Northumberland Key Land Use Impact Study
PART D

Landscapes Potentially Requiring Additional Protection

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1.   This section of the Northumberland Key Land Use Impact Study explores the relative value of Northumberland's landscapes, in order to inform the potential identification of areas to be protected by local landscape designations in future.

1.2.   The study is intended to provide a high-level overview of relative landscape value across Northumberland. It is based on an evaluation of the landscape character areas defined in the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment.

POLICY AND GUIDANCE

1.3.   Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment suggests that an assessment of landscape value can be based on "*particular characteristics that contribute to a 'sense of place' or influence the way in which a landscape is experienced, and on special interests such as cultural and literary associations, nature conservation or heritage interests.*" It goes on to suggest that landscape condition may also be a factor of value. [1]

1.4.   The European Landscape Convention (ELC), which came into effect in March 2007, promotes the concept that all landscapes matter, regardless of location or condition. It recognises that landscapes are widely valued, whether urban or rural, outstanding, or ordinary. The convention advocates an approach based on protection, management and planning of all landscapes, rather than focusing on the conservation of a specific locations.[2]

1.5.   Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004) sets out the Government's objectives for rural areas. This supports sustainable development and recognises the importance of local distinctiveness and countryside qualities. The role of local landscape designations is also outlined within PPS7. Paragraph 24 states that "*carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in LDDs, utilising tools such as landscape character assessment*" should provide sufficient protection for valued landscapes, and that local landscape designations may "*unduly restrict acceptable, sustainable development*". Paragraph 25 continues by stating that local landscape designations should only be considered "*where it can be clearly shown that criteria-based planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection.*" The onus is on local authorities to "*state what it is that requires extra protection, and why*", and to "*ensure that such designations are based on a formal and robust assessment of the qualities of the landscape*".

1.6.   This study presents a formal and robust assessment of the qualities of the landscape, based on the findings of the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (NLCA). It does not seek to define the areas that require extra protection which cannot be provided by criteria-based policies.

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[1] The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2002) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2nd edition. Spon Press. p.15
[2] Land Use Consultants (2009) Guidelines for Implementing the European Landscape Convention, Part 1. Natural England. pp.3-4

METHODOLOGY

1.7. This study comprises a review of the existing suite of local landscape designations within the County, and considers their relevance and robustness in terms of PPS7 (Section 2). The main part of the study provides an evaluation of each of the landscape character areas identified in the NLCA. A brief survey of areas which were considered likely to experience significant development pressure has been undertaken. The findings are compared with the results of the evaluation, to identify any high-value landscapes which may be under threat (Section 3). Conclusions are included in Section 4.

1.8. Since PPS7 effectively discourages the use of local landscape designations in England, there is little guidance available on the subject. In Scotland, however, Scottish Natural Heritage has published *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations* (2005), and this has been referred to in developing a methodology for the current evaluation. The guidance sets out a complete process of identifying and defining 'Special Landscape Areas'. However, for the purposes of this study, only the general approach has been adopted, which involves a criteria-based assessment utilising landscape classification. The methodology has been refined and streamlined based on LUC's past experience in this field. The evaluation has been based on desk study only, and has not involved detailed or specific field work.

Criteria

1.9. As recommended in the SNH guidance, the evaluation was carried out using a series of criteria to determine the relative landscape value of each landscape character area. These criteria were chosen to allow the identification of the most-valued landscapes in Northumberland, and were based on the characteristics set out in Annexe A to the NLCA. The evaluation therefore represents a transparent process, grounded in established baseline information.

1.10. The criteria selected from the characteristics in Annexe A, as being contributory to landscape value, are listed in Table D1.1 below.

Table D1.1 Criteria adopted from Annexe A of the NLCA

Criteria	Definition
Views and landmarks	**Presence of the landscape in views from popular viewpoints, or views to landmark cultural and natural features.** Does the landscape have scenic quality, or does it play a role in providing the setting of, or key views to and from, important natural and built heritage assets?
Remoteness	**Tranquillity, an indication of the general level of human influence, depending on factors such as noise, and views of man-made features.** Does the landscape have significant levels of tranquillity?
Historic features	**The influence of cultural heritage features, including built structures, designed landscapes, and visible earthworks, on the landscape.** Does the landscape have specific historic or cultural associations or does it contribute to the wider cultural heritage of the area?
Recreation	**Evidence of regular recreational use of a landscape, such as long-distance footpaths, visitor facilities, and landscape-based tourist attractions.**

		To what extent is the landscape enjoyed by local people and visitors?
Condition		**The physical state of the landscape, and its visual and functional intactness.** Are the landscape features or combinations of features in a good state of repair? Has the landscape experienced any decline in quality, or are present and future changes likely to lead to such decline?
Distinctiveness		**The extent to which a landscape is representative of the Northumberland landscape, or contributes to a sense of place.** Does the landscape contain features or a combination of features that recur throughout Northumberland and therefore contribute to its wider identity locally, regionally or nationally?
Rarity		**The relative frequency of a landscape's general type, within the study area.** Does the landscape contain features or a combination of features which are rare or unique within Northumberland, or which are known to be uncommon elsewhere?

1.11.   One additional criterion was included, to incorporate natural heritage value. Although not drawing directly from the NLCA, this criterion has been evaluated in a methodical way, based on the presence of national (SSSIs, National Nature Reserves) or international (SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites) natural heritage designations within each character area. This additional criterion is defined in Table D1.2 below.

Table D1.2 Additional criterion

Criteria	Definition
Natural heritage	**The influence of features of biodiversity and geodiversity value on the landscape.** Does the landscape feature high biodiversity or geodiversity values, represented by the presence of statutory natural heritage designations?

Evaluation

1.12.   The evaluation is based on the 108 individual landscape character areas defined in the NLCA, which were each evaluated against the series of criteria. The desk-based evaluation draws on GIS datasets, mapping, and aerial photography.

1.13.   For each of the criteria, five 'ranks' are possible, from 1 (lowest value) to 5 (highest value). For the criteria drawn from the tables in Annexe A to the NLCA, the definitions for each rank are predefined in that document. For the additional natural heritage criterion, these are based on awarding higher scores to landscape character areas where international designations are present, and lower scores where no designations are present. The complete set of criteria and ranking definitions are included in Table D1.3. The findings of the evaluation are discussed in Section 3.

