



The Treatment of Landscape, Biodiversity, Access & Recreation in Sixteen Provisional Local Transport Plans

Research on behalf of the Countryside Agency and English Nature.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

In July 2005, local authorities submitted provisional Local Transport Plans (LTPs) with the final versions due in March 2006. This report, commissioned by the Countryside Agency's Landscape, Access and Recreation (LAR) division and English Nature (EN), takes the opportunity to evaluate sixteen LTPs (two from each region) in their provisional form and provide an assessment on how landscape, biodiversity, access and recreation issues have been treated. The evaluation will enable LAR and EN to highlight to the Department for Transport (DfT) good practice, identify weaknesses in the provisional LTPs and influence the way these issues are dealt with in the final LTPs. JMP were also advised by landscape and biodiversity experts – LDA Design; and sport and leisure consultants – Continuum Leisure.

The LTP process has evolved since the previous round of LTPs in 2000. The second round of LTPs has seen the introduction of:

- Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs);
- Accessibility Strategies; and
- Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs) – required in 2007.

This has significantly broadened the LTP's scope, meaning that [LTP officers are required to understand a wider range of disciplines and balance competing priorities between them, in addition to developing an LTP that responds sensitively to the different geographical areas within its boundary](#). This review recognises that overall, local authorities have responded well to the new demands of LTP2; any weaknesses or omissions identified by the review should be understood within the context of the difficult task set.

Evaluating the Selected LTPs

To evaluate the sixteen LTPs, an Evaluation Framework was established that contained a range of elements within the four themes of landscape, biodiversity, access and recreation. The Evaluation Framework was set up to quantitatively assess whether the LTPs demonstrate 'awareness', 'action' and 'deliverability' of each element and to qualitatively comment on any issues that arise.

Consideration of Landscape and Biodiversity

In the majority of LTPs assessed, the need to protect and enhance landscape and biodiversity was implied through general statements such as 'improving the environment' or more specifically 'improving the natural and built environments'. However, more detailed or site-specific acknowledgement of protecting actual landscape value and biodiversity were identified in only a few LTPs and mainly in those with a strong priority towards the environment e.g. areas that include National Parks and where the beauty of the environment is a strong economic driver.

In the main, the LTPs assessed were weak in acknowledging specifically designated areas or in considering avoidance or mitigation measures relating to the likely impacts of the LTP. These issues were often considered in the SEA (although not all of the sixteen LTPs selected had a full SEA available), but the SEA findings were not fed into the provisional LTP. [A key finding from this study is a concern that lessons learnt from the new SEA process are not being carried through to the main LTP document](#). This could result in negative environmental impacts being identified in the SEA but not being addressed in the LTP. This is a particular issue where major schemes are concerned.

Consideration of Access and Recreation

The need for Accessibility Strategies in the current round of LTPs and the future requirement for Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs) in 2007 resulted in many local authorities considering rural access issues. The focus of improving rights of way has many benefits in addition to access to the countryside including health, recreation, sport and quality of life. However, there was understandably a tendency for LTPs to focus on the key services identified by the Department for Transport e.g. employment, education and health with [the benefits of sustainable access to the countryside and the knock-on benefits to landscape, biodiversity and quality of life being largely overlooked.](#)

Examples of Best Practice

The following are examples of best practice identified during the evaluation process:

Landscape and Biodiversity

- Herefordshire's LTP uses the Landscape Character Assessment for the County to provide a landscape context for its LTP policies.
- Shropshire's LTP has specific aims for conserving and improving biodiversity, such as:
 - "Roadside verge and hedgerow cutting practices which enhance habitats and minimise wildlife impacts;
 - Taking opportunities to create new habitats as part of improvement schemes e.g. habitat for bats and sand martins in replacement bridge structures;
 - Reducing severance and possibilities of road collisions through tunnel provisions such as badger tunnels in upgraded or new highway infrastructure;
 - Minimising winter salt use to reduce impacts from salt run-off on habitats".
- The Isle of Wight's LTP names the protected species present in the island, for example, it states that "the island is the national stronghold for the red squirrel and is of national significance for the dormouse, water vole and barn owl".
- Lancashire's LTP includes a section that describes the links between its LTP and the SEA of the LTP; the LTP is evidently informed by the SEA.

Access and Recreation

- Cumbria's LTP recognises the importance of access to the countryside in terms of tourism and the County's economy. It states "good management of access to and within the countryside should make an increasing and positive contribution to the sustainability of the environment, communities and the economy".
- North Yorkshire's LTP has established a Sustainable Tourism Strategy which seeks to promote its tourism industry in a way that minimises its impact on the environment.
- Norfolk's LTP2 includes area strategies for the Broads and the North Norfolk Coast AONB which actively encourage sustainable tourism within these sensitive areas.

Summary

A message for all local authorities is that it is important in the final LTP submissions to ensure that the SEA, RoWIPs and Accessibility Strategies are integrated so that the strong policies and focus of each are fed into the policies and actions in the main LTP. Otherwise, there is a danger that environmental and access elements are forgotten as the five-year span of the LTP progresses.

With this in mind, there may be a need for further guidance from the Department for Transport on the authority of these different documents and how they relate to each other. If the LTP is an umbrella document with authority over the others, the SEA, Accessibility Strategy and RoWIP need to be fully integrated within the LTP, and the LTP needs to state how it has considered and responded to the contents of its 'daughter' documents. If each plan has equal status within the LTP process, there is a question as to how one team will have the ability and resources to manage all the implications of the findings within the separate documents. LTP policy makers and practitioners need to ensure that a strategic vision with complementary aims develops from this set of separate documents.

