

# **SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT FOR THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

## **BOROUGH LANDSCAPE & TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY *CONSULTATION DRAFT***

### **1.0 Introduction - The Purpose and Status of this Supplementary Planning Document**

- 1.1 This document provides guidance to assist applicants in complying with the requirements of historic environment policies set out in the Development Plan Documents and to provide guidance on how the authority expects the historic environment to be taken into account in the development control process.
- 1.2 Whilst this guidance does not have equivalent status to Development Plan Documents, compliance with Supplementary Planning Document guidance is a material consideration in planning decisions. Applicants should therefore bear in mind that disregard of this guidance may result in planning permission being withheld.
- 1.3 The Development Plan policies relevant to this guidance are:
  - **HE1 *Local Character and Distinctiveness***
  - **HE2 *Landscape Heritage Areas***
  - **HE5 *Buildings of Local Historic Importance***

This guidance should be read in conjunction with these policies and with consideration of all relevant Development Plan policies.

- 1.4 The Dudley Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study, seeks to assist developers and others to understand and appreciate Local Distinctiveness by providing a detailed framework and context that sets out broad definitions of historic character for different areas of the Borough and maps them. A range of different general types of historic character that may be encountered as components of townscape and landscape across the Borough are also examined and listed.

- 1.5 The overarching aim of Historic Environment Policies is to protect and conserve the locally distinctive characteristics of the Borough's existing townscapes and landscapes whilst also ensuring that new development respects and/or enhances the existing character of distinctive localities. Intending developers should utilise the framework provided by the Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study to gain a greater understanding of the historic character of areas that they propose to change, using the knowledge gained to guide the design of appropriately sensitive proposals. To the same ends it may in addition be necessary for developers to commission more detailed analyses of local character in the form of "Local Area Character Appraisals". In this way it is intended that in submitting proposals developers will be in a position to supply the local planning authority with full information in relation to local distinctiveness, thus allowing properly informed and consistent planning decisions to be taken.
- 1.6 This SPD is in conformity with national planning guidance, the Regional Spatial Strategy, the Development Plan and the Community Strategy. It has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal and screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Public consultation has taken place in line with the Statement of Community Involvement. A statement of the consultation undertaken, the representations received and the authority's responses to these representations can be found in the Consultation Summary Report (NB. This section will apply once public consultation has been carried out)
- 1.7 In order to secure development that meets policy requirements, officers of the Authority are available to discuss this guidance with applicants before they submit a planning application. The early submission of supporting information is recommended and, in some cases, required. A list of useful contacts and references, including the relevant contacts in the Borough, can be found at the end of this guidance.
- 1.8 In implementing the policies covered by this guidance the authority will actively consider the use of a number of strategies, including the use of article 4 directives, conditions and planning obligations/agreements.

## 2. The National and Regional Context

2.1 The Dudley Character Study takes a form derived from an innovative approach to landscape characterisation first advocated some years ago by English Heritage and the Countryside Commission. The Countryside Commission advocates treating landscape in overview and has promoted the Countryside Character approach for use in development plans. English Heritage in particular, as the Government's statutory adviser on the Historic Environment, now urges all local authorities to take a holistic view in defining all of the attributes making up landscapes and townscapes, for it is the accumulation of these which combine to make one place distinct from another. Such an approach enables the value of whole areas to be appreciated. It stands in direct contrast to the traditional approach of relying solely upon selective designations (although these remain important). By its' nature designation focuses upon very special areas and singular components of particularly special value, this has arguably been at the expense of the local detail that combines to make surrounding areas, indeed in Dudley's case the Borough as a whole, special.

2.2 The Government itself now also directly commends the Characterisation approach stating in action point 28 of "The Historic Environment: A Force for our Future" - (DCMS, December 2001);

*"The Government wants to ensure that local policy-making on the historic environment takes proper account of the value a community places on particular aspects of its immediate environment. The Government commends character assessment to local authorities both as a useful tool in itself and as a way of encouraging greater involvement by local communities in conservation issues".*

2.3 The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), that contains strategic policy to which Dudley UDP policies directly relate, also reflects the increasing knowledge and appreciation of the historic environment that has underlined the significance of the matrix of our history as well as its individually important components. The RSS states that whilst the Region's most valuable historic heritage is protected by statutory designations it is vital to consider historic landscapes and townscapes as a whole in order to understand what gives an area its sense of place and identity (paragraphs 8.3; 8.19; policies QE5; QE6). An identical approach has been brought forward more recently into the Black Country Study, a sub-regional review of the RSS that at the time of writing (in December 2005) was in the process of undergoing Public Consultation. In this context a holistic approach is seen as critical for conserving and

enhancing the Black Country's wealth of historic features, whether designated or not, and for ensuring that the distinctive characteristics of the sub-region's settlements are safeguarded and strengthened.

### **3. Background to the Dudley Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study.**

- 3.1 Dudley Borough is largely typical of the Black Country Borough's; it covers approximately 100 square kilometres. Over two thirds is 'urban' but numerous green wedges and corridors (including a major network of canals) and a peripheral rural green belt in combination create a diverse and distinctive character. This is no "urban sprawl" but rather the Black Country has been described as "The Endless Village". Within this diverse area the variety of processes that influenced its development, perhaps particularly during the Industrial Revolution, saw the Borough evolve from a core of individual townships and villages set within distinctive natural landscapes. Today this has resulted in a rich heritage of varying townscapes and landscapes and distinct and dynamic communities which have local identity, culture and character. Such local distinctiveness represents a notable asset in its own right which should be respected and exploited both for its' cultural value and significance and in making progress towards economic vitality and urban regeneration.
- 3.2 The Government's Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM 2005) states that it is "proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness particularly where this is supported by clear plan policies" (paragraph.38), the Dudley Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study seeks to provide the basis for this support. The Study is based upon an assessment and overview of the Borough's unique landscape and townscape character; it maps the evolution of that character and defines those individual elements, both special and commonplace, which combine to make particular areas locally distinctive. The study forms a strategic context for plan policies within which local distinctiveness can be recognised and conserved, it also provides a backdrop to other policy areas concerned with landscape and townscape and provides a framework within which proposals for change and any attendant new development can be judged against locally sensitive urban design criteria.
- 3.3 The study emerged in response to a desire to resist further erosion of the special character and distinctiveness currently possessed by the Black Country, and particularly Dudley Borough. The rate of change in

present day corporate processes means that they can often fail to observe or respect the local responsiveness detectable in more traditional development, which itself helped generate today's areas of local distinctiveness. Likewise both National Policy and Development Plan policies have traditionally focused on the protection of outstandingly special features and areas (eg listed buildings/conservation areas et al) rather than recognising that local distinctiveness arises from the cumulative contribution made by many and varied features and factors, both special and commonplace.

