



Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Stockton on Tees

Landscape Character Assessment

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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.



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- 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).



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- 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.



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- 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.



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- 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



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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"> • Values trees in gardens and Preston Park along Yarm Road to create a green thoroughfare not seen in many other boroughs. • River Corridor is a 'hidden gem'. • Historic houses with mature gardens give attractive character. • Historic development of landscape character affected by agricultural history, development of railway and industry, and 20th Century expansion of population and associated housing. • Preservation of green infrastructure, including the Teesdale Way, and improvements to play areas seen as positive actions. • Development of flats and removal of mature trees to be replaced with smaller ornamental trees seen as negative impacts on the landscape. • Changes to parish include agricultural land replaced with housing and some industry replaced with housing. • Management of landscape to include the implementation of larger, slow growing trees and more variety in housing estate development.
Eaglescliffe and Eaglescliffe Parish Council (response 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Overdevelopment of gardens and other housing developments have caused increased traffic and detrimental effect on wildlife. • 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. • Green land is being sold for housing development and local landmark



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





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





Consultees	Summary of feedback
Yarm Parish Council (response 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value the river and surrounding fields; Yarm bridge and Yarm viaduct. • Housing and apartment development have had a detrimental effect. • Changes in land use include building on gardens and allotment land used for parking. • Management to include improvements to the riverside and protection of remaining green areas.
Grindon Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value rural and agricultural belt around Stockton-on Tees/Middlesbrough and note it is essential to protect. • 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. • Historic landscape character has been affected by the development of farms and quarries. • 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. • Negative factors include pressure on land to build; fly tipping; traffic; poor public transport; and lack of dedicated cycleway. • Changes in land use include dedicating land to recreation; well maintained and publicised footpaths; less farmland; increase in traffic. • Management to include stricter planning; local consultations; and redefinition of parish councils.
Thornaby-on-Tees Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value Thornaby Green; the River Tees; Bassleton Woods; aspects of Teesdale; Airfield Heritage; Town Hall; Parks and green space. • Landscape character affected by development, the loss of green space, the A66 and the loss of industry. • Landscape affected by lack of care for historic heritage; inappropriate development; derelict areas and debris in river • Linear park and well kept cemetery and Thornaby Green seen as positive aspects. • Changes in land use include A66; back garden categories as brownfield; development in green wedge; disappearance of industry and university. • 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.
Stillington and Whitton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value the open nature of the route through Stillington; the village green in Whitton; Stillington Forest Park; Honeypot Wood; the local footpath and





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"> • 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. • 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. • 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. • Suggestions for future landscape management include restrictions on new building developments; maintenance of open space; and management of Network Rail land.

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



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

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°C¹. 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>)

¹ The North East Climate Change Adaptation Study



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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:

