

# North Shropshire Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study

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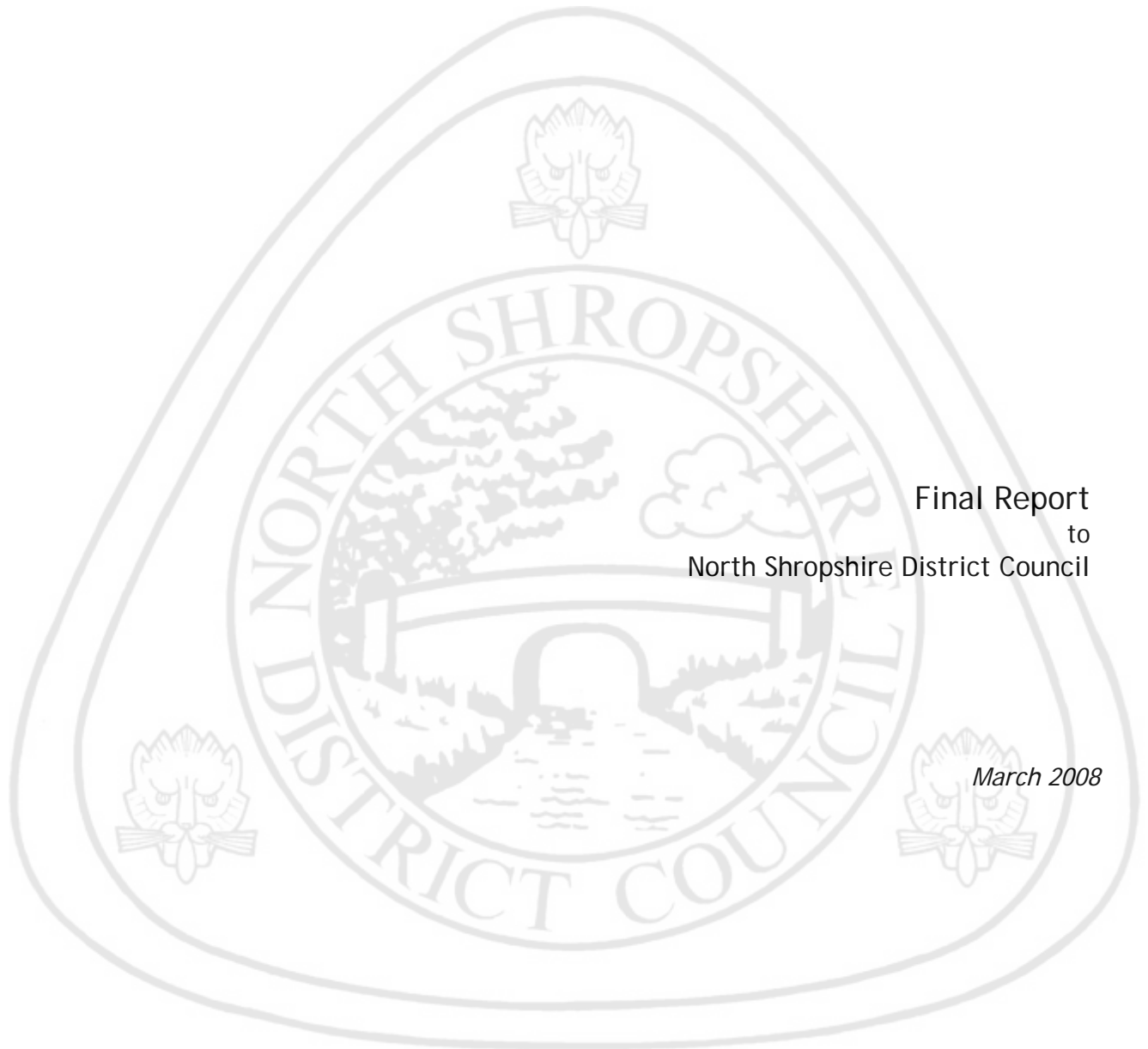
Final Report  
to  
North Shropshire District Council

*March 2008*



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# PART 1



## 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- Bridgnorth, South Shropshire 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. The study is intended to form part of the evidence base which will inform the site allocations part of the Local Development Plan.
- 1.4 It should be 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.
- 1.5 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 in 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:*

