

1. Introduction.

Background.

- 1.1 In October 2001 Shropshire County Council, in partnership with English Heritage, began a programme of Historic Landscape Characterisation (hereafter HLC). The project ran for three years to December 2004 and the results represent a major addition to the databases Shropshire County Council holds on the historic environment. It also complements the authorities Landscape Character Assessment (hereafter LCA), and forms part of English Heritage's national programme of historic landscape characterisation.
- 1.2 The initial Shropshire HLC project design sought an approach based upon the Lancashire model (Ede and Darlington 2002), which was felt to provide a range of historic landscape character types that might be broadly applicable in Shropshire (see Appendix 1). The Lancashire approach represents one of a number of 'second generation' historic LCA projects that have refined the methodology which was developed in Cornwall in the early 1990s. Subsequently, in developing the Shropshire project methodology the Devonshire model has also proved to be influential (Turner 2002).
- 1.3 The main aim of the project was to produce a GIS-based digital map of Shropshire's historic landscape character, supported by a database containing details of the attributes of each HLC 'unit'. This would: -
 - provide a broad assessment of the historic and archaeological dimensions of the county's landscape *as it exists today*.
 - set the archaeological 'sites' recorded in the Shropshire Environmental Record within a wider landscape context .
 - add a higher degree of detail to, and form an integral component of, the existing LCA (Shropshire County Council 2006), which is based on the methodology developed by Steven Warnock and the Living Landscapes Project (Warnock 2002) and complies with The Countryside Agency/ Scottish Natural Heritage's guidance (The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 2002).
 - enable a range of applications for HLC to be developed that actively contribute to the sustainable management of Shropshire's landscape.
 - identify key characteristics of the county's landscape requiring protection and enhancement through supplementary planning guidance and related development control procedures.
 - support Shropshire Council's other core functions relating to the delivery of services on archaeology, landscape, biodiversity, land reclamation and records management.

- 1.4 An initial methodology statement was issued in 2001 (Shropshire County Council 2001), and subsequently tested and refined through three pilot studies (Shropshire County Council 2002a, 2002 b, 2002c). This resulted in the definition of a number of provisional Historic Landscape Character Types (hereafter HLC Types). One of the pilot studies also tested the applicability of the Shropshire HLC methodology to an area beyond the county boundary in Staffordshire. The methodology was subsequently adopted with minor modifications by the Staffordshire HLC Project (Robinson 2006).
- 1.5 The Shropshire HLC and LCA together constitute the Shropshire Character Framework. It is intended that landscape scale information about biodiversity will be added to the Framework in due course.
- 1.6 This document is the final report on the project and therefore replaces the three pilot study reports that were issued in 2002. It includes a methodology statement and definitions for all of the HLC Types that were defined during the project. It will also explain how the results of the HLC were used to review the LCA and to produce an integrated Landscape Typology for the county. Further analysis of Shropshire's historic landscape character is provided by the report on this work (Shropshire County Council 2006). Additional statements about the Shropshire HLC statements have also been published elsewhere (most notably Fairclough and Wigley 2005).

Principles.

- 1.7 Fairclough has defined HLC as: -

“...the ways in which, in the present landscape, we can see and interpret physical remains as indicators of how the landscape's character has been created over thousands of years by the interaction of people and their environment.”
(1999: 3)
- 1.8 Clark *et al* (2004: 6) summarise the main principles behind HLC as follows: -
 - Past not present - HLC takes the present-day landscape as the main object of study, providing a broad analysis of the physical remains of past human activity as they survive within today's landscape.
 - Landscapes not sites – HLC deals with areas not sites or 'points', therefore providing a broader context for the site based data contained within county Historic Environment Records/Sites and Monuments Records (hereafter HERs/SMRs)
 - All aspects of the landscape – all parts of the landscape, from the oldest to the most recent, are viewed as part of landscape character.
 - Human landscape – HLC treats all aspects of the landscape character, including the living, semi-natural components (i.e. hedgerows, woodland, land covers), as the product of human

agency. For the purposes of HLC, biodiversity is seen as a cultural phenomena.

- Landscape as perception – HLC treats landscape as a matter of perception, rather than purely a material object.
- Landscape is the product of change – the landscape is, and always has been, dynamic. Management of change, rather than preservation, is therefore the aim.

1.9 The Shropshire HLC methodology (see Section 2) was designed to ensure that the outputs of the project have a wide range of applications in planning and land management.

Approach

1.10 Over the past decade there has been a significant increase landscape scale archaeological surveys in Shropshire (e.g. Dinn and Edwards 1999, Gaffney *et al* 2001, Leah *et al* 1998, Stamper 1993). These have been undertaken by different organisations, at different scales, times and in relation to differing priorities. These provide a rich source of information on some aspects of the character of the county's landscape. However, they do not provide complete spatial coverage for the whole of the county.

1.11 The approach that was followed in the Shropshire HLC Project acts as an additional component, at the scale of a Level 3 LCA or 1:10,000, of the recently completed LCA (Shropshire County Council 2006).

1.12 The HLC Project was seen as an opportunity to test and review the results of the LCA. The Hampshire HLC project demonstrated that there was a close co-relation between the results of both levels of survey in that county (Lambrick and Bramhill 1999). A similarly close correspondence was expected in Shropshire.

1.13 In order to maintain the integrity of both datasets the HLC was conducted independently of the LCA. This reflects the methodological differences between the two forms of assessment. HLC is essentially a desk-based, 'vertical' (i.e. principally map based) form of landscape analysis. LCA also offers a 'horizontal' view of the landscape (i.e. as it appears when standing on the ground), whereby the desk based assessment is supplemented by a field survey.

1.14 The advantage of HLC, over other forms of landscape assessment, is the analysis and greater detail it provides about patterns of landscape development and change (i.e. time-depth). Ideally, however, both forms of landscape assessment should be used together (e.g. Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 2002, Scottish Natural Heritage *et al* 2003). In Shropshire, the completion of the HLC assessment provided an opportunity to test and compare the results of the LCA. This was done by using the information about time depth provided by HLC to review the boundaries of the Landscape

Description Units (which form the basis of the LCA), and subsequently to inform the identification of Landscape Types. A more detailed description of how this was done is provided in Section 4 below.