

The Landscape Character of Derbyshire

PART FOUR - USING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AS A SPATIAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

When the 'Landscape Character of Derbyshire' was published in 2003, it played a major role in the formulation of landscape policy across the county at both the county and district/borough scale. In recent years, there has been a shift in planning policy requiring further interpretation of strategic landscape planning to help inform where development should or should not take place, or to target landscape in need of enhancement.

The holistic and spatial nature of landscape character assessment makes it a useful tool for the analysis of other environmental data. Increasingly, landscape character assessments are contributing to a range of strategic planning considerations including the allocation of land for new development and providing an environmental evidence base for emerging Local Plans. In this context, Derbyshire County Council has utilised the landscape character assessment to evaluate other known environmental data across the county. Two key pieces of work informed by this approach are the mapping of 'Areas of Multiple Environmental Sensitivity' (AMES) and 'Tranquillity'.

Areas of Multiple Environmental Sensitivity (AMES)

A methodology has been developed which allows for a strategic overview of the environmental sensitivity of the county outside the Peak District National Park; the National Park's sensitivity is considered to be reflected by its designation. AMES are broad areas of landscape that have been identified as being sensitive with respect to a range of environmental datasets. The areas have been defined using the Derbyshire landscape character assessment as a spatial framework for reviewing data relating to biodiversity, the historic environment and visual unity.

In general terms those landscapes of highest sensitivity to change will be the areas where the landscape remains intact, both visually and structurally, has strong historic and cultural identity, and contains many widespread semi-natural habitats with associated linkages appropriate to the character of the area.

Method

The methodology developed utilised data relating to three broad areas; biodiversity, the historic environment and visual unity, i.e. the 'intactness' of the landscape.

Biodiversity data used in the study relates to all spatial ecological data held or accessed by Derbyshire County Council ranging from international and national designations such as SSSIs and Ancient Woodland, to Local Wildlife Sites as recorded by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

Historic data is taken from the Historic Landscape Character Assessment and the Historic Environment Record (HER) to reflect historic features that are considered to be most sensitive to change and almost impossible to replicate. In Derbyshire, this has focused on areas of ancient or early enclosure patterns, historic parkland and Scheduled Monuments.

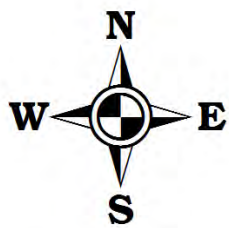
Visual Unity is data recorded in the field as part of the Derbyshire landscape character assessment and is an overall measure of the 'intactness' of the landscape relating primarily to field enclosure pattern, and trees and woodland.

A detailed methodology is included as **Technical Support Document 1: Areas of Multiple Environmental Sensitivity** available on the Derbyshire County Council's website at www.derbyshire.gov.uk





