Landscape Character Type 19:

Upland Fringe
LANDSCAPE TYPE 19: UPLAND FRINGE.
Edge of the Peak District National Park

UF1. Sutton Common          UF2. Teggs Nose- Whaley Moor
UF3. Macclesfield Forest    UF4. Wildboarclough

Key Characteristics:

- Upland inclines and undulations, steep slopes c 220-470m AOD
- Open and extensive views of the surrounding landscape
- Occasional, small surviving patches of heathland
- Small number of dispersed farms concentrated on the lower slopes
- Stone built houses, structures and boundary walls
- Gritstone quarries
- Regular and semi-regular post-medieval enclosure
- Occasional areas of semi-improved and unimproved neutral and acid grassland
- Typically low density clough woodland
- Prehistoric monuments – round barrows etc.
- Medieval wayside crosses

General Description:

This character type provides a distinctive mass along the eastern County boundary. This is a transitional landscape, occupying the steep sloping ground below the open moors of the Moorland Plateau and above the lower-
lying, shallower gradients of the *Upland Footslopes*. The below ground solid geology which forms the dramatic nature of this character type is also the reason that there are a number of quarries – some of which are designated as being Regionally Important Geological sites.

There is low woodland cover in the type, with mainly clough woodland and some conifer plantations. Patches of heath and semi and unimproved grassland are also characteristic.

Notable features include the remains of medieval wayside crosses, which are indicative of former ecclesiastical route ways across upland areas and Bronze Age barrows which indicate that these quiet isolated areas have seen human activity since the earliest time.

**Visual Character:**

It is a medium-large scale landscape, with low stone walls providing the dominant elements of enclosure. Clough Woodlands are obvious along water courses. Elsewhere blocks of enclosed woodland or regular shaped plantations appear locally dominant within the pattern of stone walls, emphasising the general scarcity of trees, hedges or woodland cover and the open nature of the landscape. Similarly the occasional stone barn or prominent farmstead can present a local landmark within the open slopes.

A strong skyline or ridge is generally dominant within this type, often provided by the higher ground of the adjacent *Moorland Plateau* landscape type. The high vantage points and generally open aspect ensure long distance panoramic views in all directions. These extend westward over the Cheshire Plain, to the east into the heart of the Peak District and to the Manchester conurbation in the north.

**Natural Influences:**

This type is underlain by a series of gritstones: roaches grit, millstone grit and chatsworth grit overlain by patches of till and glacio-fluvial deposits. Certain quarry sites are designated as Regionally Important Geological Sites.

This is an upland area, typically of improved and reverted moor. Soils on the lower slopes are typical brown earths, which are under permanent grass and suited to beef and dairy grazing, with sheep grazing on the higher slopes.

On the higher footslopes of altitudes above c240m are cambic stagnohumic gley soils which support purple moor grass and mat grass; rushes are dominant in many places with cotton grass and mosses on the wettest sites.

Woodland cover is very low except for in steep sided cloughs, typically overlooking streams where it is most likely to be broad leaved and potentially includes ancient woodland indicator species. Some conifer plantations are known such as on the banks of Lomaload reservoir, but these are limited.
Throughout the type are patches of acid and neutral semi-improved and unimproved grassland. In some cases this is species rich. These can be large – such as Cessbank Common and the banks of Todd Brook or one of a number of smaller examples like Wimberry Moss where there is 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.

Isolated heathland areas occur across this type. Such as on Bosley Minn where there is a complex of upland grassland, dry heath with heather and bilberry, and clough woodland on west facing slopes.

A small number of streams issue from the steep slopes of this character area.

**Cultural Influences:**

This character type was once part of the extensive Royal Forest of Macclesfield which effectively came to an end with the acquisition by Lord Derby in 1684 of all the grazing and pasture which he had previously rented.

Macclesfield was one of four large forests existing in Cheshire in the medieval period (Delamere, Mondrem and Wirral were the others). The medieval forest of Macclesfield covered a vast portion of Cheshire, considerably larger than the coniferous plantations that today are referred to as ‘Macclesfield Forest’. The popular perception of a forest is that of an area densely covered with trees. However, in the medieval period, a forest was an area for hunting deer and beasts of the lesser warren; broad-leaved woodland was interspersed with farmland and even settlement in some areas. Forests were mainly owned by the Crown and they were subject to Forest Law which imposed restrictions upon land use and severely punished poaching.

Macclesfield Forest was important for sheep farming in the 16th century, with enclosure and settlement encouraged in order to increase revenue. It was after the mid-17th century that enclosure of the higher altitudes increased when improved moor land was enclosed with stone walls in a regular and semi-regular pattern.

The inhospitable and exposed nature of this character type makes it particularly unappealing for settlement – hence the predominance of dispersed farms on the lower margins.

Of interest in this character type, are the surviving concentrations of Saxon crosses and Bronze Age round barrows – which are likely to have survived due to their remote location and lack of pressure for intensive farming and settlement.

**Issues affecting the Upland Fringe landscape character type**

1. **Wind Turbines are likely to target this area** given the elevated topography and average wind speeds
2. **Recreational pressures:** This type includes very popular recreational areas with visitor pressure at certain locations, leading to loss of tranquillity, loss or fragmentation of habitats, erosion of road verges, visual intrusion of car-parks or stationary vehicles and demand for additional facilities.

