

# Methodology for Designating Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPA)

## Introduction

In preparing Local Development Plans (LDPs) care should be taken to ensure that development does not dominate the landscape and townscape characteristics of settlements and that natural and built heritage and cultural features are protected. These environmental assets contribute to the distinctive character, views, setting and sense of place of settlements, contributing to their local identity and making one place different from another. They will normally form the basis for the designation of Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs) which “consist of those features and areas within and adjoining settlements considered to be of greatest amenity value, landscape quality or local significance and therefore worthy of protection from undesirable or damaging development” (ref: The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland). LLPAs are always associated with settlements. They are not stand alone designations in the wider countryside.

## Policy Context

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) indicates that Local Development Plans (LDPs) “should, where appropriate, designate LLPAs and bring forward local policies and guidance to maintain the intrinsic landscape, environmental value and character of such areas”.

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 directs policy to “Recognise and promote the conservation of local identity and distinctive landscape character”.

## Designation

An LLPA designation may include one or more of the following;

- archaeological sites and monuments and their surroundings;
- listed and other locally important buildings and their surroundings ;
- river banks and shore lines and associated public access;
- attractive vistas, localised hills and other areas of local amenity importance; and
- areas of local nature conservation interest, including areas of woodland and important tree groups (ref: SPPS).

### Example 1 – Sites of Cultural Interest

A mill owner’s house, a mill building including pond, weir, mill stream, workers cottages, associated vegetation, its views and setting.

LLPAs can be centred on one feature, for example a listed building along with its views and setting, but often they are built up in layers containing a number of different features of natural and built heritage and cultural interest e.g. an archaeological monument with extensive views on a raised landform at the bend of a river with associated woodland and shrub vegetation.

### Methodology

It is important to set down a robust and transparent baseline which will assist in gaining an understanding of the settlement, its origins and physical, historic and cultural development over time. This will assist in defining the boundaries of the LLPAs and inform general and specific policy needs. It also provides strong evidence which will explain decisions and assist in the public examination process at a later date.

It can be helpful to enlist the support of allied disciplines such as natural environment and historic building professionals including environmental scientists, ecologists, landscape architects, architects, archaeologists etc. who can provide additional information, expertise and knowledge which can assist in interpreting the information gathered and lead to a better understanding of the landscape. Local people can also provide valuable information and knowledge about their own place.

There are a number of steps to follow.

### Step 1 - Desk research



It is important to carry out a detailed desktop survey before going on site.

#### **Example 2 – Listed and Locally Significant Buildings**

A church and its environs including the wall, gate and railings, the graveyard, associated plantings, its views and setting.

This will include researching the following;

- Existing strategic and regional policies;
- Existing area plans and other local plans – designations , policies, other proposals;

- GIS information and aerial photography – the location of the settlement, landform and landcover, habitats, the settlement pattern, place names, archaeological monuments, listed buildings and other elements in the landscape, etc.
- Historic maps including the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> editions – the origins of the settlement, patterns of growth and development over time, early built, natural and cultural features such as demesnes, townland and parish boundaries, hedgerows, mills etc.
- The Gazetteer of Historic Nucleated Urban Settlements - information on settlements is available on request from DfC Historic Environment Division;
- Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs) – the NI Regional LCA, the Northern Ireland LCA Series, any other local LCAs;
- Planning histories;
- Other sources of information specific to the settlement from community and historic groups, church records etc.

Reference: Appendix 1: Examples of Desk Research.

### Step 2 - Site survey

A site survey enables a detailed settlement appraisal to be carried out, allows checks of the information gathered in the desk research and identifies other factors not evident from the research. It also enables a local LCA of the settlement and surrounding area to be undertaken.



#### **Example 3 – Historic Sites and Monuments**

A motte and bailey,  
the associated  
landform and  
vegetation, its views  
and setting.

The LCA will identify the setting and distinctive character of the settlement including the localised landforms and ridgelines, key views and attractive vistas, the views and setting of archaeological sites and monuments and

listed and locally significant buildings, historic demesnes, natural features including woodlands, rivers and shorelines, areas of amenity importance and nature conservation. Information about the cultural associations of the landscape specific to a particular area should also be gathered. The process of LCA should follow recognised methodology as laid

out in “An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment” October 2014. Christine Tutor, Natural England.

Together the settlement appraisal and local LCA help in understanding the settlement and assist in designating the LLPAs. They also allow for a review of existing LLPAs to check that the key features still exist and the area meets the criteria for LLPA designation. It is important to carry out as detailed site survey as possible including surveying the area from many different viewpoints as this will ensure a robust designation based on sound evidence.

**Example 4 - Historic Demesnes**

A large house with historic planned landscape enclosed by shelter belt planting and walls with gates and screen, situated on the edge of a settlement, its views and setting.

**Step 3 – Collating information**

The information gathered through the desk and field surveys can produce many layers of information which can be collated, recorded and summarized on an annotated map(s), backed up with site notes, written material, photographs and any other items of interest about a particular settlement. This information can be called on at a later date to explain decisions about the LLPA designations.