Analysis

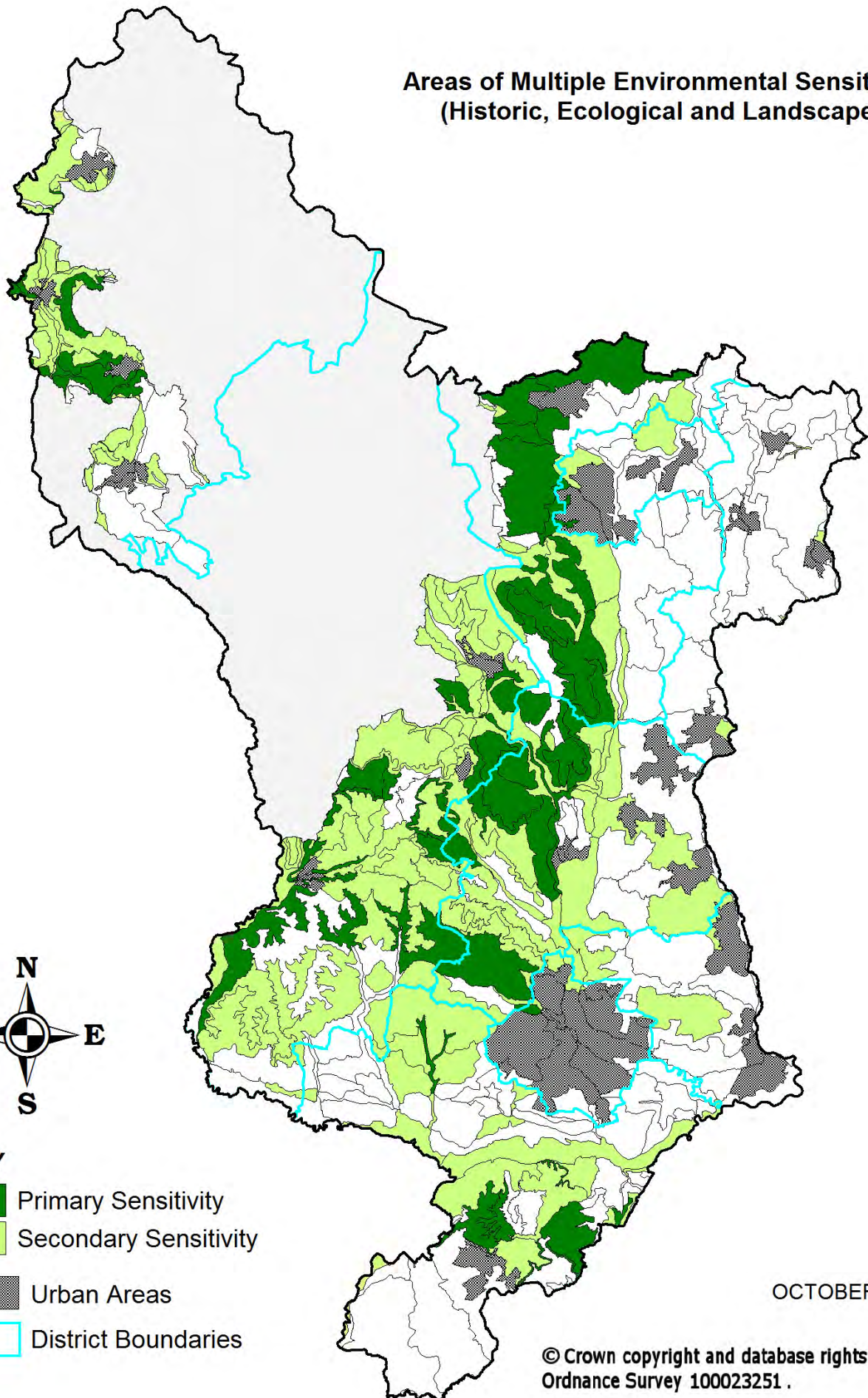
Brought together the data analysis defines 'AMES'; areas of landscape that are sensitive to change. Areas that are above average with respect to all three environmental datasets are described as having 'Primary Sensitivity' and will be most sensitive to change. These areas are considered to be a cultural resource on multiple fronts that provide significant value for green infrastructure (GI) and should be given important consideration for future strategic planning. In the context of the European Landscape Convention, these areas are likely to attract a strong focus on the **protection** (conservation) of their environmental assets.

Areas of Multiple Environmental Sensitivity (Historic, Ecological and Landscape)



KEY

-  Primary Sensitivity
-  Secondary Sensitivity
-  Urban Areas
-  District Boundaries



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Areas that are above average with respect to two of the environmental datasets (e.g. biodiversity + visual unity, etc) are described as having 'Secondary Sensitivity'. These areas are sensitive to change but may also be capable of being enhanced by development or new GI provision. These areas will attract a strong focus on the **management** (conservation and enhancement) of their assets.

Those areas that fall out of the above categories are defined as the least sensitive. These are the areas that have the potential to accommodate more change and, in particular, change that can help to deliver a range of environmental benefits which will provide strategic GI and bring about enhancements for landscape character and local distinctiveness. As such, these areas would benefit from a forward looking **planning** (restoration/creation) strategy. This does not mean that these areas are without environmental value and development proposals will still require the preparation of appropriate site assessments.

Those areas of multiple environmental sensitivity, expressed as primary and secondary sensitivity, can be used for a number of strategic planning purposes including the targeting of environmental grants and guiding decisions on the allocation of large scale development. The strength of this approach is that the National Character Area can remain as the overarching delivery unit but with clear links to the more detailed Derbyshire landscape character assessment.

Tranquillity Mapping

Tranquillity of the English countryside is recognised by the majority of people as one of its most important qualities and makes a significant contribution to the enjoyment of an area. It is important for our mental and physical well-being, and improves our quality of life. It is a key factor in maintaining the rural economy, being one of the main reasons why people head for the countryside to '**get away from it all**'. As such, tranquillity continues to be recognised as an important consideration of the planning system and features in the National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 123:

123. Planning policies and decisions should aim to:

- Identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.

Much of the work relating to tranquillity and the identification of tranquil areas has been undertaken by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) culminating in its **Tranquillity Mapping: Developing a Robust Methodology for Planning Support (2008)** publication. Utilising a Geographical Information System (GIS) each 500m by 500m square of England was given a tranquillity score, based on 44 different factors which add to or detract from people's feelings of tranquillity. This data was used as the basis for assessing the relative tranquillity of Derbyshire outside the Peak District National Park.

Information relating to the CPRE tranquillity work is available at www.cpre.org.uk.

