



Advice to communities on undertaking a Local Landscape Character Assessment

Assessing and Maintaining Local Distinctiveness



Hampshire
County Council

www.hants.gov.uk

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Introduction

Our local landscape is the backdrop to our daily lives. We often take it for granted, and it is only when something changes that we realise how much we value it. Asked to describe why landscape means so much to us, we often find it hard to explain. It may be a particular view, or the sense of history we experience as we walk along a hedge-lined track with high banks, or a part of our town or village that has a pleasing combination of buildings and spaces. It is mostly about what makes our local area distinctive and unique, and about how our experience of the area makes us feel.

'Landscape' is a complex term because it covers all the factors that make up the environment. It includes the geology and the natural forces that shaped it into different landforms, the soils and habitats that cover it, the archaeological features, the hedge and field patterns that evidence past uses of the land, and the shape, layout and building materials of towns and villages. There are also 'cultural' aspects of the landscape, such as places that have been written about and painted, which lend significance to a particular place. And there are the people who live and work there and their individual perceptions of the landscape.

The analysis and description of the landscape (known as 'landscape character assessment' or LCA) is usually done at the district, borough or county level, and is one of a suite of documents that help to inform planning policy and decisions on future development. It is also used by National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to help guide decisions about how the land is managed. It has been mainly in the professional domain, the work of specialists, and has only involved the opinions of local people to a fairly limited extent.

This toolkit is intended to put the skills and techniques for explaining the importance of the local landscape into the hands of those best placed to say what they value – local people. It describes how to use the existing local authority LCAs as the basis for the local assessment, adding detail and local perspectives where appropriate. There are many reasons why we may need to express clearly what we value in our local area: it may be to help form an opinion on the implications of a proposed development, to plan activities for local volunteers doing conservation work; to have a record of how the landscape has changed over time and what those changes mean; to help prioritise local issues and the actions to deal with them; or simply to celebrate the whole local environment.

Communities across the country are active in 'community led planning', through which they are able to say what they would like to see happen in terms of the social, economic and environmental aspects of where they live and work. Parish plans and village design statements have been written, which often form the basis of stating their aspirations for the future. Those plans and statements are very useful, but would be greatly strengthened by a clear expression of how that community sits in its wider, but local, environmental setting.

This toolkit is about two things: firstly, how to create a local landscape character assessment (LLCA) from the larger-scale local authority assessments; and secondly, how to do it in a way that involves the whole community and so give it the credibility it needs to be part of your wider community plans. It guides you through where and when to get advice from your local authority and the wider influence the LLCA findings can have in planning. This advice draws heavily on the experience of several Hampshire communities that have produced their own LLCAs, working closely on a pilot basis with the county and district councils and Community Action Hampshire (the rural community council for the county).

The toolkit also draws on previously published guidance from a range of organisations. It provides an outline framework for getting local people involved at different stages of the process, and combines advice on how to undertake the local landscape character assessment with recommendations on the most effective ways of involving the whole community at appropriate points in the process. Drawing on examples from the pilots, it is illustrated by some of the statements and maps that have been produced.

One of the main products of the pilot work is the tremendous level of community interest. There is something about the landscape that draws people in. All the pilots have reported that developing the local landscape character assessment has created a growing sense of community cohesion. This is a by-product of the work that is as valuable to the community as the landscape character assessment itself.

We publish this toolkit at a time when government policy is putting more responsibility for shaping their future into the hands of local people, whether this is about the environment or their social and economic concerns. Your local LCA, and the community plan of which it can form a part, are the kinds of tools that will help communities respond to this policy.



Landscape assessment

What is meant by 'landscape'?

'Landscape is about the relationship between people and place.... People's perceptions turn land into the concept of landscape. It is not just about visual perception.... Landscape character is the pattern that arises from particular combinations of different components which provide a sense of place to our surroundings.'

Landscape Character Assessment
– Guidance for England and Scotland. (Countryside Agency 2002)



Figure 1

What do we mean by landscape?...

The landscape wheel from 'Landscape Character Assessment
– Guidance for England and Scotland. Countryside Agency 2002

What is landscape character assessment (LCA)?

LCA is a technique for classifying and describing the landscape. The process of doing it has evolved over the last 30 years, with the former Countryside Agency (now part of Natural England) leading the way in developing guidance for undertaking LCAs.

Most LCAs produced after 2000 are written in accordance with the latest guidance (which is being updated at the time of writing). There are LCAs at many different scales: one covers the whole of England, most counties, districts and boroughs have them, all National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have them and, increasingly, parishes are producing LCAs. At each level, the detail increases so that the scale of the LCA is suitable for the area it covers and the use it was designed for.

As outlined in the introduction, LCA is about understanding what makes one place different from another. For that to happen there has to be a map showing the boundaries between one distinctive area of landscape and another, and a clear explanation of what lies within each separate area. This is done by first identifying the 'types' of landscape in the area.

Landscape types (sometimes called landscape character types) are usually based on the physical structure of the landscape: the geology, soils, habitats, land use and settlement, and their evolution. This stage of the work is a desk exercise, and results in a map of landscape types with names such as 'chalk scarp', 'open downs', 'river valley floor' and 'open heath'. These are types that could occur anywhere in the country with similar geology. Each type can be described in terms of the kind of landforms and associated physical characteristics you would expect to find in it.

This is useful in helping to understand the landscape's structure. It reveals where there are changes in the landscape that can be seen on the ground, and explains why those changes happen. But river valley floors are not all the same, nor are areas of open heath. The same basic components may be present, such as flood meadows and wet woodland on valley floors, or heather and gorse with occasional birch and pine on open heath, but what makes that area unique is the way those components come together. Capturing that uniqueness is the challenge of writing LCAs, so that landscape character areas are mapped and described to create a record of what is locally distinctive.

When describing landscape character areas, it would be possible to try to 'paint the scene' in words but this risks producing a subjective, personal interpretation. There is, therefore, a structured approach to describing the landscape that helps to keep the descriptions professional and objective. In most modern LCAs there is a list of the area's 'key characteristics', usually covering landform, 'land cover' (the distribution of land uses and habitats), the historic and built environment, and some matters of perception such as the sense of enclosure, tranquillity or remoteness. These characteristics are then explored in more detail in the descriptions that follow.

What is local landscape character assessment (LLCA)?

An LLCA is a technique that expresses what local people perceive as special qualities of their environment and identifies objectives for maintaining and enhancing the landscape (landscape quality objectives) and the issues that affect local distinctiveness. Unique geographical areas called landscape character areas are used to structure the assessment. It is a community-led process and aims to reflect the widest possible input from local people.

The local-authority-level LCAs will be the starting point for your own local LCA. You take the maps and descriptions from the published LCAs and see if the extent of the landscape character areas is right or whether they need to be divided to reflect more accurately the local circumstances, and whether more needs to be added to the descriptions.

One of the key benefits of local people writing an LLCA is that they can say what is important to them as a community about the landscape, what qualities it has that they value, what may be harming those qualities, and what needs to be done to put things right. A specialist working for or with a local authority would not be able to do this without an extensive consultation and engagement exercise. LLCAs in the pilot areas in Hampshire have all followed this approach of building on the published local-authority-scale LCAs and adding their own perceptions.

As well as the guidance in this document, you may want to refer to other sources of guidance on characterisation. The Campaign to Protect Rural England has published 'Unlocking the Landscape', written to support local communities in the preparation of a landscape character statement. This guidance builds on it in the following ways:

- **Emphasis on greater bridging with the local authority by using the authority assessment and contact with local authority officers.**
- **Signposting sources of advice and information that are available to communities.**

- Organising the process into 10 stages – which fits with national community-led planning guidance.
- Reference material and advocacy from pilot projects in Hampshire – which include those in Buriton, Liss, Froxfield, Steep, Selborne and Rowlands Castle.
- Extending the project to cover settlement and routeways characterisation.

The 2002 'Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland' published by the former Countryside Agency provides a technical guide to LCA for specialists and professionals. This is currently being reviewed and updated. It is unlikely that you will need to refer to it if you are using a local-authority-scale LCA as a starting point.

Much less work has been done on characterising the built environment. In Hampshire, the County Council and some of the districts have produced 'townscape assessments', but there is no national guidance on how to do this. For that reason this toolkit contains some outline guidance on how to characterise settlements and the road network in your local area. English Heritage has published 'Knowing Your Place', which provides guidance on incorporating the historic environment into community-led planning.

'Landscape character is defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape. Particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, field patterns and human settlement create character. Character makes each part of the landscape distinct, and gives each its particular sense of place.' Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland. (Countryside Agency 2002)

How do LLCAs help in community-led planning?

Communities are set to have more influence in shaping their area with the introduction of the Localism Bill and the 'Big Society' idea. Community led planning is well established as a way local people can voice and organise their views collectively about their area's future to planning and regulatory authorities, and raise issues and develop actions to address them. LLCAs cover the whole parish and are part of the community led planning documents such as Parish / Community Plans and Village Design Statements. Importantly, LLCAs aim to discover what communities value, what their landscape's special qualities are, and enable them to have a say in how the character can be conserved and enhanced by identifying opportunities and issues to best manage change.

'Planning is at the heart of the localism agenda Enabling communities to develop their vision for the future of their area.' – Royal Town Planning Institute

'Until now, ...many people have found that their good ideas have been overlooked and they have little opportunity to get on and tackle problems in the way they want. Voluntary and community groups often find that their potential contribution is neglected, when, in fact, they carry out some of the most innovative and effective work in public services and we should be encouraging them to get more involved. We want to pass significant new rights direct to communities and individuals, making it easier for them to get things done and achieve their ambitions for the place where they live.' – A plain English Guide to the Localism Bill, January 2011

Experience with the East Hampshire pilot community groups shows that local environmental concerns are often high on the list in parish planning. LLCAs can provide an important environmental framework and evidence base for local decision making, which helps to structure the environmental issues and provide information on what people value about their landscape. This information is important as an evidence base for future planning, for example if a community is considering writing a neighbourhood plan that deals with how it can shape the local area. It also provides an environmental evidence base for your parish plan and can form part of a village design statement. LLCAs will also be influential in feeding into the planning system to local authorities and protected landscapes such as National Parks.

There are many possible reasons for undertaking a LLCA. It may be because the parish plan has identified that the landscape is of key importance to local people – and the LLCA provides a process to develop community policy and action. On the other hand you may want to do a LLCA in advance of preparing a parish plan. Your main reason may be to influence the policy planning or land management plans of the local authority or protected landscape (National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Or you may want to stimulate interest in the local environment and ensure it is conserved and the best planning decisions made about it in the face of future planning applications. You may wish to discover and share what makes your area distinctive and develop actions that celebrate and sustain the sense of place and enjoyment of your area.

Whatever the reason, it is vital to get the support of your parish council or neighbourhood group who can endorse the project and eventually approve it. Parish councils can use the information when allocating budgets and setting targets. Depending on the level of local authority approval the LLCA may be used as a 'material consideration' in planning, for instance if it is part of an endorsed VDS.

Producing a LLCA has the following benefits:

- Celebrates the importance of the landscape to your community, prioritises local issues, and develops actions to conserve and enhance local distinctiveness.
- Provides environmental information for your parish/community plan.
- Influences planning and policy as community views are recorded and structured in an existing landscape character framework.
- Builds on LCAs by capturing what landscapes mean to local people, understanding how the past influences what we see today, and identifying issues of key importance to people.
- Support the principles of the localism agenda.

What other guidance is available?

'Unlocking the Landscape' – Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)
<http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/landscapes/item/1927-a-step-by-step-guide-to-unlocking-the-landscape>

Information is available from CPRE Hampshire www.cprehampshire.org.uk

'Knowing Your Place' – English Heritage's (EH) guidance to incorporating the historic environment in community-led planning is another important reference. An EH review of VDSs found that 60% did not refer to historic townscape and 95% did not refer to the Historic Environment Record (HER), or Scheduled Ancient Monuments – the main sources of historic records. More information can be found on the EH website: <http://www.helm.org.uk/server/show/nav.21664>

Community-led planning

Community involvement is essential. Your assessment needs to be a genuine expression of the whole community's views, not just one group's. This will mean thinking about who lives in the parish, where they live, where they meet, their age, barriers to taking part and any other issues that will help you find good ways of getting them involved. Community involvement should be part of all the stages. Take some time to think about how you will involve the community and at what stages to form your engagement strategy. Stage 5 goes into more detail but you should think about community engagement at the outset.

As you start, you need to raise awareness, gauge the level of interest in the idea and encourage people to help (stage 1). As you proceed through the stages, you need willing volunteers with a variety of skills to help with the task, for example gathering factual evidence about the area – stage 3. You will want to maximise participation when out in the field and feeding back what has been recorded – stage 6. Finally, any recommendations or conclusions from the analysis should have wide agreement before they become part of the assessment – stages 7 and 8.



Community-Led Planning Documents

Parish or community plan	Neighbourhood plan	Village design statement
Purpose		
Assess current and future potential issues and set out an action plan to tackle them.	Assess physical (spatial) assets and set out what should be protected and where future development should go.	Assess the character and set the guidelines to influence what future development should look like.
Status		
A business plan for the community, adopted by the parish council to take forward in partnership with other organisations. Part of the local development framework evidence base. (Note: Some local authorities have also approved this kind of plan as being a 'material consideration' in the determination of planning applications.)	Part of the local authority development plan (subject to an independent examination and support by local referendum) Might also result in a 'neighbourhood development order', which, subject to an independent examination and support by local referendum, will set out development proposals without the need to seek	Some authorities adopted VDSs as supplementary planning documents to make them part of the local development plan and therefore a 'material consideration' (subject to local authority approval), otherwise they sit outside the local authority development plan.
Document		
Description of the services and facilities and their strengths and weaknesses. Views and opinions on all matters affecting quality of life and aspirations for the future. Action plan outlining projects, timescale, costs and organisations involved.	Expected to include: • audit of land use and infrastructure • views and opinions about local needs and aspirations for conservation and development • policies on objectives for the area, infrastructure priorities, and a map outlining open space of community importance, assets of community value and locations for development.	Assessment of the character of the built and natural environment. Views and opinion about various elements of that character and aspirations for the future. Guidelines about the design of future development (including an attempt to influence permitted development).
Role of LLCA		
Provides an environmental evidence base. Sets out environmental issues and opportunities. Suggests environment-related actions.	Provides information about what the community see as special qualities of their environment. Maps the character of the whole parish.	The emphasis is on assessing the character of the whole parish, and this links with local authority character assessments. It is wide ranging in its environmental aspects, from natural to cultural/social to aesthetic/perceptual. Some parishes have expanded their VDS to incorporate their LLCA.

This table is based on the design by the Rural Community Council of Essex RCCE.



Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) is the national umbrella body of the Rural Community Action Network (RCAN), which operates at national, regional and local level in support of rural communities across the country.

RCAN members are charitable local development agencies, generally based at county level, which enable initiatives in rural communities. They have supported and promoted Community Led Planning (CLP) mainly in rural parishes since the late 1970s when they were first piloted as Village Appraisals and then later as Parish Plans.

