning how the landscape was characterised and which parameters were used. A similar situation also exists in other work<sup>50</sup> which attempts to use the method to inform the preliminary analysis of study areas. Therefore, a knowledge gap appears to exist between the first stage (characterisation) and second stage (making judgement) of using LCA despite the fact that the method has been increasingly referred to in planning documents in the last five years.

## **Concluding thoughts**

This chapter has reviewed and analysed the current practice of landscape planning and the different factors which shape the implementation of landscape policy in Taiwan. The two cases of Taipei and Yilan demonstrate how the scattered and diverse ways of dealing with landscape issues have now been integrated by using the master planning approach in terms of constructing landscape systems, identifying SLAs and devising landscape strategies. Examining the development and content of the two versions of Landscape Master Plans in the two areas suggests that, except for the introduction of LCA in the Yilan Plan, there are no significant differences between the two Plans despite the fact that there is a five-year gap between production of the two documents. This suggests that the conventional way of dealing with landscape issues by using the master planning approach is well established and leaves little room for new ideas to be readily fed into current practice.

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<sup>50</sup> See: Cheng (2004), using LCA to conduct regional landscape analysis in Taiwan; Brabyn (2009), exploring landscape characterisation techniques in New Zealand landscape classification; Eetvelde & Antrop (2009), devising indicators for assessing the cultural aspect of landscape character in Belgium.

There is also a distinct feature which shows that subjectivity outweighs objectivity during the creation of Landscape Master Plans in the two cases. The emphasis on subjectivity is first shown in the attention on scenic quality and the dichotomy between good and poor landscapes in Landscape Master Plans despite their recognition of the holistic nature of landscape. This presumption leads to the further subjectivity of identifying which area deserves extra attention based on planning considerations, as indicated by the identification of the 'landscape value systems' and the 'SLA systems'. Namely, the assessment and analysis of landscape in an objective way would be of little use unless they are tightly linked with subjective planning considerations.

Although the two cases demonstrated the most prevalent way of developing Landscape Master Plans, those in other counties were not all presented in the same form. Some of them, however, were developed by non landscape professionals, such as town and regional planners or architects. This underlines a significant feature of current landscape planning, namely the involvement of multiple disciplinary concepts and inconsistency in shaping landscape planning practice. Also, since there is no overarching institution to coordinate landscape matters at a higher level, the norm for landscape planning is to rely on what has been addressed in the Landscape Act (draft), which is rather static and limited to regulatory aspects rather than providing forward looking visions. The status of the draft Act as pending approval for nearly a decade adds to the problems.

Generally speaking, the practice of landscape planning in Taiwan is still at an early stage, whether in terms of the master planning approach, the use of SLAs or the involvement of LCA. According to the interview participants, Landscape Master Plans developed earlier in the first half of 2000s are now undergoing review. It is crucial to keep tracing the practice and the effectiveness of the approach in order to draw more accurate conclusion on how the SLAs can in some way be supplemented (or replaced) by the character-based approach in the future.



# CHAPTER 7

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## *Cross-national comparison and policy transfer*

Based on understanding of the approaches used in landscape planning in both the UK and Taiwan, this chapter investigates whether the transition between the two UK landscape approaches, and especially the growing emphasis on the character-based approach, can also be seen in the different cultural context of Taiwan. To find out the degree to which the UK experience is transferable, this chapter summarises findings from both the cross-national comparisons and the work on policy transfer. These are normally, as mentioned in chapter 2, two separate fields in policy studies which require different research designs. In this research the two methods are used in a combined way to provide analytical insights into the previous findings. Comparative study in this research is therefore a transitional step to provide a comparable basis to enable the assessment of policy transfer and subsequent discussion. Policy transfer is also considered in the straightforward sense of discussing knowledge exchange between the two countries and especially the feasibility of applying the character-based approach in wider contexts.

### **7.1 Conceptual framework of comparative study**

The cross-national comparison is conducted by taking UK and Taiwan as single cases to encapsulate the overall practice of each country, according to the framework set out in figure 2.6. In that figure, the steps of making comparisons start with identifying the topic for comparison, followed by comparing the similarities and differences in a series of concepts between two countries. In this research, the topic of comparison is defined by the third research objective:

*To examine the variations in cultural and planning contexts have effects on adopting different approaches to landscape planning.*

The concepts for comparison were extracted from the NVivo coding systems for both the UK and Taiwan (table 5.1 & Section 6.4.1) by using top tier and second tier code headings as concepts and sub-concepts respectively, to provide the basis for answering the research question as indicated above.

Although a similar framework was applied to both the UK and Taiwan studies, it is impossible to obtain identical coding systems for the two countries owing to the different source, quality and quantity of research materials. Therefore, the disparity of concepts between the two countries has to be dealt with before making comparisons. The first step was to slightly adjust the headings of the codes to form a parallel structure for making comparison. For example, the UK study divided the issue of landscape planning into two

concepts: ‘plan-led system’ and ‘development control’, but here they were merged into a single concept of ‘landscape in planning practice’ which is applicable to both the UK and Taiwan. Secondly, English translation of words and terms used in the Taiwan study were checked for their equivalent meaning in the UK terms, like ‘landscape systems’ in the Taiwan context actually means inventory and classification methods of landscape resources. During the process of making comparisons, the original excerpts of research materials stored in NVivo were constantly revisited to ensure their meanings and contexts were not misinterpreted. Both the UK and Taiwan concepts are listed in table 7.1, in which the comparable concepts and sub-concepts are presented in parallel for the follow-up analysis.

In terms of the way in which the concept and sub-concepts was grouped, the research structure set out in chapter 2 (figure 2.1), namely the interrelationship between the two approaches and the planning context, was used to categorise relevant concepts according to two issues:

- the formation of landscape approaches, and
- the wider influences from the planning context.

The comparison will be made firstly by listing the concepts relating to each issue, and then by discussing the individual concepts in more detail. The overall discussion of comparison will then inform the final stage of policy transfer analysis.

Table 7.1 List of concepts and sub-concepts

UK study		Taiwan study	
Concepts (1 <sup>st</sup> tier codes)	Sub-concepts (2 <sup>nd</sup> tier codes)	Concepts (1 <sup>st</sup> tier codes)	Sub-concepts (2 <sup>nd</sup> tier codes)
actors	Countryside Agency/ Natural England	actors	planning officers
	CPRE		landscape consultants
	landscape officers		public/ community involvement
	planning officers		professional background/ conflicts
	landscape consultants		
	public/ public inquiry		
landscape meaning	all landscapes	landscape meaning	difference between cultures
	landscape aesthetics/ natural beauty		difference between disciplines
	landscape composition/ features		landscape perception
	landscape capacity/suitability		visual quality
	landscape value		tourism resources
	landscape quality		
	visual quality	landscape legislation	executive problem
	local distinctiveness		legislation loophole
	landscape change		mandatory power
			structure of Landscape Act
countryside/environmental planning	countryside character		comply with relevant legislation & policies
	countryside conservation/management	landscape in planning	urban planning tradition
	Green Belts & policy areas		tourism planning
	administrative problems		
	attachment to planning purposes		
	development compensation		
	government led landscape plans		
	landscape improvement schemes		
	development control		
	practical planning issues		
landscape in planning	comply with other policies		
	LCA informed policies		
	development plans		
	planning guidance/supplementary documents		
	planning position/future direction		
	landscape position		
	landscape issues in different planning tiers		

development	application
	development needs
	dealing with existing development
	landscape considerations/landscape control
	decision making
	scale of development
landscape approach	small scale landscape planning
	LLDs
	landscape evaluation
	LCA
	LVIA
landscape strategy	enhancement
	active conservation
	maintenance
	regeneration
	restoration
	landscaping/design
	management
	re-creation
	mitigation
sympathetic to landscape	landscape impact
	incongruous features
	fitting into landscape

	urban vs. non-urban land use
landscape master planning	different expectations among planning departments
	in relation to landscape character
	landscape system
	practical aspects
	inform planning strategies
landscape approach	baseline survey by literature review
	Special Landscape Areas
	early work on landscape
	overseas experiences
	landscape planning tools
landscape strategy	conservation
	improvement
	regeneration
	preferred strategies

### 7.1.1 The formation of landscape approaches

The formation of landscape approaches is the process which turns landscape theory into planning practice. This process starts with a specific way of interpreting landscape through the lens of cultural and historical context. The formation of a landscape approach also involves using tailored methods to translate landscape information into planning tools, resulting in different outcomes and policy implementation in planning practice. As shown in table 7.2, the two UK approaches take contrasting routes in translating theoretical and practical considerations into landscape tools and strategies by using different assessment methods. The two routes have developed largely independently and lead to different outcomes despite the fact that the character approach has informed the use of LLDs in some way. By comparison, in Taiwan the SLA approach emerged directly from the landscape master planning approach, and they both feature the same considerations and mindsets of landscape planning. Since an alternative approach based on landscape character has not emerged, the two approaches are very likely to dominate the practice of landscape planning in Taiwan in the foreseeable future.

Table 7.2 Summary of the formation of landscape approaches

Concepts	UK		Taiwan	
	Character-based approach	LLD approach	landscape master planning	SLA approach
<b>landscape interpretation</b>	wider landscape, landscape character	protected area, natural beauty	landscape design & aesthetics landscape ecology protected areas	
<b>planning tradition, planning focus</b>	countryside tradition environmental issue		urban tradition tourism issue	
<b>methodology/ approach</b>	areal-wide analysis	priority areas	thematic analysis	
<b>strategies ways of delivery</b>	LLDs landscape policies planning objectives		SLAs, management plan for SLA	

#### 1) landscape meaning and interpretation

The meaning and interpretation of landscape is at the heart of the ideology of dealing with landscape issues in planning. In the UK, the concept of landscape is inherited from the appreciation of the scenic quality of landscape, mainly in terms of natural beauty, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The early emphasis on the visual aspect of landscape was gradually replaced by taking account of the holistic nature of landscape, in the phrase

‘all landscapes matter’. Although conserving landscapes judged to be of highest value still remains in the current practice of statutory landscape designation, it is widely acknowledged that landscape should also be viewed in a comprehensive sense.

In Taiwan, although landscape used to represent the ideal harmonious state between humans and nature in traditional philosophy, in the modern context landscape is dominated by the notion of landscape architecture and design since the concept of landscape was introduced to address the problem of environmental degradation. Under the influence of global trends like the ELC and ecological design, the current meaning of landscape has been broadened by trans-disciplinary perspectives into ideas of landscape ecological planning, conservation biology and cultural associations. The diversified way of using the term landscape indicates on one hand that the concept of landscape is well known and well recognised by most practitioners, but on the other hand inevitably causes loss of focus on landscape issues, due for example to the interchangeable use of landscape, ecology and environment in policy documents, and the overlapping involvement of landscape planning from different sectors.

## **2) Landscape in planning traditions**

Although the role of human activities in shaping ‘cultured landscape’ is recognised by both societies, the planning traditions in which landscape issues are dealt with are totally opposite. The countryside tradition of landscape planning in the UK is evident since landscape designations were derived initially from the Romantic and Countryside Movement with particular concern for protecting countryside against urban sprawl. In planning practice, landscape is normally categorised as an environmental or rural development issue demonstrated for example by the position of Natural England and its predecessors. Although landscape still plays an important part in urban design, it is normally on a smaller scale compared to county-wide or district-wide landscape policies no matter whether the use of LLDs or the character approach is considered.

On the other hand, landscape planning in Taiwan demonstrates a strong influence from urban planning in terms of the notion of landscape infrastructure and improvement strategies. The recent Landscape Act (draft) intends to broaden the scope of landscape planning to both urban and non-urban areas. However, according to the interviews with landscape consultants and planning officers, landscape planning is still limited to urban or built areas where planning regulations are more robust and less controversial. In the wider planning context, landscape in Taiwan is mostly mentioned together with tourism as providing natural and cultural resources for tourism. The recent reference to landscape character in the environmental section of the Northern Taiwan Regional Plan (2011) also implies a foreseeable conceptual change in landscape planning.

Taken together, landscape planning approaches in the UK derived from countryside protection and have been extended to the planning context in both rural and urban areas, whereas in Taiwan, the concept of landscape planning was first introduced to improve urban design and is expected to be extended to non-urban (rural) areas once the legislation is secured. In addition to categorising landscape into countryside or urban planning issues, another significant difference is the context of landscape planning. In the UK, there has been a long-standing tradition of dividing nature conservation and landscape conservation so that landscape issues are dealt with on its own sake, whereas in Taiwan, under the influence of landscape architecture and landscape ecology from North America, landscape planning is greatly overlapped with ecological and other social considerations and normally realised in the form of landscape ecological planning.

### **3) The Delivery of landscape approaches and the use of landscape strategies**

In England the delivery of local landscape designations is relatively straightforward in terms of inhibiting inappropriate development within LLDs. In contrast, the delivery of the character-based approach is more diverse in response to different local needs. A common way of implementing the approach is to use a supplementary planning document to provide landscape guidelines and strategies. Landscape strategies (also called landscape planning objectives in some cases) are considered the most important feature of the character-based approach because they provide guidance on whether conservation, maintenance, restoration, regeneration, enhancement/improvement or recreation are appropriate for different landscape character types/areas. Implementing landscape strategies, for example by landscape design methods or restoration schemes is often agreed by the negotiation between the applicants for planning permissions, landscape consultants and landscape/planning officers. Other LCA related landscape tools, such as landscape capacity studies and visual impact assessments, are also tools in delivering the character-based approach.

A similar notion of landscape strategies is also mentioned in the Taiwan Landscape Act in terms of planning, conservation, management and maintenance. In practice, Taipei County developed different strategies for different landscape systems (i.e. landscape types), such as visual assessment and control, site design and planting guides for the river corridor landscape system, and vernacular resource management. As for dealing with landscape issues in handling development permits, since specialised landscape officers are currently not available in most planning authorities, landscape issues are normally dealt with by committees comprised of experts, professionals and cross-sector officers. Whether the method of delivery it is clear that landscape planning is not simply a matter of landscape, but is also strongly influenced by other planning consideration. As well as delivering landscape planning through work on public

infrastructure, there is a requirement for a legal basis to underpin it, ideally through robust legislation. That is the reason why some local authorities have developed their own Self-Government Ordinance on landscape before the Landscape Act is enacted (see 1.3.3).

In addition to the different ways of delivery landscape planning, another feature distinguishing the country approaches is the planning units used for carrying out landscape planning. In the UK, both LLDs and the character approach are executed on the basis of spatial information, whereas in Taiwan landscape issues are normally dealt with by landscape themes and landscape systems (types), which tend to be based on the network features and abstract ideas of landscape.

### 7.1.2 Planning practice and policy implementation

In parallel with the formation of landscape approaches, the planning context shapes the way in which landscape planning is carried out. Under a particular planning system, landscape planning is not only influenced by planning policies and legislation, but also by actors with different roles. The wider context of domestic planning needs and international trends can also have significant effects on the implementation of landscape planning.

Table 7.3 Summary of landscape planning and policy implementation

<b>Concepts</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Taiwan</b>
<b>actors</b>	government agencies with landscape responsibilities, landscape consultants, landscape officers, planning officers/decision makers, communities of interest	landscape consultants, landscape relevant professionals, planning officers/decision makers, communities of interest
<b>planning system</b>	plan-led system, development control	zoning, development permit
<b>LLD</b>	restrictive	active planning
<b>planning outcomes</b>	landscape character turn accommodating development	Landscape Master Plans identifying planning priority
<b>outer context</b>	regulated by ELC, sustainable development	sensitive to overseas experiences, good practice and global trends

#### 1) actors

There are three types of actor who influence landscape planning. The first type of actors are people who conceive landscape plans or landscape planning tools by interpreting landscape, conducting surveys, formulating planning guidelines and offering professional opinions. Their role in the UK is demonstrated by the cooperation



between government agencies with landscape responsibilities and in-house or contracted consultants. Government agencies as the policy advisor, provides landscape consultants with financial resources to develop methodologies and guidance. By comparison, there is no equivalent government agency in Taiwan which takes the lead in incorporating landscape issues into planning considerations. Landscape planning has to rely on experienced landscape consultants to define the norm of practising landscape planning.

The second type of actor includes planning officers and decision makers who implement and execute planning policy. In most UK counties there are specialised landscape officers dealing with county-wide landscape affairs and providing guidance to district level landscape planning. They may also be involved in the planning process by giving landscape comments on development, which enables decision makers to take landscape into account as a material consideration. In Taiwan, landscape was introduced as a category of civil service in 2006, but the institutional structure of landscape officers is still premature and overlaps extensively with related areas of expertise like architects, civil engineers, gardeners and urban planners (Kou and Yu, 2005). Planning officers and decision makers who are involved in landscape planning are, however, not from a landscape background and rely heavily on the use of Landscape Master Plans and consultants.

The remaining ‘users’ of landscape information other than the first two types of actor are of the third type, such as planning applicants/developers, stakeholders, NGOs and communities of interest. In the UK, they are involved in landscape affairs by using landscape guidance to inform their planning application, and provide the developers or executors with opinions or counter ideas. In Taiwan, there are currently very few responses from this type of actor since landscape planning is mainly carried out through government-led infrastructure. Although this research does not intend to explore its involvement in landscape planning in depth, this type of actors actually plays a role which is as important as the first two types in the planning process.

## **2) Planning system**

In the UK, the interface of landscape planning with development planning is mainly dealt with by input into planning policies and development cases under the plan-led system. The current use of the Local Development Framework enables the issue of landscape be addressed in three ways: the evidence base, criteria-based policies and supplementary planning documents. As for development control, under the UK planning system landscape matters are generally dealt with in a case-based way. This means advising on planning applications in order that they can be mutually consistent and appropriate to the wider landscape, either in response to the restrictive approach (LLDs) or the tailored strategies approach (character-based).

In Taiwan, there is a distinction in planning policies between urban and non-urban areas. In urban areas, different zoning types are addressed in urban plans and secured by planning laws, whereas in non-urban areas, complying with land use class orders is the general situation and additional planning permissions are required for development sites larger than 10 hectares. This dual system results in an inclination towards conducting landscape planning mainly in urban areas where landscape planning is assisted by robust legislation. Although the mechanism of development control in non-urban areas indicates a tentative way of informing decision making by using the character approach, in the current practice no further references or guides are provided on this issue.

### **3) The use of local landscape designations**

According to Selman (2009), landscape designations, especially the national ones, have a dual purpose of positive management and negative restriction. In contrast, local designations in the UK are more recognised by its restrictive function. Since LLDs used to be defined as protecting valued landscapes from development pressures, priority areas were chosen on account of their extraordinary visual quality by using criteria to differentiate the most valued landscapes. Although LLDs which emerged after the publication of Landscape Assessment in 1987 were better informed by this method, the main purpose, of additional protection against development, still remained true and, at least in England, there is nothing to suggest these designations will receive more active landscape management. In Taiwan, the use of Special Landscape Areas exhibits the opposite characteristic in terms of being an incentive to carry out positive planning measures. This also resulted in the selection of SLAs based as much on planning needs as on the landscape system, despite the fact that the latter is also based on holistic assessment of the landscape. The implications of SLAs in Taiwan, as indicated by the policy documents, may well be very much involved in landscape improvement and beautification measures.

