



# Stockton on Tees Borough Council

## Stockton on Tees

### Landscape Character Assessment

**Date (26/07/2011)**

Arndale Court, Otley Road, Headingley, Leeds, LS6 2UJ

Tel: 0113 219 2217

Email: [enviro@wyg.com](mailto:enviro@wyg.com)



## Document Control

Project: Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment  
Client: Stockton on Tees Borough Council  
Job Number: A051290  
File Origin: Y:\Projects\A051001-A052000\A051290\reports\110726 FINAL ISSUE V4\110726 Stockton Landscape Character Assessment - FINAL ISSUE V4.doc

### Document Checking:

Prepared by:	Emily Sykes Principal Landscape Architect	Signed:	
--------------	--	---------	--

Checked by:	Mark Ashton Principal Landscape Architect	Signed:	
-------------	--	---------	--

Verified by:	Peter Harrison Regional Director	Signed:	
--------------	-------------------------------------	---------	--

Issue	Date	Status
1	27/05/09	Draft
2	27/01/10	Final Draft
3	18/06/2010	Final Issue
4	06/09/2010	Final Issue V2
5	11/10/2010	Final Issue V3
6	26/07/2011	FINAL ISSUE V4



## Contents Page

# PART 1

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction &amp; Background</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Scope of Works</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Desk Study</b> .....	<b>3</b>
3.1.1	Mapping information .....	3
3.1.2	Documentation .....	4
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Consultation</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Field Survey</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>GIS database</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Reporting: Classification and Description</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Planning Context</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Regional Landscape Character Area</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Previous Studies of the Area</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Cleveland Community Forest Landscape Assessment</b> .....	<b>12</b>
6.1.1	Landscape Character Tracts.....	12
6.1.2	Landscape Character Types .....	13
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Character Assessment Studies in the Surrounding Area</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Consultation</b> .....	<b>15</b>





**7.1 Consultation – Stage 1 .....15**

**7.2 Consultations – Stage 2 .....20**

**8.0 Landscape Change and future revision of the Landscape Character Assessment ..... 21**

**9.0 Climate Change ..... 22**

## Part 2

**10.0 Landscape Character Areas & Landscape Units ..... 1**

10.1 East Billingham to Teesmouth .....**2**

10.1.1 Summary of East Billingham to Teesmouth Character Area .....2

10.1.2 Landform and Drainage Pattern .....3

10.1.3 Land Use .....3

10.1.4 Field Boundaries and Trees.....4

10.1.5 Settlements .....4

10.1.6 Landscape Characteristics.....4

10.1.7 Landscape Change and Condition.....4

**10.2 Wynyard .....5**

10.2.1 Summary of Wynyard Character Area.....5

10.2.2 Landform and Drainage Pattern .....6

10.2.3 Land Use .....6

10.2.4 Field Boundaries and Trees.....6

10.2.5 Settlements .....7





10.2.6	Landscape Characteristics.....	7
10.2.7	Landscape Change and Condition.....	7
<b>10.3</b>	<b>Thorpe and Billingham Beck Valley .....</b>	<b>8</b>
10.3.1	Summary of Thorpe and Billingham Beck Valley Character Area .....	8
10.3.2	Landform and Drainage Pattern .....	9
10.3.3	Land Use.....	9
10.3.4	Field Boundaries and Trees.....	9
10.3.5	Settlements .....	10
10.3.6	Landscape Characteristics.....	10
10.3.7	Landscape Change and Condition.....	10
<b>10.4</b>	<b>West Stockton Rural Fringe .....</b>	<b>11</b>
10.4.1	Summary of West Stockton Rural Fringe Character Area.....	11
10.4.2	Landform and Drainage Pattern .....	12
10.4.3	Land Use.....	12
10.4.4	Field Boundaries and Trees.....	13
10.4.5	Settlements .....	13
10.4.6	Landscape Characteristics.....	13
10.4.7	Landscape Change and Condition.....	14
<b>10.5</b>	<b>River Tees Corridor.....</b>	<b>15</b>
10.5.1	Summary of the River Tees Corridor Character Area.....	15
10.5.2	Landform and Drainage Pattern .....	16





10.5.3	Land Use .....	16
10.5.4	Field Boundaries and Trees.....	17
10.5.5	Settlements .....	17
10.5.6	Landscape Characteristics.....	17
10.5.7	Landscape Change and Condition.....	18
<b>10.6</b>	<b>Yarm Rural Fringe .....</b>	<b>19</b>
10.6.1	Summary of Yarm Rural Fringe Character Area .....	19
10.6.2	Landform and Drainage Pattern .....	20
10.6.3	Land Use .....	20
10.6.4	Field Boundaries and Trees.....	20
10.6.5	Settlements .....	20
10.6.6	Landscape Characteristics.....	21
10.6.7	Landscape Change and Condition.....	21
<b>10.7</b>	<b>Stainsby Beck .....</b>	<b>22</b>
10.7.1	Summary of Stainsby Beck character Area .....	22
10.7.2	Landform and Drainage Pattern .....	23
10.7.3	Land Use .....	23
10.7.4	Field Boundaries and Trees.....	23
10.7.5	Settlements .....	23
10.7.6	Landscape Characteristics.....	23
10.7.7	Landscape Change and Condition.....	24





<b>11.0 Landscape Units .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>12.0 Landscape Character &amp; Climate Change .....</b>	<b>26</b>
12.1.1 River Tees and its tributaries .....	26
12.1.2 Habit and species loss .....	27
12.1.3 Land Use Change .....	27

## **Figures**

Figure 1 – Stockton Borough

Figure 2 – Study Area

Figure 3 – Landscape Character Areas

Figure 4 – Landscape Units

## **Appendix Contents**

**Appendix A – Report Conditions**

**Appendix B – Study Area included within the Contract Brief for the provision of a Landscape Character Study for the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees**

**Appendix C – Tees Lowland Regional Character Area**

**Appendix D – Cleveland Community Forest Landscape Assessment, Woolerton Truscott 1992 – Landscape Character Types**

**Appendix E – Consultation Responses**

**Appendix F– Site Survey Sheets**

**Appendix G– Policy Review**

**Appendix H – Landscape Character Assessment and the Green Infrastructure Strategy**





# Part 1

## Stockton on Tees Borough Council

### Landscape Character Assessment

#### Background Information







## 1.0 Introduction & Background

Stockton on Tees Borough Council has appointed WYG to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment Study for the rural and green wedge areas within the borough of Stockton on Tees. The study identifies the varied landscape that exists within the Borough, excluding the areas that have been considered as urban areas, assessing the character and qualities of this landscape, and where appropriate indicating how it has been influenced in the past to create the varied landscape seen today. The study also provides guidelines for the future management of the landscape and potential landscape conservation measures, which once implemented would benefit the landscape condition and character of the Borough.

The study has been carried out in accordance with best practice guidance as set out by the Countryside Agency (now part of Natural England) and Scottish Natural Heritage (Landscape Character Assessment, Guidance for England and Scotland' 2002). Previous studies of the area have been taken into consideration when developing this Assessment, including the regional character assessment of the Tees Lowlands (Natural England) and the Cleveland Community Forest Landscape Assessment (1992). The Cleveland Community Forest Landscape Assessment included descriptions of local landscape types and landscape units, producing guidelines and recommendations for the development and management of each of the landscape types identified and highlighted landscape elements that were of particular significance in creating local distinctiveness. This report builds upon these existing studies, updating the key issues caused by the passage of time, reassessing the character boundaries and assessing the Borough in further detail to identify the detailed Landscape Units that make up the redefined Landscape Character Areas.

The project Brief study area (Appendix B) as issued by Stockton on Tees Borough Council shows the extent of the Stockton on Tees Borough study area. At the project outset, this was further refined in consultation with Stockton on Tees Borough Council (Figure 2). It includes rural and green wedge areas of the borough and excludes urban and built up areas. The area around Seal Sands has also been included within the assessment for completeness.



## 2.0 Scope of Works

The requirements for the study have been set out within the brief provided by Stockton on Tees Borough Council. The key elements within the brief and subsequently agreed with the Council can be summarised as follows:

- Undertake a Landscape Character Assessment for all of the Borough of Stockton on Tees lying within the rural areas. The brief included a map within section 1 illustrating areas in green to be included within the scope of the assessment. For the benefit of the reader a copy has been included within Appendix B. Areas highlighted in grey on this plan were to be excluded. The scope was later refined to include only the rural areas outside the 'Limits to Development' shown on the Stockton on Tees Local Plan and the areas designated as on the Local Plan as 'Green Wedge';
- Provide evidence in a range of formats. It has been agreed that the study will be provided as a written report and through GIS mapping, detailing the individual Landscape Units and Landscape Character Areas at 1:25,000 scale, linking with the associated data. A series of photographs representative of the areas assessed during the study will also support the report.

The study is to be used as part of the 'evidence base' to assist in the development of policy and policy guidance, particularly with regards to regeneration briefs and land management programmes, and to inform the emerging Local Development Framework.

It must be noted that the Landscape Character Assessment is focused solely on green wedges and the areas lying outside the 'limits to development' and does not cover other open space areas lying within the developed areas, however it is recognised that these also contribute to the landscape character of the borough. In addition to the Green Wedges, the open space within Seal Sands has also been included as part of this assessment.



## 3.0 Methodology

The methodology used in the preparation of this assessment is based on national recommended guidance produced by The Countryside Agency 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland' 2002. In addition to this, Landscape Character Assessment Topic Papers 1-5 have also been used to incorporate current guidelines and best practice.

### 3.1 Desk Study

A desk based study was carried out at the initial stages of the assessment, collating a wide range of information from existing character assessments, both regional and local scale; the Local Plan and associated documentation; feedback from consultation exercises (see section 3.2); and detailed analysis of aerial photographs. Available mapping information was also analysed to identify common features within the borough.

#### 3.1.1 Mapping information

A number of elements were analysed as part of a mapping exercise analysing the available data. Elements reviewed include:

- Geology.
- Landform/Topography.
- Rivers & drainage systems.
- Soils.
- Land cover/Vegetation.
- Land use patterns e.g. field enclosure.
- Settlement patterns.
- Historic development of the landscape.
- Agricultural Land Classification.



## Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

- Conservation Areas.
- Development Limits.
- SSSI's, SAC's, SPA's and Ramsar Sites.
- Scheduled Monuments.
- Ancient Woodland.

Analysis of the above to identify how these features have influenced the current landscape character of the Borough has been carried out which in turn has informed the division of the borough into 'units' of land of similar characteristics. It is these Landscape Units have then been used as the basis for the field survey exercise.

### **3.1.2 Documentation**

The documents identified and reviewed as background to the assessment include:

#### Local & Sub Regional Policy Documents

- Housing growth point status (2008).
- Local Plan, 1997 (including policies GP1, EN7, EN8, EN9, EN13, EN14 and policies appertaining to protection of Playing Space, Urban open Spaces, Nature.
- Conservation Sites, Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings.
- Local Development Framework DPD's (including Core Strategy, Regeneration DPD, and Environment DPD).
- Tees Forest Plan (non-statutory).
- Conservation and historic Environment Folder (SPD).

#### Regional Documents

- Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East of England, 2008 (including policies 2, 10, 31, 32).



## Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

- Core Strategy DPD Publication Draft (October 2008)
- The Infrastructure Strategy (Supporting Evidence for Core Strategy)
- Regeneration DPD, Issues and Options (September 2007)
- Yarm and Eaglescliffe Area Action Plan, Issues and Options (July 2007)
- Strategic Housing Land availability Assessment

### National Advice

- PPS 1.
- PPS 7.
- PPS 12 (Revised).

### Character Assessments

- The Countryside Agency's Landscape Character Assessment, Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002.
- Tees Forest Woolerton Truscott Study of Landscape Character Assessment in the Tees Valley, 1992.

A Historical Landscape Character Assessment is currently being prepared; however, at the time of preparation of the Landscape Character Assessment this documentation was not available. Once finalised, this document will constitute a valuable document to be reviewed alongside the Landscape Character Assessment and will be expected to demonstrate how the landscape has evolved in historical terms.

### Other Documents

- Making Sense of Place, Countryside Agency, 2002.
- England's Landscape The North East, Fred Aalen, 2006.



## Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

- Draft Version of Stockton on Tees Green Infrastructure Study, Clive Davies Associates, May 2009. The relationship between the green infrastructure Strategy and the Landscape Character Assessment is described in further detail in Appendix H.

During the desk based study, landscape character assessments for surrounding Authorities were also consulted to ensure there would be a degree of consistency with these surrounding areas. The assessments identified are included within Section 6.0.

### 3.2 Consultation

Consultation has been carried out at 2 stages of the study in order to obtain consultees agreement in principle to the landscape character. The consultation group includes Parish Councils, Town Councils and residents within the borough of Stockton.

The first stage of the consultation exercise has been carried out as part of the desk study as it is recognised that the Parish/Town Council possess invaluable knowledge and details of the development of the landscape within individual Parishes and Boroughs. This has proven invaluable when determining Landscape Character Areas and Landscape Units. A consultation questionnaire was submitted to all Parish/Town Councils, the feedback from which is summarised in section 7.0. Consultation responses are included in Appendix E.

The second consultation period with the Parish/Town Councils has been carried out upon completion of the Draft Landscape Character Assessment. This is essential in enabling the Parish/Town Councils to review the works carried out to date and comment on the issues identified and enable any feedback to be incorporated into the assessment.

### 3.3 Field Survey

Following on from the desk study, a detailed site survey exercise was conducted by Chartered Landscape Architects to visually assess the character of the Borough. Aspects assessed during the survey included:

- Topography.
- Watercourses.
- Landscape elements.



## Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

- Land cover.
- Distinctive features of the landscape.
- 'Condition' of the landscape.
- Visual assessment of the landscape.
- Perception of the landscape.
- Settlement pattern.
- Architectural description.
- Detractors.

As part of the field work exercise, photographic records were taken at each assessment location, recording the significant landscape and visual elements that contribute to the overall landscape character of the area. Site Survey sheets have been produced for each land parcel as part of the assessment process in order to record visual elements within the landscape that were not apparent through the desk based study. The site survey sheets have been based upon the standard survey sheets as identified by The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage Guidance, adapted to reflect local landscape trends and terminology as agreed with Stockton on Tees Borough Council. The site survey sheets have been completed from a fixed location within the land parcel (with a GPS reading recorded on each survey sheet). The record sheet is then updated with any additional elements identified as the assessor passes through the publicly accessible parts of the area.

As the field surveys progressed with more detailed assessment of the landscape, variations in character not evident from the Desk Study have been recorded and Landscape Character Areas and Landscape Units amended as necessary. Each land parcel identified during the desk study has been visited as part of the field survey exercise where publicly accessible. The site survey advances the desk study by identifying key issues and changes, e.g. where recent land use has affected the character of the area; recent development not yet documented in settlement pattern and therefore unidentifiable at the desk study stage. Where required, repeat surveys have been carried out to verify the collated data and to ensure consistency.

Field surveys were carried out between January and April 2009, which although recognised as not being the optimum time period for this type of field work (the ideal time being spring/summer), the brief required the



## Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

work to be conducted during this timeframe in order to meet appropriate timescales to feed into the emerging Local Development Framework. It is acknowledged that differences in perception of the landscape will be apparent between winter and summer months, so for this reason the site surveys have been carried out in a manner that can be reviewed and easily updated in the future. Where seasonal variation is anticipated, this has been highlighted on the survey sheets.

A number of ecologically sensitive areas occur within the borough including Seal Sands, Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park and the Saltholme RSPB, east of Billingham. For Saltholme RSPB, Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park and Billingham Beck, discussions took place with the estate manager for the area to enable their site knowledge of individual ecological issues to be recorded.

Sample surveys were carried out with all members of the WYG assessment team and representatives from Stockton on Tees Borough Council to ensure consistency in the approach to field work surveys. This approach ensured that each person involved in the survey process carried out the survey and recording of information on a comparable basis. The presence of council representatives was essential should the work be updated in the future and to give reassurance to council officers formulating policy guidance.

### **3.4 GIS database**

The results of the assessment have been managed within a Microsoft Access database linking to GIS to allow interactivity between the users and the results of the assessment. The advantage of this approach includes allowing variables within the assessment to be queried; statistical analysis to be carried out; viewing the Landscape Character Areas and Landscape Units in the context of other spatial data; and the potential to make the landscape character information more widely available and easily updated.

The data compiled during the desk study and field survey has been fed into the GIS database in a systematic manner with digital images of the landscape combined with the categorised and descriptive information collated. This has created a rich database of landscape information which can be used as a resource to aid the understanding of landscape patterns and support landscape planning decisions.

Each individual land parcel identified as part of the assessment has been assigned a unique numerical or text identification tag within the database.





### **3.5 Reporting: Classification and Description**

The classification and description of identified Landscape Character Areas and Landscape Units has been carried out in parallel with the site survey work. Following completion of the field surveys, the landscape classification and description composed during the field survey plus the identification of Landscape Units were reviewed for accuracy and consistency and amended to give a complete reflection of the Landscape Character Areas identified. The completed survey sheets for each land parcel are included within Appendix F.





## 4.0 Planning Context

A Policy Review of Stockton on Tees Council Borough Councils currently adopted planning policies, standards for landscape protection in the Development Plan and other material guidance to inform an assessment of the existing character of the landscape in the urban fringe around Stockton-on-Tees is contained within Appendix G. The review serves to inform the approach to amending the policy context through the Council's emerging Local Development Framework (LDF).

The policy review looks at the adopted Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the saved policies of the Stockton Borough Council (SBC) Local Plan. Within these documents there are a number of policies that directly relate to the Landscape Character of the borough, with Landscape Character primarily addressed in the RSS, chapter 3 'Delivering an Urban and Rural Renaissance' and policy 31 of the RSS, which provide detail on the valuable landscapes within the North East. A number of policies within the Local Plan also relate to the Landscape Character, and these are detailed further in Appendix G.

In addition, supplementary planning documents have been identified, (including The Conservation and Historic Environment Folder adopted in January 2006); National Planning Policies; the evolving Local Development Framework; and other non-statutory documentation (including the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy).

Key issues and objectives that can be addressed in relation to landscape policy are recommended within the report.





## 5.0 Regional Landscape Character Area

In order to make an assessment of the landscape character of Stockton on Tees, the regional landscape context must first be identified. The 'Character of England' map produced by The Countryside Agency identifies regional landscape character areas across the country, identifying the Borough of Stockton on Tees as lying within the Tees Lowland Joint Character Area (see Appendix C).

The key characteristics as outlined in the Character of England study are summarised below:

- A broad low lying plain of gently undulating, predominantly arable, farmland with wide views to distant hills.
- Meandering, slow-moving River Tees flows through the heart of the area dividing the lowlands to north and south.
- Contrast of quiet rural areas with extensive urban and industrial development concentrated along the lower reaches of the Tees, the estuary and coast.
- Large-scale chemical and oil refining works, dock facilities and other heavy plants along the Tees estuary form a distinctive skyline by day and night.
- Overhead transmission lines and pylons, motorway corridors, railway lines and other infrastructure elements are widespread features.
- Extensive areas of mud flats, saltmarsh, wetlands and dunes at mouth of the River Tees which support valuable wildlife habitats.
- Woodland cover is generally sparse but with local variation such as at Skerne Carr, on steep banks of the middle reaches of the Tees, and to parkland and managed estates.
- Minor valleys and linear strips of open land extend as 'green corridors' from rural farmland into the heart of the Teesside conurbation.

No other Joint Character Areas have been identified within the Borough.



## 6.0 Previous Studies of the Area

### 6.1 Cleveland Community Forest Landscape Assessment

The 'Cleveland Community Forest Landscape Assessment' was produced by Woolerton Truscott on behalf of the Countryside Commission in 1992. This study identified local landscape character types across the Cleveland Community Forest area, which included Stockton on Tees along with other areas such as Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland. The study identified broad landscape tracts which contain landscapes of variable characteristics but which have a recognisable and overall unified character. This was then further broken down into landscape character types to reflect the local differences within each landscape character tract. In general, the differences related to factors such as local landform, scale, enclosure and degradation.

#### 6.1.1 Landscape Character Tracts

The following landscape character tracts were identified within Stockton on Tees in the Cleveland Community Forest Study:

- Greatham Corridor
- Wynyard
- Thorpe Beck Valley
- West Stockton Rural Fringe
- River Tees Corridor
- Yarm Rural Fringe
- Green Wedges

These character tracts have been used as the basis for the landscape character assessment, feeding into the development and update of the Landscape Character Areas defined in Section 10.0. The mapped boundaries for these areas have been used as a basis for the Landscape Character Areas and amended where appropriate. The descriptions of the character tracts provided within the Woolerton Truscott study have been updated and refined to reflect the current landscape character of the Borough, incorporating the



landscape character types listed below, consultation feedback and the results of the Landscape Units survey.

**6.1.2 Landscape Character Types**

A number of character types were identified as part of the Woollerton Truscott study within the Borough of Stockton. The identified character types are not exclusive, with a single landscape character type having broadly similar patterns in every area where it occurs, for example, Fringe Farmland falls within both Thorpe Beck Valley character tract and West Stockton Rural Fringe character tract. However, the definition of each character type is tailored and character types within different character tracts have been given individual descriptions. The table below illustrates the 25 character types identified as part of the study (refer to Appendix D)

**Table 6.1: Landscape Character Tracts and Types identified in the Cleveland Community Forest Landscape Assessment**

Landscape Character Tract	Landscape Character Type
Greatham Corridor	A19/A689 Road Corridor (G1)
	Degraded Farmland (G3)
	Estuarine Marshland (G4)
Wynyard	Incised Wooded Valleys (W1)
	Parkland (W2)
	Wooded Farmland (W3)
Thorpe Beck Valley	Fringe Farmland (T1)
	Valley Landscapes (T2)
	Elevated Open Farmland (T3)
West Stockton Rural Fringe	Fringe Farmland (WS1)
	Open Farmland (WS2)
	Rolling Farmland (WS3)
	Tees Valley (WS4)
River Tees Corridor	Vacant Land (RT1)
	Wooded Valley Banks (RT2)
	Amenity Fringe (RT3)





Landscape Character Tract	Landscape Character Type
	Open Farmland (RT4)
	River Tees (RT5)
Yarm Rural Fringe	Wooded Farmland (Y1)
	Open Farmland (Y2)
	Lightly Wooded Farmland (Y3)
	Wide Wooded Valley (Y4)
	Parkland (Y5)
Green Wedge	Wooded Minor Valley (GW1)
	Farmland (GW2)

## 6.2 Character Assessment Studies in the Surrounding Area

The Stockton borough is surrounded on all sides by other boroughs and districts, some of which have carried out their own Landscape Character Assessments at various levels of detail. These include the following:

- Cleveland Community Forest Landscape Assessment (1992) (as discussed above, in addition to Stockton –on-Tees this covers Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland);
- Hartlepool Landscape Assessment (2000);
- County Durham Landscape Character Assessment (2004);
- North York Moors Landscape Character Assessment (2003).

Where available, the above studies have been reviewed and the links to the adjacent character areas have been used to inform the definition of Landscape Character Area boundaries within Stockton.



## 7.0 Consultation

### 7.1 Consultation – Stage 1

Consultation questionnaires were submitted to all the Parish and Town Councils in the Stockton Borough as part of the first stage of the consultation exercise. Questionnaires were sent to 15 Parish Councils and 1 Parish Assembly (excluding Elton due to no Parish Council being elected at the time of the Consultation) and a total of 14 responses were received. The key comments highlighted are summarised in the table below. In some cases more than one response was received from the Parish Councils, in these cases each response is listed below. The completed questionnaires are included within Appendix E.

