

Appendix 1

Landscape Character Area Profiles

2009 Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment

LCT 1: Sandstone Ridge

1a: Peckforton Character Area

Including Peckforton Hill, Bulkely Hill & Rawhead

This upland character area forms a very prominent ridge of steep-sided wooded hills which appear to rise abruptly out of the surrounding flat or undulating farmland. The ridge forms a distinctive skyline in views from adjacent areas and the more distant parts of the *Lowland Plain* to both east and west. The abundant woodland is especially noticeable as it is in marked contrast to the scarcity of woodland cover over much of the surrounding farmland. The dense tree cover can create a very small-scale insular landscape, with views channelled along narrow tracks or woodland drives. Elsewhere, elevated viewpoints provide spectacular views, often framed or glimpsed between mature trees, over the surrounding low lying farmland. These extend in all directions to the very distant horizons of higher ground, such as the Peak District to the east and the Welsh Hills to the west.

This character area is separated from the *Eddisbury Sandstone Ridge* character area to the north by the Beeston Gap. Over looking the gap at the northern end of the ridge is the grade I listed Peckforton Castle. Beeston Castle, on the neighbouring *Sandstone Fringe*, features prominently in views to the north.

The poor soils of the ridge are well endowed with woodland habitats and some of the steeper slopes have been continuously wooded for many hundreds of years and are designated as Ancient Woodland. Other wooded areas are often much younger, having developed naturally from neglected heath or grassland.

Medieval and later field systems survived eighteenth and nineteenth century improvements in the southern part of the character area however modern field enlargement has significantly changed their character. Settlement is very sparse and consists of individual farms - often the product of encroachment onto areas of open heath in the post-medieval period. This includes a number of timber framed buildings such as the farm buildings at Grigg Hill Farm which are listed grade II.

At the southern end of this character area is the Rawhead escarpment, rising to 227m at the highest point, designated as a geological SSSI. This area was enclosed during the nineteenth century and the area retains the distinctive regular field pattern created. The steeper slopes were planted with regular blocks of coniferous or mixed woodland. The remains of numerous small sandstone quarries are evident in the area, often partially hidden by vegetation.

Peckforton Castle imitates the style of a 13th century castle yet was built in the mid-19th century for Lord Tollemache to replace the seat of the Tollemache estate at Tilstone Lodge by Salvin. It was designed to emphasise the dominance of the landlord over his tenantry and was far from being in keeping with the fashion for country estates in its time.

Significant areas of ancient woodland were replanted with mixed woodland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by the Tollmarche estate, often as part of the parkland surrounding the castle. The estate also enlarged and improved the many surviving small irregular medieval field systems on the lower slopes of the ridge. Peckforton Wood and Buckley Hill are both ancient woodland SBI's. Oak, both sessile and English, is dominant, with birch, rowan and holly in support and a poor ground flora of wavy hair-grass, soft grass or bracken and bramble.

Near Gallantry Bank, at Bickerton there is a sandstone engine house chimney, which is all that is left to mark the site of a former copper mine, worked intermittently from c.1690 to the 1920s. The quarry exposures, the Gallantry Bank Copper Mine, together with the scarp slopes around Bulkeley Hill, Bickerton Hill and Raw Head are all designated for their regional geological and geomorphological importance.



1b: Maiden Castle Character Area

Including Maiden Castle, Bickerton Hill & heathland

This is the most southerly of the Sandstone Ridge character areas, separated from the *Peckforton Character Area* by a strip of low land through which the A534 passes. Settlement is limited and mainly sits on the lower slopes of the neighbouring character areas.

Within this area the extensive tracts of heathland and peripheral birch woodland form a distinctive landscape, with the characteristic distant and panoramic views out over the surrounding lower ground so typical of this type. A number of small fields lie within or alongside the woodland. The scale of these enclosures lies mid-way between the total enclosure of the woodland and the more expansive landscapes of the open heath on the higher ground and ridges.

The area's location at the southern end of the Sandstone Ridge allows views in a southern direction, over the adjacent *Sandstone Fringe* and the areas of *Rolling Farmland* in the middle distance towards the Shropshire Hills. The elevated sandstone outcrop in the vicinity of Maiden Castle provides a distinctive ridge line when viewed from several directions.

There are a number of disused quarries that have been colonised by woodland. Locally, the extracted sandstone can be seen in the construction of buildings and lining field boundaries and sunken lanes.

Although the character area was enclosed by an Act of Parliament in 1854, the top of the hill and some areas of the scarp slope still support open heathland vegetation of ling, wavy hair-grass and gorse, encouraged by recent active management. Dense secondary birch woodland with oak, aspen, rowan, gean and holly covers extensive areas, with ling, bilberry and ferns in the ground flora. Much of the area is designated as a SSSI for its heathland communities and assemblage of reptiles. It is also notable as one of the few breeding sites in Cheshire for the pied flycatcher.

Caves naturally occur within the sandstone of the ridge and Mad Allen's Hole is an example of a possible prehistoric cave shelter as well as the former home of an 18th century recluse. There is also the Iron Age hillfort of Maiden Castle which is situated on the edge of a cliff with its outer edge protected by a double rampart (bivallate). This Scheduled Monument is under bracken and part of the heathland environment



LCT 2: Sandstone Fringe

2a: Beeston-Duckington Character Area

Including Beeston Castle, Burwardsley, Broxton & Hart Hill

This character area is undulating with a maximum elevation of 130m. It extends from Beeston Castle in the north to Larkton Hall in the south. The visual characteristics of this area are determined by its location at the transition between different landscape types, the more elevated *Sandstone Ridge* and the lower lying areas of *Cheshire Plain* and *Rolling Farmland*. The medium-scale farmland is divided by weak hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks. The River Weaver issues just below Hillside Farm, to the south of Peckforton.

This character area completely encircles the *Peckforton and Maiden Castle* Character Areas of the *Sandstone Ridge* type and this central zone of high ground forms a dominant wooded skyline throughout the area. Those elevated locations with an open outlook enjoy extensive views over the surrounding countryside. Such views can extend across the Cheshire Plain to the higher ground beyond. To the west the Welsh Hills form the distant skyline. To the east the Pennines are visible while the Shropshire Hills can be seen from the south.

Woodland, much of it ancient in origin, is located on the west-facing slopes on the western side of the Character Area. These woodland blocks provide a very strong visual image when approached from the flatter land to the west. At some locations the more undulating groundform can provide a strong element of enclosure and the scale of the landscape is much reduced where narrow lanes rise and fall, flanked by high hedges. In the west the A534 passes through a particularly complex landform with prominent ridges and hidden valleys. Where the undulation is less marked the increasing reliance upon arable crops tends to be associated with larger fields with trimmed hedges. There is a consequential increase in the apparent scale of the landscape. This is particularly noticeable in the south of the area between Duckington and Bulkeley.

The main settlements are the small nucleated villages of Burwardsley, Bulkeley and Brown Knowl. There are a number of high status halls and mansions in the area e.g. Bolesworth and Bulkeley Hall, both of which are listed Grade II*. There is also a small estate village at Peckforton (part of the Peckforton or Tollemache Estate as it was known) where brown brick estate cottages were built c 1860. The concentration of timber framed cottages in Peckforton along Stonehouse Lane, on the eastern boundary with the *Rolling Farmland* landscape type, creates a very distinctive visual character.

Many of the medieval and later fields around Beeston Castle and Peckforton have undergone enlargement and improvement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and these are probably associated with the works of the Tollmache estate. Similar changes are evident around Bolesworth Castle, which was the focus of another estate. Medieval and later field systems survived 18th and 19th century improvements in areas around Burwardsley and Harthill although modern field enlargement has significantly changed their character.

Beeston Castle is a distinctive site and topographically stands slightly aside from the rest of the Sandstone Ridge -hence its inclusion in this type. The medieval castle utilised the rampart of a hill fort and today it is open as a visitor attraction. The Sandstone Trail runs through this character area and the candle factory at Burwardsley is a popular tourist facility.

There are numerous archaeological and historic sites in this area, from prehistoric barrows to the remains of WWII searchlight batteries.

Beeston Crag is of geological and ornithological interest with features of Wilmslow, Bulkeley Hill and Helsby Sandstone Formations, and rare breeding birds. Excavations at Beeston Castle have revealed seven circular buildings of late Bronze Age to early Iron Age date and evidence which suggests that this site may have been a specialist metal working centre in the Bronze Age. The castle last saw hostilities in the English Civil war when it changed hands a number of times.

The township commons and areas of open heath, some of which survived into the 19th century, were often encroached by landless labourers creating a pattern of small fields interspersed with small holdings and a complex pattern of roads such as at Brown Knowl and Fullers Moor.

Examples of ancient woodland include Pennsylvania Wood, Broxton Wood, Walkers Wood, Barnhill Wood and Burwardsley Hill Wood. Some of the woodland has been replanted and now comprises even-aged oak, beech, sycamore and larch over bramble, bluebell and bracken.



LCT 3: Undulating Farmland

LCT 3a: Oulton Character Area

Including Whitegate, Oulton Park & Tilstone Fearnall

This character area is located southeast of the *Sandstone Ridge* and *Delamere Character area*. It acts as an intermediate zone between the flat expanses of the *West Lowland Plain* and *East Lowland Plain* and extends from the small village of Tiverton in the west to the large urban area of Winsford in the east. The area's elevated position to the east of the *Sandstone Ridge* allows distant views across the Lowland Plain to both east and west

This is a medium to large scale landscape with a relatively simple landform. The rolling land in the west becomes relatively flatter towards the east. In broad terms the scale of the landscape increases as fields generally become larger and the incidence of arable crops more frequent. A number of isolated farmsteads feature prominently in the more open landscape. In such areas there are also more extensive views over the low lying *Weaver Valley* and eastward to the distant Peak District hills.

In the south both Beeston Castle and the Peckforton Hills, in the adjoining character area, are visually dominant over a wide area. In particular the steep ground to the north of the Shropshire Union Canal provides many vantage points with extensive southward views. The church spire at Over provides a conspicuous landmark due to its elevated position on the edge of Winsford. The A54 in the north and the A51 in the south are the only major highways traversing this area and these have relatively little impact upon the rural atmosphere of the surrounding landscape.

The greater part of this character area comprises a medieval field pattern with irregular shape and medium scale (4-8ha), hedgerow boundaries and standard trees. Two areas are particularly discernable near Eaton and Little Budworth and may relate to the field systems associated with these settlements. Townfields are known for example in the vicinity of Over. This is also an area where enclosure from the Royal Forest occurred. In the southwest, the fields relate to post medieval improvement and reorganisation and there are also large fields (greater than 8ha) that are modern amalgamations of smaller fields. Post war and European C.A.P reorganisation has had a strong impact upon the landscape – destroying historic field patterns. Towards the Cheshire Plain, the frequency of field ponds begins to increase.

There are a small number of ancient nucleated settlements such as Eaton and Little Budworth. Elsewhere settlement is dispersed and comprises halls and farms, interlinked by a network of footpaths that are likely to be of some antiquity given the survival of medieval field patterns in this area. There are a timber framed buildings dating back to the 17th century, as well as red and brown brick structures.

Wooded water courses run across the area e.g. the Gowy and the Wettenhall and Shayslane Brooks. The Shropshire Union Canal runs alongside the Gowy as it passes through the area through the Wharton and Bunbury Locks. Leisure aspects of the landscape include Oulton Park, which is now used as a motor racing circuit (the house has been demolished), and a golf course in the former grounds of Vale Royal Abbey.

Tiverton lodge was the seat of the Tollemache estate, prior to the construction of Peckforton Castle and settlements such as Alraham and Faddiley were part of the estate. Place names such as Townfield Farm, Flaxyard Farm and Coneygreaves Farm all allude to medieval land use – common fields, linen production and rabbit warrens.

The greatest area of tree cover is at Oulton Park, where there is a combination of broad leaved and coniferous trees. There are two areas of ancient woodland both of which are riparian and designated as SBIs– on the banks of the River Gowy near Tiverton and at Catsclough north of Winsford. Further sections of the Gowy banks are also of ecological interest for the species-rich grasslands that have escaped agricultural improvement. Notable species include tussock and lesser-pond sedges, lady's mantle and wood club-rush. Elsewhere there are various small coverts and copses spread across the character area.

Other SBIs include: Oulton Park Mere, Budworth Pool and Tilstone Fearnall in the grounds of Tilstone Hall; meadows at Brickhouse Farm and Coach Road Farm; and Whitegate Way the dismantled railway that runs from Cuddington to the Weaver.

Scheduled Monuments in this area are rich and varied ranging from Robin Hood's Bronze Age Bowl Barrow (c 2000 – 700BC); Eaton, the only known Roman Villa in Cheshire; the medieval moated site, settlement remains and field system at Alraham; Marton Grange cross base, grange site, moat and fishpond; and Bunbury canal locks, bridge and stables.



LCT 3b: Faddiley Character Area

Including Peckforton Moss, Spurstow Spar & Larden Green

This character area sits between the upland areas of the *Sandstone Fringe* and the flat expanses of the *East Lowland Plain*. This is an area of gentle, broad rolling topography, with shorter slopes and an increase in undulation in the vicinity of High Ash (up to 120m AOD).

This is generally a medium scale landscape with many large to medium-sized arable fields laid over a rolling landform, although the occasional area of flat arable ground possesses similar characteristics to the more intensively farmed areas of the adjacent *West Lowland Plain*. Hedgerow trees are generally abundant and the occasional large block of woodland is locally prominent.

Fields are small-medium (up to 8ha) and irregular and semi-regular in shape. There is a high survival of medieval fields assarted from moss, heath and woodland. This is interspersed with extensive areas of post medieval improvement possibly associated with the Cholmondley Estate and small areas of post medieval enclosure of moss and heath – some of which is irregular and suggestive of encroachment. Field boundaries comprise hedges and standard trees. A network of foot paths which is likely to be of some antiquity links farms in the Spurstow, Ridley Green area, coinciding with the medieval field pattern.

In the north the woodland at Peckforton Moss is visible over a wide area. Elsewhere woodland is limited to a small number of copses and coverts, with ancient woodland located at Ridley Wood, Wrenbury Wood and Peckforton Wood. In the south the area is bound by the very extensive woodlands of the Cholmondley Estate in the adjacent character area which fill the low southern skyline. Certain locations further to the east have very distant views of the high ground on the Cheshire-Shropshire border near Marbury. Field ponds in the character area are frequent, but not as many as for the flatter *East Lowland Plain* and *West Lowland Plain*.

Between the major highways of the A49 (north-south) and A543 (east-west), which intersect at Ridley Green, there are relatively few roads. These tend to be narrow, meandering lanes rising and falling with the topography, connecting dispersed and isolated cottages and farms, passing between high hedges which restrict many views.

Settlement has a low density compared with the rest of this character type, and is made up of a small number of hamlets e.g. Corden Green and Chorley and mainly dispersed and isolated farms and halls. Building types include timber framed and red brick structures. The Tollemache Estate extends into the northern part of the area e.g. Faddiley, while to the south the Cholmondeley Estate has exercised a great influence over the landscape.

Where the rolling ground provides a more elevated and open location there are views out over large fields under arable crops with an extensive and intact hedgerow system. Some vantage points also enjoy extensive views to distant higher ground. To the east the Pennine Hills are visible. To the west the adjacent *Sandstone Ridge* is very prominent and the heavily wooded Peckforton Hills dominate most views along the area's western boundary. Beeston Castle provides an unmistakable landmark on the northern skyline.

The sulphur waters of the Spurstow Spa were popular in the 18th century. The Bath House, which stands nearby was used as accommodation for bathers.



LCT 4: Cheshire Plain East

LCA 4a: Cholmondeston Character Area.

Including Wettenhall, Wardle Bank & Darnhall

This character area extends from the south of Winsford to the north of Barbridge. It is dominated by medium (4-8ha) regular and semi-regular shaped fields that are typical of planned post medieval enclosure of former unenclosed heath. This character area was formerly part of the great medieval Forest of Delamere. Boundaries are made up of hedgerows and standard trees.

This is an area where a flat topography combines with a field pattern of low hedges with fewer hedgerow trees to create a fairly large-scale landscape. In some areas the character is even more open and expansive, with extensive views across the Cheshire Plain, due to the loss of hedgerows evidenced by scattered and isolated mature oaks and the use of post and wire fences. Substantial farmsteads provide obvious points of interest within the open field system. A number of long straight lanes associated with planned enclosure provide an opportunity for uninterrupted long distance views that extend as far as the *Sandstone Ridge* in the west

There is a low density of settlement, which mainly comprises dispersed farms and halls linked by an intricate network of roads and paths e.g. Calveley, Cholmondeston and the timber framed Wade's Green Hall. More recent linear settlement has developed at Cholmondeston and Wettenhall that follows one of the main roads in the character area.

Small copses and coverts are scattered across the area, with a low proportion of ancient woodland. The latter includes Page's Wood, an oak-ash woodland over hazel coppice, which is one of the largest surviving examples of ancient broadleaved woodland on the Cheshire Plain. A section of the Middlewich Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal runs across the character area, which is crossed by the railway line connecting Crewe and Chester.

On the area's western margin a linear block of woodland intrudes into the flat plain and defines the clough woodland of Ashbrook within the adjoining *Weaver Valley* character area. This is a very conspicuous local feature when viewed against the low tree cover of the surrounding area.



LCA 4b: Ravensmoor Character Area.

Including Reaseheath, Burland & Broomhall Green

This is a large character area. It extends from Bunbury, east to Nantwich and as far south as Audlem. It comprises a mix of ancient enclosure and later reorganisation during the post-medieval period i.e. both irregular and regular shaped fields, as well as patches of enclosure by Act of Parliament, which survives as a grid-like field pattern e.g. at Swanley. Hawthorn hedges and standard trees are typical boundary types.

This is a predominantly flat landscape and the different patterns of enclosure strongly influence the character of the landscape. Near the A51 in the north of the area the landscape is open and expansive, with larger fields and thin or low hedges with few trees, allowing extensive views across the plain as far west as the Sandstone Ridge. Views southward from the A51 reveal the large structures and warehouses of the Wardle Industrial Estate, developed on the very flat former airfield site. A small radio telescope structure is very noticeable relatively close to the road.

By contrast many areas in the south and west possess a smaller-scale landscape, with much more limited views restricted by high vegetation associated with smaller fields, abundant hedges and hedgerow trees. Such areas have a very tranquil and rural character.

The church tower at Aston provides a squat landmark from several directions. Nearby at Burland there are buildings of architectural interest. A number of distinctive brick-built cottages with very decorative windows and chimneys face the A534, whilst a number of substantial Victorian farmsteads are also visible from the highway.

This character area has the greatest settlement density of the whole *East Lowland Plain* character type. There are a number of nucleated villages such as Bunbury, Wrenbury and Aston as well as hamlets and a scatter of dispersed farms and halls. Dorfold Hall and garden to the west of Nantwich has a Grade II Registered Park and Garden. Buildings mainly comprise red brick but there are also a number of timber-framed structures, with brick and in some cases wattle and daub in-fill.

The Shropshire Union Canal runs through the area, the Barbridge Junction is just to the northwest of Nantwich, from which the Llangollen and Middlewich branches emerge. The A51, A534 and the A530 are the main arterial routes in this area, which have acted as a focus for the development of settlement. Winding roads and country lanes are also typical. Railways cross the area - running from Nantwich to Whitchurch and Crewe across to Chester.

Reaseheath Cheshire College of Agriculture is just north of Nantwich and the Secret Bunker at Hack Green, which is a vestige of the Cold War period is a popular tourist attraction.

Old meadow habitats survive in isolated locations at Bunbury Heath Marsh, and around Nantwich at Reaseheath Pasture, Ravensmoor and Bridge Farm. Species-rich grassland also lines the towpath of the Llangollen Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal. Other SBIs in the area include a diverse range of wetland features, such as, Peckforton Mere, Baddiley Meres and Hurlston Reservoir. It is drained by a network of brooks that traverse the area – Darley Brook, Wettenhall Brook and Barkside Brook. Woodland is limited, there are a small number of coverts and blocks of trees e.g. Tally-Ho covert, which betrays its hunting origin.

Sound Heath is an area of common land overlying light, sandy soils of glacial origin. It comprises a range of habitats including several areas of damp heath, scrub and young woodland, and pools resulting from localised sand digging. The damp heathland is now a scarce habitat in Cheshire, and Sound Heath supports several of the county's rarest plants, for example, round-leaved sundew, lousewort and bog asphodel. The wide range of habitats is known to support a diverse range of invertebrates including several species of dragonflies and damselflies.

The Tollemache estate extended across Burland, Brindley and Haughton amongst others, while the Crewe Estate included Spurstow.

The remains of a medieval village and its fields survive at Haycroft to the south of Bunbury. The battle of Nantwich fought between the Royalists and Parliamentarians in January 1644 survives in the landscape as a series of entrenchments in Acton churchyard.

RAF Calveley was an airfield used to train WWII fighter pilots. Features associated with this use that survive today are pillboxes, a hangar and seagull trenches. Today it is used as a satellite tracking station. A bombing decoy site is located at Austerson Hall which acted as a distraction for Crewe.



LCA 4c: Dodcott Character Area.

Including Burleydam, Wilkesley & Royal's Green

This character area runs along the southern County boundary between Combermere Abbey and Audlem. The character area is dominated by medium sized (4-8ha) regular fields, which have arisen as a result of reorganisation and rationalisation of the medieval field pattern, under a mixture of pasture and arable use. Boundaries comprise hawthorn hedgerows and standard trees, with solitary trees identifying the line of grubbed out hedgerows.

This area is generally flat but there local areas of more undulating ground.. In some areas a combination of flat topography, larger fields and replacement of hedges with post and wire fences, has created an open and expansive landscape character. This is further reinforced by extensive views across the plain in all directions to the surrounding higher ground in the distance. The large scale woodland of Shavington Park lies beyond the county boundary but is a dominant feature in views to the south. Elsewhere the field pattern appears more intact, views are restricted or framed by high vegetation and the landscape appears much more verdant and small scale.

There are few hedgerow trees in this character area. Those present are predominantly mature or over-mature.

Settlement is made up of a small number of dispersed farms connected via an irregular network of roads and footpaths. The only major highway is the A525, upon which are located the two hamlets of Burleydam and Lightwood Green. There are timber framed buildings such as the Grade II* Butterley Hayes and red brick houses e.g. Northwoods and Royals Farmhouse. This area was part of the Combermere estate. There are two medieval moated sites – Butterley Heys Moat and Northwood's Farm Moat.

Much of the woodland in this area is ancient oakwood, and the larger areas tend to be located in riparian contexts e.g. along Walk Mill Brook, and River Ducklow. Old coppiced hazel still persists in the understorey, indicating former traditional woodland management. Bramble, bluebell, red campion, yellow archangel and dog's mercury are characteristic species in the ground flora.



LCA 4d: Wimboldsley Character Area.

