Recycled Landscape

The Legacy of 250 Years in the Black Country

An Analysis of the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation

English Heritage Project Number 3638 Main

Second Report
2010

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Acknowledgements

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The project commenced in 2004 with the appointment of Debbie Langley as Project Officer. Debbie compiled the database and undertook much of the early work on the Character Area profiles before her departure for Staffordshire County Council. Paul Quigley succeeded Debbie in 2007 and has been responsible for the subsequent analysis of the data, for the completion of the Character Area Profiles, and for the compilation of the report. Mike Shaw, the Black Country Archaeologist, has acted as Project Manager throughout the life of the project.

We are particularly grateful to Graham Fairclough and Roger M Thomas of English Heritage who commissioned the project, and to Sue Whitehouse, Conservation Officer at Wolverhampton City Council, who provided conservation and policy advice.

Maps & Photographs

Unless otherwise marked, all maps are orientated with north at the top of the page. All photographs have been taken by the author (unless otherwise stated), and those of the Black Country form part of the photographic archive linked to the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation. The codes included at the end of each photo caption refer to the particular identifier for the corresponding area within the database of the Historic Landscape Characterisation.

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Executive Summary

This report is the second covering the main project of the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation (BCHLC), an all-inclusive survey of the surface area of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

The first report focussed on the way in which the BCHLC data had been assembled, and on the profiling of 51 individual 'character areas' which together represent the modern landscape. This report extends the analysis of the study area as a whole.

Following a brief **Introduction**, **Section 2** uses the BCHLC data to reconstruct the historic development of the area in the form of a series of maps of broad categories of land use. This sheds light on the 'classic period' of Black Country growth.

Section 3 then goes on to use these reconstructions to consider what they tell us about the nature of change in the area, highlighting a transformative period between the two world wars, together with the distinctive experience of the 'Black Country proper'.

Section 4 turns our attention away from the past to look at what, in physical terms, survives of the distinctive development of the area. In doing this it looks at examples from industry (the manufacturing specialisms of Black Country towns) and housing (the brick terraces and courts of the period before 1880).

Finally, **Section 5** suggests ways in which the results of HLC can be used. Brief **Conclusions** are then followed by a supporting **Appendix.**

Results from the Historic Landscape Characterisation programme in the Black Country can be found at: http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/archive/blackcountry_hlc_2009.

*English Heritage Project Number 3638 MAIN.

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1. Introduction

1.1 HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION

This report is part of a project to record the inherited character of the area covered by four West Midlands local authorities (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton). It is part of a national programme* which attempts to expand our definition of 'heritage' beyond historic buildings and archaeological sites, to think of the term as being applicable to all and any part of our surroundings.

The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation (abbreviated in this report to 'BCHLC') started in 2004, and our first publication described in detail the procedure the project adopted to assess the character of the entire study area, some 356 square kilometres**.

This second report aims to explore how the BCHLC can inform our understanding of the development of the Black Country landscape and, in particular, what can be seen today of important features of past landscapes.

1.2 THE HISTORICAL FLEXIBILITY OF LAND USE

Perhaps unexpectedly, we have chosen to use the title of 'recycled landscape' to describe the Black Country as it is seen through the filter of the our characterisation project. Unexpectedly, because the term 'recycled' is, in its current use at least, more commonly employed to refer to short-term, expendable household items than to the land we use on a more long-term basis to host our homes, schools and workplaces. Nevertheless, there is no doubting the currency which the term holds in the early 21st century and we use it here for two other reasons.

First, we would like to emphasise that, like many other recycled objects, urban environments are particularly man-made. As such, they have been created for a purpose or purposes in order to serve the needs of our society (or some part of it) at that point in time. For many people an 'archaeological artefact' is a piece of flint or pottery taken from a muddy trench: few stop to consider that the landscape in which the trench might be located could also be thought of as an archaeological artefact in the same way. Its shape is a function of its purpose, and its purpose tells us something about the society which created it.

Second, as will be described during the course of this report, the environment of the Black Country has been constantly used and re-used in a way that can be matched only by a very few other landscapes.

Left: A Black Country 'north light shed', built in the period between the world wars.

*More information about the English Heritage programme of Historic Landscape Characterisation, and links to many relevant documents (such as *Conservation Bulletin* 47, which is devoted to the topic of Characterisation) can be found at www.english-heritage.org.uk/characterisation.

***The Black Country: An Historic Landscape Characterisation*, available from: http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/archive/blackcountry_hlc_2009.

1.3 BLACK COUNTRY CHARACTER

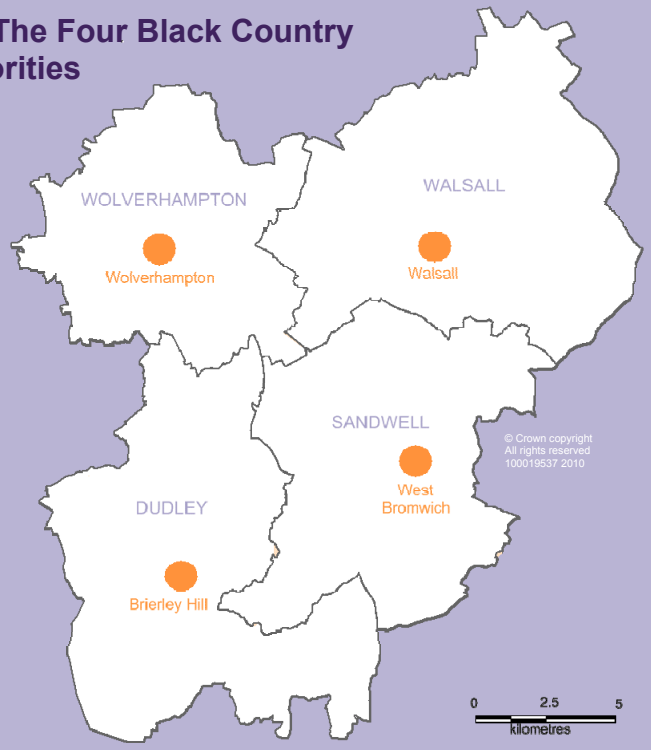
We have already described elsewhere how the BCHLC has differed from Historic Landscape Characterisation projects in other parts of England, most importantly perhaps in respect of the intensely urbanised nature of the landscape we set out to record.

But the Black Country differs in another respect which we have not yet discussed fully. Unlike the names of other geographic regions (such as the surrounding areas of Birmingham, Worcestershire, and Staffordshire), 'The Black Country' is already a description of the area's character or, more properly, the area's *historic* character.

As we shall see, the definition of the Black Country is the subject of continued lively debate (see, for example, the BBC's online discussion on the subject*), a debate which has probably continued in one form or another since the term was coined in the 19th century. Some of the participants use geological features as their starting point (such as the coalfield) others use economic features (such as the iron industry), while others still use more social factors (linguistic traits, for example).

Figure 1.1: The Black Country in the West Midlands Region

Figure 1.2: The Four Black Country Local Authorities



But the point is that these are all an effort to use *character*, in whatever sense, to understand a geographic area.

This is an attempt to do the same: to use what we can observe in the record of the landscape to help us understand what makes the Black Country the place it is in the 21st century. And it is an assumption underlying our approach that it is not possible to understand a modern landscape without understanding the story of its past development.

Thus, if we are to fully understand an area's present day character, we need to be able to distinguish what is 'new' from what is carried forward from an earlier time.

This brings us to questions of what the legacy is today of the area's particular history, and what is important or characteristic about this legacy. In a document of limited scope, we cannot hope to fully answer these questions, but the comprehensive survey which the BCHLC represents nevertheless allows us to start the discussion in an informed way.

Perhaps one of the more important questions to answer is whether what remains today in the local landscape is, either directly or indirectly, related to a special and unusually important history as a centre of mining and manufacturing. In the middle of the 20th century commentators wrote about the Black Country that '*though the area is no longer 'black', the characteristic features of the landscape are, almost without exception, relics of the former prosperity of the coalfield'***. Even if this was true in 1950, we might ask whether our 'recycled landscape' has allowed traces of this former prosperity to survive.

We consider this question later, but the next section uses the BCHLC to develop an understanding of the story of the Black Country since the 18th century and, in particular, the extent to which the landscape has been re-used during that period.

Above: A Willenhall ironmonger's shop in 2008. The business advertises itself as having been established for more than 200 years, and is located close to what was the centre of the medieval settlement. (HBL4956)

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*This discussion can be seen at the BBC's Black Country web pages at: www.bbc.co.uk/blackcountry/content/articles/2005/03/15/where_is_the_black_country_feature.shtml.

**Johnson & Wise, 1950. The Black Country 1800-1950 in *Birmingham and its Regional Setting: A Scientific Survey*. p244.

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2. The Anatomy of Landscape Change

2.1 THE BLACK COUNTRY'S DEFINING ERA

We have seen from the first report of the Black Country HLC that when we consider our study area in relatively small geographical chunks, a particular pattern of development often repeats itself in the stories of its different parts. But the BCHLC also allows us to assemble these stories into a wider, more generalised interpretation of how the whole area has been changed, particularly in terms of its land use. The maps shown overleaf in Figure 2.1 illustrate this wider story.

The first half of the sequence (i.e. the four maps up to 1840) shows how large parts of the centre of the area were transformed. A network of settlements in what was rural South Staffordshire (and, to a lesser extent, North Worcestershire) were changed forever to make room for one of the country's largest areas of mining and quarrying, together with industries which relied on the raw material it provided.

The massive exploitation of mineral riches (as well as the labour and skills of its people) during the 18th and 19th centuries was the defining period of the Black Country, generating its classic landscape of canals, spoil banks, pit mounds, and polluting chimneys. As well as giving the area the soot and contamination which may have led to its name, this period left a legacy in the landscape. It made the area different (although not necessarily in a positive way) from both its rural hinterland and other cities and towns.

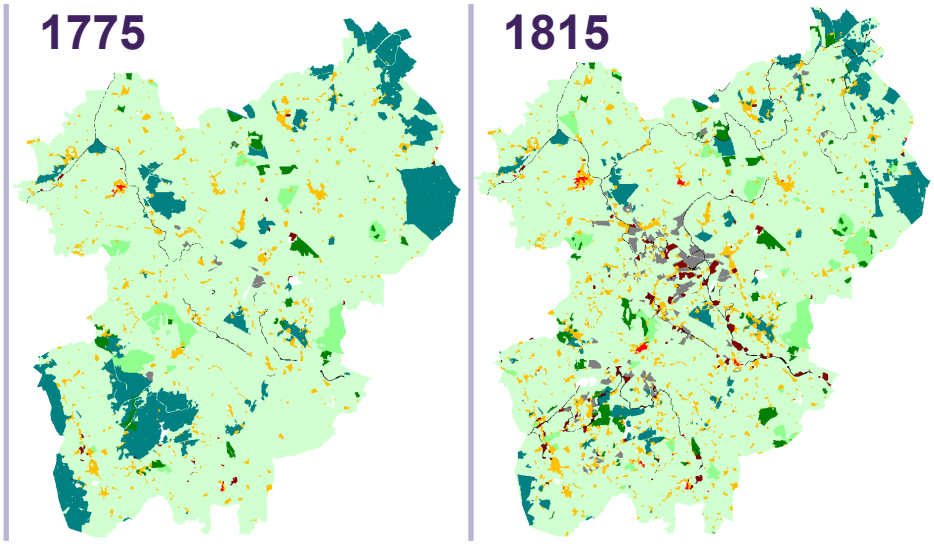
The second half of the sequence of maps in Figure 2.1 tells another story. By the end of the 19th century the landscape was undergoing a process of renewal: the coalfield at the centre of the area was dying and the 'classic' Black Country landscape was disappearing. A challenge presented itself, one of taking all the large areas which had been turned over by the numerous quarries, collieries and other mines and changing them into areas in which people might live and work. The scale of this transformation was possibly unprecedented for its time. The data from the BCHLC shows that, at its peak, mineral extraction accounted for most of an area which exceeded 55 square kilometres—larger than most modern London boroughs.

Table 2.1: Estimated Area of Disused Mining & Quarrying Land

Year	Total Area of Extractive Land (ha.)	of which, Area Disused (ha.)	% Disused
1775	76	4	5%
1815	661	5	1%
1840	882	13	1%
1885	**5,751**	2,651	46%
1900	5,682	3,672	65%
1920	5,596	**4,210**	75%
1938	4,640	3,833	**83%**
2000	410	210	51%

The 20th century in the Black Country tells the story of this huge but gradual turnaround. The maps in Figure 2.1 show that, over the course of a hundred years, derelict extractive land was almost all given over to new uses.

