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Landscape Character Assessment (Areas of Restraint)

Landscape Character Assessment Report

September 2004

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1. **Background to the Study**

1.1 **Objectives**

1.1.1 Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) commissioned Entec UK Ltd (Entec) in May 2004 to undertake a landscape character assessment of the Areas of Restraint (AOR) as defined in the Borough’s local plan\(^1\)\(^2\). The seven AOR, which define the area of study, are shown on Figure 1.1 and are as follows:

1. Grove Lane, Keresley;
2. Attleborough Fields, Nuneaton;
3. West Nuneaton (Galley Common);
4. East Nuneaton (east of St Nicolas Park);
5. Generally between Nuneaton and Hartshill (Judkins area);
6. Weddington; and

1.1.2 The objective of the assessment is to establish and understand the landscape character of the study areas. The areas defined through the landscape character assessment will provide a framework in which to assess the areas’ ability to meet the criteria set out in the AOR policy. The assessment of the AOR against the policy is reported in a separate document (Assessment of Areas of Restraint) accompanying this report. This document (the landscape character assessment report) sets out the character of the AOR as defined through a landscape character assessment. It is a neutral and value free (i.e. objective) summary of the current state of the landscape which will inform the AOR assessment.

1.2 **Structure of the Document**

1.2.1 The remainder of this document sets out details of:

- the methodology used to undertake the assessment (**Section 2**);
- a brief overview of the national and county context of the study areas (**Section 3**);
- landscape character type descriptions (**Section 4**);


\(^2\) The AOR that form the area of study excludes those AOR defined in the plan located in river valleys.
• summary landscape character area descriptions (Section 5); and
• a summary of ‘forces for change’ (Section 6).

1.2.2 It is important to note that the summary landscape character area descriptions as set out in Section 5 should be read in parallel with the accompanying tables. This report is intended for use primarily by the NBBC planning department, but could also be used by other departments within NBBC. Throughout the study the Consultants worked closely with NBBC as key stakeholders. At this stage no further stakeholder involvement is anticipated.
2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

Development of the landscape character assessment approach
2.1.1 The importance of landscape character has become more widely recognised following the production of ‘The Character of England: landscape, wildlife and natural features’ map by the then Countryside Commission and English Nature with help from English Heritage in 1997. This work identified and defined a total of 159 Countryside Character Areas covering the whole of England. During 1998 and 1999 a series of Countryside Character volumes were produced by the Countryside Commission providing descriptions to accompany the map.

2.1.2 The circulation of The Countryside Agency’s ‘Interim Landscape Character Assessment Guidance’ in 1999 followed by the publication of its final version ‘Landscape Character Assessment Guidance’ and the ongoing work of the Countryside Character Network have acted as a further spur in the development and promotion of the approach to landscape character assessment. It is now recognised that the landscape character assessment guidance provides a systematic and justifiable methodology for defining landscape character areas/types and their subsequent evaluation. The approach followed within this study is based on the methodology set out in the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance.

2.1.3 The landscape character assessment involves a number of clearly defined stages (Figure 2.1). The characterisation of the landscape leads to the production of a map and written descriptions of the different landscape character types and landscape character areas that occur within the study areas. Within this process key landscape issues are identified.

2.2 The Desk Study

2.2.1 The desk study systematically divided the study areas into discrete and relatively homogeneous units of land, within which the constituent physical, biological and historical elements occur in repeating patterns. These units of land, termed landscape

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description units (LDUs), are the building blocks of the landscape and they form the framework on which all the subsequent work is based.

Desk study process

2.2.2 The first step was to identify and obtain all relevant datasets/information for the AOR and their immediate environs (this included information from NBBC). Datasets utilised include:

- Landform - the relative relief and shape of the land surface as derived from interpretation of Ordnance Survey (OS) 1:25,000 scale contour data6;
- Structural geology - the origin and underlying structure of the earth’s surface as derived from interpretation of 1:50,000 British Geological Survey Solid and Drift geology7;
- Soils - the nature of the loose material covering the land surface as derived from interpretation of 1:250,000 Soils of England and Wales Sheet 3 Midland and Western England map8;
- Tree cover - the nature and spatial pattern of tree and woodland cover as derived from interpretation of Aerial Photography (2001) and OS maps at 1:25,000 scale;
- Land use - the broad pattern of primary land use at the landscape scale as derived from interpretation of the Agricultural Land Classification;
- Field patterns - the patterns of enclosure derived from Aerial Photography (2001) and OS maps at 1:25 000 scale;
- Settlement - the historic pattern of rural settlement taken from OS maps and informed by both the recently published national settlement map produced by Roberts and Wrathmell9; and
- Historic information - the distribution and pattern of cultural features as shown on OS maps at 1:25,000 scale. (At the time of undertaking this project a historic landscape character assessment had not been completed for the county).


8 ADAS Cartography (ACU 1983. Provisional Agricultural Land Classification 1:25000 Series Midlands and Western Region. MAFF, London.

2.2.3 Each source of information was mapped on a series of overlays. These overlays were then analysed to determine the physiographic character (a combination of geology and landform), land cover character (tree cover, land use and inherent capability of the land as derived from soil information) and finally the cultural character (based on settlement pattern information and historic features).

2.2.4 The end result is a map of the study areas, at a scale of 1:25,000, divided into a series of discrete LDUs. This ‘birds-eye’ view of the study areas provides a structured framework for informing the field survey. (This analysis and mapping was predominately carried out within GIS.)

2.2.5 Wherever relevant in the desk study, information derived from existing Landscape Character Assessments was used, ensuring the work fitted into the existing hierarchy (see Section 3).