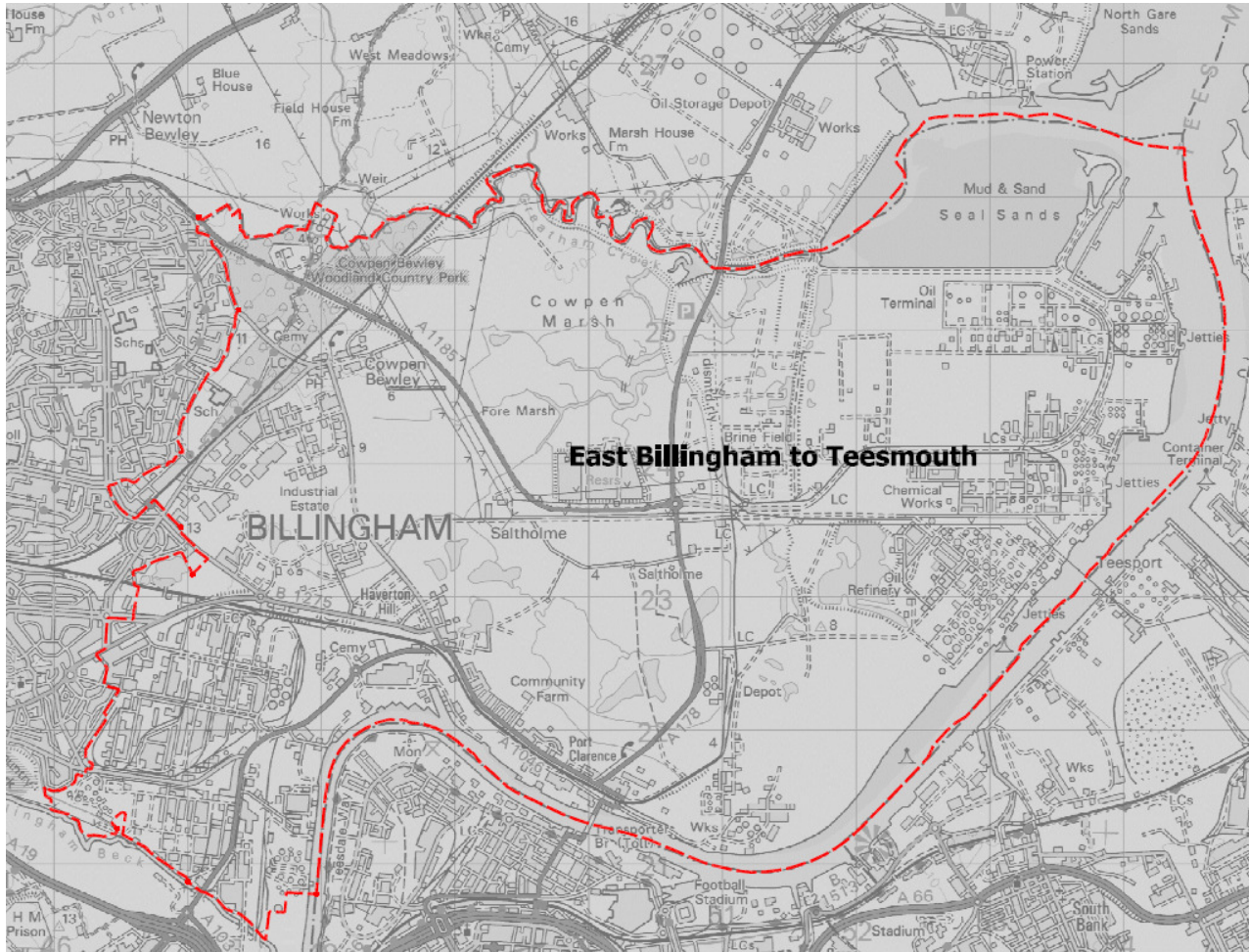
- Landscape Character Areas – are broad areas of land that demonstrate consistent landscape patterns or attributes over a large area of land that differ from those around them. Typical examples of these can include river valleys or large areas of agricultural land.
- Landscape Units – are parcels of 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



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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