Including Warmingham, Minshall Vernon & Coppenhall Moss

The large urban centres of Northwich, Middlewich, Sandbach and Winsford dominate this character area, which extends from Northwich south as far as Crewe. This character area comprises a mix of small-medium (0-8ha) irregular and regular fields, which are typical of a medieval field pattern and partial post medieval agricultural improvement. There are also long, narrow, straight-sided fields that are the result of draining former mossland e.g. Warmingham Moss and Cappenhall Moss.

This is a predominantly flat, large scale landscape with relatively few hedgerow trees or dominant hedgerows. This combines with the low woodland cover typical of the type to create an open landscape with long views in all directions to a distant skyline. Woodland is limited to a handful of copses and coverts, one of which Hollins Wood is designated as an SBI. The River Croco, Sanderson's Brook and Small Brook drain the area, while to the north in a separate character type is the River Dane. Species-rich grassland is scarce and known from only a few isolated sites in the south-west of the area around Moston Green. In places, the grassland is part of a mosaic of wet habitats including flashes caused by land subsidence, alder/willow carr merging into fen.

The Pennine Hills are visible to the east and the Sandstone Ridge to the West. In the north the areas of estate woodlands around Bostock Hall are conspicuous within the surrounding large, open arable fields. Throughout the area a number of large isolated farmsteads provide points of focus within the field system.

In this area there is a great difference in the perceived tranquillity of the more remote rural areas, with scattered and dispersed settlement linked by narrow country lanes, and those areas influenced by large scale industrial sites such as Winsford and Middlewich. With the latter, the absence of high vegetation and the open nature of the surrounding landscape allow the large structures to intrude over a very extensive area. The area is traversed by two very dominant overhead powerlines, one along a north-south axis, the other along the area's western flank, and these further diminish the area's rural character.

The M6 crosses through this relatively empty character area, and two arterial routes from Crewe (A533 and A5022) run north. There are two railway lines that link Elworth to Holmes Chapel and Middlewich, and the Trent and Mersey Canal passes through the area. Both the motorway and railways are visually intrusive when they cross the level plain on raised embankment.

Beyond the major urban centres settlement consists mainly of dispersed farms and hamlets e.g. Bostock Green and Bradfield Green, which are likely to be of some antiquity i.e. linked by footpaths and minor roads. Warmingham is a small village through which the River Wheelock flows. There are a large number of halls e.g. Davenham Hall, Bostock Hall and Eardswick Hall.

In the grounds of the Grade II* Bostock Hall there is mix of broad leaves and coniferous woodland. Stretches of both the canal and the River Wheelock are designated as SBIs. The margins are lined with rich vegetation, and the towpath supports species-rich grassland.

Buildings include red brick e.g. the 17th century barn at Kinderton Lodge and whitewashed brick, as well as timber framed structures. Moated sites are located at Wood Hall Farm and at Minshull Vernon. The hospital complex at Leighton is located here, to the west of Crewe.



LCA 4e: Stublach Character Area.

Including Lach Dennis, King Street & Byley

This character area extends from Lach Dennis in the north to Byley Hill Farm in the south. Enclosure comprises small – medium (0-8ha) regular, semi-regular and irregular fields, including medieval fields, post-medieval reorganisation and modern adaptation. Boundaries are made up of hedgerows, ditches and standard trees.

Within this area the degree of visual enclosure provided by field boundaries varies greatly. Where the field system has been rationalised the larger scale, more expansive areas provide extensive views towards the Peak District hills. Elsewhere views are limited, being restricted by the lush hedgerows and abundant hedgerow trees associated with the intact field pattern. The woodlands in the vicinity of Rudheath in the adjoining character area appear as a solid block on the eastern boundary of this part of the Cheshire Plain, terminating views in this direction.

This character area has a very low density of settlement, with the exception of the small village of Byley, there are a handful of dispersed hamlets and farms.

Woodland consists of a limited number of small broadleaved copses and coverts. There are a number of drainage features e.g. Puddinglake Brook and Bradshaw Brook.

In the north west, the large scale warehouse facilities on the A530 at Rudheath are highly visible as they lie within an area of large fields with low trimmed hedges. The visual intrusion is substantial and extends over a wide area. By contrast, only a short distance away, views along the area's western margins extend across the secluded Dane Valley to the wooded parkland surrounding Bostock Hall.

The extensive brine workings in the centre of the area are serviced by numerous low well-head structures. Fortunately these are relatively low and easily screened by the surrounding pattern of hedgerows. Two overhead powerlines converge in the centre of the character area before running south. They form a very significant feature over an extensive area.

The moated medieval Hulme Hall has 15th century origins, and the moated Drakelow Hall has four fishponds. More recently Wellington Bombers were produced at the Vickers Factory in Byley.

The M6 and the A530 or King Street as it is known both cross the character area. The latter follows the line of a Roman Road that runs north from Middlewich. Otherwise roads are minor and few. The railway line from Middlewich to Northwich runs through the west of the character area.



LCT 5: Wooded Estates and Meres

LCA 5a: Cholmondeley Character Area.

Including Castle & Meres, Norbury, Marbury & Comber Mere.

The topography of this character area comprises broad, sweeping undulations c. 80-100m AOD. This has a more intimate scale, with shorter, steeper slopes in the south of the character area near Marbury and Quoisley (up to 150m AOD at Wirswall).

In the north of the character area the large blocks of woodland associated with the Cholmondeley estate are very conspicuous in views to the west from the busy A49. The very large conifer plantation to the south of the parkland is particularly noticeable as it fills the western horizon for a considerable distance. By contrast the landscape to the east is more representative of the Cheshire field system with low hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Points of higher ground provide views out, often framed by hedgerow trees, over the undulating fields of the *East Lowland Plain* to the north, with the occasional glimpse of one of the meres in the area. Elsewhere very narrow sunken lanes with high hedges, winding through a gently undulating landscape, contribute to the perception of a remote, small scale landscape.

There is a particular concentration of black and white timber framed cottages in this area. Around Norbury the field pattern opens out to present a larger scale landscape with low hedges and post and wire fences, allowing more extensive views. To the west of Cholmondeley Castle the distinctive profile of the *Sandstone Ridge* forms the northern skyline within a fairly open landscape. Views to the south are dominated by the high ground in the vicinity of Wirswall near the county boundary.

There are ten meres in this character type, many of which are incorporated into the ornamental landscapes of historic estates – for example at Combermere Park, Cholmondeley Castle, Marbury Hall and Quoisley Hall. The large mere in Combermere Park is completely hidden from public view but the surrounding woodlands are very conspicuous, blocking views northward from the A530 for quite a distance.

There are concentrations of woodland on the Combermere and Cholmondeley estates, portions of which are designated as SBIs. This is generally made up of a mix of broad leaves and coniferous trees, but with some areas of solely broad leaved woodland. To the south of the ornamental landscape at Cholmondeley is the large conifer plantation of Moss Wood (one of the largest in the county). Bickley Brook and the infant River Weaver are the most dominant among the various drainage features in the area and ponds are also typical features.

There are small nucleated settlements such as Norbury and Marbury, but mostly settlement comprises a low density of dispersed farms and halls connected mainly by a winding pattern of minor roads. The A49 runs north through the character area and the Llangollen branch of the Shropshire Union Canal utilises a flat area of topography as it crosses Willey Moor, and passes through Steer Bridge.

Five of the meres are designated as SSSIs because of their high ecological value such as the large, nutrient rich Comber Mere with swamp and fen vegetation at its margins. There are substantial beds of algae and some horned pond weed, fan-leaved water crowfoot and lesser pondweed. It is an important site for wintering wildfowl and supports one of the largest heronries in the county. Other meres are Deer Park Mere, which is open to the public and fished and Marbury Big and Little Meres. The latter is surrounded by dense wet willow and alder with marshy ground flora. Fishing is a common pursuit, given the high number of meres. Indeed, two partial skulls believed to be of Saxon date were found in Marbury Mere by an angler.

Bret's Mere is a damp relic of a once extensive moss, which has been drained and planted with conifers. Pipehouse Farm Mire is an area of former bog, cut by old drains but still retaining extensive wet areas that support iris, greater tussock sedge and reed canary grass. Willows and mature birch have colonised part of the mire as has occurred at Bickley Moss where the wet woodland is well used by warblers, green and great spotted woodpeckers and buzzards. The whole area was identified as important for the enhancement of meres and mosses in the Cheshire Ecological Network (ECONet) in 2003. Preservation of existing mere and peatland habitat and the restoration of damaged ones is thus a nature conservation priority in this area.

Comber Mere is overlooked by grade I listed Combermere Abbey, which was founded as a Cistercian monastery in 1133. The western range of the cloister is all that survives and this has since been modified into a splendid private country mansion. There is an extensive landscaped park that dates to the 18th century.

Cholmondeley is a grade II* 19th century castle built in gothic style. It was built to replace a much older house that stood nearby and reused material from this. There are formal gardens dating back to c 1700 AD and an 18th century landscaped park. Estate farms are located in the nearby vicinity.

A large portion of the Cholmondeley Estate was put to the plough in WWII. Formerly the landscaped grounds ran as far south as Norbury Common as indicated by Park Farm and Parkside Farm, whose context is now agricultural land.



LCA 5b: Capesthorne Character Area.

Including Alderley Edge, Mottram, Rednor Mere & Redes Mere.

The topography of this type is undulating – broad, open undulation in the south of the area around Capesthorne (c 80-100m AOD) becoming steeper further north, particularly around Alderley Edge where on the sandstone outcrop, which gave the Edge its name, a maximum elevation of 190m AOD is reached.

This character area is crowded with historic estates and their mansion houses, formal gardens, landscaped parklands, woodland and water features including two large glacial meres. The larger estates are Birtles, Capesthorne, Henbury, Hare Hill, Mottram Old Hall and Alderley Park at Nether Alderley and the collective landscape value of these ornamental estates cannot be understated. The high level of woodland cover is predominantly associated with the historic estates, in some cases providing visual screening from the wider area. Woodland also occurs on the steeper slopes e.g. the large Highlees Wood near Birtles Hall and of course on parts of Alderley Edge, overlaying relict heathland.

This is a small to medium scale landscape that appears to be well-wooded. Many views are curtailed by the strongly undulating landform with local ridge and valley features. There are many areas of a smaller scale where narrow sunken lanes lie between steep tree-lined banks and linear woodlands follow watercourses. This leads to a high degree of enclosure, with glimpsed views framed by trees and high hedges.

The north of the area is more elevated and areas of open ground enjoy extensive and panoramic views in many directions. To the west the northern end of the mid-Cheshire ridge is visible upon the skyline. To the south distant views extend to the Mow Cop area of the Cheshire/Staffordshire ridge whilst in the east the Peak District moors are visible upon the skyline. The views north from Alderley edge are particularly striking and extend beyond the *Bollin Valley* to encompass the Manchester-Stockport conurbation and the Pennine Hills beyond. A very intrusive overhead powerline traverses the area in the vicinity of Henbury Hall. Towards the area's southern boundary near Near Redes Mere the ground is less undulating. The more subtle landform and lower elevation means that the views are less impressive and more easily curtailed by roadside trees.

Water bodies are a common feature of this area – from glacial meres at Redesmere and Radnor Mere (both SBIs) to ornamental lakes at many of the estates e.g. Henbury and Birtles, and numerous ponds. There are also a number of streams such as Snape Brook, and the River Bollin provides part of the northern boundary of the character type.

Mature woodland lines the banks of Radnor Mere except for the south which is part of the Capesthorne parkland. To the east is a large area of ancient woodland which supports uncommon plant and fungi species. The mere has high ornithological value for waders and wildfowl. Also in the grounds of Capesthorne are a series of artificial lakes that are fished and also designated as an SBI.

There are two small villages in the character area, Siddington at the southern end and in the north Mottram St Andrew. Elsewhere settlement comprises dispersed hamlets, farms and halls. To the west is the larger settlement of Alderley Edge.

There are timber framed houses in the character area such as the late medieval moated Mottram Old Hall, which has a timber framed upper storey. There is also a moat at Alderley Old Hall, formed by the two arms of a mill pond.

Alderley Edge is managed by the National Trust as an open access area and is a popular visitor destination. The National Trust also manages the 16th century water mill at Nether Alderley. Alderley Park, a former deer park, is now largely given over to the Astra Zeneca research laboratories, while the grounds of Mottram Old Hall include an hotel and golf course. There is a caravan park at Capesthorne Park.

In the vicinity of The Edge and Mottram St Andrew are pockets of Ancient Enclosure – small, irregular fields of medieval date. Elsewhere enclosure comprises medium sized, semi-regular fields associated with post-medieval reorganisation. Hedgerow boundaries are typical: Alderley Edge was enclosed by Act of Parliament. Some of the main arterial routes in this part of the county pass through the area – including the A538 Wilmslow to Prestbury road, the A537, which runs west from Macclesfield and the A34 that connects Alderley Edge with Congleton.

One of the first plantations in Cheshire was made by Sir Thomas Stanley who planted beech at the Mere, Alderley around 1650. This survives as Beech Wood, an area of old but not ancient woodland.

The Edge comprises dense woodland of pine, beech, oak and birch. Scots Pine were planted on Alderley Edge by the Stanleys in the mid 18th century, and the oldest of the beech were planted in 1799. Like many of the surrounding estates The Edge is also in some respects an ornamental landscape – deliberately planted and subsequently managed for the enjoyment of private individuals initially and now for the general public. Ornamental features include the crude carving of a Wizard's face into the rock face above a well, and the druid's stone circle, which were set up on behalf of the Stanleys. The north-eastern part of the Edge is ancient woodland.

The settlement of Alderley Edge developed after 1842 when the Birmingham and Manchester Railway Company opened a station called Chorley for Alderley Edge. Large villas were built along the Edge by wealthy cotton mill owners. Buildings include red brick and black and white timber framed structures.

Flint tools and waste flakes dating back to the Mesolithic (c 8000 -4000 BC) and Neolithic (c 4000-2000 BC) periods show that the Edge has been a site of activity for thousands of years. There is also evidence of copper and cobalt mining on the Edge that dates from the early 20th century back to at least the Bronze Age – old shafts, drifts and levels, and areas of open workings. Engine Vein and Wood Mine, both Scheduled Monuments, developed during Alderley Edge's most active period of mining in the 19th century. Alderley Edge is designated a SSSI due to a range of non ferrous ores including lead, cobalt, vanadium and arsenic in sedimentary Triassic rock. It is the only site in Britain where such ore deposits and their host rocks remain accessible for study in the extensive mine workings.

The woodland along Snape Brook comprises ash, alder and sycamore supporting a rich ground flora such as dogs mercury, wood sorrel and bugle that indicate ancient woodland.

Capesthorpe Hall is listed grade II*. It was built in 1719 -32 to replace a medieval hall and restored in the mid 19th century by Salvin following a fire. There are two Bronze Age bowl barrows in the grounds of Capesthorpe Hall, as well as earthwork remains of the medieval hall, chapel and settlement. This was formerly the site of a medieval deer park.

Scattered throughout the southern part of the character area in particular are small pockets of peat that have accumulated in the hummocky glacio-fluvial deposits e.g. in the grounds of Henbury Hall and at Adders Moss. Massey's Moss lies in a hollow near Siddington. Broad leaved birch woodland now covers the site, while the ground cover reflects the damp nature of the ground.



LCA 5c: Budworth Character Area.

Including Budworth Mere Country Park & Pickmere

This character area is made up of Budworth and Marston Meres and Marbury Country Park. Marbury, which is managed by Cheshire County Council is open to the general public and is a popular visitor destination for families and dog walkers. There are large open grassy spaces and features such as lime avenues left over from the landscaped parkland of the former Marbury Hall, which was built in a French chateau style designed by Salvin, requisitioned as an army camp in 1940, then bought by ICI and finally demolished in 1968. Marbury Country Park is densely covered with broadleaved trees, of which a significant portion is ancient woodland.

This is a large scale, open landscape of medium to large fields, mainly under pasture but with areas of arable farming. The landform appears as a large basin or depression with slopes of varying gradient, with the bottom occupied by Budworth Mere and Pickmere. There is widespread evidence of hedgerow loss and replacement with post and wire fences. Much of the area appears to be intensively farmed and the low, over-maintained hedges and scarcity of hedgerow trees contribute to the open and expansive nature of the landscape. The western part around Marbury Mere appears well-wooded, especially on the mere's southern margin near Big Wood. The visual character is quite different to that of the more open landscapes further east. There is little visual connectivity with adjacent character areas due to the basin-like topography and the difference in height between the highest and lowest points. Most views terminate at the tree-lined rim that forms the visual horizon.

The area is bisected by the A559, emphasising the topography as it falls down to a central low point and rises up the other side. Minor roads follow the area's boundary, providing extensive views over the field system filling the lower ground and across the area to the opposite boundary. The two large bodies of open water visually dominate the character area due to the general scarcity of screening elements such as high hedges or woodland.

Settlement includes the village of Higher Marston and occasional farms and individual houses. Enclosure is mainly regular small-medium fields with hedgerow boundaries that are typical of post medieval agricultural improvement. There is a small area south of Great Budworth, where fields of medieval date have been identified and there is an area of common land to the west of Pickmere.

Both Budworth Mere and Pickmere are SBIs. Budworth Mere is the third largest in the county, and best known as a habitat for breeding birds and a refuge for migrating wildfowl. An extensive area of reed bed at the western end with associated woodland is managed as a nature reserve by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust. Pickmere is a large natural mere with good marginal vegetation including reedbed, scrub and broadleaved woodland. The lake is used for boating activities.

There is a large area of broadleaved woodland in the valley of Cogshall Brook. At the south of the site is a disused mill pool with diverse marginal vegetation. The wood has a diverse ground flora and provides habitats for many invertebrates, birds and mammals. The canopy is dominated by oak with frequent sycamore.



LCA 5d: Tatton & Rostherne Character Area.

Including Hall, Deer Park & National Nature Reserve

This character area is dominated by the extensive and splendid Tatton Park, which is listed grade II* on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens. Tatton's designers are amongst some of the finest in the history of English parks and gardens – Humphrey Repton, John Webb, Lewis Wyatt and Joseph Paxton. At the heart of the 400ha of landscaped parkland are Tatton's gardens, which reflect many styles of English garden design since they were laid out in 1715 – an Italianate garden, fine herbaceous borders, walled gardens, a fernery, rose garden and Japanese garden with Shinto temple laid out by Japanese workmen in the early 20th century for Lord Egerton. The Hall is surrounded by a wide range of formal gardens and the extensive parkland displays all the elements of the English Landscape Style on a grand scale.

There are a number of individual farms, some of which are estate tenancies, located on the outer edges of this character type associated with small-medium (up to 8ha) regular shaped post medieval fields typical of agricultural improvement.

In general terms this is an area of medium scale, slightly undulating landscape. There is a slight variation in the north around Rostherne Mere where steeper slopes, blocks of woodland, and dense verdant hedges combine to increase the sense of enclosure. The mere is not readily apparent from distant viewpoints and it can appear as an unexpected vista along the surrounding narrow lanes. Within the park a number of large scale elements are particularly impressive; the length of Tatton Mere as it extends into the distance, the extent of several of the grazing enclosures and the length and sweep of the two principal approaches.

Within the park are many clumps of trees and coverts as well as solitary trees that are part of the designed parkland. Dog Wood and Tatton Mere Covert are both ancient broadleaved woodlands with a rich and varied ground flora. Shawheath Plantation is a mature plantation woodland with a number of introduced species.

The linear nature of many of the woodlands tends to exaggerate their importance even further within the landscape. From locations around the area's boundary most inward views towards the heart of the estate are completely blocked by solid woodland and plantations. From many viewpoints blocks of woodland appear to rise abruptly out of the flat open farmland. The extensive peripheral woodlands prevent both inwards and outward views and there is little visual connectivity between the parkland and the surrounding farmland. The woodlands are a mix of broadleaves and coniferous species and some areas are designated as SBIs.

Throughout the estate a number of isolated farmsteads and lodges share a similar building style and lend cohesion to the landholding. The parkland rises and falls quite dramatically in parts and the high points provide views out to the east. The Pennine Hills feature prominently, filling the eastern skyline, with the extensive buildings of Manchester Airport occupying the middle ground. This close proximity ensures that moving aircraft, either descending or ascending, are a constant factor in any elevated view. The associated noise can be very intrusive.

The attractive village of Rostherne appears as a tranquil and remote location despite the proximity of a number of major highways that bound area. Within the character area roads are few and tend to respect the perimeter of Tatton Park, e.g. the A5034, which is one the main roads through the area passes to the west of the park.

Permission for a deer park at Tatton was granted as far back as 1290, and today deer still roam the 18th century landscaped parkland with its majestic oaks and unimproved acid grassland. Tatton Old Hall dates from the late 15th century but was replaced by the new hall in 1807.

Melchett Mere, named after the Chairman of the company responsible for the brine extraction that caused subsidence and formation of the body of water, was created in 1922. Both are designated as biological SSSIs. Both have a rich and well developed aquatic flora e.g. fennel and horned pondweed while Melchett Mere is also a breeding site for the brown hawker dragonfly. The site also includes one of the largest areas of fen and reedswamp in the county at Knutsford Moor, which is dominated by common reed. This is important for breeding sedge and reed warblers, sand martins and for wintering and breeding wildfowl. Flushed acidic grassland contains species such as blinks, small sweet-grass and greater birds-foot-trefoil. A variety of woodland types border the mere – alder, willow, birch and oak.

Excavation at Tatton has revealed hearths of a Neolithic date (c 4000-2000 BC) and the remains of a deserted Saxon and medieval village made up of cottages, crofts and fields located on the east side of the Old Hall. There is a 1930s working farm on the estate and during WWII Tatton housed a dispersal airfield and a parachute training school, features surviving from this period include barrage balloon mooring rings.

Much of the Tatton estate is open access land and it is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the North West. Owned by the National Trust since 1958, it is managed by Cheshire County Council. Also of interest in this character area is Rostherne Mere to the north of Tatton, which has been a National Nature Reserve since 1961 and is designated as a SSSI. It was formed by subsidence resulting from the removal of salt deposits and is the largest and deepest (30m) mere in Cheshire, rarely freezing in winter and therefore supporting large numbers of wintering wildfowl, particularly pochard and pintail. Over 10,000 gulls regularly roost on the water and up to 90 cormorants roost in the trees along the edge. The mere is fringed by a narrow band of reed swamp and to the north and west is a small peat bog overgrown with birch. There is woodland in close proximity to the mere, and most of this is broadleaved and ancient as indicated by wood sorrel and early-purple orchid. The reserve also supports a number of butterfly species, most notably white-letter hairstreak, purple hairstreak and common blue.

The Old Deer Enclosure at Tatton is designated a Grade A SBI as it contains one of the most extensive areas of acid unimproved grassland in lowland Cheshire. Small wet hollows, ponds, brooks, mixed plantations and scattered parkland trees contribute to the habitat diversity. Typical grasses are common bent grass and red fescue.