### **4) Planning outcomes**

Planning outcomes means the consequences and the effectiveness of putting a particular landscape approach into practice. In the UK, while the use of local landscape designations is well-known by the public and planning officers in terms of posing additional planning restrictions, it is not effective in contributing to maintaining and enhancing local character and promoting sustainable development. These and other concerns about LLDs contributed to the 'landscape character turn' by introducing the character approach. By providing tailored information for different landscape types, the character approach should be able to make new development sympathetic to the wider landscape on one hand, and generate compelling landscape arguments in decision making on the other. Although this approach has been considered as fruitful in the

sample authorities used in this research, more evidence is needed to assess its long term effectiveness, such as the number of applications which have involved the approach.

In Taiwan, landscape planning is carried out mainly by coupling it with government-led infrastructure and planning schemes. Therefore, not only are Landscape Master Plans very much in line with planning regulations, but also the use of SLAs and the development landscape strategies are addressed by using planning terminology. SLAs are expected to reflect planning accolades for the surrounding environment by concentrating financial and administrative resources on their management. The outcomes of applying landscape strategies are not specified by the Landscape Master Plans but, as mentioned previously, landscape improvement is expected to be the most preferred consequence since landscape planning is closely tied to public infrastructure.

### 7.1.3 Comparison between the chronological patterns

The chronological patterns of development of the national and local practices of landscape planning in the UK were illustrated and discussed in chapter 5. A simplified UK pattern is now used in figure 7.1 to compare the concurrent progress of landscape planning practice in Taiwan. The different landscape approaches are firstly labelled according to the timing of changes. Key events which contributed to the development of the landscape approaches are plotted by labelled triangles at specific points in time. Events which extended over a longer period, such as landscape assessments and projects, are marked as boxes at the bottom of the diagram. The chronological comparison demonstrates several features which are discussed in the following sections.

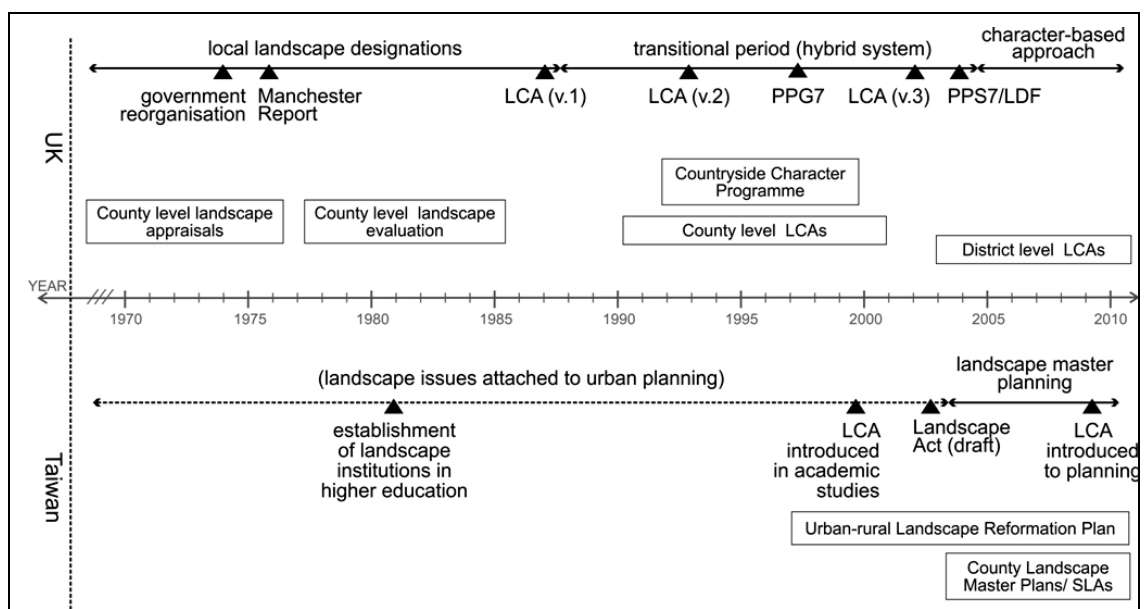


Figure 7.1 The chronological comparison of landscape planning between the UK and Taiwan

## **1. The temporal development of landscape planning**

The timeline shows that the current practice of landscape planning in Taiwan, despite its emergence in the 1970s, is highly compacted into the last twenty years by comparison with the long-term development in the UK since the 1930s or even earlier (see 1.2.1). Since the more structured landscape master planning approach was not introduced until the Landscape Act was drafted in 2002/03, the previous practice of large scale landscape planning was largely scattered in different forms of urban planning. By the time the Landscape Act (draft) specified the use of landscape master plans and SLAs, the use of LLDs in the UK (England) was diminishing with the introduction of the new LDF and the use of landscape character-informed policies. Since it takes nearly fifty years to show the whole picture of the transition between two UK approaches, it may require an enough length of time to observe the transition of landscape approaches in Taiwan.

## **2. The transition between landscape approaches**

The transition between the two landscape approaches in the UK, ranging over the period from 1987 to 2004, was a long process of conflict and adaptation in landscape planning discourses. During the second half of the transition, when the character approach began to outweigh the use of LLD under the notion of sustainability and the influence of the ELC, landscape planning in Taiwan was also expanding as a result of the launch of government-led landscape plans and projects. However, since the introduction of LCA in Taiwan did not happen until the late 1990s and early 2000s, landscape planning was by that time already dominated by notions of landscape aesthetics and design ideology, which later developed into the landscape master planning approach and the use of SLA. Since the use of SLAs is key to the current approach to landscape planning, it is likely to continue for another decade or more until the approach based on landscape character emerges in the future and is proved more effective. Therefore, given the landscape character turn is a definite process in landscape planning, the conceptual and practical transition from using SLAs to such a new approach will still require more time to be realised in Taiwan.

## **3. Spatial tier of planning practice**

In the UK, there is a hierarchy of using landscape approaches at different spatial scales. LLDs are usually identified and delineated at county level and executed at both county and district level, whereas the use of the character approach involves a more structured hierarchical system, using LCAs ranging from national/regional, county to local scales. This structure allows landscape planning to be dealt with at different planning scales, from general to specific. In contrast, Landscape Master Plans in Taiwan do not have a hierarchical structure. Although national/regional landscape

ecological planning frameworks have been proposed in consultation reports and development plans elsewhere (see 1.3.4), there is still a significant gap between county-wide landscape planning and higher level (national or regional) landscape survey/inventory and planning guidance owing to the unfamiliarity of government with landscape issues.

#### **4. Future development**

The foreseeable future of landscape planning in the UK seems likely to be dominated by the use of the character-based approach. Even if the LLD approach still remains in planning practice outside England, the LLDs now need to be fully informed by character-based or equivalent approaches to justify their retention. In Taiwan, the current practice is likely to remain unchanged since for the immediate future most of Landscape Master Plans have been developed within the last five years. According to the interviews, the government has started to gather information from local authorities to review the implementation of Landscape Master Plans. However, more time is needed to assess the long-term development and effectiveness of use of Landscape Master Plans, and especially of the practical aspects of using SLAs.

#### **Discussion of the overall comparison**

The above comparison suggests that landscape planning practices in the two contexts of the UK and Taiwan are largely different in many respects, from the conceptualisation of landscape approaches to the implementation of landscape policies. The main cause of the divergence in practices is the institutional factor, namely the way in which landscape is involved in planning considerations. The use of the plan-led system in the UK allows landscape to be included in the evidence base to inform planning practice without being preoccupied with other planning needs and considerations. However in Taiwan, landscape planning would only be valid if it can offer prompt and practical planning suggestions to planning authorities. This underlines the fundamental difference in landscape approaches. The character approach in the UK planning system is mainly descriptive—presenting landscape information as robustly as possible and leaving the discretionary decision making to planning officers and decision makers. In contrast, the method of developing Landscape Master Plans in Taiwan is rather prescriptive, providing a readymade formula of landscape planning to fit planning projects and schemes. Both practices have strengths and weakness. In the UK planners may yet become impatient with the character-based approach unless its value in specific applications can be demonstrated. In Taiwan such a value-free assessment would not be welcomed by planners and decision makers unless it led to practical proposals.

## 7.2 Transferability and generalisation of the UK experience

The UK experience suggests that the character-based approach has, at least in England, replaced the use of LLDs and become dominant in landscape policy. This is because it provides planning authorities with tailored policies and flexible strategies, and also because the government advocates its use in national policy guidance. Whether this might also happen in Taiwan requires an assessment of the feasibility of the character-based approach there, based on the degree to which the use of LCA has influenced the country's current planning practice so far. Assessment of the transferability of the character-based approach is also important, to:

- validate the ability to generalise the UK experience
- improve the compatibility of the character approach with other landscape approaches
- discuss the future use of landscape character-informed planning in Taiwan and on a wider scale

### 7.2.1 General assessment

The transferability of the character approach will be discussed initially by using the indicators of policy transfer developed by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) in terms of why, who, what and to what extent the transfer occurs (see section 2.4.2; table 2.3). This section will discuss these five indicators and leave the overall assessment of transferability in the next section.

Table 7.4 Policy transfer explanatory framework

Factors	Explanation			
<b>1. Why transfer</b>	have to (coercive) direct imposition	←.....→ (mixtures) lesson drawing (bounded rationality)	→.....→ (voluntary) <b>lesson drawing</b> (perfect transfer)	
<b>2. Who is involved in transfer</b>	elected officials/ civil servants	political parties/ pressure groups	policy makers/ exports	<b>consultants/ think tanks</b>
<b>3. What is transferred</b>	policies (goals, content, instruments)	programmes/ methods	<b>institutions/ ideologies</b>	<b>attitudes/ cultural values</b>
<b>4. Degrees of transfer</b>	copying	←.....→	<b>emulation</b>	←.....→ <b>inspiration</b>
<b>5. Constraints on transfer</b>	policy complexity	<b>structural/ institutional feasibility</b>	<b>practical factors</b> (ideology, technology, economic, language)	
<b>6. How transfer leads to policy failure</b>	<b>uninformed transfer</b> ⇄ <b>incomplete transfer</b> ⇄ <b>inappropriate transfer</b>			

\* This table is identical to table 2.3 in terms of listing all possible influences on policy transfer, while only the words in bold are applicable to the findings in this research.

(Source: based on Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000)

## **1. Why transfer**

The introduction of LCA into the planning context of Taiwan is totally out of the motivation of lesson drawing ('want to' in table 7.4). Since the master planning approach is now well-established in the field landscape, the use of LCA is more like an additional layer which makes the project more convincing and move in line with the good practice elsewhere. In this case, the reason for policy transfer is lesson drawing.

## **2. Who is involved in transfer**

The issue of who is involved in policy transfer influences the potential degree of influence of the character-based approach. In the case of Taiwan, two types of actors are involved in the use of LCAs: academic researchers and landscape planners. The former introduced the concept and method of LCA into Taiwan and diffused the idea through the latter in order that they can address it in planning documents and consultative works. In terms of policy influence, these two types of actors are less influential than decision makers who in general are not familiar with the approach. However, the current practice of contracting out landscape plans/projects still makes it possible to implement the character approach in a fuller way provided that more landscape planners and consultants can be informed by the knowledge and experience of this approach.

## **3. What is transferred**

From the limited experience of applying landscape character assessment, as exemplified by the Yilan case, the aspects of the character approach which have been transferred to the Taiwan context are mainly methodological. The step of landscape characterisation, namely the nested hierarchy of landscape character types/areas, is the feature most referred in the transplanted use of LCA. This suggests that LCA is simply taken as an alternative method of conducting landscape survey. As a result, the use of LCA in Taiwan does not reflect the origins and aims of LCA in the UK.

## **4. Degrees of transfer**

The reasons for introducing LCA are both emulation and inspiration. Landscape planning in Taiwan generally relies extensively on drawing lessons from overseas good practice. So the introduction of LCA, or indeed any other helpful practices, is generally welcomed by planners and policy makers. Also, since the dominant current approach, landscape master planning, analyses the landscape by using landscape networks in

terms of points, lines and surfaces, the hierarchical nature of LCA which covers all landscapes is undoubtedly an inspiration for the current practice.

## **5. Constraints on transfer**

Based on the interviews and planning documents concerning the use of LCA, it has received generally positive feedback from those involved in using it in the field of landscape planning. However, there is still a long way to go in developing and taking the whole character-based approach into practice. All the constraints suggested in table 7.4, including policy complexity, structural factors and practical factors, can be applied to the case of Taiwan.

- In terms of policy complexity, the proper use of LCA as a planning approach requires not only the characterisation of landscape but also tailored landscape policies and strategies to be developed and implemented.
- Structural and institutional constraints, such as the lack of a plan-led system and planning control and the absence of any government agency/institution on dealing with landscape matters, also caused the limited implication of LCA.
- Practical factors like the particular emphasis on urban landscapes and on the use of SLAs are also further constraints to successful policy transfer.

The constraints which keep the character approach from being incorporated into the Taiwan landscape planning will be elaborated more in the next section.

### **7.2.2 Discussion of policy transfer**

The above discussion suggests that the transferring of the character-based approach from the UK into the Taiwan context has so far been relatively unsuccessful. This is due mainly to the different systems and approaches used in the two countries. This finding is not wholly surprising as currently it is increasingly popular to use SLAs to direct landscape planning and LCA is so far only used in a very limited way. Since the use of LCA is still far from being developed into a planning approach, it is necessary to discuss the constraints and opportunities on the wider application of the character-based approach and its potential to contribute to changes in landscape policy in Taiwan.

Three explanations were suggested by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) to explain failure of transferability with respect to policy:

- insufficient understanding about the policy (uninformed transfer),
- missing out crucial elements (incomplete transfer) and
- failure to take into account the background context (inappropriate transfer).

These potential constraints are now discussed in the light of current practice in Taiwan.



## **1. uninformed transfer**

The carrying out of LCA in Taiwan is mainly based on the LCA guidance 2002. Although the guidance in itself provides an overview of the operational steps, and also includes examples, it cannot fully demonstrate the way of conducting and applying the assessment to the extent required for using the character approach in practice. Since only limited information concerning the full use of the character approach is provided in the LCA guidance, it is very likely that foreign users fail to appreciate the practical aspect of actually using the approach, perceiving LCA as only a landscape survey method. Since there is still a gap between understanding LCA in theory and the use of the character approach in practice, the full application of the character approach requires more insights into the translation of LCA into planning measures and strategies, and especially into the ways of fitting the approach into the planning system.

## **2. incomplete transfer**

Incomplete transfer means that the crucial elements which have led to the success of the character approach are missed during the process of policy transfer. In the UK experience, effective use of the approach is based on pre-existing LCAs, landscape character-informed policy contexts, landscape character-informed supplementary policy documents and the assistance from landscape professionals. In Taiwan, these essential requirements are generally absent since LCA has so far been applied only at the methodological level of delineating study areas. Without the essential context for using LCA, it is difficult to take the approach further to the point where it can be applied to planning policies and practice.

## **3. inappropriate transfer**

The cross-national comparative study suggests that there are fundamental differences of landscape planning between the UK and Taiwan, which can be constraints leading to inappropriate transfer:

- **planning concept**

The urban tradition of landscape planning in Taiwan makes it difficult for landscape issues to be extended into rural policies, where the uses of LCA and the character approach are usually most appropriate.

- **planning practice and planning outcomes:**

In Taiwan, the use of LCA has to be undertaken within the context of the system of Landscape Master Plans, which prevents the method from being applied independently to contributing to landscape and countryside planning.

- **attitude towards the designation approach:**

Since one of the main reasons for abandoning the use of LLDs in the UK is their unduly restrictive approach to development, it is not surprising that the character

approach is more favoured and more prevalent when sustainable development is emphasised. However in Taiwan, the use of SLAs, which originally could be applied in both restrictive and active ways, is in practice dominated by the latter function in terms of applying active and forward-looking planning measures. This is likely to ensure the continued favourable status of the SLA approach in the foreseeable future.

### **Tentative ways for more involvement of the character approach**

Although the above discussion suggests that the use of LCA is too new to the landscape planning context in Taiwan and difficult to fit with the country's existing approach to landscape planning, it is still possible to make tentative suggestions about ways of developing the character-based approach. Based on understanding of the planning contexts in both the UK and Taiwan, the best way of applying the character approach is not by replacing the current approach of landscape master plans and SLAs, but by making incremental change in the compatibility between the approaches. This requires, first of all, conducting a complete LCA involving both stages of landscape characterisation and making judgement to demonstrate its proper use in the planning process. Two applications can be suggested to demonstrate the full potential for LCA.

#### **1. Informing the carrying out of SLAs**

Considering the four relationships between the two landscape approaches in figure 5.2, the complementarity pattern suits best the current planning context of Taiwan. LCAs can be developed in the way that they can contribute to the use of SLA in terms of delineating boundaries, formulating landscape descriptions and devising landscape guidelines/strategies. As a result, the two approaches can sit alongside each other without making any unnecessary change to the existing practice.

#### **2. Informing non-urban development control**

It would be more appropriate, however, to develop use of LCA to inform non-urban development control by taking account of the wider landscape and vernacular character in decision making. In fact, this implication has already been addressed in the Landscape Act (draft) in terms of paying extra attention to landscape issues in non-urban area development permit (see Section 1.3.2). Since there is currently no guidance of applying landscape criteria to the development permit system, it will be of great value to develop LCA-informed landscape guidelines and strategies for non-urban area planning applications. Although the execution of the character approach can be complicated and demanding, there are still good examples of producing succinct and efficient ways of conducting the approach, such as the case of Derbyshire.

# CHAPTER 8

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## *Reflections and conclusion*

Preliminary findings have already been discussed to some extent in chapters 5, 6 and 7 in terms of analysing the outcomes and giving explanations on given themes. In this final chapter of reflections and conclusions, the previous findings and discussion will be integrated and critically reviewed in the light of related literature and the ongoing changes in the domestic and global planning contexts. Concluding thoughts will be made on the research and possible implications will also be identified to improve the understanding of landscape policy and planning approaches.

### **8.1 Summary of findings**

#### **8.1.1 Reflections on the research problem and research aim**

This research set out to investigate the shift from the use of local landscape designations to a planning approach based on landscape character in the UK (England), and the transferability of this experience to another planning and cultural context of Taiwan. Main research issues involve:

- the emergence of the two landscape approaches in the UK planning system under different planning ideologies and for different periods of time;
- the distinctive features, strengths/weaknesses, similarities/differences and outcomes of conducting the two approaches;
- the ways in which the character-based approach can be transferred to foreign planning contexts and the limitation of applying the approach.

