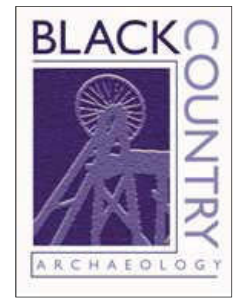


The Black Country: An Historic Landscape Characterisation* Executive Summary



Anything more than a superficial glance at the modern Black Country reveals an intricate pattern of use and re-use of land, streets, buildings, and other structures. This complexity, a product of hundreds of years of recycling of physical resources to meet human demands, is easily misunderstood without the appropriate research tools.

This Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) aims to be a tool in understanding the landscape as it exists today, by placing it firmly in a context of the historical development of its constituent parts. The purpose of producing this understanding is to assist the sensitive management of the built environment in the future.

Section 1 introduces the reader to some of the more general features of the process of HLC, to the particular landscape of the Black Country, and to the way in which HLC has been applied in this case.

HLC aims to be an open, transparent process of representing the landscape, and **Section 2** lays out in some detail the way in which the record has been assembled. This includes a discussion of the sequence of maps and aerial photographs which have formed the basis of the data, together with the systems of classification used to distinguish different types of modern and past landscape.

Although a subsequent publication will present more detailed analysis of the database, Sections 3 and 4 of this report outline some ways in which the data can be interpreted. **Section 3** considers how the HLC record can be used to produce broad overviews of land use, periods of origin and surviving character. It also shows how past transformations of the area (such as the historic switch from 19th century mining to 20th century suburban residential streets) can be represented and examined by HLC data.

Section 4 analyses the data by using it to create more than 50 *Character Areas*—zones within each of which the landscape shares something in common. **Section 5** then goes on to profile the modern and historic environment within each of these Character Areas with a view to improving our understanding of the character and local distinctiveness of each location.

Following brief conclusions, a series of four **Appendices** provide the technical detail of the categories of landscape used within the data as well as a copy of the original project design.

The programme of Historic Landscape Characterisation in the Black Country is expected to continue until 2010. As mentioned above, a second report will use the data to provide a greater level of analysis of the Black Country landscape. Additionally, a number of reports have been prepared, and others proposed, to examine the data relating to particular areas or aspects of the landscape. Details of the outputs from the programme can be found at: www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/hlc.

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