4.8 NORTH CONGLETON PLAIN

Key Characteristics

- This is a relatively flat area with local undulations in topography associated with the Dane Valley
- This is a mixed agricultural landscape of medium to large scale fields, with an irregular field pattern defined by strong hedgerows
- Field ponds are located throughout the area, though are less evenly distributed than in the Cheshire Plain
- Greater degree of woodland cover and diversity of tree species than the Cheshire Plain
- Slight parkland feel created by isolated trees and clumps of trees in fields. Metal railings at road junctions and along country lanes reinforce this character.
- Small patches of heathland and rows of silver birch are evident in many places. Where this occurs the field pattern is generally smaller
- There are several large country houses in this area whose grounds add to the character and quality of the landscape
- The most dominant features in views from this area are the radio telescopes at Jodrell Bank

CONGLETON LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT
4.8 NORTH CONGLETON PLAIN

LANDCOVER TYPES

Heathland
Small pockets of heathland are evident throughout the area. Distinctive vegetation includes clumps of birch woodland and stands of coniferous trees.

Estate Parkland
Well balanced and mature, maintained landscapes comprising of blocks of deciduous woodland, pasture and field trees. Metal railings adds to the parkland character.

Mixed Agricultural Land
Medium to large scale field size, of irregular pattern well defined by hedgerows with trees. There are scattered field ponds throughout the area, though less evident than within the wider Cheshire Plain. Farming is primarily pastoral, although there is some arable use within the larger fields.

LANDSCAPE QUALITY

The North Congleton Plain is of good quality. This is a pleasant agricultural landscape. Factors which contribute to the quality of this landscape include:
- Managed agricultural land with a mixture of field boundaries and hedgerows;
- Substantial proportion of mature vegetation associated with the valley corridor and parkland estate; and
- Some sense of place created by Jodrell Bank.
4.8 NORTH CONGLETON PLAIN

EXISTING LANDSCAPE

This area is located to the north of the Dane Valley and forms the northern boundary of the Borough. The area shares many characteristics with the Cheshire Plain to the south of the Dane Valley. However, subtle variations in landcover and topography set this area apart. The area extends from the north west of Congleton to the west of the M6 and beyond the Borough boundary to the north.

This is a relatively flat area with local undulations in topography associated with the Dane Valley. The area is formed on predominantly Triassic middle keuper marl overlaid with glacial deposits. These deposits comprise large areas of undifferentiated fluvo-glacial deposit interspersed with areas of glacial sands, gravels and boulder clay. The extent of the overlying boulder clay in this area is far less than on the Cheshire Plain to the south of the Dane Valley. The area is drained by the River Dane and its tributaries to the south and by various brooks to the north.

This is a mixed agricultural landscape of medium to large scale fields, with an irregular field pattern defined by strong hedgerows. There is however some evidence of hedgerow loss to barbed wire and post and rail fencing. Field ponds are located throughout the area. However, they are less evenly distributed than in the Cheshire Plain and tend to be concentrated in the areas surrounding Twemlow Green and Goostrey.

This area has a slightly greater degree of woodland cover and diversity of tree species than the Cheshire Plain to the south, much of which is associated with the River Dane and its tributaries or the many halls/country houses that are scattered throughout the area. Typical species are mature oaks, ash or sycamore occurring in relatively intact hedgerows with Scots pine/coniferous plantations in relatively small blocks also a feature of this landscape. There are generally more isolated trees and clumps of trees in fields than elsewhere in the Borough giving a slight parkland feel. Metal railings at road junctions and along country lanes reinforce this character. Another feature, which distinguishes this area from the Cheshire Plain, is the small patches of heathland and rows of silver birch that are evident in many places, where this occurs, the field pattern is generally smaller.

Settlement in this area is similar to the Cheshire Plain. The main settlements in this area are Goostrey and Cranage. Other settlement is limited to isolated farms or groups of dwellings along country lanes, these are predominantly red brick under slate or clay-tile roofs. There are several large country houses in this area whose grounds add to the character and quality of the landscape. Listed buildings are distributed throughout area particularly at Cranage, Goostrey, Twemlow Green and Jodrell Bank.

The area is less open than the Cheshire Plain and vistas are restricted to short or middle distance views by bands of woodland, undulations in topography and hedgerow vegetation. The most dominant features in views from this area are the radio telescopes at Jodrell Bank. These are prominent landmark features, which tower above surrounding vegetation.

This is a good quality agricultural landscape enhanced by the slight parkland feel ornamented by woodland blocks and mature trees within fields. This is a slightly more intimate landscape than the Cheshire Plain.

DESIGNATIONS

Designations within the North Congleton Plain are as follows:

Statutory Designations
Scheduled Ancient Monuments – Four Bowl Barrows to the south of Jodrell Bank Farm. Long Barrow southeast of Somerford Bridge

Non Statutory Designations
SBI Grade A – Grassland adjacent to Jodrell Bank.
SBI Grade B – Ancient Woodland at Galey Wood and Heath adjacent to Hermitage Farm
ASCV – Along boundary with Dane Valley.
ASLEV – Along boundary with Dane Valley (West).

Forces for Change
The main issues and forces for change affecting this character area are mainly concerned agricultural change. Additionally there are some commercial developmental pressures.

- Neglect of farmland is minimal, however there is some degradation of hedgerows.
- Gentrification of traditional farm properties or historic buildings such as Somerford Hall.

• North Congleton Plain is bordered to the east by Congleton. Pressures at the urban fringes will include Residential and commercial developments.

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

- Retain open views towards Jodrell Bank.
- Continue to maintain hedges, hedgerow trees and field trees as positive conservation features within the landscape. Manage hedgerows to maintain the existing age and species diversity, ensuring hedgerows continue to be a feature of the landscape.
- Conserve small pockets of heath. Heath areas are of distinctive local character, which adds diversity to the landscape. Retain and maintain character.
- Respect the conservation value of the estate parkland. Areas of estate parkland are a feature of the North Congleton Plain. Retain and maintain character.
- Protect important nature conservation areas. Woodland and grassland and heathland habitats are of importance for nature conservation and are valuable landscape features. Both their aesthetic and ecological value should be respected in any management or maintenance work.