**Table 7.1: Summary of Consultation Responses – Stage 1**

Consultees	Summary of feedback
Eaglescliffe and Eaglescliffe Parish Council (response 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values trees in gardens and Preston Park along Yarm Road to create a green thoroughfare not seen in many other boroughs.</li> <li>• River Corridor is a 'hidden gem'.</li> <li>• Historic houses with mature gardens give attractive character.</li> <li>• Historic development of landscape character affected by agricultural history, development of railway and industry, and 20<sup>th</sup> Century expansion of population and associated housing.</li> <li>• Preservation of green infrastructure, including the Teesdale Way, and improvements to play areas seen as positive actions.</li> <li>• Development of flats and removal of mature trees to be replaced with smaller ornamental trees seen as negative impacts on the landscape.</li> <li>• Changes to parish include agricultural land replaced with housing and some industry replaced with housing.</li> <li>• Management of landscape to include the implementation of larger, slow growing trees and more variety in housing estate development.</li> </ul>
Eaglescliffe and Eaglescliffe Parish Council (response 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values River Tees and associated views and wildlife; wide avenues and abundance of trees; agricultural land around parish; ecology park, nature trail and golf course for wildlife habitats.</li> <li>• Overdevelopment of gardens and other housing developments have caused increased traffic and detrimental effect on wildlife.</li> <li>• The character is preserved within the conservation area of the parish, but other areas outside this are less well preserved with some areas in state of decline and 'back garden' development flourishing.</li> <li>• Green land is being sold for housing development and local landmark</li> </ul>



Consultees	Summary of feedback
	<p>buildings being lost to develop apartments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of the landscape to include stricter control on development; extending the conservation area; protect existing mature trees; and more emphasis on railway heritage.</li> </ul>
Hilton Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value open rolling rural landscape with views of Cleveland Hills and North York Moors.</li> <li>• Historic development of landscape associated with agriculture with only the A19 and pylons and power lines currently spoiling the landscape.</li> <li>• Excessive building development in or around the village would spoil the area; currently increased traffic is spoiling the tranquillity of the village.</li> <li>• No major changes in land use in the parish for past several years.</li> <li>• Concerns regarding proposed wind farm in area.</li> <li>• Restricting heavy traffic through area would be seen as advantageous.</li> </ul>
Longnewton Parish Council (response 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value village greens, open space, woodland and farmland.</li> <li>• Past development of landscape affected by people attempting to sell bits of gardens for development and increased traffic from community forest.</li> <li>• Concerns regarding increased density of developments and the need for planting to soften recent road junction development.</li> <li>• Changes to land use include development on farmsteads and reduction of working farms.</li> <li>• Management to include restriction of development and maintenance of green belt between Longnewton, Elton and Hartburn to maintain identity.</li> </ul>
Longnewton Parish Council (response 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value the parish's rural, quiet and interesting vista and wildlife.</li> <li>• Agricultural history is still evident and the relatively new Community Forest enhances a strong sense of community within the village.</li> <li>• New road interchange has improved village atmosphere by reducing traffic.</li> <li>• Changes in land use include infill housing putting pressure on infrastructure.</li> <li>• Community Forest to be maintained and views of North York Moors and Pennines.</li> </ul>
Maltby Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value the 'surrounding natural aspects' to the south of the village.</li> <li>• Landscape development affected by change from agricultural to a city lifestyle, with associated housing development and mobile population.</li> <li>• Village envelope and planning guidance have restricted encroachment within the village.</li> <li>• Housing and industrial development and expansion has created visual</li> </ul>







Consultees	Summary of feedback
	<p>distractions in the North West of the village.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management to include restriction of development.</li> </ul>
Preston on Tees Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns regarding the management of the boundary hedge and wood at Preston Park affecting a 'Jewel in their Crown' site.</li> <li>• Would like to see improved maintenance of footpaths.</li> </ul>
Redmarshall Parish Council (response 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value views over open rolling countryside, hedgerows, trees and wildlife. Recently planted woods of benefit and footpaths well used.</li> <li>• Agricultural development has evolved from small farmsteads to larger holdings (when ancient hedgerows were removed), to stable developments in sections of fields. This has resulted in further pressure from stable owners to build housing in countryside.</li> <li>• Stable blocks, large agricultural sheds and housing are destroying open countryside and views.</li> <li>• Management to include development of small woods instead of stable blocks or other development.</li> </ul>
Redmarshall Parish Council (response 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value to rural and agricultural nature of the area; open views with small wooded areas; wildlife and peace and quiet.</li> <li>• Landscape character has been affected by development of residential properties changing the character of the village; 'travel to work for economic reasons; heavy traffic.</li> <li>• Positive affects on the landscape include tree planting, footpaths signed and stiles implemented.</li> <li>• Negative affects include hedges and fences being moved and not reinstated; and the threat of wind turbines.</li> <li>• Changes in land use include loss of farms to residential developments.</li> <li>• Management to include the prevention of 'workers dwellings' and cattle sheds in open countryside.</li> </ul>
Yarm Parish Council (response 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value key historic areas within Yarm village; the River Tees; and views to Eaglescliffe.</li> <li>• Past development of Yarm has been influenced by its port status on the River Tees with the buildings reflecting Yarm's history. The population has grown in recent years and the landscape character has been maintained.</li> <li>• There is a local desire to maintain the visual aspects and character of the area.</li> <li>• Negative pressures to change the residential character with infill development and high density housing developments.</li> <li>• Changes in land use include loss of farmland to housing around the town's perimeter.</li> </ul>





Consultees	Summary of feedback
Yarm Parish Council (response 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value the river and surrounding fields; Yarm bridge and Yarm viaduct.</li> <li>• Housing and apartment development have had a detrimental effect.</li> <li>• Changes in land use include building on gardens and allotment land used for parking.</li> <li>• Management to include improvements to the riverside and protection of remaining green areas.</li> </ul>
Grindon Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value rural and agricultural belt around Stockton-on Tees/Middlesbrough and note it is essential to protect.</li> <li>• Also value rural aspect of western part of Grindon Parish; heritage linked to local industry; trees and rural and agricultural views; buildings in and around the village; and Castle Eden Walkway and Wynyard Woodland.</li> <li>• Historic landscape character has been affected by the development of farms and quarries.</li> <li>• Positive factors affecting the landscape include the resident groups desire to look after the village and the recognition by the Borough council of the 'remarkable' resources in the northern part of the borough.</li> <li>• Negative factors include pressure on land to build; fly tipping; traffic; poor public transport; and lack of dedicated cycleway.</li> <li>• Changes in land use include dedicating land to recreation; well maintained and publicised footpaths; less farmland; increase in traffic.</li> <li>• Management to include stricter planning; local consultations; and redefinition of parish councils.</li> </ul>
Thornaby-on-Tees Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value Thornaby Green; the River Tees; Bassleton Woods; aspects of Teesdale; Airfield Heritage; Town Hall; Parks and green space.</li> <li>• Landscape character affected by development, the loss of green space, the A66 and the loss of industry.</li> <li>• Landscape affected by lack of care for historic heritage; inappropriate development; derelict areas and debris in river</li> <li>• Linear park and well kept cemetery and Thornaby Green seen as positive aspects.</li> <li>• Changes in land use include A66; back garden categories as brownfield; development in green wedge; disappearance of industry and university.</li> <li>• Management of landscape to include more green areas and play areas in housing developments; preserve and enhance existing open space and woods; restrict development encroachment on River; continue to plant 'imaginative' roundabouts and 'flower displays'; discourage unimaginative urban sprawl; and preserve historic heritage.</li> </ul>
Stillington and Whitton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value the open nature of the route through Stillington; the village green in Whitton; Stillington Forest Park; Honeypot Wood; the local footpath and</li> </ul>





Consultees	Summary of feedback
Parish Council	<p>bridleway network; the becks through the parish; allotments in Stillington; West Street playing fields; and the diversity of housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The parish’s past development has been affected by the demolition of old houses; the industrial heritage; and the co-operation of industry and the community – which still exists today.</li> <li>• Positive issues include village envelopes and the recent removal of a pig farm in Whitton, however concerns are expressed regarding the look of the new development. Main negative feature is the Network Rail Property creating an unsightly aspect to the centre of Stillington.</li> <li>• Changes in land use include the creation of Stillington Forest Park and Honey Pots Wood; allotments being replaced by new housing; a small community garden on site of former buildings; and a new children’s playground on the West Street Playground.</li> <li>• Suggestions for future landscape management include restrictions on new building developments; maintenance of open space; and management of Network Rail land.</li> </ul>

The key issues drawn from the consultation responses can be summarised as follows:

- Residents value open space, green space, the footpath and bridleway network; trees, the River Tees, the rural and agricultural countryside and numerous views within the Borough.
- Residential development, both infill, surrounding village boundaries and in open countryside, is viewed negatively and is viewed as having a negative impact on the landscape. Inappropriate farm development, temporary stables (horsiculture), temporary workers housing and development in gardens is viewed in a similar light.
- Traffic is a concern within the borough.
- A stricter planning system is seen as one of the management solutions to preserving the landscape.
- The historic landscape character is a key aspect of the character of the current landscape which should be built upon.
- The natural aspects of the Borough, particularly the River Tees, are seen as valued aspects of the landscape to enhance and preserve for all to enjoy.



- Development of the Community Forest and other woodlands is viewed positively.

The key points highlighted above have been fed into the landscape character assessment where appropriate.

## 7.2 Consultations – Stage 2

A draft version of the Landscape Character Assessment was issued to all Parish Councils and other consultees in May 2009 as part of the stage 2 consultation process. 3 Parish Councils responded with further comments and these are summarised below and included in full in Appendix E. The original response from Stillington and Whitton Parish Council was not received as part of the Stage 1 consultation exercise, but these have subsequently been incorporated above and any further comments relating to the stage 2 consultation have been summarised below. In addition, the Sites and Monuments Officer from Tees Archaeology, Landscape Architect from Stockton Council and Natural England provided comments. These are summarised in table 7.2 below.

**Table 7.2 Summary of Consultation Responses – Stage 2**

Consultees	Summary of Feedback
Ingleby Barwick Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No comments to raise on draft report.</li> </ul>
Stillington and Whitton Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted that their original comments had not been included within the stage 1 consultation</li> <li>• Commented that the assessment doesn't consider village area and concentrates on the landscape outside the villages</li> <li>• Felt that the section on Thorpe Beck was very vague</li> </ul>
Eglescliffe and Eaglescliffe Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reiterates previous comments made at stage 1 consultation</li> <li>• References planning policies welcomed by council</li> <li>• Pleased that consideration will be given to Conservation Areas when considering Landscape Character</li> <li>• Expressed caution with regards to restoring Eaglescliffe Coatham Stob due to contamination issues</li> <li>• Approves of the recommendations to introduce ecological habitat to the Eaglescliffe Golf Course.</li> </ul>
Tees Archaeology, Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleased to see historic aspects of landscape picked up, including details</li> </ul>



and Monuments Officer	such as the ridge and furrow around Cowpen Bewley
Landscape Architect, Stockton on Tees Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlighted queries on the level of assessment and general presentation</li> <li>• Queries how the assessment fits in with other assessments outside the borough</li> <li>• Requested definition on the policy appraisal section</li> </ul>
Natural England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commented that the report is well evidenced, logical and adheres to best practice guidelines</li> <li>• Comments on the detailed analysis of each character area at a local level and the consultation of parish councils as effective</li> <li>• Highlights a few items for clarification and updating to be incorporated in the final report</li> <li>• Concludes that the draft report in an effective and accurate summary and does what a LCA needs to do – highlighting that it will be a useful document.</li> </ul>

## 8.0 Landscape Change and future revision of the Landscape Character Assessment

Landscapes are dynamic, evolving over time due to a combination of natural processes and human interventions. The possible impacts of climate change are outlined below, but other short-term impacts may include:

- New housing, industrial and commercial development, especially in urban fringe locations
- Development of new roads, railways and cycle routes, which may also incorporate lighting scheme, bridges and other infrastructure which can have a significant impact on landscape character

In addition the uses and applications for this Landscape Character Assessment may change over future years. For these reasons it will probably be necessary to revise and update all or part of this landscape character assessment in the future.





## 9.0 Climate Change

This assessment is not intended to provide a detailed analysis of the potential impact of climate change on the existing landscape character of the Borough. The study may however form the basis of further work relating to the landscape character of the Borough and the potential impacts of climate change upon it.

The predicted local impacts of climate change are summarised in the Tees Valley and Stockton-on-Tees Climate Change Action Plans:

<http://www.stockton.gov.uk/resources/techsvcs/envkway/dlcchange/CCAP2009-20.pdf>

<http://www.stockton.gov.uk/resources/techsvcs/envkway/dlcchange/TVCCAP.pdf>

Over a long period the anticipated hotter, dryer summers and wetter, milder winters will have a direct impact on natural processes and wildlife species and habitats, But more significant changes might come about in the short term as a result of changes in farming and other land use practices; for example, an increase in the production of bio fuels, the introduction of new crops more suited to local climatic conditions, and increased demand for new wind farms and other renewable energy infrastructure.

Future climate scenarios for the North East predict that by the 2050's the average annual daily temperature could have risen by almost 2°C<sup>1</sup>. There is also increased likelihood of extreme weather events with for example - short spells of uncomfortably hot weather lasting 1-2 days - projected to be around 40 times more likely in the 2050s compared with the 1970s baseline. Frequent bouts of prolonged heavy rainfall causing localized flooding, of land and property are also potential events.

The Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and Scottish Natural Heritage summarised the main potential impacts as follows:

(Landscape Character Assessment Guidance Topic Paper 9: Climate change and natural forces – the consequences for landscape character - <http://www.landscapecharacter.org.uk/files/pdfs/LCA-Topic-Paper-9.pdf>)

---

<sup>1</sup> The North East Climate Change Adaptation Study



## Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

### 1) Impacts of Climate Change on the natural environment

- Habitat and species composition
- Habitat fragmentation
- Water resources
- Soil Quality

All water courses are vulnerable to climate change. The River Tees and its tributaries will come under increased pressure from surface water run off during bouts of heavy rainfall. The Environment Agency has highlighted areas of the Tees which are particularly prone to flood at Yarm, Stockton, Thornaby, Aislaby, and Eaglescliffe. There is also significant flooding risk from Coatham Beck, and Lustrum Beck affecting central areas of Stockton and Bishopton Beck affecting Carlton.

This change in rainfall and potential flooding has a direct impact upon species composition and habitats located within the Borough. Increased prolonged periods of drought followed by severe heavy rainfall may result in the migration of some existing species from the area with an influx of new species. Rising sea levels and water tables may present a risk to some of the landscapes designated for the nature conservation and species diversity within the Borough.

### 2) The Impacts of climate change on land use

- Agriculture and forestry
- Land use planning policies
- Sea level rise
- Recreation and tourism

A large percentage of the Borough is used for agricultural purposes. Changes in climate change as a result of increased rainfall during winter and longer dryer summers will result in some agricultural crops and areas of commercial forest becoming unfeasible due to inappropriate growing conditions. This may result in a dramatically changed landscape with existing areas of agricultural land use becoming redundant and new areas developed.



3) Impacts of climate change on cultural heritage

- Historic landscapes and heritage gardens
- Weathering
- Subsidence
- Flooding

Hotter, dryer summers compounded with wetter winters will result in detrimental effects on historic landscapes and buildings alike placing more strain upon these structures and placing them at risk of increased degradation or structural failure.





Part 2

Stockton on Tees

Landscape Character Areas

& Landscape Units





## 10.0 Landscape Character Areas & Landscape Units

Part 2 of this assessment identifies the Landscape Character Areas and Landscape Units that comprise Stockton Borough. These two classifications of land unit are described as follows:

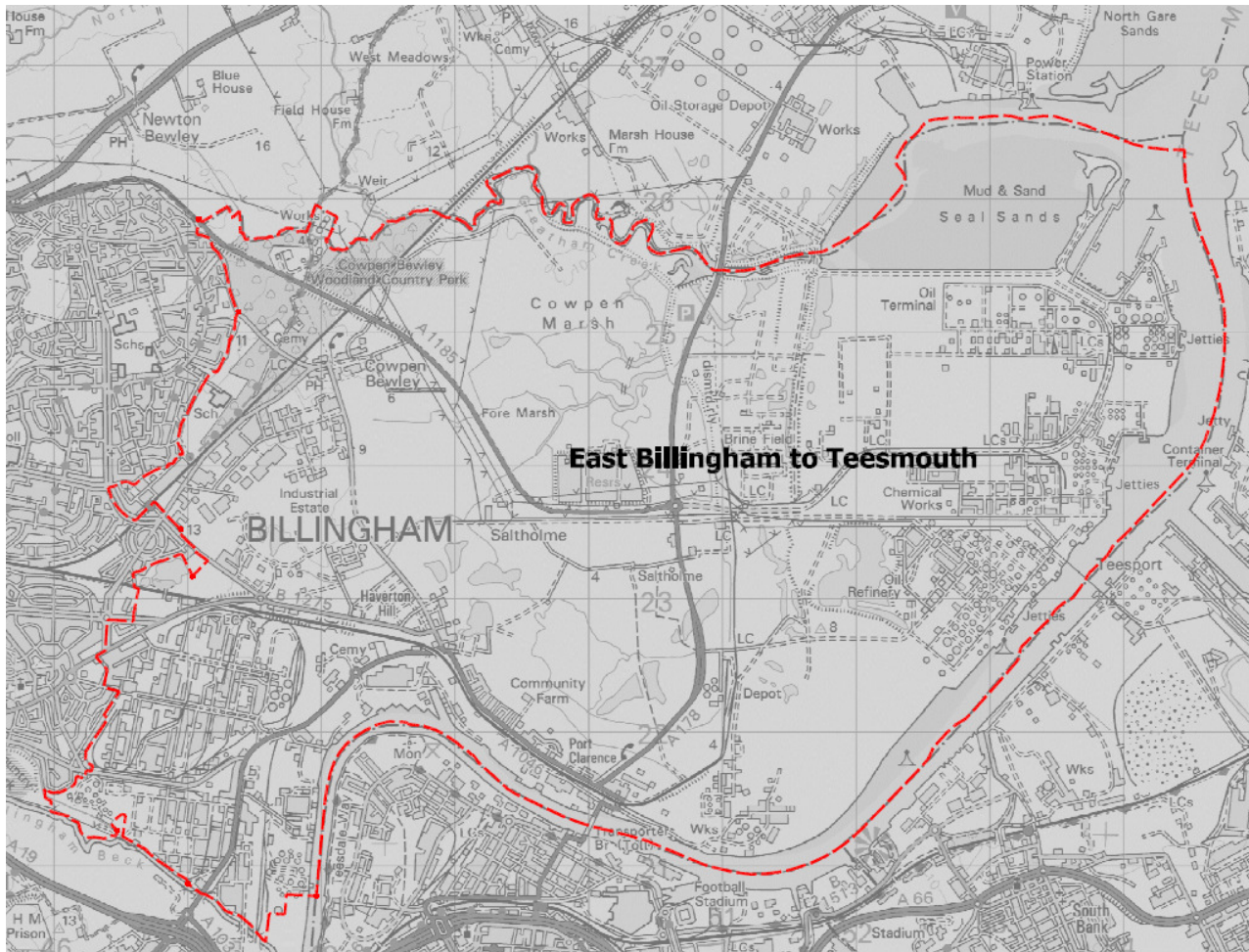
- Landscape Character Areas – are broad areas of land that demonstrate consistent landscape patterns or attributes over a large area of land that differ from those around them. Typical examples of these can include river valleys or large areas of agricultural land.
- Landscape Units – are parcels of land varying in size from a single field or woodland to a cluster of fields or area of landscape demonstrating a variety of features which contribute to the overall character of the Landscape Unit.

Almost 200 Landscape Units have been identified as part of the assessment of the Stockton Borough. The details of these are included within Appendix F and illustrated on the Figure 4. They are discussed further in section 11.0. The Landscape Units and desk based studies have been used to inform the definition and refinement of the Landscape Character Areas within the Stockton on Tees Borough as described below. In total, 7 Landscape Character Areas have been identified, which is in keeping with the previous landscape character assessment carried out in 1992, albeit with the boundaries amended to reflect the changes in the landscape since the prior assessment. The Landscape Character Areas are shown on Figure 3 and are identified as follows:

- East Billingham to Teesmouth
- Wynyard
- Thorpe and Billingham Beck Valley
- West Stockton Rural Fringe
- River Tees Corridor
- Yarm Rural Fringe
- Stainsby Beck



## 10.1 East Billingham to Teesmouth



### 10.1.1 Summary of East Billingham to Teesmouth Character Area

- Industrial landscape fringing Billingham integrated with large areas of open space including wetlands and reclaimed semi improved pasture;
- Farmland is open and flat with minimal landscape features;
- Industry dominates area to the east along the River Tees;
- Open space within industrial areas contain significant wildlife value with a number of ecological designations present including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), Site of Nature



## Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

Conservation Importance (SNCI), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar Site and Teesmouth National Nature Reserve;

- Important 'ridge and furrow' within the field pattern around the settlement of Cowpen Bewley;
- The Stockton to Hartlepool railway line is notable feature within the landscape, dividing the Landscape Character Area between estuarine and non-estuarine/rural fringe influences; and
- Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park provides the only wooded element within this Landscape Character Area.

### **10.1.2 Landform and Drainage Pattern**

The majority of the Landscape Character Area is flat with landform generally lying below 10m AOD. Due to the reclaimed nature of the landscape a number of water courses are threaded through the area with large water bodies associated with the International Nature Reserve and Saltholme RSPB site and a brine reservoir associated with the surrounding industry. Greatham Creek delineates the northern boundary of the Borough of Stockton. The River Tees forms the southern boundary of the area and also the extent of the Borough. A number of important ridge and furrow features are included within the fields around the settlement of Cowpen Bewley.

There are a number of artificial mounds within the flat estuary landscape as a result of past and ongoing landfill processes, an example being north of Cowpen Bewley within the Country Park which now forms a local viewpoint over the surrounding landscape. The second is to the east of the country park, and the third to the east of Port Clarence; both of which are still operational landfill sites.

### **10.1.3 Land Use**

The predominant land use is industry although a large quantity of interspersed open space is given over to ecological habitat with numerous ecological designations occurring throughout the area across wetlands. Some areas of reclaimed farmland are used as semi improved pasture and rough grazing. Seal Sands in the north of the area is an extensive area of mud and sand flats of notable importance both locally and nationally.



## 10.1.4 Field Boundaries and Trees

There is a distinct lack of significant landscape features within the rural area with large fields bounded by fences and broken hedgerows. There is a lack of hedgerow trees across the area which results in a visually expansive landscape. The industrial area in the east is surrounded by high security fencing which is typical for the type of industrial land use.

The only woodland within the area is that situated at Cowpen Bewley Woodland Country Park which forms a buffer between the edge of Billingham and the industry to the east. Much of this is newly planted woodland and is still establishing.

## 10.1.5 Settlements

Due to the predominant industrial use of the area only a few settlements exist consisting: Cowpen Bewley, Haverton Hill and Port Clarence. Cowpen Bewley has retained a number of medieval features despite the surrounding industrial land use, particularly its narrow linear plot divisions and ridge and furrow in the surrounding fields. The edge of Billingham is the nearest major conurbation and a number of high rise tower blocks and tall buildings are visually prominent within the area.

## 10.1.6 Landscape Characteristics

The key landscape characteristics of this area are the ecological wetland habitats, in particular the SSSI's at Seal Sands and Cowpen Marsh. These are unique features within the Borough and provide a substantial amount of ecological benefit to an otherwise industry dominated landscape. Industrial features such as large storage tanks and flares associated with the oil refineries and chemical works within the Tees estuary dominate views towards the east with vertical features outside the industrial areas, comprising transmission towers and overhead power lines.

The River Tees runs along the southern boundary of this area where it exits land at Tees Mouth, just north of Seal Sands.