2.3 The Field Survey

2.3.1 The field survey built upon the desk study together with the map and literature based analysis, by providing essential information about the landscape that could not be gained from the desk study. The field survey enabled:

- identification of aesthetic and perceptual characteristics;
- determination of key characteristics; and
- assessment of landscape condition.

Preparation of field survey form

2.3.2 A field survey form was prepared to record the information gained in the field. The form (Appendix A) follows the current approach in landscape assessment methodology as outlined in the ‘Landscape Character Guidance’. In addition to providing a checklist of landscape elements, the form was developed to incorporate space for noting the significance of the identified elements and their condition. On the reverse of the form there are checklists to record aesthetic and perceptual elements. Space to make notes about the urban/rural interface and urban linkages was also provided as the study areas predominately border the urban edge. The development of the field survey form was an interactive process, with NBBC being asked to comment on the initial draft. It was vital that the format of the form was agreed in advance of the fieldwork as it would have been difficult to modify without re-surveying areas already visited. A copy of the field survey form can be found in Appendix A together with a glossary in Appendix B.

Undertaking the field survey

2.3.3 The field survey was completed by two members of the Project Team who had undertaken the desk study. Two surveyors were chosen because previous experience has demonstrated that this staffing arrangement is the most effective in terms of time and the accuracy of the results produced. It allowed issues to be debated in the field and a consensus to be obtained.
2.3.4 It is recognised that the landscape changes with the season both in its appearance and how it is perceived. However it is recommended that summer is the best time for the field survey as there are longer days, better light conditions and better weather for undertaking the survey. Fortunately summer corresponded with the study programme and as such the field survey was undertaken during June/July 2004.

2.3.5 During the field survey LDUs of distinct and recognisable landscape character were grouped together into landscape character areas. The process by which this was carried out is an iterative one, based on a combination of known facts, informed consensus and professional judgement. The process of landscape classification can be used to define different landscape character types as well as discrete, geographically defined landscape character areas, (this is summarised in Figure 2.2). Landscape character types which are generic might include, for example, river meadowlands - a wide ranging type of landscape which occurs in different geographical areas within the country. However each river meadow landscape is a geographically unique discrete landscape character area which occurs nowhere else in England.

2.3.6 One form per landscape character area was completed, the findings of which are summarised in Section 4. The field survey form was completed once the surveyors had viewed all areas and understood the area delineated. Photographs were also taken as an additional record of the field survey.

2.4 Classification

2.4.1 Once the field survey had been completed the next task was to re-assess the findings of the desk study and field survey to verify the delineation and landscape character type of each of the landscape character areas. This provided a classification of individual landscape character types and landscape character areas.

2.4.2 Each generic landscape character type identified was named using two or three simple words that evoked the essence of that particular landscape, for example, ‘Former Industrial Landscape’. Landscape character areas were named using a combination of its specific location and the landscape character type by which it is classified, for example, ‘Tunnel Road Former Industrial Landscape’. By assessing the data recorded, key characteristics shared by landscape character areas within a landscape character type were identified and a description of the landscape character type prepared.

2.4.3 The landscapes defined at various levels share common boundaries, with landscape character types comprising of one or more landscape character areas.

2.5 Description

2.5.1 Descriptions of the landscape were prepared at two different scales:

- for each landscape character type (refer Section 4), and
- each landscape character area (refer Section 5).
2.5.2 The landscape character type descriptions describe the topography, geology, ground type, principal land uses (including woodland and tree cover), settlement pattern, field patterns, types of enclosure, ecological character, settlement pattern(s) and historical features of the landscape. Key characteristics have also been defined.

2.5.3 The landscape character area descriptions relate clearly to those elements that define landscape areas and the data collected in the field. The descriptions at this scale pick up local characteristics which create a landscape’s sense of place, particularly the aesthetic and perceptual elements. The condition of the elements that form the landscape, evidence of change and causes for change are briefly outlined where relevant. Produced in tabular form, these descriptions are structured to reflect the way in which the area has been classified making the descriptions transparent and robust.

2.5.4 Boundaries of both landscape character types and landscape character areas have been defined and delineated. At times the difference between one character type/area is very clear, for example, the bottom of a scarp slope can define the difference between a rolling agricultural landscape and a landscape of wooded hills. However, in other cases, changes in character are less clear and the landscape may change gradually from one landscape type to another. As a result, areas close to landscape type boundaries may be transitional in character and may display characteristics of both adjacent landscapes.

2.6 Identification of Forces for Change

2.6.1 Forces for change were identified in consultation with NBCC. The aim of this stage is to provide a broad overview of the likely issues and opportunities that may affect the landscape in future, such as ongoing land use change and development pressures.

2.6.2 In identifying forces for change, a list of potential subjects were defined to stimulate discussion:

- Land management;
- Natural forces;
- Development issues;
- Recreational issues; and
- Other issues (relating to nature conservation or the historic environment).

2.6.3 These subjects were discussed via a Consultant’s internal round table discussion and a meeting with NBBC. Within the internal round table meeting individuals with specialist knowledge in urban fringe, urban design, ecology, land management, recreation, planning and landscape provided comment. Issues in regard to planning were discussed further at the separate meeting with NBBC in order to harness local knowledge and experience. The findings of these discussions are set out in Section 6.
3. Existing Landscape Character Assessment

3.1 Introduction

This section explores how the AORs relate to existing landscape character assessments that have been undertaken in the area. At a national level, landscape character areas (Countryside Character areas) and landscape character types (draft national landscape character typology) have been prepared. At a county level, work undertaken by Warwickshire, together with adjacent county assessments have been reviewed. No adjacent boroughs (i.e. Coventry, North Warwickshire or Rugby) have undertaken a borough level landscape character assessment to date.