These issues have been explored by using three methodological approaches to answer the related research questions in three successive stages.

- Policy narratives were employed to construct the evolution of the two landscape approaches from the post-1945 period until now, showing a discernible pattern of moving from the use of LLDs to the character-based approach, the ‘landscape character turn’, as a reflection of the changing planning contexts.
- The practical application was conducted by using three sample areas in England to understand the implementation of both approaches in planning policies and practice. The similar case study structure was then applied to the context of Taiwan where two approaches were developed under the country’s own planning context, in order to derive a dataset which allowed comparison with UK experience.

- A cross-national comparative study was carried out on the UK and Taiwan, and the scope for policy transfer was assessed regarding the degree to which the character approach can be applied to Taiwan.

### **8.1.2 Reflections on research objectives and research questions**

The following discussion summarises the overall outcomes according to the sequence of three research objectives and nine research questions.

#### **Objective 1: theoretical basis**

To explore the making of landscape policy by tracing the theoretical origins, cultural interpretations and historical backgrounds of the two landscape approaches.

- **RQ1: Landscape becomes a planning consideration by being translated into spatial and land use plans in the form of landscape policies and guidance. Modern landscape planning is featured as an interdisciplinary issue.**
- **RQ2: Landscape approaches in the UK originate from the countryside tradition and the ideology of natural beauty, resulting in the dual planning considerations of the best valued landscapes and the wider countryside.**

The term landscape has been established in human history since the medieval time and began to be given its scientific and artistic meanings after the Renaissance. For centuries various definitions of landscape have been developed, while in terms of planning implication, landscape is now widely recognised as an overarching framework to express the interrelationship between nature and culture, as perceived by humans. The all-embracing nature of landscape results in the emergence of different approaches to landscape planning, in which landscape concepts and facts are translated into planning instruments and specific sets of tools at a strategic level, including:

- area-wide landscape approaches in relation to land use and environmental planning;
- design and aesthetic approaches mainly dealing with the visual aspect of landscape in infrastructural planning;
- the landscape designation approach used for countryside and environmental planning.

A landscape approach not only expresses the underlying landscape ideology and cultural/historical background, but also reflects on the specific planning system in which the approach is carried out. The UK experience provides a good example of how the country's own cultural and planning context and a Pan-European tradition develop into two distinctive approaches to landscape planning:

- The conservation of landscape scenic beauty originated from 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism, which resulted in using the concept of natural beauty or landscape value to designate areas which deserve extra protection. Local landscape designations under this tradition first emerged in the inter-war town and country planning proposal in terms of special landscape reservation and similar titles, and was formally addressed in planning policies alongside the establishment of their statutory counterparts after 1949. The government reorganisation and the requirement of developing county level Structure Plans in the 1970s caused a second wave of identifying LLDs so that by referring to proposal maps where LLDs were defined, local authorities could execute special attention and extra protection against inappropriate development and urban encroachment.
- The notion of the ‘wider countryside/landscape’ emerged later in the 1980s, acknowledging that landscapes should be planned based on their distinctive and recognisable character rather than aesthetic and scenic values, resulting in an approach aiming to provide tailored policy for each landscape where appropriate. The method of Landscape Assessment, established and practised since the late 1980s, is the foundation of this approach. Since its advocacy in national planning policies (PPG7) in 1997, the character-based approach has been widely applied in district/borough level planning policies and is likely to have more influence on planning practice under the reformed planning system after 2004.

## **Objective 2: application in practice**

To investigate the application of the two approaches in terms of the use, development and dynamics of each approach in planning policies, and the shift between both approaches at national and local level under the changing policy contexts.

- **RQ3: Planning authorities use landscape planning approaches to define the context of planning policies, whereas the delivery of landscape approaches depends on translating landscape information into different forms of ‘landscape tools’ to solve planning problems.**
- **RQ4: In development control, landscape arguments can be developed by referring to landscape related planning documents, based on which local authorities use landscape value and/or landscape character as a material consideration to make judgements/decisions.**

In the UK plan-led system, development plans are an integral part of planning practices and making judgements/decisions. In development plans, landscape approaches are normally categorised as countryside or environmental issues with regard to policies on landscape policy areas (LLDs) or the notion of countryside/landscape character (the character-based approach). In terms of delivering the two approaches, the

use of LLDs is straightforward and readily understandable to planners and development applicants in terms of referring to planning policies and proposal maps where LLDs are defined. In contrast, the character-based approach is more diverse and sometimes considered complicated so that effective translation is needed to properly apply this approach. The translation from landscape information to landscape character-based planning tools involves two steps:

- the first step is to assess landscape information by using landscape characterisation and establishing a spatial hierarchy of landscape character types/areas as planning units;
- the second step is to develop area-specific planning guidelines and tools, such as landscape strategies and capacity assessment, according to local planning needs, normally in the form of supplementary planning documents.

The process of translation also requires professional assistance from landscape officers and contracted landscape consultants to develop related landscape tools and interpret LCA information. The lack of ability among planners to make consistent judgements based on landscape character may otherwise weaken the performance of the approach.

The effectiveness of the character-based approach is also determined by planning authorities' ability to generate landscape arguments from these translated forms of landscape planning documents and apply them to different cases where appropriate. Judgements/decisions are made against the examination of whether the proposed development can 'be sympathetic to the character of the area', 'assimilate into the landscape' and 'fit unobtrusively into the scene', as addressed in landscape character-informed policies. Landscape officers or development control officers can therefore use LCAs or supplementary documents to examine the degree of changes which the development would make to the existing landscape. The three case studies and other evidence suggest that, with appropriate execution, this approach is generally fruitful for generating compelling landscape arguments and has been widely accepted as an alternative tool to landscape designation among UK planning authorities.

- **RQ5: The LLD approach and the character-based approach have both strengths and weaknesses, while the latter is more favourable because its strengths outweigh its weaknesses.**
- **RQ6: The 'landscape character turn' in England features a change in the relationship between the two landscape approaches from 'complementarity' to 'replacement'.**

As the UK planning ideology has shifted from emphasising only the best valued landscapes to the notion of wider countryside and sustainable development in the last two decades, the character-based approach has become increasingly important to

provide the landscape context and tailored policies. This has caused a ‘landscape character turn’ of using the character approach to justify or even replace locally defined landscape designations. This turn, according to the empirical studies in this research, was caused by different factors between national (England) level and local level. At national level, the landscape character turn came about through conceptual and practical progress in landscape knowledge (internal mechanisms) and changes in planning practice (external mechanisms) in the last two decades. The local experience showed that the turn was more related to the influence of higher level policy guidance and recognition of deficiencies in using the LLD approach. While these internal and external factors were instrumental in the transition between the two approaches, it was through the involvement of local authorities in updating the new versions of development plans that the landscape character turn was realised in planning practice. This is in line with what Jensen (2007) identified in her research on the mechanisms which triggered the transition between landscape assessment methods in the UK in terms of crucial events in the broader planning context and the involvement of key actors like government agencies.

The UK experience suggests that the relationship between the two approaches can be divided into four phases for different periods of time: neither, retention (of LLDs), complementarity and replacement (by the character approach). The third phase of complementarity is particularly crucial to the landscape character turn. At the early stage of introducing the character approach to planning in the late 1990s, it was not intended to replace the pre-existing approach based on LLDs, but to provide an additional planning tool for areas outside LLDs. However, as the LLD approach was further discouraged in PPS 7 in 2004, the consequence was a trend towards replacing rather than retaining LLDs in planning policies.

Outside England, the landscape character turn is not so evident. Although Scotland and Wales experienced the same tension between two landscape approaches, they adopted the two approaches together to complement each other rather than completely replacing the old approach with the new. Particularly in Scotland, the prolonged use of LLDs is considered to be compatible with the character approach as the latter provides the wider context to underpin and justify the former. By applying both approaches in a hybrid way, the whole landscape can be fully covered by at least one policy whilst the special value of specific landscapes can also be conserved. This highlights that there are still advantages of using the LLD approach in terms of giving clear guidance and consistent protection to locally important landscapes, provided the approach is properly informed by LCA. As a result, although the landscape character turn is clearly apparent, it is still hard to put a complete stop to the use of LLDs.

### **Objective 3: potential for transfer**

To examine how the variations in cultural and planning contexts may affect the adoption of different approaches to landscape planning.

- **RQ7: The two contexts of the UK and Taiwan differ in the way that they conceptualise landscape approaches and implement landscape policies owing to different interpretations of landscape and different planning systems.**
- **RQ8: Despite these differences, the similarities between the two systems of the UK and Taiwan offer a potential pathway for the character-based approach to be involved in planning in Taiwan.**
- **RQ9: A strong cultural identity in landscape planning and an equivalent planning system are the prerequisites for the character-based approach to be successfully transferred.**

Based on the comparative study and the assessment of policy transfer, it is possible to identify three levels at which the character-based approach may be transferred: conceptual, technical and practice. For Taiwan and perhaps elsewhere, it is relatively easy to duplicate the notion that all landscapes matter (conceptual transfer) and the method of landscape characterisation (technical transfer), but without a parallel planning system in which the character approach can inform different aspects of the planning process, it is nearly impossible to put the approach into practice. Inappropriate transfer will significantly weaken the effectiveness of the character approach. In addition to the limited degree of transfer, the fundamentally different landscape ideology and planning systems between the UK and Taiwan also make policy transfer difficult in the current context because there is insufficient understanding of the character-based approach, a lack of crucial elements for implementation and ignorance of the context of the approach.

Although in Taiwan the use of LCA has just started to inform landscape planning, this does not mean a comparable ‘landscape character turn’ will not in any case happen in the future. Firstly, since the landscape character turn in the UK occurred partly in response to concerns about the long-term consequences and flaws of executing the LLD approach, the transition between landscape approaches has gone through a lengthy process of trial and error from which the current solution emerged. Given that the practice of locally defined landscape designations is problematic and contrary to the international trend like sustainable development and the ELC, it is possible that the prevailing use of SLAs in Taiwan may in time still be supplemented or even totally replaced by another approach, which may or may not be the character-based approach. Moreover, the UK experience suggests that the drivers which caused the transition come from both the changing understanding of landscape and the change of climate in



the wider planning context. For Taiwan where landscape planning relies heavily on importing good practice from abroad, continuing drawing of lessons from the UK concerning the practical use of the character-based approach is also likely to facilitate a transition. More involvement from key actors, especially landscape professionals, is also crucial to facilitating the future use of the character approach in Taiwan.

To sum up, the assessment of policy transferability suggests that knowledge needs to be carefully examined in its original context before it is applied to the ‘recipient’ country. Since it took as long as twenty years to totally move from the use of LLDs to the approach based on landscape character (in England), long-term observation is also needed to monitor the overall effectiveness of the latter. Outside England, the ‘reformed’ use of LLD is also noteworthy in Scotland and Wales in the light of its underpinning by LCA and LANDMAP. This experience may help to shed much light on countries like Taiwan and to show the way in which the two approaches can complement each other where the exact pattern of the landscape character turn is likely take a different course.

## **8.2 Discussion and reflections on key themes**

This section focuses particularly on the transition between the two approaches—the landscape character turn—in the light of contemporary landscape study and planning trends at local and global scales. The discussion will start by anticipating future trends in local landscape designations and go on to analyse the outlook of the character-based approach. Lastly, the landscape character turn itself will be examined from a global perspective.

### **8.2.1 The future of (local) landscape designations**

This research investigated the changing roles and functions of local landscape designations and concluded that this approach is unlikely to be the focus of future policy. Findings suggest that the main causes of the diminishing use of LLDs are their excessive restriction on development and that they make little contribution to retaining or enhancing local distinctiveness. However, although the discouragement of using LLDs has been apparent since PPG7-97, the approach is still considered necessary by some. For example, in the consultation response on the draft National Planning Policy Framework (2011), alternatives to LLDs like open land or greenery were still suggested by CPRE. While the designation approach is still desired in some planning contexts outside England, research suggests that the isolation of such policy areas makes it difficult to cope with the complicated environmental–social interactions and competing interests which normally overwhelm landscape arguments (Bishop *et al.*, 1995; Scott and Shannon, 2007; Conrad *et al.*, 2009). Selman (2009) further identified the ineffectiveness of using landscape designations in terms of their vulnerability to

development pressures, small contribution to development control and their inability to form defensible arguments in decision making.

If the designation approach alone continued to be the preferred way to protect the best valued landscapes, the future use of landscape designations is likely to develop in ‘two ways’. Landscape designations which are secured under statutory powers, bear the dual responsibility of protecting the best landscape from irreversible changes, and at the same time contributing to the overall landscape quality, as suggested by the IUCN Category V Protected Landscapes and the Natural England’s recent policy position on protected landscapes. Local landscape designations, which do not have statutory support, are likely to become conceptual boundaries for identifying locally valuable landscapes rather than having real powers in the planning system.

### **8.2.2 The character approach in the UK policy context**

In Dwyer’s (2011) analysis of future UK land use policy in the next few decades, it is suggested that designated areas are likely to be challenged as they are dispersed in space, centralised in governance and lack public involvement. Policies which can integrate top-down planning needs and the bottom-up local expectations are considered more on the right track. As far as this research is concerned, the character approach is undoubtedly preferred in the policy context as it is also relevant to the main policy directions such as energy regeneration, climate change and environment issues, as identified by Dwyer. Although the character approach fits properly in the mainstream policy context, whether the approach is effective still depends on its being addressed in planning policies, especially at the national level. The up-to-date policy context is thus important to anticipate the future development of the approach.

### **The context for dealing with landscape in planning will continue to change**

Having been affirmed in PPG7 in 1997 and PPS7 in 2004, the use of the character-based approach seemed to be well established in national planning policies and local practice. This position was further confirmed by a draft PPS on natural environment (March 2010) which once supposed to supersede PPS7. This draft PPS reflected the previous notion of using ‘*landscape character, sensitivity and capacity*’ assessment to inform criteria-based policies and provide mitigation measures for development, while at the same time the use of local landscape designations was again discouraged (policy NE 3.3/NE 8.1). However, since the draft PPS was not published and was finally replaced by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012), the character-based approach, now seems insecure in national planning policies.

The NPPF, which reduces all previous national planning policy guidance to one single document, does not specify either the use of LCA or local landscape designations, nor mention the issue of landscape capacity or related landscape strategies. Omission of reference to the wider landscape and landscape character in the draft NPPF (July 2011) caused outcry, but by taking account of consultation responses<sup>51</sup>, this has been addressed by recognising the ‘*different roles and character of different areas*’ and the ‘*intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*’ (Section 17) in the final version of the NPPF. However, the advocacy of the character-based approach and the emphasis on LCA from PPS7 are otherwise removed. Under the influence of the NPPF, there may be a danger of leaving a policy vacuum in England in terms of having no LLDs and no requirement for LCA in strategic level landscape planning. This could turn landscape policies back to the position prior to the 1970s in terms of adopting neither approach as indicated by the first quadrant in figure 5.2. The failure to explain landscape character in detail in the NPPF could be solved by addressing this issue in a supporting Technical Guidance supplement to the NPPF in the future, as illustrated by the current one on flood management and mining policy.

Furthermore, the impending abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) has been proposed according to the Localism Bill (June 2011) in order to release more centrally-controlled planning powers to local authorities. The situation in High Peak Borough and South Staffordshire District, according to the latest information published on the website, is also pending the final version of their Core Strategy in response to the changes made by the NPPF and the abolition of RSS. This is likely to cause more uncertainties in securing the consideration of the wider landscape and the character-based approach from a top-down perspective. Although at local level, planning authorities still tend to include the character-based approach in their LDFs, whether the new approach can still be as influential as it has been in the past decade will depend more on local experience and commitment rather than advocacy from central government.

### **Potential threats to the use of the new approach**

In addition to the failure to include the character approach in the NPPF, the previous discussion also indicate that there are several other reasons that can weaken or even threaten the future use of the approach.

- **the complexity of landscape tools**

The increasing popularity of Landscape Character Assessment has caused the method to be developed into a wide variety of landscape tools as stated in section 3.3.3. However, the lack of proper instruction will cause ambiguity about taking these tools

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<sup>51</sup> See consultation responses from Natural England, English Heritage, CPRE and Landscape Institute

into planning practice. Since the 2002 LCA guidance introduced further applications like landscape design guides, landscape capacity studies and landscape management guides in a brief way, more guidance is needed on using landscape tools to meet increasingly diverse planning needs. Further instruction in using these tools may emerge in the updated version of the LCA guidance.

- **the requirement for professional assistance**

Due to the complexity of using landscape tools, there is an equally important issue of having professional advisors who are capable of carrying out the approach, namely, interpreting the landscape contents in LCA and applying it to landscape tools in planning practice. Local landscape officers are undoubtedly the best people to put the character approach into practice, but for local authorities where landscape officers are unavailable, the role of landscape consultants is particularly important in making the character approach applicable and understandable to planning officers and the public. In some cases, it is necessary to develop landscape tools and supplementary planning documents in an explicit, transparent and comprehensive way to improve the effectiveness of using the character-based approach.

- **the problem of scaling down LCA**

Although LCA, as the foundation of the character approach, can contribute to different aspects of the planning process from regional level to district level (see figure 5.3), this method is more difficult to apply in small scale contexts, such as site level design. As the method of LCA itself is devised for identifying the distinctive characteristics of landscape, the process of classification thus stops whenever the landscape condition appears consistent and homogenous with an area. Therefore, for small scale applications, landscape character can play only a limited role. One of the solutions is to develop ‘parish level’ LCAs<sup>52</sup>. At this scale, conducting LCA should depend more on community involvement in identifying valuable landscape elements than on exercising professional judgement on landscape information. This is also a practical way of incorporating the bottom-up perspective in the character approach.

### **8.2.3 The character approach in the light of global landscape planning trends**

Looking beyond the context of the UK, it is impossible to ignore the influences of global trends on landscape planning. Firstly, the notion of respecting landscape character has been widely recognised under the influence of the European Landscape Convention (Pinto-Correia *et al*, 2006). The usefulness of landscape characterisation in spatial planning is also supported by the follow-up discussion about executing the

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<sup>52</sup> See: Countryside Agency – Cheshire Landscape Trust, *Parish Landscape Character Assessment Pilot Project* (2005)

ELC<sup>53</sup>. At the global level, the need to devise a new landscape instrument to capture the diversity of landscape and improve the quality of life and the environment is also expressed by UNESCO<sup>54</sup>. Conceptually, the use of the character-based approach supported by LCA resonates well with the latest landscape planning trends and has influenced landscape planning elsewhere, such as the Denmark LCA project (see 1.4.1). This approach also exemplifies what Selman (2009) identified about the modern mindset of landscape planning in terms of considering all landscapes, taking a balanced view of both future and past as well as rural and urban, and recognising landscape beyond the view. However in practice, this approach still needs to be examined in the light of global–local relationships, which are not necessary in line with the underlying presumptions of the approach.