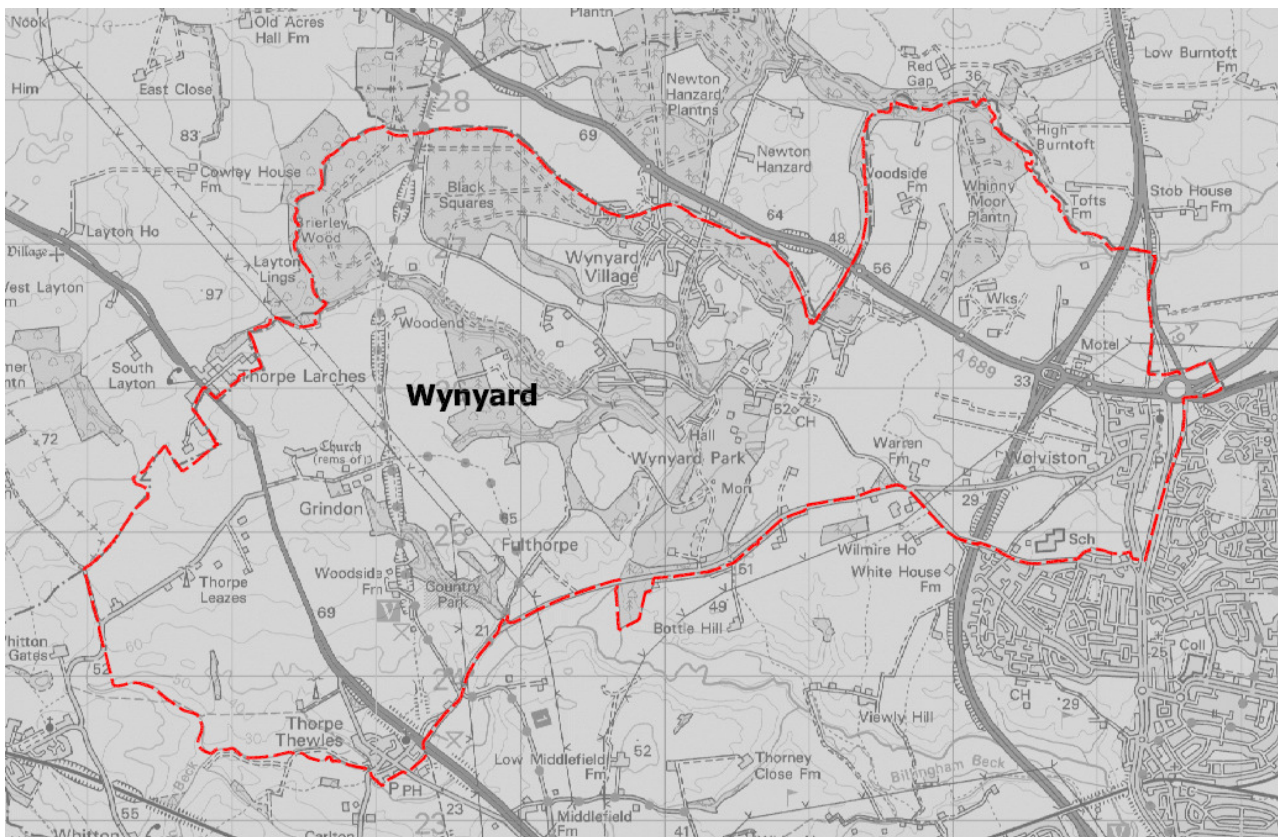


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hardstandings. It is assumed that as industry gradually migrates out of the area the ecological habitat will replace that which is lost, albeit it at a slow rate of change.

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;



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- 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.



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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;



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- 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.

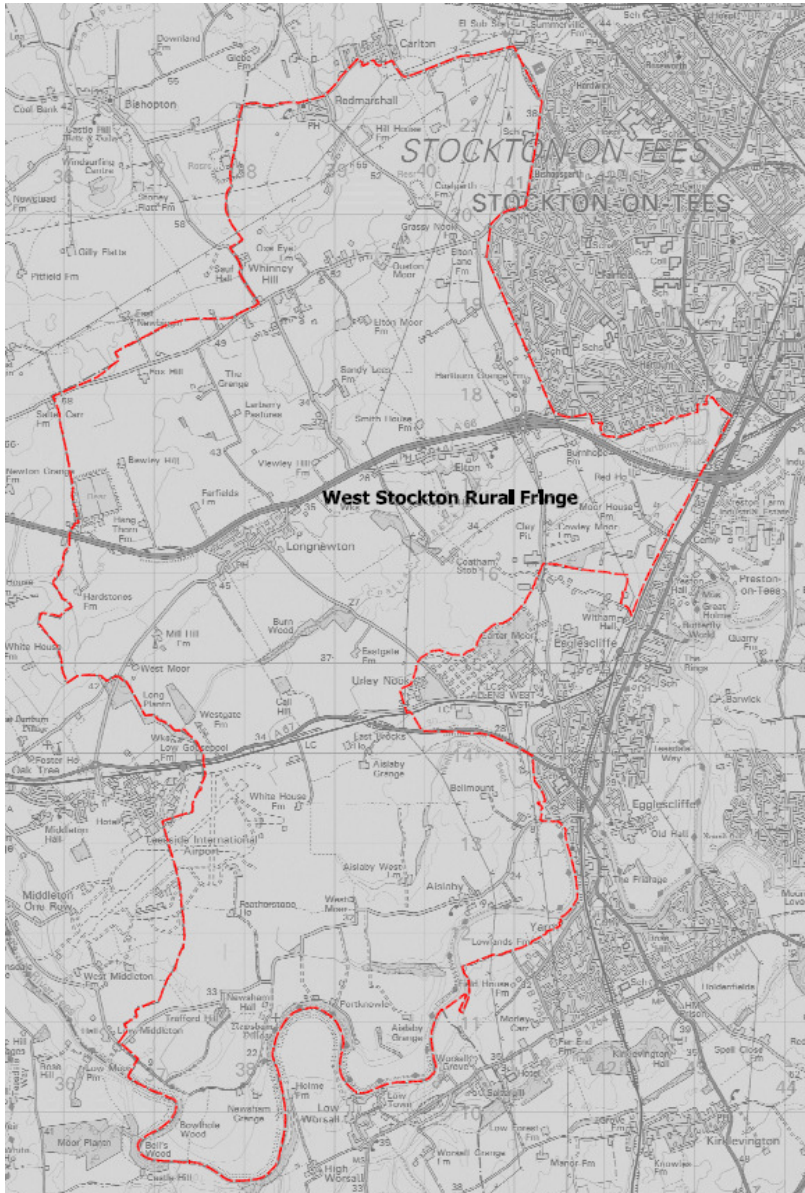
The lines of transmission towers and road network create visual detractors within the area and the lack of tree cover allows these to be viewed throughout much of the east of the Landscape Character Area on the urban fringe of Stockton and Billingham.

