



SURREY HILLS AGLV REVIEW

by

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for

SPOA

Final report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The issue of the status of Local Landscape Designations (LLD's) has been highlighted by the recent advice issued by the government and embodied in PPS 7. This states that a landscape character assessment linked to criteria based policy approach should provide sufficient protection for these areas provided such designations are based on a formal and robust assessment of the qualities of the landscape concerned.

Against this background, Chris Burnett Associates (CBA) were commissioned to undertake a review of the Surrey AGLV by the Surrey Planning Officers Association. (SPOA)

The study commenced with a review of historic background. It established that the Surrey Hills AONB is closely linked with the designation of the AGLV. The first County Plan approved in 1958 showed the first AGLV area, which was a smaller area incorporating the North Downs escarpment and the area of Greensand Hills surrounding Leith Hill. The AONB designated in the same year incorporated the original AGLV area but was much larger including the Greensand Valleys, the whole of the Frensham / Devils Punch Bowl plateau and parts of the Wooded Weald. County Plan Reviews in 1971 and a second review of the AGLV in the early 1980s resulted in further areas being designated, effectively as extensions to the AONB boundary, which remain in place today.

A review of national background was also undertaken this revealed that Natural England had recently undertaken a nationwide review of the status and approach by Local Authorities towards LLD s in England. This revealed a number of key findings

- there was continued support for LLDs by many LA s due to uncertainty of alternative approaches
- LLD s are widely valued and understood
- LLD s are generally perceived to be successful in protecting areas of high landscape value.

They also found:

- LLDs do not facilitate appropriate development or enhancement
- They are not often justified by a robust evidence base
- They are not used as a primary reason for planning refusal
- A significant proportion of LAs (43%) were planning to use alternative approaches to LLDs in their LDF's.

The overall recommendation from this review was that Natural England should promote the use of landscape character assessment to underpin the formulation and application of criteria based policies (CBP s) in Local Development Frameworks. This should be the primary method for delivering the governments objective of providing for sustainable development in sensitive landscapes and at the same time protecting them from inappropriate development and enhancing local distinctiveness commensurately. Pilot studies were set up in three areas to take these recommendations forward. The linkage between landscape character assessment and criteria based policies is still therefore in embryonic form.

CBA also consulted all the planning authorities covered by the Surrey AGLV and found that views varied over the efficacy of the AGLV in landscape protection. Greenbelt was cited in most cases as being the overriding policy in terms of landscape protection. The parish councils were also consulted using a questionnaire. The results overwhelmingly recognized the importance of the AGLV and its role in protecting the landscape quality of each parish.

A small pilot exercise was undertaken within the AGLV involving desk study and targeted field work. This yielded a series of anomalies and inconsistencies in that there appeared to be little variation between the AONB and AGLV and, in some cases, between the AGLV and surrounding undesignated land. Strong links between the AONB and adjacent AGLV in terms of landscape character were also noted.

The desk review found that the original AGLV designation relied on outmoded landscape evaluation techniques. In recent years this has been replaced by landscape character assessment methodology which makes no judgement on landscape quality but aims to map those distinct characteristics that create a sense of place. Following discussions over the findings of the desk review and the pilot field study a revised method for assessing the AGLV was agreed.

Our approach focussed on using the character of the Surrey Hills AONB, a nationally important designation, recently re-evaluated in 1998 using contemporary LCA based methodology, as a baseline for comparing the AGLV. A systematic approach was adopted which divided the AGLV up into compartments based on local authority boundaries. Following brief, preparatory desk based research into topics such as geology, topography and using the existing landscape character designations applied by Surrey County Council's landscape character assessment of Surrey, a fieldwork exercise was undertaken for each compartment. Record forms using the agreed baseline characteristics of the adjacent AONB and photographic records were used at a selected number of locations in each compartment with a view of mapping and grading the AGLV along the following lines:

Green =	area of AGLV with identical characteristics to the AONB
Amber =	area of AGLV with some shared characteristics to that of the AONB
Red =	area with few or no characteristics in comparison to the AONB

In some cases it was also possible to identify areas outside of the AGLV designation which had comparable landscape character.

These grades were mapped on and recorded on the AGLV Landscape Character Evaluation map and represent the findings of this study. It should be noted, however, that this review is broad brush in scope and more detailed work will undoubtedly be required in specific areas.

As a result of the findings key recommendations were made to take the findings of the study forward. In summary these are:

- 1) It is recommended that an urgent review of the AONB boundary takes place. The AGLV, however, should be retained until a this review has taken place. There should be no attempt to remove the AGLV designation from any areas until the case for the AONB has been considered and thereafter only once further assessment has been carried out.
- 2) When the AONB is reviewed it is recommended that the green areas are capable of being included without further assessment. Amber and red areas should be the subject of more detailed assessment.
- 3) Following the AONB review, any AGLV area that is left outside the newly defined AONB should then fall within the scope of a district wide LCA / CBP process. If funds are not available for this process then each former AGLV area should be the subject of a targeted LCA /CPB approach.
- 4) Until an AONB review is undertaken (and we recommend that this should be a priority given the inconsistencies that this study has revealed) we believe that this study has provided a sufficient evidence base for the retention of the AGLV designation for the green areas in their current form, but

more assessment work is required for the amber and red areas, to establish whether they are sufficiently robust to be retained as AGLV. The remaining areas should then be subject to a targeted LCA /CBP approach.

5) Strategic views. The key viewpoints in the Surrey Hills AONB should be mapped and policies developed which protect the existing high quality visual character of these views from damage by inappropriate development.

6) The local authorities are recommended to take account of the results of this study in undertaking further assessment work and in targeting actions in particular areas

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In the light of recent Government Guidance put forward by PPS7, local planning authorities have been asked to review the status of their Local Landscape Designations (LLD) in the context of developing their Local Development Frameworks (LDF). The relevant paragraphs in PPS 7 state:
- 1.2 **24.** *The Government recognizes and accepts that there are areas of landscape outside nationally designated areas that are particularly highly valued locally. The Government believes that carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in LDDs, utilizing tools such as landscape character assessment, should provide sufficient protection for these areas, without the need for rigid local designations that may unduly restrict acceptable, sustainable development and the economic activity that underpins the vitality of rural areas.*
- 25.** *Local landscape designations should only be maintained or, exceptionally, extended where it can be clearly shown that criteria-based planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. LDDs should state what it is that requires extra protection, and why. When reviewing their local area-wide development plans and LDDs, planning authorities should rigorously consider the justification for retaining existing local landscape designations. They should ensure that such designations are based on a formal and robust assessment of the qualities of the landscape concerned.*
- 1.3 Chris Burnett Associates were commissioned by the Surrey Planning Officers Association (SPOA) to undertake a review of the Surrey Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) in September 2006. The Surrey AGLV spans six district or borough councils as follows:
- Guildford Borough Council
 - Mole Valley District Council
 - Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
 - Tandridge District Council
 - Waverley Borough Council
 - Epsom and Ewell District Council have a small area of AGLV land.
- 1.4 Of critical relevance to this study is the fact that a large area of land is designated the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The juxtaposition of the two designations, AGLV and AONB is illustrated on **Fig 1.1**.
- 1.5 The initial brief set out two key objectives:
- 1) The provision of an overview of the AGLV across the County including the assessment of landscape character and quality and comparisons with landscape characteristics in the AONB and outside the AGLV
 - 2) Recommendations should be made which deal with the future of the AGLV including any representations as necessary for a review of AONB boundaries to include AGLV land.
- 1.6 The work involved in determining the first objective established a series of inconsistencies and the emphasis shifted towards providing an assessment in the context of the second objective. This was reinforced in the light of a national context study on LLD's carried out by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and also following research into the origins of the AGLV and AONB and the methodology used in their genesis.

CHAPTER 2.0 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE SURREY AGLV

Background

- 2.1 The 1930 London and Home Counties Green Belt Act allowed County Councils to purchase land for the protection of landscape for conservation and scenic quality for the first time. This led to purchases by Surrey County Council of parts of Box Hill, Leith Hill and other areas of scenic beauty during the 1930s and 1940s. The Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 led to powers to designate national and local areas of landscape quality and this led to both the creation of Surrey County Council's Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) followed closely by the national designation of Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Surrey County Plan approved 1958

- 2.2 The first County Plan was produced in 1953. Following its approval in 1958 the county map, depicting all approved designations, shows a much-reduced form of AGLV (see **Fig 2.1**). There are three separate areas as follows:
- The Hog's Back restricted to the flanks on either side of the ridge.
 - The North Downs from Guildford to Reigate and a narrow corridor in the Tillingbourne near Westcott linking to the broader area of Greensand Hills comprising Leith Hill and the Holmwood.
 - The North Downs Scarp between Reigate and the Kent border.
- 2.3 The AONB designated in 1958 enveloped and significantly expanded the earlier AGLV to form a much larger area. In detail it:
- Expanded the central section to include the Tillingbourne Valley, the Greensand Plateau area in and around Blackheath, and the wooded Wealden fringe.
 - Linked the North Downs through Reigate and added the areas of northern downland dip slope adjacent to Bandstead and Caterham, plus adding the Greensand area of Limsfield Chart on the Kent border.
 - Most significantly added the whole area of Greensand Plateau and Hills comprising Frensham, the Devil's Punch Bowl and Hascombe, plus the Chiddingfold Weald below.
- 2.4 The criteria for these early designations are not known but would have probably relied heavily on the influence of topography and possibly woodland cover.

1971 Review

- 2.5 The first review of the County Plan took place in 1971 and the accompanying map shows substantial extensions to the AGLV, particularly on the northern boundaries of the AONB (see **Fig 2.2**). This is likely to have been in response to early development pressures or perceived pressures from the south London suburbs. Areas within each district include:

Waverley

- Small extension south of Godalming (W5) ¹
- Area between Chilworth and Shalford (W8)

¹ The code identifies each individual compartment of AGLV land within each Borough or District Council area under review in the 2006/7 study

Guildford

- Northern slopes of the Hog's Back (G1)
- Northern chalk slopes of Ranmore / Hackhurst (G2)
- Area south of Shalford (G4)

Reigate and Banstead, including Epsom

- Northern dip slope – Walton Heath (R2)
- Northern dip slope – Chipstead (R3)

Tandridge

- Northern dip slope – Caterham (T2)
- Northern dip slope – Tatsfield (T3) excluding a further small extension made in 1981-84 review
- Greensand Hill based around Tandridge (T1)

There were no extensions in Mole Valley District. Again, the criteria on which the extensions were based are not known.

