



Basingstoke and Deane  
Landscape Assessment

Main Report

*by*

Landscape Design Associates

*in association with:*

Wessex Archaeology

*June 2001*



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This document was approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council on 12 July 2001. As such, it supports the policies of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan concerning the landscape. The document has been prepared in consultation with the general public, Parish and Town Councils and other interested parties. A list of consultees, copies of responses and details of the Council's consideration of the issues raised are available for inspection at the Planning & Transportation Department during normal office hours.

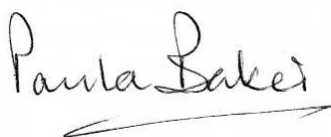
# Foreword

The conservation and enhancement of the built and natural environment has been highlighted as an issue that is of great importance to the residents of the Borough of Basingstoke and Deane. It is a priority area of my portfolio and of the Council Plan. I believe that this document will be a vital tool for the future. A greater understanding of the key characteristics of the Borough's landscape is critical if we are to recognise the current forces for change and protect those elements of the landscape that are vulnerable.

As Supplementary Planning Guidance the assessment will assist in the refinement and development of landscape policies as part of the Local Plan Review. It will provide the basis for a more informed response to development proposals affecting the landscape of the Borough. The assessment will also provide an objective basis for the preparation of a Countryside Design Summary for the Borough and Village Design Statements for local communities.

A fully integrated approach has been taken to draw together historic, ecological and landscape elements into the characterisation process and to incorporate townscape studies of the Borough's eight largest settlements. This accords with the Countryside Agency's current national guidance on landscape assessment.

I believe that the involvement of the community in the long-term planning of the Borough is extremely important. The programme of stakeholder consultation that took place during the production of this document has ensured that involvement. People have taken the opportunity to contribute to the landscape assessment from a local perspective and I am extremely grateful to all those who took part.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula Baker". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

**Councillor Paula Baker**  
**Cabinet Member for Forward Planning**

# Background to the Study

In May 2000, Landscape Design Associates, in association with Wessex Archaeology, were appointed to carry out a comprehensive, integrated landscape assessment of the Borough of Basingstoke and Deane on behalf of the Borough Council and Hampshire County Council. Extracts from the study brief are contained in **Appendix 1**.

The main purpose of the assessment is to provide the Borough Council with a more detailed understanding of the landscape resources of the Borough and its key features. This will enable the development of Local Plan policies and assist officers in the exercise of their development control responsibilities and the identification of landscape management priorities.

The more specific terms of reference for the study are as follows:

- to undertake a character assessment of the Borough's rural and urban landscape, defining areas and features of distinctive landscape and townscape character which reflect the physical, visual, ecological and historical/cultural dimensions of the landscape in an integrated way;
- to assess the status, condition and quality of these areas and features and the changes affecting them, and to allocate appropriate strategies for action to conserve, restore or enhance their value;
- to review and advise the Council on the appropriateness of local landscape designations and Local Plan policies within the Borough, in the light of current national guidance;
- to include wide stakeholder participation to ensure that the findings reflect not only professional judgements but the opinions and values attached to the landscape by local communities.

The methodology for undertaking these tasks is outlined in **Appendix 2**.

Over recent years there has been a growing recognition of the role of landscape assessment as a basis for planning and management of environmental resources. In particular, the use of landscape assessment as a tool for describing the character of our landscapes is increasingly recognised as an important first step in conserving and enhancing them, and for planning for sustainable development in rural areas. The impetus for preparing assessments at the district level has come from a number of directions.

The Countryside Agency (formerly the Countryside Commission) actively encourages local planning authorities to undertake district-wide assessments to provide an informed background for policy and development control decisions and for countryside management. It has recently issued new interim guidance on landscape assessment [1] which updates existing published guidance [2] and has produced a 'New Map of England' which provides a broad context for defining landscape character at a more local level. It also promotes the concept of local distinctiveness through its 'Design in the Countryside' initiative.