## 10.1.7 Landscape Change and Condition

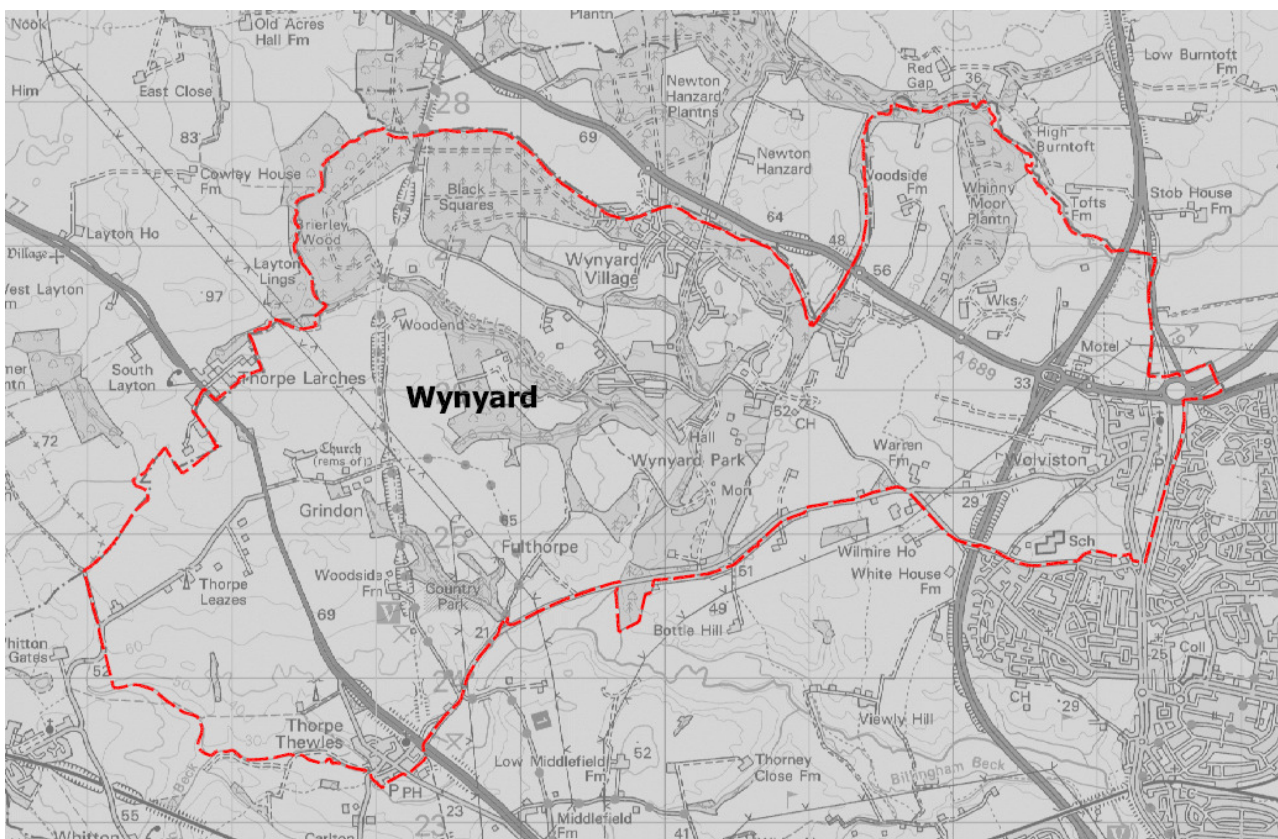
The condition of this landscape varies from that with excellent ecological value and managed as an ecological resource to a landscape devoid of natural features and dominated by industrial structures and

## Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

hardstandings. It is assumed that as industry gradually migrates out of the area the ecological habitat will replace that which is lost, albeit it at a slow rate of change.

Areas of active landfill punctuate the skyline within the area forming areas of temporary degraded landscapes. These are however transitional landscapes that will in time be reclaimed and restored.

### 10.2 Wynyard



#### 10.2.1 Summary of Wynyard Character Area

- Mixed woodland containing both commercial timber plantations and semi-natural deciduous woodland unique in character to the Borough of Stockton;
- Incised wooded river valleys intersect landform along Brierley Beck;



## Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

- Woodland blocks broken up by rolling arable fields, with residential and industrial developments encroaching on the woodland plantations and rural landscape of the Landscape Character Area; and
- Wynyard Park forms an important element in the landscape consisting of Wynyard Hall and a Grade 2\* parkland which makes a valuable contribution to the heritage of the area.

### **10.2.2 Landform and Drainage Pattern**

The landform consists of both wooded, steep sided incised river valleys and gently undulating to rolling farmland creating a diverse topography across the area. Landform ranges in height from approximately 40m AOD towards the eastern outskirts of Billingham to around 70m AOD in the vicinity of Newton Hazard Plantation.

Brierley Beck runs into Wynyard Park where it creates an impressive lakeside setting to Wynyard Hall. A number of other water courses also cut across the area to create the incised valleys in the landform characteristic of this area.

### **10.2.3 Land Use**

Land use in the area is a variety of commercial plantations, agricultural land, recreational use – including golf course, parkland and woodland walks, and commercial and residential development. The historic parkland associated with Wynyard Hall is a significant land use taking up a large area of land within the Landscape Character Area.

The area around Wynyard Hall is however in private ownership (managed by Cameron estates) and public access to and use of the woodland for recreational purposes is not permitted.

### **10.2.4 Field Boundaries and Trees**

Field boundaries are generally defined by hedgerows or fences and in most cases well maintained and unbroken. Many of the existing hedgerows are also characterised by mature broadleaf trees.

Trees form a significant part of the Landscape Character Area and are represented in a variety of combinations and species including the dense coniferous plantations of Squares Wood, mature deciduous woodland along the incised Brierley Beck valley and the linear corridor associated with the Castle Eden Walkway. The large conifer plantations form significant areas of woodland and are managed predominantly



on a commercial basis. Deciduous plantations, often designated as Ancient Woodland or a Site of Nature Conservation Importance, provide greater diversity to the site and a rich ecological habitat. Significant clumps of trees and isolated veteran trees provide the structure to the historic parkland and link the site with its historic past. Trees retained as part of the golf course development help to soften its visual impact on the surrounding environment and assist it merging with the woodland landscape of the area.

### **10.2.5 Settlements**

Wynyard Village is relatively recent and ongoing residential development within the heart of the Wynyard Landscape Character area. Still under development, the linear village gradually extends into the cleared conifer plantation of Black Squares in the west of the area. Other settlements include farmsteads throughout the arable landscape and Grindon located in the west which is characterised by its church remains.

Wolviston is located in the east of the area and on the urban fringe of Billingham which abuts the Landscape Character Area. These two settlements are separated by the A19 strategic road corridor and an area of arable farmland. This is an important landscape buffer to be maintained and to prevent the merger of the two settlements into one large conurbation.

### **10.2.6 Landscape Characteristics**

The key characteristic of this area is its wooded nature which is atypical of the rest of the Stockton on Tees Borough. The variety of wooded river valleys, conifer plantations, arable fields and parkland results in a varied landscape both visually and historically. Views out of this Landscape Character Area are relatively limited due to the enclosure created by the woodland which forms a relatively unified area. The A689, which cuts through the area, and A19 running along the eastern boundary, create visual and noise detractors to the Landscape Character Area however the woodland planting reduces their impact on the majority of the area.

### **10.2.7 Landscape Change and Condition**

Due to the commercial nature of aspects of this landscape, continual change is anticipated to be one of the key aspects of this Landscape Character Area with woodland planting being felled and replanted or replaced with built development. Care should be taken to ensure the natural features of this landscape are not damaged by this continual change, ensuring the deciduous woodland, landform and water course valleys are protected. Protection should also be afforded to the parkland setting of Wynyard Hall.





## Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

The current condition of the landscape is relatively good with well maintained aspects throughout, however isolated pockets of degradation do occur which are predominantly located within the agricultural areas and have resulted from informal 'horsiculture' or other unmanaged land practices.

### 10.3 Thorpe and Billingham Beck Valley



#### 10.3.1 Summary of Thorpe and Billingham Beck Valley Character Area

- Green corridor stretching from the rural areas of the Stockton on Tees Borough into the heart of the conurbation creating a 'Green Wedge' between Stockton and Billingham;
- Wide beck valley gradually narrowing as it extends into Billingham Beck valley extending between Stockton and Billingham;



## Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

- Field sizes vary from medium well defined fields to larger field pattern in the west with poorly maintained hedgerows;
- Land use consisting mainly of semi improved and improved pasture along the valley floor and extending up the sides;
- Transport links include A19, A177 and Stockton to Darlington railway line cutting through the agricultural landscape; and
- A network of minor roads create a complex vehicle network across the area. Public footpath links are limited.

### **10.3.2 Landform and Drainage Pattern**

The landform within this area is gently undulating with land form varying from 70m AOD in the north western extents to below 10m AOD along the course of Billingham Beck. Billingham Beck is situated at the base of a wide valley with sloping sides running into the green wedge dividing Stockton and Billingham, eventually reaching the River Tees at its westerly point. A number of smaller becks feed into Billingham Beck, including Whitton Beck. The becks each run along the base of narrow incised valleys.

### **10.3.3 Land Use**

The predominant land use in the area is agricultural with the area to the west of Stockton used for both arable and pasture with the predominant use of pasture as the valley narrows. As the green wedge approaches Stockton, land use changes to more amenity and recreational in nature with Billingham Golf Course and a Billingham Country Park being the prominent land use. At the furthest reaches close to the conurbation, the green wedge area is dominated by brownfield land with some waste disposal being carried out at the time of the assessment.

### **10.3.4 Field Boundaries and Trees**

Where field boundaries are present to the east of the Landscape Character Area, field boundaries are relatively consistent and unbroken, however boundaries further west delineate larger fields and are generally broken with unmanaged hedgerows and replaced on occasions with post and wire fences.

Tree cover includes some hedgerow trees within field boundaries to the east of the Landscape Character Area with small woodland blocks interspersed throughout. There are areas of mature woodland located



within Billingham Beck at Billingham Golf Club and within the Country Park although these are not consistent along the length of the valley. The course of Billingham Beck is lightly wooded, with some waterside tree planting.

### **10.3.5 Settlements**

The settlements of Billingham and Stockton are the dominant settlements to the east of the Landscape Character Area, separated by an important 'Green Wedge' formed by Billingham Beck valley preventing the two urban areas from merging.

The area is also characterised by farmsteads dotted throughout the countryside, mainly within the valley, with only a number of smaller settlement groups including Stillington and Thorpe Thewles and Viewly Hill.

Farm smallholdings dominate the landscape just north of Norton (south of Viewly Hill) with associated caravans and small bungalows giving the area a distinct urban fringe feel.

### **10.3.6 Landscape Characteristics**

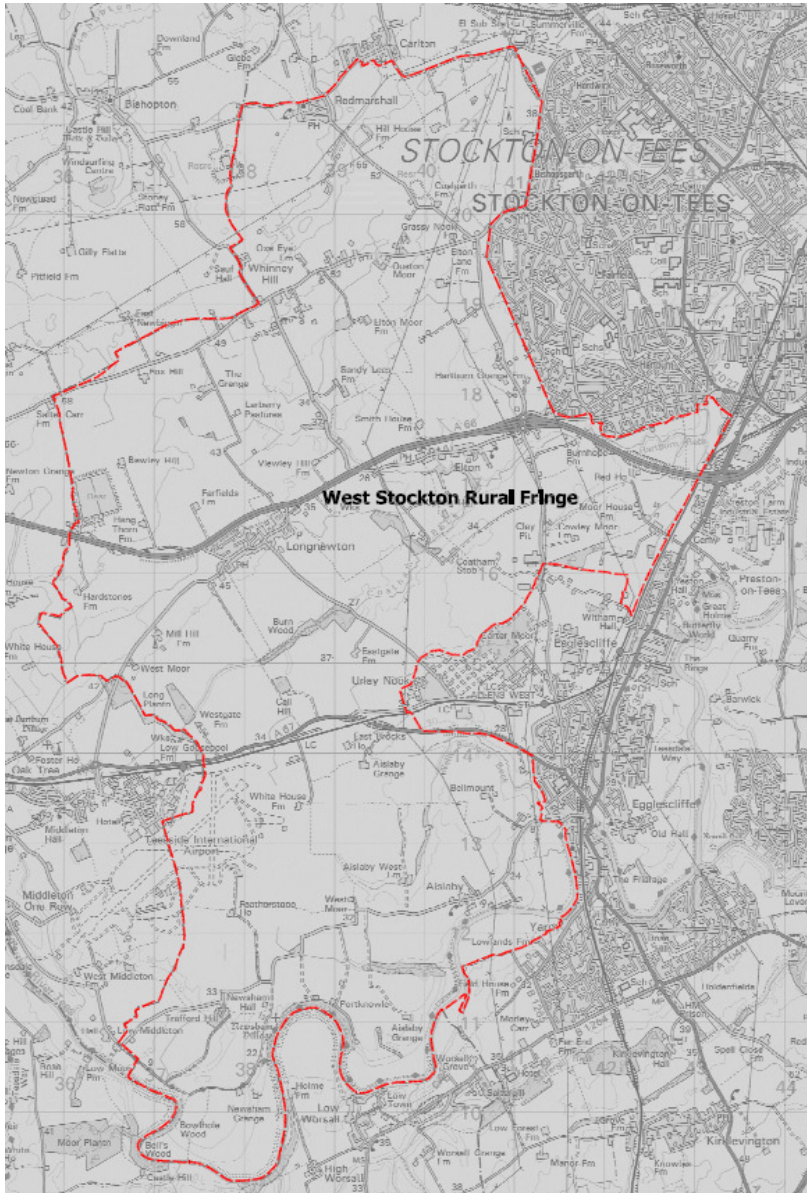
The main characteristic of this landscape is its rural nature and the green wedge linking the rural landscape with the urban areas allowing the countryside to break into the built environment. The open nature of the landscape to the west allows views to be obtained over the area and towards the North York Moors to the south east.

The lines of transmission towers and road network create visual detractors within the area and the lack of tree cover allows these to be viewed throughout much of the east of the Landscape Character Area on the urban fringe of Stockton and Billingham.

### **10.3.7 Landscape Change and Condition**

Urban fringe development associated with the outskirts of Billingham and Stockton and the smaller settlements is anticipated to be minimal. It is assumed that the current land use of the area as agricultural land will remain unchanged. The brownfield land situated to the eastern extents of the green wedge within Billingham Beck Valley would benefit from development as green space rather than built development. This would allow retention and improvement of this existing resource and allowing the green wedge to continue to penetrate to the core of the built development.

## 10.4 West Stockton Rural Fringe



### 10.4.1 Summary of West Stockton Rural Fringe Character Area

- Flat open arable farmland;
- Large areas of recently planted Community Forest within arable setting;
- Enlarged fields with fragmented and absent hedgerows;



## Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

- Strong influence of urban development to west;
- Significant infrastructure includes Teesside Airport and the A66;
- Small isolated villages and farmsteads;
- Electricity transmission towers and large substations create a significant detractor across the landscape and on the outskirts of Stockton;
- Long distant views towards North York Moors; and
- Isolated areas of historic interest.

### **10.4.2 Landform and Drainage Pattern**

The landform within this area is relatively flat (around 40-50m AOD) towards its central and northern reaches, becoming more varied in topography where the landform drops to form the broad River Tees valley. The River Tees forms the dominant water course defining the edge of the Landscape Character Area, fed by a number of becks including Coatham Beck and Nelly Burdon's Beck which cross through the area. A number of small drainage channels are also evident.

### **10.4.3 Land Use**

The predominant land use in the area is agriculture with large arable fields prevailing. Smaller areas are in use as pasture, particularly for horses, where sections of fields have been informally fenced off to create makeshift paddocks. The recently planted Community Forest dominates the central part of the area providing community recreation opportunities. The Teesdale Way runs along sections of the River Tees, again providing a recreational opportunity.

Other significant land uses in the area include Tees Valley International Airport which is situated on the western boundary of the Landscape Character Area and falls partly within the Stockton borough and the adjacent Darlington borough. Views of aircraft landing and taking off from the airport are prevalent throughout the Landscape Character Area, the noise of the airport across the area varying in degree depending on the direction of the wind.



#### 10.4.4 Field Boundaries and Trees

Field boundaries within this area are defined by hedgerows, which are generally patchy or overgrown in nature. Some areas of neatly clipped hedgerows are evident as are hedgerow trees and isolated trees; however these are not strong characteristics of this Landscape Character Area.

Woodland cover within the area includes the recently planted Community Forest towards the central part of the Landscape Character Area, which ranges in age from approximately <1year to 15years+. Other areas of woodland are evident, generally small sized blocks associated with watercourses and include Newsham Wood, Aislaby Wood, Bunkerdale Wood, Burn Wood, Cowley Moor Plantation and Rookery Plantation. Newsham Wood, Aislaby Wood and a section of Rookery Plantation are designated as ancient woodland and comprise predominately deciduous trees; Bunkerdale Wood and Burn Wood are designated as S.N.C.I., and Cowley Moor Plantation comprises established mixed woodland and is designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

#### 10.4.5 Settlements

Settlements within the Landscape Character Area are generally small isolated villages (including Longnewton, Elton, and Aislaby) or isolated farms and small groups of properties. At Newsham a small group of properties lie on the site of Newsham Medieval Village which consist of a group of houses adjacent to a picturesque village pond. This settlement is atypical of the Landscape Character Area. The villages of Longnewton, Elton and Aislaby are not part of the study as these fall within the development limit.

Farm properties within the area consist of old farm houses and more recent large farm complex developments. The built development of Stockton, Eaglescliffe and Egglecliffe and Yarm dominate the area to its western boundary.

#### 10.4.6 Landscape Characteristics

The flat and gently rolling arable nature and sparse woodland cover of the landscape allows relatively long ranging views from various locations of the Landscape Character Area across fields towards the North York Moors to the south west. The adjacent industry, urban fringe and transmission lines form visual detractors in places, reducing its visual quality. Valued features of the landscape include the River Tees and associated woodland and the Community Forest. Although the Community Forest is a relatively recent addition to the landscape it is anticipated to continue to add value to this Landscape Character Area as it





matures. The historic elements of the landscape include the site of Newsham Mediaeval Village and some areas of ridge and furrow noted in a handful of fields.

**10.4.7 Landscape Change and Condition**

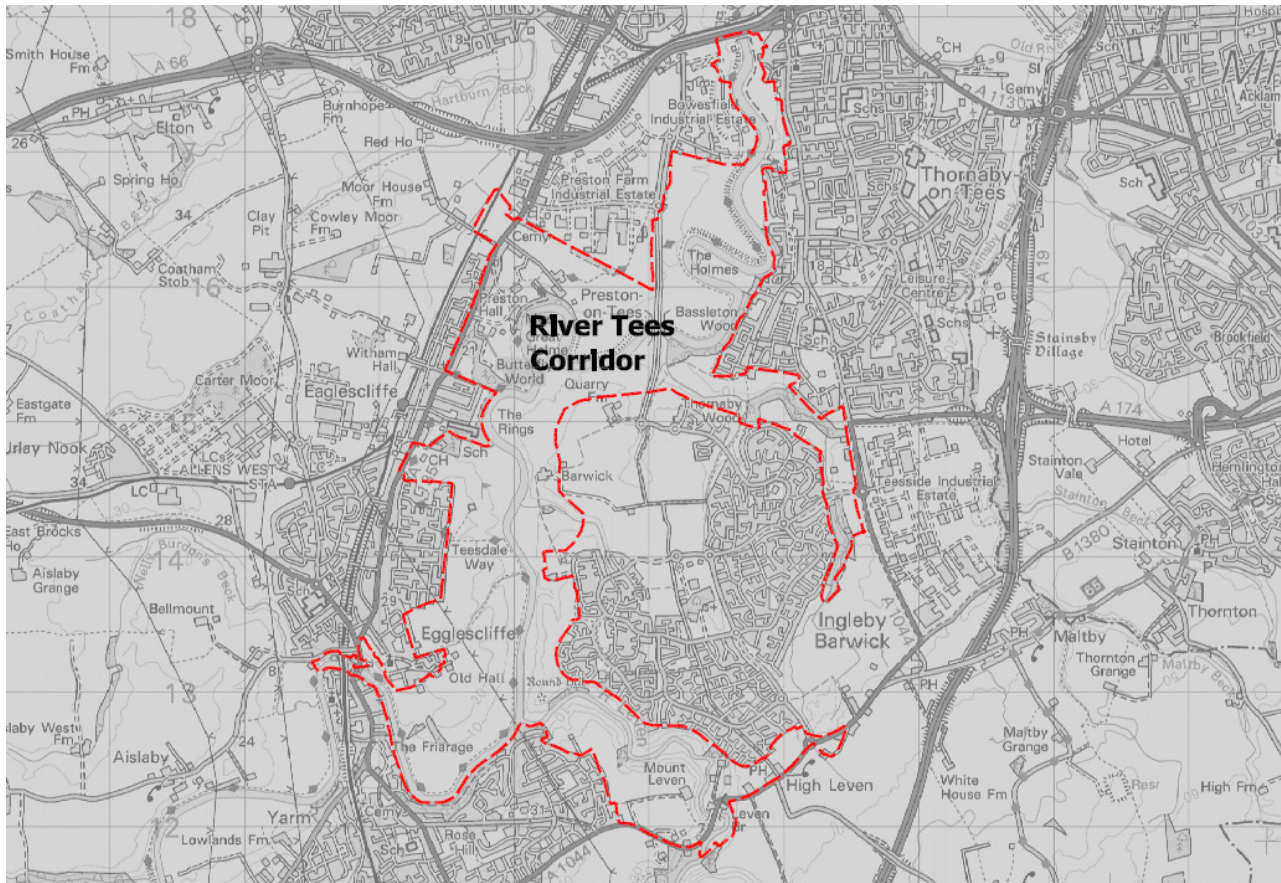
The majority of the landscape remains in agricultural use with the creation of the Community Forest the most significant change to the landscape over the coming years. The condition of the landscape is generally fair to good with improvements required to field boundaries to restore and enhance the landscape pattern. Temporary fencing is being used to create temporary paddocks within the landscape which often creates a visual detractor on the landscape, the reinstatement of hedgerows within these areas would add landscape and ecological value to the Landscape Character Area.

The creation of a new road junction to the west of Longnewton has altered the characteristic of the landscape in this area although the maturation of associated planting is anticipated to soften the impact of this road junction.





### 10.5 River Tees Corridor



#### 10.5.1 Summary of the River Tees Corridor Character Area

- River dominated corridor of green space;
- Varied landform from flat river plains to steep valley sides;
- Steep river valleys lined with established woodland;
- Encroaching residential and business/industrial development; and
- Preston Hall and Park creating a valuable historic resource within the area.





### 10.5.2 Landform and Drainage Pattern

The area consists of relatively low lying landform situated at approximately 10-20m AOD, rising gradually in the south of the Landscape Character Area to 30m AOD. The landform is flat in the northern reaches of the Landscape Character Area with pronounced steep slopes leading down to the river in the southern reaches.

The River Tees edges the outskirts of Yarm before flowing in a northern direction towards Stockton. Where the river leaves the outskirts of Yarm it is relatively straight, situated at the base of a wide valley. Towards the central and northern reaches of the river the watercourse meanders significantly, opening up the valley to create a wide flat valley floor. The River Leven joins the River Tees in its southern reaches, entering the Landscape Character Area from the south west. The River Leven is situated at the base of a narrow valley with steep wooded sides. Round Hill forms a localised landform at the point where the River Leven and River Tees join.

Bassleton Beck joins the River Tees just north of Ingleby Barwick running through a steep narrow valley sandwiched between Ingleby Barwick and Thornaby.

### 10.5.3 Land Use

A number of recent housing, business and industrial development have occurred within the River Tees Corridor. The housing development at Ingeby Barwick is not included within the current River Tees Corridor Landscape Character Area, however the land this now occupies was included within the original study carried out in 1992. The most significant development within the River Corridor is a business and housing development to the east of Preston Farm Industrial Estate. As part of this development a large area of wetland habitat has been created on both sides of the River Tees with boardwalks and marked routeways through the wetland.

Other land uses within the area include allotments and open space to the northern area adjacent to Thornaby-on-Tees. The open space areas consist of areas of rough grassland to areas of recently planted trees which are competing with un-managed grassland. The central areas consist of well maintained grassland and a golf course on the outskirts of Egglecliffe. Preston Hall is a significant land use within this area and contains parkland which is publicly accessible in the setting of the historic house.

To the south land use is more wooded with the Teesdale Way running along the eastern outskirts of the River Tees. A small housing development also occupies the southern extent of the Landscape Character



## Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

Area adjacent to the A1044. Arable and rough pasture farmland is present on the outskirts of Yarm and Eaglescliffe with some ridge and furrow noted in the landform.

### **10.5.4 Field Boundaries and Trees**

Where field boundaries are present, predominately to the south of the Landscape Character Area, these have been noted as hedgerows or fences. In some areas the hedgerows are in need of maintenance and are relatively gappy, but generally they form unbroken boundaries.

Trees form a dominant part of the Landscape Character Area to the south with trees lining the steep river valley edges adjacent to the River Leven and Bassleton Beck. Woodland comprises Thornaby Plantation, Thornaby Wood, Bassleton Wood, trees within Preston Park, Round Hill Plantation and smaller woodlands along the River Leven. The woodlands are generally established deciduous woods which play an important part in softening the outskirts of the adjacent settlements. New woodland planting is present to the north of the Landscape Character Area adjacent to Thornaby on Tees allotments, however long unmanaged grassland is competing with its establishment.

### **10.5.5 Settlements**

Settlements within this area are limited to the southern reaches of the Landscape Character Area, with a recently constructed housing development of approximately 10 houses at Leven Bridge. Preston Hall is used as council offices and does not appear to be used for private residence.