3.2 National Level Work

In the Character of England Map the AOR fall within two character areas; ‘Arden’ and the ‘Mease/Sence Lowlands’. Relationships between the Countryside Character Areas and the AOR together with the key elements that characterise ‘Arden’ and the ‘Mease/Sence Lowlands’ are set out in Table 3.1.

In the Draft National Landscape Character Typology the AOR fall within three different draft landscape character types coded as:

- UBA - physiography is upstanding (U), ground type is characterised by light land (B) and the cultural pattern is wooded (ancient relics) with a dispersed settlement pattern (A).
- UPC - physiography is upstanding (U), the ground type is of heavy land (P) and the cultural character is of coalfields (C).
- RBN - physiography is intermediate, rolling/undulating (R), ground type is characterised by light land (B) and the cultural pattern is unwooded with a nucleated settlement pattern (N).

Relationships between the draft landscape character types and the AOR, together with descriptions of the draft landscape character types are set out in Table 3.2.


3.3 County Level Work

At a county level a landscape character assessment was completed for Warwickshire in 1993\(^1\). In this work the AOR fall within the two character areas defined as ‘Arden’ and the ‘Mease Lowlands’ corresponding to the national character areas noted above. However, within this study the county level landscape types were also defined. The key characteristics for these landscape types, together with their relationship to the AOR, are set out in Table 3.3.

To the north east the AORs are bordered by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy\(^2\). Within this assessment the landscape character area bordering the two AORs\(^3\) on the north east boundary is defined as ‘Mease/Sence Lowlands’. The key characteristics for this character area are also set out in Table 3.3.


\(^{14}\) AOR 4 - East Nuneaton (east of St Nicolas Park) and AOR 6 - Weddington
Table 3.1  Countryside Character Areas and their relationship to the AOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countryside Character Area</th>
<th>AOR which fall within this Countryside Character Area</th>
<th>Key Characteristics of the Countryside Character Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arden</td>
<td>⊗ Grove Lane, Keresley</td>
<td>The key characteristics of the Arden are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>⊗ West Nuneaton (Galley Common)</td>
<td>⊗ Well-wooded farmland landscape with rolling landform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>⊗ Bedworth Woodlands</td>
<td>⊗ Ancient landscape pattern of small fields, winding lanes and dispersed, isolated hamlets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>⊗ Western side of the Judkins area between Nuneaton and Hartshill</td>
<td>⊗ Contrasting patterns of well-hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands interspersed with larger semi-regular fields on former deer parks and estates, and a geometric pattern on former commons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>⊗ Mease/Sence Lowlands</td>
<td>⊗ Numerous areas of former wood-pasture with large, old, oak trees, often associated with heathland remnants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mease/Sence Lowlands</td>
<td>⊗ East Nuneaton (east of St Nicolas Park);</td>
<td>⊗ Narrow, meandering river valleys with long river meadows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>⊗ Weddington</td>
<td>⊗ North-eastern industrial area based around former Warwickshire coalfield, with distinctive colliery settlements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>⊗ Attleborough Fields, Nuneaton</td>
<td>⊗ North-western area dominated by urban development and associated urban edge landscapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>⊗ Eastern side of the area generally between Nuneaton and Hartshill (Judkins area)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Entec

