

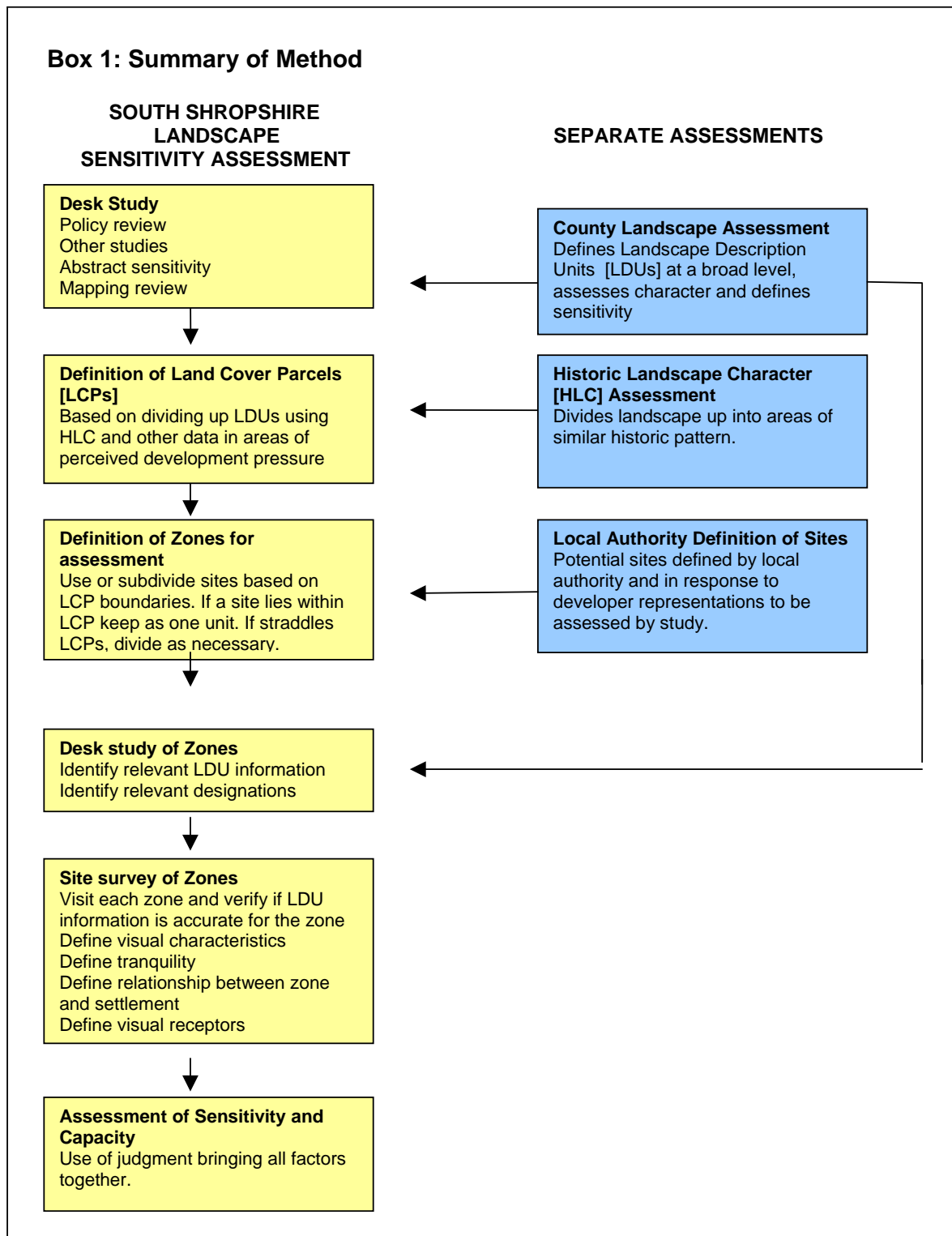
SOUTH SHROPSHIRE LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND CAPACITY STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 White Consultants were appointed by Shropshire County Council in November 2006 to undertake a landscape sensitivity and capacity assessment for defined areas around the main settlements of the three districts- South Shropshire, Bridgnorth and North Shropshire. The aim of the study is to complete the sensitivity study using the same method that has been developed in Shrewsbury and Atcham by members of the consultant team. Diacono Associates have worked with White Consultants to deliver the project.
- 1.2 A county landscape character assessment has already been undertaken by Shropshire County Council and analysis of sensitivity has been made using a new method based on four aspects of inherent sensitivity-ecological, cultural, visibility and tranquillity.
- 1.3 This project works within this assessment, reviews the sensitivity devised at Landscape Description Unit level and assesses the capacity of the landscape to accommodate housing or employment development and to identify those landscapes that should be protected from development.
- 1.4 The sites identified in the study have possible potential for housing or employment uses over the next 20 years (up to 2026). Most of these sites are located in the nine main market towns and main villages which are the most sustainable locations. These are set out in Policy SDS3 of the adopted Local Plan.
- 1.5 However in order to cover the possibility of a greater amount of new development being allocated to the smaller villages in the future, sites have also been identified in those settlements which form the next level down in the settlement hierarchy. These villages correspond with those identified in paragraph 3 of policy SDS7 of the Local Plan
- 1.6 While the study considers a range of sites it should not be taken that development will necessarily be allocated in these locations or on these sites. These are purely options at this stage and nothing more.
- 1.7 It should be further noted that the scope of this study only concerns landscape and visual matters and is not the definitive conclusion on which sites should be allocated for development or those which should be constrained. This is a matter for the planning authority who will take a full range of factors into account.
- 1.8 The report is divided into two parts. In Part 1 we discuss the method [2.0] and briefly set out a summary of findings [3.0]. The sensitivity and capacity assessments for each identified zone are set out in Part 2 for the relevant settlements in alphabetical order.