3.4 The Council's longstanding concern to protect more effectively the local historic environment via the traditional "designation led" approach was reflected in the Policies contained within the predecessor to the current Unitary Development Plan that was adopted in 1993 and subtitled "proud of the past, positive for the future". This identified "Areas of Special Townscape Value" (ASTV's) and sought the protection of their character through a specific plan policy (Policy 40). Similarly, in response to a recognition that many buildings of local historic or architectural importance were being left without any form of protection, since they often failed to meet the national criteria for statutory listing and lay outside of conservation areas, the Council adopted a "Local List" of such buildings in 1996. This was accompanied by a policy that set out to resist demolition or damaging alteration or adverse impacts upon the setting of Locally Listed buildings. That Policy was taken forward and is now formalised within the current Unitary Development Plan as Policy HE5 that relates to buildings that are felt to make a particularly singular contribution to local distinctiveness that can be defined in relation to the Dudley Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study.

3.5 The previous UDP policy relating to "Areas of Special Townscape Value" (ASTV's) has not been carried forward into the current Unitary Development Plan as it is considered that Policy HE1, when applied in conjunction with the Dudley Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study, will provide a wider ranging and more holistic measure of protection. That is not to say that ASTV's are no longer relevant since they reflect a body of survey work and detailed analysis that was successful in identifying the special nature of the most distinctive and characterful of the Borough's settlement centres. This analysis identified ASTV's as townscapes of particular importance by virtue of their established vernacular; the longevity of their street pattern; the presence of focal points of interest and importance; the occurrence of buildings of historic or architectural merit. The opportunity within ASTV's for the creation of complementary good quality townscape through extension,

newbuild or redevelopment, and the opportunity to encourage locally responsive good design was also recognised. The detailed results of that work (described fully in the ASTV Technical Appendix to the 1993 UDP) still very largely hold true today.

- 3.6 Accordingly, the Areas of Special Townscape Value as previously identified are shown for current reference purposes on figure 1. They should be recognised as defining discrete areas of townscape of acknowledged importance where the rigorous application of Policy HE1 can be expected. It is likely in assessing proposals for change within these very sensitive ASTV locations that there will be a requirement for the adoption of the detailed approaches to characterisation set out in the Dudley Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study, (i.e., Local Area Character Appraisals).

#### **4. Methodology used for the Dudley Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study.**

- 4.1 All landscape and townscape character develops from a pattern of land uses, features and processes which reflect a long term interaction between society and nature. Dudley Borough is no exception, its' character stems from a long series of decisions relating to land tenure, exploitation of minerals and industrial practices. Consequently for the purpose of this study landscape character is taken to mean the current appearance of the land, this includes the rural landscape and townscape as one entity.
- 4.2 The approach developed and adopted for the Dudley Character Study has drawn on several sources. In particular these were, the Character of England Map (1997) produced by the Countryside Commission and English Nature and the associated Countryside Commission guidance, the Conservation Area Appraisal guide (1997) produced by English Heritage and the Gosport Borough Council's Gosport Borough Landscape and Townscape Study (1996). The various methodologies used in English Heritage's more recent programme of Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) undertaken from 1992 onwards have also been taken account. Through this programme EH funded Council's to characterise their areas but until quite recently these were usually County Council's whose HLC projects were markedly rural in their application. As a result, in many ways the detailed approaches used were not of direct relevance to an urban borough like Dudley.

# AREAS OF SPECIAL TOWNSCAPE VALUE



- 4.3 In fact there is no one prescriptive methodology applicable to a holistic assessment of a Borough like Dudley and neither has there been a single, national, approach to carrying out HLC surveys. As English Heritage (EH) state *“Instead, there exists a core of concepts and recognised methods, used successfully by all practitioners, and a suite of ancillary or peripheral methods which reflect the range of differing interests”*. (Using Historic Landscape Characterisation EH & Lancs.CC 2004). Equally, it can be acknowledged that the level of detail attained by an individual HLC project will be dependent upon the level of resources available, taking account also of the end uses to which the whole exercise will be put. In fact, therefore, almost by definition, it is the unique characteristics of the particular locality allied with prevailing organisational circumstances that will very largely influence the approach taken.
- 4.4 In the case of Dudley it was felt that “in house” expertise in relation to the historic environment, ecology, geology, urban design and general planning, allied to in depth local knowledge gained through long experience of working within the Borough, was sufficient for the production of a robust Supplementary Planning Document in support of the Unitary Development Plan and in particular Policy HE1. The study would deal with Historic Landscape and Townscape characterisation by defining local distinctiveness in overview and at a relatively general level of detail. However, it would nonetheless provide an effective framework for more detailed work to be undertaken, “drilling down” the same characterisation process whenever development pressures or other factors indicated the need for such a requirement.
- 4.5 Therefore, taking the strategic overview provided by The Character of England map as a starting point the Dudley study sequentially analysed a number of elements in order to build up a broad picture of the “Natural Landscape” and the “Socio-Economic Landscape” of the Borough. Having defined these “landscapes” they were considered and analysed in combination. As a result broad “Character Areas” containing a wide range of more localised landscape and townscape “Character Types” could be discerned. It eventually proved possible to define boundaries for eight Major Character Areas which were quite distinctive one from another although often sharing common characteristics in the form of a variable range of different Character Types.
- 4.6 Following on from this, it is intended that the general attributes of a given Character Area will be analysed in conjunction with the range of landscape and townscape Character Types existing in a particular



locality. The combination of these two elements will form the basis for the undertaking of more detailed **Local Area Character Appraisals**. As envisaged these would use an approach similar to that applied to Conservation Area Appraisals and they would be employed wherever e.g. proposals for major change or redevelopment justified the need for a level of fine detail in order to ensure future land use is properly responsive to local distinctiveness. Section 6 of this Study discusses the carrying out of local area appraisals further.

## **5. Analysis.**

- 5.1 The “Natural Landscape”, is defined through consideration of the geology, hydrology, topography and ecology of the Borough, as described below and mapped in figures 2-5

### **Geology**

The Borough is situated at the meeting point of three of the Character Areas identified by The Character of England map. These coincide with the main underlying geological formation. Central and north east areas of the Borough are dominated by coal measures and the Silurian limestone outcrops. The south and east of the Borough is dominated by rich agricultural soils over carboniferous mudstone . The western edge of the Borough is dominated by triassic sandstone.

Figure 2 is a generalised bedrock map for the Borough and figure 3 shows the location of primary mineral resources.

### **Hydrology**

The Borough’s limestone ridge and outcrops form part of the watershed of England. Tributaries of the River Stour catchment flow south and west to the River Severn. Streams of the Stour include: Black Brook in the north, Lutley Gutter and Illey Brook in the south and Mousesweet Brook in the east. Dawley and Holbeche Brook flow into the Smestow Brook outside the Borough but it eventually joins the River Stour west of Stourbridge. To the north and east; tributaries of the River Tame catchment flow to the River Trent. In addition to these two major catchments the Borough has a considerable network of canals. This network crosses under the limestone watershed. Figure 4 maps the Borough’s hydrological networks.