Government advice contained within Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) also stresses the importance of landscape assessment. PPG1: 'General Policy and Principles', Annex A [3], states that "...policies should be based on a proper assessment of the character of the surrounding built and natural environment and should take account of the defining characteristics of each local area...". The revised PPG7 'The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development' [4], encourages planning authorities to undertake comprehensive landscape assessments as part of the local plan review process. The extent and effectiveness of local landscape designations is to be given particular consideration in such reviews. In addition, PPG15: 'Planning and the Historic Environment' [5], states that "...in the countryside, the detailed patterns of fields and farms, of hedgerows and walls, and of hamlets and villages, are among the most highly valued aspects of our environment...The whole of the landscape, to varying degrees... is an archaeological and historic artefact...much of its value lies in its complexity, regional diversity and local distinctiveness...".

At the County level, in 1993 Hampshire County Council undertook an assessment of the landscape of the whole County, presented in their publication, 'The Hampshire Landscape' [6]. The study provided the basis for a landscape strategy for the County, which has now been published [7] and outlines the County's aims regarding countryside management. It is intended to provide a framework for other strategies and plans, and to provide a focus for harnessing and directing environmental actions, advice and policies affecting the Hampshire countryside. The County landscape strategy supports and complements the Hampshire County Structure Plan (Review) [8], particularly Policy E6, which states, "To ensure that development maintains and enhances areas of distinctive landscape character, local planning policies will pay particular regard to (a) the need to respect scenic quality, sense of remoteness and historic landscapes; (b) the sense of place, including the local character of buildings and settlements; and (c) the setting of settlements; in the whole countryside". The broad assessment of the County's landscape needs to be supported by more detailed work at a local level and thus the County Council has encouraged the preparation of district-wide landscape assessments by the local planning authorities within Hampshire.

The Structure Plan Review, adopted in late March 2000, contains environmental policies that concentrate on the need to respect scenic quality, sense of remoteness, sense of place, historic landscapes and the setting of settlements.

At the Borough level, in May 1995, the Borough Council produced a district-wide Landscape Assessment [9] which was set within the framework of the County landscape assessment. This, amongst other things, provided a basis for the formulation of landscape policies within the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (adopted in September 1998) [10] and a sound landscape framework for planning policy and development control decisions. The Borough Local Plan includes Borough-wide landscape and environmental policies, and separate policies specific to rural areas, defined built-up areas and the town centres of Basingstoke, Whitchurch and Tadley. Policy C100 emphasises the importance of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), "permission will not normally be granted for development within the North

Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which would adversely affect its landscape quality."

Policy C101 refers to the whole countryside. It states that "Within the countryside, permission will not normally be granted for development which would adversely affect its scenic quality, the setting of a settlement or which would be intrusive in the countryside."

The Local Plan also sets out Policy C109 relating to Areas of Special Landscape Quality (ASLQ) which states, "The Borough Council will give favourable consideration to development which it considers will not adversely affect the landscape quality of the designated Areas of Special Landscape Quality".

The Borough Council now wishes to re-examine the earlier assessment and, in particular, to:

- check its robustness in the light of new guidance on integrated landscape assessment; and,
- consider the relevance of the existing local landscape designations and assist in the development of landscape policies as part of the Local Plan Review.

In addition, the new assessment will provide a basis for the Borough's Countryside Design Summary and Village Design Statements, and reflect the County Structure Plan (Review) 1996-2011.

### **Structure of the document**

The *Basingstoke and Deane Landscape Assessment* comprises three parts: the *Main Report*; *Evaluation and Enhancement Strategy*; and *Designation and Policy Review*. This is the first of the three documents, and is structured as follows:

Part One: A Landscape Overview. Describes the formative influences that have shaped the Borough landscape in the past and the factors that may influence change in the future. This sets the scene for the more detailed analysis of the individual landscape and settlement character areas which follows in parts two and three;

Part Two: The Landscape Character Areas. Contains more detailed descriptions of the individual areas, describing the main formative influences which have shaped their overall character and summarising the key features that define the special landscape, historic, ecological and settlement character of the area; and

Part Three: Settlements. Analyses eight settlements, summarising their historical evolution, the relationship of the settlement with its historic and landscape setting and the key townscape and historic characteristics that define their special identity and character. The key issues affecting these characteristics and priorities for enhancement are also summarised.