The first challenge comes from the different ways of shaping landscape between globalisation and localisation. Traditionally, landscape is considered as an outcome of the interaction between nature and humans within a local and bounded context. This premise is particularly important for the character-based approach in terms of identifying and addressing local distinctiveness in planning considerations. However, under the influence of globalisation, distant spatial relationships can sometimes be more important than local factors in shaping landscape change. As Swaffield and Primdahl (2006) put it, approaches based on ‘layered’ and ‘abstract’ landscape functions and structures in terms of using different parameters and design concepts to analyse landscape, allow more flexibility to reflect on universal planning languages that flow across space. Since in LCA the issue of landscape change is mainly dealt with in an indirect way in term of accommodating changes which may alter the key characteristics of landscape (see: Swanwick and LUC, 2002, para 8.2), it is equally important to acknowledge the influence of non spatial ‘global’ processes on landscape. In future it may be possible to develop the character-based approach to respond equally to both local and global drivers of change.

Also considering the issue of localisation, Pinto-Correia *et al* (2006) indicated that systematic landscape classification methods tend to ignore specific landscape values at the local scale. While this may not be totally true of LCA in which stakeholders’ opinions are usually involved, it is the case that LCAs at the higher level, especially regional and county LCAs, tend to be developed in a top-down way to inform the planning needs of the government. Since in the current planning context, landscape can no longer be perceived from only its physical composition, it is important to open more channels for public involvement in shaping future use of LCA and the character approach to meet people’s aspirations for landscape planning and policy implementation (Olwig, 2007).

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<sup>53</sup> See: Council of Europe (2004), European Landscape Convention: Report of Florence Conference

<sup>54</sup> See: UNESCO Executive Board 186 EX/21(March 2011)

#### **8.2.4 The transferability of the character-based approach**

Under the influence of globalism, information flows can easily cross national and continental boundaries and contribute to knowledge exchanges between countries and societies. This increases possibilities for countries to share mutual experiences and borrow good practice from abroad, and also highlights the shaping of local practices by global perspectives. However, the discussion of policy transfer earlier in this chapter shows that there is a danger of importing foreign experiences without understanding the underlying cultural, historical and political contexts. Swaffield (2006) for example, observed that the seemingly convergent pattern of landscape planning in two geographically distant places actually unwittingly conceals huge differences in their physical and cultural settings. Accordingly, even if information about LCA is easily accessible throughout the world, this does not guarantee that the method can be applied in a similar way in other countries or societies.

On the other hand, although the attempt to transfer the character-based approach from the UK to Taiwan is to a degree unsuccessful owing to fundamental differences between the two societies, it cannot be concluded that their landscape planning policies are totally incompatible. Whether policies converge or diverge depends on the level at which policy transfer is considered in terms of conceptual, technical or practical transfer. Theoretically, it may be rather hard to duplicate the identical pattern of practice in a 'recipient' country, but conceptual thinking, such as the recognition that all landscapes matter and the role of landscape character, is undoubtedly transferable across cultural and political boundaries. From the analysis of policy transfer in chapter 7, it is apparent that applying the UK experience to Taiwan is the transfer of knowledge rather than planning practice. This is defined by Stone (2004) as 'soft' policy transfer, which is also an inevitable prerequisite of full policy transfer. The role of academic and landscape contractors in the introduction of LCA has been discussed previously, but these non-state actors are also recognised as having a key role in facilitating the policy transfer process (Stone, 2004). This is particularly crucial for the application of LCA and the character approach in Taiwan as key academics and experts normally have a direct input to policy making.

However, even if concept transfer is relatively feasible, there may still be different consequences of applying the character approach in other places on a global scale. For example, although the notion of viewing landscapes as beyond scenery is widely known in planning practice throughout the world, it is rather hard to take this notion onwards to develop a planning approach based on it, unless there is a similar recognition of the intrinsic character of landscape embedded in the country's cultural context. This is, according to Selman (2008) in identifying the difference in landscape ideologies between the new world and old world, more likely to happen in the European context,

especially given the common requirement of the ELC. As for the countries or regions which are also involved in the use of LCA, whether in academic studies or in practice<sup>55</sup>, it is essential to draw more lessons from the second stage of the LCA process, of making judgements; otherwise the application of LCA may well cease at the methodological level in terms of landscape characterisation, such as in the case of Yilan.

### **Towards two-way transfer**

The policy transfer in this research has been analysed in a single direction in terms of applying the UK experience to the Taiwan context, but as a comparative study has also been completed, it is worthwhile considering whether or not lessons can also be drawn from the practice in Taiwan. There are at least three features in the case of Taiwan which could potentially contribute to UK planning practice:

- **the setting out of landscape visions**

Although the character approach is well in line with modern planning trends, its emphasis on 'local' distinctiveness limits its applications to local planning arenas and may cause the approach to be less reflective in the face of rapid land use change and planning needs. In this sense, the use of landscape master planning in Taiwan is notable for offering clear planning goals and implementation procedures. Therefore, it is worth incorporating more strategic considerations into the character approach so that its implementation can keep pace with the changing planning context. In addition to landscape policies and objectives defined by planning authorities, there may be merit in pursuing the ELC's suggestion about the incorporation of 'landscape quality objectives', namely the public understanding of local character and their expectation of landscape planning visions and measures, into landscape planning. These are all possible ways for increasing the compatibility between the character-based approach and other landscape planning practices.

- **the integrated consideration of landscape and ecological issues**

Owing to the tradition of dividing nature conservation and landscape conservation in the UK, the relationship between landscape and other environmental issues, especially ecology, has not always been made explicit in the UK planning policies. In contrast, landscape planning in Taiwan, since it was inherited from the US tradition of landscape planning, stresses particularly the ecological aspect of landscape, as can be seen from the interchangeable terminology between landscape planning, landscape ecological planning and environmental landscape planning. Highlighting the integrated role of landscape in linking these related issues can raise the priority of taking landscape into account in decision making.

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<sup>55</sup> See Antonson (2009), Brabyn (2009) and Eetvelde and Antrop (2009)

- **the enshrinement of landscape character in law.**

In the UK, the question of enshrining ideas about protecting landscape character and the wider landscape in law, as in the draft Landscape Act in Taiwan, may be worth discussing. In the UK, there are statutory landscape designations and legal protection of biodiversity, but national planning policy statements/guidance are currently the only legal recognition of the character approach and there is always a danger that the approach may be lost in the transition between former policy guidance and the new NPPF. The existence of a Landscape Act in Taiwan, and similar approaches in Japan, provide examples of the role of legislation can play.

### **8.3 Conclusions**

Having gone through the analysis of the development, transition and transferability of two UK landscape planning approaches, this research contributes to the understanding of the role of landscape in planning policy in several ways:

- shortening the distance between landscape research and policy;
- investigating the transition between two landscape approaches, which has not been studied in any academic literature;
- discovering the rich contexts behind the evolution of landscape planning approaches
- identifying the internal and external mechanisms which cause the transition between landscape approaches;
- exploring the generalisation of a national-specific landscape planning approach in wider cultural/planning contexts.

The findings from three UK sample areas suggest that the character approach has generally been effective in the past few years in terms of helping local authorities to incorporate the notion of landscape character into planning policies and make landscape arguments more convincing in planning decision making. However, a high degree of uncertainty still exists as to whether:

- the approach is robust enough to defend itself against conflicting land use interests;
- the approach is comprehensible to outsiders;
- the approach can be scaled down to inform site-level implications.

Results shows that the character-based approach to landscape planning, in both concept and practice, has, at least in England, largely replaced the long-standing approach based on locally defined landscape designations, as a modern way of incorporating landscape considerations into planning policy and practice. This transition has been particularly advocated in UK (England) national planning policy guidance since 1997, and is still applicable to most planning practices under the reformed planning system. At local level, the use of LLDs has been largely terminated in current approaches to Local



Development Frameworks. Instead, landscape character has gradually become the overarching context for criteria-based landscape policies, which are an integral part of the character-based approach alongside the use of supplementary planning documents based on LCA and related landscape tools.

Outside the UK, the concept of ‘all landscapes’ and its methodological underpinning by LCA also resonates well with modern landscape planning trends and contributes to international contexts like the European Landscape Convention and planning practices elsewhere, such as the case of Taiwan in this research. However, since the approach is developed specifically within the English plan-led system, it is less applicable in other contexts where a similar planning system is absent. Also the approach’s focus on place-based planning considerations further limits the approach from providing a strategic landscape planning vision in the wider global context. In terms of transferability, the character-based approach is more likely to be adopted in a context where the intrinsic character of landscape is widely acknowledged as being important and the mechanism of development control is applicable.

## **8.4 Final reflections and potential for future work**

This research ends with critically reflecting on aspects of the research including aspects that could be improved and on the contributions this academic research can make. In this section, the research design, process and methods will be reviewed. Then conceptual aspects will be discussed, especially the way to bridge the gap between research and policy in the field of landscape planning.

### **8.4.1 Reflections on the research design, process and methods**

This research has been a learning process and no doubt the research design and methodology could be improved in several ways. This section reflects on those opportunities and alternatives.

#### **Research scope and perspectives**

This research has taken a top-down ‘official’ view of analysing the rational development of landscape planning approaches, which assumes that there is a linear relationship from devising planning goals/visions to carrying out a particular approach in practice. This perspective led this research to use official policy documents and interviews with officers to investigate and confirm the use of landscape approaches in planning policies and practice. However, given the current trend in both policy studies and landscape research, it would have been possible to adopt the participatory approach to examine aspects of landscape policy from a bottom-up perspective (Pinto-Correia *et al.*, 2006; Antonson, 2009). A higher level and degree of public involvement has been recommended not only for the use of the character approach in including stakeholder

involvement at every stage of LCA, as suggested by the LCA guidance and its Topic Paper<sup>56</sup>, but also for the future reform of using LLDs (Scott and Shannon, 2007).

It is also important to reflect on the researcher's shifting position between the UK and Taiwan parts of study. For the UK study, the researcher's position of outsider was evident, which made it easier to take a neutral and rather conservative attitude in analysing research materials and conducting interviews. It has been suggested that some distance can help the researcher explore truth in policy analysis and the study of foreign culture (Howlett & Lindquist, 2004). In contrast, the insider's role in the Taiwan study caused the researcher to tend to see more demerits than merits in practice there. This is partly because of the inclination to find the 'pitfalls' in the Taiwan practice based on the researcher's prior knowledge of the UK experience, and partly because of the connection that the researcher has with the interviewees which may have allowed more negative points to be revealed freely. The researcher was aware of these possible biases so allowing precautionary steps to be taken. Firstly, adding any comments or subjective judgements on top of interviewees' comments was avoided. Also, when the UK experience was presented to the Taiwan interviewees, the focus was on factual statements rather than making any comparison by the researcher herself. Although it is impossible to totally diminish the influence of the researcher's positionality, examining the research issue from the theoretical or wider (global) perspectives can help balance the contrasting roles, and support discussion on the two-way learning between the UK and Taiwan. These issues are explored in the following sections.

### **Policy history narrative and policy analysis**

Although it has investigated landscape approaches in planning practice and policy, this research is inherently not a policy study since the major focus is still on landscape itself. However, some of the findings could become more meaningful if the deeper insights of a policy study could be involved. The first part of the research used policy narrative to build the historical perspective of the making of and relationship between the two landscape approaches over time. Since the term policy narrative only indicates the broad concept for such studies, more robust policy narrative studies require researchers to choose an appropriate model or theory to critically analyse specific factors or properties. In this research, clearly stating the key policy events (in chapter 3) by using thick description and comprehensively discussing their contribution to the landscape character turn (in chapter 5) were considered robust enough by the researcher when set alongside other methodological approaches in this research. Therefore, features in policy narrative, such as the enchainment, order and convergence of these events, were not deliberately discussed, nor were explanatory conclusions given for the

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<sup>56</sup> LCA Topic Paper 3: Landscape Character Assessment - how stakeholders can help

changing policy context. However, if more detailed analysis were to be made in the policy history narrative, the theoretical rigour of this research could be significantly improved, in the way that Hezri and Hasan (2006), for example, used the path dependency model to validate the findings of policy development studies.

Another way in which the arguments could be improved is to better analyse the statements and opinions about the pros and cons of the two approaches, especially at the time when the character-based approach was first introduced into national planning policies and was to some extent in conflict with the existing approach based on LLDs. As shown in the consultation responses for draft PPG7 in 1996/97, it is worth investigating the different ‘storylines’ of how different agents perceived the character-based approach at different points in time and different policy arenas. Investigating different ‘voices’ concerning the topic could be achieved by using discourse analysis in scrutinising research materials and providing more sophisticated explanations for the underlying meanings and relationships.

### **Case studies, cross-national comparison and policy transfer**

Due to limited time and resources, this research only chose three UK cases and two Taiwan cases to demonstrate the use of landscape approaches and compare the cross-national outcomes. In case study as well as in cross-national comparative study, the choice of cases in terms of numbers and types is always a fundamental question. Concerning the number of cases, since this research is qualitative in nature and involves a cross-national comparison, the total number of 5 cases has proved effective as they exhibit largely the same results albeit with slight differences in practice. However, the types of case selected, which feature the use of the most similar or most different cases, can significantly affect the outcomes of studies and the degree of generalisation which is possible. For example, if a sample area in Scotland had been chosen for analysis, the results could have been reversed, demonstrating the retention of LLDs. As they operate under the same administrative system in England, not only the three sample areas but also other English local authorities would be expected to exhibit similar features in using the two approaches. A comparison between contrasting cases showing the practice in Scotland or Wales could certainly bring more insights to the same issue, but the research design would have to be different.

For the case study in Taiwan, this research used interview and document survey to analyse the current landscape master planning approach and the initial involvement of LCA. However, an alternative approach could have been to carry out qualitative experiments. For example, in a cross-national research on EU housing policy, Quilgars *et al.* (2009) adopted a quasi-experiment approach by using descriptive scenarios to investigate participants’ reactions relevant to the research issue. A similar method can also be seen in the High Peak Borough’s stakeholder workshop for disseminating the

character-based approach, designed by the landscape contractor Countryside (2009). This quasi-experiment method could also be useful for further probing the applicability of the character-based approach in Taiwan in informing non-urban development decisions.

### **Research validity**

The multiple sources of research materials, the triangular framework of the methodology design and the iterative comparisons and discussion of findings at different stages of the study all indicate that great efforts have been made to ensure the reliability of this research. One major factor that cannot be fully controlled by the research design and research process is the ability to replicate and generalise. As shown in the discussion of policy transfer, the same pattern of the 'landscape character turn' may not be seen in other contexts outside England. However, the fact that the UK experience cannot necessarily be generalised to other countries does not mean the research is not valid. In fact according to Maxwell (2005, p.115), if the conclusion is valid and plausible across all the settings *within* the research context, the 'external generalisation' of applying the conclusion *beyond* the research context is usually not a big issue. This also reflects the open nature of qualitative research which does not aim at generating unified answers to the phenomena under study.

#### **8.4.2 Reflections on links from landscape research to policy**

Although not a specific research aim, the idea of closing the gap between research and policy is embedded in this research. This gap has been well documented in social and political studies, regarding the fact that very little knowledge can be fed into policy making compared to the resources and effort spent on generating the knowledge. This gap, according to Stone (2004), is attributed to the disconnection in the bilateral information flow between research and policy in terms of the 'supply side' of policy-relevant researches and the 'demand side' of practical policy design. In the field of landscape, the gap is further illustrated by two discontinuities, from research to policy and from higher level policy to planning practice (Pollock-Ellwand, 2001; Conrad *et al.*, 2011). Although the second gap of policy and implementation is not particularly discussed here, it is hoped that the findings in this research can at least contribute to improving the communication between landscape research and policy.

#### **LCA as a bridge between theory and practice**

Swaffield and Primdahl (2006) suggest three general ways to improve the policy relevance of landscape research:

- conceptualising landscape planning principles within the socio-economic situation;

- addressing landscape structure and change in the policy context in a way which is understandable to policy actors;
- developing specific landscape strategies in partnership with planning agencies in the light of global and local perspectives.

Pollock-Ellwand (2001) also indicated ways in which landscape can be better presented and made more effective in policy contexts:

- converting landscape ideas into planning language which is understandable to people outside the discipline;
- making the evidence about landscape more apparent to decision makers and making policies strong enough to reinforce the practice of landscape planning.

In terms of using landscape evidence to inform policy making, the UK experience is undoubtedly remarkable, whether for landscape evaluation or LCA. These two methods, although different in their ideological and methodological underpinnings, share the common notion of turning landscape information into definite landscape policies and strategies according to planning visions and needs. In particular, the idea of taking account of landscape character to provide a comprehensive view and blanket strategy for landscape planning is suggested by Antonson (2009) as a way of bridging the gap between research and policy. The role of landscape consultants in devising and developing LCA and the character approach is also a good example of policy entrepreneurs who simplify the research findings into succinct policy terms (Stone, 2004). A further issue is how to strike the balance between collecting landscape evidence and policy implementation so that landscape research can be scientifically sound while at the same time pragmatic in informing policy implications.

### **8.4.3 Potential for future work**

This thesis concludes by suggesting future avenues for research in this area, based on these reflections. First the issue could be researched in more depth from a theoretical perspective by:

1. using discourse analysis to identify the drivers of change around the use of the character-based approach from different voices and various opinions;
2. taking a specific pathway of policy dynamics from the outset of research design, or matching the outcomes with theoretical patterns of policy dynamics by the end of the research;
3. devising a more deliberately designed cross-national comparative study of landscape planning approaches
4. analysing the making of landscape approaches or the transition between landscape approaches in the face of the wider planning trends, like globalisation, environmental modernism and climate change;

There are also further opportunities to research the practical implications of the character approach, especially in relation to the new LDF, and the long-term development of the two approaches in the UK and on a global scale, by:

1. investigating the effectiveness of the character-based approach:
  - a) in a qualitative way, such as using case studies, to discover the landscape arguments based on this approach in response to the socio-economic conflicts, and/or
  - b) in a quantitative way, such as content analysis, to count the number/type of cases in which this approach is referred to, for example in planning appeals data.
2. monitoring the future evolution of the character-based approach in the UK, especially in the context of:
  - a) the ELC implementation framework proposed by Natural England and others,
  - b) the National Planning Policy Framework
  - c) implementation of the requirement for Local Development Frameworks
3. investigating the future development and application of LLDs in Scotland and Wales and assessing the arguments for re-introducing LLDs in England;
4. investigating the emerging use of Special Landscape Areas in Taiwan and exploring the scope for the character approach to be introduced in a more comprehensive way.