September 2004
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Draft landscape character type</th>
<th>AOR which fall within this Draft Landscape Character Type</th>
<th>Description of the Draft Landscape Character Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UBA</td>
<td>‣ Grove Lane, Keresley</td>
<td>UBA - This Landscape Character Type is a topographically upstanding, settled agricultural landscape characterised by a dispersed pattern of settlement. Tree cover is of remnant ancient woodlands with densely scattered hedgerow oak trees in places. The light soils mean that there are few constraints to agricultural production, with the result that the area is strongly associated with arable cultivation. This description is summarised within the coding for the Character Types (Entec et al, 2001): the physiography is upstanding (U), ground type is characterised by light land (B) and the cultural pattern is wooded (ancient relics) with a dispersed settlement pattern (A).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‣ Western side (west of tunnel road) West Nuneaton (Galley Common)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‣ Eastern side (east of tunnel road between Galley Gap and Plough Hill) of West Nuneaton (Galley Common)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‣ Western side of the Judkins area between Nuneaton and Hartshill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPC</td>
<td>‣ Bedworth Woodlands</td>
<td>UPC - This Landscape Character Type is a topographically upstanding landscape, it has heavy land typically associated with base poor clayey and loamy soils. Seasonal waterlogging is the main constraint to agricultural production and this land cover type is mainly permanent grassland; patches of wet heath/moorland are the characteristic associated habitat. The landscape is characterised as being associated with coal fields and as such has a semi-rural character that has been significantly altered by large scale industrial activity. This description is summarised within the coding for the Character Types (Entec et al, 2001): the physiography is upstanding (U), the ground type is of heavy land (P) and the cultural character is of coalfields (C).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‣ Eastern side (east of tunnel road between Galley Gap and Plough Hill) of West Nuneaton (Galley Common)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‣ Western side of the Judkins area between Nuneaton and Hartshill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBN</td>
<td>‣ East Nuneaton (east of St Nicolas Park);</td>
<td>RBN - This Character Type is a rolling/undulating, settled agricultural landscape characterised by discrete settlement nuclei (villages and/or hamlets) associated with a low to moderate scattering of farmsteads and outlying dwellings. Tree cover is usually fairly sparse and restricted to thinly scattered trees and/or small covers/tree groups. The light soils mean that there are few constraints to agricultural production, with the result that the area is strongly associated with arable cultivation. This description is summarised within the coding for the Character Types (Entec et al, 2001): the physiography is intermediate, rolling/undulating (R), ground type is characterised by light land (B) and the cultural pattern is unwooded with a nucleated settlement pattern (N).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‣ Weddington</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‣ Attleborough Fields, Nuneaton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‣ Eastern side of the area generally between Nuneaton and Hartshill (Judkins area)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.3 County landscape work and their relationship to the AOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Areas</th>
<th>Landscape Type</th>
<th>AOR which fall within this Character Area</th>
<th>Summary descriptions and characteristic features of the Landscape Type/Character Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines - Arden Character Area</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Grove Lane, Keresley</td>
<td>None provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ancient Arden</td>
<td>Western side (west of tunnel road) West Nuneaton (Galley Common)</td>
<td>A small scale farmed landscape with a varied, undulating topography, characterised by an irregular pattern of fields and narrow, winding lanes. Characteristic features are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- A varied undulating topography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- A network of winding lanes and trackways often confined by tall hedgebanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- An ancient irregular pattern of small to medium mixed fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Hedgerow and road side oaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Field ponds associated with permanent pasture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Many place names ending in Green of End</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Arden</td>
<td>Bedworth Woodlands</td>
<td></td>
<td>A rather variable, often run down urban fringe landscape characterised by mining settlements, spoil heaps and pockets of farmland. Characteristic features are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Arden</td>
<td>Eastern side (east of tunnel road between Ansley and Plough Hill) of West Nuneaton (Galley Common)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- A varied, often steeply undulating topography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Arden</td>
<td>Western side of the Judkins area between Nuneaton and Hartshill</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Pockets of farmland, often surrounded on two or more sides by urban development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- A generally poorly defined pattern of small hedges fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Small, closely spaced mining settlements often on hill tops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Rows of terraced houses along roadsides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Disused spoil heaps with semi-natural grassland and scrub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Golf courses, playing fields and other non agricultural land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Character Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Type</th>
<th>AOR which fall within this Character Area</th>
<th>Summary descriptions and characteristic features of the Landscape Type/Character Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines - Mease Lowlands Character Area</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estate Farmlands</td>
<td>East Nuneaton (east of St Nicolas Park);</td>
<td>A well ordered agricultural landscape characterised by large country estates and small game coverts. Characteristic features are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Majority of Weddington</td>
<td>A gently rolling topography of rounded hills and valleys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attleborough Fields, Nuneaton</td>
<td>A late enclosure pattern of large hedged fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern side of the area generally between Nuneaton and Hartshill (Judkins area)</td>
<td>Many small regular shaped large hedged fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Non Agricultural Landscape</td>
<td>Southern section of Weddington (area corresponding to the playing fields)</td>
<td>Small hilltop villages often marked by a tall church spire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Winding country lanes bounded by wide grass verges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy Mease Lowlands Character Area</strong></td>
<td>Adjacent to East Nuneaton (east of St Nicolas Park);</td>
<td>This landscape character area has the following distinct features:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjacent to Weddington</td>
<td>Undulating landscape with frequent small valleys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed arable and pasture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Willows associated with streams and ponds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequent hedgerow trees, mainly mature oaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Generally well trees appearance although little woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Many sites of ecological value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Landscape Character Type Descriptions

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Landscape character types defined through this study are delineated on Figure 4.1. There are a total of six landscape character types:

- Enclosed Commons;
- Ancient Farmlands;
- Pasture Farmlands;
- Wooded Slopes;
- Estate Farmlands; and
- Former Industrial.

4.1.2 Within this section each landscape character type is described through:

- the identification of key characteristics (both primary and secondary elements);
- a written description (providing an overall summary and detailed description); and
- where appropriate, by photographs.
4.2 Enclosed Commons

Figure 4.2 Extent of Enclosed Commons within the study area

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 Representative images of the Enclosed Commons Landscape Type

Summary

4.2.1 This is a small scale, densely settled landscape with a small, sub-regular field pattern. Probably of an area of former common, it is a pastoral landscape with fields defined by mixed species hedgerows. It is generally an unwooded landscape with tree cover being provided by scattered hedgerow trees, stream side tree lines and tree groups associated with the settlement.
Key characteristics

4.2.2 Please refer to glossary (Appendix B) for a full explanation of the key characteristics.

Primary

- Settled;
- Small sub-regular field pattern.

Secondary

- Stock rearing;
- Other trees;
- Mixed hedgerows.

Overview

Physiography

4.2.3 Topographically this land is above 300ft (lowland) but below 1000ft and therefore intermediate in nature. The landform itself is characterised by pronounced undulations within which streams are present (running in a west to east direction).

4.2.4 This landscape type lies on ‘hard rock’ Upper Carboniferous geology. At a finer degree of resolution this consists of both red brown mudstones and sandstones (area around Galley Common) and grey sandstones and mudstone (in the area around Plough Hill).

Land cover

4.2.5 Stock rearing is the predominant land use within this landscape type, which has a Grade 3 agricultural land classification (ALC). Generally the soils are loamy in character and can experience slight seasonal waterlogging which may explain the stock rearing land use. The slight differences in geology also give rise to differences in soils: gleic, argillic brown earths occur on the red brown mudstones and sandstones whilst a mix of stagnogley loamy soils and typical brown earths occur on the grey sandstones and mudstone.

Cultural pattern

4.2.6 The rural settlement is of key significance in defining this landscape. It is characterised by a moderate to high scattering of both farmsteads/small holdings and small wayside cottages. This settlement is dispersed irregularly along the narrow winding road and track network. Predominately an unwooded landscape, notable tree cover is provided by scattered hedgerow trees, tree lines along stream sides and tree groups associated with the residential dwellings. This tree cover and the density/proximity of settlement tends to limit views within this landscape and can lead to a sense of enclosure.