Independent local facilitators employed by RCAN members are able to work directly with communities to guide them through the process of producing a Community Led Plan. They are able to provide communities with the national toolkit for Community Led Planning which outlines 9 steps for producing plans that are well researched, inclusive and achieve the actions they propose. The national guidance explains what community led planning is, how to produce a community led plan, how it links with current government policy, where communities can get support and a checklist to record progress: ACRE | Resources | Community Guidance

For more information, please see:

<http://www.acre.org.uk/our-work/community-led-planning>

Community Action Hampshire

In Hampshire your RCAN member is Community Action Hampshire. This organisation is a Council for Voluntary Service and a Rural Community Council with over 50 years' experience of working with and supporting Hampshire's voluntary and community organisations.

If you are considering undertaking a Community Led Plan or LLCA, please contact Jo Dixon for further information and support:

Jo Dixon

Community Action Hampshire, Beaconsfield House, Winchester SO22 6AT

<http://www.action.hants.org.uk>

You may be put in touch with your borough or district Community led planning Officer (CPO), if the local authority has one, or your National Park ranger team.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY	KEY STAGES	BRIDGING WITH THE RELEVANT AUTHORITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with Community Action Hampshire and/ or the district Community Planning Officer. • Inform your local councillor. • Discuss the approach to community consultation and engagement with Community Action Hampshire and/or the district Community Planning Officer. 	LAUNCH/CORE GROUP/ GATHERING EVIDENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating a LLCA. • Briefing the parish council and setting up the core group. • Collecting relevant environmental information • Briefing and workshop for the core group and wider community. • Developing a strategy for involving the whole community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the process of preparing a LLCA with the district and county officers. • Set up a briefing meeting for the project group with the Landscape Officer to clarify the purpose, scope and approach to preparing a LLCA. • Link with the district or most appropriate LCA.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the community is kept informed of work on the LLCA. • Discuss with the district Community led planning Officer/Community Action Hampshire the organisation of an open event to share findings with the wider community. • Use a variety of techniques to engage the wider community, walks, talks, village fair etc. 	COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field survey work and recording the parish landscape. • Involving the wider community to support the preparation of a LLCA. • Writing the LLCA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get environmental information and establish contacts for specialist advice. • Consult specialists as appropriate. • Invite relevant authority officers to outreach event.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An outreach event that aims to bring as many people together to share findings and discuss the issues. • Ensure you take an objective view and include all interested parties. 	EVALUATION AND PRIORITISE ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share and discuss findings with the Landscape Officer in advance of finalising the document. • Distribute LLCA to local authority officers – allow enough time for them to comment before final publication.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide who is taking the lead on different actions, eg parish council or the landscape core group. • Keep the community informed of progress – including councillors and the parish council. 	DELIVER AND MONITOR ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the local authority to determine how the LLCA will be included in planning decisions. • Ensure dialogue with the relevant authorities and organisations when delivering actions, and check that necessary agreements are in place.

The Stages

	Action	People involved
Stage 1	Initiating a local landscape character assessment (LLCA). <i>Establishing the need and persuading others to carry out an LLCA.</i>	Parish advocate(s)
Stage 2	Briefing the parish council and setting up the core group <i>A specific presentation to the parish council and others with interest in supporting the parish planning process to gain support and approval for the LLCA initiative.</i>	Parish council (e.g. planning committee), parish advocate(s), Community Action Hampshire/community led planning officer, local authority landscape specialist.
Stage 3	Collecting relevant environmental information <i>Base mapping, LCA, historic environment, biodiversity, rights of way, highway information etc.</i>	Core group, local societies and specialists, local authority officers including the landscape officer (who can put you in contact with countryside access staff, historic environment records, highway information), and the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre.
Stage 4	Briefing and workshop for the core group and wider community <i>Workshop for the steering group and interested people within the local community to gain an overview of what is special in the local landscape, embed environmental considerations in the parish planning process and develop a broad vision and strategy.</i>	Community Action Hampshire/community led planning officer; local authority landscape specialist.
Stage 5	Developing a strategy for involving the whole community <i>Consideration of the strategy and approach for assessing local environmental assets and involving local people.</i>	Core group – involve your previous community led planning groups if possible.
Stage 6	Field survey work and recording the local landscape character <i>Field survey work and recording the parish landscape.</i>	Core group and the wider community who can commit to walk(s), fieldwork.
Stage 7	Involving the wider community to support a LLCA <i>Workshop/outreach event(s) to support the preparation of a LLCA.</i>	Core group and the wider community including harder-to-reach groups and those with less time to contribute.
Stage 8	Writing the LLCA <i>Recording and summarising the fieldwork and community involvement and building on the existing character assessment. What do people value, what are the landscape quality objectives and what are the key environmental issues?</i>	Core group and others who have shown interest from the field work.
Stage 9	Action planning <i>How the landscape quality objectives can be achieved.</i>	Core group/parish and service providers, e.g. highways authority, planning policy officers.
Stage 10	Monitoring and review <i>Recording progress and celebrating successes.</i>	Core group/parish council

The following pages describe these stages in more detail.

Stage I Initiating a local landscape character assessment (LLCA)

'Many if not most people care a great deal about their local landscapes and want to secure a positive future for them.' – Unlocking the Landscape (CPRE)

The parish plan may have found that a key community concern is the conservation and enhancement of the environment. Development may be being considered. A local plan or land management plan may be being proposed. The concern that change should be sympathetic and does not destroy or damage what people love and value about their landscape needs to be expressed in a way that represents what the whole community thinks and forms a bridge with the local authority's planning system.

A LLCA offers the community a way to ensure that the conservation and management of where they live highlights what they value, the issues they think face it, and how to ensure local distinctiveness is not lost.

Ways in which a LLCA might be started

- Parish council asks the community if they would be interested in undertaking an LLCA.
- Member(s) of the community have heard about LLCAs and approach their parish council for support.
- Local authority/protected landscape organisation promotes interest in LLCAs to parish/community group.



Briefing the parish council

Producing a LLCA should complement other existing community-led planning initiatives such as village design statements and parish/community plans. So it is essential to get the support of your local parish council before undertaking one. Hampshire County Council (HCC) can provide a Powerpoint presentation explaining what a LLCA is, what it can be used for and how it fits with community-led planning. The pilot parishes have had a lead person/co-ordinator who has been responsible for driving the project management and liaison with the parish council and local authorities. The co-ordinator should be impartial and a good communicator who can deal with widely varying views and reach balanced decisions. He or she does not need to be an environmental expert – but has to be able to enthuse volunteers and raise interest. Having experience of community led planning, such as involvement in producing a VDS, can be helpful.

Gaining support and interest

Promoting awareness and interest of the project in your community may take several months before you actually start the LLCA. Some of the pilot projects were also carrying out an update of their community plan and were able to promote the LLCA project at outreach events. Other groups carried out the LLCA after the parish plan came out, as a result of the community's concern about the environment. Community interest was stimulated by an exhibition, an article in the parish council magazine, or an initiative that involved asking the community to briefly state their favourite features in their landscape and encouraged volunteers to come forward to help with the LLCA. Maps and photographs are a good way to stimulate discussion. The process is about gaining an appreciation about what people value about their local environment.

Developing partnerships

It is important at an early stage to seek out partners and form a bridge with the local authority and other organisations that the LLCA might affect. Seek advice from the local authority, National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (as the case may be) on who to liaise with. In Hampshire, the Rural Community Action Network is Community Action Hampshire (CAH). They, together with community led planning and development officers and councils for voluntary service, can help you set up events and involve people. They can help make your project successful and save you time.



By the end of this stage you should have agreed support from the parish council and local planning authority and approached Community Action Hampshire.

Stage 2 Setting up the core landscape group

Early on, the co-ordinator will have to secure the long-term commitment of several individuals who form the core group. This group will be responsible for following the project through to completion. It's a good idea to set out a programme at an early stage. You should allow between 8 and 18 months but you can decide how long it will take.

'When you prepare a Local Landscape Character Assessment you need to make the best use of the resources within the community available to you.' – Unlocking the Landscape (CPRE)

Getting organised

A group of enthusiastic and committed people are needed when forming the 'core group' for the project. The core group can be small – 4 or 5 increasing to 25 or so. Much beyond this and meetings, communications and the project become more difficult to co-ordinate. The following outlines the key roles that need to be taken on; these can be shared or assigned to individuals.

Spokesperson/co-ordinator

There should be a spokesperson or group co-ordinator who is the key contact and drives the project and timetable. They contact and form a bridge with the parish council, community groups, local authority(s) and others like National Parks.

Event planning

This person is responsible for planning and organising community outreach events from fieldwork, guided walks, talks/seminars and village fair to specific outreach events and the accompanying publicity.

Project funding and accounts

Costs will include printing, room hire and refreshments. Grants may be available and it's useful to have a group bank account. Your parish council may be able to hold funding on your behalf as an 'accountable body'.

Landscape/environment-related specialists

You should look for one or several individuals with interest or working expertise in your community from the following fields: geology, archaeology, ecology, land manager.

Experience of community-led planning

Not essential ... but it is useful if you can get help from those who have been involved before in parish projects such as the village design statement or parish plan. They may have had experience of working on similar documents and be able to build on and make links with previous community work.

Character assessment writers

It helps if you have writers and editors who have a good, clear objective writing style and can incorporate the wider community's comments.

IT/desk-top publishing/web specialists

These can help to present the LLCA in a clear and attractive way.

By the end of this stage you should have formed the core group of volunteers who are committed to the project for the duration.

Stage 3 Collecting relevant environmental information

Knowing what information is out there and how to access it is really important before you begin the LLCA.

LCAs have been produced from the national to the local authority level, the amount of detail reflecting the geographic scale.

Key sources of information

Landscape character assessments

The most relevant assessments for your LLCA will be the County Council and district/borough assessment. If your parish is in a protected landscape – an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or National Park – there will be a LCA for these areas too. The Strategic Environmental Delivery group at Hampshire County Council can produce maps of LCAs, with an ordnance survey base tailored to your parish which is useful for fieldwork, exhibitions and publishing your LLCA.

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/landscape-and-heritage.htm>

Figure 2

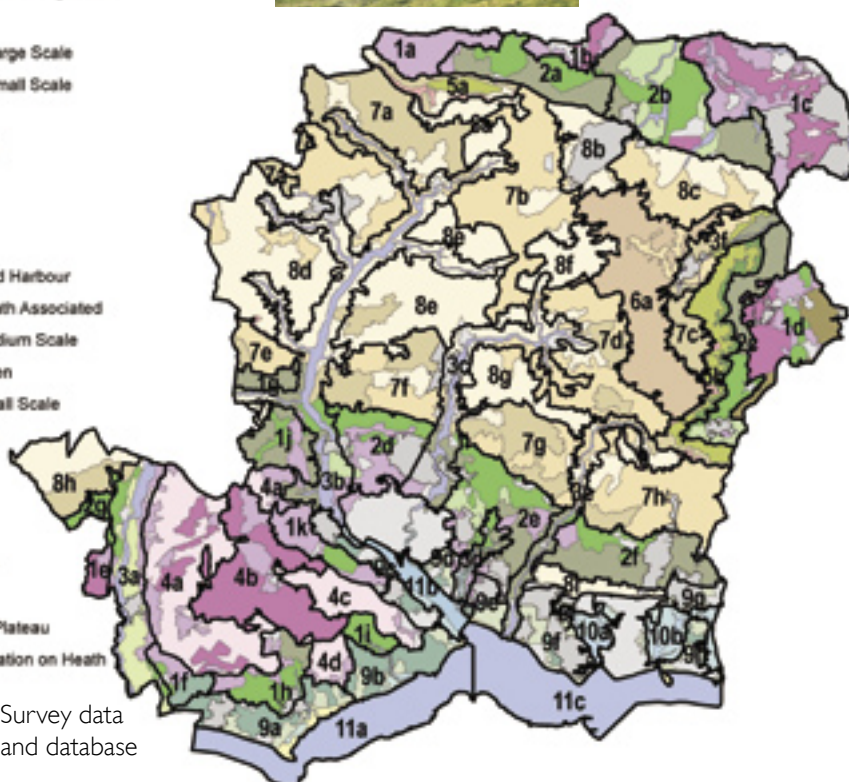
Landscape Character Assessments are available at different scale from Borough and District to County and protected landscapes.

Legend

Hampshire Landscape Types

TYPE

- Chalk Scarp
- Coastal Plain Enclosed
- Coastal Plain Open
- Coastal Reclaim and Grazing Marsh
- Coastal Sea
- Downland Mosaic Large Scale
- Downland Mosaic Small Scale
- Estuary
- Greensand Hangers
- Greensand Hills
- Greensand Terrace
- Harbour Channels
- Intertidal Estuary and Harbour
- Lowland Mosaic Heath Associated
- Lowland Mosaic Medium Scale
- Lowland Mosaic Open
- Lowland Mosaic Small Scale
- Open Coastal Shore
- Open Downs
- Open Heath
- River Valley Floor
- River Valley Terrace
- Settlement
- Wooded Downland Plateau
- Woodland and Plantation on Heath



Contains Ordnance Survey data
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Biodiversity parish summaries

The Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre at Winchester can provide maps and details of the wildlife in your parish.

This includes:

- a map showing statutory sites such as Special Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- a map showing Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), sites that appear on the Hampshire Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) and Road Verges of Ecological Importance (RVEI) in your area of interest
- a table listing the SINCs in your area of interest and why they qualified for this status
- a table listing the RVEIs and the details of these sites
- a table detailing any protected and notable species currently on the HBIC database found near your search area
- a map showing Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat information in your area of interest
- a map showing the biosites in your area of interest. Biosites are areas for which we hold survey information
- a table detailing the biosites in your area of interest.

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/biodiversity/hbic.htm>

You may want to talk to HWT about producing a 'parish wildlife map' or set up a conservation group to manage a piece of land in the parish. You may even consider forming a local group to produce a community biodiversity action plan (cBAP) which is a plan to conserve and enhance the habitats and species in your parish. Overton parish is a good example of this.

A data request form can be found here:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/biodiversity/hbic/hbic-datarequests.htm>

Historic Environment Record (HER) parish summaries:

The historic environment has a strong influence on sense of place, local identity and sense of community. Archaeology, historic buildings and historic landscape character can reveal details about the past as well as helping us understand the evolution of the world around us. It is rewarding to understand how the parish evolved to gain insight into how the landscape looks today.



'Whatever their origin and development, every village and parish today includes its own distinctive historic buildings, fascinating archaeological remains, and streetscapes and landscapes full of historic information and character. This history helps to make each place unique and cherished in some way.'