### **Topography**

The Borough’s topography closely reflects the underlying geology and has largely been defined by the river catchments. To the east of the Borough the high ridge forming the central England watershed and including the limestone outcrops runs north west to south east in excess of 175 metres above sea level. The slope falls steeply from this ridge east to Coseley and west to the ‘Pensnett plateau’. This plateau forms a large middle ground over the carboniferous coal fields into which the tributaries of the Stour have cut gentle valleys.

This plateau subsequently falls off to the low lying sandstone in the west

and also south to the floor of the Stour valley itself all largely below 125 metres above sea level. South of the Stour the watercourses have cut quite different valleys deeply into the softer mudstone which rises steeply to the south and east to the Clent Hills and Mucklow Hill. These deeply incised valleys show that geologically speaking the Stour is a fairly recent river system.

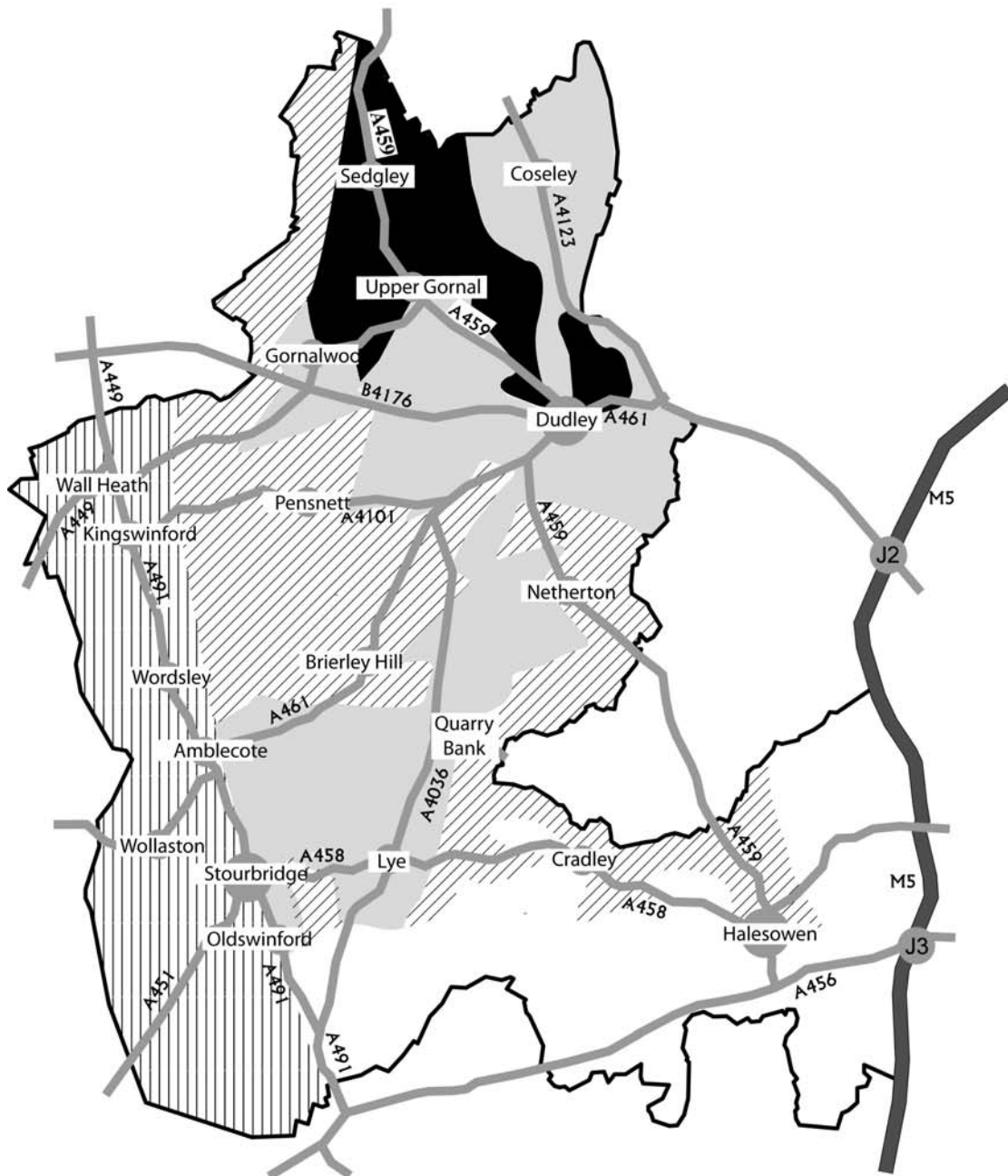
Figure 5 is a simplified topographical map of the Borough.

## **Ecology**

The ecological character of the Borough largely reflects historical changes in land management although fragmented examples of natural habitat do exist such as acid grasslands and heathland on the sandstone plateau. Agricultural uses and a predominance of post industrial habitat regeneration and urban habitats have left the Borough with a fundamentally altered but extremely diverse and valuable ecological balance. The industrial land uses throughout the Borough present a significant threat to wildlife, important elements such as the River Stour have been badly degraded over many decades of abuse. Nevertheless many nationally important habitats and species do occur within the Borough adding to the diversity and potential of the area.