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;



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- 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.

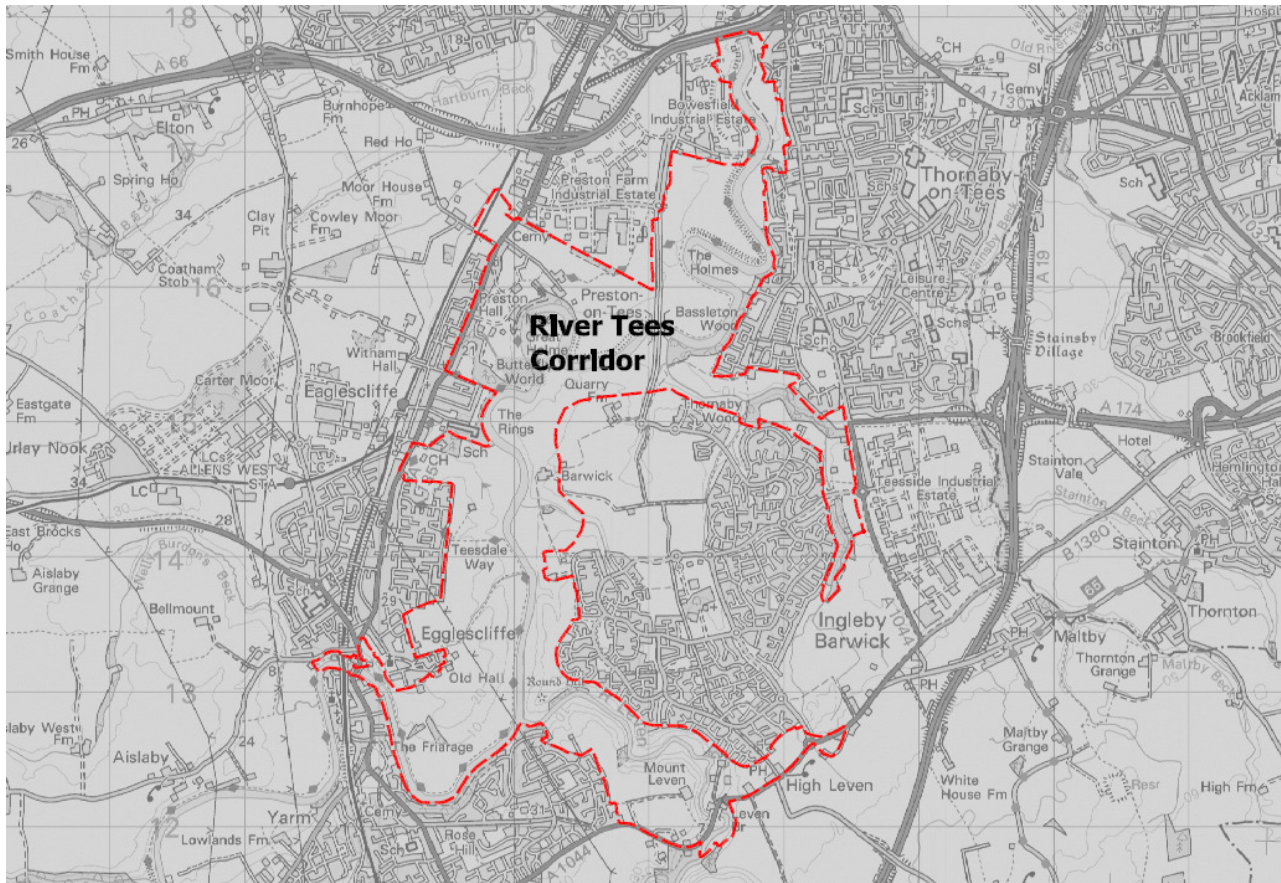