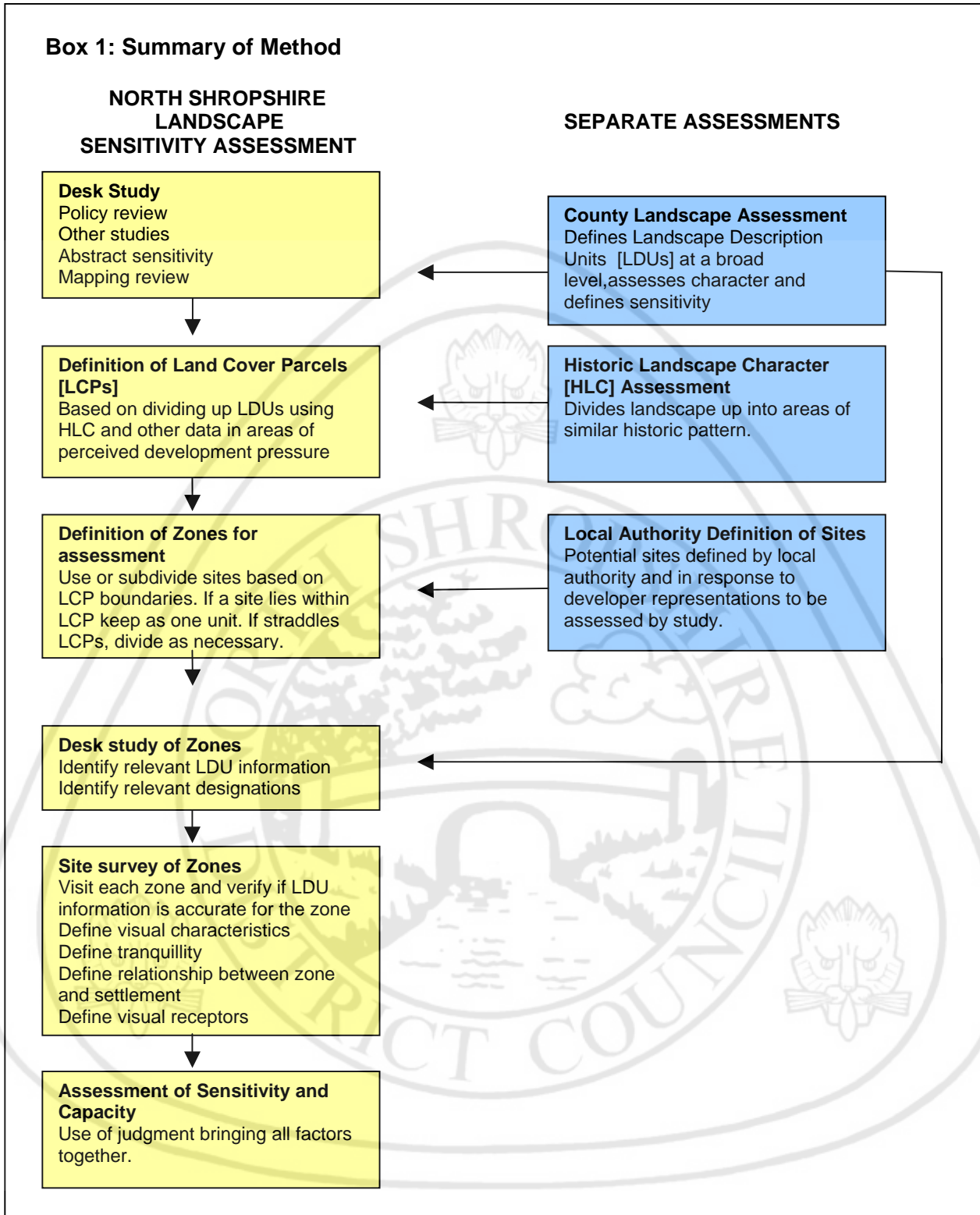
2.4 In areas of perceived development pressure Land cover parcels (LCPs) are derived. These are discrete areas of land nested within a larger LDU reflecting variations in the physical character of the land. Bounded by roads, railways, watercourses and parish boundaries, these units define areas with 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.

*Defining zones for assessment:*

2.5 The sites surveyed were selected by officers of the District Council, based on known pressure either for development or for protection from development at the time of commissioning the study. If the sites 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 into smaller zones 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 North 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. Housing is taken to be around 8m 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 recently been developed on the northern fringes of Market Drayton or east of Whitchurch. This includes medium scale industrial or commercial uses such as use classes B1 and B2 with a floor plan of around 600m<sup>2</sup> to 4500m<sup>2</sup> 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, as with other higher capacity sites, 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 landscape capacity for housing in one zone- in Hodnet, where the site is clearly within the settlement boundary albeit where sensitive design is needed. There is high/medium landscape capacity for housing in twenty one zones- in Baschurch [2], Calverhall, Clive, Dudleston Heath [2], Hadnall, Hinstock, Hodnet, Market Drayton [2], Prees [3], Shawbury, Tilstock, Wem, Whitchurch [2] and Woore [2]. There is some capacity potentially in a further twenty three zones which have medium capacity including some of the above settlements and Cheswardine, Cockshutt, Ellesmere and Welshampton. Some of these areas should only be considered for 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.
- No zones are considered to have high or high/medium capacity for employment use. Only six zones at Market Drayton, Wem and Whitchurch are considered to have any potential capacity for employment [medium capacity]. Some of these areas should only be considered for development in the longer term due to their current prominence and where advance planting is suggested if thought appropriate. Three areas have medium low capacity where some employment uses of an appropriate scale may have very limited acceptability- Dudleston Heath, Ellesmere and Whitchurch. The vast majority of zones are considered areas of constraint.

