

## Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service

### Approach towards Historic Landscapes

A key element in achieving sustainable development is to retain as much as possible of the physical evidence and character of surviving historic landscapes within new schemes. The National Planning Policy Framework defines landscapes with heritage interest as heritage assets (NPPF 2012 p.52). Incorporation of such features can enhance the local distinctiveness and attractiveness of developments.

The value to local authorities of integrating historic landscape characterisation with assessments of landscape character is stressed in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012 paragraph 170, p.41). The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), which is part of the Cheshire Historic Environment Record, recommends that historic landscape character is considered as part of any cultural heritage/desk-based assessment undertaken as part of development-led archaeological work.

The HLC acts as an information base and as a sign post to the potential survival of a set of components which contribute directly to an area's historic character. For example, fieldscapes will be defined by the field pattern, but will be made up of a number of heritage assets including field boundaries (banks, ditches, hedgerows, hedgerow trees etc.) and cultivation earthworks (ridge and furrow, marl pits etc.). Further information on the types of components associated with each HLC type is presented in the HLC report or Managing Historic Landscapes.

As part of the cultural heritage or desk-based assessment, the investigator should seek to establish the presence and quality of any components which contribute to an area's historic character. These can be established through the examination of historic maps, aerial photographs and a walkover survey, all of which are established practice for cultural heritage/desk-based assessments. It should be noted that some types of landscape, for example ornamental parkland, will require examination in greater detail.

As part of the assessment a robust, comprehensive walkover survey should normally be carried out. Historic landscape components should be noted, mapped and described, including comment on the condition of features where appropriate. The results should be presented as a simple gazetteer accompanied by an annotated map and these should usually be complemented by photographs. It should be stressed that the use of the term 'map' does not imply that formal, measured survey is required at this point; the annotation of existing base mapping at an appropriate scale will be entirely adequate at this stage.

As part of the assessment the investigator should establish the potential that any historic landscape components have for local and regional research objectives and their contribution to the overall quality of the application area's historic landscape and historic landscape character. The assessment should also establish the application area's importance to maintaining the cohesive historic landscape character of the wider landscape.

The HLC project provided a rapid consideration of a limited set of sources in order to determine the historic character of Cheshire's landscape. There is therefore the potential that the more detailed analysis undertaken as part of the assessment may lead to a reappraisal of the interpretation made by the project.

The analysis undertaken as part of the cultural heritage/desk-based assessment will ultimately inform the need, if any, for further investigation and/ or mitigation. Where a need for mitigation is identified, a strategy should be presented which should demonstrate how the impact of the development on significant historic landscape features will be mitigated.

## References

- Further information on the use of HLC can be found in Clark, Darlington & Fairclough 2004, Using Historic Landscape Characterisation, English Heritage & Lancashire County Council.

Useful links:

- The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project report & Managing Historic Landscapes: [http://www.cheshirearchaeology.org.uk/?page\\_id=175](http://www.cheshirearchaeology.org.uk/?page_id=175)
- Using Historic Landscape Characterisation: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/using-historic-landscape-characterisation/>