

# THE ASSESSMENT OF TRANQUILLITY AND NOISE IMPACT ON AREAS OF QUIET CHARACTER

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The method outlined in this paper has evolved over the last year as I have attempted to evaluate the potential impact of a number of proposed developments on areas which are considered tranquil. These include proposals within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park and a location which has been designated as valued for its tranquillity by a rural local authority. Comprehensive surveys have so far been carried out at six locations around England (with a further six planned imminently) and the approach has been developed to take into account the different features found at each.

There are currently no widely used parameters for measuring tranquillity. There are two methods which have been published: one method which was developed by the Campaign for Protection for Rural England (which was designed to identify tranquil areas across the UK and does not provide high resolution results for specific sites; and the other which was developed by Professor Watts (and others) from the University of Bradford which was intended to enable mapping of sites (such as urban parks) to indicate which areas were more or less tranquil. The proposed method is based on Professor Watts approach but introduces two new parameters; the NAMM and PONS indices (which are described in detail in this paper) which provide additional detail to enhance the tranquillity map.

It is hoped that this method will provide a toolkit for describing how tranquil a location is along with an approach which can be used for assessing the potential impact of a proposed development on that location. It is intended for use by anyone who needs to assess tranquillity, whether those wishing to develop land; those wishing to oppose a development and those who wish to evaluate a proposal neutrally (such as local planning authorities).

Consultation is ongoing with a number of key stakeholders and campaigning organisations and it is expected that a finalised version of the method will be published later in 2016.

## 2 WHY IS TRANQUILLITY IMPORTANT?

### 2.1 POLICY

In order to evaluate whether tranquillity would or would not be adequately protected, it is important to first understand what it is about tranquillity which makes it desirable and therefore worthy of protection. Government policy contained in the fourth bullet point of paragraph 123 of the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>1</sup> requires that:

*"Planning policies and decisions should aim to ... identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason".*

Some local authorities have used their local plans to designate areas as being important for their tranquillity in their local plans. So, any developer seeking planning permission for development which has the potential to harm a tranquil location falling within the criteria set out above needs to assess whether the tranquillity of that location would be adversely affected by the proposal.