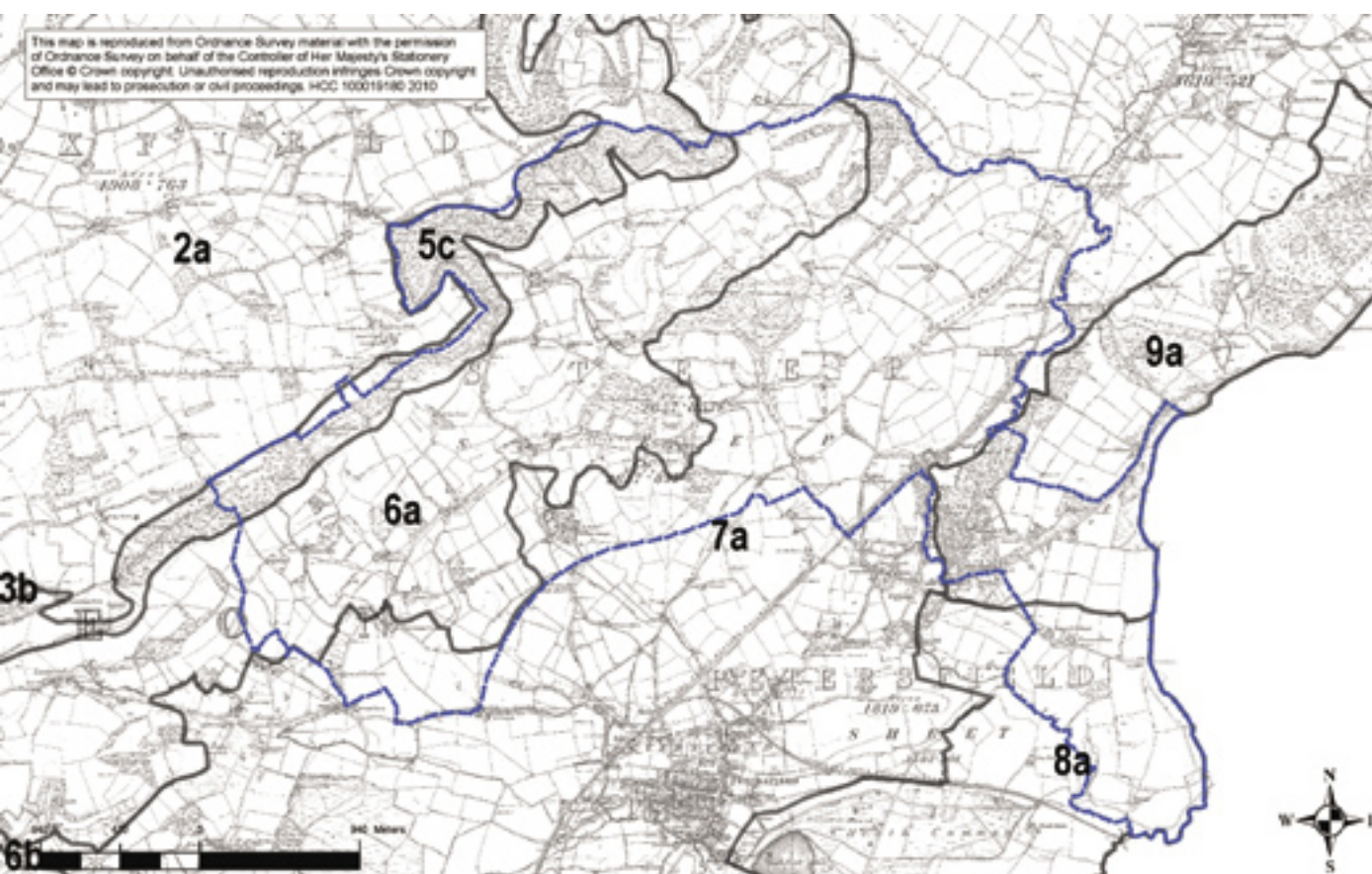
– from 'Knowing Your Place' (English Heritage)

The Historic Environment Record (HER) will provide data and maps on request. This data pack will include the archaeological data broken down by period, as well as information about historic buildings, distribution maps and historic landscape character information. Some generic distribution maps are also included, which give an insight into how land use evolved over time. Combining this data to draw out a coherent story of your parish might seem daunting. But the existing LCAs contain good introductions to the different character areas, which you could build on. Refining these for local use is a good place to start.

In most communities, groups or individuals have skills and experience they can use to support this process, but the county council archaeologist should be able to give you some advice to get you started.



The HER is available online (<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/landscape-and-heritage/historic-environment.htm>). Some of the records have additional data that the HER can supply on request. Heritage Gateway (<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>) provides access to a series of English Heritage databases. Historic maps, aerial photographs, local studies, the Records Office and Google earth are all useful tools to supplement the data. Oral history from older people can also be revealing.

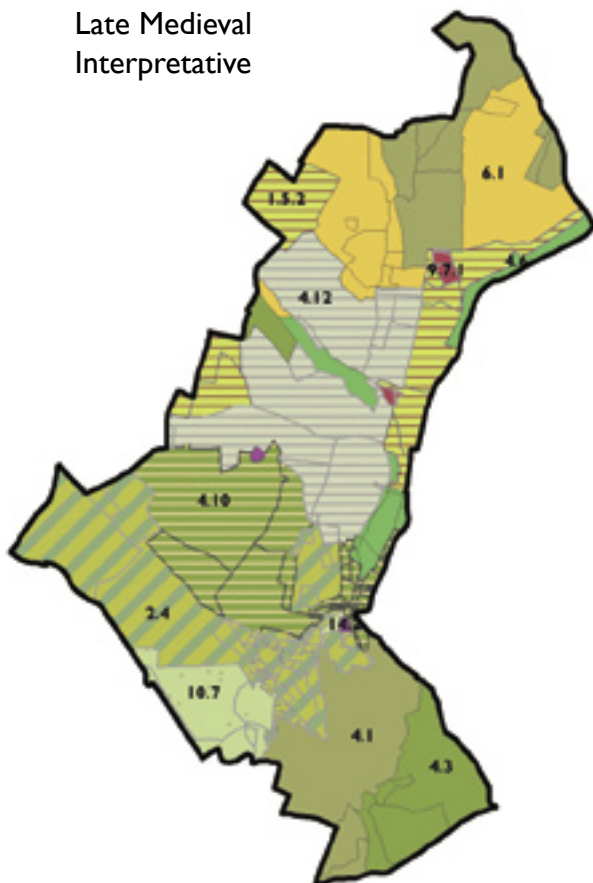


Steep Parish

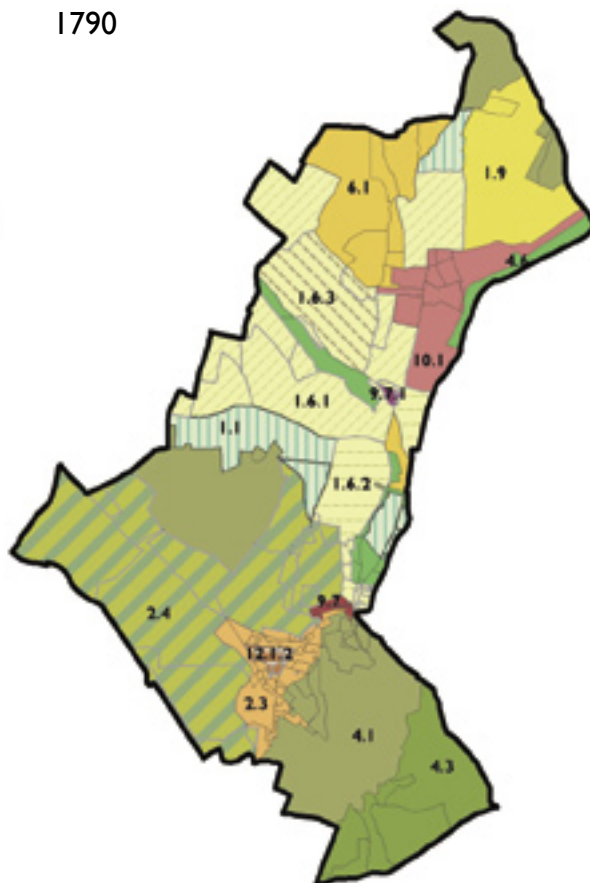
1st Edition Ordnance Survey c.1870. Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd.
(All rights reserved 2012)

The origin and evolution of the parish is a fascinating study. Not only does it identify the heritage aspects of the local scene, revealing the hidden gems, but it can add depth and meaning to familiar landmarks. A good study of the historic environment will stand you in good stead for much that follows.

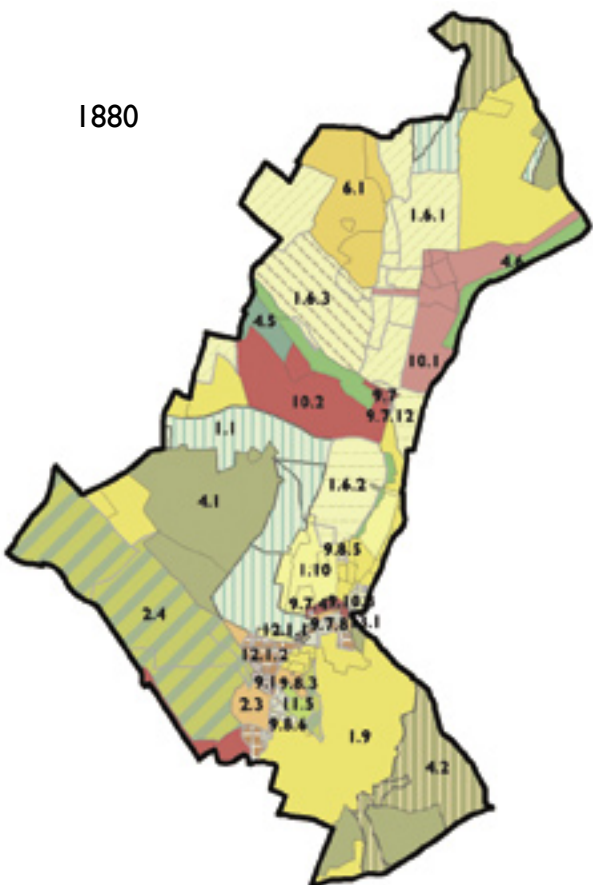
Late Medieval
Interpretative



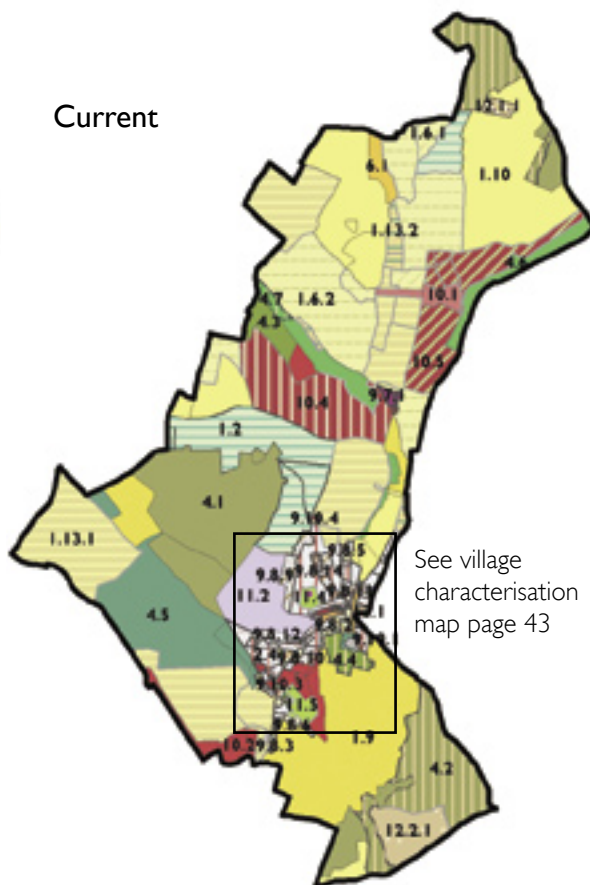
1790



1880



Current



'These maps attempt to show the evolution of Rowlands Castle Parish landscape from late Medieval to the present day. This is an example of historic landscape character assessment, which can be used in conjunction with a historic evolution narrative.'

Other useful information

Tranquillity mapping

In 2006 the CPRE published a map of tranquillity levels across the country using a variety of indicators. The mapping can be cut to your area of interest.

Soils and geology

The County Council can provide information about the soils and geology of your area – but the information is under licence and there are strict rules governing its use.

Aerial photography

The County Council has aerial photograph coverage for the whole County Council and its recent past.

Access and rights of way

Knowing where and how you can explore your area is really important – 1:25 000 ordnance survey maps are ideal – these also show open access areas. There may also be areas with permissive access such as some Forestry Commission and National Trust sites.

Historic mapping

The County Council can provide digital historic mapping of your area from 1st edition (1843–93) to the present day. The Hampshire Records Centre in Winchester can provide other historic mapping, such as tithe maps from the first half of the 19th century – which show the landscape in great detail. More easily accessible is the online mapping service, Old Hampshire Mapped – in particular the Milne 1790 map of Hampshire is very useful. Coupled with Ordnance Surveyors Drawings (1790–1810) – which can be made available for viewing – this will give you a good picture of what the landscape pattern was like at the turn of the 18th century.

Local studies

Many parishes have had studies written by people with specialist interest. These may cover e.g. local history, nature conservation, buildings or cultural associations.



By the end of this stage you should be starting to collect environmental information about your area.

Stage 4 Understanding how to do a LLCA

'Landscape in its widest sense also encompasses local knowledge, associations and perceptions...' – Unlocking the Landscape (CPRE)

Landscape character assessment and LLCA were briefly described in the introduction.

Producing a LLCA should build on and add a local perspective to the local authority character assessment, which describes the local character and its origins and history by dividing the landscape into unique character areas. The LLCA can provide feedback to the local authority on the accuracy of the character area boundaries and suggest changes where appropriate. It can also subdivide character areas if you feel that the larger-scale assessment does not reflect local differences in character in enough detail for the purposes of informing community led planning.

Community briefing

Help from local authority officers may be on hand to present and discuss the project to the community. Liaison or 'bridging' with the local authorities is an essential part of the LLCA process. The County Council's Powerpoint presentation about undertaking LLCAs is available for you to use and tailor to your local situation. When you talk to your wider community, you could perhaps show the Powerpoint presentation – suitably adapted with local examples – that you may have used in the first stage to brief the parish council.

For many who attend, this might be the first time they have heard about landscape character assessment. The parish will often have more than one character area and the local authority or protected landscape assessment can be laid over mapping showing the parish boundary on an ordnance survey base. Each character area will have a set of key characteristics and these should very briefly describe all aspects of the landscape. A short and useful exercise is to familiarise participants with the information and then enable them to add statements that make the key characteristics more locally relevant or add some key characteristics of their own.

Figure 4 shows the key characteristics of a character area in Steep parish. The group was asked to rank which of the key characteristics they most valued and add one or two extra ones that would make the description more locally specific to the parish. They were then asked to identify three issues that they thought were eroding local character.

Figure 3

Presentation and Workshop, Steep community landscape group



This exercise helps people to start to understand how to record local distinctiveness. It can be repeated with other community groups and engagement exercises later in the process – for instance during/after a guided walk.