In the sense that the landscape is now, in the 21st century, radically different from that which existed in the 19th century, we can see that the term 'Black Country' describes not only a geographic feature but also a period in history. This period is, in broad terms, the phase before the late 19th century. As one indicator of this pivotal change, Table 2.1 shows that in 1885 the amount of extractive land had peaked and, from then on, there was always more disused extractive land than land actively occupied by mines and quarries.



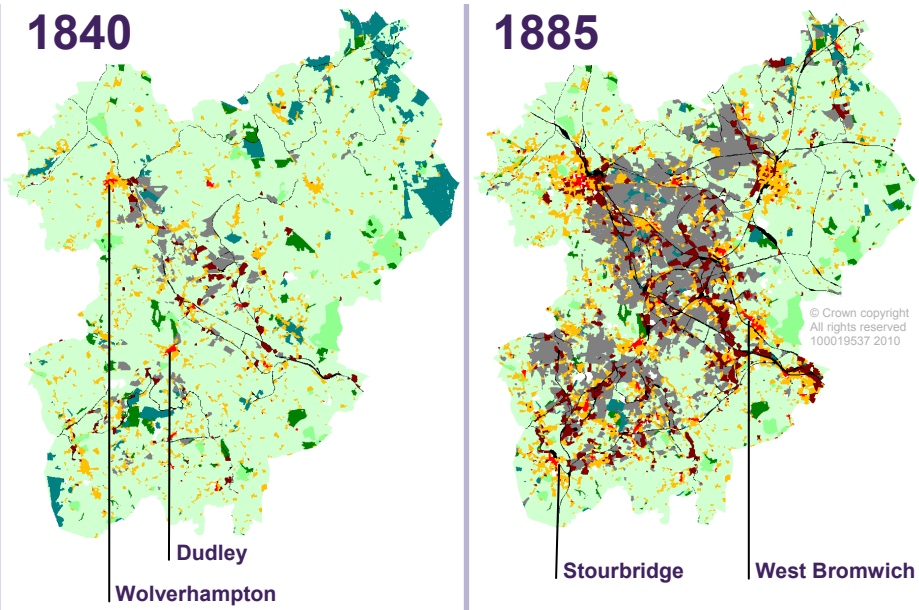


Figure 2.1:

Reconstructed Black Country Landscapes

Interpreting these maps

These maps show the previous uses of the landscape in 2000. The areas of colour marked on maps of earlier periods therefore have boundaries which may reflect the shape of modern features.

The maps show 9 categories of land use. In order to simplify the presentation, 4 of the original 13 categories recorded in the BCHLC are not shown (and are left as white). The categories omitted are: *utilities*; *military*; *public services*; and *religious*.

Appendix 1 shows the estimated land area which falls into each of the 13 categories.

Reconstructions of 1775 and 1815 are tentative as the full records for these periods were not available.

Key to the Maps:

- Commercial
- Transport
- Mining
- Fields
- Industry
- Open Land
- Parks / Recreation
- Housing
- Woodland

■ By **1840**, local canals have expanded from their origins 70 years earlier to form a link not only with Birmingham in the east, but also to the river Severn (in the south west) and to coalfields north of the Black Country itself.

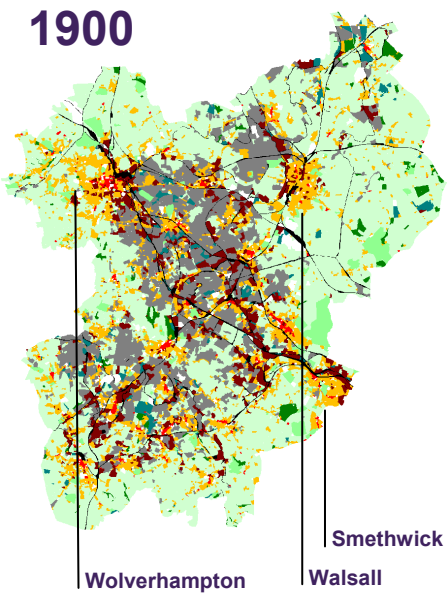
■ Mining, quarrying and manufacturing have all expanded in the areas accessible from the canals. Nearby commercial centres such Dudley and Wolverhampton have grown on the strength of this activity.

■ In the forty years before **1885**, the central part of the landscape has shown an explosive change to one dominated by mining and industry.

■ In terms of area, this is the peak of the recorded extent of the extractive industries, although nearly half of the land used by mining has already become disused as sites become exhausted or inaccessible.

■ Like the canals before them, the railways have again revolutionised transport to, from and within the area.

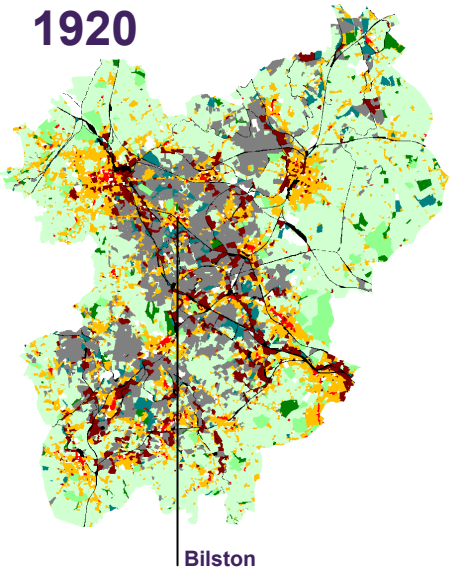
1900



■ Between 1885 and **1900**, residential areas continue to expand, often at the expense of agricultural space. Around the central area of mining and quarrying, suburbs have now started to cover fields in places like Smethwick, eastern Walsall and western Wolverhampton.

■ The amount of land given to mining and quarrying has already started to fall, and the proportion which now lies disused has risen from half to two-thirds.

1920

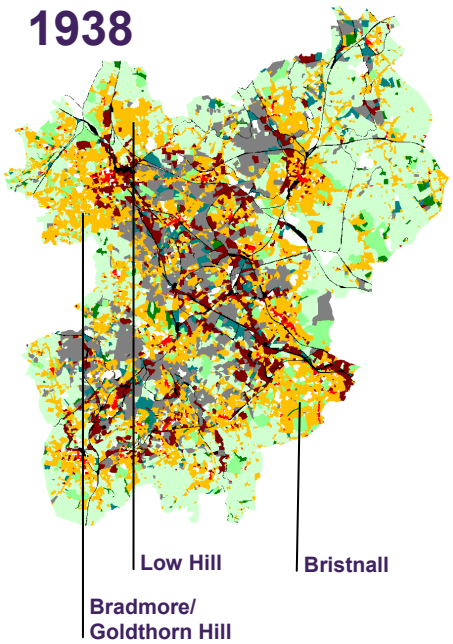


■ By **1920**, the proportion of mining land which is derelict has peaked at more than 4,000 hectares (almost twice as much as the total area occupied by industry, for example).

■ The spread of residential suburbs over neighbouring farm land continues, but former mining land at the centre of the coalfield is also being re-used to create new homes, in places like north Bilston.

■ For the first time, fields and woodland cover less than half of the total area.

1938

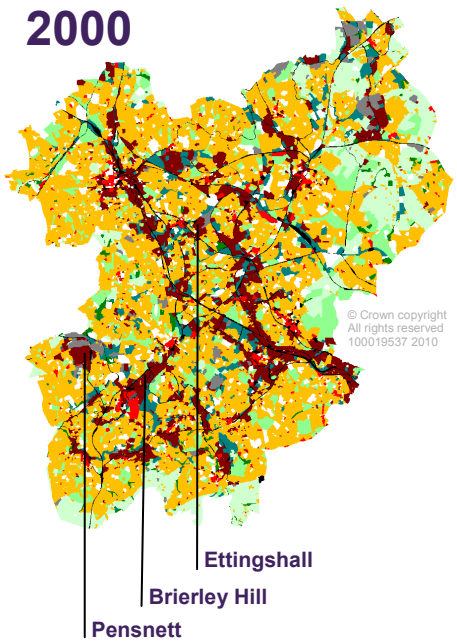


■ Almost two decades later in **1938,** demand for housing has created vast new residential areas on the edges of the coalfield such as at Bristnall, Low Hill, Bradmore and Goldthorn Hill (see Figure 3.1).

■ Suburbanisation is well underway: new areas of housing (accessible by bus and car) now exceed the area of the older settlements existing at the end of the 1900s.

■ Four-fifths of what is left of mineral working has fallen into disuse.

2000



■ By **2000**, mineral working has generally disappeared under a new conurbation into which the distinct settlements of the 18th and early 19th centuries have now been absorbed.

■ More land is taken by industry than ever before, and new industrial zones and trading estates have collected together previously scattered enterprises. Several of these zones, such as at Brierley Hill, Ettingshall and Pensnett are built on former colliery sites.

2.2 RATES OF CHANGE

The sequence of reconstructed maps in Figure 2.1 gives us a visual picture of the course of the Black Country's development. But the evidence it represents also allows us to start to consider the *pace of change* at any point in time, at least in terms of the categories of land use.

If, for example, we look at the extent of the area on each plan which altered its land use* from the previous map in the sequence, the largest change between any two consecutive maps is that for the most recent period, i.e. between 1938 and 2000. Over the 62 years of this phase, the expansion of residential and industrial areas over both agricultural land and former mining sites appears to have contributed to the conversion of nearly 200 km^2 to different purposes, as shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Estimated Relative Rates of Change

Period	Duration (yrs)	Area with a different land use* at the end of the period (km^2)	Notional rate of change (km^2/yr)
1841-1885	45	131	2.9
1885-1900	15	11	0.7
1901-1920	20	20	1.0
1921-1938	18	77	4.3
1939-2000	62	196	3.2

*i.e. those BCHLC polygons which, at the start and the end of the period in question, had different recorded previous uses.

Right: A view south across the Stour river valley near Old Hill. In the foreground are characteristic hipped roofs of interwar semi-detached houses (HBL10606)

But the maps also show that these recent changes, although huge, do not necessarily reflect the *fastest* transformation in the area's history. At least in so far as it is possible to discern from available historic maps, the pace of change seems to have been most rapid in the shorter period between 1920 and 1938.

In these interwar years as much as a fifth of the total area of the modern Black Country changed use in less than two decades. Owing to the importance of this period, we have examined the changes in more detail in Section 3.

2.3 RECYCLED LANDSCAPE

We have considered what the BCHLC data tells us about the story of the development of the landscape and also its periods of greatest change. But, in the same way, the BCHLC data allows us to make a count of the overall number of changes which each part of the area has experienced during the last two centuries or so.

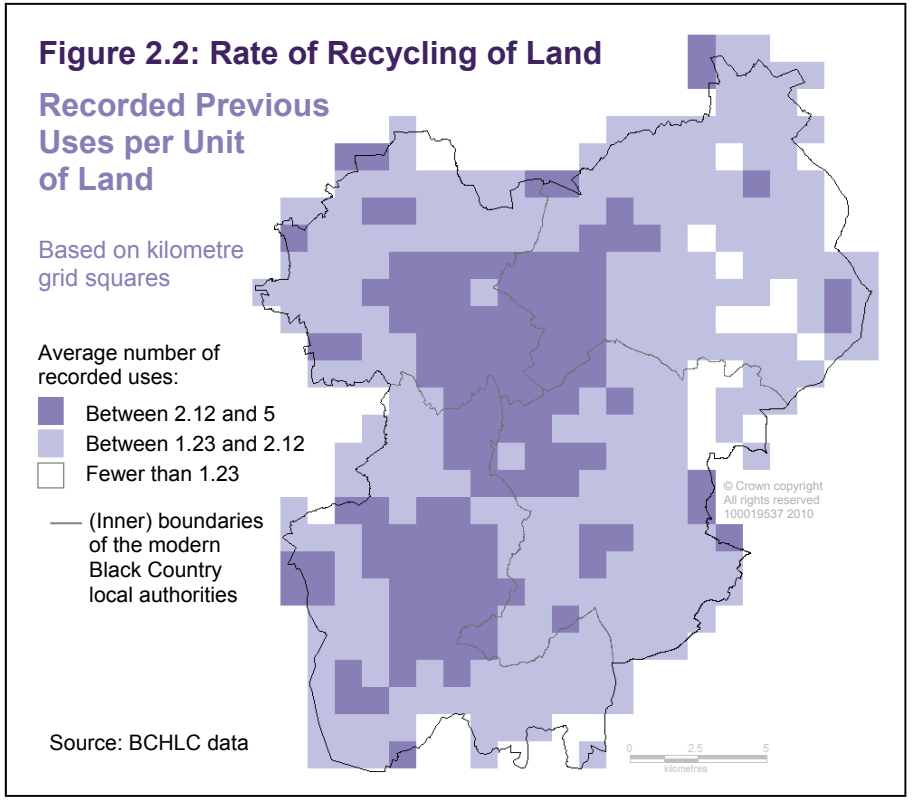
Our first report highlighted that, according to the data held in the BCHLC, each parcel of land used as the unit of recording (sometimes referred to as a 'polygon', reflecting their irregular shapes) had a current use and an average of just over two previous uses recorded. So, for example, an area of modern housing (current use) might typically have been built on a 19th century colliery (previous use #1), and this in turn might have been established on what had been 18th century enclosed fields (previous use #2).

