

**City of Bradford Metropolitan District
Council**

Landscape Character Assessment SPD

Final report

Prepared by LUC
November 2025



City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

Landscape Character Assessment SPD

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September 2023

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Landscape Context

Background and Purpose of the Bradford District Landscape Character Assessment SPD

1.1 LUC was commissioned in June 2022 by the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council (the Council) to review and update the 2008 Landscape Character Assessment for Bradford District (undertaken and produced by the Council).

1.2 The 2008 assessment was largely based on work that had been undertaken in the late 1990s. This took into account the population centres, cultural heritage, land cover, landform (elevation), geology and ecology/biodiversity. Much of the information remains relevant today and this study has been used as a basis for the updated Landscape Character Assessment.

1.3 The updated Bradford District Landscape Character Assessment (2023) provides a robust evidence base to underpin the review of the Local Plan and to assist in the local planning process. It is intended to both inform work on policy development and development management, guiding development that is sympathetic to local character and the qualities of the landscape. It can help inform locational policies for strategic development as well as appropriate design and mitigation, providing baseline evidence for more detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) and landscape and visual appraisals (LVA).

1.4 The aim is to create a comprehensive, robust and up-to-date strategic district scale landscape evidence and provide a framework for more detailed landscape studies and sensitivity assessments.

1.5 A glossary of terms is provided in **Appendix B**.

What is an SPD?

1.6 An SPD does not form part of the statutory development plan and therefore it cannot introduce new planning policies. However, an SPD provides more detailed advice or guidance on existing policies in an adopted plan. As a result, it serves as a 'material consideration' when assessing any development proposals in the District.

Who is it for?

1.7 This document can be used to aid understanding of landscape character when considering any type of change. This includes opportunities for conserving existing character, strengthening, and enhancing character as well as opportunities to create new character. This SPD has been prepared for:

- Planning officers and elected members: To provide guidance on the relative landscape character of different areas within Bradford and to provide evidence-based guidance to help when considering the potential landscape effects of planning applications within the District.
- Developers: To provide guidance on the key landscape considerations that need to be taken into account when siting and preparing planning applications for new development and how potential impacts can be minimised.
- Members of the public: Who have an interest in or may wish to comment on proposed development schemes through the planning process.

How should this SPD be used?

1.8 This SPD replaces the now out-of-date evidence set out in Bradford's 2008 Landscape Character SPD. It serves two broad purposes:

1. Bradford Council will expect developers to take account of this SPD when submitting a planning application for development schemes under the current development plan, when within a landscape character area. It provides further guidance on the implementation of Policy EN4: Landscape in the Adopted Core Strategy (2017). The SPD will act as a material consideration for all applications submitted under the current Development Plan.

2. The Landscape Character Assessment also forms part of the evidence base that underpins Bradford's emerging Local Plan, which will replace the existing development plan once adopted. As such, it will inform the development of updated policies on landscape and allocations within the new Plan – among other policies.

The Role of Landscape Character Assessment

1.9 Landscape character is defined as:

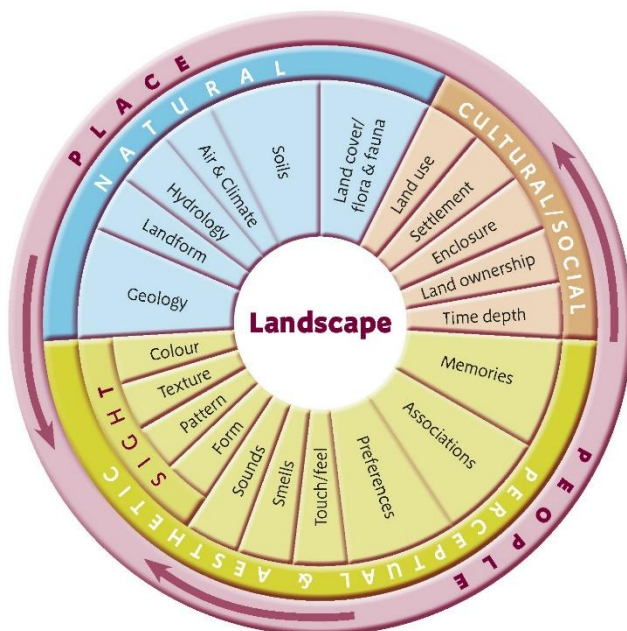
“a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse”¹

1.10 Landscape character assessment is the process of identifying and describing such variations in character across a landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of features and attributes (characteristics) that make different landscapes distinctive. The landscape is the result of the interaction between people and place which gives an area a local identity. The 'landscape wheel' below illustrates how the different natural, cultural, and perceptual attributes of a landscape combine to produce character.

1.11 The process of landscape character assessment is described in the document 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (Natural England, October 2014).

1.12 Understanding the character of place and evaluating an area's defining characteristics is a key component in managing growth sustainably and ensuring that the inherent character and qualities of Bradford's landscape can continue to be appreciated. Understanding of character can be used to ensure that any change or development does not undermine whatever is valued or characteristic in a particular landscape and help guide positive change that conserves, enhances, restores, or creates local character.

Figure 1.1: The 'landscape wheel'²



¹ Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment [pdf]. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691184/landscape-character-assessment.pdf
² Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment [pdf]. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691184/landscape-character-assessment.pdf

National Level

1.13 At a national level, England is divided into 159 distinct National Character Areas (NCAs). Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity. There are descriptive profiles available for each NCA (published in 2014 by Natural England³) setting out information on landscape character, changes in the landscape and an assessment of ecosystem services delivered.

1.14 Bradford District is part of three NCAs:

- NCA 36 Southern Pennines
- NCA 37 Yorkshire Southern Pennine Fringe
- NCA 38 Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire Coalfield

1.15 NCAs within and surrounding the District are illustrated on **Figure 1.2**.

1.16 There are no national landscape designations within the Bradford District. However, to the north east of the District sits the Nidderdale AONB and the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The South Pennine Moors to the west of the District is the only remaining large tract of upland landscape in England which is not a nationally designated AONB or National Park. It was identified as a prospective national park in the 1940s but was never given this status. Instead, alternative landscape scale initiatives have been undertaken to conserve and enhance the area's natural, built and cultural assets and to increase appreciation of them. The Pennine Prospects rural regeneration agency was formed in 2005 to advocate for this area, and from this the South Pennines Park was created as a 'self-appointed' park. These landscapes are illustrated in **Figure 1.3** in relation to Bradford District.

