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# Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment

Final  
Prepared by LUC  
May 2018

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**Client:** Cheshire East Borough Council

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Planning & EIA  
Design  
Landscape Planning  
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# Introduction



# 1 Introduction

## Background and purpose of the Landscape Character Assessment

- 1.1 Cheshire East Council is in the process of preparing the new Cheshire East Local Plan and associated evidence base. The existing landscape evidence base for Cheshire East includes the Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment (CLCA) produced for Cheshire County Council in 2009<sup>1</sup>. The CLCA (2009) includes a classification and description of the landscape for the whole of Cheshire, but does not include a landscape strategy or evaluative information. The landscape evidence base therefore requires updating to reflect the current administrative boundaries for the Borough of Cheshire East, to reflect current good practice, to reflect the present state of the landscape including changes since 2009, and to provide a landscape strategy.
- 1.2 This updated Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for Cheshire East aims to provide an objective description of the landscape and a strategy for managing the landscapes of Cheshire East and guiding landscape change in the Borough. The LCA does not set out policy, but provides an evidence base to inform policies and proposals in the emerging Local Plan, inform the determination of planning applications or more widely, around policy change, development and landscape management.
- 1.3 The Cheshire East Local Plan (Part 1) Strategic Policies was adopted in July 2017<sup>2</sup>. This provides the overall vision, strategic objectives, spatial strategy and strategic planning policies for the Borough to 2030. These objectives and policies will be supported by detailed policies within the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan (Part 2), Site Allocations and Development Document (SADPD). These policies will be informed by supporting evidence, including this LCA.

## What is Landscape Character Assessment?

- 1.4 **Landscape character** can be defined as the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics in the landscape – i.e. what makes one landscape different from another.
- 1.5 **Landscape character assessment** is the process of identifying and describing such variations in character across a landscape – in this case Cheshire East. It also seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of features and attributes (characteristics) that make different landscapes distinctive<sup>3</sup>. The 'landscape wheel' at Figure 1.1 below illustrates how the different natural, cultural and perceptual attributes of a landscape combine to produce character.

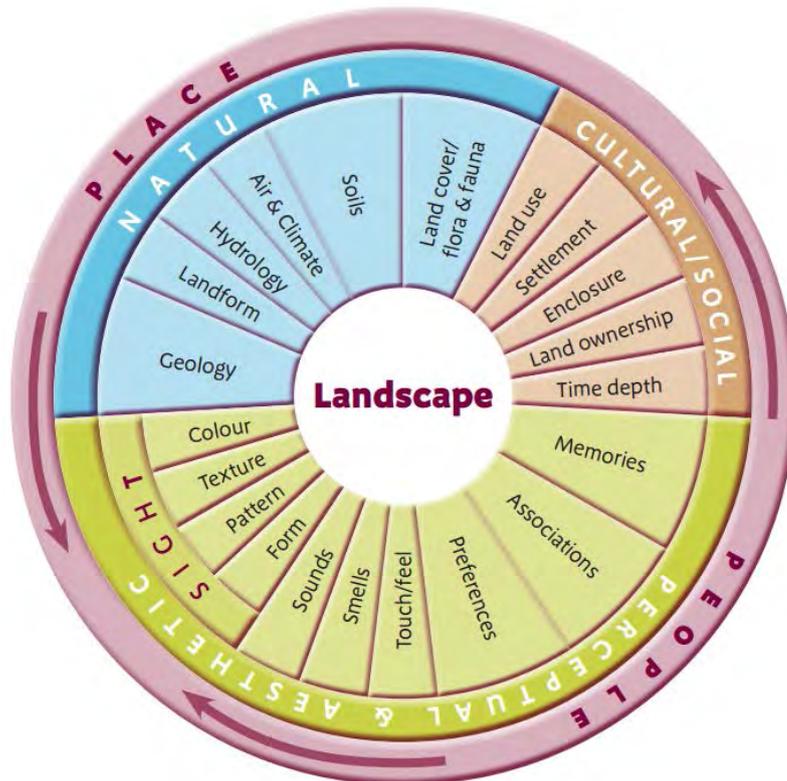
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<sup>1</sup> Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment (2009) Cheshire County Council Transport & Regeneration Service

<sup>2</sup> Local Plan Strategy Development Plan Document (June 2017)

<sup>3</sup> Definitions taken from Natural England (2014) An approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types>

Figure 1.1 The 'landscape wheel' (Natural England, 2014)



## Links to the European Landscape Convention and National Policy

### The European Landscape Convention

- 1.6 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is a convention of the Council of Europe<sup>4</sup> and came into force in the UK in March 2007. It establishes the need to recognise landscape in law; to develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes; and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies.
- 1.7 The ELC definition of 'landscape' recognises that all landscapes matter, be they ordinary, degraded or outstanding:
- “Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”**
- 1.8 The Convention puts emphasis on the whole landscape and all its values and is forward looking in its approach, recognising the dynamic and changing character of landscape. Specific measures promoted by the Convention, of direct relevance to this study include:
- the identification and assessment of landscape; and
  - improved consideration of landscape in existing and future sectoral and spatial policy and regulation.
- 1.9 This updated Landscape Character Assessment will continue to make a key contribution to the implementation of the ELC in Cheshire East. It helps to reaffirm the importance of landscape, co-ordinate existing work and guide future work to protect, manage and plan the landscapes of Cheshire.

<sup>4</sup> The ELC is a convention of the Council of Europe rather than a directive of the European Union. As the 2016 UK referendum and the wording in the Article 50 letter applied to EU membership only, not the Council of Europe, the ELC will still apply if the UK exit the EU.

## National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 1.10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in 2012, states within its core planning principles that planning should ***“take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it”***. An up-to-date Landscape Character Assessment is recommended in the NPPF to support planning decisions by local planning authorities.

### Paragraph 109 of the NPPF

- 1.11 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that *“The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by...protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...”*. The NPPF does not offer a definition or guide as to what constitutes a ‘valued landscape’, but we have case law which has gained a consensus amongst planning and law professionals on issues around ‘valued landscapes’. The definition that is now widely accepted and used is that arising from the Appeal by Gladman Developments Ltd against Stroud District Council (2014) where the Inspector determined that for a landscape to be valued would require the site to show some demonstrable physical attribute, rather than just popularity, that would take the landscape beyond mere countryside<sup>5</sup>.
- 1.12 In addition, case law suggests:
- Many areas of countryside are understandably valued by local residents, but to be considered ‘valued’ in the context of NPPF, there needs to be something ‘special’ or out of the ordinary that can be defined;
  - Locally designated landscapes such as ‘special landscape areas’ or ‘areas of great landscape value’ are likely to be considered ‘valued’ for the purposes of Paragraph 109 of the NPPF, but non-designated areas can also be ‘valued’ for the purposes of Paragraph 109;
  - Box 5.1 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment can help us to identify the ‘demonstrable attributes’ that might take a landscape out of the ‘ordinary’ to something that is ‘special’ and valued in the context of Paragraph 109 of the NPPF.
- 1.13 Landscape character assessments can provide useful evidence to help identify whether a site is ‘valued’ in the context of Paragraph 109 of the NPPF by identifying ‘valued landscape features’, using the criteria in Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 as a checklist. This LCA includes ‘valued landscape features’ as part of its evaluation.
- 1.14 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF also states that *“The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by...recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services”*. Landscape character assessment can link information about landscape character to ecosystem services so that the wider benefits of the landscape can be appreciated. This LCA includes reference to ecosystem services (see Table 2.1 below), using these services to justify why certain features of each landscape character type are valued.

## Summary of Method

- 1.15 The method adopted for the Landscape Character Assessment of Cheshire East follows the guidance promoted by Natural England through ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’<sup>6</sup>. A full method description can be found in **Appendix 2**.
- 1.16 The key aspects were:
- Desk based review of the area’s landscape character through mapping and existing landscape character assessments;

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<sup>5</sup> This definition continues to be applied, most recently in the Appeal decision in relation to Land off Wethersfield Road, Finchingfield, Essex dated 19 October 2017

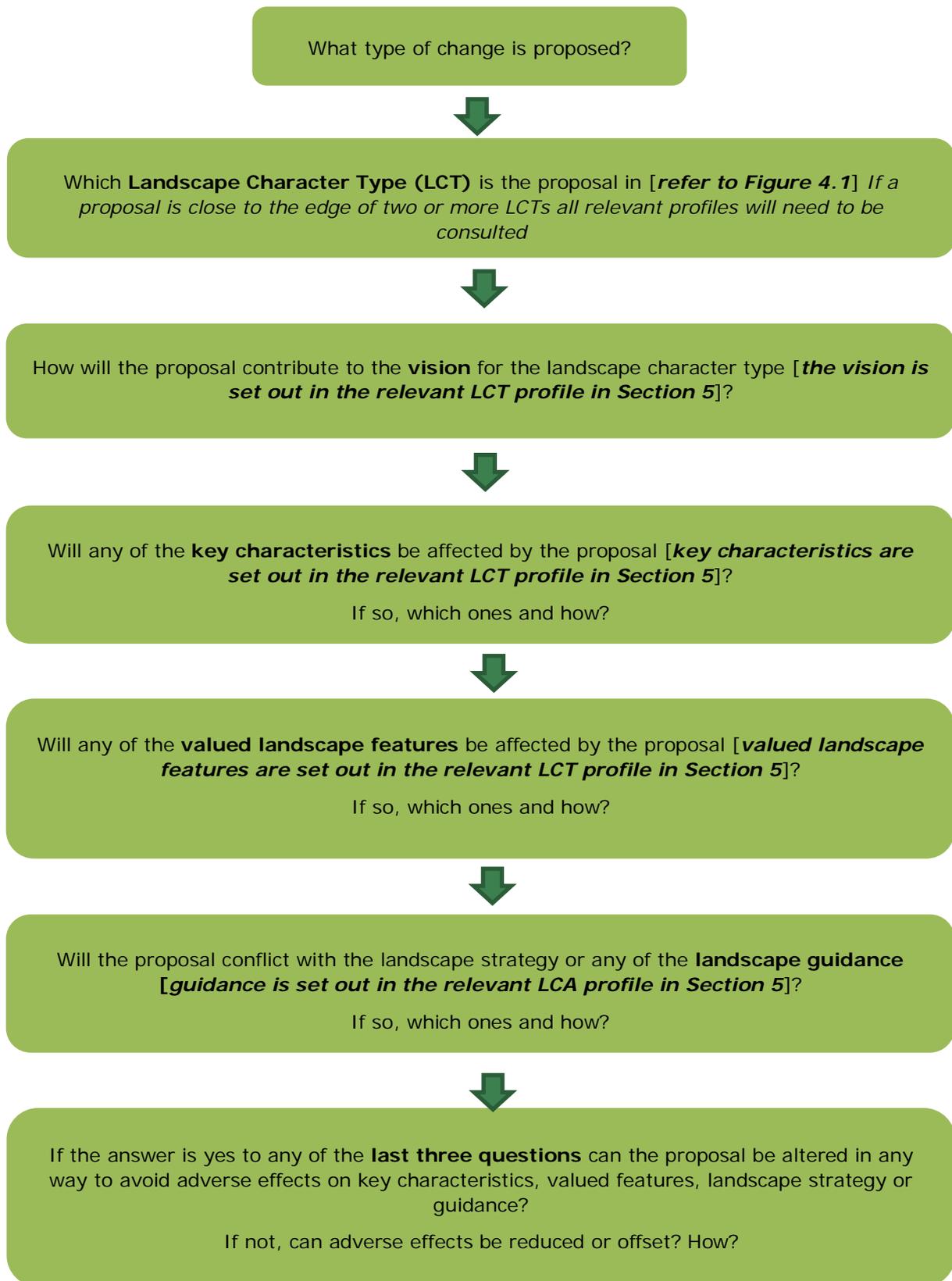
<sup>6</sup> Natural England ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’ (2014) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types>

- Classification, ensuring an appropriate fit within the hierarchy of landscape character assessment undertaken from the national to local level and compatibility with adjacent LCAs in neighbouring authorities;
- Field survey to verify the classification of landscape types and areas and collect information on perceptual character, landscape condition, valued landscape features and forces for change;
- Writing the LCT descriptions in order to reflect any changes since the last study;
- Producing an evaluative analysis for each LCT to identify what is valued as well as a vision/ forward looking landscape strategy and guidance;
- Producing a full report for consultation as part of the Local Plan consultation process.

## Using the Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment

- 1.17 This LCA can be used by planners, developers and land managers to take account of what is valued or characteristic in the Cheshire East landscape when considering new development or land uses – and to pursue opportunities to enhance and strengthen landscape character wherever possible.
- 1.18 The need for this evidence base is all the more apparent in the context of continual pressures to accommodate new development and land uses, primarily the need for new housing.
- 1.19 The flow chart below aims to help the use of the LCA. It is arranged around a number of key stages, setting out a series of questions as prompts to ensure available information is used to shape proposals and assist in planning decisions.

Figure 1.2 User Guide



## Content of this report

1.20 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

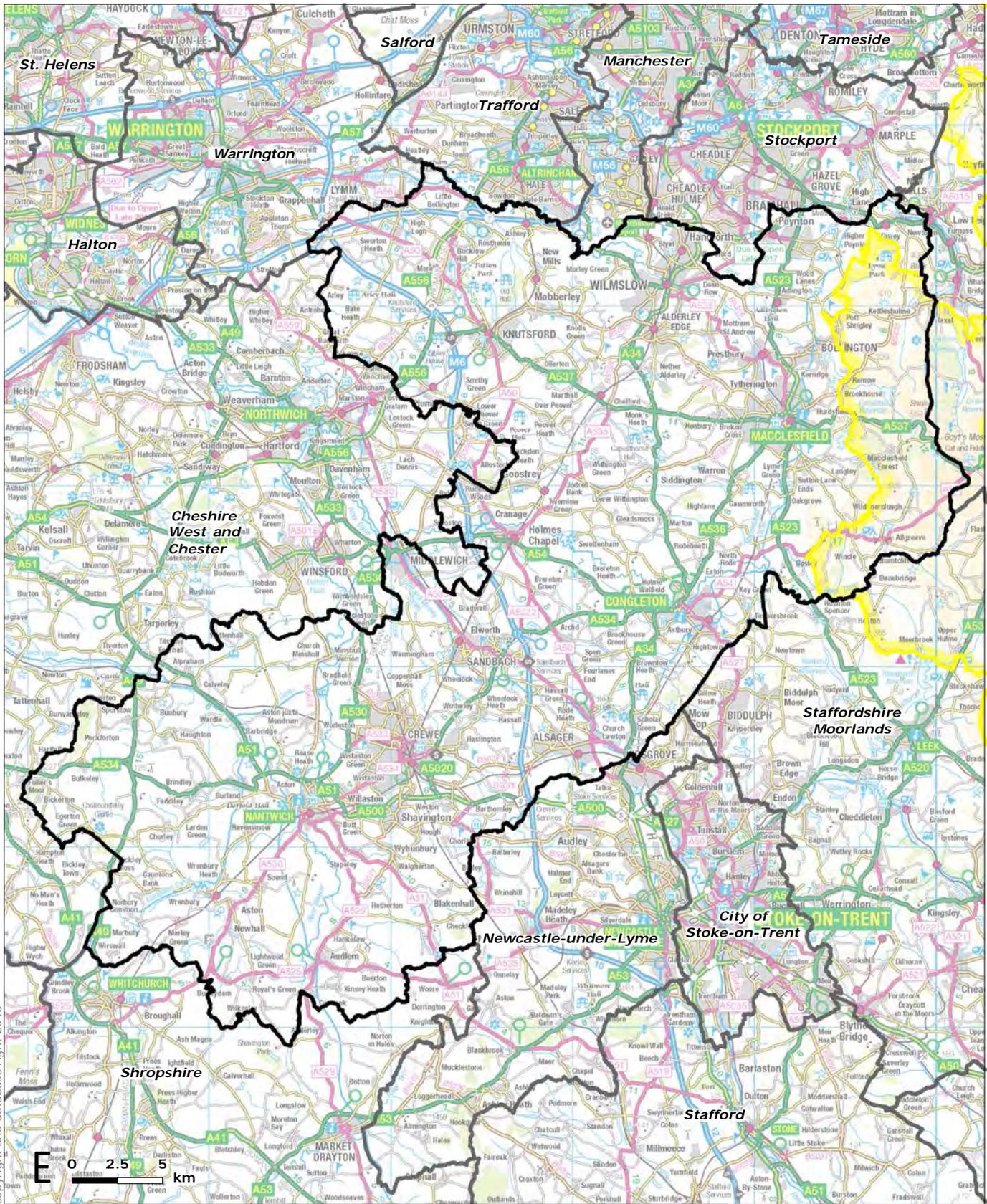
- **Section 2: An Introduction to the Cheshire East Landscape:** presents an overview of Borough landscape character and the ecosystem services it provides
- **Section 3: Summary of Landscape Issues:** provides a summary of issues affecting the Borough, and forces for change
- **Section 4: Landscape Character Classification:** introduces the landscape character types and areas for Cheshire East
- **Section 5: Landscape Character Type Profiles:** presents updated descriptions and an evaluation for each landscape character type

1.21 This report is supported by the following appendices:

- **Appendix 1 Landscape Character Area profiles:** provides the local character area profiles written for the Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment in 2009<sup>7</sup> that relate to areas within Cheshire East.
- **Appendix 2 Method:** provides a detailed summary of the method undertaken to classify the landscape into landscape character types and areas, and to provide the landscape strategy
- **Appendix 3:** provides the classification table with a comparison of how the new classification fits with the previous landscape assessment (Cheshire LCA 2009) and assessments by neighbouring authorities.
- **Appendix 3 Glossary:** provides a glossary of terms and technical words

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<sup>7</sup> Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment (2009) Cheshire County Council Transport & Regeneration Service



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018

- Cheshire East District boundary
- Surrounding districts
- Peak District National Park

Source: Ordnance Survey

Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000

**Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies**

**Figure 1.3**  
**Location of Cheshire East**

**LUC**

## 2 An Introduction to the Cheshire East Landscape

- 2.1 Cheshire East has a rich and diverse landscape that has evolved over many hundreds and thousands of years. It has been created by the interaction of the natural environment and human activities, in particular the combination of physical and cultural influences. Physical influences such as geology and landform, together with the overlying pattern of settlement and land use are key determinants of landscape character.
- 2.2 Cheshire East is a lowland rural landscape of lush green pastures with a prominent sandstone ridge to the west and a more remote and exposed landscape in the east as the land rises steadily towards the Pennine foothills. There are distinctive areas of woodland, heathland, meres and mosses across the Borough. Peaceful rivers and canals form a setting to the industrial heritage of the Borough. The salt industry and other extractive industries have historically had some impact on the landscape, including the presence of subsidence flashes and meres resulting from the removal of salt, silica and building sand. Active peat and mineral extraction continue to shape the landscape in some areas.
- 2.3 The text below briefly summarises the influences which have shaped the landscape of Cheshire East.

### Physical influences

- 2.4 The basic structure of the landscape is fundamentally influenced by its underlying rocks and relief. Geology and the processes of weathering, erosion and deposition influence the shape and form of the landscape and its drainage and soils. In turn, these influence patterns of vegetation and land use.
- 2.5 **Figure 2.1** illustrates the solid (or bedrock) geology that underlies the Borough. This shows that the underlying geology of Cheshire East is dominated by Triassic rocks of the Mercia Mudstone Group. Rocks of this group generally have a weak structure which gives rise to the low lying flat or gently rolling landscapes of the Cheshire plain that define much of the Borough.
- 2.6 The Mercia Mudstone Group also includes salt bearing rock formations (Halite). The exploitation of rock salt in the Cheshire basin which can be traced back to the Roman era has left its mark in a number of ways across the Borough but most significantly at the salt flashes of Sandbach and the long association of the area with salt extraction which continues around Middlewich This extraction is a remnant of what was once a substantial industry that can be traced back to the 'wich' towns of Cheshire, including Middlewich and Nantwich which was once the centre of Roman and Medieval salt workings. The salt workings in the area also dictated the number and location of the later canals and railways which carried the salt out of the Borough and brought coal in for salt production.
- 2.7 Along the south western boundary of the Borough, and north-west of Macclesfield, the bedrock geology is composed of Triassic sandstone. These rocks from the Sherwood Sandstone Group date from some 250 million years ago. This gives rise to a series of prominent sandstone ridges which rise sharply from the surrounding flat or gently rolling Cheshire plain, such as at Bickerton where the ridge divides east and west Cheshire and the dramatic sandstone escarpment at Alderley Edge. These sandstone outcrops show cross bedding of the layers indicating that the rocks were formed originally as windblown sand dunes.
- 2.8 To the east of the Borough the undulating ground rises to form the varied upland landscapes on the edge of the Peak District National Park. These foothills have been shaped by the erosion of the underlying Carboniferous age Millstone Grit to form broad rounded summits and ridges with

slopes which are dissected by steep wooded cloughs and fast flowing streams. Folds in the Millstone Grit rocks have left exposed Coal Measures in some areas.

- 2.9 **Figure 2.2** shows the drift (or superficial) geology which overlies the Borough. These are varied in nature and determine different soil types and drainage characteristics.
- 2.10 The solid rocks that underlie Chester East are almost entirely masked by thick glacial deposits from the last ice age except on the highest ridges where rocks are exposed at the surface, including the millstone and grit stone outcrops in the Pennine foothills and the striking bluffs of reddish-pink sandstones and conglomerate on the Cheshire sandstone ridge along the western boundary and on the sandstone escarpments of Alderley Edge.
- 2.11 In contrast to the thin free-draining and generally infertile soils on the uplands, the deep drift deposits which overlie much of the low lying parts of the Borough are characterised by slow draining, clay soils, which support lush pasture ideal for grazing dairy cattle. **Figure 2.3** illustrates the agricultural land classification.
- 2.12 The landscape has been weathered to create the distinctive landform seen across the Borough today. **Figure 2.4** shows the landform and drainage, showing the key river valleys, canals and the variety of topography across the Borough.
- 2.13 At the height of the last glaciation, Cheshire was covered by a continuous ice sheet. When the ice retreated it left much of the Borough covered with glacial sediments but the present day rivers have cut through these down to the bedrock in most places. As this process developed, progressive abandonment of floodplains left a series of descending river terraces with fluvial deposits lying parallel to the river channels.
- 2.14 The main river valleys in the Borough form distinct physical features incised into the surrounding flat or gently rolling landscape. The rivers Dane, Weaver and Bollin meander north before discharging to Liverpool Bay via the Mersey. The steep river valley slopes are often a refuge for ancient woodland and provide a linear feature that is rich in biodiversity due to the range of terrestrial and aquatic habitats. This often presents a strong contrast with the more intensively managed farmland of the surrounding areas.
- 2.15 The presence and distribution of the natural habitats found in the Borough are strongly influenced by geology and landform. The important ecological habitats are recognised through designations (SSSIs, Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves) and can be seen on **Figure 2.5** Biodiversity Designations.
- 2.16 The natural heritage includes some unique landscape areas that are both nationally and internationally designated. This includes upland moorland, remnants of heathland and wetlands, as well as meres and mosses.
- 2.17 The naturally occurring meres and relic mosses are a typical landscape feature of Cheshire East and form part of a nationally important series of open water and peatland sites ('Midland Meres and Mosses' Ramsar site). They developed in the natural depressions in the glacial drift following the retreat of the ice sheets some 15,000 years ago.
- 2.18 The glacial meres or pools in Cheshire East range in depth and area from a few metres to large meres that extend over kilometres such as Tatton Mere. Associated fringing habitats such as reedswamp, fen and damp pasture provide valuable habitats for aquatic invertebrates and overwintering birds. Typical vegetation includes the common reed, yellow iris and the greater and lesser pond sedges.
- 2.19 Cheshire East was formerly dotted with small scale mosses and mires, in some cases only a few metres across but each individually named and known to local inhabitants. The development of these habitats is associated with peat accumulation which in some cases leads to in-filling, becoming nutrient poor thus leading to the formation of bog or mossland. Many of the former mosses in this area have been drained and survive as small peat blocks, some have been converted to agriculture, others colonised by woodland such as willow and birch. Several of the larger areas developed linear field patterns known as 'moss rooms' reflecting medieval rights to cut peat for fuel, but the only significant surviving moss room landscape within Cheshire East is Lindow Moss.

- 2.20 The traditional practice of marling<sup>8</sup> along with peat extraction, sand pits and brick making has led to the creation of numerous man-made ponds and larger water bodies. The natural processes of vegetation succession have reduced many ponds to small, shallow features, filled with leaf litter over-shaded with trees and with little open water. Nevertheless, it is estimated that Cheshire's ponds represent some 10% of all farm ponds in England and Wales, and still provide an important wildlife resource. Characteristic plant species include bur marigold, water plantain, tubular water-dropwort, reedmace, branched bur-reed, water horsetail, common spike-rush, purple loosestrife, water milfoil, various water lilies and pondweeds. A wide range of invertebrates is associated with marl pits as well as all five species of amphibian found in Cheshire, including the European protected great crested newt. The surrounding fringe of oak, willow and alder trees also adds considerably to the wooded appearance of the Cheshire plain despite the lack of woodland cover.
- 2.21 Cheshire East is sparsely wooded, with woodland cover averaging approximately 4% across the Borough compared to a UK average of 13%.<sup>9</sup> In the medieval period much of the Borough would have been covered by extensive hunting 'forests'. These hunting reserves were not entirely forested but cleared for agricultural use and may have encompassed heathland as well as pasture, arable land and small settlements. The Forests of Mara and Mondrum extended from the Delamere area into Cheshire East as is evidenced by existing place names such as Aston juxta Mondrum. Macclesfield Forest was mostly heathland, the conifer woodland referred to as Macclesfield Forest today consist of catchment planting.
- 2.22 Today, woodland is largely confined to the upland cloughs and sandstone ridges and is virtually absent from the lowlands except within the parkland landscapes of the historic estates and on steep river valley slopes. Across the open Cheshire plain this is particularly evident but the frequent mature hedgerow oaks, create the perception of a wooded landscape despite the lack of significant woodland coverage. See **Figure 2.6** for the distribution of ancient woodland.

## Cultural Influences

- 2.23 The landscapes and settlement of the Borough have developed over time, and have been greatly influenced by man's use of the land as population and agricultural pressures have ebbed and flowed. Historic landscape character has been mapped through the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (2007). **Figure 2.7** Key Historic Landscape Types provides a simplified map of these historic landscape types by amalgamating the detailed historic types into the key historic types that influence character across the Borough. The important historic features that remain in the landscape today are recognised through designations (Scheduled Monuments, registered Historic Parks and Gardens) and can be seen on **Figure 2.8** Heritage Assets.
- 2.24 Evidence of early occupation includes remains of iron-age hill forts, burial mounds and ring ditches along the sandstone ridge top. The origins of some modern day settlements can be traced back to the Roman occupation of Cheshire when Nantwich and Middlewich were established due to their vital importance to the salt industry. Stiff resistance to the Norman invasion during the 11<sup>th</sup> century led to land and villages being destroyed.
- 2.25 Agriculture has historically been important within Cheshire East and the pattern of field systems visible within the Borough reflects the complex and varied history of enclosure and farming. Formal enclosure during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (including enclosure by Acts of Parliament and encroachment onto surviving commons and heaths) is still evident and exists at a variety of scales, characterised by regular rectilinear field systems. There is a relatively low incidence of 20<sup>th</sup> century field systems and no one area where there is a dominance of 20<sup>th</sup> century enclosure.
- 2.26 Over much of Cheshire East, the flat or gently undulating topography of the Cheshire plain has leant itself historically to a dispersed settlement pattern, typified by vernacular farmsteads and cottages built with a blend of warm sandstone or gritstone often with stone 'tiled' roofs to the

<sup>8</sup> The use of calcium carbonates as fertilizer to reduce acidity for lime-deficient soils before the availability of cheap lime in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>9</sup> National Statistics on Woodland Area, Planting & Publicly Funded Restocking. Forestry Commission (June 2017). The area of woodland in the UK in March 2017 is 3.17 million hectares. This represents 13% of the total land area in the UK, (10% in England)

east and west of the Borough and 'black and white' oak timber framed buildings in the plain with thatched roofs that were later replaced by slate tiles. However, in the late 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> century, industrial development led to rapid, unplanned growth in towns with the development of factories, mines and railways. Industrial, and with it, urban development is a distinct feature of Cheshire East; salt extraction at Nantwich and Middlewich and elsewhere numerous textile mills, notably Quarry Bank at Styal, often with associated housing and infrastructure, sprang up throughout the area and the population grew rapidly as opportunity was generated. Later, an engineering industry grew from the knowledge associated with the mills. Many local towns saw exponential increases in growth during this period and most are still characterised by a blend of workers cottages and the more grand houses of managers and owners. A network of canals and railways which supported the needs of industry, developed in relation to opportunity and growth and the needs of the population as a whole. Much of it is still in use commercially or as a restored element of the Borough's recreational access network.

- 2.27 East Cheshire is host to a large number of prominent stately homes, particularly around the southern edge of Manchester. Most are set within formal gardens and designed parkland and surrounded by estates, with historic influence over the surrounding farmland. These range in size from Tatton Park, which is possibly one of the finest examples of an historic estate in the country, to small estates such as Withington Hall, where the hall has been demolished. Their presence reflects the historic aristocratic associations with the area, (Combermere can be traced back to the foundation of a Cistercian monastery in the 12<sup>th</sup> century) but also the relationship between Cheshire and the industrially generated wealth of adjacent towns and Manchester. They also tend to provide a disproportionate level of tree cover as compared with much of low-lying Cheshire and have utilised and enhanced the natural meres for ornamental purposes. Many remain popular visitor locations for local families with the larger estates such as Tatton having a regional or national reputation.
- 2.28 Upland landscapes experience darker skies and are scenically and distinctly diverse and important for recreation because of wide ranging views, network of footpaths and sense of tranquillity they offer along with ease of access from adjacent towns and cities. The distinction of Dark Skies can be seen on **Figures 2.9**.

## Ecosystem Services

- 2.29 Ecosystem services are defined as "*the benefits provided by ecosystems that contribute to making human life both possible and worth living.*"<sup>10</sup> They are features and processes of the natural world which provide benefits in terms of goods and services to people, but which are often undervalued in economic analysis and decision making. The ability of ecosystems to provide a range of benefits depends upon their health and integrity, which in turn depends upon their resilience in the face of challenges.
- 2.30 Ecosystem services are generally grouped into four main categories, defined as follows:
- **Provisioning:** the products obtained from ecosystems such as food, fibre and fresh water;
  - **Regulating:** the benefits obtained from ecosystem processes such as pollination and control of the climate and water;
  - **Cultural:** the non-material benefits obtained from ecosystems; for example through spiritual or religious enrichment, cultural heritage, recreation and tourism or other aesthetic experience; and,
  - **Supporting:** ecosystem functions that are necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services, including soil formation and the cycling of nutrients and water.

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<sup>10</sup> UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA): Understanding nature's value to society, 2011

## Relationship of ecosystem services to landscape character

- 2.31 The ecosystem services approach aims to recognise the economic value of the natural environment, with the intention of enhancing the health of ecosystems and ensuring their continued ability to deliver diverse services. Landscape character assessment seeks to understand the historic and on-going processes which make a landscape what it is, and the drivers which will continue to change the landscape in the future.
- 2.32 By relating delivery of ecosystem services to specific landscape characteristics and features it is possible to clearly recognise the benefits derived from those characteristics and features and therefore the multiple benefits provided by the landscape. The table below sets out a range of ecosystem services provided by the landscape of Cheshire East.