Weighting

1.14.   Part B of the NLCA identifies a 'guiding principle' for each character area. These guiding principles, defined as *landscape planning, landscape management* or *landscape protection*, to an extent reflect the likely value of each character area, and have therefore been used as a weighting factor. Landscapes identified for *landscape protection* were awarded the highest rank (ie score 5), those for *landscape*

management the middle rank (score 3) and those for *landscape planning* the lowest rank (score 1), and these were added to the total score from the evaluation.

1.15.   The use of this weighting factor reflects the nature of the guiding principle, in that those areas identified for *landscape planning* are more likely to be of lower quality at present, and therefore subject to change, than those identified for *landscape protection*. Additional protection is therefore less likely to be appropriate in areas identified for *landscape planning*.

1.16.   This weighting was added following the main evaluation. The effects of the weighting are discussed with the results of the evaluation in Section 3.

Table D1.3 Landscape Evaluation Criteria and Rankings

Criteria	Definition	Rank	
Views and landmarks	**Presence of the landscape in views from popular viewpoints, or views to landmark cultural and natural features.** Does the landscape have scenic quality, or does it play a role in providing the setting of, or key views to and from, important natural and built heritage assets?	5	Landscape contains important or distinctive landscape features, or is important in recognised views
		4	Some important landscape features, or significance in views
		3	Locally distinctive landscape features or locally significant in views
		2	Limited or occasional landscape features or significance in local views
		1	Landscape contains no distinctive landscape features and is not a feature in views
Remoteness	**Tranquillity, an indication of the general level of human influence, depending on factors such as noise, and views of man-made features.** Does the landscape have significant levels of tranquillity?	5	Tranquil and remote, little human activity or noise
		4	Relatively tranquil, a rural landscape
		3	Some human activity, reducing sense of tranquillity
		2	Limited tranquillity, modern human influences
		1	Not tranquil; much human activity and noise
Historic features	**The influence of cultural heritage features, including built structures, land use patterns, designed landscapes, and visible earthworks, on the landscape.** Does the landscape have specific historic or cultural associations or does it contribute to the wider cultural heritage of the area?	5	Historic features are a prominent aspect of the landscape
		4	Some prominent historic features
		3	Some historic features, less important to landscape
		2	Historic features do not relate to landscape
		1	No significant historic features
Recreation	**Evidence of regular recreational use of a landscape, such as long-distance footpaths, visitor facilities, and landscape-based tourist attractions.** To what extent is the landscape enjoyed by local people and visitors?	5	Important for recreation for locals and visitors, national designation or attraction
		4	Well used for recreation, greater than local attraction
		3	Locally significant recreational use or attraction
		2	Low level informal or local recreational use
		1	Little or no recreational use

Criteria	Definition	Rank	
Condition	**The physical state of the landscape, and its visual and functional intactness.** Are the landscape features or combinations of features in a good state of repair? Has the landscape experienced any decline in quality, or are present and future changes likely to lead to such decline?	5	Well managed landscape, retaining key characteristics
		4	Well managed with some elements in poor repair
		3	Generally well managed
		2	Less well managed, with some elements in better repair
		1	Poorly maintained landscape
Distinctiveness	**The extent to which a landscape is representative of the Northumberland landscape, or contributes to a sense of place.** Does the landscape contain features or a combination of features that recur throughout Northumberland and therefore contribute to its wider identity locally, regionally or nationally?	5	Distinctive to Northumberland
		4	Representative landscape of Northumberland
		3	Some distinctive features
		2	Unrepresentative but with some sense of place
		1	Not representative
Rarity	**The relative frequency of a landscape's general type, within the study area.** Does the landscape contain features or a combination of features which are rare or unique within Northumberland, or which are known to be uncommon elsewhere?	5	A unique landscape within the area
		4	A rarely occurring landscape
		3	A more common landscape with some unique features
		2	A more common landscape, with features of some rarity
		1	A common landscape across the area
Natural heritage	**The influence of features of biodiversity and geodiversity value on the landscape.** Does the landscape feature high biodiversity or geodiversity values, represented by the presence of statutory natural heritage designations?	5	Large-scale and/or frequent international-level natural heritage designations.
		4	Smaller or more infrequent international-level natural heritage designations.
		3	Large-scale and/or frequent national-level natural heritage designations, or very infrequent international designations.
		2	Smaller or more infrequent national-level natural heritage designations.
		1	No national or international natural heritage designations.

Development pressures

1.17.   As a final layer, areas subject to development pressure were identified, and compared with the results of the evaluation, to identify any high-value landscapes which are potentially under threat.

1.18.   A survey of development pressure within the County was carried out, based on information supplied by the Council, and drawing from relevant planning documents. This includes the following:

- Minerals pressure areas;

- Potential waste landfill locations; and

- Identified wind power resource areas.

1.19.   These areas are discussed further in Section 3. Landscape sensitivity to these development types is examined in Part C of this report.

2.   EXISTING LOCAL LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

2.1.   The Northumberland County and National Park Joint Structure Plan (1996)
        recommended that district and borough authorities establish Areas of High
        Landscape Value (AHLV) within their local plans. Local landscape designations were
        therefore defined by five of the six former district councils within Northumberland.
        This section briefly reviews these designations, their justification, and their current
        status.

REVIEW OF LOCAL PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Alnwick District

2.2.   The former Alnwick District Council defined Areas of High Landscape Value (AHLV)
        in the 1997 Adopted Local Plan. The AHLV designation covered the whole of the
        district west of Longframlington and Alnwick, with the exception of Northumberland
        National Park, and also included the lower valleys of the Rivers Aln and Coquet. The
        AHLV was protected under Policy RE17. The justification for the policy states that
        "*the Local Plan has identified the principal river valleys, the upland/moorland area,
        parklands and taken account of other features such as tree cover, hedgerows, water and
        historic features in designating the Area of High Landscape Value, which is considered to be
        of county significance.*" This definition is not considered to be based on a robust or
        consistent assessment of landscape value. Policy RE17 was not saved under the
        Secretary of State's Direction of September 2007. The Alnwick Core Strategy (2007)
        replaced the AHLV designation with a character-based landscape protection policy
        (Policy S13), following the completion of the Alnwick and Castle Morpeth landscape
        character assessment (LCA) in 2006 (AXIS, 2006). This LCA formed the basis of a
        supplementary planning document, adopted in May 2010.

