4.6 DANE VALLEY WEST

Key Characteristics

- Flat/gently undulating river valley, with less steep wooded slopes than the Dane Valley to the east
- Agricultural landscape predominantly used for pasture
- Meandering watercourse lined with mature vegetation
- Poorly defined field pattern without clearly defined boundaries with the exception of clipped hedgerows along country lanes and access tracks
- Limited access along narrow country lanes and farm access tracks. However, character is strongly influenced by major transport corridors which dissect the valley
- Development located along the valley bottom including sewage treatment works and large scale industrial structures
- Dispersed settlement pattern of isolated farms, halls and villages; buildings predominantly red brick under slate. However, character is heavily influenced by the urban edge of Holmes Chapel
- Twemlow Viaduct is a prominent landmark feature
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LANDCOVER TYPES

Urban Fringe Industrial
Industrial works located at the urban fringe of Holmes Chapel. Includes sewerage plant, surrounded by areas of rough grassland.

Urban Fringe Residential
Housing development located at the urban fringe of Holmes Chapel and also the settlement of Cranage.

Woodland
Deciduous woodland on steeper sloping ground along the valley. Narrow bands of woodland extend along tributaries.

Farmed valley slopes
Medium scale farmland, primarily under pasture, field boundaries are defined by hawthorn hedgerows although are less defined along the valley bottom.

LANDSCAPE QUALITY

The Dane Valley West is good quality. This is a pleasant landscape, having a reasonable distribution of landscape features. Factors which contribute to the quality of this landscape include:

- Semi improved, low-intensity farmed pasture, along a river corridor landscape;
- distinct valley landform with significant vegetation cover, and
- industrial works, the M6 and exposed settlement edges are detractors.
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Existing Landscape

The Dane Valley West is a continuation of the Dane valley to the east. The Dane Valley and Dane Valley West are both strongly defined by topography and vegetation cover. However, the Dane Valley West has a distinctly different character due to the level of urban fringe influences associated with Holmes Chapel and development within the valley bottom and sides which is not found in the valley to the east.

This area is located immediately to the north of Holmes Chapel and the Cheshire Plain and to the south of the North Congleton Plain. The eastern boundary corresponds with the A535, at this point in the valley development becomes increasingly more evident as you progress in a westerly direction.

The topography of this section of the Dane Valley is less pronounced than the valley to the east of the A535. The influence of topography upon the character of the area gradually decreases as the valley merges with the wider Cheshire Plain beyond the M6 motorway and the Borough boundary. The floodplain gently undulates as the river sinuously meanders along the broad valley floor. River terraces indicate successive periods of erosion and fluctuating water levels. More recent localised erosion along the course of the river has formed low river cliffs, exposing sandy alluvial soils. The underlying geology is middle keuper marl overlaid with alluvium and undifferentiated river terrace deposits on the valley bottom and boulder clay along valley sides.

This area remains primarily an agricultural landscape and shares many characteristics with the Dane Valley to the east. The land is predominantly used for pasture and where evident, field boundaries are defined by hawthorn hedgerows. Woodland cover along this section of the Dane Valley is less prominent than in the area to the east.

The settlement pattern in this area is similar to that of the Dane Valley to the east, with isolated properties linked by tracks to the wider road network of the Cheshire and North Congleton Plains. However, unlike the valley to the east the Dane Valley West is heavily influenced by the settlement of Holmes Chapel which forms the majority of the areas southern boundary and features prominently in views from within the valley. The proximity of what is a relatively large settlement within the Borough to the character area has reduced the sense of remoteness found to the east.

This urban fringe character is reinforced by the presence of development along the valley bottom, which includes a sewage treatment works and commercial properties such as Massey Feeds. Older buildings within the area include properties at Cranage and along the A50.

The character of the area is also influenced by major transport corridors, which dissect the valley, in contrast to the valley to the east where transport infrastructure is not a major influence on the character or quality of the landscape. These transport corridors include the M6 motorway, the A50 and the Crewe to Manchester rail line. In addition to the visual intrusion of the M6 it also generates significant noise levels, which detract from the peaceful character of the valley found further to the east. The rail line crosses the valley on the Twemlow Viaduct, this tall multi-arched structure is constructed from red brick and is a prominent landmark feature within the valley.

This is a more open landscape than the Dane Valley to the east due to the gradually decreasing influence of topography and a reduction in woodland cover along the valley sides. The influence of Holmes Chapel and manmade features such as the M6, residential development, industrial/commercial development and sewage treatment works detract from the character and quality of the area. However, the Twemlow Viaduct is a positive landscape feature, which is a prominent landmark feature that adds to the local distinctiveness of the area.

ISSUES AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

The main issues and forces for change which are currently affecting this character area are as follows:

- Reductions in agricultural intensity resulting in under grazing or poor management.
- Development along urban fringe including possible expansion of sewage treatment works and residential areas.
- Increased demand for formal and informal recreational facilities to accommodate expansion of urban development.

Future Management

The aims of the following guidelines is to outline the most appropriate management and conservation strategies, which ensure that the character of the area is conserved, restored or enhanced.

- Respect the conservation value associated with the river and woodland. Continue to manage and maintain these areas.
- Respect the conservation value of the Twemlow Viaduct. The viaduct is a distinguishing feature of the landscape. Avoid development impacting upon this resource.
- Promote further areas for nature conservation. Areas of disturbed or degraded land affected by industry or urban fringe neglect provide an opportunity to develop new landscape features such as blocks of broadleaf woodlands, wetlands or grasslands particularly where there are positive benefits to be gained in screening industrial works and roads. Restoring some of the qualities of the valley to the east.
- Restore and manage hedgerows as positive conservation features within the landscape. Continue to manage hedgerows, restoring gaps and planting new trees to promote this feature within the landscape.

DESIGNATIONS

Landscape designations within the Dane Valley West are as follows:

Non Statutory Designations
- ASLEV - Covers much of this area
- SBI A: Small area of the Dane Valley at Holmes Chapel immediately adjacent to the Twemlow Viaduct
- SBI C: Holline Wood, Cranage