Perhaps most importantly, further research on the theoretical and practical implications of the character-based approach could contribute significantly to better communication between landscape research and landscape policy.

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# APPENDICES

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## Appendix A. List of interview participants and information

### UK study

Date	Name	Affiliation	Note
21/05/09	Ms A. Nolan	Landscape Architect, ECUS Ltd	pilot interview
10/09/09	Mr J. Porter	Head of Countryside Consultant	
29/09/09	Mr A. Goode	Group Leader of Natural Environment, Environment and Countryside Unit, Staffordshire County Council	
15/10/09	Mr T. Tinker	Landscape Planning Officer, Doncaster Borough Council	
16/10/09	Mr A Fisher	Head of Regeneration, High Peak Borough Council	previously head of planning and development control
09/11/09	Ms B. Juniper	Previous Head of Landscape, South Staffordshire District	now working for private consultancy
20/11/09	Ms G. Foster Mr G. Ellis	Landscape Architect, Conservation & Design Group, Derbyshire County Council	group interview

### Taiwan study

Date	Name	Affiliation	Note
01/03/10	Mr Y. T. Chen	Head of Urban/Rural Development Dept, Taipei County Council	
09/03/10	Mr H.W. Chan	Officer, Comprehensive Plan Division, Urban/Rural Development Dept, Taipei County Council	
11/03/10 20/12/11	Mr K.Y. Wang	Lecturer, Dept. of Landscape Architecture, Chung-Yuan Christian University, Senior landscape architect, ECG consultants	authored Taipei & Ilan Landscape Master Plan
17/03/10	Dr M. Kuo	Head of Dept of Landscape Architecture, Chinese Culture University Senior landscape architect	one of the draftsmen of Landscape Act

11/01/12 Mr C.L. Huang Deputy Director, Economic Affairs Dept,  
Yilan County Council

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**unstructured interview**

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Note</b>
11/02/10	Prof S. Wang	Prof, Dept of Geography, National Taiwan University	introduced LCA into Taiwan
02/03/10	Ms H.L. Mon	Group Leader of Landscape Division, China Development Consultants	
20/03/10 14/12/11	Ms W.J. Liu	Senior officer, Urban Planning Division, Construction and Planning Agency, Ministry of the Interior	in charge of the 'Urban/Rural Landscape Reformation Plan'

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## Appendix B. Examples of interview questions

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### Questions (UK study)

#### **What your job is in the council/consultancy and how you have been involved in matters relating to landscape planning**

- when were landscape issues first raised in the county/district/borough?
- how does the county council work with district councils in dealing with landscape matters?
- is there a specific landscape unit/team in the council? If so, what function does it have?
- how have you first been introduced to the LCA and how did you think of it then?

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### Prompts to look out for

- interpretation and understanding of landscape
- history of landscape planning and history of LLDs
- attitude towards LCA
- gaining access to previous landscape planning documents (landscape survey or appraisal)

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\* Related research questions: RQ3

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### Questions (UK study)

#### **How has the SLA/ASLV approach worked in the authority, and how far you have got in making a change from SLAs to the character approach?**

- how did earlier planning documents illustrate the SLA/ASLV approach and how did this approach function?
- was there any debate in the council about whether or not you should retain SLAs/ASLVs?
- are SLAs still used in this county/district/borough?
- how effective do you think that SLAs/ASLVs have been in your authority and what are the considerations for retaining/removing them in the new planning system?
- what are your opinions about the change from SLA to the new approach?

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### Prompts to look out for

- the use of SLAs/ASLVs
- the transition between the two approaches
- the factors that facilitated/hindered the transition
- the reason why SLAs/ASLVs can or cannot be replaced

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\* Related research questions: RQ3, RQ5, RQ6

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### Questions (UK study)

#### **How you worked out the county/district LCA and how you have developed landscape policies based on the landscape character in this document?**

- how did LCA emerge in this authority and who were involved in that process?
  - *for LCA field work:*
  - how have you developed/generated planning policies based on landscape character, and in what form are they presented?
  - *to consultants:* how did you communicate this approach with government officers and how receptive did you find them?
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- *to landscape officers*: how did you communicate this approach with other officers (planning and/or development control) and how receptive did you find them?
- what are the key reasons that encourage your authority to take the new approach

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#### Prompts to look out for

- the translation of LCA into planning policies
- the forms of landscape SPD
- the use of LCA and landscape SPDs

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\* Related research questions: RQ3, RQ4

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#### Questions (UK study)

##### **How does the landscape character-based policy work in the planning process and have they been used to inform any specific development applications?**

- have you involved in developing landscape policies in the development plan?
- how has the document (landscape SPG/SPD) been used by you and other officers?
- what specific actions have been taken to deliver this approach?
- why do you include (a certain aspect of landscape) in your LCA/landscape SPG/SPD?
- what practical actions can be considered as appropriate for different landscape strategies?

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#### Prompts to look out for

- ways of implementing the character approach
- the effectiveness of using the character approach

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\* Related research questions: RQ3, RQ4, RQ5

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#### Questions (UK study)

##### **How does the landscape character-based policy work in real planning cases including development application and development control?**

- can you explain how the SPG/SPD is used by the applicants and by the council?
- how do you make judgement based on landscape character-informed policies or planning documents?
- how do development control officers attach priorities to different issues raised by an application and how important is landscape among them?
- have you come across any difficulties in making decisions in relation to landscape character?
- does the approach allow you to deal with existing developments or incongruous features?

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#### Prompts to look out for

- gaining access to real planning applications
- the use of the character approach in development control
- arguments based on landscape character

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\* Related research questions: RQ4

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#### Questions (UK study)

##### **Looking back at the work you've done in this authority, what do you think are the most**

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**important advantages and disadvantages of adopting the two landscape approaches?**

- do you have any exchange of experiences with the areas which are doing the similar thing?
- do you think that the adoption of the new approach has been generally successful? why or why not?
- do you have any plan to update the existing LCA and which parts do you think should be improved?

**Prompts to look out for**

- advantages/disadvantages of using the two approaches
- feedback from other ‘users’

\* Related research questions: RQ5, RQ6

**Questions (Taiwan study)**

**How does your authority incorporate landscape issues into the current planning practice, and how did you develop the Landscape Master Plan?**

- what is the relationship between landscape planning and spatial/land use planning?
- what is the role of landscape in the overall planning considerations?
- what do you think are the most crucial aspects of landscape to be included in the Plan?
- in which ways have you been involved in carrying out the Plan?

**Prompts to look out for**

- interpretation and understanding of landscape
- history of landscape planning
- the formulation of the Landscape Master Plan

\* Related research questions: RQ3, RQ7

**Questions (Taiwan study)**

**What are the expectation and possible implementations of using SLAs? How do you make connection between SLAs and other forms of plan?**

- what was the process/main consideration of selecting SLAs and what were the criteria?
- what advantages/disadvantages can you anticipate concerning the future use of SLA?
- how do you deal with landscape planning for areas *outside* SLAs?
- *for authorities with SLA management plan*: how did the develop these plans and how has you been involved in carrying out them?
- *for authorities without SLA management plan*: how and in what form will you develop SLA management plans?

**Prompts to look out for**

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\* Related research questions: RQ3, RQ4, RQ7

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**Questions (Taiwan study)****How do landscape issues be dealt with in non-urban development permit system?**

- have you had any experiences in dealing with this matter?
- is there any connection between the Rural Character Structure Plan and Landscape Master Plan?

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**Prompts to look out for**

- possibility of using LCA in non-urban planning issues
- the relationship between landscape character and countryside character

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\* Related research questions: RQ8

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**Questions (Taiwan study)****(Based on the explanation of using LCA in the UK)****To what degree do you think the same approach can be applicable in Taiwan/your authority?**

- which aspect(s) of landscape planning is lack in the current practice?
- what are the considerations when you are adopting an abroad concept or method?

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**Prompts to look out for**

- the receptiveness of LCA
- the degree to which LCA can fit nicely in the current practice

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\* Related research questions: RQ9

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## Appendix C. Examples of interview transcript

### 1. Interview with landscape officers, Derbyshire County

**Time:** 20/11/09, 10:00am-12:00pm

**Venue:** Shand House, Matlock, Derbyshire

**※ This was a group interview, the two participants are indicated as ‘A’ and ‘B’**

**Q** Could you begin by telling what your job is in the Council and how you’ve been involved in matters relating to landscape and landscape assessment?

**A** A: Both of us are architects working for Derbyshire County Council. We developed the landscape character of Derbyshire project together over several years, and we’ve produced the document, and from that we’ve used in several ways, which I expect through the process of this interview we’ll examine more detail. We use that document as well we deal with mineral applications, and household waste applications for the County, so that’s extraction. And we also deal with Derbyshire County Council development control applications. We also deal with forward planning in dealing with policies, but we used to have a Structure Plan, which is now being superseded by the Regional Spatial Strategy, which deals with the region, the East Midlands Regional Assembly. So they’re the main spheres of our work. And we also advise district councils on process of landscape character work, we don’t actually do the work for them

**B:** Just add into that, before the Structure Plan disappeared then we started to use the Regional Spatial Strategy, the Structure Plan also had local landscape designations as the main tool for protecting landscapes. In Derbyshire, most of the protected landscapes are the areas immediately around the Peak District National Park to protect the setting to that. As professionals we thought that actually meant was that large parts of the County didn’t have any landscape protection at all. And we tended to favour this approach with being advocated at the time by government to go down to the landscape character approach, something about every landscape, and every landscape is judged on its own merit, which is where we are now really.

**A:** And the designated landscape called Special Landscape Areas, one main area was in the High Peak, and the other was around here in the Derbyshire Dales. Now whilst they’d protected those landscapes, it was just no development areas, there’s nothing else happen in those areas. As Gary said, we’d go to a planning application in public inquiries, we’d suffer from, this application is 20 miles from the Peak Park, and it’s 10 miles from the Special Landscape Area, so it’s not designated, it doesn’t matter. That’s where we used to be.

Now the Special Landscape Areas, High Peak have saved that policies for the moment before they go into Local Development Frameworks, but on the valley have no longer got those policies in place in the interim process.

**Q** When were landscape issues first included in this county?

**A** A: They’ve been in the mineral’s plan...

**B:** Well they are in the Structure Plan. I think Special Landscape Areas were first put into the Structure Plan in about 1981, and that was following some landscape appraisal work in the 1970s.

**A:** Yes, 1972. They did an assessment of the county and it had a knock on effect in several ways. There were the Special Landscape Areas, they were protected areas to do with coaling, but not necessarily landscape led, but it would stop coaling. And under the mineral plan there was a general policy of looking at the environment, the effect on the amenity of landscape, but it didn’t say landscape character. So there were some underlying policies, as we understand, from the 70s.

**B:** That was probably the first occurrence of our landscape policy, but just on designated. And the last Structure Plan which I don’t have a date for, that was the first one to include landscape character, and that became environment policy number one, that was the first reference for landscape character but we still also retain the policy for Special Landscape Areas as well, so we

now had the policy that protected the best bits, but also took account of the other bits, so we were running in parallel at that point.

A: So the Structure Plan I think was the early 2000 because we published our document in 2003.

B: If you look at the environment policies in here, you can see that environment policy number one, which is landscape character, which is a new policy in the Structure Plan.

(A: We wrote this policy)

And then there were two policies regarding Special Landscape Areas. And then we were brave enough to get rid of those.

A: But the problem we had when this went, the Structure Plan went, we made lots of representations to East Midlands Regional Partnership, and they didn't take up a lot of our detail stuff from landscape character into the regional plan policy. We think the regional plan policy is very liked. We think it's quite weak, we don't think it's robust enough.

B: I think policy number 30, we felt that wasn't really a policy, it was more of undertaking, more of a requirement that local authorities should use landscape character assessment. It didn't actually say, what this said (the Structure Plan), that the development needed to take account landscape character and deliver, conserve it and enhance it. More of an instruction as to what was expect it. That (RSS) was more than undertaking of what the local authority should do, and that's why we were critical of it. We didn't think that (RSS ENV30) replace that (Structure Plan ENV1) satisfactorily.

(In the future, the Structure Plan will be replaced by...)

(A: It has been.)

It has been, that is no longer valid.

A: It's a change in the planning system from central government that just moved powers away from counties to the region.

B: Where Landscape character policy still exist, is in some of the local plans in the county and that's the district scale, below the county level. Some of the districts did adopt the landscape character policy because the Structure Plan suggested they need to.

A: And we've helped them with that. There's Derbyshire Dales District Council they've got a good one, and they've got a landscape character SPD. Obviously High Peak, Adrain Fisher who you saw, I don't know where they are in the process...

B: They've got an adopted policy. I don't think Bolsover did, it got adopted. A few have actually I think Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire probably have its just they're not brilliant policy. I think a lot of the districts have actually got a landscape character policy Bolsover, who actually were our best allies in terms of supporting this policy, never got around to adopting a policy because their Local Plan haven't been adopted by the time the new planning system started.

A: But we can give you a copy of that draft criteria policy which we thought was very good.

(for which district?)

It was a draft for Bolsover (districts), but was never...

(B: It was a draft which prepared for all of the districts to pursue a similar policy)

The nine districts and its very variable for the level of take take-up, but majority of them don't have landscape architects, so the problem is for them Nick then gets to be translating it into the real world in development control.

(you developed the draft as a reference for every district council?)

B: Yeah that was the aim of it. Bolsover wrote it.

A: the planners wrote it, and then we took it on board and spread it around, it was a very good one.

B: I think actually when you look at it, it's exactly the same policy that High Peak adopted, so they actually use this policy. Other districts decided they didn't want policy that long and modified it. But that was the policy that we would pursue in and across the County

A: And when we did the landscape character of Derbyshire, all the districts financially supported it, and we were involved in it. So their landscape character assessment as well as at the county level, it works at a district level as well.

**Q How have you first been introduced to the Landscape Character Assessment and how did you think of it?**

**A** A: I went on a course by Steven Warnock in the late 1990s. That was one I've got a deep understanding of it and came back and said, this is something we need to take on board. And then the Natural England who was called the Countryside Agency at that time rang up and said, would we be interested in being involved in a pilot study because I talked to them about it. From that, the County Council of Derbyshire was a pilot study in developing the Landscape Character Assessment Methodology with Steven Warnock.

(Was that one published in 2003?)

B: Yes, fed into that document.

We already started our work for that guidance we've published. And we were probably working as much to the guidance which produced in 1993, there was a previous version of it.

(A: and we were developing the process actually at the forefront of pushing boundaries on how to do this)

Certainly things like GIS, we were one of the first using GIS for Landscape Character.

(A: we were from tracing paper at the start of the project to actually using it all for GIS)

And I think it probably then helped to influence to guidance which was produced in 2003 (2002)

**Q How do you work with district councils for landscape planning?**

**A** A: It's on an informal basis, but we've actually arranged a landscape partnership, landscape policy working group, and meet twice a year.

(B: Glynis and I meet all of the district planners to discuss landscape policy issues)

(what's the interesting issues in that group?)

A: Housing allocation is a major one. They've got to accommodate large number of housing and we're helping to look at that. Housing and industrial development, and also area action plans, and it is interlinked with Green Infrastructure. It's not just landscape character on its own, it's Green infrastructure issues.

B: I think we're trying to make sure that landscape character gets carried forward into a new policies, as part of the new district planning. By having this group, we are able to find out where all of the different districts are with their plans.

(A: and policies)

And we can also help to influence what people might want to do. The new planning system now allows for, as Glynis has touched on, other supporting documents like Supplementary Planning Documents to support policies. So we can assist if districts want to go down that approach, we can advise on how to do it, in the best way to do it. That's why we've arranged this meeting to talk to them as an ongoing process.

A: The other thing we try to do is use landscape character to show how holistic it is, it has biodiversity and historic landscape information in it. And all the core strategies look to landscape with social and economic plans, they're pulling together. They were trying to weave into the whole of their planning system more and more.

**Q How does landscape character assessment link to other policies. I saw you've done some link with biodiversity, how about other issues?**

**A** B: One of the things we've been trying to suggest, one of the thing that came out of the High Peak project was actually using landscape types, the areas of landscape, as a planning unit that you can sit everything within in terms of, when you're writing policies for housing, if you would promote housing in that landscape type, what would be the impacts? If you promoted it in that landscape type, what would be the impacts? To actually influence where things should go.

A: And use the differences between the landscape type to inform say the type of housing, or no housing, or the settlement pattern.

B: That's where Glynis and I are strongly pushing the agenda. We would like to see landscape types use much more as a spatial unit in planning as a framework.

I think the problem you've got is that's quite a new idea, no one has done it before, and there is a reluctance I think, by planners to move to a different system. They are happier just dealing with

their administrative boundary, their district boundary, and judging it on the whole. And we think it could be a bit more sophisticated than that. That's really what Glynis and I and are constantly trying to promote really.

A: But Derbyshire Dales they have a landscape architect and they have used landscape character in defence at a public inquiry for development, an inspector has taken it on board that a development was impacting negatively on the landscape character in rural Derbyshire. That's been a material consideration.

(Have you got any meeting minutes for the working groups? Perhaps I can see something interesting...)

Yes. Do you want to do that now?

(probably later. Am I able to find these minutes on line?)

B: No, I don't think so.

A: They're not published. It's very informal group.

B: Yes, I think it's an informal group. It's not like a full committee for example where you can easily get them as appropriate. But I don't think there's anything confidential that you can't see it, it just give you a flavour of the sort of things that have been talking about.

A: We can give you our terms of reference, so it shows what the group is all about.

(probably I would check the university confidential policy of using these data)

B: Or if you want to do that before, they will be electronic files. If you send us an email, we can send them to you electronically. So if you want to check at the university, that its ok we can send them to you later if that's ok. Will send them as a pdf document.

**Q How did you communicate this idea with other government officers and how receptive did you find them?**

A: We've already involved with Natural England, formerly the Countryside Agency, who were part of the pilot. Then we had a publication launch where we invited all the different bodies we could think of, we did a presentation and explained landscape character.

B: Just before the law it was subject to a consultation, it did have a wide consultation, and I think at the back of the document, you may not have it here, I don't think you have you?

(here, in the middle)

Yes, the acknowledgement, consultee list. These were the people we actually sent a copy out to, a draft of it for their comments on it. So these were the people that we'd shared it with and ask for their input, so it's another consultation, as Glynis said, we had a proper launch of it.

A: But they actually had an input into commenting on it, and looking at it.

Then we had a launch, and following on from that we've developed a lecture on the actual document, what is says and how it works, where you can find information. And then we run a workshop over a couple of hours and we give two scenarios.

B: We produce workshop event, that's got exercise in it to try and get people think about how you would use this. Not necessarily from the planning policy point of view but from a development control point of view, so actually how we influence the development on the ground, what you see and how it actually link to landscape character.