Berwick upon Tweed Borough

2.3.   An LCA of the borough (Karen Chambers Associates, 1993) formed the basis for
        local landscape designations defined in the 1999 Local Plan. Two AHLVs were
        defined: the Kyloe Hills and Glendale in the central part of the borough; and the
        Tweed Valley along the northern edge. These areas are defined in saved Policy F3,
        which clearly states their origin in the LCA. The coastal area is given similar
        protection under saved Policy F2. The remaining areas of the borough, outside the
        National Park and Berwick itself, are protected under Policy F4 which defines
        Intermediate Areas of Landscape Value (IALV). Although these designations are
        clearly based on landscape character, the Berwick upon Tweed LCA is somewhat
        dated, and has now been superseded by the NLCA. The evidence base and
        justification for these designations therefore requires revisiting.

Blyth Valley Borough

2.4.   AHLVs were designated under Policy E4 of the 1999 Local Plan, covering parts of the
        valleys of the River Blyth and the Seaton Burn, their associated hinterlands of open
        countryside, the Seaton Delaval Estate, the coast, and the Arcot area of Cramlington.
        The justification for this policy includes a detailed examination of the landscape

qualities of the designated areas, which include incised valleys, estuary, coastline, and designed landscapes. In 2006, an Area of High Landscape Value Review and Landscape Character Assessment was carried out (Geoffrey Crichton, 2006). This presented a new classification of the borough landscape, and examined each of the AHLVs, concluding that the designation was unnecessary. Policy E4 was therefore not saved, and was replaced by the criteria-based Policy ENV1 in the 2007 Blyth Valley Core Strategy.

Castle Morpeth District

2.5.   The 2003 Local Plan defined extensive AHLVs in several locations within the district. These were defined under saved Policy C3 as river valleys, the coast, country houses with parkland, the upland fringes, and a number of specific landscape features. The associated policy justification does not give any detailed rationale for the selection of these areas, other than that they are "*important to their particular locality and to the county as a whole in terms of their special character and greater than average visual quality*". It is not considered that these AHLVs are based on a robust or consistent assessment of landscape value.

Tynedale District

2.6.   AHLVs in Tynedale were defined by saved Policy NE16 of the 2000 Local Plan. This policy states that AHLVs were based on "*the principal upland areas, river valleys, parklands [and] other features such as trees, hedgerows, water, historic areas and the setting of main settlements.*" However, the 2007 LDF Core Strategy, drawing on more up-to-date strategic policy, sets out a criteria-based approach to the natural environment, including landscape quality and character (Policy NE1). Local plan Policy NE16 is not included in the Schedule of Adopted Policies Effective from October 2007.

Wansbeck District

2.7.   The 2007 Local Plan does not define local landscape designations for Wansbeck. Policy GP5 sets out a criteria-based approach to respecting the character of the district's landscape. However, the Local Plan does note a list of areas that "*contribute most to the quality and distinctiveness of the local landscape*", including the coast and the river valleys. Justification for the policy outlines the origin of these areas in the 2000 Landscape Character Assessment of South East Northumberland, part of the Northumberland Coalfield Environmental Enhancement Strategy.

CONCLUSION

2.8.   From the above review, it is our understanding that those local landscape designations which were established by the former Berwick upon Tweed and Castle Morpeth local authorities are still active as part of the development plan. Other local landscape designations have not been saved. The Berwick designations are based on a now-outdated character assessment, while those within Castle Morpeth are not firmly grounded in an evaluation of the landscape. This review therefore concludes that there are no local landscape designations within Northumberland which would currently meet the requirements of PPS7.

3. EVALUATION

3.1. This section discusses the results of the evaluation process. The evaluation results are set out in Table D3.1.

Table D3.1 Evaluation results

Character area no.	Views and landmarks	Remoteness	Historic features	Recreation	Condition	Distinctive-ness	Rarity	Natural heritage	TOTAL	Guiding principle	Weighting	TOTAL + weighting
1a	5	2	5	4	4	5	5	4	34	Protect	5	39
2a	3	2	3	3	4	4	3	2	24	Manage	3	27
2b	3	3	3	3	4	4	2	3	25	Manage	3	28
3a	4	3	3	3	4	4	1	2	24	Manage	3	27
3b	1	3	5	2	2	4	1	3	21	Manage	3	24
3c	2	3	3	3	3	4	1	2	21	Manage	3	24
4a	4	2	1	4	3	3	2	5	24	Protect	5	29
4b	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	37	Protect	5	42
4c	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	5	29	Protect	5	34
5a	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	38	Protect	5	43
5b	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	5	29	Protect	5	34
5c	5	2	4	4	3	4	4	5	31	Protect	5	36
6a	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	18	Manage	3	21
7a	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	1	32	Protect	5	37
8a	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	25	Manage	3	28
8b	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	30	Manage	3	33
8c	3	3	1	2	2	1	2	1	15	Manage	3	18
8d	4	3	4	3	3	3	2	1	23	Manage	3	26
8e	2	3	3	4	3	3	2	1	21	Manage	3	24
8f	1	4	1	2	3	2	4	2	19	Manage	3	22
8g	3	4	1	3	3	3	2	1	20	Manage	3	23
9a	3	3	4	3	3	3	5	3	27	Protect	5	32
10a	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	18	Manage	3	21
10b	4	3	1	2	4	2	3	1	20	Manage	3	23
11a	2	1	4	3	4	3	3	1	21	Manage	3	24
11b	2	4	4	2	3	3	2	2	22	Manage	3	25
11c	2	4	1	3	4	2	2	1	19	Manage	3	22
12a	2	2	4	4	4	2	2	3	23	Plan	1	24
13a	3	3	3	3	2	2	4	3	23	Manage	3	26
14a	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	28	Protect	5	33
14b	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	29	Protect	5	34
14c	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	3	33	Protect	5	38