The surrounding housing of Yarm, Egglecliffe and Preston to the west, and Ingleby Barwick, Thornaby on Tees and Stockton to the east and north enclose the Landscape Character Area on three sides by settlement development, strongly influencing the Landscape Character Area.

### **10.5.6 Landscape Characteristics**

Views within this area are channelled along the River Tees corridor with the River Tees and River Leven forming the main physical features. The varying topography and land cover in the southern area levels out towards the central area as the river meander. This creates distinct changes in the landscape character linked through the common feature of the river. The surrounding built development creates a relatively enclosed feel to the area, with built development encroaching on it from the extension to Preston Farm Industrial Estate. The wetland area created adjacent to the built development provides a unique feature within the borough of Stockton.



Preston Park is a key historic characteristic linking the area to its past and providing a valued community resource.

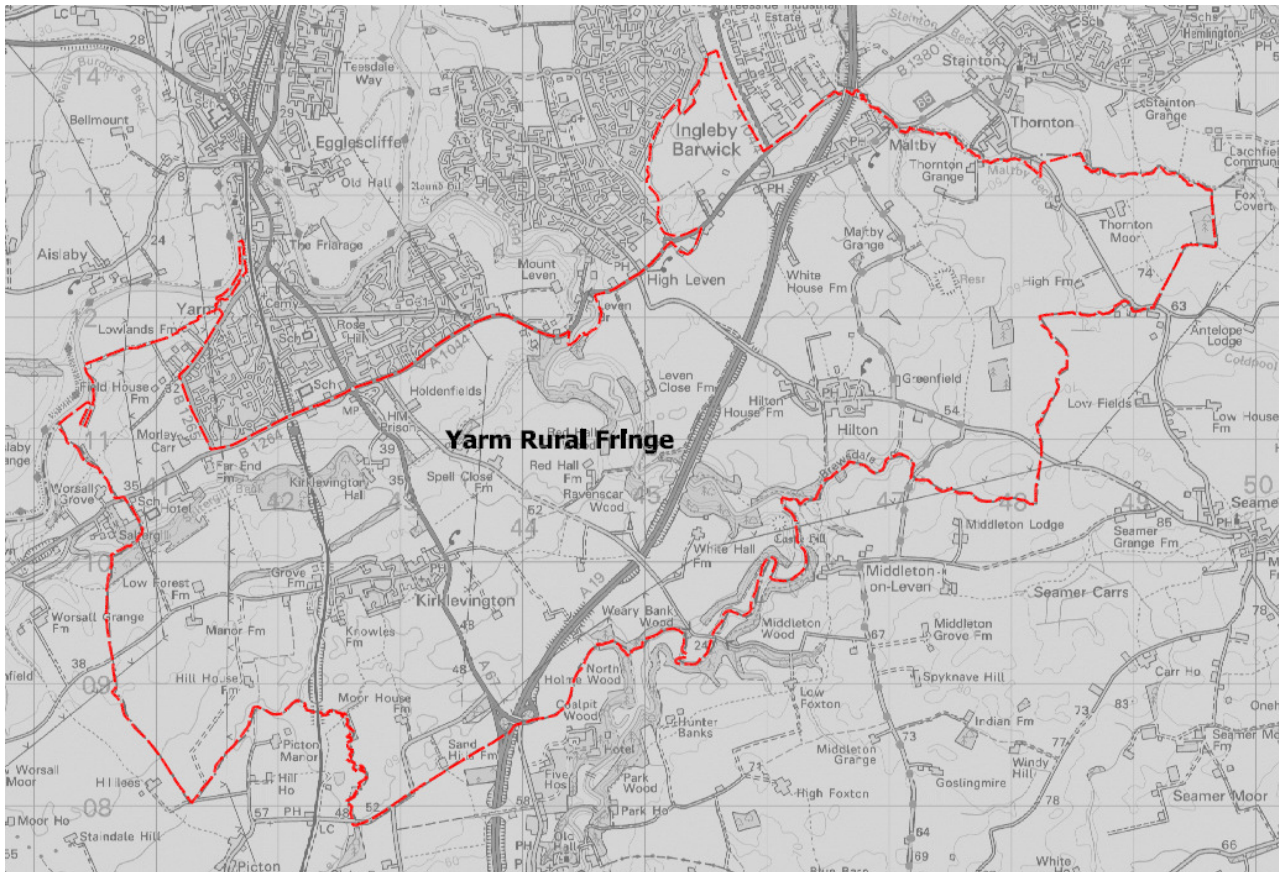
### **10.5.7 Landscape Change and Condition**

The recent and emerging development both within the Landscape Character Area and on its boundaries has significantly changed this area, narrowing the corridor and resulting in a greater need to protect the green wedge. The protection of the green wedge is essential to prevent the merger of the settlements on either side of the river and enable each settlement to retain its own character.

The condition of the landscape varies throughout the Landscape Character Area with some areas maintained in very good condition in the central and southern parts whilst areas closer to Thornaby on Tees appear neglected with significant river debris. The wetland habitat appears to be well managed and acts as a valuable wildlife resource. With maintenance and management its future value will be secured.



## 10.6 Yarm Rural Fringe



### 10.6.1 Summary of Yarm Rural Fringe Character Area

- Flat to rolling arable landscape;
- Large fields with few hedgerows reducing in size to medium and small fields within closer proximity of Yarm, Kirklevington, Hilton and Maltby;
- Wooded river valleys cutting through arable landscape;
- Pressures on landscape from potential development on the outskirts of Yarm, Kirklevington, Maltby and Hilton; and
- Transport corridors including the A19 and A67 cutting through the area and creating both visual and noise detractors to an otherwise tranquil landscape.



### **10.6.2 Landform and Drainage Pattern**

The landform within the area is generally flat to rolling, however reaching heights of 70m AOD in the south eastern reaches of the Landscape Character Area. River corridors (of the River Leven and Saltergill Beck) cut through the area creating pronounced valleys in the landform.

The River Leven and Saltergill Beck are the most prominent water features in the area. The River Leven meanders through the landscape to the east of Yarm dividing the Landscape Character Area to the east and west. Saltergill Beck rises at Kirklevington Hall and flows in a westerly direction to eventually join the River Tees to the west. Other water courses include East Gill, joining the Leven from the east and Maltby Beck which flows in a northern direction on the eastern aspects of the Landscape Character Area to join Stainsby Beck. A number of manmade drainage ditches are present running across the agricultural fields.

### **10.6.3 Land Use**

Predominant land use in the area is arable farmland and wooded river valleys. A number of farmsteads are dotted throughout the Landscape Character Area with some larger developments including a golf driving range, Kirklevington Prison, Kirklevington Hall and associated parkland and a large hotel complex named 'Tall Trees' to the outskirts of Yarm breaking up the rural characteristics.

### **10.6.4 Field Boundaries and Trees**

Field boundaries are formed by hedgerows, creating fields of varying sizes from large fields where hedgerow boundaries have been removed to smaller more intimate fields located on the outskirts of Yarm and the settlements of Kirklevington and Hilton.

The river valleys cutting through the area are associated with wooded valley edges with mixed woodland situated on the valley sides. These wooded valleys are of particular importance as an absence of trees is noted in the agricultural aspects of the Landscape Character Area. Some small plantations have been noted particularly to the east.

### **10.6.5 Settlements**

The settlements of Maltby, Kirklevington and Hilton form medium sized villages within the Landscape Character Area with other settlements comprising of isolated farmsteads. Yarm defines the northern boundary of the Landscape Character Area and strongly influences its boundary with a number of



developments spilling from Yarm into the surrounding countryside. These include development along the B1264, comprising the large Tall Trees Hotel and development along the A67 which includes Kirklevington Prison. A small group of houses are associated with the prison complex.

### **10.6.6 Landscape Characteristics**

This Landscape Character Area comprises a diverse landscape structure with the northern boundaries strongly influenced by the urban fringe of Yarm and the southern and western reaches characterised by isolated farmland. The wooded river valleys provide a welcome break in the agricultural landscape with the mature woods and parkland around Kirklevington Hall softening the harsh urban edge of Yarm.

The area is dissected by major transport links including the A19, A67 and the railway link from Northallerton to Yarm. These transport links restrict access through the area with crossing points only available in a limited number of places. The road links also cause some degree of noise disturbance on the surrounding countryside, effecting its tranquil nature within close proximity of the roads. In addition, the visual impact of the development extending from Yarm, particularly Kirklevington Prison and Tall Trees Hotel have an impact on the landscape and detract from its rural nature character.

### **10.6.7 Landscape Change and Condition**

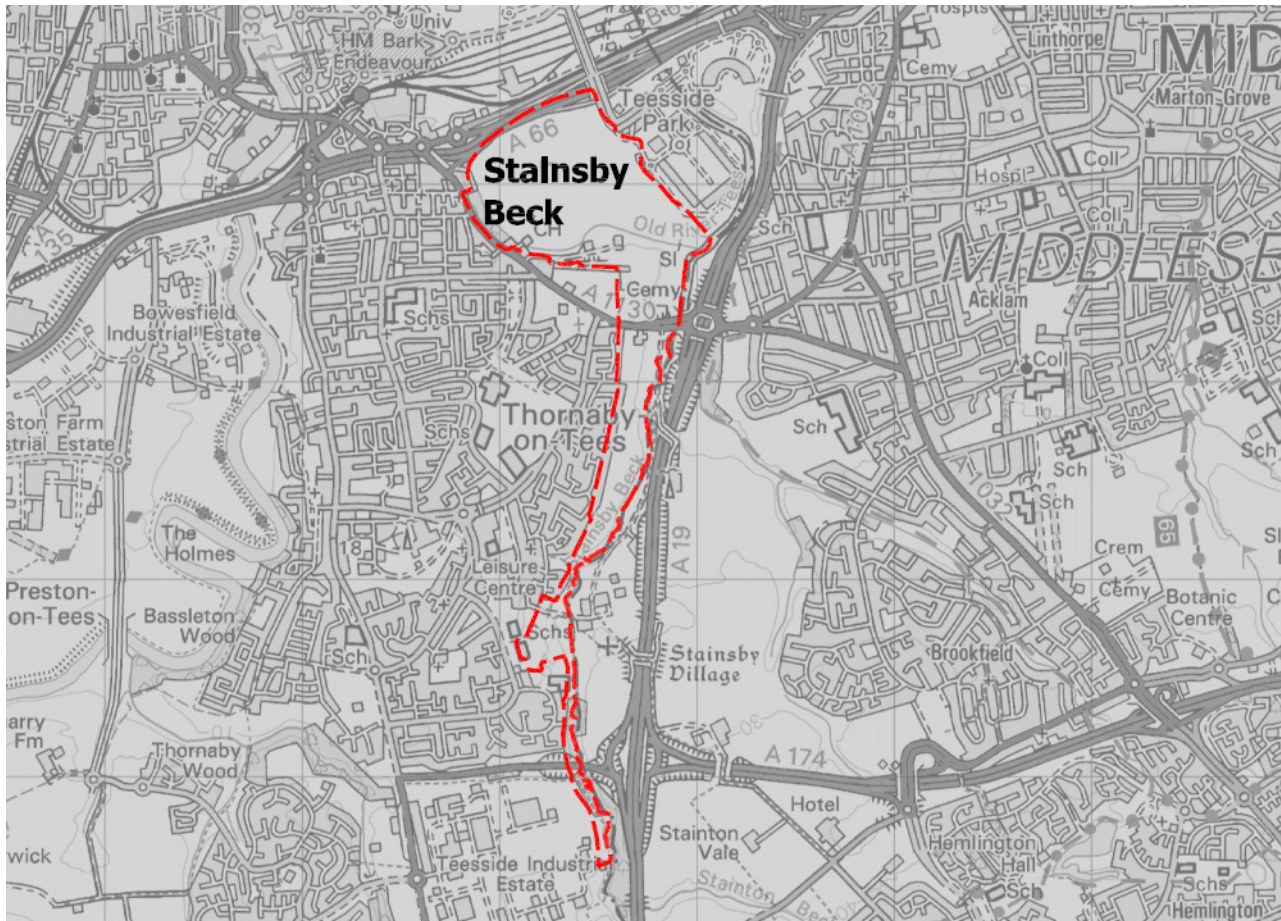
The 1992 assessment indicated that there were potential plans to close Kirklevington Prison, however, this was still in use at the time of this assessment. The assessment also indicated that there were plans to develop a golf course in the River Leven Valley. This was not evident at the time of the assessment and plans for a golf course in this location are currently unknown.

The agricultural landscape is generally in good condition although some unmanaged and neglected fields were noted to the west of the Landscape Character Area, west of Kirklevington. Pressures on the landscape are anticipated from pressure to develop around the outskirts of Yarm and other settlements within the Landscape Character Area.





## 10.7 Stainsby Beck



### 10.7.1 Summary of Stainsby Beck character Area

- Green corridor between the boroughs of Stockton and Middlesbrough;
- Narrow wooded valley with Stainsby Beck running through the centre defining the edge of the borough;
- Mixed land use including woodland, public open space, footpath, golf course, agriculture and cemetery;
- Strongly influenced by the residential and industrial edge of Thornaby on Tees;
- Bisected by road corridors including the A19 running just outside the northern boundary.



### 10.7.2 Landform and Drainage Pattern

The landform of this corridor is relatively constant ranging between 10m and 20m AOD. Stainsby Beck runs along the western boundary of the area, which coincides with the boundary of the borough of Stockton. In the north of the Landscape Character Area lies a large flat area of land bound by the Old Course of The River Tees. The land within this area contains a number of man made drainage channels.

Stainsby Beck runs along the floor of a narrow valley with relatively steep sided topography to the south, opening up as it travels in a northern direction. Steep topography is also evident to the north of the Landscape Character Area around Harewood Pleasure Gardens.

### 10.7.3 Land Use

Land use varies within this Landscape Character Area from a golf course, public pleasure gardens and extension to the existing cemetery in the north, to improved pasture, agriculture, public green space and woodland along the linear stretch of the Landscape Character Area. The A174 cuts across the Landscape Character Area to the south and the A19 abuts the boundary in areas to the north.

### 10.7.4 Field Boundaries and Trees

Field boundaries are defined by both hedgerows and fences, with only a small amount of the Landscape Character Area used for agricultural purposes with defined fields.

Woodland planting is predominant to the south of the area where Stainsby Wood runs along the course of the beck. Small woodland plantations are also present throughout the area with both clumps of trees and isolated trees present throughout.

### 10.7.5 Settlements

No settlements were noted within this Landscape Character Area. However, the adjacent settlement of Thornaby dominates the eastern boundary of the Landscape Character Area with the open space a significant component of the character of the adjacent housing.

### 10.7.6 Landscape Characteristics

The key characteristic of this landscape is its function as a green wedge separating the borough of Stockton from Middlesbrough. Its mixed characteristics include relatively pleasant woodland lining a beck, well





maintained and areas of open space, agricultural fields and significant man made features including the golf course, cemetery and pleasure gardens. The close proximity of the A19 to this Landscape Character Area is softened by the significant woodland planting screening views. Other road networks cross the Landscape Character Area dividing it into discrete segments but the presence of the built development to the eastern and northern boundaries is the most significant influencing factor to this Landscape Character Area.

**10.7.7 Landscape Change and Condition**

The landscape characteristics in this area have changed over time due to the surrounding built development, both industrial and residential, and the introduction of man made features such as golf courses, formal gardens and roads altering the perception of the landscape. The woodland elements are constant features within this area which should be preserved. The general condition of the area is good with some public open spaces potentially benefiting from less frequent mowing regimes to allow more ecological rich habitats to develop within the public spaces.





## 11.0 Landscape Units

Almost 200 Landscape Units have been identified as part of the assessment of the Stockton Borough. The methodology for completing the survey sheets is included within section 3.0.

The survey sheets cover a range of topics including built form, landcover, infrastructure, topography, and a brief description of the land parcel, highlighting its rarity within the Borough of Stockton, its key characteristics and its condition. External influences have also been included to detail any key factors outside the land parcel which significantly affect its characteristics, e.g. airport noise, road noise, views over industry. Architecture is noted where applicable, although not all Landscape Units contain built form.

In addition to a recording of the physical elements present within the landscape a visual assessment has also been carried out highlighting some of the more aesthetic aspects of the character. As the survey was carried out during winter and spring months, where seasonal variation to the aesthetic elements is anticipated, this has been highlighted as 'potential for seasonal variation'. An example might be where a woodland has been surveyed in the winter months with little vegetation cover present, allowing open views and a sense of remoteness, to surveying the same area in the summer months where vegetation may provide a diversity of colour, enclosing the area and attracting a number of walkers and wildlife to make an active landscape. This visual assessment is closely linked to the perception of the landscape, which again has potential for seasonal variation. The perception of the landscape may be more subjective than the other elements of the study, as the responses given will reflect the experience of the individual assessors within that land parcel. However, wherever possible an element of objectivity has been used to inform the judgements made and any feedback received during the consultation stages helps to reinforce judgements made.

The final section recorded within the survey sheets includes an initial response to potential landscape conservation to be implemented within the area. This is a general observation by the assessor suggesting elements of work that would be required to be carried out in order to maintain or improve the current condition of the landscape. Examples of potential conservation include the removal of fly tipping, woodland management and hedgerow maintenance.

The survey sheets are included within Appendix F and the mapped areas illustrated in Figure 4. The survey sheets have been compiled into an access database to allow elements of the survey to be interrogated to identify common factors, changes over time and for ease of updating the records. This creates a usable



data storage tool which can be continued to be used into the future in addition to informing the current Landscape Character Assessment.

## 12.0 Landscape Character & Climate Change

This assessment is not intended to provide a detailed analysis of the potential impact of climate change on the existing landscape character of the Borough. This study may however form the basis of further work relating to the landscape character of the borough and the potential impacts of climate change upon it.

It is recognised and accepted that the climate of the UK has changed notably over the past century and studies have identified that this is likely to continue into the future resulting impacts on landscape features and the overall landscape character. Although the result of climate change is not fully known, it is anticipated to have an impact on existing landscape features and the overall landscape character as a result in evolving farming and land use practice.

Future climate scenarios for the North East predict that by the 2050's the average annual daily temperature could have risen by almost 2%. This could mean that the climate in the longer term will consist milder, wetter winters and drier summers.

There is also increased likelihood of extreme weather events with for example - Short spells of uncomfortably hot weather lasting 1-2 days - projected to be around 40 times more likely in the 2050s compared with the 1970s baseline. Frequent bouts of prolonged heavy rainfall causing localized flooding, of land and property.

At a local level, impacts may include the loss of existing landscape features including tree cover, vegetation and watercourses as we currently know them.

As a result of this there may be the development of new habitats and landscape features and although unknown at this time what these could be, may result in physical changes in the existing landscape character of the Borough.

### 12.1.1 River Tees and its tributaries

All water courses are vulnerable to climate change. The River Tees and its tributaries will come under increased pressure from surface water run off during bouts of heavy rainfall. The Environment Agency has highlighted areas of the Tees which are particularly prone to flood at Yarm, Stockton, Thornaby, Aislaby,





and Eaglescliffe. There is also significant flooding risk from Coatham Beck, and Lustrum Beck affecting central areas of Stockton and Bishopton Beck affecting Carlton.

The river basin estuary at Seal Sands is also prone to tidal flooding. This will have a knock on effect backing up tributary water courses in North Billingham causing flooding further inland. Although a heavily industrialised this area is also an important wetland habitat and as such is under particular threat from habitat loss caused by both tidal surges and river flooding.

**12.1.2 Habit and species loss**

Changing climate is causing loss of indigenous habitat along river banks leaving banks exposed and vulnerable to scouring during high tides and flood events potentially undermining river bank development.

Introduction into the area of non- indigenous species and disease is resulting in the weakening of existing flora. Careful planting of hardy species will need to continue to mitigate against further loss of habitat.

**12.1.3 Land Use Change**

Longer growing seasons and increased length of time that grazing is available may change farming practices in the area. Growing biomass may also become more prevalent as a result.





## Figures



## Appendices



## **Appendix A – Report Conditions**



# Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment

## **REPORT CONDITIONS**

### **Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment**

This report is produced solely for the benefit of Stockton on Tees Borough Council and no liability is accepted for any reliance placed on it by any other party unless specifically agreed in writing otherwise.

This report is prepared for the proposed uses stated in the report and should not be used in a different context without reference to WYG. In time improved practices, fresh information or amended legislation may necessitate a re-assessment. Opinions and information provided in this report are on the basis of WYG using due skill and care in the preparation of the report.

This report refers, within the limitations stated, to the environment of the site in the context of the surrounding area at the time of the inspections. Environmental conditions can vary and no warranty is given as to the possibility of changes in the environment of the site and surrounding area at differing times.

This report is limited to those aspects reported on, within the scope and limits agreed with the client under our appointment. It is necessarily restricted and no liability is accepted for any other aspect. It is based on the information sources indicated in the report. Some of the opinions are based on unconfirmed data and information and are presented as the best obtained within the scope for this report.

Reliance has been placed on the documents and information supplied to WYG by others but no independent verification of these has been made and no warranty is given on them. No liability is accepted or warranty given in relation to the performance, reliability, standing etc of any products, services, organisations or companies referred to in this report.

Whilst skill and care have been used, no investigative method can eliminate the possibility of obtaining partially imprecise, incomplete or not fully representative information. Any monitoring or survey work undertaken as part of the commission will have been subject to limitations, including for example timescale, seasonal and weather related conditions.

Although care is taken to select monitoring and survey periods that are typical of the environmental conditions being measured, within the overall reporting programme constraints, measured conditions may not be fully representative of the actual conditions. Any predictive or modelling work, undertaken as part of the commission will be subject to limitations including the representativeness of data used by the model and the assumptions inherent within the approach used. Actual environmental conditions are typically more complex and variable than the investigative, predictive and modelling approaches indicate in practice, and the output of such approaches cannot be relied upon as a comprehensive or accurate indicator of future conditions.

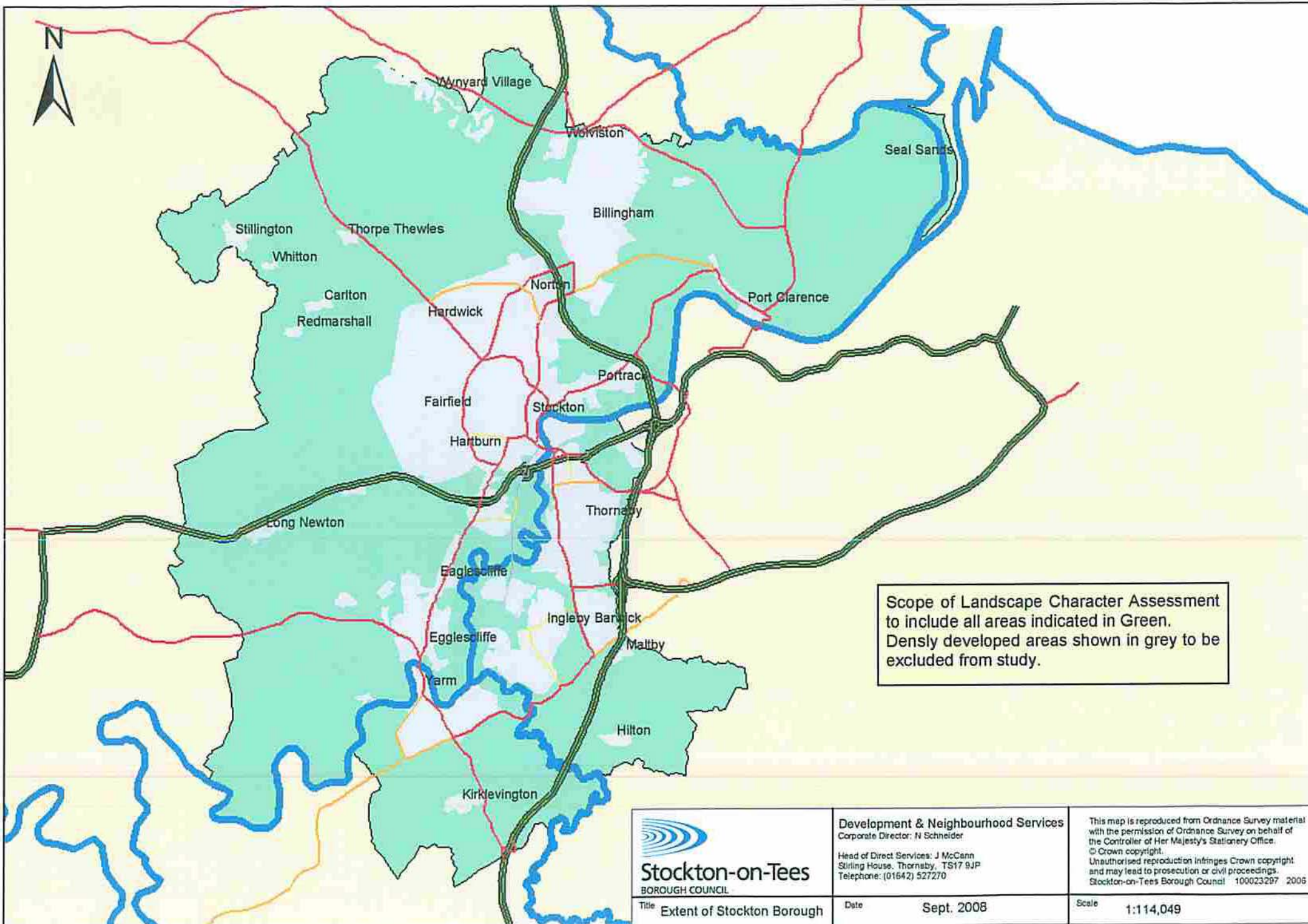
The potential influence of our assessment and report on other aspects of any development or future planning requires evaluation by other involved parties.

