Landscape
Institute
Technical
Information
Note

Townscape Character Assessment

Technical Information Note 05/2017

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Townscape Character Assessment

Contents

This Technical Information Note provides an overview of the townscape character assessment process, signposting to existing guidance. It was updated in April 2018 to take account of guidance published by Historic England in December 2017.

1. Introduction

1.1 This Technical Information Note (TIN) has been prepared by the Landscape Institute to explain how the principles and general approach of landscape character assessment can be applied to townscape character assessment. It is intended to apply to all jurisdictions of the UK, but draws principally upon the following existing guidance:

- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014);

- An Approach to Seascape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2012);

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013); and

- Landscape Character Assessment TIN 08/2015 (Landscape Institute, 2016).

1.2 The definition of townscape used as the basis of this note is that described in GLVIA3 as: "*the landscape within the built-up area, including the buildings, the relationship between them, the different types of urban open spaces, including green spaces and the relationship between buildings and open spaces*." (Paragraph 2.7).

1.3 Natural England has defined the principles of landscape character assessment in its document 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'. This TIN simply helps to clarify how practitioners typically interpret that guidance for townscapes by giving emphasis to particular issues that may need to be considered when assessing, mapping and describing the character of built-up areas.

1.4 '*An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*' suggests that all character assessments, including townscape character assessments, should be undertaken in a robust, transparent and structured way. It follows that the approach applied to each assessment will depend on the purpose, scope and scale of the assessment being undertaken and the skills and resources that are available to carry it out. The process advocated by Natural England is the same for the rural landscape as it is the townscapes of conurbations and cities, through suburbs, towns and villages to small rural hamlets. However, the various physical and cultural aspects which contribute to character may differ.

The Audience for this Technical Information Note

1.1 This TIN is intended to provide a resource to members of the Landscape Institute and other professions, such as those involved in commissioning, carrying out and using a townscape character assessment for planning or design purposes. This might include landscape professionals, architects, archaeologists, urban designers, infrastructure engineers, or experts in a range of fields working in government departments and agencies, local authorities, and development and utilities companies.

1.2 Townscape character assessment may also appeal to heritage professionals preparing Conservation Area Appraisals, assessing the contribution made by setting to the significance of heritage assets or identifying buildings and other features of townscape value for local listing, for example.

1.3 Communities may also have an interest in the assessment process and in the findings of townscape character assessment, perhaps in helping to shape their local environment, for example in preparing Neighbourhood Plans or Village Design Statements.

2. What is Townscape?

2.1 Townscape, like the rural landscape, reflects the relationship between people and place and the part it plays in forming the setting to our everyday lives. It results from the way that the different components of our environment – both natural and cultural - interact and are understood and experienced by people (Natural England, 2014).

2.2 The term townscape first came into popular use in the UK in the 1940's and 1950's, when there was a concern amongst some architectural critics that the identity of our villages, towns and cities was being eroded by poorly planned post-war reconstruction. They derived their definitions of townscape from the Roman "*genius loci*", which translates as "*the prevailing character or atmosphere of a place*". It does not mean preservation however, and townscape was used as a way of explaining how modern development could co-exist alongside historic buildings and areas, contributing positively to the evolution of a place. The townscape movement helped to raise the public profile of the conservation of built heritage, leading to the establishment of groups such as the Victorian Society and the 20th Century Society.