To the west of Tatton is the small settlement of Mere, where The Mere, which is located alongside a golf course is designated as a SSSI due to the presence of twelve species of submerged water plants including the nationally rare autumnal water-starwort.



LCA 5e: Tabley Character Area.

Including Tabley Mere, Booths Mere & Moseley Hall.

This character area is defined by the features of the estates associated with Tabley House, Toft Hall and Booths Hall. The largest of these is Tabley House, which is of the Palladian style, built in the late 18th century to replace the Old Hall, which was erected c.1380 AD on an island in Nether Tabley Mere. The Old Hall has subsequently collapsed and is now a ruin, the chapel which stood alongside it has been relocated next to the present hall. It is screened from view by mixed belts of broadleaves and coniferous trees that delineate the estate boundaries, part of which is ancient woodland. It was formerly a medieval deer park.

This is a medium scale landscape possessing many features of the surrounding areas. The land is generally slightly undulating but there are several flatter patches. The area is mainly pastoral farmland where the hedgerow system is relatively intact with numerous hedgerow trees and these can screen and filter many views across the landscape. However, there are a number of locations where agriculture appears much more intensive. Here larger and flatter arable fields and low trimmed hedges combine to create a larger scale landscape with panoramic views. Such open locations enjoy distant views east towards the Pennine Hills, whilst in all other directions the low horizon beyond the immediate field system appears full of trees. Urban Knutsford bounds the area to the north and its close proximity has an important localised influence on the landscape where residential development is visible across flat farmland with low hedges.

Patches of higher woodland density are characteristic of this landscape type, and this occurs in the vicinity of the three estates. These locations are characterised by parkland landscapes and extensive tracts of woodland of varying type. The local dominance of massed mature trees reduces the scale of the landscape quite significantly, screening or framing many views and contributing to a landscape that feels much more insular. From most directions the general location of Tabley Hall appears as a solid block of woodland, with no indication of the classic parkland setting surrounding the main buildings. Two highly prominent gatehouse lodges, on the A5033 and the A556, feature as landmarks along these busy highways and provide the only clue to the motorist of the nature of the landscape behind the perimeter woodland screen. The parkland surrounding the hall is representative of the classic "landscaped" country estate. The Hall with its ornamental planting is approached along a number of sweeping tree-lined drives, past ornamental water bodies, veteran specimen trees and strategically located woodland blocks.

In the middle of the character area near Toft Hall a number of large woodland blocks assume greater prominence due to the contrast with the surrounding flat and open fields, many defined by ditches. Woodland comprise a mix of broadleaved and coniferous trees, some of which were associated with the former landscaped grounds of Toft Hall, and survive in a much reduced form e.g. Windmill Wood, originally an approach to the hall.

Settlement comprises a low density scatter of dispersed farms and halls. Fields in this area are predominantly small – medium (up to 8ha) in size and regular in shape, and are typical of post medieval reorganisation. To the east of Tabley is an area of surviving medieval enclosure with irregular shaped fields. Boundaries associated with this type are hedgerows with standard trees. There are a number of individual farms located throughout the area.

This area is adversely affected by a number of incongruous elements within the landscape. The M6 forms a very intrusive element as it crosses the area along a north-south axis. Its visual influence is particularly extensive in the centre of the character area where traffic is highly visible as it passes through flat and open fields.

Further south an electrified rail line crosses over the motorway and the overhead gantries are widely visible. The railway in turn is crossed by an overhead powerline, providing another disruptive element within the surrounding open field system. Other major roads include the A50 and A537.

Nether Tabley Mere and the larger Tabley Mere are included in a SSSI. Tabley Mere contains extensive strands of submerged plants – autumnal starwort and pondweed, and stands of lesser reedmace and common reed. Along the north shore is an area of acidic marshy grassland. Nether Tabley Mere has extensive cover of yellow and white water lily. A large heronry is present in the nearby woodland (alder, birch and oak) and both undisturbed meres attract wildfowl.

Rinks Wood follows the Waterless Brook – it has a canopy of mainly oak and sycamore and a diverse ground flora.

The park and garden associated with Booths Hall to the east of Knutsford includes the large Booths Mere, which has been utilised as an ornamental lake and relict Victorian gardens. To the south of the college buildings is the moated site of Norbury Booths, which is where the medieval hall once stood. To the east of this site are extensive areas of broadleaved woodland, a large proportion of which is ancient and includes water bodies – streams and ponds



LCT 6: Woodland, Heaths, Meres and Mosses

LCA 6a: Rudheath Character Area

(Including Rudheath Woods, Shakerley and Newplatt Meres)

This area appears as a flat, large scale landscape due to large fields and large, open bodies of water. Many of the fields are defined by blocks of trees, including conifer plantations, which dominate the skyline and generally restrict views out of the area. A number of substantial properties and grazing enclosures occupy plots which appear to have been cut out of the dense woodland. The only vantage points are provided by the bridges constructed over the busy M6 motorway as it runs north-south through the area and these have a significant impact upon the surrounding landscape. This major highway is not as visually intrusive as one would expect, due to the presence of mature roadside planting, the visual constraint associated with woodland cover and the lack of high view points. However there is loss of tranquillity due to the constant traffic noise.

The sand and gravel extraction industries have had a massive impact on the landscape of this area - woodland such as Old Wood and New Platt has been cleared to make way for large pits, which are now water-filled pools. Although the meres are man-made they provide an illusion of a natural landscape as they are surrounded by a range of natural vegetation types, including marginal vegetation, birch woodland and heathland. The best example of this is the very popular Shakerley Mere Country Park. Industry has now given way to leisure, including the Boundary Water Park and a nearby caravan park.

This area corresponds with an area of heath shown on Burdett's map of Cheshire published in 1777. It was part of the once extensive medieval heathland forest of Rudheath, which reputedly was one of the areas where incomers to the shire had been able to camp in order to seek protection of the earls. Today only small fragments of this once great heath survive, for example, at Goostrey Heaths and Shakerley Meres.

The field systems of this area are dominated by regular rectangular fields created in the 19th century by Parliamentary Acts and local landowners. As with Delamere a significant amount of the heath was planted for forestry. Settlements such as Allostock, Cranage and Goostrey which either lie in or bordering this area largely developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In the south of the area is RAF Cranage a former World War II airfield. During 1940 No.96 Squadron was formed at Cranage and flew in the air defence of Liverpool later the US Air Force were stationed at Cranage. Six parts of this are scheduled monuments including the Airfield Defence Head and a number of Pillboxes.



LCA 6b: Withington Character Area

(Including Withington Hall, Astley Hall and active sand quarries)

This character area is bound on three sides by the *Lower Farms and Woodland* landscape type and to the east by the *Estate Woodland and Mere* type of the Capesthorpe Character Area. This is a medium to large scale landscape with a varied landform. There are many large, gently rolling arable fields, with evidence of field boundary rationalisation and the use of post and wire fences. Blocks of woodland, some very extensive, are visually dominant and many fields are defined on one or more boundary by woodland. This constant woodland presence restricts many views, although some areas of open ground enjoy views out to the Pennine Hills. From such locations this high ground fills the entire eastern skyline and includes the distinctive communication mast at Croker Hill and the summit of Shutlingshoe. From a few limited positions the radio telescope at Jodrell Bank features as a landmark to the south, where it appears to rise out of dense woodland.

A low density of dispersed and isolated farmsteads and properties are linked by a number of minor roads which pass between high but closely trimmed hedges. This not only reduces the immediate scale of the landscape but contributes significantly to the feeling of a well maintained, tidy landscape.

Active and extensive sand quarries form an important but discrete component of this landscape and their visual impact is surprisingly low key. Careful study of the landscape reveals many recently established elements: extensive areas of new woodland planting, low earthworks, new field boundaries and hedgerows. Fortunately much activity is below ground and almost unobserved behind the surrounding screen of dense planting. For this reason a number of very large water bodies arising from sand extraction and dispersed throughout the area have a very limited visual effect upon the surrounding landscape. A fuller view may be provided by the occasional field entrance with a glimpse of sand spoil heaps, conveyor belts and moving machinery. However the new components are woven effectively into the agricultural landscape of arable crops, pastoral enclosures and prominent woodlands. One of the few exceptions can be found on the area's southern boundary, where the machinery tower of Dingle Bank Quarry is visible above the surrounding tree planting when viewed from the A535.

Prior to the arrival of these extractive industries, this area was more typically associated with ornamental landscapes – estate parkland and gardens for example at Withington Hall and Astle Hall and the field systems created by improvement of the estate farms in the 18th and 19th centuries. Associated with this landscape are small areas of enclosed heath and 18th and 19th century plantations. The parks are now much more hidden features, although some woodland patterns are a hangover from this previous land use. The parkland at Astle Hall is very distinctive, with sheep grazing in fenced enclosures with many large veteran trees standing as isolated specimens. A range of woodland types form a solid backdrop to this pastoral scene.

Sandle Heath is a surviving area of heath and ancient woodland runs along Snape Brook. There has been some benefit from the extraction industries to the local wildlife: Farm Pool, once a sand pit, is now a nature reserve.

Pollen dating from 59,000 BC has been extracted from deposits at Farm Wood Quarry. The pollen indicated that there had been a warmer period (interstadial) within the last glaciation. This interstadial has been named Chelford after this site.

Although this climate could support human habitation, the first evidence of human activity in this area dates to the Bronze Age: Withington Hall Barrow Cemetery, a group of three bowl barrows located south west of Home Farm. Later activity includes the remains of a WWII ammunition store to the north east of Chelford.



LCT 7: Lower Wooded Farmland

LCA 7a: Arley Character Area.

Including Park Moss, Holford Moss & Plumley Lime Beds.

Arley is a low rolling character area (c 40-70m AOD). It extends from the northern county boundary south to the gas storage fields at Holford Moss. To the east lies the *Estate Woodland and Mere* types of Tatton and Tabley and to the west is the *East Lowland Plain*.

This is a medium to large scale landscape with obvious and strong contrasts in landscape character arising from a significant variation in the distribution of hedgerow trees. There is a very localised concentration of woodland, broad-leaved and mixed, including a small element of ancient woodland. Although in many parts the field system remains intact there are signs of hedgerow decline across large parts of this character area. Where more intensive arable farming is practiced there are conspicuous lines of isolated oaks and post and wire fences. Where woodland is present it can appear as a solid block within this expansive and open landscape. Elsewhere there are sufficient hedgerow trees to filter views across the landscape. Big Wood near Arley Hall is typical of a number of large woodlands which have a significant local effect upon landscape character.

The M56 runs east-west along the area's northern boundary and the complex multi-level M6-M56 interchange in the west is especially intrusive. The close proximity of a number of urban areas including Knutsford and High Leigh has an important localised influence upon landscape character and land use. There are no obvious views to the west despite the many patches of open ground and significant landmarks are scarce. Views to the east extend to the very distant Pennine Hills

Settlement includes the nucleated village of High Legh, small hamlets at Moss End and Bate Heath. It is mainly made up of dispersed farms and houses, with a medium density.

Fields are largely post-medieval in date and reflect improvements at this time. They are small – medium (up to 8ha), with some large fields (over 8ha) in a regular and semi-regular pattern. There are a few medieval fields that have survived this reorganisation. Boundaries consist of a mix of patchy hawthorn hedges with standard trees and fences. Horsiculture has also made an impact on this area e.g. modern fenced horse paddocks.

Fundamentally this is a rural character area, with a network of minor roads and settlement. However, the M6 bisects the centre of the type and the M56 cuts across the northern portion. The visual impact increases locally where the motorway is raised upon embankment or where over-bridges allow a number of minor roads to cross over the motorway.

Arley Hall was built in c1833-41 and is listed grade II*. It stands on the site of an earlier moated house. Arley's park and garden is also listed Grade II* on the English Heritage Register. Arley Green is a picturesque small settlement at the gates to Arley Hall and includes a timber framed school that is listed Grade II. There are a large number of moated sites in this character area, indicating the status of the dwellings in the medieval period. Moats were status symbols and ornamental features, not designed for defensive purposes. Examples include: Belmont, Hough Hall, Alderhedge Wood and Swineyard Hall.

Areas of ancient woodland include Park Covert and Winnington Wood. There are a number of wooded SBIs including wooded streams e.g. Wincham Brook and the Arley and Waterless Brook. Others include blocks of wood such as on Holford Moss and shelter belts in the grounds of Arley Hall. Mill Wood, Big Wood and Willowbed Wood comprise a large woodland complex in Arley Park. All are rich in plant and bird species. Mill Wood is a narrow strip of wet broad leaved woodland in the valley of Arley Brook with a marshy ground flora and was a large pool in the nineteenth century. Big Wood is an oak wood traversed with many drains and Willowbed Wood is on flat land traversed by drains with several ponds. .

Bongs Wood is an ancient woodland on Arley Brook. It lies on land which slopes steeply with a flood plain planted with hybrid black poplars. The canopy is dominated by mature oaks with some sweet chestnut, downy birch, cherry and sycamore. The understorey includes coppiced hazel. The ground flora contains ancient woodland indicator species

In the south of the character area Plumley Lime Beds SSSI is an old industrial waste tip that now provides a rare example of a calcareous habitat in a county where there are few outcrops of limestone and areas of calcareous soils. Lime has washed from the lime beds into the surrounding soil creating a variable soil condition. The site is rich in willow species and a number of interesting hybrids occur while the ground flora includes yellow-wort, common centaury and hawkweeds. Orchids are abundant and there is hybridisation between the northern and southern marsh orchids, which is unusual as both are at the limits of their distribution. A moderately herb rich grassland has developed on the soil overlying the lime beds and a number of moss species have been recorded on the site including the rare flamingo moss. Woodland, scrub and reed beds provide a nesting habitat for a number of warbler species. The open water attracts waders and wildfowl.

There are three large areas of mossland in the character area, Sink Moss, Whitley Reed and Holford Moss. Holford Moss Wood is an area of mixed woodland on old mossland dominated by oak, birch and Scots pine with signs of former peat cutting. As a result of local brine pumping an area of saltmarsh has developed around the old pump reservoir. Inland salt marsh is a rare habitat in Cheshire and this site includes several species normally only found on the coast: sea aster, lesser sea spurrey and reflexed saltmarsh grass. A large area of neutral unimproved grassland survives in Wincham Brook Valley, designated as an SBI.



LCA 7b: Ringway Character Area

Including Ashley, Styal, and Manchester Airport's second runway

This gently undulating character area is located along the northern boundary of Cheshire, stretching from the intersection of the A556 and M56 in the west to Styal in the east. It lies c 20-60m AOD. This is a medium-scale landscape of relatively flat topography with minor variations in slope. The area is characterised by a combination of typical rural elements, such as high hedges, narrow country lanes and tree-lined streams, and very intrusive man-made features such as motorways and the sprawling complex of Manchester Airport. Development over the county boundary in Greater Manchester is on a far greater urban scale than in Cheshire and in many ways despite the impact this has had, this character area can still in part be described as rural.

Much of the area consists of post medieval fields, but with a small patch of surviving medieval enclosure to the east of Tatton. Field size is small – medium (up to 8ha) and mainly regular with some semi-regular fields. There are a small number of broadleaved and mixed wooded areas – copses and along watercourses. Burleyhurst and Brickhill Woods are examples of ancient woodland and there are numerous ponds

This character area, by virtue of its proximity to Manchester has undergone significant changes in the past decades. This is a prime catchment area for commuters who work in Manchester and also contains a complex concentration of transport infrastructure. The M56 is the most important highway traversing the area and visually dominates a corridor of agricultural land along an east-west axis. The visual impact increases locally where the motorway is raised upon embankment or where over-bridges allow a number of minor roads to cross over the motorway. There are also railway lines – a substantial cutting runs north-south to Manchester from Wilmslow. These all have a visual impact upon the area as well as noise implications.

Manchester Airport has a massive intrusive presence within this character area in terms of buildings, structures and aircraft. At peak times moving aircraft are a constant element within the landscape and provide a major visual intrusion within the surrounding agricultural landscape. One of the runways lies on the area's northern boundary and when viewed from the south this runway appears upon a raised formation that is elevated above the surrounding, slightly elevated, farmland. The obvious artificial element of the extensive level runway and perimeter fence is evident even when aircraft are absent.

Views across the landscape are variable. On the more elevated sections of the A556 there are extensive views north to the industrial areas of Carrington and Partington which extend to the Pennines on the distant skyline. Tatton Park borders this area and the extensive estate woodlands provide a very conspicuous feature in views to the south.

The settlement pattern, which was dispersed in origin, has undergone creeping linear expansion along the roads e.g. at Mobberley and Knolls Green. There is now a medium settlement density and red brick buildings are typical. Recent developments include Her Majesty's Prison, Styal. There are golf courses at Hollingee and to the north of Styal.

There are a number of sites that represent the activity that this area has witnessed in the past - a Bronze Age cremation burial excavated at Fairy Brow, Agden Roman coin hoard, the crossing of the River Bollin by a Roman road and a medieval moat at Hollingee.



LCA 7c: Chonar Character Area.

Area of farmland separating Wilmslow and Alderley Edge

This is a small area of gently undulating farmland (68-94m AOD) partially bound by the settlements of Wilmslow and Alderley Edge in the west and the *Upper Bollin Valley* Character Area to the north east.

Although the location is essentially urban-fringe the character of much of the area is surprisingly rural, due to the absence of industry and the suburban character of the settlement edges, with large mature gardens and abundant trees. Within the character area a number of dispersed farmsteads are located along narrow but well-used country roads.

Fields are almost exclusively under pasture, generally medium-sized and irregular in shape, defined by hedgerows with abundant hedgerow trees. They comprise a combination of medieval, post medieval and modern enclosures. At several locations there is evidence of field boundary rationalisation with lines of squat hedgerow oaks identifying former hedgerows. There are numerous field ponds.

The high escarpment of Alderley Edge to the south, in the adjacent *Capesthorne Character Area*, forms a very prominent wooded feature and dominates all view in this direction.

In the west the area is by traversed by the Manchester-Crewe railway and the busy Handforth-Wilmslow Bypass and urban influences are much stronger. The noise generated by both road and railway can be intrusive and the roofs of residential properties can be glimpsed amongst mature trees. The highway planting scheme is beginning to mature and screen much of the traffic but the electrified rail line on embankment is more evident. The Alderley Edge Golf Course occupies the western extent of the character area in the vicinity of Whitehall Brook. This small watercourse meanders through an ornamental landscape of mown grass and younger trees with a backdrop of more steeply rolling ground and mature copses.

Prior to the construction of the Wilmslow-Handforth Bypass (opened 1995) a major project was undertaken to mitigate the impact of the construction programme upon amphibians in 15 field ponds lost to highway construction and a further 10 affected by associated development. This included the excavation of replacement ponds and the capture and translocation of 11,000 amphibians, including all 5 of the widespread native species (common frog, common toad, smooth newt, palmate newt and great crested newt)



LCA 7d: Marthall Character Area.

Including Peover Eye, Jodrell Bank & Swettenham heath

This low undulating (c 40-90m AOD) character area extends from Lower Peover, northwest as far as Alderley Edge. The southern boundary is provided by the valley of the River Dane.

This is a medium scale landscape of mixed arable and pastoral farmland which shares many of the characteristics of the *West Lowland Plain*. There are localised areas of more undulating ground but the land is generally flat. In the north many fields have been enlarged and there is evidence of hedgerow removal with increased reliance upon post and wire fences. This has produced a more open, larger scale landscape with more extensive views, although even here many views are curtailed in the middle distance by solid blocks of woodland. The estate woodlands associated with Toft Hall and Peover Hall have a strong visual presence and feature in many views. In the north of the character area the landscape is strongly influenced by the close proximity of urban Knutsford, Wilmslow and Alderley Edge. A number of major highways, including the A50 and A537, traverse the area with the associated intrusion of heavy traffic, but many tranquil rural locations remain in the inter-land between these strategic routes.

The area is drained by a number of small rivers including Peover Eye, Marthall Brook and Pedley Brook and these are often associated with linear woodlands or lines of mature trees, forming conspicuous features in the landscape.

In the northern part of the character area the high ground of Alderley Edge with its wooded slopes forms an important visual feature on the horizon. In the south the Jodrell Bank radio telescope provides a local landmark as it is visible over a wide expanse.

Settlement has a medium density comprising clusters of dispersed settlement e.g. the Warford Hall and Blackden Heath areas; linear settlement that has developed along roadways e.g. Stocks Lane, Over Peover; small nucleations at Swan Green and Twemlow Green and larger nucleated villages that have undergone modern expansion such as Chelford and Goostrey. The railway connecting Alderley Edge and Holmes Chapel runs across the area.

There is a substantial concentration of small-medium (up to 8ha) medieval fields with semi-regular pattern in the Lower Peover/Peover Hall area. Much of the remaining area comprises regular small-medium post medieval enclosure with some medieval and large modern fields (over 8ha). Boundaries are a mix of patchy hawthorn hedges with standard trees and fences. Horsiculture also has made an impact on this area e.g. stables and modern fenced horse paddocks. Red brick buildings, some with white wash are typical and there are also a number of half timbered, brick nogged cottages

This Character Area has a number of placenames that indicate former heath and mossland. Today small areas of peat occur at the Lower Moss Wood Nature Reserve and Gleads Moss. The latter is a SSSI for its fen and alder carr. A small area of bog remains on the western edge of the site and a narrow fringe of acidic marshy grassland is included along the northern edge of the woodland, most of which is wet and dominated by alder, birch and willow. The rich ground flora contains many fen species including sedges and meadowsweet, soft rush and bogbean. The bog vegetation is dominated by bog mosses (*Sphagnum* species)

A range of woodland types occur across the character area from riparian ancient woodland, birch colonised mossland, to planted blocks of broad leaves and conifers, for example at Lower Withington. Several woodlands are SBIs such as at Sossmoss Wood, Stockin Moss and Lower Moss Wood. Woodlands include birch, oak and sycamore with planted conifers. The understorey is rowan with holly and buckthorn while the ground flora is locally dominated by buckler fern with areas of bracken. Diversity in these woodlands is provided by open heathy areas, ponds and remnant bogs.

Peover Eye river valley with steep-sided banks, permanent pasture and woodland with ancient woodland indicators, has a diversity of species rich habitats. The underlying geology supports a mosaic of grassland types – acid, neutral with

species rich flushes. The valley is designated as an SBI, as are sections of Marthall and Pedley Brooks, where the latter's banks are predominantly wooded with alder and neutral semi-improved and unimproved grassland.

Human activity can be traced back four thousand years with a Bronze Age barrow cemetery at Jodrell Bank, although this has been badly damaged by excavation and ploughing. Two further possible barrows are located near Twemlow Hall, which is a Grade II, formerly moated late 17th century mansion house of red brick.

Peover Hall has a Grade II park and garden listed on the English Heritage Register. The Hall itself is a Grade II* 16th century manor house, with a moat to the south west that indicates the location of an earlier medieval house.

Broadleaved shelter belts surround the grounds.