| Character area no.	Views and landmarks	Remoteness	Historic features	Recreation	Condition	Distinctive-ness	Rarity	Natural heritage	TOTAL	Guiding principle	Weighting	TOTAL + weighting
15a	2	4	4	4	5	4	3	3	29	Manage	3	32
15b	2	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	27	Manage	3	30
16a	5	2	3	3	4	4	2	4	27	Manage	3	30
16b	3	3	4	4	4	3	2	4	27	Manage	3	30
16c	3	3	4	4	4	3	2	4	27	Manage	3	30
17a	1	3	3	1	3	2	2	1	16	Manage	3	19
18a	2	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	26	Manage	3	29
18b	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	4	18	Manage	3	21
18c	2	4	3	3	4	2	3	4	25	Manage	3	28
18d	2	4	4	3	4	3	3	1	24	Manage	3	27
19a	2	3	2	3	3	4	5	5	27	Plan	1	28
19b	5	2	2	5	5	5	5	3	32	Plan	1	33
20a	2	2	4	3	4	2	3	1	21	Manage	3	24
20b	2	3	4	4	4	2	3	2	24	Manage	3	27
20c	2	3	4	4	4	2	3	1	23	Manage	3	26
21a	2	3	4	4	3	3	3	1	23	Protect	5	28
21b	3	5	3	4	3	3	3	1	25	Protect	5	30
21c	2	3	4	3	3	3	3	1	22	Protect	5	27
22a	2	3	3	2	3	3	4	1	21	Manage	3	24
22b	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	1	22	Manage	3	25
23a	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	30	Protect	5	35
23b	2	5	1	2	4	3	4	3	24	Protect	5	29
23c	2	3	1	3	3	4	4	3	23	Protect	5	28
24a	2	4	2	4	4	3	4	4	27	Protect	5	32
24b	2	5	1	2	4	3	4	4	25	Protect	5	30
24c	2	3	3	3	4	2	2	3	22	Protect	5	27
24d	1	4	1	2	4	4	1	4	21	Protect	5	26
24e	5	3	4	5	4	5	4	1	31	Protect	5	36
25a	4	4	3	4	4	4	2	1	26	Protect	5	31
25b	3	4	1	4	4	4	3	5	28	Protect	5	33
25c	2	4	2	3	4	4	2	5	26	Protect	5	31
25d	3	4	4	3	4	4	2	5	29	Protect	5	34
25e	2	5	2	3	4	4	2	5	27	Protect	5	32

Character area no.	Views and landmarks	Remoteness	Historic features	Recreation	Condition	Distinctive-ness	Rarity	Natural heritage	TOTAL	Guiding principle	Weighting	TOTAL + weighting
26a	1	4	3	2	3	1	1	1	16	Plan	1	17
27a	2	4	4	3	5	4	3	4	29	Protect	5	34
27b	2	3	4	4	5	4	3	5	30	Protect	5	35
28a	5	3	5	5	5	5	3	3	34	Protect	5	39
29a	4	3	4	5	5	3	4	2	30	Protect	5	35
30a	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	2	25	Manage	3	28
30b	3	2	1	3	3	3	4	2	21	Manage	3	24
30c	3	2	4	3	3	3	4	2	24	Manage	3	27
31a	2	3	4	3	3	3	3	1	22	Manage	3	25
31b	1	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	19	Manage	3	22
31c	2	3	1	2	3	2	3	2	18	Manage	3	21
31d	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	1	18	Manage	3	21
31e	2	1	2	2	5	1	1	1	15	Manage	3	18
31f	3	2	5	2	4	3	2	2	23	Manage	3	26
31g	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	1	17	Manage	3	20
32a	1	5	2	2	5	4	3	1	23	Protect	5	28
32b	3	4	3	4	5	3	4	4	30	Protect	5	35
33a	2	4	4	1	3	2	3	1	20	Manage	3	23
34a	4	3	4	5	2	4	3	1	26	Manage	3	29
34b	1	4	1	4	2	4	2	1	19	Manage	3	22
34c	2	3	3	3	2	1	1	3	18	Manage	3	21
34d	2	4	3	1	2	2	1	1	16	Manage	3	19
34e	2	4	1	2	3	2	1	4	19	Manage	3	22
35a	2	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	28	Manage	3	31
35b	2	3	4	3	4	4	3	1	24	Manage	3	27
36a	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	15	Plan	1	16
37a	3	4	2	2	4	4	3	2	24	Plan	1	25
37b	3	4	4	2	4	4	3	2	26	Plan	1	27
38a	2	2	3	2	3	2	1	1	16	Manage	3	19
38b	2	3	4	3	4	2	1	2	21	Manage	3	24
38c	2	4	4	4	4	3	1	1	23	Manage	3	26
38d	2	4	4	2	4	2	1	1	20	Manage	3	23
38e	2	2	4	5	4	3	2	1	23	Manage	3	26

Character area no.	Views and landmarks	Remoteness	Historic features	Recreation	Condition	Distinctive-ness	Rarity	Natural heritage	TOTAL	Guiding principle	Weighting	TOTAL + weighting
39a	2	1	3	3	2	3	2	2	18	Plan	1	19
39b	3	1	4	5	2	3	2	2	22	Plan	1	23
39c	2	1	3	3	3	2	1	2	17	Plan	1	18
40a	4	3	3	4	4	5	4	5	32	Manage	3	35
40b	2	1	1	3	2	3	4	5	21	Manage	3	24
41a	3	1	3	3	1	2	4	5	22	Plan	1	23
42a	4	1	2	3	2	2	5	2	21	Plan	1	22
43a	3	4	2	2	3	2	3	1	20	Manage	3	23
43b	3	4	2	2	3	3	3	1	21	Manage	3	24
44a	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	1	21	Manage	3	24

TOTAL SCORES

3.2.   Prior to weighting, a range of total scores between 8 and 40 were possible. The map of unweighted total scores (Figure D3.1) illustrates which landscapes were ranked highly under the most criteria. Character area 5a *Holy Island Coast* was the highest-scoring landscape with 38 points, followed by 4b *Farne Islands Coast* with 37 points, and 1a *Tweed River Mouth* and 28a *River Irthing* each with 33 points. The lowest-scoring landscapes were character areas 8c *Charlton Ridge*, 31e *Stocksfield to Prudhoe*, and 36a *Ingoe Moor*, each with 15 points.

3.3.   It is apparent from Figure D3.1 that the highest-scoring landscapes relate quite closely to the existing areas of landscape protection. Landscapes within the Northumberland Coast AONB scored particularly highly. Other high-scoring landscapes include Hulne Park, Kielder Reservoir, and the Derwent Valley.

3.4.   Scores in the 26-30 range represent the upper middle of the overall ranking. Landscapes in this bracket include the North Pennines AONB, parts of the Cheviot fringe, and Kielder Forest. North Northumberland, including the prominent Kyloe Hills, is also in this range, along with the Coquet Valley and the South Tyne Valley.

3.5.   Landscapes in the lower-middle bracket, scoring between 21 and 25, include some valley landscapes, particularly around the Tyne Gap and the Cheviot fringe. The area around Ashington, Blyth and Cramlington also falls within this range, as well as a number of open farmland and upland fringe areas.

3.6.   Those areas scoring 20 or less are generally open, intensively farmed areas, or upland fringe landscapes with coniferous forestry. Also in this range are some valley landscapes, and the extensively human-influenced fringes of the Tyne Gap.