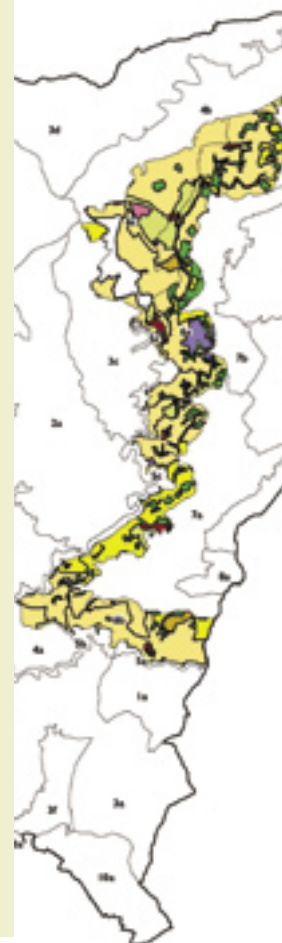
Figure 4

Extract from presentation at Steep's first community outreach event, showing the key characteristics of a landscape character area in the parish from the District Council assessment.

6a Selborne Greensand Terrace

Key Characteristics

- A terrace formed from Upper Greensand with a locally prominent escarpment clothed in woodland defining its eastern edge.
- Cut by a series of small streams (e.g. Oakshott Stream) that rise from springs at the foot of the chalk escarpment, and have eroded narrow, deep valleys as they cross the Greensand terrace.
- The sandstone geology gives rise to sunken lanes where steep banks reveal tree roots and exposures of the bedrock geology and which have a high biodiversity value.
- Fertile and well drained grey loamy soils which have supported a long history of settlement and cultivation, including orchards.
- Ancient hanger woodlands (e.g. Milking Hanger), a habitat of international importance, and comprising a range of nationally uncommon woodland types such as those dominated by yew, beech, lime, and ash/wych elm, cling to the steepest slopes forming a wooded silhouette.
- Meadow grasslands (Bentley Meadow SSSI) which are important sites for invertebrates, particularly where found in association with other habitats such as scrub and woodland.
- An area of orchards around Selborne is a distinctive land cover feature.
- The area is well served by public rights of way including the Hangers Way, which runs the length of the character area and is accessible from Petersfield, Selborne and East Worldham.
- A diversity of field patterns and enclosure including, to the south, small irregular fields carved from woodland indicative of medieval assarts.
- Low density of settlement characterised by small nucleated medieval settlements. There are a number of low density housing estates in the area around Steep, associated with the settlement of Petersfield.
- A strong sense of rural tranquility resulting from the absence of overt human impact and a low density of settlement.
- Building materials are typically local 'malmstone', with red and yellow brick detailing, and clay tile roofs.
- Where woodland permits there are dramatic views of the chalk escarpment.

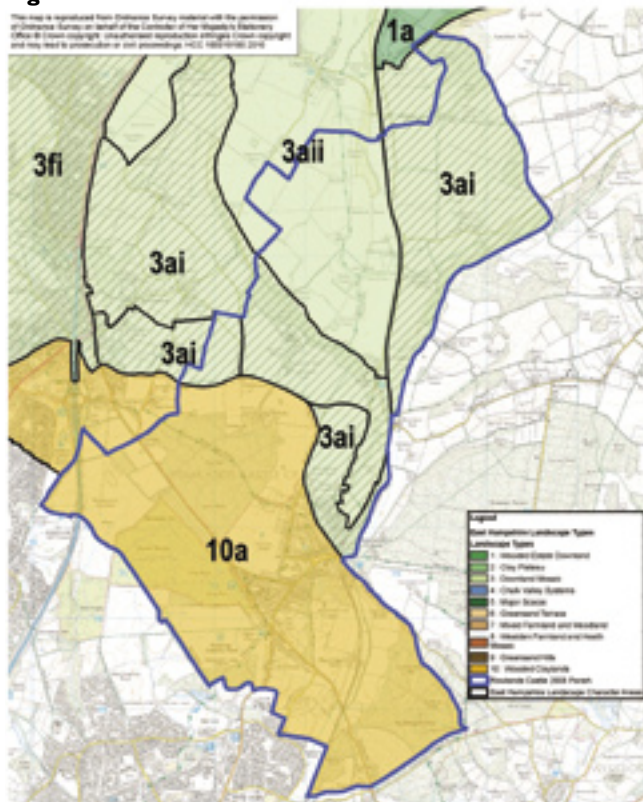


Another good way of engaging people about the character of the place where they live is to explore the history of its landscape. Using the information supplied by the County Council and tapping into experts from the local historical society helps to unlock the landscape's evolution – revealing why it looks the way it does.

Figure 5 *Exhibition and historic material on hand at the briefing – Froxfield*



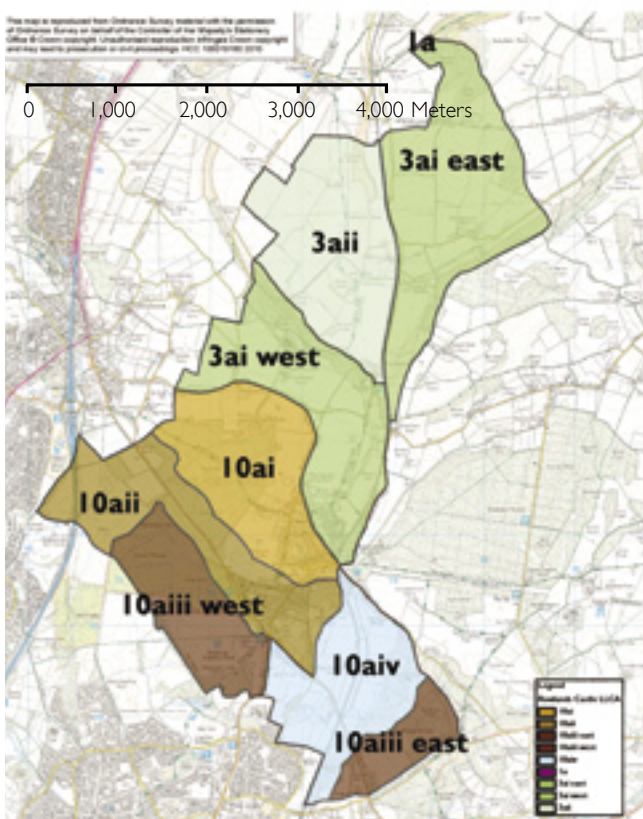
Figure 6



Familiarise yourself with the character assessment mapping and descriptions. You may feel that the descriptions do not accurately reflect your area's complexity – or perhaps the descriptions need to be edited to tailor them more to the part of the character area that coincides with your parish. Modifying the character assessment mapping and descriptions is valid. Figure 6 is an example where the East Hampshire Assessment character assessment mapping has been reviewed and more detailed character areas defined.

East Hampshire LCA

An example of the local authority character assessment. The parish outline in blue lies to the extreme south and east of the District local authority boundary.



By the end of this stage you should be aware of the character assessment that has been produced for your area by the local authority/National Park and start to check its accuracy at the local level.

Rowlands Castle Parish LLCA

This parish decided to undertake a more detailed assessment to more accurately reflect the different characteristics of their local landscape – particularly the varied geology and land cover pattern of fields, and woodland in the south.

Stage 5 Developing a strategy for involving the whole community

'The key to a successful project is total community involvement. But you should not sit back and wait for people to come to you. You will have to reach out and contact them in ways which are interesting, entertaining and most important of all, ways which suit their lifestyles'. – Parish and Community led planning Toolkit (ACRE)

You will need to demonstrate that there has been thorough community engagement in the process when it comes to parish council approval or endorsement by the local or protected landscape authority. It will also help to unlock potential sources of funding that may be on offer. Not least, community engagement ensures that local people have the opportunity to contribute and get involved in the project; and it gives a sense of ownership and widespread community support for the LLCA.

Ways to engage the community

There is a lot of guidance to help you engage with different groups in your community. A variety of ways and initiatives need to be considered to reach as wide an audience as possible. Events allow people to engage and allow exchange of views and information. These can include guided walks, fieldwork trips, and exhibitions/stands at other community events such as the local fair. More active engagement techniques will also be needed if you want to ensure specific groups can contribute. A good example may be land managers and owners who look after the landscape of large portions of the parish – one parish referred to these groups as 'custodians of the landscape'. Another case where you will have to make the approach is to local community groups. This may be to access specific interest groups such as the historical or wildlife conservation societies, who will have relevant local environmental expertise. Or it may be to get input from a large community group who represent a good cross-section or in combinations with other groups a wide cross-section of local people.

You can also contact County Council officers for local specialist historic or nature conservation advice.

Considering how the community will be involved and developing a strategy for engagement should be set out at an early stage. Often, establishing links and organising events and dates requires a significant time to prepare. Having an overview/strategy for community engagement will help convince the local authority and support potential grant-funding applications for the LLCA.

Guidance on setting up events and involving local people can be obtained from district council community led planning officers (where they exist) community development officers, councils for voluntary service, Community Action Hampshire (rural community councils).

'Selling' the project to others and generating enthusiasm among the community is crucial as the project can take up a lot of their time. It's important to tailor jobs and responsibilities so that they are not too great a burden. It will also help if you emphasise that the project will be fun, an opportunity to meet others, and a way of gaining a good understanding of where you live. The social side is really important to produce and retain enthusiasm. Indeed one pilot group organised a series of 'house parties' where the focus was on discussing the local landscape – what people valued and what they saw as the main issues.

Consider piggybacking on existing community events such as fetes, produce and dog shows, which are usually well supported. One group targeted an annual New Year's Day walk that celebrates a famous local poet.

It is also a less expensive way of reaching a larger number of people. The main work is done out in the field. Experience has shown that organised walkabouts, field trips and guided walks are well supported. These can be pitched at various levels. Those who are more technically minded and want to document the landscape features in detail could go out together and complete the record sheets in the field. However, there is also merit in asking walkers and others to write down or record in a visual way their own impressions of the landscape as they walk the dog or go on a family outing. In this way a wider group of people can take part through everyday activities.



Figure 7

The process should be fun and sociable, not a chore – Buriton LLCA organised house parties as part of the wider community engagement process

Structuring community engagement

You may want to have regular meetings of the core group to reflect on progress and occasionally hold public meetings or outreach event(s). Outreach events enable you to bring volunteers together and connect with what else makes your area distinctive. For example, the use of local produce for refreshments allows producers to market themselves. The historical or archaeological society could put together a display of old photos. Setting out a programme (see fig 8) is a useful exercise.

Young people

Too often younger members of the community get overlooked. This may be because they tend not to come to village meetings; but sometimes it is because adults feel it is too difficult to make contact with them. Issues such as Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and getting permission to display photographs do need to be dealt with, but they should not be used as an excuse not to engage. Several agencies can help, including Community Action Hampshire. Children can be engaged through their schools, or specific activities can be arranged. Qualified childcare professionals must oversee any activities where parents are absent.

Make it fun

People are giving you their free time. So the more enjoyable the experience, the better and more interested their response will be. Organised walks, field trips and house parties have been successes. But you need to be creative in your approach, and adopt ideas to fit your community.

During the project, volunteers' enthusiasm might wane and you may have to think of ways of rekindling it. One of the pilot parish landscape groups organised family picnics, which generated more interest and brought out a wider cross-section of people than the field-trip groups that had been surveying the landscape.

Record who participates

It is important to record the events and who has taken part as evidence of community engagement. This can be done very simply. Not least, people's time

volunteered can be used to match-fund some grants you apply for. It's equally important to record groups who are not at events so that you can target them more actively – such as land managers. Don't forget that an article in the village magazine about the project counts, as well as the organised events.

Figure 8

*An example of organising the community engagement strategy –
Steep LLCA groups schedule of events*

2010

13 Nov Project start-up; Parish Plan exhibition at village hall, key stakeholders invited; high participation, sign-up of volunteers for LLCA

2011

- Jan 15 *approximate dates;* **Introductory workshop** for participating volunteers; purpose, concepts, proposed methods, example 'tools'; form Area Teams
- Jan 29 **Outreach event 1:** Group field trip; publicity to expand participation. Purpose: walk-thru with forms, discuss terms used, reach consensus on how to record, document and index landscapes
- Feb 5, 12, & 19 **Field work** – Area Teams walk their routes and take field observations; worksheets and cameras. Index and file data on the same day!
- Feb 26 Target date for return of completed worksheets and photo files to respective coordinators.

Period for analysis and writing the draft LLCA

March 26 **Outreach event 2:** Presentation of initial results, advance publicity to attract all parish residents, provide posters of key photos and broad conclusions so far; opportunity for feedback of reactions

Period for core working group to incorporate feedback and refine analysis

- June 4, 11 **Outreach event 3:** Group field trips led by individual area teams; publicity to expand participation. Purpose: to initiate field work for summer round of observations and photos of landscape views with leaves on the trees. Index and file data same day!
- June 18 Target date for return of completed worksheets and photo files to respective coordinators

Period for analysis and writing the draft LLCA

July 16 **Evaluation workshop.** Presentation of compiled results and conclusions to all working participants; opportunity for feedback of reactions, comment, further contributions

Period for core working group to incorporate feedback and refine analysis, prepare and layout Final LLCA Statement

July 30 **Outreach event 4:** Presentation of the final LLCA statement, advance publicity to attract all parish residents, provide posters of key photos and broad conclusions; approval of the final LLCA statement.

By the end of this stage you should have a clear strategy for community engagement and programme for the LLCA.

Stage 6 Field survey work and recording the parish landscape

Probably the most important part of the project is getting out with others and recording what makes different parts of your parish distinctive and what people value. This stage, especially, needs careful planning to get the most out any fieldwork.

‘A thoroughly enjoyable morning in congenial, knowledgeable company’

– feedback from a local guided walks series (Rowlands Castle Parish LLCA)



Figure 9

Steep LLCA group and locals out in the field

Exploring and sharing what each other knows about the local landscape helps you appreciate your area's assets and what you all most value. As mentioned in stage 4, using the local authority or AONB or NPA landscape character assessment and the list of key characteristics gives you a good starting point. There's no need to start from cold. However, these statements may refer to a much larger geographical area and you will need to edit them to make them more specific to your parish. You will also want to add local perceptions about how people value the different aspects or describe their quality and how people value different features. It's important to recognise that some features may be unique and individual – such as a historic park and garden, or particular building – and others will be pervasive and appear throughout the landscape, such as wooded hedgerows or extensive panoramic views.

‘The whole idea and execution of these walks are much appreciated – keep going!’

– Feedback from local guided walks series (Rowlands Castle Parish LLCA)

It is important to structure guided walks and fieldwork. Having copies of the local authority landscape character descriptions – especially the brief key characteristics – makes a good focus for comments. If you devise a fieldwork form, don't make it too long with lots of questions, fields or tick boxes. The pilot groups found that a few basic questions and lots of space for free text brought the most useful information.

There have been various approaches to the fieldwork stage by parish groups. Some of the pilot parishes devised survey sheets and used them to structure the field work. This can take the form of a series of guided walks organised by the core group. Where possible, inviting volunteer local people with specialist environmental

knowledge to help lead the sessions will be of great benefit. Another equally valid approach is to divide up the parish and assign volunteer leads for each area to co-ordinate and encourage other members of the community to walk the area together.