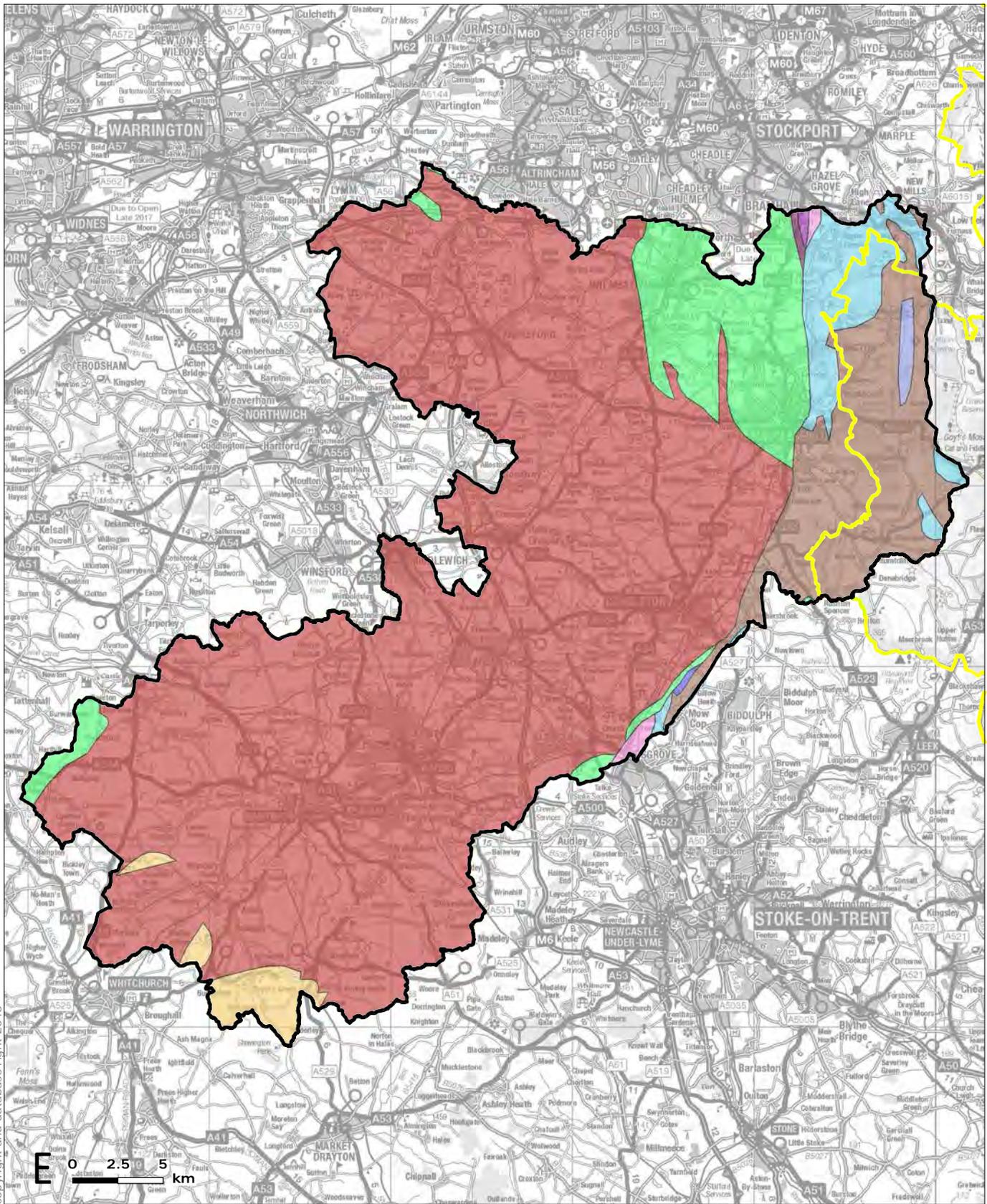
**Table 2.1: Examples of ecosystem services delivered within Cheshire East**

Ecosystem Services	Landscape characteristics and features that provide these services in Cheshire East
<b>Provisioning</b>	
Food	<p>Arable crops (including silage, hay and fodder crops), particularly across the Cheshire Plain in LCT 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 11 which provide food for human and animal consumption.</p> <p>Dairying on the lush pastures of the Cheshire Plain (particularly in LCT 3, 4, 8, and 11) which produce milk and a range of dairy products and livestock (particularly in LCT 12, 13) which produce beef and lamb.</p>
Fibre and fuel	<p>Areas of woodland in LCT 1, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12 which are managed for timber and coppice products, including the commercial forestry plantation in the Macclesfield Forest in LCT 13.</p> <p>Sheep which provide wool, for example on uplands to the east of the Borough in LCT 13 and 14.</p> <p>Biomass/energy crops for example south of Congleton in LCT 7 which are used for fuel.</p>
Minerals	<p>Sandstone in at Kerridge Hill (millstone grit), The Cloud (LCT 12) and Sandstone Ridge (LCT1) and limestone near Mow Kop (LCT 12) quarried for building stone. Silica sand extraction operations found between Chelford and Congleton and at Archid in LCT 6, 7 and 11 used principally for glass manufacture, foundries, and other industrial and horticultural uses. Sand extracted at Alsager in LCT 9 which provide minerals for construction.</p> <p>Salt deposits around Sandbach where brine pumping continues at Warmingham brinefields in LCT 4 used in industrial processes (chemicals, shampoos etc).</p> <p>Peat extraction, at White Moss in Alsager and Lindow Moss in, both in LCT 9, for horticultural uses.</p>
Genetic resources	<p>Local and native vegetation, for example the rare species of aquatic plants found in the wetland habitats around the meres and mosses (sphagnum moss species, cotton grass, bog asphodels and sundews) or the range of species found in the rare saline habitats in LCT 8, as well as the species found on the remnant heathland habitats in in LCT 1, 12 and 13 (such as cross-leaved heath, purple moor-grass, bog mosses and juniper) which provides local genetic resources.</p>

Ecosystem Services	Landscape characteristics and features that provide these services in Cheshire East
	Locally, regionally or nationally rare species e.g. Native Black Poplar which is associated with rivers and brook, principally the River Weaver floodplain. Other rare species include farmland seed-eating birds (e.g. lapwing, linnet, skylark, yellow hammer etc) associated with traditional farmland across the Borough, and the adder and slowworm found on remnant heathland habitats. Species associated with the numerous ponds in the Borough include the Ivy-Leaved Water Crowfoot and invertebrates such as the Lesser Silver Water Beetle and Mud Snail.
Fresh water	Reservoirs (including canal feeder reservoirs), rivers (the River Weaver, Dane, Bollin), ground water throughout the area (especially LCTs 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 11 12 and 13) which provide water for domestic/agricultural/industrial use.
Regulating	
Carbon storage	Peat, wetland and other carbon-rich soils that act as a carbon-sink and can help regulate the effect of carbon emissions, for example in the Mosslands LCT 9, but also the pockets of peat soil in LCT 4, 5, 7, 11 and 14 and the poorer soils associated with the heathlands on the sandstone ridges.  Woodlands and copses throughout the Borough provide carbon storage.
Air quality regulation	Trees and woodland which provide a filtering effects and can help extract chemicals from the atmosphere particularly in LCT 1, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12.
Climate regulation	Woodlands and trees that can reduce temperature underneath them, and sequester greenhouse gas.
Water regulation (flooding)	Trees and woodlands and other vegetation that intercept rainfall and slow rate of run off into rivers.  Floodplains that provide natural storage for floodwater, or wetlands that can help absorb and reduce the power of floodwaters particularly in LCT 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 11.
Soil regulation (erosion)	Permanent pasture, hedgerows and woodland across the Borough that limit soil erosion.
Pollination	Wild flowers found in field margins, along verges and in meadows (particularly in LCT 4,10,11,12) that support natural pollinators such as bees.
Cultural	
Sense of place/inspiration	The extensive rolling lowland landscape of lush pastures dominated by dairy farming, interrupted by dramatic landscape features such as the sandstone ridges to the west, at Alderley Edge, and the linear ridges of Mow Cop and Kerridge in LCT 12 to the east as well as rocky outcrops such as Tegg's Nose in LCT13. The associated long distance views from these ridges that provide a sense of place and spiritual enrichment.

Ecosystem Services	Landscape characteristics and features that provide these services in Cheshire East
	Sense of relative peace and tranquillity (absence of disturbance and interruption), for example on the upland hills and sandstone ridges along the boundary with the Peak District National Park and at Bickerton Hill, as well as within pastoral farmland on the Cheshire Plain particularly in the enclosed woodland and estates of LCT5, and the wooded river valleys of LCT10, which provides spiritual refreshment
Sense of history	Historic field patterns found across the Borough and historic sites including iron-age forts and burial sites on the sandstone ridges in LCT 1 and 12. The historic character is further reinforced by the numerous estate parklands around stately homes and black and white moated halls, particularly in LCT 5 (but also present in LCT 4, 6, 7 and 11), the dispersed towns and villages and large farmstead of brick or sandstone as well as the mills and canals associated with the area's industrial past which provide an understanding of history and cultural heritage.
Recreation and tourism	The towpaths along the network of canals (in LCT 4, 10, 11 and 12), and the network of promoted walks which cross the Borough (including the Sandstone Trail, Gritstone Trail and Crewe and South and North Cheshire Way) which offer public access. The Registered Park and Gardens such as Tatton Park in LCT 5 (some owned and run by the National Trust), the NNR at Wynbury Moss in LCT 9 and the open access land on the ridge tops in LCT 1 and 12 which provide opportunities for recreation and tourism. Jodrell Bank is the location of the Lovell radio telescope which dominates the open landscape and is a popular visitor centre.
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	<p>The diversity of habitats which provides opportunities to experience and enjoy the variety of the Cheshire East landscape. This includes the wetland habitats associated with the numerous meres and mosses (including lowland raised bog and lowland fens) scattered throughout the Borough (particularly in LCT 5, 6, 7 and 9) many of which are designated as SSSIs (and some within the Midland Meres and Mosses Ramsar site) which support distinctive species of plants and animals, particularly wintering wildfowl. Other important habitats include the numerous hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees across the Cheshire Plain, the wet woodlands along the rivers (LCT10) and upland oakwoods on the Pennine fringe (LCT12).</p> <p>There are also remnant lowland and upland heathland (LCT 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 12, 13 and 14). The Sandbach Flashes SSSI in LCT8 provides a rare inland saline habitat. The dry stone walls in the east of the Borough (LCT12 and 13) provide another valuable habitat.</p> <p>The sandstone bluffs at Raw Head (LCT1) and Alderley Edge (LCT 5) and gritstone outcrops at Whaley Moor and Tegg's Nose (SSSI) (LCT13) provide an opportunity to experience a geologically rich landscape.</p>
<b>Supporting</b>	
Photosynthesis	These supporting services, necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services act on a larger scale and are more difficult to relate to particular localities and are delivered across
Soil formation	

Ecosystem Services	Landscape characteristics and features that provide these services in Cheshire East
Water recycling	the study area and a wider area.
Nutrient cycling	



Cheshire East District boundary

Peak District National Park

**Bedrock Geology**

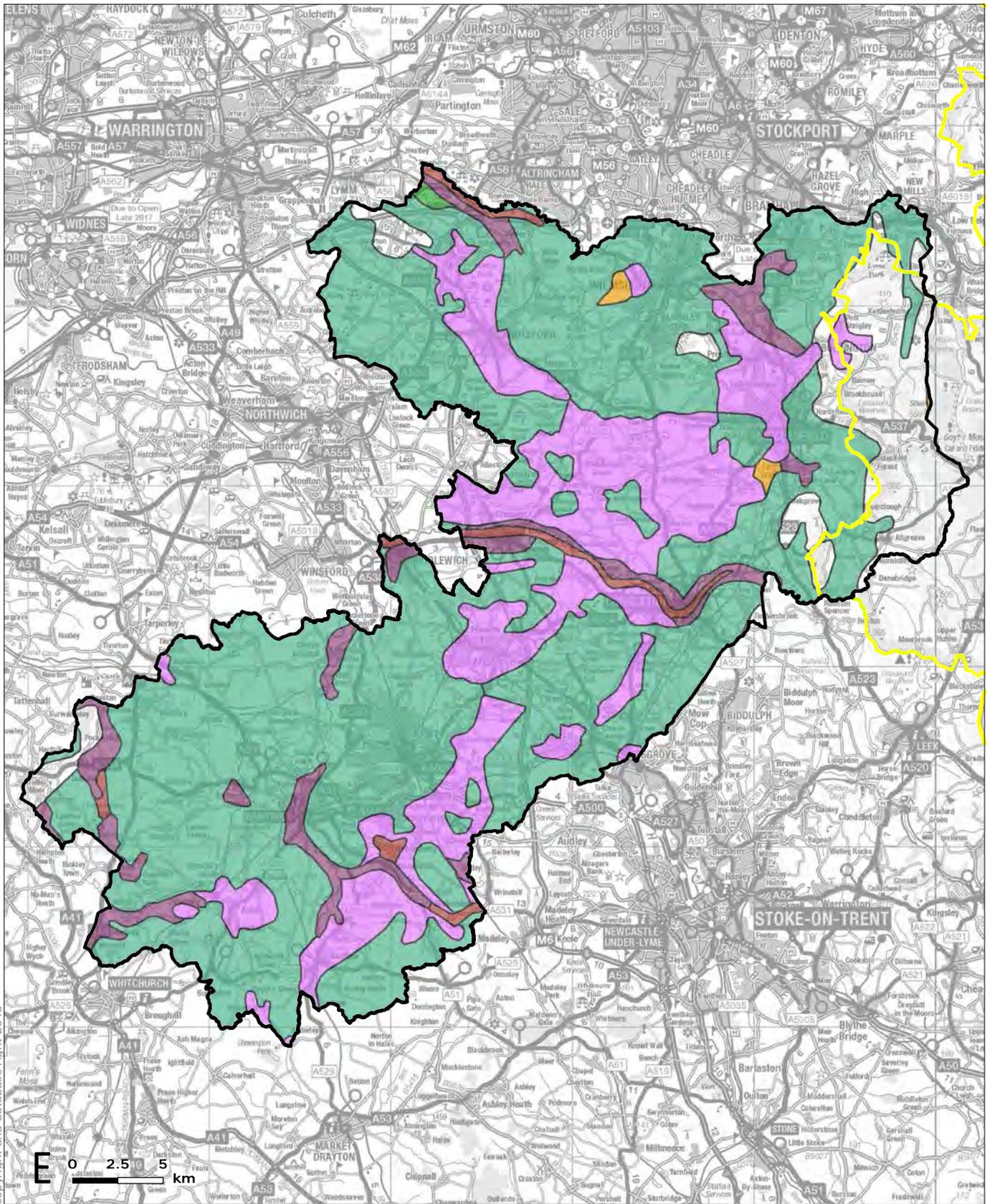
- Mudstone, Siltstone And Sandstone - Bowland High Group And Craven Group (Undifferentiated)
- Limestone With Subordinate Sandstone And Argillaceous Rocks - Dinantian Rocks (Undifferentiated)
- Mudstone, Siltstone, Limestone And Sandstone - Lias Group
- Mudstone, Siltstone And Sandstone - Millstone Grit Group
- Coal Measures - Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation And South Wales Lower Coal Measures Formation (Undifferentiated)
- Coal Measures - Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation And South Wales Middle Coal Measures Formation (Undifferentiated)
- Mudstone, Siltstone And Sandstone - Permian Rocks (Undifferentiated)
- Sandstone And Conglomerate, Interbedded - Permian Rocks (Undifferentiated)
- Mudstone, Siltstone And Sandstone - Triassic Rocks (Undifferentiated)
- Sandstone And Conglomerate, Interbedded - Triassic Rocks (Undifferentiated)

Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000

**Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies**

**Figure 2.1**  
**Bedrock Geology**

**LUC**



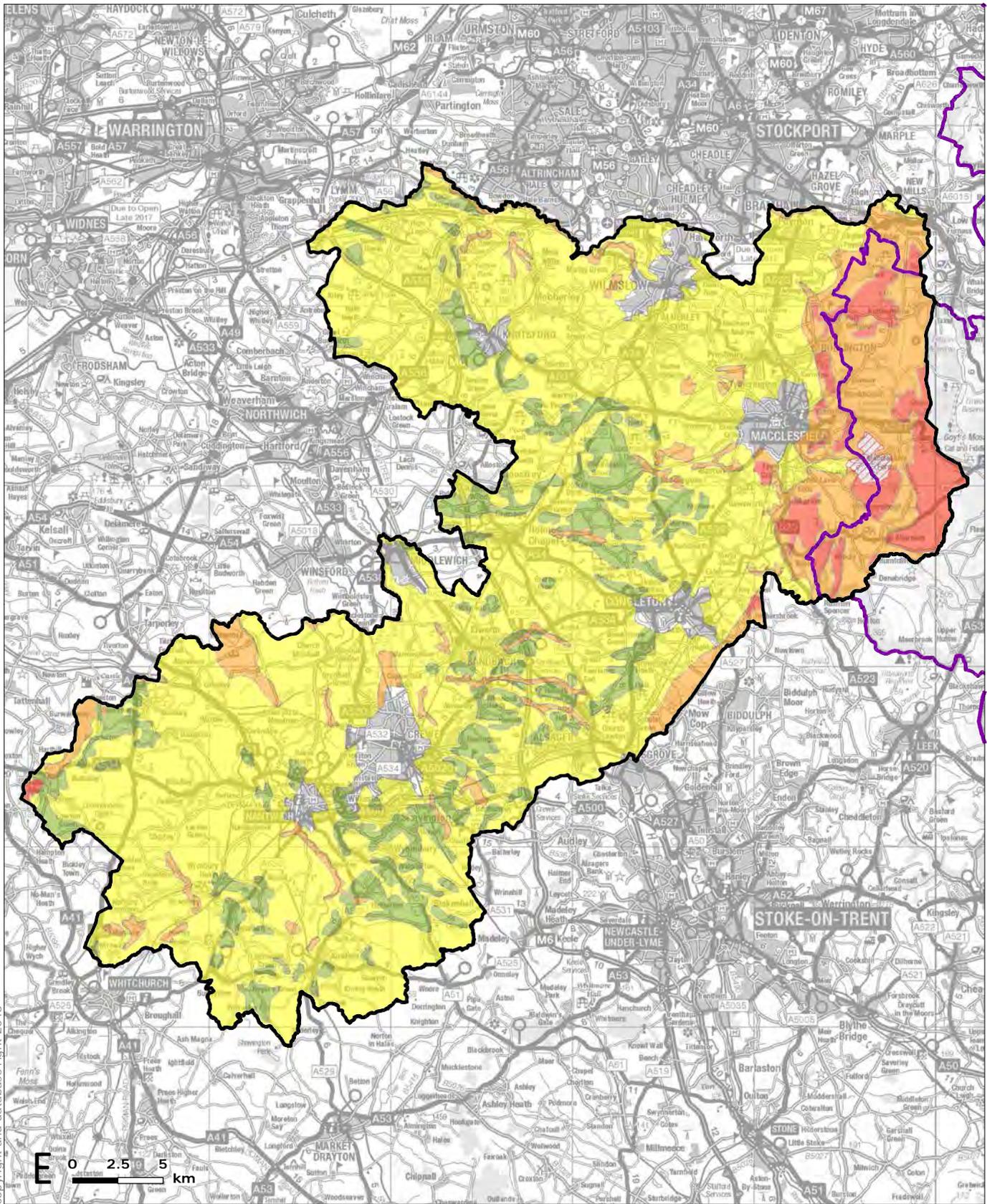
- Cheshire East District boundary
- Peak District National Park
- Superficial Geology**
- Alluvium
- Blown Sand
- Glacial Sand And Gravel
- Peat
- River Terrace Deposits (Undifferentiated)
- Till

**Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies**

**Figure 2.2**  
**Drift Geology**



Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000



▭ Cheshire East District boundary

▭ Peak District National Park

**Agricultural Landscape Classification**

- ▭ Grade 2
- ▭ Grade 3
- ▭ Grade 4
- ▭ Grade 5
- ▨ Non Agricultural

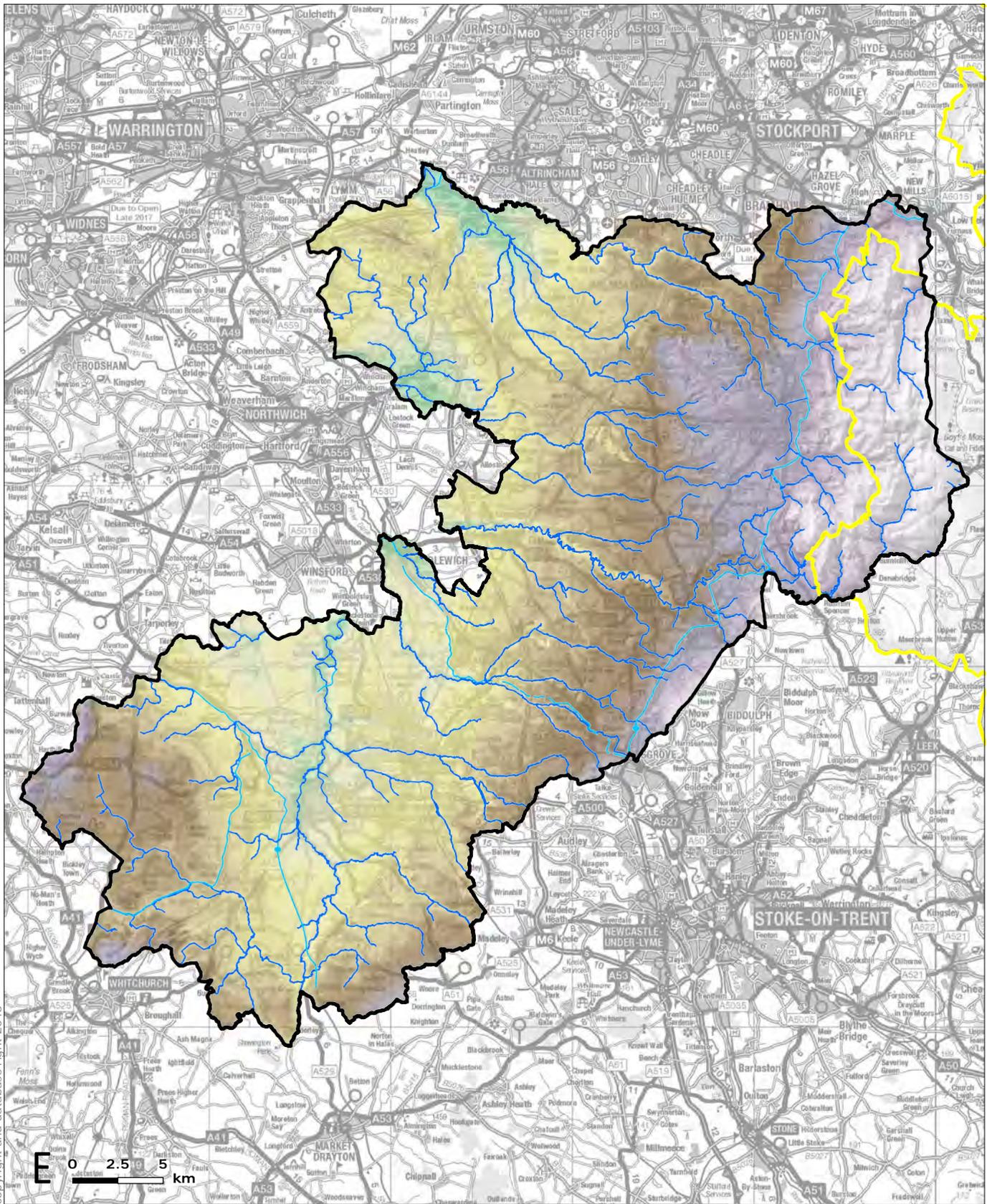
**Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies**

**Figure 2.3**

**Agricultural Land Classification**

**LUC**

Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000



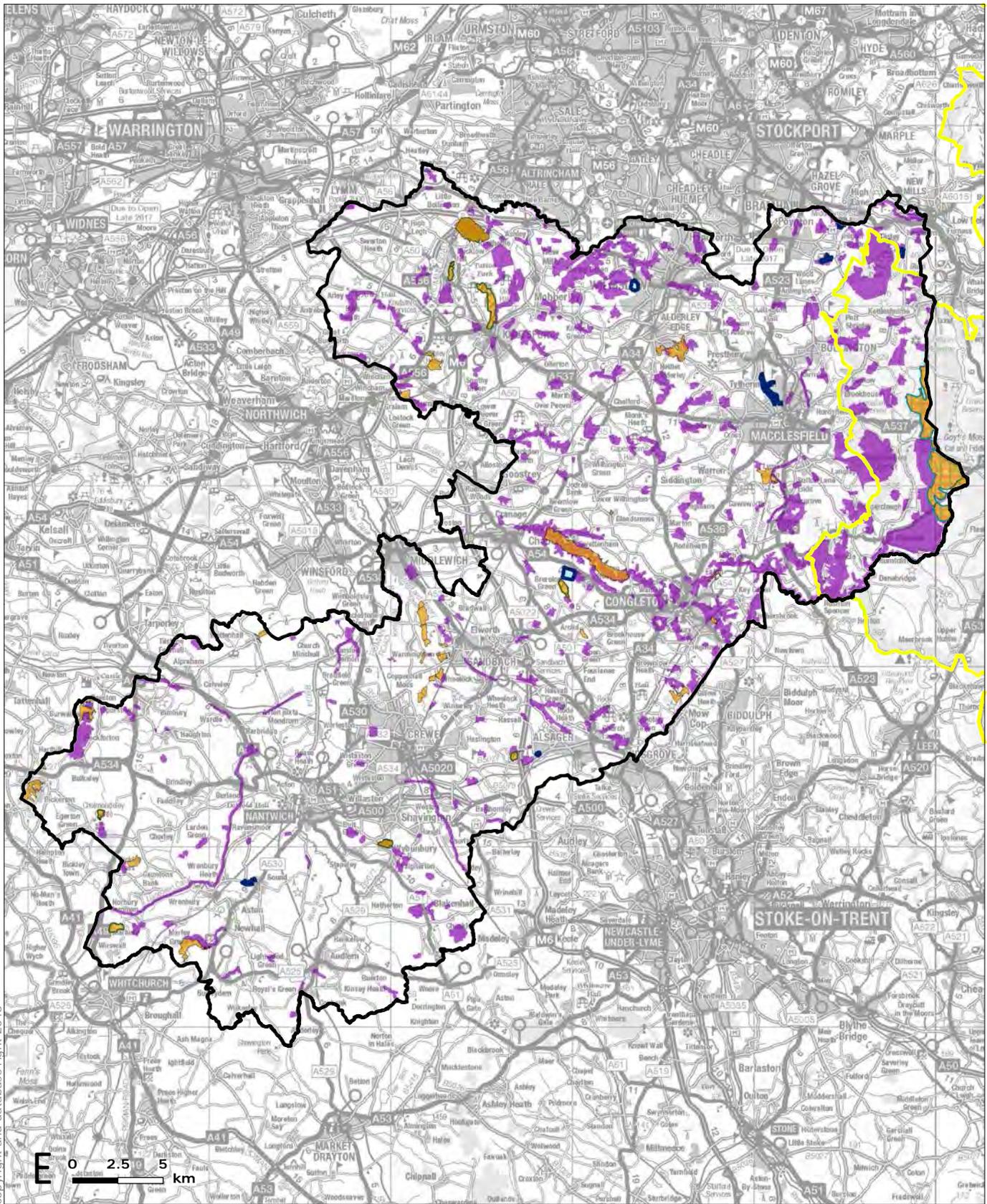
- Cheshire East District boundary
  - Peak District National Park
  - River
  - Canal
- Elevation (Metres AOD)**
- High : 558.8
  - Low : -1.2

**Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies**

**Figure 2.4  
Landform and Drainage**



Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000



- Cheshire East District boundary
- Peak District National Park
- Local Nature Reserve
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Ramsar
- Special Protection Area
- Special Area of Conservation
- National Nature Reserve
- Local Wildlife Site

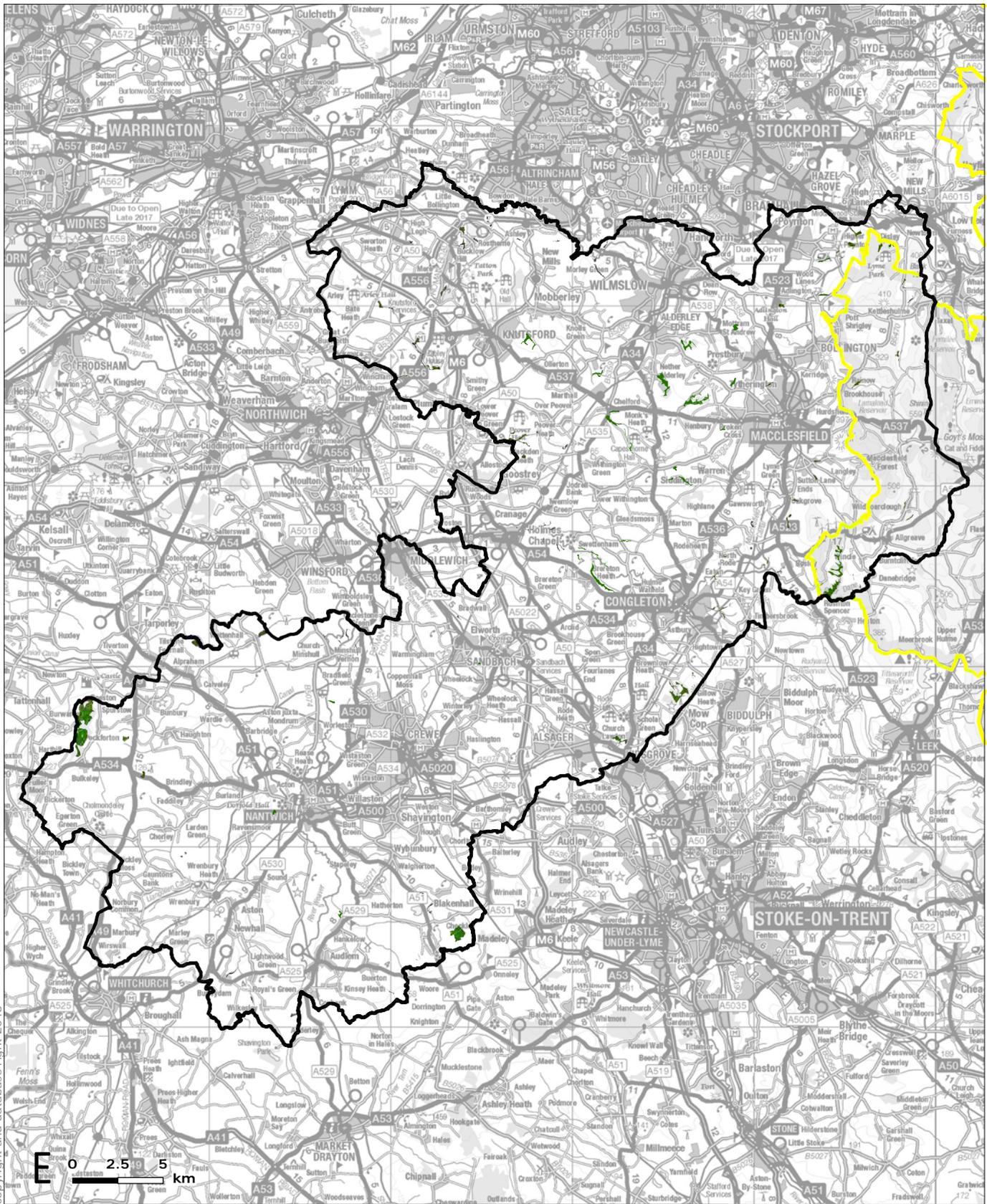
Source: Ordnance Survey, Natural England

Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000

**Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies**

**Figure 2.5  
Biodiversity Designations**

**LUC**



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018

- Cheshire East District boundary
- Peak District National Park
- Ancient Woodland

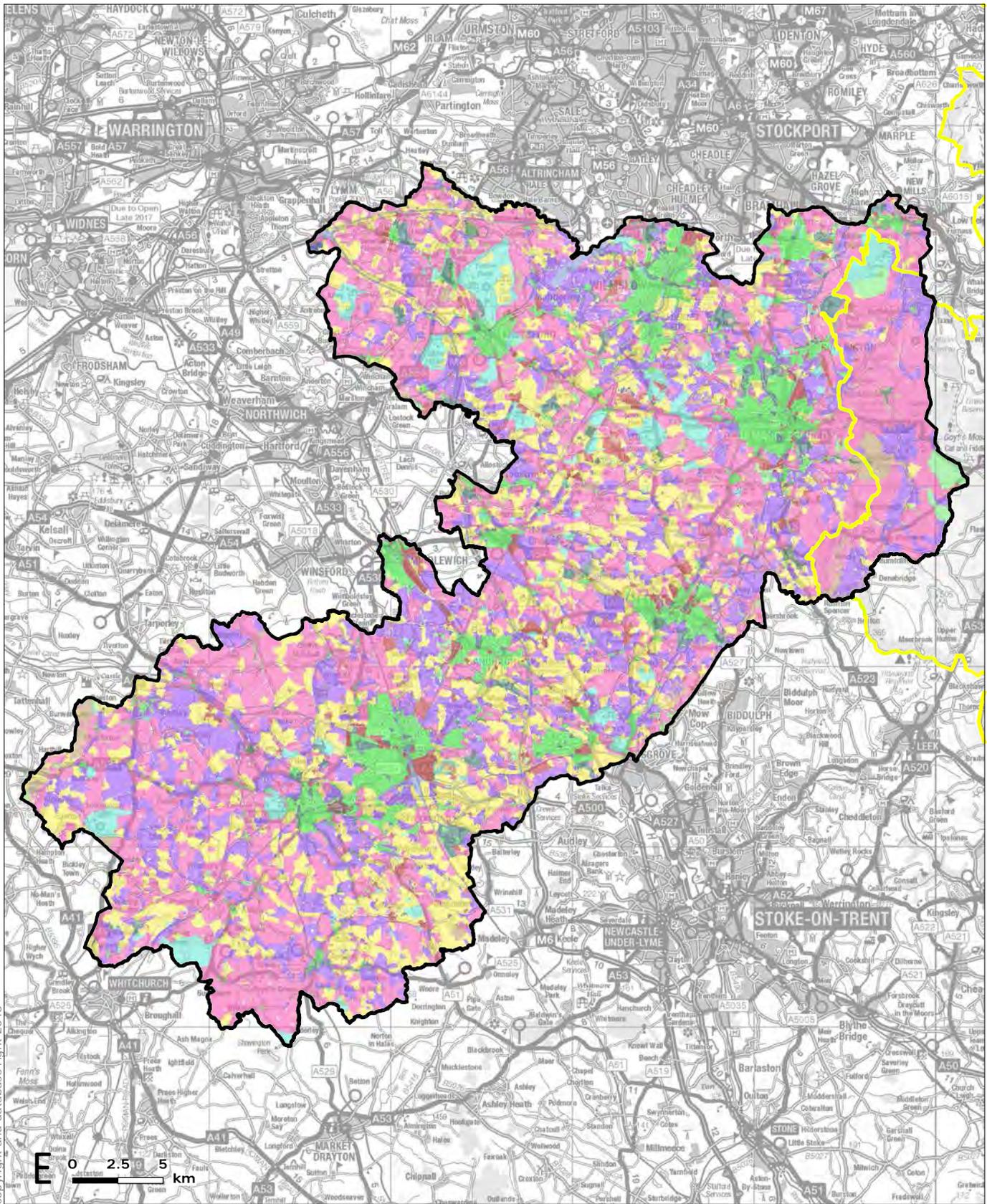
Source: Ordnance Survey, Natural England

Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000

**Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies**

**Figure 2.6**  
**Ancient Woodland**





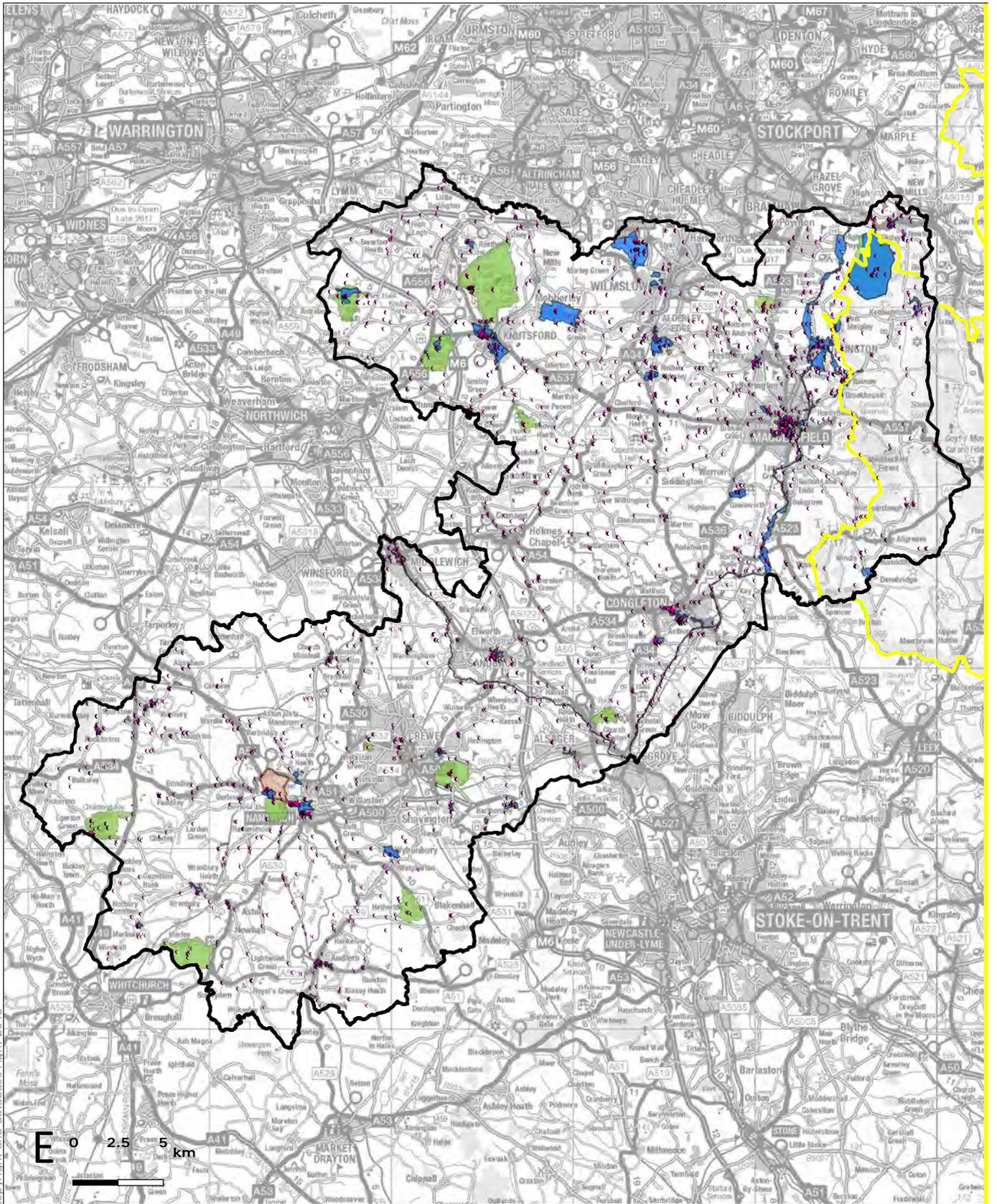
- Cheshire East District boundary
- Peak District National Park
- Key Historic Landscape Types**
- Ancient Fieldsapes
- C20th Fieldsapes
- Communications
- Industry
- Late Post Medieval Agricultural Improvement
- Military
- Non-improved Land
- Ornamental
- Post Medieval Fieldsapes
- Recreation
- Settlement
- Water Bodies
- Woodland

**Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies**

**Figure 2.7**  
**Key Historic Landscape Types**



Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000



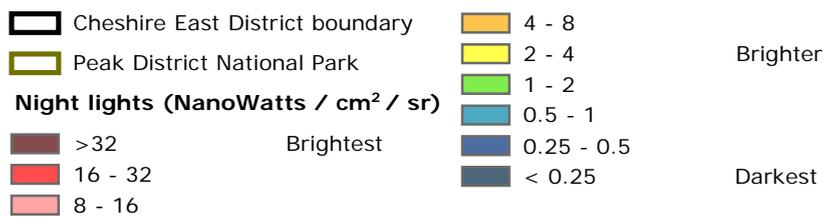
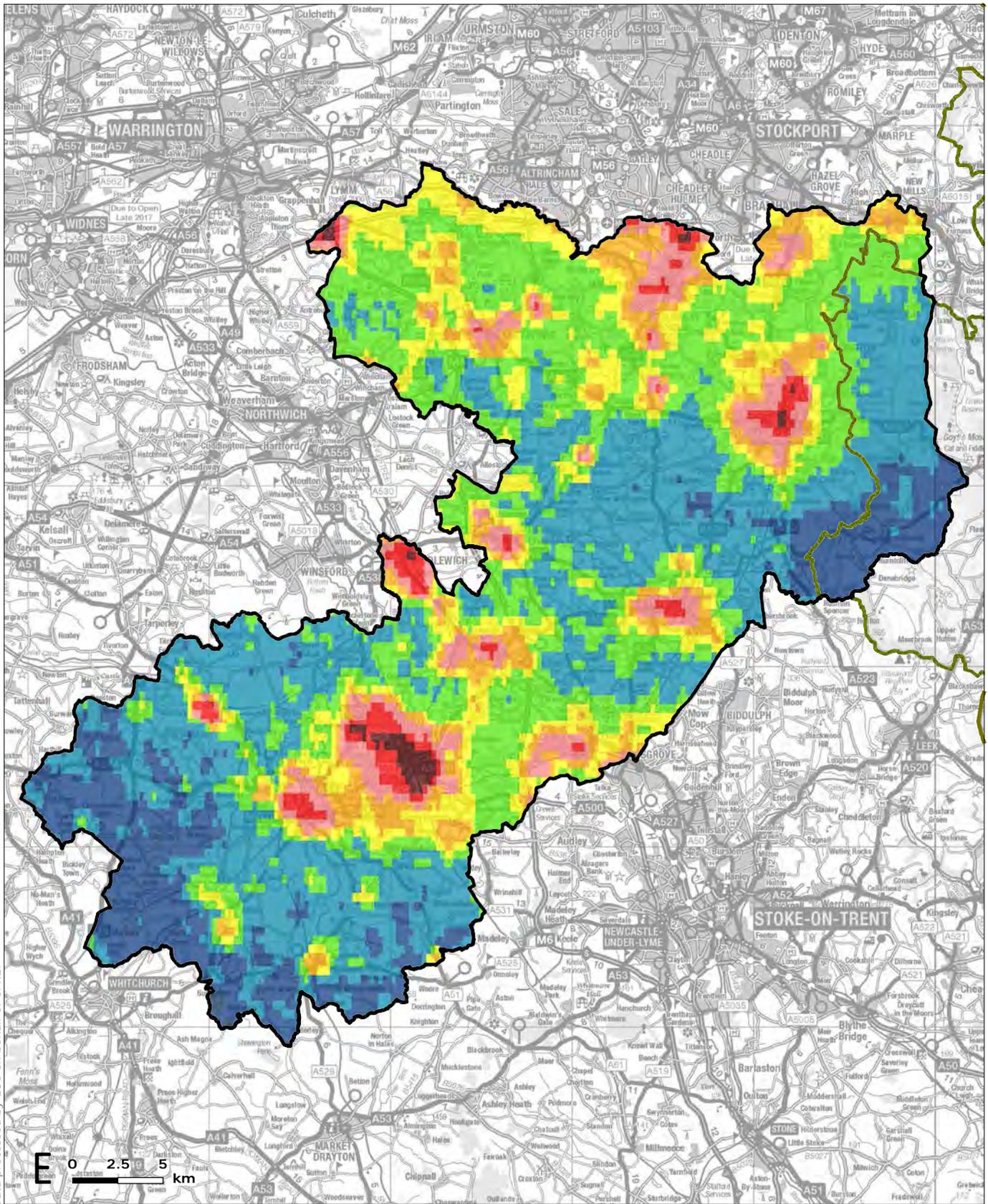
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**Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies**

**Figure 2.8**  
**Heritage Assets**



Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000



**Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies**

**Figure 2.9**  
**Light Pollution**



For details on the methodology used to create this data, visit [nightblight.cpre.org.uk](http://nightblight.cpre.org.uk)  
 Source: Ordnance Survey, CPRE

Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000

## 3 Summary of landscape issues

- 3.1 In some areas of the Cheshire East landscape, the condition of the landscape has deteriorated or is considered to be at risk due to factors as summarised below. It is recognised that some of the causes of poor landscape condition are outside the remit of the Planning Authority, however, some may be addressed by policy and development control.

### Development pressures

- 3.2 The presence of large conurbations both within the Borough and to the north means that pressure for development is a challenge to the existing landscape character.
- 3.3 The characteristic pattern of dispersed rural settlement, which often includes small dwellings and farmsteads located in direct relationship to the landform is greatly at risk from zoned or opportunist development. This is leading to loss of vernacular character, ribbon development and in-fill.
- 3.4 The demand for mineral extraction sites related to increases in housebuilding is likely to increase as the population increases and is threat to the lowland habitats although it also offers the opportunity to restore heathland and wetland habitats.
- 3.5 Development will also increase water demand and borehole extraction is lowering water levels in some areas so potentially threatening important wetland habitats in the Borough. Water abstraction for domestic and industrial uses can alter water tables and land cover.. Moorland drainage can cause flooding in winter and water shortages in summer. This type of landscape is generally in decline.
- 3.6 The loss of ponds, so characteristic of the Cheshire landscape, through drainage, in-fill, shading, plus nutrient run-off from surrounding farmland is leading to a decline in species-rich wetlands.

### Agricultural changes

- 3.7 Agricultural changes, particularly related to the dairy industry are resulting in partial decline leading to suburbanisation in some areas and intensification of farming practices in others.
- 3.8 More intensive farming practices are resulting in larger amalgamated farms with new agricultural buildings. The form of modern agricultural buildings is often a detractor in agricultural landscapes, most of these buildings being of large scale and having no local distinction. Intensification, particularly of dairy farming, is also associated with a loss of pasture for arable and fodder crops (maize) which is in turn resulting in field enlargement and subsequent loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Hedgerows lose their function in arable landscapes, and are often replaced by post and wire fences. The heavy clay of the Cheshire plain is being deep ploughed leading to problems with compaction and subsequent soil erosion.
- 3.9 The intensification of the dairy industry means that farms are generally decreasing in number with many smaller farms going out of business and their agricultural buildings steadily converted to residential use with accompanying change in lighting requirements in these rural areas and non-traditional farm use of the surrounding fields, such as horse paddocks. The increase of Horsiculture is having an impact on the character of the countryside with an increasing use of horse tape, number of menages and degradation of pasture.

### Increase in traffic and transport

- 3.10 The extensive transport network which crosses the Borough , including the motorway corridors, local highways and the web of railway lines which emanate from Crewe have a large-scale impact on landform, particularly in the north of the Borough along the M6 and M56 corridor.

- 3.11 Road and rail improvements, particularly on the proposed HS2 route risk the urbanisation of rural villages and growth over and above the housing expansion of 36,000 homes proposed in the Local Plan. Crewe is an important node in the national rail network and the construction of HS2 will result in a new high speed hub station in the town, a major railway depot to the north of Crewe, adjacent to the Weaver Valley. The integration of transport and rail corridors into the wider landscape is needed. HS2 will also be a catalyst for growth in Crewe with 5,000 homes linked directly to the station transformation.
- 3.12 Narrow rural roads are vulnerable to widening or experiencing an excessive number of vehicles, causing damage to grass verges and hedgerows.

#### Decline in woodland management and over-maturity of specimen trees

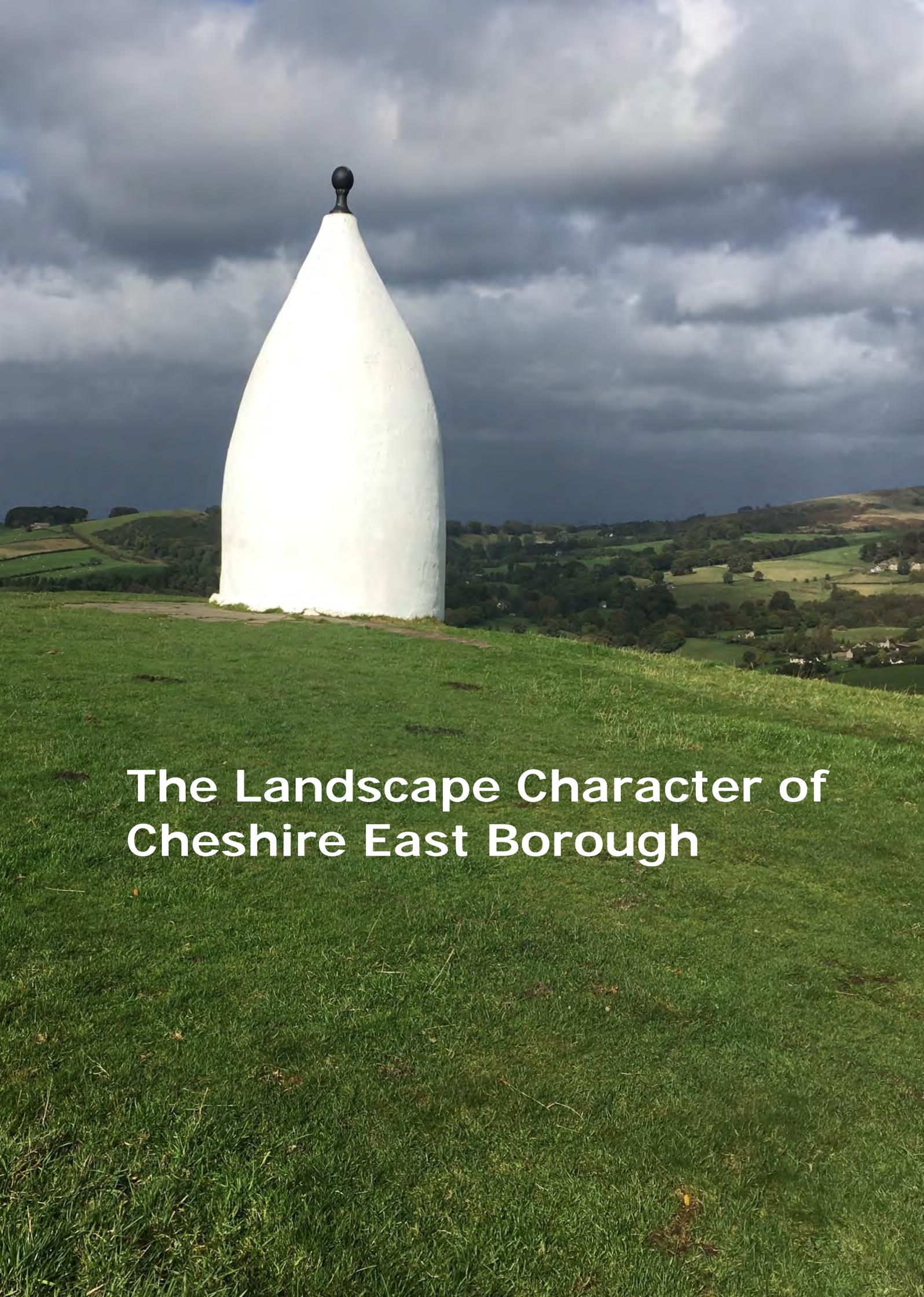
- 3.13 The on-going decline in traditional woodland management practise is leading to under management of farm woodlands, coverts and copses with little replanting across the Borough. There is pressure on ancient woodland and semi-natural woodlands in upland areas from a lack of management, or inappropriate management which can prevent natural regeneration. However, recently there has been an increased interest in wood fuel initiatives which may have the potential to help unmanaged woodlands back into management.
- 3.14 In lowland Cheshire mature hedgerow trees (particularly oak) are an integral part of the ancient hedge system and together with pond-side trees (oak and alder) contribute to the wooded aspect of the Borough. The loss of these trees through senescence, agricultural intensification and consequent field enlargement, climate change and associated pests and diseases together with a lack of replacement is a key challenge to the existing landscape character.

#### Climate change

- 3.15 Climate change is a major pressure on agricultural landscapes and is likely to result in increasingly unpredictable weather patterns with hotter drier summers, more intense rainfall and longer dry periods resulting in the need for agriculture to adapt to grow different crops and develop more flexible and responsive land management practices. Hotter summers and increases in temperatures could result in increased demands for irrigation and domestic uses. Responses to climate change may also result in pressure for development of renewable energy.
- 3.16 Climate change resulting in more extreme weather patterns could alter the species composition of existing species-rich woodlands, cloughs and hedgerows, favouring species with lower water demand. There are likely to be increasing incidences of pathogens changing the species mix of woodlands, and higher temperatures and prolonged drought are likely to put woodlands under stress and increasing the risk of wildfires.
- 3.17 Climate change is also likely to affect important semi-natural habitats, particularly river and wetland habitats throughout the Borough. Water shortages on the one hand and increased water flows and flooding on the other, causing potential damage to habitats and species.

#### Recreational pressures

- 3.18 Upland areas in Cheshire East are very popular recreational areas with visitor pressure at certain locations leading to a loss of tranquillity, loss or fragmentation of habitats, visual intrusion of car parks or stationery vehicles and demand for additional facilities.
- 3.19 The existing Green Infrastructure improves connectivity and provides access for local communities to green spaces. However, providing access and recreational opportunities also represents a strain on the natural resource along these connected linear routes and the countryside beyond.



# The Landscape Character of Cheshire East Borough

## 4 Landscape character classification

### Landscape Types and Character Areas

- 4.1 The updated landscape classification identifies **14 landscape character types** each representing a distinct identity and reflecting the range of contrasting landscapes across the Borough. These are illustrated in **Figure 4.1** below.
- 4.2 The changes in character types represent the gradual change from west to east, from the sandstone ridge along the south western boundary(LCT1 Sandstone Ridge), to the flat plain which dominates much of the Borough (LCT 3 Undulating Farmland, LCT4 Cheshire Plain East and LCT 7 Lower Wooded Farmland), to slightly more undulating landscape (LCT 11 Higher Wooded Farmland) to the more dramatic landscapes on the fringe of the Peak District (LCT 12 Upland Footslopes, LCT13 Gristone Uplands and LCT14 Moorland Hills and Ridges). The transition between types, both within the Borough and across administrative boundaries, is gradual and therefore boundaries are transitional rather than hard lines of change.
- 4.3 The landscape types are sub-divided into local **landscape character areas** (LCAs) which are discrete geographic areas that possess the characteristics described for the landscape type. The revised classification identifies 51 separate landscape character areas. Some of these cover relatively small areas along the Borough boundary which extend into neighbouring authorities. These are listed in **Table 4.1** below and illustrated in **Figure 4.2**.

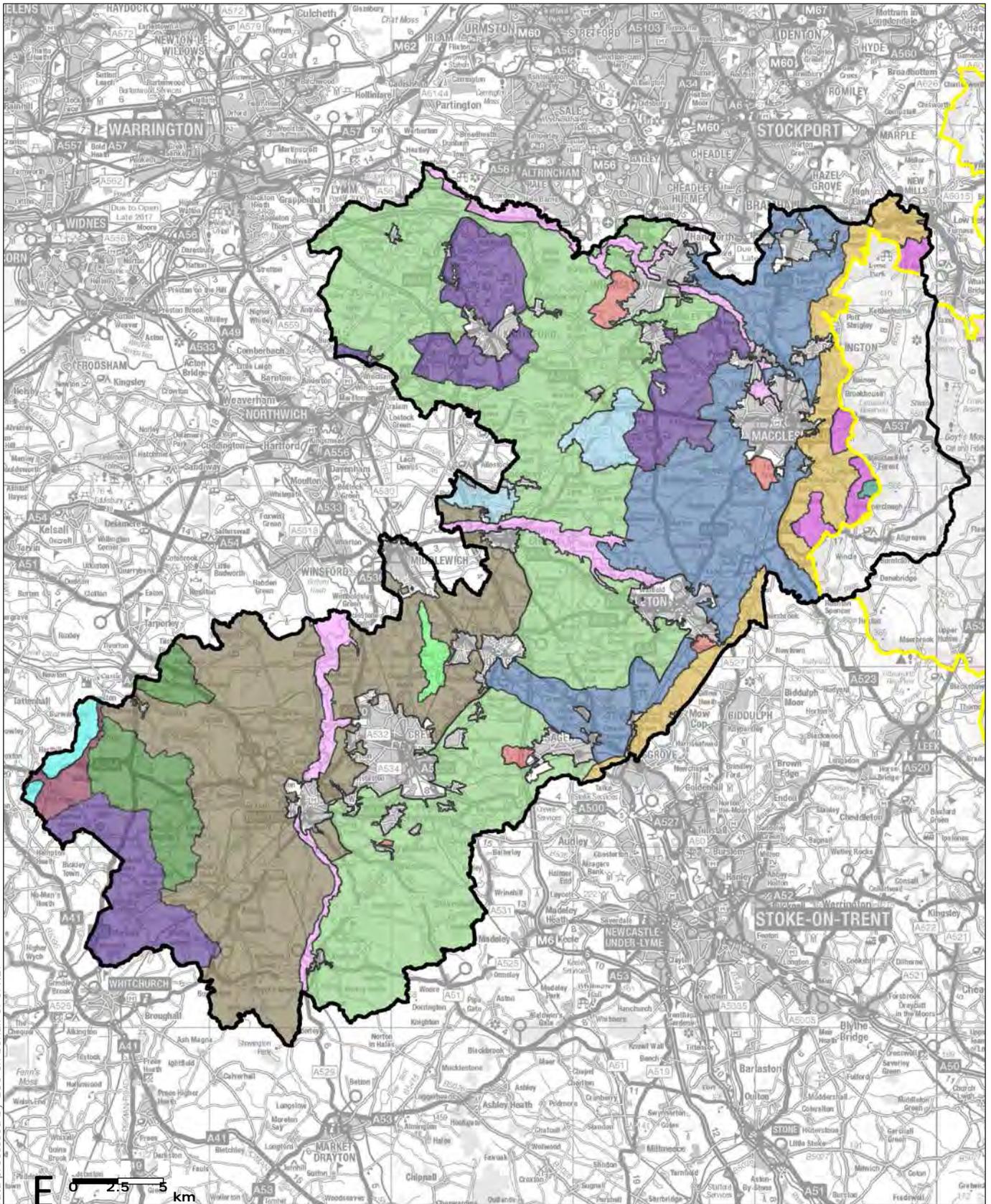
**Table 4.1 Landscape Character Types and Areas in Cheshire East**

LCT No.	Landscape Character Types	LCA No.	Landscape Character Area
1	Sandstone Ridge	1a	Peckforton
		1b	Maiden Castle
2	Sandstone Fringe	2a	Beeston-Duckington
3	Undulating Farmland	3a	Oulton
		3b	Faddiley
4	Cheshire East Plain	4a	Cholmondeston
		4b	Ravensmoor
		4c	Dodcott
		4d	Wimboldsley
		4e	Stublach
5	Wooded Estates and Meres	5a	Cholmondeley
		5b	Capesthorpe
		5c	Budworth

LCT No.	Landscape Character Types	LCA No.	Landscape Character Area
		5d	Tatton and Rostherne
		5e	Tabley
6	Woodland, Heath, Meres and Mosses	6a	Rudheath
		6b	Withington
7	Lower Wooded Farmland	7a	Arley
		7b	Ringway
		7c	Chonar
		7d	Marthall
		7e	Brereton Heath
		7f	Barthomley
		7g	Audlem
8	Salt Flashes	8a	Sandbach Flashes
9	Mosslands	9a	Lindow Moss
		9b	Danes Moss
		9c	Congleton Moss
		9d	Oakhanger Moss
		9e	Wynbury Moss
10	River Valleys	10a	Lower Bolin
		10b	Upper Bolin
		10c	Lower Dane
		10d	Upper Dane
		10e	Higher Dane
		10f	Upper Weaver
		10g	High Weaver
11	Higher Wooded Farmland	11a	Adlington
		11b	Gawsworth
		11c	Buglawton

LCT No.	Landscape Character Types	LCA No.	Landscape Character Area
		11d	Little Moreton
12	Upland Foothills	12a	Higher Disley
		12b	Kerridge
		12c	Langley
		12d	Mow Cop Ridge
13	Enclosed Gritstone Uplands	13a	Whaley Moor
		13b	Teggs Nose
		13c	Macclesfield Forest
		13d	Cessbank Common
		13e	Sutton Common
14	Moorland Hills and Ridges	14a	High Moor

- 4.6 Each of the generic **landscape types** has a distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes. For this strategic scale study, the landscape types are sub-divided into component local **landscape character areas**. These are discrete geographic areas that possess the common characteristics described for the landscape type. Each character area has a distinct and recognisable local identity.
- 4.7 It is important to note that the boundary between one character area and the next is transitional and there is rarely a clear cut change. The precision of boundaries drawn around landscape character areas and types varies with the scale and level of detail of the assessment. This assessment has been mapped at a scale of 1:25,000 which means that it is suitable for use at this scale. The scale of this classification will need to be taken into account whenever the assessment is used to ensure that the level of detail is compatible with the intended application. For example the LCT 9 Mosslands only picks up larger or designated mosslands and not the numerous smaller mosslands scattered throughout the Borough.



- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Cheshire East District boundary  | 6 - Woodland, Heaths, Meres and Mosses |
| Peak District National Park      | 7 - Lower Wooded Farmland              |
| <b>Landscape Character Types</b> | 8 - Salt Flashes                       |
| 1 - Sandstone Ridge              | 9 - Mossland                           |
| 2 - Sandstone Fringe             | 10 - River Valleys                     |
| 3 - Undulating Farmland          | 11 - Higher Wooded Farmland            |
| 4 - Cheshire Plain East          | 12 - Upland Footslopes                 |
| 5 - Wooded Estates and Meres     | 13 - Enclosed Gritstone Upland         |
|                                  | 14 - Moorland Hills and Ridges         |

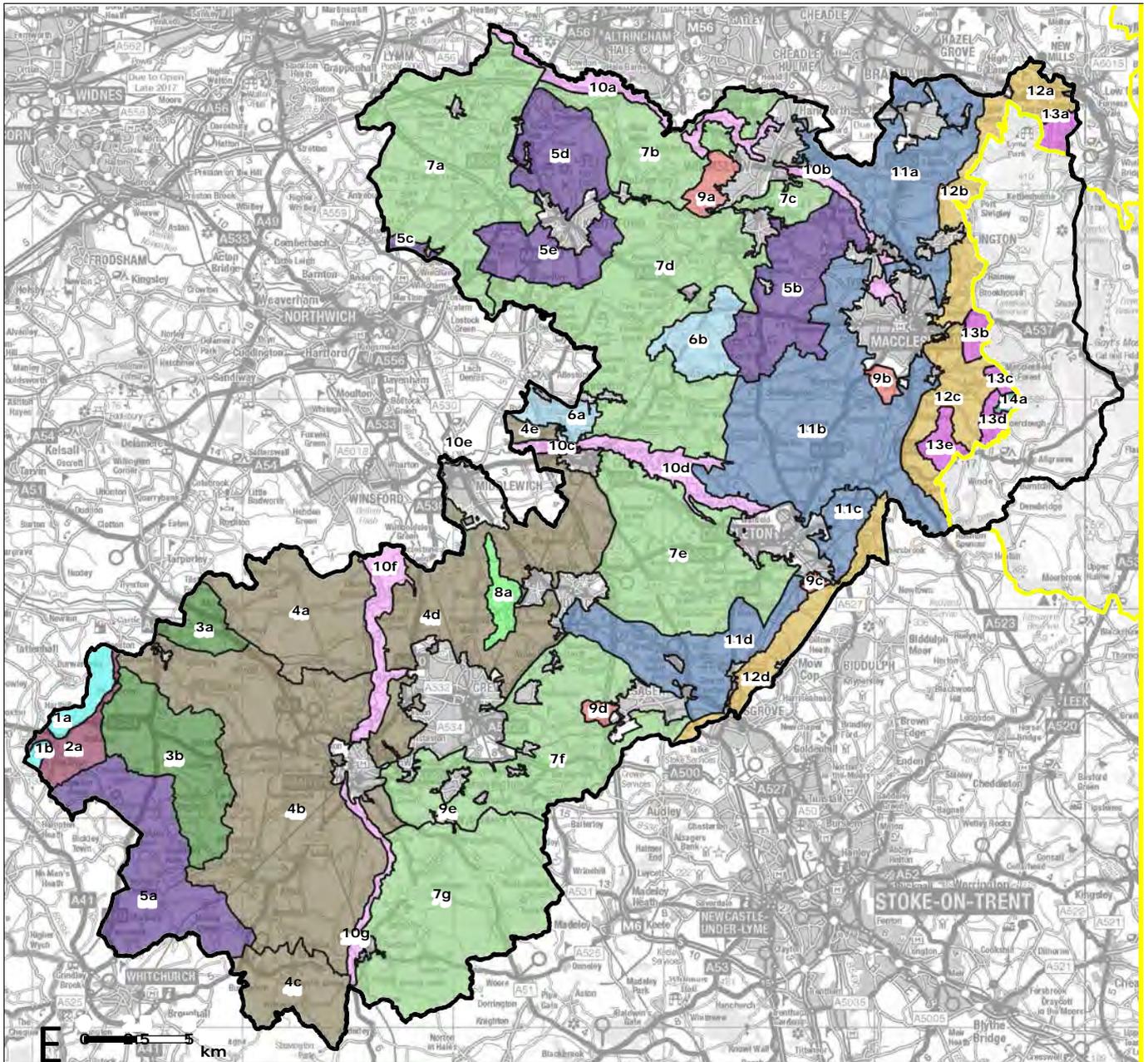
Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000

**Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies**

**Figure 4.1**

**Landscape Character Types**





Cheshire East District boundary

Peak District National Park

**Landscape Character**

1 - Sandstone Ridge

1a - Peckforton

1b - Maiden Castle

2 - Sandstone Fringe

2a - Beeston-Duckington

3 - Undulating Farmland

3a - Oulton

3b - Faddiley

4 - Cheshire Plain East

4b - Ravensmoor

4c - Dodcott

4d - Wimboldsley

4e - Stublach

5 - Wooded Estates and Meres

5a - Cholmondeley

5b - Capesthorpe

5c - Budworth

5d - Tatton and Rostherne

5e - Tabley

6 - Woodland, Heaths, Meres and Mosses

6a - Rudheath

6b - Withington

7 - Lower Wooded Farmland

7a - Arley

7b - Ringway

7c - Chonar

7d - Marthall

7e - Brereton Heath

7f - Barthomley

7g - Audlem

8 - Salt Flashes

8a - Sandbach Flashes

9 - Mossland

9a - Lindow Moss

9b - Danes Moss

9c - Congleton Moss

9d - Oakhanger Moss

9e - Wyburnury Moss

10 - River Valleys

10a - Lower Bollin

10b - Upper Bollin

10c - Lower Dane

10d - Upper Dane

10e - High Dane

10f - Upper Weaver

10g - High Weaver

11 - Higher Wooded Farmland

11a - Adlington

11b - Gawsworth

11c - Buglawton

11d - Little Moreton

12 - Upland Footslopes

12a - Higher Disley

12b - Kerridge

12c - Langley

12d - Mow Cop Ridge

13 - Enclosed Gritstone Upland

13a - Whaley Moor

13b - Teggs Nose

13c - Macclesfield Forest

13d - Cessbank Common

13e - Stretton Common

14 - Moorland Hills and Ridges

14a - High Moor

**Map Scale @ A4: 1:300,000**

**Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies**

**Figure 4.2**

**Landscape Character**

**Types and Area**

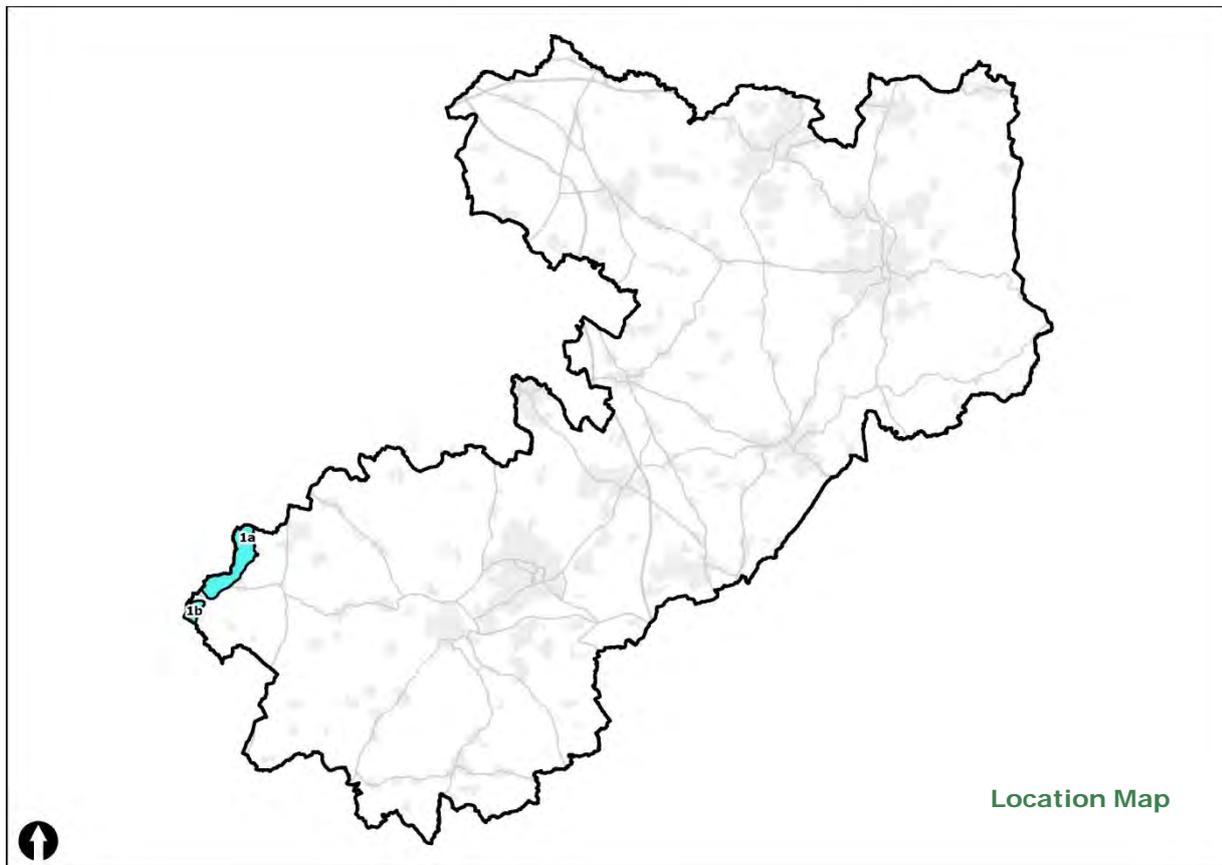
**Classification**



## 5 Landscape Character Type Profiles

- 5.1 This section contains the Landscape Character Type profiles including descriptive and evaluative information.