A: And we've taken that workshop seminar to all the district council planner officers, we've taken it to the National Trust and Natural England venue officers. So anybody we can think of who it affects and would be willing to come and listen. I've presented it to highways in County, and all the County Council development control.

B: We did do this, as we said earlier, in partnership with the district councils anyway, so even when we were doing this, all the district councils were signed up to it, some of them financially signed up to it. So there was ongoing communication all the way through the process.

A: And even we've got planning officers going out and helping drive Jonathon around the district, helping them do the surveying. That actually got them in to seeing their district more. So it's being a whole process all the way through.

**Q So at that time what were the pros and cons to this approach?**

A B: From our perspective or in generally from what other people have said from the outset?

(in generally, like somebody may be against it)

I think the pros outweigh the cons. Most of the people were in favour of this, so there were a lot of districts across this County that had got no landscape policy at all, no landscape designations covered their areas, so a lot of people supported this because for the first time, they got a landscape document that they can use for their patch, for their area. On the cons side, we did have a lot of resistance from some people

(A: and from the planning)

who didn't think that we needed this because the old policies of landscape designation were working perfectly all right, and we didn't necessarily agree with that.

(A: and we were aware that they were going to remove Special Landscape Area designation and would be left with nothing. As the project went on, this came on board)

When we started this work, we were at that time thinking that it might lead to us maintaining landscape designations but rather than be based on our survey work, they would be based now on current up-to-date landscape character, so you could say that you describe the character and these are the little bits, where is the best, the strongest character.

But we've moved away from that, we haven't pursued that, but that's one of things we were thinking about when we first started it. We partly went down that road because as I said we did get a lot of resistance from some people who weren't keen to see the end of landscape designations.

But in terms of the overall pros, it has been an incredibly valuable tool for development control because we are much clearer as to whether development is right in that landscape, whether it can deliver any benefits to that landscape.

A: When Gary and I go out separately which we always do, we are giving consistent and clear advice, we're giving the same advice. Within there, there is the tree and woodland planting guidance, and hedge species mixes. Again, we can hand that to developers, they can use it, the farming and wildlife advisors, can stand on a farm and say to the farmer, you are in this landscape type, here's the basic mix that relates to your landscape character. Similarly, landscape architects advising developers can use this information. And it says them starting again from scratch of all broad base, unifying.

B: I think that's a definite pro with the exercise. Another difficulty with landscape character is, Glynis and I as landscape professionals find it very easy to use, but I think some people find it quite difficult because it looks to be a quite complicated document because it picks up so many bits of interest. I don't think everybody fully understands it. That's probably one of the cons a little bit because you've got to try and explain that and get your message in those simple terms.

A: And people continuously think that landscape character is separate from biodiversity and historic landscape, and we keep saying it's not just how the landscape looks, it's holistic, and that's...

B: How it works and functions, the whole package. I think that's what people find difficult to understand. It's not just what you see, it's why you see it.

A: I think one other big pros in here was doing the biodiversity table, taking the broad habitat types and writing simply what those types were because there were lots of BAPs with different titles, which is very confusing to which what they we're talking about. With the help of the County ecologists we simplified it, and I think we broke it down in layman's terms that you could understand which biodiversity action plan related to which landscape type, and what habitat was the most appropriate to that landscape type.

**Q About this biodiversity management table, could you explain how it works?**

**A** B: This table was the summary table we produced to try and link the main habitat types in the biodiversity action plans across the county. We were trying to link those habitats with the landscapes where you are most likely to find them. So where you've got a solid black circle (●), that is a landscape that is associated with that habitat type. Equally, where you've got a dash (-), you wouldn't necessarily get that habitat. An obvious example is, on our limestone landscapes here, apart from the Dales, where you get rivers running in the bottom, you don't

really get any water associated with them because they are free draining landscapes. We felt that we needed to do that because quite often with biodiversity, people who didn't understand the landscape were promoting habitats that shouldn't go in that landscape because they're not associated with it.

A: They like digging a pond in the free draining landscape, making artificial habitat in a landscape type that wasn't characteristic habitat. And then we produce the secondary level work, they might occur randomly but they weren't necessarily a key characteristic. We use that for guidance for habitat conservation, enhancement or creation.

B: But we were really trying to use this to make the point that wildlife habitats that you see, are actually one of the features that define the character of the landscape, and if you just promote those anywhere, you're not actually reinforcing character. So we wanted to produce a table that was a very simple graphic representation of what should go where, and why.

(A: and that then fits into your management of those types)

(so it's the same aim as another one landscape management table?)

Yes, we produced this table because the Landscape Character Assessment doesn't provide any guidance. It is purely a description of the landscape types.

(A: the tree and woodland guidance...)

Put that type back into this, there wasn't any other guidance, what we wanted to do was produce some very simple guidance so we took a list of themes and they're explained in the document what these mean. Just to give people pointers to where these issues were relevant or not relevant, or priority.

(Did any of these ideas go down to the district LCAs?)

B: What we have done recently, not so much for the Local Plan but now the new Local Development Framework is starting, a lot of the districts have clipped these to just their patch. We only give them their types that they're interested in, and they start to put these tables into their own websites so that people can see what influences their area.

A: So we take them out, we've clipped it to the district and we've clipped the landscape types that are relevant to them in the table, in the biodiversity table.

(B: so they're starting to use it)

(Is it an easier way for people to understand it instead of giving them the whole document?)

A: Yes. They've just got the extract that relates to the district.

B: This is a summary table to a large extent. If you don't read all of the text, at least this gives you a pointer as to what you should be thinking about the area.

(A: what are the main issues)

**Q How did you come up with these aims? Based on your field work?**

A B: Partly on our field work, partly on our professional judgment. We know the County very well,

(A: and we consulted the County experts, ecologist, the archeologist)

and we spoke to district planners, we published out to a wide consultation, so people saw this before it was actually published, to get an idea as to whether they agreed with this. There are occasional comments that they didn't agree necessarily with the priorities that we place on it. I have to say to a large extent, Glynis and I know the County very very well, and we felt we were quite familiar with lots of these issues, so we were strong initial point. But survey work and other people's comments fed into it as well.

**Q About your Structure Plan, now you're adopting Special Landscape Areas and landscape based approach. How do these two approaches work together?**

A A: That Special Landscape Area has gone.

(so it's no longer existed)

No. There's only High Peak they've got a saved policy to their new Local Development Framework plan comes on board, and then it will go.

B: Yes, there's no reference to protected local landscapes in the Regional Spatial Strategy so it's already gone from that level (region level), and that level will replace the Structure Plan. There



is no longer any protected landscape other than the National Park, the national designations. As Glynis says, the districts are going to probably have to abandon local landscape designations and go down the landscape character approach.

(A: and that comes with PPS7 )

(After that, every policy will change in the future)

Yes, it's all going to become landscape character based and require all the mechanisms to strengthen this approach, so it might require Supplementary Planning Documents to give people more guidance on what this approach actually means.

A: And we're quite concerned that it happens at the district level. When we go to them they've not got any landscape expertise. This is why we're continually trying get involved and help where we can.

**Q How do you think of the change from the previous Special Landscape Areas to this new approach?**

**A** B: We're mixed. We're quite nervous about going down landscape character because having been involved in a public inquiry a few years ago. It really highlighted the difficulties of using just landscape character. It's much easier if you are in a protected landscape, you can defend yourself a lot better. Planning inspectors like simple things, they like designation because it means something can't go there but it can't go there.

A: And the development control officers like it as well because it makes that a lot simple. Again, not there, because it is designated; here (outside designation), here it doesn't matter. But that's the point whether it falls down is the rest of the landscape, which is a lot of Derbyshire, had no protection. But I think we're finding increasingly difficult to defend the landscape character aspect.

B: When you go back to your pros and cons earlier, that's one of the cons I said. Because landscape character is a much more complex approach, planning inspectors and some planners just find it difficult to understand. It's very hard to create an argument then. It's much easier to just say, oh that's a protected landscape, everybody understands that. So that's one of the main difficulties.

A: But where it's working for is it gives us a tool to argue a case with developers how to do restoration or colours to a development or scale and size, it has helped us on that.

**Q Regardless of the requirement in the PPS7, what are the key reasons that encourage you to still use the new direction and not use SLAs?**

**A** B: I think basically because that's the way government policy wants to go. I think it doesn't favour landscape designations full stop. What really came out of this work (LCA) was that this work didn't naturally support the Special Landscape Areas, the designated areas. We didn't always agree with the lines that were drawn for the Special Landscape Area. They didn't relate to landscape character at all, they were just purely visual lines. So that was one of the reasons. PPS7 says you can have landscape designation provided they are supported by a rigorous assessment of the quality of the landscape. Landscape Character Assessment can do that, but unfortunately in Derbyshire, the assessment didn't match the previous designation very well.

A: The assessment had been based on topographical variation. The first Special Landscape Areas came out of where there was a lot of hills, they scored very high, or a lot of trees. And the Trent Valley which is flat, which is equally important landscape, didn't score at all. During this assessment, we came to realise that not only just had the coalfield being impacted upon highly in Derbyshire, it hoped to see that the Trent Valley as well, had been impacted upon incredibly due to mineral extraction.

What drove this on from a professional point of view is having concern about the whole of all landscapes in Derbyshire needing some sort of informed decisions.

B: Going back to the question you asked, I think that's the other important driver is that we now signed up to the European Landscape Convention. And the European Landscape Convention is about all landscapes matter. So it further moves your way from designation because designation always says that bit is more important than that bit. I think the actual mechanism is that it did

take in how you look at landscape, are moving your way from designation, and moving you much more to characterisation, because characterisation looks at all of the landscape.

(A: as Gary says European Landscape Convention is now helping enormously to support to our arguments)

(That seems it's higher than the PPS7 and give you an overall idea)

I think it probably added to what PPS7 is saying, probably makes it look like the government are ahead of themselves really, by promoting characterisation. But I think the European Landscape Convention is very much supporting this approach

**Q Also about the Special Landscape Area you used to have, you said it was quite effective here, how did it work?**

**A** A: It's only effective in the area which was designated, which was the edge of the Peak Park. It was calculated how many contours cross kilometer grid square, that got more points, and more trees and woodlands got more points. The two landscapes that came out as high scoring were High Peak and Derbyshire Dales which lie on the fringes of the Peak district National Park.

B: It was successful in keeping development out of it. But the pressures for development weren't generally in those areas anyway. The development pressures were in places like the coalfield and the Trent Valley which Glynis talked about it earlier. It's hard to say how successfully it was, it was easy to resist things with that policy because you could just say, sorry, is a Special Landscape Area so the answer is no. What I would say that is whilst it stopped development, it didn't necessarily conserve landscape character or condition because walls and trees and hedgerows were still in quite a poor condition because it didn't influence management of those landscapes, it only said no development. So whether it was successful is a point to debate. It was successful in stopping development, is wasn't successful in conserving condition of landscapes.

(so it's not a positive, forward looking policy)

(A: no...no)

I don't think it's particularly positive policy, I think it's actually quite a negative policy because it's basically...

(A: and all the other areas are suffered from the fact that somewhere is designated)

And also protected areas, there is always some development that can take place somewhere that can bring about enhancement. So it was too blunt in some ways, there is no reason why very small, localized development designed well couldn't go into a protected landscape and brought about, it could've been hedgerow, it could've planted trees, it could've built walls, it could've done something positive. I think the SLA approach didn't really allow for that because it started from the point of view that no development.

A: Having said that, now we've been looking at the Trent Valley, and we've been looking at the character of Trent Valley in mineral applications, we found that there are some intact historical landscapes and I would love to have some mechanism to identify those areas, to protect them.

(that's how the landscape character can work with that)

Yes, and we don't know how to do that at the moment.

**Q I know that in 1988 there was a Special Landscape Area guidance or assessment here. Is there any copy of it you still have in hand?**

**A** B: We might have. We might send you that again. We can probably scan and sent it as a pdf. We'll try to find you something of that.

(Did you have any involvement of the two assessments?)

A: No, it's before I came here.

(B: no, that's before my time)

**Q About how the landscape character work in the planning system here, are there any specific development cases that the LCA has particularly involved?**

**A** A: It contributes to all our mineral applications. It informs all the restoration proposals for opencast coal, gravel, sand and gravel, limestone, gritstone extraction. It's huge from that. It informs what they should conserve to start with, and we can argue that, and how the restoration scheme should be designed.

B: Yes I think it has been really really successful in delivering much better landscape schemes generally because I think even developers now coming into the County have got a much more clear understanding of what the landscape looks like and how it works. And equally when we're talking to those developers, and asking, saying you should deliver this, this and this, they can understand why we're asking for those things because all are in this document (Derbyshire LCA).

A: And we can give you two excellent case studies, one is in Dowlow (place name), and also probably the sewage work.

(B: yes, we've got a couple of sites that have been really successful)

Gary persuaded the developer to actually reshape a huge tip, and move away from tree planting to creating pasture and limestone walls, drystone walls that can be grazed by sheep in the limestone landscape. That's a huge change of attitude by the developers.

(that has already taken place?)

B: Yes, that's near Buxton.

(A: I can show you the photo)

I've got photographs of that. That's been really successful, it moved us away when something looks bad, the old way of dealing with it is to plant trees in front of it to hide it. But if all the landscape doesn't have trees in it, you have to look at the characteristics of that landscape and try and do it another way and that's why I think we've done successfully in Dowlow. To be honest you wouldn't know it was tip any longer, it just looks like a piece of the countryside.

A: And we use landscape character as the argument in discussion, and that's being taken on board. Another example is, again in the limestone dales, a sewage works on the way to Buxton in the bottom of the dale. They were going to relocate it which they've done in a quarry. Gary helped inform the colour system scheme and then also informed what to do with the restoration and other promoting, taking development out of the river valley.

B: And planted it all back to a natural dale side of woodlands. You wouldn't know, certainly of few more years when the trees are growing, you won't know there's ever sewage works there. That was an example of how we manage to work with developers to conserve in a new development, the character, but at the same time enhance the character by getting rid of the old development and restore it back to the original landscape.

So they are two good examples of working with the landscape character to deliver beneficial development I think.

**Q What is the standard process when a developer comes to you? They need to look at this (LCA) first and write a proposal?**

**A** A: We have pre-application discussions, and with very big schemes we have what's called, first of all is screened, and then they have a scoping exercise is to what they need to look at. If this is going to be an environment impact assessment.

And we can give you our scoping response. We have a general response that says you must take this into consideration and apply it.

(and then this application goes to development control?)

B: Yes, comes into our planning control group.

A: And then we are part of the consultation. And then we can say, no, it doesn't accord with landscape character, or yes, it does. We go in to lengthy negotiations about it with the big scheme.

**Q I'm wondering how the development control officers attach the priorities to the issues raised by an application, and how important landscape is among them?**

**A** B: Good question. I think we have a very good working relationship with our development control officers and the group that we're working has got ecologist, landscape architect and archeologist. The three disciplines are all probably equally important. But I think our planning control officers are very very converse with landscape issues, they are aware of this document, they use this document, it gets referred to in committee reports on a regular basis, and they respect our judgments.

A: And they take a lot of notice of our comments and we can obviously often know in meetings with the developers if landscape is often a major issue. And it's not just character, it's visual impact as well, the two go hand in hand.

B: Yes we have used landscape character to turn development down because we don't believe it's sympathetic to character or we don't believe that the benefits that come out of the development will improve landscape character. They won't enhance it or conserve it. So we have used this to actually say no, we are not going to approve it.

(A: but also we've used it to turn bad applications round into much better schemes)

(Does the approach allow you to deal with existing inappropriate developments?)

A: Only if it's a mineral site with a review of conditions which is a R.O.M.C., review of mineral condition. Then we can use it because they review in, a conditions in the planning process. But existing development that's already got permission, no. Because there's no planning process.

(So it's more about the coming future developments?)

B: Yes it's new development. It's very limited how it can affect existing permissions. As Glynis says, the environment act allowed us to revisit the conditions on old planning permissions. A lot of quarry operators are aware of this document and they are quite open-minded to trying to bring about improvements to the landscape if they can.

What it allows us to make much stronger arguments about why we think you should do this because of the character of the landscape.

A: And we... it's helped us to understand our landscapes much much better than we did before.

(So that's how it works when the developer comes to you.)

B: Yes, that's the main strength when developer's coming in, are new to the county.

**Q What specific actions have been taken to deliver this approach by you?**

A: Educate? That's back to the workshops that we went and presented to people.

B: We do provide training for the use of this, we've done that. First of all we did that internally to development control officers we've told about, to highway people, to planners. Because we felt they were the first people that needed to understand this document because they were the people that would have the greatest influence on how the landscape is affected. So we've done in house training, we've done countryside services, those are the people that manage the land of the County own to see if they can bring about improvements on manage it in sympathy with the character.

A: We've been round all the districts and they've had the development control officers and the policy officers. We've been to Natural England as well and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to explain it at all.

(since the publication of this document, you've been doing this all the way?)

B: Yes, it has been a rolling programme really since about 2004. We're regularly providing training in fact. With only six months earlier this year that we did Natural England, we were asked to provide some training to Natural England staffs that we met them in Bakewell and offered them a day's training.

A: Because these officers have been reorganised, remit has expanded to consider landscape character more.

**Q What's the content of these training? Teach them how to use this document?**

A: B: It's twofold. It's partly to explain how we did the document, how we produced it, it's partly to show people how to use it, how to find information in it because it's a fairly big document all together. And thirdly to actually apply it in a real life situation, so we have developed a scenario. We pretend there was a development, and we try and get them to think about how that development could go ahead and deliver things or improve the landscape or at least not impact on the landscape.

(A: and we can give you that scenario with questions)

We can give you that if that's of interest to you

(A: and there's a question sheet and it makes them work through the document to find the answer)

A: And we found that while they're actually working through the question sheet and having to look up the answers in the document, the penny was dropping from the lecture we've given them twenty minutes before. And going on to the working case scenario, a road going through two landscape types, it then cemented the principles of using it.

B: What we can send you a typical training sheet if you wanted one, just to look at the ideas (that's must be very useful...you've done a lot of works here)

A: We're proud of it.

B: We're proud of it, we think it's a good piece of work and we want people using it, so we spent a lot of effort trying to get people understand it and use it. That goes down the way we present it, to training, to the way we put it on the internet, we've tried to promote it the best we can all along the line really.

A: And the colour coding just in the actual document itself, if you've seen the colour document, it tried to make it as easy as possible for people to use.

(It's very important for people who are fresh to this idea and get a sense about how to use it.)

Yes, and it's easy to use, it doesn't put people off, they are open.

**Q Looking back at the work you've done in Derbyshire, what do you think are the most important advantages and disadvantages of changing to an approach based on landscape character?**

**A** A: The big advantage is we've got whole coverage across the county to start with.

(B: and a better understanding of our landscapes, that's the first advantage)

And then taking any advice we're consistent and clear.