³ Natural England (2014) National Character Area profiles [online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>

Figure 1.2: National Character Areas

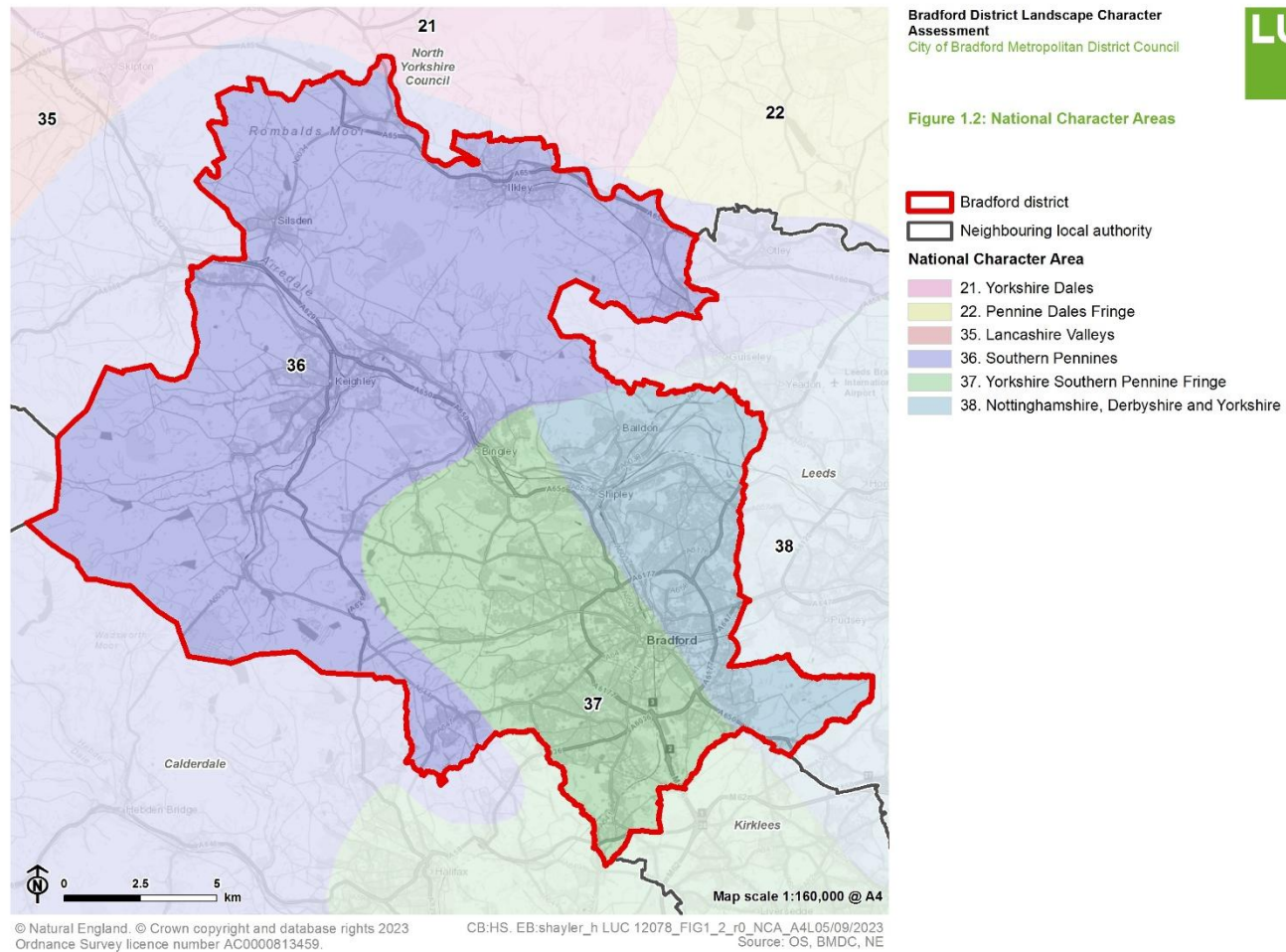
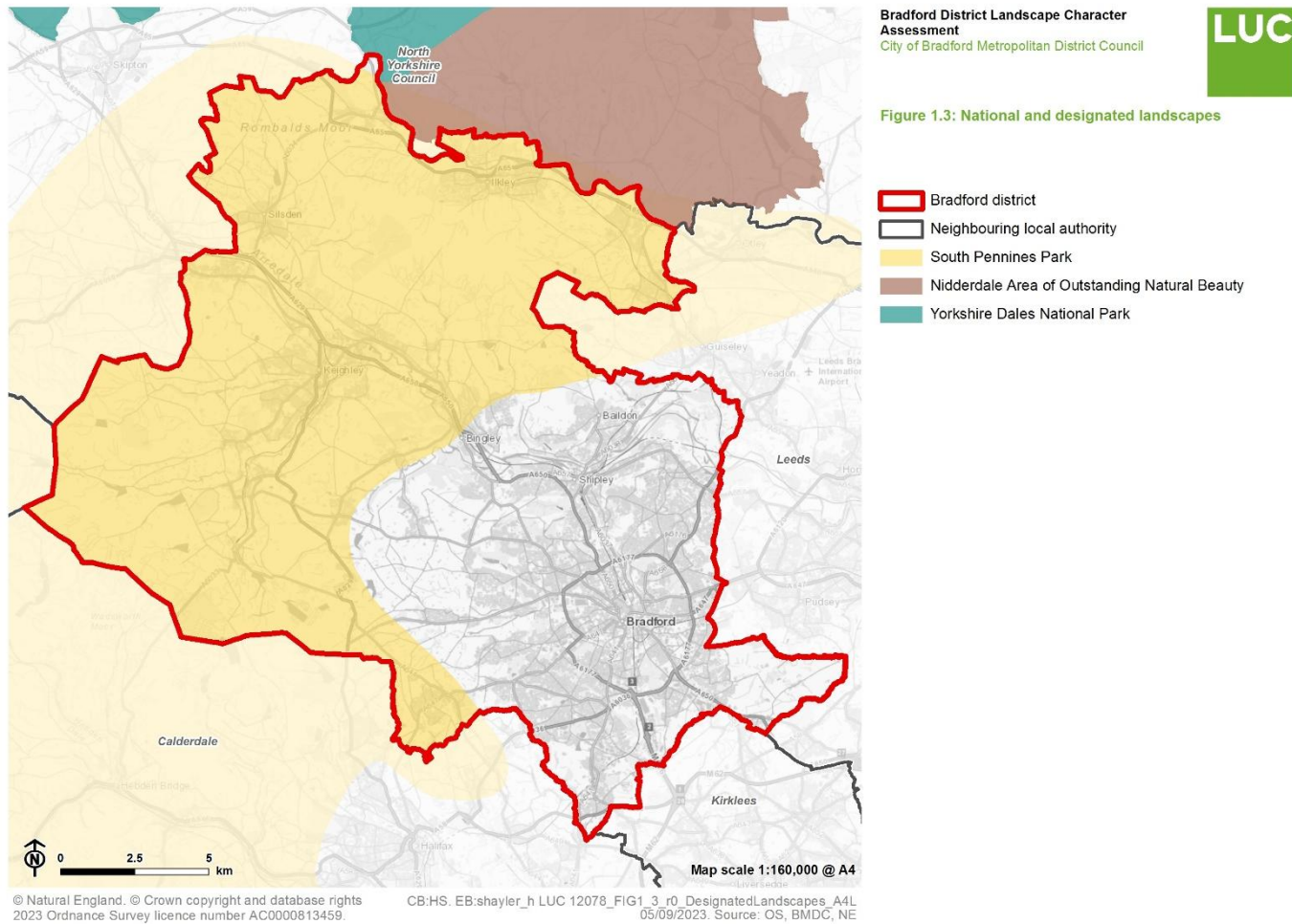