2.3 **Figure 1** below is an adaptation of Figure 1 in Natural England's 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment', amended to summarise some key considerations which relate to townscape character assessment. It has been informed by the results of a workshop hosted by the Landscape Institute London Branch on 28 November 2016. A link to a video of the event is provided in the references section.
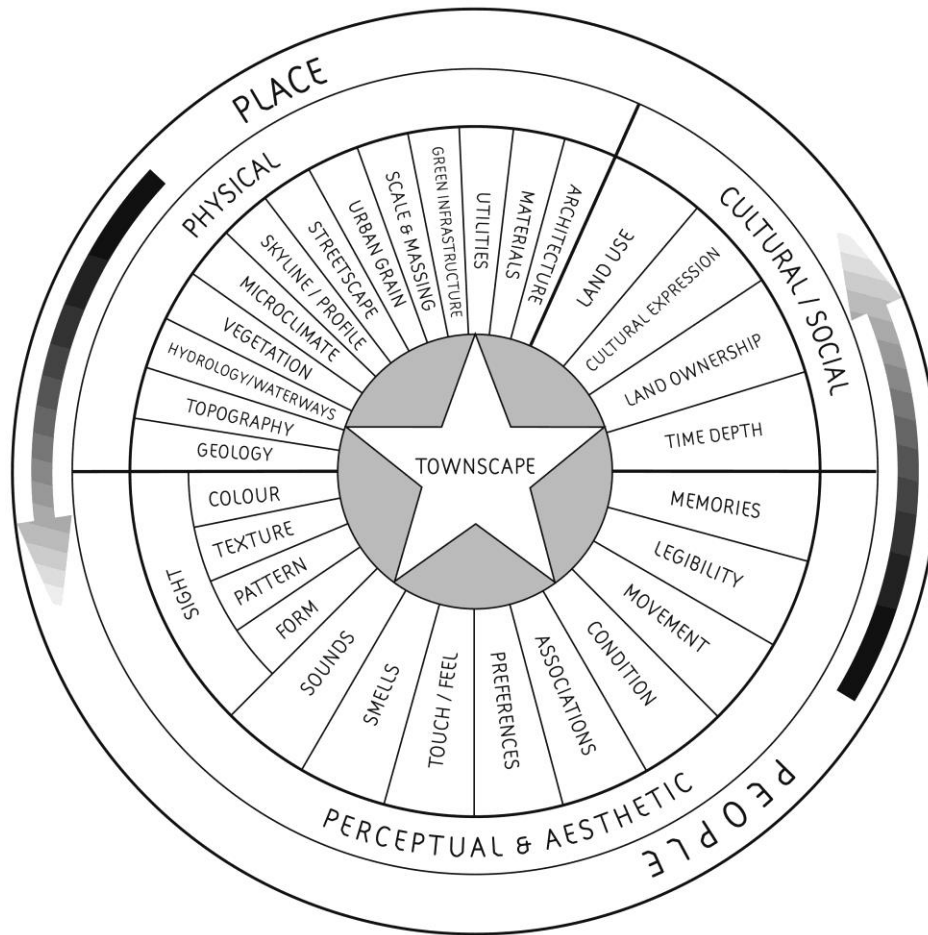
Figure 1   What is Townscape?
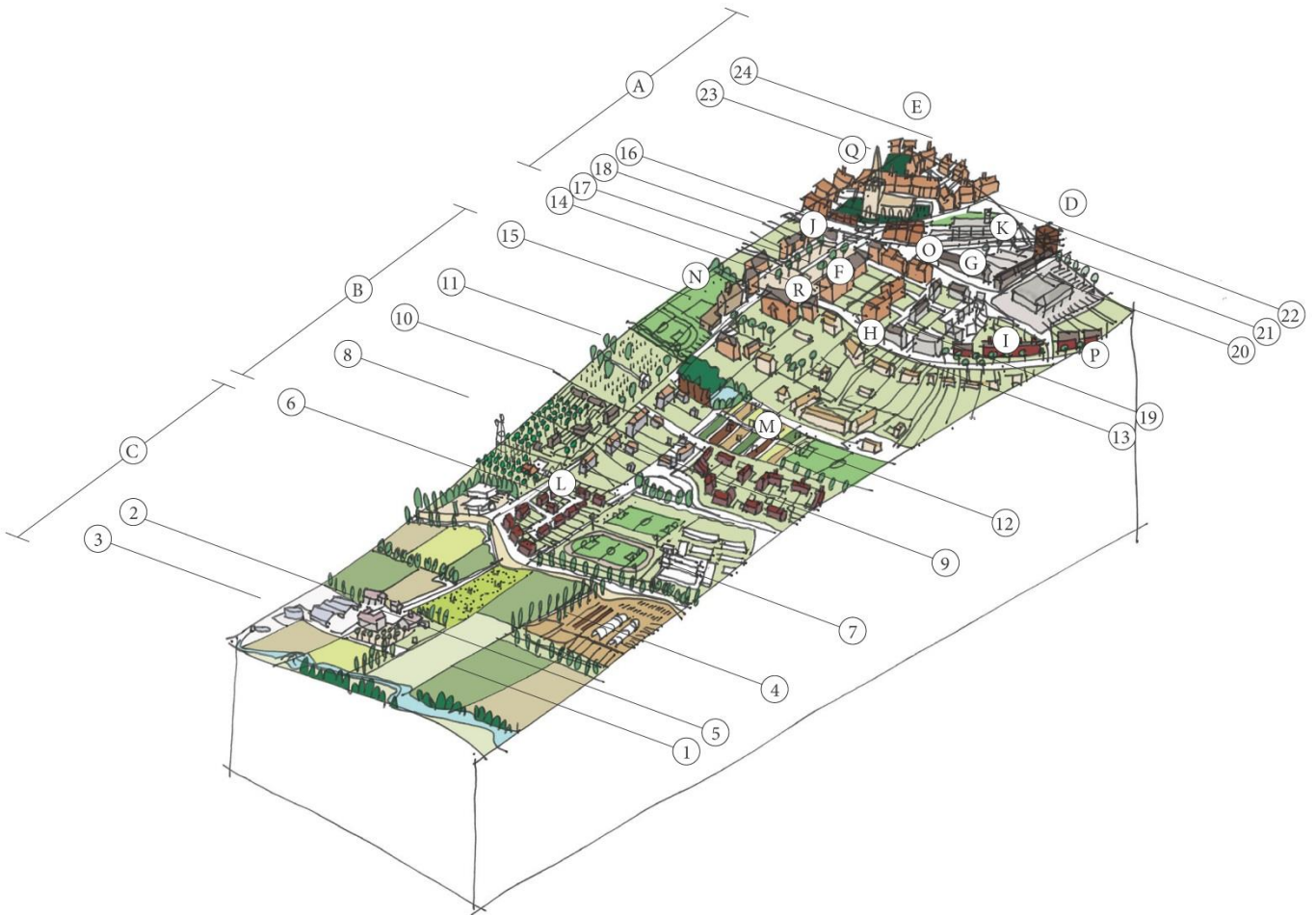
LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND ACTIVITIES