Figure 2

## GENERALISED BEDROCK



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### Carboniferous

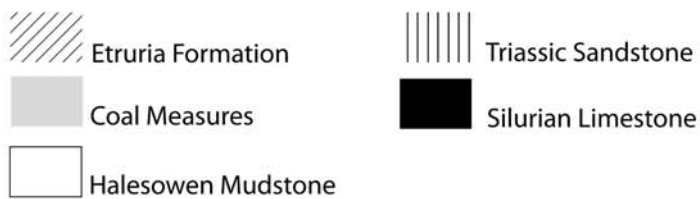
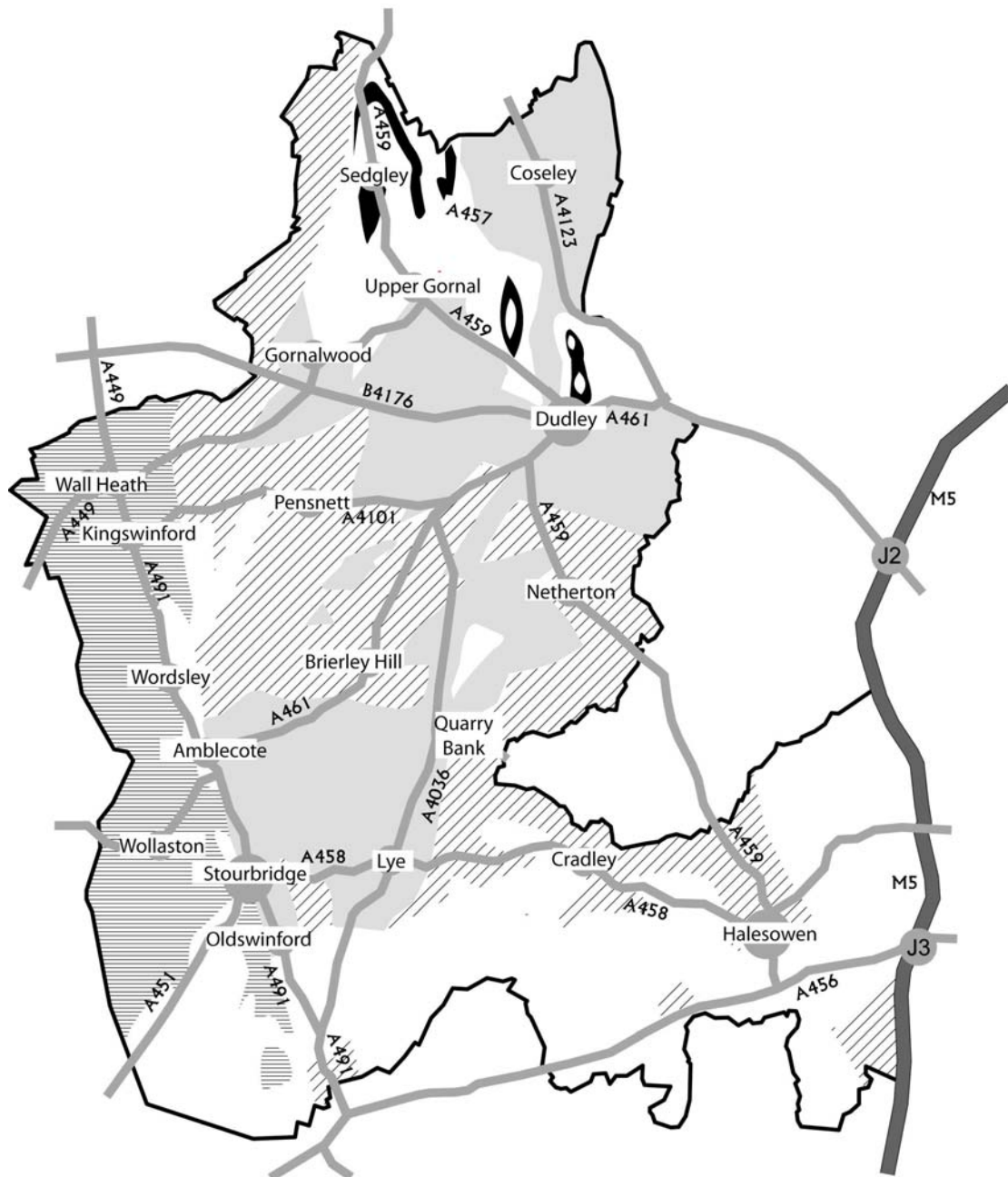


Figure 3

## PRIMARY MINERAL RESOURCES



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Figure 4

# HYDROLOGY

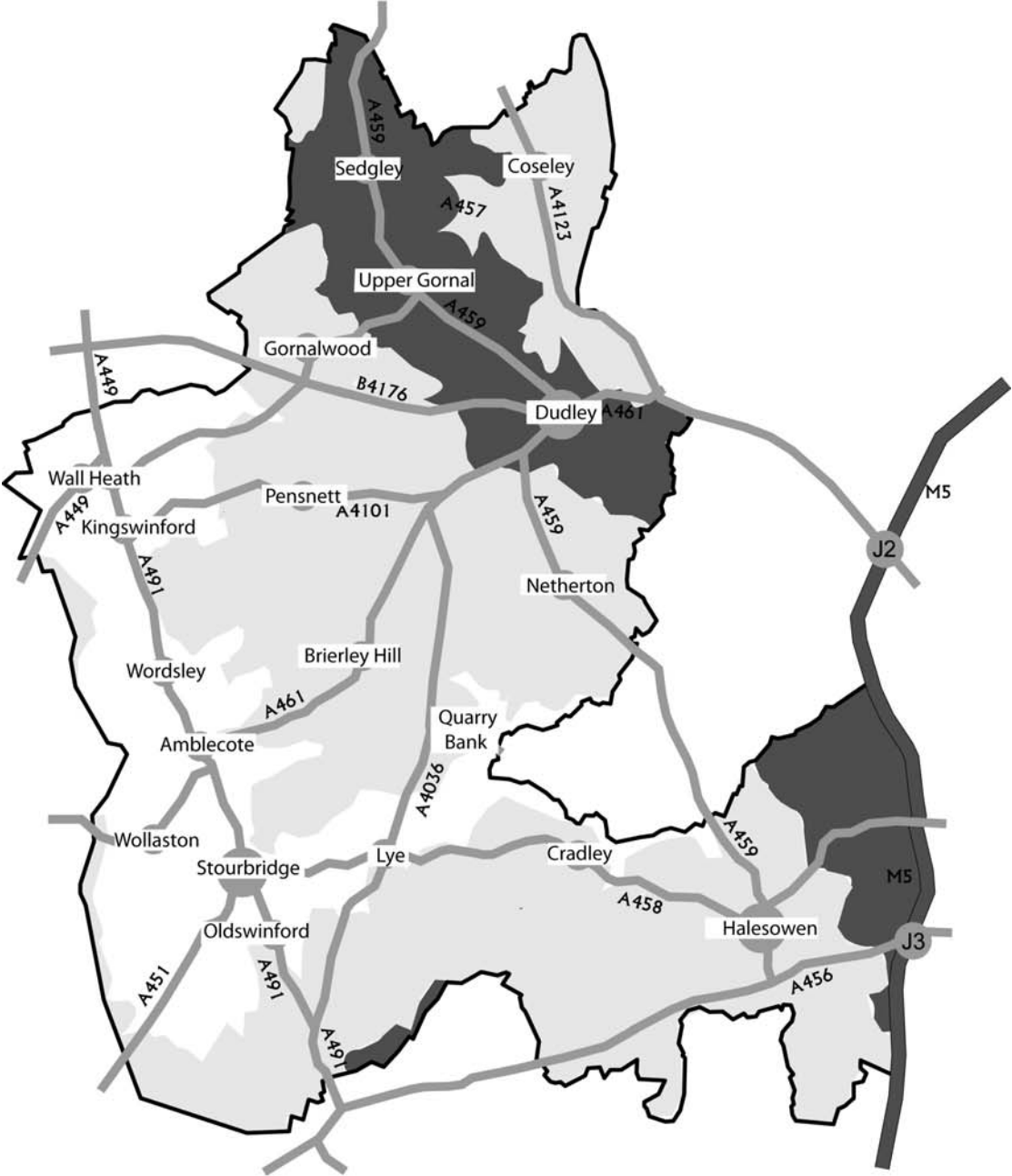


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- 'Natural' Watercourses
- ==== Canal/Tunnels
- Open Water