Figure 1.3: National and designated landscapes



Local Level

1.17 Landscape does not stop at administrative boundaries but continues seamlessly into surrounding districts. This assessment therefore sits alongside the Landscape Character Assessments of the adjacent authorities including:

- Calderdale District LCA and Review of Special Landscape Area Designation (2016)
- Craven District outside the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Forest of Bowland AONB Landscape Appraisal (2002)
- Harrogate District LCA (2004)
- Kirklees District Landscape Character Assessment (2015)
- Lancashire LCA, A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire (2000) (covering parts of Craven and Pendle, Burnley and Rossendale Districts)
- Leeds Landscape Assessment (1994)
- North Yorkshire and York Landscape Characterisation Project (2011) (covering part of Craven and Harrogate Districts)
- Yorkshire Dales National Park LCA (covering part of the Craven District to the north of Bradford District)

The Landscape Context in Bradford

1.18 The District of Bradford is a large metropolitan authority and covers an area of approximately 36,519 hectares (141 square miles), as one of the five districts in the West Yorkshire conurbation. It has a (2021) population of approximately 547,000 and a relatively high population density (as of 2019) of 1,473 people per square kilometre – against an England average of 434⁴.

1.19 Bradford is a key strategic location within the wider Leeds City Region – with three rail routes providing public transport connectivity. It also has connections to the strategic highway network via the M606 and M62. The network of A roads provide links to the surrounding settlements including Skipton, Colne, Halifax, Brighouse, Yeadon and Rawdon, Farsley and Pudsey, and Leeds. These locational factors, combined with the quality of the rural areas, help make the area a popular place to live and work.

1.20 In landscape terms, the District is known for its high quality landscapes, with areas of high landscape value in close proximity to the main urban areas. The landscape is varied and ranges from the rugged open moorland of the South Pennine uplands to rolling farmland, and from open river valleys to wooded hillsides. The rural environment of two thirds of the District enhances the quality of life enjoyed by both urban and rural residents.

1.21 There are substantial areas of upland heathland and blanket bog to the west of the District, while the Coal Measures area of the District contains more woodland, valley wetlands and unimproved grasslands – this latter area is also the focus of demand for new development.

1.22 Around one third of the District consists of built up urban areas. The main urban areas are Bradford (the inner city and suburbs surrounding the City Centre), Shipley and Lower Baildon. Along the Airedale Valley north west of Shipley are the towns of Bingley, Keighley and Silsden, and the smaller settlement of Cottingley, East Morton and Steeton-with-Eastburn. To the north of Airedale is Wharfedale – characterised by the freestanding town of Ilkley, the smaller settlements of Menston and Burley in Wharfedale, and the village of Addingham. The rural areas include many Pennine villages, some large in size such as Thornton, Queensbury, as well as many smaller ones such as Denholme, Haworth, Oakworth, Oxenhope, Harden, Cullingworth and Wilsden. These built up areas contain many highly valued heritage features, with the third highest number of designated assets in the region and the World Heritage Site at Saltaire as the 'jewel in Bradford's crown' and a number of designated historic landscapes and gardens. A 16-mile navigable stretch of the Leeds and Liverpool canal is also protected by a conservation area designation.

⁴ Office for National Statistics (2021) Population profiles for local authorities in England [online]. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/articles/populationprofilesforlocalauthoritiesinengland/2020-12-14>