EN and CA (LAR) welcome the expansion of the LTP process to include RoWIPs, accessibility strategies and SEA as this reflects the impacts that transport planning has on access, the environment and on social inclusion. How this expanded agenda is effectively managed over the next five years and beyond is an important issue for policy and decision makers to debate.

1 Introduction

Background to the Study

- 1.1 In October 2005, JMP Consulting were commissioned by the Countryside Agency's Landscape, Access and Recreation (LAR) Division and English Nature to evaluate sixteen provisional Local Transport Plans (LTPs) in order to evaluate their effectiveness at meeting landscape, biodiversity, access and recreation objectives.
- 1.2 The Countryside Agency (CA) is the statutory body working to make the quality of life better for people in the countryside and the quality of the countryside better for everyone.
- 1.3 English Nature (EN) is the statutory body that champions the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and natural features in England. It advises the government on all aspects of nature conservation.
- 1.4 In October 2006, a new organisation - *Natural England* - will be created with responsibility to conserve and enhance the value and beauty of England's natural environment and promote access, recreation and public well-being for the benefit of today's and future generations.
- 1.5 The creation of the new organisation, *Natural England*, has already begun, with English Nature (EN), the Landscape, Access and Recreation division of the Countryside Agency (LAR), and the Rural Development Service (RDS) working together as partners. From April 2005, this natural partnership will work together to deliver joint outcomes and pave the way for *Natural England* whilst continuing to deliver their separate and respective statutory duties.
- 1.6 For this piece of research, the focus of the evaluation of the provisional LTPs is on the objectives of LAR and EN. These combined objectives can be defined as:
 - Conserving and protecting our natural landscapes and all their characteristics;
 - Encouraging awareness of, access to and enjoyment of the countryside and green spaces;
 - Achieving the sustainable management and use of the countryside; and
 - Ensuring that future generations can enjoy and benefit from a wealth of wildlife as a major part of their quality of life.

Purpose of the Evaluation

- 1.7 The CA and EN's transport work includes advising and contributing towards national transport policy, Regional Transport Strategies, Local Transport Plans (LTPs) and responding to selected transport studies, proposals and individual schemes.
 - 1.8 In July 2005, local authorities submitted provisional LTPs and the final versions are due in March 2006. LAR and EN therefore wanted to take the opportunity to evaluate LTPs in their provisional form and provide an assessment on how landscape, biodiversity, access and recreation issues have been treated. The evaluation will enable LAR and EN to highlight to the Department for Transport (DfT) good practice, identify inadequacies in the provisional LTPs and influence the way these issues are dealt with in the final LTPs.
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Selected LTPs

1.9 **Table 1.1** shows the LTPs selected for evaluation.

T 1.1: Selected LTPs by Region

Region	LTP
East Midlands	Derbyshire
	Lincolnshire
Yorkshire & Humberside	North Yorkshire
	West Yorkshire
North West	Cumbria
	Lancashire
South West	Wiltshire
	Dorset
North East	Durham
	Northumberland
East	Bedfordshire
	Norfolk
South East	Kent
	Isle of Wight
West Midlands	Herefordshire
	Shropshire

Project Outputs

- 1.10 This report provides a summary of the evaluation of the sixteen LTPs and is intended to be read by the client and key decision makers within the Local Transport Plan process such as the Department for Transport and Government Offices.
- 1.11 A key aim of the project is also to provide those Local Authorities, selected for the study, with recommendations on additional improvements that can be made to their LTP. In addition to this report there are therefore sixteen individual reports providing feedback to each local authority on their LTP and its consideration of landscape, biodiversity, access and recreation issues.
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2 Policy Review

2.1 To ensure a full understanding of the priorities of LAR and EN a desk-based review was conducted. This enabled the evaluation of the LTPs to be set in context. Crucial to this work was a review of the various policy documents and research projects. Key documents reviewed included:

- Landscape Access and Recreation Division: Transport Statement;
- English Nature's 2005 Environmentally Sustainable Transport Position Statement; and
- DfT Guidance on the Development of LTP2 including guidance on Accessibility Planning and Rights of Way Improvement Plans

Summary of LAR's Transport Statement

2.2 Transport has a profound impact on the landscape and on access to the countryside. Transport corridors form a major part of the landscape and visual environment and often represent one of the most lasting human interventions in the landscape. Without appropriate design, siting and management, transport infrastructure and the traffic it carries can undermine landscape character and local distinctiveness. In reverse, well planned transport strategies can positively contribute to the quality of the landscape and visual environment, the pattern of the landscape, sustainability, quality of life, cultural landscapes etc. Transport also makes the countryside accessible linking our towns and cities with rural recreation and leisure opportunities. Traffic levels and speeds however determine whether people feel safe to walk, cycle or drive to the countryside. LAR's transport principles include:

- Landscape quality and character should be protected from the negative impacts of the transport network;
- Changes to transport infrastructure should respect the character of all landscapes and conserve and enhance the best;
- Transport should contribute to sustainability by underpinning high quality spatial development;
- Communities should be included in delivering transport in the countryside;
- People should be able to travel around the countryside by low impact modes such as walking and cycling;
- Transport should facilitate rural recreation without damaging landscape quality and character; and
- Transport should help people of all ages and abilities to access and enjoy the countryside.