The performance of environmental protection measures and of buildings and other structures in relation to acoustics, vibration, noise mitigation and other environmental issues is influenced to a large extent by the degree to which the relevant environmental considerations are incorporated into the final design and specifications and the quality of workmanship and compliance with the specifications on site during construction. WYG accept no liability for issues with performance arising from such factors.






**Appendix B – Study Area included within the  
Contract Brief for the provision of a  
Landscape Character Study for the  
Borough of Stockton-on-Tees**



Scope of Landscape Character Assessment to include all areas indicated in Green. Densely developed areas shown in grey to be excluded from study.

 <p><b>Stockton-on-Tees</b> BOROUGH COUNCIL</p>	<p><b>Development &amp; Neighbourhood Services</b> Corporate Director: N Schneider</p> <p>Head of Direct Services: J McCann Stirling House, Thornaby, TS17 9JP Telephone: (01642) 527270</p>	<p>This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council 100023297 2006</p>
<p>Title Extent of Stockton Borough</p>	<p>Date Sept. 2008</p>	<p>Scale 1:114,049</p>



## **Appendix C – Tees Lowland Joint Character Area**

# Tees Lowlands



## Key Characteristics

- A broad lowlying plain of gently undulating, predominantly arable, farmland with wide views to distant hills.
- Meandering, slow-moving river Tees flows through the heart of the area dividing the lowlands to north and south.
- Contrast of quiet rural areas with extensive urban and industrial development concentrated along the lower reaches of the Tees, the estuary and coast.
- Large-scale chemical and oil refining works, dock facilities and other heavy plants along the Tees estuary form a distinctive skyline by day and night.
- Overhead transmission lines and pylons, motorway corridors, railway lines and other infrastructure elements are widespread features.
- Woodland cover is generally sparse but with local variation such as at Skerne Carr, on steep banks of the middle reaches of the Tees, and to parkland and managed estates.
- Distinctive areas of peaty fenland flatts and carrs within the Skerne lowlands. Extensive areas of mud flats, saltmarsh wetlands and dunes at mouth of the river Tees which support valuable wildlife habitats.
- Minor valleys and linear strips of open land extend as 'green corridors' from rural farmland into the heart of the Teesside conurbation.

## Landscape Character

The Tees Lowlands form a broad, low-lying plain framed by the Cleveland Hills to the south-east, by the Pennines Fringes to the west and merging in to the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau to the north. To the south of the river Tees, low hills form a more subtle transition into the Vale of Mowbray beyond. The slow-moving river Tees meanders through the heart of the area, dividing the lowlands to north and south. The whole area

is gently undulating or nearly flat, much of it below 30 m AOD, and very broad in scale, with wide views to distant hills.

The Teesside conurbation forms an extensive area of urban and industrial development which spreads around the margins of the Tees estuary as an almost continuous built-up area from Redcar to Billingham, with Hartlepool as a discrete settlement to the north. Minor valleys and open strips of land form 'green corridors' linking rural farmland into the heart of the Teesside conurbation. High-rise buildings, large-scale chemical and oil refining works, dock-side container terminals, a power station and other installations, all clustered on land reclaimed from the estuary at Teesmouth, form a distinctive and dramatic skyline which is highly visible across this low-lying landscape by day and night.



Rich arable land on Morton Flatts with Roseberry Topping in the distance.

MIKE KIPLING

This extensive area of industry is starkly juxtaposed with the natural elements of the Tees estuary. Areas of open water, mud flat, salt marsh and meadow, including Seal Sands and the Cowpen Marshes, survive in amongst the industrial installations and are protected as habitats of outstanding importance for birds as well as offering an important archaeological resource.



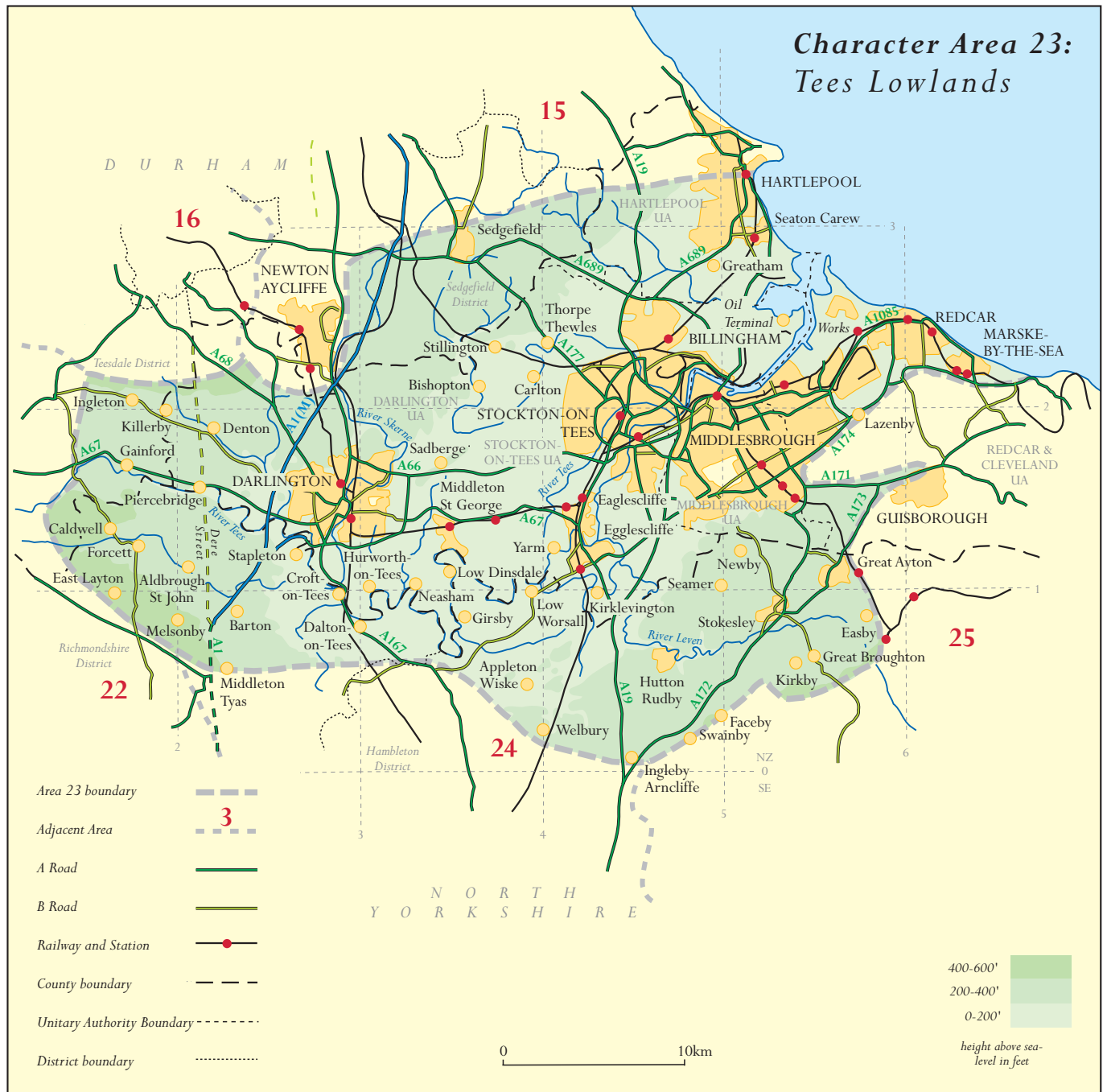


MIKE KIPPLING

Piercebridge was the site of an important Roman fort which guarded the strategic crossing point of Dere Street over the Tees.

West of Teesside, the Tees Lowlands extend as a broad area of gently undulating, arable farmland, large in scale, sparsely wooded and open, before reaching Darlington, another major industrial town. The land drops gently down to the river Tees which is only made visible by the willows growing along its banks. There are few hedgerow trees, ash and sycamore and only occasional blocks of farm woodland. Unspoilt villages lie close to the Tees, at the 'blind' ends of meandering minor roads, for there are few bridging points along the middle reaches of the valley. This is a rural landscape with a few scattered small villages and farmsteads and only the presence of pylons to remind one of the proximity of a major urban and industrial complex. Views of the Cleveland hills to the south.

To the north of Billingham the land rises gently and is more undulating. Permanent pastures and leys are more frequent, with grazing sheep and cattle, and with stretches



of semi-natural woodland on thin-soiled heathy areas. Nearby the Skerne Carrs form an extensive and distinctive area of essentially flat, peaty fenland and carrs with frequent water courses.

Estates and landscaped parklands are occasional features of the Tees Lowlands landscape and include South Park, within the urban setting of Darlington, Wynyard Park, set within an extensive well-wooded estate to the north of Stockton, and Hardwick Park, notable for its landscape garden and 36-acre lake.

The area is crossed by corridors of major infrastructure, including the north-south A1 road, A19 and main east coast railway line, together with the A66 and prominent overhead transmission lines.

### Physical Influences

The Tees Lowlands is largely underlain by red mudstones and sandstones of Permo-Triassic age. Jurassic sandstones and shales, resistant to weathering, outcrop on the coast and form the upstanding edge of the Eston and Upleatham Hills near Guisborough.

Almost the whole area is masked by thick deposits of glacial drift, till or boulder clay, sand and gravel. These deposits are typically tinged red by their content of Permo-Triassic rock debris.

The area is gently undulating, falling south and south-eastward from about 120 m on the dip slope of the Magnesian Limestone plateau, to sea level. Much of the area lies below 30 m AOD, with extensive flat areas of coastal plain, estuarine marshland and mud flats and, inland,

areas of carr as at Bradbury, Morden and Preston Carrs. To the south of the river Tees, low undulating hills of glacial moraine rise as a low watershed between the Tees and its former tributary, the river Wiske, which was deflected by the glacial deposits to flow south to the river Swale.

The river Tees flows through the centre of the lowland basin, fed by its tributaries the Skerne, Langley Beck, Billingham Beck and the river Leven. Its meandering course, in places incised through the glacial deposits into the plain, is locally defined by bluffs, with gorge-like sections in its middle reaches. Its flow is controlled by artificial embankments in these stretches, but downstream its flow is controlled by a newly completed tidal barrage.

### Historical and Cultural Influences

The Tees Lowlands have always been an important area for farming. Much of the originally wooded landscape of the Tees Lowlands was cleared more than 2000 years ago by Iron Age farmers, who lived in small settlements such as the one excavated at Thorpe Thewles, and cultivated the surrounding area. Roman influences still remain, in the landscape and in the north-south alignment of the modern B6275 road, formerly Dere Street, which ran northwards through the area from Piercebridge which was the fortified crossing of the river Tees. Evidence that the fertile, loamy soils supported a large rural population in the Middle Ages is provided by the many sites of deserted or 'shrunk' medieval villages within the landscape of the Tees Lowlands, especially in the area around Skerne Carrs.



The extensive area of urban and industrial development that forms the Teeside conurbation contrasts sharply with the natural elements of the Tees estuary and surrounding countryside.



Areas of semi-natural open water, such as Saltholme Pools, survive or have been reclaimed from the industrial installations of Teesside. They are habitats of outstanding importance for waders and wildfowl.

The development of the towns that go to make up the conurbation of Teesside as a major industrial area has its roots in rich local mineral reserves, good communications links and an estuarine and coastal location.

Stockton was the location of major innovation in the use of steam which stimulated industrial development throughout the country. The world's first public passenger steam railway, by Act of Parliament, ran from Witton Park to Stockton and was formally opened in 1825. Locomotion no.1 departed from Shildon to Stockton and subsequently Stephenson and Hawkworth pioneered the opening up of the whole area, with lines extending northwards to the Durham coalfield, along the Durham coast and eastwards into Teesside. The remaining artefacts of the many railway lines with their bridges and viaducts reflect the importance of the early development of the railway network.

Teesside was also formerly one of the three most important shipbuilding rivers in the region, exploiting ironstone deposits in the Cleveland Hills, combined with cheap local coal, and the flat estuarine location. The extensive chemical plants, which form one of the largest complexes in Europe, have their foundations in the manufacture of matches, 'Friction Lights' as invented by John Walker of Stockton in 1827. Much of the modern chemical industry developed later, after the 1880s and followed the invention of a process to exploit underlying salt reserves by extracting salt as brine.

In contrast to the rapid industrial growth of the 19th and early 20th century, heavy industry at Teesside has declined considerably over the last 30 years, including the closure of the huge shipyards. The resulting widespread dereliction within the Tees valley has been partly addressed through a variety of both current and completed restoration schemes.

## Buildings and Settlement

Some of the small villages, such as Gainford, are early 'green villages', typically with terraced cottages of red sandstone built around a central tree-lined green and often retaining their long characteristic tofts and garths radiating out to meet the countryside beyond. More recent building is often of mottled pink/red/orange bricks with red pantiles.

Piercebridge originated as the site of an important Roman fort which once guarded the strategic crossing of Dere Street over the Tees. Other forts are found at Croft-on-Tees, Low Dinsdale and Yarm. Yarm has since developed as a market town with a long, wide central street and market place lined with elegant Georgian town houses. Middleton St George has quite different origins, enjoying a brief period as a 19th century spa 'town' following the discovery of a sulphur spring at nearby Dinsdale. Larger individual settlements include the market towns of Stokesley, Darlington and Guisborough, with fine 19th municipal buildings in the town centres built of local sandstones.

Dense, urban development lines the lower valley of the Tees. Middlesbrough, Stockton and Billingham occupy higher, drier land above the floodplain, and line the riversides at its lowest downstream crossing point. Large-scale chemical and oil refining works have spread across the estuarine flats forming an almost continuous conurbation between Hartlepool, an ancient town and port, and Redcar, a popular seaside resort. Newton Aycliffe, located adjacent to a second world war ammunitions factory, developed as a 'New Town' in the 20th century.

## Land Cover

Extensive areas of the Tees Lowlands region are given over to urban and industrial development, including infrastructure such as motorway corridors, particularly concentrated within the Teesside conurbation and within the A1 corridor. However, within the wider agricultural landscape, broad fields of arable crops, enclosed by a combination of fencing and low hedgerows with few hedgerow trees, ash and sycamore, are typical. This contrasts with the more pastoral landscape of the Skerne lowlands where beef cattle, particularly the local Shorthorn breed, and sheep are reared on the peaty fenland flats and carrs. With the proximity of racecourses at Redcar and Sedgfield, areas of good quality permanent grassland are also grazed by racing horses and by ponies on the fringes of urban areas.

Woodland cover within the region is generally sparse. Locally, however, woodland cover is higher, as for example the substantial, often ancient, semi-natural woodlands on the steep banks of the river Tees valley and its tributary the Leven. Some estates, such as Wynyard Park and Hardwick Park, are well-wooded with blocks of mixed and conifer

planting. New areas of immature mixed woodlands have been planted recently as part of the multi-purpose Cleveland Community Forest programme. Orchards were historically important in the area to the south of the river Tees especially around Ormesby, Guisborough and Yarm.

Areas of semi-natural open water, mud flat, salt marsh, dune and meadow survive or have been reclaimed from the industrial installations of Teesmouth to provide habitats of outstanding importance for waders and wildfowl. Teesmouth and the Cleveland Coast have been identified as a potential Special Protection Area (SPA), and contains a number of important sites including the Charltons Pond bird sanctuary, Cowpen Marshes, Seaton Dunes and the mud flats of Seal Sands.



MIKE KIRLING

The industrial installations of Teesmouth, clustered on land reclaimed from the Tees estuary, form a distinctive and dramatic skyline at night which is highly visible across this low-lying landscape.

## The Changing Countryside

- The intensification of agriculture, change in practices and the move from livestock to arable has led to the combining of farm holdings and field amalgamation, resulting in loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Drainage schemes have greatly reduced wetland areas particularly in the Skerne Carrs where the water table has been lowered with a resulting loss of damp grasslands. South of the Tees there has been a noticeable loss of orchards and meadows.
- Changes within river corridors include the under-management of broadleaved woodland and the loss of vegetation cover fringing rivers and watercourses. This has resulted in the erosion of river banks due primarily to over-intensive management. Natural river courses and flows have been altered by the construction of substantial flood defence schemes, including flood alleviation works at Croft-on-Tees, and the recently completed Tees barrage which controls tidal flow in the river.
- Upgrading of road transport links, particularly between the A1 and Teesside urban centres has led to the increased dominance of urban infrastructure whilst large-



scale developments have encroached upon the open countryside. The urban fringe effect, of fragmented holdings, poor land management and miscellaneous landuses, including pony grazing, has extended.

- Steady growth of urban areas has, in places, created abrupt edges to settlements where newly developed sites meet the surrounding land. Other development sites awaiting construction have been left unmanaged and subject to fly-tipping.
- Loss of historic parkland through lack of management of existing features and through the implementation of mixed development within parkland areas, for example Wynyard Park.
- Reclamation of Tees estuary margins for industrial land use has led to the loss of mud-flats and marshes, although the designation of Teesmouth as a SPA/NNR has provided protection for a range of landscape features and habitats, including coastal mud flats, salt marsh, dunes, cliffs and beaches.

### Shaping the Future

- The conservation and management of existing field boundaries should be addressed, particularly where the loss of older hedgerows of nature-conservation value, or historic significance, would be detrimental to the landscape character. New hedgerow trees within farmland, and along road sides, would increase the sense of enclosure.
- The management of existing woodland, particularly ancient, semi-natural woodland would ensure continuing diversity of age and structure.
- The restoration and management of both 'built' and natural features within historic parklands and estate landscapes, would help maintain their distinctive character.
- The Cleveland Community Forest, and other programmes for the multi-purpose community use of land surrounding Teesside, can achieve landscape improvements particularly through woodland planting, environmental improvement schemes, the development of countryside gateway sites and recreational access developments. Tree planting within the wider countryside could benefit agricultural diversification and conservation.

- There are opportunities to encourage the conservation of archaeological sites, including deserted or shrunken villages, and surrounding patterns of land use and enclosure, including ridge and furrow.
- The enhancement of degraded river and stream corridors might include the re-establishment of marginal vegetation and the reversion from arable or improved grassland to low intensity grassland management on land adjacent to river channels.
- The character of the Skerne Carrs, would benefit by reverting from arable cropping to a more varied pastoral landscape incorporating areas of semi-natural wetland, carr and species-rich pastures, particularly adjacent to watercourses.
- The enhancement of degraded areas and the re-creation of damaged landscapes, particularly those associated with industrial sites and with intrusive infrastructure, should be considered within their overall setting and landscape character.

### Selected References

- Cleveland County Council (1994), *Cleveland Community Forest Landscape Assessment*.
- Cleveland Community Forest (1994), *Forest Plan*.
- Durham County Council (April 1994), *County Durham Structure Plan Review: Consultation Draft*.
- Durham County Council (1995), *County Durham Landscape Assessment Working Paper 2: Landscape Classification*.
- British Association for the Advancement of Science (1970), *Durham County and City with Teesside*.
- Durham County Council (1993), *County Durham Nature Conservation Strategy*.

### Glossary

*AOD*: Above Ordnance Datum

*carr*: a marshy copse



**Appendix D – Cleveland Community Forest  
Landscape Assessment, Woolerton  
Truscott 1992 – Landscape Character  
Types**



## **Appendix E – Consultation Responses**



## **Appendix F— Site Survey Sheets**



## **Appendix G– Policy Review**



# Stockton Borough Council

## Landscape Character Assessment: Policy Review

**Date (27/05/2009)**

Arndale Court, Otley Road, Headingley, Leeds, LS6 2UJ  
Tel: 0113 219 2217  
Email: [firstname.surname@wyg.com](mailto:firstname.surname@wyg.com)



## Document Control

Project: Landscape Character Assessment  
Client: Stockton Borough Council  
Job Number: A051290  
File Origin: N:\Projects\A050001 - A055000\A051290\reports\A051290 090521 SBC LCA v1.doc

### Document Checking:

Prepared by:	Paul Thornton	Signed:	
--------------	---------------	---------	--

Checked by:	Glenn McGill	Signed:	
-------------	--------------	---------	--

Verified by:	Glenn McGill	Signed:	
--------------	--------------	---------	--

Issue	Date	Status
1	27/05/09	Final
2		
3		
4		



## Contents Page

1.0	Relevant Policy.....	1
2.0	Policy Framework .....	2
3.0	Policy Appraisal .....	31

### Appendices

Appendix 1:	Sites Promoted through SHLAA
-------------	------------------------------







## 1.0 Relevant Policy

### 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The purpose of this section of the report is to review the Council’s currently adopted policies and standards for landscape protection in the Development Plan and other material guidance to inform an assessment of the existing character of the landscape in the urban fringe around Stockton-on-Tees. This review will serve to inform the approach to amending the policy context through the Council’s emerging Local Development Framework (LDF).

1.1.2 The policy appraisal recommends policies based on the work undertaken to identify the landscape character areas. The aim is to produce policies which:

- Enable assessment of development to be tailored to particular sensitivities;
- Support and enable sustainable and non-damaging development, rather than frustrate it;
- Reflect the national and regional framework and the vision for the area, and be rigorous enough to stand the test of the appeal process;
- Protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the varied landscape character within the Borough reflecting landscape sensitivity and promoting local distinctiveness;
- Promote a high quality of design taking account of the site context.



## 2.0 Policy Framework

### 2.1 Development Plan Position

2.1.1 The Development plan for Stockton comprises the adopted Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the saved policies of the Stockton Borough Council (SBC) Local Plan.

### 2.2 Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

2.2.1 The RSS for the North East was adopted in July 2008 and sets out a long-term strategy for the spatial development of the North East Region of England.

2.2.2 The RSS sets out the spatial strategy and priorities for growth in the Tees Valley City Region, including a high priority to improving the environment. This has been reflected by policy 2 on sustainable development states:

2.2.3 "Planning proposals and Local Development Frameworks should support sustainable development and construction through the delivery of the following environmental, social and economic objectives [including]:

- To protect and enhance the region’s biodiversity, geodiversity and soil quality;
- To make better use of our resources, including the built fabric;
- To mitigate environmental and social costs of developments, and encourage efficient resource use;
- To promote the concept of green infrastructure, a network of linked, multifunctional green space in and around the Region's towns and cities."

2.2.4 Policy 8 focuses on protection and enhancement of the environment:

"Strategies, plans, programmes and planning proposals should seek to maintain and enhance the quality, diversity and local distinctiveness of the environment throughout the North East by (inter alia):



- Promoting a high quality of design in all development and redevelopment;
- Promoting development that is sympathetic to its surroundings;
- Seeking to conserve and enhance historic buildings and landscapes;
- Identifying and giving appropriate protection to the Region’s internationally and nationally important sites for biodiversity and geodiversity, including full assessment of the potential impact of development on Internationally Designated Conservation sites;
- Identifying and protecting existing woodland of amenity and nature conservation value, particularly ancient woodlands;
- Encouraging and facilitating the implementation of the Regional Forestry Strategy...Tees Forestry strategy, related biodiversity initiatives and other woodland planting;
- Encouraging and supporting the establishment of green infrastructure, including strategic wildlife corridors.