Rather than using fieldwork sheets, you can record people's perceptions under various headings, which you use as prompts to discuss all aspects of the landscape. These can include historic environment and archaeology (such as buildings and monuments, ancient ritual sites, parks and gardens, field boundary descriptions), ecology (types of habitat), landcover pattern, land use and management, leisure and recreational activities, roads, byways and footpaths, settlement buildings and architecture, local stories and cultural associations, views and sounds, and tranquillity. The discussions are also an opportunity for people to speak about shared concerns; special qualities and local distinctiveness; the impact of local businesses; aesthetics; and topical issues like local food, climate change, renewable energy and development needs.

When planning the walks it is sensible to think about health and safety. Whether you take out insurance is up to the group. Take advice from your parish council. It is worth walking the route before the group fieldwork/walk and understanding potential hazards and how you might deal with them. The local authority rights-of-way team may be able to provide advice too. But try not to get bogged down and put off!

You should contact landowners, businesses and residents and those that might not be able to attend organised walks to share what they value about the landscape.

It's important to keep all your survey work. The difficult part is collating and finding the common ground that establishes a consensus, accurately reflects local feelings about the character, and adds detail to make the local authority or protected landscape LCA description more specific to your area. This principle extends to how the landscape is evaluated. At this stage the LLCA it should reflect how far landscape issues and concerns are shared. Later in the process, there will be the opportunity to address these issues.

By the end of this stage you should have finished the fieldwork, made the character area descriptions relevant to your area, and started to explore the issues, concerns and opportunities that will retain local distinctiveness in your area.

Figure 10

Rowlands Castle LLCA group and locals about to start a guided walk



Stage 7 Outreach to the wider community to support the preparation of a local landscape character assessment

Reaching the wider community can take the form of event(s) organised by the core group where the community is invited, or can involve targeting and approaching specific community groups and individuals. Remember to invite to events parish councillors and representatives from local authorities and protected landscapes such as community led planning and landscape or planning officers. This helps to ensure you maintain a bridge to decision makers.

Figure 11

Guided walk organised by members of the core group – Froxfield LLCA group.



'An organised walk in the countryside followed by lunch of local foods is a good way to encourage people to attend.'

This section of the advice builds on and extends the community involvement to a wider audience than section 6, mainly to people who are interested but can't spare much time. It is also an opportunity for local people to share and discuss issues facing the environment. You can do a one-off event – or hold several smaller-scale events at stages through the process. You may want to show a draft of the LLCA that draws on the fieldwork when you involve the wider community at a public outreach event or you may prefer to defer drafting until after the public meetings. Having a draft available helps local people to be specific by adding their values and perceptions to the descriptions from the fieldwork in stage 6 and prioritising the issues.

Outreach event(s)

'The aim of the outreach event is to inspire people to think and talk about the character of their local landscapes by engaging them in a range of creative activities.'

– 'Unlocking the Landscape' (CPRE)

CPRE's 'Unlocking the Landscape' guidance sets out clear advice to groups undertaking an outreach event. You can refer to the guidance. Its organisation for the event is summarised below:

Planning for the event: Booking the venue, organising catering, inviting participants, health and safety, publicity, collecting character assessment maps and descriptions.

Activities on the day: Explaining the agenda; outdoors – guided walks/car visits; indoors – activities that are designed to draw out a mixture of written, drawn and spoken responses and discussion. These include flag mapping, rich pictures and using photographs.

Figure 12

A suggested programme for an outreach event to the wider community – photo from Frofield LLCA group

Typical programme for the day

- 10.00am Introduction, and set out what you are trying to achieve.
Introduction to the concept of landscape character and the reasons for producing a community LLCA – the local authority or protected landscape officer may be able to help.
- 11.00am Gather into groups with assigned leader(s). Drive people to destinations for guided walks, looking at specific characteristics and issues.
- Return for lunch – local produce is ideal – allow an hour and a half at least.



Lunchtime allows people to mingle informally and exchange thoughts before the afternoon session. It is useful to remind people about the afternoon session's subjects for discussion such as 'special qualities' and 'issues and opportunities'.

- 2.30pm Afternoon: Re-form as discussion groups. You can use various activities to engage people. Allow for exchanging information between groups.
- 4.00pm Summing up and what will happen next.

Outdoors guided walks/car visits

Most parishes are large and it's important to cover as much of the area as possible. So LLCA groups have often found it necessary to divide a parish into several areas, assigning participants an area at the start of the day. Leaders are assigned for each area and to arrange transport for participants. People can be taken to specific areas and features or can walk back to the venue – but it's important to have local guides or experts who can point out key characteristics in the landscape. Allow up to 2 hours for this stage.

Figure 13

Example of 'features of interest' and key characteristics map for a guided walk – Froxfield LLCA



- 1 High Cross Church, built 1862. Norman Pillars (ex Froxfield Church).
- 2 Dellfield (1970s estate), Deans Dell (late 20th and early 21st century social housing).
- 3 Oak Wood. Ancient woodland, historical coppice – 46 ancient woodland indicator species.
- 4 Piper Farm – modern light industrial unit (Honey Farm) concealed by brick and flint elevations.
- 5 Views – undulating farmland to Shoulder of Mutton Hill.
- 6 Views – long internal, south westerly.
- 7 View – South Downs.
- 8 View – to Hindhead / Haslemere.
- 9 Stoner Hill settlement. 15 houses, 1 farm (pasture). Reminder of Stoner Hill estate (early 20th C). Stoner Hill road was Winchester to Petersfield turnpike until C18 built (early 19thC). Pond for watering horses and site of small coaching Inn at top of Old Stoner road.
- 10 Wyke Green Farm 18thC, name first recorded 1209
- 11 Week Green Farm 18thC, farmhouse first recorded on site 1205
- 12 Edward Barnsley workshop. Built 1923. Famous Arts and Craft furniture maker. Now charitable trust.
- 13 Red House – home of WWI poet Edward Thomas (1910-1915, killed WWI 1917).
- 14 New 'cottage' under construction.
- 15 Old Litten lane – SINC and road verges of ecological importance (RVEI).
- 16 Fine southerly view.
- 17 Methodist chapel – converted into house 1900.
- 18 The Slade – 18th C with 16th C parts. Seat of Silvester family from reign of King Henry VIII until family died out in 1928.

Figure 14

Presentation and workshop to Selborne community by County Council officers and Community Action Hampshire.





Indoors session

This session aims to get people's views on what they value and think is of key importance to local character. It's also to discuss key issues and concerns that can alter character, which may be threats or positive changes. 'Unlocking the Landscape' suggests several ways of helping people to put forward and discuss their views on the landscape.

'Each group was asked to do a Flag mapping exercise to identify: boundaries, values and change. Participants used large scale aerial photograph prints with the LCA mapping superimposed. This was followed by Photographs and Rich Pictures. It was decided to ask each group to choose, over lunch, 6 photographs that best represented what they had observed in the morning both good and bad and these were printed whilst the groups carried out the first exercise of the afternoon.' – Liss LLCA report, June 2006

Having 'local experts' and members of the core group on hand to facilitate, helps to keep discussions focused on all aspects of the landscape and encourages participants to have an equal say. Members of the core group should record and then analyse topics and common threads.

Reaching out to groups and individuals

Your group and community may feel it is better to approach specific community groups and individuals instead of or as well as outreach events. This involves finding interested and well-attended associations and groups and presenting the draft LLCA at one of their meetings. Like the outreach event process, the purpose is to achieve agreement on the descriptions of the characteristics of your areas and establish the key issues facing the different character areas. This can be done in an evening at any time of the year, regardless of the weather.

Before asking your audience to contribute their ideas and values about the environment, one or two members of the core group could give a presentation or talk to set the scene and present findings about the landscape. They can identify and discuss the issues using the above techniques, like flag mapping and rich pictures.

Rich pictures is a diagrammatic way of relating your own experiences and perceptions to a given problem through the identification and linking of a series of ideas. In other words there may be several contributing factors that affect an ill-defined issue in the landscape – such as loss of tranquillity or suburbanisation of the countryside. The creation of a rich picture provides a forum in which to think about a given situation. Rich pictures should concentrate on both issues and opportunities and be carried out in groups so that different people's perceptions are recorded – rather like a mind map with pictures.

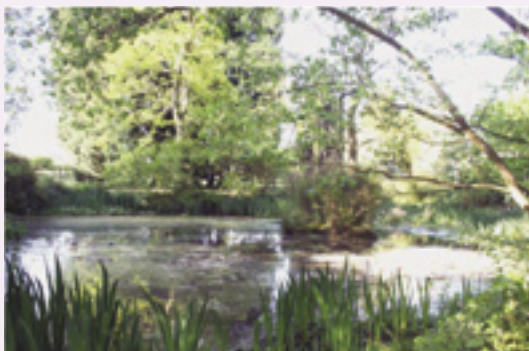
By the end of this stage you should have gathered the wider community's views on the landscape.

Stage 8 Writing the local landscape character assessment perceptions and key issues

Editorial group

What are the special qualities of your landscape?

You may have already started drafting the assessment for stage 7, but after the public events you need to establish a small group of volunteers to analyse the various consultations and edit the LLCA. It can be a challenge to bring together and assess the collective view of the landscape's special qualities and the issues where there has been greatest consensus. A clear way of presenting this is to have the local perceptions typed in a different colour next to the local authority's landscape character assessment text. These can be referred to as supplementary local comments. Alternatively, instead of repeating all the text, you could just state the local authority assessment's key characteristics. There are survey/questionnaire analysis programmes like 'Survey Monkey' or 'Surveygizmo' which can help.



The large numbers of **disused clay, flint and chalk pits** are now havens for wildlife and bio diversity. With their steep sides and rather secretive aspects, they are a special feature of the local landscape. So too are the many **ponds** – some in very good condition, some apparently overgrown but still very attractive to insects, amphibians and birds. Others have nearly disappeared because they no longer retain water. Relining or re-puddling is an expensive remedy.



Figure 15

Extract from Froxfield LLCA – showing an example of 'supplementary local comments' – these add local detail and perspective to the local authority character assessment

The **woodland blocks and hedgerows** are also a beautiful characteristic of the landscape. There are a number of ancient semi-natural woodland sites (ASNWs), also classified as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) which are of considerable conservation interest. A half mile-long, woodland strip adjacent to Privett Church, contains an intermix of monkey puzzles and cedars, planted in the 1850s to form part of the main carriage way connecting Basing Park, the Church and the Petersfield Road. The several hazel coppices are ideal for bluebells and are a glorious sight in the spring. A half mile avenue of limes and maples, east of 27 Barnetside, is believed to have been planted by Canadian soldiers during WW1. Well maintained hedges surround most of the fields and trees, mainly oak, but also ash, hazel and holly often grow to full size within them. A number, primarily older oaks, are dying.

Use maps where they help to clarify important views and valued local features. You can also use maps to highlight lanes and tracks that have similarities and shared issues ('routeway characterisation' is discussed later in this guidance) and show important green spaces and connections between them. It is useful to show these connections and spaces in the context of character area mapping.

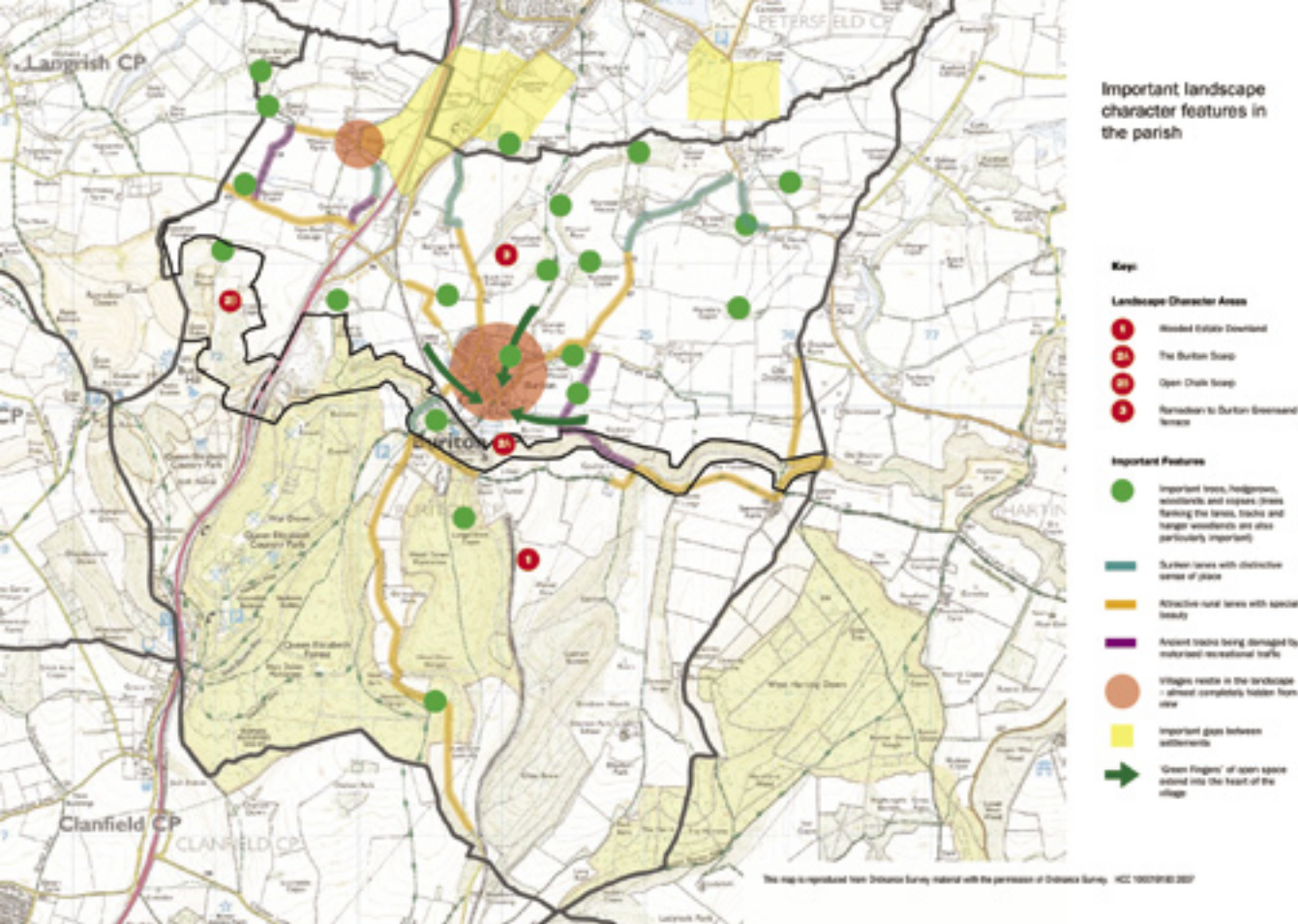


Figure 16
Extract from Buriton LLCA, showing some of the special qualities of the parish landscape.

What are the issues and opportunities?

Summarise the key environmental concerns raised by people. These may be specific to certain character areas or parish wide. At this stage you may want to draft landscape quality objectives, which are statements about what you want the landscape's character to be in the future. Remember that whatever you write needs to be achievable through consultation with the relevant authority or by community action and self-help.