4.2.7 The small scale character of this landscape is also a key characteristic. This is primarily defined through the sub-regular pattern of small fields which are generally defined by mixed species hedgerow boundaries.
4.3 Ancient Farmlands

Figure 4.5 Extent of Ancient Farmlands within the study area

Figures 4.6 and 4.7 Representative images of the Ancient Farmland Landscape Type

Summary
4.3.1 This is an undulating landscape of mixed farming with tree cover provided by a combination of small ancient woodland relics and scattered hedgerow trees. A landscape of dispersed settlement, it has a sub-regular field pattern defined by mixed species hedgerows.
Key characteristics
4.3.2 Please refer to glossary (Appendix B) for a full explanation of the key characteristics.

Primary
- Mixed farming;
- Ancient woodland relics;
- Undulating land form.

Secondary
- Sub regular field pattern;
- Mixed hedgerows;
- Dispersed settlement pattern.

Overview
Physiography
4.3.3 Topographically this land is above 300ft (lowland) but below 1000ft and therefore intermediate in nature. The landform itself is characterised by pronounced undulations, a key characteristic of the landscape. Views can be limited within the base of the undulations, however, mid to long distance views are experienced from the tops of the undulations.

4.3.4 Similar to the Enclosed Commons, this landscape type lies on ‘hard rock’ Upper Carboniferous geology. At a finer degree of resolution this area predominately consists of red brown mudstones and sandstones.

Land cover
4.3.5 Mixed farming is the predominant land use and is a key characteristic of this landscape type. It typically has a Grade 3 agricultural land classification and the soils are mainly characterised by gleyic, argillic brown earths which are loamy in character with slight seasonal waterlogging. Such soils may indicate that this land is relatively good to cultivate and may explain the mixed farming land use evident.

Cultural pattern
4.3.6 This is a landscape comprising small ancient relic woodlands, often located on steeper undulations and along stream sides. Further tree cover is provided by scattered hedgerow trees. Tree cover is a key characteristic of this landscape. The rural settlement is characterised by a moderate level of dispersal of farmsteads. Field pattern, defined by mixed species hedgerows, is characterised by a sub-regular pattern of medium sized fields.

4.3.7 In areas outside of the AOR but linked to this landscape type, are large country houses with associated parklands e.g. Ansley Park.
4.4 Pasture Farmlands

Figure 4.8 Extent of Pasture Farmlands within the study area

Figures 4.9 and 4.10 Representative images of the Pasture Farmland Landscape Type

Summary

4.4.1 This is landscape comprising a regular pattern of small scale fields. These fields are defined by mixed species hedgerows with tree cover provided by a combination of small ancient woodland relics and densely scattered hedgerow trees. A landscape of pastoral land use within which localised patches of wet pasture occur.
Key characteristics
4.4.2 Please refer to glossary (Appendix B) for a full explanation of the key characteristics.

Primary
• Small, regular fields;
• Stock rearing.

Secondary
• Ancient woodland relics;
• Dispersed settlement;
• Mixed hedgerows.

Overview

Physiography
4.4.3 Topographically this land is above 300ft (lowland) but below 1000ft and therefore intermediate in nature. The landform itself is very gently rolling, at times almost flat and as a result enables views over the landscape. This landscape type falls upon glacial drift, part of a large band that continues into Bedworth.

Land cover
4.4.4 Pastoral farming for stock rearing is the predominant land use and is a key characteristic of this landscape type. This landscape has two different agricultural land classifications. Grade 3 covers the area to the west and south of Bedworth Lane whilst Grade 4 agricultural land classification occurs to the west and extends upwards between Bedworth and Nuneaton. This poor (Grade 4) land classification may explain the pastoral land use.

4.4.5 The soils are stagnogleys, which are seasonally waterlogged and slowly permeable soils which may also explain the pastoral land use and poor agricultural land classification.

Cultural pattern
4.4.6 The field pattern of small, regular shaped fields is a key characteristic of this landscape. This is a landscape comprising small ancient relic woodlands, and perhaps most notably, densely scattered hedgerow trees. Field boundaries are defined by mixed species hedgerows which, together with the tree cover, often limit views and creates a sense of enclosure. The rural settlement is characterised by a moderate level of dispersal of farmsteads.

4.4.7 In the areas outside of the AOR but linked to this landscape type, are large country houses with associated parklands e.g. Arbury Park.
4.5 **Wooded Slopes**

Figure 4.11  Extent of Wooded Slopes within the study area

Figures 4.12 and 4.13  Representative images of the Wooded Slopes Landscape Type

**Summary**

4.5.1 This is a steeply sloping landscape that is heavily wooded. Outside the woodland there is a sub-regular field pattern defined by mixed species hedgerows and a dispersed settlement pattern.
Key characteristics
4.5.2 Please refer to glossary (Appendix B) for a full explanation of the key characteristics.

Primary
• Woodland;
• Steep slope.

Secondary
• Dispersed settlement pattern;
• Sub regular field pattern;
• Mixed hedgerows.

Overview

Physiography
4.5.3 Topographically this land is above 300ft (lowland) but below 1000ft and therefore intermediate in nature. The landform itself is a key characteristic of the landscape, being part of a significant scarp slope that runs in a south east to north west direction from Camp Hill to Harts Hill and beyond. The scarp slope, outside of the woodland, provides long distance view over the surrounding landscape to the north east. The underlying geology comprises Lower and Pre Cambrian ‘hard rocks’.