Figure 5

### SIMPLIFIED TOPOGRAPHY



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-  Over 175m OD
-  100m - 175m
-  Below 100m

5.2 **“The Socio-Economic Landscape”** is defined via an examination of the evolution of land use and demographics over time, broadly identifying a time series of the Borough’s growth over the centuries. This aspect of the study utilised documentary and archaeological evidence but was largely based upon regressive map analysis, ie studying landscape change as evidenced in successive historic maps, dating in Dudley largely from the mid-eighteenth century to the present. The work was undertaken on a borough wide basis and by necessity the working documents are to a map scale which precludes wholesale reproduction in the format of this study.

Figure 6 is reproduced here, however, by way of a sample of the technique and it illustrates the evolution of Dudley Town itself, indicating the Character Types now present which resulted from the Town’s growth over time. Figures 7-12, in the appendix, depict interpretive Borough Maps produced using the same source material. These have been digitised and they clearly illustrate in pictorial form the evolution of the Borough over successive time periods. All of the original map work is held by the Dudley Historic Buildings Sites and Monuments Record. The digitised Borough wide historic maps can also be accessed through the Council’s web site and are accessible for use in the Borough’s schools.

This aspect of the study makes it clear that the character of the Borough’s landscape results from varying degrees of change. Change which has largely been reflective of human society’s relationship with the environment. The study suggests that the key to an understanding of the Borough that exists today could reasonably be said to lie in an understanding of four main historic periods.

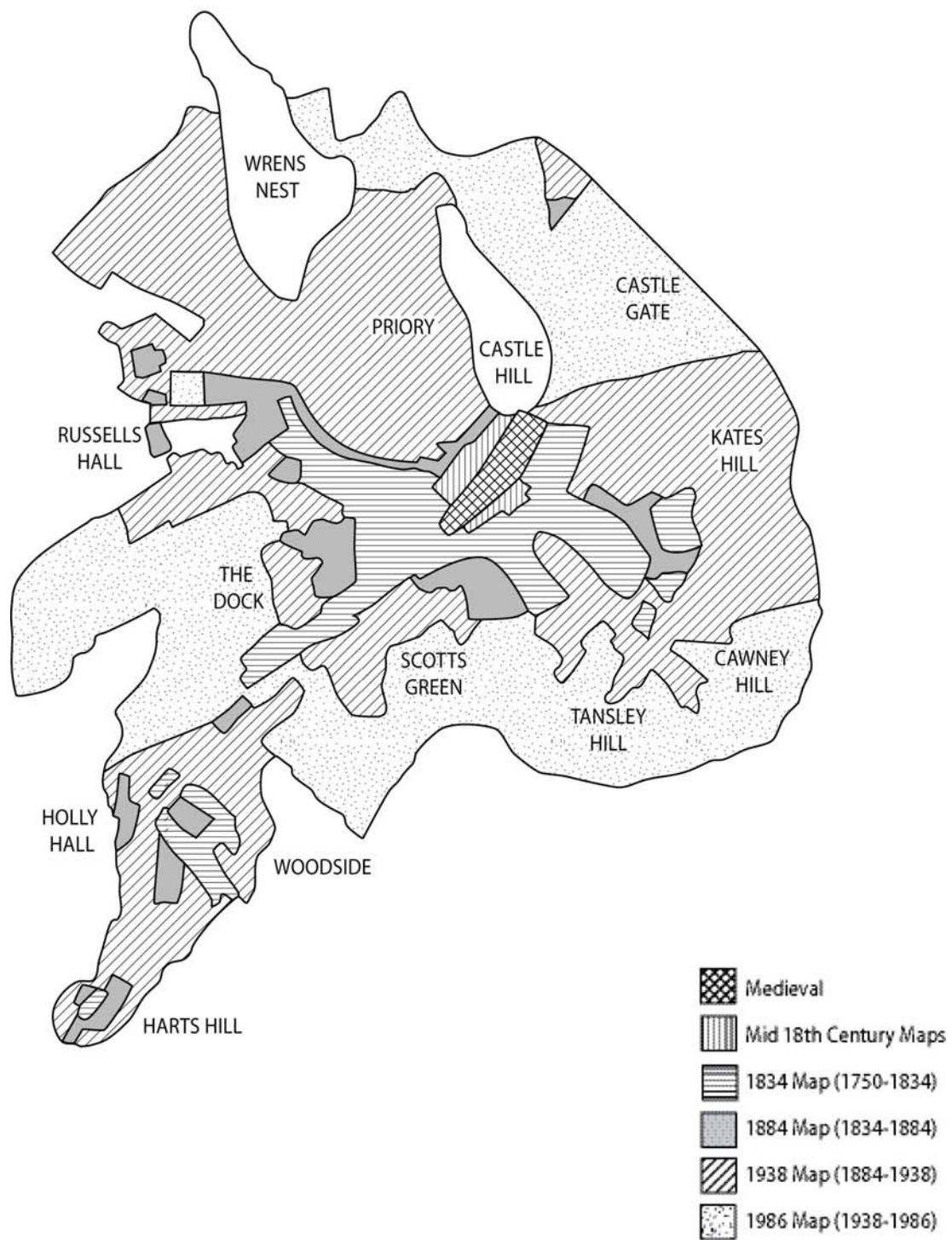
### **Pre-Industrial Landscape**

This was a primarily rural one dominated by two strategic pre-historic routes: a valley road along the the A491, (an ancient salt way) in the lowland in the west and the A459, (a ridgeway of great antiquity) along the high land in the east. Early settlements developed along these routes; Kingswinford, Wordsley and Amblecote just off the former and Sedgley and Dudley off the latter. These were separated by the woodland wilderness of Pensnett Chase. South of the River Stour, on the Halesowen Mudstones, the land was a good deal more agriculturally productive. The settlement pattern was more dense and also hierarchical in that there were market towns, such as Halesowen and Stourbridge, villages like Oldswinford, Cradley and Lye and numerous farmsteads with evocative names like Foxcote, Cakemore and Illey.