1. Flood meadows and farmland
2. Farmstead
3. Biogas facility (diversified agriculture)
4. Garden centre and 'pick your own' (diversified agriculture)
5. Converted barns: business units/ residential/ holiday lets

TOWNSCAPE FEATURES AND ACTIVITIES

6. New 'gateway' housing development
7. Academy/secondary school
8. Mobile phone mast/transformer station & telephone exchange
9. Inter-war and post-WWII 'ribbon' development
10. Late C20th infill dwellings
11. Victorian/Edwardian burial ground
12. Allotments and recreation/playing fields
13. Victorian/Edwardian villas
14. Georgian/early Victorian townhouses and chapel
15. Primary school with new buildings
16. Market square and market cross
17. C15th-C19th townhouses, banks, shops, agencies, hotel and inn
18. Arts Centre/Museum
19. Late C20th retail development
20. Large food-store and car park on former cattle market site
21. Industrial units on former railway sidings and goods yard
22. Bus station and C20th railway station and level crossing
23. Church and churchyard
24. Medieval streets and houses/Artisan shops, businesses and inns

TECHNICAL TERMS

A. Town centre/city centre
B. Suburb
C. Urban fringe farmland
D. Tall building
E. Historic core
F. Planned settlement
G. Business quarter
H. Streetscape
I. Street
J. Public realm
K. Brownfield development
L. Greenfield development
M. Public open space
N. Green infrastructure
O. Connectivity
P. Built form
Q. Skyline
R. Venacular

Figure 2   Three-Dimensional Representation of a Hypothetical Townscape (*LDA Design*)

Why Townscape Matters

2.1 The vast majority of UK residents now live in built-up areas; over 80% at the last census (ONS, 2011) and so the character and quality of the urban environment has a major impact on quality of life and well-being across society. Threats to local identity, whether it be the loss of local buildings or landmarks with strong cultural associations which people value or the incremental erosion of key characteristics, are often cause for public concern.

2.2 As recognised by national policy, change is part of a living, evolving built environment. But change needs to be understood in context and managed to bring about sustainable outcomes. To achieve positive and widely supported change, it is normal practice that those who have control over the mechanisms and processes for change are well informed about the nature of the environment that may be affected and the implications or effects that change will have upon it.

2.3 Townscape character assessment can help to inform development policy which, in turn, ensures that new development contributes positively to the character of the townscape and reinforces local distinctiveness. It may therefore be used to ensure that built-up areas are attractive places to live, work and visit, which supports environmental, social and economic vitality. It is a concept which members of the public can easily relate to and engage with - if carefully communicated.

What is Townscape Character Assessment?