Figure 1.4: Bedrock geology

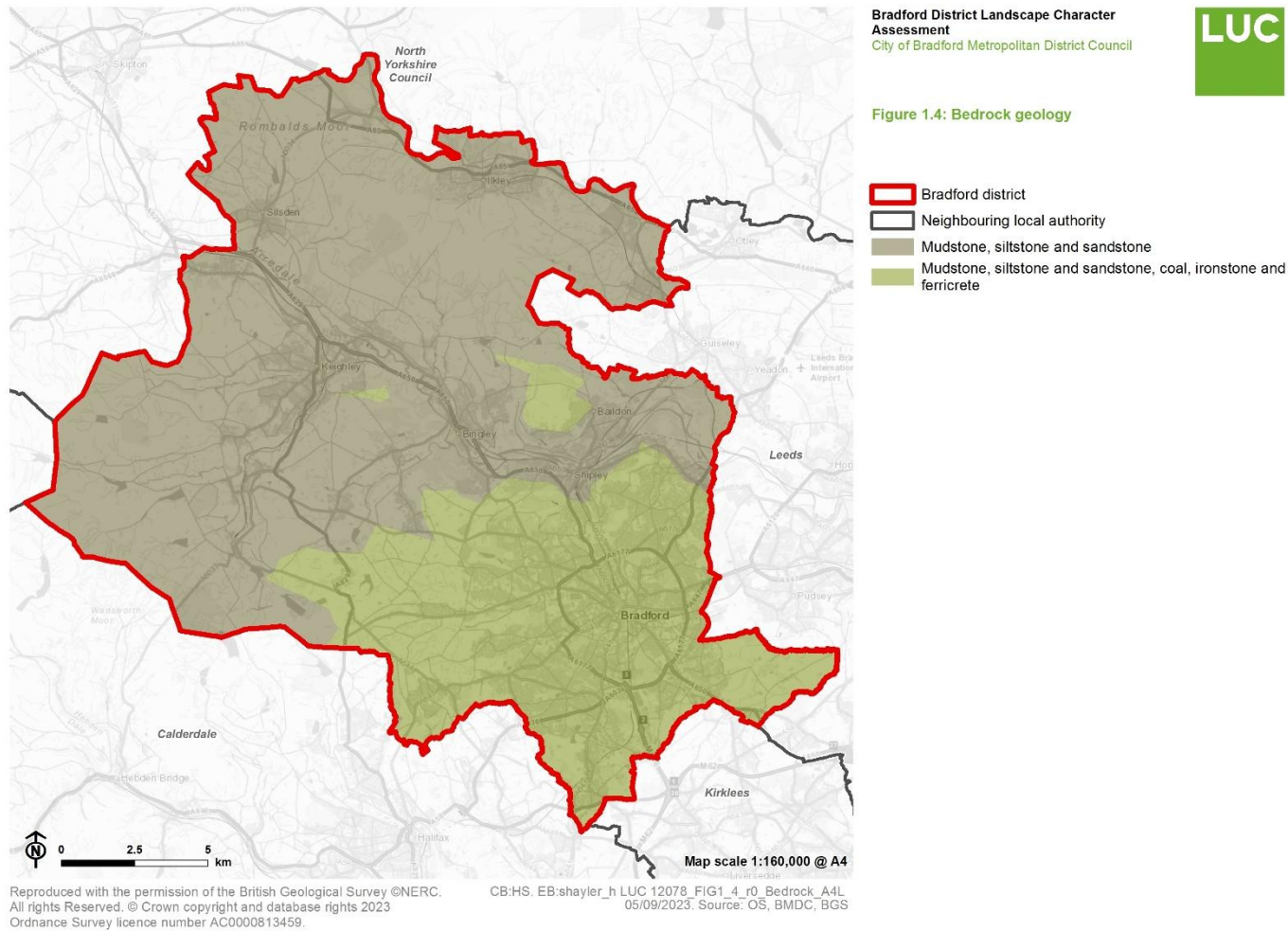


Figure 1.5: Superficial geology

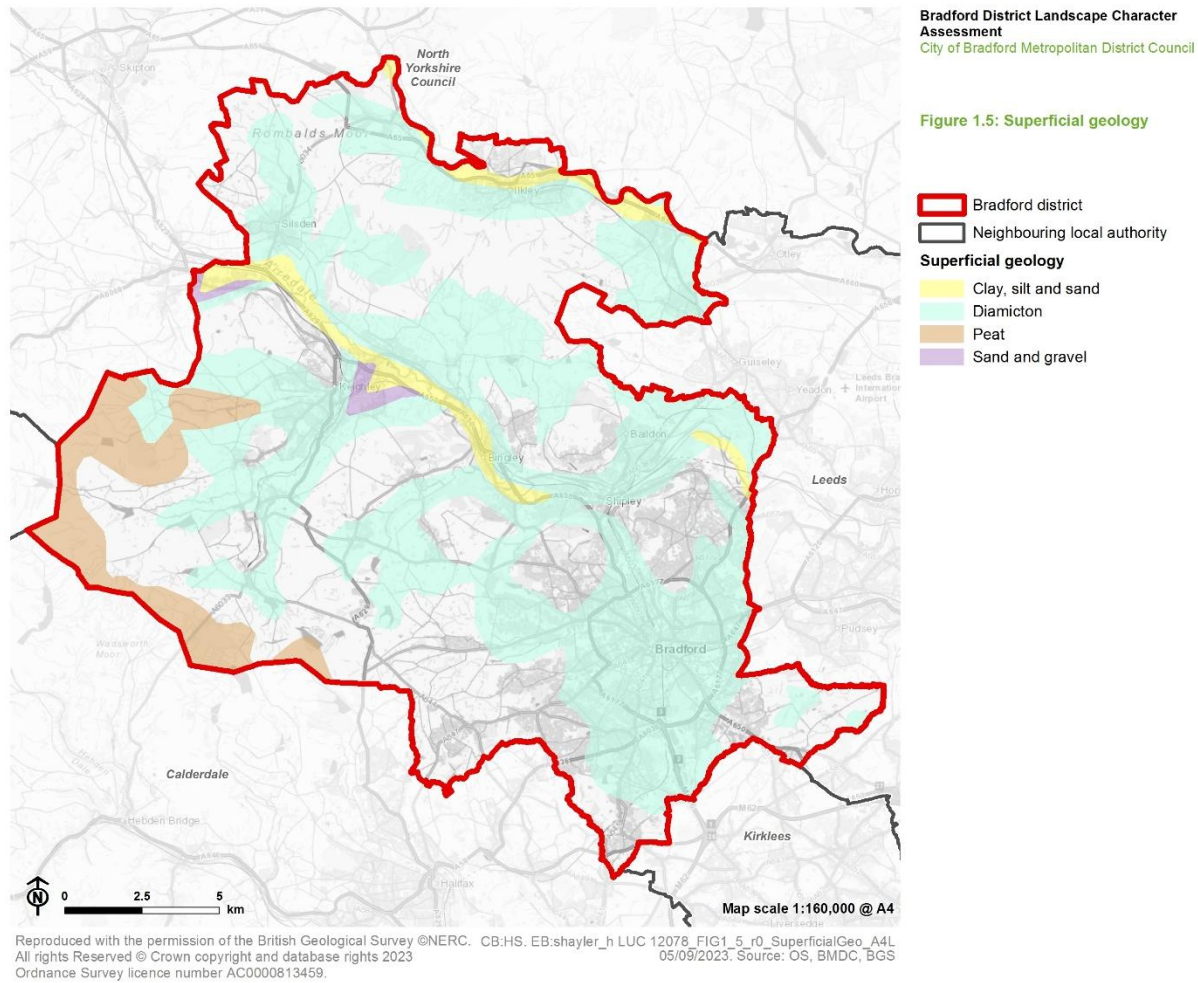


Figure 1.6: Topography

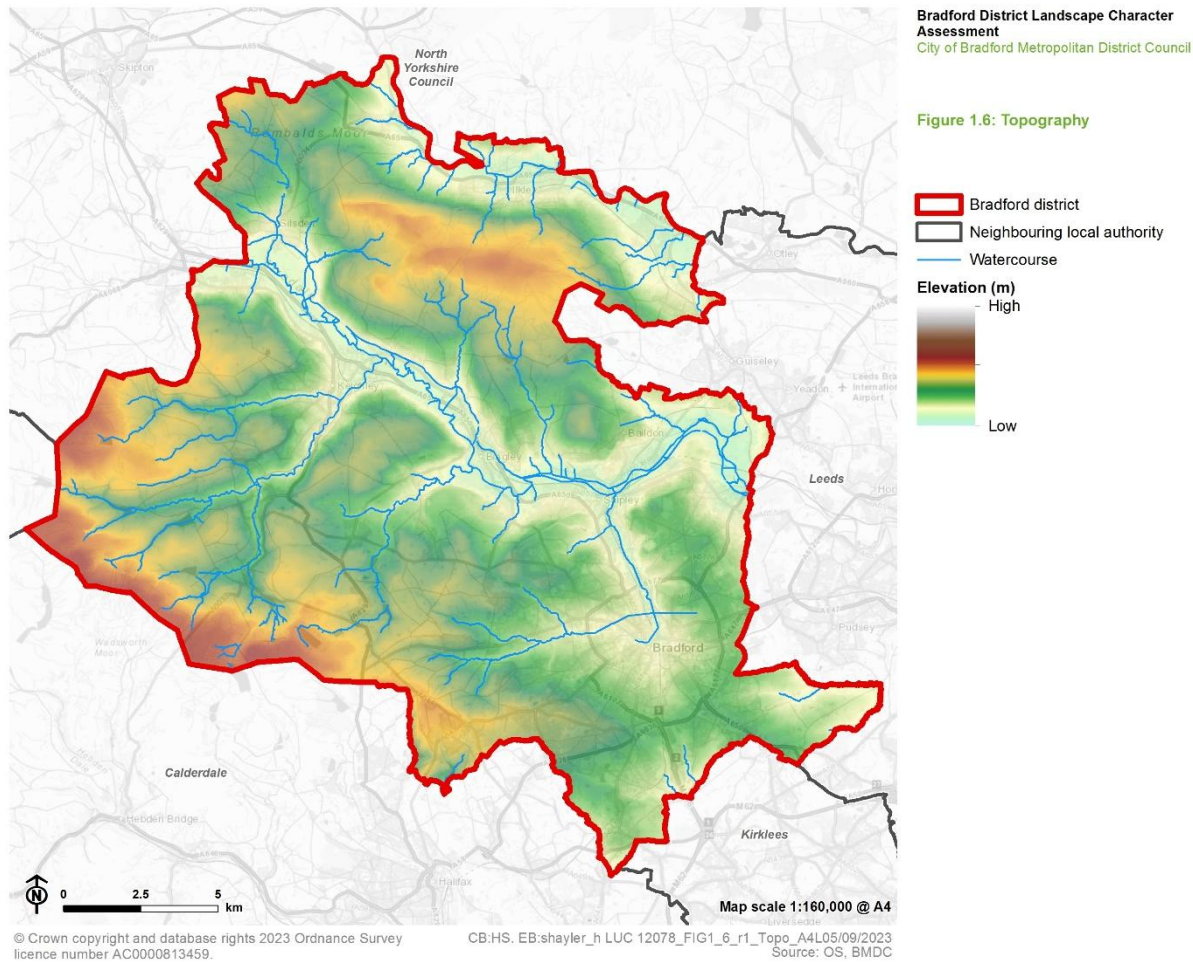


Figure 1.7: Tranquillity

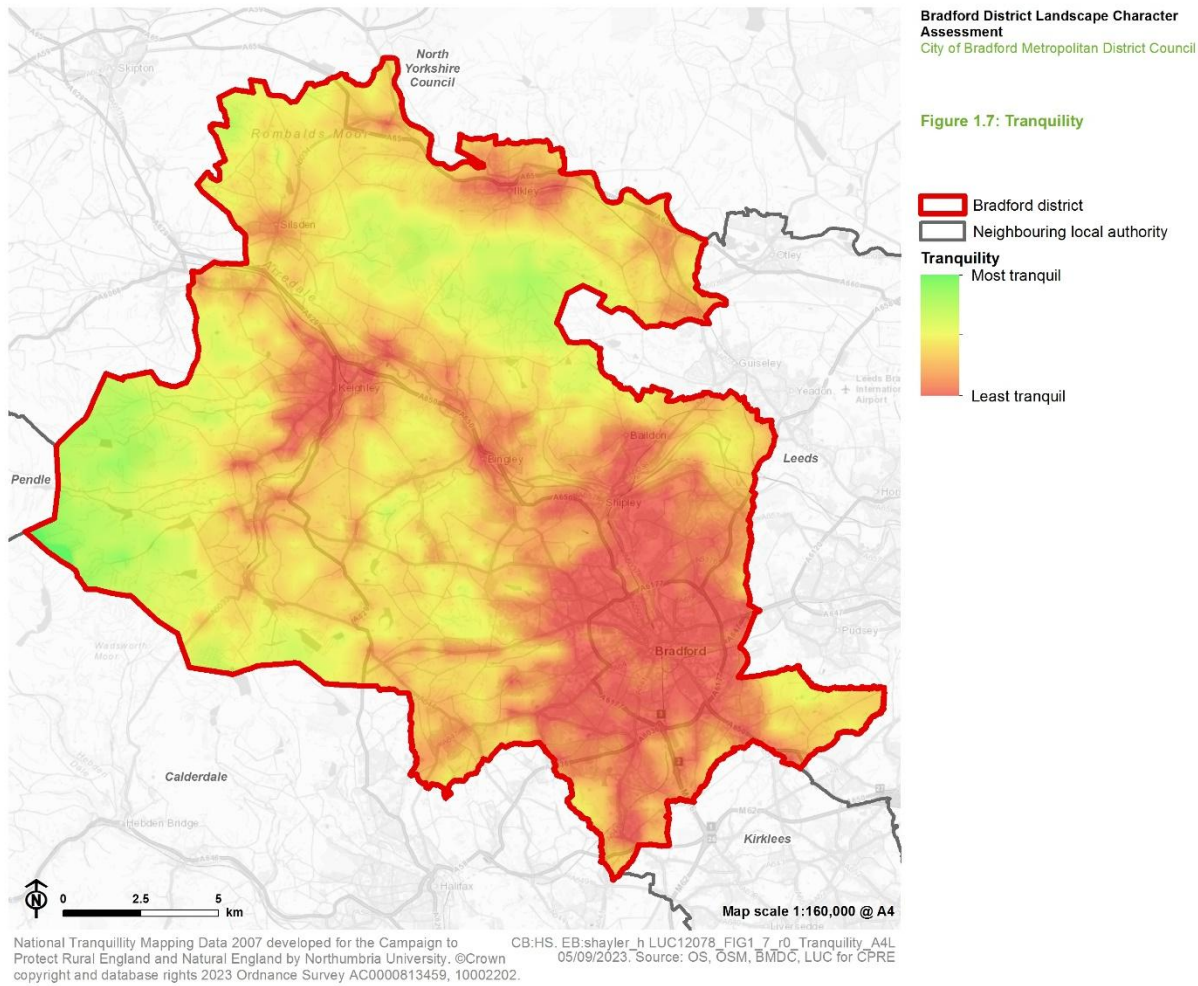
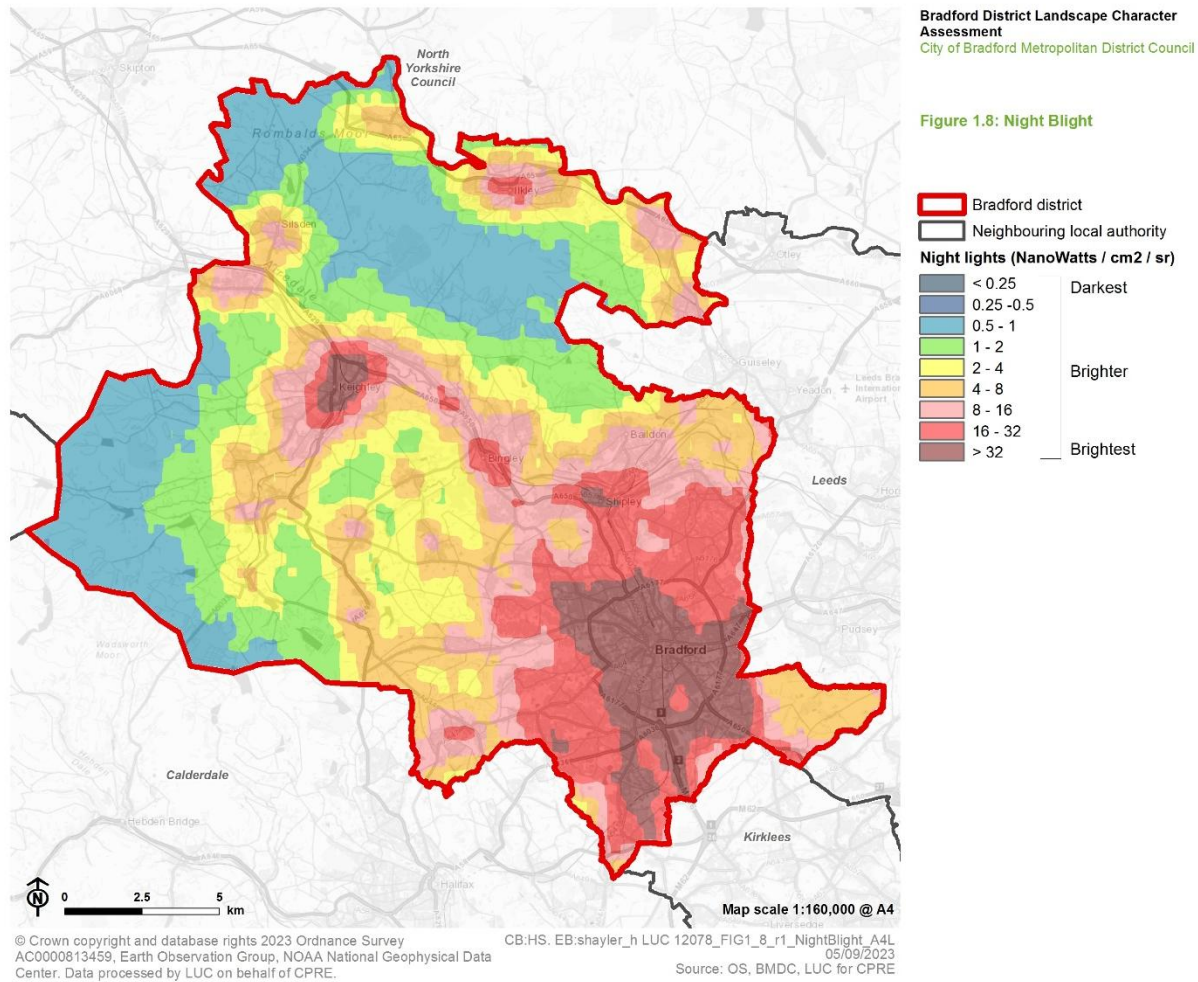


Figure 1.8: Night Blight



Policy Context

The European Landscape Convention

1.23 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into force in the UK in March 2007. It established the need to recognise landscape in law; to develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes; and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies. The ELC definition of 'landscape' recognises that all landscapes matter, be they ordinary, degraded, or outstanding:

"Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."

1.24 The ELC puts emphasis on the whole landscape and all its values and is forward looking in its approach, recognising the dynamic and changing character of landscape. Specific measures promoted by the ELC of direct relevance to this study include:

- The identification and assessment of landscape; and
- Improved consideration of landscape in existing and future sectoral and spatial policy and regulation.

1.25 The situation regarding the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union (EU), or 'Brexit', is unrelated to the ELC. The ELC is a convention of the Council of Europe, not the EU. Therefore, Brexit does not affect the status of this convention, and as of 31st January 2020, the UK remains a signatory.

1.26 This updated Landscape Character Assessment will continue to make a key contribution to the implementation of the ELC in Bradford. It helps to reaffirm the importance of landscape, coordinate existing work and guide future work to protect, manage and plan the landscape.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

1.27 The revised NPPF, published in July 2021, states in paragraph 174 that:

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- *...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) (para 174.a)*
- *...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... (para 174.b)"*

1.28 The NPPF is supported by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which recognises the role that Landscape Character Assessment plays in helping to understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape⁵. This assessment for Bradford provides evidence to help protect valued landscapes and recognise the intrinsic value and beauty of the countryside.