Consulting on the draft

Having drafted your LLCA, you should enable people to comment. The local authority and protected landscape officers you have liaised with during the project will be your key points of contact and you should allow them reasonable time to comment on the draft. Other officers including planners and other specialist officers will also want to comment. Each authority will have its own way of acknowledging and referring to the LLCA in future 'place-making' decisions. However, they will all want to see evidence that the LLCA has addressed some common criteria, e.g. appropriate community engagement.

What makes a successful LLCA?

- The agreement and support of the parish council to the preparation of an LLCA.
- An inclusive process with genuine community involvement and wide community consultation during the preparation.
- Bridging/consultations with the district/County Council at critical stages during preparation.
- An assessment that builds on the existing local authority landscape character assessment, refining and informing the broader work through more detailed local evidence.

- A robust and rigorous approach to preparation under the guidance of a steering group with a clear plan and targets.
- An open and transparent process with records that show evidence of how conclusions were reached.
- Application of the LLCA as a tool and evidence base for community led planning.
- A framework for future monitoring and review.

Approvals

The text of the final version should incorporate comments. There may be some things you feel should not change, and these should be recorded. It is useful to list the consultees, a summary of their comments and then the decision whether and how these will be incorporated. The final version should be circulated with the approval of the Parish Council. You should confirm with the local authority and other plan-making organisations the level of endorsement and whether it will be regarded as material consideration. The latter is a piece of evidence in planning law that the decision maker must consider when assessing an application for development.

An effective LLCA:

- is developed, researched, written and edited by local people
- reflects your community's representative views
- involves a wide cross-section of residents in its production
- describes the visual character of the landscape and settlement
- demonstrates how local character and distinctiveness can be protected and enhanced
- is compatible with larger-scale character assessments and the statutory planning system and its local application
- should be acknowledged by the local planning authority
- is relevant to land management planning and all forms and scale of development
- is about managing change in the parish, not preventing it.

By the end of this stage you should have established the special qualities and landscape quality objectives for your area and stated the issues and opportunities for the landscape – by character area and parish wide.

It should have approval from the parish. It should also have been sent to and incorporated comments from the local planning authority.

Stage 9 Developing actions from the landscape quality objectives and issues

You will start to see the difference on the ground when you transform the LLCA's key issues and landscape quality objectives into a series of actions. This stage may be fed into the parish plan if you have one. The table below enables you to take forward the LLCA and focuses on how to achieve change. The emphasis is on communities being able to achieve things through self-help, where appropriate. Often you will need to liaise with the right authority to get the work done. Advice from authorities is available on who to contact. Having the LLCA will strengthen your requests for help.

How to take forward Landscape Quality Objectives:

Actions can be achieved by the following means: by the community, by service providers, by strategic planning (both community led planning and influencing local authority planning policy).

The first exercise should be to look through what you as a community can do to achieve your objectives and tackle issues. Put these in the community category. There will be other things you want to achieve where you need local authority help – put these in the service providers category. There will be other conclusions in the LLCA that could influence and shape policy for land-use planning and management, for instance the local authority's Local Development Framework or protected landscapes management plan – put these in the strategic category. Also included here are strategic follow-up actions your community might take, such as influencing the parish plan, VDS or perhaps a community biodiversity action plan. Try to organise the plan by character area, so actions are specific and targeted to different areas.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA: NAME

Landscape quality objective:	How it will be tackled	Priority	Time scales	Responsibility	Resource implications	Monitoring
Community						
Service providers						
Strategic						

Figure 17

'Model action plan' adapted from the Parish and Community led planning Toolkit (ACRE).

1 Community

Identify objectives and a set of actions that can be done by local people ('self-help'). Be aware that these actions will be heavily dependent on volunteer commitment and timescales and so they are difficult to be precise about.

2 Service providers

You may want to seek advice from the local authority on which local authority department to approach such as highways or countryside service, or maybe another organisation like the Environment Agency.

3 Strategic planning

Your objectives should influence your local planning authority policy – seek opportunities to influence land-use planning. Increasingly important strategic landscape plans are green infrastructure studies. These look at how well green public and private spaces connect, and their use and function in relation to biodiversity, the historic environment, access and recreation, the contribution to the local land-based economy (e.g. farming or forestry) and the quality of the environment. You should aim to feed findings and objectives into local plans and land management plans – as statements that express the local community's views.

Village Design Statements

Some parishes have integrated the LLCA with updating their village design statement (VDS). VDSs can be adopted by planning authorities as supplementary planning guidance/documents (SPGs/SPDs). This can give added weight to planning decisions. If a VDS has already been produced, the strategic landscape quality objectives from the LLCA could be used in updating policies in a VDS review. One example is Liss parish.

LLCAs enable you to characterise the settlement and road and lane network in the parish as well as the rural landscape. Again, this can help ensure local character and distinctiveness are well managed and can be cross-referenced with the VDS as supporting information. Often VDSs don't cover the whole settlement and may only characterise older parts. The characterisation process ensures complete coverage of the settlement so more informed and sympathetic place-making decisions can be made. See the later chapter on 'Settlement and routeways'.

Making links with other plans and policy

It is a good idea to search out planning and policy documents that can support your landscape objectives and actions. If the actions you develop from the LLCA meet similar objectives that other organisations want for the landscape, you will find them easier to achieve. Check with your local authority (and protected landscape authority), for the latest version of the Local Plan or Development Framework and the County Council for the latest Transport Plan and Minerals and Waste Plan. There may be other landscape- and environment-specific plans such as a Green Infrastructure Strategy, Biodiversity Action Plan, Countryside Access Plan or other land management plans that are produced by all AONBs and others such as Forestry Commission sites. National Parks will have their own plan. Other organisations like the Environment Agency will also be worth contacting, especially if there are flooding and water pollution issues.



From action plan to getting projects on the ground

By approving the LLCA, your parish council should take on the responsibility for progressing the action plan. This may be delegated to a sub-group. Help is available from your community led planning or development officer if there is one. Different authorities have different ways to progress

community projects. For example, in East Hampshire and Eastleigh projects can be brought to the local 'community forum' or 'community board'. Your district or borough will be divided into several boards. The community forums are designed to target community issues by listening to what local people have to say and working in partnership to get things done. In some boroughs like Test Valley, projects can be brought to a sub-group of the local strategic partnership or direct to the policy planning department. It is worth trying to gain support of local councillors too. Small grants may be available to you. For highways, minerals and waste and rights-of-way projects, the County Council is the planning/relevant authority. There are area officers/managers for highways and countryside access.



By the end of this stage you should have developed a set of actions that relate to the landscape quality objectives. You can group them based on how they should be achieved, then assign them to the relevant authority or community group.

Stage 10 Action plan monitoring and review

It's important for the parish council to keep a record of progress on tackling the action plan and share it with the community.

Action Plan E13

Reducing the amount of damage to rural lanes by traffic

Background

The results of the Great Village Voice Questionnaire Survey show that damage to the parish's rural lanes is one of the biggest worries that people have about our countryside and environment: 88% of respondents were either 'very worried', 'worried' or 'slightly worried' with only 12% being 'not worried at all'. Almost one in every three households (31%) is 'very worried' about this issue – a particular high

strength of feeling. Views and ideas on this matter had also been provided in Village Voice House Parties and workshops.

Activities	Target for Completion	Who	Notes	Status / Progress
VDS Group to reinforce the strength of feeling about damage to rural lanes by traffic in the review of the Village Design Statement – drawing on evidence from the Community Landscape Character Statement and other Village Voice work	Sept 2008	VDS Group		✓
Parish Council to be alert to the concerns about damage to rural lanes by traffic whenever considering planning applications	Ongoing	Parish Council		✓
Parish Plan Group to explore ways of deterring unnecessary traffic from short-cutting through the village (eg. by contacting Ordnance Survey about databases used for SatNav systems)	December 2007	Parish Plan Group	As a result of correspondence from the Village Voice Group, Ordnance Survey has agreed to change its database	✓
Parish Council to explore ways of reducing the numbers of large / heavy vehicles using the country lanes (eg. ask EHDC to only allow smaller refuse collection vehicles in the parish – as in other places)	September 2008	Parish Council, District Council	Correspondence exchanged in 2009: opportunity may come when contracts are renewed	

Figure 18

Extract from Buriton Parish Action Plan

This stage is ongoing and the action plan needs to be maintained regularly updated.

Settlement and routeways characterisation

Guidance on writing village design statements was published in the 1990s by the Countryside Commission – ‘Village Design – making local character count in new development’. It advises communities how to describe their settlement’s distinctive character. How planners and designers describe the built environment has improved over recent years, and they have become more structured. The purpose being to manage change more sympathetically. The following guidance aims to build on VDS advice, rather than replace it. It follows the characterisation principles and best practice used by some local authorities. This exercise can benefit from local authority officer help and advice. The techniques explained here are still in the early stages of development and yet to be really tested. The county council may be able to help you structure the process, information and mapping.

Village characterisation

How can village/settlement characterisation add to Village Design Statements?

By defining different parts of your settlement as character areas, you can be more geographically specific about issues and forming local policy and plans. Characterisation allows you to deal with the whole settlement not just certain buildings or parts of the village. VDSs can be improved by this approach. Character areas will have unifying characteristics but should also recognise that areas are not necessarily the same in form and style and can have diversity. Try not to go too small scale – part of the purpose of having character areas is that certain parts of the village will have different sets of issues to others. For example, there may be back-garden development in a character area where the house plots and gardens are large, or lack of green space in areas of higher-density housing. If the character areas are too small you can get repetition and a difficult task because you’ve got to cover so many areas.

The process is fundamental to understanding the parish’s historic settlement pattern and how it has evolved; how it has influenced what exists today; which remaining features are special to the community and important to keep; and how the past pattern of development can inform the new.

Characterising a settlement

The LCA will refer to the contribution that the different settlements and built environments make to a sense of place and local distinctiveness. However, it will not explore the character within villages. Different parts of the village are under different kinds and amounts of pressures and forces for change. As part of the local level character assessment (LLCA) process, parishes can undertake assessment and examine area-specific issues. They can also develop guidance to manage change and place-making, which can help as the basis for actions in the parish plan. The Historic Environment Record (HER) can provide historic rural settlement information, extensive urban surveys (EUS), historic landscape character (HLC), and listed building (LB), information. These insights can inform your understanding of origin, evolution and development, layout, setting, the context of surviving assets etc. How these things influence the present settlement and how they are perceived can change how they are valued in the present settlement.

The principles for assessing villages is a more detailed variation of the county council's work on larger settlements in Hampshire.

The process can be summarised:

- History and evolution.
- Setting in the wider landscape.
- Identification and mapping of village character types (VCTs)
 - largely desk based.
- Identification and mapping of village character areas (VCAs)
 - largely fieldwork based. The community identifies different neighbourhoods or character areas – parts of the settlement that share similar characteristics.
- Draw out key qualities – positive statements that should be respected when considering the future of an area.
- Identify issues through community consensus that are likely to be both negative and positive for each character area.

Prompt questions:

What is the history of the settlement and how and why has it grown?

What historic features/vernacular materials have survived? Flint/cob/brick/thatch/timber frames etc.

Do particular features make the settlement distinctive?

What issues are having a negative and positive effect on character?

Village boundaries

This can be very subjective so parishes are encouraged to use the settlement policy boundaries used for LDFs. These boundaries help to form a bridge with the local authority's different policies.

Village character types

The village types are a classification based on period and function. Identifying and mapping them helps give an instant summary of the different areas of 'built form character'. The aim is not to map and classify every building but areas that are broadly similar. Historic maps to identify the village types are available from the County Council Landscape Planning and Heritage Group. At the offices you can also see electronic epoch mapping (series of historic maps). You can get a list of village types from the County Council.

Village character areas

The character assessment group is encouraged to involve the local community in defining these areas. Getting consensus over the definition of different character areas is an important stage. So it's a good idea to use 'village types mapping' and find out what people perceive as different parts or neighbourhoods of the village. There are no fixed rules for defining VCAs but they should be single geographical areas, rather than two or more areas split across a wider area. A character area will comprise several character types and have a sense of place and be recognised as a neighbourhood in the village. There may be more than one unifying characteristic such as having a leafy character and mainly buildings of similar architectural style. Village character areas should fit well with people's perceptions, ideally through wide community engagement.





Figure 20

Example of 'village character areas' – Rowlands Castle – (assessment in progress and not completed)

Using the village character assessment sheet

The assessment sheet helps structure the character area assessment and describe accurately the different elements of built form.

Village character assessment structure:

The following sets out the structure for describing and assessing the built form within your parish.

Settlement name:

Historic evolution

Village core descriptions are well covered in The Hampshire Rural Settlement project – the County Council’s Strategic Environmental Delivery group (SED) can provide a copy of this.

Here, you can add cross-references to other parish council documents such as the village design statement.



Overall form and layout

The Hampshire Rural Settlement project gives detailed information of the original plan form types in the historic parts of the village. The village types you assess and map will help give the later settlement its form and show how it has developed.

Setting

Refer to the local authority’s LCA e.g. <http://www.easthants.gov.uk/ehdc/HeritageWeb.nsf/webpages/Landscape+Character+Assessment>



Village character areas

For each character area, go through the following process. It has been adapted from the assessment method developed by New Forest District Council (NFDC) Environmental Design team.

LAYOUT PATTERN AND BUILDINGS

Component village character types (VCTs)	Description of the pattern of the component VCTs
Plot	Regular or varied: width, size, proportion of plot occupied by building small to large. Have these been altered over different periods of time?
Building line	Parallel or at angles to road, straight or staggered, set back from the highway/plot boundary. Rhythm: consistency of style, gaps between buildings, variation in height and elevation.
Front boundary	Type: hedge, wall, railings and height. Separation from the highway: verge, pavement or straight onto street.
Building format	Detached, semi detached, bungalow. Number of storeys. Vernacular styles or not.
Significant buildings and structures	Listed and of local interest. Cross-refer to the listed buildings and conservation area assessment if appropriate. The County Council's Strategic Environmental Delivery group (SED) can provide maps with the Conservation Area and Listed building locations. Cross-refer to Hampshire Treasures: http://www.hants.gov.uk/hampshiretreasures/vol06/page265.html This is a useful reference for listed and non-listed features; the characterisation process enables you to update the information.

GEOPHYSICAL

Topography	Describe briefly the local topography and aspect.
Water	What contribution do standing/running watercourses make to the village character? Are there seasonal streams and flooding?

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE (multifunctional green spaces and network)

FUNCTION	Contribution made by:
Describe in terms of historic, biodiversity, public amenity	Front gardens, publicly accessible green space (village green, parks, incidental open space, rights of way and other routes), street trees and hedges, access points, other green spaces – private or not – that are generally accessible.
ROUTEWAYS	List the highways/transport/lane types (see following section).

Routeway characterisation

The quality and character of our landscape has been heavily influenced by the needs of motor vehicles. In 2007 the government guidance 'Manual for Streets' aimed to improve the quality of residential streets and put more emphasis than before on the needs of people and places than traffic movement. In 2010 Hampshire County Council produced the Companion Document to Manual for Streets, which sits alongside the earlier manual and gives a County perspective. 'Traffic in Villages' is another very useful reference guidance for communities concerned about retaining village character whilst accommodating increasing traffic demands on the highway. The guidance stresses the importance of assessing character and sense of place in order to manage traffic in a more sensitive manner.

