

Landscape Character Assessment for Stoke-on-Trent City Council

FINAL

June 2026



LEPUS CONSULTING
LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY, PLANNING & URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

Landscape Character Assessment

Stoke-on-Trent City Council

FINAL

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Front cover: Bridge No. 16 over the Trent and Mersey Canal, Stoke-on-Trent.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

SOTCC	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
LCA	Landscape Character Area
LCT	Landscape Character Type
NCA	National Character Area
UCA	Urban Character Area

1 Introduction

1.1 Appointment and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Lepus Consulting has been appointed by Stoke-on-Trent City Council (SOTCC) to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment to support the preparation of the new Local Plan review.
- 1.1.2 Lepus Consulting is a multi-disciplinary environmental assessment and planning practice, based in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, specialising in landscape, ecology, sustainability appraisal, green infrastructure and local plan preparation.

1.2 New Local Plan Review

- 1.2.1 The Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy 2006-2026, Stoke-on-Trent City Plan 1993 and Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Local Plan (2013-2026) form the current local development framework in place. A new Local Plan review is in preparation for the period 2020 to 2040. A Regulation 18 consultation on the draft Local Plan document took place between September and October 2025. A key issue which has been expressed in previous consultations is the need to enhance the identity and distinctiveness of the built and natural environment. This Landscape Character Assessment will therefore inform the Regulation 19 stage for the pre-submission version of the Local Plan.

1.3 Landscape Character Assessment

- 1.3.1 Landscape Character Assessment is the process of identifying and describing variations in landscape character within a defined area. It sets out to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that give each landscape its distinctive identity. The outcome of this process is the production of a Landscape Character Assessment.
- 1.3.2 Townscape character has also been considered within this landscape character assessment. Urban character is central to understanding how settlements accommodate change, and how edges and interfaces can be managed to retain local distinctiveness.
- 1.3.3 This report establishes Landscape Character Types (LCTs) for Stoke-on-Trent to provide a consistent spatial framework for understanding landscape character across the city. The assessment draws on existing landscape evidence, historic characterisation, policy context and field survey.

1.4 Geographic context of Stoke-on-Trent

- 1.4.1 The city of Stoke-on-Trent covers approximately 93.4km² and is located within the county of Staffordshire in the Midlands region of England. The city is the largest within Staffordshire and is bounded by Green Belt land, with the towns of Alsager, Kidsgrove, Biddulph and Newcastle-under-Lyme surrounding. Birmingham lies further south, while Manchester lies to the north.
- 1.4.2 The city is polycentric and was formed by six towns in 1910, including Stoke-upon-Trent, Hanley, Burslem, Tunstall, Longton and Fenton. The city is renowned for its pottery industry, historically serving as one of the principal centres of pottery production in England, which earned it the nickname 'The Potteries'.
- 1.4.3 The city is characterised by gently undulating topography and the head of the Trent River valley in the northeast. The city contains several traversing canals including the 'Trent and Mersey Canal' and 'Caldon Canal'.

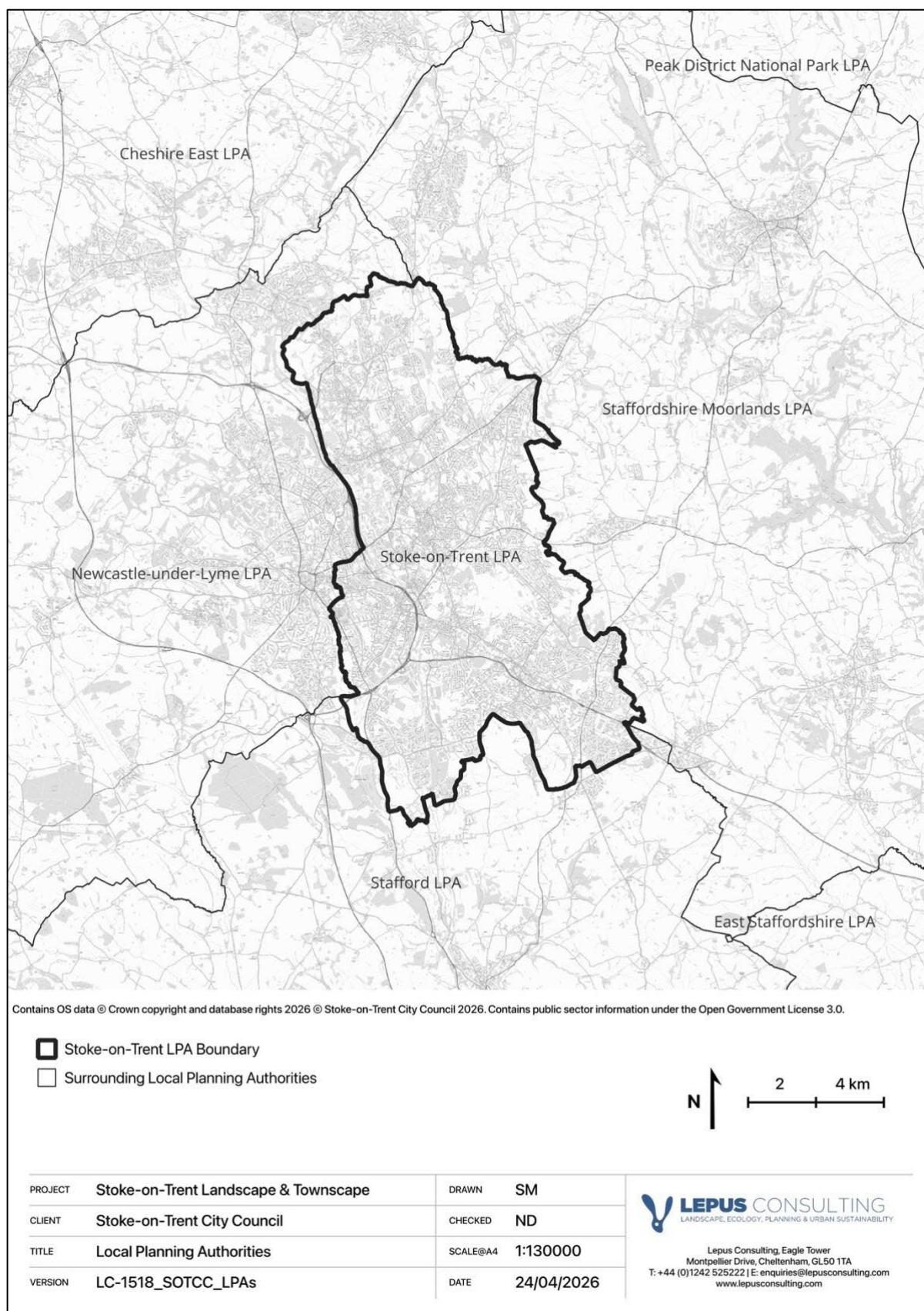


Figure 1.1: Location of Stoke-on-Trent with surrounding LPAs

2 Planning policy

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This LCA has been undertaken within the context of relevant planning policy. Planning policy and other material considerations are taken from the following:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)²
- Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy 2006-2026
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Local Plan (2013-2026)

2.1.2 Further details of these planning policies are provided below.

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework

2.2.1 The NPPF³ is used by local planning authorities, both in plan preparation and making decisions about planning applications. The environmental objective of the NPPF is as follows:

Paragraph 8c

“To protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”

2.2.2 In relation to the LCA, the following paragraphs of NPPF 2024 are of relevance:

Paragraph 135

“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: ...c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);”

Paragraph 187

“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: ...a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).

...b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.”

¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (December 2024) National Planning Policy

Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Accessed: 25/03/26]

² Planning Practice Guidance (2021) Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance> [Accessed: 25/03/26]

³ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (December 2024) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Accessed: 25/03/26]

2.3 Planning Practice Guidance

- 2.3.1 The Government publishes Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)⁴ to accompany the NPPF. In relation to landscape matters, the Natural Environment PPG provides broad guidance primarily relating to the development of local planning policy and accompanying evidence.
- 2.3.2 Landscape matters are included as part of the guidance on the natural environment, specifically information about how policies can conserve and enhance landscapes and how the character of landscapes can be assessed⁵. Further details of relevant Local Plan policy are provided below:

2.4 Statutory Development Plan

- 2.4.1 The statutory development plan for the city of Stoke-on-Trent comprises the three following documents:
- Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy (2006-2026)⁶
 - Stoke-on-Trent City Plan (1993)
 - Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Local Plan (2013-2026)

2.5 Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy

- 2.5.1 It is important to recognise the current policies of the City of Stoke-on-Trent to reference the relevant policies within the LCA. The Core Spatial Strategy was produced in 2006 and set to be renewed in 2026. The Core Spatial Strategy sets out a series of area spatial strategies. The policies most relevant to this LCA are summarised below:

Policy	Summary
ASP1 - City Centre of Stoke-on-Trent Area Spatial Policy	High standards of urban design will be expected for the City Centre which embrace the best principles of modern design and are sensitive to the existing, valued character of the area.
ASP2 – Stoke-on-Trent Inner Urban Core Area Spatial Policy	The creation of more sustainable communities based on a programme of progressive urban renewal providing improvements to the urban fabric and building stock and taking advantage of the area's proximity to services, greenspace, watercourses and topography. The enhancement of the built and natural environment, together with increased access to greenspace and watercourses will be supported and guidance produced to improve design and address issues such as crime and the fear of crime.

⁴ Planning Practice Guidance (2024) Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance> [Accessed 18/02/26]

⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2018 to 2021) and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. PPG. Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment> [Accessed 25/03/26]

⁶ Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent (2006-2026) Core Spatial Strategy. Available at: https://www.stoke.gov.uk/directory_record/331603/sot_and_nul_local_development_framework_core_spatial_strategy_2006_to_2026 [Accessed:25/03/26]

2.5.2 Core strategic policies include:

Policy	Summary
Policy CSP1- Design Quality	New development should be well designed to respect the character, identity and context of Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent's unique townscape and landscape and in particular, the built heritage, its historic environment, its rural setting and the settlement pattern created by the hierarchy of centres. New development should: • Be based on an understanding and respect for Newcastle's and Stoke-on-Trent's built, natural and social heritage • Protect important and longer distance views of historic landmarks and rural vistas. • Contribute positively to an area's identity and heritage (both natural and built) in terms of scale, density, layout, use of appropriate vernacular material for buildings and surfaces and access, • Ensure a balanced mix of uses that work together and encourage sustainable living in the use of water, energy and re-use of materials and minimises the impact on climatic change. • Be safe, uncluttered, varied, and attractive.
Policy CSP3 – Sustainability and Climate Change	All new development shall be located at lowest possible flood risk as identified in the SFRA and all suitable flood mitigation measures shall be investigated and where possible incorporated into the development. Opportunities will be sought to open culverted watercourses to alleviate flood risk, create and improve habitats and develop green corridors.
Policy CSP4 – Natural Assets	The quality and quantity of the plan area's natural assets will be protected, maintained and enhanced through the following measure: Working with relevant partners to enhance the plan area's natural habitats and biodiversity to achieve the outcomes and targets set out UK Biodiversity Action Plan, the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and the Staffordshire Geodiversity Action Plan: ... Ensuring that the location, scale and nature of all development planned and delivered through this Core Spatial Strategy avoids and mitigates adverse impacts, and wherever possible enhances, the plan area's distinctive natural assets, landscape character, waterways, network of urban green corridors and priority species and habitats identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan. Ensuring that the value of previously developed land as a source of biodiversity is recognised and appropriate measures are taken to reduce the negative impact of development upon this resource and wherever possible to achieve an enhancement.
Minerals in Stoke-on-Trent	Scarce Etruria Marl resources and reserves are located within the mineral safeguarding areas and permitted clay workings shown on Plan 9. All reasonable steps should be taken to avoid sterilisation of the mineral.

2.6 Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Local Plan (2013-2026)

2.6.1 The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Local Plan was produced in 2013 and set to be renewed in 2026. The Joint Waste Local Plan will be maintained alongside the new local plan document. The following policy is relevant to this LCA:

Policy	Summary
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Policy 4.2 Protection of environmental quality	In determining the impact of the proposed development, consideration will be given to the effect of the proposals on the following: • Natural environment features and landscape networks important for wildlife and amenity. • The Landscape. <u>vi) The Landscape</u> The policy seeks to safeguard landscape character, diversity, and distinctiveness by ensuring that development is appropriately integrated within both urban and rural settings. Proposals should respond sensitively to landscape character through appropriate siting, scale, design, and materials, while avoiding unacceptable visual impacts. Particular regard is given to the protection of locally distinctive landscape elements, historic field and settlement patterns, semi-natural vegetation and tranquillity. Development that contributes to landscape enhancement, restoration, or environmental improvement, including reclamation and planting, is supported where consistent with wider planning objectives.
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3 Landscape Character Assessment Methodology

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 Landscape Character Assessment is the process of identifying and describing variations in landscape character. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes and townscape distinctive (see **Figures 3.1 and 3.2**). This process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment⁷.