2.2.5 Policy 10 of the RSS addresses the Tees Valley City-Region. It states that strategies, plans and programmes, and planning proposals should support regeneration, economic prosperity, sustainable communities connectivity, maintain the strategic gaps between settlements and wider environmental aspirations.

2.2.6 In terms of sustainable communities, the policy mentions, inter alia,

“Developing housing to support economic growth strategies in sustainable locations, mainly on previously developed land in areas where it does not undermine existing housing markets...”  
and “insisting on high standards of new development and redevelopment, which improve the quality of the environment and promote sustainability.”

2.2.7 In terms of the environment, the policy advocates the need for:

- “Supporting the establishment of strategic networks of green infrastructure, including green wedges, that links existing and proposed greenspace with corridors running through urban, suburban and urban fringe areas to the countryside and coast.”
- “Subjecting development proposals in and likely affecting designated sites of nature conservation importance, Saltholme Nature reserve, the Heritage Coast and the Tees Estuary, to rigorous examination, taking account of the existing biodiversity and geodiversity interests.”  
and;
- “Encouraging the development of renewable energy while carefully considering the local impacts of proposals.”



2.2.8 Policy 16 on culture and tourism alludes to a variety of issues, including improving first impressions gained by visitors arriving and passing through the Region, including supporting environmental improvements to gateways and transport corridors; ensuring development of such facilities should safeguard the environment and attractiveness of place.

2.2.9 Policy 20 is about key employment locations and includes 200 hectares at Wynyard, for the prestige electronics and high technology sectors.

2.2.10 Policy 24 is very pertinent to landscape character, stating that:

“Strategies, plans and programmes and planning proposals should assess the suitability of land for development and the contribution that can be made by design in relation to a number of criteria, to include:

- The nature of development and its location requirements;
- Concentrating the majority of the region’s development within defined urban areas;
- The need to use previously developed land, wherever possible;
- Linking development to appropriate provision of infrastructure, including green infrastructure, water supply and waste water treatment, energy supplies;
- The impact that the development of sites and its design will have on the region’s natural resources, biodiversity, landscapes, environmental and cultural assets and people’s health; and its potential to contribute to enhancement of these;
- Physical constraints on the development of land, including the level of contamination, flood risk and land stability, incorporating flood protection...;
- The potential to reduce health inequalities...including provision of play space and greenspaces with accessible woodland, with new development;
- The promotion of mixed use developments....and ensure that best use is made of land, transport infrastructure and services.”
- Ensuring that development has low consumption of natural resources both in construction and operation and incorporates embedded renewable energy where appropriate;
- The potential contribution of development to the enhancement and creation of habitats and species populations and to the promotion of biodiversity and geodiversity.

2.2.11 Policy 28 is about gross and net dwelling provision, whilst Policy 29 is about delivering and managing housing supply, although these policies have been affected by Government approval of additional housing numbers through ‘Growth Areas’ and subsequent events affecting the property market. Policy 29 makes reference to issues such as focussing development on a target percentage of previously developed land, densities, release of land, to be managed with the locational strategy



and sequential approach and consideration of planning proposals , including lapsed permissions and unimplemented development plan allocations and re-use of surplus employment land.

2.2.12 Landscape Character is primarily addressed in chapter 3 'Delivering an Urban and Rural renaissance', at paragraphs 3.118 – 3.123. This section provides detail on the valuable landscapes within the North East noting at paragraph 3.118 that "Strategies, plans and programmes should support suitably located and designed development necessary to facilitate the economic and social well-being of these designated areas and their communities.

2.2.13 Paragraph 3.120 alludes to countryside character areas as defined by the Countryside Agency (Natural England), which provide a framework for more detailed assessment at local level "which can be used to determine the ability of a landscape to accommodate change whilst protecting key characteristics that contribute to local distinctiveness and sense of place....Where appropriate, these assessments can also be used to help target landscape restoration and environmental improvement schemes as part of wider area-based regeneration objectives.

2.2.14 Paragraph 3.121 seeks to address tranquillity, seen as an important asset in the diverse landscapes of the North East. It states:

"Tranquillity, freedom from noise and visual disturbance, is one of the less easily defined attributes of the countryside but is also important to quality of life. The Region has some of the most tranquil landscapes in the country and these are a major asset to the tourism economy. A pilot study has investigated ways of mapping tranquillity in more detail in the Northumberland National Park and the Durham Coalfield. As there is no comprehensive study of the Region, the RSS does not define tranquil areas as this is more appropriately considered at the local level."

2.2.15 Paragraph 3.122 states that:

"In addition to protection from inappropriate development, integrated management initiatives developed and implemented by effective partnerships are required to sustain, and in some cases enhance, the diversity of the Region's designated and non-designated valued landscapes. Management plans and strategies should be developed and kept updated...Urban fringe landscapes would also benefit from this approach."

2.2.16 Landscape Character is formally addressed through Policy 31 of the RSS, which states that strategies, plans and proposals should:

- a. "promote development appropriate to the special qualities and statutory purposes of these areas in the Northumberland National Park, the Northumberland Coast and the North Pennines



AONBs, and the three areas of Heritage Coast: North Northumberland, Durham and North Yorkshire and Cleveland;

b. contribute to the implementation of the National Park and AONBs Management Plans whilst helping to achieve favourable condition status at European sites;

c. have regard to landscape character assessments and the content of AONB/National Park Management Plans to justify the retention or creation of any local landscape designations, guide policy formulation and development control decisions, and assist in targeting landscape restoration and environmental improvement schemes;

d. promote integrated management initiatives to sustain nationally, regionally and locally valued landscapes, including the Durham, North Northumberland and North Yorkshire and Cleveland

Heritage Coasts and urban fringe landscapes;

e. recognise the role that character-based planning tools such as Town Design Statements, Village Design Statements, Countryside Design Summaries and Concept Statements can play in promoting high quality development that respects local character and distinctiveness; and

f. Incorporate the findings of Shoreline Management Plans and Catchment Flood Management Plans.”

2.2.17 Policy 32 goes on to deal with the Historic Environment of the North East region, stating that “Strategies, plans and programmes and planning proposals should seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment of the Region by [including]:

a. clearly identifying and assessing the significance of any heritage assets and their vulnerability to change;

b. using the process of characterisation to understand their contribution to the local environment and to identify options for their sensitive management;

c. encouraging the refurbishment and re-use of appropriate disused or under-used buildings and incorporating them into regeneration schemes;

d. seeking to preserve, in situ, archaeological sites of national importance and, where appropriate, other archaeological remains of regional and local importance;

e. recognising the opportunities for heritage led regeneration to be used in a constructive way to help bring about social and economic regeneration, and to encourage its potential for business, education and tourism; and

Local authorities should:



- a. prepare, and regularly maintain registers of Grade II listed buildings 'at risk'; for their areas, and pursue policies and measures which seek to repair and remove all grades of building from 'at risk' registers through repair;
- b. consider preparing, and regularly maintaining, lists of locally important buildings for their areas, and set out policies in LDFs, which seek, as far as possible, their protection against inappropriate change;
- c. consider preparing Conservation Area Appraisals for existing and proposed conservation areas, and proceed to the preparation of Management Plans for the delivery of improvements to those areas;
- d. consider preparing lists of locally important registered landscapes, Historic Landscape Assessments and Conservation Management Plans for historic designated landscapes; and
- e. consider preparing urban surveys of historic towns and other substantial settlements, to improve knowledge of their entire historic fabric as a guide to ensure future development maximises the potential for preservation, protection and enhancement."



2.2.18 Policy 33 refers to biodiversity and geodiversity, including their protection and enhancement, including promotion, protection and enhancement of internationally and nationally important sites and species, reversing habitat fragmentation, developing habitat creation/restoration projects, particularly in the priority Habitat Creation and Enhancement Areas, preparing audits, preparing and implementing Local Biodiversity Action Plans and Local Geodiversity Action Plans and proposals to limit the spread of invasive species and their elimination. Of particular importance is “Providing for the expansion and linking of existing habitats and species populations, including the creation of semi-natural green spaces in and around urban areas and for habitat restoration.”

2.2.19 Policy 35 alludes to flood risk, which is relevant to landscape character assessment, including any proposals for development, as a result of new development land releases. The policy refers to “...a strategic, integrated, sustainable and proactive approach to catchment management to reduce flood risk within the region.” A sequential, risk-based approach to development and flooding should be adopted, as stipulated by the guidance for development of Local Development Frameworks and liaison with the Environment Agency, where appropriate.

2.2.20 Policy 36 is about Trees, Woodlands and Forests and sets out the policy template related to relevant strategies to expand and protect tree cover in appropriate locations for delivery of multi-purpose benefits.

2.2.21 Policy 40 is about planning for renewables and is most relevant, in terms of landscape character, in terms of new wind energy developments and grid connection lines. The policy is supportive in terms of the wider environmental, economic and social benefits, but mentions, inter alia;

“Acceptability of the location and the scale of the proposal and its visual impact in relation to the character and sensitivity of the surrounding landscape...effect on.....other national and internationally designated.....landscape areas.....effect of development on nature conservation sites and features, biodiversity and geodiversity, including internationally designated and other sites of nature conservation importance.....visual impact of new grid connection lines.....and cumulative impact of the development in relation to other similar developments.”

2.2.22 Policy 42 refers to overall mineral strategy and advocates that;

“Land is made available to provide an appropriate contribution to local, regional and national needs for minerals...and ensure the effective environmental management of mineral extraction in line with sustainable development objectives”





## 2.3 Local Plan

2.3.1 The SBC Local Plan was adopted in 1997 with Alteration Number 1 adopted in March 2006. As a result of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) the plan was reviewed and a number of policies were deleted in September 2007.

2.3.2 Policy GP1 is the overarching policy development must be compliant with. This states:

“Proposals for development will be assessed in relation to the policies of the Cleveland Structure Plan and the following criteria as appropriate:

- (i.) The external appearance of the development and its relationship with the surrounding area;
- (ii.) The effect on the amenities of the occupiers of nearby properties;
- (iii.) The provision of satisfactory access and parking arrangements;
- (iv.) The contribution of existing trees and landscape features;
- (y.) The need for a high standard of landscaping;
- (vi.) the desire to reduce opportunities for crime;
- (vii.) The intention to make development as accessible as possible to everyone;
- (viii.) The quality, character and sensitivity of existing landscapes and buildings;
- (ix.) The effect upon wildlife habitats;
- (x.) The effect upon the public rights of way network.”

2.3.3 Section 2 of the Local Plan deals with the local environment in detail and it is apparent that a considerable number of the environmental policies in the Local Plan are relevant to Landscape Character Assessment.

2.3.4 Policies EN1 (a) and (b), (as well as policy EN12, which refers to the International Nature Reserve) are highly relevant to Landscape Character Assessment, since they refer to areas of the borough where there is nature conservation interest and where development should not ideally take place. Policy EN1(a) states “Proposals for development in or likely to affect Sites of Special Scientific Interest will be subject to special scrutiny. Where such development may have a significant adverse effect, directly or indirectly on the SSSI, it will not be permitted unless the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the value of the site itself and national policy to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation value of the national network of such sites.” The policy also stipulates that planning obligations will be pursued where development is permitted. Policy EN1 (b) states that “Proposals for the development or land use which may affect a European site, proposed European site or a RAMSAR site will be subject to the most rigorous examination. Any proposal which is not directly connected with, or necessary for the management of the site for nature



conservation and which is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the site will only be permitted.....” The policy then makes caveats and advocates potential use of planning obligations as per policy EN1 (a). These related policies therefore indicate that development in areas where these designations are present should be avoided, if at all possible.

- 2.3.5 Policy EN2 seeks to resist development in Local Nature Reserves; specifically Basselton Woods and the Holmes, Thornaby, Billingham Beck Valley and Thorpe Wood, Grindon and policy EN3 declares further LNR’s at Bowsfield Pond, Stockton, Charlton’s Pond, Billingham and Quarry Wood, Eaglescliffe, such that they become subject to policy EN2.
- 2.3.6 Policy EN4 states that “Development which is likely to have an adverse effect upon sites of nature conservation importance will only be permitted if (i) there is no alternative site or practicable approach; and (ii) any impacts on the sites nature conservation value is kept to a minimum.” Policy EN5 makes the same kind of provisions for land adjoining the North Tees works, including two adjacent SNCI’s at Dorman’s Pools and Reclamation Pond. Again, these policies make provision for Planning Obligations in appropriate circumstances. Policy EN6 similarly seeks to safeguard protected plant or animal species and their habitats from development unless satisfactory provisions for these species have been made.
- 2.3.7 The three ‘Special Landscape Areas’ of the Borough are detailed in Policy EN7 which protects these areas as follows:
  - “Development which harms the landscape value of the following special landscape area will not be permitted:-
  - (a.) Leven Valley
  - (b.) Tees Valley
  - (c.) Wynyard Park”
- 2.3.8 Paragraph 2.28 goes on to note that parts of the Wynyard Park Special Landscape Area are allocated for both residential and industrial development. Any planning permission will be subject to conditions seeking to protect landscape quality and on site landscaping of a suitable quality to be incorporated into proposals.
- 2.3.9 Wynyard Park is the only nationally recognised park in the Borough of special historic interest. As such, Policy EN9 seeks to protect the historic layout of the landscaped parkland and formal gardens, including their architectural features, stating:

“Development which is likely to be detrimental to the special historic interest of Wynyard Park will not be permitted.”



- 2.3.10 Policy EN8 addresses development likely to impact upon numerous Ancient Woodlands in the Borough. They have strong historic value to the landscape and this policy therefore states that “Development within ancient woodland which detracts from its conservation value will not be permitted.”
- 2.3.11 Policy EN10 seeks to protect higher grade agricultural land from development and agricultural land often contributes positively towards landscape character.
- 2.3.12 Policy EN11 seeks encouragement of tree planting, within the Community Forest (see The Tees Forest Plan, 2001), which has made a significant contribution to landscape character in the countryside in and around Stockton.
- 2.3.13 Paragraph 2.40 refers to the objective of controlling the expansion of the built up area to protect the countryside for its own sake and to encourage the recycling of derelict and underused sites within the urban area.
- 2.3.14 The Local Plan proposals map defines the ‘Limits to development’ within the Borough, which are addressed at paragraph 2.41 which states:

“Where possible, limits have been drawn where there is a clear break between urban and rural uses and landscapes. In the countryside beyond these limits, development will be strictly controlled. It will be confined to activities necessary for the continuation of farming or forestry, contribute to rural diversification, or cater for tourism, sport or recreation.”
- 2.3.15 Policy EN13 provides the policy backing to this text and states:

“Development outside the limits to development may be permitted where:

  - (i.) It is necessary for a farming or forestry operation; or
  - (ii.) It falls within policies EN 20 (reuse of buildings) or TOUR 4 (hotel conversions); or in all the remaining cases and provided that it does not harm the character or appearance of the countryside; where:
  - (iii) it contributes to the diversification of the rural economy; or
  - (iv.) It is for sport or recreation; or
  - (v.) It is a small-scale facility for tourism.”



2.3.16 Six Green wedges are identified within the settlement limits, as detailed above. These are detailed in Policy EN14 which states:

“Within the following green wedges, development will not be permitted which detracts from the open nature of the landscape so as to threaten, by itself or cumulatively; the local identity of the areas separated by the green wedge.

- (a.) River Tees floodplain from Surtees Bridge, Stockton, to Yarm;
- (b.) Leven Valley between Yarm and Ingleby Barwick;
- (c.) Bassleton Beck Valley between Ingleby Barwick and Thornaby;
- (d.) Stainsby Beck Valley, Thornaby;
- (e.) Billingham Beck Valley;
- (f.) Between North Billingham and Cowpen Lane Industrial Estate.”

2.3.17 Paragraph 2.44 of the text addresses the importance Urban Open Space has in terms of the local landscape character. It is noted that “Such spaces should generally be protected from development unless this would achieve a genuine enhancement of the site to the benefit of residents of the Borough.” This is given policy backing at Policy EN15, which states:

“Development will not be permitted on urban open space unless:

- (i.) It would enhance the sporting, recreational, or nature conservation value of the land and the space would still retain its open character; or
- (ii.) The development of a small area of open space would result in the enhancement of the remainder to the overall benefit of the local community.”



2.3.18 Certain policies seek to safeguard landscape character by permitting reclamation and use of derelict land in the countryside (policy EN19) and the conversion, adaptation and reuse of rural buildings for commercial, industrial, tourism, sport and recreational uses (policy EN20), but not for residential purposes (policy EN21).

2.3.19 When considering the landscape character important consideration will have to be given to extant Conservation Areas. These are listed at Policy EN 22 as Billingham Green; Egglecliffe; Hartburn; Stockton Town Centre; Thornaby Green; Wolviston. Policy EN22 gives SBC the scope to review the boundaries of these areas where appropriate. Policy EN23 goes on to state that schemes for the preservation and environmental enhancement of all existing conservation areas were to be progressed through the course of the plan.

2.3.20 Development proposals within Conservation Areas are to be assessed against policies EN24 and EN 25. Policy EN24 details the criteria which new development proposals within Conservation Areas should accord with. These are as follows:

- (i) "The siting and design of the proposal does not harm the character or appearance of the conservation area; and
- (ii) The scale, mass, detailing and materials are appropriate to the character and appearance of the area."

2.3.21 Policy EN25 addresses proposals to demolish structures within Conservation Areas stating such proposals will not be permitted unless:

- (i) "It can be shown that the loss is not detrimental to the character or appearance of the conservation area; or
- (ii) The structural condition renders it unsafe; or
- (iii) The structure is beyond reasonable economic repair.

Conditions will normally be imposed to secure the satisfactory redevelopment of the site.

2.3.22 There are over 400 Listed Buildings within the Borough which are protected from demolition and alteration and are important in terms of landscape character. These are protected by the following policies:

"EN 26 - Alterations, extensions and changes of use to listed buildings will be permitted where the proposals are in keeping with the character and appearance of the original building, and its architectural or historic interest is not adversely affected.



EN27 - The total demolition of a listed building will not be permitted unless the building is beyond economic repair.

EN28 - Development which is likely to detract from the setting of a listed building will not be permitted.”

2.3.23 Sites of Archaeological Interest are addressed at paragraph 2.73 – 2.76 which notes that these are an irreplaceable part of the heritage of the borough. There are several Scheduled Ancient Monuments which are listed as:

- Castle Hill, Castleavington;
- Grindon Church, Grindon;
- Round Hill Castle, Ingleby Barwick;
- Larberry Pasture Settlement Site, Longnewton;
- Newsham Deserted Medieval Village;
- Market Cross, Stockton;
- The Market Hall, Yarm;
- Yarm Bridge, Yarm.

2.3.24 These are protected at a local level by Policy E29 which states:

“Development which will adversely affect the site, fabric or setting of a scheduled ancient monument will not be permitted.”

2.3.25 Sites of archaeological interest are considered important to the Borough also, although the redevelopment of these sites is not precluded by the Local Plan. These are addressed through Policy EN30 which states:

“Development which affects sites of archaeological interest will not be permitted unless:

- (i.) An investigation of the site has been undertaken; and
- (ii.) An assessment has been made of the impact of the development upon the remains; and where appropriate;
- (iii.) Provision has been made for preservation 'in situ'.

Where preservation is not appropriate, the local planning authority will require the applicant to make proper provision for the investigation and recording of the site before and during development.”

2.3.26 Policy EN41 refers to development which is required to enable the release and transmission of energy from renewable sources, including “the proposal does not impinge on any of the Borough’s



natural assets.....and that buildings are sited, designed and landscaped to secure the integration of the facility into the landscape.”

2.3.27 It is acknowledged at paragraph 2,96 that whilst the average windspeed across Stockton Borough is too low for viable harnessing the exception to this may be at Seal Sands/Teemouth due to the sustained onshore breezes, though this area is constrained through lack of sites and importance to birds. Policy EN42 addresses proposals for wind turbines, stating:

“Single wind turbines and associated plant in the countryside will normally be permitted unless:

- (i.) It is detrimental to the character of a special landscape area; or
- (ii.) It causes unacceptable harm to the amenity of neighbouring residents.”



- 2.3.28 Within the Local Plan, there is a plethora of other policy which has a potential impact upon landscape character. For example, policies related to the economy can have impacts. For example, policy IN16 states that “proposed telecommunications development should be sited and designed to cause the least practicable adverse visual impact...”
- 2.3.29 In the section on ‘Development’, there are various issues which could have a bearing on landscape character e.g. policy REC10 regarding the effect of development on public rights of way; policy REC15 on overnight moorings and policy REC21 on sites identified as suitable locations for bridges for combined pedestrian and cycle use.
- 2.3.30 The ‘Transport’ section of the Local Plan also includes policies which could have a bearing on landscape character, such as policy TR4 on a network of cycle routes across the Borough and policy TR21 regarding development at Durham Tees Valley airport, where it is intended to safeguard the nature conservation interest of the area; ensure substantial landscaping to mitigate, screen and integrate the effects of any new development.

## **2.4 Supplementary Planning Documents**

- 2.4.1 The Conservation and Historic Environment Folder (CHE) was adopted in January 2006 and fulfils the requirements of Local Plan Policies EN22 and EN23 for reviewing the existing Conservation Areas. Other Policies in the Local Plan set the framework for development affecting each of the sites and buildings that are subject to protection.
- 2.4.2 The document contains detailed appraisals of all Conservation Areas and other designated landscape features and provides a useful evidence base for the LCA.

## **Other Material Considerations**

## **2.5 National Planning Policy**

- 2.5.1 Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) ‘Delivering Sustainable Development’ sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. In its objectives, PPS1 refers to ‘conserving the countryside’ and that open spaces are a vital resource for everyone. Planning should facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive





patterns of urban and rural development by protecting the natural environment and 'the quality of the countryside'.

2.5.2 Plan policies and planning decisions should be based on:

- Up to date information on the environmental characteristics of an area;
- The potential impacts upon the environment of development proposals;
- Recognition of the limits of the environment to accept further development without irreversible damage.

2.5.3 Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' details the Government's objectives for rural areas, which include raising the quality of life and the environment through the promotion of:

- Good quality, sustainable development;
- Confirmed protection of the open countryside.

2.5.4 A key principle is to apply strict control to development in the open countryside, whilst contributing to a sense of local identity and rural diversity. Landscape Character Assessment, along with Village or Town Design Statements and Village or Parish Plans, is recommended as a tool to assist Local Authorities in the preparation of policies and guidance that encourage good quality design throughout rural areas (Para 13).

2.5.5 At paragraph 24 of PPS7, the Government recognises and accepts that there are areas of landscape outside nationally designated areas that are highly valued locally. They recommend carefully drafted criteria-based policies in Local Development Documents, utilising landscape character assessments, without the need for rigid local designations that may restrict sustainable development and economic activity.

2.5.6 As such PPS7 has altered the balance from policies for locally designated areas towards an emphasis on maintaining and enhancing the distinctive character. Such policies reflecting character not quality should relate well to the landscape character assessments undertaken, and should, therefore assist in accommodating necessary change without sacrificing local character and ensure that development respects and enhances local distinctiveness and the natural processes of its location.

2.5.7 It is worthy of mention that the Government released a Briefing Note on the new 'Planning Policy Statement 4' in May 2009, with the objective of bringing together policies relating to the economy, in an attempt to simplify national planning policy, with a focus upon encouraging economic growth



in a sustainable manner. It is intended that this will replace other Government planning policy guidance, including parts of PPS7: 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.' In terms of rural areas, the paper advocates that Local Authorities should support small scale economic development, albeit with a preference for re-using sites within settlements. It also offers support for the conversion or re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic development and it offers support for sustainable rural tourism and leisure that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors. This new statement could have an effect upon landscape character that is subtly different to the objectives of the existing PPS7 in due course. The consultation will run for twelve weeks until 28th July 2008 and has an accompanying 'Best Practice Guide'.

2.5.8 Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12: 'Local Development Frameworks' advocates streamlining the planning process but still providing the opportunity for issues, including landscape, to be integrated at various levels.

2.5.9 PPS12 advocates the production of policies based upon a thorough understanding of the needs and opportunities in an area, through an up-to-date evidence base. Criteria based policies should act as a framework for assessing proposals. It could then be that the policies may need to be referenced in a Supplementary Planning Document for greater detail.

## **2.6 Local Development Framework**

2.6.1 Stockton Borough Council is currently in the process of replacing the extant Local Plan with the Local Development Framework. A number of documents are at varying stages of production and whilst they do not for adopted guidance the proposals details have been considered when undertaking the Landscape Character Assessment of the Borough.