How can routeway characterisation help to manage highways and traffic issues? Current design and management of our highways applies the principle that routeways enable movement (type and amount of traffic) and should reflect the sense of place (e.g. village centre or countryside) in their layout and design. It is possible to categorise your routeways by movement function and place status. This helps to assess the proportion of the different types of users, from motor vehicles to pedestrians and the balance in priority they should have. Using this information you can identify where, for example, there should be more pedestrian priority, or identify where the highway is a barrier to pedestrians in a residential area.

The following is intended as a framework you can use to categorise different routeways. Often, routes of similar character have features in common, which you can identify on a map.

Example of a routeway type:

'Rural lanes with dwellings and commercial properties'

Description

Lanes retaining historic rural character but modified by ribbon development of houses and commercial properties *List of lane names of this character.*

Issues and options

- **Change to the lane's character through the removal of sections of hedgerow and banks to create or widen access to properties as part of planning applications and house improvements.**
Parish council to assess the implications, to seek to secure protection as a condition of development, and monitor developments during construction.
- **Damage to verges and banks as a result of the volume of passing traffic and the size of vehicles using the lane.**
Parish council to liaise with local businesses to express concern over vehicle size. Potential to investigate 'satnav' solutions to redirect commercial traffic.

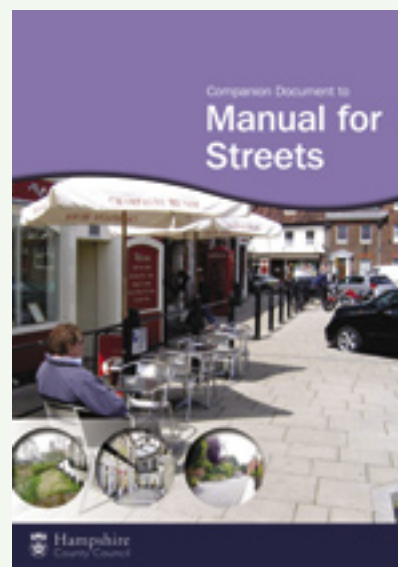


Figure 2 I

'Companion Document to Manual for Street' – HCC; advocates that our roads and lanes reflect local sense of place which they pass through and as well as transport requirements. Local routeways characterisation makes a good fit with this policy.

- Erosion of rural character through the planting of non-native hedges or replacement of native hedges with fences and walls, and the introduction of urbanising features such as concrete kerbs to driveways.

Raise awareness among residents of their responsibilities to conserve rural character.

Characterising routeways

Before you focus on the nature and character of individual parts of the road network, it is useful to gain a broad understanding of how local routes evolved.

The way roads have changed over time has helped shape the pattern of settlements and contributed to the area's character. Plotting the development of routes through the centuries as well as recent changes and additions gives a framework for examining existing highways. It also sets a context for understanding possible future change.



You might consider the following questions while examining historic and recent maps of the area and walking and driving the routes. As you collect information, you can plot it on a base map to record the historic and modern aspects of highways. Verges, banks and ditches should be included.



Prompt questions

Place function – context of the present and historic environment

- How have roads through history helped shape the settlement pattern and character of the parish?
- What are the main features of local roads that contribute to its special character and sense of place?
- Are there any historic features within the highway environment that require specific protection and management?
- Are there highway verges/spaces of particular value to nature conservation?
- How have modern highway engineering and traffic control measures changed the nature of the road network?
- What are the characteristics of the edges of the highway, i.e. verges, ditches, banks boundary hedges, walls and fences? Are these features managed appropriately?

Movement functions – present and historic traffic / uses

- What are the main routes passing through the parish and the volume and pattern of traffic movement?
- What is the use and status of different routes in the network?
- What are the key destinations within and neighbouring the parish that generate traffic?
- How are local access roads, lanes and tracks used and what is the nature of the use, e.g. farm and business use, the school run, walking, cycling, riding?
- Which routes are used by buses and where are the bus stops?
- How does the highway network link with footpaths and bridleways? Do these create viable routes or are footpaths and bridleways fragmented?



The County Council can provide a list of routeway types and advice on how the highway network might be classified.

Summary reports of LLCAs

This section contains reports from the LLCA group co-ordinators. They enable other community groups to learn from others what is involved in producing a LLCA.

Liss

Draft Report on Outreach Day 3 June 2006



Background

Liss parish lies in the district of East Hampshire and almost wholly within the East Hampshire AONB. The part outside the AONB forms part of the Wealden Heaths SPA and is within the designated boundary of the South Downs National Park. The parish's total population is about 6,300, of which about 4,900 live in the main settlement of Liss. There are other settlements in the parish, most

notably Liss Forest with a population of around 1,100, as well as scattered farms and smallholdings that account for the remaining population. The parish has been subject to heavy development pressure and was faced with an allocation in the draft Local Plan of 150 dwellings on greenfield sites when the original VDS was launched. This pressure has eased, with the local plan inspector rejecting all the proposed development sites and proposing just one reserve site in the main village.

Liss is a thriving community with more than 50 local community and amenity groups.

Liss prepared a Village Design Statement, 'A Hidden Village', that was accepted as supplementary planning in 2000. It is currently putting together a Parish Plan. Advice was given by the District Council that any VDS update would need to be undertaken as part of the Parish Plan process and be subject to the same proofing as any other supplementary planning document under the local development framework if it was to be given substantial weight in the planning process. The group undertaking the parish plan on behalf of the parish council – the Liss Village Plan and Design Partnership (LVPDP) – and the parish council unanimously resolved to do what was needed to achieve planning weight for the updated VDS.

In February 2006 the South Downs landscape character assessment was published. As a follow-up the East Hampshire LCA was expected to be published in July 2006. This is still awaited though said to be imminent. These documents show 4 character types in the parish, all on Greensand: East Hampshire Greensand Terrace, Rother Valley Mixed Farmland and Woodland, Woolmer Forest and Weavers Down, and Hillbrow Greensand Hills (see attached map).

The group decided that the first stage in any VDS update should be a community landscape assessment to detail the landscape aspects that were important as regards planning. An Outreach Day took place on 3 June to involve the local community in preparing the LLCA.

Format of Outreach Day

The group used the CPRE's 'Unlocking the Landscape' technique. In the morning villagers explored the landscape, making notes and taking photographs. The group decided not to use the CPRE forms for taking field notes as these had been too complicated for the time available at Chilbolton. After lunch they analysed what they had seen. Techniques included photography, flag mapping and rich pictures.

Preparation

Local groups with relevant knowledge were invited to send representatives, in particular residents associations, historic and archaeological societies, the Conservation Volunteers for its biodiversity knowledge, and the Embroiderers Guild, who had agreed to produce an impressionistic embroidery for the front cover of the updated VDS. Also invited were villagers with known expertise or knowledge or who, as lifetime villagers, knew much about the parish's more recent history. Articles appeared in the Petersfield Post and Petersfield Herald.

As this was a relatively new use of a LLCA non-villagers were invited, to bring a more independent insight as well as extra expertise. So there were representatives of CPRE (HQ and Hampshire), South Downs Joint Committee, Hampshire County Council (Landscape), and Community First East Hampshire. Rowlands Castle Parish Council sent two representatives to help learn how to update its own VDS.

A week before the event, those invited received a programme for the day and pre-event reading that included the relevant parts of the South Downs LCA, a LCA sketch map of the parish, and a description of each stage of the day's proceedings.

It was decided to split the parish into four areas, which broadly followed the landscape types but with the largest being split and one portion added to the smallest. These were named after the main settlement in each area: West Liss, East Liss, Liss Forest, and Hillbrow. Four team leaders were appointed: the chair of the parish council, the chair of its planning committee, the chair of the LVPDP (which organised the event), and the VDS update co-ordinator. All four areas were walked/driven at least once by at least two of the leaders. Representatives of the Historic Society attended two of the preliminary sessions. The co-ordinator attended all the preparatory walks and produced notes for the other leaders. Following advice from Chilbolton, they identified locations of particular note including photography vantage points.

These preliminary sessions showed that some of the boundaries in the South Downs LCA were problematical. This was borne out when the boundaries were drawn on the aerial maps (see below). So the areas of concern between Hillbrow and the Rother Valley character areas were included in the programme for both relevant groups. The problematical area between the Rother Valley and Woolmer LCAs was included in the programme for the Liss Forest group.

Participants were allocated to an area in advance. Most were allocated to their 'home' area but efforts were made to ensure a balanced mix of participants in each group and the best use of expertise.

Logistics

Given the parish's size, the importance of covering all its areas, the time available and the mobility of participants, it was clear that vehicles would be needed by all four groups. The Hillbrow area was particularly difficult to cover, so it was decided to hire the school minibus.

A member of the LVPDP core group volunteered to organise the logistics for the afternoon and to send out all the pre-outreach day letters and attachments to participants. Two villagers served lunch provided by two of the team leaders, and an IT expert in the village agreed to take charge of downloading all the photos taken in the morning. He and other participants provided laptops, a colour printer, a video projector and screen.

Hampshire County Council provided four aerial maps of the parish for flag mapping and its biodiversity centre gave a map of the habitat designations. East Hampshire District Council provided a copy of the LCA. Other information (geology sketch maps, resumé of the parish history, details of parish bird life) were drawn together from villagers; all team leaders had copies to make available to their group as necessary.

All photocopying was carried out free of charge by a parish council member and the LVPDP chair.

Outreach Day

With the back-up team, more than 50 people took part, including a district councillor and seven parish councillors.

The day was fine and sunny, though participants had been warned that the event would proceed whatever the weather. They gathered at the village hall at 10am for a briefing, to meet the rest of their group, and to agree 'official' photographers and scribes for the group.

All groups reached the start point of their morning activity by 10.30am. The aim was to return to the village hall by 12.30 but all groups returned at around 12.45. This did not cause major problems (but see below). At the village hall, the 'official' photographs were downloaded and participants had lunch.

Based on the Chilbolton experience, it was decided to start the afternoon session with flag mapping and to split this into three parts: boundaries, values, and change. This was followed by photographs and finally rich pictures. Again, based on the Chilbolton experience, it was decided to ask each group to choose over lunch about six photos that best represented what they had observed in the morning (both good and bad). These were printed while the groups carried out the first exercise of the afternoon.

Flag mapping was a success. Thoughtful opinions were put forward on boundaries, and these were consistent between groups looking at the same issues. Useful information was recorded on values and change that will inform both the CLCA and the VDS. The one concern was the aerial maps used for the exercise. Although these were generally thought to be useful, the group dealing with the heavily wooded Hillbrow had great difficulty identifying where they had been. Another group had problems finding roads because trees in parts of Liss parish make them almost invisible on an aerial map.

Photos provided useful information. By limiting the number each group could display,

key issues from the morning were identified. To provide more enjoyment and to involve people in a whole-group exercise, everyone was asked at the end of the afternoon to place a dot on the photo they felt best summed up the parish. First and second prizes of bottles of wine were given. Both prizes went to photos of sunken lanes that were imaginatively summed up by one group as 'natural tunnels concealing traffic and contributing to the hidden village'.

By the time groups got to rich pictures, tiredness was setting in so they did the exercise with speed and enjoyment to finish off the day. Again, some imaginative depictions of the parish were sketched. In this exercise, participants vented their anger about some of the worst degradations suffered by the parish.

Outcome

The day was busy and a lot was achieved. At the outset it was decided that time would not allow peer-group review of each group's findings by the others nor a wash-up session to summarise the day. Instead, participants could join a further workshop in the autumn to review the findings and agree conclusions for the CLCA and the VDS.

All participants, from within and outside the village, appeared to have thoroughly enjoyed the day, learned from it, and committed themselves to the next stages.

Lessons learned

The Outreach Day enabled villagers with different interests to see the landscape and built environment from each other's point of view. It was useful, for example, to have a farmer explain his problems and diversification strategy. Others expressed their concerns about the different impacts on the landscape and how this might be reduced.

The main lesson was that preparation is all. Without it, the day would have been a disaster. Another major lesson was that despite all the knowledge and expertise in the parish, external support contributed a great deal. The support of facilitators was particularly valuable as it challenged people to see the landscape through fresh eyes and enabled them to use the techniques in the afternoon to best effect.

Other more detailed points

- Note taking: No guidelines were given for note taking and some notes were more comprehensive than others. Without moving to the full CPRE model, some guidance or a simple form might be useful.
- Had groups known their route in advance, this might have prevented some of the problems faced by the Hillbrow group. However, on the day routes had to be adapted to keep to time.
- The information collated from various sources before the Outreach Day helped on the day itself and was of great value when the LLCA was drafted.

Cost

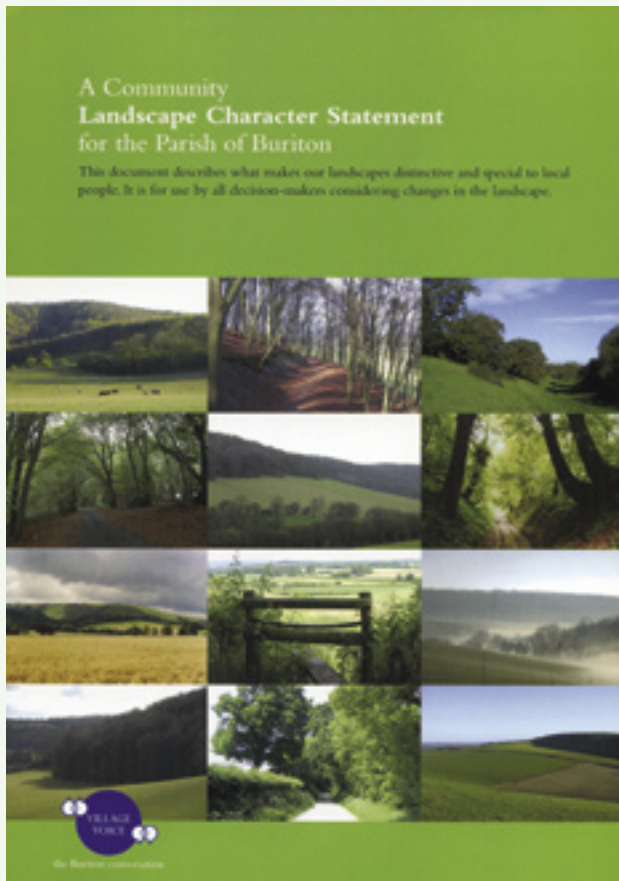
Healthy sales of the original VDS meant that the day cost only £250.

Conclusion

In a nationally protected landscape it is vital that a VDS or parish plan is put in the context of the wider landscape. A LLCA is vital to this. However, given the work involved, it is difficult to see how a community could justify the effort if the LLCA was done as a free-standing exercise.

Margaret Parren: Liss group co-ordinator 2007

Buriton



Why did the community want to produce a local landscape character assessment?

The parish of Buriton sits astride the South Downs, just south of Petersfield in East Hampshire, close to the county border with West Sussex. It covers about nine square miles and has a population of about 750.

The community had produced a Village Design Statement (VDS) in 1999/2000, which had been adopted as supplementary planning guidance by East Hampshire District Council and had proved a useful addition to local planning policies.