Summary of EN's Environmentally Sustainable Transport Position Statement

2.3 English Nature recommend a set of principles to guide future transport policy. These include:

- Reducing the need to travel, by improving access to local services and green space and making the most of existing transport networks;
 - Reducing pollution from cars and aircraft in particular, by encouraging people to use more environmentally friendly transport and sharply increasing the cost of fuel;
 - Making sure all types of transport pay their full environmental costs; and
 - Reducing the negative effects of transport as far as possible by including in any plans measures to protect wildlife, habitats and landscapes.
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2.4 This can be achieved by:

- Planning and designing transport developments in ways that benefit the environment as well as society and the economy;
- Avoiding damage to areas that are important for nature conservation, with full compensation for any unavoidable effects; and
- Developing transport systems that benefit the environment, especially in environmentally sensitive areas.

DfT Guidance for LTPs

2.5 The DfT Guidance for LTPs was reviewed to establish what Government guidance was made concerning the four themes. Below is a summary of DfT guidance on landscape, biodiversity, access and recreation.

Landscape

- “Local authorities should ensure that policies and schemes mitigate adverse effects on the landscape, and, where possible, take opportunities to ensure transport measures actually improve landscape quality”.
- “LTPs should take into account both the statutory purposes and particular transport needs of designated areas (e.g. National Parks, SSSIs and AONB) and the need for design standards that take account of environmental concerns.”

2.6 “Tourism is particularly important to the rural economy; where appropriate LTP2’s should set out plans for supporting the industry that include protecting sensitive areas from inappropriate traffic”.

Biodiversity

2.7 “In planning and delivering local transport schemes, local transport authorities should consider how their LTPs might enhance, or adversely affect biodiversity. Local transport authorities should also consider how their activities link to the biodiversity priorities and objectives that feed into their community strategy”.

Accessibility and Recreation

2.8 “Improving accessibility makes a valuable contribution to national objectives and targets in other sectors, including: - improved access to countryside leisure and exercise opportunities”

2.9 “To ensure that local transport planning is making the most effective use of the rights of way network, in both urban and rural areas – particularly in delivering better networks for walkers and cyclists”.

2.10 “The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced a duty for all local highway authorities to prepare a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) by 2007”.

Policy Summary

2.11 These policies were taken into account and informed the development of the Evaluation Framework.

3 Evaluating the Selected LTPs

Development of the Evaluation Framework

- 3.1 In developing an evaluation framework, two aspects needed to be kept in mind:
- To develop an evaluation framework that accurately represents the priorities of LAR and EN; and
 - To produce a consistent evaluation of the sample provisional LTPs.
- 3.2 The policy review formed the basis of a workshop held with experts in the fields of landscape, biodiversity, access and recreation. This ensured that our evaluation of the provisional LTPs accurately and robustly considered these different themes.
- 3.3 The Advisory Panel finalised the Evaluation Framework agreeing the elements within the themes that should be evaluated. **Table 3.1** shows the elements of the four themes.

T 3.1: Themes and Elements

Landscape	Biodiversity	Access	Recreation
1. General Policy Statement 2. Designated Sites/ Protected Sites National Parks AONBs Heritage Coasts Community Forest World Heritage Sites Greenbelt Areas of Local Landscape Value Registered Parks & Gardens Conservation Areas Historic battlefields 3. Other Key Considerations Landscape Character Landscape Strategy Distinctiveness Design Road hierarchy/Legibility Lighting Tranquillity Detailing Sustainability Cross-boundary issues	1. General Policy Statement 2. Designated / Protected Sites and Habitats Sites of European/ International importance National Nature Reserves (NNRs) Sites of Special Scientific Interest Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation/ Geological Sites Important hedgerows/ Ancient Woodland/ Veteran Trees Legally protected/ Section 74/ LBAP species 3. Other Key Considerations Habitat fragmentation Wildlife casualties Mitigation / compensation for unavoidable effects Indirect impacts	1. General Policy Statement 2. Other Key Considerations Pedestrian access Equestrian access Cycle access Disabled access PT user access Quiet Lanes, Green Ways and Green Infrastructure Sustainable Tourism Rights of Way Improvement Plans Freight	1. General Policy Statement 2. Designated Sites Local Parks Country Parks National trails Spotlight National Nature Reserves Green Grids Cycle Networks Woodland and forests Lakes and water 3. Other Key Considerations Areas of Educational Value Health Sport Quality of Life Green space/ open spaces Employment

- 3.4 The Evaluation Framework was set up to quantitatively assess whether the LTPs demonstrate ‘awareness’, ‘action’ and ‘deliverability’ of each element and to qualitatively comment on any issues that arise. This provides an audit trail and justification of the comments within this document. The full Evaluation Framework is contained in **Appendix A** for information.

Process of Evaluation

- 3.5 LTPs are complex documents with rural and urban issues spread through the document. In addition, although they are produced to comply with DfT guidance, the way they are ordered and organised is different for each Local Authority. The methodology was therefore systematic to ensure all elements of the LTP were evaluated including the main body of the LTP, the Accessibility Strategy, and any available SEA and RoWIP.
- 3.6 An initial review highlighted key areas of each LTP through a keyword search. This resulted in a document being produced that:
- Page referenced issues relating to the countryside within the LTP;
 - Page referenced issues relating to access to the countryside;
 - Page referenced RoWIP information;
 - Page referenced key elements of the SEA;
 - Page referenced Major Transport Schemes; and
 - Any consultation letters to the local authority from LAR or EN relating to the LTP.
- 3.7 Following the initial review each LTP was evaluated using the Evaluation Framework for its consideration of the elements that made up the landscape, biodiversity, access and recreation themes. The elements were assessed on their awareness, action and deliverability. The scoring was justified in the framework with a qualitative explanation and page references. As part of the evaluation 'highlights' were identified as well as key omissions within each LTP. Table 3.2 presents a summary of this information.
- 3.8 The completed Evaluation Frameworks were used as the basis for individual reports to be sent to each local authority containing recommendations and a checklist to assist in the completion of the final LTP submission.