10.4.7 Landscape Change and Condition

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.

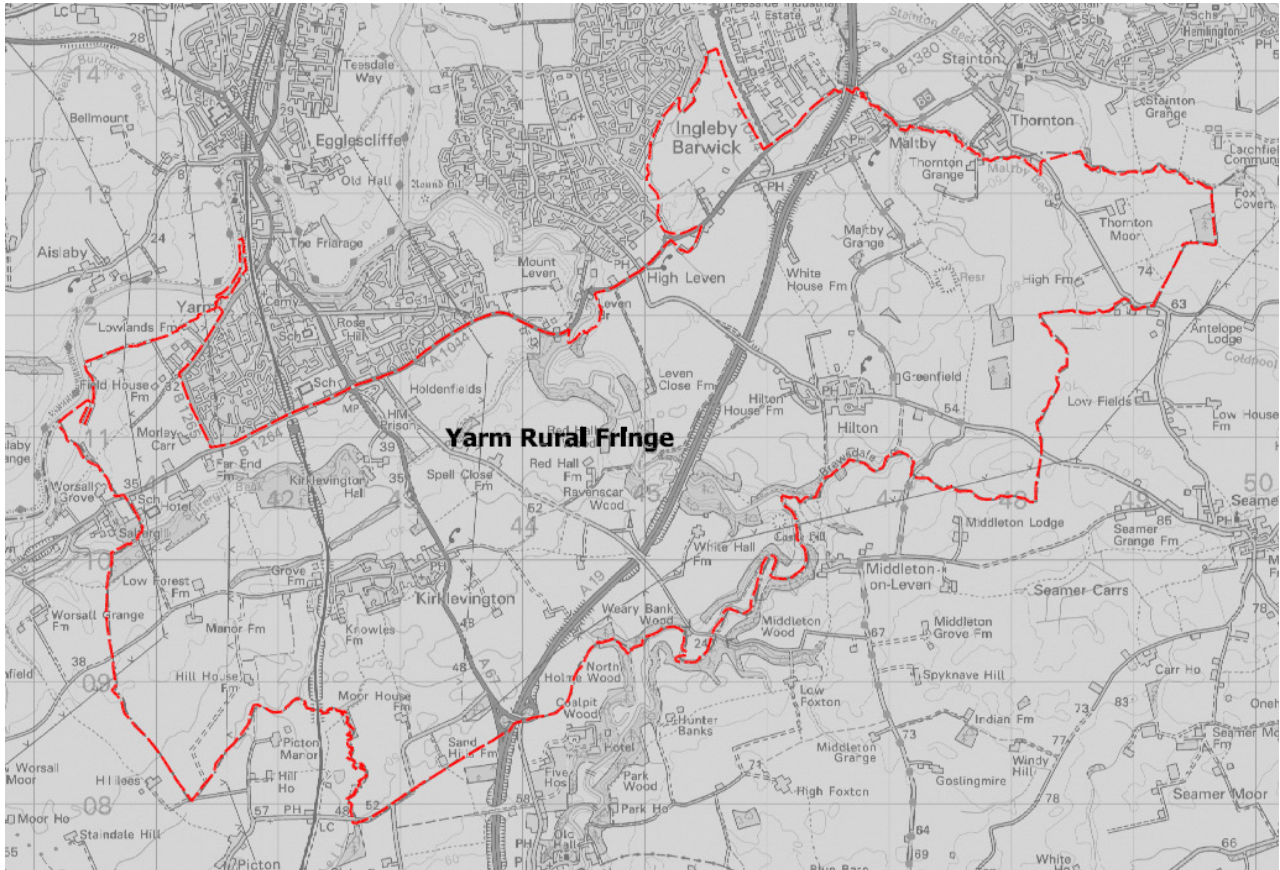
10.5.7 Landscape Change and Condition

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.

