

Charnwood Landscape Character Appraisal Workshop 11th June 2012

Attendance

Richard Brown	(RB)	Charnwood Borough Council
Don Munro	(DM)	Munro and Whitten
Sam Lattaway	(SL)	National Forest Company
Ben Wheeler	(BW)	Friends of Charnwood Forest
Jon Golby	(JG)	Pegasus Planning
Sally Eden	(SE)	Charnwood Borough Council
Phil Rech	(PR)	FPCR
Lesley Eddleston	(LE)	Leicestershire County Council
Liz Astill	(LA)	Charnwood CPRE
Graham Stocks	(GS)	Leicestershire Landscapes
Rebecca Hiorns	(RH)	Andrew Hiorns Ltd
Clive Self	(CS)	CSa
Hazel McDowall	(HM)	Natural England
Jonathan Amos	(JA)	Clifton Homes
Judith Livesey	(JL)	Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners
Geoff Brown	(GB)	Charnwood Borough Council

Purpose of the Meeting

Richard Brown (RB) welcomed people to the meeting and invited participants to comment on the Draft Landscape Appraisal, focusing in particular on the Guidelines and Capacity / Sensitivity.

General Comments on the Draft Document

The Borough wide appraisal was welcomed by attendees. The following general comments were made:

- There was a wish to see the work being used as part of the evidence base to support the Core Strategy.
- The text needs to be made more concise and simplified to avoid potential inconsistencies between character areas and to be clearer more helpful to potential readers of the document.
- The introduction needs to explain purpose and role of document .
- The Borough wide appraisal was seen as part of the suite of documents alongside the 2008 Charnwood Forest Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment and the 2012 Charnwood Landscape and Sensitivity Appraisal for the Urban Fringes.
- It was agreed that the boundaries of the character were not hard boundaries but were areas of transition where one area merges into another.

- It was agreed that the views into and out of an area were an important consideration.
- The issue of climate change needs to be mentioned in the main text
- Consistent wording for each LCA was required.
- 'Stepping stones' should be referenced in the document.
- The final document should emphasise local distinctiveness.
- There was considerable support for the approach adopted in the 2008 Landscape Appraisal.
- There was general agreement that many of the messages in the individual sections are repeated and there is scope for bringing them forward into the general guidelines. This could include some of the references to issues such as Lighting, Planting of Native Species, Tranquility and Climate Change.
- It was recognized that additional appraisal work would still be required for individual sites.
- Mention was made of the fact that there was no reference of the proposal to establish a regional park.
- There was a call for an appendix to be included which showed the methodology of scoring for capacity and sensitivity.
- An approach based on matrices could be used with two tables side by side showing strength and condition and capacity.
- The idea of using the same boundaries as Leicestershire County Council's landscape appraisal was supported..
- It was confirmed that geology and soils had informed the Leicestershire Landscape Appraisal work.
- An appendix setting out the methodology was called for.
- It was recognized that more detailed site specific work would be required to support individual development applications.
- Further consultation on the draft was recommended

Appraisal Guidelines

Charnwood

It was acknowledged that parts of Charnwood Forest are close to the M1 and therefore are not 'tranquil'.

SL was of the view that the woodlands and trees and ecology sections needed to be redrafted highlighting amongst other things the potential of new woodlands to create new wildlife corridors.

Mountsorrel and Rothley are shown in the Charnwood Forest Character Area but are also discussed in the Soar Valley Character Area.

High Leicestershire

There was discussion about the use of the word 'conserve' in the General Principles for High Leicestershire compared to Charnwood Forest.

Langley Lowlands

There was a typo on Page 7 'on the hedges'.

PR called for a more positive strategy for creating new woodland.

Soar Valley

SL called for the reference to 'judicious planting' to be clarified.

Reference should be made to valley sides in addition to the river aspect (DM).

There may also be a need to refer to industrial development in view of the presence of the gypsum mill and paper mill at Rothley (PR).

The presence of caravans in some parts of the area was considered by some to be unsightly.

The Soar Valley Guidelines must be fully inclusive with commentary and guidance on the valley slopes as well as the valley floor / river corridor.

Quorn, Mountsorrel and Rothley are outside the Soar Valley LCA but located on the western valley slopes but Barrow upon Soar, Cossington and Sileby on the eastern valley slopes are in the Soar Valley LCA.

Wolds

GS referred to work that had been undertaken previously by Melton Borough Council and asked if there had been any joint work between the two authorities.

LE commented with respect to the section on woodland and trees, and questioned why there was no reference in earlier section to the comment about 'gradually replacing poplar trees'

LE also highlighted the fact that some non native trees may have a local amenity value. This was supported by JG.

SL drew attention to the importance of buffer zones but GS queried what 'sufficient width' meant.

Some non native species such as pine form part of historic parkland and it was felt that recommending their removal in this instance was not appropriate.

Wreake Valley

DM called for more clarification about the role of Village Design Statements.

JG said that the emphasis should be upon 'accommodating development' rather than 'screening development'. DM expressed a preference for using the words 'assimilating development' On the same subject GS said it was important to soften the edges of settlements.

On the subject of flooding and flood risk a comment was made that the third bullet point should be deleted as this is a matter for the Environment Agency. It was also stated that the EA may be amenable to planting in the flood plain.

Capacity and Sensitivity

It was suggested that a table would be more appropriate than the text to illustrate landscape strategy as it removes potential inconsistencies in language

It was suggested that an introductory section explaining the scale of development that is likely to happen and the way in which capacity and sensitivity assessment will be used to inform development should be included.

JG emphasized that the most important issue was that the right development in the right location should be brought forward. As currently worded the Guidelines appear quite anti development.

BW drew attention to the large amount of brownfield land in urban areas.

Existing Landscape Features Heading could be renamed 'Condition and Character'

Charnwood Forest

Terminology for Sub-Areas needs to be the same as 2008 TEP Charnwood Landscape Character Appraisal

In 2008 Rothley Brook was scored as moderate while in this reappraisal Rothley Valley in the Charnwood Forerst Fringe is scored as medium low.

High Leicestershire

PR welcomed the approach of looking at sensitivity and capacity for different sub areas.

Detailed Drafting Points

Rothley - Should read A46 not A50

Charnwood Forest Page 7 - National Forest Company has been in existence for 17 years not 15 years.

Charnwood Forest LCA, Page 9 – should read Rothley Brook

Charnwood Forest Page 10 – Should refer to Central Charnwood Forest consisting of Whitwick Wooded Farmland and Rocky Outcrops the Charnwood Forest Fringe (consisting of Swithland)

Charnwood Forest, Page 10 – should read Rothley Valley (Rothley Brook)

Mountsorrel and Rothley are shown in the Charnwood Forest Character Area but are also discussed in the Soar Valley Character Area.

Quorn, Mountsorrel and Rothley are shown in the Soar Valley LCA but located on the western valley slopes but Barrow upon Soar, Cossington and Sileby on the eastern valley slopes are in the Soar Valley LCA.

Way Forward

Comments on the methodology were invited by Friday 15th June.

The document will be redrafted to reflect comments expressed at the meeting.

RB reported that the urban fringe landscape appraisal work would be included as a chapter in this redrafted document.