LANCASTER DISTRICT LAND ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

REVIEW OF KEY URBAN LANDSCAPE ALLOCATIONS IN LANCASTER DISTRICT

Review Stage 1: Assessment of Key Urban Landscapes

November 2012
LANCASTER DISTRICT LAND ALLOCATIONS DPD

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Review Stage 1:
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Contents

Preface

1 Background

2 Local Landscape Designations within Lancaster District

3 Assessment of Key Urban Landscapes in Lancaster District

Figures:
Map 1: Plan: The locations of Key Urban Landscapes

Appendix 1:
Key Urban Landscapes: Landscape Character Assessments
PREFACE

i. This report by Woolerton Dodwell was commissioned by Lancaster City Council. It forms part of a review of areas within Lancaster District identified under ‘saved’ Local Plan Policy E31 as Key Urban Landscape. The policy states that these areas will be conserved and important natural features safeguarded, and that development in such areas will only be permitted where it preserves the open nature of the area and the character and appearance of its surroundings. The purpose of the review is to help inform consideration of the continued appropriateness of the Key Urban Landscape allocation in the Land Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD), which forms part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Lancaster District.

ii. The review was undertaken in two stages. This Stage 1 report identifies 19 areas of Key Urban Landscape and provides an assessment of the character of each area. The Stage 2 report draws on the Stage 1 report to consider the character and qualities of each area of Key Urban Landscape in relation to a range of evaluation criteria that are relevant to the identification of valued landscapes for designation. Together the two reports provide a suitable basis for Lancaster City Council’s consideration of Key Urban Landscape and the extent to which such areas should continue to be allocated as a form of local landscape designation in the Land Allocations DPD.

iii. A further element of Woolerton Dodwell’s commission involved the preparation of landscape assessments for five emerging strategic site options within the District that have been identified as having potential to accommodate significant future development. The purpose of the landscape assessments is to help inform Lancaster City Council’s consideration of future growth options and ultimately the allocation of sites in the Land Allocations DPD.
REVIEW OF KEY URBAN LANDSCAPE ALLOCATIONS IN LANCASTER DISTRICT:

Review Stage 1: Assessment of Key Urban Landscape Allocations

BACKGROUND

Project Brief

1.1 Lancaster City Council requires advice on the continued appropriateness of its Key Urban Landscape allocation - a form of local landscape designation - in the Local Plan. Key Urban Landscapes are areas of open land protected by Policy E31 ‘saved’ within the existing Lancaster District Local Plan (Strike-Through Edition September). The policy states that these areas will be conserved and important natural features safeguarded. Development in such areas would only be permitted where it preserves the open nature of the area and the character and appearance of its surroundings. The City Council wishes to review these areas in order to determine their continued appropriateness in the Land Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD).

Overview of Current Guidance and Practice

1.2 Current UK guidance on local landscape designation\(^1\) was published jointly by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Historic Scotland (HS) in 2004. The guidance notes that there are three main policy purposes of local landscape designation. These are: as an accolade; as a means to focus policies and objectives; and as a tool for management. The guidance was prepared to assist local authorities in reviewing their local landscape designations, for it was recognised that current designations had often been made many years ago and frequently lack robust justification for their importance such that the designations cannot be considered to be ‘fit for purpose’.

1.3 A number of reviews have now taken place in Scotland based on the SNH/HS guidance, notably for the City of Edinburgh Council\(^2\) (2010) which involved a mix of urban and rural landscapes, and for Fife Council\(^3\) (2008) and for the Scottish Borders Council\(^4\) (2011) which largely involved rural landscapes. The City of Edinburgh review focussed on a selection of open spaces considered to make a significant contribution to the wider landscape (and townscape) of Edinburgh, while the rural Councils considered all of the...
landscape within the Council’s area, drawing on comprehensive assessments and descriptions of landscape character.

1.4 The full review process typically involves:

1. Preparation of baseline assessments that describe and illustrate the character and qualities of areas of landscape under consideration, noting the features that contribute to character including views and scenic qualities, the presence of cultural heritage assets and associations, features that contribute to public enjoyment, and relative naturalness /wildness.

2. Evaluation of the areas of landscape under consideration, based on assessments of their character and qualities. The evaluation process typically involves the rating of landscapes (on a high, medium or low basis) according to agreed criteria. The ratings are subsequently converted to numeric scores. In some cases weightings were applied to certain criteria considered to be particularly important to the purposes of designation as defined by individual local authorities.

3. Identification of candidate areas for local landscape designation from the highest scoring landscapes.

4. Further review of the candidate landscapes to examine their value for designation and in terms of practical considerations (such as size), support from the Council and the community etc. This process often leads to a refinement of the list of candidate areas and also to the amendment of area boundaries.

5. Preparation of a designation report for the final list of candidate landscapes, including Statements of Importance for each area that describe their location and boundaries and the particular features that make the landscape special. In some cases the Statements of Importance also include a ‘Forces for Change’ statement which identifies the threats which could result in an adverse impact on the proposed local landscape designation, and recommendations for landscape management.

6. Public Consultation on the designation report with its final list of candidate landscapes, followed by amendments as needed to reflect the outcome of consultation.