3. **Restructuring of commercial forestry plantations** may lead to changes in the appearance of prominent conifer plantations. An increase in the proportion of broadleaved trees can lead to an increase in biodiversity.

4. **Grazing pressures on unenclosed woodlands,** linked to practicality of fencing clough woodlands.

5. **On-going decline in traditional woodland management practices** leading to under management of farm woodlands, coverts and copses leading to general deterioration. Many hedgerow trees over-mature and in decline.

6. **Ancient and semi-natural woodlands are often inappropriately managed:** Over the years some areas may have been felled and replanted with non-native conifers. Mismanagement can prevent natural regeneration, e.g. stock grazing. Some sites have had inappropriate species introduced, such as rhododendron.

7. **Increased demand for visitor facilities** such as holiday cottages, caravan parks and holiday cabin developments.

8. **Loss of historic field pattern** due to disrepair of drystone walls at many locations, with resulting increase in use of fencing.

9. **Reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of grassland habitats.** Changes in grassland management may affect the appearance and biodiversity of the landscape. Intensification of grazing may lead to loss of species-rich acid grassland and impoverishment of rush pasture. Reduction or abandonment of grazing, often evident in smaller marginal enclosures, may lead to scrub encroachment.

10. **Barn conversions etc.** with the associated suburbanisation of rural properties and their cartilage and the loss of vernacular materials and features.
UF1: 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 Wilboarclough 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 Clwydian 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.
UF2: Teggs Nose – Whaley Moor Character Area. 
Including Blakestondale Moor, Nab End and 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 gritstone 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 gritstone 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 linnet.

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.
UF3: Macclesfield Forest Character Area.
Toot Hill, Ridgegate & 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.
UF4: Wildboarclough Character Area.
Including Yarnshaw Hill, Clough Brook & Helmesley.

This character area follows in part the valley of the River Dane along the southern county border as well as the steep-sided Clough Brook, which runs north through Wildboarclough and alongside Macclesfield Forest. Small semi-regular and irregular fields of medieval date predominate, with some areas of post medieval enclosure occurring. However, it is likely that the valley bottom was enclosed at an early date.

The visual character of this area is dictated by the dramatic topography of the narrow steep-sided valleys, which ranges from 240-430m AOD between the valley bottoms and the high ground. The skyline is therefore very dominant throughout the area. This character area is restricted to the valley bottom and middle slopes and the Moorland Plateau landscape type occupies much of the surrounding higher ground. These adjacent character areas have a distinctive, open and tree-less landscape which appears very different to the enclosed pasture and prominent woodlands of the valley bottoms. The contrast between the two landscape types is easily observed from the lower ground and is an essential component of the area’s visual character. The summit of Shutlingsloe is visible from many locations.

A narrow country lane follows the course of Clough Brook along the valley floor as it flows through a greater part of the character area. Woodland is scattered along Clough Brook – both broad leaved and coniferous. There are adjacent habitats of ancient woodland, species rich unimproved grasslands and acid heaths. Most woodland elsewhere in the character area is riparian and there are a number of narrow clough woodlands. From the public highway many low level views are framed or screened by trees. The combination of brook-side trees and dispersed blocks of woodland, often located in a prominent position higher up the steep slopes, can create an illusion of high woodland cover. The large conifer plantation at Yarnshaw Hill is very prominent. Such woodlands can appear as isolated blocks within the field pattern of low stone walls. This is due to a noticeable absence of hedgerows or individual trees which would otherwise help to integrate the woodlands into the landscape. Crag Hall is a substantial property surrounded by an extensive area of woodland in a prominent elevated location on the side of the valley.

This can be a very insular landscape, as many outward views from areas of lower ground are contained within the valley. Extensive views are available from the higher ground along the margins of the character area. These include views northward towards the high ground of Shining Tor and west towards the summit of Shutlingsloe, both in the Moorland Plateau type.

Settlement has a low density and is mainly dispersed in character and focussed in the valley bottom, including the small village of Wildboarclough. This was previously a centre for textile production – former mills include Lower Mill and Folly Mill and the former Post Office was originally part of the Crag Works – a water powered carpet works.
This area is very popular with walkers and there are a number of footpath trails.

Bank Top Wood is an ancient wood on the steep slopes overlooking Clough Brook at Wilboarclough. The ground flora includes opposite leaved golden saxifrage and wood sorrel and is rich in mosses and liver worts. The River Dane as it passes through this character area is a good example of an upland river system with high water quality and associated diverse habitats.

On the steep gritstone and shale slope overlooking Clough Brook are Allgreave Pastures - a mosaic of unimproved acid grassland with a diverse flora, sessile oak woodland and bracken. Just upstream of this Allgreave Wood and Gibbons Cliff Wood are ancient semi-natural woodlands with associated unimproved pasture on either side of Clough Brook. Bird life is rich and includes the pied flycatcher, wood warbler, redstart and tree pipit. Bryophytes and ferns are well represented on natural exposures.

There are two small surviving patches of heath at High Ash Farm. There is also an isolated area of blanket bog with associated pasture to the south-east of Wildboarclough. The bog has a characteristic flora which includes cranberry, bilberry, heather and is dominated by wavy hair grass.

To the east of Wildboarclough are the earthworks of a sub-circular enclosure that is potentially of Romano-British date.