3.1.2 The methodology for this study has been derived from aspects of:

- 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition' (GLVIA) (2013)⁸
- Landscape Institute (2021) 'Assessing landscape value outside national designations' Technical Guidance Note 02/21⁹
- Natural England (2014) 'An approach to Landscape Character Assessment'¹⁰
- Natural England (2019) 'An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management'¹¹
- The Countryside Agency Topic Paper 6 (2002) 'Techniques and criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity'¹²
- Landscape Institute (2018) 'Townscape Character Assessment' Technical Information Note¹³.

3.1.3 The assessment can be summarised as having four key stages:

1. Define the purpose, scope and study area for the project
2. Desk study
3. Field study
4. Classification and description of LCAs

⁷ Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Accessed: 19/03/26]

⁸ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition) Abingdon: Routledge

⁹ Landscape Institute (2021) 'Assessing landscape value outside national designations' TGN 02/21 Available at <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/publication/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations/> [Accessed: 19/03/26]

¹⁰ Natural England (2014) An approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Accessed: 19/03/26]

¹¹ Natural England (2019) 'An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management' Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/817928/landscape-sensitivity-assessment-2019.pdf [Accessed: 19/03/26]

¹² The Countryside Agency (2002) Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5601625141936128> [Accessed: 19/03/26]

¹³ Landscape Institute (2018) Technical Information Note. Available at: <https://landscapeinstitute.org/technical-resource/townscape/> [Accessed: 19/03/26]

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- 3.1.4 Natural England's 2014 guidance sets out five principles for Landscape Character Assessment:
- 1) Landscape is everywhere and all landscape, townscape and seascape have character.
 - 2) Landscape occurs at all scales, and the process of Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at any scale.
 - 3) The process of Landscape Character Assessment should involve an understanding of how the landscape is perceived and experienced by people.
 - 4) A Landscape Character Assessment can provide a landscape evidence base to inform a range of decisions and applications; and
 - 5) A Landscape Character Assessment can provide an integrating spatial framework – a multitude of variables come together to give us our distinctive landscapes.
- 3.1.5 Townscape character has also been assessed in this study, utilising the same principles and processes which underpin the landscape character assessment methodology. Townscape is defined as *“the landscape within the built-up area, including the buildings, the relationship between them, the different types of urban open spaces, including green spaces and the relationship between buildings and open spaces.”*¹⁴
- 3.1.6 **Figures 3.1 and 3.2** show the landscape and townscape wheels which set out the elements and features which make up a landscape or a townscape.
- 3.1.7 The process of Landscape Character Assessment, as described in ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’ is illustrated in **Figure 3.3**.

¹⁴ Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Accessed: 19/03/26]

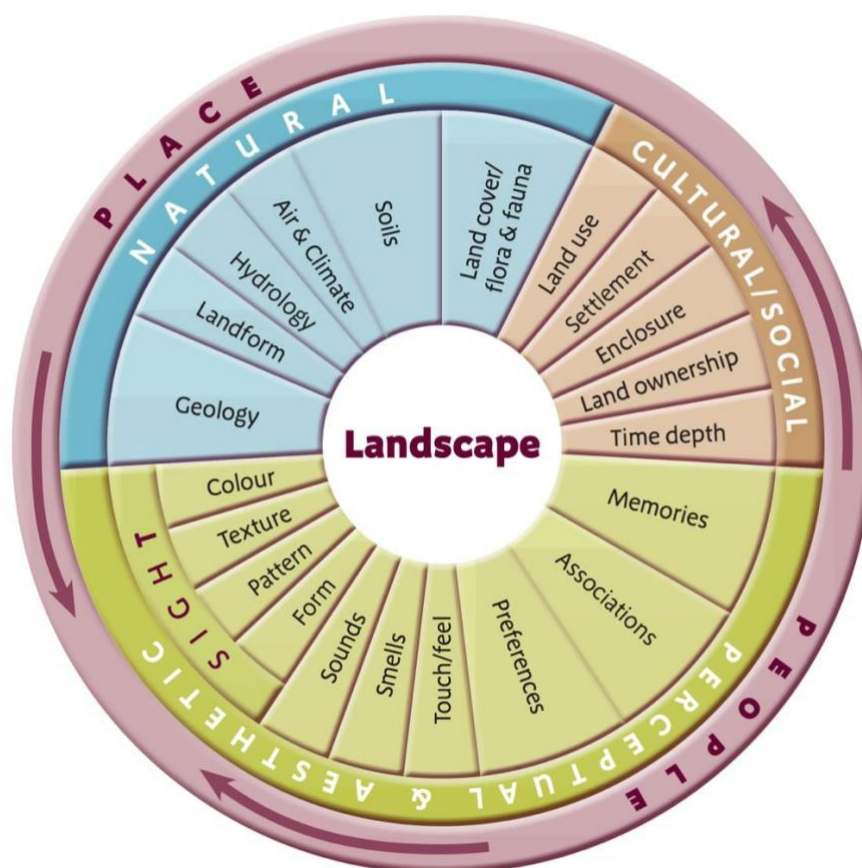


Figure 3.1: What is landscape?

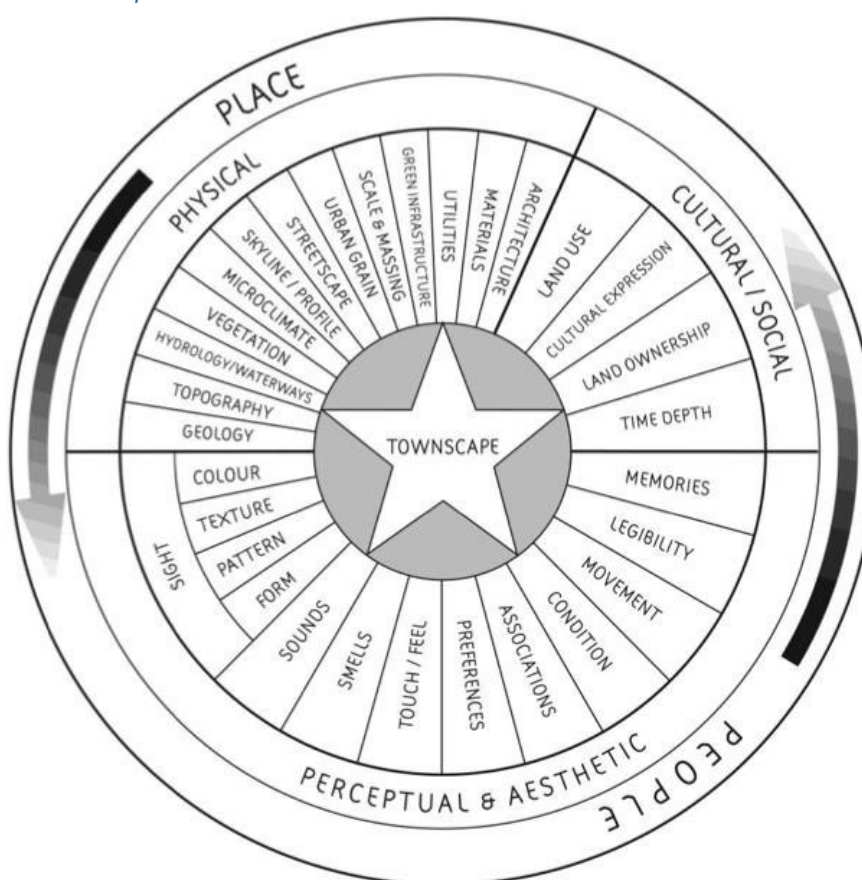


Figure 3.2: What is townscape?

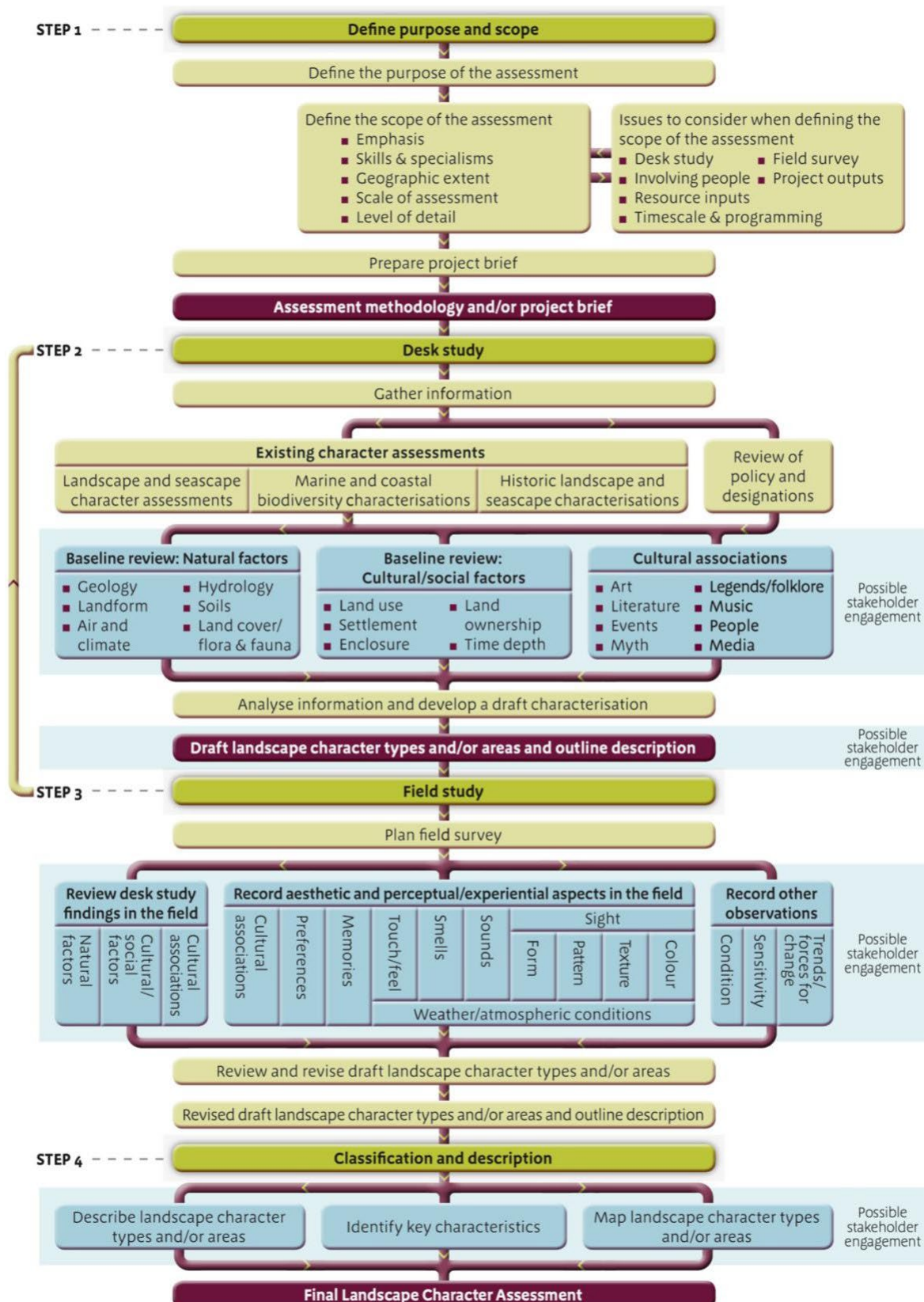


Figure 3.3: The process of Landscape Character Assessment

3.2 Define purpose and scope of the project

- 3.2.1 This study assesses landscape character across Stoke-on-Trent by identifying Landscape Character Types. The purpose of this project is to provide the city council with a practical and defensible framework to guide its Local Plan Review and future planning decisions.

3.3 Desk study

- 3.3.1 The desktop study stage consists of an information gathering exercise to prepare a baseline review of natural, cultural and social aspects of Stoke-on-Trent. This relies largely on information from the following sources:

- National Character Areas (NCAs) in Stoke-on-Trent: Potteries and Churnet Valley¹⁵ and Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain¹⁶

The spatial GIS data used to inform this Landscape Character Assessment is listed in **Table 3.1**.

Table 3.1: GIS data used in this Landscape Character Assessment

Dataset	Source
Aspect	Ordnance Survey
Agricultural Land Classification	Natural England
Ancient woodland	Natural England
Built-up areas	Ordnance Survey
Country Parks	Natural England
Flood zones and surface water flood risk	Environment Agency
Geology	British Geological Survey
Historic environment and heritage assets (listed buildings, Conservation Areas (CAs) scheduled monuments (SMs))	Stoke-on-Trent City Council Historic England
Local Wildlife Sites	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
National Character Areas	Natural England
Nature conservation designations (Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS))	Stoke-on-Trent City Council Natural England
Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Scale Colour Raster	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
OS Greenspaces	Ordnance Survey
Overhead power lines	National Grid
Priority habitat inventory	Natural England
PRoW Networks and Local Greenspaces	Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Ordnance Survey
Roads, railways	Ordnance Survey

¹⁵ Stoke-on-Trent National Character Areas (2013) Available at: <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/potteries-and-churnet-valley/> [Accessed: 16/03/26]

¹⁶ Natural England (2025) NCA 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain. Available at <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/shropshire-cheshire-and-staffordshire-plain/> [Accessed 16/03/26]

Terrain	Ordnance Survey Terrain 50
Watercourses and surface water	Ordnance Survey
Woodland	National Forest Inventory

3.4 Field study

3.4.1 As stated in 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'¹⁷:

"The field study is an essential part of the Landscape Character Assessment process. It presents the opportunity to observe and understand how all the factors identified as part of the desk study interact and are perceived and experienced, to give us landscapes of distinct character. It also enables the identification of other factors that are not evident from the desk study and the chance to record aesthetic and perceptual aspects".