The variation in the number of previous uses recorded for each unit of land is, in a sense, a measure of the amount of change the environment has undergone. This variation can be illustrated in a map such as the one in Figure 2.2.

The map in this case is deliberately a very generalised, impressionistic representation (it makes this generalisation possible by dividing the study area into 1 kilometre grid squares and representing the average number of previous uses for each square). This is in order to allow us to come to broad conclusions about the amount of change without these being obscured by unnecessary detail.

What this representation reveals is that the variation in the number of previous land uses is far from randomly distributed across our study area. Instead, there are clear areas in the central part of map (shown in dark blue) where land has, in general, been recycled or reused on more occasions than in other parts. This conclusion only serves to reinforce the story revealed in the sequence of reconstructed maps in Figure 2.1, i.e. that the centre of our study area has undergone two periods of radical change in little more than 200 years.

In contrast to this area of 'rapid' reuse, figure 2.2 also shows that there are zones which are much less changed than other parts, such as the area in the north east, straddling the boundary between the modern boroughs of Sandwell and Walsall. Many of these remain part of older landscape phases characterised by enclosed fields.

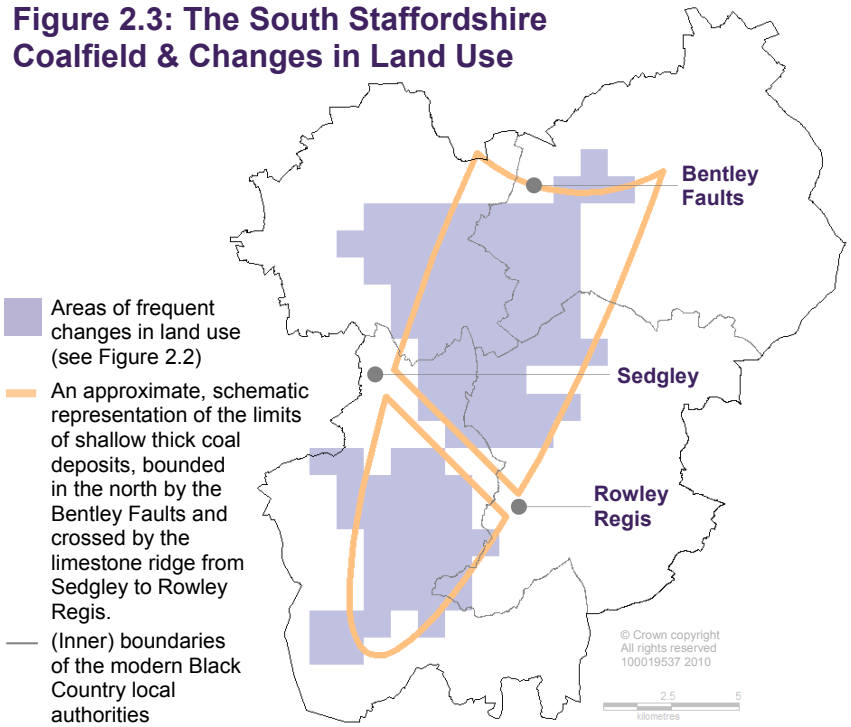


2.4 THE INFLUENCE OF THE COALFIELD

The locations of the zones within the modern Black Country which have a higher average number of recorded previous land uses seem to have a clear relationship to the location of the South Staffordshire coalfield. Figure 2.3 illustrates this apparent link.

While the presence of the coalfield in the centre of our study area (and straddling all four modern local authority areas) does not explain all of the variation in land use change, it has clearly played a fundamental role in shaping both the landscape itself and the record of it held by the BCHLC.

Figure 2.3: The South Staffordshire Coalfield & Changes in Land Use



More than this, the differences revealed here between, on the one hand, the experience of those parts of the study area over the coalfield and, on the other, those which are not, seem to endorse the idea of two Black Countries. The first one sits on the thick coal; the second, which comprises the surrounding areas, and is today associated with the coalfield (for example by common local government) has a character which is less influenced by mining and related industry.

For the purposes of the BCHLC project we have decided to use the term 'Black Country' to refer to the whole area of the four modern local authorities. However, there are some writers for whom the first of our two areas might fit well with the idea of a 'Black Country proper'. Indeed, the idea of reserving the use of the term 'Black Country' solely for the area close to the coalfield is by no means new. It has long been advocated, for example, by organisations like the Black Country Society (established in 1967)*.

Whatever names we choose to label the areas with, the BCHLC data does appear to support the idea that the modern Black Country (based on local authority boundaries) has at its centre an area which has had, in very general terms, a different historic character to its surroundings. This core area is shown here to have experienced major and frequent changes in land use, almost certainly as a result of its proximity to accessible deposits of coal.

Interestingly, surveys of the physical and social landscape of the area more than 60 years ago also found it useful to highlight the difference in experience between the wider administrative area and a more tightly drawn core of the Black Country**.

This is not to say that the area of the wider Black Country outside the 'core' has not also been influenced by the presence of the coalfield. Certainly the movement of

*www.blackcountrysociety.co.uk/aboutbcs.htm.
**In 1948, the publication *Conurbation: A Survey of Birmingham and the Black Country* by the West Midlands Group (pages 84 & 94) made use of the idea of a core area of the sub region which they referred to as 'Black Country main'.

coal, other minerals and manufactured goods in and out of the central area has had its impact, in terms of both economic prosperity and the legacy in the built environment. So, for example, Smethwick (in the south east), Wolverhampton and Tettenhall (in the north west) and the towns on the canal route to the river Severn (in the south west) all show characteristics inherited from their proximity to the area of rapid landscape change highlighted by Figure 2.3.

Nevertheless, the concentration of changes in land use which is evident in the centre of our study area is not only important in distinguishing different experiences within its modern boundaries. The extent of the change and the huge task of reclamation in the 20th century (already highlighted in Section 2.1) sets the Black Country apart from many other large urban areas which lie further afield.

In common with the Black Country, many urban areas have had a dynamic, relatively fast changing landscape, and many have also experienced the widespread 20th century suburbanisation which we have seen has been a feature of our area. But few have seen the *extra phase* of extraction which is now 'hidden' in the longer historical transformation of the area from agricultural landscape to 21st century conurbation.

Using the HLC we can even measure the amount which the growth and demise of extractive industries has contributed to the overall amount of change. If we consider in totality all the occasions when a change has taken place between major categories of land use, we can say that mining and quarrying have been involved in about one in every six. Within the central part of the Black Country (i.e. the area of frequent changes in use shown in blue on the map opposite) the impact is twice as much, and the proportion of changes associated with extraction increases to one in every three.

In this sense the landscape of the Black Country appears to have the distinction of being more extensively recycled in the last 250 years than most of its modern urban equivalents This is supported by preliminary conclusions from the other HLC projects in major English conurbations.

Above: Cottages fronting on to the towpath of the Netherton Tunnel branch canal, close to the tunnel itself. The opening of the tunnel in 1858 provided a second, wider link under the limestone ridge which had divided the northern and southern parts of the coalfield (HBL10076).

2.5 THE NEXT PHASE?

Before we finish this section and go on to consider in more detail one of the most important 20th century changes, it is worth considering the fact that the landscape did not, of course, stop changing in the year 2000.

One way to think about the future development is to look at what is planned by the government agencies responsible for the local environment. In 2004, the UK government introduced a new system to manage development of both urban and rural areas*. As in other parts of the country, this placed an obligation on each of the four Black Country local authorities to devise a local spatial plan or *Local Development Framework* to shape the growth of the area. In the event, the four Black Country local authorities have come together to create a combined plan for the area in the period up to 2026. This *Joint Core Strategy* will be a set of published documents.

Although the reality of the way that the landscape develops will depend on a number of other economic and political forces, the *Black Country Joint Core Strategy* proposes some particular changes in overall land use. Perhaps the largest of these is the reuse of 1,000 hectares of industrial land for new housing over the period between 2009 to 2026. This would necessitate a reduction of one fifth in the area of industrial land present in 2009**.

Right: *The Crossing*, a recent development of 22 small flats in Oldbury. In the 19th century, the site was also the location of high density housing. Reflecting the unpredicted downturn in 2008, the housebuilder of the new construction went into administration soon after its completion (HBL11428).

Below: a 21st century extension to a large logistics concern close to the M5 motorway. Echoing an earlier phase of transport history, the building, now more than 350m long, was built on the site of spoil heaps created during the excavation of the adjacent canal more than 200 years earlier (HBL12384).

*Detailed in *The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*.

**Black Country Joint Core Strategy Publication Document Part 1 (November 2009), Table 4, page 50. Available from: http://blackcountrycorestrategy.dudley.gov.uk/latest.

3. Suburbanisation and the Recycling of the Landscape

3.1 THE EXPANSION OF RESIDENTIAL SUBURBS IN THE INTERWAR YEARS

We have established that a greater proportion of our study area changed between the two world wars than in any equivalent period of its history. This was the result of the first large scale creation of suburbs: new residential communities largely separated from the mixed commercial, industrial and residential centres which were the basis of the preceding settlement structure.

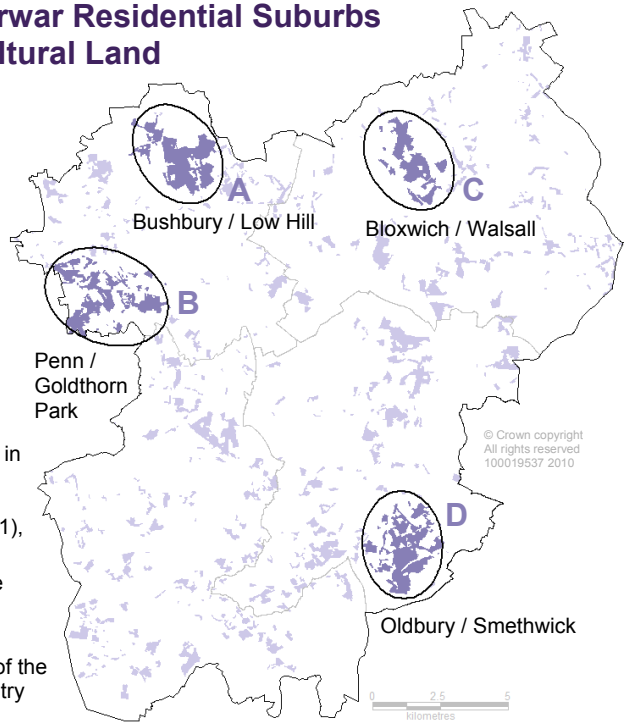
As we have seen, these new residential areas contributed to the linking of previously separate Black Country settlements within the overall growth in their combined extent (sometimes referred to as 'sprawl'). This outward expansion was, as elsewhere, made possible by changes in transport—railways, buses, electric trams, cars, bicycles, the expansion of (tarmaced) roads—and, in particular, by the distances it was now possible to travel to work. Indeed, in an age before ideas of a protected greenbelt took effect, the biggest component of the change in the Black Country in the 1920s and 30s was the construction of large residential suburbs over surrounding former agricultural land. On a more national scale, this wholesale 'browning' of previously 'green' land contributed to a reaction in defence of the countryside, epitomised by the establishment of the *Campaign to Protect Rural England* in 1926.

Left: Streets like this one in Blakenhall, Wolverhampton were part of the massive interwar expansion of Black Country housing over surrounding agricultural land (HBL6848).

Figure 3.1: Interwar Residential Suburbs Built on Agricultural Land

With largest areas highlighted

35 km^2 in total, of which 12km^2 is within the four areas highlighted



Areas of agriculture in 1920 which had become housing by 1938 (see Figure 2.1), of which ...

… these were some of the largest concentrations

(Inner) boundaries of the modern Black Country local authorities

We can see from Figure 3.1 that the new interwar suburbs were, in the Black Country, concentrated over particular tracts of former agricultural land. Although the four areas highlighted in the figure for example account for less than a tenth of the Black Country, they represented more than a third of all agricultural land converted to housing during this phase.

Interwar housing was often designed in 'single character' estates, many of which were part of a wider national expansion of municipal housing. In this context, it might be interesting to note the relationship of the four major conversions from agricultural land to housing to the structure of local government at the time. Of the four areas marked on Figure 3.1 (each of which is large enough to consist of several different estates), areas A and B were both expansions of what was then the town of Wolverhampton and, for the most part, inside the boundaries of what was then its County Borough. Area C was built within Walsall County Borough, while area D was divided by the boundary between Oldbury Urban District and the County Borough of Smethwick.