LCA 10e: Brereton Heath Character Area.

Including Brereton & Astley Mere Country Park

This gently undulating and almost flat character area (70-120m AOD) is located south of the River Dane. It extends from Holmes Chapel down to Sandbach and across to Congleton.

The landscape is predominantly of a medium scale but with wide variations in enclosure. Although primarily an agricultural landscape, woodlands provide an important visual characteristic throughout the character area, often out of proportion to their actual size. The woodland type varies greatly, ranging from conifer plantations to dense birchwoods on former moors or heathland. This has an obvious effect upon landscape character and provides visual diversity throughout.

Sand extraction has led to the creation of a number of water bodies and some, such as that at Arclid form important features in the landscape. Others are well screened by vegetation and cannot be seen from public highways.

Views across the landscape are variable. To the east the high ground of the Pennine Hills form an important feature and Mow Cop and the Cloud within the *Upland Footslopes* landscape type are clearly visible across a large part of the character area. To the west the much flatter landscape of the *East Lowland Plain* type provides no obvious landmarks.

In the vicinity of Brookhouse Green is a concentration of small (up to 4ha), irregular shaped medieval fields. This is also an area with a number of small, narrow minor roads. Elsewhere the field type is mainly post-medieval in date and more regular in form (up to 8ha). Across the area there are a number of large (over 8ha), regular, modern fields. Boundaries are a mix of patchy hawthorn hedges with standard trees and fences. Typical building materials include red brick and white render.

A small area of heath is located at Brereton Heath Country Park, which is a popular visitor attraction. This is a reclaimed sand quarry part of which is now a lake. There is an expanse of broadleaved woodland, and to the east, in the vicinity of the village of Somerford there is a mix of broad leaves and conifers. Much of this site is designated an SBI. Other large broadleaved woodland blocks include Blackberry Covert and Brookhouse Moss.

There are a number of small villages and hamlets in this character area e.g. Brereton Heath, Brereton Green, Brookhouse Green and Arclid. Elsewhere settlement is generally dispersed. Brereton Hall is a 16th century building in origin with subsequent alterations. It is listed grade II. The site of a former mill lies to the west of the Hall, the mill pond of which survives albeit heavily silted.

There are large working sand pits at Arclid to the north of Sandbach and due west of Congleton. At Dumber Bank there is a waste disposal site. The M6 passes through the western edge of the area and includes the Sandbach Services. Three main roads in the area are the A50, A54 and A534.

Small peat patches are located at Brookhouse Moss and at Bagmere, both of which are biological SSSIs. Bagmere is the bed of a former mere, which has now almost completely in-filled with peat apart from one small area of open water. The range of habitats includes rich fen, the vegetation of which is dominated by lesser pond-sedge. Notable species include purple small reed and greater pond sedge; marshy grassland with species such as meadowsweet and wild angelica; and carr woodland dominated by grey willow and downy birch. The site supports the only colony of small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly in Cheshire.

Brookhouse Moss is an outstanding example of a moss at an advanced stage of development. Several areas of open bog vegetation are present in which bog mosses, cross leaved heath and cotton grass are dominant. Nationally rare species such as bog rosemary, sundew and crowberry are also present. The scarce alder buckthorn occurs in the fen woodland along with birch, alder and goat willow. The Carr woodland grades into drier oak with rowan and purple moor-grass.

A large swamp and marsh lie to the south of Brookhouse Moss and Bagmere where breeding birds include reed bunting and whitethroat; both are designated as SBIs.

There is one glacial mere located at Taxmere north of Sandbach. This is an SBI and the southern and western edges have unimproved semi-natural grassland. At the north and east lie wet grassland. The lake is surrounded by lush marginal vegetation and wet woodland - mostly alder and hazel with pond sedges. There are numerous ponds located across the area.

In Brereton Plantation is a large lake formed by sand working and now managed for recreational purposes. Drains and dried out ponds add to the diversity as do patches of acid unimproved and semi-unimproved grassland. The site supports birch woodland with occasional oak and pine is regenerating well.

Historic features within this area are varied. At Somerford Bridge there is a potential Neolithic (4000-2000BC) long barrow, although it has been suggested that this was the site of a mass cattle grave following an outbreak of murraine. Yet the discovery of two inurned cremations indicates that there has been activity in the area since at least the Bronze Age. At Bent Farm there are the earthwork remains of a possible temporary Roman camp.



LCA 7f: Barthomley Character Area.

Including Crewe Hall, Slaughter Hill & Wheelock Heath

This gently undulating character area is located south of Sandbach and runs as far west as Nantwich and east as far as Alsager. It lies c 40 -110m AOD. Fields are small-large in size and regular- irregular in pattern. This reflects the re-use and adaptation of medieval and post-medieval fields in the modern period. Loss of boundaries and the introduction of fences in the landscape are more recent events.

This is a landscape of strong contrasts with many local variations, and in places the relatively dense settlement pattern is very obvious. The area around Crewe Hall is small scale and verdant due to the presence of large blocks of woodland which curtail many views. Elsewhere around the edge of Crewe the landscape is relatively open due to the combination of flat topography and low field boundaries and is especially susceptible to the visual intrusion of large man-made structures. Large warehouses and industrial buildings, highway over-bridges, tall lighting columns associated with both road and rail infrastructure and built development in general all dominate the surrounding landscape. The topography becomes more undulating towards the county boundary in the south, where there is a strong sense of rural tranquillity due to enclosing landforms and abundant trees and hedgerows.

The area is heavily influenced by its close proximity to Crewe and the development of this railway town, in particular the rapid expansion that it underwent in the 20th century. Accordingly the nucleated settlements on the fringes of Crewe - Haslington, Hough, Shavington, Weston and Wheelock have also undergone modern growth, as has Sandbach to the north. In recent years this area has experienced significant change to landscape character arising from the development of extensive new residential areas upon former agricultural land. The development at Wychwood Park near Weston which includes a hotel and housing is particularly noticeable, where a new road system serves substantial properties constructed adjacent to a new golf course and is surrounded by extensive landscaped areas. Another golf course is located to the north-east of Crewe Hall. There is a background pattern of dispersed settlement, which is typical of the area before the development of Crewe.

The communications network has had a massive impact on the character of this area – beginning with the introduction of railway lines (the first in 1837) and the subsequent development of the massive railway junction at Crewe. Numerous important highways traversing this area have a substantial impact upon landscape character. The A500 is particularly high where it bridges the main north-south rail line and moving traffic is visible over an extensive area. Elsewhere major highways pass through deep cuttings and the roadside planting schemes are very conspicuous within the original field pattern. The M6 is a very significant visual feature in the east as it traverses the gently undulating landform, progressing between cuttings and embankments with moving vehicles particularly noticeable upon the latter.

There are a number of industrial sites including a vast landfill site at Maw Green to the northeast of Crewe and a Royal Ordnance factory at Radway Green to the south of Alsager. Also in south-east Crewe at Crewe Gates Farm there is a large industrial estate, which has a visual impact upon the surrounding area.

A concentration of woodland occurs at Crewe Hall (listed Grade I) in the park and garden (listed on the English Heritage register as Grade II). Here woodland comprises broadleaves, conifers and a mix of both. Elsewhere woodland cover is limited. Broadleaves follow stretches of water courses such as Engelsea Brook, and Deans Rough and Riders Wood are two small areas of ancient woodland. The Henbury Lee and Monneley Mere areas are also mosslands, characterised in part by drainage ditches. SBIs include Haymoor Green Farm Meadow, Basford Brook and Townhouse Wood.

Finds such as a Neolithic (4000-2000 BC) hand axe and a possible Roman lead saltpan indicate early activity. Much more recent are the remains of a WWII Prisoner of War Camp at Snape Farm where Italian and German POWs were confined. There are a number of high status halls in the area – Willaston, Hough and Weston – all of which are Grade II* and Haslington, which is Grade I.



LCA 7g: Audlem Character Area.

Including Doddington Hall, Checkley Wood & Blakenhall Moss

This character area lies south of Wybunbury and runs south to the county boundary. The western boundary is defined by the River Duckow. This is a broadly undulating character area (c. 40-130m AOD), with steeper wooded slopes along watercourses e.g. the Duckow and the Checkley Brook. Some aspects of these riparian slopes are ancient woodland and are also designated as SBIs.

Settlement is of low density and mainly consists of dispersed hamlets and farms and small settlements such as Buerton and Chorlton. Fields are a mix of medieval, post-medieval and modern enclosures i.e. small to large (up to 8ha), regular, semi-regular and irregular fields with boundaries of hedgerows and standard trees. In the north of the area a number of roads radiate out of Nantwich towards the county boundary. A number of substantial properties located along these highways contribute to a more settled and urban character. Over most of the area however the low density of small settlements, linked by a network of narrow country roads, creates a quiet rural, almost isolated, atmosphere.

A number of large woodland blocks are visible from major highways and in many locations hedgerow trees are abundant. In areas of more intensive arable farming there are signs of field boundary rationalisation. Where this is combined with low trimmed, intermittent hedges with fewer trees, the scale of the landscape increases and such areas are characterised by extensive views in all directions. In the east the Staffordshire Hills, with visible urban development, are prominent above the massed tree canopies of the Cheshire farmland.

The parkland and mere associated with Doddington Hall are very noticeable from the A51 and the scale of much of the surrounding area seems to be larger and more expansive. Further south the highway follows the undulations of the topography and the high points provide extensive views out over the landscape and the intact field system.

Around Audlem the topography is more undulating, with tree-lined streams and field drains, small woodlands and copses. This area appears more verdant and enclosed, with a smaller scale. As one progresses further north along the area's western margins the topography appears similar to parts of the *Lowland Plain*, with views over a flat expanse of large fields with low hedges, towards the high ground forming the southern end of the *Sandstone Ridge*.

Roads include the A525, A529 and the A51, the remainder being minor routes. The main line of the Shropshire Union Canal passes through the area as does a railway line to Crewe.

Checkley Wood is a particularly large woodland with ancient woodland flora indicators. It is part broad leaved and part coniferous and also an SBI. According to an 18th century description, Checkley Wood was managed as coppice with standards, which was thought to have been used for charcoal production –namely the tops of trees and underwood. Until the use of coal and coke, charcoal was an important source of fuel, particularly in the iron industry. Lea Forge, which stood on Checkley Brook from the 17th to 19th centuries, is likely to have used charcoal from this wood.

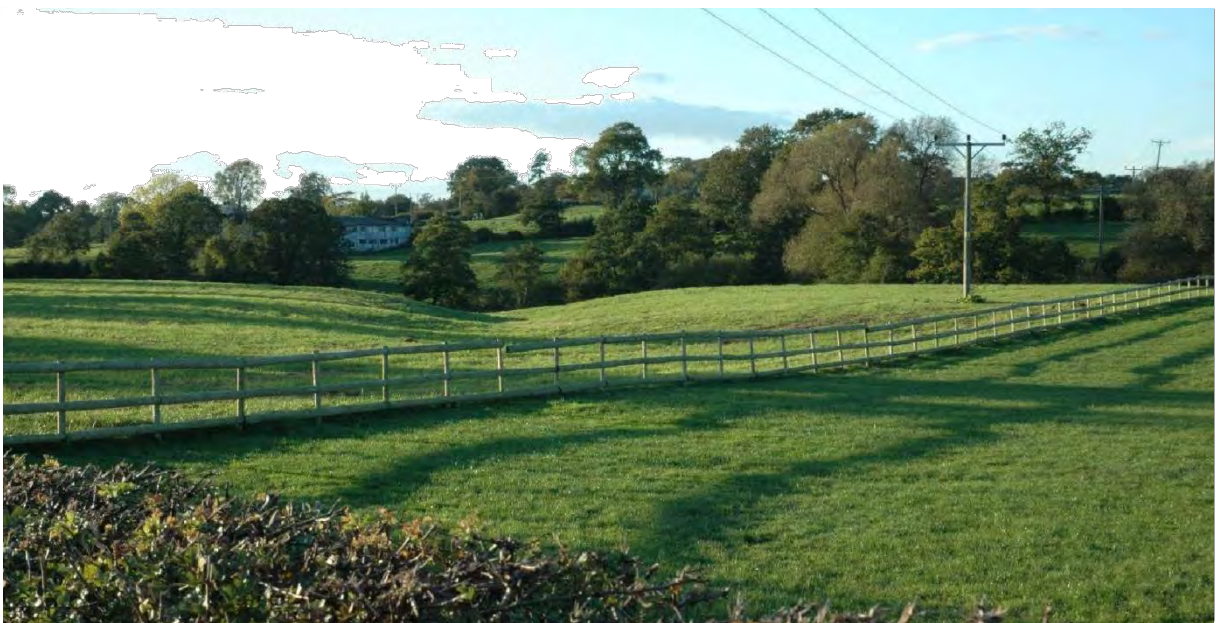
There are a small number of riparian wooded areas, good examples being Threepers Drumble where there is a rich ground flora indicative of ancient woodland and an understorey that includes coppiced hazel and alder; and Long Wood where a diverse clough woodland with a canopy dominated by oak with willow and alder by the stream. The ground flora is lush and diverse and includes abundant wood melick as well as ramsons, moschatel, sweet woodruff, wood sorrel, bluebells and dog's mercury.

Hatherton Flush SSSI is the largest flush of its type in Cheshire and contains an excellent assemblage of wetland plants such as marsh valerian, great horsetail and bog pimpernel. Several species of orchid grow profusely on the site including marsh helleborine which are rare in Cheshire as is marsh lousewort which is also present. It is surrounded by acidic grassland, which is characteristically species poor and contains plants such as crested dog's tail and heath grass. A small part of the Betley Mere SSSI is included in this character area – the rest of which lies over the county border in Shropshire.

Within the low rolling hills of this area are numerous small hollows, filled with peat but still occasionally retaining open water. Examples include the SBI Blackenhall Moss, which is an almost circular area of woodland on the site of an old moss, the eastern end of which has a rich ground flora. There are small isolated patches of unimproved grassland, for example in Jericho Wood and Pasture where neutral grassland and neutral flushed grassland occur.

Doddington Hall is a Grade I listed building, combining an 18th century hall with a late 14th/early 15th-century tower house. The latter is an unusual example of a building style that is found further north in the Border Reiver territory of the English/Scottish border. Its park and garden is listed grade II. Associated with the Hall was once a deer park, which was used as the site of a prisoner of war camp in WWII.

Early indications of activity in this area are known from the Bridgemere hoard, which included early Bronze Age axes and a long dagger. A pillbox stands in Buerton and a bomb decoy site was located at Chorlton. Industrial sites in the area include brine pits north of Audlem, of which little surface evidence survives. There is an active sand quarry at Hough Mill.



LCT 8: Salt Flashes

LCA 8a: Sandbach Flashes Character Area

Including Salt flashes & nature conservation

This area of former brine-pumping is located to the south of Middlewich and west of Sandbach. There were 44 brine wells and bore holes sunk in the Sandbach area in the 20th century. Work began in this area in the 1920s and continued into the 1970s.

In this character area the water bodies provide small scale local features within the surrounding agricultural landscape. There are a number of peripheral reed beds, introducing an alternative element into the agricultural landscape. Fields are mainly under pasture with gappy hedges, especially where drainage is poor. The field pattern dates back to the medieval period – small and irregular in pattern. There are a number of parking areas provided for members of the angling clubs and groups of stationary vehicles can be intrusive within the landscape.

The area is bound by the landscape of the *East Lowland Plain* on three sides, with typical ground level outward views curtailed by hedgerows and hedgerow trees. To the east the electrified railway on embankment and the large buildings of the Ettiley Heath industrial estate are very prominent. The Trent and Mersey Canal also runs along this boundary but is not visible. Where the ground has subsided to form hollows and depressions the views from within these areas are restricted to the surrounding shoulder of high ground. There is a strong degree of enclosure in the more pronounced hollows. The area is crossed by a number of tortuous narrow lanes linking dispersed farms and residential properties. The River Wheelock traverses the area but for most of its length it is a relatively minor watercourse and is not visually significant.

The Sandbach Flashes that make up much of this area are designated as SSSIs. The Moston Flash area consists of two parallel elongated hollows, which were formed by the removal in solution of underlying salt deposits and resultant collapse of glacial deposits above. These were initially formed naturally but brine extraction has accelerated their development.

Two of the flashes are nature reserves: Watch Lane Flash and The Moat. Due to the differing age, depth and water chemistry the flashes show considerable variation in plant and animal communities. Generally the most recently formed are dominated by emergent stands of great reedmace, while the oldest have extensive beds of common reed. Wet woodland is dominated by alder and willow and the woodland also has an exceptional lichen flora for Cheshire. The more saline flashes are fed by natural brine springs and contain a range of species that are tolerant of brackish water – for example spiked water milfoil, fennel-leaved pond weed and horned pond weed. Adjacent to the salt flashes are areas of salt marsh vegetation containing sea aster and notable water invertebrates occur including the water boatmen and shrimps

Several of the flashes are important for breeding birds and also support large numbers of wildfowl and waders as migrants and winter residents. Wigeon, teal, lapwing, snipe and curlew are regularly recorded.



LCT 9: Mossland

LCA 9a: Lindow Moss Character Area.

Peat extraction, country park & bog sites.

Lindow Moss lies to the west of Wilmslow in a much reduced form due to past peat extraction and drainage.

This area is characterised by very flat topography with a landscape of varying scales. There are many blocks of woodland, especially in the north and east, where the urban edge of Wilmslow is completely hidden from view by dense vegetation. Lindow Common is completely encircled by tree growth, precluding any outward views from the numerous footpaths. Relief from total enclosure is provided by the open water of Black Lake and a number of small-scale areas of heathland. On the western boundary Ross Mere provides a similar open landscape on the edge of dense woodland. This is a modern body of water, created through the extraction of peat and drainage of the moss.

In the northern half of the area numerous properties and small plots of grassland are connected by a complex system of straight narrow lanes, bridleways and footpaths where views are almost totally restricted by the enclosing high vegetation. The combination of narrow access ways and the strong sense of enclosure mean this area can appear remote and inaccessible, despite the very close proximity of suburban Wilmslow. The industrial style fencing to a closed waste landfill site appears incongruous but the raised landform is not obvious amongst the maturing tree planting.

By contrast the area of commercial peat extraction near Saltersley Farm on Lindow Moss appears as a large, sunken, open space of raw brown peat surrounded by dense tree growth. The contrast in colour and scale is very striking. Many grassland plots are used for horse grazing, but in places shack-like horse shelters and potholed track surfaces create an impression of neglect and deterioration. The standard of grazing varies greatly and ranges from improved grassland defined by wire fences to the roughest, shrub encroached pasture.

In the centre of the area the field enclosures are larger. In this location the landscape character is similar to surrounding landscape types with low, straight hedges and more expansive views in all directions. In the south the area bound by the Mobberley Road is divided into many long and narrow field enclosures, evoking the distinctive landscape associated with moss "rooms" or compartments, which represent previous phases of peat extraction. Broad leaved woodland is superimposed on part of the moss-rooms and across the northern extent of this area. There are mature hedgerows with oak and ash and poplar is also present.

Most settlement is peripheral to the moss but there has been some encroachment along Racecourse Road and in Baddockhill. In addition there are developments such as poultry farms and kennels.

There are patches of heath near Lindow Common, which was previously used as a racecourse and is designated a SSSI. This is one of the few remaining areas of lowland heath in Cheshire. It includes a mix of wet and dry heath, bog, open water and scattered scrub and woodland. Most of the dry heath is dominated by heather and purple moor-grass, while lower lying areas are permanently or seasonally waterlogged. In the wettest areas bog mosses are dominant. Black Lake in the centre of the site contains peaty, acidic water. Aquatic plants are sparse although several areas of lesser reedmace are present which form an important roost for swallows and house martins.

To the west of Lindow Common is Saltersley Moss SBI – a large raised bog which is extensively cut for peat and so the majority of the site is bare with drainage channels. To the east on abandoned workings scrub and birch wood have developed along with patches of heather.

In the north of the character area at Morely Green Heath is a large expanse of neutral semi-improved and unimproved grassland. This SBI is a patchwork of small, narrow fields and areas of woodland on the former Lindow Moss. A system of drainage ditches runs through the site. There are signs of past peat digging. Plant species include heather, cross-leaved heath, bilberry and wavy hair-grass.

Ivy House Farm Fields SBI is a site of unimproved hay meadows supporting common grass species such as meadow foxtail, sweet vernal grass as well as sorrel and yellow rattle in places. Lindow End is a complex mix of birch woodland, small fields, ditches and an area of dry heath in what was once part of Lindow Common. The southern section of woodland is mature and the unimproved acid grassland has a rich flora.

Most of the woodland is dominated by birch with scattered oak saplings and some holly. The ground flora is poor, dominated by Yorkshire fog and wavy hair-grass. Patches of heather and bilberry occur in the more open areas.

Peat continues to be extracted at Lindow Moss and in the 1980s this led to separate discoveries of Lindow Man, the head of a woman and 70 body parts of an adult male. These were dated to somewhere between the Iron Age and the Romano British period. Part of a timber causeway of unknown date was also discovered, which may be of some antiquity. The discovery of Neolithic flints puts activity in the area firmly back into prehistory. Meanwhile, the earliest written reference to the moss dates to 1423.



LCA 9b: Danes Moss Character Area.

Including nature reserve and active landfill site.

Danes Moss is located to the south of Macclesfield and is designated a SSSI. It is the largest example in Cheshire of a cut-over raised mire and a rare habitat in lowland England. In the south is an area owned and managed as a reserve by Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

When viewed from the surrounding land the remaining mossland appears as a solid block of low, dense woodland occupying an area of flat ground. However a number of public footpaths traverse the area and these allow views of a range of vegetation types and reveal different degrees of enclosure, largely determined by the extent of past exploitation and the current water level. There are extensive blocks of very dense birch woodland and high scrub and even small areas of open woodland with oaks of a reasonable size. These alternate with patches of wet grassland with small shallow water-bodies. Some outward views are available, either from the less enclosed areas of open grassland or channelled along narrow footpath corridors. The high ground of the *Upland Foothills* is prominent to the east with the Croker Hill communication mast highly visible beyond that in the *Upland Fringe*. The distinctive shape of The Cloud near Congleton features in views to the south.

Across the area is a network of drainage channels and a distinctive feature of Danes Moss are the moss rooms in the north of the character area - long, thin fields enclosed by hedgerows. One of the three largest land fill sites in Cheshire is located here, screened by areas of new planting. There are areas of broad leaved woodland and in the north there are playing fields. The residual peat has a depth of up to 5m. In the north by the landfill site it is drying out although small dystrophic pools are present. Scattered scrub covers a large area and this becomes dense in places. The area of least cut peat lies to the south east of the railway line and supports the largest stand of bog myrtle in Cheshire.

