



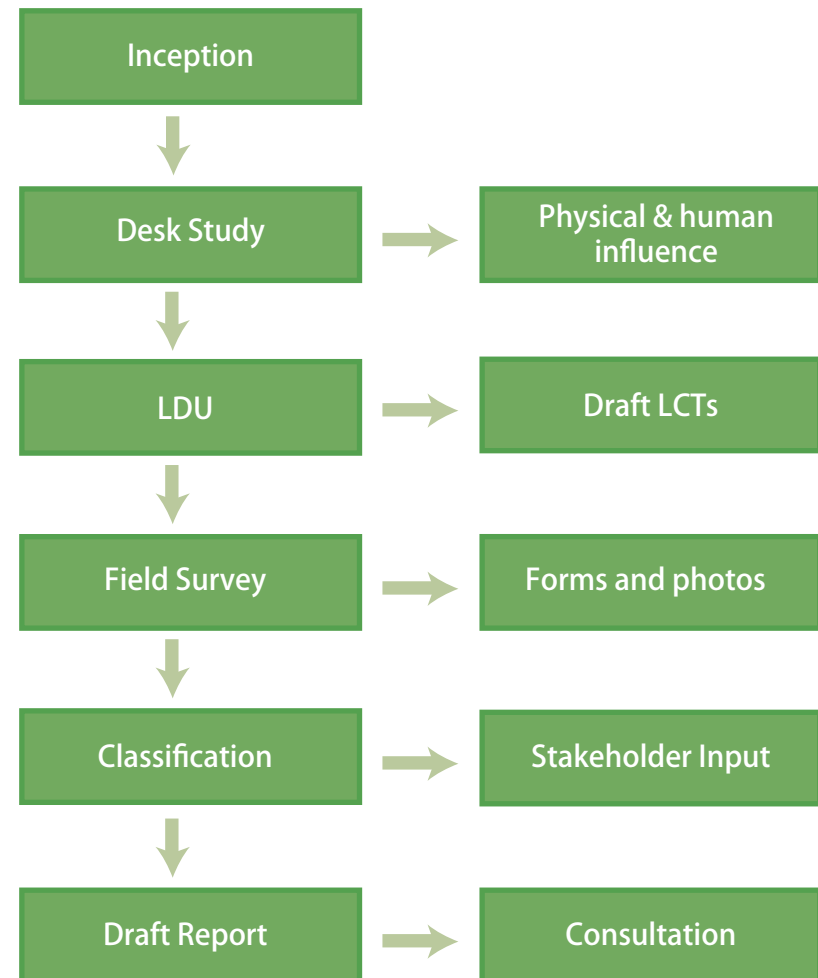
3. Methodology

Key Stages

The approach to this assessment has followed best practice as promoted by the Countryside Agency in the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002) and seeks to be compliant with the requirements of the European Landscape Convention.

It is concerned primarily with Landscape Character, rather than with landscape quality or value. Issues of quality or value will be relevant when Devon County Council prepare a Devon County LCA which will be used to inform decision-making, but the LCA methodology itself seeks to distinguish between Landscape Character Types (LCTs).

“The key stages in producing the LCA are identified on this flow chart and are described further in the following pages”



Stage 1: Desk based classification

This stage used various information presented in a Geographic Information System (GIS) format to start to identify draft Landscape Character Type (LCT) boundaries to be verified in the field. This included the Landscape Description Units (LDUs) identified for Mid Devon through a previous county-wide desk based exercise, as well as the LCTs identified by the completed assessments for adjoining districts, as defined within the Devon Menu of LCTs (Appendix 1).

These layers were verified against other spatially available information layers including geology, soils, landform, drainage, aerial photographs, agricultural land classification, historic landscape characterisation, river catchments, environmental designations, land cover, and habitats.

Stage 2: Field Survey

The field survey work was undertaken from September to December 2010, and was a systematic rigorous exercise that involved undertaking written observations, map annotations, and taking photographs. The standard survey checklists used for each classification ensured that the landscape features and characteristics were recorded in a consistent and objective way.

It became clear that the LDUs did not always account for the variations within the landscape, for instance boundaries tended to follow contours rather than traceable features demonstrating a clear change in character. Therefore it was agreed that the draft LCT boundaries, initially based upon the LDU boundaries, would focus on thorough fieldwork based approach and be refined accordingly.

Stage 3: Stakeholder workshop

Stakeholder consultation is key to the success of landscape character assessment. The approach in this assessment follows that proposed by the landscape assessment guidance to engage both communities of place and communities of interest.

The workshop for Mid Devon's Landscape Character Assessment specifically sought to meet the objectives of the European Landscape Convention - to develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes. Two exercises were undertaken with local stakeholders and key interest groups, where they were asked to identify what they particularly value about the different landscapes of Mid Devon, as well as discuss ideas for landscape

Exercise 1 - Identifying Special Qualities

The group as a whole were asked to use post-it notes to write down what individuals thought were the 'special qualities' most associated with the eleven Landscape Character Types (LCTs) identified for Mid Devon and to highlight any issues with LCT boundaries.

Exercise 2 - Brainstorming issues affecting special qualities of the landscape

The group as a whole were split into 4 focus groups, where they were asked to look at the 'top 3-5' special qualities identified in the first exercise for the Landscape Character Types. Each group discussed the forces/issues affecting the special qualities (e.g. development issues, climate change) and then discussed ideas for the development of landscape guidelines, using the wording protect, manage and plan.

Stage 4: Draft report

The draft report was then circulated to special interest groups and those who attended the workshop for comment. Written responses were catalogued and, where appropriate, changes incorporated into the text of the Final Report.

To be compliant with the European Landscape Convention (ELC) the guidelines in the Landscape Character Assessment are organised using the following wording:

protect: to protect what should be protected;

manage: to manage what needs management in order to be sustained;

plan: to take strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore and create landscapes.

Stage 5: Final report

Following receipt of the comments from the Workshop Group, this Landscape Character Assessment and LCT classification was then finalised.

The finalised Landscape Character Areas for Devon, as prepared by Devon County Council has drawn on the information contained within this assessment. Mid Devon District Council also intend for this assessment to feed into the formulation of specific landscape policies, and to be part of the evidence base for those policies in the Local Development Framework.