It is also worth noting that large new suburbs did not only dictate the location and character of new homes themselves. Associated with them were new local amenities such as schools, libraries, public houses, leisure and health centres.

Right: Smethwick Swimming Centre (formerly Thimblemill Baths) seen here in 2008, the year of its 75th anniversary. It was contemporary with, and built alongside one of the largest interwar suburbs inside the modern Black Country (see Area D in Figure 3.1). Several of the Black Country's leisure centres originate from this period.

Below: An example of a large interwar pub, *The Black Horse* was built with a substantial car park and fronted on to the route of the Birmingham New Road, which itself provided a major new arterial route across the Black Country in the 1920s. Demolished in 2009, the pub sat on the edge of a vast area of housing to the south of Wolverhampton (see Area B in Figure 3.1).

Photo: Wolverhampton CC Conservation Team

As we have mentioned already, suburbanisation between the wars was a widespread phenomenon, part of a common change in industrial societies, and in that single respect at least, the experience of the Black Country was not unusual. There was, however, a particular twist in the story of our study area which other cities and towns did not share. This was the reclamation of land affected by Black Country mineral extraction. The extent of mining land had peaked some decades earlier, but the period before WW2 represented the largest effort so far to reuse that land.

Next to the 'browning' of 'greenfield' areas discussed above, the recycling of mine and quarry sites to residential uses was the next most important change in the land use of the Black Country in the interwar years. Figure 3.2 shows how housing built on derelict extractive sites was distributed.

Above: A case of 'the best laid plans…'?: the huge self-confidence of the planners of interwar suburbs, perhaps not always borne out by reality, is illustrated by this sequence of plans for Bushbury, in the north of what is now the city of Wolverhampton. A giant, 1km long symmetrical pattern of streets is laid out over fields in 1928 (above, left), but by 1933 (above, centre) it has already been abandoned in favour of an alternative, less regular plan. However, as can be seen by the street lines in 2000 (above, right), even this was not completed. (Sections of the Alfred Hinde's Maps of Wolverhampton 1928, ref: MAP/587, and 1933-1934, MAP/594a, reproduced with the permission of Wolverhampton Archives & Local Studies).

The fact that derelict mines and quarries made a smaller overall contribution to the new suburbs than agricultural fields was partly to do with availability: there was, in general, much more agricultural land on hand than former mining sites. But it was also the result of other practical obstacles: the sites left vacant had large problems of reclamation associated with them (old shafts to be made safe, waste ground levelled etc.).

Despite these issues, the recycling of mining land provided a useful way for those settlements located directly on the coalfield (i.e. closer to the geographic centre of our modern study area) to provide new residential areas. Thus Tipton, Coseley, Wednesbury and Bilston for example were able to host an expansion of housing between the wars on a scale which would not otherwise have been possible because of the shortage of greenfield sites immediately nearby.

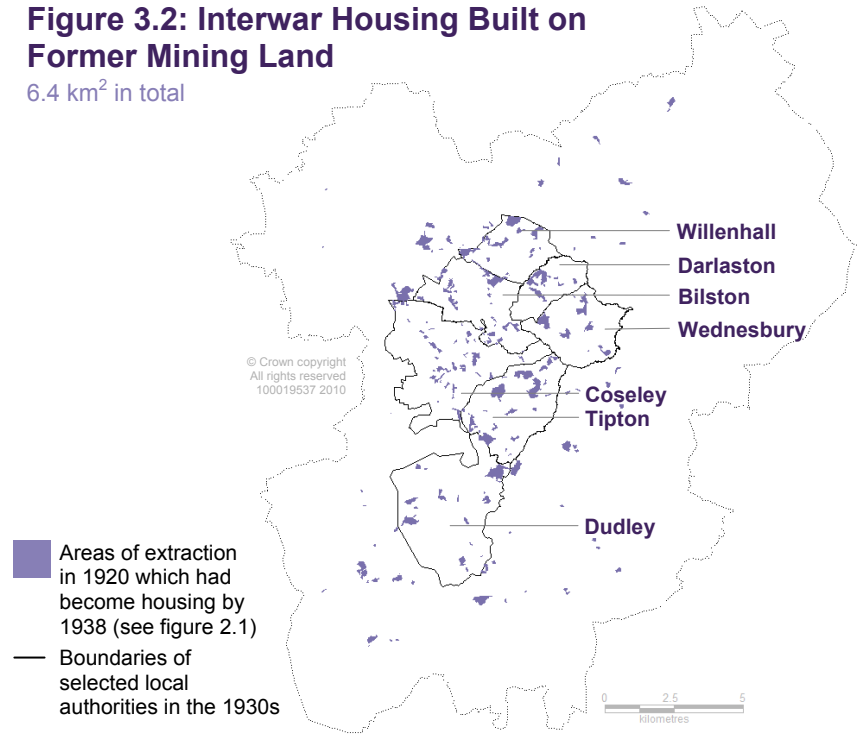
3.2 HOUSING OF DIFFERENT CHARACTER

Perhaps the confined nature of this expansion also led to it being different in character to the estates which were built out over greenfield sites.

Certainly the BCHLC shows that the interwar expansion on former mining land comprised, in proportion, more small terraced houses (such as those illustrated on the next page) than that laid out over agricultural land. More specifically, of the residential land reclaimed from extraction activities, more than half was covered by

Figure 3.2: Interwar Housing Built on Former Mining Land

6.4 km^2 in total



Above: Two examples of the short terraces which were built between 1920 and 1938 on derelict mining land in the central part of what are now the Black Country local authorities: (*top*) a row built in Willenhall on a colliery which had been derelict since the 19th century (HBL5037); and (*bottom*) a row of small terraced houses built over an area of old coal shafts in Brierley Hill next to the Stourbridge canal (HBL7883).

mixed small semis and terraces, whereas the equivalent proportion on agricultural land was less than a third.

Although the data available to the BCHLC did not make it possible to distinguish directly between Council-built and private estates, we can speculate that many of these estates of clustered terraces and semis were municipal housing.

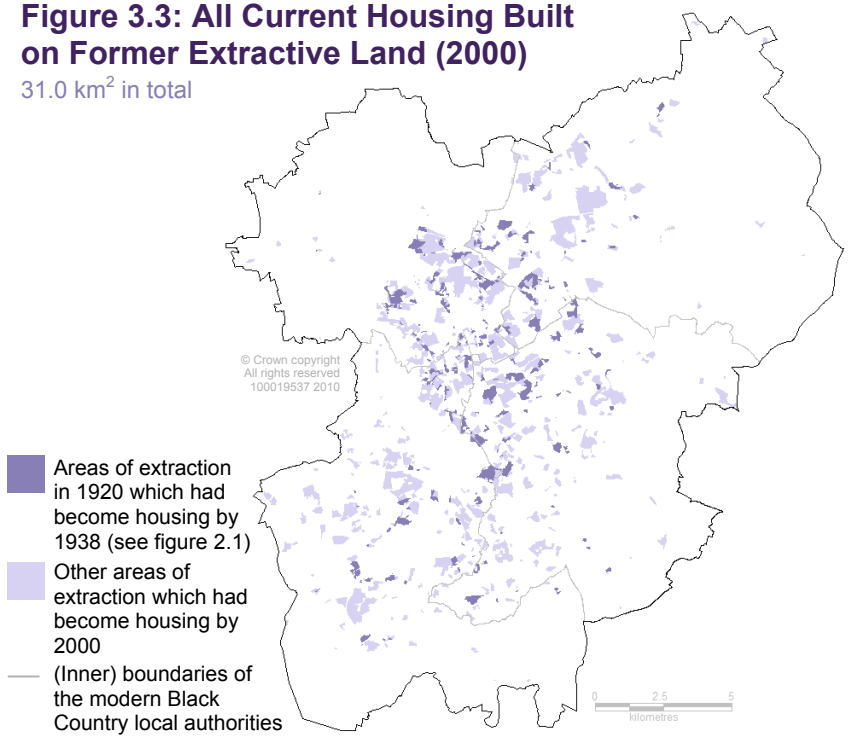
But there were other differences aside from the size and form of the buildings themselves. For example, the plot sizes were also generally smaller: on former mining land, almost three fifths were estimated to be less than 250m^2 —whereas on agricultural land the proportion of properties which fell into this category was only a quarter.

So, although it would be difficult to say that these neighbourhoods owe their character directly to the fact that they were built over old mines and quarries, their form and size probably derive from factors such as lack of available space and the social class of the people they were intended to accommodate. The possibility of there being difficulties in planning large residential areas right at the congested centre of the historic Black Country is clear, while there was also a need to provide affordable housing for families who may have relied on unskilled trades in the coal and iron industries for example.

Whatever the driving force behind the trend, the use of derelict extractive sites as the location for new residential neighbourhoods, like other aspects of the area's suburbanisation, continued after the Second World War. As illustration of this point, Figure 3.3 shows that the re-use of mining land to provide new areas of housing, which started in earnest in the interwar years, went on to become a more widespread feature of the Black Country suburbs.

Figure 3.3: All Current Housing Built on Former Extractive Land (2000)

31.0 km^2 in total



3.3 EVOLVING SUBURBAN STREET PATTERNS

Over the course of the late 19th and 20th centuries the process of suburbanisation, shaped as it has been by different pressures in different places, has left its legacy in the nature of the housing stock of the Black Country. But it is also responsible for the relationship of houses and flats to each other and to the streets which tie them together. The shape of local streets says something about both the history of the area and the social trends which informed the thinking about their design.

Figure 3.5 illustrates five broad types of residential street pattern visible in the Black Country landscape. It is possible to argue that the evolution of their design has been both a response to, and an influence on, other aspects of the way society in the area

Table 3.1: Cul-de-sacs in Black Country Street Patterns

Period of Origin	Proportion (by number) of housing areas with cul-de-sacs (a)	Proportion (by number) of housing polygons with multi-headed cul-de-sacs (a)
Pre 1900	3%	0%
Interwar	18%	0%
Immediate post-war	34%	0%
1960s & 1970s	53%	1%
Late 20th century	69%	11%

Note (a): This refers to areas of the modern landscape (i.e. in 2000) which are classified as settlement by the BCHLC and which contain at least one cul-de-sac (or, in the case of the third column of the table, a multi-headed cul-de-sac). It does not exclude the possibility that a small number of these cul-de-sacs have been added as amendments to an original street pattern.

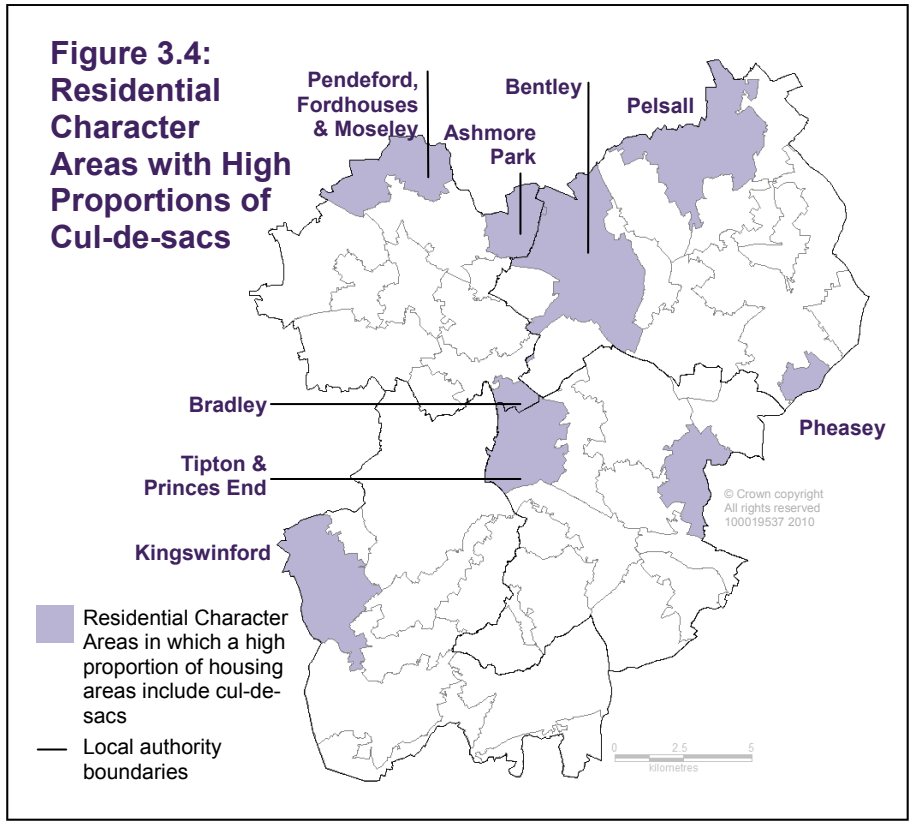
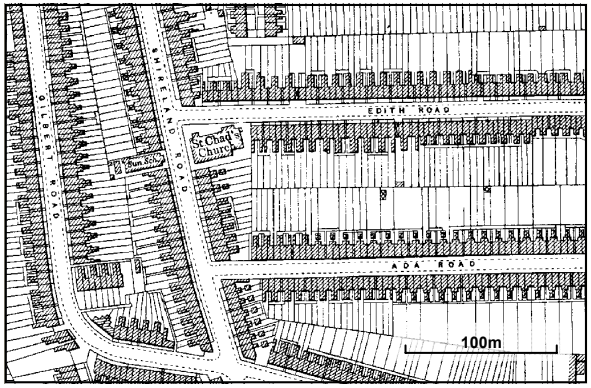


Figure 3.5: Street Patterns Typical of Different Periods of Black Country Suburbanisation

has developed. The growth of car ownership, for example, has influenced planners and developers to take account of the additional space needed for hard standing or garages, together with vehicular access to the rear of properties for example. But where pedestrian routes may have been overlooked (or indeed deliberately discouraged) in the design of neighbourhoods, street layout has also contributed to the need to use cars.

