

Section 6: Conclusions

This report has outlined how the method of Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has been applied to the area of the Black Country local authorities. The process has resulted in a unique database record of the geography and history of the area: a record which has potential uses in a number of different arenas.

In creating this record, and in using it to re-examine the present and past of the Black Country, we are naturally brought to a position where we can draw conclusions about both the nature of this particular landscape as well as the application of HLC to it. This discussion will be the subject of future reports and we will confine ourselves to a few brief comments here.

The Black Country's reputation is as an industrial area with a history of mining. However, the HLC has shown that the local landscape in the 21st century is in fact primarily suburban —large clusters of 20th

century residential streets and estates organised around (and in some instances dominating the surviving character of) older settlement cores.

Although the area is essentially a *built* landscape (perhaps more so than for any other HLC hitherto carried out in England), there are shown to be more 'green' areas than perhaps many would have expected in an ostensibly urban area. These are in most cases survivors of the rapid suburbanisation of the 20th century, and a reminder of the 19th century and earlier when the exploitation of coal and other minerals was carried out in a largely agricultural context.

The overview made possible by the HLC also serves to emphasise the common history of the area now divided between the four local authorities. Each one contains landscapes with other stories, but all share some part of the legacy of the historic upheaval in the 18th and 19th centuries caused by the scramble to make use of the extraordinary mineral wealth of the area.

Whilst the Black Country HLC will perhaps find its most useful applications within the field of planning policy, it will also be of interest to a wider group of landscape students (in the broadest sense of the word). These will hopefully include ecologists, historians, geographers, archaeologists, geologists, architects, conservation officers, and anyone with an interest in the sensitive regeneration of the social and physical environments.

Finally it is worth emphasising that the Black Country HLC is a public resource, and that it has been assembled from information which is largely in the public domain. Anyone interested in using it should make contact using the details on the back of this report.



Walsall's St Paul's Bus Station was rebuilt at the start of the 21st century and provides public transport links around the region