3.4.2 The guidance goes on to explain why Landscape Character Assessment can be used to inform land use planning and specifically local plans. Landscape is typically appreciated under umbrella headings of (i) Natural, (ii) Cultural and Social, and (iii) Perceptual and Aesthetic factors.

3.5 Classification and description of Landscape Character Areas

3.5.1 Landscape classification can be prepared at a variety of scales depending on the purpose and scope of the project. The scale of the area to be assessed determines the likely level at which the differences between homogeneous and distinctive factors are separated to identify character areas.

3.5.2 The Landscape Character Assessment guidance from Natural England¹⁸ states that this part of the process deals with the final classification and description of LCAs, and explains:

- The purpose of an LCA
- Classification at different scales
- Involvement of people
- Boundary confirmation
- Naming LCAs
- Describing landscape character
- Mapping LCAs

3.5.3 Landscape classification was informed by these stages which were used to define areas of distinct, recognisable and consistent character. Due to the urban nature of Stoke-on-Trent, landscape character is classified in this assessment via Landscape Character Types, presented in **Chapter 6**. This enables suitable categorisation of townscape across the city.

3.5.4 The following information has been assembled for the LCTs:

- Descriptions of key characteristics of each character type including physical, cultural and social and perceptual and aesthetic factors.

¹⁷ Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Accessed: 23/03/26]

¹⁸ Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Accessed: 23/03/26]

- **Figure 6.1:** Stoke-on-Trent mapped by Landscape Character Type

3.5.5 The range of factors that combine to influence landscape character that have been considered for each LCT are listed in **Tables 3.2 to 3.4**.

Table 3.2: Range of physical factors that combine to influence landscape character

Physical factors	
Geology	Geology (solid and drift)
Landform	Landform/topography Hydrology/waterways
Streetscape	Skyline/profile Scale and massing Utilities Architecture
Green Infrastructure	
Vegetation and microclimate	Vegetation and tree cover

Table 3.3: Range of cultural and social factors that influence landscape character

Cultural and social factors	
Land use	Land cover and use Recreation Urban morphology
Time depth	Historic land use and structures Archaeology
Cultural expression and associations	Building types, styles and materials Art, literature and music Events and cultural uses

Table 3.4: Range of perceptual and aesthetic factors that influence landscape character

Perceptual and aesthetic factors	
Perceptual qualities	Condition, form and movement, supported by tranquillity, identified largely via field survey.
Sounds	Audial contributions to the landscape, identified largely via field survey.
Sight	Notable views.

3.6 Definitions

3.6.1 The definitions presented in **Table 3.5** have been reproduced from Natural England's Landscape Character Assessment Guidance (2014)¹⁹ and are used throughout this report.

Table 3.5: Natural England (2014) definitions

Landscape Character Areas ²⁰	These are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type. Each will have its own individual character and identity, even though it shares the same genetic characteristics with other areas of the same type.
Landscape Character Assessment	This is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive. This process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment.
Landscape Character Types ²¹	These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historical land use, and settlement pattern.
Landscape Quality (or condition) ²²	This is based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual, functional, and ecological perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements which make up the character in any one place.
Landscape Value ²³	The relative value or importance attached to a landscape (often as a basis for designation or recognition), which expresses national or local consensus, because of its quality, special qualities including perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness, cultural associations or other conservation issues.
Sensitivity ²⁴	A term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.
Susceptibility ²⁵	The ability of a defined landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences.

¹⁹ Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Accessed: 23/03/26]

²⁰ The Countryside Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (CAX 84), the Countryside Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage, April 2002.

²¹ Ibid

²² The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2002), Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Second Edition, London: Spon Press.

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013), Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, London: Routledge.

²⁵ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013), Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, London: Routledge.

4 Landscape and Visual Baseline

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The baseline landscape and visual description is drawn from observations carried out during the site visit and the desktop review of relevant landscape character studies, designations and aerial photography.

4.2 National Character Areas

- 4.2.1 At a national level, landscape character assessment has been defined by the assessment work of Natural England, which has divided England into 159 areas of similar landscape character termed National Character Areas (NCAs)²⁶. The city of Stoke-on-Trent is primarily covered by **NCA 64: Potteries and Churnet Valley**. Approximately 0.027 km² of the city falls within **NCA 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain**, in the southern part of the boundary. The location of this NCA is shown in **Figure 4.1**.
- 4.2.2 Each NCA identifies four Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) that guide Natural England and other stakeholders to ensure their work is targeted and contribute to the protection, restoration and enhancement of the natural environment²⁷.
- 4.2.3 In order to monitor landscape change across each NCA, Super Landscape Objectives (SLO) are a national tool devised to identify trends for each NCA. Each SLO focuses on a specific aspect of landscape character and is scored against clear indicators to show whether that element is improving, stable or declining.
- 4.2.4 A summary of the key characteristics and the accompanying SEOs as well as the overall landscape change trend of each of the NCA's in Stoke-on-Trent are set out below:

²⁶ Natural England (2025) National Character Areas. Available at: <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/> [Accessed 18/03/26]

²⁷ Natural England (2025) Statement of Environmental Opportunity. Available at <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/glossaryitem/statement-of-environmental-opportunity-seo/#:~:text=Any%20one%20of%20a%20range,impact%20on%20ecosystem%20service%20provision.> [Accessed 18/03/26]

4.3 NCA 64: Potteries and Churnet Valley²⁸

Key Characteristics

- Varied landscape of dissected hills, plateaux, river valleys and steep ravines, contrasting strongly with the urban Potteries.
- Sandstone ridges and mudstone plateaux shape the landform, with lower ground around the Needwood Basin.
- Strong woodland presence in the Churnet Valley, including commercial conifer plantations in the south.
- Fast-flowing river systems (Churnet, Trent and Dove) and ponds provide ecological connectivity.
- Field patterns vary from hedgerows and hedgerow oaks in valleys to drystone walls on higher ground.
- Agriculture is dominated by permanent pasture, grazing and dairying, with limited cereal cropping in flatter southern areas.
- Important habitats include ancient woodland, valley grasslands, grazing marsh, heathland and restored industrial mosaic habitats.
- Rich industrial heritage linked to coal, iron, silk and pottery production, with historic mills and trade routes.
- Surviving heathlands, smallholdings and parklands contribute to historic landscape character.
- Traditional building materials include red brick, sandstone, Millstone Grit, clay tiles and slate.
- Settlement pattern ranges from scattered valley villages and farmsteads to dense urban development in the Potteries.
- Transport infrastructure includes major roads, railways and canal networks.
- Recreation and tourism are significant, including the Staffordshire Way and Alton Towers Resort.
- **According to the relevant SLO, the overall trend in landscape change is considered to be “mainly improving”²⁹**

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

SEO 1: Manage, expand, link and buffer the characteristic semi-natural woodland and protect the ancient woodland, for example in the Churnet Valley, reducing habitat fragmentation to benefit landscape character, biodiversity, resource protection and regulation; and enhancing the recreational and experiential qualities of the NCA.

SEO 2: Protect and manage the rivers, streams and springs to enhance the riverine character of the many valleys and cloughs to protect the quality of water from diffuse pollution to benefit biodiversity; and expand riparian habitats to mitigate flood events and to improve the experiential qualities of the NCA.

SEO 3: Manage and expand areas of characteristic unimproved grassland pastures in the Churnet Valley and heathland and moorland of the Staffordshire Moorlands, reducing habitat fragmentation and restoring traditional boundary features to benefit landscape character, sense of place, biodiversity and resource protection while enhancing the recreational and experiential qualities of the NCA.

SEO 4: Protect and manage historic landscape character and associated heritage assets that include the historic transport network and industrial heritage and improve the understanding of its intrinsic links with geodiversity; and find sustainable solutions to manage visitor pressure at popular attractions, for example Alton Towers and Trentham Gardens, thus supporting the tourist economy and maintaining a high level of public access to enjoy the wealth of recreational experience that the NCA offers.

²⁸ Natural England (2025) Natural England (2025) Potteries and Churnet Valley NCA. Available at <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/potteries-and-churnet-valley/> [Accessed 16/03/26]

²⁹ Natural England (2025) Potteries and Churnet Valley NCA – Landscape Change. Available at <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/potteries-and-churnet-valley/landscape-change/> [Accessed 16/03/26]

4.4 NCA 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain³⁰

Key Characteristics

- Extensive gently undulating plain shaped by glacial deposits, with productive clay soils and distinctive glacial landforms such as moraines, kettle holes, meres and mosses.
- Discontinuous Triassic sandstone ridges form prominent elevated features with steeper slopes and freely draining soils.
- Woodland cover is limited, concentrated around estates, sandstone ridges and areas near Northwich, with some conifer plantations and orchards.
- Strong field patterns are defined by well-maintained hedgerows, mature hedgerow trees, sandstone walls and estate boundaries.
- Land use is dominated by dairy farming, with mixed farming and arable cultivation in some northern and south-eastern areas.
- Wetland habitats, including meres, mosses, raised bog, fen, reedbed and wet woodland, support important biodiversity.
- Peat floodplains and grazing marshes provide valuable habitat for breeding waders and other wetland species.
- Major rivers and floodplains, including the Dee, Severn and Sow, contribute to grazing marsh, flood meadows and a high density of field ponds.
- Rich historic character includes Iron Age hill forts, Roman routes, ridge and furrow landscapes and moated sites.
- Settlement pattern consists of dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and market towns, with distinctive timber-frame, brick and sandstone buildings.
- **According to the relevant SLO, the overall trend in landscape change is considered to be “mainly improving”³¹**

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

SEO 1: Restore, manage and protect from diffuse pollution the rivers, streams, lakes, ponds and wetland habitats (including flood plain grazing marsh and wet woodland) and support partnerships to maintain the integrity and unique conditions for the preservation of the internationally important meres and mosses and River Dee, to benefit water availability, water quality, landscape character, biodiversity and climate regulation.

SEO 2: Protect the landscape of the plain, recognising its importance to food production and incorporating well-maintained hedgerows, ponds and lowland grassland margins within agricultural systems, to secure resource protection and maintain productivity, while reducing fragmentation of semi-natural habitats to benefit a wide range of services, such as landscape character, sense of place, water quality and biodiversity.

SEO 3: Manage and restore lowland heathland and ancient and plantation woodland, support partnerships to plan appropriately scaled new woodland cover, particularly where this will link and extend existing woodlands, restore and reinstate traditional orchards and increase biomass provision to mitigate the impact of climate change, where this will benefit biodiversity, landscape character and enhance the experiential qualities of the area.

SEO 4: Protect and manage the nationally important geological sites and heritage features demonstrating how the interaction of natural and historical factors influenced the distinctive character of its landscape and settlement patterns and help to promote greater understanding of the link between wildlife, heritage and geodiversity, particularly the importance of former extraction sites for both geodiversity and biodiversity.