Local Policy Context: Bradford's Adopted and Emerging Local Plans

1.29 This Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) forms part of a sound evidence base to support the landscape policy and other character policies in the emerging Bradford District Local Plan. At the time of writing, Bradford Council is developing a new Local Plan, which will set out how the district will grow sustainably over the next 15 to 20 years and what that means for local communities. The plan will feature new sites for housing and employment and a range of policies which will help guide development and the determination of planning applications. It will also set out spatial strategies for local areas and settlements and how they may change over the plan period to 2038.

⁵ PPG paragraph 036, Reference ID: 8-036-20190721 / PPG paragraph 037, Reference ID: 8-037-20190721

1.30 As an SPD, in the interim the LCA presented here also supports Bradford's existing Local Plan – which was adopted in July 2017. The adopted plan's Core Strategy DPD sets the strategic planning framework and policies to guide development in the district up until 2030 and will be replaced by the new Bradford Local Plan once adopted. The existing Core Strategy highlights the quality of Bradford's landscapes as one of the most striking features of the district and includes a dedicated landscape policy EN4 (Bradford District Landscape Character Areas), which requires that:

"Development decisions as well as Plans, policies and proposals should make a positive contribution toward the conservation, management and enhancement of the diversity of landscapes within the District... This should use the approach set out in the Landscape Character SPD."

1.31 As the most up-to-date evidence base available on landscape, for these purposes this LCA SPD supersedes the previous LCA SPD (published in 2008).

Chapter 2

Methodology

Approach

- 2.1** The Landscape Character Assessment follows the method promoted by Natural England through 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (2014)⁶, which embeds the principles of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) within it.
- 2.2** The 2014 guidance lists the five key principles for landscape character assessment as follows:
- Landscape is everywhere and all landscape has character;
 - Landscape occurs at all scales and the process of Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at any scale;
 - The process of Landscape Character Assessment should involve an understanding of how the landscape is perceived and experienced by people;
 - A Landscape Character Assessment can provide a landscape evidence base to inform a range of decisions and applications; and
 - A Landscape Character Assessment can provide an integrating spatial framework – a multitude of variables come together to give us our distinctive landscapes.
- 2.3** The assessment has been prepared within the framework set by Natural England's Natural Character Areas and has aimed to join up with surrounding authorities' LCAs. It supersedes the previous Bradford Landscape Character Assessment (2008) but draws on information from the 2008 assessment where this remains relevant.
- 2.4** GIS was used throughout the study as the tool for collating, manipulating and presenting data.

Process of Assessment

- 2.5** The process for undertaking the study involved three main stages as described below.

Stage 1: Desk Review and Consultation

- Inception;
- Review and baseline data collection/collation;
- Desk-based characterisation;
- Classification and description; and
- Consultation with stakeholders (online workshop with key stakeholders and questionnaire sent to Parish Councils, as detailed in **Appendix C**).

Stage 2: Site Assessment

- 2.6** A systematic field survey was undertaken to review and refine the draft classification and descriptions presented in the interim report. This involved:
- Verifying and fine-tuning the classification of the landscape types and areas identified including review of boundaries;

⁶ Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment [pdf]. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691184/landscape-character-assessment.pdf

- Checking and identifying key characteristics;
- Collecting aesthetic/perceptual information;
- Identifying key sensitivities and valued attributes;
- Taking photographs to provide a visual record of the landscape; and
- Providing more detailed guidance in relation to changes observed on the ground.

Stage 3: Reporting

- Updating the interim report with field observations;
- Completing a landscape evaluation based on the field survey; and
- Submitting a draft for client review followed by a final report.

Desk Study

2.7 The initial desk-based stage involved the collation of a wide range of up-to-date mapped information to 'sense-check' the existing landscape classifications and to update the baseline. Designations relating to cultural heritage, nature conservation and landscape were checked for any changes since the original LCA. Feedback from stakeholders helped to identify development which has occurred since the previous 2008 LCA.

2.8 Data used within the report, including data collated in the GIS database is shown in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1: GIS data

Name	Source
Base OS mapping at 1:25k and 1:50k	Ordnance Survey via Bradford District Council
Terrain 50 contour data	Ordnance Survey via Bradford District Council
Superficial deposits, and bedrock geology 1:50K	British Geological Survey
Administrative boundaries	Bradford District Council
National Character Areas	Natural England
Existing Bradford Landscape Character Assessment (2008)	Bradford District Council
Public Rights of Way, and access land	Natural England
Cycle routes	Sustrans
Watercourses	Ordnance Survey
Flood zones	Environmental Agency
Nature conservation designations	Natural England
Local Wildlife Sites	West Yorkshire Ecology Service
Priority habitats	Natural England
Forestry	Forestry Commission
Historic Landscape Characterisation dataset	West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service

Name	Source
Heritage designations	Historic England (national datasets) and Bradford District Council (local datasets)