Land cover
4.5.4 The soils are shallow brown ranker soils on bare rock which would favour pastoral and woodland land uses. This landscape is classified (on a national scale) as Grade 3 agricultural land. However, it is likely in reality (at the local level) that this land is of poorer quality as suggested by the soils. Other than woodland, land use is characterised by pasture for stock rearing.

Cultural pattern
4.5.5 This is a landscape comprising large woodlands which are a key characteristic of this landscape. The woodlands are predominantly deciduous in character, some of which may be ancient, while some may be regenerating secondary woodland. The field pattern of sub-regular, large fields is defined by mixed species hedgerows. The rural settlement is characterised by a moderate level of dispersal of farmsteads.
4.6 Estate Farmlands

Figure 4.14 Extent of Estate Farmlands within the study area

Figures 4.15 and 4.16 Representative images of the Estate Farmlands Landscape Type
Summary

4.6.1 This is a predominately arable agricultural landscape with a sub-regular field pattern of medium to large fields. The landscape is often open and gently rolling in character. Field boundaries are defined by mixed species hedgerows and tree cover is provided by scattered hedgerow trees together with tree lines along stream sides.

Key characteristics

4.6.2 Please refer to glossary (Appendix B) for a full explanation of the key characteristics.

Primary
- Cropping;
- Sub regular medium large field pattern;
- Gently rolling landscape.

Secondary
- Dispersed settlement pattern;
- Mixed hedgerows;
- Other tree cover.

Enclosed commons overview

Physiography

4.6.3 Topographically this land is typically below 300ft and therefore classified as low-lying. The landform is a key characteristic of the landscape being gently rolling, almost flat in places. The gently rolling landform allows mid distance views in many locations. Geologically this landscape is younger than the Upper Carboniferous areas to the west of the Borough. The landscape predominantly comprises Mercia Mudstone and areas of drift. An area of glacial till occurs in an area around the A47 where the A47 cuts the AOR between Nuneaton and Hinckley. Fluvial glacial drift occurs along the River Anker in both the Weddington and Attleborough Fields area.

Land cover

4.6.4 The soils are predominantly gleyic, argillic brown earths which experience slight seasonal waterlogging. Associated with the area of glacial till stagnogleys soils occur, which are seasonally waterlogged and slowly permeable soils.

4.6.5 This landscape is classified as both Grade 2 and Grade 3 agricultural land. Grade 2 land occurs in an area between Weddington, the A5 and St Nicolas Park as well as in the vicinity of the A425 to the east of Nuneaton. Such good land classification is reflected in the predominantly cropping/arable land use, a key characteristic of this landscape type.
Cultural pattern

4.6.6 The landscape comprises a medium to large sized, sub-regular field pattern which is a key characteristic of this landscape. Field boundaries are predominantly defined by mixed species hedgerows. The rural settlement is characterised by a moderate level of dispersal of farmsteads. Tree cover within this landscape is provided by scattered hedgerow trees and tree lines along stream sides.

4.6.7 The wider landscape outside of, but linking with the AOR, includes estates such as Caldecote and Higham Grange with the country house, lodges and associated parkland and estate woodland planting.
4.7 Former Industrial

Figure 4.17 Extent of Former Industrial within the study area

Figures 4.18 and 4.19 Representative images of the Former Industrial Landscape Type

Summary

4.7.1 This is disturbed landscape that is often characterised by its man made ‘artificial’ landform of low hills, often created from spoil heaps/waste. It has a dispersed settlement pattern.
Key characteristics

4.7.2 Please refer to glossary (Appendix B) for a full explanation of the key characteristics.

Primary

• Low hills;
• Disturbed land use;
• Spoil heaps.

Secondary

• Dispersed settlement pattern.

Overview

Physiography

4.7.3 The landform is a key characteristic of the landscape characterised by man made low hills which are often prominent in the surrounding landscape. Geologically the landscape is often associated with coal bearing geology from which coal has been excavated leading to the formation of this landscape type due to deposition of material for mining activity.

Land cover

4.7.4 Soils are likely to be highly modified and disrupted within this landscape due to both presence of waste and/or the process of top soils being brought in as part of the remediation or restoration of the site.

4.7.5 This landscape is classified (on a national scale) as Grade 3 agricultural land. However it is likely in reality (at the local level) that this land may vary in quality depending upon the soils/ remediation or restoration activity on the individual sites.

4.7.6 As a result of restoration of this former industrial landscape, land use is disturbed (a key element) and can include woodland or farmland.

Cultural pattern

4.7.7 The landscape is in an area of former industrial activity such as coal extraction which lead to the associated features of spoil heaps; a key landscape characteristic. Where farmland has been adopted as the restoration option, field boundaries within this landscape are predominantly large and regular in scale and defined by thorn hedgerows indicating its relatively recent evolution. The settlement is characterised by a moderate level of dispersal of farmsteads on the edge of the area.

4.7.8 Tree cover within this landscape is varied, again dependent on the restoration option followed. The planting of large deciduous woodlands can often occur.
5. Landscape Character Areas

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Landscape character areas defined through this study are delineated on Figure 5.1. There are a total of eleven landscape character areas:

- Galley Common Enclosed Commons (AOR 3b);
- Galley Common Ancient Farmlands (AOR 3a);
- Keresley Newlands Ancient Farmlands (AOR 1);
- Bedworth Woodlands Pasture Farmlands (AOR 7b);
- Caldecote Hill Wooded Slopes (AOR 5a);
- Coventry Canal Estate Farmlands (AOR 5b);
- Weddington Estate Farmlands (AOR 6);
- St Nicholas Park Estate Farmlands (AOR 4);
- Attleborough Fields Estate Farmlands (AOR 2);
- Ansley Former Industrial (AOR 3c); and
- Market Hall Former Industrial (AOR 7b).