In Summary

- 3.9 **Table 3.2** summarises the key findings from the LTPs.
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T 3.2: Summary Table

LTP	Strengths	Weaknesses
Bedfordshire	The Recreation and Access themes are catered for through the Rights of Way and Outdoor Access Improvement Plan.	<p>The LTP does not discuss or refer to the findings of the SEA and both documents are weak in detail on landscape and biodiversity.</p> <p>The LTP emphasises the 'growth' of the county due to the growth area allocation and neglects many of the environmental issues that this may bring. Could focus on actions and deliverability of solutions that may improve the environment e.g. green spaces, recreation and access to and in the rural fringe.</p>
Cumbria	<p>The LTP area comprises the Lake District, so good awareness is shown of access, landscape and recreation.</p> <p>The LTP contains a Countryside Access Strategy.</p> <p>The LTP shows an awareness of the importance of landscape to design of schemes and states use of sustainable materials and methods.</p> <p>The SEA identifies landscape and biodiversity issues associated with highway improvement works.</p>	<p>The LTP shows no awareness of equestrian access to the countryside.</p> <p>The SEA identifies landscape and biodiversity impacts of highway improvements, but these are not referred to in the LTP.</p>
Derbyshire	<p>The LTP provides a good example of how an LTP and SEA should be integrated. The LTP references the SEA throughout. The SEA highlights LTP actions as outcomes of evaluation.</p> <p>The LTP indicates that landscape and biodiversity are integral to the design stage of transport schemes.</p> <p>The LTP demonstrates a good awareness of the health benefits of sustainable transport.</p> <p>The LTP demonstrated a good awareness of Sustainable Tourism.</p>	<p>The review has not included any of the major schemes as these were not available at the time of review. There will undoubtedly be landscape and biodiversity issues associated with these schemes.</p>
Dorset	<p>The LTP actively promotes sustainable tourism and refers to the Jurassic Coast Transport Strategy as a key action of the strategy.</p> <p>The LTP shows a good awareness of Dorset's habitats and rich biodiversity. The County Council are in consultation with Dorset Wildlife Trust to ensure selected areas of highway verge are managed to encourage wildflower growth.</p>	<p>The LTP does not indicate the environmental impact of major schemes.</p> <p>The LTP is focussed on improved access to the Jurassic Coast but shows little awareness of access to the wider countryside.</p> <p>No awareness shown of equestrian access to the countryside.</p>

LTP	Strengths	Weaknesses
Durham	<p>The LTP demonstrates a good awareness of the role of recreation, health and quality of life.</p> <p>The LTP actively encourages sustainable tourism through the North Pennines AONB pursuit of a Car Free Tourism Strategy.</p> <p>The Council is working with the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in relation to a Green Space Strategy.</p>	<p>More discussion needed of mitigation measures and specific actions to reduce environmental impacts of LTP – particularly as several of the Major Schemes have predicted adverse impacts on landscape and biodiversity.</p> <p>Little evidence of awareness of protected or designated biodiversity sites within the LTP, such as Durham Coast Site of European/ International Importance, SSSIs, Local and National Nature Reserves.</p>
Herefordshire	<p>The LTP is appreciative of the role pedestrian and cycling infrastructure have to play in recreation, health and leisure.</p>	<p>Little consideration of the impacts of the Major Schemes on landscape and biodiversity.</p> <p>No mention of the importance of design and detailing and mitigation and compensation measures in alleviating the impacts of the LTP on landscape and biodiversity.</p> <p>Little awareness of access to the countryside.</p>
Isle of Wight	<p>LTP acknowledges the island's landscape character assessment and is taking a proactive approach to landscape management.</p> <p>LTP demonstrates a good awareness of the island's biodiversity, including its significant areas for red squirrel and national significance for the door mouse, water vole and barn owl.</p> <p>The Council recognises the importance of maintaining and improving access to the countryside both in terms of transport, but also for recreation, health, leisure and tourism.</p>	<p>The LTP does not discuss or refer to the findings of the SEA.</p> <p>The LTP shows no awareness of the role of the countryside in terms of its educational value gained through recreation and conservation linkages with schools.</p>
Kent	<p>The LTP indicates a new Kent Design Guide that recognises the importance of the quality of public spaces, streetscape and community safety, which are important issues for the County. It has the potential to make a significant and real difference to people's quality of life.</p> <p>The SEA notes that highway infrastructure policies will have landscape and biodiversity impacts.</p>	<p>The LTP does not specify that the Kent Design Guide will be extended to rural areas.</p> <p>The LTP does not discuss how the design of transport measures can alleviate the impacts of the LTP on landscape and biodiversity. There are few 'Actions' stated.</p> <p>The LTP does not mention access to the countryside, merely key services.</p> <p>The LTP does not consider Sustainable Tourism, despite noting the impact of UK tourist traffic on Kent.</p>