³⁰ Natural England (2025) NCA 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain. Available at <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/shropshire-cheshire-and-staffordshire-plain/> [Accessed 16/03/26]

³¹ Natural England (2025) NCA 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain NCA– Landscape Change. Available at <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/shropshire-cheshire-and-staffordshire-plain/landscape-change/> [Accessed 16/03/26]

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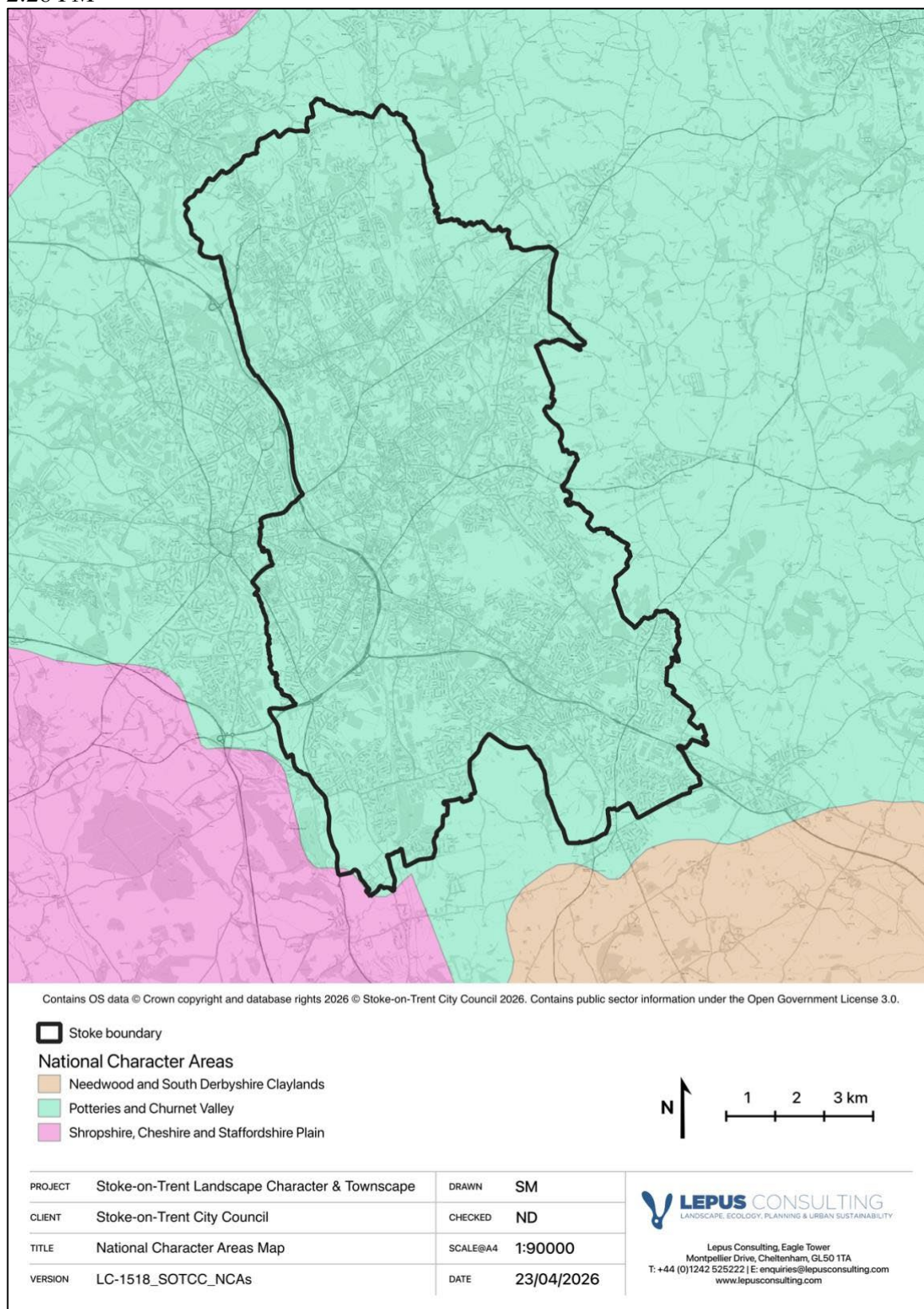


Figure 4.1: NCAs in Stoke-on-Trent City

5 Baseline Character Features

5.1 Natural factors of the Stoke-on-Trent Landscape

Landform and geology

- 5.1.1 **Figure 5.2** presents the topography of Stoke-on-Trent. The highest point is Baddeley Edge, where elevation reaches approximately 240m AOD. The lowest point lies in the valley of the River Trent at approximately 92 metres AOD.
- 5.1.2 Geologically, the area is composed of predominantly Pennine Upper to Lower Coal Measures (mudstone, siltstone and sandstones), with small exposures of Millstone Grit in the east and the Warwickshire Group in the west (siltstone and sandstones) overlain by areas of till, alluvium and river terrace deposits. A geological map depicting this is presented in **Figure 5.3**.
- 5.1.3 Agricultural Land Classification is mapped in **Figure 5.1**. Given the urban character of the city of Stoke-on-Trent, the majority of the land is classified as urban. Areas of Grade 4 ALC are situated in the north and east, small areas of Grade 3 ALC exist in the south.

Hydrology and flood risk

- 5.1.4 The River Trent flows through the city from the northeast towards the southwest, with several watercourses and tributaries joining it (see **Figure 5.4**). Key tributaries include the Fowlea Brook, Lyme Brook, Ford Green Brook and Causeley Brook.
- 5.1.5 The city contains two canals that meet in the central west. These include the Caldon Canal, which enters from the east and joins the Trent and Mersey Canal, which runs north to south through the western part of the city. Several brooks also traverse Stoke-on-Trent, including Fowlea Brook flowing north through the west, Longton Brook flowing west through the south, Scotia Brook flowing north to west in the south, and Lyme Brook flowing north along the western boundary.
- 5.1.6 Areas of Grade 2 Flood Zones (FZ3) are located throughout the city, typically surrounding the flowing watercourses and represent areas of medium risk for development. Grade 3 Flood Zones (FZ3) are slightly sparser and situated surrounding the flowing watercourses and tributaries, representing a high risk for development. It is worth noting that the extent and risk of Flood Zones 2 and 3 may increase in relation to Climate Change over the next century, despite the existence of current flood defences³².

Landcover and biodiversity

- 5.1.7 There are no European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas or Ramsar sites) situated within the city, however the Midland Meres & Mosses Phase 2 SAC is located 7.5 km from the northwestern boundary and the South Pennine Moors SAC is situated to the northeast of the city, approximately 13km away from the boundary as seen in **Figure 5.5**.
- 5.1.8 There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within Stoke-on-Trent: Hulme Quarry SSSI and Ford Green Reedbed SSSI. Four SSSIs are situated close to the city boundary to the east, southwest and west. This is shown in **Figure 5.5**.

³² DEFRA (2025) Flood Zones – Product Description. Available at: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/file-management-open/datasets/455d2eb3-3065-4d20-871b-c4d5dee23f67/files/Flood%20Zones%20Product%20Description.pdf>. [Accessed 18/03/26]

5.1.9 The city has one National Nature Reserve (NNR), Park Hall County Park, and nine Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). Listed below, these are also shown in **Figure 5.5**.

- Whitfield Valley, Norton - ponds, streams, grassland and heathland. The LWS spans 91ha and attracts many swallows in the summer³³.
- Westport Lake, Longport - containing a woodland conservation area and wildflower meadow, the lake spans 29ha³⁴ and attracts several species of bird including water birds and occasional sightings of the shoveler and little ringed plover.
- Holden Lane Pools – located in the north of the city, the reserve attracts many water birds and the 8ha pool is primarily used for recreational fishing.
- Bagnall Road Wood - the woodland is made up of a Victorian tree nursery and several deciduous trees including oak and beech. The black poplar is also present with brown long-eared bats evidenced onsite. The woodland spans 6.1ha.³⁵
- Berryhill Fields – 63ha of grassland located in the eastern central of the city.
- Hartshill Park - multiple habitats including five ponds in the western central area of the city. The 13.7ha³⁶ park is an area of a Norman deer hunting park.
- Smith's Pool – 9.3ha reserve in the east used for recreational fishing, attracts many water birds.
- Brigett's Pool – 2.1ha reserve in the west of the city.
- Coyney Woods - 30.2ha³⁷ of semi-natural woodland, grassland and a stream. Evidence of owls, bats and woodpeckers and amphibians.

5.1.10 There are 41 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) in Stoke-on-Trent, comprising the following habitat types:

- Open mosaic habitat
- Scrub
- Broad-leaved semi-natural woodland
- Broad-leaved plantation woodland
- Wet woodland
- Acid grassland
- Unimproved grassland
- Semi-improved neutral grassland
- Neutral grassland
- Amenity grassland
- Marshy grassland
- Wet grassland
- Heathland

33 Stoke-on-Trent. (n.d) Whitfield Valley Local Nature Reserve. Accessible at: https://www.stoke.gov.uk/directory_record/331205/whitfield_valley_local_nature_reserve [Accessed: 17/03/26]

34 Stoke-on-Trent. (n.d) Westport Lake Local Nature Reserve. Accessible at: https://www.stoke.gov.uk/directory_record/331204/westport_lake [Accessed: 17/03/26]

35 Woodland Trust (n.d) Bignall Road Wood Nature Reserve. Accessible at: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/woods/bagnall-road-wood-nature-reserve/>. [Accessed: 17/03/26]

36 Woodland Trust (n.d) Hartshill Park Local Nature Reserve. Accessible at: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/woods/hartshill-park-nature-reserve/> [Accessed: 17/03/26]

37 Woodland Trust (n.d) Coyney Woods Local Nature Reserve. Accessible at: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/woods/coyney-woods-nature-reserve/> [Accessed: 17/03/26]

-
- Hay meadows
 - Pond
 - Small stream
 - Swamp
 - Reedbed

5.1.11 The city is home to 280 areas of priority habitats, comprising deciduous woodland, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, lowland dry acid grassland, lowland fens, lowland meadow, lowland heathlands and additional habitats, as seen in **Figure 5.5**.

5.1.12 The city contains one area of ancient woodland in the far south and several areas just outside the boundary. Areas of National Forest Inventory are dispersed throughout the city, with large areas in the north and far south.