5.1.2 Within this section each landscape character area is described within a tabular format. This format was chosen to allow:

- consistency in the way the character areas are reported;
- transparency back to the landscape type classifications; and
- individual landscape elements, for example, landform, to be easily compared from one character area to another.

5.1.3 In these tables key characteristics (both primary and secondary elements) are identified through the dark blue and light blue shading respectively. The individual attributes that come together to provide the character of the area are recorded and further detail gained from both the desk and field survey is provided in the description column. The current state/condition of the landscape attributes, where relevant, and as recorded in the field is also noted.

5.1.4 It is recognised the character areas can be further divided to a finer level of detail dependent upon visual and actual boundaries present in the landscape. Such divisions do not represent a change or difference in character but produce a clearly delineated area at a more detailed level than character areas. This is explained and mapped in more detail in the AOR assessment report.
6. Forces for Change

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 There are myriad forces for change that may effect the future character of the
landscape. Within this section a brief commentary is provided on the most likely and
significant forces for change relevant to the landscapes studied for this report.

6.1.2 As defined within this assessment the majority of the landscapes are agricultural
landscapes and as such, changes in agriculture may lead to significant changes in
character. Furthermore the landscape studied are predominantly bordering the urban
townscape and as a consequence, development and/or recreational changes are likely
to be key forces for change. Other broad generic issues relevant to the study area are
also summarised.

6.2 Land Management

6.2.1 Land management forces for change are arguably the most significant changes which
are likely to affect the landscapes studied.

6.2.2 Changes in land ownership can have a direct impact on how landscape features are
managed, such as the type and intensity of farming or frequency of hedge cutting.
Such changes in the landscape can be both immediate or gradual. A change from
pasture to arable may be immediate, whilst allowing the growth of young hedgerow
trees may be more gradual. This sort of change is likely to occur at the farm scale
dependent upon ownership.

6.2.3 Changes in farm structure may also affect landscapes. Changes in subsidies and
legislation can, for example, change the way the landscape is farmed or encourage the
retention of valued features such as habitats/landscape elements. These forces for
change come from government and, as such, are likely to have a large scale i.e.
national effect on landscapes.

6.2.4 As agriculture is becoming increasingly less profitable, marginal areas of land may be
taken out of production and effectively be left unmanaged. The impact on the
landscape is likely to occur over a long period of time but will effectively create areas
of semi natural vegetation where agricultural land once stood.

6.2.5 Alternatively, non profitable land may be utilised for recreation/amenity use; an
increasing trend and agricultural land may be converted to other uses such as golf
courses or be utilised for equestrian activities. Such a wholesale change may have an
immediate and dramatic impact on the landscape in which it stands, introducing a non
agricultural and potentially suburban character to the landscape.
6.3 Development

6.3.1 Within landscapes on the urban - rural fringe, as all these landscape character areas are, development is also a key force for change.

6.3.2 The emerging local plan phases housing land release in accordance with PPG3. The first two phases comprise brownfield housing land allocations. Greenfield housing land allocations are allocated in the third and final phase of housing land release. These greenfield sites will only be required if other allocated or brownfield windfall sites do not come forward to meet the identified housing requirement. Modifications to the emerging local plan provide sufficient employment land to meet the structure plan targets and no new transport routes are identified within either the local plan or Local Transport Plan that would effect the AOR. However, if the strategic employment centre identified for this sub region was to be located in the Borough, there may be a future need for land to accommodate associated housing in the urban-rural fringe.

6.3.3 The Borough is investigating the housing needs of gypsies within the Borough. There is scope to undertake a Gypsy Housing Needs Assessment with neighbouring boroughs to determine if there is a need and how it might be met. The need for any additional sites would be borne out through this Needs Assessment. Although relatively small in area, such sites are likely to be sited on agricultural ground and hence change the land use of the area. Also, gypsy sites may have associated planting that could have effects on the landscape’s tree cover character. Furthermore, the concentration of dwellings may change the settlement character of the landscape by creating a new nuclei of dwellings.

6.3.4 There is also, as in all urban - rural fringe land, pressure for new housing development from house builders and land owners. This is particularly notable to the east side of Nuneaton which is seen as an affluent area with better schools and higher house prices compared to other parts of the Borough.

6.4 Recreational

6.4.1 In urban - rural fringe areas recreational/amenity issues are often forces for change where such facilities are required by the adjacent urban community.

6.4.2 Currently, there is no identified need for additional recreational/amenity facilities within the Borough. However, should the need for a significant built recreational facilities be required, the urban form is unlikely to be able to accommodate such development and, as such, these are likely to be located in the adjacent rural landscape. Such a change will introduce a non agricultural and suburban character to the landscape arising from associated buildings and parking facilities.

6.4.3 Future increased use of the existing public rights of way (present in all of the landscape character areas) may also influence character, due to the increased presence of humans and movement within the landscape. However such a change is likely to have a limited influence on the landscape due to the limited landtake associated with rights of ways.
6.5 **Natural Forces**

6.5.1 The predominant natural force for change is climate change, either through direct or indirect impacts. Direct impacts of climate change on landscape character include flooding events, longer growing seasons or low river flows. Flood risk areas such as that associated with the River Anker are particularly vulnerable to this sort of climate change impact.

6.5.2 Although climate change impacts such as increased summer temperatures may not influence landscape character directly, there could be downstream effects on landscape components such as agricultural land use. Climate change will affect the natural environment, land use and cultural heritage aspects of landscape character.

6.5.3 Potential impacts on the natural environment component of landscape character include: changes in habitat and species composition; the fragmentation of habitats; changes in water resources; and changes in air quality and soils.