2.4 A townscape character assessment may present a description of the townscape that is distinctive to that place, supported by materials such as maps, illustrations and photographs. It can provide an understanding of how a place has evolved and developed over time to respond to natural, social and economic drivers, and how this is reflected in the layout of streets, the architecture of buildings and the materials used. Historic Area Assessments may also be used to inform the historic environment aspects of the townscape character assessment (see paragraph 4.4).

2.5 This understanding of the intrinsic character and qualities of the place can then be used to guide the location, design, scale, massing and type of development that can be accommodated, such as public realm improvements, new buildings or an urban park. A townscape character assessment can also form the basis for assessing the effects of change, to help decision-takers decide whether a new development is appropriate in its context, for example.

2.6 Trends and forces of change, such as urban extensions and regeneration, climate change, vehicle automation and commuting patterns can also be considered as part of a townscape character assessment. This information can be used to develop mechanisms to guide positive decisions and actions to protect, manage and promote distinctive townscape character in the future.

2.7 The outputs of a townscape character assessment can inform the separate process of making judgements and evaluating townscape quality or value, or making decisions about the appropriateness of development (see Figure 3 in 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment').

What are the benefits of Townscape Character Assessment?

2.8 The identification, mapping and description of townscape character can be carried out at any scale and for any type of settlement or built-up area. The principal benefits of townscape character assessment may require that it:

- Follows a rigorous, objective and evidence based approach;

- establishes a robust evidence base specifically linked to a place;

- provides baseline evidence at the appropriate scale to inform different types of judgements and decisions;

- follows a holistic approach to the whole geographic area being assessed, rather than focusing on special or protected sites or features;

- forms a spatial framework of townscape character types and/or areas to which different policy applications and decisions can be applied;

- integrates natural and cultural considerations and includes an understanding of how a place is experienced, perceived and valued by people;

- identifies the key elements, features and characteristics that come together to create the intrinsic sense of place and character of a locality; and

- Creates a snapshot-in-time, against which future change can be monitored and managed.

3. Application of Townscape Character Assessment

Introduction

3.1 Character assessments, whether for rural, urban, coastal or marine contexts can be undertaken for many different reasons. It is generally accepted that the purpose of the assessment being undertaken should be made clear at the outset as this will have a significant influence on the overall scope, the resources required, the nature of the approach taken and the outputs developed.

Plan-making and policy

3.2 Character may vary greatly across rural, urban and peri-urban areas and this variety is therefore a consideration in preparing development plans. Robust planning policies form the basis of decisions on whether a proposed development is considered appropriate to its context. An objective, fact based assessment of townscape character can provide evidence to support such policies.

3.3 National planning policy and guidance differs in each of the countries of the United Kingdom and includes the following:

- **England** – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly paragraphs 17, 56, 58 and 60 (DCLG, 2012), and National Planning Practice Guidance (DCLG, 2014).

- **Scotland** – Scottish Planning Policy (Scottish Government, 2014a), Scotland's Third National Planning Framework (Scottish Government, 2014b) and Principal Policies including

'Creating Places - A policy statement on architecture and place for Scotland' (Scottish Government, 2013) and 'Designing Streets: A Policy Statement for Scotland' (Scottish Government, 2010). Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002) is no longer current in England but still relevant in Scotland.

- **Wales** – Planning Policy Wales(Welsh Government, 2016a) and in particular Technical Advice Note 12: Design (Welsh Government, 2016b).

- **Northern Ireland** - Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) (Department for the Environment Northern Ireland, 2015) and Planning Policy Statements (PPS), including PPS6: Areas of Townscape Character (Department for the Environment Northern Ireland, 2005).

Masterplanning

3.4 Masterplanning is a well-established process, which can play an important role in place-making. The Urban Task Force's 'Towards an Urban Renaissance' defines a spatial 'masterplan' as a "*three-dimensional strategy that explores how a new development will work in its wider urban context*." (Urban Task Force, 1999). A masterplan, such as those prepared for new settlements on brownfield land, Garden Villages and Sustainable Urban Extensions, is thus a product of the Masterplanning process. The former Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) emphasised the importance of understanding character in their document 'Creating successful masterplans', which states that a well-designed place is "*a place with its own identity*". It stressed the need to start the masterplanning process with an assessment of the context, including its most important characteristics through urban design analysis and characterisation (CABE, 2004).

3.5 Masterplans can also form the basis of design briefs which provide more detail on key sites, clusters of buildings and open spaces. These documents may be adopted as supplementary planning documents (CABE, 2004) or developed as part of a Neighbourhood Plan.