## LCT 1: Sandstone Ridge



### Summary of location and landscape character

The Sandstone Ridge stands prominently above the surrounding Plain and is a visually distinctive landmark in the landscape. It is located in the south west of the Borough, adjacent to the Cheshire West border, and runs from Bickerton to Peckforton Castle, continuing northwards into Cheshire West. The ridge dips down into the Sandstone Fringe type where Salter's Lane crosses the landscape. There are overlapping characteristics with the Sandstone Fringe character type, but the visual and topographic differences set it apart from this more intermediate landscape. The ridge has a very strong cultural and natural character including a concentration of prehistoric features, semi-natural woodland and heathland, disused quarries, rock exposures, narrow sunken lanes and sandstone buildings and walls.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCAs

- 1a: Peckforton
- 1b: Maiden Castle

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- Elevated sandstone ridge which forms a distinctive landmark, with steep slopes, outcrops and upstanding bluffs above 200 metres AOD, reaching a maximum of 227 metres at Raw Head.
- Underlying bedrock comprises the Helsby Sandstone formation. Raw Head is designated as a SSSI for its nationally important sandstone exposures. The Sandstone Ridge is generally overlain by free-draining brown earths and brown sands.

#### *Woodland/tree cover*

- The ridge has a high density of woodland compared with the rest of Cheshire, comprising post-medieval conifer plantations as well as large areas of ancient oak woodland. Gorse is found amongst the farmland.

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- Farmland is mostly post-medieval small/medium scale regular fields used for a mixture of pastoral grazing and fodder crop growing, although there are some larger fields, particularly on top of the ridge. Fields are divided by post and wire fences, hedges and woodland.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- Nationally important lowland heath habitats including Bickerton Hill SSSI which at 120 hectares comprises half of the remaining heath in Cheshire. This area is undergoing restoration by the National Trust to improve the habitat resource for rare reptiles, invertebrates and birds.
- Ancient woodland is also valued for wildlife and includes Peckforton Woods SSSI. These habitats are important for a number of bird species including buzzard, sparrowhawk, raven and pied flycatcher.

#### *Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- The Iron Age hill fort of Maiden Castle is located atop a promontory of Bickerton Hill and is designated as a Scheduled Monument. The historic Victorian hall at Peckforton Castle (Grade I listed building) is also a prominent feature on the skyline.
- Industrial archaeology is also evident within the landscape, including a number of disused sandstone quarries and copper mines.

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- Settlement on the ridge is limited to low-density dispersed farms, with sandstone buildings and boundary walls. Some farm buildings on the ridge top form visually prominent features. Roads are limited to narrow, winding and often sunken lanes.
- The Sandstone Trail crosses the ridge and is linked to a number of other footpaths. National Cycle Route 45 also provides access to the ridge. Open access land at Maiden Castle is popular with walkers and horse riders.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- Spectacular long distance views across Cheshire and beyond into North Wales, the Peak District and Merseyside.
- The ridge itself forms a focal point in views, rising up from the adjacent low lying farmland.
- There are remote and exposed qualities atop the ridge due to the elevation, large fields and lack of significant settlement. Elsewhere, there is a strong sense of enclosure due to the dense woodland coverage and narrow sunken lanes.

### Physical and Natural Influences

Land within this character type has elevation between approximately 80 metres and 227 metres AOD. Raw Head forms the highest point. The underlying bedrock comprises the Helsby Sandstone formation with a small amount of glacial till. The steep slopes and thin acid soils support high concentrations of woodland, with a mixture of ancient oakwood and areas of more recent secondary origin or planted with conifers.



Heathland is also characteristic of the type and remains most intact on Bickerton Hill. A number of woodlands are listed as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) such as Peckforton Woods and Bulkeley Hill, and there are three SSSIs at Peckforton, Bickerton and Raw Head. A number of other geological and geomorphological features in the type are listed as of regional importance (RIGS).

Pasture dominates the agricultural land use and is enclosed by hawthorn hedgerows and sandstone walls in the south. Arable cultivation of fodder crops and potatoes are located on the better draining, gentler slopes of the ridge. Fields are usually post-medieval in origin, regular in shape and those on the slopes are small in size, becoming larger on top of the ridge.

### Historic and Cultural Influences

Flint scatters and barrows indicate prehistoric activity (Bronze Age and earlier). The character type has been inhabited since at least the Iron Age period (c 700 BC), as evidenced by the hillfort at Maiden Castle. This defended settlement utilised the imposing natural topography as part of its defences. It is designated as a Scheduled Monument and is now managed by the National Trust. Evidence of former industries is visible in the landscape, with numerous disused sandstone quarries and copper mines. Quarried sandstone from the ridge has been used in the construction of local buildings and boundary walls.

Settlement comprises individual farms and houses. The 19th century castle at Peckforton (grade I listed building) is a prominent feature in

the north of the LCT. A sandstone vernacular is evident in buildings and walls, reflecting the local geology. The ridge also provides a distinctive setting and orientation to nearby settlements.



Road access to the ridge is limited to narrow sunken lanes and private tracks. The Sandstone Trail runs along the ridge and is supplemented by a dense network of footpaths and cycle routes including National Cycle Route 45. There are open access areas such as Maiden Castle which is popular with walkers and horse riders.

### Visual and Perceptual Character

This landscape exhibits varying degrees of enclosure and contrasting scales, due to the localised ridge and valley features of the undulating topography and a wide variation in woodland cover. The sense of enclosure by lush, dense vegetation is reinforced by the sunken roads between high hedges. Elsewhere, reduced tree cover leads to a more open and exposed landscape, particularly from elevated positions available along the network of narrow lanes.



Expansive, long distance views provide an important element of this landscape type as they are widely available from the higher ground and contribute significantly to the distinctive character of the landscape. These vary between narrow views framed or filtered by high vegetation to spectacular panoramic views from open vantage points including Maiden Castle and Kitty's Stone. Views extend over the surrounding plain as far as the hills of the Clwydian Range and Mersey Valley in the west and the Peak District in the east.

## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- The dramatic ridge landform, rising abruptly above the surrounding flat farmland which provides a strong sense of place and orientation within the wider landscape and creates an undeveloped, wooded skyline.
- Nationally and regionally important geological features and sandstone exposures including Raw Head SSSI which show the geological evolution of the underlying bedrock.
- The densely wooded slopes create strong contrasts in the context of the predominantly flat and open plain. Large areas of birch and oak woodland (including ancient woodland) provide natural heritage value and landscape character on the tops and upper slopes of the ridge, including Peckforton Woods SSSI and LWS and Bulkeley Hill LWS.
- Important areas of heathland including Bickerton Hill SSSI, which comprises half of the remaining lowland heath within Cheshire. The heath gives a scenic quality to the landscape as well as biodiversity and recreation value.
- Nationally important heritage features from various eras of history, including Maiden Castle Scheduled Monument and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Grade I listed building of Peckforton Castle. These features attract many visitors to the area and give a strong sense of time-depth to the landscape.
- The relative lack of settlement, with sparsely arranged individual dwellings and farmsteads of relatively small scale, historic architecture and many of which are constructed of local sandstone reflecting the local geology and creating a strong sense of place.
- Popular trails and walking routes including the Sandstone Trail which are valued for recreation and health benefits.
- Panoramic long distance views from the ridgeline summits over the Cheshire Plain and beyond provide a rare opportunity to appreciate the surrounding landscape of this part of Cheshire East. Viewpoints at Maiden Castle and Kitty's Stone are popular with visitors.
- Sense of exposure on the ridgetop which contrasts with the enclosed character experienced along the narrow lanes and in dense wooded areas.
- Remote and tranquil perceptual qualities, with a strong naturalistic and historic character which provide a sense of escape for many people including those living in nearby urban areas.

### Landscape condition

Much of this landscape is currently well-managed by the National Trust and Peckforton Castle estates and overall it is in good condition. Peckforton Woods is noted as being in favourable condition. In places, past loss of hedgerows has diluted the field patterns and their replacement with post and wire fencing does not provide the biodiversity benefits of hedgerows or walls. In small, localised areas, a lack of appropriate management on heathland and semi-natural grassland communities is leading to scrub encroachment.

### Forces for change

- **Visitor pressure at certain locations**, particularly along the Sandstone Trail and the Open Access Land at Maiden Castle. This may lead 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.
- **Increased demand for visitor facilities** such as holiday cottages and car parking facilities.
- **Changes in farming** including pressure to diversify and changing patterns of land ownership. The purchase of agricultural holdings by non-farmers is becoming a significant force for change, resulting in conversion of farm houses and farm buildings and changes in farm use.
- **Pressure for communications masts and potentially wind turbines** which may target the ridge and the surrounding landscape given the prominent topography and high average wind

speeds.

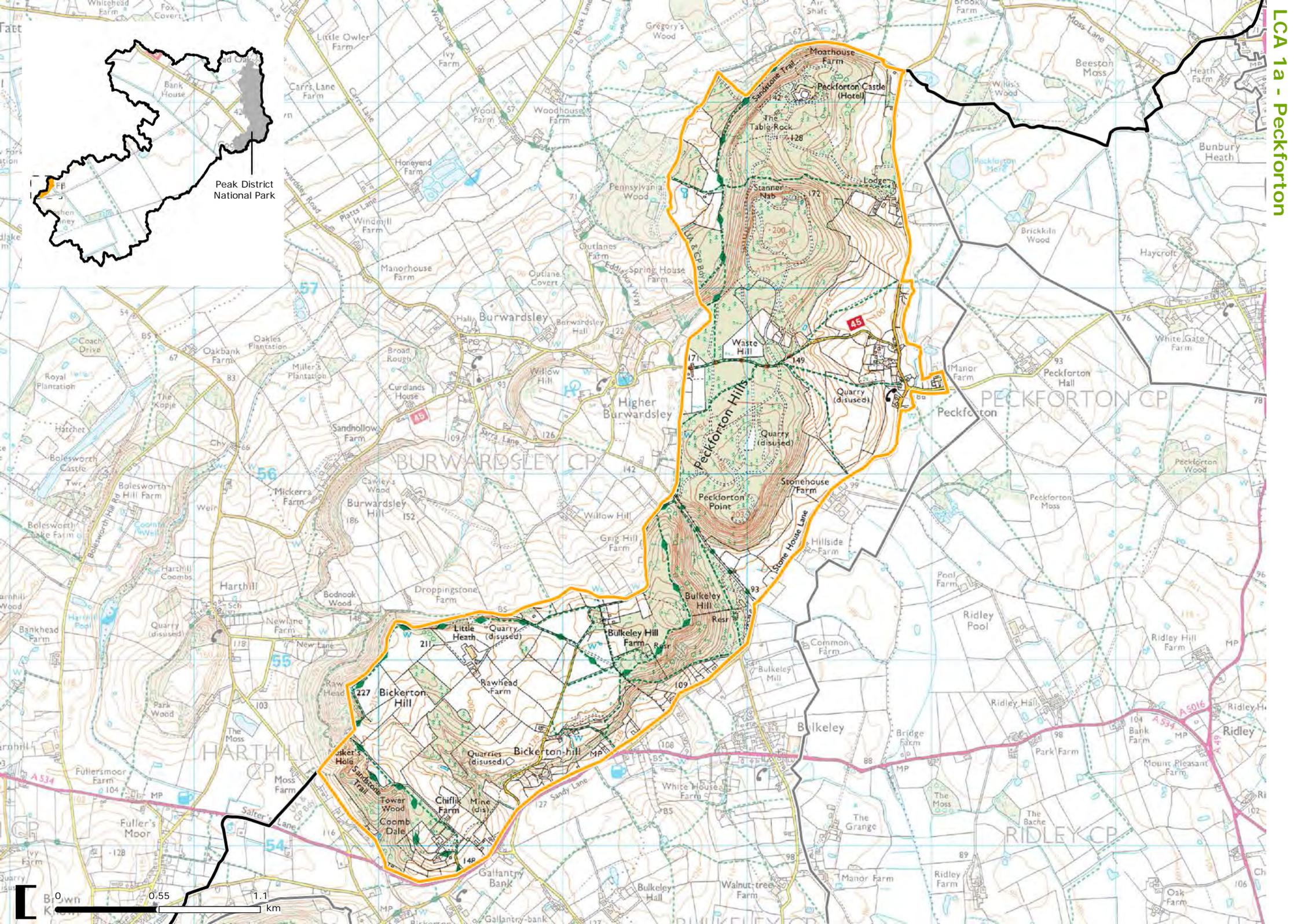
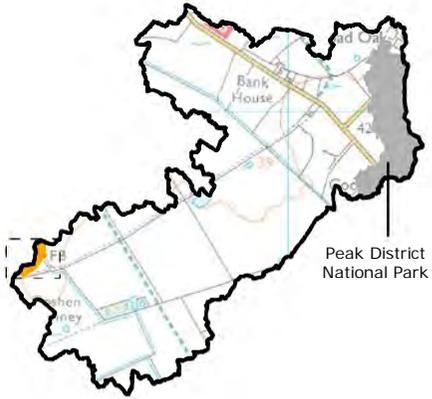
- **Changes in woodland composition** as new pests/diseases spread (particularly *phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)) which may lead to large scale felling. On-going decline in traditional woodland management practices may lead to under management of farm woodlands, over maturity of trees and neglect of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- **The relaxation of traditional grazing practices** and resultant spread of scrub and trees has resulted in a reduction and deterioration of heathland.
- **Reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of habitats** at some locations, including ancient woodland and heathland.
- **Dilution of field patterns** due to decline in hedgerow management and disrepair of drystone walls, with resulting increase in use of fencing.
- **Erosion of built environment character through incremental development** which 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.
- **Standardisation of roads** with potential upgrading of characterful lanes and minor roads leading to increasingly suburban character of the countryside.
- **Horsiculture** leading to the introduction of fencing and pony tape and associated structures.

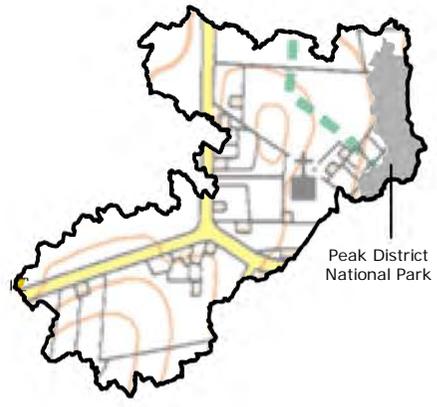
## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

### Overall vision and landscape strategy

A well-managed rural landscape with a network of mature hedgerows marking post-medieval field patterns which compliment large areas of ancient woodland and designed parkland with historic buildings. The rural farmland is interspersed with valued semi-natural heathland and grassland habitats. Provision for recreation in the landscape is good and aligns with ecological and heritage conservation.

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to conserve the prominent, distinctive skyline and panoramic views from the ridge, and to restore the traditional field pattern with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees where these have been lost.



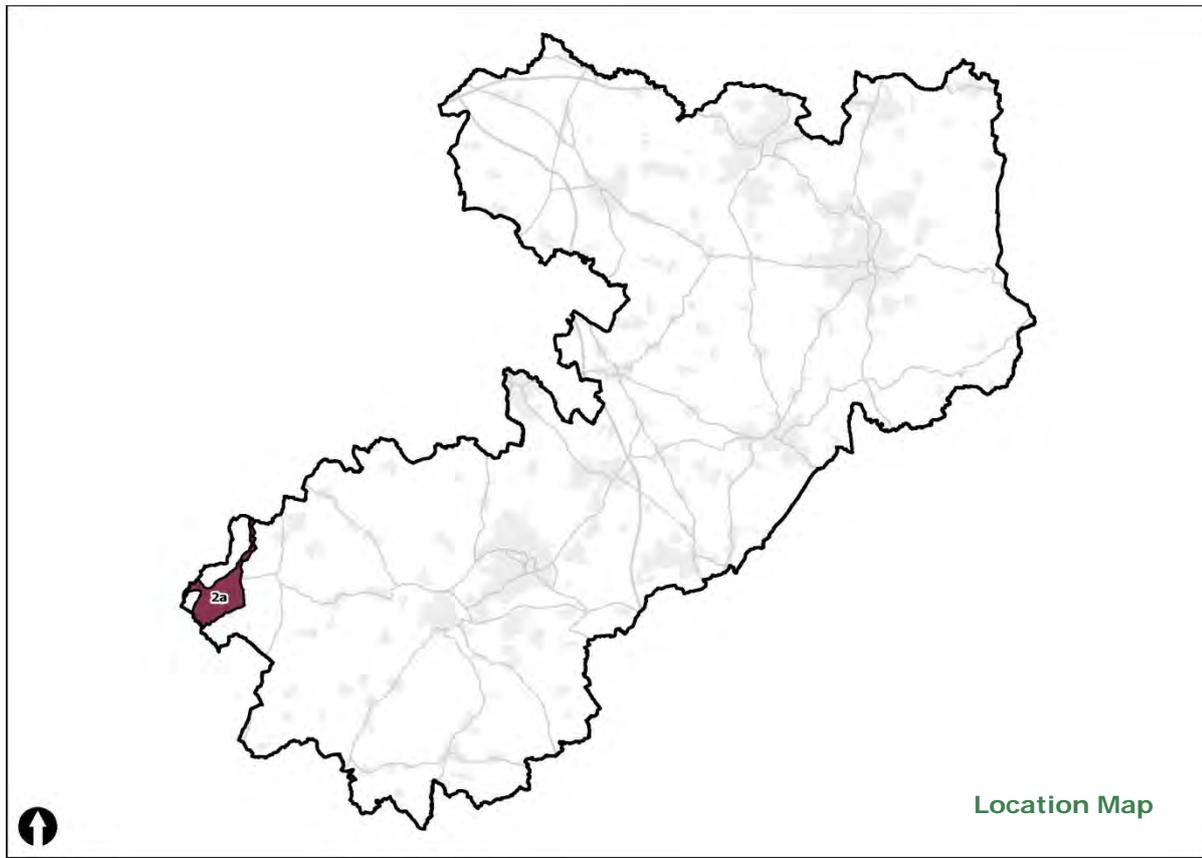


## Landscape Guidance

The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:

- Conserve the distinctive wooded skyline and avoid siting development (both buildings and other structures including masts and wind turbines) on the dramatic slopes or in visually prominent locations.
- Protect the distinct geological features of the landscape including Raw Head SSSI and continue to implement appropriate management regimes.
- Protect the dense woodland that characterises the Sandstone Ridge. Plan for the restoration of plantation woodland and the replacement of non-native species with native broadleaved species as well as maintaining a diverse age structure for the benefit of biodiversity.
- Protect and maintain valued semi-natural habitats, including the heathland which has seen significant losses across the county. Manage scrub to protect the heathland/species rich grassland communities. Explore options to expand or create habitats and create/maintain linkages between habitats where feasible.
- Retain field patterns and restore the hedgerows and walls forming field boundaries where they have been lost or degraded.
- Maintain and promote the Sandstone Trail and provide further linkages to the rights of way network where appropriate. Manage visitor numbers to avoid footpath erosion or harm to the heritage features in the landscape e.g. Maiden Castle.
- Plan strategically for sustainable transport routes to the attractions and recreation. Avoid introduction of recreation opportunities which may detract from the valued perceptual qualities of the landscape.
- Respect and maintain the sparse settlement pattern and distinctive existing vernacular which reflects the sandstone geology of the landscape. Ensure any conversion of farm buildings to residences retains the building's rural character and does not introduce sub-urbanising features.
- Retain the rural character of the narrow, winding roads and avoid the over-engineering of roads which could create an urbanising influence within the strongly rural landscape.

## LCT 2: Sandstone Fringe



### Summary of location and landscape character

This is a transitional landscape type that rises to the adjacent Sandstone Ridge. To the east and south is the Undulating Farmland landscape type. Occasional hills are found in the Sandstone Fringe although these are less dramatic than those associated with the Sandstone Ridge. Overall, this is a predominantly a farmed landscape with sparse settlement and strong rural qualities. Hedgerows with mature trees divide the small-medium scale fields. Roads are mostly narrow rural lanes which lead to farms. There are prominent views to the adjacent ridge and longer views to the uplands of the Pennines.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCAs

- LCA 2a: Beeston-Duckington

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- Transitional zone between the high ground of the Sandstone Ridge and the surrounding low-lying farmed landscape, with elevation ranging between 80 metres and 150 metres AOD.
- The landscape is underlain by the Bollin Mudstone Member Group and Wilmslow Sandstone Formation. The overlying soils are slightly acid loam and clay.
- Small watercourses including Bickley Brook and the River Gowy cross the landscape. There are numerous in-field ponds, many of which originated as marl pits.

#### *Woodland/tree cover*

- Woodland is limited to parts of the slopes immediately adjacent to the Sandstone Ridge and is mostly coniferous plantation. In-field and hedgerow trees are common features within the farmland and give the landscape a wooded character despite the lack of significant areas of woodland.

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- Fields are divided into mixed pattern of small-medium scale medieval and parliamentary enclosures which are mostly used for pasture with some arable growing on the flatter land. Fields are enclosed by hedgerows and occasional sandstone walls which reflect the underlying geology.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- Semi-natural habitats are fairly limited and include remnants of acid grassland amongst the farmed landscape. These areas support flora such as fescue and sheep sorrel. The many in-field ponds, hedgerows and trees are also of value to biodiversity.
- Wetland habitats associated with the watercourses in the landscape are important for wildlife.

#### *Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- A Bowl Barrow (designated as a Scheduled Monument) near Bickerton Hall provides evidence of prehistoric occupation of the landscape. The Georgian house at Bulkeley Hall is a more recent heritage feature, and is a Grade II\* listed building.

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- Settlement is a combination of villages at Peckforton and Bulkeley and dispersed farms/houses. Peckforton is designated as a Conservation Area. The vernacular is of black and white timber framed buildings and red brick.
- Roads mostly comprise a network of minor, single-track rural lanes, which often terminate at farms. The A534 is the only major route which crosses through the landscape.
- The Sandstone Trail briefly crosses through the landscape, joining the separate parts of the Sandstone Ridge, while a number of public footpaths provide access to the countryside.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- From higher ground there are extensive views across Cheshire East towards the Pennine Hills.
- Strongly overlooked from the Sandstone Ridge, which forms prominent wooded skylines above the Sandstone Fringe. Features including Peckforton Castle are distinctive in views from this type.
- Varied perceptual qualities, with some areas with a strong sense of enclosure as a result of the landform and dense vegetation contrasting with larger scale areas with more extensive views.

### Physical and Natural Influences

The Sandstone Fringe rises from the Rolling Farmland at approximately 80 metres AOD, undulating towards the Sandstone Ridge with a maximum elevation of 148 metres AOD. The topography varies from gentle slopes and undulations to steep slopes adjacent to the ridge. The underlying geology comprises Wilmslow Sandstone and Bollin Mudstone, which is overlain by glacial till and glacio-fluvial deposits. Soils are loam and clay, which support arable crops and grassland. Fragments of acid grassland are also found in this character type. The River Gowy, Bickley Brook and numerous in-field marl ponds also provide natural interest.

The overall woodland cover is generally low, although numerous in-field and hedgerow trees create a wooded character. Although there are no designated habitats within this type, the dense hedgerow network forms an important habitat network between semi-natural habitats within adjacent landscapes. Fields are mainly small-medium scale medieval and early post medieval in origin and created following the assarting of heath and woodland. They are enclosed with hawthorn hedgerows although there are areas of fencing where hedgerows have been lost creating a perception of enlarged fields e.g. near Bulkeley.



### Historic and Cultural Influences

The Bowl Barrow near Bickerton Hall provides evidence of Bronze Age and earlier activity in this area. There are a number of villages such as Bickerton, Bulkeley and the estate village of Peckforton. Buildings are constructed predominantly from red and brown brick, but there are also examples of 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed buildings with white washed brick and brick infill. Black and White Cottage in Peckforton is a well-preserved example of these 17<sup>th</sup> century structures and is a Grade II\* listed building. Bulkeley Hall (Grade II\*) is a Georgian

country residency, located within landscaped grounds.



Part of the Sandstone Trail passes through the character type, linking the discrete areas of the Sandstone Ridge. A network of footpaths which originate in the villages provide access to much of the countryside. Roads generally consist of narrow, winding rural lanes, which often terminate at farms. The A534 is the only major road in the area.

### Visual and Perceptual Character

This is a landscape of strong contrasts. At many locations landform, high hedges with trees provide effective enclosure and ensure only immediate, short distance views and create a small-scale, verdant character. This is in contrast to those elevated and open viewpoints enjoying extensive and panoramic views across the adjacent low lying plain landscape towards the Pennines in the east.



From open viewpoints on the lower slopes the eye is drawn to a number of distinctive landmarks along the high ground of the adjacent ridge including Peckforton Castle and Beeston Castle. The densely wooded Sandstone Ridge forms a prominent skyline above this landscape character type.

## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- Distinctive hills shaped by glaciation including the hills near Bulkeley Hall and Bickerton Hall which provide a sense of place.
- Rivers and numerous in-field ponds providing valued landscape features and habitats for wildlife. The marl ponds also provide evidence of past uses of the land and a sense of time-depth.
- The hedgerow trees and in-field trees which provide a well-treed character, a valued habitat network to numerous species and are scenic features within the landscape.
- Nationally important heritage features including the prehistoric Bowl Barrow near Bickerton Hall which is designated as a Scheduled Monument and provides evidence of the cultural evolution of the landscape.
- Areas of surviving medieval field patterns enclosed by thick, intact hedgerows which give the landscape a pastoral quality, sense of time-depth and provide linkages between habitats.
- The grand Georgian country house of Bulkeley Hall which is a Grade II\* Listed Building and contained within picturesque, landscaped grounds.
- Sparse settlement pattern which comprises small villages and farms, including the historic estate village of Peckforton (designated as a Conservation Area). The distinctive vernacular of black and white timber framed or red-brick which provides a strong sense of place and time-depth.
- The dense network of public footpaths which provide an opportunity to experience the landscape and link to nearby destinations including those on the adjacent Sandstone Ridge.
- Narrow, winding character of the lanes which contribute to the traditional rural character and sense of intimacy in the landscape.
- Rural character with minimal modern intrusion and highly peaceful and tranquil perceptual qualities which are valued for recreation and provide a sense of escape from nearby urban areas.
- Views to the wooded skylines and landmark features on the adjacent Sandstone Ridge, which overlooks and provides a scenic backdrop to and sense of orientation within this landscape.

### Landscape condition

This is a well-managed, strongly rural landscape, although some localised areas have become more intensively farmed and there has been subsequent removal of hedgerows and enlargement of fields often associated with a change of land use to arable cropping. Horsiculture adjacent to houses has resulted in the construction of associated outbuildings and replacement of field boundaries with post and rail fencing. There are also areas where overgrazing and poaching of soils have occurred. Some hedgerow trees are over mature. Overall this landscape is in moderate condition.

### Forces for change

- **Erosion of built environment character through incremental development** which 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.
- **Changes in farming including pressure to diversify** and changing patterns of land ownership. The purchase of agricultural holdings by non-farmers is becoming a significant force for change, resulting in conversion of farm houses and farm buildings and changes in farm use including areas of horsiculture and associated buildings.
- **Changes in woodland / tree species composition** as new pests/diseases spread (particularly *phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)). Loss of trees within hedgerows would be particularly noticeable in this landscape type.
- **Changes in agricultural practices** including agricultural intensification leading to an increase in areas under arable or fodder crops and the introduction of large-scale modern farm buildings.
- **On-going decline in traditional woodland management practices** leading to under management of farm woodland, over maturity of trees and neglect of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- **Pressure for construction of communication masts and potentially wind turbines** which are likely to target this landscape type given the elevated topography and average wind speeds.

- **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 increased demand for visitor facilities such as holiday cottages, caravan parks and cabin developments.
- **Reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of habitats** at some locations, including remnant areas of semi-natural grassland within the farmed landscape.
- **Loss of historic field pattern** due to decline in hedgerow management, with a resulting increase in use of fencing.
- **Standardisation of roads** with the potential upgrading of lanes and minor roads leading to increasingly suburban character of the countryside.

## Landscape Strategy and Guidance

### Overall vision and landscape strategy

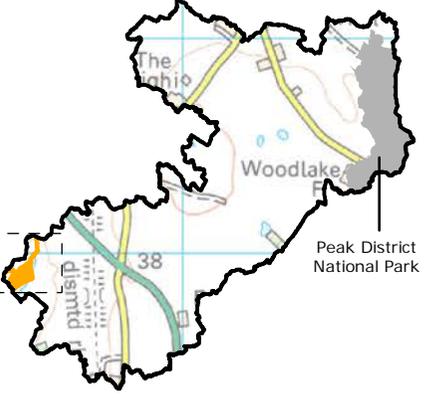
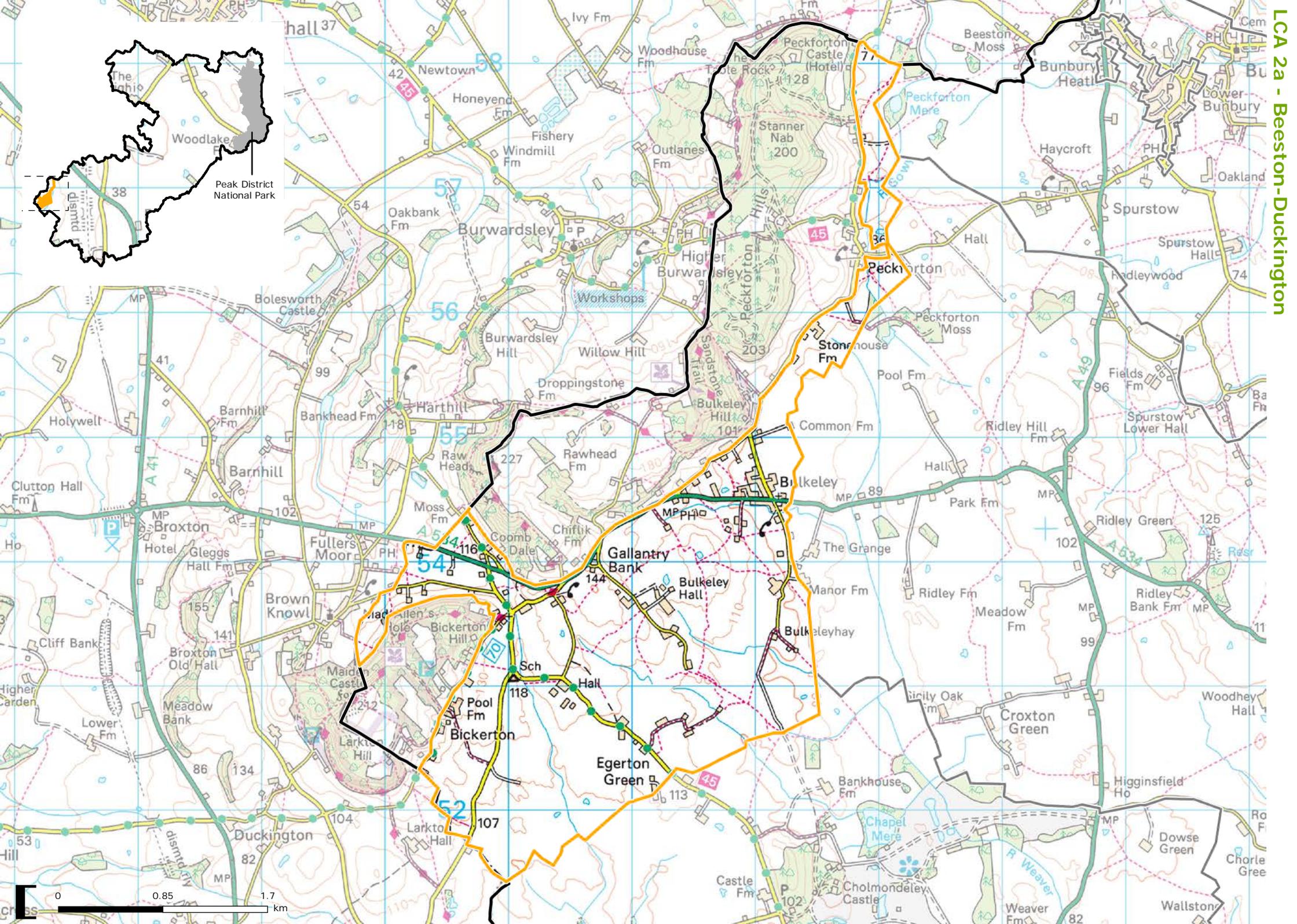
This is a strongly rural landscape, with intact, well-managed hedgerows containing frequent trees which give the landscape a well-treed character. Public rights of way provide sustainable access routes between villages and destinations for access and recreation. In-field ponds are conserved and retained for their wildlife and historic value and water quality in the rivers is favourable.

The overall management strategy for this type is for it to remain as a working, farmed landscape and to conserve the rural character of the landscape and its valued features.

### Landscape Guidance

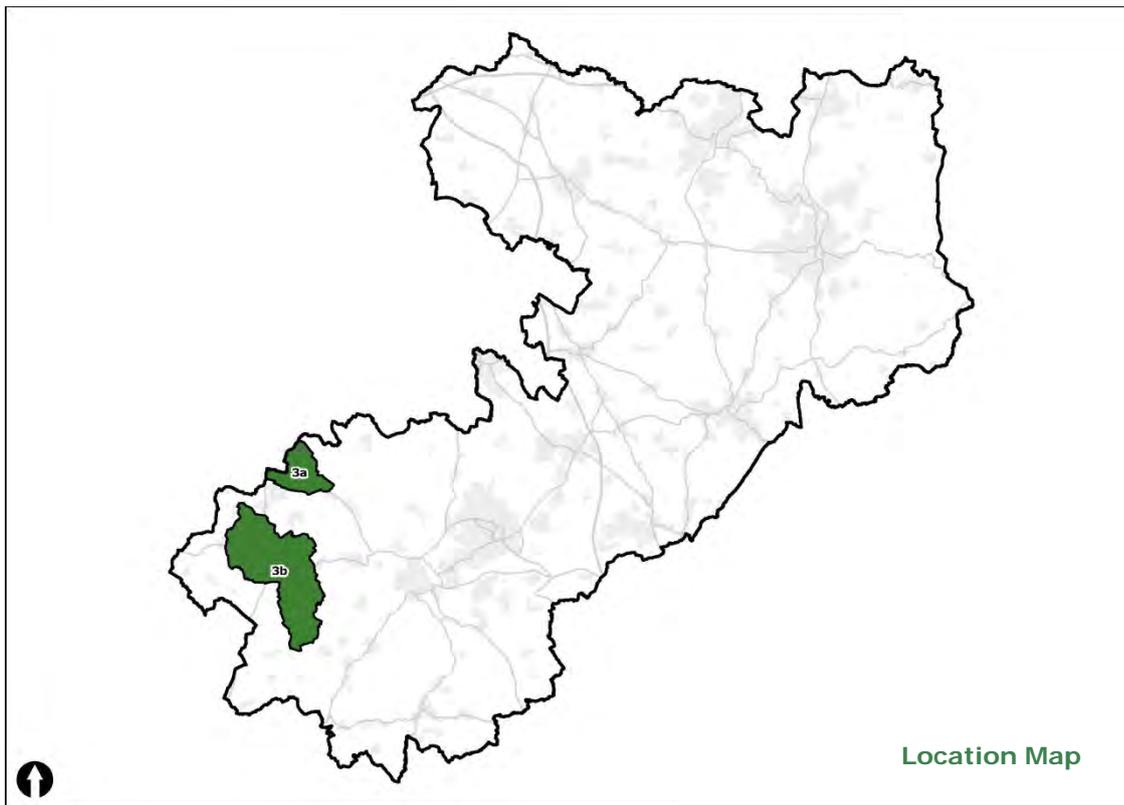
The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:

- Avoid development on areas of steep landform and in visually prominent locations.
- Protect, conserve and appropriately manage hedgerows which provide valued linkages between larger areas of semi-natural habitat in adjacent landscapes. Seek to replace those hedgerows which have been lost.
- Manage the rivers and the adjacent land to ensure good water quality for the benefit of wildlife, addressing issues such as agricultural run-off.
- Retain the numerous marl pits which provide a sense of time-depth within the landscape and form important habitats within the farmed landscape.
- Retain the hedgerows which define medieval field patterns and retain and manage the frequent mature hedgerow trees which give the landscape a well-wooded character despite the absence of significant areas of woodland.
- Protect the valued heritage features within the landscape, including the Bowl Barrow near Bickerton Hall and the Grade II\* listed building of Bulkeley Hall.
- Respect the existing sparse settlement pattern and distinctive vernacular and setting of the small villages and isolated houses and farms.
- Ensure any conversions of farm buildings to residences retain their rural character and do not introduce suburbanising influences.
- Create, enhance and link up sustainable transport routes through the landscape, including linkages to the Sandstone Trail.
- Retain the characteristic narrow, winding roads and avoid the over-engineering of roads which could create an urbanising influence within the strongly rural landscape.
- Avoid development which will interrupt or spoil views to the landmark locations on the Sandstone Ridge, which provide a strong sense of place and orientation in the landscape.



