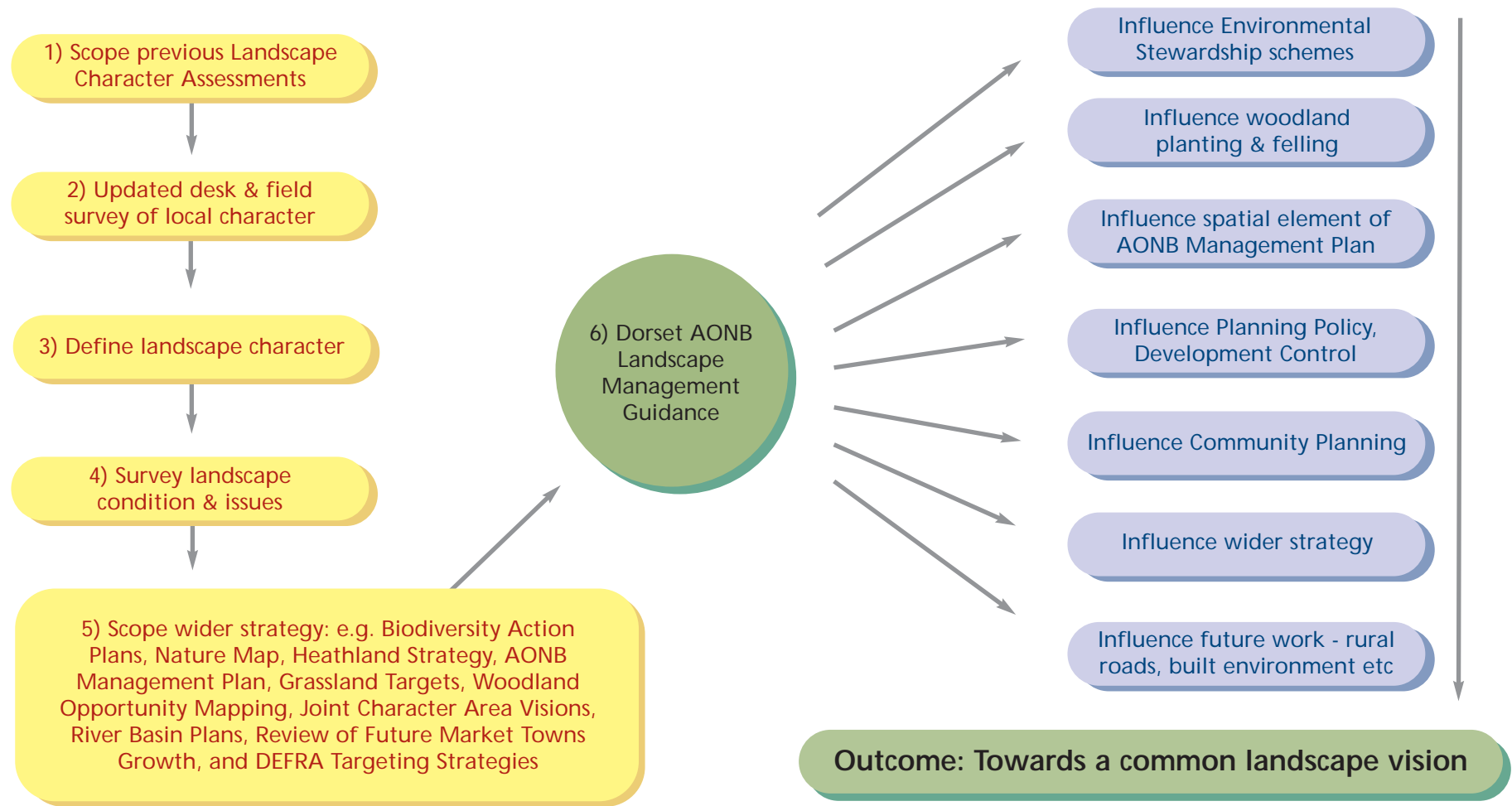


Overview of approach

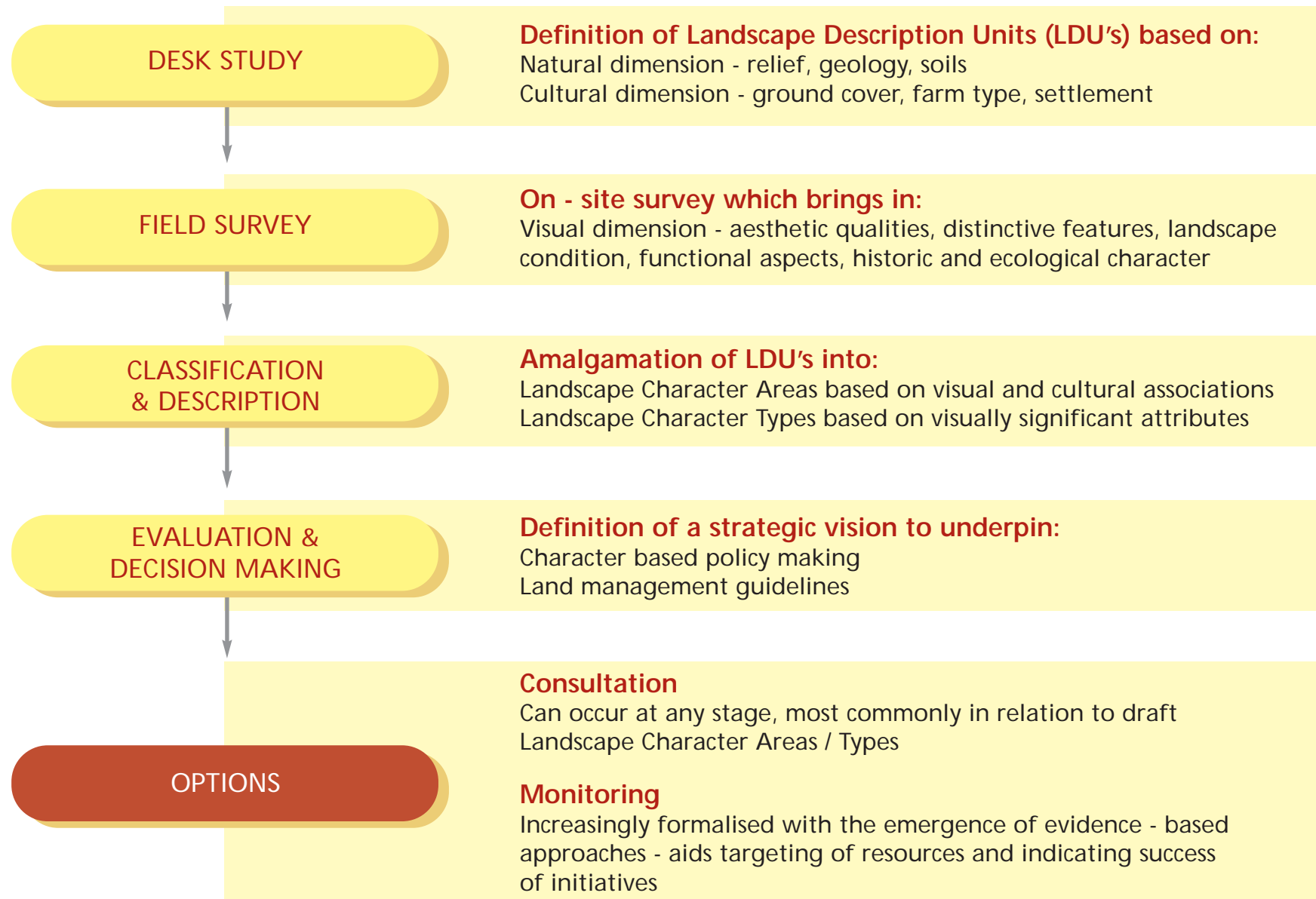


The following diagram sets out an overview of the process of developing the revised Landscape Character Assessment, associated Management Guidance and its potential applications.