3.6 The physical elements and key characteristics of the site and its context can provide information to inform site design. 'By Design - Urban Design in the planning system: towards better practice' sets out the following principles which assist in assimilating the information gathered through the townscape character assessment process to determine which aspects may inform site design (CABE, 2000):

- Consider the site's landform and character when laying out new development.

- Integrate new development into its landscape setting to reduce its impact on nature and reinforce local distinctiveness.

- Respond to the layout of existing buildings, streets and spaces to ensure that adjacent buildings relate to one another, streets are connected and spaces complement one another.

- Respond to local building forms and patterns of development in the detailed layout and design of development to help reinforce a sense of place.

- Use of local materials, building methods and details is considered a major factor in enhancing local distinctiveness.

- Consider the scale, massing and height of proposed development in relation to that of adjoining buildings; the topography; the general pattern of heights in the area; and views, vistas and landmarks.

3.7 As part of masterplanning, townscape character assessment may typically contribute to a range of outputs, including:

- Architectural design;

- Design and Access Statements;

- Design briefs;

- Design Codes;

- Inclusive Design Statements;

- Infrastructure planning and design;

- Masterplans, including density, scale and massing); and

- Streetscape and public realm design.

Assessment and the parallel process of project design

3.8 For development proposals in urban areas, the planning authority may determine that a townscape and visual impact assessment or appraisal (TVIA) is required. If the development is deemed to require an EIA through the screening process, this will be agreed at the scoping stage. This is the point at which the key topics to be examined and the areas of likely significant effects are identified. If EIA is screened out, then a townscape and visual appraisal may still be required.

3.9 GLVIA3 is the industry standard guidance for TVIA. The process of assessment set out within the guidelines is as equally applicable to urban townscapes as other forms of landscape including in determining the scope and approach to the TVIA, whether it be as part of an EIA or as a standalone appraisal. It may also be necessary to refer to other guidance for specific types of development in urban areas. For example, the 'Design Manual for Roads and Bridges' with respect to major road schemes.

3.10 Townscape character assessment as part of TVIA can also provide valuable evidence in the design process to assist in developing a scheme which responds to and enhances the local environment. Further information on this can be found in section 4 of GLVIA3.

Specific considerations for TVIA

3.11 As set out above, GLVIA3 provides detailed guidelines which are applicable to TVIA. Based on the experience of practitioners, there are some specific considerations in relation to townscape which may need to be taken into account:

- Existing townscape character assessments may be unavailable.

- The density of existing development may restrict the geographical scope of the townscape character assessment, although the area within which significant effects on views and visual amenity are predicted to occur may be larger.

- The baseline may be difficult to define, particularly for larger developments in cities where the programme for the assessment is long and the pace of development is high.

- For a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) to be helpful in an urban context it may be necessary to include a digital surface model, which includes existing buildings and structures.

- Many people may be affected by views associated with a Proposed Development in an urban area. Selecting and agreeing representative viewpoints to inform the assessment with the relevant planning authority can therefore be important.

- The scope of the cumulative assessment may be difficult to define, particularly for projects with long planning and construction programmes.

- For major infrastructure schemes, it may be necessary to refer to specific guidance from the relevant authority, such as the 'Design Manual for Roads and Bridges' in relation to roads (DfT, 2017).

- The preparation of photomontages may be challenging in dense urban environments, particularly where tall buildings are proposed.

Indicators of townscape value

3.12 Value relates to the relative importance of the townscape to different stakeholders and can apply to areas of townscape as a whole, or to individual elements, features and aesthetic or perceptual dimensions which contribute to the character of the place. Paragraph 5.20 and box 5.1 of GLVIA3 provide lists of information which can contribute to an understanding of value. Practitioners typically consider:

- Buildings, open spaces, or other features, which contribute positively to the character of a Conservation Area and may be designated.

- Buildings, open spaces, or other features of townscape merit outside of Conservation Areas and may be designated.

- Buildings or groups of buildings, and open spaces which have won awards for architecture or design quality, such as Civic Trust or RIBA awards.

- Buildings, open spaces, or other features identified on a local list.

- Greenspaces or other open spaces, which are designated in the Local Plan or have won awards, such as Green Flag or Landscape Institute awards.

- Areas designated and protected for geological or biological conservation, such as SSSIs and, SACs.

- Key or protected views.