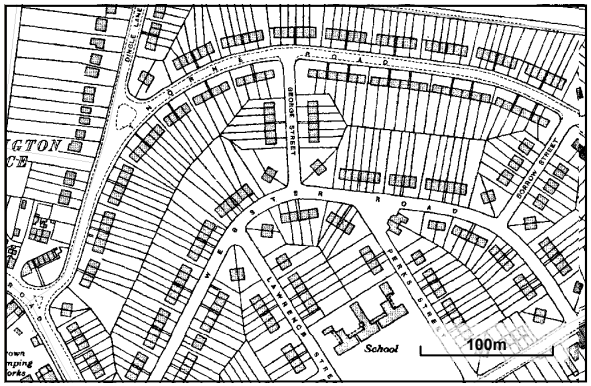
One trend which is visible in the evolution of suburban street patterns is the move away from layouts which form a permeable network allowing easy through-access (such as those visible from the late Victorian) to designs which reduce the number of access routes to groups of properties. A common expression of the latter ideal in the Black Country is the cul-de-sac, a layout which of course only allows one way in and the same way out. In mid-20th century designs these were only incorporated into a minority of layouts but, by the end of the century, they had not only become the norm but they had become 'multi-headed', increasing further the number of properties relying on a single access route.

Table 3.1, based on BCHLC data, allows us to plot the inexorable rise of the cul-de-sac in the Black Country's residential streets. We can also see that particular parts of the study area are host to concentrations of street designs which use cul-de-sacs as a feature of their layout. Given what we know about the sequence of housing construction in the area (illustrated by the maps in Figure 2.1), and that new housing is often in the new suburbs at the edge of the study area, it is not surprising that most cul-de-sacs are around the periphery of the Black Country. So Bentley in the



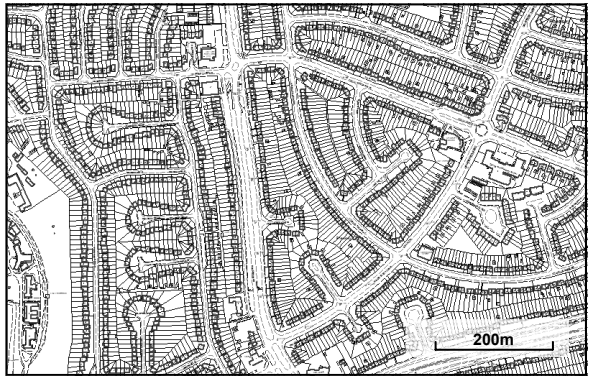
Late Victorian

Characterised by: Straight streets of (often) terraced housing in many cases forming a 'grid iron' pattern. No cul-de-sacs. Houses built with little or no set-back and right up to street corners (this particular plan is taken from the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map of Cape Hill).



Interwar

Characterised by: Fewer straight streets than 19th century patterns, and often incorporating geometric shapes such as circles, ovals and ellipses. Few if any cul-de-sacs. Street junctions often designed to be more open and rounded or flared (this particular plan is taken from the 4th Edition Ordnance Survey map of Willenhall).

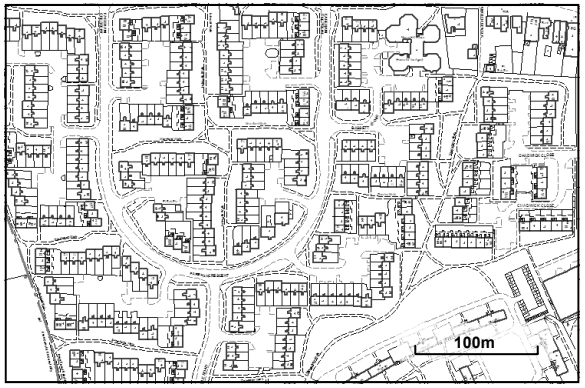


Immediate Post-war

Characterised by: Frequent use of curved streets connecting (usually straight) cul-de-sacs, the latter being used in greater numbers than during the interwar period. As in that case, street corners are rounded and open (this particular plan is taken from the 2000 Ordnance Survey *Land -line* map of Pheasey. *© Crown copyright. All rights reserved 100019537 2010*).

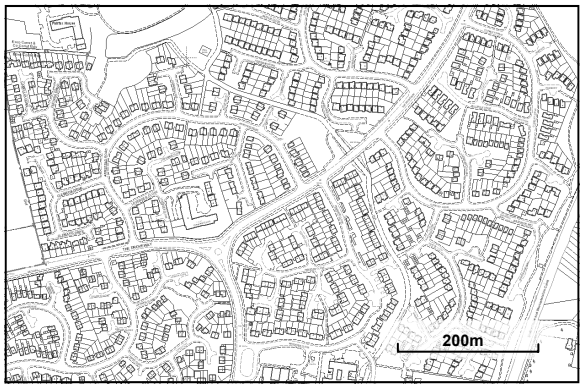
1960 to 1980

Characterised by: Straight streets with long rounded corners linking cul-de-sacs. Frequently separates pedestrian access to house fronts from vehicular access to rear parking or garages (this particular plan is taken from the 2000 Ordnance Survey *Land-line* map of Merry Hill, Wolverhampton. *© Crown copyright. All rights reserved 100019537 2010*).



Late 20th Century

Characterised by: Irregular curved streets with very frequent use of curved, often multi-headed cul-de-sacs. Greater use of long crescents with more properties dependent on fewer access points (this plan taken from the 2000 Ordnance Survey *Land-line* map of Pendeford. *© Crown copyright. All rights reserved 100019537 2010*).



Hybrid Forms

Characterised by: Alterations to original patterns, here illustrated by post war changes to the first street layouts. Specifically, cul-de-sacs added to an interwar pattern (left) and a late Victorian layout (right) (these plans taken from the 2000 Ordnance Survey *Land-line* map of Brierley Hill and Cradley Heath. *© Crown copyright. All rights reserved 100019537 2010*).

north, Halesowen and Stourbridge in the south, Kingswinford in the south west, and Wolverhampton's outer western suburbs are all among these*.

If we look at the *proportion* of neighbourhoods in each area which have cul-de-sacs we get a slightly different pattern (Figure 3.4). Some of the same peripheral suburbs feature again but, perhaps more unexpectedly, two character areas in the centre of the Black Country (*Bradley* and *Tipton & Princes End*) are, for their size, also host to a relatively high occurrence of cul-de-sacs. This is possibly the result of the combination of both late 20th century house construction (built on former industrial sites) and inter war developments. The latter may have used cul-de-sacs as a response to the challenge of providing housing within a landscape which was divided into small irregular parcels of land by a dense network of railways and canals.

We started this section looking at the vital role which one period, the interwar years, played in the story of the modern Black Country. This was not only because this particular era saw unprecedented change, but also because it has left us so much. In relative terms, all but a few of the houses and streets built in the interwar period survived the 70 years which followed the outbreak of WW2, and were therefore recorded by the BCHLC as being part of the landscape at the turn of the millennium.

We now turn our attention to what survives from other periods of the area's history, in particular from the era which gave the Black Country its popular identity.

Above: An interwar cul-de-sac in Stourbridge, part of a single development of several hundred homes built over former agricultural land and fireclay mines (HBL1892).

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*These character areas are profiled in more detail in the following sections of *The Black Country: An Historic Landscape Characterisation*:
Dudley Character Areas:
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/arch-939-1/dissemination/pdf/BCHLC_Sections5_Dudley.pdf
Sandwell Character Areas:
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/arch-939-1/dissemination/pdf/BCHLC_Sections5_Sandwell.pdf
Walsall Character Areas:
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/arch-939-1/dissemination/pdf/BCHLC_Sections5_Walsall.pdf
Wolverhampton Character Areas:
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/arch-939-1/dissemination/pdf/BCHLC_Sections5_Wolverhampton.pdf

4. The Legacy of the Defining Period

4.1 SURVIVALS: 1840 ONWARDS

We have seen in Section 3 that interwar residential suburbs are still very much represented in the landscape of the 21st century. Beyond this example, however, the BCHLC allows us to put together a more systematic overview of how well or otherwise different landscape phases are represented in the modern fabric of the area. It also allows us to start to consider which *characteristic* features can still be seen, and which have survived less well.

Figure 4.1 illustrates some typical examples of landscape features from each of the phases discussed in Section 2 which still survive within the Black Country. Not surprisingly, direct survivals from the period before 1840 contribute a relatively small amount to the physical environment of the 21st century (by area, less than 3%). However, among the features which do originate from this period are canals and reservoirs, parts of historic settlement cores, parkland and church buildings.

It is noticeable that the built environment of the middle 19th century appears to have survived relatively poorly, when compared for example to that of the subsequent 15 years up to 1900 which contributes more than 10 times the area in the modern landscape (Table 4.1). However, much of the disappearance of the mid-Victorian landscape is accounted for by the re-use of former extractive land and structures.

Despite processes of demolition or re-use of land the built environment of the years 1840 to 1885 has left us railways and significant industrial buildings, as well as parks, churches and cemeteries.

Figure 4.1: Surviving Examples of Landscape Phases

-1840


Titford canal, surviving from the early c19 (left), and the late c18 growth of Wolverhampton, represented by King Street (right).

1841-1885


A bridge over the former Great Western Railway (left), and surviving buildings from the Chance Glassworks (right).

1886-1900


Small 'tunnel back' terraces in Smethwick which typify the late c19 (left), and surviving industrial buildings in Stourbridge (right).

1901-1920


Open land in Bradley, the legacy of former mining activity (left), and early c20 housing in Willenhall (right).

1921-1938


Interwar semi-detached housing in Warley (left), and industrial buildings on the Bilston Road, Wolverhampton (right).

1939-2000


Part of the Pensnett Industrial Estate, built on a colliery site (right), and post war suburbs at Quarry Bank (right).

Relatively little housing survives from before the late 19th century, but the last decades of the Victorian period are represented most commonly today by streets of terraced homes from that period, a feature discussed in more detail later in this section.

Moving to the 20th century, we can see that the period before the WW1 also contributed large areas of housing, as well as open land (the legacy of mining, discussed in the previous section), and some significant facilities devoted to newly expanded leisure activity (golf clubs, other sports grounds and public parks). Lastly, the remainder of the 20th century has given us most of our remaining housing and industry.

This represents only a sketch of the legacy which has been left by the change in landscape. We now devote some time to considering two examples of the themes on which BCHLC data can shed light: the legacy of industrial specialisation; and the clearance and renewal of Black Country housing.

Table 4.1: Non-agricultural* Landscape Surviving in 2000

Period of Origin	**Estimated area of landscape surviving from the end of that period** (hectares)	**Minimum Age in 2000** (years)	**Proportion of the non-agricultural landscape in 2000 which this represents**
Before 1840	827	160	2.8%
1841-1885	141	115	0.5%
1886-1900	1,474	100	5.0%
1901-1920	1,206	80	4.1%
1921-1938	6,197	62	21.1%
1938-2000	19,557	0	66.5%

*This table excludes field systems, woodland, and ancient unenclosed pasture

4.2 INDUSTRIAL SPECIALISATION

Among the particular characteristics of local manufacturing often referred to by historians is the specialisation of Black Country towns in the production of particular goods.

A pattern of concentrated, interdependent production was not in itself unique to the Black Country—it is one which is shared by many other industrialised areas at different points in time. It is nevertheless a defining characteristic of the Black Country, surviving until at least the second half of the 20th century.

The geographic distribution of industrial sites recorded by the BCHLC (which, in turn, takes its evidence from the references to trades marked on historical maps) illustrates the particular pattern of industrial specialisation. Figure 4.2 shows the incidence of factories or works within five sectors, the locations of which have been recorded in the BCHLC data (albeit for any one or more of a number of different periods). These five trades are not necessarily the most common in the area overall, but they are industries which can be shown to cluster in particular locations. In this respect they have given an individual and distinct character to different towns within the Black Country.