2.0 METHOD

- 2.1 This study is a technical exercise and the report uses a number of technical terms for precision and as a means for reaching conclusions on sensitivity and capacity. These terms are defined in the Glossary in **Appendix 1**. We have taken into consideration Countryside Agency 'Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity [2004]'. **Sensitivity** is taken to mean the sensitivity of the landscape itself, irrespective of the type of change which may be under consideration. It is a combination of the sensitivity of the landscape resource [including its historical and ecological features and elements] and the visual sensitivity of the landscape [such as views and visibility]. For the purposes of this study it also includes landscape value [including designations]. **Capacity** is taken to mean the ability of a landscape to accommodate different amounts of change for a development of a specific type.
- 2.2 The Shropshire County Council landscape character assessment is at a broad scale identifying landscape description units [LDUs]. The method is set out in detail in **Appendix 2** and shows how LDUs are defined and what information is collected. The defining attributes are physiography [geology and landform], ground type [based on soils], landcover and cultural pattern. For each of these units there has been an assessment of intrinsic sensitivity. The method for this is explained on a step-by-step basis also in **Appendix 2**. This provides the context for this more detailed study. Importantly, it relates to the intrinsic qualities of the LDU, not its relationship with adjacent areas, such as settlement. Sensitivity is divided into ecological sensitivity (see **Figure A1**), cultural sensitivity [see **Figure A2**], visual sensitivity and tranquillity. The latter two aspects are not attached in **Appendix 3** because a more detailed visibility and tranquillity assessments related to each specific area is presented in this study. **Box 1** shows a summary of the process undertaken which is then further explained in the text.
- 2.3 Key tasks are explained in more detail:
Defining Land Cover Parcels:
- 2.4 In areas of perceived development pressure Land Cover Parcels (LCPs) are derived. These are discrete areas of land nested within a larger LDU reflecting variations in the physical character of the land. Bounded by roads, railways, watercourses and parish boundaries, these units define areas with similar patterns and land use, field pattern and tree cover. They provide the finer grain of resolution necessary for assessment. They are derived from Historic Landscape Character [HLC], previous studies, aerial photos and mapping [see **Figures A3**].



Defining zones for assessment:

- 2.5 Zones are based on the sites put forward by the local authority for assessment. If these lie within LCPs they are usually kept as one unit unless

they are very large with differing characteristics or relationship with the settlement edge. However, where they cross LCP boundaries they are subdivided to reflect the different characteristics of each LCP. The numbering reflects this sub division with the first number indicating the identified site, and the second the relevant LCP in which it lies. The areas identified are set out in **Figure 1**.