4. The Townscape Character Assessment Process

4.1 The basic approach to townscape character assessment is the same as for landscape character assessment, which is set out in Figure 2 of Natural England's '*An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*'. The four main steps, which are common to all scales of assessment are as follows:

- Step 1: Define purpose and scope

- Step 2: Desk study

- Step 3: Field study

- Step 4: Classification and description

4.2 The "*Five Key Principles for Landscape Assessment*" set out in Natural England's 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' are applicable to townscape character assessment and are set out below.

> **Principle 1**: Landscape is everywhere and all landscape has character.
>
> **Principle 2**: Landscape occurs at all scales and the process of Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at any scale.
>
> **Principle 3**: The process of Landscape Character Assessment should involve an understanding of how the landscape is perceived and experienced by people.
>
> **Principle 4**: A Landscape Character Assessment can provide a landscape evidence base to inform a range of decisions and applications.
>
> **Principle 5**: A Landscape Character Assessment can provide an integrating spatial framework – a multitude of variables come together to give us our distinctive landscapes.

Specific considerations for Townscape Character Assessment

4.3 The process of defining the natural characteristics of the landscape, such as topography and hydrology, is well documented. However, there are some specific aspects of the urban environment which a landscape character assessment – depending upon scale - may not provide detail on. This includes cultural expressions and social aspects, such as the detailed historical development of the area, and physical elements, such as streets, blocks, buildings and other structures and open spaces. Documents, such as '*Shaping Neighbourhoods: Character and Context*', which is a supplementary planning document to the London Plan, may provide useful information to help define what information needs to be considered in a townscape character assessment (GLA, 2014). Other local guidance may be available, such as urban design guides. The following information, which is not exhaustive and may not be relevant in every situation, is based on the range of aspects which practitioners typically consider in carrying out townscape character assessments.

Historical development

4.4 A study of the historical development of an area can help to build a picture of how the structure and identity of a place has evolved over time. This information can help to explain the origin of urban street patterns, the location and setting of buildings and the materials and building styles which contribute to local vernacular. Historic England's 'Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments' provides guidance on the types of information that may be useful in describing the historical evolution of a place and its heritage (Historic England, 2017a). Preliminary information for a townscape character assessment and sources of information which can be helpful in describing the historical development of a place may include:

- Historical maps
- Guidebooks and leaflets

- Historical photographs

- Local history books

- Literature

- Oral histories

- Art, such as paintings and sketches

- Posters and postcards

- Event programmes

- Sales particulars

- Written accounts

- Extensive urban surveys

- Conservation Area Appraisals or Statements

- Previous planning documents

- Old aerial photographs

- Tree surveys, including Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)

- Citations for designated heritage assets (monuments, parks and gardens and buildings/structures)

4.5 A description of the historical development of place can be presented in a number of ways. An illustrated timeline may, for example, identify dates, supported by short descriptions of key events that took place. If presented well, this can provide a clear and accessible diagram which can be understood by a wide range of stakeholders. Alternatively, it may be necessary to provide a narrative with passages of text used to describe the detail. Appendices can be used to present the evidence used to support the descriptions of historical development and links to or details of specific references.

Movement and connectivity

4.6 The pattern, scale and wider connections of roads, streets and passageways can strongly define the structure and levels of activity within an area and annotated maps and descriptions can be used to illustrate this. The following could be used a guide for understanding how road networks contribute to townscape character:

- Gateways and nodes

- Legibility and permeability

- Classification – motorway, A Road, B Road, named or unclassified

- Width – narrow, single or dual carriageway, for example

- Public rights of way, permitted routes and cycleways;

- Pavements – if present, wide or narrow

- On-street parking

- Junctions and crossing places

- Lighting

4.7 It may also be useful to note the location of railway stations, which can generate high levels of activity, and railway lines and sidings, which can form barriers to movement. Crossing

points, such as level crossings overbridges, under bridges, and arches beneath viaducts can also assist in understanding how railway lines affect the structure of an area.

4.8 Permeability and legibility for pedestrians and cyclists can be explained with reference to public rights of way, passageways and signage.

4.9 Waterways used for transport, airports and ports may also need to be considered where relevant.

Urban structure and built form

4.10 It may be helpful to consider the following in describing the urban structure and built form of an area:

- Urban grain

- Scale, massing and density

- Blocks – size, shape and edges

- Building line – position, regularity

- Roofline – style, regularity, dormer windows, chimneys or plant, etc.

- Skyline

- Building height – storeys, regularity

- Plots – size, position of buildings within plots, gardens, yards etc.