6.5.4 Land use changes could be subtle and be the result of myriad individual land management decisions at the local scale. Agriculture and forestry will be most affected but also the response of land use planning policies, for instance through presumption against building on flood risk areas, could affect landscape character.

6.5.5 Cultural heritage, typified by historic buildings and archaeological sites, is fundamental to landscape character and also vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The impacts on ancient landscape features such as field patterns or ridge and furrow, could well be significant but subtle and the result of other changes such as land use. Key impacts on the cultural component could involve historic landscapes and gardens, weathering, subsidence and flooding.

6.6 **Other Issues**

6.6.1 Changes in the management and/or protection of nature conservation sites or scheduled ancient monuments may occur with changes in policies or government legislation. However these are likely to be site specific and therefore have a limited influence upon the landscape. There are no national nature conservation designations or historic environment designations within the areas of study. There are however a number of wildlife sites and wildlife corridors located in the AOR that may be influenced by such changes.
7. **Next Stages**

### 7.1 How the landscape character assessment may be used by planners

7.1.1 The main purpose of a landscape character assessment is to provide information on the landscape character of an area i.e. identifying what the character is and the individual components that define it. This information can be used in several ways within the planning department as well as by others. Planners can use the landscape character assessment to inform their decision making process when:

- assessing individual planning applications; and
- identifying at a strategic level if land use change/development should occur, and if so, where.

7.1.2 When reviewing a planning application, officers can use the assessment to determine whether or not the development is appropriate within the landscape (i.e. if it respects the inherent character of the landscape as defined in this report). Furthermore, if the development should go ahead the landscape character assessment can provide information on the siting, scale, spacing and design conditions for development. An understanding of the key characteristics that define a landscape can help ensure that these are retained within any new development (where feasible) and hence assist in the retention of character. For example, if small woodland coverts are a characteristic of the landscape, the retention of these features within a housing development would allow the character of the area to be retained to some degree.

7.1.3 Landscape character assessment can be used to inform capacity studies which would identify which areas are the most and least able to accommodate change, how much change and under what conditions (see Section 7.3.5). It can also be used in a similar way to assess the development potential of areas.

7.1.4 Also, should the need arise, landscape character assessment can be used to inform the designation of Special Landscape Areas/Areas of Great Landscape Value that are defined at a local level. A landscape character assessment can help identify what it is that requires extra protection and the reasons why i.e. identify a landscape’s value.

### 7.2 Other potential use of landscape character assessment

7.2.1 A wide variety of officers both internally and externally of NBBC may benefit from the use of a landscape character assessment to inform their work. Landscape character assessment can:

- inform the preparation of landscape guidelines/strategy; and
• contribute to other initiatives (village design statements, parish plans, Biodiversity Action Plan, agri-environment schemes).

7.2.2 In order to maintain, or indeed, enhance the existing character of the landscape it is the key characteristics (as defined within the landscape character assessment) which contribute to its character that require effective management. The assessment has identified the existing conditions, where relevant, of the key characteristics, and this, together with prediction of future changes and general trends, will indicate the relevant management strategy required. From an analysis of this information clear management aims will emerge which can form a series of landscape guidelines.

7.2.3 The landscape character assessment can provide useful information to a range of countryside initiatives within the borough. It can inform the context for Village Design Statements/Parish Plans by setting out how the village/parish fits into the wider landscape and even identify different character area/landscape types within the parish. Links can also be forged with Biodiversity Action Plans and agri-environment schemes.

7.3 Future opportunities

7.3.1 It is recognised that an objective landscape character assessment, such as that reported in this document, provides an understanding of the landscape and can provide a starting point for further landscape work and landscape evaluation within the Borough. If time and resources allow such work could include:

• the preparation of a landscape character policy;
• the extension of the landscape character assessment to cover the whole borough;
• a consultation process; and
• a landscape capacity study (should the need arise).

7.3.2 A local plan policy relating to the character of the landscape (as informed by a landscape character assessment) would assist protecting landscape character whilst allowing acceptable, sustainable development that respects the landscape’s character. Such a policy would reflect national planning advice as stated in Planning Policy Statement 7 and adhere to current best practise. Protecting landscape character will assist in maintaining the differences in character present within the borough to ensure a sense of place and local distinctiveness is retained.

7.3.3 The landscape character assessment covers only certain areas of land within the borough (selected Areas of Restraint) with other areas lying outside the scope of the assessment. Extending the landscape character assessment to cover the entire Borough will allow landscapes both within and outside the Areas of Restraint to be compared more easily and will provide a comprehensive landscape document for the entire borough. There is also the potential to extend the landscape character assessment methodology to urban areas in the form of an urban character assessment. Such an assessment can then inform guidance on development within the urban area.

7.3.4 This study has been undertaken by consultants with expertise in landscape character assessment working in consultation with the planning department of the NBBC. If the
opportunity arose, it would be greatly beneficial to undertake a wider consultation with communities of place (e.g. people who live, work and visit the area etc) and communities of interest (e.g. Government Departments, Government Agencies, Local Authorities, Non Government Organisations etc). Such consultation would allow greater ownership and understanding of the landscape character of the borough as well assist in obtaining:

- local consensus on the delineation of landscape character areas/types;
- additional information to compliment the landscape character area descriptions; and
- validation of the key landscape characteristics.

7.3.5 If the need should arise for NBBC to accommodate development outside the urban boundary the landscape character assessment can be used to inform a landscape capacity study. This could be developed from the landscape character assessment within this report to identify which areas are the most able to accommodate change, how much change and under what conditions. The landscape’s capacity to accommodate specific types of change depends upon an analysis of landscape character sensitivity, visual sensitivity and landscape value as set out in Topic Paper 6 Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity\(^\text{15}\).