A central part of the site has been successfully re-flooded by the installation of strategically placed dams. The depth of water varies because old cuttings, peat baulks and drains have been inundated. The tops of baulks are colonised by purple moor-grass and heather while shallow water contains tussocks of common cottongrass. Over the site seven species of *Sphagnum* moss can be found and various rare species in Cheshire are supported here including 11 species of damselfly and dragonfly and brimstone and green hairstreak butterflies. The common lizard is also recorded.

The discovery of Bronze Age hammer stones and an arrow head indicate activity dating back to the prehistoric period. Later features include two WWII pillboxes.



LCA 9c: Congleton Moss Character Area.

Small dried out moss & historic moss rooms.

This is a very small character area on the southern edge of Congleton. Congleton Moss is a small area of moss surviving at just over 1km in width. This is a tiny remnant of a once huge mossland that extended well over 1000ha in area. It is now thoroughly dried out and experiencing rapid succession to birch scrub. Dominant species are purple moor grass and heather with cross-leaved heath in some ditches. The moss comprises a series of enclosed radiating moss-rooms which form a fan shaped field pattern.

This character area is not breached by any public highway and remains largely hidden from view. Water-filled ditches and areas of wet ground betray the mossland origins of this very flat, small to medium scale pastoral farmland with regular field boundaries and little woodland cover. There is a wide variation in the condition of the hedgerows. In some areas the hedgerow pattern is largely intact, with numerous hedgerow trees providing an element of enclosure and filtering views. Elsewhere the very flat topography, lack of tree cover and gappy hedges with post and wire fences, has led to an enlargement of scale allied with extensive views out of the area. These views extend to the ridge of high ground forming the county boundary in the east. The distinctive shape of the Cloud forms part of this elevated skyline.

To the south are large fields that were formerly unenclosed and a number of boundaries are drainage channels. A cricket ground and school field encroaches upon the mossland.



LCA 9d: Oakhanger Moss Character Area.

Relic wood-covered moss

Located west of Alsager this character area comprises Oakhanger and White Mosses, which are separated by the M6 motorway that runs north-south through the area. This is a flat landscape of mixed land use and varying scales. There are small-scale regular enclosures to the south, elsewhere enclosure is large-scale and reflects where boundaries of earlier small scale enclosure have been removed. This area does not have the typical moss room enclosure pattern, which potentially suggests a later phase of extraction than has taken place at other mossland character areas.

The character is strongly influenced by the M6 motorway, with moving traffic glimpsed through the mature roadside planting scheme, whilst the extensive block of woodland in the west forms another dominant element. Areas of pastoral farmland are defined by straight, generally intact field boundaries with locally abundant hedgerow trees filtering many views. This is a visually diverse agricultural landscape with subtle contrasts provided by the variation in woodland type and the difference in appearance of arable crops and pastureland. Woodland variation leads to changes in the visual character of the landscape, from the lighter greens of the deciduous woods to the darker green and dense shade of the conifer plantations. The extensive area of woodland creates a strong impression of visual enclosure where virtually all horizons appear wooded.

To the east of the M6 an extensive open area of peat and sand extraction at White Moss, a raised peat bog, is well screened from the public highway. The scale of this relatively large plot is not immediately obvious from the surrounding area. An overhead powerline traverses the north of the area and forms a conspicuous element in such a flat landscape.

Oakhanger Moss is a SSSI covered with broad leaved woodland. This is one of the shallowest of a cluster of depressions in glacial sands. It is of greatest importance for the range of mire vegetation that it supports. Oakhanger Moss was known to be a mere at least until the 1600s sustained by a flow of water from Alsager Mill to the east. Since that time it has been completely infilled, first with sedge and reedswamp peat and latterly with peat derived from *Sphagnum* mosses. Birch, alder and willow predominate and adder is found here and just one other known site in Cheshire.

To the north of this is an area of mixed woodland and new planting. Bibby's Moss and White Moss are SBIs. Bibby's Moss is a large old mossland, consisting of dried out raised lowland peat bog. Most of the site is now covered with woodland – damp and quite diverse broadleaves in the south and mixed plantations in the north. There are open glades.



LCT 10: River Valleys

LCA 10a: Lower Bollin Character Area.

Including Styal Country Park & Quarry Bank Mill

This character area extends from Wilmslow, north to the County boundary. The Bollin is a steep sided, incised river valley, the eastern end of which possesses a very urban character, with public facilities such as areas of well-maintained grassland, seats, play equipment and tennis courts, all served by a network of surfaced footpaths. Mature woodland occupies the steep valley slopes and this prevents the encroaching urban development from impinging upon this attractive amenity area. Views downstream follow the river as it meanders along the flat valley floor. The combination of picturesque watercourse and mature trees, including numerous free-standing specimens within open grassland, conveys a parkland atmosphere. Dense wooded slopes form a solid backdrop in all directions and the character is surprisingly rural for a location on the urban fringe.

The width of the valley floor increases noticeably at the point where the Bollin and Dean watercourses converge. The steep banks of the River Dean are species rich with flushed areas. The north side of the valley is densely wooded, with semi-improved grassland to the east. The flat, poorly-drained ground in the Deane valley is used for pasture, divided by thin hedges and fences into a number of medium sized fields. This open landscape is viewed against a solid backdrop of steep, wooded slopes. In both valleys the tree-lined skyline is very dominant.

Downstream beyond Twinnies Bridge the steep valley sides converge and the valley floor almost disappears. The character is much more enclosed, with dense woodland and steep slopes preventing all but the closest views along the river.

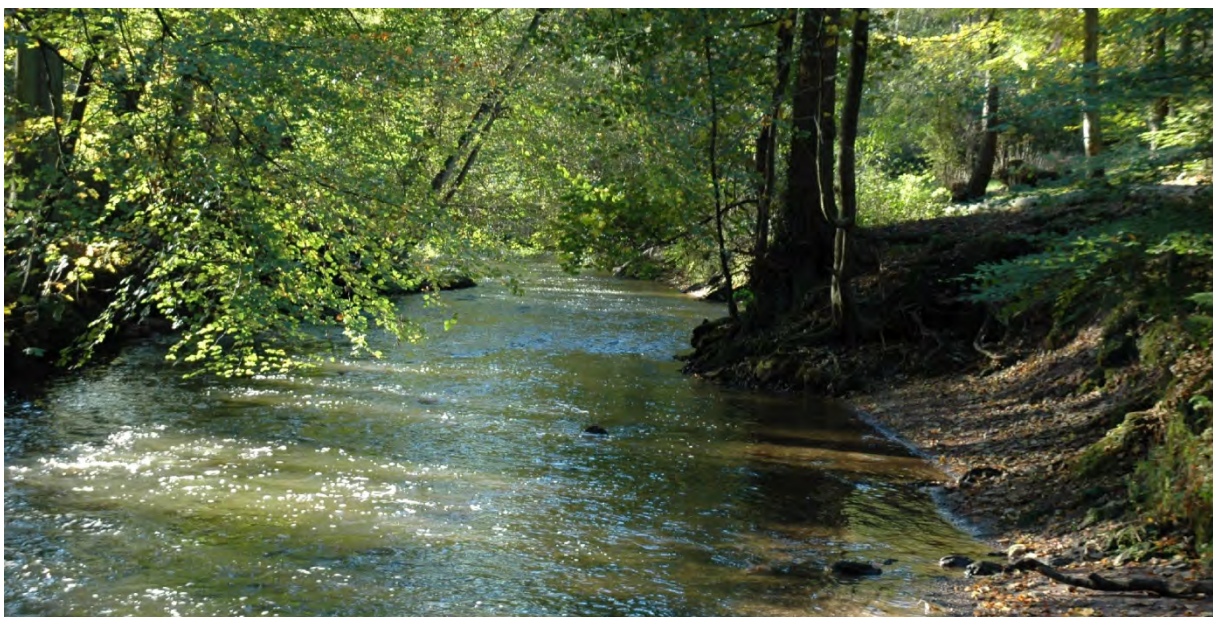
There is no inter-visibility with the surrounding character areas and the valley feels insular and almost remote. Between this point and the A538 further west the character of the area is exclusively that of a small river flowing between high, steep, densely wooded side slopes. A number of footpaths follow the river and as they rise and fall over the steep ground there are short distance and restricted views along and down into the valley. The appearance of the woodland varies, with areas of ancient woodland contrasting with tall stands of exotic conifers. At a number of points along the footpaths there are outward views over areas of pasture which slope down towards the river. These fields offer relief from the constrained views of the narrow valley but the topography prevents any visual connection with the surrounding landscape type.

In contrast the western end of the character area has been highly influenced by massive man-made structures. The character area terminates where the river passes under the runway at Manchester airport, at a location dominated by a large tunnel portal with security fencing lining the skyline. Aircraft can be seen from the valley floor as they begin their ascent or taxi along the runway. Nearby the very busy A538 emerges in dual carriageway from a tunnel beneath the runway, before passing over the river near a large hotel on the south bank. Between these two points the valley remains densely vegetated and remarkably unaffected. This is due to a combination of very high steep slopes clothed with solid growth, and pronounced river meanders, closing down all views and providing effective screening even in close proximity to such massive engineering structures.

Wilmslow Carrs near Twinnies Bridge includes marsh, ponds, semi-improved grassland, woodland flushes, woodland streams and secondary hanging woodland on the valley slopes. There is an exceptional population of the common frog. Further east the woodland cover diminishes and instead a large portion of the Bollin to the east of Wilmslow is designated as an SBI for its grassland habitats (Bollin Valley, Wilmslow Park to Mottram). The grassland here is species rich and include black knapweed, common cat's ear and in places devil's-bit scabious. Intermingled with old and new oxbows are areas of scrub and tall herb. There are marl pits that are now wooded, which are frequented by little owl and kingfisher. There is an amphibian relocation pond.

The northern section of the river largely comprises Styal Country Park where the Grade II* Quarry Bank Mill is located amongst a wooded and grassy setting. Quarry Bank Mill and its associated buildings provide a striking landmark. This impressive complex on the river's northern bank is almost hidden from view and hardly intrudes upon the river's lush verdant character. It was built in 1784 for Samuel Greg as a rural cotton spinning mill development to counter the lowering of living standards and accordingly to try to maintain the moral standards of the mill workers. It is five storeys high and there is a four storey weaving shed. Also listed Grade II* is the associated Apprentice's House which was built in 1790 to house 80 pauper apprentices cared for by husband and wife superintendents. Children were brought from across England – from London to Liverpool. The country park is managed by the National Trust and the Mill and its building complex are now an industrial museum.

Styal includes a large complex of woodlands, which are designated as an SBI. Around Norcliffe Hall there is semi-ornamental woodland, while to the south there is well-structured and diverse broadleaved woodland. Burned Hey Wood is particularly interesting with wet carr woodland near the river and by Piggishaw Brook, with an excellent lichen population. The site is very good for fungi and is of ornithological interest.



LCA 10b: Upper Bollin Character Area.

This character area extends from Prestbury, north to Wilmslow, where the character of the valley changes significantly as the river flows downstream towards the west. There is very little settlement within the Bollin river valley with the exception of occasional farms. There are some crossing points located in the area including that of the A5102. At the eastern end of the character area the River Bollin flows through Prestbury as a relatively minor watercourse in a shallow incision, before passing into a shallow valley of small fields under pasture. Trees and shrubs line both river banks whilst the river itself is largely hidden from view. A number of large woodlands are prominent on the higher ground forming the southern edge of the valley.

In the centre of the character area the river is crossed by the Adlington Road on a small stone bridge. This forms a local landmark within a wide, shallow valley where the river follows an obvious line. This is an expansive, open landscape where the river meanders through a pastoral scene of large flat fields with low hedges and wire fences and relatively few hedgerow trees. Panoramic views extend to the wooded high ground of Alderley Edge to the south, and to the distant Pennine Hills in the east. A number of farmsteads are prominent on the higher ground that defines the valley on all sides. These contours are generally marked by trees and woodland which appear to fill the immediate skyline, creating a strong contrast with the open grassland in the valley.

As the river flows westward the valley sides become noticeably higher and steeper. On the outskirts of Wilmslow at Varden farm the valley sides close in completely where the river is bridged by a local highway. The steep northern bank is filled with mature woodland, with the occasional property visible through the trees. The much shallower southern slope lies under pasture, rising up to the private gardens on the edge of the urban development. This boundary appears more obviously suburban than the opposite bank, with substantial properties surrounded by mature ornamental planting. The Pennines hills remain visible to the east but the dense riverside woodland blocks any views westward along the valley.

The western end of the character area takes the form of a very narrow, steep-sided valley, with the river flowing through a narrow strip of flat grassland managed as a public amenity. The surrounding dense woodland effectively screens much of the surrounding development which generally lies at a higher level on the edge of the valley. This public space is managed in a naturalistic style and provides a tranquil refuge from the surrounding urban setting.

There were a number of textile mills in operation on the Bollin in the 18th and 19th centuries, for example Folly Holes Mill and Carr Mill, neither of which survive today. However, the harnessing of water power on the Bollin is likely to date back to the medieval period and a possible site is suggested to the west of Wilmslow. Of particular interest to the north of Prestbury is Spittle House, which is a remarkable building that comprises the western range of a 14th century monastic leper hospital. It is timber framed on a sandstone plinth and listed Grade II.



LCA 10c: Lower Dane Character Area.

River meanders & floodplain, canal and subsidence flashes.

This area extends from Northwich to Holmes Chapel. Within this character area the River Dane meanders through the *East Lowland Plain* - a very gently rolling, low-lying, open agricultural landscape of medium sized fields, many under arable crops. It has steep but low, tree-lined river banks. The topography is very shallow, with little variation in elevation between the river bank and the valley's outer margins. The River Dane is an actively eroding river valley displaying all the classic geomorphological features: floodplain, oxbow lakes, meanders, rivercliffs, beaches, rapids, pools. When viewed from peripheral areas the presence of the watercourse is indicated only by a thin line of trees within the wider field system. There are no significant crossing points or developments and the character can appear to be remote and tranquil.

In the north the character area is bounded by development at Northwich and Rudheath but still retains a rural character as the urban edge is considerably softened by woodland. The roofs of the large buildings at the Rudheath Storage depot are visible above the tree tops. Davenham Church lies outside the character area but the spire provides a conspicuous local landmark.

Within this part of the character area the Trent and Mersey canal has a strong visual presence as it passes through a number of subsidence water bodies in a relatively open, medium scale landscape at Billinge Green. The canal enters the character area at Middlewich, from where it runs north, following the course of the River Dane for a considerable distance.

Southward beyond Whatcroft Hall the repeated meandering of the river creates a constantly changing relationship between the two waterways which contributes to the valley's distinctive character until they diverge on the northern margin of Middlewich. In places the two appear to be separated only by a steep, tree covered slope whilst elsewhere a field of arable crops fills the intervening flat ground. In all directions the skyline appears full of trees, often an illusion created by the surrounding field pattern with its abundant hedgerow trees, but locally there are a number of obvious woodland blocks. The woodland in the vicinity of Bostock hall is very conspicuous on the western boundary as it lies upon the slightly elevated horizon. The roof and chimneys of the Hall remain visible above the tree tops.

Between Middlewich and Holmes Chapel the river passes through a very shallow valley, where large to medium arable fields slope gently towards the watercourse. The landscape is quite open in aspect and settlement has very low density with a number of isolated but substantial farmsteads that provide local landmarks. A number of woodland blocks are prominent in this large scale, open landscape but tree cover overall is relatively low.

There are a large number of crossing points including: railway viaducts in Northwich and Twemlow viaduct to the north of Holmes Chapel (listed Grade II); the M6 to the west of Holmes Chapel; and other key road crossings including the A556 south of Northwich, the A50 to the north of Holmes Chapel and the A53 at Middlewich. There are a number of footpaths in the character area, most notably the Dane Valley Way, which runs along sections of both the River Dane and the Trent and Mersey Canal.

A large pool either side of Davenham Road is an SBI, formed by land subsidence caused by brine pumping. The pool has thriving bird, butterfly and insect populations.

It has been suggested that the place name Shipbrook Castle is indicative of a Norman castle, but nothing survives on the ground to support this. The Roman road of King Street is thought to have crossed the River Dane somewhere to the north of Middlewich i.e. not on the line of the modern route. There are a number of listed bridges e.g. Havannah Bridge, which is listed Grade II and Crossley Bridge, which is a Scheduled Monument.



LCA 10d: Upper Dane Character Area.

River meanders within a steep-sided, wooded valley.

This character area extends from Holmes Chapel to Congleton as the River Dane meanders tortuously along a steep sided valley with a wide and generally flat floor. Much of the steeper ground is wooded, whilst the valley floor is devoted to pasture. Field boundaries are generally defined by post and wire fences and much of the valley floor appears as a wide, open expanse of grassland. The course of the river is marked by an intermittent line of vegetation, typified by willows leaning over the watercourse. The high, steep valley side slopes and the frequency of woodland ensure there is little inter-visibility between this area and adjoining character areas. Within the body of the character area there is a single crossing point in the form of a small road bridge. Consequently much of the river is inaccessible to all but the most determined walker.

The brick-built railway viaduct at the western end of the valley is a very impressive structure which emphasises the broad width of the valley floor at this location. At this point the southern slope is steep and wooded whilst the northern slopes are gentler and under pasture. Between the two slopes the valley floor is filled with a flat, agricultural landscape with medium sized fields. There are many post and wire fences, free-standing mature oak trees and the occasional farm building.

At Radnor Bridge a minor road follows a curving line across the broad valley floor. Linear woodlands follow the contours on both sides of the valley, with a number of individual properties visible amongst the trees. The riverside vegetation is very dense in parts and in places merges into the wooded slopes. Where the slope is shallower the pastureland extends up from the valley floor to the surrounding higher ground. This open landform allows some partial outward views and the Cloud is visible to the east.

A large proportion of the course of the River Dane is wooded of which a significant part is ancient woodland – principally on the steeper slopes and following the tributary valleys e.g. near Somerford and Swettenham. There is scrub and mature woodland as well as some unimproved neutral pastures. From Holmes Chapel through Congleton to the Peak Park boundary the river valley is designated as an SBI, by far the longest SBI in Cheshire. It has high ornithological interest and is important for insects and mammals. Settlement includes the dispersed settlement of Swettenham and a low density, dispersed pattern of halls and farms. Along the length of the Dane are a number of works such as sewage works and reservoirs. To the west of Congleton are the Congleton business park and a large superstore.

The character area terminates in the east at the Congleton Business Park on the western edge of Congleton. This development occupies the entire valley floor and the very large buildings and hard standings abruptly terminate the rural character of the valley. Both sides of the valley are steep and wooded and the high ground dominates the river below. A number of substantial properties constructed on the valley shoulders are visible amongst the trees at the highest level.

The earthworks of a medieval moat and house platform survive at Crossley. There have been a number of watermills in operation along the length of the Dane at various points in time – today mill buildings survive at Swettenham Mill (listed Grade II) and Cranage Mill. Forge Mill near Congleton was used for silk production and a number of flour mills were located at the eastern end of the character area near Bosley.

A section of the Dane Valley east of Holmes Chapel is a large geomorphological SSSI designated for its meanders and terraces.



LCA 10f: Upper Weaver Character Area

Including Winsford Flashes, ancient woodland & Nantwich

This character area extends from the south of Winsford as far as Worleston where the river becomes a less dominant feature in the landscape.

In the north of this character area the water bodies of Top flash and Bottom Flash form distinctive features in the bottom of the valley. These and a number of other smaller water bodies created by the subsidence that occurred following extensive brine pumping in the 19th century. Both have a high value for flora and provide valuable habitats for birds. For example, at Top Flash there are areas of swamp and fen at the edge, while the flora includes flowering rush and tubular dropwort. The flashes are important for recreation e.g. angling and sailing and a waterside caravan park is very conspicuous.

While Top Flash is connected to the River Weaver by a drain, the river flows through the eastern side of the Bottom flash. This has resulted in sediment build up and schemes are currently being explored to overcome this problem.

The character of the valley changes subtly as one progresses upstream and the valley becomes shallower. The locally complex topography in the north, with relatively steep slopes and incised river meanders, becomes flatter and more uniform towards the south. Where medium and long distance views are available the meandering form of the Weaver is emphasised by sinuous blocks of bank-side trees in contrast to the surrounding framework of medium-sized regular shaped fields.

Woodland is mainly restricted to the steeper slopes, in particular the steep-sided cloughs of tributary streams, where there is a high proportion of ancient woodland.

This area has a very rural character with an absence of any large settlements apart from Church Minshall, a small nucleated village on the western bank of the Weaver. Settlement is low density and the area is characterised by dispersed hamlets and farms, often very substantial farmsteads with associated outbuildings and barns which punctuate the skyline on both sides of the valley. Isolated halls are also noted such as Lee Hall - a Grade II listed brick building dating to 1566 with later modifications and a 19th century wing. Much of this area comprises medieval enclosure, with hedgerow boundaries.

The Shropshire Union Canal defines part of the eastern boundary and emphasises the transition between the Lowland Plain to the east and the more complex topography and slightly steeper gradients of the Weaver Valley. It crosses the Weaver near Hoole Grave Manor. To the west and east of the Bottom Flash are former land-fill sites. There is a sewage works south of Brayne Hall, in the south of the area on the west bank of the river but this is not readily apparent due to the lack of accessible viewpoints.

Shaws Wood is a typical wooded clough on the sides of Firwood Brook. Sycamore, alder and occasional birch dominate the canopy with evidence of hazel coppice in the understorey. The ground flora is indicative of ancient woodland and includes bluebell, dog's mercury and wood anemone. There are two large biological SSSIs – Wimboldsey Wood to the north of Top Flash and Wettenhall and Darnhall Woods on the banks of the Wettenhall and Ash Brooks – both of which are dominated by pedunculate oak and ash. This group of woodlands is also a core area for the Cheshire Ecological Network and forms conspicuous features when viewed against the surrounding *East Lowland Plain* with the typical pattern of hedgerow and hedgerow trees.

Nothing remains on the surface of Darnhall Abbey – a former Cistercian abbey founded in 1274 by Prince Edward after his survival of a ship wreck in 1263. This location proved to be unsuitable and the abbey was moved to Vale Royal in 1281.

There were a number of small mills located on the tributaries of the Weaver e.g. a medieval mill was thought to have been located at Buckley, while Darnhall Mill a Grade II four storey white-washed brick and slate building with an impressive pool and weir with sluice is thought to have replaced an earlier medieval mill.



LCT 11: Higher Wooded Farmland

LCA 11a: Adlington Character Area.

Including Poynton Lake, Whitley Green & Butley Town

The underlying geology of this area is sandstone with Chester Pebble Beds and Pennine lower coal measures. There is undulation, rising in height to the east with an altitude of between 80 and 160 m AOD. This character area follows the northern county boundary from Wilmslow, east to Higher Poynton. The River Bollin provides the southern boundary along with Prestbury.