Figure D3.1 Total scores

Unweighted score

- 15 - 20
- 21 - 25
- 26 - 30
- 31 - 35
- 36 - 40
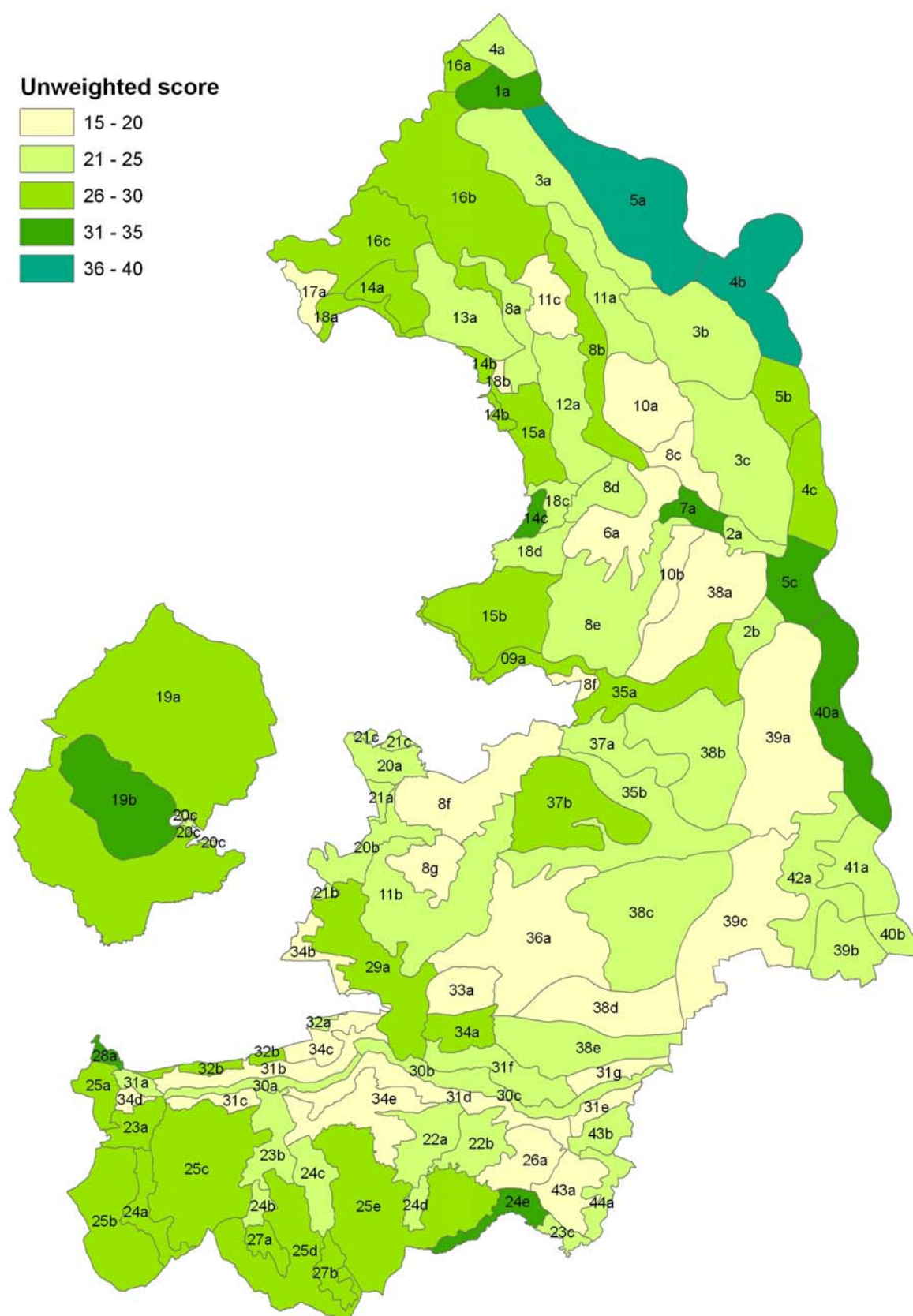
WEIGHTING

3.7. As explained in Section 1.12, the guiding principles identified by the NLCA Part B were applied as a weighting factor. The range of possible scores was therefore increased to between 9 and 45. Weighted results are illustrated in Figure D3.2.

3.8. After weighting, there was no change in the top six places, with character areas 5a *Holy Island Coast* and 4b *Farne Islands Coast* still coming highest, with 43 and 42 points respectively. The lowest-scoring landscape was character area 36a *Ingoe Moor*, with 16 points, followed by 26a *Healey* (17 points) and 39c *Stannington* (18 points). Comparing the illustrations of weighted and unweighted results, similar patterns can be discerned, although there is greater differentiation due to the greater overall range in scores. The similarity between the unweighted and weighted results suggests that the assessment process is robust, since it arrives at a comparable selection of landscape units.

3.9. Only the two areas noted above scored over 40. Areas scoring above 35 include a range of different types. High-scoring valley landscapes include Hulne Park, the Derwent Valley, and the Irthing gorge. Other high-scoring areas are the Cheviot outliers at Old Fawdon, and the Tweed, Aln and Coquet estuaries.

3.10. Areas scoring between 31 and 35 include most of the remaining areas within the two AONBs, including almost all of the North Pennines AONB. Druridge Bay is also within this bracket, and in fact scores slightly higher than some of the coastal AONB landscapes. The Cheviot fringes, north Northumberland, the Kyloe Hills, Kielder Reservoir, and the Coquet and Tyne Valleys fall into this range.

3.11. Areas scoring below 30 include the remainder of the Cheviot fringe, the Coquet and Aln valleys, and Kielder moors. The Font and Wansbeck valleys, and surrounding farmland, are within this range, as are parts of the Tyne Gap, and the North Pennine Dales. The greatest number of character areas fall into the 21-25 range, representing the lower-middle rankings. These landscapes include much of the Tyne gap, and the farmland and upland fringe landscapes which extend northwards, following the line of the sandstone hills. The built-up areas and developed coastline of south-east Northumberland are within this bracket.

3.12. The lowest scoring landscapes are mainly areas of open, intensive farmland or upland fringe farmland, such as Ingoe Moor, the Longframlington area, and the area around Healey. The settled farmland of south-east Northumberland, and the east end of the Tyne Gap, also scored poorly.