3.6 It is recommended that these findings are taken into consideration in the preparation of the Local Development Plan site allocations and need to be considered alongside appropriate design and landscape policies.

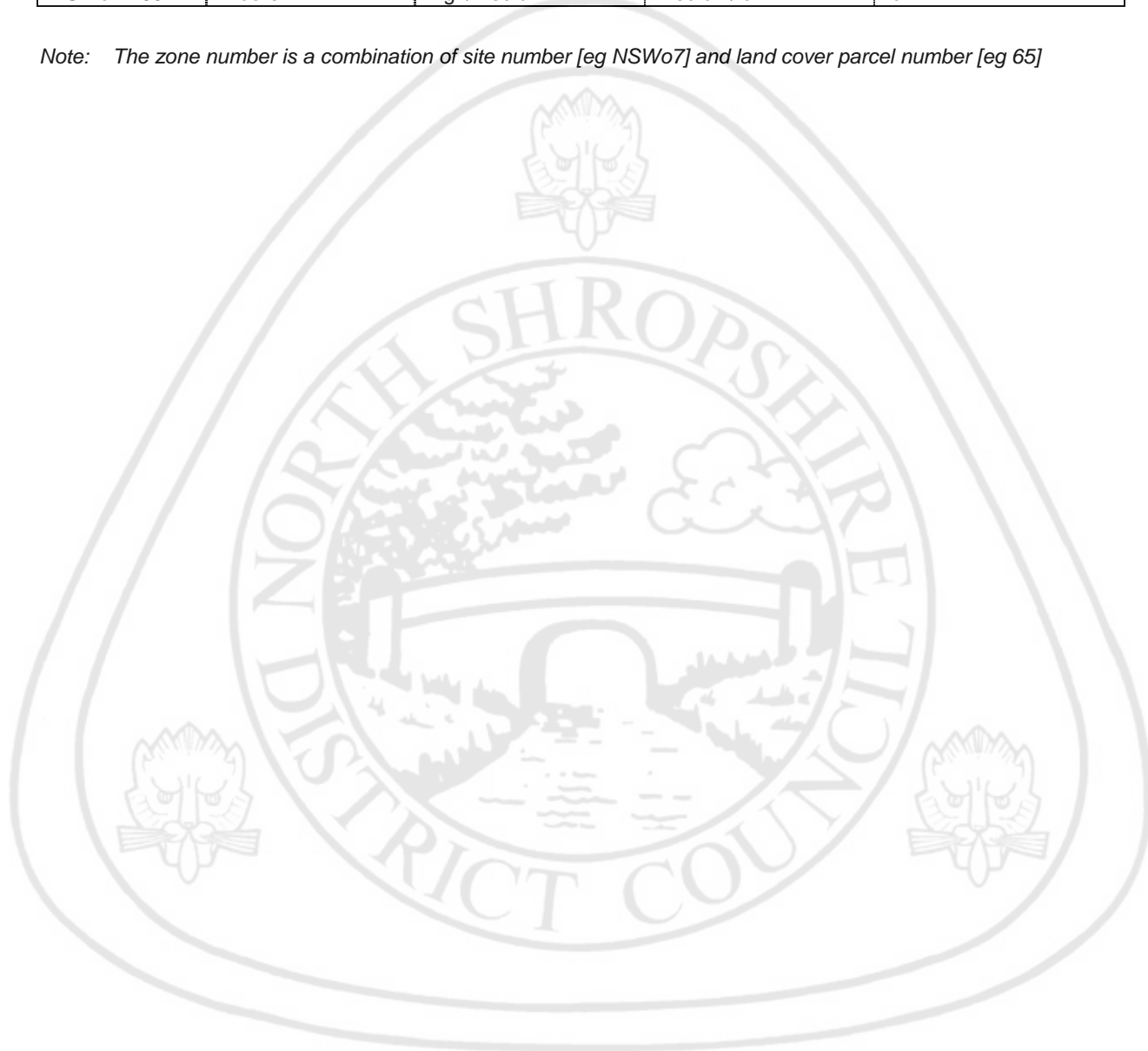
**Table 1 North Shropshire zones landscape sensitivity and capacity**