1981-84 Review

- 2.6 During the second review of the AGLV areas, which began in 1981 six extensions were made in Waverley Borough and smaller additions in the other districts (see **Fig 2.2**). Additional areas designated as AGLV included:

Waverley

- Chalk hills around Dippenhall including Farnham Castle (W1)
- Greensand Plateau and Wey Valley at Moor Park (W2)
- Greensand Hills around Dockenfield (W3)
- Greensand Hills, Westbrook to Binscombe (W4)
- Chiddingfold Weald (W6)
- Wooded Weald below Cranleigh and Ewhurst (W7)
- Valley of Cranleigh Waters connecting both sides of the AONB (W8)

Guildford

- Area of Greensand including Wey Valley, Eashing to Hurtmore (G3)
- The Wey Valley approach to Guildford around Shalford (G4)

Mole Valley

- Small addition to the northern chalk dip slope at Headley (M1)
- Greensand areas to west of Reigate – Buckland and Wonham Manor Deer Park (M2)

Reigate and Banstead

- One small area to the west of Reigate around Skimmington (R1)

Tandridge

- Small extension to the northern dip slope at Old Park Wood (T2)
- Small extensions to the northern dip slope at Tatsfield and Woldingham Golf Course (T3)

- Larger extensions of Limpsfield Chart to include Staffhurst and Langhurst (T4)
- 2.7 The method for these additions used landscape evaluation techniques developed during the 1970s. These techniques were based on a scoring system with 'positive' features such as topography, woodland cover, hedges etc attracting a higher value than 'negative' features such as pylons and chimneys. In this review the AGLV boundaries were seen as broad brush relating to easily identified local features such as roads, railways and streams, so in Tandridge for example, the area south of Limpsfield Chart (T4) was extended to the east-west railway line.
- 2.8 During this review process the County Council's Policy Working Group were suggesting that the AGLV designation should be "*...retained for broad areas of landscape of high quality, pending any future review of the AONB. The timing of such an event is not known so it is likely that AGLV notation will be retained as an important control measure for some length of time...*"
- 2.9 In guiding the 1981-84 review process the County's advice to the District Authorities stated "*...Areas proposed for inclusion in existing AGLV should be of equivalent landscape quality, and as AONB policies of control are to continue to apply, landscape value should approach the highest level. Extensions or minor new proposals should relate to areas adjacent to the AONB where, should a revision of the boundary occur, the local planning authorities would wish to see included...*"

Present Day

- 2.10 There has been no review of the AGLV areas since 1984 until this present study, which is based on current landscape character assessment methods in contrast to the earlier landscape evaluation techniques. The following sections deal with the outcomes of this 2006/7 review.

CHAPTER 3: **CURRENT PLANNING POLICIES and CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 Six of Surrey's Local Planning Authorities have AGLV land within their boundaries, the majority of which is covered by the five listed below:

Guildford Borough Council
 Mole Valley District Council
 Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
 Tandridge District Council
 Waverley Borough Council

Epsom and Ewell District Council have a small area of AGLV land.

- 3.2 Naturally they all have policies in their Local Plans which deal with the AGLV and are broadly similar in content. In accordance with government guidance all are now engaged in preparing their Local Development Frameworks including relevant Core Strategies. Some Local Authorities are more advanced than others. Often the policies covering the AONB and AGLV follow on from each other.
- 3.3 All the planning departments of the five local authorities were visited to obtain their informal views on the status of the AGLV, its role in defining policy or development control and whether or not it should be retained. These views are summarized at the end of each section. In summary these can be represented as follows:

GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Planning Policies for AONB and AGLV (extracts from local plan)

AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)

- 3.4 *The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as defined on the Proposals Map, is of national importance and will be subject to the most rigorous protection. Development inconsistent with the primary aim of conserving the existing landscape character will not be permitted. Small scale development for agriculture, forestry or outdoor recreation as well as that in support of services for the local community will normally be acceptable provided the proposals conserve the natural beauty of the landscape. Important views to and from the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty should be retained.*
- 3.5 *Policy PE7 of the Surrey Structure Plan 1994 designates the Surrey Hills AONB. This covers most of the southern half of the Borough and is a landscape of national importance. The detailed boundary of the AONB is shown on the Proposals Map.*
- 3.6 *The Surrey Hills AONB was designated in 1958 and comprises landscape of national importance. The primary objective of the designation is the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape. Any development deemed acceptable will need to have regard to this objective. The promotion of recreation is not an objective of the AONB designation, although it should be used to meet the demand for recreation so far as it is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses. The siting of major industrial or commercial development will not be permitted in this area. Only proven national interest and lack of alternative sites can justify an exception. The design, scale*

and impact of traffic of any development which receives permission will be controlled to minimise the environmental damage.

- 3.7 *Development should not result in the loss of important views to and from the AONB.*
- 3.8 *The Borough Council, in co-operation with statutory agencies and other local authorities covering the Surrey Hills AONB, has set up a Joint Advisory Committee to encourage a co-ordinated approach to management.*
- 3.9 *The AGLV is of county importance and covers the southern half of the Borough as defined on the Proposals Map. Within this area development should have regard to the conservation and enhancement of the existing landscape character.*
- 3.10 *The majority of the AONB and AGLV cover the same geographical area.*

Policy RE6
AREA OF GREAT LANDSCAPE VALUE (AGLV)

- 3.11 *Development within the Area of Great Landscape Value, defined on the Proposals Map, should be consistent with the intention of protecting the distinctive landscape character of the area.*

Guildford Borough Council Consultation

- 3.12 The view expressed by the landscape architect in charge of the recent landscape character assessment at Guildford was that the LLD i.e. the AGLV could effectively be replaced by a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) / Criteria Based Policies (CBP) approach based on the recent assessment work. Guildford are well advanced on developing their Local Development Framework and to that end they are working on a Criteria Based Policy which suggests that any development must:
- 1. Conserve or enhance local landscape and townscape character;*
 - 2. Adopt appropriate building styles and materials; and*
 - 3. Support land management practices that have no adverse impact on characteristic landscape patterns.*
- 3.13 The wording is in draft form, supported by justification and rationale statements, and may be strengthened. For example, other authorities have used much stronger wording such as "*...Development will only be permitted where it respects and retains or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the individual Landscape Character Area in which it is located...*"

MOLE VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL
Planning Policies for AONB and AGLV (extracts from local plan)

AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY AND GREAT LANDSCAPE VALUE

- 3.14 *Extensive areas of the District lie within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), designated by the Countryside Commission in view of their nationally important*

landscape. They include the chalk hills and largely beech woods of the North Downs together with the undulating wooded greensand ridge around Leith Hill.

3.15 *Additionally these areas together with further landscape in the south west of the District have been defined by Surrey County Council as being an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) which is important in the context of Surrey. The Plan has extended the boundary of the AGLV to include land to the east of Givons Grove, Leatherhead up to the Reigate Road which provides an appropriate physical boundary enclosing an area where the quality of the landscape is similar throughout.*

3.16 *The extent of the AONB and AGLV is shown on the Proposals Map.*

POLICY ENV5 – AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

3.17 *The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is of national importance and will be subject to the most rigorous protection. Development inconsistent with the primary aim of conserving and enhancing the existing landscape character will not be permitted. Small scale development for the reasonable needs of agriculture, forestry or outdoor recreation as well as that in support of services for the local community will normally be acceptable in the AONB provided that proposals conserve the landscape character and are in accordance with the policies of this Plan.*

POLICY ENV6 – AREA OF GREAT LANDSCAPE VALUE

3.18 *Development within the Area of Great Landscape Value defined on the Proposals Map which would be inconsistent with the intention of protecting the Area's distinctive landscape character will not be permitted. Small scale development for the reasonable needs of agriculture, forestry or outdoor recreation, as well as that in support of services for the local community, will normally be acceptable in the AGLV provided that proposals conserve the landscape character and are in accordance with the policies of this Plan.*

3.19 *The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the contiguous Area of Great Landscape Value include the chalk hills of the North Downs which cross the District from Abinger in the west to Buckland in the east. The distinctive profile and scarp face of the Downs dominate the landscape to the east and west of Dorking. The Downs contain extensive areas of beechwoods and chalk grasslands. The Downs are paralleled to the south by an undulating woodland Greensand ridge rising to Leith Hill. There are several small villages and hamlets in the AONB and AGLV but generally it is a relatively sparsely populated and undeveloped area which is dominated by open countryside and extensive attractive views punctuated by woodlands and hedgerows.*

3.20 *The AGLV also extends over the area to the south of Forest Green and west of the A29. This is a very open rural area which has an undulating landscape that is dominated by the Greensand ridge to the north. It contains extensive areas of woodland and actively managed farmland.*

3.21 *In considering development proposals in the AONB and AGLV, the Council will have particular regard to the landscape character of the locality as described in the Landscape Profiles in Appendix 1 of the Plan to ensure that the development would not prejudice the special landscape quality of the area.*

3.22 *The landscape qualities of these areas and their relative quiet and peacefulness justify extra*

vigilance in considering development proposals. A development meeting other policies in the Plan including the landscape considerations in Policy ENV4 will be subject to additional scrutiny to ensure that harm will not be caused to the character of these important landscapes and that opportunities are taken for enhancement. Their status justifies a strict degree of control and the highest standards of design to ensure the development contributes to or integrates with the established character in terms of siting, scale, design, choice of external materials and colour. Landscape enhancement works or other environmental benefits may be required.

- 3.23 *To be consistent with the aim of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB and landscape character of the AGLV, new development which satisfies other policies in this Plan, especially those relating to the Green Belt outside villages and the countryside beyond the Green Belt will normally be expected to be small scale. However, in order to meet the reasonable needs of agriculture, larger buildings may be necessary. In these circumstances the siting, design, and external materials will require very careful consideration.*
- 3.24 *Sufficient information will be required to be submitted with the application for a proper judgement on these matters. This may include illustrations as to how the development will appear in its landscape setting.*
- 3.25 *It is most important to protect the integrity and qualities of these attractive areas from even small unsuitable proposals, including unsympathetic extensions to dwellings. In considering proposals for small scale development the Council will have regard to the potentially damaging cumulative effect if similar proposals were to be repeated. which has been established to enhance the countryside around Horley and Crawley including the adjacent areas in Mole Valley.*

Mole Valley District Council Consultation

- 3.26 The view from Mole Valley DC planning department was that the AGLV was of lower priority in protecting the landscape from development. Green Belt was cited as being the key policy in terms of providing landscape protection and preserving openness of the district and was used as the overriding policy in most development control cases. Greenbelt covers 75% of Mole Valley DC's area in comparison to 33% covered by the AONB. The AGLV was seen, however, as providing a useful tool as a buffer to the AONB. Mole DC rely on Surrey CC's landscape character assessment and have no plans to carry out an LCA of the district at the present time. The Local Development Framework which will replace the 2000 version of the local plan is well in hand.

