Landscape Character Type 17:

Upland Estate
LANDSCAPE TYPE 17: UPLAND ESTATE.
Historic estate & deer park

UE1 Lyme Park Character Area.

Key Characteristics

- Lyme Park historic house.
- Formal gardens in the Dutch style.
- Landscaped parkland including woodland and ornamental features such as The Cage, a former hunting lodge.
- Unenclosed moor – Park Moor.
- Upland, undulating topography.
- Recreation amenities – Lyme is a popular tourist attraction.

UE1 Lyme Park Character Area.

General Description:

This character type largely refers to Lyme Park – the largest historic house in Cheshire with gardens and parkland, all of which is managed and open to the public by the National Trust. In the south of the character area is Park Moor, which shares many characteristics with the Moorland Plateau type, but is subject to very different land management and recreational uses.

This landscape was originally dedicated to private pleasure for the landowners whereas today it is an area of public recreation with large...
numbers of visitors from nearby conurbations making use of this extensive green space.

**Visual Character:**

This is an undulating upland landscape located in the north east corner of Cheshire, on the southern fringe of the Manchester conurbation. The landscape exhibits a variety of scales, ranging from the intimate small-scale wooded valley bottoms and enclosed lower slopes to the expansive, large-scale landscape of the unenclosed moorland on the higher ground. Here the high elevation and open landscapes ensure long distance views in all directions, extending to the Cheshire Plain in the west and the moorland ridges of the Peak District to the east. The high-rise buildings of Stockport and Manchester City Centre are particularly evident to the north.

The area is characterised by dry-stone field boundaries and stone buildings, although the latter are very limited in number and mainly associated with the estate. Roadways are limited to tracks through the estate land holding. The impressive Lyme Hall is the most prominent building in the area, surrounded by ornamental gardens and set within undulating parkland. The Cage Hill monument occupies a prominent hilltop within the park. Avenue planting, veteran trees and large woodland blocks contribute to a very high woodland density and a strong sense of enclosure with intermittent views. This is in marked contrast to the elevated Park Moor in the south of the area, where trees are very scarce and there are few elements within the landscape to provide any degree of visual containment.

The northern edge of this area is strongly influenced by the close proximity of the Disley urban area with the Stockport rail link and the very busy A6. This creates a very localised suburban character, at odds with the often bleak and remote character experienced by users of the minor tracks or footpaths crossing the higher ground to the south and east of the area.

**Physical Influences**

Lyme Park is a large park, lying inside the boundary of the Peak Park on steep slopes south of Disley. It rises the further south and east you go across the park – from c 170m AOD in the northwest to 370m AOD on the southeast.

The underlying geology comprises alternate banding of lower Pennine coal measures and Milnrow sandstone with a band of sandstone in the east. Peat is concentrated in the south-east of the character area and Devensian till in the north. Soils are poor draining cambic stagnohumic gley soils with a band of raw oligo-fibrous peat soils. Typically these soil types are associated with rush dominated rough moorland.

There is a high percentage of woodland cover on account of the estate woodlands: Kennel, Lantern and Hampers Woods, which have been partly planted with conifers. Kennel Wood is the most diverse of these, the others are grazed and contain abundant rhododendron. A large area to the south
and east of the landscape type is based on peat while the vast majority of the site is open, unimproved acid grassland. The whole of this grassland area, over half the landscape type, is designated a Grade A SBI on account of the county significance of this grassland. There are numerous red and roe deer. It is one of the richest sites in Cheshire for fungi with over 200 species present including over 50 grassland species.

There is a strip of mainly broadleaved woodland at the western edge of Lyme Park with a tributary of the Bollinhurst Brook running through it. Sycamore is the most abundant tree species with oak, beech, sweet chestnut, pine and larch amongst others present. While the ground flora is not particularly diverse there are ancient woodland indicator species.

To the north of Lyme Park are two small reservoirs. The area is rich in bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and flowering plants. There is a narrow belt of woodland to the west and to the south is Bollinhurst Plantation which is planted densely with hardwoods and larches. The area is rich in birds including blackcap and wood warbler.

At the western edge of Lyme Park on the slopes of Poynton Brook are Deer Clough and Hase Bank Wood, which has a diverse ground flora including wood speedwell and lesser celandine. Rocky outcrops and small cliffs within the woodland add to the diversity and much of Lyme Park is designated as a Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological site due to the occurrence of natural rock exposures.

To the south of Lyme Park is Park Moor, an area of open unenclosed moor, which is accessible to visitors.

**Cultural Influences**

Originally a Tudor house, Lyme was transformed by the Venetian architect Leoni into an Italianate palace and is listed Grade I. It was home to the Legh family for over 600 years until 1946 when it was taken over by the National Trust.

The 6.8ha Victorian gardens boast impressive bedding schemes, a sunken parterre, an Edwardian rose garden, reflection lake, ravine garden and Wyatt conservatory. There is also a gazebo called the Lantern which dates back to the 16th century. The garden is surrounded by a medieval deer park of c 550 ha of moorland, woodland and parkland, containing an 18th-century hunting tower called ‘The Cage’. Later this building, which is listed Grade II*, was used as the park keeper’s house and prisoner’s lock-up. Lyme Park is listed Grade II* on English Heritage’s Register of Parks and Gardens.

Lyme Park is owned and managed by the NT and partly financed by Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council. It appeared as ‘Pemberley’ in the BBC’s adaptation of Jane Austen’s novel *Pride and Prejudice*.
Evidently, activity in this area pre-dates that of the Legh Estate - within the grounds of Lyme a group of three round barrows were described in 1810 as three small tumuli. Two of these have been subsequently described as low mounds of potential Bronze Age date and designated as scheduled monuments. Two further scheduled Bronze Age barrows are located at Knight’s Low which are also slight and have evidently been denuded over time.

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

1. **Reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of habitats:** Intensification of grassland management leading to loss of species-rich acid grassland.

2. **Decline in veteran trees**, an essential component of historic ornamental landscapes and a scarce biodiversity resource.

3. **Significant unmapped early industrial and other archaeological remains** are located in this area.

4. **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.

5. **Erosion of built environment character through incremental development**: This may lead to loss of historic buildings and vernacular character; the suburbanisation of rural properties and their curtilage; pressure for expansion of existing settlement, ribbon development and in-fill.