<b>Zone no.</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Zone landscape sensitivity</b>	<b>Zone landscape capacity housing</b>	<b>Zone landscape capacity employment</b>
NSAd1 - 231	Adderley	high/medium	low	low
NSAM1 - 23	Ash Magna	high/medium	low	low
NSAM2 - 23	Ash Magna	high/medium	medium/low	low
NSBa1 - 42	Baschurch	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSBa2 - 41	Baschurch	medium	high/medium	low
NSBa3 - 192	Baschurch	medium	medium/low	low
NSBa3 - 42	Baschurch	high/medium	low	low
NSCa1 - 54	Calverhall	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSCh1 - 211	Cheswardine	medium	medium	low
NSCh2 - 211	Cheswardine	medium	medium	low
NSCh3 - 211	Cheswardine	medium	medium/low	low
NSCI1 - 37	Clive	medium	high/medium	low
NSCI2 - 36	Clive	medium	medium	low
NSCI3 - 194	Clive	high/medium	low	low
NSCI4 - 38	Clive	high	low	low
NSCo1 - 8	Cockshutt	medium	medium	low
NSDH1 - 5	Dudleston Heath	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSDH2 - 6	Dudleston Heath	medium	high/medium	medium/low
NSEI1 - 4	Ellesmere	high/medium	low	low
NSEI2 - 3	Ellesmere	medium/low	medium	low
NSEI3 - 2	Ellesmere	medium/low	medium	low
NSEI4 - 190	Ellesmere	high/medium	medium/low	medium/low
NSEI4 - 191	Ellesmere	high/medium	low	low
NSEI5 - 190	Ellesmere	high	low	low
NSHa1 - 193	Hadnall	high	low	low
NSHa1 - 44	Hadnall	high	low	low
NSHa2 - 44	Hadnall	high/medium	low	low
NSHa3 - 45	Hadnall	medium	medium	low
NSHa4 - 193	Hadnall	high/medium	low	low
NSHa5 - 193	Hadnall	medium	medium/low	low
NSHa6 - 43	Hadnall	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSHa7 - 193	Hadnall	medium	medium	low
NSHi1 - 68	Hinstock	medium	medium	low
NSHi2 - 67	Hinstock	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSHi3 - 69	Hinstock	medium/low	medium	low
NSHi4 - 67	Hinstock	high	low	low
NSHo1 - 51	Hodnet	medium	high	low
NSHo2 - 52	Hodnet	high	low	low
NSHo3 - 50	Hodnet [note was once site 5]	medium	medium/low	low
NSHo4 - 204	Hodnet	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSMD1 - 56	Market Drayton	high	low	low
NSMD2 - 57	Market Drayton	medium	low	medium
NSMD3 - 56	Market Drayton	high/medium	medium/low	medium
NSMD4 - 55	Market Drayton	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSMD5 - 55	Market Drayton	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSMD6 - 58	Market Drayton	medium	medium	low
NSMS1 - 53	Moreton Say	high/medium	low	low
NSMy1 - 39	Myddle	high	low	low
NSMy2 - 39	Myddle	high	low	low
NSMy3 - 40	Myddle	high	low	low
NSNH1 - 59	Norton in Hales	high/medium	medium/low	low

<b>Zone no.</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Zone landscape sensitivity</b>	<b>Zone landscape capacity housing</b>	<b>Zone landscape capacity employment</b>
NSPr1 - 31	Prees	high/medium	medium	low
NSPr1 - 35	Prees	medium/low	medium/low	low
NSPr2 - 199	Prees	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSPr3 - 34	Prees	high/medium	low	low
NSPr4 - 33	Prees	medium	high/medium	low
NSPr5 - 32	Prees	high/medium	low	low
NSPr6 - 35	Prees	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSSh1 - 207	Shawbury	medium	medium/low	low
NSSh1 - 208	Shawbury	high/medium	low	low
NSSh1 - 46	Shawbury	high	low	low
NSSh1 - 47	Shawbury	medium	low	low
NSSh1 - 48	Shawbury	medium	low	low
NSSh2 - 208	Shawbury	medium	medium/low	low
NSSh3 - 48	Shawbury	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSSh4 - 48	Shawbury	medium/low	medium	low
NSSt1 - 205	Stanton upon Hine Heath	high/medium	low	low
NSSt1 - 206	Stanton upon Hine Heath	high	low	low
NSSt1 - 49	Stanton upon Hine Heath	high/medium	low	low
NSTi1 - 9	Tilstock	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSWe1 - 30	Wem	medium	low	medium
NSWe2 - 28	Wem	medium	medium	low
NSWe2 - 29	Wem	medium	medium	low
NSWe3 - 27	Wem	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSWe4 - 196	Wem	medium	medium	medium
NSWe4 - 26	Wem	medium	medium	medium
NSWe5 - 197	Wem	high/medium	low	low
NSWe6 - 197	Wem	high/medium	low	low
NSWe6 - 198	Wem	medium	low	low
NSWe6 - 25	Wem	high/medium	low	low
NSWe7 - 195	Wem	high	low	low
NSWe8 - 24	Wem	medium	low	low
NSWe9 - 24	Wem	medium	medium	low
NSWh1 - 10	Whitchurch	high	medium/low	low
NSWh1 - 11	Whitchurch	high	low	low
NSWh11 - 203	Whitchurch	medium	low	low
NSWh11 - 22	Whitchurch	high	low	low
NSWh12 - 20	Whitchurch	high/medium	low	low
NSWh12 - 200	Whitchurch	high/medium	low	low
NSWh13 - 20	Whitchurch	medium	low	medium
NSWh13 - 202	Whitchurch	high/medium	low	low
NSWh14 - 201	Whitchurch	high/medium	medium	low
NSWh14 - 22	Whitchurch	high	low	low
NSWh15 - 201	Whitchurch	medium/low	high/medium	medium/low
NSWh2 - 12	Whitchurch	medium	medium	low
NSWh3 - 21	Whitchurch	high/medium	medium/low	low
NSWh4 - 15	Whitchurch	medium	medium	low
NSWh5 - 14	Whitchurch	high	low	low
NSWh5 - 15	Whitchurch	high/medium	low	low
NSWh5 - 16	Whitchurch	high	low	low
NSWh6 - 17	Whitchurch	high/medium	medium/low	low
NSWh7 - 203	Whitchurch	medium	high/medium	low
NSWh8 - 19	Whitchurch	medium	medium	low