Figure D3.2 Total scores after weighting applied

Weighted score

- 16 - 20
- 21 - 25
- 26 - 30
- 31 - 35
- 36 - 40
- 41 - 45
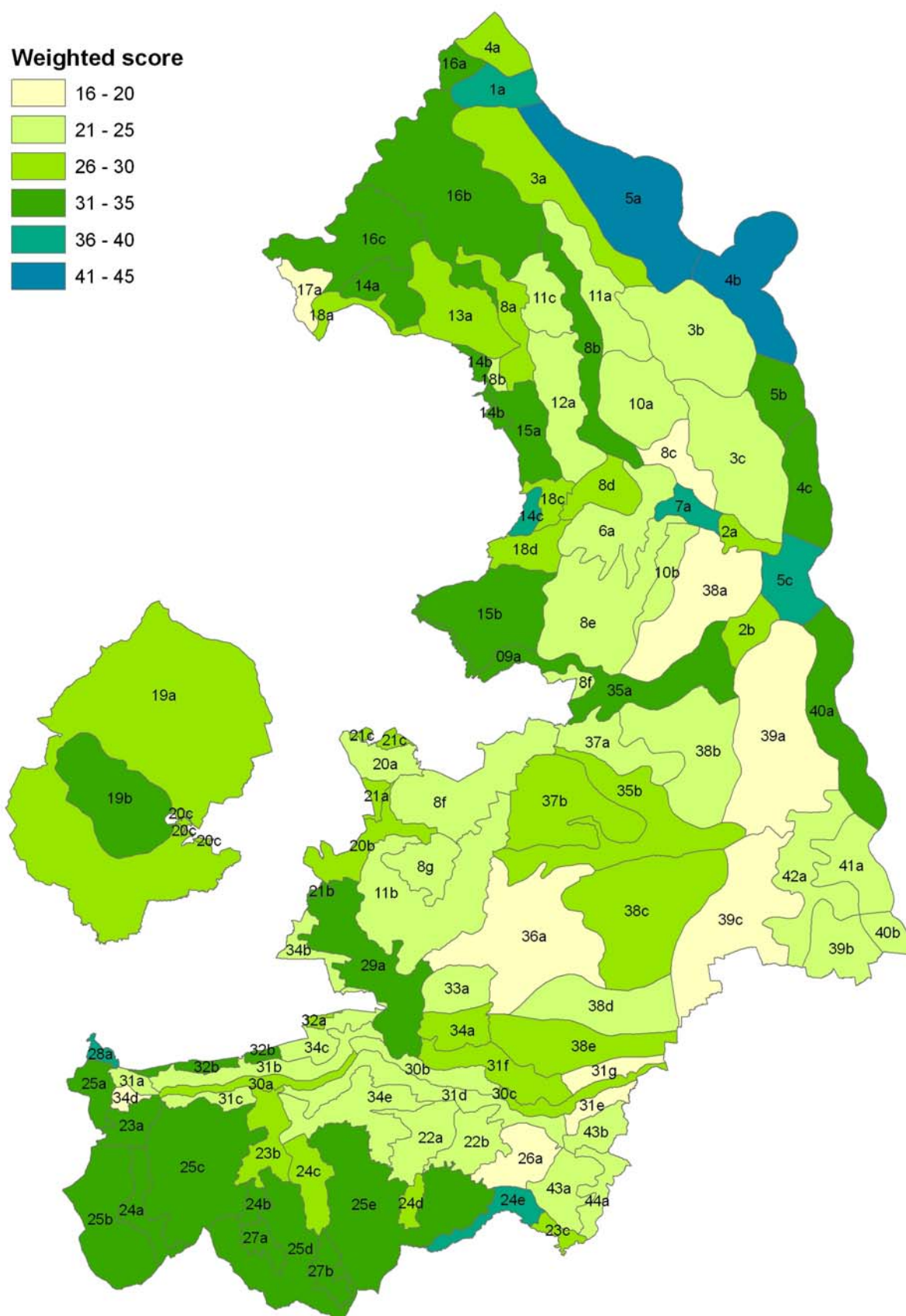
Selection of areas for consideration against development pressures

3.13. Several of the landscapes within the study area already benefit from a significant level of protection, as they form part of the North Pennines and Northumberland Coast AONBs. The 19 character areas which fall wholly or mostly into an AONB were therefore excluded from further consideration, including many of the highest-scoring landscapes. These are shown in Figure D3.3.

3.14. Based on the weighted results, and excluding those within AONBs, the highest-scoring one-third of the character areas were selected for consideration against development pressures. This amounts to 31 character areas out of 89, including all areas which scored 28 or over (therefore slightly more than one third). These landscapes are listed in Table D3.2 and illustrated in Figure D3.4.

3.15. While the one-third limit is an arbitrary cut-off, it is considered that the very best of Northumberland's landscapes, ie those which may merit additional protection, would be within this bracket. The benefits of additional protection are likely to reduce as the size of the area protected increases. Extending protection to large parts of the County would diffuse the focus of activities aimed at planning and managing these areas.

3.16. The resulting selection of character areas, illustrated in Figure D3.4, can be grouped as follows. The greatest concentration of areas is in north Northumberland, including the areas of *Open Rolling Farmland* (LCT 16), the area around Berwick, and the area north of the Cheviot Hills. Extending south from this area are the *Kyloe and Chillingham Hills* (8b), and a group of landscapes to the east of the Cheviot Hills.

