

# Local Development Framework Briefing Papers Landscape Protection and Enhancement



## Devon County Council's advice to Local Planning Authorities.

*This is one of a series of briefing papers prepared by Devon County Council to assist the preparation of Local Development Documents.*

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**Local Planning Authorities are requested to take the following matters into account in preparing their Local Development Frameworks and other documents:**

1. **The Core Strategy** - should include a strategic policy addressing the protection and where appropriate the enhancement of the landscape as part of the sustainable long term vision of each LDF and for strategic environmental assets [and their relationship to adjoining districts] to be shown on the core strategy diagram.
2. **Other local development documents** - should develop the core strategy and through a range of policies and proposals that:
  - a) **Protect, conserve and enhance those nationally designated landscapes, such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in accordance with the purposes for which they were designated, maintaining and enhancing their character and distinctiveness.**
  - b) **Protect the special qualities and characteristics of the Areas of Great Landscape Value until such time as character-based policy supersedes it.**
  - c) **Protect and enhance the distinctive character, qualities and features of Devon's landscapes.**
  - d) **Identify, assess and incorporate the physical, social, economic and environmental value of the landscape in development and regeneration proposals**
  - e) **Improve and broaden access to the countryside and coast**
  - f) **Achieve design standards in new development that is sensitive to the locality**
  - g) **Seek landscaping and planting schemes that are consistent with local landscape setting, complement the locality and help achieve biodiversity objectives**
3. **Local development documents should map designated landscape areas to which policies apply on the Strategy Diagram / Proposal Map as appropriate.**
4. **Protect, manage and enhance the Coastal Preservation Area / undeveloped Coastal Zone and restrict development which does not require a coastal location.**  
*(See Briefing Paper on Coastal Zones for more information)*

### **Partnership Working**

**Devon County Council wishes to work in partnership with District Councils, in further developing the above policy areas with colleagues and other organisations and would wish to be involved in any discussion relating to them.**

## 1. Introduction

**Devon's landscape** is a valued inheritance. Its character and beauty make the County outstandingly attractive as a place to live and work, or as a place to visit. As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the landscape must rank among Devon's greatest assets.

It is important that:

- there is a wide appreciation and recognition of the landscape in its entirety, as well as in its detail;
- landscapes important for their aesthetic quality, typical characteristics, rarity, special character or as a finite resource have these characteristics recognised and appreciated and protected;
- the essence of the Devon landscape as a whole, typical and commonplace, rare and special, subtle and grandiose, is recognised, appreciated, understood and strengthened, the importance of the "sense of place" it imparts being accepted as the basis for Devon's future

[Adapted from "The Essence of Devon - Devon's Landscape"; DCC 2004

**The Devon Structure Plan** recognises the need to ensure that the overall quality of Devon's landscape including its variety and distinctiveness is conserved for present and future generations (Policy CO1), and that National Parks (Policy CO2) and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Policy CO3) have their landscapes appropriately protected. It is important that the provisions of these policies are carried forward into the draft Regional Spatial Strategy.

The Structure Plan also recognises the need to protect the special qualities and characteristics of the Areas of Great Landscape Value (Policy CO4). The Government indicates that local landscape designations such as AGLV's should only be used when criteria-based planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. The Panel, when considering this matter at the Structure Plan Examination in Public suggested that, once developed, the landscape character approach could replace AGLV designations, but that for the present, the designation affords the areas of locally significant landscape additional protection against inappropriate development and thus has an important role to play.

*For the sake of clarity it should be noted that the Coastal Preservation Area (CPA) is not a landscape policy. The CPA Policy (Policy CO5) recognises that Devon's undeveloped coast is a finite resource in County and national terms that needs to be protected from inappropriate development by strictly limiting the type of development that should be located within the CPA. The Coastal Zone / CPA issues are the subject of a separate Briefing Paper titled 'Coastal Zone Policy'.*

**The draft Regional Spatial Strategy 2006 to 2026** (published June 2006) recognises the need: to protect and enhance the Region's natural and historic environment (Policy ENV1), for Local Planning Authorities to undertake assessments of landscape character to identify priority areas for the maintenance, enhancement and/or restoration of that character and to provide an appropriate policy framework in Local Development Documents for each area. (Policy ENV2). The Strategy also recognises that in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty the conservation and enhancement of their natural beauty should be given priority over other development proposals and that only specific types of development will be provided for (Policy ENV3)

**This briefing paper** reflects the County Council's strategic role in coordinating landscape policy and advice, with the objective of conserving, enhancing and managing landscape resources.