The map in Figure 4.2 shows a pattern which is, at least in general terms, well-documented elsewhere: chain making in Cradley Heath; glassmaking in

Left: Chain making became a specialism of the area around Cradley Heath: data collected by the BCHLC suggests at least a handful of sites may still retain buildings from the period of chain production.

Figure 4.2: Manufacturing Specialisms in Black Country Towns

Selected Industrial Sites, as recorded by the Black Country HLC

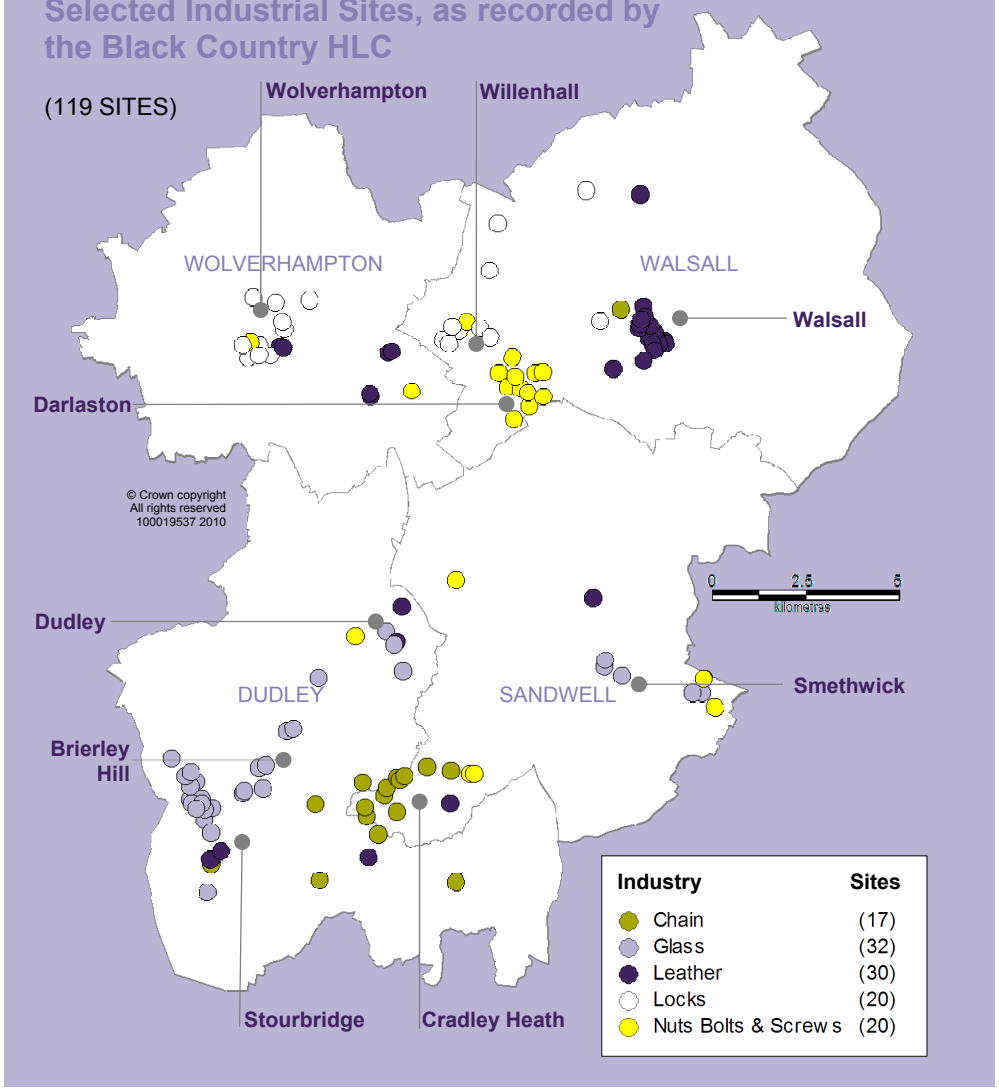
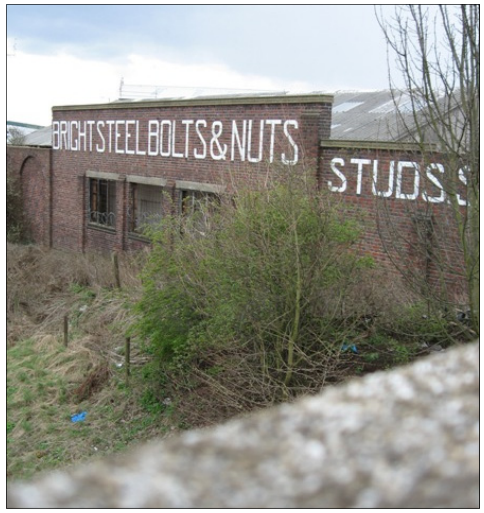


Table 4.2: Survival Rate (in 2000) of Selected Industrial Sites

Specialism	Sites noted	For which….. BCHLC suggests probable demolition of buildings	BCHLC suggests possible survival of buildings	Other sites	Maximum possible survival rate
Chain*	17	10	7	0	41%
Glass	32	23	7	2	22%
Leather	30	17	12	1	40%
Locks	20	9	9	2	45%
Nuts/bolts*	20	7	12	1	60%
Total	**119**	**66**	**47**	**6**	**39%**

*In general sites were identified by the classification of the current or previous land use, or through the text associated with its HLC record. However neither chain nor nut/bolt works were classified separately, so sites were only identified from associated text.



Left: One of a number of buildings of nut and bolt manufacturers surviving in Darlaston (HBL6302).

Stourbridge, Brierley Hill and Smethwick; leather working in Walsall; lock making in Wolverhampton and Willenhall; and nut and bolt manufacture in Darlaston.

These specialisms arose during the industrial revolution and, as a result, some of them mean very little in terms of the modern, 21st century economy of the area. Nevertheless each undoubtedly left a legacy, whether this was social (for example the skills and experience of local people), industrial (the persistence of related manufacturing trades), or in the remaining buildings and structures.

Unfortunately only the latter is within our remit here. However, the BCHLC does allow us to start to examine the extent of survival of buildings and structures—whether they are still in use for the purpose for which they were originally constructed, or whether they have become derelict, reused, or incorporated into new construction.

A first examination of the modern character of the sites shown on the map in Figure 4.2 indicates that it is likely that, based on map evidence and aerial photography alone, most buildings from the relevant period have since been demolished. At least two in every three locations do not appear to retain any buildings from the era in which their industrial specialism was recorded (Table 4.2).

More positively however, more than a third might retain structures or parts of structures from these character-defining industries. The fact that these minority survivals might now be the sole representatives of such an important phase in the landscape supports further research into possibilities for designation and protection. The wide scope of the BCHLC data provides a starting point for such an overview of the remaining industrial heritage*.

*It is expected that a wider review of this heritage of the Black Country (based on the black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation) will be published in 2010.

4.3 HOMES & STREETS

As we have seen from Section 2, the Black Country landscape in 2000 included a greater expanse of residential streets than at any time in its previous history. But the growth of housing to this point was not a simple, straightforward one. Instead, the pattern has included a number of different trends:

- the spread of new suburbs over agricultural or extractive land;
- the loss of residential areas to other uses;
- new housing directly replacing older forms of accommodation.

Table 4.3: Change in the Area of Housing

Type	Area (km^2)	% of Black Country	Number of BCHLC Records
Lost residential areas	20.4	6%	1,545
Remaining residential areas (2000)	168.7	47%	7,490
of which, replaced residential areas	24.7	7%	2,346

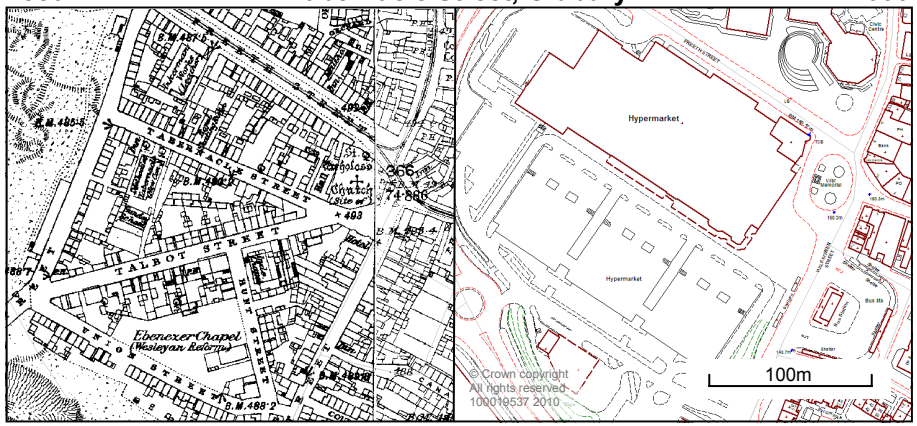
Figure 4.3: Examples of Lost Residential Areas

(a) Housing demolished, surviving street pattern

1911 **Frederick Street, Walsall** **2000**

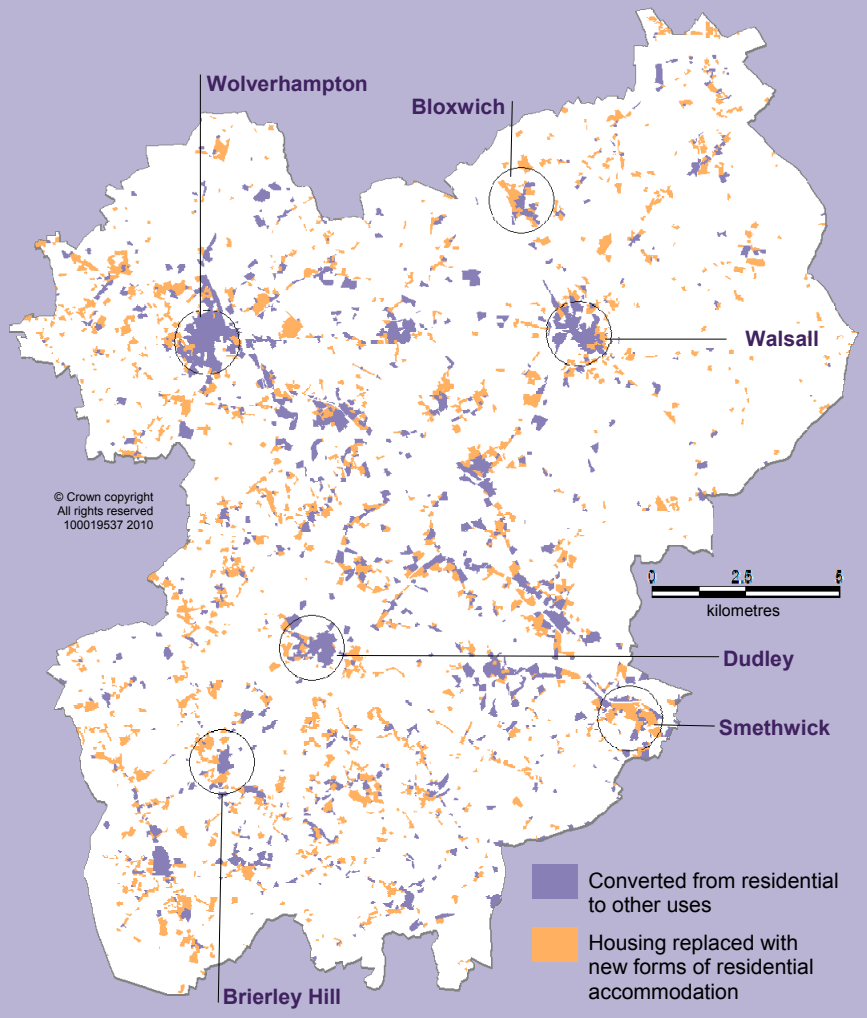
(b) Housing demolished, street pattern removed

1880 **Tabernacle Street, Oldbury** **2000**



Right: Two examples of housing being replaced in the Black Country. In the two maps shown in top half of this figure, terraced housing in Walsall (left) is replaced by industrial units (right), while the straight 19th century street pattern survives in the new landscape. The maps shown in the bottom half show the removal of both terraced housing and its associated street patterns (left), ultimately superseded by a hypermarket in the centre of Oldbury (right).

Figure 4.4: Lost Residential Areas & Replaced Housing



We have already illustrated the first of these, so we can now turn to the latter two. Table 4.3 uses the BCHLC to illustrate the prevalence of these types of change. Since the vast majority of the housing remaining in 2000 does not fall into the category of 'replaced residential areas', these figures confirm that most of the Black Country's remaining housing is in areas which have never previously been used for residential purposes.