Method

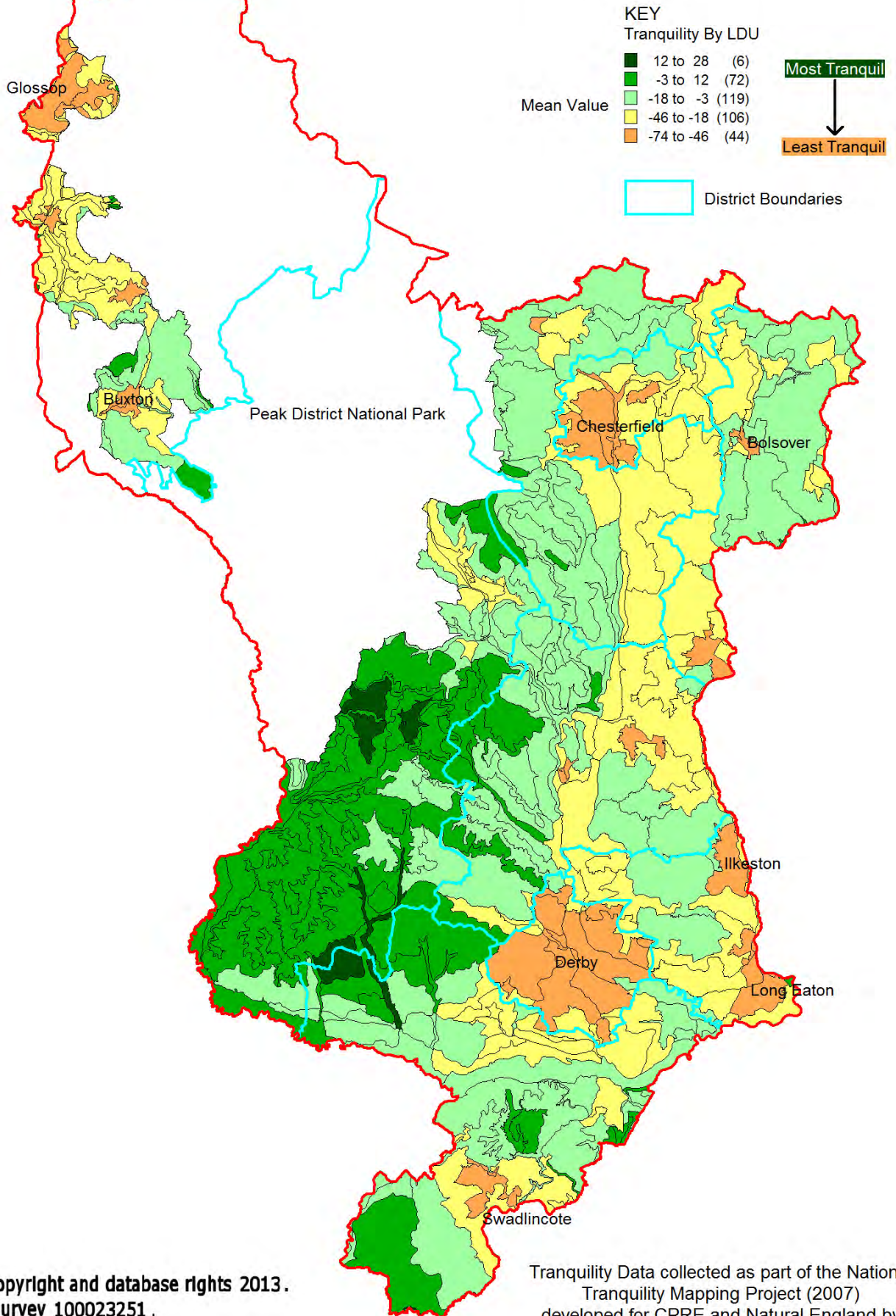
Whilst the CPRE work provides a broad overview of tranquillity at a national scale, the spatial context (500m x 500m squares) is quite arbitrary and lacks a landscape context; the medium within which tranquillity is appreciated by people. Having clipped the national dataset to the county boundary (excluding the area covered by the Peak District National Park), again utilising a GIS, the Derbyshire landscape character assessment was used as a spatial framework for mapping the relative tranquillity of the county.

A full methodology is provided in **Technical Support Document 2: Tranquillity** available on the Derbyshire County Council website at www.derbyshire.gov.uk.

Analysis

The data analysis provides a map of the relative tranquillity of Derbyshire outside the Peak District National Park. The CPRE dataset has become an accepted record of current national tranquillity and this methodology simply builds on this work by applying it to a spatial framework developed around landscape characterisation. It is intended that this work will become an evidence base for policy makers across the county to help find ways to protect and enhance our most tranquil areas. The strength of this methodology is that it reinforces a spatial approach to the evaluation of other environmental datasets. This allows for a composite of environmental values to be assigned to the same spatial unit helping to identify those areas of landscape that are most sensitive to change for a range of considerations.

Relative Tranquillity of Derbyshire outside the Peak District National Park



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Tranquility Data collected as part of the National
Tranquility Mapping Project (2007)
developed for CPRE and Natural England by
Northumbria University.