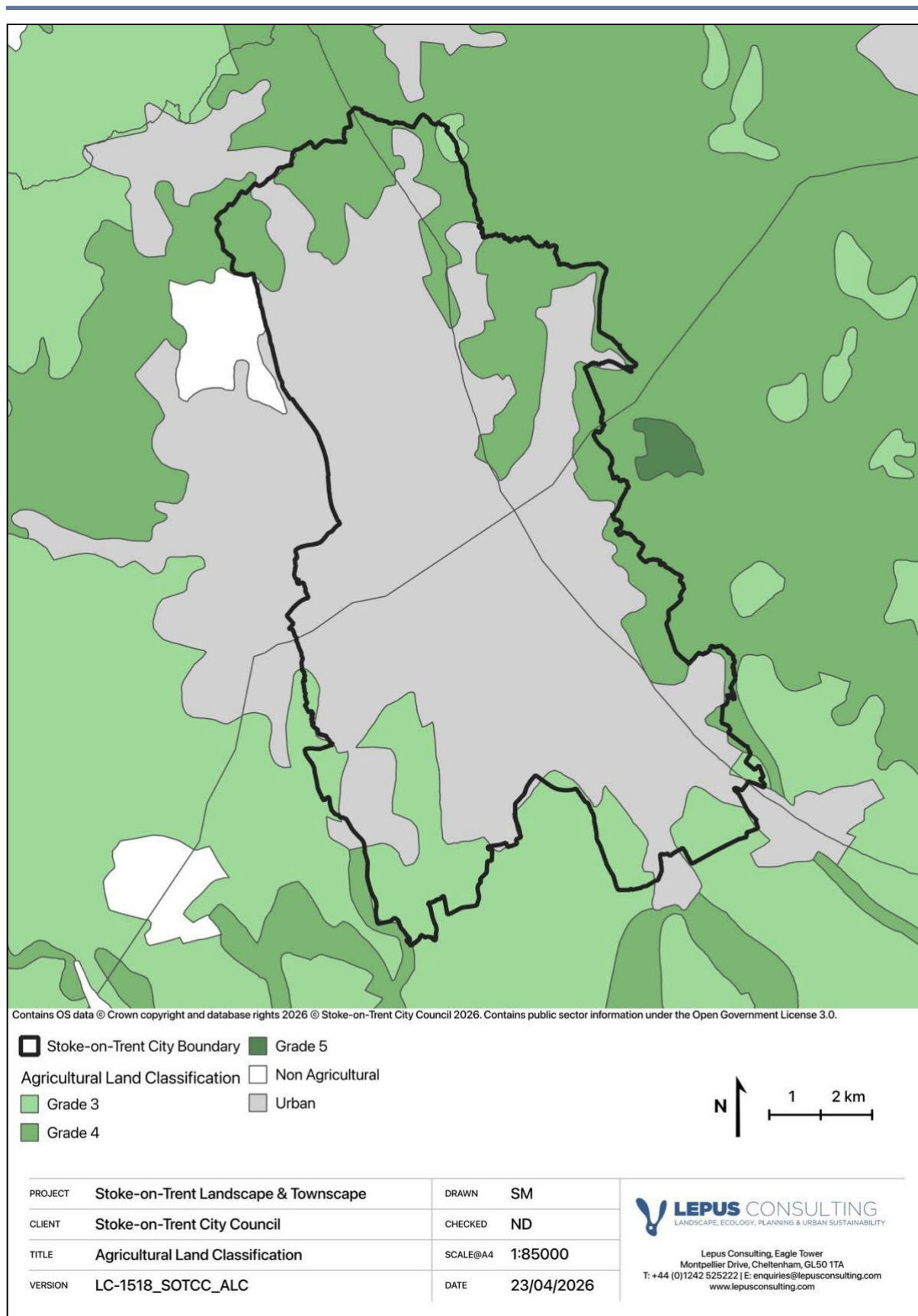


Figure 5.1: Agricultural land classification in Stoke-on-Trent

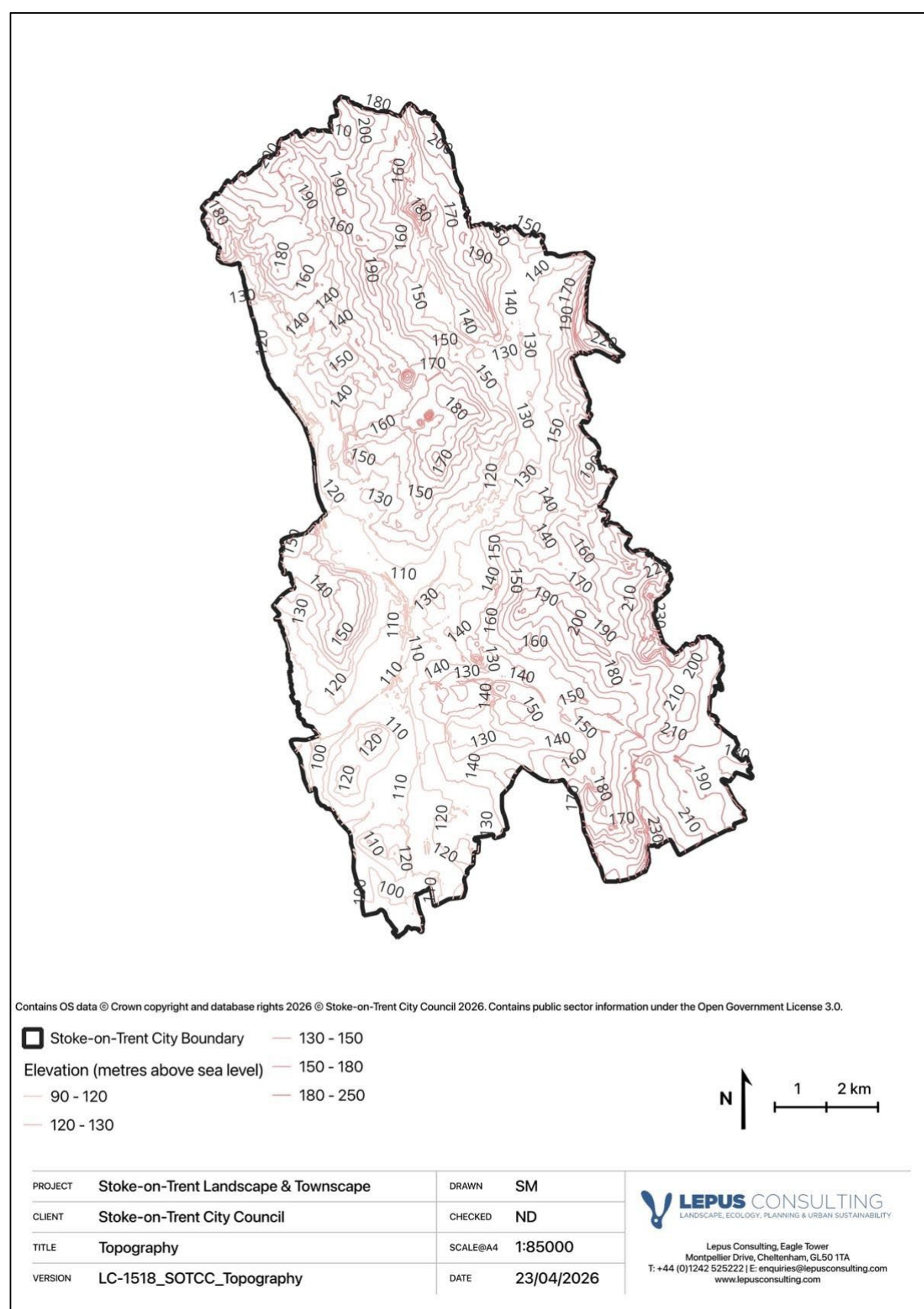


Figure 5.2: Topography in Stoke-on-Trent

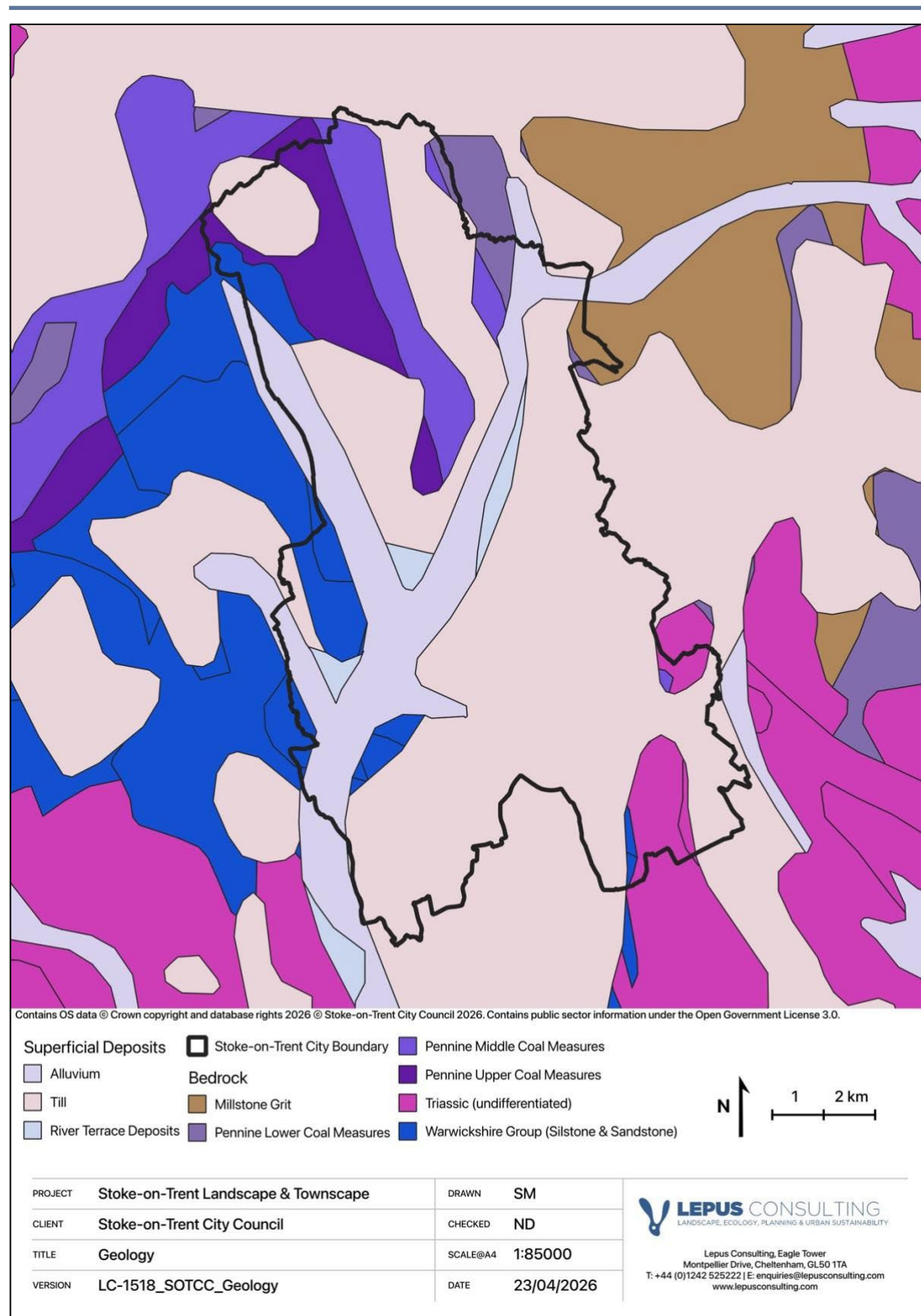


Figure 5.3: Geology in Stoke-on-Trent

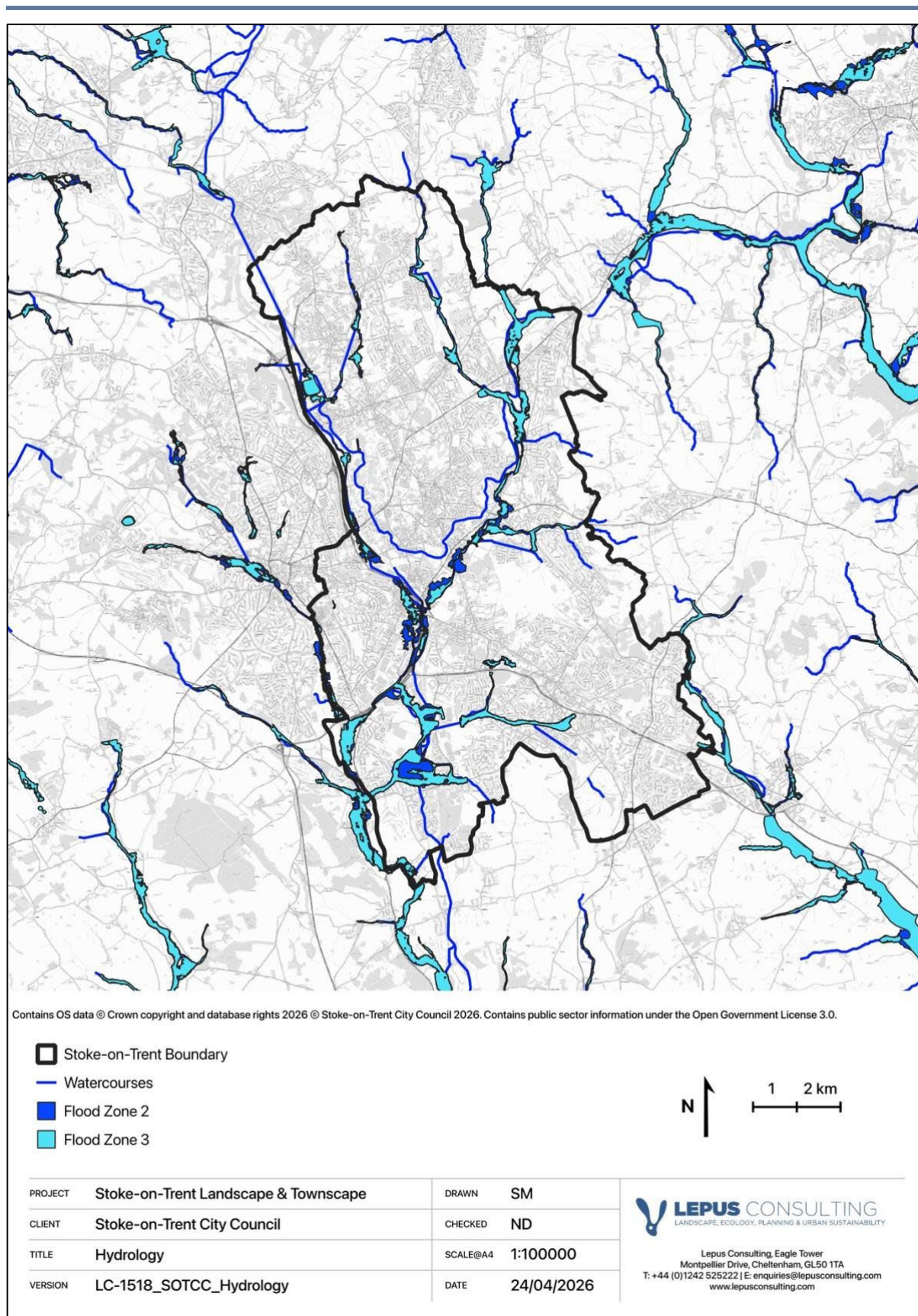


Figure 5.4: Hydrology in Stoke-on-Trent

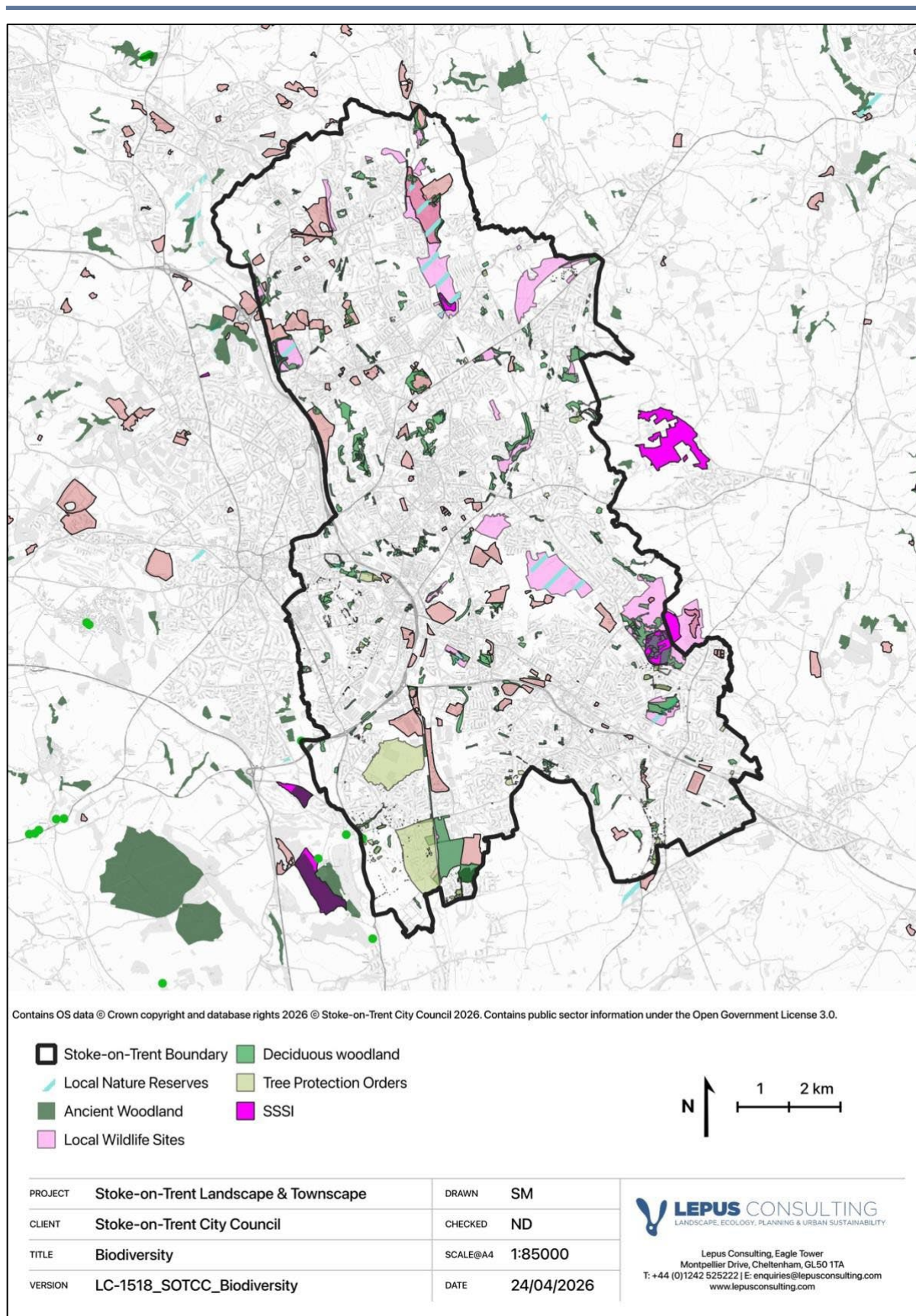


Figure 5.5: Biodiversity in Stoke-on-Trent

5.2 Historic, cultural and social factors of the Stoke-on-Trent Landscape

Historic Environment

The historic environment of Stoke-on-Trent is shaped by its development as six separate towns including Burslem, Fenton, Hanley, Longton, Stoke, and Tunstall, each of which retains its own historic core and pattern of growth. Settlement was influenced by local topography, watercourses and the availability of clay and coal, with industrial expansion later consolidating these early development patterns. Much of the character of the area derives from the 18th and 19th century industrial expansion, particularly the pottery industry, which was the largest in England and played a major role in Britain's industrial development for over 300 years. The pottery industry influenced street patterns, building architecture and the distribution of housing and employment areas, so much so, the city is commonly referred to as 'The Potteries'.

Early medieval period

- 5.2.1 Evidence of early-medieval occupation is limited but is reflected in the presence of the Grade II Listed Building 'Cross Fragment in St Peter's Churchyard', a remnant of an Anglo-Saxon cross, likely constructed in the 10th century. The scheduled monument 'Anglo-Scandinavian cross in St Peter's Churchyard' was erected between the 8th and 10th century, with parts of the cross-shaft surviving from the early-medieval times.

Medieval period

- 5.2.2 During the medieval period, settlement and agriculture became increasingly organised. Defensive structures such as Norman motte-and-bailey castles, such as the scheduled monument 'Lawn Farm moated site and two ponds'³⁸ coexisted with parish churches, such as the Church of St John the Baptist and Church of St Bartholomew, reflecting the dual priorities of security and religious life. The scheduled monument 'Hulton Abbey: a Cistercian monastery adjacent to Leek Road, Abbey Hulton' was constructed to re-establish Christianity on AD597. The Abbey was founded by Henry de Audley, a local nobleman, and like all Cistercian monasteries, was dedicated to St Mary³⁹.

Industrial Revolution

- 5.2.3 The pottery industry expanded rapidly during this period, establishing Stoke-on-Trent as a major centre of ceramic production known as 'The Potteries'. The availability of local raw materials, particularly clay and coal, supported large-scale industrial growth and encouraged the development of pottery works across the area. The 'Trent and Mersey Canal', completed in the 1770s, linked the River Trent at Derwent Mouth in Derbyshire with the River Mersey, creating an important transport route for moving pottery from the Midlands to ports and markets across the country. This improved connectivity played a key role in supporting industrial expansion and urban growth in Stoke-on-Trent.

38 Historic England (2026) Lawn Farm moated site and two ponds. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1011060?section=official-list-entry>. [Accessed: 17/03/26]