Figure 6

### DUDLEY TOWN EXEMPLAR



## **Early Industrial Landscape**

The rural landscape slowly gave way to a proto-industrial one, still operating very much in conjunction with agriculture. Initially this took the form of occasional employment with the components of ironworking; charcoal burning, quarrying and mining of coal and ironstone, smelting and smithing. Despite the fact that much of this industry was on a domestic scale the need to utilise water power led to many of the mills on the River Stour being converted from corn and fulling for use as blast furnaces and forges. From the manufacture of domestic implements and tools for local consumption a steady growth in production led to nail making as a major regional trade. By the early 17th century this had been joined by another industry exploiting local materials - glass-making. Now not depending on the restricted employment of agriculture the population began to grow.

## **Large Scale Industrial Landscape**

In the 18th and 19th centuries industrial activity 'exploded'. Each new invention fuelled further growth. In the late 18th century the Enclosure of Pensnett Chase released a large area of open land over the coal fields for exploitation. Settlements like Brierley Hill, Quarry Bank, and Pensnett became 'boom towns'. In the Stour Valley area Cradley and Lye expanded exponentially. With the factories and furnaces came a rapid increase in transportation improvements; canals, turnpiked roads, tramways and their successors railways criss crossed the industrial heartland. This growth also occurred in the older settlement areas. In particular the landscape around Coseley changed completely as the coal and iron industries took over. The population mirrored the industrial activity and rose from 51,000 in 1801 to 231,000 in 1884 this bringing with it the overcrowded and sub-standard housing that later became known as slums.

## **Post Industrial Landscape**

With the raw materials of industry beginning to be worked out the 20th century saw a gradual industrial decline. The population still grew but with Public Health legislation conditions improved. The slum clearances of the 1930's produced large estates such as Harts Hill, Wrens Nest and Kates Hill. By the 1950's three quarters of the Borough's industrial and mineral workings had become redundant or derelict, since that time the population has increased to over 300,000. This has resulted in considerable pressure for residential development and has been

responsible for increased development densities and urban sprawl. This pressure has been absorbed by utilising the available resource of developable land to continue to perpetuate the economic viability of the Borough.

### **5.3 Major Character Areas**

A combined consideration and analysis of the natural and socio-economic landscapes makes it apparent that broad areas of the Borough owe their character to and are reflective of dynamic socio-economic processes, acting upon a particular physical backdrop which could over time offer up varied opportunities and constraints to industrial and other exploitation. In effect the Borough's townscape and landscape has evolved as natural resources have allowed and as a result of an accumulation of changes taking place over time, these being entwined and overlaid one on the other in the physical landscape of today's Black Country.

The following eight broad Character Areas have been identified from the assessment of the interaction between the socio-economic and natural landscapes. Consideration was also given to location, common context and influences, contribution of Character Types, links within the area, key landmarks and features and relationship to other areas.

#### **General Descriptions of Major Character Areas** (*Figure 13*).

##### **A491 Corridor –**

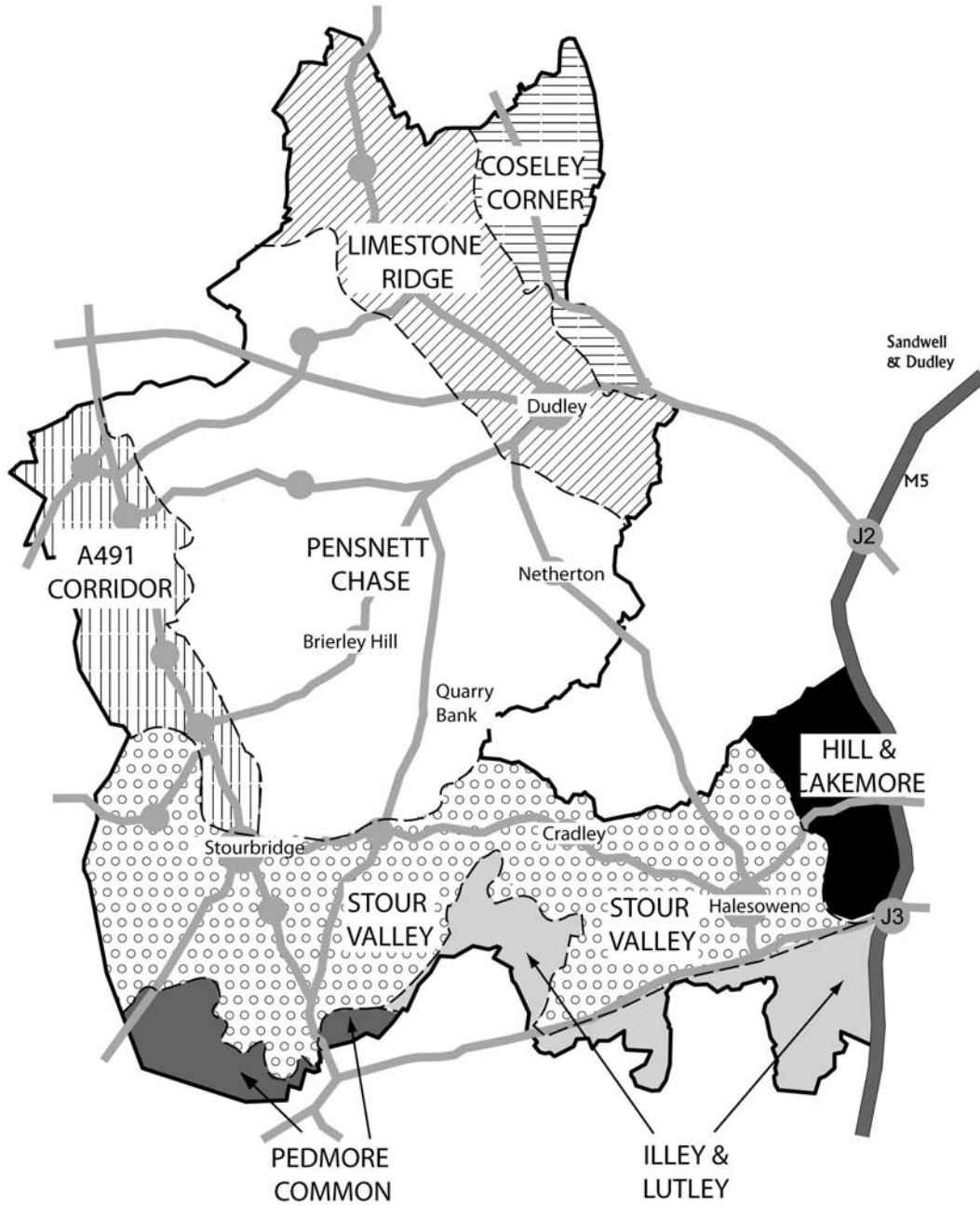
Located down the western edge of the Borough over the sandstone geology. Stretching along the A491 down to Stourbridge the area includes Wall Heath, Kingswinford, Wordsley, Audnum and the township of Amblecote. This string of settlements lining the road are of at least medieval origin but now mainly owe their character to the 18th and 19th century exploitation of the adjacent coal and fireclay deposits, which had spawned the internationally important glass industry as early as the 17th century.