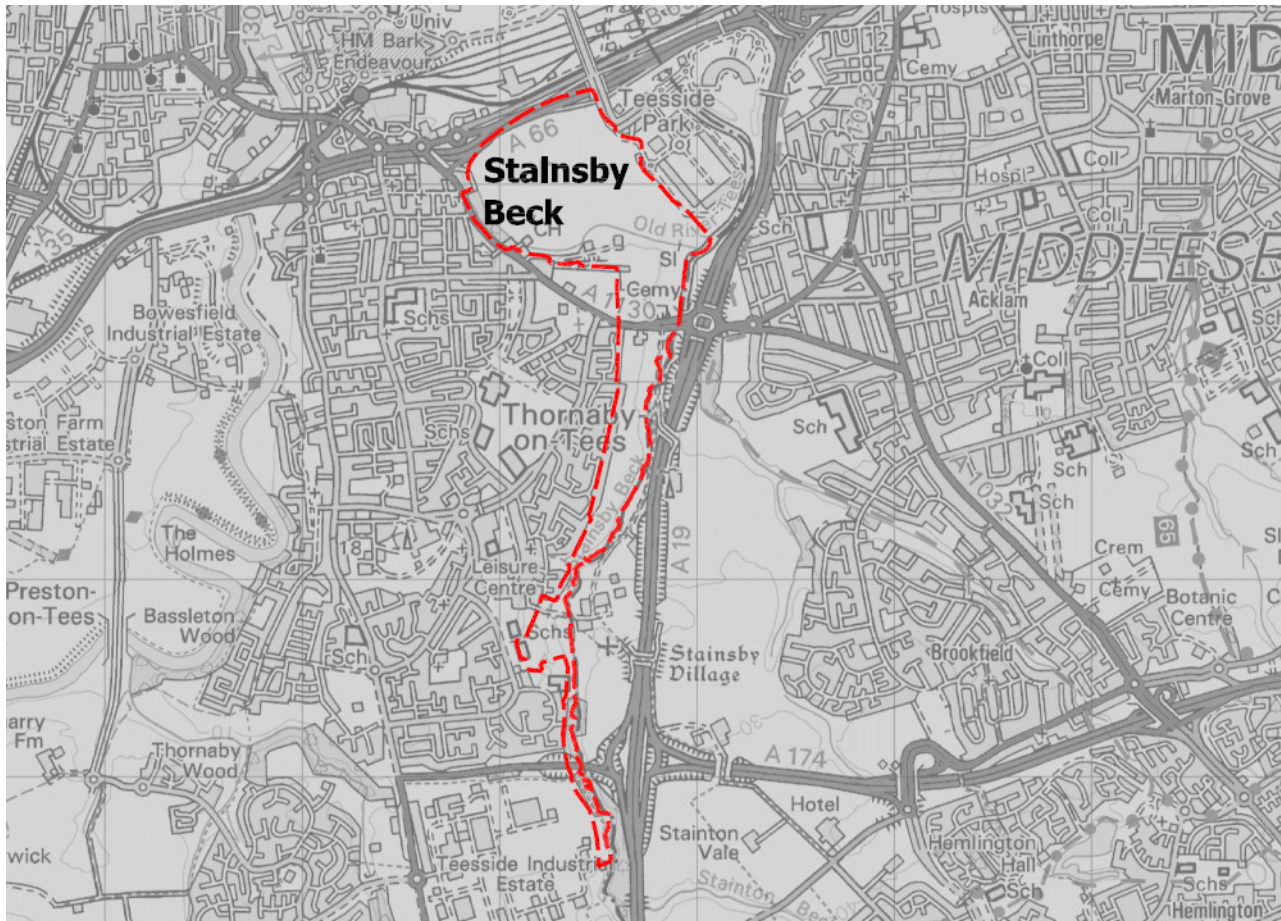
10.6.7 Landscape Change and Condition

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**



Appendix C – Tees Lowland Joint 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