This is an area of medium-scale undulating farmland, predominantly under pasture and increasing in elevation towards the east. The landscape character of this area reflects its location between urban areas such as Poynton and Adlington in the north and Bollington and Macclesfield in the south and the higher ground of the adjoining *Upland Footslopes* landscape type. In certain areas the rural nature of the landscape has been diminished by the cumulative effect of building conversions and improvements to properties and their surroundings. There are a number of Golf Courses where the loss of rural character is also evident. In places the management of hedges is beginning to be neglected and the field pattern shows signs of deterioration. Elsewhere many isolated settlements and farmsteads are connected by narrow winding roads and the character remains very rural. Where woodlands occur they have an important localised effect on the landscape.

The higher ground to the west is visually dominant throughout the character area and appears to be more heavily wooded. There is a high density of woodland, including ancient woodland e.g. the large Wigwam Wood to the north. There are a number of steep-sided stream valleys – which are wooded in part: Wych Wood, which is located on Red Brook, a tributary of the River Dean; and along Norbury Brook

In the south of the area the Kerridge Ridge, within the adjacent *Upland Footslopes* landscape type, feature prominently in views to the south east. This high ground appears as a narrow ridge with the landmark of White Nancy clearly visible over a wide area. The Macclesfield Canal bounds the entire area to the east and provides an attractive small-scale element within the landscape, with characteristic small stone bridges where narrow country roads cross over the canal. An overhead powerline traverses the south of the area before turning west near Adlington. This forms a very intrusive element within the landscape as the pylons are visible over a wide area.

Settlement is mainly dispersed linked via minor roads, with one small nucleation occurring at Dean Row. Poynton is a large nucleated settlement in the north of the character area. Fields around Dean Row are mainly irregular, small and date to the medieval period. Elsewhere they are mainly post medieval, with some large regular modern fields arising through hawthorn hedgerow boundary loss.

Adlington Hall (Grade I), half of which is 15th and 16th century black and white timber framed and the other is mid 18th century brick. Woodland in the grounds of the park and garden at Adlington Hall (Grade II* on the English Heritage Register) includes a mix of broad leaves and conifers. There are also a number of small broad leaf copses. Foxwist is a medieval moated site and in the north east of the character area is Woodford Aerodrome.

Norbury Brook is a steep-sided minor valley with an area of oak and birch woodland designated as an SBI. The shrub layer is diverse and the ground flora is locally rich including dog's mercury, woodruff and yellow archangel.



LCA 11b: Gawsworth Character Area.

Including Rodeheath, Marton & North Rode

The landform in this character area gently undulates in the vicinity of Marton in the west (c. 90m AOD), becoming steeper as it approaches the *Upland Foothills* type (up to 180m AOD) in the east. This is a medium-large scale landscape where the adjacent highground is visually dominant, and the distinctive landmarks of the Croker Hill telecommunication mast and The Cloud feature in most eastern views.

Fields are mainly post-medieval in date and are typical of agricultural improvement. Small areas were also enclosed at a later stage e.g. parkland at Gawsworth and former areas of heath and moss. The fields are small (up to 8ha) with some medium and large (4-8, over 8ha). The larger and more regular fields are typical of modern changes to the field pattern.

Although many areas retain an intact field pattern there is widespread evidence of hedgerow loss. There are areas of more open landscape, with large arable fields bound by wire fences, where trees form isolated elements within the field pattern. In such areas woodland can take the form of isolated blocks that have an important local effect upon the surrounding landscape. Some blocks are very large and can fill the local horizon if they occupy the high ground within the undulating landform.

Major roads in the area include the A34 and the A536 – arterial routes from Congleton, but away from the major highways, and the urban influence of Macclesfield and Congleton, the character is very rural and even remote. The greatest impact from urban development is experienced on the edge of Macclesfield e.g. proximity to the Danes Moss landfill site and the modern expansion of the villages of Warren and Henbury. Beyond these, settlement has a low density and mainly comprises dispersed farms connected by narrow country roads which rise and fall with the rolling landform.

Leisure use in the landscape includes a golf course, visiting opportunities at Gawsworth and the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk which runs along the Macclesfield Canal. There is a railway line linking Macclesfield and Congleton and also in this vicinity is the Macclesfield Canal. To the north of Congleton is a large sand pit and water-filled former extraction site.

Overall this area has one of the highest concentrations of woodland in the county, including some of the largest blocks – Tidnocks, Marton Heath and Cocks Moss are all SBIs and comprise mainly broadleaves with some conifers located on drained mossland. Typical species are birch with rowan and occasional aspen and alder buckthorn. Ancient woodland associated with streams and watercourses include those along the tributaries of the Dane and Heskey Wood on Snape Brook.

The accumulation of peat in hollows created by the glacial process is demonstrated by the usual pattern of peat in basins or valley mires surrounded by pasture.

Cocks Moss for example measures c. 30 ha, it has been severely drained and is now planted with trees, while many others measure just 10m across.

Sandy Lane Pit is a derelict landfill site to the west of Macclesfield with ponds and terrestrial habitats that support a large number of amphibians including great crested newts. Grassy banks support devil's bit scabious and glaucous sedge. West of this is an old sand quarry containing a small lake – Whirley Mere, which is surrounded by rough unimproved grassland.

Evidence of early human activity can be traced back to the prehistoric period following the discovery of a range of implements commonly in the moss and former moss areas e.g. a Bronze Age axe from Marton Moss. Sites include a Bronze Age barrow at Woodhouse End.

There are a number of historic estates in this area – Gawsworth, which has a Grade II* park and garden on the English Heritage Register. Gawsworth Old Hall is listed Grade I and in its present form dates from the 15th and 16th centuries with 19th and 20th century alterations. To the north are 5 rectangular ponds which were part of the garden design as well as being used as fish ponds. Other estates include Somerford Booths Hall, a moated house built dated 1612 but altered in the 18th century; the moated Henshaw Hall; and Rode Manor House which is a Grade II 19th century building. A local increase in woodland cover is normally associated with such estates.

A small patch of woodland called Maggoty Johnson's Wood to the south of Warren is managed by the National Trust. Buried in 1773 this is the resting place of Samuel Johnson, who has been described as the last English jester.



LCA 11c: Buglawton Character Area.

Including Crossley, Dane-in-Shaw woods & canal

This is a small character area to the east of Congleton, overlooked from the east by The Cloud, which is situated in the adjoining *Upland Foothills* landscape type. This adjacent highground dominates the character area. It has gentle to moderate undulation across the area (c 90-150m AOD) with the greatest slopes in the vicinity of watercourses.

Field size is small to medium and there is mainly a semi-regular pattern (some irregular and regular). This is typically medieval enclosure with post-medieval reorganisation and improvement. There was some enclosure by Act of Parliament in the vicinity of Buglawton School.

Settlement is limited and mainly consists of dispersed farms and a small number of houses in the vicinity of Key Green.

There is a high level of woodland cover associated with lines of drainage and in many locations this creates a strong sense of enclosure and a small-scale verdant landscape with remnants of ancient woodland on steeper ground. The Dane Valley in particular appears as a solid line of woodland which curtails views in a northerly direction. Where views to the east are available these extend to the high ground of the *Peak Foothills* and the telecommunication mast at Croker Hill is visible.

The A54 runs through the area, with remaining roads being of a minor nature. Where the railway crosses the Macclesfield Canal and the River Dane the structures form points of interest in the landscape and the impressive Dane viaduct is a local landmark. A number of designated footpaths follow both the canal and the Dane Valley, e.g. The Dane Valley Way.

Steep sided, wooded watercourses include Timbers Brook and Dane-in-Shaw Brook. Timbersbrook and Bath Vale Woods are both SBIs that contain areas of unimproved grassland in addition to ancient woodland. Here there is a rich ground flora and a varied fauna and the valley sides support species rich neutral unimproved pasture. Dane-in-Shaw Pasture is designated a SSSI, for its species rich neutral and acidic pastures with ponds, stream, marsh, mature hedge and scrub alder. Mute swans breed on the millpond and water avens, fleabane, meadow saxifrage and common centaury occur. The nearby Dane-in-Shaw Brook Meadows are an SBI with further patches of unimproved grassland.

A number of mills were once located in this area associated with cotton and silk spinning. Of these the Dane-in-Shaw Mill, built in 1784, was Congleton's first cotton mill.



LCA 11d: Little Moreton Character Area.

Including Hassell Green, Rode Hall & Little Moreton Hall

This small to medium scale character area is located east of Sandbach and to the north of Alsager. It is very gently undulating in the west (c. 50m AOD), becoming steeper as it approaches the *Upland Foothills* (up to 140m AOD). This dominant high ground terminates all views eastward and some views feature the distinctive elevated landmark of Mow Cop.

In parts of the character area there has been an intensification of agriculture with an emphasis upon arable farming. Such areas can have a different appearance as the removal of hedgerows leads to a more open landscape with an increase in scale. In such areas the remaining hedgerows tend to be closely trimmed and hedgerow trees are sparse, leading to extensive and uninterrupted views across the landscape.

There are a number of historic estates in this area of which Little Moreton Hall is probably the best known, picturesque timber framed manor house in England. An increase in tree cover, often in the form of solid blocks of woodland, is mainly associated with these numerous halls. Such locations also exhibit areas of parkland with its own very localised but distinct character. The large water body of Rode Pool is clearly visible from a public highway within a parkland setting.

Landscape character can be strongly influenced by the close proximity of nearby urban areas, with Sandbach to the west, Alsager to the south and Congelton to the east. A more urban character is particularly evident within the western arm of the character area where there is strong concentration of major highways, including the M6.

Beyond the modern development that has been focussed at Rode Heath, settlement is mainly low density and consists of dispersed farms and hamlets. The field pattern is predominantly medieval enclosure with some post-medieval and modern reorganisation. It is therefore mainly semi-regular and irregular in form and enclosures are small – medium in size (up to 8ha).

Major routes such as the M6 pass through the area, as do the A34 and A50. The remaining routes are minor. There are two golf courses and the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk runs along the Trent and Mersey Canal.

The moated Little Moreton Hall is listed Grade I on the English Heritage register. The present house dates from the early 15th century. Great Moreton Hall meanwhile was built in the 19th century in a castellated gothic style (Grade II*), and is now used as a hotel. Rode Hall, built from red brick c 1700 is listed Grade II* while its park and garden is Grade II. Lawton Hall, now used as a school, is listed Grade II.

Along the canal side, in the vicinity of Malkins Bank were a number of old salt works established in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Lawtons salt works were established in the 17th century and closed following subsidence in 1926. All of these have long since been cleared away and are now either part of meadows or a golf course.

Bratts Wood contains ancient woodland indicator species such as dog's mercury and ramsons. Chellshill Wood is located in the steep-sided valley of the River Wheelock, while the flat valley bottom is an area of wet grassland. Both are SBIs.

Both the lake at Lawton Hall and Rode Pool at Rode Hall are designated as SBIs. Lawton Woods are dominated by sycamore with oak, ash, beech and wild cherry. The ground flora contains bluebell and wood anemone indicating that this is ancient woodland. Rode Pool is a large lake in the grounds of Rode Hall where stands of reed bed occur around the margins and areas of woodland surround the lake.



LCT 12: Upland Footslopes

LCA 12a: Higher Disley Character Area.

Including Lane Ends & Gritstone Trail.

This small character area is located in the far north-eastern corner of the county. The county boundary follows the River Goyt, parallel to this runs the Peak Forest Canal. There is an increase in elevation – rising from c 120m at the county boundary to 350m AOD in the south of the area.

Much of the area exhibits a very strong urban influence associated with the settlement of Disley. The concentration of major roads and railways in the Goyt Valley has had an inevitable adverse impact upon the landscape. However areas of open pasture can be found within a relatively short distance of the developed areas. Visually dominant stone walls, enclosing sloping fields of varying size, combine with modest stone buildings on the edge of the settlement to create a very distinctive character. As altitude is gained the views become more distant and panoramic. From the elevated ground in the south of the character area there are views down onto the rooftops of Disley and Newtown, and views along the Goyt Valley in both directions. New Mills is very prominent to the north east. The nearby urban centres feature prominently in all distant views, as do the high moors of the Pennines further north. The Manchester conurbation is visible to the west with High Lane in the foreground.

Fields are small to medium and regular in form and relate to post-medieval planned enclosure, with some surviving patches of medieval enclosure. Field boundaries comprise dry stone walls and hedgerows.

In the south west elements of the adjoining *Upland Estate* landscape type are visible. The monument at Cage Hill, set upon a hill top within the grounds of Lyme Park, creates a local landmark. The Gritstone Trail recreational footpath lies close to the southern boundary and provides views of two reservoirs that lie beyond the character area boundary.

Two railway lines run east-west through the area. One line includes the Disley Tunnel and is defined on the ground surface by air shafts. The A6 runs through the area, other roads are mainly minor. The Peak Forest Canal passes through the area in the north. Settlement within the area is largely dispersed, with a concentration at Lane Ends. Building materials include timber and local stone.

There are many wooded areas e.g. the large broadleaved Knat-Holes Wood which is a semi-natural deciduous wood with alder scattered throughout and unimproved grassland to the south-west. At Stanleyhall Wood on the county boundary there is pedunculate oak with a dense understorey of holly and rhododendron and ancient woodland indicator species are thinly scattered.

At Redmoor Farm is an area of unimproved grassland, which covers an old coal mining site. Species include birdsfoot trefoil, bitter vetch, devil's-bit-scabious and pignut. There are also two large hay meadows, which are mostly semi-improved neutral with some unimproved acid grassland.

There are isolated, small patches of heathland that survive in this character area such as at Jackson'e Edge Quarry and Disley Golf Course.

There are a number of disused quarries, a reservoir near Moorwood Farm and also a covered reservoir. There were a small number of mills in this area in the 19th century; the site of a former cotton mill is now Disley Paper Mill.

The Peak Forest Canal is designated as an SBI, given the diverse and varied flora on either side of the tow path. Marginal vegetation includes yellow iris, greater tussock sedge and gipsy wort.



LCA 12b: Kerridge Character Area.

Including Styperson Park, Pott Shrigley & Rainow

This character area extends from the south of Disley through Kerridge south and east as far as the Macclesfield-Buxton Road. This ranges from 160m AOD up to 280m AOD at Nab Head.

This area has a complex landform that is reflected in widely differing visual characteristics. There are number of sharp ridges which provide a distinctive skyline to many vistas and dominate the surrounding lower ground. Kerridge Ridge is perhaps the best known because of the conspicuous landmark of White Nancy at its northern end. This wooded ridge is very prominent in views from the lower ground of the *Higher Farms & Woods* landscape type to the west. The ridge itself provides extensive and far-reaching views out to the west. Macclesfield Industrial Estate features prominently in the foreground, whilst the whole of Cheshire stretches out to the west.

A number of minor valleys converge near Pott Shrigley and much of the steeper ground is occupied by woodland. This creates a small scale, verdant landscape characterised by attractive stone buildings with glimpsed views out to the lower ground. This perception is reinforced by the network of narrow tortuous lanes passing between steep, vegetated banks where the tree canopies form continuous overhead cover.

Around Bollington the tree cover reduces and the scale of the landscape increases accordingly. On the upper slopes above the town a number of steep narrow lanes pass through enclosed pasture, and these enjoy extensive views to the west. The rooftops of Bollington occupy the immediate foreground, with large mill structures evident, and Wilmslow and the Manchester conurbation are visible beyond.

The village of Rainow lies within one of the valleys, surrounded by higher ground that forms a visually dominant skyline. The valley floor appears quite well-wooded and smaller scale due to the size of the field enclosures. Much of the more open high ground lies in the adjoining *Upland Fringe* landscape type. The contrast between the two landscape types is easily observed from the lower ground and forms an essential component of the area's visual character.

North of Rainow, fields are post-medieval in date and character – dating to the 18th and 19th century and mainly regular in shape. These occur where either earlier field systems have been improved or where new areas have been taken into enclosure

There are two RIGGS in this area – the largest being Kerridge Hill Quarry. Kerridge and Billinge quarries are also both designated as SBIs due to the habitats that have developed in these abandoned workings. Before transport was improved in the 19th century, Kerridge stone was used for roofing slabs. Nab Quarry continues to operate.

Kerridge Hill is covered with lightly grazed unimproved/semi-improved acid pastures on a steep east facing slope which has rocky outcrops in places. On the brow of the hill is a small strip of heathland while to the south dense scrub with a variable canopy occupies part of a disused quarry. The pasture is herb-rich with some uncommon species such as adder's tongue and moon wort. The site is also of national interest for waxcap fungus.

There are various small heathland areas to the north and east of Bollington.

There is also a covered reservoir at Kerridge End. Shrigley Hall was an area of former parkland, now the house is used as a hotel and the park has been converted into a golf course. There are a number of ponds in the grounds that survive from the ornamental landscape. To the west is Styperson Park, another wooded area with disused quarries.

Early activity in the area is indicated by a Bronze Age round barrow at Nab Head, although this has been greatly disturbed by quarrying. Coal pits and shafts are also recorded in the Higher Hurdfield area. White Nancy provides a striking landmark in the Bollington area. This c 5m high conical shaped folly was built as a summer house for the Gaskell family at Ingersley Hall c 1815, possibly to commemorate Waterloo.



LCA12c: Langley Character Area.

Including the Hollins & Whitemoor Hill.

This character area extends from the Macclesfield-Buxton Road in the north as far south as Bosley Reservoir and Lower Minnend, with elevations up to 320m AOD (to the south of Langley).

The west facing slopes in the south of this character area form a distinctive component in many views from adjoining areas and more distant parts of Cheshire. These steep, partially wooded slopes appear to rise up from a gently undulating agricultural landscape and are widely perceived as the transition to the high ground of the Peak District. The topography is much more complex than it would appear from a distance. A number of minor valleys and past quarrying activities combine to produce a complex mix of scarred landscapes, steep wooded slopes and relatively open pasture land.

In the north the settlements of Langley and Sutton-Lane-Ends are served by a network of tortuous narrow lanes lined with stone walls. This is a relatively small-scale, enclosed landscape with a high density of trees and tall hedgerows. The walls and the many small-scale, stone built properties make an important contribution to the visual character of the area. To the north the high ground of Teggs Nose forms a recognisable landmark on this very dominant skyline. Further to the east the conspicuous conifer plantations of Macclesfield Forest define the edge of the character area.

In the centre of the area the Lowerhouse Valley penetrates further east into the higher ground of the *Upland Fringe* landscape type. At lower levels on the valley floor there are abundant hedges and tree-lined streams and a number of isolated farmsteads are quite prominent. On the intermediate slopes a number of individual properties are noticeable, often surrounded by a stand of protective trees

Settlement is dispersed with a number of nucleated villages – Langley and Dane Bridge. These are characterised by steep roads, stone built houses and stone flagged roadways. In the immediate vicinity are the towns of Bollington and Macclesfield.

Fields are enclosed with dry stone walls and hawthorn hedges. The lower slopes to the east of Macclesfield, surrounding Sutton Common comprise small to medium (up to 8ha) semi-regular and irregular fields that date back to the medieval period. These were the cultivatable areas on the valley floors and lower slopes. On Macclesfield Common fields date to the 18th and 19th century and are mainly regular in shape. Overall, boundary types are a mix of hedgerows and dry stone walls.

West and north of Gawsworth Common is Ratcliffe wood, a large broadleaved woodland which is partially ancient. Gawsworth Common itself has unimproved grassland and on Whitemoor Hill to the west is a small area of heathland. This is also an area of extensive quarrying – rock outcrops occur along the hillside.

Two RIGGS occur in this area: Rough Hay Quarry and a section of the Harrop Brook, on Gawsworth Common. Small patches of heath survive on Cliff Hill to the east of Macclesfield.

There are numerous reservoirs in this character area – the long, thin Bosley Reservoir c 1km in length, is located at the foot of a steep slope and partially surrounded by trees: wych elm, wild cherry and willows. It is also important for neutral grassland. It has a varied bird community including a wintering population of goosanders. Bottoms reservoir and Teggs Nose reservoir are located at the base of the slope that leads up to Teggs Nose Country Park.

The Congleton and Macclesfield area is renowned for its textile industry heritage. Mills were once a common sight in this area and a number survive such as Ingersley Vale Mill and Gin Clough Mill, both former water powered textile mills.

Of interest is a moated site and annexe at Ridge Hall, which is reputedly the highest moat in Cheshire.



LCA 12d: Mow Cop Character Area.

Including Roe Park woods, Cheshire Close & the Cloud.

This character area extends along the county boundary from The Cloud where it reaches a maximum elevation of 343m AOD, south as far as Mere Lake.

Both the Cloud and Mow Cop are very prominent hill and ridge features dominating the lower lying character areas of *Lower Farms & Woods* and *Higher Farms & Woods* immediately to the west. This upland landscape is characterised by strongly undulating slopes and steep-sided valleys and exhibits a range of scales. There are a number of intimate small-scale wooded valley bottoms and elsewhere there are medium-scale landscapes with a strong element of enclosure provided by woodland and high hedgerows. By contrast large scale landscapes are found on the elevated open slopes, with weak field boundaries and very extensive panoramic views. Views from the Mow Cop area extend over the Cheshire Plain as far as the Sandstone Ridge and the Welsh Hills beyond. Vantage points on the Cloud enjoy views in all directions over lower ground in both Cheshire and Staffordshire. In the north east these views extend to the rising ground of the *Upland Footslopes* landscape type and the even higher ground of the *Upland Fringe* landscape type, crowned by the Croker Hill telecommunication mast.

There are a number of rock outcrops along the length of the gritstone ridge e.g. at Rainow Hill, Congleton Edge and at Mowcop. In some areas the ridge is quite densely wooded. Large woodland blocks of oak occur on the slopes below Mow Cop, with birch, holly and rowan appearing on the high ground.

Settlement includes the small villages of Mow Cop and Timbersbrook and hamlets along the ridge. Generally the area has a strong rural character with narrow winding lanes linking dispersed settlements. Stone structures are typical, with dry-stone field boundaries at the higher levels. However in certain localities the close proximity of the Congleton urban area, and to a lesser extent Mount Pleasant, has had a strong influence upon landscape character.

Fields are small-medium (up to 8ha) and comprise a mix of medieval fields and post-medieval enclosure. The latter is the result of enclosure of the former open moor. Unimproved pasture is enclosed in dry stone walls and hawthorn hedges. On the higher slopes in the south, field boundaries have been replaced with post and wire fences, but neglected stone walls combined with poor grazing to convey an atmosphere of a deteriorating landscape.

Limeworks and coal pits are features of the area's industrial past, e.g. air shafts and disused pits located in the vicinity of Limekiln Wood. There is also a covered reservoir. A section of the Macclesfield Branch of the Trent and Mersey Canal passes through the character area. The South Cheshire Way and the Staffordshire Gritstone Trail intersect at Mow Cop

Roe Park includes an area of broad leaved ancient woodland designated as a SSSI for its large size, acidic heathy ground flora and woodland community types rare in the county. Gorse scrub, acid grassland and heath are located along the ridge. There are five areas of dry heath around the summit of Mow Cop and two areas of heathland mosaic further down the ridge towards Dales Green that are included in an SBI. All are on thin soil associated with the gritstone ridge that runs from here to Congleton Edge. Congleton Edge is a gritstone outcrop that has been modified by numerous small quarries – now disused. Vegetation is typical of upland heath with developing birch and sessile oak woodland. Species include cownwheat, bilberry, heather and crowberry.