3.17. The Coquet valley is wholly within the selected areas, as is *Hulne Park* (7a), although this area has some protection as a Registered Park and Garden, and *Druridge Bay* (40a). The other groups of selected areas cover the Kielder area, the *North Tyne Valley* (29a) and adjacent areas, and the western part of the Tyne Gap.
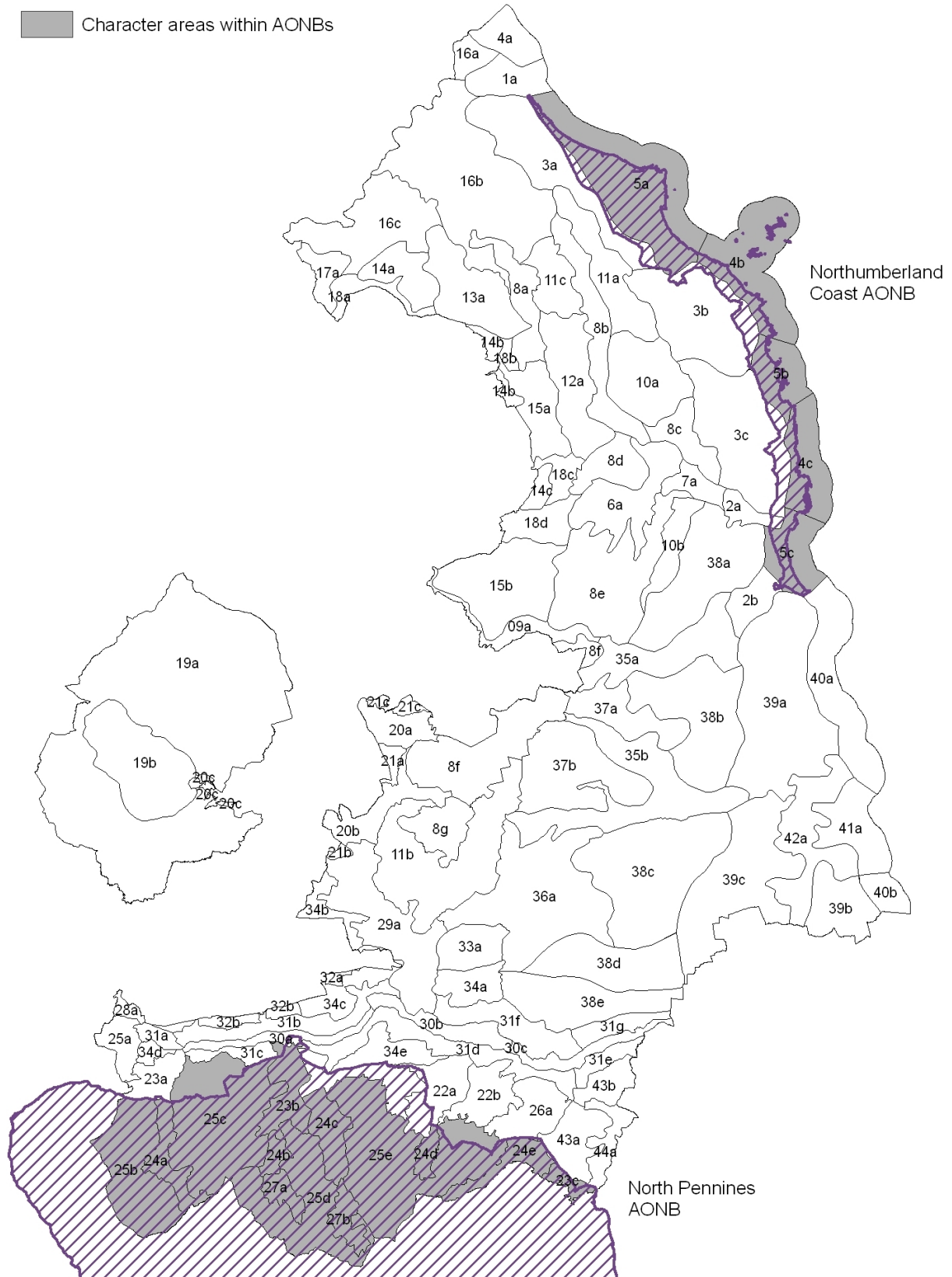
Figure D3.3 Character areas within AONBs

Table D3.2 Highest-scoring third of character areas, after exclusion of those within AONBs

Character area no.	Character area name	Total score + weighting
1a	Tweed River Mouth	39
28a	River Irthing	39
14c	Old Fawdon	38
7a	Hulne Park	37
23a	Lower South Tyne	35
29a	North Tyne Valley	35
32b	Haltwhistle, Melkridge and Ridley Commons	35
40a	Druridge Bay	35
14b	Wooler Foothills	34
8b	Kyloe and Chillingham Hills	33
14a	Moneylaws and Coldside	33
19b	Kielder Reservoir	33
9a	Coquetdale	32
15a	Lilburn and Roddam	32
25a	Blenkinsopp Common	31
35a	Coquet Valley	31
15b	Upper Coquet	30
16a	Halidon	30
16b	Duddo and Lowick	30
16c	East Learmouth	30
21b	Ealingham Rigg	30
4a	North Tweed Coast	29
18a	Bowmont Valley	29
34a	Acomb Ridge	29
2b	Lower Coquet	28
8a	Doddington Ridge	28
18c	Upper Breamish	28
19a	Kielder and Redesdale Forests	28
21a	Corsenside Common	28
30a	Haltwhistle to Newbrough	28
32a	Howden Hill	28

Figure D3.4 Highest-scoring third of character areas, after exclusion of those within AONBs

Highest-scoring character areas

Character areas within AONBs
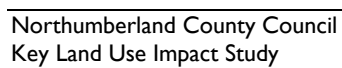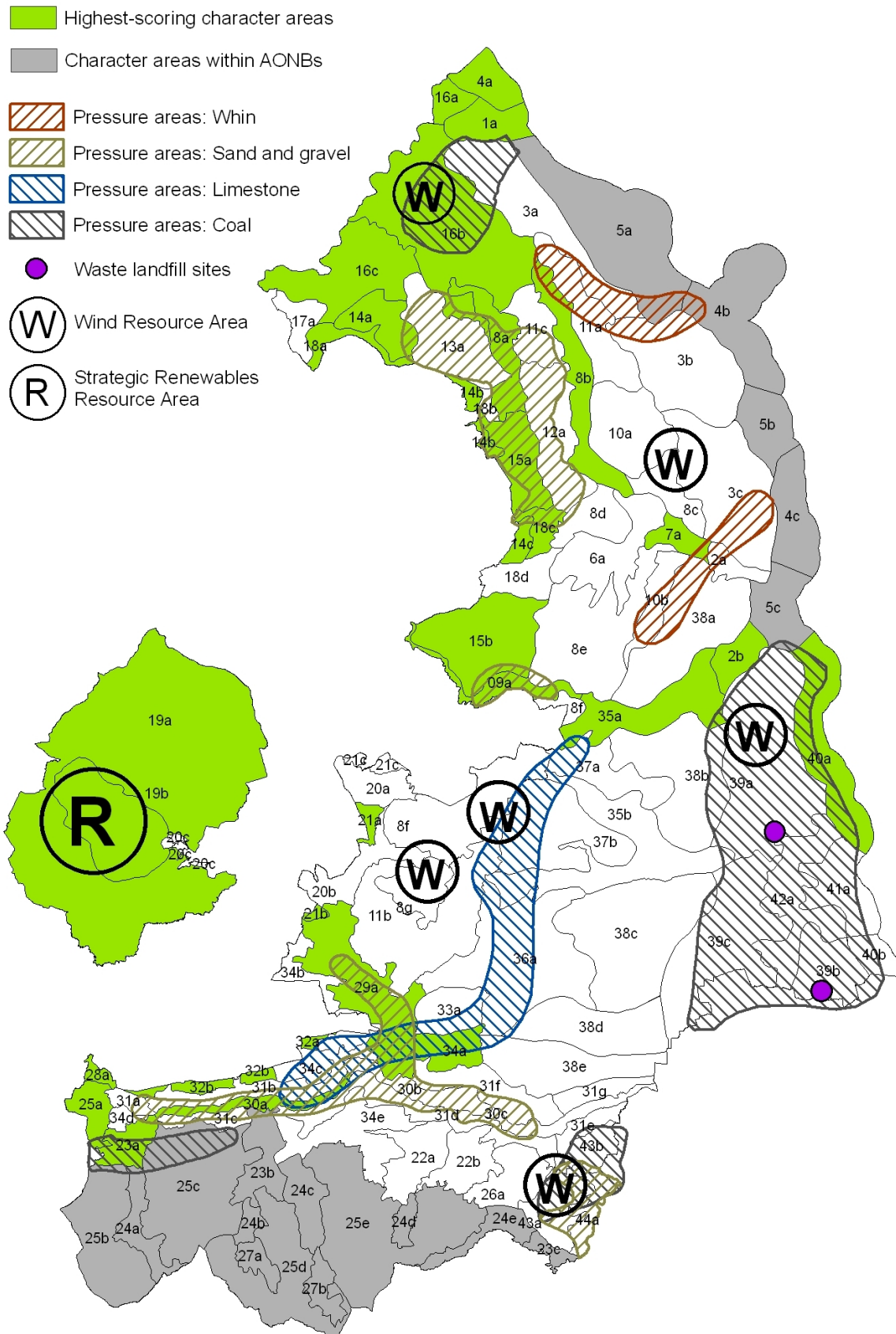
COMPARISON WITH AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