<b>Zone no.</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Zone landscape sensitivity</b>	<b>Zone landscape capacity housing</b>	<b>Zone landscape capacity employment</b>
NSWh9 - 203	Whitchurch	high/medium	low	low
NSW11 - 7	Welshampton	high/medium	medium	low
NSWo1 - 66	Woore	medium	high/medium	low
NSWo2 - 66	Woore	high/medium	medium/low	low
NSWo3 - 209	Woore	high/medium	low	low
NSWo4 - 64	Woore	medium/low	high/medium	low
NSWo5 - 65	Woore	high/medium	low	low
NSWo6 - 65	Woore	high/medium	low	low
NSWo7 - 65	Woore	high/medium	medium/low	low

*Note: The zone number is a combination of site number [eg NSWo7] and land cover parcel number [eg 65]*

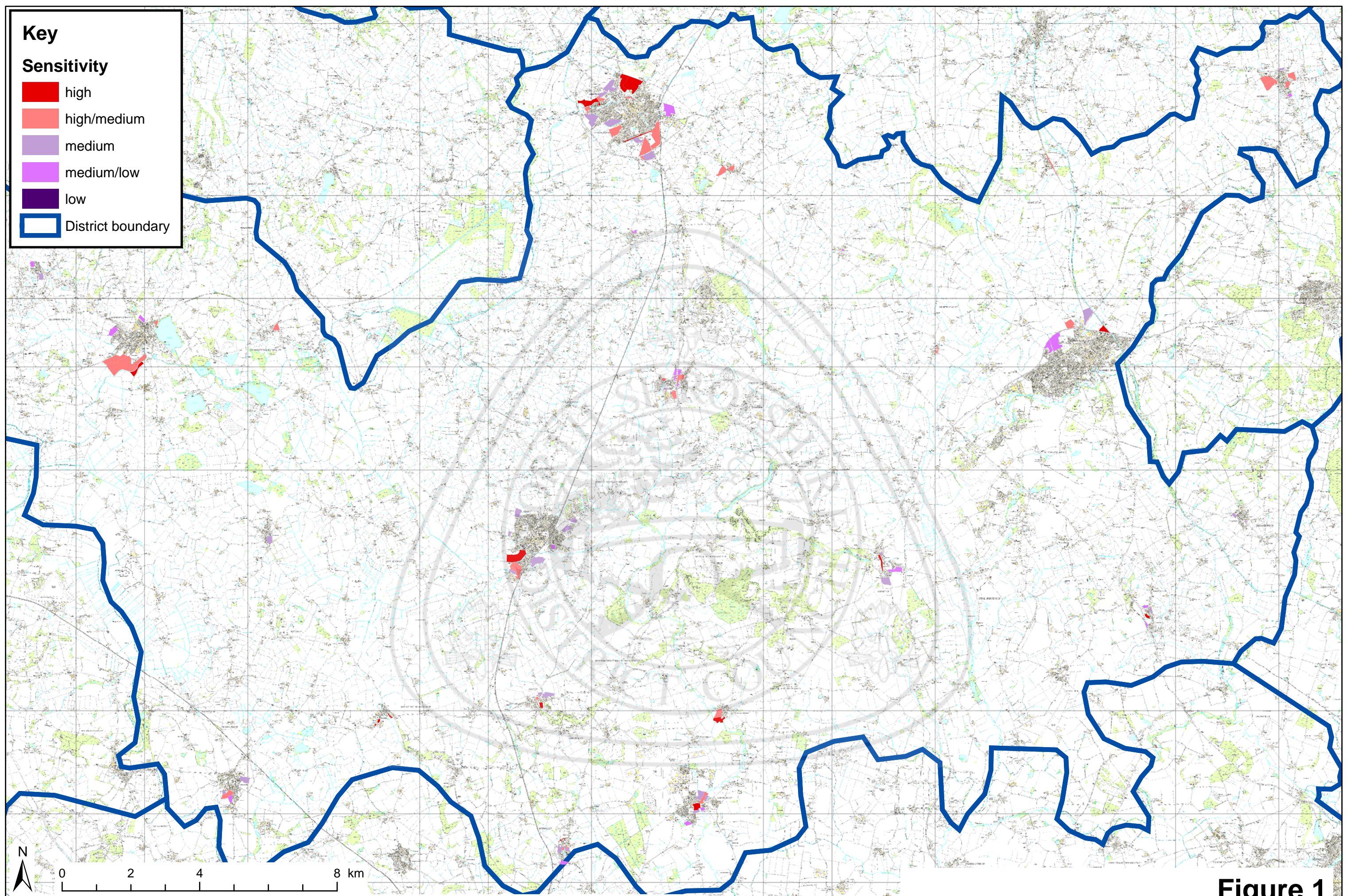




**Key**

**Sensitivity**

- high
- high/medium
- medium
- medium/low
- low
- District boundary



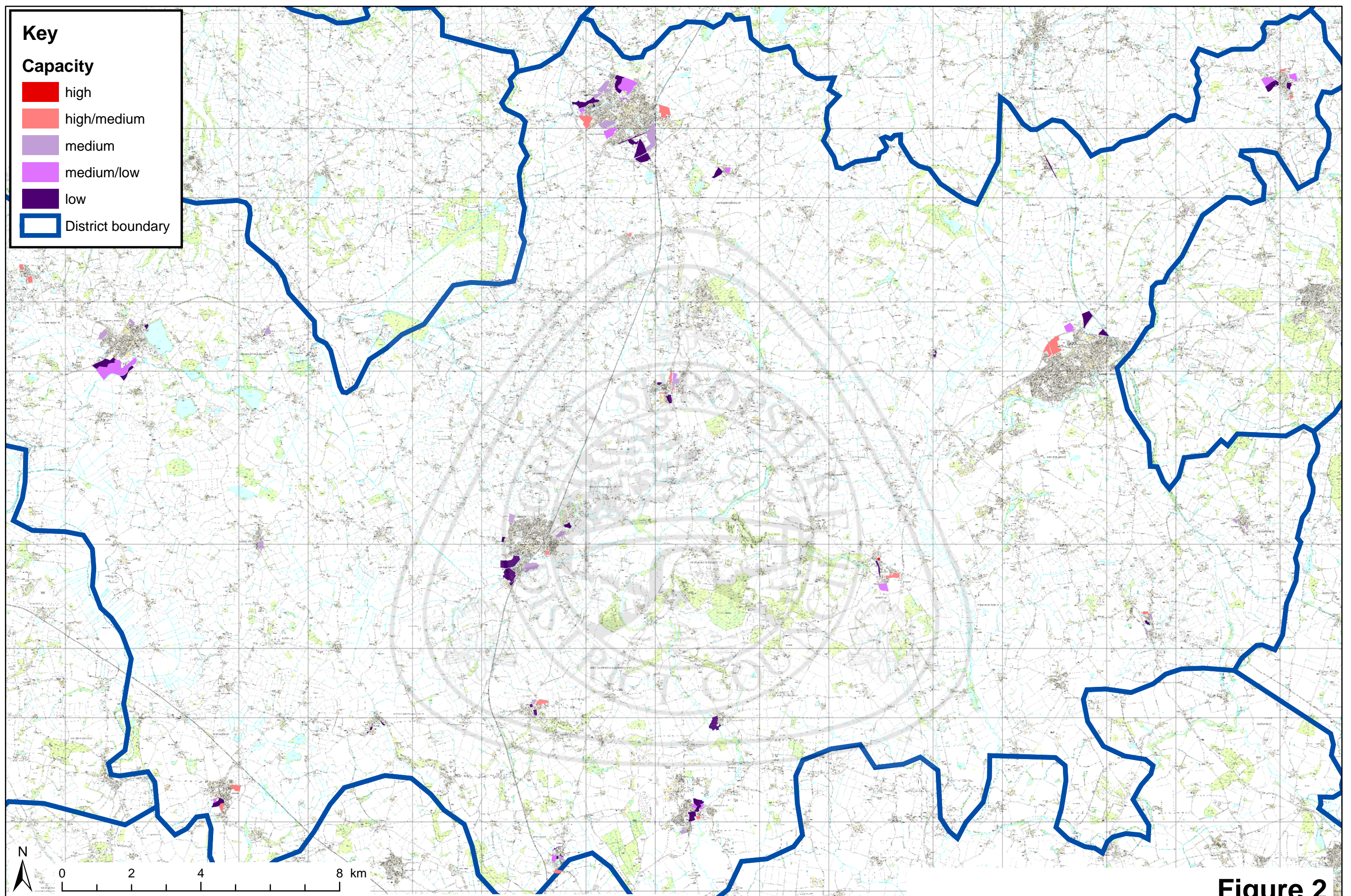
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**Figure 1**  
**Landscape Sensitivity of zones**