The Cloud is an open access area that is in the guardianship of the National Trust, the summit being covered with the largest area of heathland in Cheshire. There is also a plantation of scots pine. Boundaries and earthworks on The Cloud have been identified as potentially belonging to field systems, their date is undetermined but this is likely to have been a place of activity since prehistory. There has been extensive gritstone quarrying in the area. The Old Man of Mow is a pillar of stone that was left as a remnant of a former quarry, today it provides a striking land mark as does the Mow Cop Folly. This is an early example of a castle folly built in 1754 by Randle Wilbraham to be viewed and visited from Rode Hall.

A disused flooded quarry is located at Limekiln Farm – its steep sides and nearby spoil heaps are densely wooded. Sycamore, ash and mature hawthorn dominate the canopy. Ground flora includes cowslips, bluebells and celandines. Patches of semi-improved and unimproved grassland survive on the slopes such as at Cheshire's Close where there is acidic, semi-improved upland grass dominated by wet rushy fields.

An outstanding example of a Neolithic monument in the northwest is the Bridestones chambered tomb, located close to the county boundary. This monument was once 100 metres long, but much of it was destroyed when stones were removed for road building, leaving the chamber inside.



LCT 13: Enclosed Gritstone Upland

LCA 13a & 13b: Teggs Nose – Whaley Moor Character Area.

Including Blakestondale Moor, Nab End & Lamaload Reservoir.

This character area extends from Whaley Moor to the north of Kettleshulme south as far as Tegg's Nose Country Park – a former limestone quarry that is now used as a visitor centre – providing facilities, interpretation about the quarry industry, views of Cheshire and easily accessible walks. Much of the park is designated as a site of Regionally Geological Importance as it is one of the few places in Cheshire where limestone occurs at the ground surface.

This is an upland area, largely of enclosed former moorland with an elevation of between 310 – 470 m AOD. Drystone walls are typical and fields are mainly regular with some semi-regular areas up to 8ha in size and associated with post medieval planned enclosure. Settlement comprises occasional dispersed farms and there are a small number of steep, narrow, minor roads.

This is a large character area with a complex and varied landform, comprising high ridges and rounded hills with intervening valleys. There is low woodland cover, with some conifer plantations around Lamaload reservoir and woodland on steep-sided water courses. The area is bound almost entirely by the *Upland Footslopes* landscape type and all peripheral areas enjoy views out over the lower-lying agricultural landscapes. The disparity in tree cover between the two types is evident from most vantage points and there is an obvious reduction in the number of trees as altitude increases.

The A537 Macclesfield-Buxton road passes through the area in the south where flatter contours combine with roadside wire fences to create a larger scale landscape with extensive, panoramic views in most directions. A succession of ridges of similar height recede into the distance and the visible land cover is exclusively rough pasture and moorland. The absence of trees contributes to the bleak and exposed character. The heavy traffic seems incongruous in such a “wild” and empty landscape.

A number of small valleys in the centre of the area present a different visual character. There are isolated farmsteads and groups of trees at lower levels, where steep slopes and high ridge lines prevent outward views. This creates a medium-scale, insular landscape with a dominant skyline. Perhaps the most accessible valley is occupied by Lamaload Reservoir, which is partially surrounded by woodland and has a very distinctive character. It is owned by the water authority and managed in part as a recreational area and is of great ornithological importance particularly for ducks and waders.

At many locations there are also views towards the higher *Moorland Plateau* landscape. Teggs Nose Country Park in the south is typical, with panoramic views that extend to the *Upland Footslopes* landscape type in the valley, including settlements within the *Langley Character Area* and the solid plantations of *Macclesfield Forest Character Area*, and views out to the higher ground around Shutlingsloe summit within the *Moorland Plateau* Landscape type. Throughout the character area many high summits and most west facing slopes have extensive views towards Macclesfield with the Manchester conurbation visible to the north east. In the far north of the area there are views towards New Mills and Disley, whilst the monument at Cage Hill, within Lyme Park, provides a local landmark.

Ancient woodland occurs at the Oaks in the south-west and on the west bank of Todd Brook where woodland has a good ground flora.

There are two large areas of semi-improved and unimproved acid grassland at Todd Bank and on the steep slopes of Ely Brow. There are a number of smaller grassland areas scattered across the area where sedges are common, including Redmoor where species rich pasture is located in a shallow open valley and at Lamaload Meadow where unimproved acid pasture is herb rich with species such as yellow rattle with crested dog-tail, pignut and ribwort. The latter is important for breeding birds – sky lark, curlew and linnnet.

At Wimberry Moss are a group of meadows, all of which have a diverse flora and a high proportion of herbs to grasses including yellow rattle, zigzag clover and birdsfoot trefoil. There is a small scatter of heathland areas such as at Green Stack, Cutlers Farm quarry, Brink Lane Farm and Buxton Old Road Quarry.

Within this character area is a particularly high density of prehistoric monuments. This includes seven Bronze Age round barrows, most of which are scheduled monuments. For example, there are two barrows on Sponds Hill, while a barrow on Reed Hill revealed a primary cist and a secondary burial when it was excavated in the early 20th century. Three medieval crosses are known in this area, but only one survives – the Bowstones, which is made up of two decorated potentially Anglian cross shafts set into a large base stone.

There is also evidence of an industrial past: the Pott Brickworks closed in the late 20th century, having been in operation since the mid-19th century; and beside Harrop Brook, small scale coal workings are visible across a wide area including adit workings and air shafts.

At Park Moor is the site of a WWII bombing decoy designed to divert attention from the Manchester area.



LCA 13c: Macclesfield Forest Character Area.

Toot Hill, Ridgeway & Trentabank Reservoir.

The predominant land use in this character area is conifer plantation and the area has come to be known as Macclesfield Forest. This area was previously enclosed farm land. Small remnants of broad leaved woodland are scattered throughout the area – in cloughs and along roads and edges. The whole of the area is designated as an SBI.

This area is characterised by the very striking landform of a steeply sloping valley head with a very strong and dominant skyline. The low ground in the valley bottom is largely filled by two reservoirs and the surrounding slopes are covered in dense conifer plantations. This dominant land use, as a means of managing the reservoir catchment area, is an obvious departure from the remaining character areas within this landscape type. Many tracks and pathways are totally enclosed by the closely spaced conifers which restrict all but the nearest of views. One of the area's most distinctive characteristics is the sharp contrast between the gloomy enclosure of the plantations and the expansive views across the open water of the reservoirs. At a much higher level there is a similar contrast where the plantations terminate suddenly at the surrounding ridge at an elevation that allows long distance views into adjoining character areas within the *Upland Fringe* landscape type. Along the eastern boundary these views also extend to the character areas within the *Moorland Plateau* landscape type. A number of open glades on the upper slopes provide framed views across the deep valley to the opposite skyline which is predominantly wooded. The rock outcrop of Teggs Nose, within the adjoining *Teggs Nose-Whaley Moor Character Area*, is noticeable upon the skyline from some locations at lower levels.

To the north of Macclesfield Forest is a settlement referred to as Toothill. Here three large hill top fields, a small churchyard and glebe field are rich in neutral and acid unimproved and semi-improved grassland habitats.

Ridgeway and Trentabank reservoirs are important for wildfowl and waders, including a large heronry at Trentabank.

This area is popular with walkers, and public access is a key part of the management of this character area, with a large number of footpath trails available. Public facilities include the Trentabank Car Park and Visitor Centre. This is a popular access point for hikers ascending the summit of Shutlingsloe in the adjacent *Moorland Plateau* landscape type.



LCA 13d & 13e: Cessback & Sutton Common Character Area.

Including Croker Hill, Bosley Minn & Cessbank Common

This character area encompasses the top reaches of the upland enclosed moor to the west of Wilboardclough with an elevation of c 220m up to 400m AOD. This includes the two prominent hills of Sutton Common and Cessbank Common, both of which still retain areas of common land, albeit much reduced in size. While much of the underlying geology comprises bands of various gritstones, in the west is an area of Morridge Formation and Minn Sandstones. Fields are regular and semi-regular in pattern and are typical of planned post-medieval enclosure. There is evidence of earlier enclosure near Bosley Minn, which may have origins in the medieval period.

This is a large scale, open and expansive landscape where long ranging, panoramic views provide the defining characteristic feature. Field enclosure is provided by low stone walls, but these are often visually insignificant and the eye is inevitably drawn towards the distant horizons. Views to the west extend over the whole of Cheshire as far as the Welsh Hills, and The Cloud is very obvious to the south west. The Manchester conurbation is visible to the north, with Macclesfield prominent in the foreground. Many rolling Peak District summits are visible to the east with the distinctive shape of Shutlingsloe especially noticeable. The area's high elevation ensures that in addition to distant panoramas, many locations enjoy extensive views down into the adjacent lower ground.

This character area has a very low settlement density, with just a small number of dispersed farms. Settlement is mainly concentrated on the lower moorland slopes and individual farmsteads figure prominently within this observed landscape of the valley bottoms. The A54 runs west-east through the character area, alongside which is the large Fourways motel near Cleulow Cross Clough.

Within this character area woodland cover is very low, with the exception of the steep slopes of the southwest where for example Close and Flash Woods near Bosley Minn are oak dominated ancient woodland. The higher tree cover of the surrounding landscape type is very evident, with typical small-medium field enclosures with high hedges and tree-lined streams. This is in marked contrast to the open and tree-less landscape of the *Upland Fringe* landscape type. The difference in tree cover is particularly noticeable in the south of the character area, where views down into the adjacent *Wincle Character Area* from surrounding high points such as Bosley Min reveal the lower ground to be occupied by a very significant mass of woodland.

The telecommunication mast at Croker Hill in the west of this character area is probably the most widely visible landmark in Cheshire. The height of the structure and its elevated location on the edge of the Cheshire lowlands ensures that this obvious man-made feature is visible from a very great distance. The smooth topped ridge of Croker Hill and Sutton Common forms a dominant skyline in views from the surrounding areas of lower altitude. Another obvious feature of inward views is the change from the enclosed lower slopes to the more open nature of the higher ground. As height is gained there is an obvious reduction in tree cover and low stone walls replace hedgerows as field boundaries.

There are disused gritstone quarries in the north of the character area, including Fox Bank Quarry which is designated as a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIG). The Gritstone Way traverses the area in a roughly north-south direction, providing close-up views of active quarries and distant views in all directions.

There are a number of areas of heath – on Bosley Min and Croker Hill, with smaller patches elsewhere. On Bosley Minn is a complex of upland grassland, dry heath with heather and bilberry, and clough woodland on west facing slopes. Grassland on Bosley Min is acid on the hill and neutral in the valley. This is unimproved and species rich grassland, while the Cessbank Common area is a large upland area of acid and neutral semi-improved grassland, which is species rich and includes mountain pansy. There are several areas of soft rush and Rabb Clough contains a narrow strip of woodland.

There are two wayside crosses located in this type – the first at Cleulow High Cross is thought to be Anglo-Saxon in date and comprises a stone pillar sat on a mound overlooking the Shell Valley Brook. The second is a red sandstone wayside cross near Clough Brook. A third, Blayklow cross has been destroyed.

Modern structures are few, while there are a much greater number of prehistoric and historic monuments such as two known Bronze Age round barrows – the scheduled Bullstones, which was investigated in the 19th century and found to contain a cremation burial, and the Cess Banks barrow, which was excavated in the 19th century and found to contain an inurned cremation. The latter is badly damaged and has a quarried appearance.



LCT 14: Moorland Hills and Ridges

LCA 14a: Shutlingsloe Character Area.

Including High Moor, Higher Barn & Higher Nabbs

The character type refers to an area of unenclosed moor to the south of Macclesfield Forest and lies partly within the Peak District National Park. It is an upland area with steep slopes and ranges from 330m to 506m AOD on the top of Shutlingsloe Hill, which is a prominent landform. A series of small streams occur in shallow valleys on the hillside. This character type is characterised by a lack of obvious human activity – there are no signs of habitation such as buildings

The summit of Shutlingsloe dominates most of this character area with a distinctive landform that is recognisable from many of the surrounding character areas. This is the only obvious landmark in an expansive landscape of rolling moorland. When in flower purple patches of heather provide the only relief from the visually dominant acid grassland. The high elevation of this character area allows very distant views in all directions across a number of counties. The whole of Cheshire is visible in an extensive panoramic outlook that includes the Welsh Hills beyond the county's western boundary and the power stations in the Mersey Valley to the north-west. To the north the high rise buildings of Manchester and Stockport are visible. In the south-west the communication mast at Croker Hill is the most obvious local feature as it is surrounded by rolling open ground. In the east distant views extend over the county boundary into the Derbyshire and Staffordshire Peak District. Immediately to the north the *Macclesfield Forest Character Area* is easily recognised. The dense plantations form a very obvious boundary where the sweep of the open moorland is terminated abruptly by the solid mass of conifers.

The area is bound to the east by the *Peak Footslopes* landscape type of the *Wildboarclough Character Area* and along this margin there are extensive views down into the valley of the Clough Brook. A number of woodlands are visible within the valley and the large conifer plantation at Yarnshaw Hill is particularly prominent. The substantial property of Crag Hall is also visible from this elevation, surrounded by woodland on the opposite side of the valley. Views extend across the valley to the rolling, large-scale moorland plateau of the *Shinning Tor Character Area*. To the north east it is just possible to identify traffic moving along the A537 Macclesfield-Buxton Road, near the Cat and Fiddle public house, with the obvious high point of Shinning Tor beyond.

Characteristically this landscape type has low woodland cover, and there are just two small conifer wooded areas. Careful management, in particular grazing of the moor prevents the reversion to scrub and climax woodland vegetation. There is a small area of acid unimproved grassland surviving on Shutlingsloe Hill.

Evidence of prehistoric activity has been recorded in the area – in the 19th century two standing stones stood on Shutlingsloe, however, these have long since been removed. Shutlingsloe hill is surrounded by a curving dry-stone wall on monolithic foundations which may date from the medieval period. On the northern slopes of the hill summit are a number of small quarries. This prominent hill is given as one of six cattle pastures leased to Thomas Stanley in 1442 and was probably part of the vaccaries at an earlier date.



Appendix 2

Method

Guidance

- A2.1 This Landscape Character Assessment follows the method promoted by Natural England through 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'¹, which embeds the principles of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) within it.
- A2.2 The 2014 guidance lists the five key principles for landscape character assessment:
- 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;
 - A Landscape Character Assessment can provide an integrating spatial framework- a multitude of variables come together to give us our distinctive landscapes.

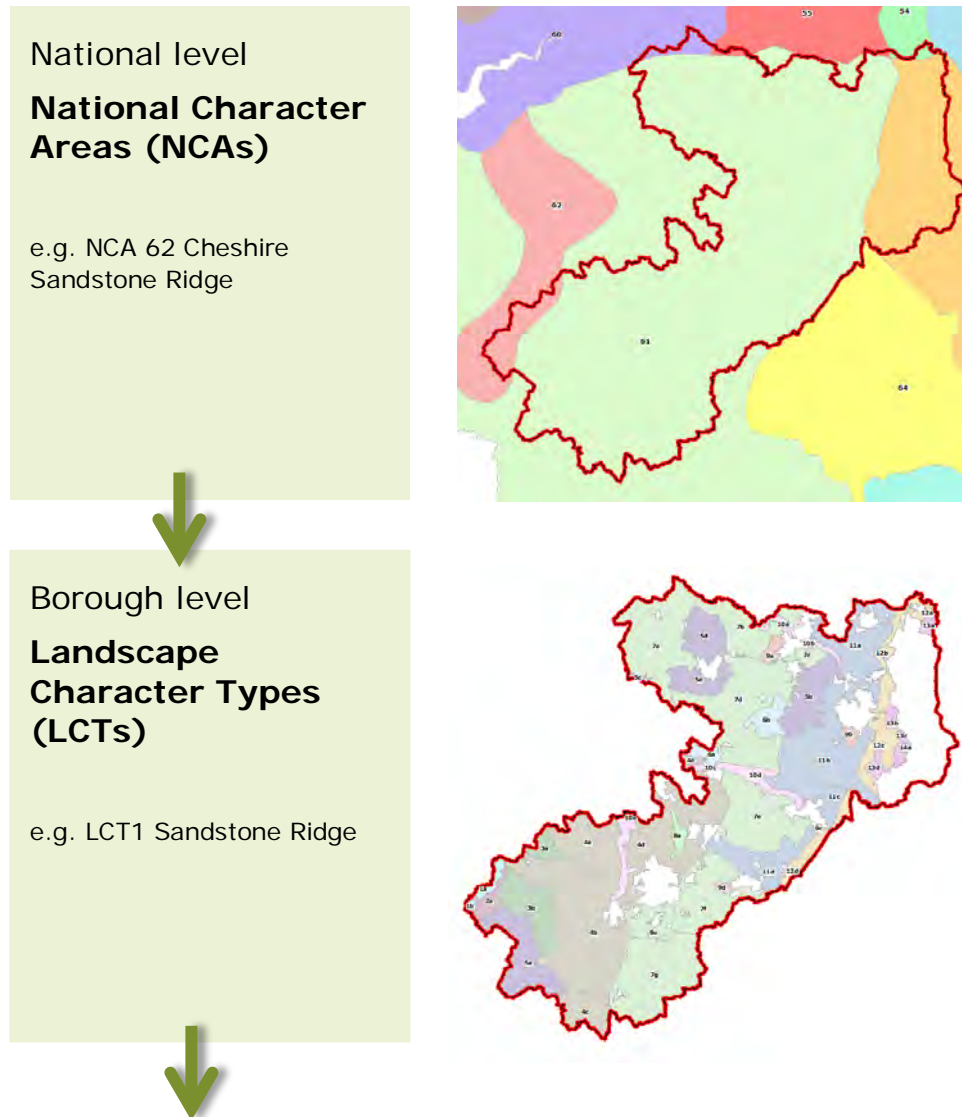
Landscape Character Assessment Framework

- A2.3 Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at a variety of scales and levels of detail, with the land within Cheshire East included within a hierarchy of landscape characterisation documents from the national down to the local level.
- A2.4 Landscape does not stop at administrative boundaries but continues seamlessly into surrounding administrative areas. Therefore, an aim of this assessment was to join up with the Landscape Character Assessments of adjacent authorities and sit within the existing national assessment (the National Character Areas published by Natural England).
- A2.5 At the national level, England is divided into a total of 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape character, biodiversity, geodiversity. There are descriptive profiles available for each NCA (published in 2014), setting out information on landscape character, changes happening in the landscape and an assessment of ecosystem services delivered.
- A2.6 Cheshire East contains 6 NCAs, as shown in **Figure A.2.2** and listed below:
- NCA 53 South West Peak
 - NCA 54 Manchester Pennine Fringe
 - NCA 55 Manchester Conurbation
 - NCA 60 Mersey Valley
 - NCA 61 Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain
 - NCA 62 Cheshire Sandstone Ridge

¹ Natural England 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (2014) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types>

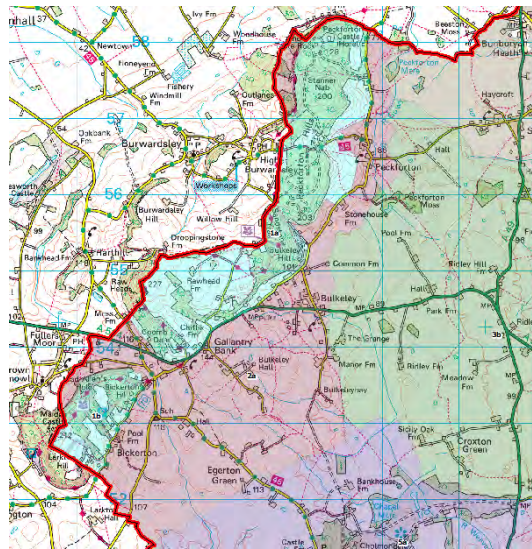
A2.7 The borough is dominated by one NCA, the expansive low-lying flat and gently undulating Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain (NCA 61). To the west of this expansive area is the distinctive Cheshire Sandstone Ridge (NCA62) which runs north-south and rising to the east are the upland slopes and moorland plateau of the South West Peak (NCA 53). The drained marsh, mudflat and saltmarsh of the Mersey Valley (NCA 60) and the outer edges of the Manchester Conurbation (NCA 55) and Pennine Fringe (NCA 54) lie along the northern fringes of the borough. The landscape character hierarchy is illustrated in **Figure A.2.1** below.

Figure A.2.1: Landscape Character Hierarchy



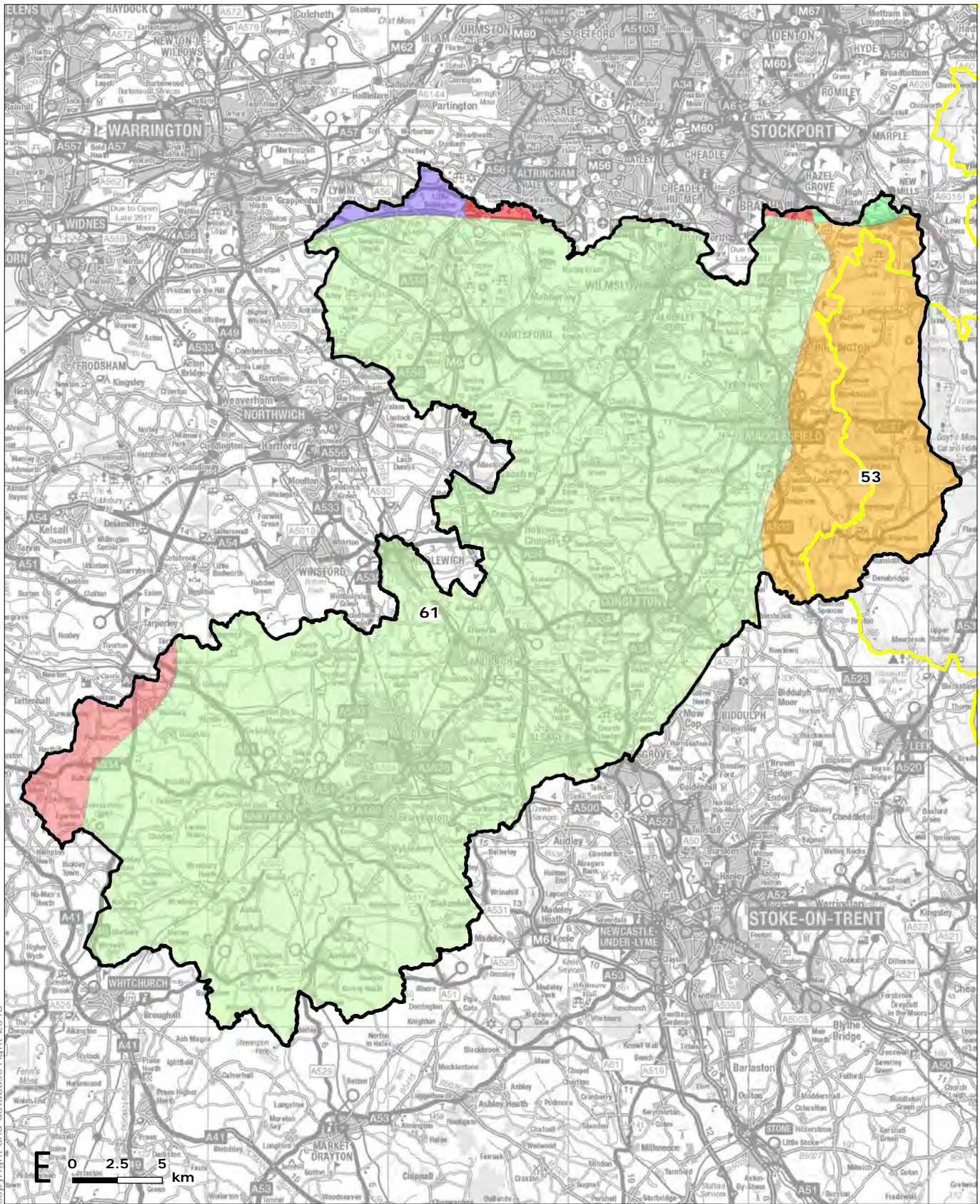
Borough level
**Landscape
Character Areas
(LCAs)**

e.g. LCA 1a Peckforton



A2.8 The classifications for neighbouring authorities are illustrated on **Figure A.2.3 Neighbouring Character Areas**.