Classification

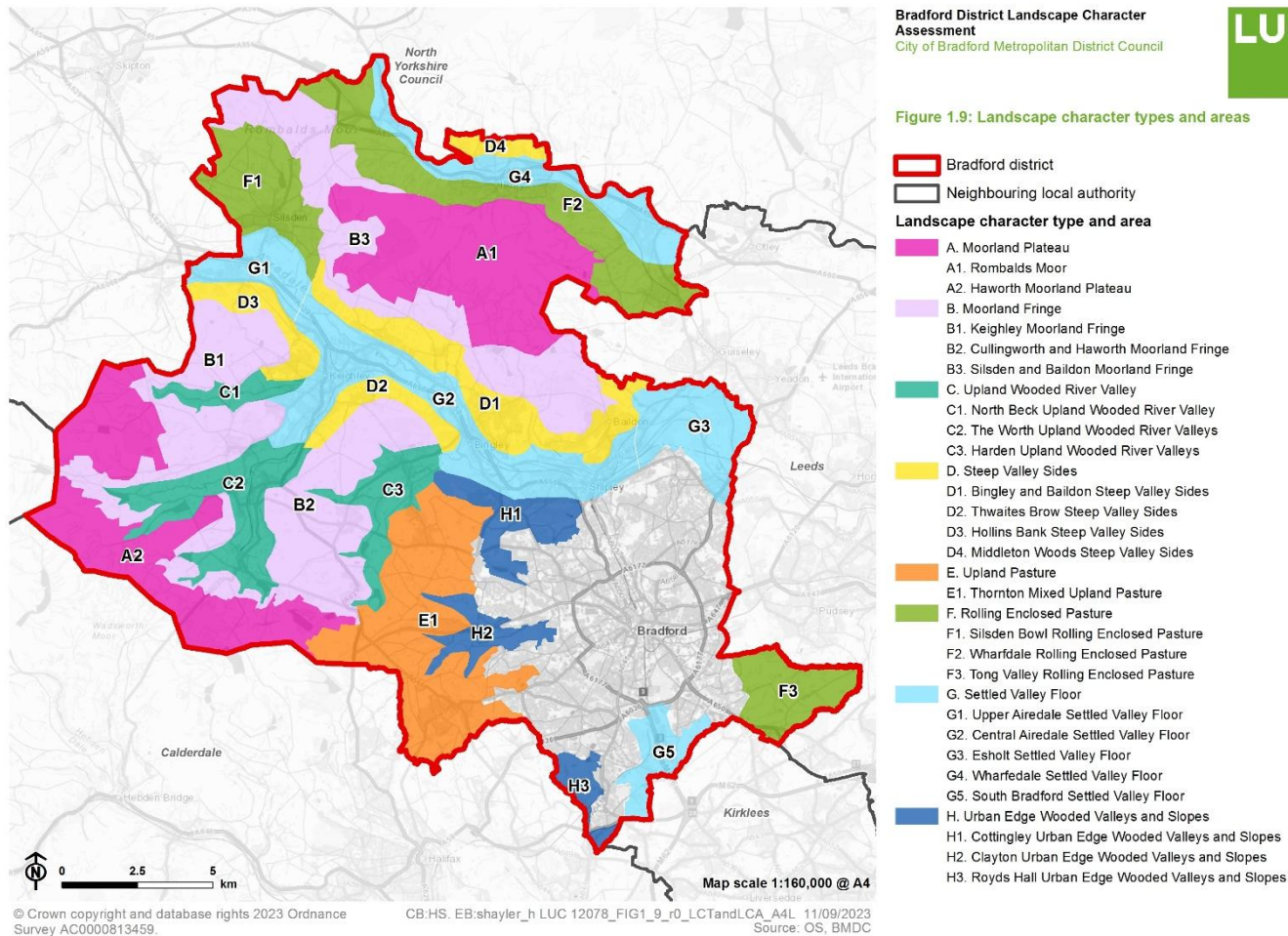
2.9 Classification is concerned with dividing the landscape into areas of distinct, recognisable, and consistent common character and grouping areas of similar character together.

- Landscape Character Types (LCTs) share broadly similar patterns of geology, topography, vegetation, and human influences in each area in which they occur. Although not identical they share a common pattern of elements such as LCT A Moorland Plateau.
- Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) – Each landscape type is divided into geographically specific character areas. These share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type but have their own particular identity or ‘sense of place’ such as LCA A1 Rombalds Moor/Ilkley Moorland Plateau which falls within LCT A Moorland Plateau.

2.10 The update of the landscape classification for Bradford is based on a review of the 2008 approach, boundaries and new information on landscape change. The 2008 Landscape Assessment subdivided the district into ten LCAs. Within each of the LCAs there were several different LCTs. The 2022 approach has reviewed and rationalised the classification and identification of generic LCTs and then subdivided these into geographically distinct LCAs. The original LCAs are mapped in **Appendix A**.

2.11 This process resulted in the definition of 8 LCTs and 24 LCAs for Bradford District. The classification is shown on **Figure 2.1**.

Figure 2.1: Landscape character types and areas



Landscape Character Area Profiles

2.12 The Landscape Character Assessment is presented at LCA level and arranged by their respective LCT within the District in **Chapter 3**.

2.13 Each LCT section begins with an overview map showing the location of the LCT within the District and its relationship with other LCTs and the component LCAs within it. The overview map is accompanied by an overview description of the LCT.

2.14 The individual LCA profiles are each structured as follows:

Landscape Character Area Reference and Name

- Each LCA has been given a geographically unique reference and name which refers back to the LCT.

Location and Summary

- A paragraph summarising the defining landscape character and location of the LCA is followed by a location map (1:25,000 scale) which shows the extent of the LCA and its relationship with other LCAs.

Key Characteristics

- Written in bullet point format – this section provides a summary explanation of the key characteristics of the LCA which is easily accessible.

Representative Photos

- Photographs providing examples of the various views and key features of the specific landscape accompanied by captions are included to help the reader appreciate the character of the LCA.

Landscape Character Description

2.15 This section provides a description of the most notable influences in the landscape within each LCA under the following headings:

- Geology, Soils, Topography and Drainage
- Semi-natural Habitats and Tree Cover
- Land Use and Field Patterns
- Cultural Associations and Historic Landscape
- Settlement and Transport Pattern
- Access and Recreation
- Views and Perceptual Qualities

2.16 The descriptive text is supplemented by plans.

Pressures and Forces for Change and Guidance

2.17 This section evaluates the pressures experienced by the landscape and the approaches which could be employed to counter these pressures. This is considered by LCT to avoid repetition.

2.18 The 'Pressures and Forces for Change' section relates to past, present and potential future changes that have or could have a significant effect on landscape character. The key pressures and forces for change are broken down by themes identified in the consultation process. Where a certain theme was not an issue within a specific LCT it has been omitted from the list. The key themes include:

- Climate Change
- Agricultural Change

- Development
- Habitat Management and Environmental Initiatives
- Heritage at Risk
- Tourism, Recreation and Access Pressure
- Pollution, Littering and Anti-social Behaviour

2.19 Within the Guidance section, recommendations are made which seek to counter the identified pressures in order to maintain and/or enhance landscape character.

Open Landscape within Urban Areas

2.20 The main focus of the landscape character assessment is on the rural landscapes of the wider Bradford District, outside of the urban area of the city of Bradford. The landscape character assessment excludes the urban area of the city of Bradford because it would be more appropriate to assess this as part of a separate Townscape Character Assessment, which would require a different approach and methodology.

2.21 The focus of this landscape character assessment, however, does not negate the importance of large swathes of more open landscapes within the urban area of Bradford. These areas may have been preserved from development due to their steep topography, woodland, because of a range of other constraints or simply by chance. They often perform a function in separating different localities and in maintaining the identity of historic villages or hamlets which have been absorbed into the metropolitan area. In addition, they provide a range of health and well-being benefits to local residents.

2.22 In reflection of this, a section has been added to this LCA to include a brief description of one open landscape within the urban area and the developmental pressures it faces. This is not a full character assessment of the area, and should not be treated as such, but it does provide an indication of the potential landscape value of this and similar landscapes within the urban core and illustrates the importance of maintaining their valued characteristics.