REIGATE AND BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Planning Policies for AONB and AGLV (extracts from local plan)

AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY AND GREAT LANDSCAPE VALUE

- 3.27 *The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) comprises landscape of national importance which follows the full length of the North Downs Escarpment within this Borough, from Pebble Coombe Hill in the west to Alderstead Heath in the east. The main purpose of designation, is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and the traditional landscapes of the area. This includes protecting flora, fauna, geological as well as landscape features.*

- 3.28 *Complementing the AONB are landscape areas of county significance with sufficient visual quality to merit special protection. The County Council is responsible for the designation of Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLVs) and reviewed the boundaries in 1983 to include additional tracts of countryside, including areas within this Borough. The major areas designated as AGLVs include land on the dip slope of the North Downs at Walton and Banstead Heaths, Kingswood, Chipstead Valley, Banstead Wood, and Hooley. Additionally, the Reigate Heath area forms part of an AGLV.*
- 3.29 *Recreational demands arising from proximity to London and the completion of the M23/M25 network bring greater pressure to bear on these areas. In addition, they are vulnerable to the changing economic situation in agriculture. The large number of voluntary bodies and land owners active in these areas together with a wide range of recreational pursuits gives rise to conflicting interests and organisational problems in meeting the objectives of designation. The Borough Council will therefore seek, through discussion and voluntary agreements with interested parties, to ensure that pressures for change are managed and co-ordinated in the interests of conservation of the landscape.*

Policy PC 1

- 3.30 *The Borough Council will protect the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Areas of Great Landscape Value, as shown on the Proposals Map, from inappropriate development, and will promote measures for the conservation and enhancement of the landscape. Major proposals for development within these areas would normally be inconsistent with the aims of designation. To aid proper consideration they must be accompanied by an appropriate appraisal of their environmental impact.*

When considering applications for development in these areas the Borough Council will apply the following criteria:-

- (i) *there will be a general presumption against any development other than to meet the essential requirements of agriculture, forestry or informal recreation, and development provided for in Policies Ho 24, Ho 24A and Ho 26. Mineral working and waste disposal may be acceptable where no suitable alternative sites are available outside the designated areas and where the need for development outweighs environmental and other relevant considerations;*
- (ii) *special care will be afforded to the siting, scale, impact and design of any development which may be permitted to ensure that it is in keeping with the surrounding landscape. In particular:-*
- (a) *the design, materials, siting and screening of new farm buildings should be compatible with the landscape; and*
- (b) *where proposals are made by statutory undertakers, the Borough Council will ensure that the interests of visual amenity are a key consideration in siting and design.*
- 3.31 *Within these areas, the Borough Council will promote conservation and enhancement by: -*
- (i) *encouraging the management of open spaces and public rights of way for nature conservation and informal recreational use to ensure that visitors are accommodated without detriment to the environment;*
- (ii) *ensuring that where intrusive development or uses are to the detriment of amenity, action will be taken to improve the environment and extinguish such uses, where practicable;*

- (iii) the grant aiding of tree planting and conservation schemes taking into account nature conservation;*
- (iv) the promotion of joint action with private interests, including the management of land by agreement to take account of landscape, conservation and other objectives.*

Particular regard will be paid to the provisions of this policy in the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in recognition of its national importance.

3.32 **Amplification**

- (1) The winning of minerals will normally only be permitted where there is an overriding economic necessity. If permitted special landscaping measures will be required to ensure the protection of the landscape and agreements and conditions will be imposed to require full restoration.*
- (2) Informal recreation will be encouraged where no damage would result to the landscape. The Borough Council will endeavour to secure improved public access to recreational areas (see Policy Re 8). Formal recreation and associated facilities are normally inappropriate to the aim of protecting natural beauty.*
- (3) Where "permitted development" is considered to threaten the quality of the landscape or nature conservation interest, the Borough Council will consider the use of Article 4 Directions in order to bring such development under planning control.*
- (4) Without careful control, advertisements can severely detract from areas of otherwise good landscape. Those parts of the Borough subject to Green Belt Policy in 1972 were designated an area of special control of advertisements, and this places additional restrictions on the types of advertisement that may be displayed without consent. A review is now necessary but the statutory procedures and requirements for consultation need to be carried out separately from the procedures leading to the adoption of this Plan.*
- (5) Much of the North Downs escarpment is owned by the National Trust, while the Borough Council also owns a substantial tract around Reigate Hill. The National Trust and the Borough Council, together with the County Council who are responsible for managing the North Downs Way, co-operate in managing the land in this area, which is subject to increasing visitor pressure (see Policy Pc 5).*
- (6) Specific conservation works and recreation projects, where consistent with the conservation of natural beauty, may be subject to grant aid. Grant aid may also be available for tree planting schemes (see section on Woodlands and Trees). Such schemes should not encroach on existing viewpoints or vistas, but should enhance them or help to create new ones.*
- (7) In AONBs, some permitted development rights are reduced and others withdrawn entirely, so that some types of normally minor development remain subject to scrutiny by the planning system. AGLVs however, have no direct statutory implications for the planning process in terms of any limitations of permitted development rights, but serve to highlight particularly important features of the countryside that should be taken into account in planning decisions.*

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council Consultation

- 3.33 Reigate and Banstead BC are also in the process of pulling together their LDF and are engaged in a preferred options process and are currently in the process of undertaking an LCA process for their area. This will inform a Supplementary Planning Guidance document which will deal with issues such as local distinctiveness. 70% of the borough is Green Belt and they cited Green Belt policies as being easier to use in terms of protecting landscape quality although they considered that the AGLV added extra weight in determining planning applications in the countryside. The AGLV was perceived as a designation ensuring a certain degree of landscape protection. If it was removed then the level of protection would be diminished as a result.

TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Planning Policies for AONB and AGLV (extracts from local plan)

AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY AND GREAT LANDSCAPE VALUE

Policy RE16 - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 3.34 *The Surrey Hills and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are of national importance and will be subject to the most rigorous protection. Development inconsistent with the primary aim of conserving and enhancing the existing landscape character will not be permitted.*
- 3.35 *Development required to meet the social and economic needs of rural communities is acceptable, but only provided such proposals conserve the natural beauty of the AONB and conserve features of the landscape that make up their special character.*
- 3.36 *Outdoor sport and outdoor recreational developments will only be permitted where they are sensitively related to the distinctive landscape character of the area and are consistent with conservation of the area and the needs of agriculture and forestry.*
- 3.37 *Large scale developments will be strongly resisted unless they are proven to be in the national interest, incapable of being located outside the AONBs. All proposals for large scale development should be accompanied by environmental assessments.*
- 3.38 *Where development is permitted, it must be of the highest standard of design and siting, reflecting the traditional character of buildings in the area and the landscape using only local materials.*

Justification - Policy RE16

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 3.39 *The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers the North Downs scarp, the downland valleys to the north and the Limpsfield Chart area to the south. The High Weald AONB (for which there is a management plan) covers about 2,600 hectares in the south eastern corner of the District. The landscape designations are made by the Countryside Commission and are of national importance. Development will be assessed against the following Policy. In the High Weald area the High Weald AONB Management Plan and Landscape Assessment will be taken into account as well.*

Policy RE17 - Areas of Great Landscape Value

- 3.40 *Development within the Area of Great Landscape Value defined on the proposals map will not be permitted if it would be inconsistent with the intention of protecting the Area's distinctive landscape character.*

Justification - Policy RE17**Areas of Great Landscape Value**

- 3.41 *Designated by Surrey County Council and of regional importance is the Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) which covers a wider area than the Surrey Hills AONB. The various Areas of Great Landscape Value are more varied in character than the Surrey Hills AONB and comprise parts of the dip slope of the North Downs and parts of the Low Weald to the South of the Downs. Although not of national significance, the landscape in these areas is of a similar quality to the AONBs, and has justified them being given this designation. In response to the Deposit Version of the North of the Downs Local Plan, the Council proposed that an area of land between Croydon Road, Caterham and the by-pass was to be included in the AGLV. This was considered at the Public Inquiry, and the Inspector accepted that the land should be included. Unfortunately the proposals map in the adopted North of the Downs Plan did not show the designation extended. As a matter of correction the District Plan's Proposal Map now shows the AGLV extending over this area.*

Policy RE18 - Areas of Local Landscape Significance

- 3.42 *In Areas of Local Landscape Significance, as defined on the Proposals Map, the Council will seek to protect and conserve the landscape character and quality of the area. Development proposals which may be permissible under the other policies of the Plan should be so sited and designed as to minimise their visual, and general environmental impact.*

Justification - Policy RE18**Areas of Local Landscape Significance**

- 3.43 *The Areas of Local Landscape Significance (ALLS) cover a large part of the District and is a District Council designation. The areas are generally that of the low weald and are characterised by attractive often rolling countryside when agricultural and woodland landscapes remain predominant over built development. Because of the vulnerable nature of the countryside to the west and east of Tatsfield, two new ALLS are proposed for these areas. All the areas are shown on the proposals map. Green Belt policies already give a degree of protection to such areas but the following policy will help to give additional control.*

Tandridge District Council Consultation

- 3.44 Tandridge stated that Green Belt is a national policy with considerable weight. Therefore inappropriate development such as housing is not going to be approved, whether it is AGLV or even AONB (in general terms). There are exceptions such as farm workers dwellings that may be acceptable.
- 3.45 However, AGLV really comes in to its own when considering development that might be appropriate in the Green Belt, for example a large agricultural building might be appropriate in the Green Belt, but if that area is AGLV then the impact of the proposal needs to be considered in terms of the special landscape character. Therefore the two policies (Green Belt

and AGLV) have very different functions; a proposal could pass the Green Belt test and fail the AGLV test.

- 3.46 As far as Tandridge's LDF is concerned the Tandridge Core Strategy is due to be submitted in December 2007. The submission version will contain a policy concerning the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The policy may also make reference to the retention of the Area of Great Landscape Value depending on the outcome of this AGLV assessment.