A2.9 This assessment can also provide a framework in which more detailed assessments sit, such as local landscape character assessment produced to inform Neighbourhood Plans.



- Cheshire East District boundary
- Peak District National Park
- National Character Areas**
- 51: Dark Peak
- 53: South West Peak
- 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe
- 55: Manchester Conurbation
- 60: Mersey Valley
- 61: Shropshire, Cheshire And Staffordshire Plain
- 62: Cheshire Sandstone Ridge
- 64: Potteries And Churnet Valley

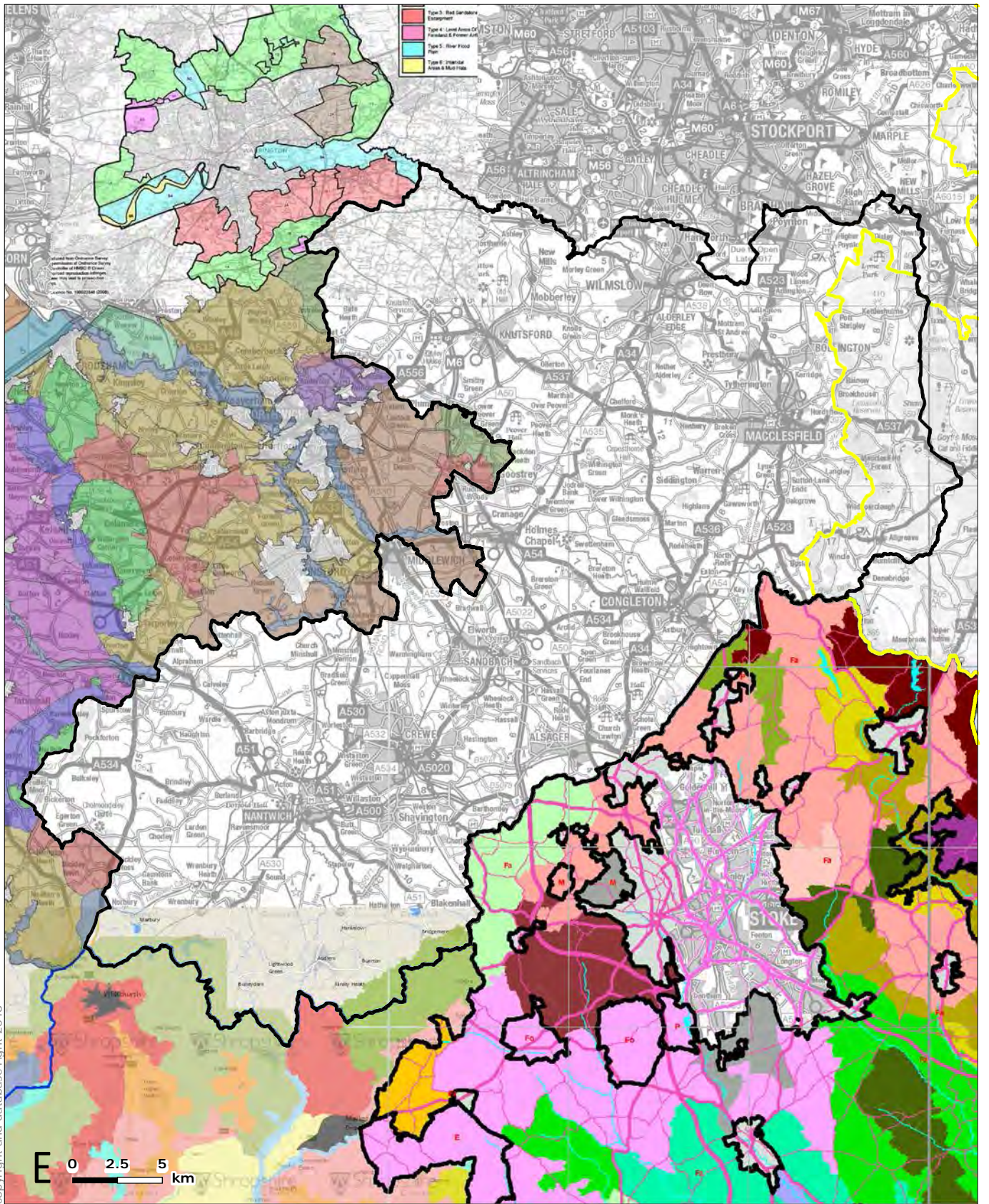
Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies

Figure A.2.2
Landscape Character Context



Source: Ordnance Survey, Natural England

Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000



Cheshire East District boundary
 Peak district NP

Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies

Figure A.2.3
Neighbouring Character Areas



Source: Ordnance Survey, Natural England

Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000

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Process of Assessment

A2.10 The process for undertaking the study involved five key stages:

- Desk-based review and classification
- Field survey
- Description
- Evaluative analysis
- Draft report
- Final report

Stage 1: Desk-based review and classification

A2.11 This stage involved reviewing and updating a wide range of mapped information to ‘sense-check’ the existing classification.

A2.12 Data used within the report, including data collated in the GIS database is shown in in Table A.1 below.

Table A.1 GIS Data

Name	Source
Base OS mapping at 1:25k and 1:50k	Ordnance Survey
Terrain 50 Contour data	Ordnance Survey
Settlement boundaries	Cheshire East Borough Council
Bedrock geology 1:625k	BGS
Public rights of Way	Cheshire East Borough Council
Night skies and light intrusion	LUC/ CPRE
Cheshire Historic Landscape Character Types (HLC) ²	Cheshire East Borough Council
Rivers and flood zones	Cheshire East Borough Council
Agricultural Land Classification	Natural England
Cultural and heritage designations	Cheshire East Borough Council
Landscape and nature conservation designations	Cheshire East Borough Council

A2.13 Existing assessments (National Character Area profiles³ and the 2009 Cheshire LCA) were reviewed and have fed into the revised character area classification (see the final classification in **Table 4.1**). Where necessary boundaries and names have been amended to provide an appropriate, consistent landscape classification which enables comparison with neighbouring classifications. For example, some minor amendments to boundaries were made where necessary in order to reflect changes in the landscape since 2009 or for cross-border continuity with neighbouring local planning authorities and the Peak District National Park.

A2.14 The 2009 Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment extended into the Peak District National Park. Areas within the Peak District National Park are excluded from this assessment.

² Cheshire HLC (2007),

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>

A2.15 A comparison of how the new classification fits with the previous landscape assessment (Cheshire LCA) and assessments by neighbouring authorities is in **Appendix 3**.

Stage 2: Field survey

A2.16 Field surveys were undertaken in September 2017 to gather details on each of the character types and areas. This focused specifically on:

- verifying the classification of landscape types and areas;
- collecting perceptual information on character;
- identifying valued landscape features;
- assessing landscape condition; and
- gathering visual information on forces for change.

Stage 3: Description

A2.17 Descriptions were updated to reflect any changes in the landscape since the Cheshire LCA was written in 2009. Desktop analysis of all available literature that covers Cheshire East, including GIS data, information within the National Character Areas (NCA) profiles, the Cheshire LCA (2009) and the Landscape Assessment of Congleton Borough (1999), was undertaken so that the descriptions brought together all information into one evidence base.

A2.18 Designations relating to cultural heritage, nature conservation and landscape were checked for any changes.

A2.19 For each landscape character type a location map and representative photos were provided. Landscape character was described in terms of:

- A general summary of the location of the type and its character;
- Component landscape character areas;
- Key characteristics;
- Descriptions of physical and natural influences, historic and cultural influences, and visual and perceptual character (taken from the Cheshire LCA 2009 but with any inconsistencies corrected and expanded where necessary to paint a picture of the landscape type).

A2.20 The landscape descriptions from of each Landscape Character Area (taken from the Cheshire LCA 2009) are reproduced in **Appendix 1** of this report. The descriptions generally remain unchanged from 2009. Changes to the boundaries of the LCAs, or where parts of the area are now found within Cheshire West and Chester District are noted in **Appendix 3** below.

Stage 4: Evaluation and Strategy

A2.21 An evaluative section was produced for each Landscape Character Type to identify what is important and why about the landscape, to help inform a forward-looking landscape strategy for the Borough.

A2.22 The landscape evaluation contains the following information:

- **Valued landscape features** - the features and characteristics that are particularly valued for their contribution to character and for the ecosystem services they provide (see **Text Box A1** for a list of ecosystem services). This section drew on the values set out in the statements of

significance and spirit of place from the 'A Landscape Scale Approach for a Project Area within Cheshire East'⁴).

- **Landscape condition** – summarising the condition (quality) of the landscape;
- **Forces for change** – identifying factors that are resulting in landscape change, building on the 'issues and change' section of 'A Landscape Scale Approach for a Project Area within Cheshire East' and the 'issues' section of the 2009 Cheshire LCA.
- **Overall vision** and forward looking landscape strategy – setting out a vision for each LCT and whether the overall strategy is to protect, manage or change (or a combination of these).
- **Guidance** for landscape management and built development.

Text Box A1: Ecosystem services (from <http://www.ecosystemservices.org.uk/ecoserv.htm>)

Our health and wellbeing depends upon the services provided by ecosystems and their components: water, soil, nutrients and organisms. Therefore, ecosystem services are the processes by which the environment produces resources utilised by humans such as clean air, water, food and materials. Ecosystem services can be defined in various ways. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment provided the most comprehensive assessment of the state of the global environment to date; it classified ecosystem services as follows:

- **Supporting services:** The services that are necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services including soil formation, photosynthesis, primary production, nutrient cycling and water cycling.
- **Provisioning services:** The products obtained from ecosystems, including food, fibre, fuel, genetic resources, biochemicals, natural medicines, pharmaceuticals, ornamental resources and fresh water;
- **Regulating services:** The benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes, including air quality regulation, climate regulation, water regulation, erosion regulation, water purification, disease regulation, pest regulation, pollination, natural hazard regulation;
- **Cultural services:** The non-material benefits people obtain from ecosystems through spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, reflection, recreation and aesthetic experiences.

A2.23 Examples of the **ecosystem services** delivered within Cheshire East are set out in **Table 2.1**.

Stage 5: Draft landscape character assessment report

A2.24 A draft report was submitted to the Cheshire East Steering Group for comment in November 2017. A draft final report, incorporating comments from the Steering Group was published on the Council's website in early 2018.

Stage 6: Final landscape character assessment report

A2.25 The final Landscape Character Assessment Report and Strategy will be published following consultation.

⁴ 'A Landscape Scale Approach For a Project Area within Cheshire East' (2016) a study produced on behalf of the National Trust and Cheshire East Council.

Appendix 3 Classification

NCA	Previous landscape classification Cheshire LCA 2009				Neighbouring classification		New Classification			
	Landscape Character Types			Landscape Character Area	Source		Landscape Character Types		Landscape Character Area	
NCA61 Shropshire, Cheshire & Staffordshire Plain & NCA 62 Cheshire Sandstone Ridge	LCT1	Sandy Woods	SW2	Rudheath <i>Extended into Cheshire West</i>	CWaC	Woodland, Heaths, Meres and Mosses	LCT6	Woodland, Heaths, Meres and Mosses	6a	Rudheath
			SW3	Withington					6b	Withington
NCA 62 Cheshire Sandstone Ridge	LCT2	Sandstone Ridge	SR3	Peckforton <i>Extends into Cheshire West</i>	CWaC	Sandstone Ridge	LCT1	Sandstone Ridge	1a	Peckforton
			SR4	Maiden Castle <i>Extends into Cheshire West</i>					1b	Maiden Castle
	LCT3	Sandstone Fringe	SF3	Beeston-Duckington <i>Extends into Cheshire West</i>	CWaC	Sandstone Fringe	LCT2	Sandstone Fringe	2a	Beeston- Duckington
NCA 61	LCT5	Rolling	RF2	Oulton	CWaC	Undulating	LCT3	Undulating	3a	Oulton

NCA	Previous landscape classification Cheshire LCA 2009				Neighbouring classification		New Classification			
Shropshire, Cheshire & Staffordshire Plain		Farmland		<i>Extends into Cheshire West</i>		Enclosed Farmland		Farmland		
			RF4	Faddiley <i>Extends into Cheshire West</i>		Enclosed Farmland				
	LCT7	East Lowland Plain	ELP1	Ravensmoor	CWaC	Cheshire Plain East	LCT4	Cheshire East Plain	4a	Cholmondeston
			ELP2	Dodcott					4b	Ravensmoor
			ELP3	Cholmondeston <i>Extends into Cheshire West</i>					4c	Dodcott
			ELP4	Stublach <i>Extends into Cheshire West</i>					4d	Wimboldsley
			ELP5	Wimboldsley <i>Extends into Cheshire West</i>					4e	Stublach
	LCT9	Estate, Woodlands and Meres	EWM1	Cholmondeley	CWaC/ Wrexha n	Mere Basin	LCT5	Wooded Estates and Meres	5a	Cholmondeley
			EWM2	Capesthorpe					5b	Capesthorpe

NCA	Previous landscape classification Cheshire LCA 2009				Neighbouring classification		New Classification			
			EWM3	Budworth <i>Extends into Cheshire West</i>					5c	Budworth
			EWM4	Tatton & Rostherne					5d	Tatton and Rostherne
			EWM5	Tabley					5e	Tabley
	LCT10	Lower Farms and Woods	LFW1	Marthall <i>Extends into Cheshire West</i>	CWaC/ Stafford shire	Lowland Farmland and Mosses	LCT7	Lower Wooded Farmland	7a	Arley
			LFW2	Brereton Heath					7b	Ringway
			LFW3	Arley <i>Extends into Cheshire West</i>					7c	Chonar
			LFW4	Audlem					7d	Marthall
			LFW5	Chonar					7e	Brereton Heath
			LFW6	Ringway					7f	Barthomley

NCA		Previous landscape classification Cheshire LCA 2009			Neighbouring classification		New Classification			
			LFW7	Barthomley					7g	Audlem
	LCT11	Salt Flashes	SFL1	Sandbach Flashes	CWaC	Salt Heritage Landscape	LCT8	Salt Flashes	8a	Sandbach Flashes
	LCT12	Mosslands	M1	Danes Moss		-	LCT9	Mosslands	9a	Lindow Moss
			M2	Lindow Moss					9b	Danes Moss
			M3	Oakhanger Moss					9c	Congleton Moss
			M4	Congleton Moss					9d	Oakhanger Moss
			M5	Wynbury Moss					9e	Wynbury Moss
	LCT13	River Valleys	R3	Upper Weaver <i>Extends into Cheshire West</i>	CWaC	River Valleys	LCT10	River Valleys	10a	Lower Bolin
			R4	Lower Dane					10b	Upper Bolin
			R5	Upper Dane <i>Extends into Cheshire West</i>					10c	Lower Dane

NCA	Previous landscape classification Cheshire LCA 2009				Neighbouring classification		New Classification				
			R8	Lower Bolin					10d	Upper Dane	
			R9	Upper Bolin					10e	Higher Dane	
									10f	Upper Weaver	
									10g	High Weaver	
	LCT16	Higher Farms and Woods	HFW1	Gawsworth		-	LCT11	Higher Wooded Farmland	11a	Adlington	
			HFW2	Little Moreton					11b	Gawsworth	
			HFW3	Adlington					11c	Buglawton	
			HFW4	Buglawton					11d	Little Moreton	
	NCA 53 South West Peak	LCT17	Upland Estate	UE1	Lymme <i>Now within Peak District National Park</i>	PDNP	Slopes and Valleys with woodland	-	<i>Peak District National Park not covered within this LCA</i>	-	-
		LCT18	Upland Foot slopes	UFS1	Mow Cop Ridge	PDNP	Slopes and Valleys with woodland	LCT12	Upland Footslopes <i>Part of the former LCT is now within Peak District National Park and not covered</i>	12a	Higher Disley
UFS3				Higher Disley	12b					Kerridge (part)	
USF5				Langley	12c					Langley	

NCA		Previous landscape classification Cheshire LCA 2009			Neighbouring classification		New Classification			
			USF6	Kerridge				<i>by this LCA</i>	12d	Mow Cop Ridge
	LCT19	Upland Fringe	UF1	Sutton Common (part)	PDNP	Enclosed Gritstone Upland	LCT13	Enclosed Gritstone Uplands <i>Much of the former LCT is within Peak District National Park and not covered by this LCA.</i>	13a	Whaley Moor (part)
			UF2	Teggs Nose-Whaley Common					13b	Teggs Nose (part)
			UF3	Macclesfield Forest (part)					13c	Macclesfield Forest
									13d	Cessbank Common
	13e	Sutton Common								
	LCT20	Moorland Plateau	MP2	Shutlingsloe (part)	PDNP	Moorland Hills and Ridges	LCT14	Moorland Hills and Ridges <i>Much of the former LCT is within Peak District National Park and not covered by this LCA.</i>	14a	High Moor

Appendix 4

Glossary

Term	Definition
Aesthetic	Concerning the visual appeal of a feature or landscape
Amenity	The pleasantness or attractiveness of a place.
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum (sea level).
Agricultural Land Classification	The classification of agricultural land in England in Wales.
Ancient woodland	Woods that are believed to have been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD.
Alluvium	Loose soil or sediments, which have been eroded, reshaped by water in some form, and redeposited in a non-marine setting.
Arable	Land used for growing crops.
Biodiversity	The measure of the variety of organisms present in different ecosystems.
Built Form	The characteristic nature of built development.
Brine	Water strongly impregnated with salt.
Characteristic	A distinctive element of the landscape that contributes to landscape character for instance a particular hedgerow pattern or sense of tranquillity.
Condition	A judgement on the intactness and condition of the elements of the landscape.
Coniferous woodland	Woodland comprised of coniferous trees often having needle like leaves. They are usually evergreen.
Copse	A small group of trees
Deciduous woodland	Woodland where the majority of tree lose their leaves at the end of the growing season
Drift	The name for all material of glacial origin found anywhere on land or at sea, including sediment and large rocks.
Enclosure	The placing in private hands of land to which there was previously common rights; the merging of strip fields to form a block surrounded

	by hedges.
Floodplain	The area that would naturally be affected by flooding if a river rises above its banks, or high tides and stormy seas cause flooding in coastal areas.
Geodiversity	The variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, sediments and soils in an area, together with natural processes, such as erosion and landslips that may still be active.
Grassland	Land used for grazing. Grassland can be improved (by management practices) semi-improved (modified by management practices and have a range of species less diverse than unimproved grasslands), or unimproved (not treated with fertiliser, herbicide or intensively grazed and consequently species diversity is high).
Gritstone	A coarse sandstone
GIS	Geographic Information System.
GPS	Global Positioning System.
Habitat	The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism.
Halite	Sodium Chloride as a mineral, typically occurring as colourless cubic crystals; rock salt.
Heathland	A shrubland habitat found mainly on free-draining infertile, acidic soils, characterised by open, low-growing woody vegetation.
HLC	Historic Landscape Characterisation.
Horsiculture	Development of farmland for horses and equestrianism
Hydrology	The science dealing with the occurrence, circulation, distribution, and properties of the waters of the earth and its atmosphere
Intact	Not changed or diminished
Land cover	The physical material at the surface of the earth.
Landscape character	The distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape and how these are perceived. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement.
Landscape character areas (LCA)	Single unique areas that are the discrete geographical area of a particular landscape type.
Landscape character types (LCT)	Distinct types of landscape that is relatively homogenous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but share broadly similar combinations of

	geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historic land use and settlement pattern.
Landmark	An object or feature of a landscape or town that is easily seen and recognized from a distance, especially one that enables someone to establish their location.
Local Plan	A development plan prepared by local planning authorities.
Marl	Sedimentary rock of soil consisting of clay and carbonate of lime, formerly used as fertilizer.
Marl Pit	A pit from which marl is excavated.
Mere	A lake or pond.
Moss	A bog, especially a peat bog.
Naturalness	The quality or state of being natural.
NCA	National Character Area – defined within the <i>National Character Area Study, Natural England (2013)</i> - NCAs divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity.
Nucleated settlements	A settlement that is clustered around a centre, in comparison to a linear or dispersed settlement.
OS	Ordnance Survey.
Parliamentary fields/ enclosure	Fields formed by a legal process of enclosure (or inclosure), typically during the 18 th and 19 th centuries – by passing laws causing or forcing enclosure to produce fields for use by the owner (in place of common land for communal use).
Pastoral	Land used for keeping or grazing sheep or cattle.
Perceptual	The ability to interpret or become aware of something through the senses.
Permeability	The degree to which an area has a variety of pleasant, convenient and safe routes through it
Remnant	A part or quantity left after the greater part has been used, removed, or destroyed.
Rural	Relating to or characteristic of the countryside.
Scheduled Monument	Nationally important archaeological sites or historic buildings, given protection against unauthorised change.
Sense of Place	A person's perception of a location's indigenous characteristics, based on the mix of uses, appearance and context that makes a place

	memorable.
Sensitive	The response to change or influence.
Skyline	The outline of a range of hills, ridge or group of buildings seen against the sky.
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest.
Time depth	The time period expressed in the landscape, or the extent to which the landscape reflects a certain time period (a landscape with greater time depth will comprise older elements than a landscape with lesser time depth).
Topography	The arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of an area.
Valued attributes	Positive features and characteristics that are important to landscape character and that, if lost, would result in adverse change to the landscape.