LTP	Strengths	Weaknesses
Lancashire	<p>The LTP provides a good example of integration of LTP and SEA. The LTP references SEA throughout.</p> <p>The LTP refers to a Landscape Strategy for Lancashire which provides an assessment of the County's landscapes and recognises the special character of countryside and villages.</p> <p>The LTP mentions Quiet Lanes and Greenways as a way of improving access to the countryside.</p>	<p>The LTP does not account for the role of the Countryside and open space in providing educational value through recreation and conservation.</p> <p>The LTP does not consider habitat fragmentation or wildlife casualties as potential impacts of its policies.</p>
Lincolnshire	<p>The LTP shows good awareness of landscape and biodiversity with examples of how these can and have been protected.</p> <p>The LTP includes some good initiatives to increase access to the countryside through Rural Priorities Initiative.</p> <p>The LTP indicates that landscape and biodiversity are integral to the design stage.</p> <p>The SEA highlights biodiversity and landscape impacts of major schemes in Lincoln, Boston and Grantham.</p>	<p>The LTP does not mention access for mobility impaired people or equestrians.</p> <p>The SEA findings are not reflected in the LTP.</p>
Norfolk	<p>The LTP places a strong emphasis on landscape – particularly the Broads and North Norfolk Coast AONB and sustainable tourism.</p>	<p>The LTP does not show awareness of biodiversity/protected sites such as Sites of European/ International Importance, NNRs, SSSIs and LNRs, but these are referred to within the SEA.</p>
Northumberland	<p>The LTP shows awareness of the importance of the Rights of Way network and its importance in the provision of leisure routes and links to other facilities</p>	<p>A strengthening of the LTP in relation to access to and the benefits of recreation in the countryside would be beneficial.</p> <p>NB: Difficult to effectively assess Northumberland's LTP as SEA not available to be reviewed.</p>
North Yorkshire	<p>The LTP places a strong emphasis on the need to enhance and protect the environment, with the County Council actively supporting sustainable tourism through measures under its 'Transport and Sustainable Tourism Guidelines'.</p> <p>The LTP refers to the Sleep Zone initiative recently agreed that prohibits quarry traffic from driving through the towns of Settle and Giggleswick at certain hours of the night.</p> <p>The LTP actively encourages sustainable transport. The 'Moor to Sea' Cycle Route in partnership with North York Moors NP Authority is being developed to tackle congestion from tourism.</p>	<p>The SEA found that the major schemes such as A59 Kex Gill improvement would potentially have a negative impact on biodiversity. However, the LTP does not acknowledge this. The scheme proposal is for a section of the existing A59 route to be bypassed.</p> <p>The LTP does not show regard for regional and local distinctiveness.</p>

LTP	Strengths	Weaknesses
Shropshire	<p>The LTP demonstrates a good awareness of landscape and biodiversity. Particularly the importance of design and distinctiveness.</p> <p>The LTP shows a good awareness of access, particularly ROWIP and sustainable tourism.</p> <p>The LTP includes a number of actions to protect Shropshire's biodiversity, including reducing severance and the possibility of collisions by crossing improvements such as badger tunnels in upgraded or new highway infrastructure.</p> <p>The LTP states that the council will take opportunities to create new habitats as part of improvement schemes e.g. habitat for bats and sand martins in replacement bridge structures.</p>	<p>The LTP should refer to the importance of National Trails for recreation, such as The Shropshire Way, Offa's Dyke National Trail, Severn Way, Jack Mytton Way, Sabina Way and Kerry Ridgeway trails. These are however, referred to within the ROWIP progress report.</p> <p>The LTP makes no reference to how woodlands, local parks or county parks can be linked to the promotion of countryside recreation.</p> <p>The LTP could make reference to the education and sport value of accessing the countryside.</p>
West Yorkshire	<p>Good consideration of importance of walking and cycling in promoting health.</p> <p>The LTP contains a NATA appraisal summary table for proposed major schemes.</p> <p>Fenway and Colne Valley greenway are listed as proposed schemes which consist of combined cycling, pedestrian and equestrian facilities. These will aid in improving access to the countryside.</p>	<p>The LTP does not mention access specifically in terms of increasing access to the countryside.</p> <p>The LTP does not discuss how transport impacts on landscape and biodiversity.</p>
Wiltshire	<p>The LTP shows very good awareness of the designated and protected landscapes within Wiltshire, in particular its three designated AONBs and the New Forest National Park.</p> <p>The LTP acknowledges the opportunities to reduce noise pollution by the controlled movement of HGVs through the County Freight Strategy.</p>	<p>The LTP demonstrates no awareness of the importance of local detailing and to avoid standardisation of design.</p> <p>LTP focuses on improving walking and cycling facilities in urban areas and does not mention their importance in terms of recreation/ countryside access.</p>

4 Key Findings and Conclusions

- 4.1 Through assessing the sixteen LTPs synergies have been found between the landscape and biodiversity themes and the access and recreation themes. These are therefore summarised together in the following section.