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL (extracts from local plan)

AONB and AGLV Planning policies

AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY AND GREAT LANDSCAPE VALUE

- 3.47 *The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated by the Countryside Commission in 1958 and therefore it is a national designation. The Government's planning policies for AONB's are set out in PPG7 which states that "the Government regards National Park Designation as conferring the highest status of protection as far as landscape and scenic beauty are concerned". This has been amplified by a ministerial statement in June 2000, which indicated that the above "reflects the National Park Authorities' primary objective to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Parks. It does not mean that the landscape beauty of AONB's is in any way inferior to that of National Parks. AONB's should therefore share the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. In relation to major projects, it is the Government's view that, henceforth, the assessment required in paragraph 4.5 of PPG7 in National Parks should also apply to proposals for major development in AONB's. Such proposals should be demonstrated to be in the public interest before being allowed to proceed". In Waverley, the AONB covers over half the rural area, reflecting the significant quality and importance of the landscape. In 1958 and 1971, the County Council designated part of Surrey as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). Additional areas were designated in Waverley in 1984. The AGLV is a local designation which complements the AONB. Therefore the policies are combined in the Plan. In some areas the AGLV extends beyond the AONB to include areas of more local landscape importance. In Waverley, these extended areas include the countryside north and west of Farnham, and areas around Dockenfield, Dunsfold and Ewhurst. Figure 3b illustrates the broad extent of the AONB and AGLV. The precise boundaries are shown on the Proposals Map.*
- 3.48 *In most instances, the AONB and AGLV notations wash over the rural settlements identified under Policy RD1 (Rural Settlements). This reflects the fact the villages are an intrinsic part of the landscape and development within them needs to be carefully controlled. There is an overlap between the Moor Park part of the South Farnham Area of Special Environmental Policy (Policy BE3), and the AGLV notation, where there is a low density policy in tandem with a rural policy. This is because, although the area has a distinctive rural character, there lies within it a very low density residential area, divorced from the main settlement of Farnham.*
- 3.49 *Looking at the AONB part of the policy, the phrase "in support of services in the local community" relates to the fact that there are settlements within the AONB and they may need facilities.*
- 3.50 *Some parts of the AONB and AGLV are also Areas of Special Historic Landscape Value (see paragraph 5.37).*

POLICY C3 – Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Area of Great Landscape Value

- 3.51 *The Council will protect and conserve the distinctiveness of the landscape character areas within the Borough. Management and enhancement of landscape features to conserve landscape character and retain diversity will be promoted. Development appropriate to the countryside will be expected to respect or enhance existing landscape character by appropriate design.*

(a) Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 3.52 *The Surrey Hills and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are of national importance. The primary aim of designation is to conserve and enhance their natural beauty. Development inconsistent with this primary aim will not be permitted unless proven national interest and lack of alternative sites has been demonstrated.*
- 3.53 *Small scale development for agriculture, forestry or outdoor recreation as well as that in support of services for the local community, or acceptable under Policy RD1, will be permitted in the AONB provided that proposals conserve the existing landscape character and are consistent with protection of the natural beauty of the landscape.*
- 3.54 *Protection of the natural beauty and character of the AONB will extend to safeguarding these areas from adverse visual or other impact arising from development located outside their boundary.*

(b) Areas of Great Landscape Value

- 3.55 *Landscapes designated as Areas of Great Landscape Value on the Proposals Map make a valuable contribution to the quality of Waverley's countryside and the setting of the towns. Strong protection will be given to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the landscape character.*

Waverley Borough Council Consultation

- 3.56 Waverley Borough Council was one of the local authorities that greatly extended the AGLV area in the second main review of 1981-4. Waverley BC are currently seeking to retain the AGLV designation within their Local Development Framework Core Strategy submission, although this particular document and its policies are currently under review after having been submitted and subsequently withdrawn. They are aware of the need to carry out an assessment of the character of the landscape areas in the County, along with other Surrey Authorities. In particular, in Waverley BC's case, they are aware of the need for an urban character assessment of Farnham and Godalming and the surrounding landscape to support the eventual core policies in their LDF. In principle they supported the notion of the AGLV and its designation although the concept is under review.

THE SURREY HILLS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 3.57 It is worth summarizing some of the key aspects of the Surrey Hills AONB management plan as this is the most recent document that carries forward the AONB review undertaken for the

Countryside Agency in 1998. It provides a rationale for the status of the AONB and the qualities that the landscape has been designated to protect. The plan starts with a useful statement on the **AONB's designation**:

- 3.58 *The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 legislates for the designation of AONBs and National Parks. Both designations are of equal landscape status and have the purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty although National Parks were also designated as areas that afford the opportunity for open air recreation for the wider public enjoyment. There has been clarification regarding the aims of AONB policy since 1949. The Countryside Commission statement of 1991, restated in 2001, set out the following purpose of AONB designation:*
- 3.59 *The primary purpose of the designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and the social and economic needs of rural communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment. Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met in so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.*²
- 3.60 On defining '**Natural Beauty**' the AONB Management Plan summarises the issue as follows, "...Recent Countryside Agency guidance on AONBs provides a useful non-technical definition of natural beauty: "Natural Beauty" is not just the look of the landscape but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries..." Further, Dr Nicola Bannister, Landscape Historian, has stated '... The term "natural" in the designation title is a misnomer as no part of the Surrey Hills is "natural" in the wild sense; rather it is less intensively managed compared with other parts of Surrey, retaining landscape features and semi-natural habitats which have a high ecological diversity and interest...' The qualities of the Surrey Hills AONB are concisely summarized by Dr Nicola Bannister, who was engaged to conduct a Historic Landscape Assessment to further inform the development of the management plan.³
- 3.61 The AONB Management Plan refers to the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, which incorporates significant measures designed to enhance the management of AONBs by:
- *Confirming the powers of local authorities to take appropriate action to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of AONBs*
 - *Placing a duty on all public bodies and statutory undertakers to 'have regard' to the 'purpose of protecting and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty'*
 - *Establishing a process for creating AONB Conservation Boards*
- 3.62 On the need for an action plan as an integral part of the management plan, targets for key topics to be undertaken over a 5 year period from 2004 to 2009 have been identified. As the plan states the criteria for tasks included in the action plan are ones that:
- *Help to achieve a number of policies in the Management Plan*

² Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A Policy Statement (Countryside Commission, CCP 356, 1991 p. 5)

³ Surrey Hills AONB; Historic Landscape Descriptions, Dr Nicola R. Bannister, July 2002, unpublished

- *Are of strategic importance and cannot be implemented solely by individual partner organisations*
- *Have the prospect of attracting resources from a variety of sources, especially external funding*
- *Are demonstration, experimental or innovative*
- *Encourage joint working and co-operation, and are sustainable.*

The tasks are listed against the Management Plan policies and the intended outcome. At this stage the actions have not been costed as tasks will need to be programmed into the annual business plans of partner local authorities, agencies and the Surrey Hills Office in order to identify and confirm the funding, staff resources and technical expertise required.

- 3.63 The Action Plan has been grouped into the following broad areas to reflect the purpose of the AONB designation:

Landscape Protection and Enhancement: *to support landowners and managers in achieving practical action to protect and enhance the special features of the Surrey Hills*

Enjoyment and Understanding: *to raise awareness of the Surrey Hills AONB to ensure its special qualities are identified, protected and enhanced, and to provide information on environmentally responsible recreation opportunities for residents and visitors*

Partnership and Coordination: *to ensure that the Management Plan policies are coherently represented, implemented, monitored and reviewed at an appropriate national, regional, county and local level.*

- 3.64 Within the framework of the AONB Management Plan the AGLV is seen as being important in helping to protect the AONB landscape through its role as a buffer zone. In addition much of the AGLV area plays an important role in the significant views from the AONB and therefore in the quality of the experience of visiting the AONB.

CONSULTATION WITH PARISH COUNCILS

3.65 The Parish Councils that are covered by the AGLV were also consulted by way of letter, accompanied by a map and questionnaire. These are included in the Appendices. A total of 30 Parish Councils were consulted in this way and 18 or 60% responded (see **Fig 3.1**). The results are presented in Table 3.1 below:

Parish Council	Awareness	Views of Success	Scenic Quality	Citing	Comments on existing boundaries
Tandridge	Aware	Successful	Lower	Cited	In Tandridge why is the southern boundary of the AGLV limited
Witley	Aware	Successful	Similar	Not Cited	by the railway - a man made feature Broadly agree but welcome the review
		Successful in the areas it covers, unsuccessful in that it doesn't extend far enough		None, but have cited the proximity of the AONB.	The AGLV does not extend into Effingham parish but the parish council strongly supports the extension of the AGLV to cover the areas hatched green on the accompanying copy of the map, south of the A246 and up to the boundary of the AONB. It is felt that the landscape there is eminently suitable and much in need of this added protection.
Effingham	Aware		Variable	Don't	
Caterham	Aware	Successful	Lower	Know	Maybe could be extended
Valley					AONB was probably well defined for specific areas of interest. AGLV is not carefully defined, but it is vital it should be used to protect equally valuable landscape in and around AONB, and for isolated areas. Keep it, and redefine its extent please.
Betchworth	Aware		Similar	Cited	Give it greater recognition too.
Farnham Town	Aware	Successful	Similar	Cited	Farnham Town Council strongly believe that continued protection of the Surrey AGLV and AONB's existing boundaries is critical to maintaining the setting of Farnham.
West Clandon	Aware	Successful	Similar	Cited	The parish council would not wish to see either category changed.
Tongham	Aware	Successful	Similar	Don't	
Godstone	Aware	Successful	Similar	Know	
				Not Cited	
Bletchingly	Aware	Successful	Lower	Cited	OK as they stand, but should not in any way be diminished
					AGLV boundaries to North are vital to stop spread of Farnham, and Routledge. Our draft VDS has action point to convert entire AGLV in parish into AONB
Frensham	Aware	Successful	Lower	Not Cited	We regard the position of the existing AGLV to be most importantly left untouched from future modification.
Woldingham	Aware	Successful	Lower	Cited	
Bramley	Aware	Successful	Similar	Cited	
Hambledon	Aware	Successful	Similar	Not Cited	No - except to say they are most essential and must not be tampered with.
Tatsfield	Aware	Successful	Similar	Cited	The Parish Council is strongly opposed to any reduction in the extent of either AGLV or AONB.
			Don't		
Cranleigh	Unaware	Don't Know	Know	Not Cited	
Limpsfield	Aware	Successful	Similar	Cited	The existing boundaries should be retained. See letter 22.11.06 for comments.
Buckland	Aware	Unsuccessful	Similar	Cited	

- 3.66 The overwhelming view is that the AGLV has been successful in protecting the landscape quality of their respective parishes and that overall the consensus view was that the AGLV had a similar scenic quality to that of the AONB. Similarly the AGLV was often cited in grounds for refusal of planning permission.

CONSULTATION WITH AONB OFFICERS

- 3.67 Initial contact with other AONB officers, requesting information and advice on similar planning issues with AONB policies and PPS7, drew a number of responses. Most of these referred to instances of past planning inquiries and sources of further information such as the latest landscape character network research, referred to elsewhere in this section.
- 3.68 It was reported that in South Devon AONB the local authorities were doing away with AGLVs in the light of PPS7 and relying instead on new landscape character assessments. They are also relying on AONB policies to influence development outside the AONB boundary which will nevertheless impact on the AONB.
- 3.69 The Norfolk Coast Partnership also reported that they had been working over recent years to raise the profile of landscape character and its use as a planning tool and to aid in landscape scale decision making. They have currently just completed a project with consultants on developing consistent core policies for the AONB and the inclusion and use of landscape character assessment, historic landscape character assessment and biodiversity issues. (see previous section)
- 3.70 What they hope to achieve is consistent core policies for the AONB, consistent approaches to landscape character assessment and its interpretation, consistent integrated (LCA and HLCA) landscape character assessments and their supplementary planning documents (SPD's) that also include the ecological network mapping portraying the potential for development of various habitats and species networks.
- 3.71 As a consequence, North Norfolk District intends to base their LDF policies on the landscape descriptive units or types and to dispense with the various designations in the current local plan. They felt that their existing designation of high value landscape was not effective and that criteria based policies tied to an SPD on integrated landscape will provide a more effective means of assessing each application. The other borough councils in the Partnership area are, apparently hoping to follow suit.