The dominant character is provided by the A491 itself, which was always a strategic route, thereby being a focus for settlement whilst also increasingly attracting industry to locate along its length. This existing linear pattern of urban growth was reinforced in the 18th century with the introduction of the Stourbridge Branch Canal, running parallel to the road route and offering an ease of communication which attracted industry in its turn. The generally low lying topography is gently undulating and

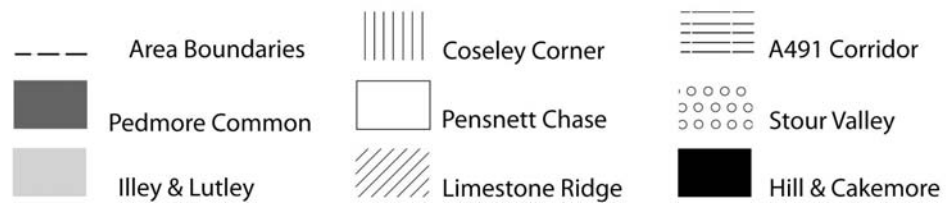
forms an enclosed landscape allowing few views out of the area to the adjacent countryside to the west or to the urban area to the east.

Figure 7

### CHARACTER AREA BOUNDARIES



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## **Limestone ridge**

This narrow character area runs along the high limestone ridge. Historically this was the strategically important 'high' road passing through the medieval settlements of Sedgley and Dudley with its Castle. The dominant character is provided by the elevated position of the corridor which includes large areas of open and wooded landscape of the Castle Hill and Wrens Nest Nature Reserve reclaimed from earlier quarried landscapes.

Despite its origins and settlement pattern being very old major 20th century elements such as the Wrens Nest estate are important contributors to the character. Its dominant position allows extensive views from the area and also forms a dominant skyline from a considerable distance with several notable landmarks such as the Eve Hill flat, the Castle and Dudley Top Church.

## **Illey & Lutley**

This area forms the southern green belt from the Borough's eastern boundary across to Pedmore and its character is generally rural and open. Historians have identified the predominant settlement pattern as being typical of the medieval woodland settlements of North Worcestershire. Characteristically, the landscape was one of well dispersed small farms or hamlets, set within their own surrounding fields, woods and commons. Such a pattern can still be discerned today, although perhaps in a less well wooded form, and overlain by a pattern of hedged fields imposed by post-medieval and parliamentary enclosures. The enclosure hedgerows have, however, been much diminished as a result of agricultural intensification during this century.

The rising topography to the south enables significant views north into the Borough. Due to its rural nature the landscape character is simpler to appreciate here than in the urban character areas. The Area is, however, rich in archaeological evidence of prehistoric and later activity, for instance in the form of artefact scatters and earthworks, which have been largely obscured in the more developed urban areas.

## **Stour Valley**

This area follows the valley floor and sides of the River Stour and extends south of the river to border on more rural Character Areas. The area includes Amblecote (east of the township itself), Stourbridge, Lye, Cradley and Halesowen. The present character of this area owes much

to topography but early industrial activity is also reflected. This relied on the Stour and its tributaries for water power and on coppiced woodlands on the valley sides (a number of which survive) for fuel. Increased industrial activity carried on into the 18th and 19th centuries comprising massive exploitation of the valleys coal and fireclay deposits and intensive allied industrialisation of the area as a whole. Industries ranged in scale from very extensive fully integrated ironworks and brickworks to small scale manufactories and domestic chain shops.

Such activity has obscured much of the evidence relating to the earlier development of the areas settlements, all of which had medieval origins. The 13th century planned origins of Halesowen itself are today difficult to detect both for the reasons cited above and because of the impact caused by the construction of the Cornbow Centre in the 1960's and the imposition of the present major road system.

Much formerly open farmland was also subsumed by major expansion of the areas settlements in response to an ever-rising population, Stourbridge in particular expanded dramatically. 18th and 19th century industrial premises were typically small to medium sized and still remain within the urban fabric, although representing a rapidly diminishing resource, even the 20th century industry is still mainly small in scale.

The scars of former large-scale industrial activity and of mineral extraction have now largely been erased and industrial and housing estates now typically impose their own character on the outskirts of the areas settlement centres with Stourbridge, off the coalfield, being least affected.

The topography of the valley makes this character area very enclosed and dominated by the river itself and its tributaries and important open areas along it.

### **Pensnett Chase**

This area represents the industrial heartland of the Borough. In the medieval period the area was largely woodland wilderness and unpopulated but overlay a major share of what was to become the Borough's hugely important mineral resource. Changes in land tenure combined with the rapid industrialisation of the area in the 18th and 19th century created the settlements of Brierley Hill, Netherton, Quarry Bank and Pensnett in a very short period of time. This spread was made

possible by the development of canals and railways as well as major improvements of the road network. The even more rapid decline of industrial activity during the 20th century resulted in vast areas of redundant and derelict land. Some areas naturally recolonised such as the Oak Farm green Wedge and Fens pools while other areas were redeveloped for industrial and residential estates and retail uses. The slightly elevated plateau and gently undulating topography enable extensive views across the urban area and to the open countryside to the south and west.

### **Coseley Corner**

This area slopes steeply down north and east from the Limestone ridge and shares a similar industrial heritage of mineral exploitation to that of Pensnett Chase. There was a particular emphasis on the iron industry which benefited greatly from the opening of the Birmingham Canal. The early twentieth century decline of extractive and primary processing industries has resulted in the recycling of much former industrial land and a landscape character now dominated by large housing and commercial estates.

### **Hill & Cakemore**

Located on the high ground to the east of Halesowen this was historically an area of scattered settlements and their cultivated grounds within woodlands and moors. Since the earlier part of the twentieth century the areas position at the western edge of the Birmingham plateau and its somewhat marginal upland agricultural status has ensured that most of the area is now covered by suburban housing.

### **Pedmore Common**

Forming the remainder of the southern Green Belt west of Pedmore over the sandstone, the rural character of this area can be traced back to agricultural enclosures of the medieval landscape in the 18th century including parkland around Pedmore Hall and Hagley Hall.

## **5.4 Landscape and Townscape Character Types**

The Character Areas define the relation of one area to another and provide a Borough wide context for more detailed analysis. At the local level, since the combination of natural resources in a given area offered a very varied range of opportunities which could be exploited in a multiplicity of ways, each locality has in the past had an inbuilt tendency

to grow up in a distinctive manner. As a result the Character Areas all encompass and often share a wide range of general landscape and townscape Character Types which can be broadly sub-divided into “urban” and “rural” types, although there is considerable overlap. Analysis of the individual types of landscape, buildings and open spaces that occur in the Borough has led to a preliminary listing of these as follows.