B: I don't say anything different to Glynis. When we meet somebody, we say exactly the same thing, we tell them exactly which landscape it's in, there's no conflict.

A: The disadvantages I think is, I think it would repeating what I've perhaps said earlier, if it's not protected, we struggle with getting the idea across and the importance across to chief planning officers and inspectors, it's the concept.

B: Yes I mean that's the disadvantage. It's sometimes more difficult to create an argument why something shouldn't go, you know, where it's being proposed. Where if you with a protected landscape, you don't have to worry about that, you just say, no way, the policy says no. That's the most difficult part of it.

But I think that's also a little bit to do with the fact that landscape character is still quite a new concept, it's only been through the late 1990's, it's probably only ten years old. So I don't think a lot of people fully understand what landscape character is about. And I think until there is a longer period and people start to understand it. Because even now we still have applications that talk about landscape designations, that's not the way we're looking at our landscapes anymore.

(A: but the big benefit is new development that comes along is much better informed and much better designed)

(in the future there will be more and more people understand this approach?)

Yes, that's what I would like to think so, you know.

(A: become more important in local district planning)

**Q Do you think this document is a robust justification for development control? One thing I'm wondering is, compared to other issues like biodiversity, they've got scientific data, or economic data to support decision making?**

**A** B: I think that's one of the problems of landscape characteristics, it's not as scientific as some of the other disciplines perhaps.

(A: but it's systematic, and we've gone through a process where we look at all the elements of the landscape, physical and cultural, in a systematic way)

And it's the most scientific landscape that's ever been because the end of the day the first thing is defining character, things like geology, and soils, and topography. They are fixed, there's no argument about them.

A: And they are affected how man is used the landscape through history, so steep slopes affect how they can farm them. Derbyshire particularly has got very distinct topography, north to

south, east to west, so that's had a big influence.

B: I think it's the most scientific landscape can be. If you're comparing how a lot of landscape designations are really quite crude, they are just visual lines, they don't relate to landscape character at all. They are just basically lines on a map where they've decided that, you can't see this land from over there so we won't include it in it, it's as crude as that.

A: And this systematically looks at elements as settlement pattern, transport, ecology for each area. And actually some is not just being a desktop exercise, somebody actually in it was Jonathon Porter, went through the whole of the County, filling in survey sheets, so it's an onsite actually survey.

**Q Another question is I think Derbyshire is quite an unusual case because of the Peak District Park and the distinct characters. Do you think the approach would work in a place which is less characteristic, contains more modern elements?**

A B: Yes, yes! I think the fact it does work across the whole of the country shows that it works in any landscape. You're right, we've got some very distinctive landscape, that's quite iconic nationally. But I think it can work in any landscape type. The only thing is sometimes that drawing the boundaries between landscape types is a little bit more difficult because they tend to blend together a little bit more.

(A: changes might be more subtle. We might get bigger areas, but they still help you understand your landscape)

I think it does work, that is one of the strengths of it personally.

**Q Have you got any plans to update this document and extend it any further?**

A A: We're very well aware that we need to review it at the end of the ten year period, and we've got it earmarked to start thinking about that, but that's as far as we've got.

B: The things have changed since we wrote that. The European Landscape Convention has been signed, and we'd like to make reference to the European Landscape Convention, and we'd like to make reference to that because this document now supports as principles of the approach.

A: Fundamentally it still sounds today, the topography is not changed, the geology, the urban area might just spread outside, but there were no judgments made on this, this was an A, B, C building block assessment, that's not changed to any great degree.

B: And we've never had anybody who has used the document who was challenged any of the landscape that we had defined, everybody seems to be quite happy that the landscape types that are in this document are actually out in Derbyshire.

A: When it went to public inquiry was accepted, the methodology was accepted. It just needs tweaking to update it.

(or links more explicitly to planning policy like RSS?)

(B: that might be quite difficult...)

That's because the districts are dealing with it.

B: By working with the districts, we're trying to make that connection that through their policies they refer to this document and then we can give them a shortened version of this document for their area. We're also trying to work with them if they want to produce Supplementary Planning Document, so further information that supports this work. But it's difficult for us because we haven't got a Structure Plan anymore.

A: But the mineral policies, I think there's two basic policies with one for wastes and one for minerals that link to this, and the developers are aware of those.

(B: we will promote in those documents)

(in those two plans there's already some involvement of the LCA?)

B: Yes, they're being reviewed at the moment and a new plan developed, and we're using landscape character much more in that. We would like to think that the policies that are in those plans are better than the policies that are in the old plans, to take more account of this work.

A: And we've also used this approach to assess allocated sites and rank them, and we've developed a methodology, again that's new, and it involved ecology and archaeology, that's being a huge way forward in assessing allocations that never happened before.

(In the past were no landscape related policies in the waste and mineral plan?)

B: A passing reference. There are some old waste policies that talk about landscape, landscape character.

(A: and within these coaling area because of landscape, I think it was land use)

They weren't very good policies anyway.

(A: but at least there was something remotely to link to)

**Q Overall and thinking generally in the Derbyshire, do you think the adoption of the landscape character approach has been successful, and what direction it might take in the future?**

**A** A:I think it has been huge successful.

B: I think main development we would like to see in the future, and this is at the region, and at the districts, is to see landscape character types used as a spatial unit in planning. That's the number one thing we're trying to steer at the moment

A: So if you look at housing allocations or development types, you look it within framework of that landscape type, or you look at ecosystem services and biodiversity by landscape character type, or transport development, or economic development or social.

B: We firmly believe that these units of landscape can look at any planning issue, whether you're looking an employment land or housing land or recreational facilities and access, biodiversity, historic environment, green infrastructure, they can all be considered in a context of these units. That is something quite radical, nobody does that at the moment. That's what we would like to see.

A: And also within that raising people's awareness of the importance of landscape character and how it effect people's house and wellbeing. It's not just development issues, it raises the profile of how landscape is important to people's lives in lots of ways.

**Q Do other ecologists have the same view about it?**

**A** A: it's a new person, the former ecologist skeptical to start with and then found it very useful and started to use it a lot more.

B: Another thing is generally ecologists are very focused on sites and local areas of interest. They find it difficult to come back sometimes the very big pictures. But if they could just come back to the bigger picture, they could see the benefits of landscape types being used as a framework for all of the habitats that they're interested in, in that landscape.

A: So looking at biodiversity at the landscape scale, that's what many ecologists are not used to and this is what we try to do.

B: Yeah, that's constant fight really to try and convince ecologist that landscapes can provide a framework.

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## 2. Interview with the Head of Regeneration, High Peak Borough

**Time: 10/09/09, 10:00-11:00am**

**Venue: Municipal Buildings, Glossop, Derbyshire**

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**Q Could you begin by telling me what your job is in the Borough and how you have been involved in planning and landscape matters?**

**A** My current job title is called Head of Regeneration (give a business card), and that covers planning policy, development plan, and what called spatial planning, but it also covers heritage and design, tourism, economic development, sort of physical project and also the Council's markets. I've already done that job for the past two or three months, prior to that, my job was called Head of Planning, so I was responsible for again planning policy and heritage and design and projects, but also the planning applications side, and building control as well. That's quite important because for the all planning policy, it's one thing to have good policies but it's quite another to see they are implemented on the ground if you see what I mean. That's very important connection in my view. So for most of the time we're working with landscape character, but actually being was responsible for both sides. So both policy and implementation.  
(it also includes development control?)

Yea. Not anymore, but for most of the past five years, I've been responsible for that as well.

**Q Do you know when landscape issues were first included in the planning system of this Borough?**

**A** Landscape is always being important in this area simply because it is very attractive, and of course we are surrounded by National Park. (show you a map) This is the Borough of High Peak, this is local authority area. The most of the area is covered by National Park, and National Park are their own planning authority. They are responsible for the planning function within that area. You're left with this rather unusually shaped area which is excluded from the National Park, which is the responsibility a Council. About 90% of the people living in this area (outside NP), so this is most densely populated, but also it is still quite attractive. When the national park was drawn up, in many cases on administrative grounds, not on landscape grounds, just bits of unusual but it just to do the politics at that time. so going back quite a long way, even in legislation there was a special concession enshrined within the national planning legislation, what was called Article 16 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 made a special provisions for certain areas on the periphery of National Parks to deal with landscape, and that was a particular legislation to do with the agriculture and farming. Even going back for quite a long way, there was recognition that certain areas on the edge of National Parks, landscape is important, and High Peak is included in that.

More recently, in 1988, Derbyshire County Council, (bear in mind that you probably picked up that the UK, local government system is very confusing at the moment because it's in a state of flux, but we still have a county council and district council and borough council, county council sits over it). The County Council back in 1988 prepared what was called a Special Landscape Plan for Derbyshire, that was looking at not so much landscape character itself although, I supposed the character for part of it, but it wasn't probably as we understand it now, but what that was looking at was really like a value system of landscape. It was trying to assess a landscape which people thought of as being attractive, so they devised that system and the methodology back at that time. Then that established a system called Special Landscape Areas in Derbyshire, and in fact a lot of High Peak is covered by that application. When national policy in Britain changed with the publication of Planning Policy Guidance 7 round about 1999, that expressed concerns about what was called about local landscape designations. In other words, there was a concern nationally that councils were producing landscape designations but they weren't doing the necessary preparatory work to do it, so this cautioned against that approach. At the same time we were getting the landscape character, as we understand it now, the process is now emerging. The driver for the most recent work that High Peak has done was



really the fact that we knew that Special Landscape Areas we wouldn't be able to retain those as a planning policy. That has been a successful planning policy for almost twenty years in effect, and it had been good at maintaining the quality of development in respecting certain landscapes, but we needed it to change. It was really back in the Local Plan which produced in 2005 that we had a policy for landscape character and design which is policy OC4. With this document, I guess took a couple years in preparation, round about the early 2000 when we were starting to think about this new approach and working with the County Council.

**Q Was there any debate in the Council at that time whether or not retaining the SLAs?**

**A** Yeah, certainly there was some question mark. This Local Plan actually has both, it has a Special Landscape Areas, policy OC3 on Special Landscape Areas, and policy OC4 is on landscape character. So this is a bit of the transitional document between the two systems. There was a big debate in terms about whether the two could sit alongside each other. Because it (SLA) worked very well, it's a policy that the Council understand and people understand, whereas landscape character is more complex, it's harder for people to grasp, so people would be nervous about abandoning the Special Landscape policies. For this Local Plan we kept both of that. (in the future will the SLAs still remain?)

No, they will go, which leads to a bit of question as to in quite a changing of landscape character approach. It raises an issue about how people value landscapes. The criticism about Special Landscape Areas was it would take a certain area and say, in this area this is special and therefore you need to pay particular attention to design and landscape and so on. But outside that in a sense that this implication (LC approach??) was almost anything can go, you don't need xxx of these things. The good thing about landscape character is it's effectively saying, wherever you are, there is a prevailing character, you need to adapt the development to be in tune with that. The downside really is that I think in the public's mind, the perception of some landscapes are inherently more attractive than others. Landscape character at least as far as we have developed doesn't address that issue, and we haven't really got into that value assessment of landscape. I think that's a gap that would need to be filled in the future.

**Q What was your first impression when you saw the Landscape Character Assessment and how you felt at that time it would work in this Borough?**

**A** We thought it was very good. What happened was Derbyshire County Council did a Landscape Character Assessment in terms of the whole of Derbyshire, and that's the document that was started, everything else. We thought that was an excellent piece of work, it also followed from some work that the national conservation body now called Natural England, at that time it was called English Nature (Countryside Agency), did some work about what were the character areas of Britain. They published a map, and that was quite influential. At that time we thought that was a very helpful piece of work because it actually mapped perhaps what in a sense people have always known, but it formalised the landscape that we couldn't instantly recognise what it was trying to say. So we thought it was really good piece of work.

**Q When I interviewed with Countryside, they said that Countryside Agency now Natural England approached you and gave you the work to produce this report.**

**A** What happened was the Countryside Agency were looking, around this time we could see as a Council we had a problem because we needed to do something in our landscape because the Special Landscape Areas policies were under threat, so we needed to replace them. So we knew we needed to do some work around our landscape. At the same time Countryside Agency put out a call for projects that they would be prepared to fund, and I think they just sent round an email to every local authority. I just put a bid together to say we would like to do this and develop it. We've seen Derbyshire County Council have done their very raw character work, it just classified the whole county into different areas. But we knew that we needed to, for that to have any meaning in terms of development, it needed to be taken more further. It was that we put a bid into the Countryside Agency, and the Countryside Agency very kindly gave us some money, we then have to find some money ourselves. We put together a project to that was when we engaged Countryside to do the bulk of the work.

(you mentioned that SLA at that time was under threat, what does that mean?)

It means because national policy guidance from the government was questioning the appropriateness of Special Landscape Areas type policies. What their national guidance was saying that they felt that these policies perhaps weren't sufficiently justified. I think actually in the case in retrospect, in the case of Derbyshire Special Landscape Area, it was a very thorough piece of work, but it was being done in the 1980s, so of course it was starting to be a bit out of date. I think we were just nervous because we thought that we would all, I mean out local plans hence have to go through a system of examination we get an inspector who basically tests what you do. We were worried that we didn't inspect wouldn't support the policy around Special Landscape Area development, so that's why we were concerned about that.

**Q You mentioned the Special Landscape Areas used to work quite well here. Were there any management plans for them or a policy to help?**

**A** There was originally a plan during that we may...there was a development plan but it's essentially a planning policy tool rather than a management, landscape management tool. We just illustrate how it works. That's our proposal (proposal map in the Local Plan?), everything with the parallel lines is within the Special Landscape Area. You can see actually it covers the particular part of High Peak, it covers almost most of the countryside. A lot of the countryside was covered by this notation. Simply recognizing that even...this is the National Park here, and National Park sometimes wiggles in and out, so it sometimes follows quite funny boundaries, and you probably picked up the national park system in Britain is different, the state doesn't own a land in national park, so it's slightly different system that operates in the other countries. Most specially different from the way works in America for example, so it made the land still for the most part, in private ownership. It's an administrative thing rather than management designation. If you covered big part of High Peak, it was a very important policy (SLA) and we still use it to some extent.

**Q If people feel it's very important to have this kind of designation, how do the applicants and developers think about it? Does that mean they can't develop anything in there?**

**A** To some extent it is restrictive in terms of what can be developed, but it only operates in the countryside anyway, and the countryside would be subjective to fairly restrictive policies because in England is particular such a densely populated country, we really lack space. Areas of countryside people value a forest as a green space, so therefore we have quite strict control over building. To some extent it is an extra layer of restriction. The good thing about Special Landscape Area was that developers understood it. It's quite easy to understand. People could say, yeah, we're in a Special Landscape Area, therefore I understand I may need to build the house of different materials, I may need to pay more attention to designs and things like that. (were there some regulations on Special Landscape Areas that tell people how to do with the design?)

Yes, certainly. There is a policy, but I don't think we ever did elaborate on it particularly. The policy simply said special regards to landscape quality inside landscape. We didn't necessarily, there's a little bit in the preamble, but there wasn't a huge amount of guidance in effect. I suppose what you might say is perhaps people wouldn't necessarily be certain of knowing what is expecting with them. They just knew that they perhaps had to do a bit more within areas than they might have to do otherwise.

**Q Now how well do the planning officers and the public like stakeholder groups understand of the new approach based on landscape character?**

**A** If I was honest, I think that probably it took a bit of time for the planning officers to get grasp of it because obviously they used to an old system. Now I think they understand quite well and use it quite a lot. I suspect that the public people who don't normally deal with planning matters would have very limited knowledge or understanding of the concept, and it is perhaps a little hard for people to get to grasp it because it's more complex. You're trying to do more, so there is more to grasp because in effect in Special Landscape Policy if you draw a line on your map and you say, everything in here is special, everything outside isn't. That's quite a simple

concept. And if people can get through though, and it's easier than area like this whether there're very strong landscape types because people they always understood the Peak District, the distinction between what we called the Dark Peak and White Peak, that's down to the colour of the rock. In the north you have the gridstone, which gives rise to a particular type of landscape, dark rocks and black peat moorland. In the south roughly speaking you have limestone, which of course is white, pale rock, and gives rise to a gentle, pastoral kind of landscape. People always understood that distinction and I think when you get start to explain it, people do grasp it, but it just does need a little bit more explanation than the very simple in or out concept.

**Q Is there any landscape team or landscape unit in this Borough teaching people how to deal with their application?**

**A** No. It's simply dealt with something and it's part of planning policies, we have a supplementary planning document we would give to people as far as we go. Most particularly district councils are quite small and they don't have many people working for them, and the resource is quite limited, so that's (SPD) as far as we go.

(I saw in this document the building styles were particularly stressed, why is the reason of that?) That's because in a way we want the buildings as far as possible to reflect the area that they're in. Designing new buildings is very important. If we were trying to maintain or enforce landscape character, building design is really essential for that. And I suppose also because we're using this as a planning policy rather than a landscape management policy, we're mainly implementing it through the development control process sometimes now called development management process whereby people want to build anything at all they have to apply for planning permission. I think that also means that it tends to be orientated towards building because it's buildings that need planning permission. I suppose somebody would simply altering, planting tree, or doing something like that, they wouldn't necessarily need any permission of anybody, so you can go out and plant species which is really inappropriate though we have no control over that, that's sort of difficulty. But every time you have a new house or a new building normally we would put a condition on saying well you have to have the boundaries around it in a particular way like a dry stone wall. And then we would also say you have to have a landscaping scheme, and we would then control that landscaping scheme to make sure that there's a lot of plants that reflected this area.

**Q Has the LCA approach been used to judge any planning applications?**

**A** Yes, quite a lot. It's adopted in March 2006 so it's well over three years old. So in that period we've used it many times and it was proved quite a useful tool in many cases.

(is it possible to see any examples of how people apply and you respond them by using this approach?)

The best way would be through to look at the planning application reports that go to the planning committees. You can access all these on the website, if I send you some reference numbers of applications, then you can perhaps look at those reports. The other area where its cropped up is in appeals. When the Council turns down planning permission, people have to write the appeal, and that xx appeal is notionally lasted in the Secretary State, in other word the government minister is responsible for planning. But in practice it's decided by planning inspector (I don't know if you are familiar with planning inspector in Britain). It's a body that determines planning appeals in England and Wales (and a very similar system in Scotland), and what you get is sometimes these appeals are done by exchange of documents, sometimes these appeals are considered by various forms of hearing, which in some cases can be quite formal, with legal representation. So they may have a Barrister who will present the case of the witnesses of cross examination, they can be quite interesting and it might be worth seeing if you can get yourself along to one of those at some stage. I don't know how the system work in Taiwan, but the function is a product of what we called adversarial system of law that operates in Britain and America and Australia and English speaking countries, which is different from the system that operates in the Continental Europe. In Continental Europe you have a system where you have a judge who asks questions of people, interrogates people, it would be called

inquisitorial. In Britain you have a system whereby two sides present evidence and cross examine each other, and a judge arbitrates, so the planning inspector, almost like a little judge, almost like a court. That can quite interesting things to hear, we had a few of those as well. What you do get out of those is quite detailed, often a fairly detail report from the planning inspector. We have one or two of those where they had dealt with landscape character as part of this decision. I'll see if I can find one or two examples and perhaps email them to you.