CHAPTER 4 : A REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL CONTEXT FOR LOCAL LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

- 4.1 A key part of this study is to place the AGLV review into a wider context nationally. An initial response from several officers from other AONBs in the UK produced a mixed response but pinpointed various studies into LLD s which had recently been undertaken. They suggested that the provision of a robust evidence base for LLDs was gradually being supplanted by the use of LCA / CBP approach although this remains in an embryonic state at the present time as the summaries below highlight.
- 4.2 The most useful background paper was provided by Natural England, (previously the Countryside Agency) which commissioned a study by Chris Blandford Associates in 2005 /6 the results of which are set out below:

Countryside Agency Review of Local Landscape Designation

- 4.3 In 2006 the Countryside Agency commissioned a review of Local Landscape Designations (LLDs) at a national level to determine their relevance in the interest of the Government's recent guidance embodied in PPS7 (referred to in the introduction section 1).
- 4.4 The objectives of the study were to:
- Explore how LLDs were used by local planning authorities
 - Examine the existing and future role of the LLDs
 - Investigate how the roles for LLDs might be replaced or integrated with a landscape character approach.
- 4.5 The consultants devised a questionnaire and issued it to all 361 local authorities in England and this was followed up in a select number of cases by telephone interviews. A stakeholder workshop was also held to examine the key issues in more depth.
- 4.6 The consultants main findings were as follows:-
- The continued support by many local authorities for LLDs and their retention in one form or another, largely due to the current uncertainty surrounding the proven utility of alternative approaches such as criteria-based policies as promoted by PPS7.
 - LLD s are widely valued and apparently understood by Members, the public and by Officers
 - LLDs are considered to be relatively easy to use by Planning Officers without need for specialist advice
 - LLDs have generally been perceived to be successful in protecting areas of high local landscape value from development
- 4.7 However in relation to reliance on LLDs on their own as a key landscape planning tool (the 'LLD Approach'), the review found that:

- LLD policies do not typically facilitate appropriate development or actively promote the enhancement of local character and distinctiveness within these areas.
 - The approach is often accompanied by a lack of policy guidance on securing opportunities for conservation and enhancement benefits in the wider or 'everyday' landscapes outside of LLDs and in focusing on the 'best landscapes' can exclude degraded landscapes
 - LLDs are often not fully justified by a robust evidence base
 - LLDs were often not used as primary reasons for refusal in planning applications, due to their interpretation by LPAs as having less weight than in the past based on PPS7 requirements.
 - A significant proportion of local authorities (43%) stated that they were considering alternative approaches to LLDs in their LDFs.
- 4.8 The consultants recommended that Natural England should strongly promote the use of Landscape Character Assessment to underpin the formulation and application of criteria based policies in the emerging Local Development Frameworks. They suggested that the LLD is too "blunt an instrument" to achieve the Government's stated aim of delivering sustainable development in ways which protect sensitive landscapes from inappropriate development whilst actively promoting the enhancement of local character and distinctiveness in all areas. A key finding of both survey and workshop was the general support (amongst those intending to retain their LLDs) for a using a Landscape Policy Objectives Approach (the use of criteria based policies informed by Landscape Character Assessments) in combination the retention of LLD's. This was referred to as the Combined Approach.
- 4.9 The also recommended that case studies, piloted by the Countryside Agency (Natural England) should also be maintained. Two such case studies which have relevance to the Surrey AGLV study are reviewed and summarized here
- CASE STUDY 1: High Peak, Derbyshire.**
- 4.10 In 2005/6 the Countyscape in conjunction with the Planning Co-operative were commissioned by the positive planning branch of the Countryside Agency to carry out a study to translate the principles of the Derbyshire Landscape Character Assessment into detailed and practical development guidance. The guidance would form a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) within the High Peak LDF. Large areas of the county have been designated Special Landscape Areas and much of them surround the National Park. The similarities between this situation and that confronting the Surrey AGLV are cogent, particularly in terms of the report's objectives.
- 4.11 Of the four core areas of the project, the one with the most tolerance was to:-
- Review the long established system 'special landscape areas' on the periphery of the Peak District National Park.
 - Using a more comprehensive approach based on landscape character.
- 4.12 The most illuminating part of the report however, is connected with a succinct appraisal of the history of landscape evaluation which is worth repeating as it sheds some light on the history of the classification of the Surrey Hills AGLV and AONB. Like Surrey, the AGLV was first classified in 1958. The following is an extract from the report. ⁴

⁴ Appendix II – The Development of Special Landscape Areas in Derbyshire pp 54 - 56 in *From Special Landscape Areas to Landscape Character – Project Methodology Final Report* by Countryside and The Planning Cooperative, February 2006

- 4.13 *The landscape was previously understood through evaluation, trying to make judgements regarding the value of one landscape against another in order to prioritise management approaches. The Manchester Landscape Evaluation Report comments that early landscape evaluation was often subjective and constrained in its desired outcome (1976, p21): “In 1996 a survey by the Institute of Landscape Architects showed that most counties considered the purpose of landscape evaluation was to identify Areas of Great Landscape Value. . . few of which offered precise reasons why particular areas were thought to be high quality landscape. . . Each county developed its own standards for Areas of Great Landscape Value and many anomalies arose at County boundaries.”*
- 4.14 *The lack of cohesion regarding approaches and methods was coupled with a criticism that the evaluations were subjective and offered no scientific and objective proof of the different outcomes. The result was a quest to find an objective approach to landscape evaluation that could result in rigorous, scientific results. The way to achieve this was often seen to be through the use of quantitative approaches for different landscape elements and interactions. The outcomes were often more complex than the landscapes which they were supposed to express, for example:
 “Beauty = a + 1.7665 (landform) + 0.9350 (no. of listed buildings) + 0.7799 (amount of parkland) + 0.6950 (area of water) + 0.6078 (amount of woodland) + 0.2758 (amount of heathland) + 0.0549 (no. of hedgerow trees) + 0.0451 (amount of farmland) – 0.2063 (length of power lines) – 0.4489 (amount of residential development) – 0.6119 (amount of other developed land) – 0.8753 (length of railways and motorways) – 0.9902 (amount of unused land) – 1.5482 (amount of industrial land) – 2.0237 (amount of mining)”
Coventry-Solihull-Warwickshire Sub-Regional Study (1971)*
- 4.15 *Such results were of little use as, although they did consider the landscape and all of its components, they did not really result in an outcome that could be easily used or understood, as Swanwick comments (2002 p1):
 “Emphasis on supposedly objective, scientific, often quantitative approaches to determining landscape value which was very much the fashion at the time . . . led to a considerable degree of disillusionment with this type of work. This was largely because many believed it inappropriate to reduce something as complex, emotional and so intertwined with our culture, as landscape, to a series of numerical values and statistical formulae.”*
- 4.16 *Not all assessments were quantitative in approach but generally there was an aim to try to value the different landscapes against each other, often by measuring the amount of human impacts and influences on the landscape or the visual attributes, such as landform and tree cover, of a landscape and making a judgement in this way.*
- 4.17 *Landscape evaluation has since evolved into landscape assessment and, most recently, Landscape Character Assessment with the emphasis no longer on landscape values but instead upon landscape description and classification so that it is easy to understand what makes a landscape distinctive and different from another landscape as opposed to placing a value upon these differences. Such a shift in approach is important for achieving sustainability as it takes in all aspects of the landscape and can be easily linked to other initiatives such as Historic Landscape Character Assessments and biodiversity studies. The outputs are also much more varied and widespread than simply designating the ‘finest’ landscapes.*

- 4.18 The report concludes that the methods in understanding landscape have changed greatly since they were first conceived but there is still a reliance on older approaches which cannot be relied upon if “...landscapes are to become more sustainable in the future. Current designations can often be seen to preserve landscapes in past forms in order to protect them from harm. The result is a landscape that cannot develop into a sustainable form and this cannot be viewed as sustainable...” However – the report points out that a key weakness in subsequent SLA appraisals was the absence of field work and or a more holistic approach to landscape assessment which assesses all component parts of a landscape to define what makes them special or distinctive.

CASE STUDY 2: Norfolk Coast Partnership

- 4.19 Chris Blandford Associates were appointed with Alison Farmer associates by the Norfolk Coast Partnership to advise on the development of a coordinated approach to integrated landscape planning across the district planning authorities within the Norfolk Coast AONB. ⁵ (Note though that this study applied wholly to land covered by an AONB designation.)
- 4.20 The primary objective of the study was to facilitate the development of a coordinated approach to the use of Landscape Character Assessment in the formulation of policy, strategic planning and development control.
- 4.21 Unlike the Surrey AONB there is no universal landscape character assessment (LCA) in place covering the whole AONB using contemporary methodology. Understandably, therefore, a number of inconsistencies emerged from the variety of LCA’s commissioned by each of the district LPAs at different times and from different consultancies.
- 4.22 Chris Blandford Associates summarized the various policies each of the LPA’s had for both the AONB within their area and also for landscape character policy generally. They put forward a proposed policy for the AONB the wording of which reflects :
- PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas requirements
 - PPS12 Local Development Frameworks advice
 - The East of England Plan EIP Panel Report’s recommended Policy ENV2 Landscape
 - Conservation requirements
 - The Countryside Agency’s West Sussex Demonstration Project19
 - Comments from the Steering Group on a first draft.

- 4.23 This is reproduced below:

‘POLICY X – NORFOLK COAST AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

THE PRIME CONSIDERATION WITHIN THE NORFOLK COAST AONB WILL BE THE CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL BEAUTY, WILDLIFE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE AREA. OPPORTUNITIES FOR REMEDIATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF DAMAGED LANDSCAPES WILL BE TAKEN AS THEY ARISE. THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WILL BE RIGOROUSLY CONSIDERED.

DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE IT EITHER:

⁵ Chris Blandford Associates and Alison Farmer Associates, *Towards a Co-Ordinated Approach to Integrated Landscape Planning in Norfolk*, a draft report to the Norfolk Coast Partnership, November 2006

- *RELATES TO THE APPROPRIATE RE-USE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS*
- *IS APPROPRIATE TO THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING OF THE AONB*
- *IS DESIRABLE FOR THE UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT OF THE AREA*

AND PROVIDED THE DEVELOPMENT WILL:

- *BE DESIGNED TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS*
- *NOT DETRACT FROM THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE AONB*
- *FACILITATE DELIVERY OF THE AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES*

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AND THOSE CAUSING SIGNIFICANT ADBVERSE EFFECTS ON THE AONB SHOULD ONLY BE PERMITTED IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES. THESE PROPOSALS SHOULD DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY ARE IN THE OVERWHELMING PUBLIC NTEREST AND INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT, ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING SITES OUTSIDE THE DESIGNATED AREA, AND MITIGATION OF ANY DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS.

