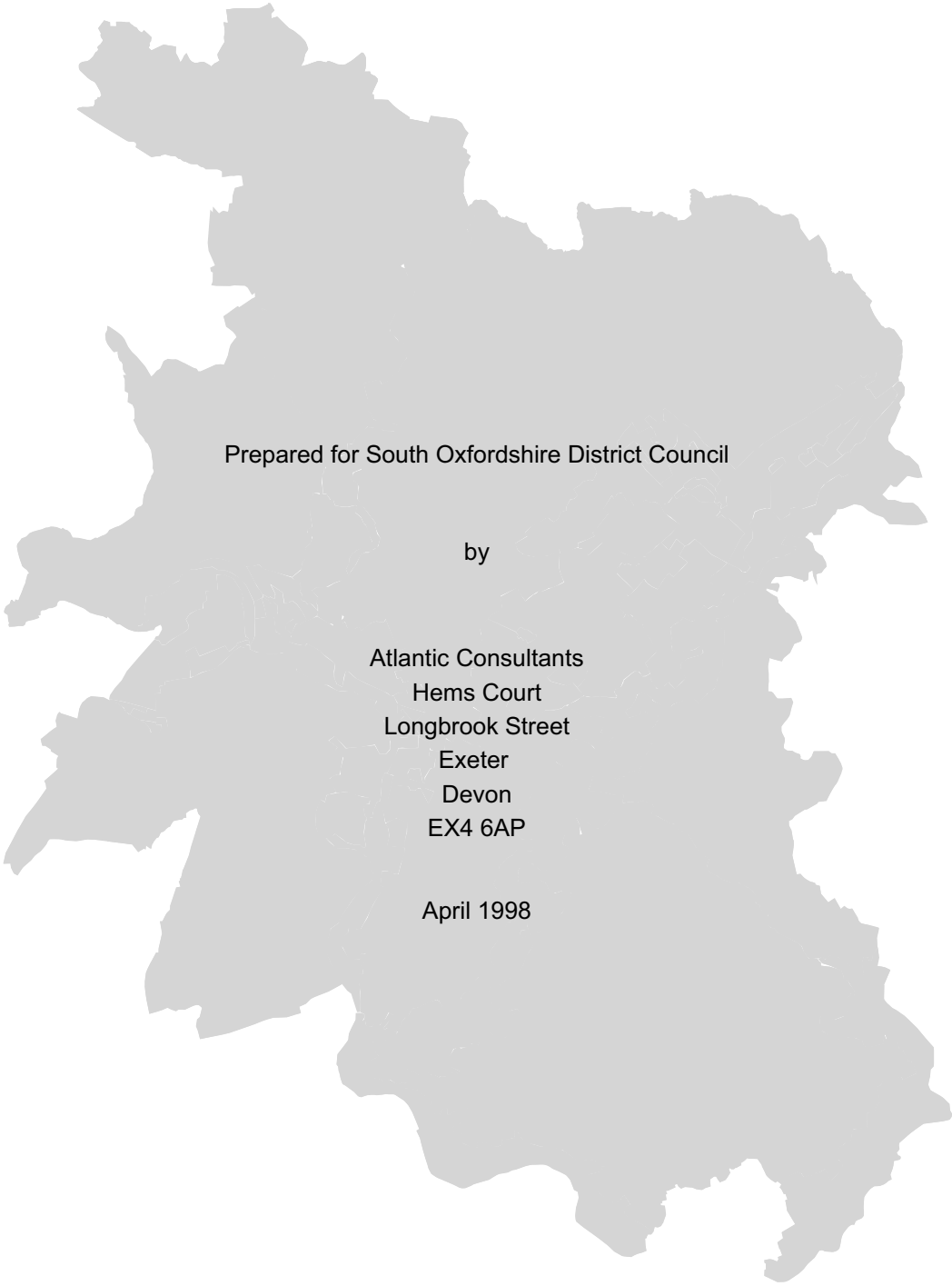


# SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT



Prepared for South Oxfordshire District Council

by

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SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

# PREFACE

## Preface

The South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment was undertaken by Atlantic Consultants on behalf of the Council in 1998. Public consultation was carried out by the Council for a six week period between 21 June and 2 August 2002, at the same time as the consultation on the First Draft Deposit South Oxfordshire Local Plan, which includes a landscape character-based policy framework. The consultation document was widely distributed and copies were sent to parish and town councils, amenity groups, societies and individuals. Full details of the consultation are available on request.

The Council considered its response to the comments made and resolved to make a number of changes to the Assessment which are listed in the erratum. The Assessment was adopted as supplementary planning guidance with these changes on 24 July 2003.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

## GENERAL TERMS

### Balance and proportion

The relative quantities and relationship of different elements within the landscape which can affect its aesthetic qualities.

### Character

A distinct pattern or combination of characteristics that occurs consistently in a particular landscape.

### Characteristic

An element or group of elements that are typical of a particular landscape

### Dipslope

The gently sloping backslope of an escarpment landform

### Diversity

The number of landscape components and the way in which they inter-relate, creating complexity or uniformity in the landscape.