**Key**

**Capacity**

- high
- high/medium
- medium
- medium/low
- low
- District boundary



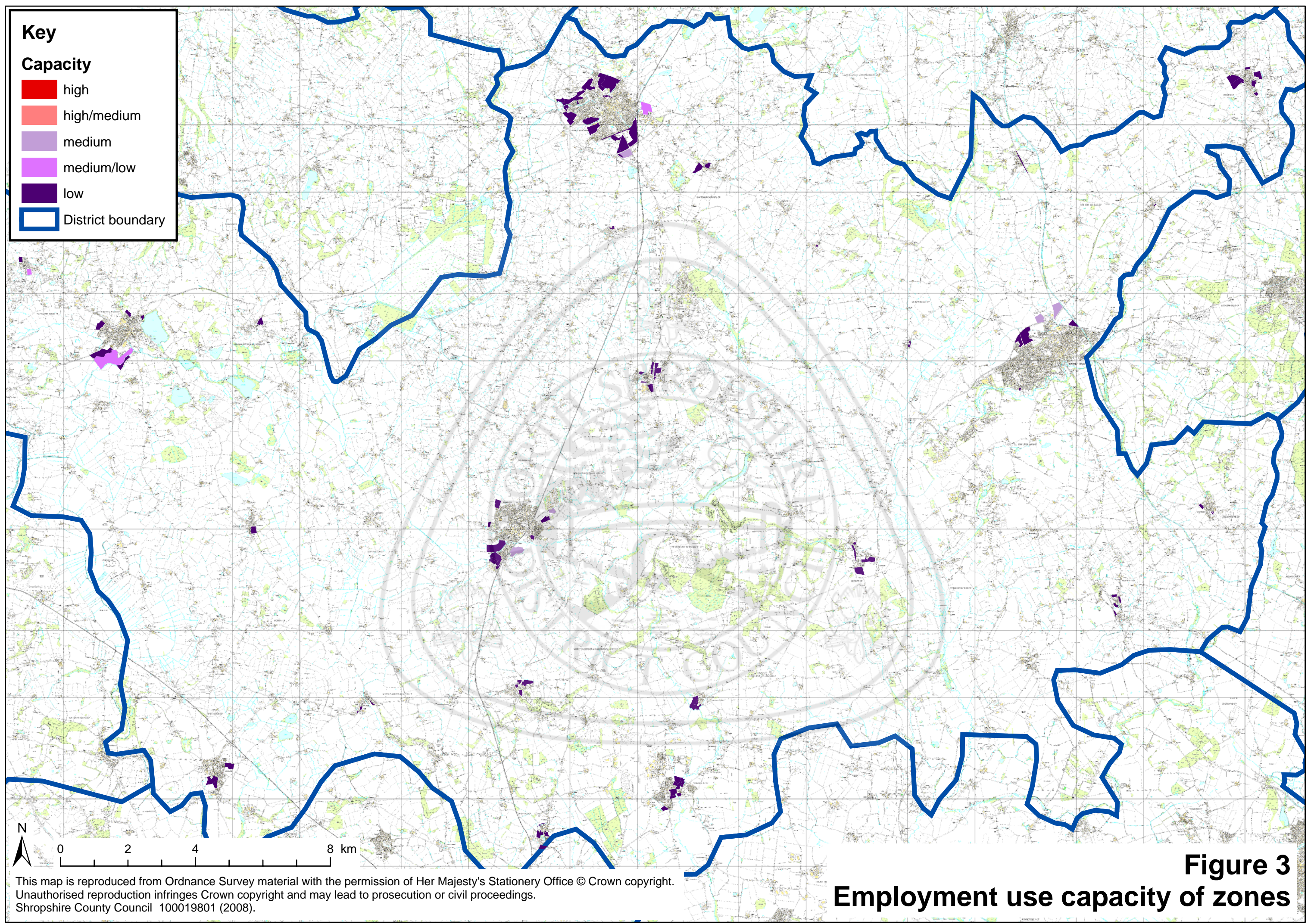
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**Figure 2**  
**Housing use capacity of zones**

**Key**

**Capacity**

- high
- high/medium
- medium
- medium/low
- low
- District boundary



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**Figure 3**  
**Employment use capacity of zones**

# PART 2



## 4.0 ZONE SENSITIVITIES AND CAPACITIES

- 4.1 The sensitivity and capacity of each zone is set out on the following pages. Before this, an explanation of the purpose of each section is described. The definition of specific terms can be found in the Glossary in **Appendix 1**.

### Zone Sensitivity and Capacity Summary

- 4.2 This section summarises the overall landscape sensitivity and the capacity of the zone for housing or employment uses.

