

Minutes/Action Points from HLC Consultation Group meeting 16 Jan 2013

Present:

Oxfordshire County Council: Vicky Fletcher, Susan Lisk, Charlotte Malone, Dave Calver, Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale

English Heritage: Pete Herring, Roger Thomas

Districts: Phil Shaw, Grant Audley-Miller, Nick Dalby, Janice Bamsey, David Radford, Claire Mitchell, Rose Todd, Jamie Preston

AONBs: Emma Rouse, Colin White, Mark Connolly

Apologies: Paul Smith, George Lambrick, Stephen Mileson, Tom Sunley, Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, Steve Rodrick; Cllr Hibbert-Biles, Tom Flanagan

Stated interests in the Oxon HLC by the attendees:

- Input into Local Plans and development management
- Use of HLC in appeal process; is it recognized by planning inspector?
- Ensure Oxon HLC ties in with the one done for the Chilterns
- Landscape Assessment
- Ensure Local Plans have enough hooks to enable districts to use it
- Oxford's growth into outlying areas
- Site allocations within villages
- Impacts of strategic development on HLC
- Value of historic landscape

Pete's introduction:

- HLC started simultaneously as the European Landscape Convention
- HLC maps predominant types (like in biodiversity, geology, soils)
- HLC helps society evaluate and guide the form of change – assess sensitivity, vulnerability and capacity for change
- HLC in NPPF(National Planning Policy Framework) “responds to local character and history”
- Bigger areas of HLC are Landscape Character Assessment areas used in HEAPS (Historic Environment Archaeological Plans); these are produced by Emma R for the North Wessex Downs (NWD) and Cranborne Chase areas
- HLC helps to contextualize Historic Environment Record (HER) data, and can be used as a predictive tool (like geophysical survey)

Roger's talk:

- HLC useful on national, county or town level
- Urban HLC is more fine-grained than rural HLC, and can result in Landscape Character Assessments (as done in Oxford City)
- HLC is good basis for negotiating change

Charlotte's talk:

- Progress on Oxon HLC, now in pilot phase; just under 10,000ha in size and includes overlap with both NWD and Chilterns area, as well as Dorchester and Didcot
- Reanalysis of HLC data in AONB areas and Oxford City
- Key purposes of HLC

Discussion Session:

- Vicky opened with funding situation – all data collection, analysis and report writing covered by English Heritage funding; final phase of web development will need funds, possibly from OCC and districts, possibly external funding such as the Heritage Lottery
- Any parts of HLC to be shared before the 3 years are up?
Probably best to check with Susan
- Timing of completion is too late for current consultations on LDF, but in time for the next cycle of LDF/Local Plans
- Suggestion that strategic allocations next to green belt areas might be next to be looked at in the HLC sequence after the pilot stage and HS2 area; the reason being is that these areas have the greatest development pressure
- Another development pressure is found in small villages of a certain form – could these be prioritised to be looked at quickly?
- A suggestion was made that each district could identify priorities so that the HLC could be used as an evidence base; this was not thought to be workable as a scattergun approach; HLC can be valuable at the time of design so can be used 2-3 yrs down the line
- Mid or late February will be when Phase 1 will be completed, and reports will be distributed to all consultation members
- Emma R offered to share a short methodology document showing how HLC types can help inform planning decisions; this will be useful when the HER provides this data to consultants who will then use raw HLC data to maximum advantage, especially for time depth
- Pete H said that HLC has not been used in planning enquiries, because it is designed to be incorporated into an earlier stage;

planning enquiries need to be addressed by material evidence within Local plans /NPPF

- Bucks CC has used HLC as a sensitivity analysis within an appeal for Milton Keynes development
- Will district authorities have access to the database: Yes
- Can HLC help to identify sensitivity to change? *Sensitivity to change is not an inherent part of the HLC, but can be used to inform judgements, or investigate the effects of particular change/development scenarios*
- Can HLC be used as a constraint layer? Yes, but planners might need to do finer work to justify/explain their decisions
- What are the best ways to inform communities/other interested parties? Online access (see Black Country HLC online)
- Chilterns HLC has provided online access to reports (summary report in popular style) for “deepening” data on trackways/routes
- Cllr Lindsay-Gale asked why Oxon was at the end of the queue in HLC projects? Mainly because the county was not ready...
- How is interpretation done? Can be done by HLC project, but also by bottom-up approach if there are misunderstandings/errors; will set within HER, but it would be good to create an evolving process so that interpretations can change with input from communities
- How to take to the next level? Local policies should reference HLC on county level as less authority if done locally; information can ultimately be put into the HER

AONB discussion:

- Broad types are based on EH Thesaurus, not on work done in the AONB areas
- Complementary datasets will exist with a broader-level county HLC, and finer-grained HLCs in the AONBs and Oxford City; both county and AONBs need to refer to each other's HLC
- Copy of Cotswold AONB can be gotten via Gloucestershire CC; main work was done by Jon Hoyle

Overall Actions:

- Dave Calver to look into enclosed forum for discussion and dissemination of HLC documents within this group
- Emma Rouse to share her toolkit for interpretation of HLC data
- Minutes to be sent to consultation group members along with abridged copy of project design and Oxfordshire landscape