Even within the categories of Table 4.3, however, there are complications. The phrase 'lost residential areas' for example refers, in this context, to more than one type of change. Housing itself may have been demolished leaving a surviving street layout (illustrated by the two maps of the same area in Figure 4.3 a) or, alternatively, both housing and street patterns may have been erased (Figure 4.3 b).

Returning to the difference between areas which have moved out of residential use compared with those in which housing has been renewed, we can see the pattern of these two scenarios in Figure 4.4.

Comparing these distributions with the location of the modern town centres we can see that the 21st century commercial and administrative cores of Wolverhampton, Walsall and Dudley, for example, feature prominently in the areas which were previously residential but now have other functions. The balance in other town centres, such as Bloxwich, Smethwick and Brierley Hill for example, has been more towards the *renewal* of housing. It may not be a coincidence that the former have until recently been the three largest commercial centres in the area: the expansion of these larger towns as retail centres has been at the expense of residential accommodation in their centres.

Overall, more than 40 km^2 of housing has been demolished. Given the extent of this change, we might justifiably ask what kind of housing has disappeared?

Among that which has now gone, the most common single type to have been superseded has been terraced housing, accounting for more than a quarter of the total area of 'lost' or replaced settlement. Among these demolished terraces, the most common narrow type is that representing the housing visible on the First Edition Ordnance Survey maps of the 1880s, and therefore which originated in the mid 19th century or earlier.

4.4 MID VICTORIAN TERRACED HOUSING

We have established earlier in this report that the Black Country had already acquired both its name and its classic landscape by the mid 19th century. So it follows that the housing of that period will always be associated with the local economic activity which established the reputation and identity of the area. Hence it is no accident that the Black Country Living Museum, in recreating an trip-back-in-time for its visitors, chose to centre it on a reconstructed 'Victorian village'.

In the public imagination Victorian terraces are therefore, like canals, mines, and iron working, part of the typical fabric of the area.

In fact, in the present day, outside of museums, they represent little of the modern fabric of the surviving built environment. What does survive is not only small compared to the present day stock of housing, but also compared to that which previously existed in the mid Victorian period.

Table 4.4 shows estimates of relative survival rates at the end of the 20th century. It indicates that only about a fifth of the total built still exists, but also that this surviving stock is not evenly distributed. The modern area of Sandwell originally contained the largest number of this type of property of the four districts, but relatively little remains today. Alternatively, in Dudley more than half of the original stock has been retained.

Table 4.4:
Survival of Pre-1880 Terraced Housing by Local Authority

Local Authority	Area of lost pre-1880 terraced housing (km^2)	Area of current pre-1880 terraced housing (km^2)	Total	Survival rate of terraced housing (i.e. current/ total)
Dudley	2.9	1.5	4.4	52%
Walsall	3.0	0.7	3.7	22%
Wolverhampton	4.1	0.5	4.6	12%
Sandwell	5.9	0.4	6.3	7%
Total Study Area	15.9	3.1	19.0	19%

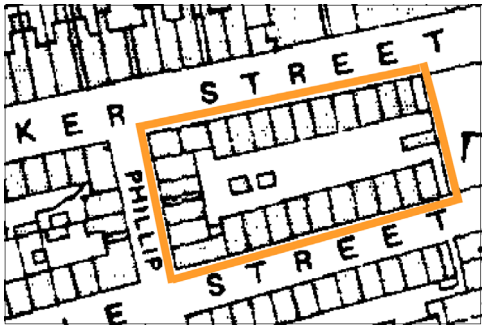
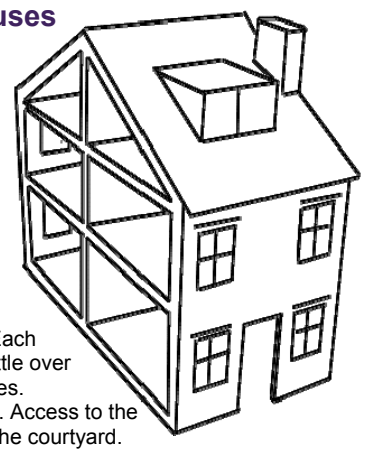


Figure 4.5: Back-to-Back Houses



Above: The plan of former back-to-back houses around a courtyard in Wolverhampton off Dale Street (HBL2178). Each building in the block highlighted here has a footprint of a little over 6m by 3m, which would have been shared by two properties.
Right: The schematic form of two back-to-back properties. Access to the property at the rear being through a narrow alleyway into the courtyard.

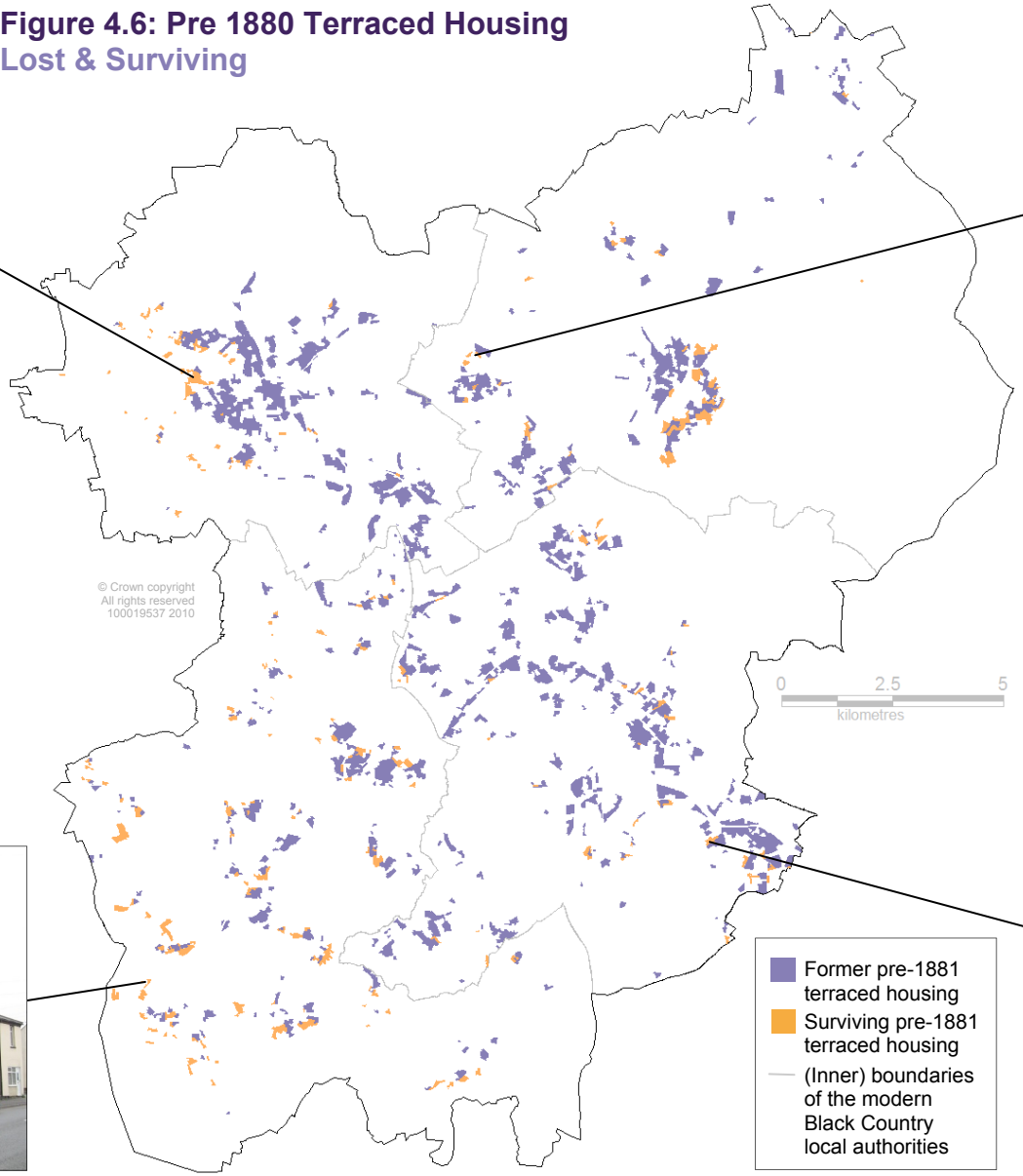
The map in Figure 4.6 illustrates this distribution in more detail. It shows that what survives is concentrated in the less central parts of the study area: in Kingswinford and Stourbridge in the south west, the western suburbs of Wolverhampton and in a arc around the east of Walsall town centre.

Around the map are photographs of four examples of surviving terraced houses from the period. Clearly, one probability is that, in general, those properties which survive are of a different quality to those which have disappeared. We know that much of the housing of the period would have been of poor quality, and much of it would have been in the form of the back-to-backs illustrated in Figure 4.5. This type was subject to the slum clearances of town centres such as Wolverhampton, Smethwick and West Bromwich which contributed to the pattern of loss and survival in Table 4.4.

Figure 4.6: Pre 1880 Terraced Housing
Lost & Surviving

Oakland Terrace, on Tettenhall Road in Wolverhampton. Probably originating in the mid 1800s, these houses were built on fields to the west of the city (HBL3350).

These terraced houses on St. Anne's Road, Willenhall were built on agricultural land sometime between 1820 and 1880 (HBL5073).



These terraces on Wollaston High Street probably originate from the mid 19th century and may have been built over settlement which was part of the medieval town (HBL7803).

Some of the oldest surviving housing in Smethwick, these properties were built in the 1850s on enclosed fields (HBL12199).

5. Using Historic Landscape Characterisation Data

5.1 APPLICATIONS OF HLC

Many of the applications of HLC are concerned with managing future change in the landscape. In this sense HLC is a tool to inform the actions of government agencies which have the role of regulating or promoting change. Moreover, it provides something other management information often lacks: an ability to show that the modern environment is one which is inherited from successive changes in the past.

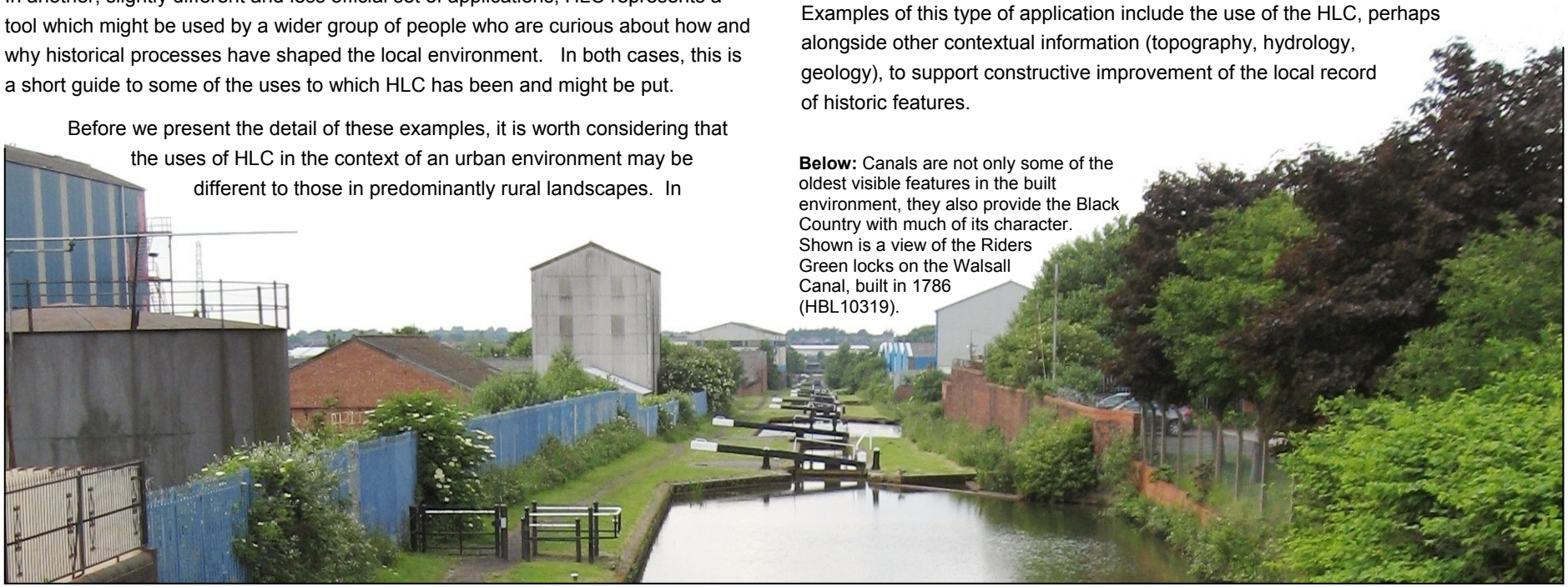
In another, slightly different and less official set of applications, HLC represents a tool which might be used by a wider group of people who are curious about how and why historical processes have shaped the local environment. In both cases, this is a short guide to some of the uses to which HLC has been and might be put.