39 Historic England (2026) Hulton Abbey: a Cistercian monastery adjacent to Leek Road, Abbey Hulton. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1021284?section=official-list-entry> [Accessed: 17/03/26]

- 5.2.4 The work of Josiah Wedgwood was highly influential in the development of industrial pottery production, as he introduced factory organisation, division of labour, and new ceramic techniques. His Etruria Works, opened in 1769, became a model for large-scale industrial pottery manufacture and played a significant role in shaping Stoke-on-Trent's reputation as a centre of ceramic production. Today, only the counting house and stable block survive as the remaining historic structures of the original works.⁴⁰.

Modern period

- 5.2.5 In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the industrial landscape has diversified, comprising a mixture of retail and industrial development, residential, roads, canals and watercourses. The skyline is defined by several mounds. There are several large areas of greenspace⁴¹. Settlement expansion has occurred surrounding the six major towns and the city is the largest settlement in Staffordshire.

Heritage assets

- 5.2.6 The city contains a rich historic environment with heritage assets including 22 Conservation Areas and 3 Scheduled Monuments as seen on **Figure 5.7**.
- 5.2.7 There are 212 Listed Buildings (LBs) including 1 Grade I LBs, 19 Grade II* LBs and 192 Grade II LBs (see **Figure 5.7**). There are also five registered park and gardens:
- Victoria Park, Tunstall
 - Burslem Park
 - Queen's Park, Longton
 - Hartshill Cemetery

Settlement, infrastructure and recreation

- 5.2.8 The settlement pattern of Stoke-on-Trent is polycentric, the six towns of Burslem, Fenton, Hanley, Longton, Stoke, and Tunstall forming to create one city. The towns are largely arranged in linear patterns around transport routes and industrial factories.
- 5.2.9 The city is traversed by major roads, including the A34, A50 and A52. The major rail route serving the city is the West Coast Main Line which directly connects the city to Birmingham in the south, Manchester in the north and London to the southeast.
- 5.2.10 567 areas of green space designated for playing fields, religious grounds, allotments and public parks provide recreational and scenic enjoyment to local residents, shown in **Figure 5.6**. 'Park Hall' Country Park enhances scenic and recreational value in the east.
- 5.2.11 There is a network of footpaths and bridleways traversing the city. Popular walks within the city include the 'Living Heritage City Trail', 'Trentham Estate and Garden' Registered Park and Gardens and the 'Trent and Mersey Canal' towpath.
- 5.2.12 To reduce coalescence of settlements, urban sprawl and enhance recreation, Green Belt separates the city from the surrounding rural areas and towns, with the exception of Newcastle-under-Lyme, which is separated by the A500.

40 Historic England (2026) Josiah Wedgwood's Etruria Pottery Works. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/item/DES01/04/0101> [Accessed: 18/03/26]

41 Natural England (2026) Potteries and Churnet Valley – Description. Available at: <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/potteries-and-churnet-valley/description/> [Accessed: 18/03/26]