2.6.2 The SBC Core Strategy final draft document was released in October 2008 for a consultation period ending 22nd December 2008. When adopted the document will set out the vision and Spatial Strategy for meeting development requirements to 2021.

2.6.3 Section 5 of the Core Strategy details the differing spatial options for growth, four of which were considered during the 'Issues and Options' stage. Draft Core Strategy Policy 1 (CS1) details the Council's preferred choice for new housing development. To briefly summarise this states that the Council's Preferred Option is to support the regeneration of the urban core by:

1. Ensuring that the majority of development takes place within the Core Area of the Borough.
2. Priority is to be given to previously developed land, with particular emphasis given to regeneration schemes.



3. Seeking to ensure remaining housing growth/ development takes place in the remaining urban area, particularly in locations which support the district centres of Billingham, Thornaby and Yarm.
4. Continuing to implement neighbourhood regeneration projects and work to be undertaken to identify further areas in need of housing market restructuring.
5. Priority given to affordable rural housing in sustainable locations.
6. Provision of a range of employment sites throughout the Borough, both to support existing industries and to encourage new enterprises. Development is to be concentrated in the conurbation, with emphasis on completing the development of existing industrial estates. The main exception is the safeguarding of land at Seal Sands and Billingham for expansion of chemical processing industries. Initiatives which support the rural economy are to be encouraged.

2.6.4 Proposed Policy CS3 addresses Sustainable Living and SBC’s preferred options for addressing climate change through planning policy. Item 8 of this policy seeks to ensure that:

“Make a positive contribution to the local area, by protecting and enhancing important environmental assets, biodiversity and geodiversity, responding positively to existing features of natural, historic archaeological or local character, including hedges and trees, and including the provision of high quality public open space;”

2.6.5 Core Strategy Policy CS10 sets out the overarching policy for the environment of the Borough stating that:

- 1.” Proposals will need to demonstrate that that there will be no adverse impact from development on the integrity of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site, and other European sites.
2. Development throughout the Borough and particularly in the Billingham and Seal Sands area, will be integrated with the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, geodiversity and landscape.
3. The separation between settlements, together with the quality of the urban environment, will be maintained through the protection and enhancement of the openness and amenity value of:
  - i) Strategic gaps between the conurbation and the surrounding towns and villages, and between Eaglescliffe and Middleton St George
  - ii) Green wedges within the conurbation, including
    - River Tees Valley from Surtees Bridge, Stockton to Yarm



- Leven Valley between Yarm and Ingleby Barwick
- Bassleton Beck Valley between Ingleby Barwick and Thornaby
- Stainsby Beck Valley, Thornaby
- Billingham Beck Valley
- Between North Billingham and Cowpen Lane Industrial Estate

iii) Urban open space and play space.

4. The integrity of designated sites will be protected and enhanced, and the biodiversity and geodiversity of sites of local interest improved.

5. Habitats will be created in line with objectives of the Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan as part of development, and linked to existing wildlife corridors wherever possible.

6. Joint working with partners and developers will ensure the successful creation of an integrated network of green infrastructure.

7. Initiatives to improve the quality of the environment in key areas where this may contribute towards the tourism offer will be supported, including:

- i) Haverton Hill and Seal Sands corridor, as an important gateway to the Teesmouth National Nature Reserve and Saltholme RSPB Nature Reserve;
- ii) River Tees Park.

8. The delivery of the Tees Forest Plan will be supported.

9. New development will be directed towards areas of low flood risk, that is Flood Zone 1, as identified by the Borough's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). In considering sites elsewhere, the sequential and exceptions tests will be applied, as set out in Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk, and applicants will be expected to carry out a flood risk assessment.

10. When redevelopment of previously developed land is proposed, assessments will be required to establish:

- the risks associated with previous contaminative uses; and
- the biodiversity and geological conservation value."

2.6.6 The Regeneration DPD will detail policies for the regeneration of the urban core of Stockton as part of the Stockton-Middlesbrough initiative. The document is currently at Issues and Options stage, with the Preferred Options due to be available in the near future.

2.6.7 A number of issues pertinent to the Landscape Character of Stockton will be addressed in this document. WYG notes that SBC are currently reviewing options in relation to:

- 1. Whether existing development limits to villages should be retained;



2. Whether Green Wedges should be included within development limits;
3. Location of new economic, community and residential development; and
4. The regeneration of a number of key sites including the 'Green Blue Heart' which is an environmental and landscape led regeneration of an area of contaminated sites along the River Tees.

2.6.8 The SBC Infrastructure Strategy was prepared as part of the evidence base to the Core Strategy, and considers five key areas of infrastructure provision, one of which is 'Green infrastructure and other community facilities'.

2.6.9 Paragraph 7.10 of the document give the key green infrastructure and community facility proposals to be reflected in the Core Strategy as:

1. Development of the River Tees Park;
2. Pedestrian/cycle routes linking communities in south of Borough;
3. Expansion of the Tees Forest;
4. Environmental improvements to Haverton Hill/Seal Sands;
5. Provision of additional open space to meet standards;
6. Improvements to Preston Park and its Hall;
7. Development of the Green Blue Heart; and
8. Facilities to enhance the sustainability of communities.

2.6.10 Further detail on these is provided in the paragraphs of the document which follow.

2.6.11 SBC submitted a bid for 'Housing Growth Point Status' as part of a wider bid through the Tees Valley bid. On 24th July 2008 CLG announced that the Tees Valley had been successful. The key sites for Stockton Borough Council are:

- North Shore;
- Green Blue Heart;
- Stockton Riverside;
- Northern Gateway;
- Parkfield;
- Bowesfield Riverside;
- South Stockton; and
- Allens West.



## 2.7 LDF Evidence Base

- 2.7.1 SBC produced an Urban Capacity Study (UCS) in March 2004 to assess the amount of residential development that might be provided in the urban areas, as a response to the requirements of PPG3 (now replaced by PPS3). This concluded that in order of 3000 dwellings might eventually arise from the sources identified within the urban area. The UCS is in the process of being superseded by work within the Strategic Housing Land availability Assessment (SHLAA) which will seek to address revised regional targets in the future.
- 2.7.2 The SHLAA is part of the evidence base for the Stockton-on-Tees Local Development Framework. It does not allocate sites for housing, but uses a methodology to assess sites to provide evidence for future LDF documents.
- 2.7.3 In particular the SHLAA is relevant to the Core Strategy and the Regeneration DPD's. The Core Strategy DPD will set out how the Council proposes to distribute and phase new housing provision in general. The Regeneration DPD will allocate specific sites that are consistent with this approach.
- 2.7.4 The first Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) was published on 20 October 2008. The 2009 SHLAA update is subject to consultation (period ending 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2009) which provides the public opportunity to comment on the proposed sites, which include a number of extensions to the urban area. The sites promoted through this are included as a list at [Appendix 1](#) to this document.

## 2.8 Other Non-Statutory Documentation

- 2.8.1 The 'Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy' was developed with CABE and the final document was adopted in 2008. It sets the vision for green infrastructure in the Tees Valley up to 2021. This is given as:

"To develop by 2021 a network of green corridors and green spaces in the Tees Valley that:

- Enhances the quality of place and environment for existing and future communities and potential investors;
- Provides an enhanced environmental setting and context for new development, regeneration projects, and housing market renewal initiatives and produces schemes of high quality design;
- Creates and extends opportunities for access, recreation and enhancement of biodiversity, and
- Provides a buffer against the effects of climate change.



- 2.8.2 The document provides detail in section 5 as to the Natural England's Natural Area boundaries, and notes that these largely coincide with those of the Countryside Character areas. The document goes into detail about the Tees Lowland Natural Area and Tees Estuary and Cleveland Coast, parts of which are within the control of SBC.
- 2.8.3 Landscape issues and opportunities are addressed at paragraph 6.6 of this document where it is noted the transformation to area of Stockton has undergone since the 19th Century, and how urban development has become the dominant landscape feature.
- 2.8.4 It is noted at paragraph 6.8 that there are “features within the urban fabric of the Tees Valley that offer opportunities for integration within a green infrastructure network. These include landmarks such as the Transporter Bridge and Newport Bridge, features associated with the area's industrial past such as chemical and steel structures and railway artefacts as well as large urban parks and gardens.”
- 2.8.5 Paragraph 6.32 of the document highlights the importance of taking forward and developing the green infrastructure concept through building on existing strategies and plans.
- 2.8.6 Section 7 of the document identifies a way forward for the Tees Valley to move towards a Strategic Green Infrastructure Network, with paragraph 7.1 identifying the two overarching priorities that the strategic Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Tees Valley is seeking to achieve:
  - The first is the protection and, where appropriate, enhancement of the critical elements of the existing green infrastructure resource within the conurbation and main towns and settlements.
  - The second is developing and extending where necessary the existing elements of green infrastructure into a multi-functional network that links existing and proposed green spaces. This would also address the issue of gaps in the network.
- 2.8.7 The strategic priorities for green infrastructure are detailed at paragraph 7.2. Of relevance to this appraisal are the flagship regeneration project at North Shore, the Stockton-Middlesbrough Initiative, areas at Stockton Town Centre and North Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick and the Green Blue Heart.
- 2.8.8 The document provides guidance on green space standards with paragraph 7.7 considering England's Green Space standard to be a useful guideline for LPA's to consider as achievable through planning policy. These are as follows:



“No person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural green space of at least 2 hectares in size;

- There is provision of at least 2 hectares of natural green space per 1,000 population;
- That there should be at least one accessible 20 hectare site within 2km from home;
- That there should be one accessible 100 hectare site within 5km;
- That there should be one accessible 500 hectare site within 10km; and
- That adjacent green spaces are interconnected, the priority and extent being determined by local decision making informed by stakeholder involvement.”





2.8.9 A number of guidelines have been provided on the promotion of green infrastructure through the landscape and historic environment at paragraph 7.8. This states:

- Green infrastructure should contribute to the management, conservation and improvement of the local landscape and townscape and reflect the landscape character approach;
- Local landscape and townscape character assessments should be undertaken when appropriate;
- Green infrastructure should contribute to the protection and enhancement of historic assets;
- Where possible derelict, vacant and unused land should be restored/reclaimed for uses that contribute to the objectives of the Green Infrastructure Strategy. Land identified for specific uses but where development is only likely in the long term (for example some employment land) should be considered for temporary 'greening' such as timber production for local renewable energy schemes, although the biodiversity value of such land should also be taken into account
- A mosaic pattern of woodlands should form a core component of the green infrastructure network and should be planned and created in line with the Regional Forestry Strategy and the Tees Forest Plan
- Where appropriate woodland management and creation should include opportunities to produce sustainable supplies for local renewable energy projects.

2.8.10 Strategic aims of the site specific proposals previously detailed are given in section 8 of this document. As previously stated a number of these are relevant to the local landscape character of SBC, including:

- The River Tees Corridor – which provides a setting for a number of key regeneration projects, and employment and industrial centres. The whole of the Corridor forms a strategic wildlife corridor providing a major route through the urban area and into the surrounding countryside.
- Darlington Middleton St. George, A66/67 Corridor to Stockton - of particular relevance is the strategic gap between Darlington and Stockton, and the green wedge and River Tees Corridor in the vicinity of Preston Farm and Bowesfield.
- Hartburn to Lustrum Beck to River Tees – which runs through a largely urban part of Stockton.



- Stainsby Beck Valley – a major green corridor from Tees Barrage/Green Blue Heart eventually linking to open countryside. A major new park is proposed along the A66/Whinney Banks site.
- Billingham Beck Valley – this strategic wildlife corridor forms an important part of the green network, linking the River Tees with open countryside.
- River Leven Corridor – which runs in a steeply sided valley from the Stockton-on-Tees Borough boundary near Crathorne and Hilton. The woodland has both amenity and wildlife benefits.

2.8.11 The Countryside Agency and Groundwork document 'The Countryside in and around Towns' was produced in January 2005 to highlight the potential opportunities that exist within the 'rural urban fringes' of our towns and cities.

2.8.12 The document highlights the challenges and drivers of change impacting upon the countryside and these areas in particular. The document highlights the potential for "exciting new landscapes for the 21st Century" to be created through regenerating land, and developing sustainable communities where appropriate in these locations.

2.8.13 With regard to Green Belts the document highlights the need to place greater emphasis on the positive use of land within these areas. It requests that future reviews of Green Belt policy consider how to achieve economic, social and environmental benefits within this land.

2.8.14 The vision presented within this document follows ten key functions for the countryside in and around towns. These are as follows:

- 1) A bridge to the country – Encouraging the use of footpaths, bridleways and cycle ways to link to networks of new and improved parks, woodlands and green spaces.
- 2) A gateway to the town – Highlights the importance of managing and maintaining land adjacent to major transport routes.
- 3) A health centre – This promotes accessibility to these areas and the importance this can play in a healthy, active lifestyle.
- 4) A classroom – Promotes learning opportunities within the countryside.
- 5) A recycling and renewable energy centre – The importance of the sustainable management of waste, water and pollution generated in urban areas is noted, including positive environmental gains that can arise from opportunities for mineral extraction or waste management.
- 6) A productive landscape – The advantages of agricultural opportunities located close to urban areas is highlighted.



- 7) A cultural legacy – The importance of protecting our cultural heritage which can be apparent in many forms in such locations is highlighted.
- 8) A place for sustainable living – This deals with locations deemed to be sustainable urban extension opportunities, highlighting the importance for such schemes to create “genuinely balanced communities”.
- 9) An engine for regeneration – States that strategies for local regeneration can help develop skills, confidence and prospects for residents in these areas where they are fully involved in regeneration strategies.
- 10) A nature reserve – The potential for these areas to develop existing, or establish new, woodlands, wetlands, meadows and other habitats is encouraged.

2.8.15 The Tees Forest Partnership produced ‘The Tees Forest Plan’ in November 2000 which outlined the vision of the forest and strategy to implement this.

2.8.16 The countryside areas in and around the urban area of Stockton all fall within the remit of the Partnership, and the plan.

2.8.17 The area to the immediate west and south of the built up area of Stockton is defined as being within ‘Local Management Zone 5: West Stockton Rural Fringe’. The main focus for woodland extension within this area is land to the south of the A66, and on urban boundaries. The strategy notes the scope for a high yield potential for commercial timber production, which can provide a focus for recreation and, has high biodiversity potential. The importance of new planting on the western edges of Stockton to soften views of the built up area is highlighted. A new greenway linking Stockton and Darlington is encouraged, and has the potential to act as a corridor for recreation and sustainable, non car modes, of travel. There are a number of proposals to be considered, which are as follows:

“LMZ 5.1 Extend the influence of Coatham Stob by securing further major afforestation areas to create a significant woodland core between Stockton and Darlington.

LMZ 5.2 Recognise and realise the potential for both commercial forestry and recreation in this zone.

LMZ 5.3 Promote agri-environmental measures to enable connectivity between larger woodlands to aid bio-diversity.

LMZ 5.4 Provide screen planting on urban-industrial boundaries to soften the appearance of the built up area.

LMZ 5.5 Develop a new Greenway between Stockton and Darlington for recreation and travel by non motorised means of transport.



LMZ 5.6 Develop the Admiralty Ecology Site as an educational facility.”



- 2.8.18 Parts of the area to the south of Stockton which abuts the River Tees are included within 'Local Management Zone 6: River Tees Corridor'. The supporting text to this notes the area has "a distinctive rural character". The importance of recreational opportunities located within the area as a result of the River Tees barrage creating a stable water level is highlighted. It is also noted that Preston Park is an important gateway on the western side of the Tees. There are a number of proposals to be considered, which are as follows:
- 2.8.19 "LMZ 6.1 Protect and facilitate expansion of native, broad leaved woodlands in appropriate locations throughout the zone.
- 2.8.20 LMZ 6.2 Exploit opportunities for the development of both formal and informal recreation, including water based pursuits on the River Tees.
- 2.8.21 LMZ 6.3 Assist other organisations to develop further open access areas, new and improved linkages, including paths and trails and a proposed bridge across the River Tees.
- 2.8.22 LMZ 6.4 Retain the Leven Valley as a haven for wildlife and biodiversity, by focussing on informal access only."
- 2.8.23 2.71 'Local Management Zone 8: South Tees Green Wedges' contains a green wedge to the south of Thornaby, within land controlled by Stockton. To retain the character of this area it has been subject to the following proposals:
- 2.8.24 "LMZ 8.1 Ensure green wedges form the basis for woodland extension.
- 2.8.25 LMZ 8.2 Promote good forest management for the benefit of local communities, wildlife and the environment.
- 2.8.26 LMZ 8.3 Encourage community based recreation within green wedges, in association with new woodland planting and new and improved access routes in order to promote healthier living and foster the development of more sustainable communities."
- 2.8.27 2.72 The final zone where parts of the land come under the influence of Stockton is 'Local Management Zone 13: Tees Urban Green Corridor'. This land is located to the east of Stockton and runs alongside the A19 corridor, following the River Tees and its tributaries. The importance of areas of salt marsh around The Old River Tees and Stainsby Beck, and wetland areas around Billingham Beck are highlighted. The opportunity that exists to utilise large amounts of land formerly used for industry to complement regeneration proposals is highlighted. The potential for additional woodland and recreational facilities are detailed, and the following proposals made:



“LMZ 13.1 Woodland extension should be complimentary with regeneration initiatives and cater variously for permanent woodland creation, advance planting and to provide landscaping in association with new development.

LMZ 13.2 Develop techniques of woodland establishment, particularly those that are based on sustainable environmental principles.

LMZ 13.3 Develop selected woodlands and the Tees Barrage as recreational foci and provide opportunities for healthy living and for tackling social exclusion in nearby communities.

LMZ 13.4 Promote the potential of the Teesdale Way as a recreational route and enhance links between it and other recreational and green commuter routes.

LMZ 13.5 Safeguard environmentally sensitive areas, such as Billingham Beck wetlands.”

2.8.28 ‘The Cleveland Community Forest Landscape Assessment’ was undertaken by Woolerton Truscott on behalf of the Countryside Commission in 1994. This research was undertaken, excluding the main urban centres to assess the character and qualities of the existing landscapes of the Cleveland Area, which includes the borough of Stockton-On-Tees.

2.8.29 It is noted that there was numerous classifications of character detailed within the rural areas of Stockton, ranging from flat open farmland to valley landscape. Various character classifications and strategies to maintain and improve the landscape character of the area are detailed throughout the document.

2.8.30 There are a number of key themes which run throughout the document, relevant to the assessment of the Landscape Character of Stockton. These are:

- Softening the urban edge;
- Improving the view;
- Providing an attractive setting for development;
- Woodland links;
- Extending and improving landscape pattern

2.8.31 It is noted that the locational policies and proposals follow that of the later ‘Tees Forrest Plan’ (though they are condensed in the Tees Forrest Plan somewhat). These are not therefore reiterated in this review.



### 3.0 Policy Appraisal

#### 3.1 Summary

3.1.1 The landscape character assessment (LCA) has identified the following 5 landscape 'sensitivities' which have been applied to the landscape of Stockton:

- Very high
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Very low

3.1.2 These sensitivities have been assessed using the initial responses to landscape conditions, which include landscape character sensitivity, sensitivity of individual elements, sensitivity of aesthetic aspects and visual sensitivity.

3.1.3 The current policies contained within the Local Plan should be replaced by a suite of policies, to reflect current Government guidance and the broad range of character identified within the LCA in the LDF.

#### 3.2 Key Issues

3.2.1 It is considered that these policies can be addressed in terms of vision and core objectives and should be reflective of the key issues that have arisen from the LCA. Clearly the landscape policies can address some of these key issues and supplement other development control policies in the plan. The matters that can be addressed through policy are as detailed below:

##### **Landscape Development**

- Woodland links;
- Maintaining and extending landscape pattern;
- Retention and enhancement of green wedges.

##### **Built Development**

- Use of inappropriate building materials and design;
- Expansion of commercial, residential and leisure development on the edges of settlements which erode rural character.



**Infrastructure**

- Loss of tranquillity through development or widespread lighting;
- Increase in powerlines, telecommunication masts and buildings on the skyline.

**Recreation and Tourism**

- Activities such as mountain biking, watersports etc particularly along the Tees;
- Some horse related development (e.g. post and rail paddocks, horse jumps);
- Golf courses.

**Small Scale Change**

- Urban fencing and lighting, extension of domestic gardens etc;
- Loss of locally distinctive planting;
- Obstructive signage, traffic calming measures
- Decline in use of traditional building methods.

**Agriculture**

- Erosion of traditional landscape patterns, loss of hedgerows, trees, removal or traditional ridge furrows/ historic landscape etc;
- Decline in traditional land management;
- Some rural diversification schemes, e.g. inappropriate conversions





### 3.3 Key Objectives

3.3.1 In relation to landscape policy, the following key objectives are recommended:

- Sustainable development objectives, including conservation of natural resources;
- Landscape character objective to protect, conserve and where appropriate, enhance the varied landscape character within the Borough, promoting local distinctiveness;
- Countryside/ rural strategy objective to protect the countryside, particularly that at the rural urban fringes of settlements, whilst encouraging sustainable development;
- Settlement character objective to protect the countryside whilst encouraging sustainable development;
- Settlement character objective to protect, conserve and where appropriate enhance local distinctiveness and retain separation between settlements;
- Design objectives to promote high quality embodying sustainable development techniques taking full account of site and context.

3.3.2 A district-wide audit of all landscape areas within the defined Green Belt, and a selection of inset settlements has been undertaken to assess their landscape character and sensitivity. The findings of the assessment are provided in the LCA, providing full details of all individual landscape areas and a district-wide map, which provides sensitivity classifications on an individual landscape area basis and broad landscape character areas. The protection and enhancement of these should be encouraged through LDF Policy.

3.3.3 The positive aspects of landscape character should be identified for the landscape area covering the site of a particular development proposal by reference to the Study and regard had to the broader character area within which it falls and to the possible impact on adjoining landscape areas. The sensitivity levels have been defined as very high, high, medium, low and very low. These should be identified using the Study in order to assess the tolerances of the site and its ability to accommodate change. The higher the sensitivity, the lower the tolerance.

3.3.4 In order to ensure that any new development does not create harm to the existing landscape sensitivity and character of the surrounding area, it is important that development proposals conserve, protect and where possible enhance the character of the landscape area and local distinctiveness. Policy Framework should reflect this.

3.3.5 It is understood that SBC will review the LCA and formulate planning policy based on the recommendations included within this document.