Supporting Explanatory Text

National policy in PPS7 affords nationally designated areas the highest status of protection in relation to natural beauty, which includes wildlife and cultural heritage as well as scenery.

The Norfolk Coast AONB was designated in 1968 for its relatively undeveloped and unspoilt coastal character - the wild, rich and diverse mix of unusual coastal geomorphological features of sand and shingle spits and broad band of salt-marshes, set against the contrasting picturesque backdrop of distinctive rising wooded rolling hills, ridges and heathland that characterise the inland agricultural landscapes.

The Norfolk Coast AONB Management Plan 2004-2009 provides guidance for the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the AONB. The Plan will need to be taken into consideration in all development proposals within or close to the AONB.

National policy advises that major developments should not take place in AONBs except in exceptional circumstances, and that where planning permission is granted that development is carried out to high environmental standards.⁶

- 4.24 The consultants then advance an approach for creating policies for landscape character citing PPS 7 guidance and their own research carried out on behalf of the Countryside Agency into Local Landscape Designations.⁷ They concluded that as the majority of LPAs in the Norfolk Coast partnership were considering abandoning their LLDs in their Local Development Documents (LDDs) in favour of a more wide ranging criteria based policy approach this approach would be germane to the study.
- 4.25 They suggested that any Landscape Character Policy would have to contain the following key considerations:
- *The need to recognise that landscape character is of fundamental importance to the quality of life for communities in all areas.*
 - *High priority should be afforded to the protection, conservation and enhancement of landscape character in delivering sustainable development in line with Government policy.*

⁶ Chris Blandford Associates and Alison Farmer Associates *op. cit.* Appendix E *Recommended Local Development Framework Policies* p. 66

⁷ Chris Blandford Associates, *Review of Local Landscape Designations*, for the Countryside Agency, Final Report, June 2006

- *A clear definition of landscape character and local distinctiveness.*
- *The role of a Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document to provide guidance on how the overall character of each Landscape Character Unit identified in a Landscape Character Assessment can be protected, conserved and enhanced.*
- *The provision of other appropriate evidence bases related to understanding specific aspects of landscape character/geographical areas – such as tranquil areas, townscapes, settlement-edge landscapes, etc.*
- *The need to stress the importance of encouraging well-designed, high quality new development within rural areas that helps sustain and/or create places with a strong sense of place and local identity.*
- *Encouragement for landscape enhancement schemes, submission of a design statement with planning applications that fully address landscape considerations, and provision of landscape-scale management plans/strategies.*⁸

4.26 They suggest an appropriate wording for the policy as follows:

POLICY X - PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE OF URBAN AREAS SHOULD BE INFORMED BY AND BE SYMPATHETIC TO THE DISTINCTIVE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS IDENTIFIED IN THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT, AND SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE ACTIVE CONSERVATION, ENHANCEMENT AND/OR RESTORATION OF THESE AREAS.

DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE IT CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT ITS LOCATION, SCALE AND DESIGN WILL PROTECT, CONSERVE AND/OR ENHANCE:

- *THE SPECIAL QUALITIES AND LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE AREA (INCLUDING ITS HISTORICAL, BIODIVERSITY AND CULTURAL CHARACTER AND ITS TRANQUILLITY)*
- *THE VISUAL AND HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SETTLEMENTS AND THEIR LANDSCAPE SETTING*
- *THE PATTERN OF DISTINCTIVE LANDSCAPE FEATURES, SUCH AS WATERCOURSES,*
- *WOODLAND, TREES AND FIELD BOUNDARIES, AND THEIR FUNCTION AS ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS FOR DISPERSAL OF WILDLIFE*
- *VISUALLY SENSITIVE SKYLINES, HILLSIDES, VALLEYSIDES AND GEOLOGICAL FEATURES*
- *NOCTURNAL CHARACTER*
- *THE SETTING OF, AND VIEWS FROM, THE NORFOLK COAST AONB, THE BROADS,*
- *CONSERVATION AREAS AND HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS*

Supporting Explanatory Text

The undeveloped countryside is part of the everyday surroundings for a large proportion of the population in the Borough/District, and the visual character of landscapes and seascapes is a significant influence on the quality of life for communities in all areas. In line with Government policy, the Council affords high priority to the protection, conservation and enhancement of landscape character in delivering sustainable development within the Borough/District. The Council seeks to encourage well-designed, high quality new development that helps sustain and /or create landscapes with a strong sense of place and local identity.

The landscape character of the whole Borough/District has been identified by an integrated Landscape Character Assessment, a technical study prepared in consultation with representatives of stakeholder groups. A Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document will be

⁸ Chris Blandford Associates and Alison Farmer Associates *op. cit.* p. 43

prepared to provide guidance on how the Landscape Character Assessment can be applied to help protect, conserve and enhance the landscape. Informed by biodiversity and historic landscape studies, the Study identifies and describes distinctive Landscape Character Areas throughout the Borough/District as a whole. Drawing on this study, the SPD will set out objectives and guidelines for conserving, enhancing and restoring the character of the Landscape Character Areas. This information can be used, along with other studies that provide part of the evidence base about landscape character, to inform considerations about the effects of development proposals on the distinctive character, qualities and sensitivities of landscapes and seascapes within the Borough/District.⁹

- 4.27 To ensure that consistent approach is adopted by all the relevant LPA's and to ensure that the core and development control policies are supported, they recommend the adoption of a simple methodology or toolkit within a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). They cite, as an example, the model used in another pilot Countryside Agency Demonstration project by High Peak Borough Council. This is outlined below:

‘Step One

Find which Landscape Character Type the site is in using the map on page 11. Look at the section of the SPD that deals with that Landscape Character Type. Are there any points that are particularly relevant to your site or proposal?

Step Two

Look at your site and its wider landscape setting. Think about how best to fit the development into the local landscape. You may find it helpful to look at surrounding development, especially within the same Landscape Character Type, to see how it relates to the landscape. Some key questions to consider are:

Where on the site?

What is the relationship of new development to the shape of the land? How does development relate to existing buildings, trees, habitats and other landscape features?

What shape of development?

Consider the height, width and depth of new development and the shape of any enclosures.

What type of development detail?

Consider the colours and textures of materials for the walls and roof of buildings and for hardstanding and other surfaces. Also consider the detailed design of buildings including the pattern and shape of windows and doors.

How to relate to the landscape setting?

What types of boundaries will help to tie development into the landscape? Would appropriate tree planting or habitat creation help to link development to the wider landscape?

Step Three

Use the material in the SPD to help with any of the issues above. Not all of it will be relevant. Select relevant aspects from the guidance that can be used to help in the design of your proposal.

Step Four

Prepare your planning application, including plans and sketches. Demonstrate how you have considered the above issues in your design. A concept statement will help to summarise the key issues.¹⁰

Summary

- 4.28 The overall direction suggested by the current national review and case studies is in favour of promoting the use of landscape character assessment to underpin the formulation and application of criteria based policies in Local Development Frameworks. They state that the

⁹ Chris Blandford Associates and Alison Farmer Associates *op. cit.* p. 68

¹⁰ *Ibid* p. 46 *Methodological Steps in the High Peak Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document*

landscape evaluation techniques used to designate many Local Landscape Designations are no longer accepted methodology and therefore the emphasis should now be on character assessment to determine landscape policies. As Guildford BC recently put it in their recent (2006) draft LDF:

'Landscape character is defined as "a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse." Essentially, landscape character is that which makes an area unique.'

- 4.29 Currently, authorities such as the High Peak are looking at a toolkit approach to ensure that future development responds to local landscape context by reinforcing aspects of local distinctiveness and vernacular style. However, the use of landscape character assessment and criteria based polices for planning control remains at an early stage.

CHAPTER 5: **APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY**

Desk Study Review

- 5.1 The review of background historic material into the origin of the AGLV suggested that the designation was based on a now outmoded qualitative assessment system of assigning values to component features of the landscape.
- 5.2 This approach was also in use in other authorities at the time as various studies into the origin of LLD's have found and alluded to in Chapter 4. This approach has now been superseded by Landscape Character Assessment which is in universal use and adopted by most Local Authorities across the UK as a proven method of assessing landscape character. This approach was used to assess the Surrey Hills AONB in 1997 now enshrined in CCP publication CCP530 and integrated into the recent Surrey Hills AONB management plan.
- 5.3 The LCA approach, however, makes no judgement on landscape quality but aims to map those distinct characteristics that distinguish one landscape area from another and contribute a sense of place. No attempt is made to distinguish between an area which has a higher scenic or landscape quality than another. As the emerging Guildford Borough Local Development Framework policy on landscape states (in draft form only in para 4.28):

5.7.32 *Landscape character is defined as “a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.” Essentially, landscape character is that which makes an area unique.*

- 5.4 As these findings suggest, it was not considered appropriate to assess the AGLV area using the original assessment template nor would a standard LCA approach suffice as it cannot be used to define a boundary area based on ‘quality’ rather than character. The system of deriving Criteria Based Policies (CBP) from the LCA still remains at the present time untested and unproven, though this situation is actively progressing. Added to which only Guildford Borough Council has carried out a Landscape Character Assessment of its area at the present time, although Reigate and Banstead are on the verge of doing so.
- 5.5 An adjustment in emphasis to the original brief for this study was therefore considered appropriate and the strong correlation between the AONB and AGLV, both in historic and landscape terms, provided the basis for the revised scope of the study.

Pilot Study

- 5.6 Following the desk study, a pilot area of AGLV land was selected for field study. As a precursor to this exercise, information on the area's geology, topography, land use and designation in Surrey County Councils county landscape assessment was assimilated and evaluated by the project team.
- 5.7 A route was plotted through the pilot area and potential viewpoints identified. Two surveyors, (in accordance with LCA guidelines to promote a consistent methodical approach), surveyed the area using checklists and record forms, and using photography as appropriate, to assess

the qualities of the AGLV, the AONB and also adjacent areas of non designated open countryside.

- 5.8 The results of this exercise established that a number of anomalies and inconsistencies existed. In some areas, there was no appreciable difference between the AONB and AGLV across the boundary between them. In others, there was little or no difference between the AGLV and the adjacent undesignated countryside. In some areas however, the change in landscape character could be perceived across the AGLV / undesignated boundaries. In some cases artificial boundaries such as railway lines had been used to demarcate the boundary between AGLV and open countryside. It was the strength of the connection between the AONB to the AGLV that provided the greatest influence for the change in emphasis of this study.
- 5.9 In particular the fact that the AONB had recently been assessed using the LCA system was a critical factor in this process.
- 5.10 The foundation of the revised approach to the assessment of the AGLV was the use of the AONB as a baseline for comparison. The key objective was to determine if the AGLV was the same, similar or different in character to that of neighbouring areas of the AONB. If it was, then a sufficiently robust argument could be advanced for its retention on the grounds that it matched the character of the AONB, a strategic designation of national importance, recently evaluated using contemporary LCA methodology. A more effective solution of course, if it was found that sufficient areas were of similar AONB quality, would be to argue for a review of the AONB boundary to include such areas.
- 5.11 The fieldwork approach, tested in the pilot area, was used as the most suitable process for quickly identifying the way in which different elements and features combine to create distinctive patterns in the landscape.