Desk study of zones:

- 2.6 LDU sensitivity information is abstracted from the county assessment-cultural, ecological and visual sensitivity [see **Appendix 2**]. Ecological and historic designations are identified which further refine each area's sensitivity. The functional relationship of the area with the adjoining settlement is assessed including its role as a green wedge or for recreation/access etc.

Site Survey of zones:

- 2.7 The LDU sensitivities are verified for each zone. Because of the size of the LDUs there will often be variations in both characteristics and sensitivity within them. In terms of this more detailed study, each zone is assessed to check whether its sensitivities do correspond to the broader level assessment. It is worth noting that at the county scale of the assessment some of the LDUs in South Shropshire including both built form and adjacent green space were classified as urban and were not, therefore, attributed a sensitivity value.

- 2.8 Other relevant factors are then recorded including:

- Function of area
- Presence of water
- Visual characteristics
- Tranquillity
- Functional and visual relationship of the zone with its surroundings and the city.
- Description of settlement edge- is it a positive or negative edge to the city?
- Definition of sensitive receptors within and outside the area.
- Potential for improvement of the settlement edge and for overall mitigation.

These are further explained in **Part 2**.

- 2.9 Bringing all the information together, an overall analysis of each zone's sensitivity is made. Judgments are not based on a mathematical adding up of factors, positive or negative. Some factors will be more important than others in different zones. For instance, the function of an area in separating settlements may be considered very important and make it sensitive to development even if it is of limited inherent landscape value. A justification is given as to why it is considered that an area has a particular sensitivity. The calibration of the sensitivity is as follows:

- Low- key characteristics of landscape are robust and/or are of relatively low intrinsic value as a landscape resource.
- Medium-low- key characteristics of landscape are resilient to change and/or are of limited intrinsic value as a landscape resource.
- Medium- key characteristics of landscape are susceptible to change and have value as a landscape resource.

- High-Medium- key characteristics of landscape are vulnerable to change and/or have high value as a landscape resource.
- High- key characteristics of landscape are very vulnerable to change and/or have significant value as a landscape resource.

2.10 A capacity rating is then defined for both housing and employment uses. This is based on the sensitivity of a zone and the likely magnitude of effect and character of proposed development. This will be different for both housing and employment. Housing is taken to be around 8 m high ranging from individual houses through to larger estate developments. Employment is taken to mean offices or commercial premises of a similar grain and character to that which has been developed in Craven Arms. This includes medium scale industrial or commercial uses such as use classes B1 and B2 with a floor plan of around 600m² to 4,500m² in size and associated storage and car parking. The minimum depth of buildings would typically be expected to be around 20m and heights may exceed 8m. The capacity for small scale employment built form where the floor plan and height is similar to housing and with low key environmental impact such as noise, dust etc and limited signage/storage etc within the B1 use class could, in some cases, be considered in the same way as housing capacity to the local planning authority's discretion. An example may be small scale craft units or offices. It will be a matter of judgement depending on the character and location of the proposals and the site.

2.11 Capacity for housing and employment will differ. For instance, because of the smaller individual unit size of houses these can be put on steeper slopes and in finer grain landscapes than medium scale employment. The calibration of the capacity is as follows:

- High- thresholds for significant change are very high and much of the area can be developed.
- High-medium- thresholds for significant change are high and the area is able to accommodate a significant proportion for development.
- Medium- thresholds for change are intermediate with some ability to accommodate development in some parts.
- Medium-low- thresholds for change are low and development can be accommodated only in limited situations.
- Low- thresholds for change are very low and the area is unable to accommodate development without significant adverse effects.

3.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Overall, the study has found that there is more capacity for housing in the area than employment.

3.2 Areas of higher sensitivity and lower capacity have tended to be those of intrinsically higher value, those in open countryside not closely associated with a settlement, acting as setting to conservation areas or listed buildings, in valley corridors, on steep or prominent slopes or those forming gaps between

settlements. There is a need to protect in particular the landscapes of the valley bottoms and maintain green fingers of open space penetrating into settlements to maintain the quality of life for residents. Some zones assessed form an important visual setting to parts of a settlement and act as recreational and wildlife corridors and reservoirs.