Landscape and Biodiversity

- 4.2 In the majority of LTPs assessed, the protection and enhancement of landscape and biodiversity was implied through general statements such as 'improving the environment' or more specifically 'improving the natural and built environments'. More specific acknowledgement of protecting actual landscape value and biodiversity would be preferable. However, LTPs have been marked positively if they mention protection of the environment. Most LTPs reviewed therefore indicated some awareness of landscape and biodiversity issues. Some did provide quite detailed statements regarding the need to protect and enhance these resources, but few carried this awareness through to specific actions/deliverables.
- 4.3 In the main however, the majority of LTPs reviewed were weak in acknowledging specifically designated areas or in considering avoidance and mitigation measures relating to the likely impacts of the LTP. These measures were however, often considered in the SEA (where available) but the SEA findings did not appear to have been fed into the provisional LTP. This is a key area of concern as the SEA process should influence the final content of the plan or programme to which it is applied. This was a particular issue where LTP major schemes were concerned.
- 4.4 Examples of good practice identified from the evaluation in terms of landscape and biodiversity included:
- Landscape Strategies (Lancashire County Council) which recognise the special character of the countryside and villages and refer to the County's landscape character assessment;
 - Protection of National Parks (Cumbria, Wiltshire);
 - Good integration of LTP and SEA (Lancashire and Derbyshire).
- 4.5 The main weaknesses relating to the consideration of landscape and biodiversity included:
- Lack of integration between LTP and SEA;
 - Lack of awareness/consideration of designated and protected areas within the LTP;
 - Lack of consideration of the landscape and biodiversity impacts of Major Schemes and the significance of cumulative effects of minor schemes, or how opportunities could be taken to improve landscape and biodiversity;
 - Poor response to the landscape and biodiversity challenges facing areas with Growth Area Status and areas outside protected landscapes;
 - Little indication of how general awareness of landscape and biodiversity is to be translated into deliverable and enforceable strategies.

Access and Recreation

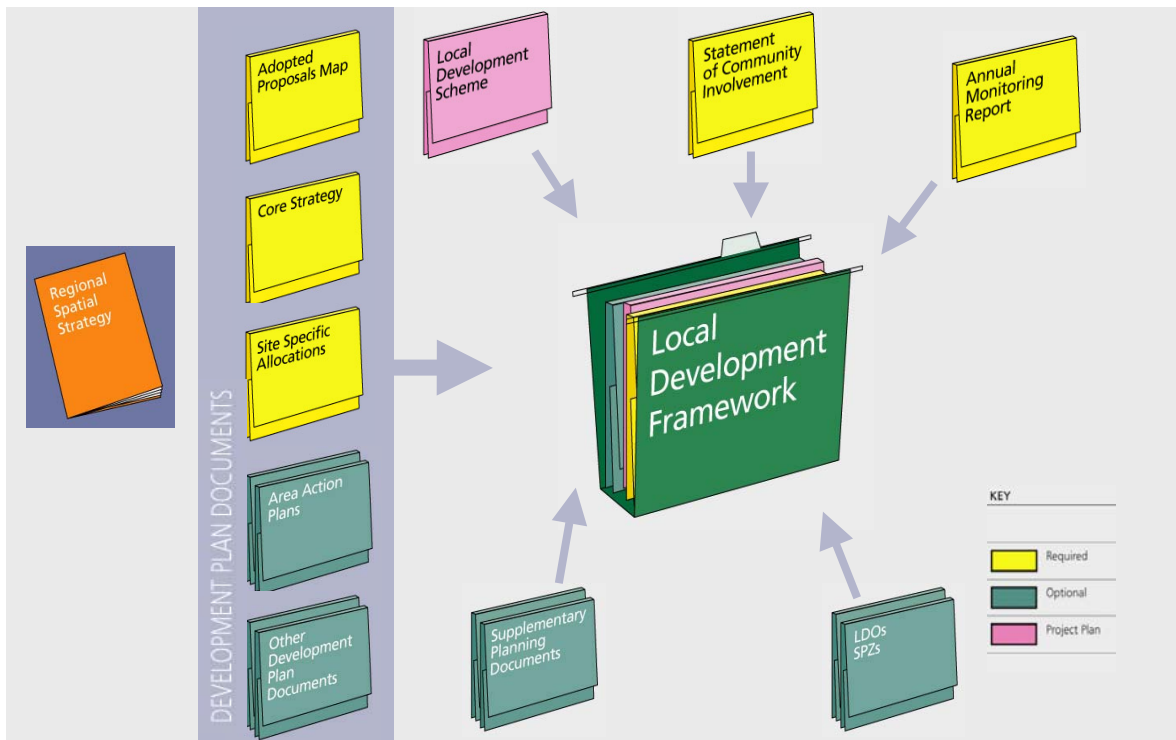
- 4.6 The need for Accessibility Strategies in the current round of LTPs and the future requirement for Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs) in 2007 encouraged many of the LTPs reviewed to respond to rural access issues. It was recognised by many that the focus of improving Rights of Way has multiple benefits in addition to access, including health, recreation, sport and quality of life. Where accessibility planning was concerned, there was understandably a tendency for the LTPs to focus on access to key services identified by the Department for Transport e.g. employment, education and health. In the context of the provisional LTPs, many of these would be improved if they also considered access to and within the countryside.
- 4.7 It is appreciated that access to the countryside is difficult due to the viability of public transport services and the feasibility of accessing more remote areas by bike or walking. However, it could be acknowledged that improving access from rural to urban areas would also bring wider benefits, by enhancing reversed travel opportunities from urban to rural areas. This is a particularly important aspect when considered in the context of the increasing leisure trips by car. Although some LTPs considered protection of the environment through sustainable tourism initiatives, others had not made this connection.
- 4.8 It is appreciated that recreation is not a core element of the LTP however, most would have benefited from an acknowledgement of designated areas such as Local Parks, Country Parks and Areas of Educational Value and access to them – particularly for children.
- 4.9 The good practice identified from the evaluation in terms of access and recreation include:
- RoWIPs and similar countryside access strategies (Most LTPs);
 - Sustainable Tourism Day (Durham) to promote sustainable access to the countryside;
 - Green Space Strategy (Durham) to improve green spaces around the County;
 - Sleep Zone Initiative (North Yorkshire) to enhance the tranquility of the countryside by prohibiting quarry traffic from driving through the towns of Settle and Giggleswick at certain hours of the night;
 - Leisure cycle routes that improve access to and within the countryside (Herefordshire, Northumberland, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire).
- 4.10 The key weaknesses relating to the consideration of access and recreation include:
- Failure to consider disabled access in the countryside;
 - Poor awareness of recreational designated sites; and
 - Poor awareness of the need to provide sustainable access to recreational areas;