3.18. The final stage of this study is a comparison of the highest-scoring landscapes with those areas which are likely to come under pressure for large-scale development. As noted in Section 1, these include:

- Minerals pressure areas;

- Potential waste landfill locations; and

- Identified wind power resource areas.

3.19. Minerals pressure areas have been identified by Northumberland County Council for coal, whinstone, limestone and sand and gravel extraction. Potential waste sites have been identified as extensions to existing sites at Seghill and Ellington Road. These areas are shown on Figure D3.5.

3.20. Wind resource areas were defined in the former North East Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).[3] Policy 41 of the RSS identified 11 wind resource areas, based on 'broad areas of least constraint' which were themselves derived from examination of landscape character at a regional scale. The following wind resource areas are within Northumberland:

- South and West Berwick upon Tweed;

- North/ South Charlton;

- Knowesgate area;

- Harwood Forest;

- Northern Coalfield south of Druridge Bay; and

- Kiln Pit Hill area.

3.21. In addition, Kielder Forest was identified as a Strategic Renewables Resource Area, with potential for large-scale wind power development. These resource areas are illustrated in Figure D3.5.

3.22. Since the preparation of this document, the RSS has been revoked, and therefore the 'broad areas of least constraint' are no longer defined in the development plan for the County, although their basis in regional landscape studies is unchanged. The Council is therefore considering whether to endorse the continued use of these areas across Northumberland, or whether to operate a criteria-based approach utilising the policies contained in LDFs and saved Local Plans in conjunction with up to date national planning policy guidance.

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[3] Government Office for the North East (2008) The North East of England Plan: Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021.

Comparison

3.23.   The identified pressure areas overlap with the selected character areas in a number of locations. In north Northumberland, the area around Berwick is not threatened by known demands, but the area to the south-west may come under pressure for wind farms and for coal extraction. Further south, the areas east of the Cheviot Hills are likely to come under pressure for sand and gravel extraction. A small part of the Kyloe Hills may be affected by future whin extraction.

3.24.   The upper Coquet valley is an identified sand and gravel resource area, but the remainder of the watercourse is unlikely to be affected. Hulne Park is not considered to be under threat due to its single ownership and Registered Park and Garden status, although Druridge Bay may come under pressure for coal extraction.

3.25.   Pressure for renewable development is likely to continue in the Kielder area, though the other identified wind resource areas are outside the selected character areas. There is likely to be pressure for sand and gravel and limestone extraction within the North and South Tyne valleys, potentially affecting selected landscapes in this area.

Figure D3.5 Highest-scoring areas with development pressure

Legend:
- Highest-scoring character areas
- Character areas within AONBs
- Pressure areas: Whin
- Pressure areas: Sand and gravel
- Pressure areas: Limestone
- Pressure areas: Coal
- Waste landfill sites
- W Wind Resource Area
- R Strategic Renewables Resource Area

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1.   A structured evaluation of the relative value of the Northumberland landscape has been carried out, resulting in a ranking of the 108 landscape character areas identified in the NLCA. The highest-scoring landscapes, representing the likely most valuable landscapes in the study area outside the AONBs, were identified, and compared with identified development pressure areas.

4.2.   Of the 31 character areas selected from the evaluation as representing the highest-value landscapes in the County, almost all are likely to come under some pressure for mineral extraction or wind farm development. There are potential conflicts inherent in attempting to establish additional protection for certain landscapes. This is particularly so where the landscapes have already been identified as 'areas of least constraint' in the former RSS.

4.3.   The areas identified in Figure D3.5 could form the basis for areas to be afforded additional protection in the form of local landscape designations. However, there would need to be more detailed, local level study of each group of character areas, including field work and consultation, in order to establish broad support for, and robust justification of, the areas chosen.

4.4.   Character area boundaries may not be the most suitable basis for designated area boundaries, as landscape value may vary within character units. There may be benefit in protecting associations of different landscape types where they are closely related, so that boundaries may not be fixed to one type. The definition of boundaries should consider the policy implications of designation, the coherence of the area enclosed, and the suitability of boundary features themselves. Again, boundary selection would be based on field work and consultation.

4.5.   This study therefore forms the first part of a potential process towards local landscape designations in Northumberland. Referring back to PPS7, it provides a "*formal and robust assessment of the qualities of the landscape*", and has identified the highest-value landscapes in Northumberland. The next stage should be careful consideration of the need to protect these landscapes, either through the use of a local landscape designation, or through criteria-based policies.

4.6.   This process is not intended to indicate areas in which all development or land use change should be resisted. It provides guidance on the relative qualities of the range of landscapes within Northumberland, which can inform decisions about steering development to the most appropriate locations. In combination with the NLCA, the study will assist in identifying the factors which must be taken into account, in order that development may be accommodated without detriment to the key qualities of the landscape.