The scope of this briefing paper is to ensure:

- The appropriate protection, conservation and management of Devon's landscape, both designated and undesignated, based on identification of those qualities that make them distinctive
- The recognition of these assets as an important economic driver
- The promotion of design and development that takes account of local distinctiveness

## **2. Vision / Strategy for the future**

The County Council Vision and Aims are set out the Devon Structure Plan. The thrust of the Vision is:

***To conserve and enhance the quality of Devon's environment and its local distinctiveness so as to maximise the benefits to the environment - including the special beauty and characteristics of the countryside, coasts, buildings, cultural and historic heritage - together with the diversity of its wildlife and habitats to achieve the following objectives:***

- 1a) Conserve and enhance Devon's landscape, coast and cultural heritage.***
- 1b) Conserve and enhance biodiversity and protect wildlife habitats.***
- 1c) Improve the urban environment, by improving safety, reducing congestion and enhancing townscape.***
- 1d) Preserve and enhance open space and access to the countryside.***
- 1e) Provide for new development where it would not conflict with the need to conserve and enhance the special environment and heritage of Devon.***

The Community Strategy and the Devon Strategic Plan recognise the importance of the environment to the economy and quality of life of Devon's residents and visitors.

## **3. Key Issues to Address**

The issues to be addressed include:

**The need to ensure that the landscape related policies meet the requirement for protecting and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage and for promoting the understanding and enjoyment of such areas.**

**Population growth and development will place greater demands on the environment.**

Attractive environments are essential to the County's tourism industry and to the wider economic and health well being of its residents. There is the potential for development, leisure, recreation and tourism pressure to erode the character and nature of the landscape unless properly managed. The potential tension between conservation of the environment and promotion of tourism and leisure needs to be addressed in LDFs.

**The understanding of the nature of places based on characterisation techniques** needs reflecting in policy. The Landscape Character Assessment exercise which began in January 2006 will provide information to enable such work to be done prior to it being possible to derive a character –based policy unrelated to a local landscape designation. In the longer term, such a character based policy may be possible and desirable, but this may be an issue for discussion at that time.

**The Issues relating to Areas of Great Landscape Value / Local Landscape Designation -**

Pending completion of landscape characterisation across the County and any possible policies derived that relate to such characterisation, the AGLV policy should be retained and the AGLV boundaries should be refined in the context of the detailed landscape characteristics within each area. .

**The integrity of the nationally designated landscapes**, the conservation and enhancement of their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and the promotion of the understanding and enjoyment of such areas all need to be addressed with adequate policies in place.

**The need to maintain and enhance tranquillity** should be reflected through appropriate policies in the LDF.

## 4. The Content of LDFs

### i) Core Strategy

Given the contribution that the landscape makes to the unique character of Devon, the protection and where appropriate the enhancement of the landscape should form part of the sustainable long term vision of each LDF.

***The Core Strategy should include a strategic policy addressing the protection and where appropriate the enhancement of the landscape as part of the sustainable long term vision of each LDF. Strategic environmental assets [and their relationship to adjoining districts] should be shown on the core strategy diagram.***

### ii) Other Local Development Documents

Policies and proposals in other local development documents should address the need to protect and enhance the landscape.

***Other local development documents should develop the core strategy through a range of policies and proposals that:***

- a) ***Protect, conserve and enhance those nationally designated landscapes in accordance with the purposes for which they were designated, maintaining and enhancing their character and distinctiveness***
- b) ***Pending completion of County wide landscape characterisation, include policies to protect the special qualities and characteristics of the AGLVs until such time as character based policy supersedes them.***
- c) ***Protect the distinctive character, qualities and features of Devon's landscapes***
- d) ***Identify, assess and incorporate the physical, social, economic and environmental value of the landscape and coast in development and regeneration proposals***
- e) ***Improve and broaden access to the countryside and coast***
- f) ***Achieve design standards in new development that are sensitive to the locality***
- g) ***Seek landscaping and planting schemes that are consistent with local landscape setting, complement the locality and help achieve biodiversity objectives***

### iii) Key Diagram / Proposal Map

***Local development documents should map designated landscape areas to which policies apply.***

## 5. Partnership Working

Devon County Council wishes to work in partnership with District Councils, in further developing the above policy areas with colleagues and other organisations and would wish to be involved in any discussion relating to them. For example the County Council would wish to be consulted on any criteria used in LDFs to define Landscape Policy Areas.

# **Appendix 1**

## **Timetable for Landscape Characterisation Assessment**

Aim of project: To provide a detailed baseline for landscape in Devon, based on around 600-700 landscape description units

January 2006	Start of project
Spring 2006	Completion of desk based assessment
Summer 2006	Completion of verification work for the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONBs
Spring 2007	Completion of verification fieldwork for the remainder of East Devon, South Hams outside DNP, the North Devon AONB and the Exeter urban fringe.
Summer 2007	Dependent on resources – the remainder of North Devon and Teignbridge outside DNP are probable priorities for completion of verification fieldwork.

## **Other Landscape Information**

Assessments of the character and quality of the overall landscape have been undertaken [Countryside Agency on a national basis, 1997 and Devon County Council 2002]. The relationship of the character assessment to the designated areas is indicated in DCC's 2002 work. In addition, descriptions have been published by the Countryside Agency for most of the AONBs, [excluding to date only North Devon], and in 2000 DCC undertook a landscape assessment of the County's AGLVs. All these documents provide something of a baseline for the condition of the landscape of the designated areas, and allow broader landscape trends to be identified over periods of time.

## **Key Structure Plan Policies**

Policy CO1: Landscape Character and Local Distinctiveness

Policy CO2: National Parks

Policy CO3: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Policy CO4: Areas of Great Landscape Value

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