### Enclosure

The density and arrangement of structural elements in the landscape (eg. landform, trees, hedges, woods, walls) so that they enclose space and create visual and physical containment

### Escarpment

A distinctive whaleback-shaped hill or landform unit (typically of chalk) which comprises a steep face and gently sloping dipslope.

### Evaluation

The process of weighing up and attaching a non-monetary, subjective value to landscape by reference to specified criteria.

### Floodplain

The very flat land adjacent to a river or watercourse, generally underlain by alluvium and which would be naturally prone to flooding without specific flood alleviation measures (NB this definition is broader than that used by the

Environment Agency to define the Statutory Flood Plain).

### Heritage values

Features of archaeological, cultural or ecological significance.

### Enhancement strategy

The most appropriate type of landscape improvement or management (conservation, repair, restoration or reconstruction) based on intrinsic landscape quality and condition and enhancement needs.

### Intrusive influences

Features (eg. buildings, structures, electricity pylons) and non-agricultural land uses which are out of keeping with the typical, unspoilt or distinctive character of the landscape.

### Landcover

Combinations of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface.

### Landform

Combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land surface.

### Landscape assessment

An umbrella term used to encompass all the many different ways of looking at, describing and analysing landscape.

### Landscape character area

A geographic area with a consistent character or coherent identity.

### Landscape structure

Structural components of the landscape, eg hedgerows, trees, woods, walls etc.

### Landscape type

A generic term for a landscape with a consistent character, resulting from different combinations of landform and landcover.

### Landscape vernacular

The combination of elements or components which are locally distinctive to a particular area of landscape.

### Linear settlements

Settlements where buildings are typically arranged in a linear form (eg. along a road, ridgeline or valley bottom).

### Local distinctiveness

The special character of a place or area which gives it a particular and recognisable identity.

### Nucleated settlements

Settlements where buildings are typically arranged in a nucleated or clustered form around a central feature (eg. around a village green, common, church, road junction etc.).

### Riparian

A character which is specifically associated with rivers.

### Rolling

Landform which is characterised by pronounced topography of soft hills.

### Scale

The typical size, scale or grain of elements and patterns within the landscape, which have a close bearing on such factors as balance, proportion and enclosure.

### Scenic quality

A subjective judgement of the aesthetic appeal of different landscape types, influenced by such factors as balance, proportion, diversity, harmony, unspoilt character, cultural preferences etc.

### Sense of place (or 'Genius Loci')

The essential character and spirit of a landscape or area (Genius Loci means literally 'spirit of the place').

### Sensitivity to change

A subjective overall assessment of landscape sensitivity and vulnerability to change, based on a combination of factors including landscape quality and visual sensitivity.

### Settlement pattern

The typical pattern of settlement, eg. scattered evenly across the countryside or concentrated within one area or along a particular line (eg. valley side).

### Suburbanisation

A process whereby the intrusion of more urban land uses or features gradually erodes the rural character of landscape and settlements to produce a 'suburban' character.

### Undulating

Landform which is characterised by gentle topography of shallow hills and valleys.

### Visual sensitivity

The degree to which the landscape is open or enclosed by landform or vegetation and therefore exposed to views.

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## Relevant experience

Atlantic Consultants is a professional consultancy with specialist expertise in town and country planning, landscape architecture, urban design, ecology, environmental planning and economic development.

The team responsible for producing the South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment includes acknowledged experts in this field, who have been involved in the development of landscape assessment methodologies for many years. We had a significant input into the original (CCP423) and recently up-dated (CAX 84) guidance on landscape character assessment prepared for the Countryside Commission/Agency and studies undertaken by our team members are included in these documents as examples of good practice.

This strong theoretical basis for landscape assessment is matched by our very extensive practical experience. This includes a large number of landscape assessments undertaken for local authorities, at both county and district level, to assist in the course of Local Plan reviews or issues relating to landscape designations. At the county level, we have prepared assessments which provide a framework for landscape policies and designations within county Structure Plans. Team members have also been responsible for a large number of district-wide landscape character assessments, including assessments for Cherwell District and West Oxfordshire, which have been prepared specifically to provide an input to Local Plan reviews. They have all involved the characterisation of the district into distinctive areas, evaluation of landscape quality and the preparation of planning and management guidelines in accordance with best practice guidance.

Consideration of the issue of local designations - both as a matter of policy and in defining appropriate boundaries - has been a key element of our work in many areas. We are, therefore, very familiar with both the policy background and the practical application of designation and boundary criteria, as well as Government guidance and current thinking on the appropriateness of local designations or character-based approaches to landscape policies in development plans. Several of our projects have included more detailed appraisal of urban fringe areas and the ability of landscapes to accommodate change, in order to guide planning decisions relating to development around the fringes of settlements.

We have extensive experience in the assessment of landscape and visual impacts and played a central role in the preparation of the original guidelines on this subject on behalf of the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment. We have undertaken several development capacity and urban expansion studies which have involved assessment of landscape implications and have informed the identification of appropriate development options. Other projects have specifically involved advising on the ability of different landscapes to accommodate development and the preparation of design guidance, to influence the form and character of new development in order to reinforce local distinctiveness.

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