

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEETING

2 June 2014

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Environment

**REQUEST FOR FORMAL ADOPTION OF THE LANDSCAPE
CHARACTER OF DERBYSHIRE PUBLICATION (JOBS,
ECONOMY AND TRANSPORT)**

(1) **Purpose of the Report** To seek Cabinet approval to formally adopt 'The Landscape Character of Derbyshire' and Technical Support documents as a vital evidence base to support Local Plan and decision making across the County, and as a spatial framework to help deliver sustainable economic growth and social wellbeing.

(2) **Information and Analysis** Derbyshire sits at the heart of England with a diverse range of beautiful and varied landscapes from the upland moors of the Peak District to the expansive floodplain of the Trent Valley. It occupies a unique position encompassing England's upland-lowland divide between the north and south, and the dairy-arable transition from west to east. The Landscape Character of Derbyshire document identifies and recognises the intrinsic qualities of all landscape and focuses on the landscape of Derbyshire outside the Peak District National Park.

The landscape of Derbyshire already plays an important role in shaping the County's economy and its communities. It underpins many sectors of the Derbyshire economy, such as agriculture, minerals extraction, leisure and tourism. Tourism in Derbyshire and the Peak District is dependent upon the high quality of its natural environment and in 2011, the tourism sector attracted 35 million visitors, employed 25,000 people and generated £1.7 billion of economic spend.

The 'Landscape Character of Derbyshire' provides a baseline to monitor landscape change and a framework to influence growth so that it enhances the natural and built environment for the residents of and visitors to Derbyshire. It is hoped that this will encourage a stronger, more resilient economy in a more attractive Derbyshire.

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'The Landscape Character of Derbyshire' will help inform the delivery of a number of key County Council pledges in the Council Plan by recognising the intrinsic qualities and diversity of the landscapes across Derbyshire, and ensuring that the natural and cultural environment continues to play a vital role in underpinning the economy, as well as sustaining and enriching life.

This publication will assist in delivering the best stewardship of Derbyshire's environment and be pivotal in delivering a number of County Council priorities in particular:

- placing 'Communities at the heart of decision making';
- contributing to 'A strong economy';
- sustaining 'Well connected communities';
- maintaining 'Healthier communities with reduced health inequality'; and
- providing 'Sustainable and green communities'.

This document was first published in December 2003 and this is the first comprehensive review. Since its publication, much has happened with respect to the consideration of landscape issues as part of the planning process. This 10 year review of the document has allowed the re-evaluation of data collected as part of the original landscape character assessment, to take stock of changes to the planning and regulatory system, and to reflect on how the work has helped to inform and guide landscape change in the intervening period. The review was informed by the views of practitioners within the County Council and partner agencies, including the District and Borough Councils.

The work also underpins the principles of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) (ratified in March 2007) which promotes the principle that 'all landscapes matter' and provides a spatial framework for decision making across a variety of sectors and activities. This publication fully embraces the principles of the ELC and provides the context for spatial planning and landscape policy in Derbyshire.

Since the original publication, other concepts have developed to further emphasise the need for an integrated approach to environmental planning and management. These are enshrined in the Natural Environment White Paper (2011), the National Planning Policy Framework and are now firmly embedded in the recent review of Natural England's National Character Areas (NCAs).

The document sub-divides the 10 NCAs within Derbyshire into 39 Landscape Character Types (LCTs); LCTs are broad tracts of landscape that have a unity of character. Each LCT has a written description, which sets out the key features that combine to define its character.

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The document has five aims to:

- Maintain and enhance the overall quality and diversity of landscape character across the County.
- Manage change by supporting and complementing planning policies.
- To support and complement the aims of the Biodiversity Action Plans for Derbyshire.
- Monitoring landscape change by utilising landscape character as a spatial framework for evaluating the relative sensitivity of the landscape to change and to develop a process for monitoring change.
- Promote the use of landscape character as an educational tool, to raise awareness and help foster community engagement in the spatial planning of the landscape.

Information on managing development and landscape change, and linking landscape character to biodiversity are dealt with in parts 2 and 3 respectively.

This review now includes a section on the use of landscape character as a spatial framework and considers landscape sensitivity through the definition of strategic 'Areas of Multiple Environmental Sensitivity' (AMES), utilising ecological, historic and landscape data. It is intended that these AMES will be used to inform strategic planning and plan for economic growth. Tranquillity data produced by the CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) has also been used in a similar way to provide a tranquillity map of the County outside the Peak District National Park. Both of these topics are supported by more detailed technical documents.

Monitoring landscape change helps underpin one of the aims of the ELC and it is proposed to monitor landscape change in Derbyshire through the use of fixed point photography on a 5 yearly cycle. There are 24 viewpoints identified across the county which will be monitored and detailed in a further Technical Support Document.

Finally, since the document was first published, there have been many examples where new development across the County has successfully applied the principles of landscape characterisation and a number of case studies have been included to demonstrate this. A copy of the draft document can be found by following this link:

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/council/meetings_decisions/meetings/cabinet/262014_cabinet.asp.

These new areas of work will help underpin sustainable economic growth and social well-being across the County and allow the County Council to support the aims of the Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and the Peak District Local Nature Partnership (LNP's) in working alongside the D2N2 (Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire) Local Economic Partnership

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(LEP) in delivering the emerging agenda that “green business is good business”. For example, it will inform the LNP’s hopes to promote and deliver a new ‘Vision’ (the Trent Valley Vision) for the entire Trent Valley within Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, to develop a new landscape character for the area, to redress the impacts of sand and gravel extraction, and create an attractive, wildlife-rich landscape for local residents both existing and new. It is envisaged that this landscape could become a new tourist destination at the heart of England, serve to attract inward investment, and provide a range of environmental benefits addressing broader environmental issues associated with climate change and flood alleviation.

Landscape character has already been used as a framework for mapping environmental sensitivity in the Trent Valley to support the emerging Minerals Local Plan and it is intended to roll this work out to the communities in the east of the County situated along the magnesian limestone plateau and coalfields.

(3) **Financial Considerations** There are no financial considerations associated with this report.

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

(4) **Key Decision** No.

(5) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(6) **Background Papers** The document will be available to view on the Derbyshire County Council's website at www.derbyshire.gov.uk/landscape
Officer contact details - Adam Lathbury, extension 39791.

(6) **OFFICER’S RECOMMENDATION** That Cabinet approves the adoption of The Landscape Character of Derbyshire and Technical Support documents to support delivery of sustainable economic growth and social wellbeing in the County.

Mike Ashworth
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