Conclusions

- 4.11 The LTP process has evolved since the previous round of LTPs in 2000. The second round of LTPs has seen the introduction of Strategic Environmental Assessments, Accessibility Strategies and the future requirement for Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs) in 2007.
- 4.12 SEA is a generic tool which can be used in a variety of situations. A particular form of SEA is being introduced by the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC. This requires national, regional and local authorities in Member States to carry out strategic environmental assessment on certain plans and programmes that they promote. LTPs therefore require an SEA. "SEA should be a tool for improving the [Local Transport]

Plan" (webtag unit 2.11, section 2.2) with a view to "integrating environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes to promote sustainable development" (ODPM, A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive, 2005).

- 4.13 Accessibility strategies should be based on an assessment of the needs and problems of the area. It should set out priorities within the LTP's five-year period, and demonstrate how a range of interventions can address these problems. Local authorities should seek to maximise benefits and prevent any adverse accessibility impacts when developing their wider LTP policies and schemes.
- 4.14 The Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced a duty for all local highway authorities to prepare Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPS) by 2007 to:
- Provide an assessment of the need to which rights of way meet the present and future needs of the public;
 - Provide an assessment of the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and recreation; and
 - Provide an assessment of the accessibility of local rights of way to all members of the community.
- 4.15 These additional requirements have significantly broadened the LTP's scope, meaning that LTP officers are required to understand a wider range of disciplines and balance competing priorities between them. This is in addition to developing an LTP that responds sensitively to the different geographical areas within its boundary. This review recognises that overall, local authorities have responded well to the new demands of LTP2; any weaknesses or omissions identified by the review should be understood within the context of the difficult task set.
- 4.16 A message for all local authorities is that it is important in the final LTP submissions to ensure that the SEA, RoWIPs and Accessibility Strategies are integrated so that the strong policies and focus of each are fed into the policies and actions in the main LTP. Otherwise, there is a danger that environmental and access elements are forgotten as the five-year span of the LTP progresses.
- 4.17 With this in mind, there may be a need for further guidance from the Department for Transport on the authority of these different documents and how they relate to each other. If the LTP is an umbrella document with authority over the others, the SEA, Accessibility Strategy and RoWIP need to be fully integrated within the LTP, and the LTP needs to state how it has considered and responded to the contents of its 'daughter' documents. If each plan has equal status within the LTP process, there is a question as to how one team will have the ability and resources to know all the implications of the findings within the separate documents. LTP policy makers and practitioners need to ensure that a strategic vision with complementary aims develops from this set of separate documents.
- 4.18 Spatial planning policy has undergone a period of change with the development of a key Local Development Framework document and a number of supporting documents. The figure below (GVA Grimley, 2005) illustrates the new system.



Source: GVA Grimley, 2005, TRICS Conference

- 4.19 It may be that the LTP process can learn from this approach. SEAs, RoWIPs and Accessibility Strategies could become the 'Required' documents providing input to the LTP framework. Other documents decided necessary by the local authority could become 'Optional'.
- 4.20 EN and CA (LAR) welcome the expansion of the LTP process to include RoWIPs, accessibility strategies and SEA as this reflects the impacts that transport planning has on access, the environment and on social inclusion. How this expanded agenda is effectively managed over the next five years and beyond is an important issue for policy and decision makers to debate.

Appendix A

Evaluation Framework

Landscape

Element	Question	Assessment			Identified Elements (Incl. page ref.)	Missing Elements
		Aw	Ac.	Del		
A. LANDSCAPE/ TOWNSCAPE						
A1. General Policy						
a. General Policy Statement	Does the LTP include a general statement of policy on landscape?					
A2. Designated Sites/ Protected Sites						
a. National Parks	Does the LTP consider the following designated and protected sites?					
b. AONBs						
c. Heritage Coasts						
d. Community Forest						
e. World Heritage Sites						
f. Greenbelt						
g. Areas of Local Landscape Value						
h. Registered Parks & Gardens						
i. Conservation Areas						
j. Historic battlefields						
A3. Other Key Considerations						
a. Landscape Character	Does the LTP consider LCA as an integral part of the design process, from national to local level?					
b. landscape Strategy	Does the LTP consider landscape strategies as part of the process?					
c. Distinctiveness	Does the LTP show regard for regional and local distinctiveness and historic landscape patterns?					
d. Design	Does the LTP consider design and its direct and indirect effects on the character of the landscape?					

Element	Question	Assessment			Identified Elements (Incl. page ref.)	Missing Elements
		Aw	Ac.	Del		
e. Road hierarchy/legibility	Does the LTP consider road hierarchy/legibility in the landscape?					
f. Lighting	Does the LTP address the effects of lighting on the landscape? Reference to night lighting map?					
g. Tranquillity	Does the LTP have regard for tranquil landscapes? E.g. quiet lanes, home zones, noise. Reference to tranquillity map?					
h. Detailing	Does the LTP show regard to local detailing / avoid standardisation of design?					
i. Sustainability	Does the LTP consider use of sustainable design and its effect on landscape character? E.g. sustainable drainage (SUDS)					
j. Cross-boundary issues	Does the LTP consider effects on neighbouring landscapes / wider patterns and issues?					