Landscape Character Assessment Methodology

The process of mapping and describing landscape character has followed the 'Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland' (Countryside Agency, 2002). The key steps of this process, to include the identification of Management Guidelines is as follows. A more detailed understanding of the methodology used in the production of this work is presented in the Technical Appendix at the end of the document.



Definition of terms

Landscape description

Following the completion of the desk and field survey Landscape Character Areas and Types were described and mapped. These areas provide the spatial framework for identifying common characteristics in the landscape and associated management guidelines, and are described as follows:

'Landscape Types'

are generic and share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation and human influences, e.g. chalk valleys

'Character Areas'

are individual and unique discrete geographical areas representative of the landscape type, e.g. Upper Piddle Valley.

Landscape evaluation

Once the baseline information on character had been completed, the next step was to assess and evaluate the Strength of Character and Landscape Condition to underpin the nature of management policy. These terms (as adapted from Diacono Associates and Land Use Consultants) are described as:

'Strength of Character'

The strength of character of each area is determined by judging the survival of elements in relation to landscape type and how distinct and recognisable these are. It also relates to the time depth of a largely unaltered landscape such as the ancient character of heathland and downland slopes with lynchets. It looks at the combination of physical and cultural influences on the landscape, the sense of place and other perceptions of the landscape. This is assessed as Strong, Medium or Weak.

The following judgements are based on comparing the expected characteristics in landscape from the LDU database with the results of the field survey.

Strong - where the patterns of characteristic landscape elements are consistent throughout the landscape with little evidence of change altering the inherent character of that area.

Medium - where the patterns of characteristic landscape elements are evident throughout the landscape although there is some evidence of change which is inconsistent with the inherent character of that area.

Weak - where some characteristic landscape elements are present in an area although significant change has taken place that is inconsistent with the inherent character of that area.

'Landscape Condition'

The 'Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland 2002', states that landscape condition (or quality) "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".

To make judgements on condition of the landscape character areas the 'physical state' or 'intactness' of key elements characteristic to each landscape have been evaluated. The following main headings to define character have been used as indicators of condition:

- **Landform**
Has the natural form of the land been retained or has there been significant human interference e.g. mineral extraction that detracts from the overall sense of intactness of the shape of the land?
- **Archaeological and Historic Features**
Have important artificial landforms such as ancient earthworks and burial grounds survived and are these in good condition?
- **Field Patterns and Boundaries**
Are field boundaries consistent and well managed e.g. are hedgerows intact or gappy and are they being regularly managed?
- **Land Cover and Land Use**
Is the landscape in positive management? Do land uses fit well with the character of an area? Are there any incongruous features e.g. impacts of highway management or development?
- **Ecological Character and Biodiversity**
What is the general state or condition of habitats? How well does the country side function as habitat networks for wildlife?
- **Settlement and Built Character**
Has development respected the form and pattern of settlements? Do they retain a sense of place?

Landscape condition is defined as **good**, **moderate** or **poor** in relation to the following change statements:

Stable - where current and predicted landscape changes will not significantly affect the condition of patterns of landscape elements across the area.

Improving - where current and predicted landscape changes will improve the condition of patterns of landscape features across the area.

Declining - where current and predicted landscape change will weaken the condition of patterns of landscape elements across the area.

'Management Guidelines'

The assessment of strength of character and condition, along with the understanding of landscape change underpin the following landscape strategies:

Conserve – a landscape of good condition and strong character where the emphasis is on protecting the key characteristics of an area.

Enhance – a landscape where some features have fallen into decline. Management should aim to re-introduce the features, improve their management and remove features that detract from the overall character.

Restore – a landscape where features have been lost or are in a severe state of decline. Management should aim to repair and re-establish characteristic features.

Create – where condition is poor and character weak, the aim should be to consider the planning and management of a new landscape.