### LDU context

- 4.3 The LDU (landscape description unit) is the broad area of landscape with common characteristics in which the zone is located. This has been defined as part of the Shropshire landscape assessment and more information is available in **Appendix 2**. The LDU is described in terms of landform and land cover amongst other factors and these are set out on the form. The cultural, ecological and visual sensitivity are also defined. 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 characteristics and sensitivities do correspond to the broader level assessment. If there are differences this does not mean to say that the overall LDU judgment is incorrect as it applies to a much broader area and defines the dominant characteristics of that area. It still acts as a relevant context to the zone.

### Biodiversity

- 4.4 Nature conservation designations are listed in this section and comments made as to the specific features. Designations can indicate that the area is sensitive.

### Historic

- 4.5 Historic conservation designations are listed in this section and comments made as to the specific features. Designations can indicate that the area is sensitive.

### Function of area

- 4.6 The main functions and land uses of the zone are listed with any additional comments necessary. The diversity, or variety, of uses is commented on ie are the uses generally few and simple or many and diverse. Simple land use can indicate strong consistency of character of either positive or negative nature. Diversity can indicate a rich, varied landscape which might be affected adversely by large-scale development but in which sensitive small-scale development may be able to be accommodated.

### Water

- 4.7 The presence of water is noted and commented upon. Water bodies such as streams or ponds can be sensitive and valuable features.

### Skyline

- 4.8 The prominence and importance of any skyline in the zone is noted and its complexity described. Skylines are sensitive features as they are generally widely visible and any feature on them is brought out in relief against a light sky. Varied skylines can be more attractive and valued although they may be able to accommodate small-scale change. Simple skylines may be less attractive although maybe the more sensitive to any change as it may be more noticeable. As a general rule, all development should avoid breaking the skyline.

### Key views

- 4.9 Key views are those views from publicly accessible places [which are used regularly or to enjoy scenic quality] towards features of interest. Generally, these are sensitive to change and development. Any landmarks in the zone or visible from the zone are noted. Any detractors, or unsightly features, are also noted.

### Intervisibility

- 4.10 The degree to which the zone is visible to the surrounding area is noted through site observation i.e. a visit to the zone. Any views of key features visible or key places within the zone are also recorded. If the area has high intervisibility it is likely to be more sensitive to development than if it is hidden.

### Tranquillity

- 4.11 Tranquillity is broken down into the noise sources within an area, the number of views of development and the presence of people. Views of development are defined by the amount that can be seen using, where appropriate the arc of view of development possible i.e. 180, 270 or 360 degrees. The more and louder the noise sources, the less the tranquillity. The more the views of development or the number of people, also the less the tranquillity. Tranquillity is a valuable commodity, particularly in areas accessible to larger settlements, and contributes to sensitivity.

### Functional relationship of area

- 4.12 The relationship of the zone with the adjacent settlement, if relevant, with the wider landscape and with an adjacent assessed zone in terms of function is recorded. The function can range from land use such as agriculture through to the nature conservation function e.g. as a wildlife corridor. Some zones may be interdependent with others and change in one may affect all adversely.

### Visual relationship of area

- 4.13 The relationship of the zone with the adjacent settlement, if relevant, with the wider landscape and with an adjacent assessed zone in terms of visual connection is recorded. Some areas can be important to the settlement in terms of providing a setting. Other areas can provide a visual link out into the wider landscape. These links can be important and make an area more sensitive to change.

### Are adjacent assessed areas mutually reliant?

- 4.14 Some zones may be interdependent with others and change in one may affect all adversely.

### Settlement edge

- 4.15 The age of the settlement edge is defined as either being pre- 20th-century or more recent 20 to 21st century. Often, where the older core of a settlement meets an open area it is likely to be more sensitive than a later development. The nature of the edge is recorded i.e. whether it is positive or negative and its form noted i.e. whether it is smooth, linear or indented. The latter tends to be more attractive and is often symptomatic of an older edge. It can be more sensitive towards proposed development than a linear, bland edge or an edge with detractors.

### Receptors and sensitivity

- 4.16 Receptors are people in a variety of different situations who can experience views within an area and who may be affected by change or development. Receptors can include urban or rural residents, users of public footpaths, roads, rail or cycleways. Some are more

sensitive than others. The same person driving a delivery van for work may be less sensitive to a view than when he or she is looking out of their living-room window or taking a walk in the countryside. The more the number of sensitive receptors in an area, the more sensitive the area will be to change or development.

**Potential for improvement of settlement edge and overall mitigation**

- 4.17 If an existing settlement edge has a number of detractors or a poor relationship with the adjacent landscape there may be opportunity for improvement. This improvement can either take the form of mitigation such as woodland planting or screening. It could also mean that further development may be desirable provided it was carried out in a sensitive manner and provided a positive edge itself. Where such opportunities exist a comment is made. If no such opportunity exists, this is stated as a 'no' or a dash.