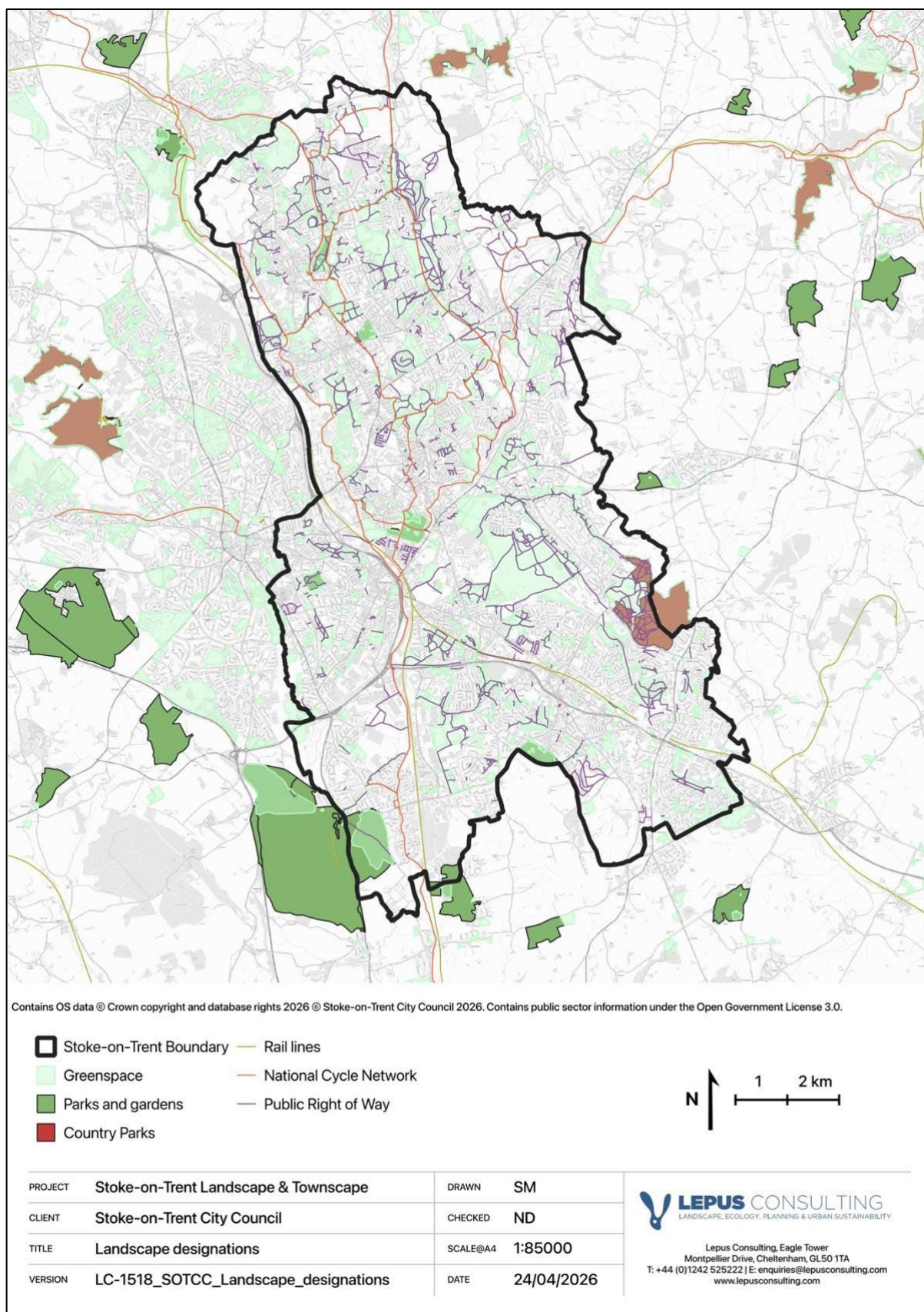


Figure 5.6: Recreation and infrastructure in Stoke-on-Trent

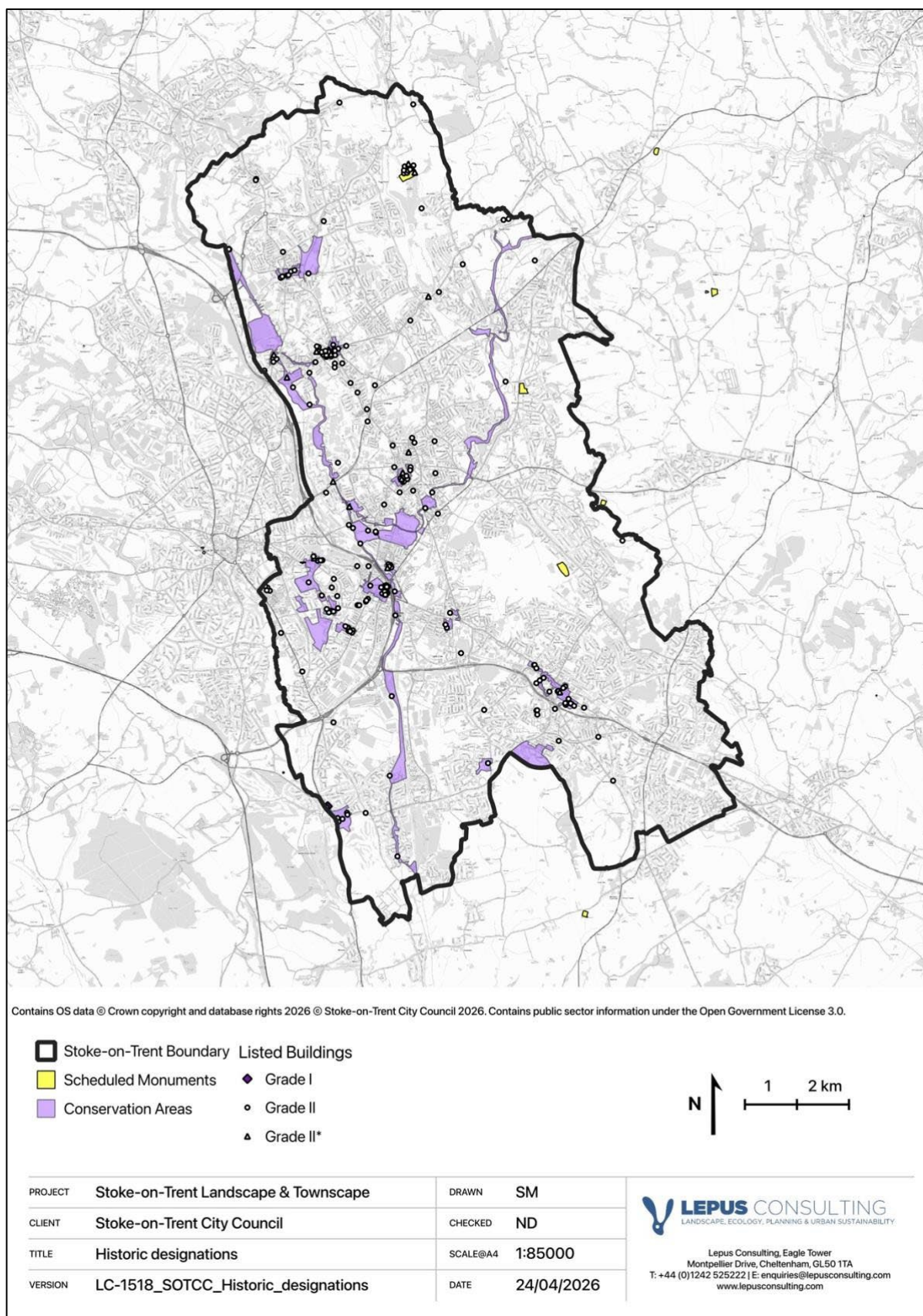


Figure 5.7: Historic designations in Stoke-on-Trent

6 Landscape Character Types

6.1 Landscape Character Types

- 6.1.1 Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are distinct categories of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They provide a spatial framework for understanding the diversity of the city's landscapes and form the basis for subsequent analysis, including the identification of landscape sensitivity and management guidance.
- 6.1.2 Each LCT is defined by a consistent and recognisable combination of characteristics, including geology, landform and topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and land cover, historic land use, and settlement pattern. While individual examples of an LCT may vary in their detailed appearance, they share common underlying patterns that can be identified through desk-based analysis and verified through site visits. LCTs are not tied to a single geographic location and can occur repeatedly across a study area or be present in only one location. LCTs can also be identified at different levels within the hierarchy of landscape character.

6.2 Overview of Stoke-on-Trent LCTs

- 6.2.1 This section provides detailed definitions of the LCTs identified across Stoke-on-Trent. Each LCT description sets out the key characteristics that define the type, including landform, land cover, field pattern, vegetation cover, settlement type and density. These definitions are informed by field surveys and desk-based analysis of datasets such as historic imagery, satellite/airiel imagery, designated sites and ancient woodland inventories. Reference was also taken from national and county-level guidance, including Natural England's National Character Area profiles.
- 6.2.2 The LCT definitions are intended to be repeatable, allowing them to occur in multiple locations across the city. They provide a consistent framework for understanding how different types respond to change and for guiding planning and decision making.

6.3 LCT1: Academic Institution

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	This LCT covers places of education including primary, secondary schools, universities and nurseries. Ranging from single buildings to the University of Staffordshire campus, built-form ranges in size and appearance. The buildings are often adjoined by playing fields and indoor sports facilities. Commonly separated from nearby roads and buildings by gateways and fencing near the entrance, trees and shrubbery tend to line the fields.
Cultural landscape features	Institutions have individual senses of character and history, dependent on longevity. Sports facilities may be shared by local clubs, creating a link to the community and providing space for recreational use.
Perceptual qualities and views	Vegetation lining the fields create a sense of enclosure and separation from the surrounding environment, along with access only being from the building fronts. Traffic spreads to the surrounding roads at peak times and can have high impact, but streets are otherwise relatively quiet, particularly at night.
Forces for change	Change in catchment area, school status or Ofsted report outcome may impact number of pupils, performance or local perception for primary and secondary schools. Character is impacted by community in this way. Change in surrounding land uses may impact sense of quiet, particularly for the playing fields in certain areas. Due to the style of its traffic, the area will also be impacted by road network

Protect, Manage and Plan	changes, with noise and stationary traffic a potential problem at peak times if the change is not considered appropriately. Protect: character of the institution and its origins. Manage: vegetation and associated habitats in any tree cover or greenspace. Monitor building condition. Plan: improvements to provision and connection with local community, contributing to a shared vision.
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6.4 LCT2: Allotments

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	Small rectangular plots of land used for horticulture, typically located in proximity to residential developments. Flat landscapes that were commonly agricultural. Windows of biodiversity in an urban backdrop.
Cultural landscape features	Strong contributors to community health, they are usually popular amongst local residents and well-subscribed.
Perceptual qualities and views	There is a community aspect of allotments due to their layout, in shared space, activities and communal equipment. The spaces bring a sense of quiet and enjoyment to the lives of residents, creating a different strain of greenspace for their use. The land also feeds back benefits to the urban environment in terms of water, climate and temperature balance. The soil is rejuvenated by changing use, and air quality improved. Views are pleasant amongst the urban backdrop.
Forces for change	Those council-managed and rented annually are subject to any change to the system or management strategy, as changing land use or extent will impact landscape character. Building up around allotments will also impact their character, between the need for light and benefit of quiet, they are vulnerable to change and development of the surrounding land. Also vulnerable to invasive species.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: surrounding landscape and current land use. Manage: affordability is key, despite waitlists in popular locations. Plan: aim to work with private providers to increase the overall availability of plots, getting more people involved in the numerous benefits allotments provide. Work to find more suitable sites.

6.5 LCT3: Amenity Land

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	Open areas of generally unmanaged grassland partially defined by interspersed hedgerows. These landscapes are characterised by dispersed areas of woodland, ponds and several informal paths.
Cultural landscape features	No active use. Part of the land may be designated for habitats or biodiversity. It is possible that some amenity land used to be former golf courses.
Perceptual qualities and views	Typically located on the periphery of settlements, the relatively open space can enable views across the landscape, providing green windows into the countryside beyond. Despite not being managed, the land is generally a reprieve in visage from the townscape in terms of the quiet it provides, along with change in colour and lack of built form. Can have a range in appearances from wild to relatively managed.
Forces for change	Proposed development locations.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: existing habitats and connections.

	Manage: sensitivity to be assessed for potential change to landscape and land use. Monitor habitats and species present. Plan: consider if development would improve the landscape.
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6.6 LCT4: Canal Recreational Landscapes

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	This type covers areas around the Trent & Mersey Canal and Cauldon Canal and adjacent tow paths. The areas are typically enclosed by woodland and situated throughout the city, separating residential from industrial and commercial development. The topography of the canal is flat, with some steep slopes surrounding the canal and towpath.
Cultural landscape features	The tow paths, along with formal and informal paths through surrounding grass and woodland provide recreational opportunity for walking and spending time near the canal. The Trent & Mersey Canal and surrounding grassland is a designated Conservation Area, reflecting the historic industrial use of the canal for transportation and movement of goods and people.
Perceptual qualities and views	An area where heritage assets are integrated with greenspace. The water provides different recreational opportunities than those afforded by other areas of grass and woodland in the urban setting. Extending across the city, it reinforces the overall character and heritage of the city as well as breaking up the views of consistent buildings.
Forces for change	An environment that will likely sustain through time as the city changes. It is impacted by use as a waterway, foot traffic on the paths and surrounding noise.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: the canal as a heritage asset. Manage: footpaths, woodland and waterway use. Plan: positive ways to attract people to the landscape, as a recreational or educational opportunity.

6.7 LCT5: Commemorative Landscapes

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	Land comprising cemeteries or burial grounds, enclosed by surrounding residential or institutional development. Character is defined by formal grave layouts, hard-surfaced paths, memorial structures and mature tree cover.
Cultural landscape features	An enclosed landscape with strong cultural and visual identity. Distinct value in culture, history and links to people.
Perceptual qualities and views	A change of pace from the noise of the surrounding urbanisation.
Forces for change	This landscape should withstand time, if enclosed and protected from the surrounding environment properly. It is vulnerable to noise and activity that encroaches from surrounding development, particularly industrial or commercial. The landscape is fundamentally one of peace and quiet. It will not integrate well with development, nor should it.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: respect the history and place of meaning. Manage: current sites and proposed nearby developments. Plan: potential designations of additional sites, for different cultures.

6.8 LCT6: Commercial and Industrial Landscapes

Features and characteristics	Description
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Natural landscape features	Commonly close to the canals, the 17-19 th century landscapes are characterised by dense brick-built structures, hard surfaced yards, narrow street patterns and limited vegetation that reflect the industrial heritage of Stoke-on-Trent. More modern development is characterised by large buildings, offices and warehouses, concrete and little vegetation. Large roundabouts and multi-lane roads typically cross-cut these landscapes, connecting the industrial and commercial estates.
Cultural landscape features	17 th -19 th century development is associated with Victorian industrial expansion, particularly pottery works, manufacturing complexes, warehouses and railway-related infrastructure. Modern development includes retail parks, industrial estates and business parks, often located on the periphery of settlements.
Perceptual qualities and views	Historic commercial and industrial landscapes bring heritage to the city, visually expressing Stoke's industrious past. Modern development may bring large footprints of disruption, or improvement, to a landscape. Regardless of the style or condition, these landscapes are dominated by built-form and little vegetation. They are the epitome of urban, often contributing road traffic, noise and loss of views to a landscape, but may bring new architecture and vision for a landscape in ruin.
Forces for change	This landscape character type is susceptible to change in terms of its heritage assets.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: condition of older buildings, access to the public. Manage: new developments and management of existing visitors facilities. Plan: improvements in educational opportunities. New developments to follow the original style of building to retain the character of Stoke's past.

6.9 LCT7: Former Extractive Landscapes

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	Characterised by undulating grassland, remnant spoil forms, scattered hedgerows, shrub growth, woodland colonisation, and occasional disused shafts. Small areas of hardstanding and industrial buildings may be situated within the landscape.
Cultural landscape features	Post-industrial landscapes associated with former mineral extraction.
Perceptual qualities and views	These landscapes often retain a fragmented and transitional character between residential and commercial areas.
Forces for change	New development has the potential to change these area's character significantly, though much has already been repurposed.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: heritage assets through designation if areas hold particular value. Manage: grassland and shrubbery for habitat potential. Plan: future land use.

6.10 LCT8: Hospital

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	This LCT includes the Royal Stoke University Hospital and Haywood Hospital. Built-form ranges in size and appearance. Commonly with roads and car parks intertwining multiple buildings, a few trees dispersed.
Cultural landscape features	Each has an identity in terms of the community it provides for and link to them, as well as a history.

Perceptual qualities and views	A sense of enclosure may be created by the roads, car parks and sprawled buildings, but with so many entrances the landscape tends to merge with surrounding residential landscapes. Activity is 24/7.
Forces for change	Management or redevelopment, provision will always be required, but reinvestment will always be required. Their functionality is vulnerable to changes in the surrounding road network.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: functionality of the institution. Manage: building condition Plan: improvements to provision and connection with local community, as well as improvements to facilities.

6.11 LCT9: Managed Recreational Landscapes

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	Distinguished by maintained vegetation and structured layouts that pronounce it as actively, well-maintained land. Often includes walking paths through grassland and dispersed pockets of trees.
Cultural landscape features	Purposefully managed open spaces designed for recreational and leisure use. Land uses include golf courses, children's play areas, skateparks and formal recreational grounds.
Perceptual qualities and views	Areas for local residents to access recreational opportunities. Important changes in landscape from housing, which they are usually situated amongst.
Forces for change	Redevelopment can pose a threat to residents' greenspace access.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: existing landscapes and facilities. Manage: the condition of paths, vegetation and grass to maintain the natural aesthetic and functionality of pathways. Maintenance of any equipment relating to play areas, skateparks etc. to ensure they can be used as intended. Continue to schedule management well, as this is key to these areas. Plan: future additional spaces, additional providing, further recreational opportunities that can be provided. Ensure access is available for all.