- Building type –e.g. house, offices, industrial shed etc.

- Relationship between buildings – terraced, detached

- Architecture – style, period, architect if known, detailing

- Materials – walls, roofs, windows, doors, finishes

- Structures – e.g. retaining walls, bridges, ramps, terracing

- Condition

- Colour and texture

- Enclosure

- Microclimate

- Drainage

- Nightscape – lighting, skyglow, dark areas

Heritage assets

4.1 Historic England defines heritage assets as "*a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest*", as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF. Similar

definitions exist in other jurisdictions. The second edition of Historic England's Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (GPA3) was published in the December 2018 (Historic England, 2017b). This document clarifies the important differences between setting and curtilage, character, context and landscape. It also clarifies the relationship between a heritage asset and its setting and the related planning considerations of landscape character and visual amenity.

4.2   There are a number of designations which are relevant to townscape assessment and which are included as part of the Historic Environment Record, including (in England):

- Listed buildings;

- Scheduled monuments; and

- Registered parks and gardens.

4.3   In addition to this, some Local Planning Authorities compile lists of non-designated heritage assets. These are 'buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which are not formally designated heritage assets' as defined in paragraph 39 of the Government's Planning Practice Guidance for England (see section 3.3 for references to other jurisdictions). The appearance of a non-designated asset on a local list does not give it statutory protection but it does identify that it is a valued asset and ensures that it is taken account of in the planning process.

4.4   Conservation Areas, which are designated for their special architectural and historic interest, may also be an important consideration in urban areas. Local Planning Authorities often prepare Conservation Area Appraisals or Statements, which may include an assessment of townscape character and establish principles for managing change. This designation applies a level of protection to buildings and trees within the area and its setting. An Article 4 direction may also be applied by the Local Planning Authority which restricts certain permitted development rights.

4.5   Heritage at risk registers identify buildings, landscapes and conservation areas where there is a risk to its conservation status.

Green infrastructure and public realm

4.6   The Landscape Institute defines Green Infrastructure (GI) as the network of natural and semi-natural features including land cover and vegetation, open spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities (Landscape Institute, 2013). Within urban areas GI, such as parks, churchyards, allotments, nature reserves, vacant land, rivers and street trees can have a substantial influence on the pattern and density of development. Some Local Planning Authorities have GI strategies, which can provide evidence to support townscape character assessments. The Ordnance Survey has also recently released the free to download OS Greenspace dataset, which provides the location and extent of spaces such as parks and sports facilities that are likely to be accessible to the public (Ordnance Survey, 2017).

4.7   The public realm refers to the streets and spaces around buildings which are open to the public. This can range from the pavements which line the streets through to large public squares or seafront promenades. The structure of these spaces, the materials used and levels of activity can influence the character of an area.

Tranquillity

4.8   The Landscape Institute TIN 01/2017 provides an overview of tranquillity in relation to landscape. TIN 01/2017 adopts the Oxford English dictionary definition of tranquillity, which is *"the quality or state of being tranquil, calm"*. It also recognises that, in the UK, tranquillity is almost always relative to the context, and this is particularly important in urban areas where even small spaces can provide a degree of tranquillity in comparison to busy streets, for example. These areas of relative tranquillity might affect a way an area is perceived and therefore its townscape character. The extent to which a townscape is lit at night may also affect tranquillity.

Stakeholder engagement

4.9   As set out in Natural England's 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment', stakeholder involvement in Landscape Character Assessment can add value to the assessment and increase the weight given to decisions based on it (e.g. policies and guidance). In urban areas, consultees may include the statutory authorities, such as Historic England, local planning authorities, town or parish councils, local heritage groups and residents associations. Local people can often provide resources which are not available in the public domain, particularly for smaller settlements. Documenting and summarising the results of consultation can also assist in assigning values to townscape elements and character areas.

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Further details of the Landscape Institute London branch workshop held on 28 November 2016, which explored "the townscape wheel", are available here: http://london.landscapeinstitute.org/landscape-seascape-townscape-character-assessment-understanding-place-informing-change/

6. Glossary of Terms

Architecture

The style in which a building is designed and constructed, especially with regard to a specific period, place or culture. (OED)

Building line

The line formed by the layout of buildings.

Built form

Buildings and structures.

Condition

The state of the townscape with regard to its appearance, quality or working order (OED).