- 3.3 Some settlement edges, usually consisting of housing estates, present an unattractive boundary with the countryside. In these cases, and combined with where the landscape itself has lower intrinsic sensitivity, the opportunity is taken to recommend a higher capacity for development. This is with the proviso that the development itself will present a positive edge with significant planting in order to integrate and enhance the landscape. This is best achieved by a design or development brief including landscape, nature conservation and urban design/settlement edge objectives.
- 3.4 The landscape sensitivities and capacities of each zone are summarised in Table 1 and are shown in **Figures 1-3**.
- 3.5 In summary:
- There is high/medium landscape capacity for housing in thirteen zones- in Bishops Castle, Bucknell, Burford [2], Craven Arms [3], Clun, Cleobury Mortimer [2], Church Stretton [2] and Diddlebury. There is some capacity potentially in a further 24 zones which have medium capacity including the above settlements and Aston Munslow, Clee Hill, Chirbury, Hope, Lydbury North, Ludlow, Marton, Snailbeach, Stiperstones, Wentnor, Wall under Heywood and Wistanstow. Some of these areas should only be considered the development in the longer term due to their current prominence and where advance planting is suggested if thought appropriate. Most zones are considered areas of constraint.
 - Less than 10% of the zones are considered to have any potential capacity for employment. Of these, only two are considered to have high/medium capacity which are located at Burford and Craven Arms. Two areas have medium capacity where some employment uses may be considered appropriate –at Clun and Ludlow. A further five areas are considered to have medium/low capacity in Burford, Craven Arms, Church Stretton and Ludlow.
- 3.6 It is recommended that these findings be taken into consideration in the preparation of the Local Development Plan. Overall, there is a need for a strong vision on what South Shropshire should be in the future incorporating quality of life, landscape and urban design objectives.

Table 1 South Shropshire zones landscape sensitivity and capacity

Zone no.	Settlement	Zone landscape sensitivity	Zone landscape capacity housing	Zone landscape capacity employment
SSAC1 - 90	Aston on Clun	high/medium	medium/low	low
SSAM1 - 106	Aston Munslow	high/medium	low	low
SSAM2 - 104	Aston Munslow	medium	medium	low

SSBC1 - 99	Bishop's Castle	high/medium	low	low
SSBC2 - 100	Bishop's Castle	medium	medium	low
SSBC3 - 100	Bishop's Castle	medium	high/medium	low
SSBC4 - 100	Bishop's Castle	high/medium	low	low
SSBC5 - 99	Bishop's Castle	high/medium	low	low
SSBC6 - 97	Bishops Castle	medium	medium	low
SSBC6 - 98	Bishop's Castle	high/medium	low	low
SSBC7 - 100	Bishop's Castle	medium	medium	low
SSBC8 - 97	Bishop's Castle			
SSBC8 - 98	Bishop's Castle	high/medium	low	low
SSBk1 - 96	Bucknell	medium	high/medium	low
SSBo1 - 114	Brockton	high/medium	low	low
SSBu1 - 112	Burford	medium/low	high/medium	low
SSBu2 - 110	Burford	medium/low	high/medium	high/medium
SSBu3 - 111	Burford	high/medium	medium/low	low
SSBu4 - 112	Burford	medium/low	medium	low
SSBu5 - 109	Burford	medium	medium	medium/low
SSBu6 - 111	Burford	high/medium	low	low
SSBu7 - 111	Burford	high/medium	low	low
SSCA1 - 180	Craven Arms	medium	medium	medium/low
SSCA2 - 89	Craven Arms	high/medium	medium/low	low
SSCA3 - 181	Craven Arms	medium	medium	low
SSCA3 - 182	Craven Arms	medium	medium/low	low
SSCA4 - 181	Craven Arms	medium/low	high/medium	low
SSCA5 - 87	Craven Arms	medium	high/medium	high/medium
SSCA6 - 179	Craven Arms	high/medium	low	low
SSCA7 - 88	Craven Arms	medium/low	high/medium	low
SSCe1 - 195	Clee Hill	high/medium	medium/low	low
SSCe2 - 198	Clee Hill	high	low	low
SSCe3 - 198	Clee Hill	high/medium	low	low
SSCe4 - 205	Clee Hill	medium	medium	low
SSCe5 - 205	Clee Hill	medium	medium	low
SSCe6 - 204	Clee Hill	medium	medium	low
SSCe7 - 204	Clee Hill	high/medium	low	low
SSCh1 - 103	Chirbury	high/medium	medium/low	low
SSCh2 - 102	Chirbury	high/medium	low	low
SSCh3 - 102	Chirbury	medium	medium	low
SSCI1 - 94	Clun	medium	high/medium	medium
SSCI2 - 92	Clun	high/medium	medium/low	low
SSCI3 - 93	Clun	high/medium	low	low
SSCI4 - 92	Clun	high/medium	low	low
	Cleobury			
SSCM1 - 78	Mortimer	medium/low	high/medium	low
	Cleobury			
SSCM2 - 78	Mortimer	medium/low	high/medium	low
	Cleobury			
SSCM3 - 77	Mortimer	high/medium	low	low
	Cleobury			
SSCM4 - 76	Mortimer	medium	medium	low
	Cleobury			
SSCM5 - 76	Mortimer	high	low	low
	Cleobury			
SSCM6 - 75	Mortimer	high/medium	medium/low	low