LOCAL LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS WITHIN LANCASTER DISTRICT

1.5 The Lancaster District Local Plan Proposals Map indicates the areas designated Key Urban Landscape under saved policy E31. The supporting text to saved policy E31 refers to three main types of Key Urban Landscape: the Urban Coastline, the Lancaster Eastern M6 Corridor and Open Land of Key Townscape Importance. It also describes, in general terms, the role played by each type of Key Urban Landscape in contributing to the setting of the District’s urban area, which comprises the main built-up area of Lancaster, Morecambe and Heysham.
1.6 However the reasons for the selection of the Key Urban Landscapes were not formally recorded by the City Council when the areas were originally identified. Consequently there is no clear evidence as to why these areas are considered to be important; such evidence is needed to underpin and justify their designation as Key Urban Landscapes.

1.7 Currently there is no detailed assessment of the character and qualities of the landscapes Lancaster District that could help inform the review of Key Urban Landscapes. Although two existing landscape character assessments\(^5\)\(^6\) contain useful baseline information regarding Lancashire’s landscapes, these county-wide studies do not provide a sufficiently detailed basis for a review of local-scale Key Urban Landscapes. It has therefore been necessary to assess the character and qualities of Lancaster District’s areas of Key Urban Landscapes in order to establish baseline information as a first step in the review process.

1.8 A number of Key Urban Landscapes are indicated on the Lancaster District Local Plan Proposals Map for protection under saved policy E31. Some are individual areas that follow the boundaries of a park, for example, while others are extended tracts of land that have required sub-division into discrete areas in order to facilitate the assessment and review process. The following Key Urban Landscapes have been identified:

1. Lancaster Castle and Priory, Lancaster
2. Ryelands Park, Lancaster
3. Land north of Haverbreaks, Lancaster
4. Land south of Haverbreaks, Lancaster
5. Grounds of Jamea Al Kauthar Islamic college, Lancaster
6. Greaves Park, Lancaster
7. University of Cumbria campus, Lancaster
8. Williamson Park, Lancaster
9. Highfield Recreation Ground, Lancaster
10. Lancaster Cemetery, Lancaster
11. Land south-east of Caton Road, adjacent to M6, Lancaster
12. Land adjacent to Grab Lane, Lancaster
13. Land south of Wyresdale Road, adjacent to M6, Lancaster
14. Land south & east of Newlands Road, adjacent to M6, Lancaster
15. Land south of Hala Hill & adjacent to M6, Lancaster
16. Land west and south of Lancaster University, Lancaster
17. Land south of Smithy Lane, Heysham
18. Heysham Head and The Barrows, Heysham
19. Land north of Knowlys Road, Heysham

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\(^5\) Lancashire County Council Lancashire Landscape Character Assessment
http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/landscape/landscapecharacass/cover.asp

\(^6\) Lancashire County Council Lancashire Historic Landscape Character Assessment
1.9 Map 1 indicates the broad locations of the 19 Key Urban Landscapes. The Lancaster District Local Plan Proposals Map should be referred to for more detailed information concerning the location and extent of these areas.

**ASSESSMENT OF KEY URBAN LANDSCAPES IN LANCASTER DISTRICT**

1.10 This review of Lancaster District’s Key Urban Landscapes involves the first stage of the review process that is set out in paragraph 1.4 above ie it provides assessments of the character and qualities of land within each of the 19 Key Urban Landscapes identified above. The assessments reflect a combination of:

- **Desk study review** of the Key Urban Landscapes to identify existing characterisation, mapped information, natural heritage, cultural heritage, access information etc as available and relevant to Key Urban Landscape areas. Key information sources include: OS mapping, Lancashire County Council’s MARIO website, Lancaster City website, GoogleEarth website, English Heritage website and ‘The Buildings of England – Lancashire: North’ by Clare Hartwell and Nikolaus Pevsner.

- **Field Assessment**: field visit to confirm/revise desk top assessment of landscape character of each Key Urban Landscape and to assess aesthetic qualities.

- **Analysis**: Synthesis of desk-top and field assessment of landscape character for each Key Urban Landscape, including identification of local landscape character type, reference photograph, brief character description and a summary of the landscape assessment recorded on a proforma.

1.11 Several local landscape character types were identified by the assessment. Coastal grassland, Coastal scrub and Informal urban open green space characterise Key Urban Landscapes located within the District’s Urban Coastline. The Lancaster Eastern M6 Corridor and Open Land is generally characterised by the Rolling or sloping farmland type with areas of Valley farmland and Campus green space. Within the main urban area, the Open Land of Key Townscape Importance type includes Formal urban open green space, Informal urban open green space and Campus green space.

1.12 Landscape assessments prepared for each of the 19 Key Urban Landscapes are included in Appendix 1. These provide an overview of the characteristics of individual Key Urban Landscapes and form part of Lancaster City Council’s evidence base for the District’s Land Allocations DPD. The assessments will be used by the Council to review individual areas of Key Urban Landscapes in order to determine their continued appropriateness in the Land Allocations DPD, and to inform future policy responses.

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7 Lancashire County Council’s MARIO website  http://mario.lancashire.gov.uk/agsmario/
8 Lancaster City Council website  http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/
9 GoogleEarth