For example, the presence/absence of derelict or vacant land and/or buildings. Often closely linked to perceptual qualities, such as level of maintenance, safety and how a place is experienced.

Cultural Expression

The inhabitants of the locality and how different cultural backgrounds shape the built environment reflective of their culture.

Edge

The boundary between two areas or features, these can be natural topographical features or man-made features.

Enclosure

The use of buildings, structures and/or townscape to create a sense of containment.

Gateway

The design of a building, site or landscape to symbolise an entrance or arrival to a specific location.

Green Infrastructure

The network of green spaces and other natural features within the built form such as parks, sports pitches, golf courses, allotments, cemeteries, rivers, canals, village greens, trees , green walls and roofs or vacant and revegetated ground. It may have public or private access.

Historic Environment Record

A record held by the local authority of known archaeological sites, historic buildings, and designed landscapes.

Land Cover

The surface cover of the land, usually expressed in terms of vegetation cover or lack of it but may be buildings or surfaces. Related to but not the same as land use.

Land Use

What land is used for, based on broad categories of functional land cover, such as industrial, residential or commercial.

Legibility

The ability to navigate through or 'read' the urban environment. Can be increased through a number of means such as good connectivity, landmarks and wayfaring signage. Within townscape low legibility and the ability to become 'lost' can be a positive feature in the right circumstances.

Massing

The arrangement and shape of individual or combined built form.

Materials

The matter used to create the built form, likely to include brick, glass, concrete, stone, timber and metal.

Microclimate

The climate of a very small or restricted area within the built form (OED). Can often be altered or modified by built form often intensifying conditions (such as urban wind canyons) but can also moderate conditions too.

Movement

The sense of travel and activity through and within a place, often strongly influenced by the flows of people and traffic, greater levels of which potentially creating a 'busy' and bustling feel.

Listed Building

A listed building is one that has been placed on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. There are three categories of listed buildings in the United Kingdom:

- Grade I buildings, which are of exceptional interest and make up 2.5% of all listed buildings in the United Kingdom.
- Grade II* buildings, which are particularly important buildings of more than special interest and make up 5.5% of all listed buildings in the United Kingdom.
- Grade II buildings, which are of special interest and make up 92% of all listed buildings in the United Kingdom.

Photomontages

A visualisation which superimposes line work or an image(s) representing a proposed development upon a photograph or series of photographs (GLVIA 3).

Photomontages produced using set technical methods ensuring the accuracy of the image and development shown within it can also be referred to as Accurate Visual Representations (AVRS).

Rural

Relating to, or characteristic of the countryside rather than the town. (OED)

Scale

The relative size or extent of built form (OED).

Setting

The context or environment in which something sits.

Skyline/Profile

The outline of built form and land defined against the sky (OED). Sometimes referred to as silhouette.

Streetscape

The view or scene of streets (OED). It can be shaped by a number of factors such as buildings, open spaces, trees/ vegetation, street furniture, signage, lighting, materials used for paving and may vary during different times of the day or night.

Suburban/Peri-urban

An edge, outlying or peripheral district of a city, especially a residential one (OED).

Topography

The arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features (OED). Likely to strongly influence the location and characteristics of built form, drainage, movement and routes, and green infrastructure.

Townscape

The character and composition of the built environment including the buildings and the relationships between them, different types of urban open space, including green spaces, and the relationship between buildings and open space (GLVIA 3).

Townscape Character

A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the built environment that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse (GLVIA 3).

Townscape Character Areas (TCAs)

Townscape Character Areas (TCAs) are unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular townscape type (GLVIA 3).

Townscape Character Types (TCTs)

Distinct townscape types that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement pattern, and perceptual and aesthetic attributes (GLVIA 3).

Tranquillity

A state of calm and quietude associated with peace, likely to be highly valued in urban environments (GLVIA 3).

Tree Preservation Order (TPO)

A Tree Preservation Order is an order made by a local planning authority in England to protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodland in the interests of amenity.

Urban Grain

The arrangement or pattern of the buildings and streets within the built form. It may be fine or course, formal or informal, linear, blocky, planned, structured or unstructured.

Utilities

The presence and prominence of service infrastructure such as pylons, power lines, telecommunications, water and waste infrastructure.

Vernacular

The way in which buildings are built in a particular place, making use of local styles, techniques and materials and responding to local economic and social conditions.

Views

A sight or prospect that can be taken in by the eye from a particular place (OED).

Visual Amenity

The overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provide an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area (GLVIA 3).

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