As with most VDSs, Buriton's was mainly concerned with buildings: their siting, size, form, styles and materials. Although it included

some design guidelines about landscape, residents felt more work could be done.

They were aware that landscapes have economic value (for farming and, potentially, for tourism), social value (bringing enjoyment and inspiration) and environmental value (for wildlife, wild flowers and biodiversity).

Residents felt that if they could better understand what made their local landscapes special and distinctive, there would be more awareness and understanding about sensitivities to development and change.

They also felt that locally produced evidence should be able to add value to County and District Council LCAs and local planning policies.

Buriton took the opportunity to combine its Local Landscape Character work with a thorough public engagement process to produce a Parish Plan.

And the community also decided to update its VDS – and to include findings from the landscape character work within it – so that the results could be adopted as a supplementary planning document by planners.

To achieve the status of a supplementary planning document was an important motivator; and people hoped that their work could eventually become part of the Local Development Framework as well.

How was the local landscape exercise done?

Buriton's Parish Plan used a wide range of techniques, over a period of 15-18 months, to engage and involve the local community. The aim was to ensure that the vast majority of households took part, covering all age groups and all parts of the parish.

Special workshops and landscape survey tours were included to add more detail to the landscape components of the work.

Participation in the special landscape workshops and surveys was not restricted to parishioners. A range of expert inputs came from council staff and councillors, AONB staff, CPRE experts, local naturalists, farmers and land managers.

Workshop participants travelled in groups throughout the parish using special survey forms to record information about physical landscape characteristics and the sounds, feel, heritage and other experiences.

Each group took digital photographs and, back in the village hall, printed a selection to best represent the special characteristics and illustrate any negative features.

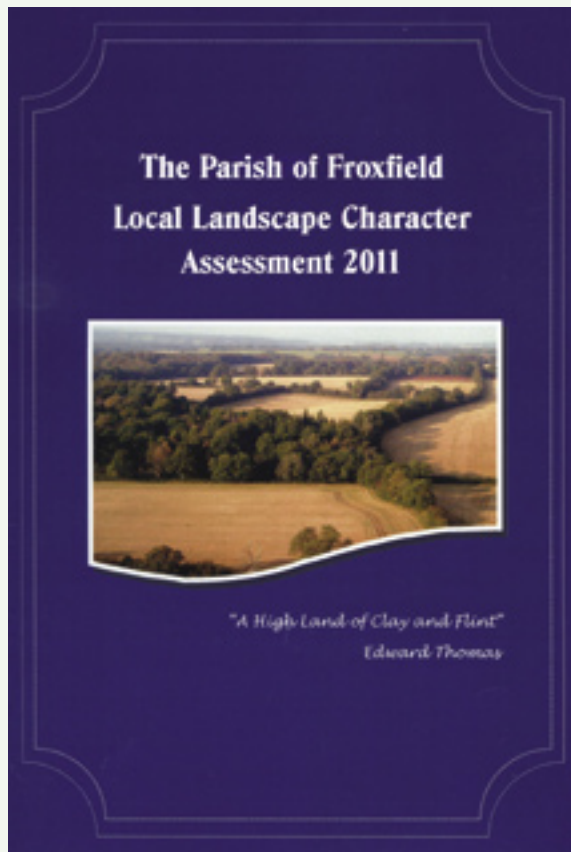
Feedback discussions then summarised findings (including the highlights and eyesores) and identified potential threats and opportunities. There were also 'mind-map' and 'flag-map' exercises for individuals to spotlight particular landscape issues.

As well as yielding valuable insights into what makes the landscapes distinctive and special to local people, the exercises were great fun.

After further public consultation on the emerging findings and on a draft Landscape Character Statement, the community published its work in April 2007 – 'for use by all decision-makers considering changes in the landscape'.

The local statement builds on the District landscape character assessment. But it also amplifies information about each landscape character area, highlights key sensitivities, identifies landscape management and development considerations, and pinpoints important locations on a map base.

Froxfield



1 In March 2010, Froxfield Parish Council asked me to take the lead in producing a local landscape character assessment (LLCA) of the parish. I was aware of the potential importance of LLCAs in the planning system, though I had little knowledge of their content and structure or how to produce one. I have lived in Froxfield for 40 years, love its landscapes and beautiful countryside, and have been involved in several village organisations.

2 In early summer I gained a clearer view of the project through discussions with the authors of two LLCAs in nearby villages. The relevant officials in the local and county council and the South Downs Joint Committee (later to merge into the new South Downs National Park Authority) were

also generous with advice. They sent – or explained how to get – copies of many important documents, including relevant LCAs, the character appraisals of the two parish conservation areas, maps and reports on our archaeology and historic buildings, the ecological database for the parish, and a pilot toolkit produced by the South Downs Joint Committee. The local NFU office sent copies of the NFU vision for the future of the South Downs National Park. CPRE (Hampshire) gave me a copy of the CPRE toolkit 'Unlocking the Landscape'. I also obtained copies of the LLCAs of Liss and Buriton, and the Froxfield and Privett Historical Society offered to help if needed.

3 Establishing such a range of contacts and getting copies of so many vital documents is essential for anyone who is going to lead an LLCA team. After discussion with some of the early volunteers, the following principles emerged:

- i) To make the task manageable, the parish would be divided into seven areas, five in Froxfield and two in Privett. A small team of 2-4 volunteers who lived in the relevant areas would be allocated to each.
- ii) A really committed and varied team of 20 volunteers – with a fair balance of Froxfield and Privett residents – would have to be recruited (see Annex A).
- iii) It would be essential that the teams regularly consulted each area's residents
- iv) The area reports would be key source documents for the parish LLCA and would need to be comprehensive and accurate.
- v) The goodwill of the five major landowners/farmers in the parish must be sought and maintained.

- vi) The area team members must each have a full set of the key documents, including the CPRE toolkit. This had been selected as the preferred baseline by the county council for their project to develop a new toolkit, which could be used by any Hampshire parish carrying out an LLCA. We had agreed to join this project. We stressed, however, that our teams had discretion to apply the CPRE toolkit as they felt appropriate – or not at all. Our overall aim was to encourage each team to use their talents as they saw fit to get the optimum result with minimum bureaucracy and maximum enjoyment and satisfaction. We considered that maximum delegation and trust were the best ways to get the best out of volunteers and to ensure that we produced a final report that accurately reflected the views of all our residents.

We proceeded accordingly.

4 We advertised for volunteers in the monthly parish council magazine, giving a brief description of the project and its importance. Such written appeals rarely produce more than a handful of volunteers but they do ensure that most residents are well aware of the project when the targeted face-to-face recruiting programme starts. This approach quickly produced the volunteers needed.

5 The first full meeting of the LLCA team took place on 16 September 2010, attended also by representatives of Froxfield Parish Council (FPC), Hampshire County Council (HCC), East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) and Community Action Hampshire (CAH). The project was formally launched and an initial budget of £1,000 set – £500 each came from the parish council and the county council. The latter said it would also consider a grant if needed later in the project. This is being negotiated now as it is apparent that total spending will be £1,750. The expenses are mainly for hire of village halls, the Outreach Day – lunch and refreshments in particular – publishing costs and other items. Most team members also bore the costs (around £500 in total) of using their computers and printers for the project themselves. The timetable was discussed. There were two views – six months, as suggested in the toolkit, or something closer to a year as proposed by some of our members. It was decided to defer a decision until the next meeting in December by when we would have gained some experience of what was involved. This was particularly important for the nine members who worked full-time (all the others were also busy, either working part-time or retired but almost full-time on voluntary tasks). By the next meeting it was clear that a harsh winter was likely; snow had lain on the ground since the last week in November and didn't melt until just before Christmas; then it rained pretty well continuously during February. Carrying out the fieldwork was becoming difficult. It was decided that about ten months would be a realistic timescale. In the event it took 11 months to complete – and it will be another few weeks before all the printing is done and copies sent to all those on the full, approved distribution list.

6 Our third team meeting was in early April to review the progress on the seven area reports (initially a small steering group had been created but it proved unnecessary). It was enough to hold a full team meeting every 2-3 months, with small subcommittees to deal with our display at the Froxfield Fete in late June and the community Outreach Day on 6 August. After the area reports were finished in early May a small editorial group (three of us and one person to deal with printing) was

formed to draft the parish LLCA for subsequent approval by the full team. Following discussions with the newly appointed South Downs National Park Authority staff, the county council and East Hampshire District Council we decided to produce the LLCA with a similar format to that used by Buriton (i.e. a summary of the East Hampshire District LCA in black ink with supplementary comments by Froxfield residents alongside in green and then concluding with a 'Key issues for the parish' section). We decided to start drafting the LLCA straight away, using the area reports as key source documents. We also decided that the area reports would be attached to the main report as appendices to provide an extra layer of detailed information when required.

7 At that third meeting we also looked ahead to the next stage, when we would move from concentrating on areas to covering our whole parish. We agreed to mount a display at the Village Fete on 26 June, which would feature a comprehensive photographic display and a photographic quiz for children, as well as bound copies of the area reports and the first draft of the parish LLCA (which had been discussed at our fourth meeting on 24 June). The display proved popular, with over 80 people visiting it and entering into discussions.

8 Our Outreach Day followed on 6 August. Centred on Froxfield village hall, it started at 10am and finished at 3.45pm. It featured a Powerpoint presentation by the county council on LCAs/LLCAs, two large displays – one by us and the other by the Historical Society – four pre-planned two-hour walks (allocated to ensure that walkers didn't walk near where they lived), a free lunch (a locally sourced ploughman's theme – the bread was specially baked in the village), and then two discussion periods, the first based on the walk teams and the other a session with everyone. Despite being held on a Saturday in the summer holiday period and in the middle of harvesting, over 90 local residents attended – in addition to representatives of the HCC, SDNPA and EHDC – and several who couldn't attend sent us their views. It was a successful day, and led to many requests for more parish walks. Everyone who attended was given a copy of the 'Key issues' section of the draft LLCA on their arrival and copies of the full draft were also available for people to read. Draft questionnaires were issued and well over 40 were completed and handed in. These, plus the points raised in the discussion periods, were analysed and graded in depth by the editorial group before we made agreed amendments to the draft LLCA. Copies of the revised draft went to all who had ticked the 'Will you attend the evaluation meeting/workshop on 20 August?' box. The evaluation meeting was lively, well informed and useful. Over 30 residents attended on a Friday evening.

9 Following final amendments, to text, map and photographs, the draft LLCA was approved at the fifth and last meeting of the full team (which included the chairman of the parish council) on 26 August. Also approved were the distribution list, the printing arrangements for the LLCA, the final budgetary arrangements, and a decision that final detailed arrangements would be dealt with by the editorial group. It was also agreed that the LLCA would be sent for final approval and future custody to the parish council, which would update it if required and monitor/pursue progress on the 'Key issues'. This was agreed at the council meeting on 8 September, which several of us attended.

10 Throughout, progress reports were published in the parish council magazine every 2-3 months and a verbal report given at the annual meeting. These were just two elements of our consultation process, which was a major and continuous feature of our work. During the first few months, when the areas' work was ongoing, various methods were used to keep in touch with local residents (made easier because the members of the small-area teams lived in their areas). Some actually visited every house in the area (usually after preliminary phone calls), others delivered leaflets to every house, meetings were held with small groups, one-to-one discussions took place, questionnaires were delivered (and responses chased up) and copies of the draft reports were sent to residents for comments. Around 340 residents were actively involved. This sowed the seeds for considerable public interest in the major events later and also caused many to offer comments when they couldn't attend. Regular contact was also maintained with our major farmers and they all received copies of the final LLCA draft for discussion and comment. With all this interest it is, perhaps, no surprise that when our team approved the final draft, it was version 13. We are sure it accurately represents the views of all who live in this lovely place.

11 It was a lot of work for many of us, but enjoyable and worthwhile. The average time team members spent was about 125 hours, varying between some who did well over 400 hours and others who gave 20 hours. We consulted around 500 residents.

Brian Brown, Chairman, Froxfield LLCA Team – September 2011

Case-study projects

This section contains examples of projects that LLCAs have informed and influenced. Case studies will be added as action plans are implemented. These can be supplied as Powerpoint slides for talking to your community about possible outcomes from a LLCA.

Village centre enhancement, reduced traffic speeds, more pedestrian-friendly highways

Buriton's local landscape character assessment (LLCA) has led to a number of parish council initiatives and has helped to attract funding for projects. The LLCA helped achieve a sympathetic design approach to reducing traffic speeds on approach and through the village. Environmental street design projects have de-cluttered our highways by removing signs, road markings and unsightly bollards while giving road space back to pedestrians and reducing local traffic speeds. The sensitive use of materials and street tree planting has helped to retain the feel of a village rather than a more urban setting.

Buriton Parish Council



Issues and challenges:-


- Traffic Speed and safety
- Road space dominated by vehicles
- Visual clutter from road signs, bollards etc.
- An ageing 'temporary' traffic scheme

LLCA/VDS ACTION PLAN – CASE STUDIES

Buriton Parish Council

The Street Design Project:-

- Implemented by Hampshire Highways East
- Improved public spaces with vehicles no longer dominant
- Street clutter removed including 20 road signs, 10 bollards and 2km of centre line
- High quality materials, trees planted as focal points, ducting under new surface to take existing overhead cables



LLCA/VDS ACTION PLAN – CASE STUDIES

Getting the messages across...

© Buriton Parish Council



LLCA/VDS ACTION PLAN – CASE STUDIES

Building links between the village and local farmers

Buriton's 'Down on our farms' initiative has improved links between parishioners and farmers, enabling villagers to buy fresh produce directly from local farms, to enjoy farm open days/school visits, and to help with some aspects of farmwork. The LLCA process encouraged discussion and debate between villagers and farmers, which has resulted in closer community links and cohesion.

Farm walks, open days and school visits

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B
down on
Buriton's farms

LLCA/VDS ACTION PLAN – CASE STUDIES

Accessible local walks – interpretation of the local landscape and accessing ‘doorstep countryside’

Work has taken place to improve local rights of way by removing most of the parish's stiles to improve access to the countryside for all members of the community and visitors. Heritage leaflets have been published on the historical importance of the local chalk extraction industry and its legacy to the landscape.

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LLCA/VDS ACTION PLAN – CASE STUDIES

Accessible local walks – information about
the local landscape and making doorstep
countryside easier to use

© Burton Parish Council



LLCA/VDS ACTION PLAN – CASE STUDIES

Abbreviations

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
ACRE	Association with Communities in Rural England
CAH	Community Action Hampshire
EA	Environment Agency
EHDC	East Hampshire District Council
HBIC	Hampshire Biodiversity Information Network
HCC	Hampshire County Council
HER	Historic Environment Record
LCA	Landscape character assessment
LLCA	Local landscape character assessment
NALC	National Association of Local Councils
NPA	National Park Authority
RCAN	Rural Community Action Network
SDNPA	South Downs National Park Authority
SED	Strategic Environmental Delivery – part of the Economy, Transport and Environment department of Hampshire County Council
VDS	Village Design Statement

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- 4** 'Companion Document to Manual For Streets Guide' – Hampshire County Council.
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