Methodology

- 5.12 To ensure that a consistent approach was adopted from the outset, the following methodology was devised, based on a field work appraisal process.
1. Compartments. The AGLV was divided up into compartments based on the areas of AGLV per district or borough. **See Fig 6.1**
 2. Checklists. Checklists were compiled using the key characteristics identified in each of the relevant AONB landscape character areas extracted from the CCP document of the Surrey Hills Landscape Assessment and combined with the more recent Surrey Hills AONB management plan. The checklist was supplemented with a standard perception checklist to provide comparisons on perceived character in each compartment. In the former case the characteristics of the baseline AONB character area would be compared with that of the AGLV on a sliding scale of: subtle, evident or conspicuous. A form is set out in **Table 5.1**
 3. Desk Study. A brief desk study for each AGLV compartment was undertaken prior to the fieldwork phase. This included relating the target area in terms of its designation under the Surrey County Council's Landscape Character Assessment, understanding its geology and topography and landscape pattern for geological and ordnance survey maps and finally identifying a route for the fieldwork together with locations for vantage points to undertake the checklist appraisal.
 4. Field work. Two experienced surveyors visited each compartment together commencing first with a visit to the baseline AONB area. Using the checklist to confirm the landscape

characteristics, a brief written description was compiled and a series of panoramic photographs taken. Armed with this information, a route was followed through the AGLV compartment and the same process repeated at a number of locations in each AGLV compartment.

5. Mapping. Following the fieldwork, each area was graded and assigned a colour on a map according to the following criteria:
 - Green = area of AGLV with identical characteristics to that of the AONB
 - Amber = area of AGLV with some characteristics to that of the AONB
 - Red = area with few or no characteristics in comparison to the AONB.

Table 5.1

Characteristic Features	WAONB	WAONB2	W6a	W6b
Gently undulating landform	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Steep sided ghylls	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Patchwork of irregular, medium fields and mature woodland	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Shaws and hedgerows	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Ponds, often of historic origin	✓	✓	✓	✓✓
Scattered settlements of hamlets and farmsteads	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Extensive areas of species rich woodland and commercial plantation	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
SUMMARY CHARACTERISTICS				
.	A mix of undulating woodland and farmland rising gradually to the Greensand ridge. The area is characterised by a small scale patchwork of fields within an irregular pattern of mature woodland. The wood often follows streams which have cut steep sided ghylls. Shaws and hedges predominate	As for AONB1 but more undulating, influence of Surrey Hills more pronounced and smaller fields but sense and good woodland coverage. Very high quality. Transitional quality between ornamental Hascombe Hills and more rolling wooded weald	As per AONB but less enclosed, more distant views but same topography, woodland cover and unity	Same as AONB but more densely wooded horizon - very good eg of wooded weald.
PERCEPTION				
Views	Intermittent	Distant	Distant	Intermittent
Scale	Medium	Small	Medium	Medium
Enclosure	Enclosed	Semi-enclosed	Semi-enclosed	Enclosed
Variety	Varied	Varied	Varied	Varied
Texture	Textured	Textured	Textured	Textured
Colour	Colourful	Colourful	Colourful	Colourful
Movement	Peaceful	Peaceful	Peaceful	Peaceful
Unity	Unified	Unified	Unified	Unified
Naturalness	farmed	farmed	farmed	farmed

✓ = subtle

✓✓ = evident

✓✓✓ = conspicuous

- 5.13 Findings are presented in Chapter 6 in map form on **Fig. 6.1** and in tabular form in **Table 6.1**. In each case a summary assessment was made for each compartment by drawing together the results of the checklists and photographs and evaluating them against the following criteria :
1. Homogeneity Units of landscape pattern, landform, geology and land use. The opposite end of the scale is represented by a fragmentary or interrupted landscape character.
 2. Concentration or density of features. The quality or density of a combined series of features influenced the grading. Generally the greater the correlation between the number of features possessed by both the AONB and AGLV, the greater the chance the area would be graded green. Clear exceptions existed in both AONB and AGLV areas in terms of small areas that deviated from the overall character but these were largely isolated occurrences.
 3. Condition The condition of the landscape also had an influence. A landscape that appears well managed or generally in good condition had a positive influence in the grading. There were few instances of poor or neglected management with the AONB but several areas within the AGLV.
 4. Strategic context If the area provided a visual buffer to or from the AONB, then this factor also contributed to the overall grading.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

- 6.1 The findings of the assessment process are presented in this section in the form of a table supplemented by a map defining each area in terms of its similarity in landscape character to that of the equivalent character area of the Surrey Hills AONB.
- 6.2 The table is constructed in a way that facilitates cross referencing to the appendix which contains the results of the fieldwork assessment including record forms and panoramic photographs. These are contained in **Appendix 1**.

Limitations

- 6.3 It should be emphasised that these findings are by their very nature overarching in extent and where any doubt as to the validity of the assessment was concerned then the area was given amber or red status which implies that more, detailed assessment work should be done. Also this study should not be regarded as a boundary study but sets the scene for a more through boundary review of the AONB. In the majority of the green areas it was quickly apparent, however, that the characteristics were readily identifiable as being similar in character to those of the AONB.
- 6.4 In the case of some amber areas, particularly those close to the edge of development, the difficulty of making rapid assessments in often complex urban fringe settings resulted in amber status rather than green or red status, unless the area was so radically different from that of the surrounding AONB in which case it was graded red.
- 6.5 Clearly a number of map based boundary anomalies exist in the definition of the AGLV. These are illustrated for example by the railway line boundary in Tandridge (compt. T1 and T4) and the Roman road boundary in Ockley (compt. M3). The landscape character in these cases has been identified as being similar across these boundaries but it is beyond the remit of this study to define the extent of this similarity as the land lies outside the AGLV boundary. In such circumstances these areas have been identified on **Fig 6.1** with bold arrows.
- 6.6 The smaller areas of AGLV, usually small pockets of land surrounding the major towns were omitted from this study due to the revised project scope and timing constraints.

Strategic Views

- 6.7 The assessment took on board the importance of the AGLV in the strategic views from the AONB. This was particularly important from the key viewpoints along the North Downs Way, a national trail route, and from the main viewpoints in the Greensand Hills. Viewpoints included Chinthurst Hill near Shalford, Hascombe Hill, Winterfold Hill, Holmbury Hill, Leith Hill and Limpsfield Chart in the Greensand area and the Hog's Back, Newlands Corner, Box Hill, Colley Hill near Reigate, Gravelly Hill near Caterham, and Titsey Hill on the chalk escarpment of the North Downs.

Findings

6.8 The table, **Table 6.1** below, contains a brief summary statement which summarizes the results of the preliminary desk study, fieldwork, and record sheets (**Appendix 1**) and should be read in conjunction with maps (**Appendix 2**) including **Fig 6.1** and photography, (**Appendix 3**) :

AGLV compt	Status	Rationale	Record ref no.	Panorama photo
WAVERLEY				
W1	Amber	Isolated pocket of AGLV with characteristics that are similar to that of the chalk downs of East Hampshire. North part good quality but southern half showing signs of deterioration with poor hedge management, abundant paddocks, larger fields etc. The connection, therefore, with the chalk landscape of the Surrey Hills AONB needs to be re-examined. The area around Farnham Castle is a stand alone country park.	WS4	W1a
W2	Green	Narrow river corridor of the Wey Valley. Enclosed intimate river landscape with dense wooded valley sides and level floodplain. Separate landscape character of high, coherent quality, but distinct from adjoining areas. Characteristic of the AONB Upper Wey Valley landscape character area.	WS1	
	Red	Up market housing estate in woodland plus large scale extensive mineral extraction on river valley. Few shared characteristics with the AONB Greensand Plateau character area	WS2	
W3	Green	Dockenfield. High quality landscape but not immediately connected to an area of associated AONB character. Typical though of Greensand Hill type landscape evident in Hascombe, Marthas Hill and Limpsfield. Dense collection of features leading to an identifiable high quality landscape with steep sided hills, valleys and streams, wooded hilltops, high hedges, small fields and isolated large houses.	WS3 WS8	W3
W4 /G3	Green Amber	High quality landscape associated with the Upper Wey river corridor. This is such an interrupted landscape on the outskirts of Godalming that defining areas of shared characteristics is an impossible task within the scope of the project. This area needs further detailed study. Some areas share characteristics of the neighbouring AONB but others do not.	WS4	

AGLV compt	Status	Rationale	Record ref no.	Panorama photo
W5	Green	Landform, field patterns and tree cover share same characteristics with the neighbouring Greensand Hills AONB character area.		
	Amber	Shares characteristics of the neighbouring Greensand Hills AONB but difficult to assess as it becomes more interrupted on the outskirts of Godalming.		
	Red	Very large open, flat fields, with no shared characteristics of the surrounding AONB Greensand Hills.		
W6	Green	This area is directly comparable to the Wooded Weald AONB surrounding Chiddingfold and matches or occasionally exceeds it in terms of scenic character. It possesses a similar landscape pattern arising from woodland, landform, field sizes and the underlying geology.	WS5	WAONB WAONB3 W6a,b W6c,d,e
	Amber	This area has number of shared characteristics with the Wooded Weald AONB but the landscape is more open and its condition in parts is beginning to break down. The influence of Dunsfold aerodrome is also a factor.		
	Red	The same applies to this area but the landscape has a flatter feel and is more unmanaged with commensurate affect on the condition of its component parts and land use.		
W7	Green	Similar in character to the Wooded Weald fringe of the AONB in most respects. Occasionally, small sporadic areas with larger field pattern and less managed hedges occur but generally this area is homogenous and directly comparable to that of the adjacent AONB Wooded Weald: Wonersh to Holmwood character area. This is characterised by a fusion of gently undulating topography and woodland cover which encloses small to medium sized fields.		W7a,b