Biodiversity

Element	Question	Assessment			Identified Elements (Incl. page ref.)	Missing Elements
		Aw	Ac.	De.		
B. BIODIVERSITY						
B1. General Policy						
a. General Policy Statement	Does the LTP include a statement of policy on biodiversity and/or geological assets?					
B2. Designated Sites/ Protected Sites						
a. Sites of European/ International Importance	Does the LTP consider Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Ramsar Sites?					
b. National Nature Reserves (NNRs)						
c. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)						
d. Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)						
e. Sites of Importance for nature Conservation/ Geological Sites?	Does the LTP consider Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) or Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS)?					
f. Important Hedgerows/ Ancient Woodland/ Veteran Trees						
g. Legally protected/ Section 74/ LBAP species	Does the LTP consider legally protected species, section 74 species or LBAP species?					
B3. Other Key Considerations						
a. Habitat fragmentation	Does the LTP consider habitat fragmentation as a potential threat?					
b. Wildlife casualties	Does the LTP consider wildlife casualties as a potential threat?					

Element	Question	Assessment			Identified Elements (Incl. page ref.)	Missing Elements
		Aw	Ac.	Del		
c. Mitigation/ compensation for unavoidable effects.	Does the LTP consider mitigation and compensation as an integral part of the design process?					
d. Indirect impacts	Does the LTP consider indirect impacts of transport e.g. from aerial and aquatic pollution, noise, lighting of spread of invasive species.					

Access

Element	Question	Assessment			Identified Elements (Incl. page ref.)	Missing Elements
		Aw	Ac.	De.		
C. ACCESS						
C1. General Policy						
a. General Policy Statement	Does the LTP include a statement of policy on access to and within the countryside?					
C2. Other Key Considerations						
a. Pedestrian Access	Does the LTP consider pedestrian access to the countryside?					
b. Equestrian Access	Does the LTP consider equestrian access to the countryside?					
c. Cycle Access	Does the LTP consider cycle access to the countryside?					
d. Disabled Access	Does the LTP consider disabled access to the countryside?					
e. PT user Access	Does the LTP consider PT users' access to the countryside?					
f. Quiet Lanes, Greenways and Green Infrastructure	Does the LTP consider improvements to networks for non-motorised users such as Quiet Lanes, Green Ways and Green Infrastructure?					
g. Sustainable Tourism	Does LTP take into account the need to plan for sustainability in terms of both the environment and financial implications for visitors and tourist to the countryside?					

Element	Question	Assessment			Identified Elements (Incl. page ref.)	Missing Elements
		Aw	Ac.	De.		
h. ROWIP	Does the LTP account for Rights of Way, and the wider access network (e.g. permissive paths, open access land) and their use by walkers, cyclists and equestrian users alongside the tourism and health opportunities they afford?					
i. Freight	Does the LTP consider the impact of freight movement on the countryside?					

Recreation

Element	Question	Assessment			Identified Elements (Incl. page ref.)	Missing Elements
		Aw	Ac.	De.		
D. RECREATION						
D1. General Policy						
a. General Policy Statement	Does the LTP include a statement of policy on recreation in the countryside?					
D2. Designated Sites/ Protected Sites						
a. Local Parks	Does the LTP account for the important role that local parks and green spaces play as informal recreation space and contribution to overall quality of life in an area?					
b. Country Parks	Does the LTP embrace sustainable development objectives and the role of Country Parks in achieving health and well-being objectives?					
c. National Trails	Does the LTP account for the use of National Trails linked to bridle networks and cycle tracks and the opportunity and potential role they can play in promoting active recreation and sustainable transport use.					
d. Spotlight National Nature Reserves	Does the LTP account for the role of nature reserves as destination sites for leisure and recreation use?					
e. Green Grids	Does the LTP account for local and regional plans for Green Grids which link landscape, recreation and open space to promote sustainability as well as active recreation?					

Element	Question	Assessment			Identified Elements (Incl. page ref.)	Missing Elements
		Aw	Ac.	De.		
f. Cycle Networks	Does the LTP account for the important role of safe, well-designed and linked cycle networks which not only encourage recreational use and activity but provide wide range of benefits to environment and transport.					
g. Woodland and forest	Does the LTP account for the recreational use and value of woodland and forest areas for mainly informal recreation opportunities?					
h. Lakes and waterspac	Does the LTP account for the important use for both formal and informal recreation use of lakes and water space.					
D3. Other Key Considerations						
a. Areas of Educational Value	Does the LTP account for the role of the Countryside and open space in providing educational value through recreation and conservation and the important link with schools especially in urban settings to accessing these opportunities.					
b. Health	Does LTP take into account the importance of the role of recreation in the Countryside and it impact upon health and well-being. 'Your Countryside Your Health' is the main driver for the CA?					
c. Sport	Does the LTP account for the 'Everyday Sport Agenda' as a campaign by Sport England and Government to encourage people to take up activity?					

Element	Question	Assessment			Identified Elements (Incl. page ref.)	Missing Elements
		Aw	Ac.	De.		
d. Quality of Life	Does LTP refer to the role of recreation in the Countryside adding to the quality of life for residents and visitors?					
e. Greenspace/ openspace	Does LTP take into account National and local Government direction on protection and promotion of green space.					
f. Employment	Does the LPT refer to or account for the employment opportunities that recreation in the countryside can provide through facilities and activities?					

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