### **Urban Areas**

- Principal settlements of medieval origin; Dudley, Stourbridge, Halesowen and Sedgley. Typically these include examples of mixed building types dating from between the 15th and 20th century. The street layout remains largely lineal with 3 and 4 storey structures. Many buildings would have been originally used as shops and dwellings, now commerce and retail. The settlements also typically include a market place, church and church yard. civic buildings and now fire stations, police stations, museums, library, cinema, and entertainment (bingo, night clubs), hotels and public houses, office blocks and street furniture.
- Smaller settlement centres of medieval origin; Kingswinford, Wordsley, Cradley, Coseley, Oldswinford, Pedmore and etc.
- Proto-industrial “village” settlements; particularly in the Limestone Ridge Character Area and particularly where early post-medieval and onwards quarrying and ironworking, especially nailmaking, augmented small scale agriculture leading to the early growth of small population centres such as Ruiton and Upper and Lower Gornal.
- Industrial “squatter” settlement; typically as at Mushroom Green, Gornal Wood, Meers Coppice, Tansey Green. The early industrial exploitation of minerals in Pensnett Chase from at least the 18th century gave rise to dispersed, unplanned, small-scale settlements of cottages and workshops.
- Extended settlements; typical expansion of the medieval and later centres during the 18th and 19th centuries. This included working class terraced housing, middle class detached villas and included corner shops, dispersed manufacturing premises for food, consumer goods, engineering etc, schools and colleges with playing fields, chapels, churches, hospitals and cemeteries, petrol stations and allotments
- New major industrial settlements; Brierley Hill, Quarry Bank, Pensnett.



Occurred in the late 18th and early 19th century as a direct result of the intensive industrial exploitation of the previously sparsely populated heartland of the Borough. In the Stour Valley Character Area a similar expansion occurred at Lye, with early informal colonisation of Lye Waste later being formalised into a more planned focus on The Cross major road junction.

- Major Industrial Areas; (Extractive and processing-18th to 20th Century) Largely on former common ground where the raw materials were. Most of the coal and iron mines, limestone, sand and clay quarries have now become residential or commercial areas. Iron works, engineering works, brick works, glassworks etc. remain in places reflecting a changing economy.
- Relict Industrial Landscapes; Bumble Hole, Saltwells, Barrow Hill, Fens Pools, Castle Hill/Wrens Nest, Sedgley Beacon etc. now semi-naturalised grassland and woodland over former major industrial areas.
- 1920's and 30's suburban developments; Typically low density detached and semi-detached housing with shops and schools.
- Housing Estates from the 1930's to present; Detached and semi detached housing, flats and terraced and semidetached shops, schools, clinics, chapels, churches and public houses.
- Commercial Estates from the 1950's to present; Trading estates, shopping complex, large and light industry, warehouses.

### **Rural areas**

- Villages/Hamlets of medieval origin; These include buildings from the 17th to 20th century, halls, farm houses, cottages, semi and detached dwellings, chapels, inns.
- Post medieval farmsteads; Typically timber framed to brick farmhouses, barns, cattle sheds, granaries, pig sties, and other outbuildings.
- Fields of medieval origin; many have been compartmentalised during post medieval and 18/19th century enclosures. Enclosure varies from hedges, banks, ditches, walls and fences. These areas often represent important potential for more ancient archaeological evidence of activity in the Borough which has largely been completely lost to view in the urban area.
- Woods; medieval and post medieval in origin.

## **Elements occurring across the whole Borough**

- Parklands; often created from earlier large rural estates or later post-industrial sites. Urban parks and gardens; with bandstands, tennis courts, war memorials, bowling greens, football, cricket, golf courses.
- Services; 19th – 20th century, electrical substations, power lines, reservoirs/ pools pumping stations and pipelines. Sewage works.
- Communications; The Borough's communication network is often the least altered element in the social landscape with routes established from Roman roads to 20th century remain largely evident. Other elements such as the rivers, bridges and weirs, canals, locks, bridges and basins, pumping stations, railways, viaducts, stations and signal boxes.
- Watermills and Windmills; important elements in the landscape of the past.
- Woods; within the urban fabric and often medieval and post medieval in origin.

## **6. Conclusions and Future Directions**

- 6.1 Following generally established principles of characterisation the process undertaken in formulating the Dudley Character Study was essentially incremental and started with a Borough-wide assessment of the natural and socio-economic influences which have acted upon the landscape. The picture built up through this analysis provides an enhanced understanding of the evolution of the Borough and allowed the definition of eight broad Character Areas. Within these Major Character Areas distinctive general Landscape Character Types were also identified, these would be susceptible to even more localised definition via the carrying out of **Local Area Character Appraisals**. It is envisaged that Local Area Character Appraisals will be based on an approach similar to that applied to Conservation Area Appraisals and there will be a requirement that they be employed wherever e.g. proposals for major change or redevelopment justify the need for such a level of detail.
- 6.2 Broadly, Local Area Character Appraisals would involve analysis of the general attributes of a given Character Area and any strategic relationships between Character Areas in conjunction with giving detailed consideration to the full range of landscape and townscape Character Types existing in a particular locality. Such appraisals would also consider and characterise the common-place details of the built and

natural environment such as building materials, architectural detailing, semi-natural and natural features and wildlife. The precise characteristics which make a particular locality unique will therefore, where necessary, receive eventual definition as part of local area appraisal exercises designed to provide the fine detail required to ensure future land use is properly responsive to local distinctiveness.

- 6.3 Subsequent to the successful completion of the Dudley Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study English Heritage have made funding available for a Black Country wide Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) project. This, “The Black Country Urban HLC” is based at the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record (BCSMR) in Wolverhampton and has a dedicated project officer. It is being developed in partnership with the historic environment advisers of the four Black Country Boroughs. That study is currently at its’ mid point and the provisional completion date for the Project is March 2007. It is envisaged that the new study will incorporate and build upon the results of Dudley Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study and there is no indication that there will be any contradictory outcomes from the exercise. Rather, the enhanced level of detail possible through the application of EH funding is simply likely to increase the number of both character areas and character types identified within the Borough and also give a generally higher “resolution” in terms of detail.
- 6.4 The results of the “The Black Country Urban Historic Landscape Characterisation” will be made available to Dudley on its completion as a discrete GIS-based characterisation module linked directly to the Dudley Historic Buildings Sites and Monuments Record. It may well be, therefore, that at some future date (that can be determined in relation to the Council’s Local Development Framework annual monitoring reports) it will be expedient to view the Black Country wide study as having fully superseded the Dudley Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study. At that point, it is envisaged that the Black Country Urban HLC might itself be formally adopted by Dudley MBC with a reviewed development plan policy and a new Supplementary Planning Document being produced.