## Appendix 1: Sites promoted through SHLAA

### **Billingham East**

SHLAA 63 St Michael's School (buildings and hardstanding only)  
SHLAA 84 Site of Derwent House, Low Grange Ave, Billingham

### **Billingham South**

SHLAA 51 Billingham House  
SHLAA 83 Land at Roscoe Road, Billingham

### **Eaglescliffe**

SHLAA 10 Land to the West of Preston Farm, Preston Lane  
SHLAA 16 Land at Allens West, Eaglescliffe  
SHLAA 46 Low Crook Farm, Eaglescliffe  
SHLAA 53 Land North of Preston Lane  
SHLAA 61 Eaglescliffe School (buildings and hardstanding only), Eaglescliffe  
SHLAA 69 Land bound by Urray Nook Road  
SHLAA 82 Land at Durham Lane, Eaglescliffe

### **Hardwick**

SHLAA 14 University Hospital of North Tees

### **Ingleby Barwick East**

SHLAA 15 Land at Little Maltby Farm, Ingleby Barwick  
SHLAA 70 Land adjacent to Teeside Industrial Estate

### **Ingleby Barwick West**

SHLAA 72 Sandhill, Ingleby Barwick

### **Mandale & Victoria**

SHLAA 1 Tees Marshalling Yard (West)  
SHLAA 2 Tees Marshalling Yard (East)  
SHLAA 8 Supreme Knitwear Building, Mandale Triangle, Thornaby  
SHLAA 9 Land to the South of Teesdale Park, Thornaby  
60 SHLAA Land behind Old Autoparts, Thornaby

### **Newtown**

SHLAA 4 Land off Grangefield (Millfield)

### **Norton South**

SHLAA 13 Land at Chesham Road, Norton  
SHLAA64 Norton School (buildings and hardstanding only), Norton



**Parkfield & Oxbridge**

- SHLAA 6 Bowesfield Riverside Phase 2
- SHLAA 55 Former Cable Ski Site, Bowesfield Farm
- SHLAA 57 Land at Smith's Farm
- SHLAA 66 Land and buildings adjoining the
- SHLAA 87 Bowesfield Riverside Phase 1

**Roseworth**

- SHLAA 65 Blakeston School, Stockton

**Stockton Town Centre**

- SHLAA 3 Chandler's Wharf
- SHLAA 5 Speedy Hire, Boathouse Lane
- SHLAA 7 The Barrage
- SHLAA 52 Arriva Bus Depot, Boat House Lane
- SHLAA 54 Municipal Buildings, Stockton Library and Police Station

**Village**

- SHLAA 11 Land South of Thornaby (between Middleton Avenue and Bassleton Lane)
- SHLAA 12 Land to the rear of Holly Bush Farm, Thornaby Road, Thornaby

**Bishopgarth & Elm Tree**

- SHLAA 35 Land West of Harrowgate Lane
- SHLAA 36 Land South of Bishopgarth School
- SHLAA 42 Land at rear of Bishopgarth Cottages, Darlington Back Lane
- SHLAA 43 Land at Two Mile House Farm 4.9 110 121

**Hartburn**

- SHLAA 23 Hartburn Grange land between Yarm Back Lane and West Stockton built up area.
- SHLAA 24 Land at Yarm Back Lane, Hartburn
- SHLAA 29 Land adjoining Bungalow, Netherleigh
- SHLAA 44 Elton Lane Farm, Yarm Back Lane
- SHLAA 80 Land to north of Southlands, Yarm Back Lane

**Northern Parishes**

- SHLAA 30 Land to the North East of White House Farm, Billingham
- SHLAA 56 Land at Wolviston
- SHLAA 62 Land adjoining Blakeston Lane, Norton

**Yarm**



SHLAA 47 Land of Green Lane, Yarm

SHLAA 88 Land to West of Yarm Station, Green Lane

**Billingham East**

SHLAA 79 Land at Manor House Farm, Cowpen Bewley

**Eaglescliffe**

SHLAA 33 Land on the North Western boundary of Aislaby Village

**Ingleby Barwick East**

SHLAA 48 Land North of Maltby

SHLAA 49 Land adjacent to Maltby

**Northern Parishes**

SHLAA 17 Land to the South of Wynyard Village (Masterplan site 4)

SHLAA 18 Land at Wynyard (Masterplan site 3)

SHLAA 20 Land at Wolviston

SHLAA 21 Land at Wolviston

22 SHLAA Land at Wolviston

SHLAA 32 Land at Durham Lane to the South East of Thorpe Thewles

SHLAA 40 Land North of St James Close Thorpe Thewles

SHLAA 74 Land East of Wolviston Road, Wolviston

SHLAA 75 Land at Wynyard (Masterplan site 5)

SHLAA 76 Land at Wynyard Golf Course

SHLAA 81 Wynyard Park

SHLAA 86 Land at Durham Lane to the south west of Thorpe Thewles

**Western Parishes**

SHLAA 25 Land at Hall Farm to the North and West of the Village of Carlton

SHLAA 31 Land at Mount Pleasant, Long Newton

SHLAA 38 Land adjacent to Stillington

SHLAA 39 Townend Farm, Whitton

SHLAA 41 Hill House Farm Redmarshall

SHLAA 58 Land at West End Farm, Longnewton (Parcel 2)

SHLAA 59 Land at West End Farm, Longnewton (Parcel 1)

SHLAA 67 Land to the rear of Londonderry Arms, Long Newton Yarm

SHLAA 26 Land to the South of Knowles Close, Kirklevington

SHLAA 27 Land at St Martin's Way, Kirklevington

# Appendix H – Landscape Character Assessment and the Green Infrastructure Strategy

*"We are faced with a wide range of serious environmental, social and economic challenges; developing housing to meet demographic changes, ensuring that our environments are resilient to a changing climate, maintaining adequate supplies of water, managing flood risk, securing food and energy supplies and safeguarding against biodiversity loss – all of these, and more, need to be considered by anyone concerned with the planning, design and management of our places"*

The Landscape Institute; 2009.

## **PURPOSE & CONTEXT**

The purpose of this appendix is to describe how the Stockton-on-Tees Landscape Character Assessment and the Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy interlock; in particular it draws attention, notably for the benefit of Green Infrastructure Planners, to the Landscape Character Assessment as a resource that can be used when planning individual green infrastructure projects; it is therefore particularly relevant to the green infrastructure delivery process.

The Landscape Character Assessment shows sensitivities to be aware of (e.g. ecological) and opportunities that can be used creatively (e.g. landscape with recreational potential); this relationship between sensitivities and opportunities provides the scope for using the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Landscape Character Assessment together. The Green Infrastructure Strategy's can act as a delivery vehicle to enhance and manage the Borough's landscape into the future; a notable example being areas where green-links should be devised or enhanced.

The Landscape Character Assessment should be considered as a tool to support cross-cutting themes across the work programmes of the Council and its partners; this includes Design, Planning, Environmental protection, Street Scene, Regeneration and others; these same themes resonate with delivery of the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has commissioned the preparation of a Landscape Character Assessment from WYG Environment; this commission has taken place at the same time as a Green Infrastructure Strategy is being prepared for the Borough by an environmental partnership led by the Borough Council. There is a further coincidence of timing; in 2009, a position statement on green infrastructure was issued by the Landscape Institute. The Landscape Institute is the professional body that represents chartered members of the landscape profession and a charity responsible for protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment for the benefit of the public; this appendix also draws on that statement.

The interaction between the Landscape Character Assessment and the Green Infrastructure Strategy has been facilitated by the involvement of Clive Davies Associates as consultant advisors. Clive Davies has acted as the technical advisor to WYG on the Landscape Character Assessment and is also the consultant advisor to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council on the preparation of the Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy. Sarah Edwards at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has also been involved with both the Landscape Character Assessment and a member of the steering group for the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

## **LANDSCAPE INSTITUTE POSITION STATEMENT 2009**

This position statement recognises that a Green Infrastructure approach to land-use planning can promote the widest range of functions which can be performed by the same asset, unlocking the greatest number of benefits. It also recognises that multi-functionality, connectivity and ecosystem services are part of the green infrastructure mix. The Landscape Institute believes that the benefits of incorporating green infrastructure into the planning, design and management of landscapes includes:-

- **Climate change adaptation:** that even modest increases in tree canopy cover can significantly reduce the urban heat island effect via evapo-transpiration and shading, as well as improving air quality.
- **Climate change mitigation:** that well-designed and managed green infrastructure can encourage people to travel in a more sustainable way, such as cycling and walking and has the potential to efficient, decentralised, renewable energy, improving local energy security, providing space for ground source heating, hydroelectric power, biomass and wind power.
- **Water management:** that green infrastructure is a good approach for managing flood risk.
- **Dealing with waste:** that green infrastructure can deal with waste in a sustainable way a good example of this is the use of reed beds which remove pollutants from water.
- **Food production:** that creating space for food production through allotments and community gardens and orchards, increases access to healthy food, provides educational opportunities, contributes to food security and reconnects communities with their local environment.
- **Biodiversity enhancement, corridors and linkages:** that green infrastructure has a role in providing wildlife habitats in both urban and rural areas and that taking a landscape-scale can facilitate species migration.
- **Recreation and health:** that providing accessible green infrastructure provides important opportunities for informal and active recreation, notably by ensuring that assets are provided in close proximity to people's homes.
- **Economic values:** that quality green space can have a major positive impact on land and property markets, creating settings for investment and acting as a catalyst for wider regeneration.
- **Local distinctiveness:** that well-designed and managed assets, particularly those that engage local communities and which relate to landscape character and heritage, can enhance local sense of place and foster community spirit.
- **Education:** that natural environments which are connected to local communities can provide a range of educational opportunities and assist in reconnecting society with the natural environment.
- **Stronger communities:** that green infrastructure can help in meeting a wide range of community needs.

## **THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY – DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Green Infrastructure Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees is based on the delivery of ten themes; there is a consistency between these themes and the benefits of green infrastructure identified by the Landscape Institute. Landscape will interface with all the functions although it is more relevant to some than others. The following sections describe how Landscape and/or the Landscape Character Assessment can be used in respect of the ten themes included in the Green Infrastructure Strategy; recommendations and key points are shown in ***bold italic***.

## **Green Infrastructure Strategy Theme 1: Image and green settings for new development.**

***Existing landscapes and landscape enhancements can be used to create and re-enforce the 'green settings' for new development*** envisaged in the Green Infrastructure Strategy. This can be achieved by ensuring that 'built features' are 'framed' and 'set within' high performance landscapes.

***Landscaping well-in-advance of new built development is to be encouraged;*** landscape professionals; architects, contractors and engineers are nowadays well versed in building and site works that minimises the damage to the landscape setting. Advance landscaping also makes the commercial marketing of sites easier.

New developments that make use of natural systems as engineering solutions such as 'sustainable urban drainage systems' help maintain a heterogeneous landscape.

It should be recognised that development can encroach on valued landscapes; this is illuminated by the River Tees corridor which is an important regional resource; encroachment leads to long term landscape decline.

There are relatively few areas of Stockton-on-Tees where new development is totally inappropriate on landscape grounds alone; even so ***master-planning must include a robust approach and understanding of landscape issues*** to ensure this is so; the Development Control process has a key role in this respect.

Green Corridors are especially vulnerable to development encroachment and maintaining these as open landscapes is recommended. ***In green corridors new development proposals need to pass a higher threshold of need*** if these valuable landscape and ecological corridors are not to be lost.

The multi-dimensional qualities of trees; noting their height; is especially relevant to new development. In the past 25 years the norm has been towards low height low maintenance arboriculture but with green infrastructure the time has come to challenge this thinking. The reason is simple to find; large trees offer significantly more eco-system services than small-sized amenity trees and shrubs; indeed the relationship between size and eco-system services of trees is a logarithmic rather than linear relationship. ***New development provides the funding opportunity for extensive tree planting; and encouragement is given towards the planting of large trees,*** which make a landscape statement.

## **Green Infrastructure Strategy Theme 2: Natural systems to combat climate change.**

All of the stated 'key ambitions' in the Green Infrastructure Strategy theme on Natural systems to combat climate change; interact with landscape planning and design at some level.

Whilst ambitions to increase woodland cover need to be consistent with other landscape types; there are ***specific opportunities to diversify some landscapes, including those which are otherwise absent or rare such as floodplain woodland and Carr.***

The Tees Forest project has shown that there is ***ample opportunity to establish new larger woodlands with productive and recreational potential.*** The consultation on the Landscape Character Assessment showed how important the work of The Tees Forest has

been and the value placed on community woodland. The Tees Forest project is no longer operational but a ***Tees Forest Plan exists and could be delivered by partners.***

***River restoration projects are strongly encouraged as a way of returning rivers to a more natural character*** and can also assist in the delivery of strategic objectives such as those set out in the water framework directive.

Green buildings provides an exciting opportunity for combining landscape with built architecture; ***green roofs and green walls could make the urban offer substantially more attractive.***

Two landscape types impact most on climate change adaptation these are (a) woodland/tree landscapes – both urban and rural and (b) fluvial (water) landscapes. Together they will help deliver the aspirations of the green infrastructure strategy.

***Amenity green space such as parks and woodlands can be engineered to act as flood holding areas*** to divert and hold water away from commercial and residential property during fluvial and pluvial flooding events.

### **Green Infrastructure Strategy Theme 3: Local green spaces for enjoyment, health and well-being.**

People value local landscapes for the amenity they provide and the contribution they make towards their 'quality of life' whether in the town or countryside. It is self evident that landscapes exist at all scales and are nested amongst each other. Local landscapes are simply the units that are the components of larger landscapes. This analysis means that the role of landscape in local green space can not be separated from the wider landscape that it is apart of. ***Master planning of local green spaces should consider its landscape performance within the wider landscape setting.***

Landscape is one of the factors that people use to perceive their own personal safety in local green-spaces. There is a preference to see landscapes as 'well managed'; this does not however imply that naturalness is unpopular; indeed the opposite is true. The point here is that ***natural green-space requires care and management to the same extent as formal green-space***; albeit different skills may be involved.

Research by organisations such as CABI Space has shown that quality landscapes are also those associated with the greatest use by all sections of the community and in promoting physical and mental health.

***Mature landscapes are highly valued*** for their visual amenity but take generations to mature; these are a precious resource where ***conservation is a key priority.***

Initiatives such as ***the introduction of street trees to urban areas should be viewed as long term projects*** as maturity can take up to 100 years plus to achieve. The selection of trees should be diverse to help protect against diseases, be cognoscente of the changing climate and include a substantial proportion of larger tree species; which will be valued in the future for their status.

### **Green Infrastructure Strategy Theme 4: Destinations for recreation and tourism.**



As can be seen from areas such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; landscape is a major attraction in its own right. However it is not only naturalistic landscapes that people value; the relationship between the built environment and natural areas is also of value as can be seen in the Estuarine Marshland of Greatham Corridor.

Stockton's existing attractions include many landscape types; some of the most notable examples being woodland (Coatham Wood, Wynyard Woodland Park); post industrial landscapes (Stillington Forest Park) parklands (Preston Park and Wynyard) and river corridors (Tees Barrage). This mix is considered to be a sign of a healthy landscape framework.

The ambition to develop a regional nature park with RSPB Saltholme acting as the hub is a clear example of landscape and biodiversity combining; the notable opportunity from a landscape perspective is to link with other landscape types in the area; of which the Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park is a substantially different but complimentary landscape as is the ridge and furrow field patterns at Cowpen Bewley village.

Coatham Wood, part of The Tees Forest project and run by the Forestry Commission is an example of the creation of a completely new landscape resource; although immature in landscape terms (planting started in 1997); this large woodland is evidence of how quickly a new landscape can be created for recreation and tourism. There are ***opportunities for community forestry projects of the same scale to take place elsewhere; especially where there is a coincidence of linear access (cycle, walking), open arable landscapes and access by road and public transport.***

#### **Green Infrastructure Strategy Theme 5: Biodiversity, air and water quality**

Biodiversity and landscape are closely aligned; especially when considered in terms of 'habitats'; by definition these have an ecological and landscape component. Hence the green infrastructure strategy ambition to conserve and enhance the priority species and habitats identified in the Tees Valley also requires a strong focus on landscape.

The highest aim for a landscape approach in the Stockton Green Infrastructure Strategy is to achieve connectivity; the professional discipline that supports this work is called Landscape Ecology. The key objective being to reduce habitat fragmentation through the creation, extension and restoration of priority wildlife habitats. Landscape ecology normally requires landscape to be considered at the 'landscape scale' with a priority being placed on linear features and buffering sensitive habitats from potential damaging adjacent land-uses. The landscape features that can contribute to this include (a) wetlands and river corridors including small water features (b) hedgerows and field trees (c) deciduous woodland (d) bounded green-lanes, footpaths and bridleways which act as 'greenways'.

In urban areas landscape design can be used to 'design in' close to nature experiences close to residential areas and in the public realm.

Opportunities should be taken to allow for natural regeneration especially of post industrial sites, the resulting habitats can be unique in ecological and landscape terms.

#### **Green Infrastructure Strategy Theme 6: Routes for sustainable travel and recreation**

Landscapes contribute to this theme in similar ways to that applying to biodiversity, notably through landscape connectivity. **Projects that help 'bridge' gaps in the network of cycle, footpath and bridleway routes can be used to create new landscape corridors;** most notably by providing off-road safe routes; these can be tree lined and contain linear landscape features such as hedgerows and hedge banks.

One area of need is to bridge urban/rural boundaries; in Stockton such areas are often fringe farmland. Improvements to existing rights of way are a clear starting point for this work but there are specific challenges associated with negotiating new access corridors; this is both attitudinal and associated with development hope value. Where restructuring is possible a variety of landscape opportunities exist; such as the creation of new green lanes bounded by hedges and hedgerow trees.

Sustainable transport corridors have a low impact at the landscape scale although there will be local issues to be dealt with through master planning and consultation. **If the ambitions of the green infrastructure strategy are delivered the landscape of Stockton will contain more linear corridors than presently.** This will make the landscape more heterogeneous which is considered to be beneficial in landscape terms.

### **Green Infrastructure Strategy Theme 7: Landscape and heritage**

The Green Infrastructure Strategy's ambitions for heritage and landscape include conservation and enhancement of local landscape character; tackling poor landscape quality through landscape restoration projects and conserving and enhancing the Borough's geodiversity, archaeology and cultural heritage. The Landscape Character Assessment will help the local authority in the prioritisation of those landscapes that most need these interventions.

**Intrusive features in the landscape, such as pylon lines and wind turbines require careful consideration within the wider landscape setting;** most notably how landscape modelling can ameliorate the visual impacts; this requires these features to be considered at some distance from source (several kilometres); it is at this distant that landscape interventions may be required.

**Maintaining a landscape that is genuinely reflective of Stockton-on-Tees, the so called 'genius loci', is a landscape that reflects cultural heritage and cultural diversity.** For this reason not all post industrial landscapes should be considered bad. Assumptions that post industrial landscapes should always be reclaimed, even for green end uses, need to be challenged. The world famous Emscher Park in Germany is an example where natural regeneration has created an internationally celebrated landscape.

The most notable landscapes that give Stockton its special landscape qualities; are the river corridors, especially the section of the River Tees between Stockton centre and Yarm but also its tributaries notably the River Leven; the estuarine landscape of the Greatham corridor and the now extensive network of new community woodlands and countryside facilities such as Wynyard Woodland Park which have developed in the period between the Cleveland Community Forest Landscape Assessment and this new Landscape Character Assessment.

## **Green Infrastructure Strategy Theme 8: Productive landscapes**

This term generally refers to landscapes in primary production, such as farming and forestry, yet in reality most landscapes are productive. It is just that the non-market benefits are more difficult to define; nevertheless these are taken to include landscapes that inspire people, add to quality of life, and attract visitors and tourists. The three themes emerging from the Green Infrastructure strategy are a sustainable agricultural landscape (which is taken to include forestry), local food production and renewable energy production.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century agricultural intensification, driven by UK and European policies had a considerable and normally detrimental impact on the landscape. This was characterised by the rationalisation of field size, removal of hedgerows, wetland features and trees; this result in a less heterogeneous landscape. Contrary to belief in some quarters these improvements were not always popular with the farming community but driven by economic pressures; many farmers decided to leave farming because of these economic factors. The last ten years has seen a 'sea change' in attitudes with environmentally sensitive farming becoming the norm rather than the exception and this has resulted in the reintroduction of many landscape features; nevertheless these features will take many years to mature. ***Landscape guidelines for farming should include diversification and a strong focus on eco-system services.*** Farming landscapes are very important to biodiversity and linear access corridors can be created as green lanes; reintroducing landscape features such as hedgerows and hedge banks, unmanaged margins sometimes known as beetle banks and field and hedgerow trees are an essential part of the mix.

Local food production is undergoing a renaissance as witnessed by the spread of ideas such as the Havana method and the demand for new allotments. These landscape units are usually small but constitute components of the wider landscape setting and it is expected that the majority of these will be in urban areas. The local authority will have a role to ensure that these areas are not maltreated or left to decline, which could detrimentally affect the landscape.

There are some small holdings in Stockton associated with fringe agriculture; but these are overwhelmed in area by the amount of land used as paddocks or informal horsiculture. It is suggested that the ***planning authority might wish to consider an expansion in the number of small holdings*** perhaps linked to self-build housing; with landscape requirements placed as a planning condition.

Energy production is a contemporary use of the agricultural landscape; although it is by know means new; in particular wood has been used as a fuel source since prehistory.

- An expansion of tree cover (forestry) as a wood fuel source would be beneficial in landscape terms.
- Biomass production (poplar & willow or straw & grasses) is largely neutral in landscape terms.
- Bio-digesters have a low profile or can be set underground and also have a low impact on the landscape.
- Ground-source is largely invisible and has no measurable impact on the landscape.

- Geothermal, where possible, and local hydroelectric have a low landscape footprint excepting service buildings.
- Wind turbines are intrusive features; public policy is for an expansion of wind energy production, but there is often strong local opposition.
- Telecommunication features are rarely as intrusive as turbines and are less demanding on the wider landscape.

### **Green Infrastructure Strategy Theme 9: Promoting understanding and community involvement**

The Green Infrastructure Strategy sees education as a key dimension to access and learn about the Borough's natural environment and heritage and through this to create a greater understanding of the role of natural systems and processes. At one level 'landscape' can be seen as the cultural outcome of natural and manmade processes and as such is a dimension to be included in educational programmes; as will be seen under the next theme this has significant consequences in terms of skills, training and employment.

The Landscape Character Assessment has shown the diversity of the local landscape and this in turn suggests there are ample ***opportunities to utilise landscape within educational programmes both in schooling and adult learning***. Some of the most interesting learning landscapes in Stockton are close to urban centres or have visitor facilities.

***Countryside Managers need to consider whether the workforce of wardens, rangers and other professionals in sufficiently skilled to help teach about landscape*** as this is may be a less developed skill to biodiversity and ecological knowledge amongst this work force.

Some regions have charitable Landscape Trusts; no such organisation exists in the Tees Valley, which raises the question whether such a Trust should be formed. Elsewhere Landscape Trusts; coordinate tree warden activities, run tree nurseries, undertake hedgerow and orchard planting and promote community engagement in the landscape.

### **Green Infrastructure Strategy Theme 10: Skills, training and employment**

***Landscape based skills and training will form a significant part of the employment opportunities presented by green infrastructure strategy***; yet the Stockton area is poorly serviced in this regard. There are no professional landscape courses in the area (the nearest is Leeds) or landscape research groups (the nearest is Newcastle) and landscape skill's aimed at the manual workforce are delivered outside of the sub-region notably at Newton Rigg (Cumbria) and East Durham College, the latter providing; arboriculture, environment and horticulture qualifications at their Durham City campus. Furthermore there are notably few providers in the Intermediate Labour Market. Hence it is a reasonable assertion that ***Stockton does not have an adequate skills base to fulfil the employment needs brought about by the Green Infrastructure Strategy***.

The situation described above is reflected nationally; in response CABE Space has launched the 'Skills to Grow' national strategy for improving the green space skills of the workforce. It contends that the green space sector is facing a skills crisis with shortages of

landscape architects and people with the horticultural know-how to create and maintain high quality green spaces. The strategy contains a 'GreenSKILL' on-line database for improving skills and training within the green space sector; 'GROW careers' based on seven priorities to improve urban green space skills and highlights the severe shortage of horticultural skills facing the green space sector and 'Parkforce', a campaign highlighting the importance of park workers in transforming and maintaining Britain's parks. CABE Space provides an invaluable source of advice and guidance on landscape skills and also organises free best practice workshops for urban local authorities on how to run a successful green space apprenticeship scheme.

Another area highlighted in the Green Infrastructure Strategy is volunteering. Landscape works are ideal for volunteers to participate in, notably 'estate skills' footpath works, tree planting etc but also the soft infrastructure of organising events, recruiting volunteers and raising funds. ***The green infrastructure delivery partnership should consider how to develop the volunteering sector locally to meet the landscape needs of the green infrastructure strategy.***

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This appendix has been written to show the close relationship between green infrastructure strategy and landscape. The Landscape Character Assessment is a tool to be used by Green Infrastructure partners to help inform all aspects of the Green Infrastructure Strategy. It can help by identifying those landscapes that are most sensitive and those that are not. Yet the discussion necessarily reaches beyond assessment towards future trends and detailed analysis. In the 10 sections above each has been looked at through the lens of a landscape led approach.

Overall, Stockton is well positioned in terms of its current landscape and how these landscapes can act in tandem with the Green Infrastructure Strategy. There is a notable strength in the diversity of landscapes including the new community woodlands created through The Tees Forest project, the Estuarine Marshland which is of regional significance and the importance of river corridors of which the River Tees is the most notable. It is reasonable to state that the Stockton landscape has improved immensely in 20 years although much remains to be achieved.

The weaknesses lie in respect of skills, training and employment; the challenges of creating new linear access that bridge the town and countryside; and the need to contain urbanisation of green corridors notably the River Tees between Stockton centre and Yarm. It should be debated as to whether there is a need for a charitable Landscape Trust in the Tees Valley to complement the work of other providers and the local authorities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Assessments of the landscape impact of the green infrastructure strategy are undertaken every five years.
2. That a landscape audit of the finished green infrastructure strategy is undertaken.
3. Green infrastructure delivery group debate the recommendations and discussion points in this appendix