AGLV compt	Status	Rationale	Record ref no.	Panorama photo
W8	Amber	Shares some of the characteristics of the Wooded Weald fringes on either side of the valley. Woodland and trees line the edges of fields, and small irregular fields and streams are prominent. There are two differences. Firstly, it is flatter and less undulating and is less unified, with more interruption, and secondly the presence of birch and slightly less management lessens its coherence.	WS6 WS7	W8
GUILDFORD				
G1	Amber	This area is fragmenting but remains an important part of, and buffer to, the Hogs Back. Apart from occasional areas of woodland, some key characteristics have been lost, producing a landscape of large arable fields, interspersed with smaller ones, and resulting in a landscape lacking overall unity. The ridgeline, however, is significant both in landscape and historic terms. Views out from this ridgeline are also important so this area is, arguably, a visual buffer to the AONB and should be considered on those grounds. Needs careful, more detailed assessment.	GS1	G1a
G2	Green	This area is open but the AONB is similarly open and there is no obvious break of slope between the AONB and the AGLV. The area has similar field sizes, geology, trees hedges, etc. The scenic quality of the AONB is not particularly high here and the AGLV is of comparable quality.	GS2	G2a
G3/W4	Green Amber	High quality landscape associated with the Upper Wey river corridor. This is such an interrupted landscape on the outskirts of Godalming that defining areas of shared characteristics is an impossible task within the scope of the project. This area needs further detailed study. Some areas share characteristics of the neighbouring AONB but others do not.	GS1	

AGLV compt	Status	Rationale	Record ref no.	Panorama photo
G4	Red	Two parcels of AGLV land that have now been developed as industrial/commercial developments.	GS3	G4a,c
	Green	This area, as it approaches Guildford, shares some of the attractive characteristics of the Wey Valley ie narrow floodplains, flat fields, meandering watercourses, meadows, wetland trees etc although the area around Broadford bridge is more disturbed, with rough grazing, and the background presence of the urban fringe, the area still retains a rural secluded character of high visual quality running into the heart of Guildford. The area around Chinthurst is a part of the Tillingbourne valley and the area around Shalford is part of Wey Valley. As such both share strong characteristics with the neighbouring AONB character areas.		
G5	Green	Shares the same characteristics of the neighbouring low Greensand Hills of the Tillingbourne valley	GS3	
MOLE VALLEY				
M1	Green	Rolling landform and well defined chalk valley with large blocks of woodland. Identical to surrounding AONB in character.	MVS1	M1b
M2	Amber	The foothills of the chalk scarp have a mixed character. Some characteristics remain such as individual trees and low hedges and medium sized fields but increased development, new blocks of woodland planting and variable land use contribute to an incipient feel of fragmentation. However, the areas key role lies in its buffering capacity to the adjoining AONB North Downs character area, and in its affect on views into and out of the AONB.	MVS1	M2a,b
M3	Green	Similar in character to the Wooded Weald fringe of the AONB in almost all respects. Occasionally, small sporadic areas with larger field pattern and less managed hedges occur but generally this area is homogenous and directly comparable to that of the adjacent AONB Wooded Weald: Wonersh to Holmwood character area. This is characterised by a fusion of gently undulating topography and woodland cover which encloses small to medium sized fields. The woodland cover in this area is at its most concentrated giving the landscape a highly intimate nature.	MVS2	MAONB

AGLV compt	Status	Rationale	Record ref no.	Panorama photo
REIGATE AND BANSTEAD				
R1	Green	Reigate Heath is a discrete pocket of high quality landscape although isolated in this area of the AGLV and similar to the character of adjacent heathland, e.g Banstead Heath.	RS2	
	Amber	There are strong elements of topography, irregular fields, hedges, parkland and woodland shaws, but these are not uniformly present throughout the area.		
R2	Green	There is a golf course within the wooded heath, but it retains characteristic heathland features eg heather/pines/birch etc. Most of the area is wooded or birch type heath, similar to adjacent Headley Heath AONB.	RS1	R2
	Amber	A less distinctive, more open landscape pattern predominates in this area, in comparison to that of the neighbouring AONB. The woodland is smaller more unmanaged and evidence of equestrian activity is ubiquitous. The landform pattern of interlocking valleys is also less pronounced.		
R3	Green	Strong chalk valley system with abundant woodland on ridges, steep sided slopes with generally well managed pasture and sunken lanes. Often wooded with a strong sense of place similar to AONB. Chalk downland character is strong.	RS1	R3 R3a
	Amber	The urban fringes of Banstead and Kingswood combine to influence the character of this landscape which although has the same underlying topography and geology as the adjacent AONB has suffered from a lack of management in recent years such that natural regeneration is taking hold in fields and the hedges remain unmanaged. The landscape pattern is on the verge of fragmenting as a result.		
	Red	Now almost wholly occupied by development and bounded by the M25 and railway.		
EPSOM and EWELL				
EE1	Amber	A less distinctive, more open landscape pattern predominates in this area, in comparison to that of the neighbouring AONB. The woodland is smaller more unmanaged and evidence of equestrian activity is ubiquitous. The landform pattern of interlocking		

		valleys is also less pronounced		
TANDRIDGE				
T1	Green	This area possesses topography, ancient woodland, Surrey Hills style vernacular houses, well managed coherent field patterns, and sunken lanes. The Greensand Hill outcrop provides a coherent unified backbone to the area.	TS2	
T2	Green	Two parcels of AGLV are presently wooded with similar characteristics to the woodland in the chalk dip slope of the AONB. No difference in character.	TS1	TAONB
T3	Green	Northern dip slope with well wooded chalk downland. Very similar in characteristic to the neighbouring North Downs AONB character area		TAONB T3a,b T3c
	Amber	More exposed, and less wooded, than the North Downs AONB. Evidence of more fragmentation and issues such as fly tipping noted.		
	Red	Chalk plateau. Small percentage of woodland but different character, often birch heath and bracken. Recreational elements such as golf courses/horses/paddocks are prevalent together with urban fringe characteristics such as scrappy fences, unmanaged fields, fly tipping, and plethora of signs.		
T4	Green	Identical characteristics to neighbouring Greensand Hill AONB, with wooded ridges and tiered slopes. Patchwork of small fields and mature individual trees and scattered settlement within the wooded setting.	TS2	T4 T4b T4c,d
	Green	Similar in character to the Wooded Weald: Womersley to Holmwood AONB character area. Intricate, rich pattern of woodland shaws and irregular small fields and occasional small streams and network of lanes.		
	Red	New housing estate in AGLV	TS3	
	Amber	Large open flat agricultural landscape with little woodland or wooded shaws.		

CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The findings of the report support the link between the AGLV and the AONB and the recommendations set out below, point to a number of different options that can be adopted by members of SPOA. The options vary from a universal policy spread across all authorities of reviewing the AONB boundary to more area specific proposals.

7.2 **1) It is recommended that an urgent review of the AONB boundary takes place and that the AGLV should be retained until such a review has taken place. There should be no attempt to remove the AGLV designation from any areas until the case for the AONB has been considered and thereafter only once further assessment has been carried out.**

Rationale: The correlation between certain specific areas of the AGLV and the adjoining AONB is sufficiently strong in terms of landscape character for a boundary review to be recommended. This applies particularly to the Weald but also, in key areas, to the chalk valley landscapes of the North Downs and to the Greensand Hills of Tilburstow. Further detailed investigation will undoubtedly be required but this study has identified those areas which should be targeted for inclusion with minimal assessment.

7.3 **2) When the AONB is reviewed it is recommended that the green areas are capable of being included without further assessment. Amber and red areas should be the subject of more detailed assessment.**

Rationale: The green areas on **Fig 6.1** represent those areas with the highest degree of shared characteristics in comparison to those of the, usually adjacent, AONB. Often the boundary between AONB on the ground appears seamless with little or no change in character or characteristics. As a result they are recommended for inclusion with a minimal amount of further assessment. The amber shaded areas on the other hand, share some, but not all of the characteristics of the parent AONB character area. This could be for a number of reasons:

- the landscape character has been interrupted by development or depleted by lack of management or altered through a change in land use
- the area surrounds urban development making the process of drawing the boundary difficult and outside the scope of this study
- the area is difficult to access making character assessment difficult
- there are fewer characteristics of the AONB to merit a green grading

These areas require more assessment and comparison so that the boundary can be drawn more accurately and the assessment will undoubtedly need to be more intensive.

7.4 **3) Following the AONB review, any AGLV area that is left outside the newly defined AONB should then fall within the scope of a district wide LCA / CBP process and supported by a relevant LDD (Local Development Document). If funds are not available for this process then each former AGLV area should be the subject of a targeted LCA /CPB approach.**

Rationale: If the AONB boundary is reviewed then it is likely that not all the area of the current AGLV will be included within the expanded boundaries. Ideally these areas should be assessed as part of a district wide LCA process as undertaken by Guildford BC and planned by Reigate

and Banstead BC. If funds are not available for this process then consideration should be given to undertaking a targeted LCA for these areas and their immediate surroundings. The net result should be the establishment of criteria based policies supported by a Local Development Document (LDD) which are integrated into each Local Planning Authorities emerging LDF. The LDD could contain guidance for development control planners and applicants on how LCA information can be used to support the criteria based policies contained in core policy documents, perhaps similar to the guidance contained in the High Peak Borough Council's toolkit approach (see section 4).

- 7.5 **4) Until the AONB is reviewed (and we recommend that this should be a priority given the inconsistencies that this study has revealed) we believe that this study has provided a sufficient evidence base for the retention of the AGLV designation for the green areas in their current form, but more assessment work is required for the amber and red areas, to establish whether they are sufficiently robust to be retained as AGLV. The remaining areas should then be subject to a targeted LCA /CBP approach.**

Rationale: Until the AONB is reviewed, sufficient evidence has been gathered for the green areas of the AGLV to be retained in their current form. If this is the case, consideration should be given to extending the AONB management plan policies that are relevant to each area concerned. The policies contained in the Action Plan which deal with Landscape Protection and Enhancement, Enjoyment and Understanding, and Partnership and Coordination could be adapted and extended to cover these areas, thereby meeting the concerns in PPS 7 that current LLDs do not go far enough in terms of delivering rural enhancements or sustainable development. Amber and red areas will require further assessment to establish whether they have sufficient characteristics to be included in the retained AGLV. Once this assessment has been completed then the remaining areas should be the subject of a targeted LCA / CBP process as described in 3 above and linked to the development of a LDD

- 7.6 **5) Strategic views. The key viewpoints in the Surrey Hills AONB should be mapped and policies developed which protect the existing high quality visual character of these views from damage by inappropriate development.**

Rationale: Whilst most of the key viewpoints are located within the Surrey Hills AONB their zones of visual influence often lie within the AGLV or open countryside. The condensed perspective afforded from such vantage points, which are universally located on high ground, often conceals development and provide the impression of uninterrupted countryside. Any development proposals which might damage this impression and adversely affect the quality of the view should be given careful consideration.

- 7.7 **6) The local authorities are recommended to take account of the results of this study in undertaking further assessment work and in targeting actions in particular areas.**

Rationale: In view of the relatively broad brush approach of this study, more detailed assessments of the red and amber areas may provide further information that would justify elevating some red areas to amber or green and elevating some amber areas to green. Targeted actions may help to enhance or improve neglected or degraded landscapes