Before we present the detail of these examples, it is worth considering that the uses of HLC in the context of an urban environment may be different to those in predominantly rural landscapes. In particular, using HLC to inform those approaches to land management which apply specifically in the English countryside (for example Landscape Character Assessments or agri-environmental or countryside stewardship schemes) will not generally be applicable in urban areas like the Black Country. However, there are also applications of HLC in an urban setting (some of which are detailed below) for which the approach has not been useful in its rural form.

5.2 MANAGING CHANGE IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

The first group of applications of HLC relate to the task of managing what is known as the 'historic environment resource', a reference both to the stock of 'protected' heritage assets (i.e. listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments, registered parks etc.) and important features or sites which may not yet be protected.

Examples of this type of application include the use of the HLC, perhaps alongside other contextual information (topography, hydrology, geology), to support constructive improvement of the local record of historic features.



Below: Canals are not only some of the oldest visible features in the built environment, they also provide the Black Country with much of its character. Shown is a view of the Riders Green locks on the Walsall Canal, built in 1786 (HBL10319).

Left: Examples of past prosperity survive in what are now areas in need of regeneration. The building used by Lodge Primary School in West Bromwich is Grade 2 listed and was built in 1903 (HBL12549).

The creation of what have been termed 'Historic Environment Character Zones' or HECZs by West Berkshire Council is an example of this*. The purpose of HECZs is 'to provide a more comprehensive account of the historic environment resource that will enable the… historic features of the district to be better understood and better cared for'. Along the same lines, but in the context of a search for hidden, below-ground features, it is possible to use HLC to inform predictive modelling of where as yet undiscovered archaeology might be.

*More details of West Berkshire Council's use of Historic Landscape Characterisation is at: www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=13297

Another process which uses characterisation to extend the existing legal protection (as well as to give that protection which exists a systematic base of evidence) is illustrated by a recent study in London. A Borough-wide characterisation of Enfield was used as a background for more detailed studies and these, in turn, resulted in the designation of four new conservation areas*. Closer to home, there are also similarities here to the way in which Dudley Council has used the results of characterisation to extend the proportion of the Borough covered by conservation areas**.

As well as reviewing or extending existing protection of heritage assets, HLC can also be used to model their sensitivity to change. This can be especially important when it is necessary to select sites for the expansion of housing, for example. The use of the Shropshire county HLC results to inform an analysis of Shrewsbury growth points has been one example of such an approach in the West Midlands.

The Black Country HLC has already been used as part of the base of information available to studies of narrower geographic areas of expected regeneration***.

Beyond a focus on the historic environment resource, HLC has a number of potential roles in the wider process of spatial planning in urban environments. In the context of local government's obligations to produce local development frameworks under current planning legislation, characterisation can inform the strategic planning function. this has already been the case in the Black Country, where the HLC is

*_The Enfield Characterisation Study_ can be downloaded from: www.enfield.gov.uk/info/511/planning-conservation_areas/201/characterisation_study, while the way in which it has been used is described on page 17 of English Heritage's _Conservation Bulletin_, 62, available from: www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/Con_Bull_62pp13-23.pdf?1260357039.

**More details of Dudley Council's use of Historic Landscape Characterisation can be found at: www.dudley.gov.uk/environment--planning/planning/historic-environment/historic-landscape-characterisation-hlc

***These include: Wessex Archaeology's study 'All Saint's and Blakenhall Community Development Area Detailed Historic Landscape Characterisation' in 2005; 'A Landscape Character Framework for the Black Country Regeneration Corridors' in 2009 (available from www.blackcountryobservatory.co.uk/researchdetails.asp?id=940; and CgMs' three characterisation studies of Wolverhampton Area Action Plan Areas in 2009.

cited as evidence in the drafting of policies within the Joint Core Strategy on the area's historic character and distinctiveness*. Paralleling the way HLC has been used to assist the identification of the particular distinctiveness of the Black Country, the Enfield characterisation study mentioned above also lists the local urban environment's 'distinguishing characteristics'.

At a more detail, site-specific level, HLC can also have role in the consideration of individual planning applications. In particular, it can help assess whether a proposal is consistent with the character of an area and therefore whether it is appropriate or not in the context. this goes beyond simple questions of the preservation of a specific architectural style: rather, HLC can assist a deeper analysis of the extent to which an area might already have a mixed character for example, or look at a wider arrangements of street pattern, plot size etc., putting all of these questions in the context of systematic evidence of their geographic distribution. In this way any contested application can be reviewed in a more rational way.

Particular to an urban context, historic landscape characterisation has the potential to be a huge resource for urban designers. The HLC already contains several categories of information about the townscape which would help ensure that new development takes account of the existing aesthetic and functionality of the fabric of the area. But again, it brings a particular ability to inject any discussion about urban design with information on a locality's historical role and changing development.

Lastly in this section and on a question which has a particular relevance in an industrial area such as the Black Country is the problem of how to respond to the question of contaminated land. Local authorities in the UK have responsibilities to assess, regulate and in some case remedy land which has been contaminated by historical industrial activity for example. By allowing a systematic evaluation of historical land use, HLC has a potential role in informing these responsibilities.

Black Country Core Strategy Publication Document Part 2, available from: http://blackcountrycorestrategy.dudley.gov.uk/latest.

Right: On its construction in 2006, the Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple near Oldbury was said to be the largest Hindu Temple in Europe (HBL11434)

5.3 RESEARCH & EDUCATION

As already mentioned, beyond its role in managing change HLC has the potential for a wider contribution to the process of investigation and teaching of landscape history. This potential lies both in the informal process of learning and awareness-raising, as well as in more formal, academic and professional research environments.

In the case of the latter, a range of research projects in academic disciplines such as ecology, social/economic history, historical geography, geology, architecture and design could potentially benefit from the use of HLC data. One example in the Birmingham and Black Country conurbation might be the use of HLC to better

Left: Both these terraced houses and the 19th century street pattern around which they were built will disappear in the current phase of redevelopment of the centre of West Bromwich (HBL12548).

understand the environmental conditions which have led to the particular distribution of flora in the urban area.

In terms of education, the results of HLC have the ability to make questions of heritage more accessible to a wider audience. This is particularly the case because HLC is based on the premise that every part of the landscape, however ordinary, every-day or degraded it might seem at the moment, has a story worth telling.

An example from Merseyside was the use of the HLC to support a 'big screen' event in a Liverpool shopping centre as part of the local Heritage Open Days. This allowed shoppers to give an archaeologist their postcode and then see successive historic maps displayed on a giant screen to show how their street had developed. In this way people who took the opportunity were allowed to see that their own locality was part of a wider story which had its own importance.

Although not an HLC project as such, another innovative approach in the urban landscape of Salford used many of the elements of HLC to involve a community in thinking about its local heritage. 'Mapping the Streets' was designed by artists and enlisted school students and residents in a participative project to recreate the story of street patterns in their area*.

Of course there is a relationship between these approaches to wider education and awareness-raising on the one hand and Local Authorities' role in managing change on the other. In so far as government aspires for meaningful consultation with a wider set of residents' views, the fulfilment of this aspiration depends on how involved residents themselves feel in the story of their part of the urban environment. HLC used as an educational tool has the potential to contribute to that sense of involvement.

5.4 ACCESSING THE HLC DATA FOR THE BLACK COUNTRY

The interpretation of what the HLC tells us about the Black Country can be found in the reports of the project. These are available (free of charge) to download from the website of the *Archaeology Data Service*** (ADS), or as paper documents from the Black Country Archaeology Services (contact details are on the back cover of this report; there may be a fee to cover costs).

At the expected end of the project in 2010 it is intended that the data on which the reports are based will also be made accessible to a wider audience. Availability will be restricted to non commercial purposes, but will otherwise allow the HLC data (held in the form of a single layer which can be read by any Geographical Information System, together with a relational database) from the ADS website.

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*The Mapping the Streets project is described at:
www.archweek.co.uk/education/mappingthestreets.asp
**The *Archaeology Data Service* website is at:
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/archive/blackcountry_hlc_2009/

6. Conclusions

This report has used Historic Landscape Characterisation as a tool to explore distinctive development of the sub-region. In the event, our investigation has highlighted the extraordinary story of the Black Country as it is shown in the changing fabric of the area.

This story is characterised by the slow development of mining and industry before the arrival of the canals and then, in the later 18th and 19th centuries, an explosion of activity and associated prosperity for a few. Mineral extraction in particular left a huge legacy in the landscape and, as it drew to a close in the first half of the 20th century, a vast reconstruction project faced the planners and designers, many of whom were employed by the fragmented network of local government.

Alongside disused mines there were other legacies such as civic buildings, municipal parks, industrial buildings and structures, workers housing (largely since replaced) and the homes of factory owners and industrialists. Patterns in the landscape, most notably the polycentric structure of settlement cores, also left their mark at a larger scale. Last but by no means least the canals, perhaps the most dense network of artificial waterways in the country, survived beyond the period of their industrial use, albeit in a reduced form.

In the popular imagination, the structure of the landscape in the 19th century gave the area its enduring character. It also provided a common experience which united the multiple Black Country localities (still divided between four local authorities). But in the conclusions of our first report we drew attention to the difference between what might be a commonly held mental image of the Black Country and the type of landscape which we find in the area today:

> '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'

Above: This building which survives from the 19th century is close to the centre of Wednesbury, an important centre of mining and industry in the early experience of the Black Country. It is within a Conservation Area, itself unusual in being located within the Black Country proper (HBL10319).

What we have seen in fact is that, in one sense, suburbanisation is the veil thrown over the older, classic black country landscape.

It is an argument commonly made that the best preserved buildings and landscapes are those which lose their economic dynamism: changes to the landscape are often the result of wholesale adaptations to new uses. Other landscapes of the industrial revolution in England are in some case better preserved because they fell out of use, but in the case of the Black Country the area moved on from its 19th century function to fulfil an important role in the 20th century, based on new forms of housing and new industrial locations.

So, while suburbanisation is a veil covering the evidence of the industrial revolution, it also represents a phase of development in its own right and with its own particular traits. The 20th century suburbs hide character, but they also have character themselves, albeit varying in quality from place to place.

For this reason among others an all-encompassing characterisation is an important tool in the understanding and protection of the heritage of the Black Country. The designation of listed buildings and conservation areas for example has been concentrated in the historic settlement centres: characterisation provides a way of taking into account the landscape beyond and between the centres.

Moreover, it provides a way of understanding the legacy of the Black Country as a single landscape, not simply as a number of important structures which happen to be clustered in one region, but an interdependent network of extraction, industry, domestic accommodation, education and leisure facilities, and transport infrastructure.

One other noticeable trend is that the pattern of legal protection for built heritage which does exist within the four authorities tends to be outside the 'Black County proper'. Again, characterisation provides a possible antidote to this: a way of articulating the experience of a landscape of frequent change but one which has nevertheless embedded itself in a persistent local identity*.

Above: The majority of the buildings which provided homes to people working in mines and factories of the Black Country of the 19th century disappeared in the 'slum clearance' which followed. In the second half of the 20th century high rise flats replaced back-to-back housing in this part of Great Bridge (HBL11544).

*Evidence of the persistence of this identity into the 21st century can be found at: www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/media/news/2009/august/blackcountry.html

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Appendix: Land Use by Historical Period*

Broad Category of Land Use:	Estimated Area of Land Use (in km^2) in ... 1775	1815	1840	1885	1900	1920	1938	2000
Commercial	0.2	0.6	0.8	3.4	3.6	3.6	4.3	9.3
Communications	0.7	2.5	3.1	10.2	10.5	10.7	10.8	10.7
Extractive	0.8	6.6	8.8	57.5	56.8	56.0	46.4	4.1
Field System	281.6	282.1	281.9	199.1	181.4	170.3	122.8	36.5
Industrial	0.6	3.5	3.9	19.2	21.7	21.4	26.3	39.6
Military	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.1
Open Land	45.2	21.3	17.6	5.6	6.7	9.6	11.0	21.4
Public Services	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.4	2.2	3.2	5.4	18.4
Recreational	8.9	9.9	9.2	9.2	12.9	15.8	22.0	34.8
Religious	0.2	0.3	0.4	2.2	2.6	2.8	3.1	4.4
Settlement	12.7	20.4	21.4	41.1	48.4	52.8	93.0	168.8
Utilities	0.7	1.2	1.1	1.6	3.8	4.0	4.9	3.3
Woodland	4.5	7.6	7.6	5.7	5.6	5.9	4.6	4.8

*The background to the production of these estimates, together with the maps of reconstructed landscapes in Figure 2.1 is outlined in more detail in a publication to accompany this report, '*Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation, Technical Appendix: Enhancing the Record of Previous Land Use*'.

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More details of the Black Country's programme to characterise the local historic landscape can be found at:
www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/hlc