**Step 4 - Analysis**

The data gathered needs to be interpreted to help gain a better understanding of the important natural, built and cultural elements within and adjoining the settlement and their sensitivity to development. Important landforms, areas of vegetation, field patterns, and historic buildings etc. which contribute to the landscape character, views, setting and sense of place of the settlement need to be considered. This in turn informs judgements and decisions about the boundaries of the LLPA designations and any specific policy requirements for each LLPA such as features to be protected or the type of development which may be accommodated within the designation without any detrimental effect on the key features and landscape and visual character.

**Example 5 – Features of Natural Interest**

A river, its banks, floodplain, associated vegetation, bridges, open areas, its views and settings.

**Step 5 – Mapping**

The proposed LLPAs are then mapped for inclusion in the draft Local Development Plan.

**Step 6 – LLPA Descriptions**

LLPA descriptions should include the key features which contribute to the intrinsic environmental value and character of the LLPA and a brief description of the importance to the settlement of the features in terms of the landscape character, nature conservation and amenity value, heritage and cultural interest. The local authority could consider tree preservation orders (TPOs) for significant trees, groups of trees and woodland which are highlighted as key features of the LLPA.

### LLPA Policy and Guidance

In previous plans a strategic policy with general guidance for all LLPAs was written. Some LLPAs may also require specific policy or guidance where there are particular issues with regard to the area's capacity to accommodate development or sensitivities such as landforms, views or important features which need to be protected. LLPA designations can also influence the design principles that could be assigned to nearby development zonings.

### References

Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment October 2014, Christine Tutor.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/396192/landscape-character-assessment.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/396192/landscape-character-assessment.pdf)

Department for Infrastructure (2015) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS). Planning for Sustainable Development. September 2015.

<https://www.planningni.gov.uk/spps>

Department for Infrastructure (2010) Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035. Building a Better Future. <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/regional-development-strategy-2035>

## Appendix 1: Examples of Desk Research

Sources of information	Type of information to gather	Examples
<b>Regional Development Plan</b>	Information specific to the settlement.	Housing growth indicators, relevant policies etc.
<b>Existing Area Plan</b>	Settlement development limit.  Existing land use zonings/designations.  Policies and other information particular to the settlement.	Conservation Areas, Areas of Townscape Character, Local Landscape Policy Areas, Areas of Archaeological Potential, Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest, open space etc.
<b>GIS information/OS maps.</b>	Location of settlement.  Landform.  Landcover.        Settlement pattern.  Elements within the landscape.  Names - place names, house names etc.	Coastal, hilltop, etc.  Topography - ridgelines, hills etc.  Vegetation - forestry, arable, bog etc.  Water bodies - rivers, lakes, floodplains etc.  Trees, groups of trees and woodlands including ancient and long established woodland, sometimes on townland and parish boundaries  Dispersed, bi-focal, on edge of demesne, planned settlement, market town, fishing village, built frontage along street with long back gardens etc.  Railways, roads, glens, raths, weirs, large houses, schools, churches etc.  Milltown, Portrush, Church Street etc.
<b>NI Landscape Character Assessment Series</b>	Landscape Character Area.  Landscape features.	Landscape Character Area 113 - Expansive Crumlin Farmland.  Distinctive landscape settings, prominent

		ridges, key views etc.
	Areas of Scenic Quality.	Lough Neagh Shores.
	Settlement analysis of larger settlements.	Landscape setting and principles for the siting and design of new development - caution is advised as this was written a considerable time ago.
<b>Historic/heritage information on the old maps including the 1st, 2nd and 3rd edition maps</b>	The origins of the settlement	Workers cottages for a demesne or mill, fishing village, hilltop settlement, a church, historic routeways, fords, crossings, etc.
	Patterns of settlement growth and development over time.	Dispersed, linear, cross roads, bi-focal, on edge of demesne, planned settlement, market town, fishing village, built frontage along street with long back gardens etc.
	Social/cultural heritage.	Employment, industrial heritage eg mills, farming, quarrying etc.
		Place names, townlands, house names etc
	Historic Environment Assets	Large houses, churches, institutional buildings etc.
		Industrial heritage - mills, mill ponds, races and weirs, mill owners houses, workers cottages etc.
		Other features of heritage interest including railways, canals etc.
		Archaeological features - raths, mottes, standing stones etc.
		The influence of historic environment assets on settlement evolution and on placenames, street names etc
	Natural heritage features.	Demesne plantings, woodlands, trees, field patterns, townland and parish boundary hedgerows etc.
<b>GIS and other database searches for designations, listings etc. including the Gazetteer of Historic Nucleated</b>	Historic Environment Assets	Listed and locally significant buildings railings, gates etc. including large houses, churches, institutional buildings etc (ref: DfC web-site).

**Urban Settlements**

Historic parks, gardens and demesnes both registered and supplementary sites (ref: DfC web-site).

Scheduled and non-scheduled archaeological monuments Areas of Archaeological Potential, sites of industrial and defence heritage (ref: DfC web-site),

Natural heritage designations, regional, national and local.

Ramsar sites, SAC's, SPA's, ASSI's, AONB's etc. (ref: DAERA web-site).

Tree Preservation Orders.

(ref: Local Authority Tree Officer).

Planning designations.

Conservation Areas, ATC's, SLNCI, AoHSV etc.

**Planning searches**

Planning permissions, histories, applications etc.

Pressures and trends in development

**Aerial photographs**

Identify items as listed above and others.

Woodlands, airfields, quarries, water bodies, development etc.