6.12 LCT10: Mosaic Farmland

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	Agricultural land commonly on the periphery of urban development, the beginning of the rural landscape. Mosaic refers to the irregular-shaped series of fields the landscape type comprises of; a variety of sizes and boundary compositions, topography may vary from flat to undulating.
Cultural landscape features	May include PRoWs. The agricultural land may contain areas of biodiversity designation. Farm access on tracks between fields and lanes surrounding.
Perceptual qualities and views	The bridge to the rural landscape, mosaic farmland in Stoke begins to feel like the countryside. Even with internal field boundaries and vegetation, fields open up and vistas enter the landscape. Noise reduces; tranquillity takes over.
Forces for change	New development propositions may change the character of the landscape if not enclosed or in line with existing settlement patterns. Villages are likely vulnerable to bridging if this land is not retained as agricultural. The fields and views would be impacted by installation of overhead service cables.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: existing biodiversity and rural character. Manage: field boundaries to keep views clear.

Plan: how these landscapes contribute to both Stoke and the surrounding countryside.

6.13 LCT11: Mounds

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	Landscapes whose predominant mound features are surrounded by dense vegetation and natural features such as streams.
Cultural landscape features	The areas are largely enclosed by urban development and may contain PRoW for recreational opportunities.
Perceptual qualities and views	Vegetation and associated biodiversity contributes to rural character. Quieter than their surroundings, these areas can provide a break in urbanisation, but not so much as other greenspace LCTs.
Forces for change	Any changes to PRoW and surrounding landscape will impact. As these areas do not hold strong character themselves, they are largely susceptible to external influence.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: vegetation density and opportunities for habitats. They may function as habitat corridors given their location generally surrounded by urban development. Manage: any biodiversity designations present. Plan: how to improve biodiversity in maintenance of features, design of human access to protect certain areas.

6.14 LCT12: Open Wooded Greenspace

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	Scattered trees, grassland, scrubs and areas of woodland providing key greenspace opportunities for urban dwellers. Typically flat landscapes, but may be gently undulating in places.
Cultural landscape features	These areas of quiet greenery can be used for recreation in walking but are importantly also simply a separation of landscapes within the townscape.
Perceptual qualities and views	Small plots or wider spaces, these landscapes break up the urban vista through light, colour and lack of noise. Pleasant aesthetics, they are able to make urban environments feel sub-urban.
Forces for change	Surrounding development in terms of roads, buildings heights and residential development density, leading to overpopulated use.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: habitats and woodland. Manage: number of people accessing the greenspace, and the land itself. Forestry work may need completing, or simply regular grass maintenance. Plan: additional greenspaces; if provision meets need.

6.15 LCT13: Parkland

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	Characterised by large greenspaces with a mix of tree cover, grassland and dense hedgerows with paths traversing throughout.
Cultural landscape features	Parkland is often associated with historic estates, public parks or nature reserves.

Perceptual qualities and views	The interplay of vegetation structure, open spaces and occasional built features such as playgrounds and estate buildings contributes to a visually varied and culturally significant landscape.
Forces for change	Would be impacted by new built form, encroaching on the rurality of the landscape. Invasive species, tree cover change, changing land ownership and changing land management practises would all create change for the landscape's character.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: existing land and biodiversity designations. Manage: condition of buildings associated with the parkland to retain historic character, alongside the grassland, woodland and vegetated land cover. Plan: educational and further biodiversity opportunities.

6.16 LCT14: River Valley Landscapes

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	A large catchment area of farmland characterised by valleyed topography surrounding a central river corridor on the urban edge of Stoke-on-Trent, between the settlement and Green Belt. Also includes small areas of linear parcels of woodland surrounding a river corridor, often with PRoWs providing recreational access.
Cultural landscape features	Scattered farmsteads and connecting tracks are present, with some PRoW providing recreational access.
Perceptual qualities and views	Mix of blue and greenspace providing welcome change to the environment in all areas of the city, on the fringe or towards the centre. Views open up through these landscapes on the edge of Stoke.
Forces for change	New buildings or change in land use on the farmland would change the land's character significantly. Lack of management of the land surrounding river corridors would change their functionality as a greenspace.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: natural features of the land. Manage: habitats, tracks and access. Plan: future conservation of the inner city river corridors, in addition to how the farmland catchment interacts with the green belt.

6.17 LCT15: Rolling Planned Farmland

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	Gently undulating landscapes characterised by large, regular fields resulting from planned enclosure, with a weak hedgerow structure. Field patterns are relatively open, with small and heavily managed hedgerows allowing expansive views over the rolling topography.
Cultural landscape features	A sparsely settled landscape where agricultural land use dominates.
Perceptual qualities and views	The structured field layout imparts a sense of order and planned rural character.
Forces for change	Change in topography by new development or land use. This landscape is particularly vulnerable to buildings and tall structures, with its open expansive landscape.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: key features of the existing landscape – topographically, rurally and locally. Manage: habitat protection.

Plan: future land use in agriculture.

6.18 LCT16: Structured Farmland

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	Landscapes characterised by large, regular fields resulting from planned enclosure, with a strong hedgerow or fenced structure. Field patterns are relatively open, with small and heavily managed hedgerows, allowing expansive views over the landscape.
Cultural landscape features	A sparsely settled landscape where pastoral land use dominates.
Perceptual qualities and views	A strong sense of order and planned rural character.
Forces for change	Similar to LCT15, this farmland is susceptible to any change that will disrupt views, tranquillity or the sense of rurality.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: key features of the existing landscape – topographically, rurally and locally. Manage: habitat protection. Plan: future land use in agriculture.

6.19 LCT18: Sports Facilities

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	Grass surfaces are often well-maintained alongside associated footpaths or facilities. Boundary vegetation can provide a sense of enclosure.
Cultural landscape features	Landscapes dominated by formal sports provision such as football pitches, tennis courts and cricket grounds.
Perceptual qualities and views	Key provision for the urban area. Functionality is the keystone of this LCT, providing not just access to greenspace, but spaces for a wide range of recreational activities that require facilities, not just fields. Whilst visuals do include buildings, they are a generally a welcome change from the surroundings.
Forces for change	Lack of facilities management could render this space unusable.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: the land and its ability to function for the sport/recreational activity it is intended e.g. grass vs. rain for a cricket pitch. Manage: the grass and boundary vegetation that is present. Access and car parking is important to manage in order to not overflow and impact surrounding residential streets. Plan: potential additional sports, facilities and provisions that can be made to the local community.

6.20 LCT19: Urban Residential Landscapes

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	17-19 th century housing is characterised by high-density, linear residential development with limited greenspace. The topography of the type is predominantly flat or located on a slight slope. Modern developments integrate vegetation planting, gardens, formal and informal open spaces, and are generally increasingly far from historic town centres.
Cultural landscape features	17-19 th century housing design is typically associated with Victorian and Edwardian style in terraced brick houses associated with Stoke-on-Trent's industrial growth between the late 17 th and early 19 th centuries. These areas are

	located close to the historic town centre, as well as pottery factories, coal quarries and shafts, reflecting their history of housing workers employed in these industries. Modern development is characterised by lower-density housing, wider street patterns and a more open and non-linear spatial structure.
Perceptual qualities and views	Modern styles with greenspace integrated contribute to a softer urban edge and less uniform built character than previous styles. The dominant character type across Stoke, urban residential landscapes and their form contribute significantly to an area's character.
Forces for change	The direction of the nature of this character type is fundamentally controlled by the style of new development, where it will be, and how integrated it will be with existing styles and landscapes.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: functionality whilst respecting history and retaining the city's character. Manage: associated greenspace, the state of roads, provision of services, condition of buildings and access. Plan: development should aim to retain characteristics of historic residences, whilst improving condition to showcase a pleasant landscape.

6.21 LCT20: Woodland

Features and characteristics	Description
Natural landscape features	Landscapes characterised by substantial woodland blocks with maintained paths and PRoW providing recreational access. Includes areas of continuous woodland, which is more dominated by dense woodland, small areas of interspersed grassland and occasional pools.
Cultural landscape features	Usually enclosed by urban development, woodland character is combined with active recreational use.
Perceptual qualities and views	Urban views are hidden amongst the trees, an opportunity for local residents to immerse themselves in quiet, tranquil landscapes. The woodland positively combats noise, creates separation between areas of the city and enhances the vista.
Forces for change	Reduction in tree cover and density would significantly impact the key characteristics of this type. The contrast between light and dark is fundamental, and thinning for non-ecological reasons would have adverse impact.
Protect, Manage and Plan	Protect: sense of quiet and tranquility. Manage: how the woodland can function as a key corridors and connector for surrounding habitats. Plan: how ecosystems can be brought to the woodland floor and surrounding land.

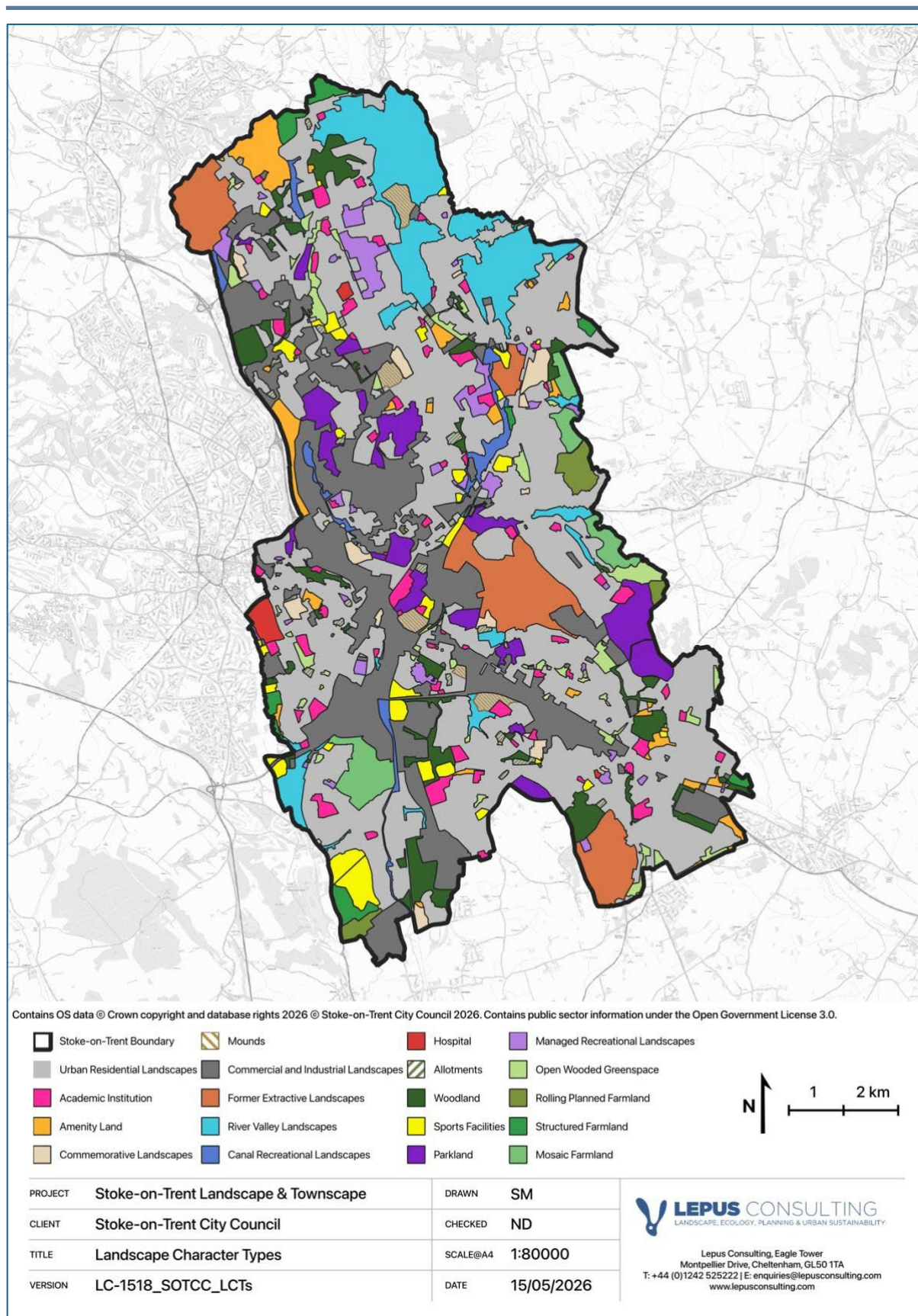


Figure 6.1: Map of Landscape Character Types within Stoke-on-Trent

Habitats Regulations Assessment
Sustainability Appraisal
Strategic Environmental Assessment
Landscape Character Assessment
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
Green Infrastructure
Expert Witness
Ecological Impact Assessment
Habitat and Ecology Surveys
Biodiversity Net Gain



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