Zone no.	Settlement	Zone landscape sensitivity	Zone landscape capacity housing	Zone landscape capacity employment
	Cleobury			
SSCM7 - 77	Mortimer	high/medium	low	low
SSCS1 - 84	Church Stretton	high/medium	low	low
SSCS1 - 85	Church Stretton	high/medium	low	low
SSCS2 - 80	Church Stretton	medium	high/medium	low
SSCS3 - 81	Church Stretton	medium	medium	low
SSCS4 - 1	Church Stretton	medium/low	high/medium	low
SSCS4 - 80	Church Stretton	high/medium	medium	medium/low
SSCS5 - 81	Church Stretton	medium	medium/low	low
SSCS5 - 83	Church Stretton	high	low	low
SSCS6 - 175	Church Stretton	high/medium	low	low
SSCS6 - 86	Church Stretton	medium	low	low
SSCS7 - 80	All Stretton	high/medium	low	low
SSCS8 - 176	Church Stretton	high/medium	low	low
SSCS9 - 1	Church Stretton	high/medium	medium/low	low
SSDi1 - 178	Diddlebury	medium/low	high/medium	low
SSDo1 - 107	Doddington	high/medium	medium/low	low
SSDo2 - 108	Doddington	medium	medium/low	low
SSDo3 - 107	Doddington	high/medium	medium/low	low
SSHo1 - 118	Hope	medium	medium	low
SSHo2 - 119	Hope	high/medium	low	low
SSLN1 - 95	Lydbury North	medium	medium	low
SSLu1 - 188	Ludlow	high/medium	low	low
SSLu2 - 185	Ludlow	high/medium	low	low
SSLu3 - 186	Ludlow	medium	low	low
SSLu4 - 79	Ludlow	medium	medium/low	medium
SSLu5 - 79	Ludlow	medium	medium	medium/low
SSLu6 - 79	Ludlow	medium	medium/low	medium/low
SSLy1 - 101	Lydham	high/medium	medium/low	low
SSMa1 - 113	Marton	high/medium	medium/low	low
SSMa2 - 113	Marton	medium	medium	low
SSMu1 - 105	Munslow	high/medium	low	low
SSNe1 - 189	Newcastle	high/medium	medium/low	low
SSOn1 - 184	Onibury	high/medium	low	low
SSOn2 - 183	Onibury	high	low	low
SSSn1 - 116	Snailbeach	medium	medium	low
SSSt1 - 117	Stiperstones	medium	medium	low
SSWe1 - 174	Wentnor	medium	medium	low
SSWH1 - 177	Wall under Heywood	medium	medium	low
SSWi1 - 91	Wistanstow	medium	medium	low
SSWo1 - 115	Worthen	high/medium	low	low
SSWo2 - 115	Worthen	medium	low	low

Note: The zone number is a combination of site number [eg SSWo2] and land cover parcel number [eg 115]