(can I access this information on the web?)

Certainly, all planning applications you can go on the website. Most applications don't go to committees, but major ones do.

I'll see if I can find some example applications for you and maybe a couple of appeals and you can just see how that is being used in dealing with the planning application.

(so the applications on the website are all using the new approach?)

Yeah, they will do. In some cases, because we've still got two policies, sometimes they may refer to Special Landscape. But for the most part, we would use the landscape character approach.

**Q how did you use the 2009 Countryside report to inform your planning policies**

**A** This is where we are now really and we're still getting to grasp with this. In that we are at the moment preparing our core strategy, we will use it as part of the evidence base, so it will be a document that we'll support how we prepare that strategy, and it will also inform it. We haven't yet worked out exactly how we're going to incorporate this, but the hope would be that we would use it to support what goes into our finishing document. I think we're publishing finishing document in March next year, hopefully in March, there will be elements in the Core Strategy which will reflect this work and build up from it.

(that will be the final version for the Core Strategy)

Yeah, in effect it will be the next version of that (Local Plan). That's (joint CS) just the very early stage, there are a good number of examples of completed Core Strategy. If you go on line you'll be able to have a look of those.

**Q As a decision maker, how do you attach different priorities arise in an application, and how important landscape is among them?**

**A** That's quite difficult because each case is different. You have to look at what is being proposed, which policies apply, and sometimes they may be competing considerations. Certainly landscape character is something we've tried to take quite seriously, and design is being emphasized nationally as being important. People recognise the importance of good design, people will support development where there is good design but they will oppose where it is bad. It's a bit simplification, but the end of the day we are planning for our community, we need to make sure that the community itself is happy with what goes on. If they see something and say, yeah, that look good. You don't necessarily say why that look good, but they would be able to perceive that and therefore they're much happier about that type of development, I supposed to all forms of development which they feel are out of character and therefore sometimes could be quite critical

**Q Have you come across any difficulties in making decision about landscape matters?**

**A** I think it's often easier with the approach to look at something and say it's harmful and not appropriate and refuse that development. It's sometimes more difficult to use this approach to achieve a better quality of design that otherwise would be the case, or t perhaps it's harder to necessarily make that connection. For example when we have something that is refused and it goes to appeal, and the inspector will refer to the landscape character policy. In effect it's explicit that landscape character has have handed in say preventing a development which would be harmful. It's much harder to get the same audit trail in terms of saying, look, this development is better because we have these policies. I think that's partly because it's just the way the process works, and I think it's probably an area where we as a council need to do more to promoting it and proactive. I think it does take place more quietly, that's the way works out I think.

**Q Have you used this approach in appraising existing development?**

**A** I don't think existing development because things any coming to the planning process, at the end of the day it's just planning tools so something is already there. It doesn't really come onto the Council, the Council has no role in dealing with it. I think it may come into play in terms of say somebody wanted a new building on a site that perhaps is long established that may come into play, but not particularly elsewhere otherwise we have more of those alone.  
(it's more for the future developments?)

Where things have in practice is in terms of new development where people have to come to the Council and say, I need planning permission to do x y or z, so that's when we can have an influence

**Q High Peak is an unusual case because the landscape quality is relatively high. Do you think the approach would work in some areas which is less distinctive in character, change very fast, or contains more modern elements?**

**A** I think it's going to be harder, it's going to be interesting for me personally because I'm going to be leaving the Council soon, moving to different area where the landscape character is not so strong. That's going to be quite interesting for me to see to what extent it will work in an area. Because here the landscape types are very strong and I think it's easier for this to do this (approach). I think the interesting challenge is can you make this work in areas where is not quite pervasive, where some of the distinction are more subtle or more limited. I think it will be harder, but I think it's certainly worth trying because even in all areas I mean that's the whole of approach landscape character, all areas will have something about them that makes them different, and it's worth enforcing those aspects. I think the other thing is important that we do make a work in terms of new development, so the new development can be very modern, but it can also reflect the area where it is, that's quite important.

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## Appendix D. Coding frameworks

### Case study 1: Derbyshire County—High Peak Borough

<b>actors</b>			
	CPRE		
	Natural England		
<b>character approach</b>			
	applicability		
	character approach-		
	character approach+		
	efficiency		
	history		
<b>countryside &amp; env protection</b>			
	countryside character		
	countryside conservation		
	EIA		
	local landscape significance		
	protected landscape		
<b>development</b>			
	application	concept statement	
		landscape scheme	
	development need		
	Development Plan	evidence base	
		landscape SPD	
		LDF	
		SPD	
		Structural Plan	
	existing development		
	landscape consideration	building design	
		fit into landscape	
		incongruous feature	
	major development		
<b>landscape approach</b>			
	LCA	history	
		inform justification	application
			BAP
			decision
			development
			development control
			historical
			mining
			planning
			policy
		key to success	support from the gov
			supportive mechanism
		LCA-	
		LCA in use	problems
			professional assistance
			readable format
			robustness
			translating LCA
			w/o landscape officer

	LCA+	scale issues	spatial temporal
		scoring system version	change in between LCA LCA99
		viewpoints from outsider	decision maker ecologist planning consultancy public
	LCA vs. LLD LLD	boundary & beyond clues of change criteria history limitation LLD- LLD+	
	L VIA		
<hr/>			
<b>landscape strategy</b>		policy objective landscaping	enhancement
<hr/>			
<b>landscape meaning</b>		all landscape landscape aesthetic landscape character landscape composition landscape setting	historic holistic physical visual
		landscape suitability landscape value local distinctiveness natural beauty	
<hr/>			
<b>plan-led system</b>		development control	inhouse consultation priority
		future direction in transition LC type as planning unit legislation planning guidance	PPG PPS
		planning position	landscape position general planning position positive objective restrictive objective
		planning tier_conflict planning tier_coop recent trend	ELC sustainable development
<hr/>			

## Case study 2: Staffordshire County—South Staffordshire District

<b>agents</b>		
	Countryside Agency CPRE professional assistance public inquiry	
<b>character approach</b>		
	character approach- in practice	
<b>countryside planning</b>		
	countryside conservation policy areas & GB	
<b>development</b>		
	compensation	
	development control	inhouse consultancy LCA_inform application LCA_inform comments & judgement
	development need	sustainable development
	Development Plan	LDF RSS_requirement SPG
	existing development	
	sympathetic to landscape	fit into the landscape incongruous feature
<b>landscape approach</b>		
	landscape evaluation	
	LCA	County LCA_future use LCA- LCA in early years LCA_further work LCA+ operational
		controversy LCA in use LCA_planning tier w/o landscape officer fitting purposes recreation village/settlement
		relevant topics technical
		LCA_accuracy LCA_boundary LCA_limitation LCA_monitoring LCA_scale LCA_update LDU scoring system site survey
	LCA vs. LLD	
	LLD	LLD- clues of obsolescence LLD_history no development



<b>landscape policy objective</b>			
	advantages		
	landscape active conservation		
	landscape enhancement		
	landscape maintenance		
	landscape regeneration		
	landscape restoration		
<b>landscape strategy</b>			
	landscape creation		
	landscape design		
	landscape improvement		
	landscape management guidelines		
	landscape management in practice		
<b>landscape meaning</b>			
	landscape change		
	landscape content	historic setting	
		landscape features	
		humans and nature	
		physical setting	
		scope	
	landscape quality		
	landscape sensitivity		
	local distinctiveness		
	natural beauty		
	representativeness		
	terminology		
	value	best landscape	
	visual aspect	visual analysis	
		visual impact	
<b>plan-led system</b>			
	comply with other policies		
	decision making	judgement_ground truth	
		judgement_justification	
		landscape officer	involving decision
			rights & responsibility
			strong role
		priority	
	LCA_inform policy		
	planning guidance	ELC	
		PPG	
	planning objective	positive objective	
		restrictive objective	
	planning position		
	planning tier	changing system	potential problem
		planning tier_landscape's role	
		planning tiers_conflict	
		planning tiers_coop	

## Case Study 3: Doncaster Metropolitan Borough

<b>actors</b>			
	public inquiry		
	landscape consultancy		
	landscape officer		
	landscapae arch		
<b>character-based approach</b>			
	char aprh-		
	char aprh+		
	character change	acceptable impacts	
		negative impacts	
<b>countryside planning</b>			
	countryside conservation		
	countryside management		
	countryside designation	policy areas & GB	
		protected landscape	
<b>development</b>			
	application	application requirement_lsc	
		application refusal	
		application_user's end	
		environment impact (assessment)	
		environment statement	
		landscape scheme	
		quality development	
	development need		
	development_existing		
	development_large		
	development_small		
	Development Plan	LDF	core strategy
			evidence base
			SPD
		RSS	
<b>landscape approach</b>			
	landscape content	landscape_soft&hard	
		landscape_physical setting	
	LLD	LLD-	
		LLD+	
		LLD_boundary & selection	
		LLD_functionality	
		LLD_justification	
		LLD_representative	
		LLD_strategy	
	landscape evaluation		
	LCA	LCA-	
		LCA supplement	
		LCA_boundary	
		LCA_functionality	
		LCA_limitation	
		LCA_scale	
		LCA_tracking change	
		further study	
	LVIA		

<b>landscape policy objective</b>		
	enhancement regeneration restoration	
<b>landscape strategy</b>		
	landscape improvement landscape management landscape mitigation landscape design	landscaping site survey quality design corridor
	landscape_re-create sustainable landscape	
<b>landscape_generic characterisites</b>		
	capacity change landscape character features landscape function quality sensitivity value landscape character vs. land use representativeness perception visual aspects	best landscape     local distinctiveness visual impact visual vulnerability visual quality
<b>plan-led system</b>		
	decision making	decision making_priority development planner judgement
	development ctrl	development ctrl_enforcement inhouse consultation regulation restrict development no development
	planning guidance	PPG3 PPG7 PPS7 LCA93
	other considerations planning strategy	development_compensation positive objective
	limitations planning legislation	
<b>sympathetic to landscape</b>		
	impact- incongruous feature landscape impact fit into lsc	

## Case study: Taiwan

<b>actors</b>	community involvement landscape consultant professional conflict
<b>landscape by meaning</b>	landscape character (geo) landscape interpretation landscape interpretation (geo)
<b>landscape legislation</b>	executive problem Landscape Act_structure legislation loophole mandatory power relevant legislation & policy
<b>landscape objective</b>	get help from objectives landscape conservation landscape regeneration
<b>landscape approach</b>	conceptual early involvement new ideas involvement overseas experience practical public perception to PA
<b>landscape in planning</b>	administrative problem baseline survey development compensation gov leading landscape plan landscape improvement scheme landscape in development ctrl landscape initiatives non urban use planning system practical problem
<b>Landscape Master Plan</b>	in use inform planning strategy KLA output structure accolade (concentrate funding) boundary conflicts design ctrl development ctrl inform development inform planning selecting criteria

## Appendix E. Landscape legislation in Taiwan

### [Example] Self-Government Ordinance Governing Landscapes of Taoyuan County

As promulgated by presidential order Fu-Fa-Yi-Zih No. 0960034809, January 30th ,2007

※ This Self-Government Ordinance is articulate in a similar way to the articles in the Landscape Act (draft) and is used here to demonstrate the conventional landscape legislation in Taiwan where the English translation of the Landscape Act is currently unavailable.

Article 1 The self-government ordinance hereof is enacted by the Taoyuan County Government (hereinafter referred to as “the Government”) in order to preserve the county’s natural and cultural landscape, improve the features of cities and villages, and create a better life environment.

Article 2 The terms used in this autonomous regulation are defined as follows:

1. Landscape: Refers to the visual manifestation of natural or man-made environments, as perceived by humans. It may include natural ecological landscapes, human environments and cultural landscapes.
2. Landscape Master Plan: Refers to the guiding plan under this County’s administrative jurisdiction, to build a landscape resource system and designate key landscape areas.
3. Key Landscape Area: Refers to an area of rich landscape resource that requires special protection, management and preservation, or an area of poor landscaping which requires special improvements, as designated by the Landscape Master Plan and promulgated as such.
4. Landscape Plan: Refers to a plan designed to strengthen the protection, preservation, improvement and administration of landscape resources in key landscape areas.

Article 3 The supervising authority of the autonomous regulation is the Government. Its authority and responsibilities are described as follows:

1. Draw up and review the landscape master plan;
2. Plan key landscape areas;
3. Draw up, review and approve landscape plans;
4. Plan, promote and implement other landscape-related endeavours.

The autonomous regulation stipulates that the protection, preservation, improvement and administration of landscape can be commissioned to Township or City Offices.

Article 4 The Landscape Master Plan should include the following elements:

1. Project objective;
2. Landscape resource and space structural system;
3. Landscape resource database;
4. Landscape development issues;
5. Position and vision for the development of entire landscape features;
6. Designation of key landscape areas;
7. Principles for the control of the development and exploitation of landscape resources;
8. Implementation mechanism for the landscape master plan;
9. Other items that should be included.

Article 5 The Government can prioritarily designate the following areas as key landscape areas:

1. Major seashores, rivers, reservoirs, irrigation ponds, water canals, terrace lines, urban parks and their neighbouring landscape areas;
2. Major transportation or visual corridors;
3. Ancient monuments, historical buildings, villages, ruins, cultural landscapes, natural landscapes and their neighbouring landscape areas;
4. Major centre of activities or landmarks, and their neighbouring landscape areas;
5. Other areas designated by the Government.

Article 6 Landscape plans can be drafted for key landscape areas. If the area is located within the geographic scope of implemented Urban Planned Districts, the landscape plan can be further incorporated in the detailed plans relevant to urban planning.

The landscape plan should include part or all of the following elements:

1. Geographic scope of the area;
2. Investigation and analysis of local natural, socio-cultural and landscape elements;
3. Zoning and current use of the land;
4. Description of buildings and landscapes designated for preservation by relevant laws;
5. Objectives of the plan, challenges and strategies;
6. Procedure and standards for landscape control;
7. Principles and method for landscape improvement;
8. Landscape construction plan;
9. Implementation schedule and financial plans;
10. Incentives;
11. Other relevant items.

Apart from using narrative descriptions, charts and tables, the proposal also must include a map of the plan, with proportions no smaller than 1/3000 for urban areas, and no smaller than 1/10,000 for non-urban areas.

Article 7 After the landscape plan is drafted, it must be sent to the Government's Urban Design Committee for review. Before the review process starts, the plan must be presented for a period of 30 days in public exhibitions held at the County's township, village and city offices, and explanatory meetings must be held. The date, time and location of exhibitions and explanatory meetings must be announced publicly in newspapers. For the period during which public exhibitions are held, any individual or group wishing to express opinions or comments to the Government can do so in writing by clearly indicating their name and address. These opinions and comments will be used as references by the Government's Urban Design Committee.

Article 8 After a key landscape area has been declared, a construction permit will only be issued after approval granted by the Government's Urban Design Committee following a review process, in the following cases:

1. Building projects for which the dimension of the lot size exceeds 6,000 square meters, or the dimension of the total floor area exceeds 30,000 square meters;
2. The construction, expansion, reconstruction, and repair of public buildings or projects applied for under the Regulation of Multi-use for Public Facilities Land in Urban Planning Area;
3. Parks or public squares for which the dimension of the lot size exceeds 3,000 square meters;

4. Elevated roads, pedestrian overpasses, cross river bridges that exceed 150 meters in length, and underground buildings for public facilities;
5. Design projects for this County's road system that exceed 30 meters in width and roads that pass through national scenic areas or national parks;
6. The construction, expansion, reconstruction, and repair of public and private buildings in protected historic sites and other special purpose areas;
7. The construction, expansion, reconstruction or repair of historical buildings designated by the Government;
8. Other building applications considered by the Government as possibly obstructing the landscape or going against public interest, and proclaimed as such.

Article 9 After the announcement of the implementation of the landscape plan, which must respect landscape improvement and protection, the supervising authority should inform by letter all owners of land, buildings and equipments, as well as administrators and users to cooperate, according to the landscape plan's schedule and improvement methods.

Article 10 Owners, administrators or users of any public or private land and buildings in the County identified after Government survey as hampering landscaping will be informed in writing by the Government, and will be requested to make necessary improvements within specific delays. Failure to meet delays will result in the Government taking necessary steps to carry out improvement work.

The Government can carry out greenification work to the above mentioned public or private land and buildings having underwent improvement work. Relevant matters for the implementation of greenification work will be determined by the Government.

Article 11 The Government can provide subsidies as incentives for the adoption of facilities and unused or vacant lots in the following circumstances. Developers must submit an adoption project proposal and undergo review by the Government before authorization is granted:

1. Parks;
2. Green spaces;
3. Public places;
4. Walking trails, bicycle trails;
5. Pedestrian overpasses;
6. Underground passages;
7. Elevated bridges;
8. Urban roads;
9. Public toilets;
10. Unused or vacant lots;
11. Unused or vacant buildings;
12. Public or private land designated by the Government for greenification;
13. Other circumstances defined by the Government.

In the advent that the aforementioned facilities and unused or vacant lots fall under regulations other than the landscape plan, these regulations will prevail.

The Government will determine the subsidies and regulations for adoption.

Article 12 The aforementioned adoption projects must include the following items:

1. Location of the lot or facilities to be adopted;
2. The cadastral data, land inventory and land property papers for unused or vacant land, buildings or facilities. In case of private property, a letter of consent from the owner(s) must be included;

3. Description of the current environmental situation;
4. Administration and maintenance project: the project must include administration principles, administration plan, facilities, tree maintenance method and other necessary items;
5. Signboard identifying the adopting party and the adopt project;
6. Schedule of adoption.

Article 13 Owners, administrators and users of land, buildings or facilities in key landscape areas in violation of Article 6, Paragraph 2, Item 6 and Article 9 will receive a written notice issued by the supervising authority ordering rectifications to be made within a specified period. Failure to make necessary rectifications by the end of the period can result in administrative fines of not less than NT\$3,000 (£600) and no more than NT\$30,000 (£6,000). The supervising authority has the right to continue issuing fines until all necessary rectifications are made.

Compulsory execution procedures will be initiated in accordance with the law for failure to pay the administrative fine referenced in the preceding paragraph within the prescribed period.

Article 14 This Act shall be implemented from the date of promulgation.