Peak District National Park

## LCT 3: Undulating Farmland



Location Map

### Summary of location and landscape character

This character type is defined by its undulating topography and the associated small to medium scale enclosure into which it is divided. Land use is mainly pasture and settlement consists of small villages/hamlets and scattered farms. A range of archaeological features are found within the landscape including Bronze Age barrows and post medieval canal locks. Views within this type often include the prominent Sandstone Ridge although they are dependent upon location, the nature of the immediate topography and the presence/absence of woodland.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCAs

- LCA 3a: Oulton
- LCA 3b: Faddiley

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- Gently rolling and undulating topography, interspersed with small sloping valleys containing streams and rivers including the River Weaver and the River Gowy.
- The solid geology is primarily Sidmouth Mudstone or Northwich Halite, overlain by till and glacio-fluvial deposits with alluvium deposits along the watercourses.
- Numerous water bodies are found throughout the landscape – mainly in-field ponds created through marl-pit digging. The salt spring of Spurstow Spa was popular for bathing in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *Woodland cover*

- Generally low woodland density with most trees located along watercourses. However, the landscape has a wooded character as a result of frequent hedgerow trees and remnant areas of ancient woodland.

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- Pasture and arable land is divided into irregular and semi-regular small and medium fields of medieval and post-medieval origin. These are primarily divided by hedgerows with numerous hedgerow trees of oak, ash and sycamore.
- Small areas of unimproved grassland are located amongst the farmed landscape and are usually associated with watercourses.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- There are a number of woodland, wetland and grassland habitats within this landscape designated as Local Wildlife Sites, including Wrenbury Wood and Tilstone Bank and Gowy Flushes.

#### *Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- Nationally important archaeological remains from various periods of history including Bronze Age tumuli, the site of a medieval village and canal buildings and locks from the industrial age. Woodhey Chapel is a distinctive Grade I listed building located in a rural setting.

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- Sparsely settled, with small hamlets including Ridley and Chorley and isolated farms and halls. The villages of Alpraham and Calveley are located near the River Gowy.
- Several main A-roads and the Crewe-Chester railway line cross through the landscape, although access is primarily via a network of narrow, meandering lanes.
- Fields are crossed by a network of footpaths, with the towpath along the Shropshire Union Canal popular as a recreational route.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- Views are varied depending on topography and vegetation, with some enclosed areas and others which are open with long views towards the high ground of the Pennines in the distance.
- Perceptual qualities are also varied depending on topography and tree cover, with lower lying areas tending to be more enclosed and intimate, whilst higher ground has a more exposed quality. As a whole, the landscape has high levels of tranquillity, with few intrusive features.
- Overlooked by the nearby wooded sandstone ridge, with features including Peckforton Castle and Beeston Castle forming prominent landmarks on the skyline.

### Physical and Natural Influences

This type has gently rolling and undulating topography between 50 metres and 125 metres AOD. Elevation rises to a maximum of 127 metres near Chesterton Wood. The River Weaver and River Gowy cross the landscape, creating valley slopes. The salt spring of Spurstow Spa was popular for bathing in the 18th century. In-field ponds are frequent as a result of digging for marl. Soils are nutrient-poor and suited to grass; a major factor in the development of the Cheshire dairy farming industry.

Woodland levels are generally low and concentrated in riparian locations such as along the River Gowy; in steep sided stream cloughs overlooking the River Weaver, and along smaller streams where there are small areas of ancient woodland including Ridley Wood, Wrenbury Wood and Peckforton Woods. Frequently, woodlands are associated with unimproved grassland habitats which have escaped modern farming practices. Trees within hedgerows and adjacent landscapes including the Cholmondeley Estate also contribute to the wooded character of the landscape.



Field patterns are small to medium in scale. Patterns are mixed with irregular medieval fields created by the assarting of moss, heath and woodland and the regular fields reflecting post medieval improvement. Field boundaries are delineated predominantly by an intact network of hawthorn hedgerows with hazel, blackthorn and dog rose also present. Oak, ash and sycamore are the main tree species within hedgerows. The majority of fields are grass leys for pasture, although increasing areas are cultivated for silage or feed crops including cereals and maize.

### Historic and Cultural Influences

Traces of past activity include the Bronze Age barrow at Robin Hood's Tump and the medieval moated site and settlement remains south of Alraham. Bunbury Locks, Bridge and Stables are also designated as a Scheduled Monument, illustrating the industrial heritage of the area.

Settlement is sparse and comprises a mix of small picturesque villages (including Alraham and Calveley) which are surrounded by a dispersed pattern of hamlets, farms and halls. The character of the built environment includes timber framed buildings (some of which date back to the 17th century) and red and brown brick buildings. Other notable historic buildings include Woodhey Chapel (Grade I) and Peckforton Hall (Grade II\*).



This character type is mainly crossed by narrow, meandering roads, and short sections of major routes e.g. A49, A51 and A534. A railway line and the Shropshire Union Canal also pass through the LCT near the River Gowy. Associated with the early fields is a network of footpaths, which may be of some antiquity. The towpath along the canal is a popular walking route.

### Visual and Perceptual Character

The location of this type is reflected in the prevailing views which extend to adjacent character areas, either out over the low-lying plain or up towards the often dominant wooded Sandstone Ridge including the Peckforton Hills and the landmark of Beeston Castle. Roads typically follow the rolling topography, offering extensive views from the high points out over the immediate landscape and extending to the high ground of the Pennines in the far distance. In lower lying areas the landscape appears smaller scale due to the increase in enclosure and the contained views, often as a result of the intact hedgerow system, complemented by numerous small farm woodlands or coverts upon locally prominent areas of high ground.



## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- The River Weaver and River Gowy which cross the landscape and carve steep slopes into the landform and provide valued semi-natural habitat.
- The in-field marl ponds, which give the landscape a sense of time-depth and contribute to the habitat resource of the area.
- Remnant areas of woodland, some of which is identified as ancient. These are often associated with pockets of remnant semi-natural grassland habitats which are an important resource for wildlife and also provide texture within the landscape, contributing to scenic quality.
- Irregular medieval field patterns, divided by an intact network of hedgerows with occasional trees which provide wildlife habitat and give a scenic, pastoral quality to the landscape.
- Valued heritage features from various eras of the past, including Bronze Age remains and features from the industrial age including Bunbury Locks and the Shropshire Union Canal which are popular destinations for recreation and provide a sense of history.
- The sparsely settled character, comprising small villages and scattered farms and halls which include distinctive timber-framed and red and brown brick buildings which provide a sense of place and time-depth.
- The strong rural character with high levels of tranquillity and limited modern, intrusive elements, offering an escape from nearby urban areas.
- Long views (including towards distinctive features such as Peckforton Castle and Beeston Castle), which provide a sense of orientation within the landscape and contribute to scenic quality.

### Landscape condition

The landscape is generally in good condition, with intact landscape features. Intensification of farming has resulted in a localised deterioration of landscape condition in places resulting in the replacement of hedgerows with post and wire fencing.

### Forces for change

- **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.
- **Increase in demand for equestrian facilities** including enclosed exercise areas and associated large-scale buildings.
- **Changes in farming** including pressure to diversify and changing patterns of land ownership. The purchase of agricultural holdings by non-farmers is becoming a significant force for change, resulting in conversion of farm houses and farm buildings and changes in farm use.
- **Changes in farm crops** with an increase in areas under arable or fodder crops and a trend towards silage production.
- **Changes in woodland / tree species composition** as new pests/diseases spread (particularly *phytophthora pathogens* and ash die-back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)). On-going decline in traditional woodland management practices leading to under management of farm woodlands, coverts and copses leading to general deterioration.
- **Reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of habitats** with a loss of ponds through drainage and in-fill plus nutrient run-off from surrounding farmland. Decline in species-rich hedgerows at some locations. Intensification of grassland management leading to loss of species-rich acid grassland.
- **Loss of historic field pattern** due to decline in hedgerow management, with resulting increase in use of fencing.
- **Standardisation of roads** with the upgrading of lanes and minor roads leading to increasingly suburban character of the countryside.

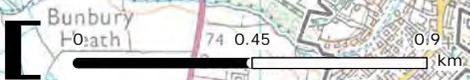
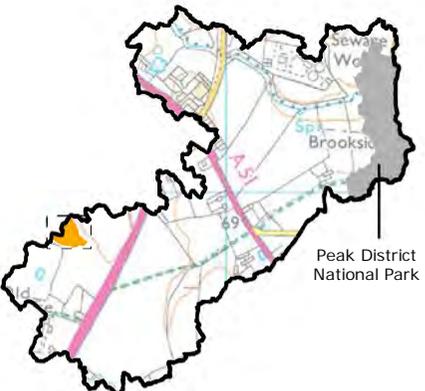
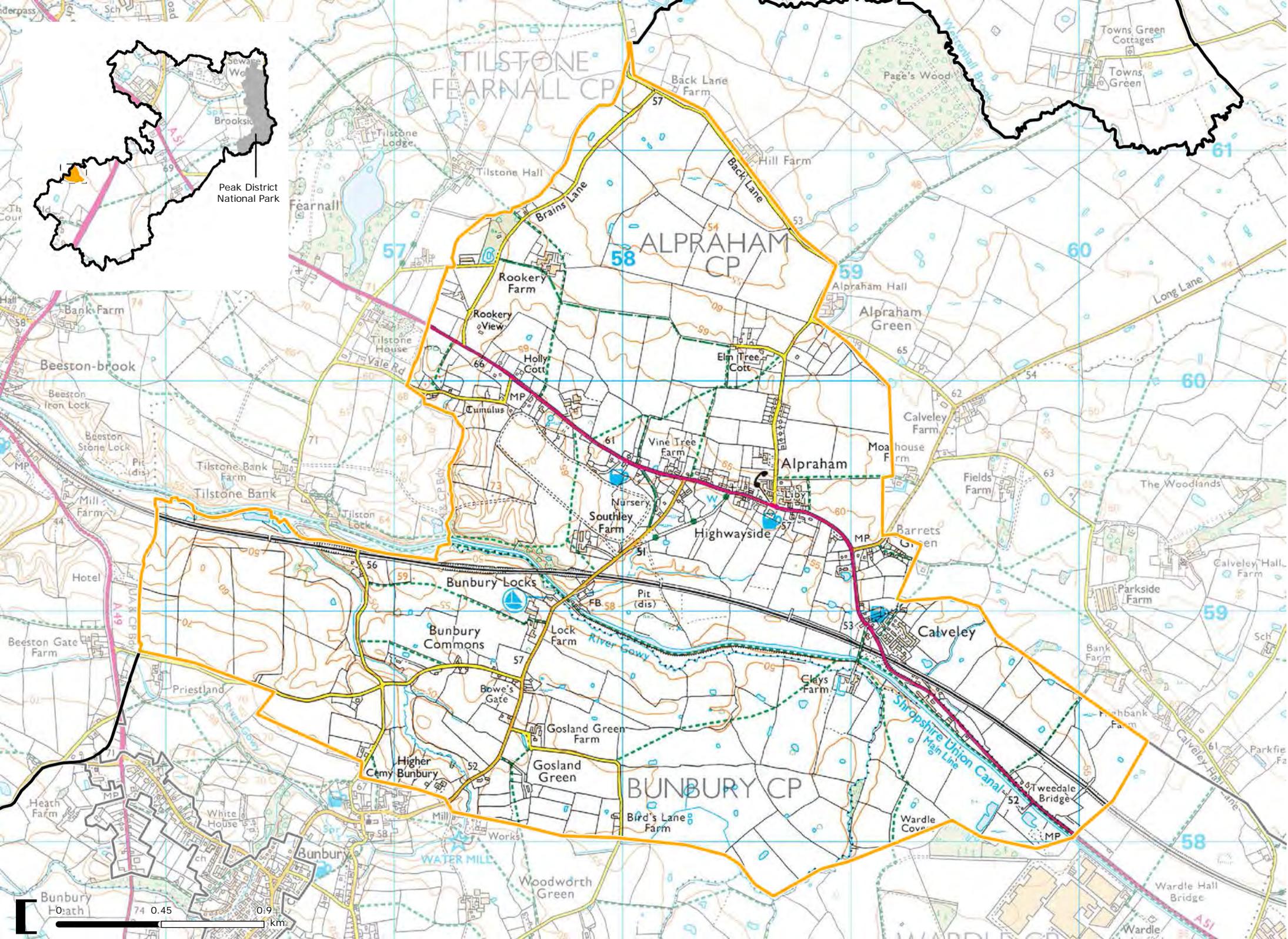
## Landscape Strategy and Guidance

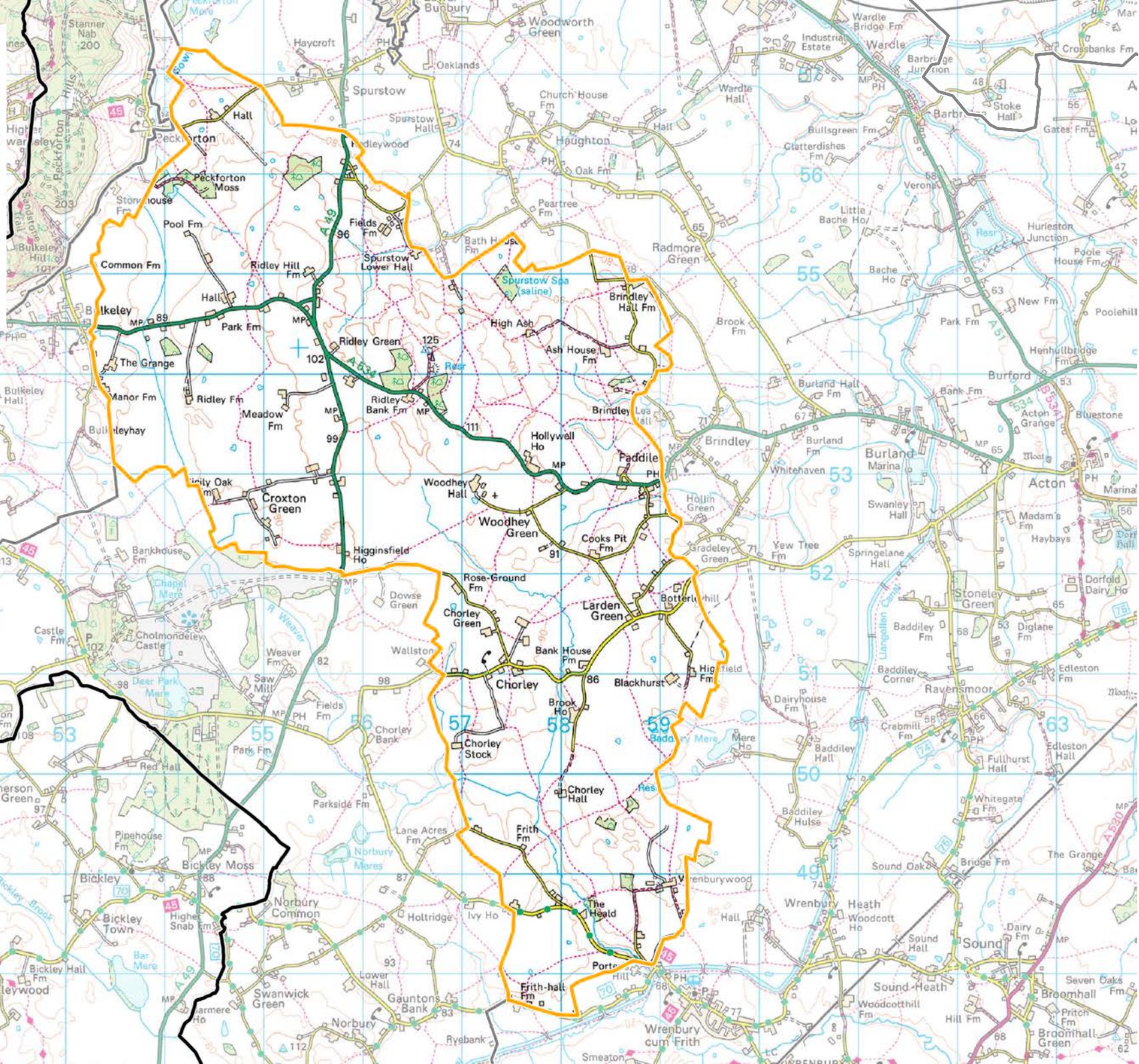
### Overall vision and landscape strategy

This is a well-managed, traditional pastoral landscape with a strong hedgerow network and intact historic field pattern. Settlement within the landscape has a low density and is constructed in a local vernacular. The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to conserve remnant areas of woodland and semi-natural grassland habitat and extend them where appropriate to improve the biodiversity value of the landscape. Valued heritage features should also be conserved and their interpretation promoted where appropriate.

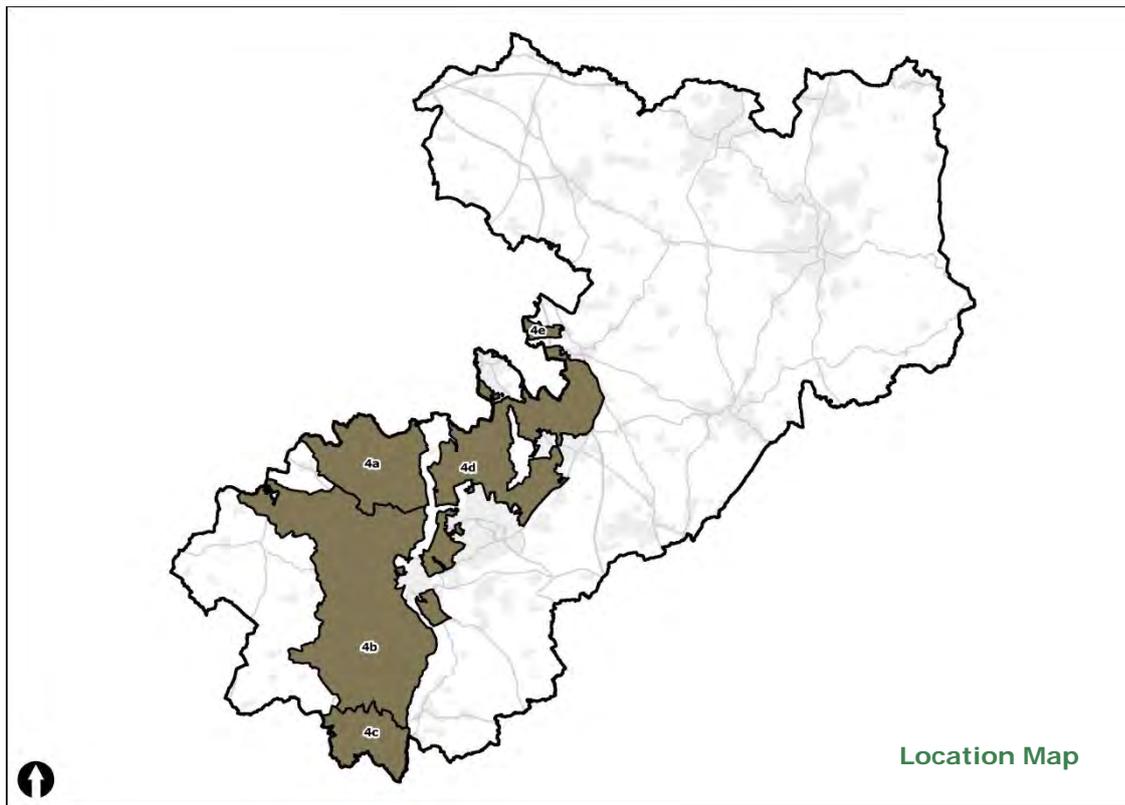
### Landscape Guidance

- The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:
- Avoid siting development in visually prominent locations or on steep valley slopes.
- Manage the watercourses for the benefit of flood alleviation, biodiversity and recreation purposes. Management of adjacent agricultural land should aim to reduce nutrient run off to these habitats.
- Retain the distinctive in-field marl ponds as features for natural and cultural heritage purposes.
- Protect the overall wooded character of the area through appropriate management of the small pockets of deciduous woodland. Extend these habitats where possible.
- Conserve the existing hedgerow network which provides valued linkages between ancient woodland habitats. Extend and create new hedgerows/woodland areas where appropriate within the landscape, particularly within areas which have seen past losses.
- Conserve the small-scale irregular field patterns, particularly those which are of historic origin.
- Conserve remnant areas of semi-natural unimproved grassland and ensure farming practices protect these valued habitats.
- Protect valued heritage features which give time depth to the landscape. Promote interpretation of these features where this would not be at odds with conservation of these assets.
- Ensure that any new development is in keeping with the existing form and vernacular of settlements. New development or conversion of farm buildings should retain a rural character by utilising traditional materials and building styles wherever possible.
- Manage change arising from future development or farm diversification to ensure it can be accommodated without detriment to the valued attributes and sense of place.
- Retain the traditional rural character of the landscape and avoid the introduction of intrusive features. Mitigate existing intrusive features within the landscape where feasible.
- Retain the characteristic narrow, winding lanes and avoid over engineering of roads and other suburbanising influences.
- Maintain existing public rights of way and promote sustainable travel routes between villages and to destinations within the landscape for both active travel and recreation purposes.
- Ensure that dramatic views across the farmed landscape are retained and not interrupted.





## LCT 4: Cheshire Plain East



### Summary of location and landscape character

This large expanse of flat and very slightly undulating land comprises a relatively large proportion of the Cheshire East landscape. Woodland cover is low, with small coverts scattered intermittently across the area, however numerous hedgerow trees create the perception of a well-treed landscape. It is a working, farmed landscape with field patterns comprising a mix of medieval enclosure and post medieval improvement bound by hedgerows with mature trees. Settlement is predominantly low density villages and dispersed farms, although there are influences from adjacent urban areas. Some parts of the landscape are intensively farmed. The lack of woodland cover enables long views across the plain.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCAs

- LCA 4a: Cholmondeston
- LCA 4b: Ravensmoor
- LCA 4c: Dodcott
- LCA 4d: Wimboldsley
- LCA 4e: Stublach

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- Large plain landscape with mostly flat topography with gentle undulations, between 40 metres and 80 metres AOD.
- The plain is underlain by halite and mudstone geology with poorly drained soils which are suited to pasture and have historically influenced the dairy industry in this area.
- A large number of small water bodies which have formed within marl pits and a handful of meres and reservoirs are found on the plain. The Rivers Wheelock and Weaver also cross the area.

#### *Woodland/tree cover*

- The plain generally has low levels of woodland cover although there are some riparian ancient woodlands and field coverts. Frequent hedgerow trees create the perception of a well-treed landscape despite the lack of significant woodland coverage.

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- Small to medium sized fields of medieval and post-medieval origin which are used for a mix of pasture and arable farming, mainly divided by hawthorn hedgerows with hedgerow trees.
- Some areas are more intensively farmed and associated with increased field sizes and large, modern farm buildings.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- Scattered meadows and species-rich grasslands are located amongst agricultural areas. This includes nationally and locally designated sites such as Sound Heath SSSI, Bunbury Heath Marsh LWS and Kent's Rough LWS.
- Wetland habitats are also of importance to wildlife, including Peckforton Mere LWS.

#### *Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- Important archaeological and historical features including Iron Age remains, medieval moated sites and a cold war era bunker. The site of the Battle of Nantwich is located in this type and is a Registered Battlefield.
- Halls and granges are scattered throughout the landscape and are often Listed Buildings. The historic parkland estate of Dorfold Hall (Grade II Registered Park and Garden) is a distinctive feature on the plain.

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- Low density settlement which mostly comprises dispersed historic hamlets and farms, with some villages designated as Conservation Areas. Densely developed adjacent urban centres such as Crewe and Nantwich also have an influence on the landscape.
- A number of significant transportation routes cross the landscape, including the Shropshire Union Canal, the Trent and Mersey Canal and numerous railway lines. The landscape is crossed by a number of main arterial routes including the M6 and numerous A-roads. Narrow country lanes provide access to the more remote areas and can be winding or very straight.
- Much of the farmed landscape is accessible via public rights of way, including towpaths along the various canals. Promoted routes include the Crewe and Nantwich Circular Walk.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- Perceptual character varies; there are small-scale enclosed areas with limited views although for the most part the landscape is expansive with extensive views. In areas away from urban areas and major roads the landscape has a remote feel.
- The plain is a working, farmed landscape, with a traditional rural feel, although there are some more intensively farmed areas and large scale buildings which are widely prominent (e.g. Wardle Industrial Estate).

### Physical and Natural Influences

This character type is low-lying, with flat and gently undulating topography. Elevation is generally between 40 metres and 80 metres AOD. The underlying bedrock is a mix of halite and mudstone. The overlying soils are poorly drained and suited to pasture. There are some small areas of peat. Areas of open water including Peckforton Mere, Baddiley Meres and Hurlston Reservoir are designated for their wildlife value. There are numerous in-field ponds which originated as marl pits.

The landscape of the plain generally has low woodland cover. Where woodland does occur it generally consists of a mix of broadleaved and coniferous trees in small copses and coverts, a small proportion of which is ancient woodland. Despite this, frequent hedgerow trees give the landscape a wooded character.



The majority of the landscape is mixed arable and pasture farmland, which is divided into a mixed field pattern of small and medium scale medieval and post-medieval parliamentary enclosures delineated by hawthorn hedgerows with trees. In places with intensive farming, some hedgerows have been replaced by post and wire fences. Amongst the farmed landscape there are remnant meadow habitats and species rich grassland.

### Historic and Cultural Influences

Amongst the farmed landscape, settlements tend to be small and dispersed, although there are some influences from larger settlements adjacent to the Plain including Nantwich and Crewe. Typical building materials include red brick, such as white washed brick and timber frames. Large historic halls are not common within the landscape, although they do occasionally occur, including Dorfold Hall (Grade II Registered Park and Garden). A number of the villages are designated as Conservation Areas.

The Battle of Nantwich took place in 1644 during the English Civil War and the site is a Registered Battlefield. There are a number of Scheduled

Monuments, often from the medieval period. More recent features include the Cold War secret bunker at Hack Green which is now a museum and tourist attraction and the WWII airfield at RAF Calveley, where fighter pilots were trained.



A number of significant transportation routes cross the landscape, including canals, numerous railway lines and main arterial routes including the M6, A51, A534, A525 and the A530. Narrow country lanes provide access to the more remote areas. There is a good network of footpaths and rights of way which provide access to the countryside.

### Visual and Perceptual Character

Visual and perceptual character is varied. Where fields are smaller, hedges higher and hedgerow trees more abundant, there is a strong sense of enclosure. Long distance views are blocked or filtered and the perception is of a smaller scale and highly tranquil verdant landscape. Where fields are larger with low hedgerows and fewer trees, the lack of enclosure results in an open landscape with extensive views. The plain is overlooked from higher ground including the Sandstone Ridge and elevated land around Wirswall.



Although settlement within the landscape is sparse, perceptual qualities are influenced by adjacent urban centres including Nantwich, Sandbach and Crewe. Some large industrial areas next to larger settlement introduce urbanising influences into the landscape. These include power lines which are visible on the skyline near Crewe and Nantwich.

## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- The distinctive, flat landform of the plain, which provides an expansive feel, long views and a strong sense of place.
- Valued semi-natural habitats, including remnant areas of heathland, meres and frequent marl ponds which contribute to biodiversity and give the landscape a sense of time-depth and provide scenic interest. Some are nationally or locally designated for their importance to wildlife.
- Remnant pockets of woodland within the sparsely wooded landscape, including areas of ancient woodland and mature hedgerow trees which provide texture and natural interest in the predominantly flat plain landscape.
- Historic field patterns, including some of medieval origin, and their intact hedgerow network with frequent trees, giving the landscape structure and time-depth in addition to the wildlife habitat provided by the hedgerows and the hedgerow trees.
- Nationally important archaeological remains including numerous medieval remains and the site of the Battle of Nantwich which provide evidence of the cultural evolution of the landscape.
- Historic halls and granges which provide a sense of history and scenic quality including Dorfold Hall which is found in a historic parkland setting and designated as a Grade II Registered Park and Garden.
- Sparse settlement pattern comprising small villages/hamlets and scattered farms constructed in a local vernacular including red brick and rendered timber-framed buildings which contribute to the rural character. Several of the villages and the Trent and Mersey Canal are designated as Conservation Areas.
- Dense network of rights of way providing access to the countryside and opportunities for recreation giving people an opportunity to experience the tranquillity of the landscape and providing a sense of escape from modern life.
- The strong rural character of the traditional farmed landscape of the plain and remote quality of areas away from urban development and main roads.

### Landscape condition

The Cheshire Plain is a working agricultural landscape, although some areas are more intensively farmed and there have been losses of historic field patterns and semi-natural grassland habitats as a result. Modern intensification of farming has also led to the construction of some large scale farm buildings which are particularly prominent within the landscape where they are higher than the trees. Some semi-natural habitats are not in a favourable condition due to issues including run-off from agricultural land affecting the quality of watercourses and lack of management and subsequent scrub encroachment on grassland habitats.

### Forces for change

- **Changes in farming** including pressure to diversify and changing patterns of land ownership. The purchase of agricultural holdings by non-farmers is becoming a significant force for change, resulting in conversion of farm houses and farm buildings and changes in farm use.
- **Continued pressure for development** associated with expansion of residential/industrial expansion close to the urban centres of Crewe and Nantwich.
- **Erosion of built environment character through incremental development** which 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.
- **Intensification of farming activity** resulting in the conversion of pasture land to arable in order to grow fodder crops and the introduction of large-scale modern farm buildings.
- **Changes in woodland / tree species composition** as new pests/diseases spread (particularly *phytophthora pathogens* and ash die-back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)). Loss of trees within hedgerows would be particularly noticeable in this landscape type. 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.
- **Reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of habitats:** Loss of ponds through drainage and in-fill plus nutrient run-off from surrounding farmland. Decline in species-rich hedgerows at some locations due to poor management. Intensification of grassland management leading to loss of species-rich acid grassland.

- **Loss of historic field pattern** due to decline in hedgerow management, with a resulting increase in the use of fencing.
- **An increase in traffic levels**, particularly on narrow rural lanes, which is likely to diminish levels of tranquillity and pressure to widen/standardise roads eroding rural character.

## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

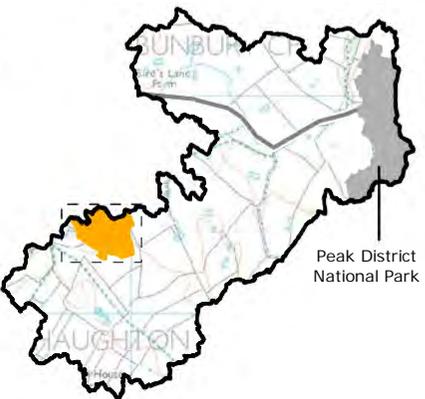
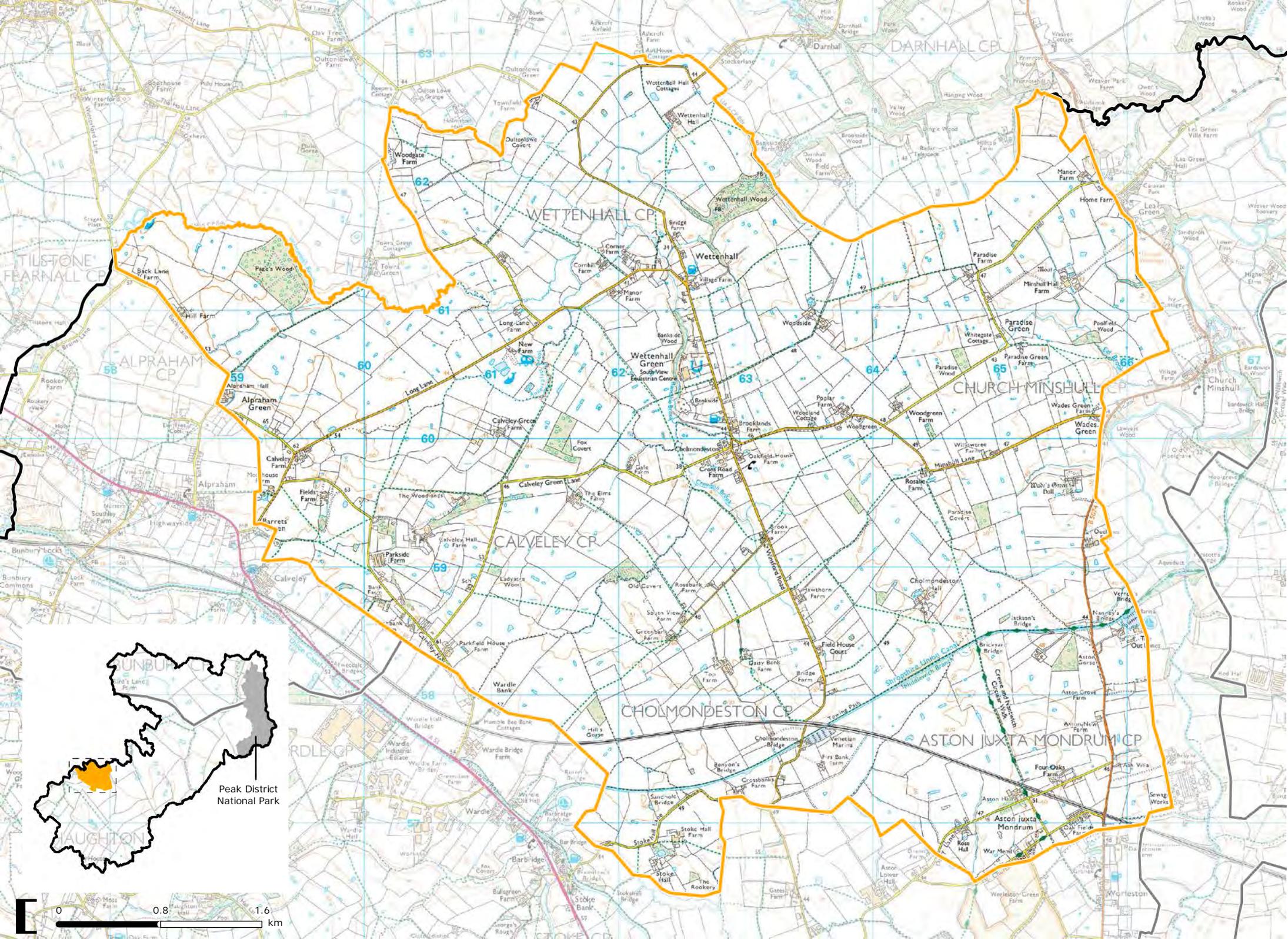
### Overall vision and landscape strategy

The overall strategy for this landscape is for the plain to remain as a working agricultural landscape whilst retaining its rural character and conserving the valued features and attributes of the landscape. New agricultural infrastructure is sensitively designed and sited within the landscape and the structure of the landscape is intact. Hedgerows are conserved and replaced where they have been lost in the past as a result of field enlargement and farm intensification. Trees within hedgerows remain a feature, providing a well-treed character. Where possible, semi-natural habitats are restored or created to improve linkages between them. Suburban influences on the landscape are avoided/mitigated.

### Landscape Guidance

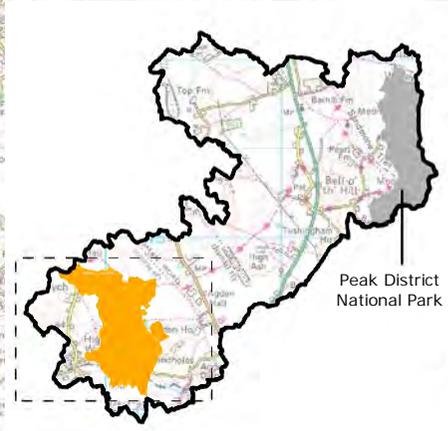
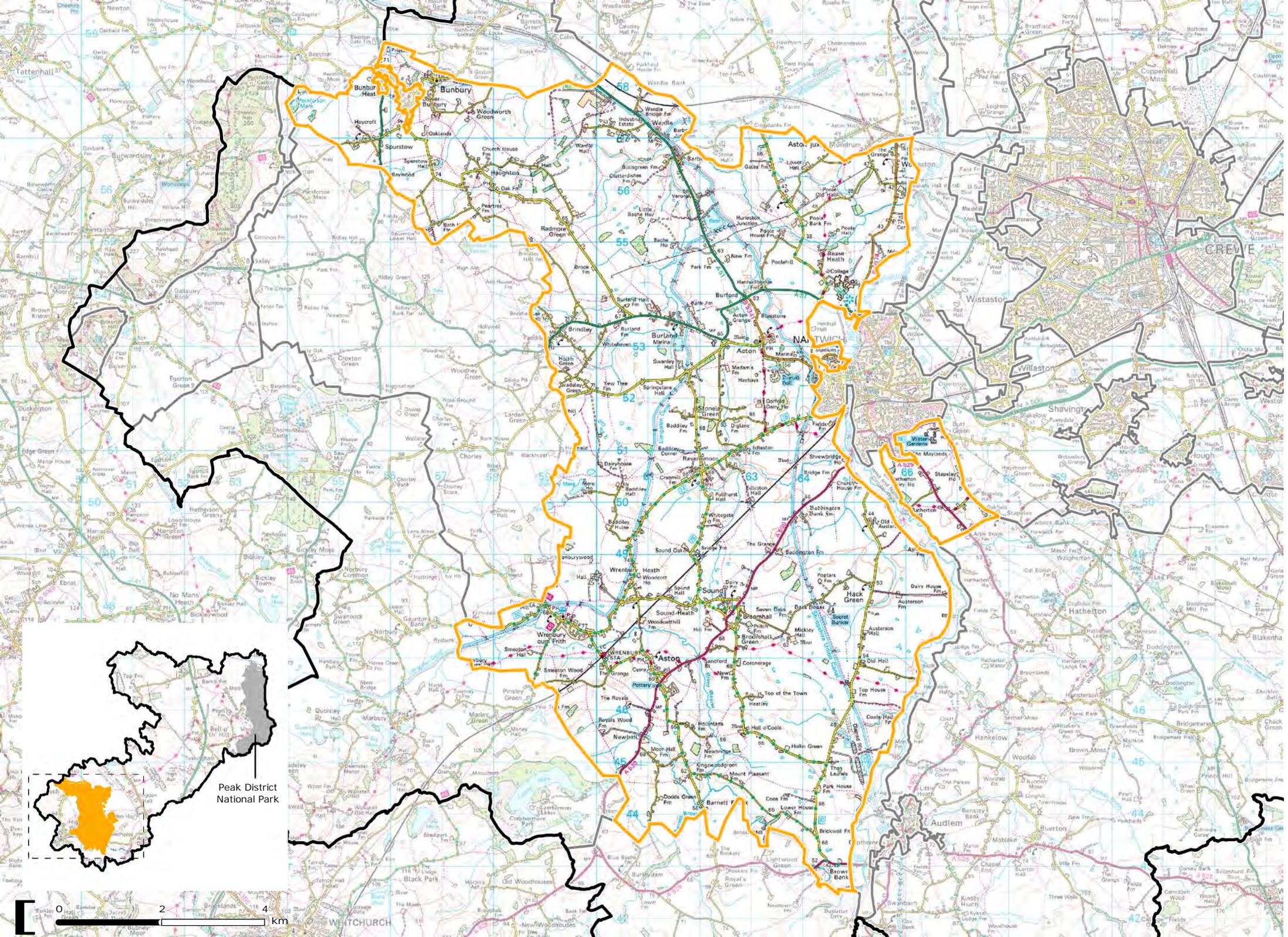
The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:

- Avoid construction of large-scale buildings which will be widely prominent within the landscape (particularly those with a height above the tree-line).
- Important semi-natural habitats are conserved and appropriately managed. Manage and enhance valued semi-natural habitats, particularly the frequent ponds which punctuate the landscape and remnant areas of heath and grassland through appropriate management/farming practices, including preventing agricultural run-off and managing scrub. Create and enhance linkages between habitats to improve biodiversity function.
- Protect the remnant areas of woodland in the area through appropriate management of the small pockets of deciduous woodland (including ancient woodland) and mature in-field and hedgerow trees. Link up woodland areas where appropriate within the landscape, and maintain a diverse age and species structure for the benefit of biodiversity.
- Historic field patterns are retained and reinstated where boundaries have been degraded or lost. Hedgerows are replaced where they have been lost as a result of intensive farming.
- Protect and appropriately manage the cultural heritage of the area, including nationally important Scheduled Monuments and the Registered Battlefield of the Battle of Nantwich to preserve a sense of history. Promote interpretation of these features where this would not be at odds with conservation of these assets.
- In-field ponds are retained for their biodiversity value and sense of time-depth they provide to the landscape.
- Protect the integrity and setting of valued heritage features including Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Registered Parks and Gardens.
- Any new development within the landscape is in keeping with the form and vernacular of existing settlement. Any conversion of agricultural buildings is undertaken in a sensitive manner and retains the character of the building and its surrounds.
- Promote, maintain and seek to link up existing rights of way including the South Cheshire Way, Crewe and Nantwich Circular Walk and various canal towpaths.
- The strong rural character of the landscape is retained and existing intrusive features within the landscape are mitigated/screened where possible/appropriate.

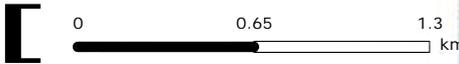
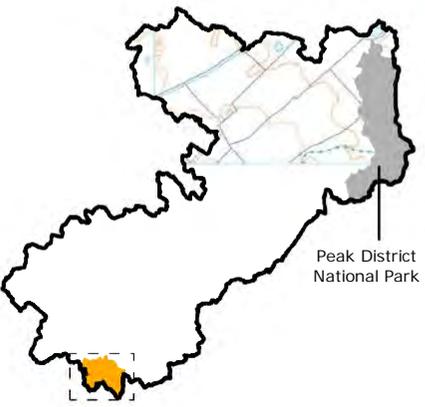
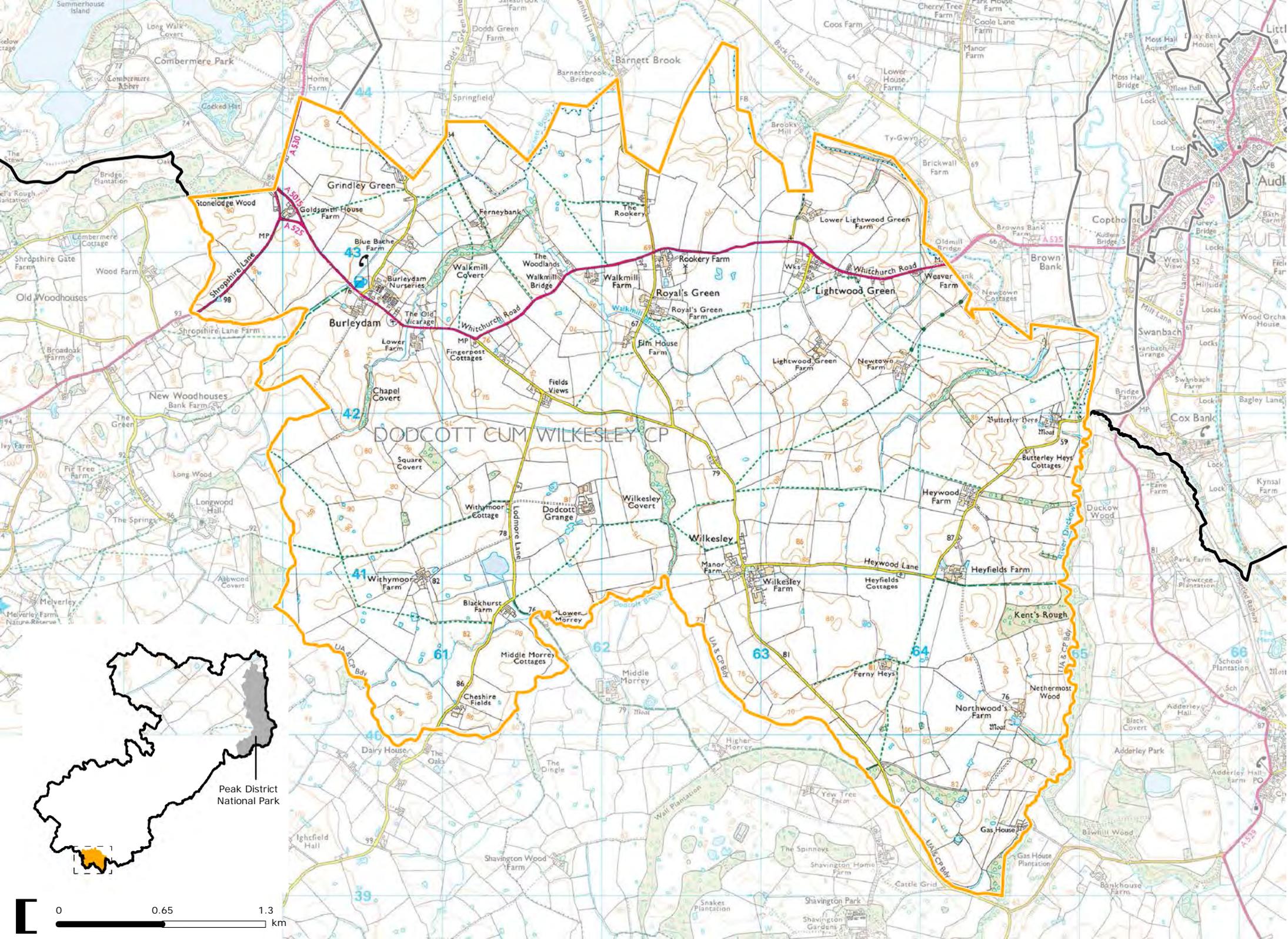


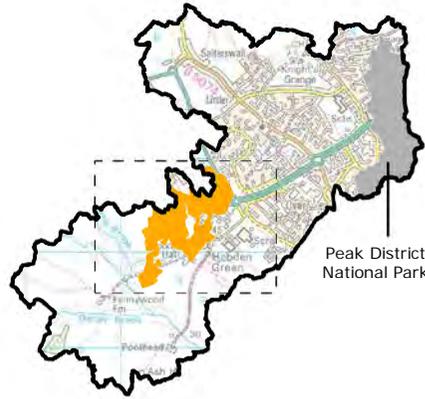
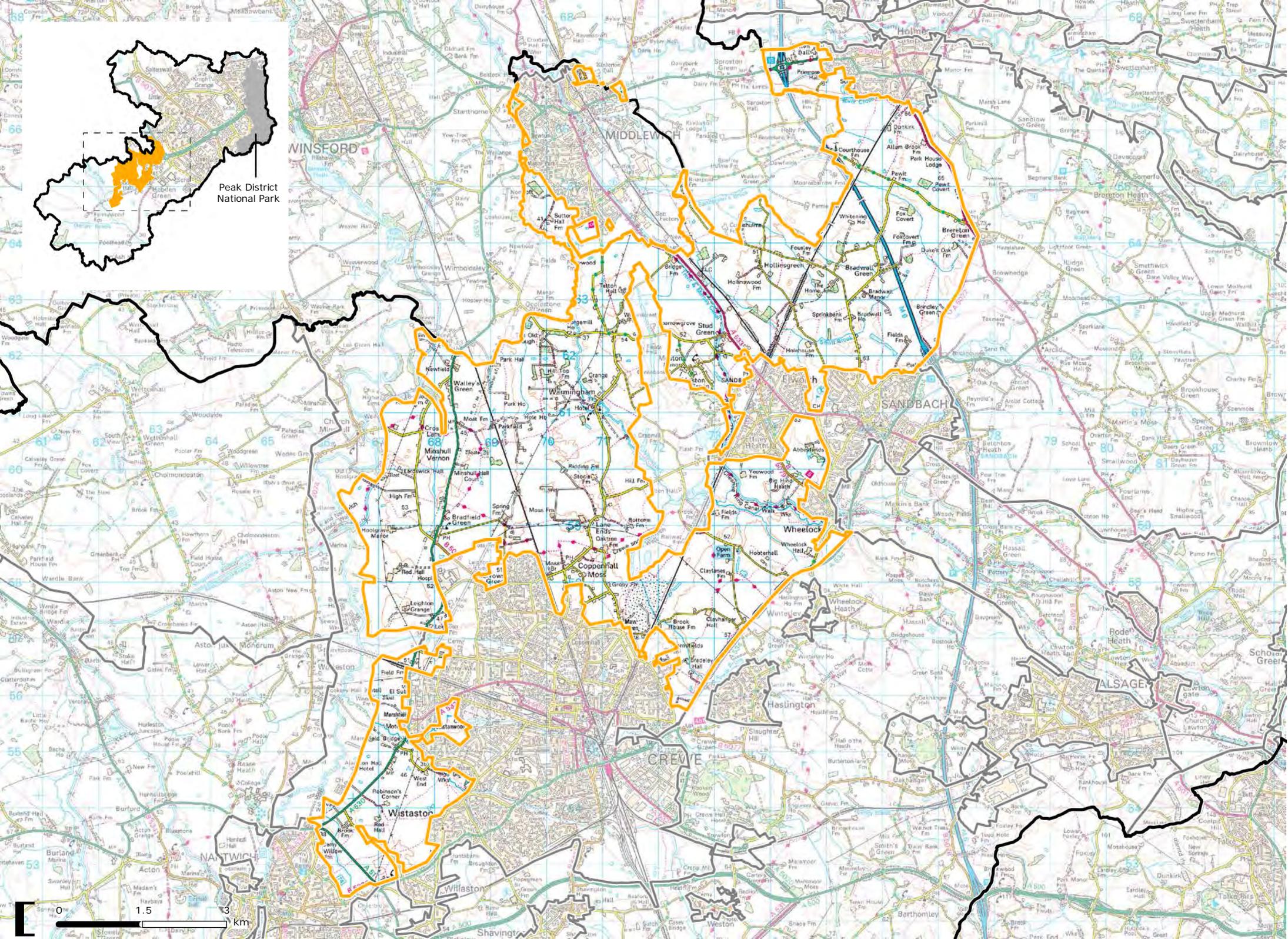
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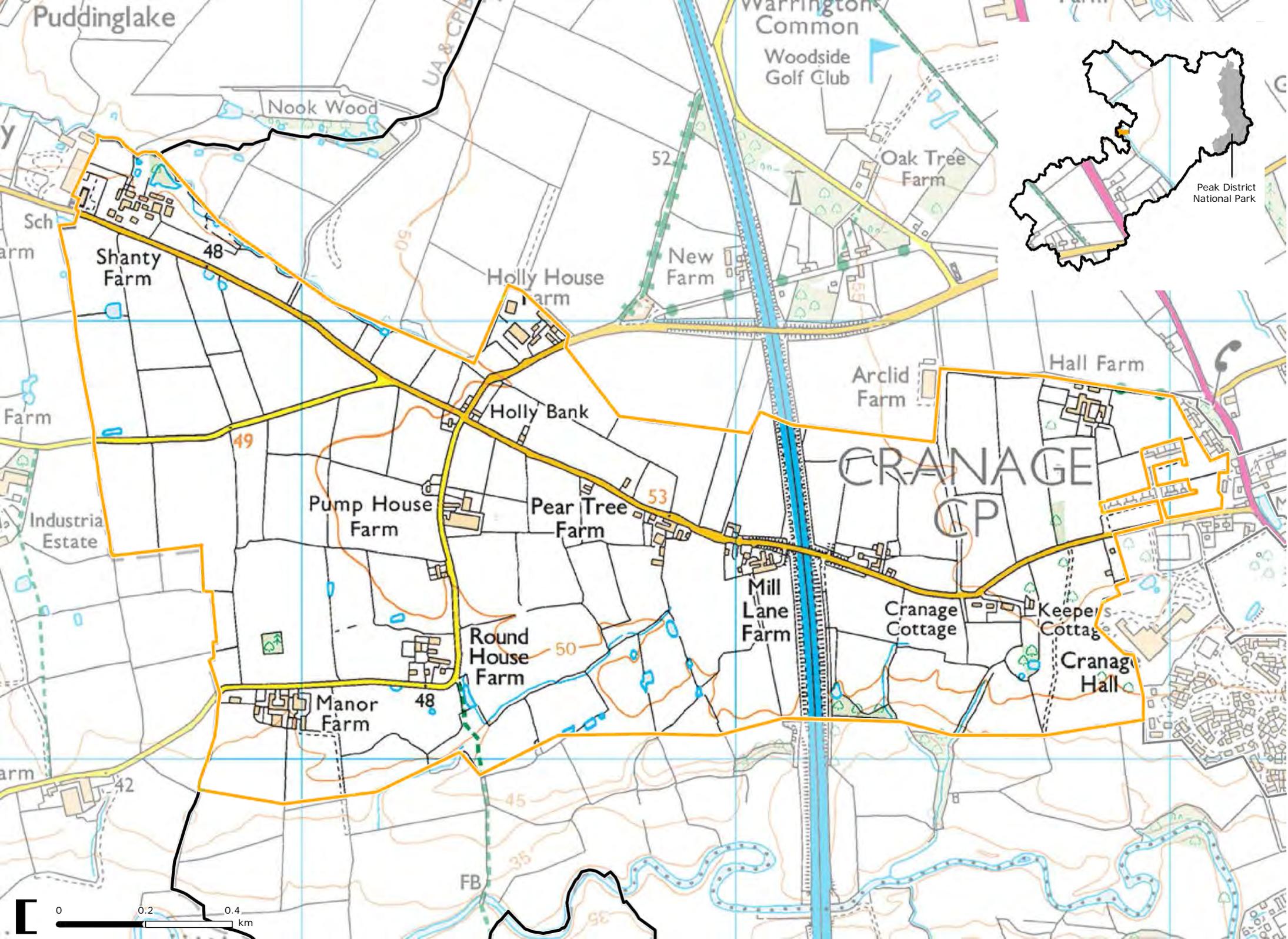
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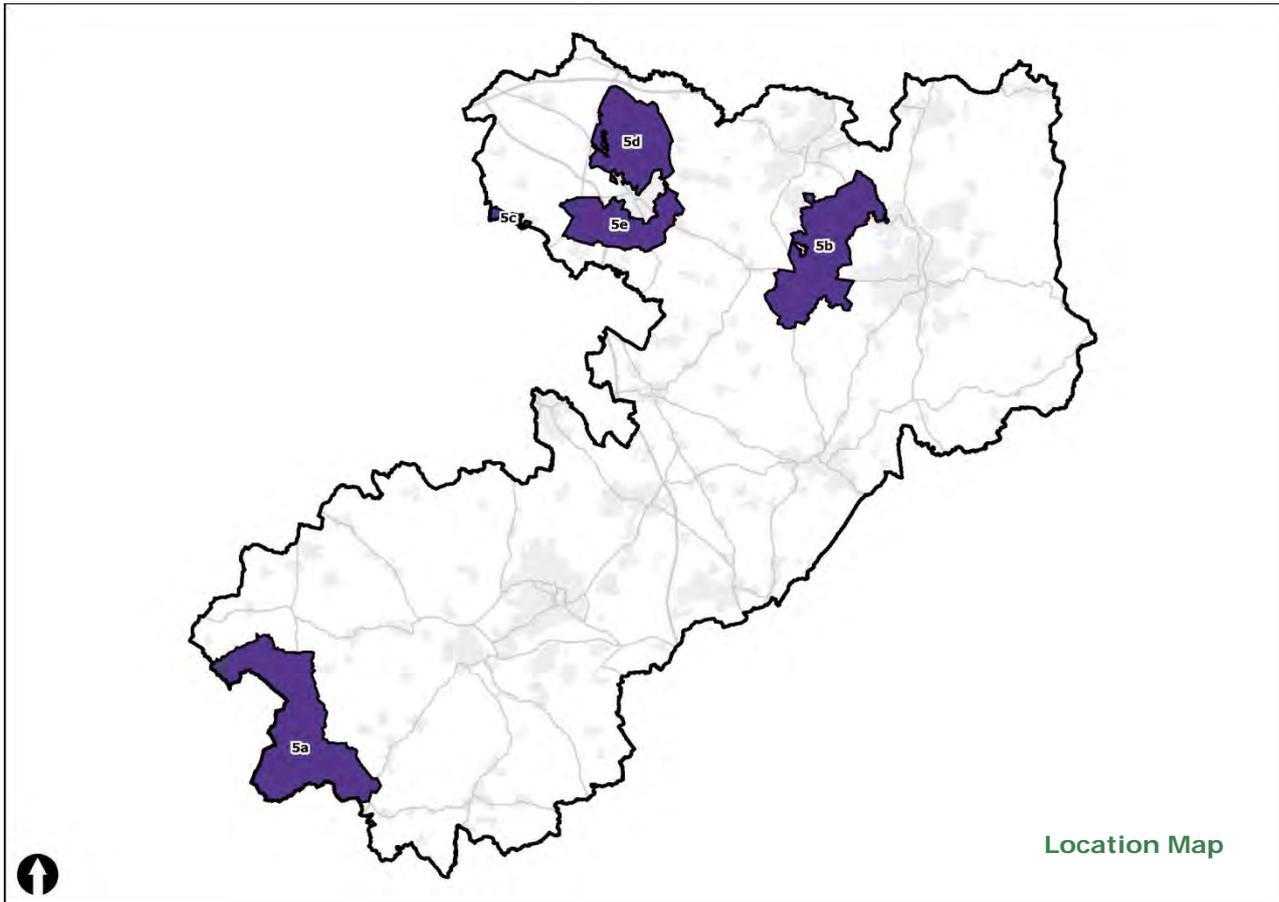
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Peak District National Park

## LCT 5: Wooded Estates and Meres



Location Map

### Summary of location and landscape character

This type is defined by a concentration of historic estates and their associated features, including parkland and formal gardens, a high density of woodland and mosses and meres which are often utilised as ornamental lakes. The topography of the type ranges from flat ground, through broad undulations to occasional steeper slopes. Fields are varied in size and shape and are generally of medieval or post-medieval origin. Settlement is mainly dispersed with a limited number of small nucleated villages and hamlets including Rostherne and Marbury.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCAs

- LCA 5a: Cholmondeley
- LCA 5b: Capesthorpe
- LCA 5c: Budworth
- LCA 5d: Tatton and Rostherne
- LCA 5e: Tabley

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- Varied landform, ranging from flat to undulating land around Tatton Park and Tabley House with some areas of steeper, more complex landforms including Alderley Edge and Comber Mere.
- Underlying geology of banded siltstone, Bollin Mudstone and Northwich Halite overlain by glacial till, river alluvium and sandy soils. Occasional pockets of peat have been exploited in the past as a source of fuel.
- Frequent meres, mosses and ponds formed as a result of glaciation, which are a focal point of the landscape. Some meres are adapted for ornamental purposes as part of the estate landscapes.

#### *Woodland cover*

- Compared to the adjoining farmland, the estates contain high densities of broadleaved and mixed woodland, some of which is ancient woodland. Veteran and specimen trees are a characteristic feature of the estates.

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- The farmed landscape comprises a mixture of small-medium scale irregular, semi-regular and regular fields of medieval and post-medieval origin. Fields are mostly delineated by hedgerows although walls and railings within the estates are common boundary types.
- Other land uses include golf courses, caravan parks and the deer park within Tatton Park.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- Nationally important semi-natural habitats which include the meres, woodland and grassland habitats. The wetland habitats are particularly important for overwintering wildfowl and are often nationally designated, including Rostherne Mere National Nature Reserve.

#### *Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- The landscape has a strong sense of time-depth, with large, grand historic houses and associated buildings including gatehouses, estate farms and lodges. Ornamental landscape features such as parkland and lakes are prominent features. Many are listed as Registered Parks and Gardens.
- Archaeological remains indicate activity in some areas of this type dating back to the Neolithic period (c4000BC).

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- Settlement is dispersed and comprised of small hamlets and scattered farms. Several of the settlements are designated as Conservation Areas. Buildings are constructed in a vernacular of black and white timber frame, red sandstone and red brick.
- Mostly, the road network is comprised of minor lanes, which are often lined by avenues of mature trees. There also are a number of major routes which cross through this landscape type, including the M6 motorway.
- Popular landscape for recreational activity for both local people and visitors. Attractions include the historic houses, gardens and golf courses. The presence of public footpaths varies as some of the estates are publicly inaccessible. Promoted routes including North Cheshire Way and South Cheshire Way cross this type.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- Views are often restricted by woodland, which creates an intimate, naturalistic landscape. Picturesque designed vistas are associated with the estates.
- Generally this is a highly naturalistic, tranquil landscape, although levels of tranquillity may be eroded by the presence of nearby major infrastructure, including Manchester Airport.
- Occasionally, where woodland cover allows, there are longer views to prominent features including the Sandstone Ridge and Pennine Hills.

**Physical and Natural Influences**

The topography is mostly flat or gently rolling. In some areas the landform is more complex and slopes become steeper, in particular on Alderley Edge where slopes rise to 190 metres AOD and impressive geological exposures are found.

The solid geology of this character type is predominantly made up of banded siltstone,

Bollin Mudstone and Northwich Halite overlain by glacial till, river alluvium and sandy soils. A number of the meres are designated as SSSIs or National Nature Reserves and provide a habitat for wintering wildfowl and aquatic invertebrates, including the previously endangered Great Crested Grebe. Man-made ponds are abundant.



Compared with much of East Cheshire, the historic estates have a higher than average woodland cover. This includes both ancient broadleaved woodland (e.g. Beech Wood, Nether Alderley) and coniferous plantation (e.g. Moss Wood south of Cholmondeley). Woodland is also located on the edges of watercourses.

Outside the estates, land use is typically arable or pastoral, with small-medium irregular and semi-regular fields of medieval and post-medieval origin divided by hawthorn hedges with standard oak trees. There are isolated areas of species-rich neutral unimproved grassland amongst the farmland. Fields are typically enclosed by hedgerows with mature trees. Some localised areas which are more intensively farmed appear to be larger in scale with low hedgerows and longer views.

**Historic and Cultural Influences**

This character type is dominated by large historic estates, with mansion houses, ornamental parkland and formal gardens. The meres are often used as ornamental lakes. Estate management has heavily influenced the form of the landscape and the estates have their own individual character and create a strong sense of time depth. Many of the estates are listed on Historic England’s Register of Parks and Gardens. Some estates have developed alternatives to traditional uses including golf

courses and caravan sites. Publicly accessible locations are popular with local families and dog walkers as well as visitors from further afield.



Settlement is generally sparse; there are small nucleated settlements such as Rostherne, Norbury and Marbury, but mostly settlement comprises a low density of dispersed farms and halls. Roads vary from tree-lined driveways and minor roads to major A-roads and the M6 which crosses the landscape east of Tabley House.

**Visual and Perceptual Character**

The many mature woodland blocks and individual parkland trees result in a substantial enclosure and create a small to medium scale naturalistic landscape. The high density of woodland provides a strong contrast with the surrounding, more open, agricultural landscapes. Estates are often hidden from view from roads due to the extensive tree planting, although there are occasional designed vistas. The estates have a strong sense of time depth and are valued as a tranquil escape from modern life for visitors. Where tree cover allows, there are views to the Sandstone Ridge and Pennine Hills.



Some limited intrusive elements can detract from these valued qualities, including the M6 motorway, railway lines (with overhead gantries) and power lines. Noise from infrastructure including main roads and Manchester Airport can also reduce tranquillity. Parts of the landscape are also influenced by the close proximity of urban edges.

## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- Areas of steep, dramatic and complex landform, including Alderley Edge and Combermere Park which provide visual interest.
- Nationally important geological exposures including Alderley Edge SSSI, which provide visible evidence of the physical evolution of the landscape.
- Semi-natural habitats of the glacial meres which are important to plant, invertebrate and bird species (some valued at the international/national level through designations such as Ramsar, National Nature Reserve and SSSI) features which provide a unique sense of place.
- Strong wooded character with both ancient broadleaved woodland and coniferous plantation which also have an influence on adjacent landscapes. Many of these areas are locally designated for their wildlife value and are popular for recreation.
- A legacy of historic field patterns enclosed by hedgerow boundaries with numerous mature trees which provide an important environment for flora and fauna as well as a sense of history.
- The important historic houses which are often Listed Buildings and sited within picturesque, designed ornamental parkland, giving the landscape a strong sense of time depth and scenic qualities. Many of the estates are Registered Parks and Gardens; Tatton is listed grade II\*, whilst Tabley, Cholmondeley, Capethorne and Combermere are listed grade II.
- Where publically accessible, the estates and surrounding countryside form a valued destination for recreation for both local people and visitors to the area.
- Sparsely settled character with small hamlets, villages and farm holdings also often associated with estates, including gatehouses. This includes numerous Conservation Areas with buildings constructed in a traditional vernacular.
- Narrow rural lanes, including picturesque and intimate estate driveways lined by mature trees.
- Strong sense of visual enclosure and naturalistic character as a result of the dense tree cover, with high levels of tranquillity
- Occasional glimpses to the dramatic open uplands of the Pennines to the east, which provide a sense of orientation within the landscape.

### Landscape condition

Much of this landscape is currently well-managed and preserved by the estates and landowners including the National Trust. A number of the meres are polluted due to agricultural run-off resulting in algal blooms and reduced biodiversity. Some locations are also adversely affected by invasive species (Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam) and scrub encroachment which require on-going management. There are some over mature trees which will need be supplemented by new stock over time. Nearby transport infrastructure including the M6 and Manchester Airport have an adverse effect on tranquillity.

### Forces for change

- **Recreational pressures** particularly in related to the historic estates leading to an increase in traffic levels on rural lanes, visual intrusion of car-parks, disturbance of sensitive habitats and demand for additional facilities such as holiday cottages and caravan parks. There is increased demand for water-based recreation in meres, leading to potential conflict with nature conservation objectives.
- **Changes in woodland / tree species composition** as new pests/diseases spread (particularly *phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)). Loss of trees within woodlands and hedgerows would be particularly noticeable in this landscape type.
- **Changes in farming** including pressure to diversify and changing patterns of land ownership. The purchase of agricultural holdings by non-farmers is becoming a significant force for change, resulting in conversion of farm houses and farm buildings and changes in farm use.
- **Continued pressure for development** associated with major infrastructure such as HS2 which would be prominent within the landscape.
- **Erosion of built environment character through incremental development**, particularly adjacent to large urban areas. 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.

- **Changes in farm crops** with an increase in areas under arable or fodder crops and a trend towards silage production. An increase in the use of fertiliser can result in pollution of the wetland habitats.
- **Reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of semi-natural habitats.** Loss of ponds through drainage and in-fill plus nutrient run-off from surrounding farmland. Decline in species-rich hedgerows at some locations. Intensification of grassland management leading to loss of species-rich acid grassland.
- **Loss of historic field pattern** due to decline in hedgerow management, with a subsequent increase in the use of fencing.
- **Loss of historic parkland** to agriculture and recreational use e.g. camping/caravan sites and golf courses.
- **Decline in veteran trees** resulting in a loss of both a valuable biodiversity resource and an essential component of historic parkland.
- **Standardisation of roads** with the upgrading of lanes and minor roads leading to increasingly suburban character of the countryside.

## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

### Overall vision and landscape strategy

The overall strategy for this landscape is to conserve a well-managed landscape which balances the conservation of the historic landscapes and buildings with sustainable recreational uses. Provision for recreation in the landscape is good and aligns with ecological and heritage conservation. Woodland is appropriately managed, including distinctive specimen trees. Replacement of aging trees is planned for in advance. The landscape is intact with a network of mature hedgerows marking historic field patterns, large areas of ancient woodland and designed parkland with historic buildings. The rural farmland is interspersed with valued semi-natural heathland and grassland habitats.

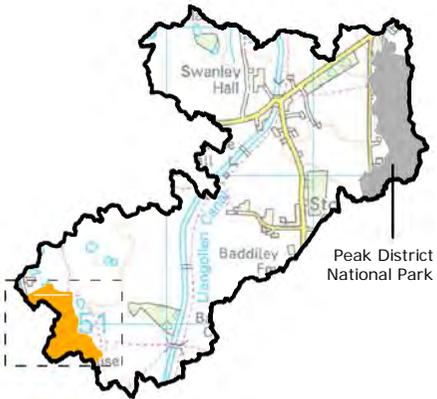
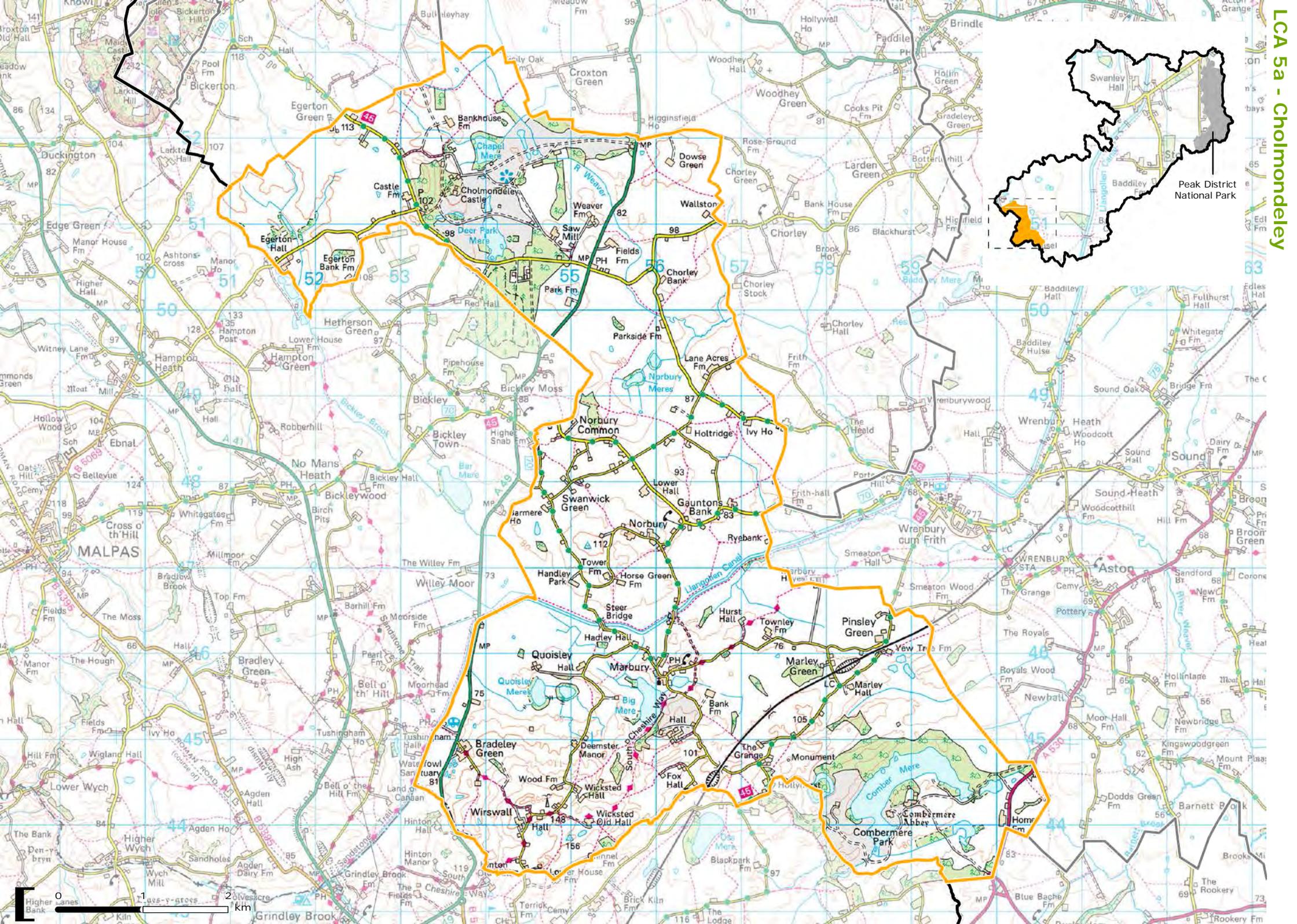
### Landscape Guidance

The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:

- Avoid siting development (including buildings and other structures) in visually prominent areas or areas of complex landform.
- Protect the distinct geological features of the landscape, including rock exposures and continue to implement appropriate management regimes.
- Protect and appropriately manage the dense woodland that characterises the estate landscapes. Plan for the restoration of plantation woodland with native species and the replacement of aging specimen trees.
- Manage and enhance valued semi-natural habitats, particularly the undesignated ponds, meres, mosses, meres which are focal features of the landscape as well as woodland and unimproved grassland habitats. Seek to create linkages between habitats where possible to improve biodiversity resource within the landscape.
- Ensure that the meres are appropriately managed and conserved for their natural heritage value and issues including agricultural run-off are addressed.
- Conserve the historic integrity of the designed landscapes and their component heritage features. Promote interpretation of these features where this would not be at odds with conservation of these assets.
- Retain historic field patterns and restore the hedgerows and walls forming field and estate boundaries where they have been lost or degraded.
- Respect the setting, form and vernacular of existing settlements, including those designated as Conservation Areas. Ensure any conversion of farm buildings to residences retains a rural character and does not introduce sub-urbanising features.
- Ensure that the recreational value of the landscape is retained, whilst managing activity in a

sustainable manner that promotes conservation of the valued features.

- Plan strategically for sustainable transport routes to the attractions and recreation destinations. Avoid introduction of recreation activities which may detract from the valued perceptual qualities of the landscape.
- Maintain any sweeping, designed views/vistas within the estates and longer views experiences in the landscape which include the Pennines and the Sandstone Ridge.
- Ensure that the sense of enclosure and high levels of tranquillity experienced throughout much of the landscape are retained.
- Utilise trees and woodland to screen major transport routes to reduce their visual and audial impacts.
- Retain the rural character of the narrow, winding roads and avoid the over-engineering of roads which could create an urbanising influence within the strongly rural landscape. Conserve and maintain the characterful lanes with avenues of mature trees.



Peak District National Park

LCA 5a - Cholmondeley



MALPAS

Aston

Pinsley Green

Combermere Park

Wirswall

Wiley Moor

Norbury Common

Cholmondeley Castle

Egerton Hall

Higher Lanes Bank

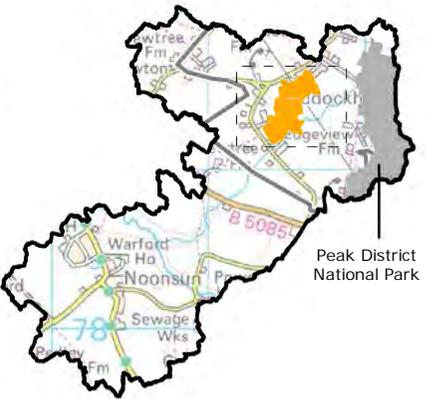
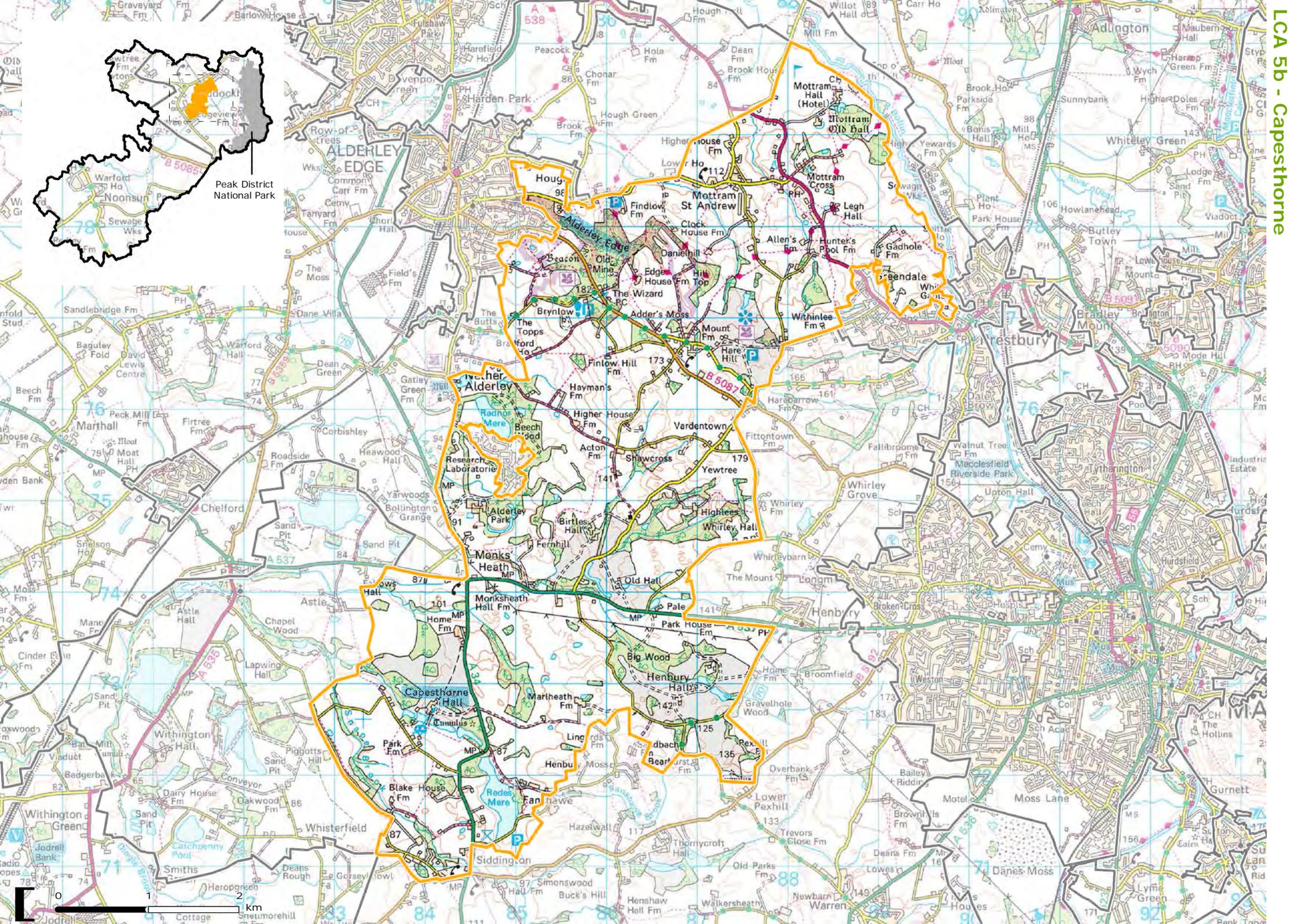
Kiln

Grindley Brook

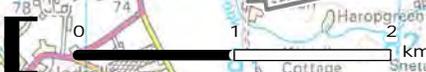
Cheshire Way

Warrington

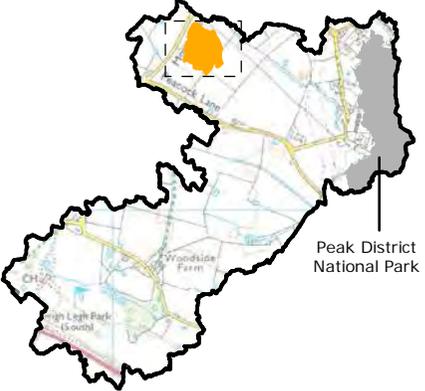
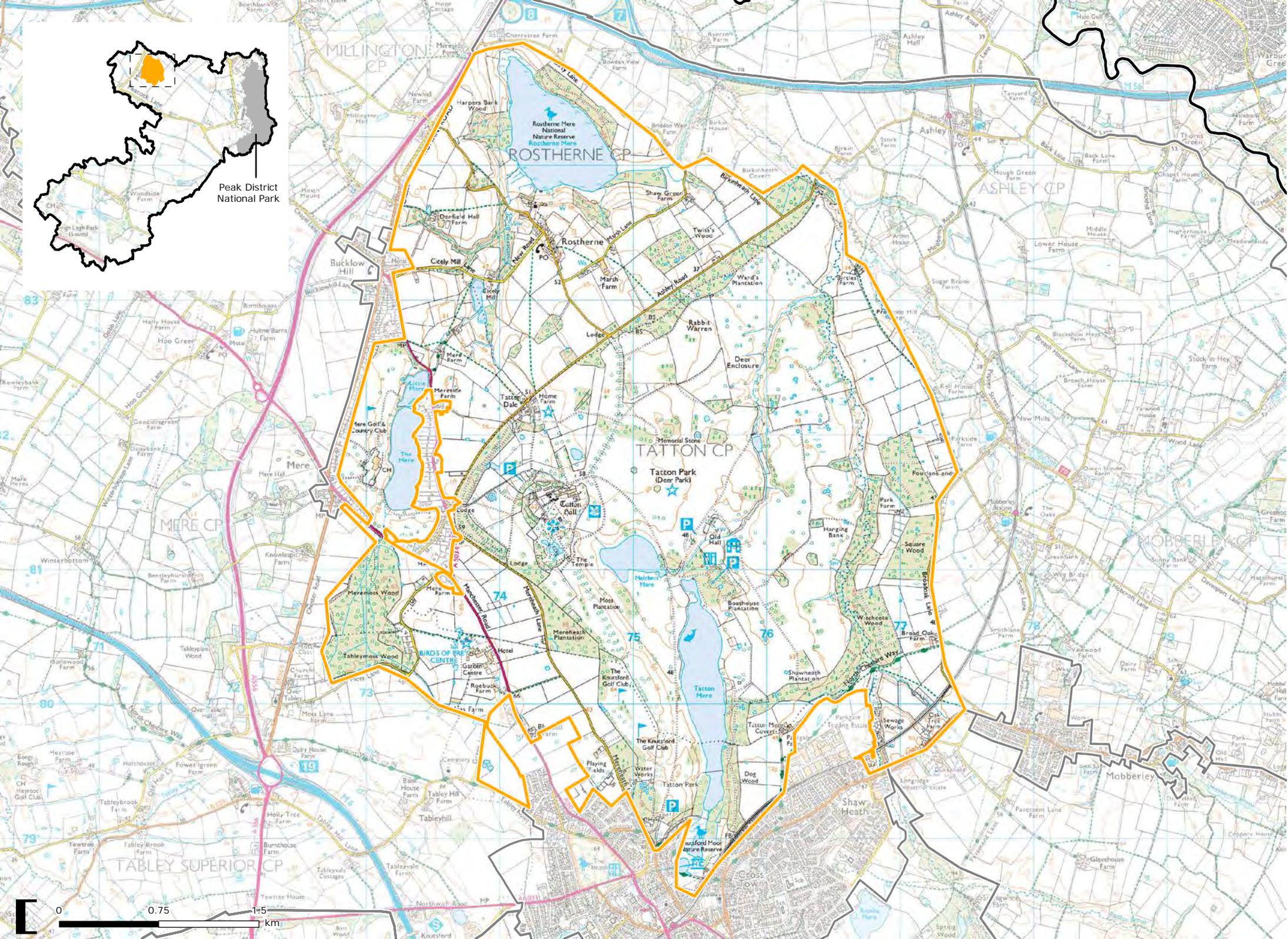
Widnes



Peak District National Park

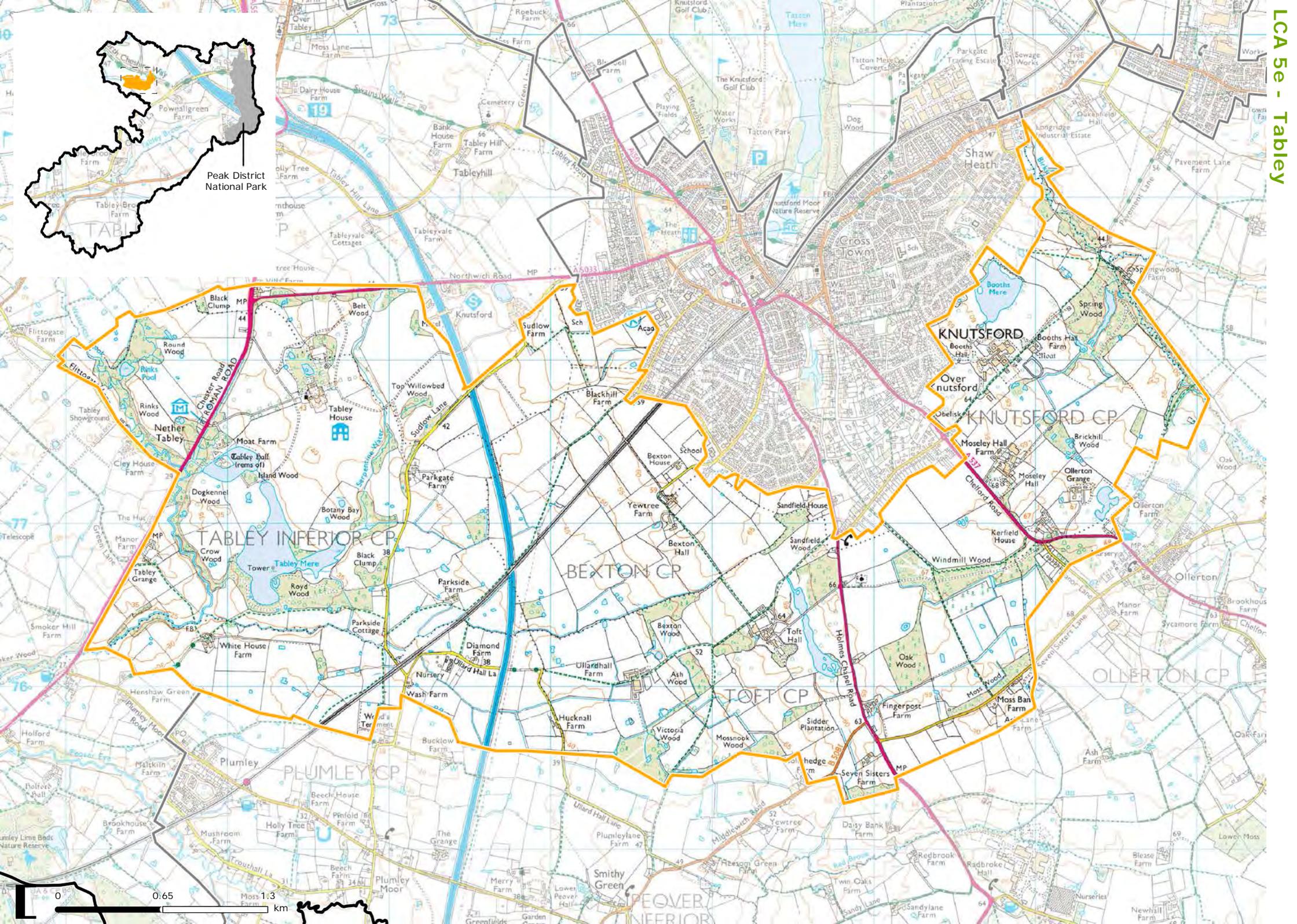
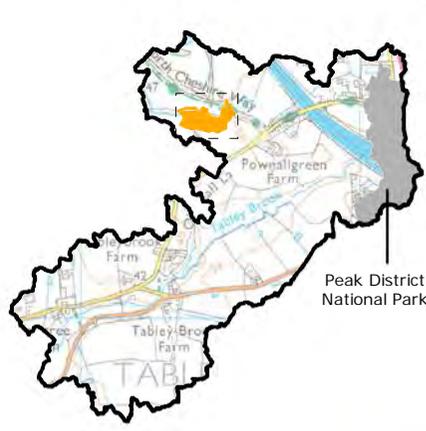




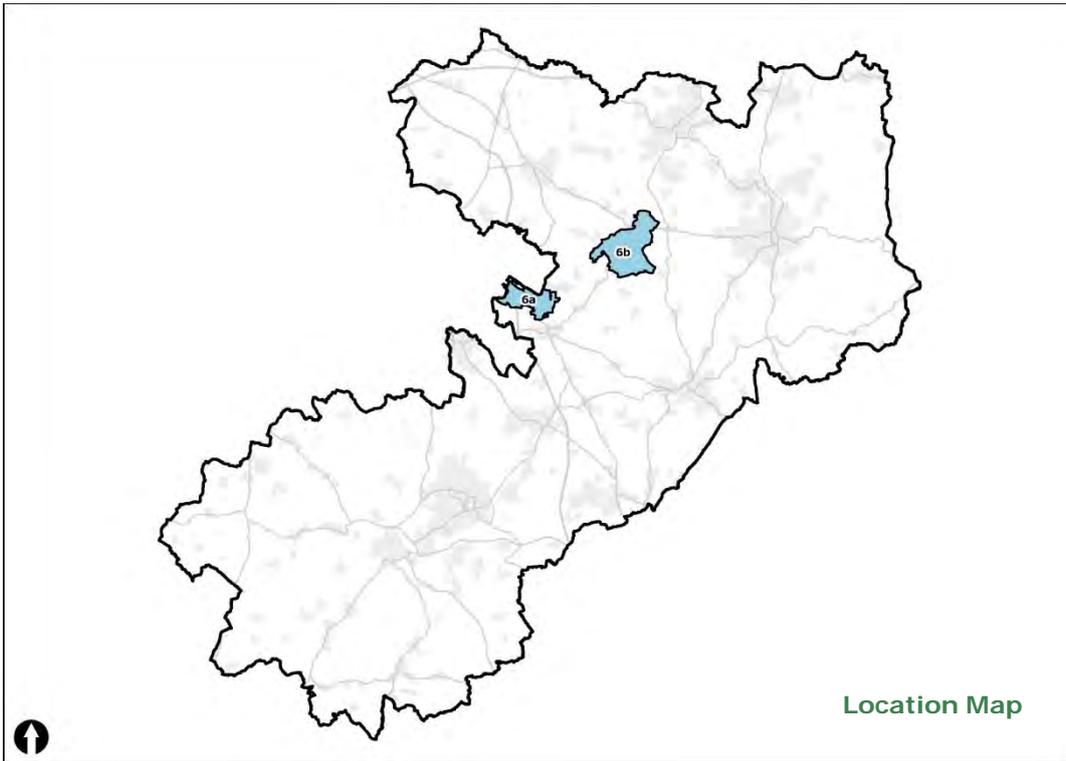


Peak District National Park





## LCT 6: Woodland, Heaths, Meres and Mosses



Location Map

### Summary of location and landscape character

This well wooded character type is associated with an area of former grazed heathland and still retains a heathy character. It is defined by blocks of mixed woodland interspersed with small relict heath, meres and mosses and is located in the northern half of the Borough, either side of the A535 south of Chelford. The landscape is crossed by brooks, with large water bodies created more recently through sand and gravel extraction. Beyond the woodlands and water bodies, the flat or undulating landscape consists of large fields defined by straight hedgerow boundaries.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCAs

- LCA 6a: Rudheath
- LCA 6b: Withington

Location Map

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- Flat to gently undulating topography lying between c 40 – 90m AOD on an underlying geology of mudstone and sandstone overlain by drift deposits of sand and gravel deposited during the last glaciation.
- Numerous small ponds plus meres and mosses formed in glacial hollows now hidden within dense woodland. Larger water bodies resulting from historic and more recent sand and gravel extraction are locally dominant.

#### *Woodland/tree cover*

- Extensive blocks of mixed woodland, planted on former sandy heathland, lend a wooded appearance to the type.
- Surviving areas of ancient deciduous woodland and relict heath run along winding brooks, such as Snape Brook.

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- Active and inactive sand and gravel quarries mostly screened by low earthworks and dense tree belts.
- Around the water bodies and woodland is a pattern of large (over 8ha) arable fields defined by straight-sided hedgerows or post and wire fences with some smaller pastoral fields. There are also remnant areas of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> field enclosure from waste heathland.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- The sandy soils support species-rich lowland heath, such as the relict heathland at Sandle Heath or Goostrey Heath.
- Glacial meres and associated mossland habitats, including lowland raised bog, located within dense deciduous woodland, often designated as Local Nature Reserves, such as The Mosses LNR.
- Areas around open water, resulting from extraction have subsequently become valuable ecological habitats, some designated as local nature reserves such as Farmwood Pool.

#### *Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- Evidence of Bronze Age human activity illustrated by the Withington Hall Barrow Cemetery.
- Areas of relict parkland and estate farmland are a typical feature with designed features and veteran trees. Created in the 18th and 19th centuries, these are associated with historic halls many of which have since been demolished such as Withington Hall and Astle Hall.

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- Settlement is sparse due to the late enclosure of the sandy heath. Dispersed farms and properties characteristically built of red brick with clay or slate tiles. These are generally linked by narrow roads with some busier arterial roads.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- Visual contrast between the enclosed nature of the woodland with the openness of the meres, although water bodies are largely hidden from the road. There are occasional views towards the mast on Croker Hill and the Pennine Hills.
- Away from the busy M6 motorway which runs north-south along the Cheshire West border, and key arterial roads (A535, A50) areas of tranquillity can be found. Localised disturbance from the extraction sites is minimal except for views of the machinery tower at Dingle Bank Quarry.

### Physical and Natural Influences

This character type occurs at an intermediate elevation (c 40 – 90m AOD) with an underlying solid geology of mudstone and sandstone overlain by drift deposits of sand and gravel. The landform, soils and vegetation have been heavily influenced by glacial activity, with numerous melt water channels and hollows in which the meres and mosses subsequently developed.



More mineral extraction has led to the creation of large water-bodies some of which have subsequently become valuable ecological habitats in their own right, for example, Farmwood Pool.

These water bodies are enclosed by extensive dense blocks of mixed woodland interspersed with relict heathland. Elsewhere the flat or undulating landscape consists of large fields defined by straight hedgerow boundaries which are often in poor condition or have been replaced by post and wire fencing.

### Historic and Cultural Influences

Historic settlement is not a key feature of this type as it was formerly open heath that was only enclosed in recent centuries.

There are areas of relict parkland and estate farmland belonging to 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century halls some of which survive such as Fallows Hall (Grade II listed).

The natural drift geology of this type which has influenced the occurrence of heath and meres has also encouraged the exploitation of sand and gravels which in turn has had a major impact upon the landscape including the creation of new meres. Active quarries continue to work the local mineral deposits. However, these tend to be well screened from general view by tree belts.

Medieval woodland-pasture and wooded heath survive in small isolated pockets, for example at Sandle Heath, on what were once large grazed heathland. The enclosure of areas of sandy heath from the 17<sup>th</sup> century has resulted in the typical landscape of regular large scale enclosure (greater than 8 ha) which have been further amalgamated and enlarged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



The meres and mosses provide a considerable paleo-environmental resource. Meres are likely to have provided an early source of food going back into prehistory. The discovery of worked flint tools in this area indicates very early human activity.

### Visual and Perceptual Character

This is a landscape of strong contrasts. The flat or gently rolling topography and large straight-sided fields combine with woodland blocks and large water bodies to create a large scale landscape. In marked contrast, within the woodlands there is a strong sense of enclosure. The large open water bodies are locally prominent but most views are restricted by trees and woodland block although there are occasional views towards the prominent ridges of the Pennines.



Seasonal variation is provided by the broadleaved woodland and purple flowering heathers on the pockets of remnant heathlands.

## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- The mosaic of open water, woodland and relict heathland both a legacy of glaciation and former sand and gravel quarries which provide a sense of naturalness, provide visual diversity (a variety of colours and textures and changing seasonal interest) and a setting for recreation and enjoyment of the landscape.
- The large number of water bodies which are a key feature of the area and offer reclaimed natural habitats and flood control.
- The woodland and trees which provides a strong sense of place and provide natural heritage value. Areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland particularly provide biological and visual diversity and have a sense of history. Woodland and trees also help to filter views to road networks and active mineral extraction sites from within the area.
- Remnant lowland heath including lowland raised bog habitats (The Mosses LNR) which provide an important environment for flora and fauna as well as a sense of history.
- Relict parkland (such as Astle Hall and Withington Hall) and some historic halls and farms which provide a cultural record of the past and reflect the historic associations between the area and the industrially generated wealth of adjacent towns and cities.
- Sense of rural tranquillity away from the major road networks which provides an escape from more settled parts of the Borough.
- Views over the meres to the Pennine Hills which an enable appreciation of the wider landscape.

### Landscape condition

This is generally a well-managed landscape. Although mineral extraction has declined, not all sites have been restored and some large sites are still in industrial use. There is an historic loss of heathland sites, a gappy hedgerow network and lack of woodland management. Tranquillity is broken by the key arterial routes which cross the area including the M6.

### Forces for change

- **Continued pressure for mineral extraction**, both current and future operations may present a threat to habitats and the historic environment but also provide opportunities for habitat creation
- **Historic felling, clearance of many sites and re-planting of non-native conifers**. This has implications for both biodiversity and the visual character of the woodland and the immediate surroundings
- **Decline in traditional woodland management practices** in some areas leading to under management of woodland, coverts and copse as well as a decline of veteran trees within the parkland landscapes, leading to general deterioration.
- **Changes in woodland / tree species composition** as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytophthora pathogens and ash die-back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)).
- **Loss of historic field pattern** due to historic field enlargement and continuing decline in hedgerow management with resulting increase in use of post and wire fencing. Many hedgerow trees over-mature or in decline.
- **Changing patterns of land ownership** including the purchase of agricultural holdings by non-farmers resulting in the conversion of farm houses and buildings and changes in farm use.
- **Loss, fragmentation or deterioration of relic habitats** including meres and mosses and lowland heathland through inappropriate management. Loss of ponds through drainage and in-fill plus nutrient run-off from surrounding farmland.
- **Decline in veteran trees** which are a valuable biodiversity resource and an essential component of historic parkland.
- **Loss of historic parkland** to agriculture and recreational use including golf and equestrian facilities.
- **Erosion of built environment character** through incremental development, particularly ribbon development. Unsympathetic renovation leading to loss of historic buildings and the suburbanisation of rural properties and their curtilage.
- **An increase in traffic levels** particularly on key arterial routes and the narrow local roads, which is likely to diminish levels of tranquillity and pressure to standardise roads eroding rural character.

## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

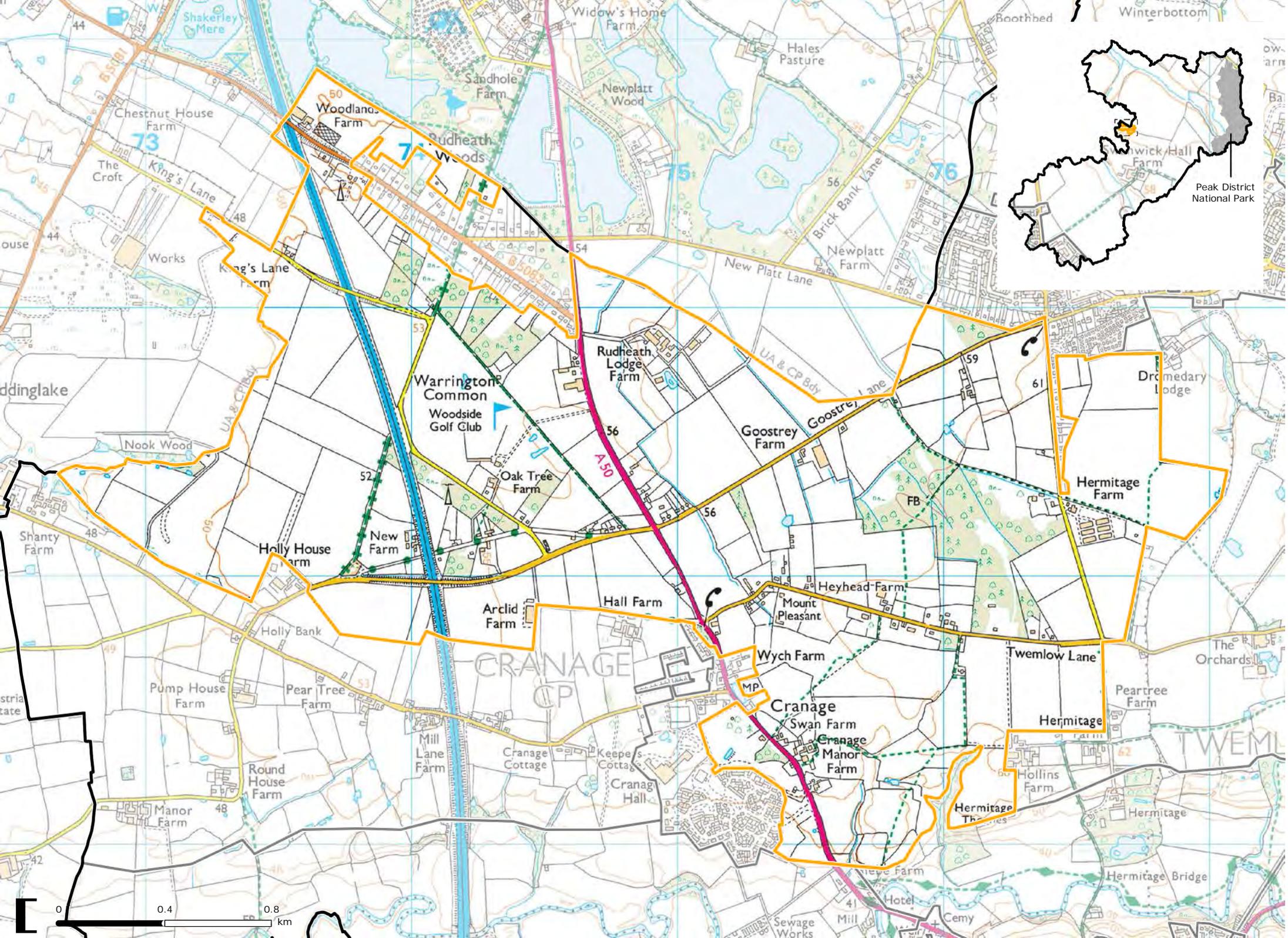
### Overall vision and landscape strategy

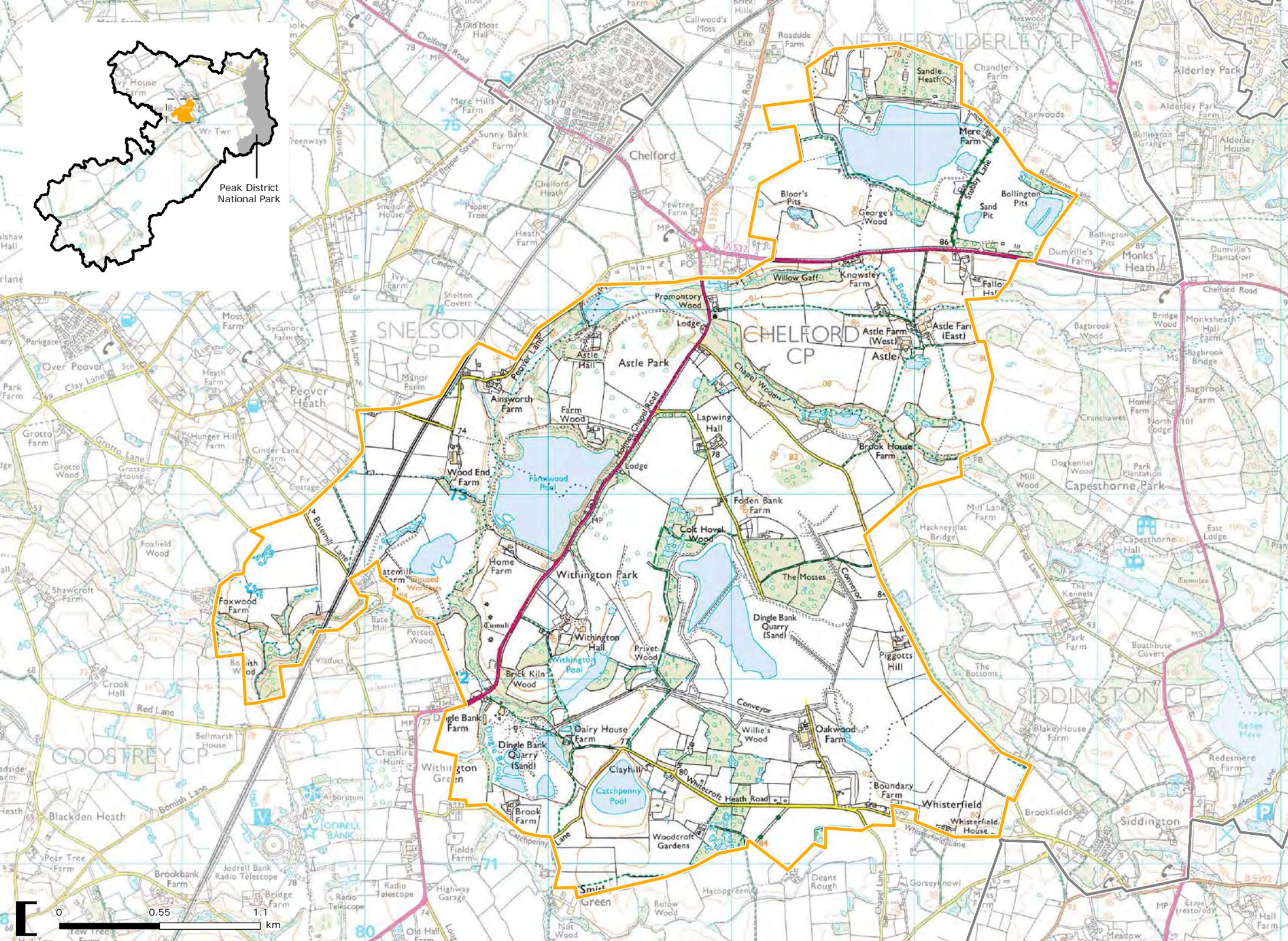
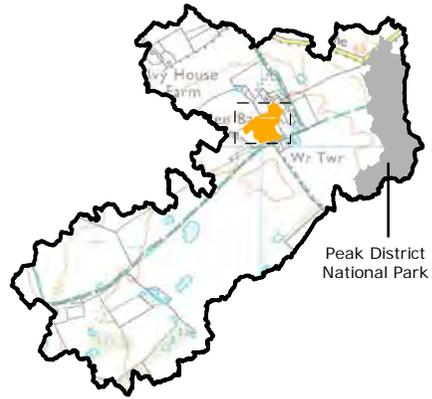
The strategy for this LCT should be to protect the valued attributes listed above including the woodland, relict parkland, open water bodies, relict heathland and meres and mosses and the rich habitats they support and ensure any proposed development is a catalyst for positive change.

### Landscape Guidance

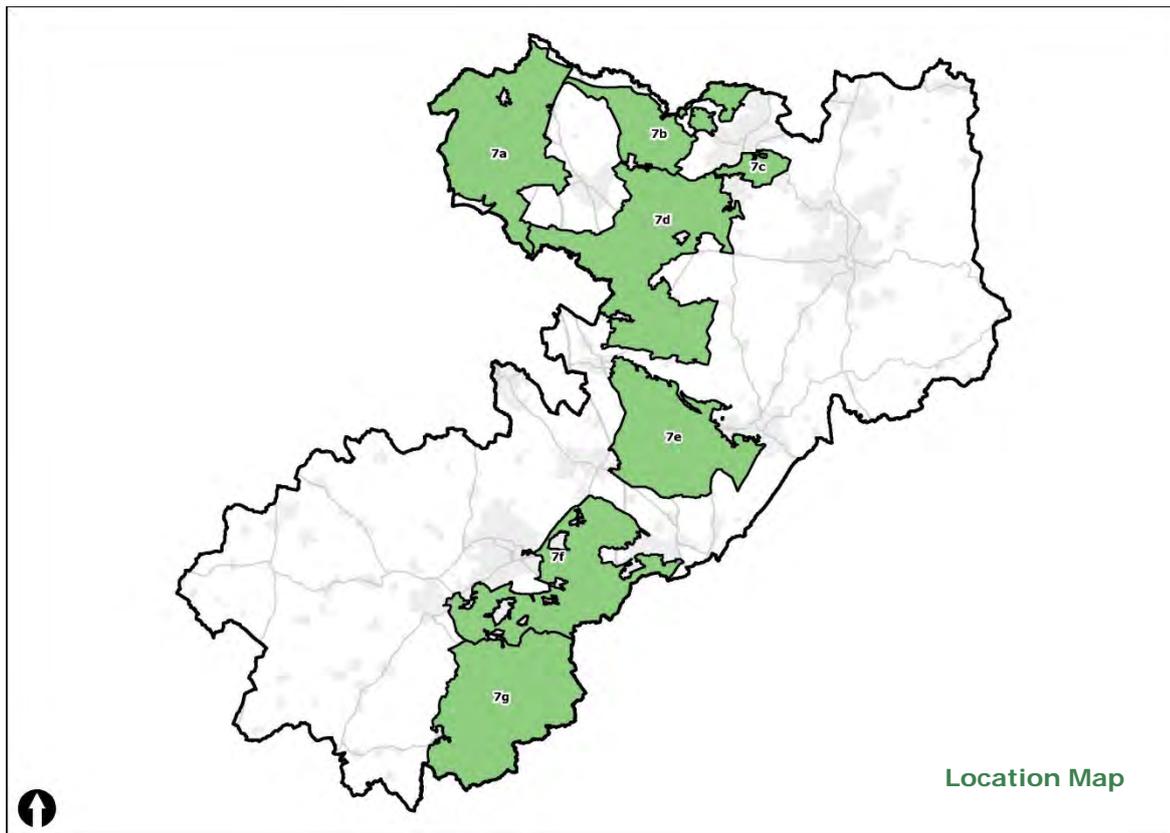
The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:

- Ensure mineral extraction does not detract from the naturalistic and tranquil qualities of the area. Use naturalistic planting to screen on going activities. Seek positive restoration schemes for mineral extraction sites to heathland and wetland habitats, scrub and woodland. Seek opportunities for recreational use of restored sites where this is compatible with nature conservation objectives.
- Protect, restore and enhance wetland habitats including open water and fragmented meres and mosses that survive within this landscape for the benefit of biodiversity as well as cultural heritage and recreation purposes.
- Protect the overall wooded character of the area through appropriate management of mixed woodland (including areas of ancient woodland) including the replacement of non-native species by native broadleaved species.
- Extends and create appropriately scaled new woodland cover, particularly where this will provide linkages between existing woodlands.
- Maintain hedgerow boundaries and encourage replanting of hedgerows with trees in areas of farmland to maintain continuous hedgerow network
- Manage and enhance valued semi-natural habitats, particularly through restoration and recreation of remnant lowland heathland (including lowland raised bog) including removal of conifers on these sites. Manage through grazing and aim to include heathland creation in mineral restoration plans. Management of agricultural land should aim to reduce nutrient run off to these habitats.
- Conserve the historic character of the relict estate landscapes and plan for the management and reinstatement of parkland features such as veteran trees.
- Protect and appropriately manage the cultural heritage of the area, including the archaeological features at Withington Hall Barrow-Cemetery.
- Retain the rural character of the landscape with its low settlement density. Protect the local vernacular of red Cheshire Brick and sandstone with slate or clay tile roofs and avoid the introduction of intrusive features. New development or conversion of farm buildings should retain a rural character by utilising traditional materials and building styles wherever possible.
- Ensure any future development helps to meet Green Infrastructure objectives, reinforcing positive connections between town and country.
- Maintain the openness of the meres and views towards to the Pennine Hills.
- Protect the relative tranquillity of the area which provides a respite from urban areas.





## LCT 7: Lower Wooded Farmland



### Summary of location and landscape character

This character type covers a large area and is divided into seven character areas extending from High Leigh and Arley in the north, east to Poynton and Congleton and as far south as Audlem. This very gently rolling landscape type has many similarities with the Cheshire plain, yet it has a greater concentration of woodland and a slightly higher settlement density with more nucleated hamlets and villages. Land use is a mix of arable and pasture, while settlement largely retains its dispersed pattern. Intensive reorganisation during the post-medieval period saw the dilution of some medieval field patterns. The landscape is very rural, although has been impacted in places by the presence of major transport routes and nearby large urban areas.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCAs

- LCA 7a: Arley
- LCA 7b: Ringway
- LCA 7c: Chonar
- LCA 7d: Marthall
- LCA 7e: Brereton Heath
- LCA 7f: Barthomley
- LCA 7g: Audlem

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- Mostly low lying, gently rolling topography although steep slopes are found occasionally throughout the landscape, often associated with watercourses.
- Underlying bedrock comprised of halite (rocksalt) and mudstone geology. Pockets of peat are located throughout the landscape and have been historically exploited for fuel.
- Large number of water bodies with mosses and meres resulting from glacial activity as well as frequent in-field marl ponds.

#### *Woodland cover*

- Compared with much of the Borough, this type has a relatively high density of coniferous, mixed and deciduous woodland found in blocks, coverts and along streams and rivers.
- Mature trees (often oak, beech and sycamore) within fields and within hedgerows also contribute to the wooded character of the landscape.

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- A mix of arable and pasture land, divided into medium-scale fields of medieval and post-medieval origin.
- Fields are primarily divided by hedgerows with frequent mature trees, although in some places boundary loss has led to the formation of larger fields. In some areas hedgerows have been replaced by post and wire or wooden fencing.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- The landscape contains a number of wetland habitats including nationally important sites such as Bagmere SSSI and Brookhouse Moss SSSI.
- Other semi-natural habitats scattered amongst the farmland include unimproved grasslands and remnant heath, which has seen major losses in the past.

#### *Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- Prehistoric remains including Bronze Age barrows and tumuli are scattered throughout the landscape, with some designated as Scheduled Monuments.
- Historic estate landscapes are occasional features and include a number of Registered Parks and Gardens.

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- Medium settlement density with a mix of dispersed farms and nucleated hamlets/villages, including a number of Conservation Areas. Some settlements have grown due to their proximity to large urban areas. Typically built vernacular is of red brick or white render.
- Roads are a mix of major arterial routes including the A50/A500 and winding narrow lanes. The M6 motorway also crosses through a number of the areas within this type.
- An intact network of rights of way provides access to the countryside. A number of promoted routes cross the landscape, including the North Cheshire Way, Dane Valley Way, South Cheshire Way and Crewe and Nantwich Circular Walk.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- This type is generally very rural although is sometimes influenced by the presence of adjacent urban areas. Major infrastructure including the M6 motorway and Manchester Airport has a visual impact and introduces traffic noise.
- Perceptual qualities are varied throughout the character type, often depending on the presence of woodland/trees which provide a strong sense of enclosure and limit views.
- Where woodland cover allows, there are views to prominent features including the wooded ridgeline of Alderley Edge and the uplands of the Pennines.

### Physical and Natural Influences

This character type has gently undulating topography, in some areas appearing to be almost flat e.g. Brereton Heath. Overall elevation ranges from approximately 10–130 metres AOD. The underlying geology of this type is predominantly made up of halite (rocksalt) and mudstone. This is overlain by sand and gravel, soils, with pockets of peat.

Meres and mosses are scattered across this type. Due to past losses surviving examples are valuable and many are designated as SSSIs. There are frequent in-field ponds which originated as marl pits. A wide range of flora, invertebrates, amphibians and birdlife are associated with marl pits. A number of minor watercourses cross this type, forming small valleys.



There are scattered small patches of semi-improved and unimproved grassland, which provide valuable habitats for other botanical species. Heath was once common in this area although this has largely been lost and is now limited to a small part of Brereton Heath.

While small wooded copses and coverts are relatively common, there are larger blocks of broad leaved and coniferous plantations, as well as riparian woodland on steep slopes alongside streams and in the grounds of estates. A small proportion of this is ancient woodland. Alder and willow are typical of the damper areas, progressing to oak and sycamore where the ground becomes better drained.

### Historic and Cultural Influences

Overall settlement has a medium density – predominantly this is dispersed but with some small nucleated hamlets and villages and occasionally larger commuter villages. A number of the settlements are designated as Conservation Areas. Typical architectural materials used are red brick, some cottages and houses with a white render. There are also some black and white timber framed cottages.

Field patterns are a mix of medieval enclosure with post medieval improvements and modern adaptation. The overall pattern is therefore a

combination of regular, irregular and semi-regular form, mostly small to medium in size, with some larger fields as a result of boundary loss. The land is used for arable as well as pastoral farming. Boundaries are a mix of patchy hawthorn hedges with standard trees and fences. Horsiculture also has made an impact on this area by introducing stables and modern fenced horse paddocks.

Human activity in this type can be traced back to prehistory, with Bronze Age, Roman and medieval remains. Historic estate parklands form occasional features.



Key arterial routes such as the M6 and M56 pass through the character areas but more typical are the network of minor roads. A major landmark located in this type is the Jodrell Bank Observatory.

### Visual and Perceptual Character

This type is characterised by a medium scale landscape, with local variations dependent upon the presence of woodland and hedgerows. Local increases in vegetation are often associated with larger brooks or minor watercourses. Views are varied; many views are partly blocked or filtered by high hedgerows or woodland however the Pennine Hills are visible in the distance from some vantage points.



Many locations have a very rural character with small, winding country lanes and traditional farm buildings still in active use. In a limited number of localities the removal of hedgerows has created a larger-scale landscape with more extensive views. In such areas the larger blocks of woodland can appear as prominent features in an open, low lying landscape.

## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- Areas of steeper, more complex landform formed by glaciation which are often associated with watercourses and provide visual interest.
- The wooded character of the landscape, with some areas of ancient woodland which provide biodiversity, recreational and scenic value within the landscape.
- Valued semi-natural habitats including meres, mosses, unimproved grasslands and remnant heath which contribute to biodiversity and give the landscape a sense of time-depth and provide scenic interest. Some are nationally or locally designated for their importance to wildlife, including Brookhouse Moss where nationally rare species such as bog rosemary, sundew and crowberry are found.
- Historic field patterns delineated by hedgerows with numerous mature trees which contribute to the distinct wooded character of the landscape, giving the landscape structure and time-depth in addition to important wildlife habitats provided by hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Important archaeological features including Bronze Age barrows and tumuli which provide evidence of the cultural evolution of the landscape and a sense of time-depth. Remains from the Roman era and medieval period are also present.
- Picturesque designed estate parklands including the Registered Parks and Gardens of Arley (Grade II\*), Crewe Hall (Grade II), Doddington Park (Grade II) and Peover Hall (Grade II) which provide a sense of time-depth and a recreational destination where there is public access.
- The distinctive, Grade I listed building of Jodrell Bank Observatory which forms a prominent landmark throughout much of the wider landscape and is a popular recreation destination.
- The sense of enclosure and tranquillity as a result of the frequent trees and woodland, which often create an intimate, pastoral landscape. These contrast with the occasional long views to the dramatic landform of the Pennine Hills.
- The strongly rural character and naturalistic qualities experienced within the landscape, contrasting with and providing an escape from nearby urban areas.

### Landscape condition

Land condition is varied throughout this landscape character type which covers a large portion of the Borough. Whilst some parts are well-managed and in good condition, other parts of the landscape have seen deterioration in condition due to over grazing, poaching, water pollution as a result of agricultural run-off, and scrub encroachment on valued habitats. Loss of hedgerows and their subsequent replacement with fencing has diluted historic field patterns. Close to urban areas, horse paddocks introduce pony tape and associated buildings which can have a suburbanising influence on the landscape.

### Forces for change

- **Continued pressure for development** associated with major infrastructure such as HS2 and residential/industrial expansion of large urban areas including Crewe and Congleton.
- **Increase in demand for equestrian facilities** such as riding schools including enclosed exercise areas and associated large-scale buildings.
- **Changes in farming** including pressure to diversify and changing patterns of land ownership. The purchase of agricultural holdings by non-farmers is becoming a significant force for change, resulting in conversion of farm houses and farm buildings and changes in farm use.
- **Changes in farm crops** with an increase in areas under arable or fodder crops and a trend towards silage production.
- **An increase in traffic levels**, particularly on narrow rural lanes, which is likely to diminish levels of tranquillity and pressure to widen/standardise roads eroding rural character and introducing suburbanising influences.
- **Changes in woodland / tree species composition** as new pests/diseases spread (particularly *phytophthora pathogens* and ash die-back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)). Loss of trees within hedgerows would be particularly noticeable in this landscape type. An On-going decline in traditional woodland management practices leading to under management of farm woodlands, coverts and copses leading to general deterioration.
- **Reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of habitats** including the loss of ponds through

drainage and in-fill plus nutrient run-off from surrounding farmland. Decline in species-rich hedgerows at some locations. Intensification of grassland management leading to loss of species-rich acid grassland. Loss of ancient woodland through inappropriate management, grazing, encroachment and erosion through informal recreation.

- **Continued pressure for mineral extraction;** current and future operations can present a threat to habitats but also provide opportunities for habitat creation
- **Loss of historic field pattern** due to decline in hedgerow management, with resulting increase in use of fencing.
- **Loss of historic parkland** to agriculture and recreational use e.g. golf courses.
- **Erosion of built environment character** through incremental development which 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.

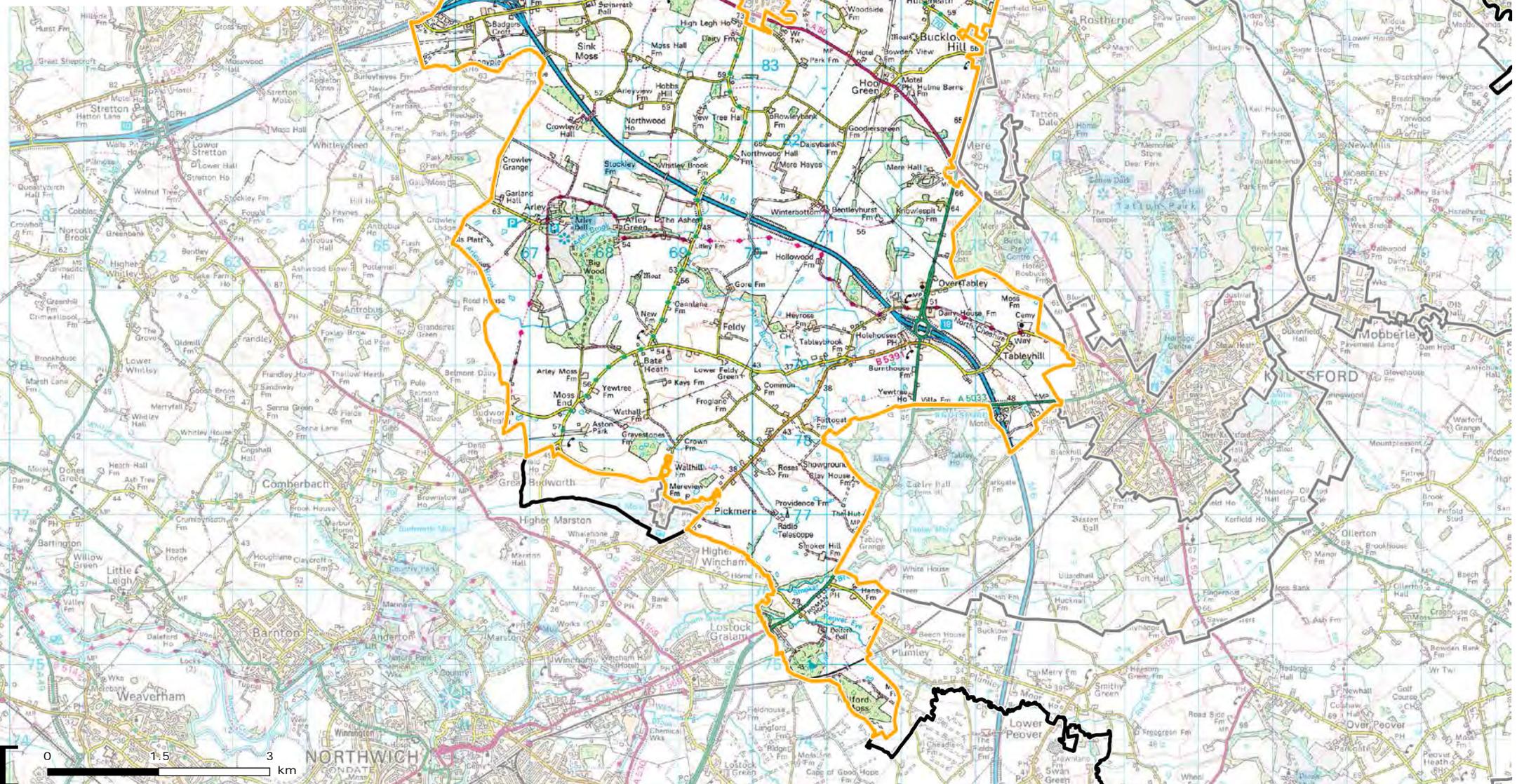
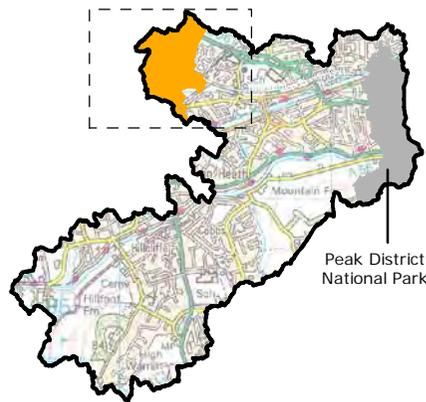
### Overall vision and landscape strategy

This is a traditional working landscape which retains its strong rural character. Important natural and cultural heritage features are conserved and any new land uses or development is sympathetic to existing landscape/settlement form and character. The overall strategy for this landscape is to conserve the woodland and trees which give the landscape its wooded character, the valued semi-natural habitats and heritage features and the rural character which has been lost in some places due to suburbanisation and the presence of major transport corridors.

### Landscape Guidance

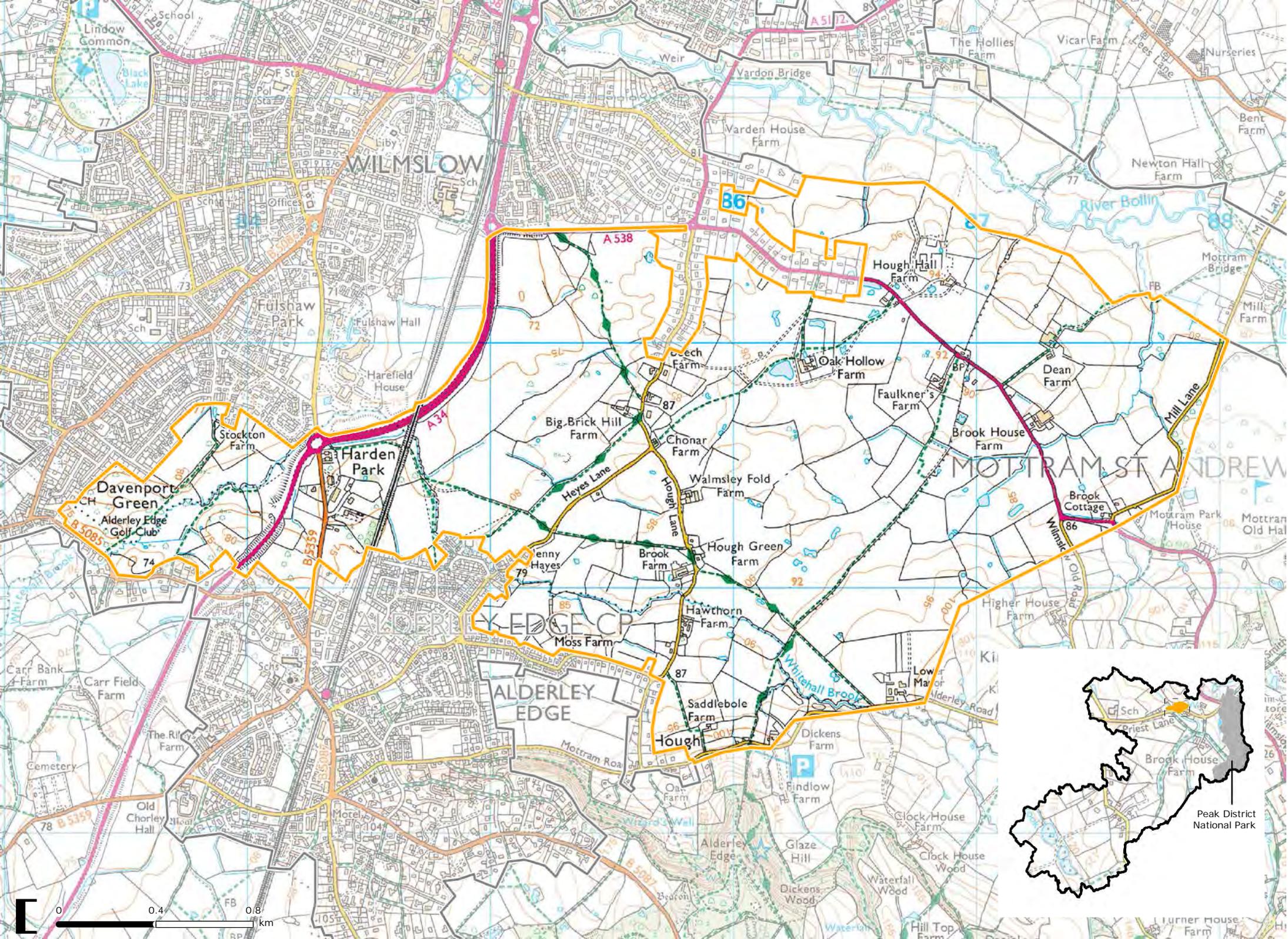
The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:

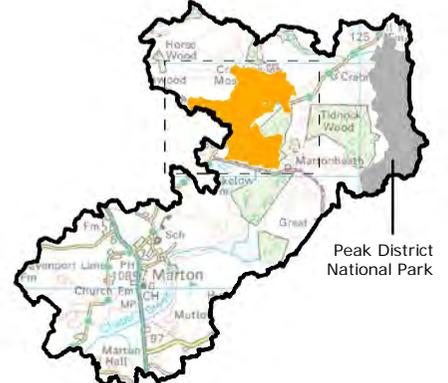
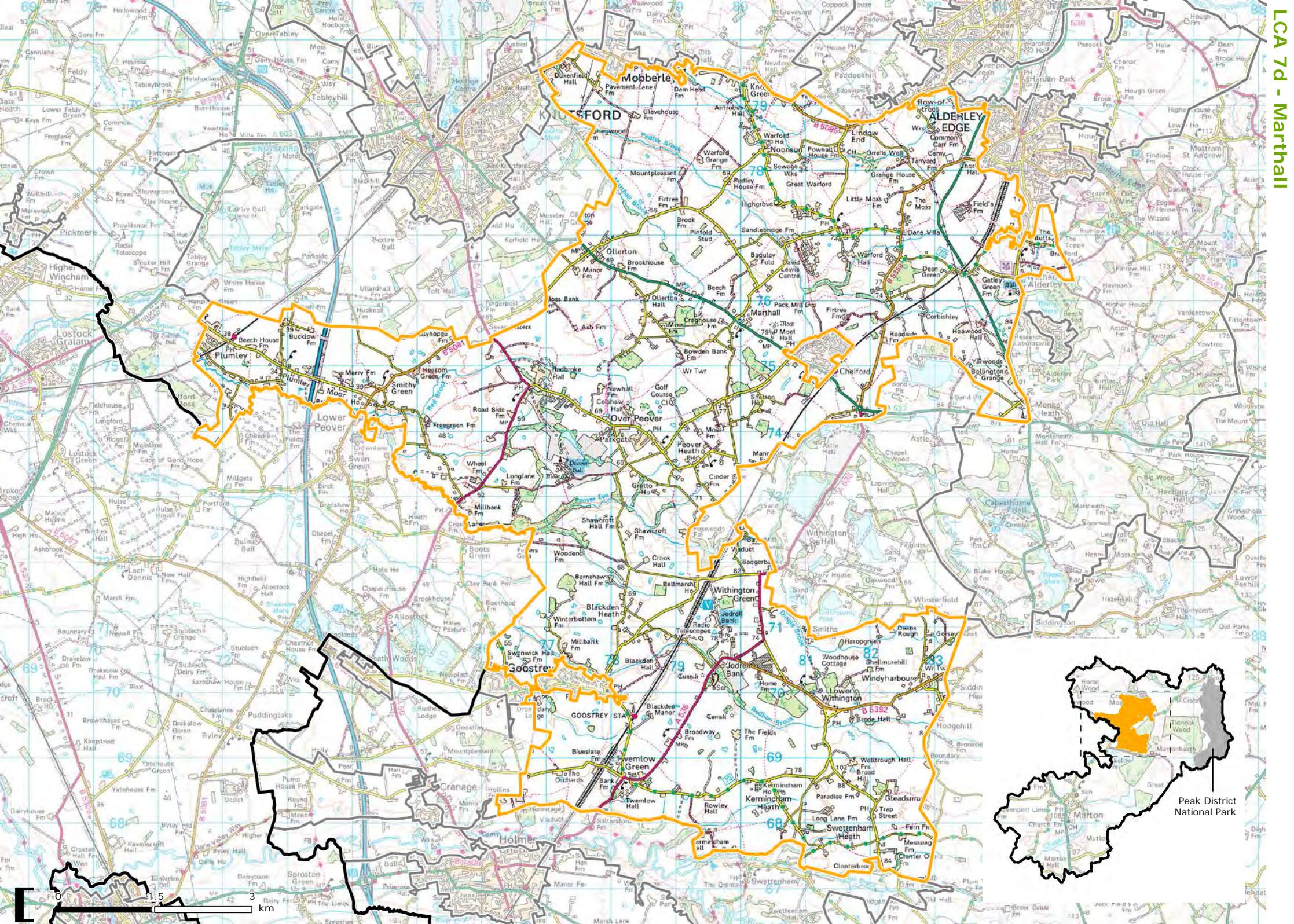
- Avoid development (both buildings and other structures) on steep slopes or in visually prominent locations.
- Protect the overall wooded character of the area through appropriate management of the areas of deciduous woodland (including ancient woodland) and mature in-field and hedgerow trees.
- Retain historic field patterns and restore the hedgerows and walls forming field and estate boundaries where they have been lost, degraded or replaced with fences. Conserve the existing hedgerow network which provides valued linkages between other habitats.
- Protect and manage the valued wetland habitats of the meres and mosses for the benefit of flood alleviation, biodiversity and recreation purposes. Management of adjacent agricultural land should aim to reduce nutrient run off to these habitats.
- Unimproved grassland and remnant heathland habitats are conserved and enhanced, with new linkages between habitats created where possible.
- Conserve the historic integrity of the designed landscapes and their component heritage features. Promote interpretation of these features where this would not be at odds with conservation of these assets.
- Protect and appropriately manage the cultural heritage of the area, including nationally important Scheduled Monuments to preserve a sense of history. Promote interpretation of these features where this would not be at odds with conservation of these assets.
- Retain the character of the narrow rural lanes and avoid the over-engineering of roads which could create an urbanising influence within the strongly rural landscape.
- Ensure new and changing land uses do not degrade from the traditional rural character of the area.
- Retain the sense of enclosure and high levels of tranquillity with the landscape and screen the visual and audible effects of existing and new intrusive features within the landscape where possible/appropriate.



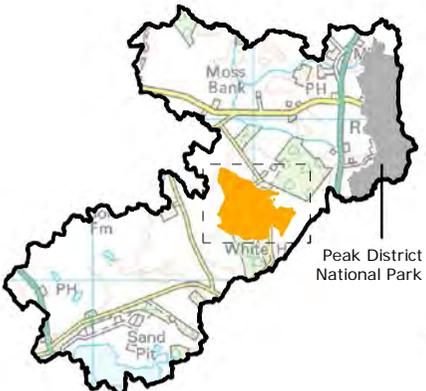


Peak District National Park





Peak District National Park



LCA 7e - Breerton Heath

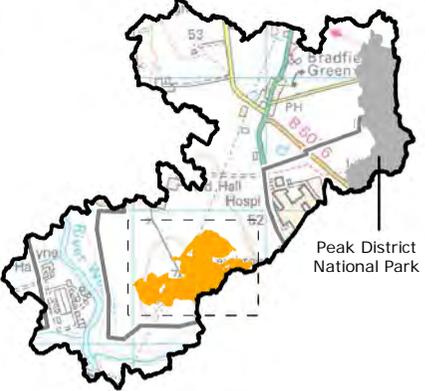
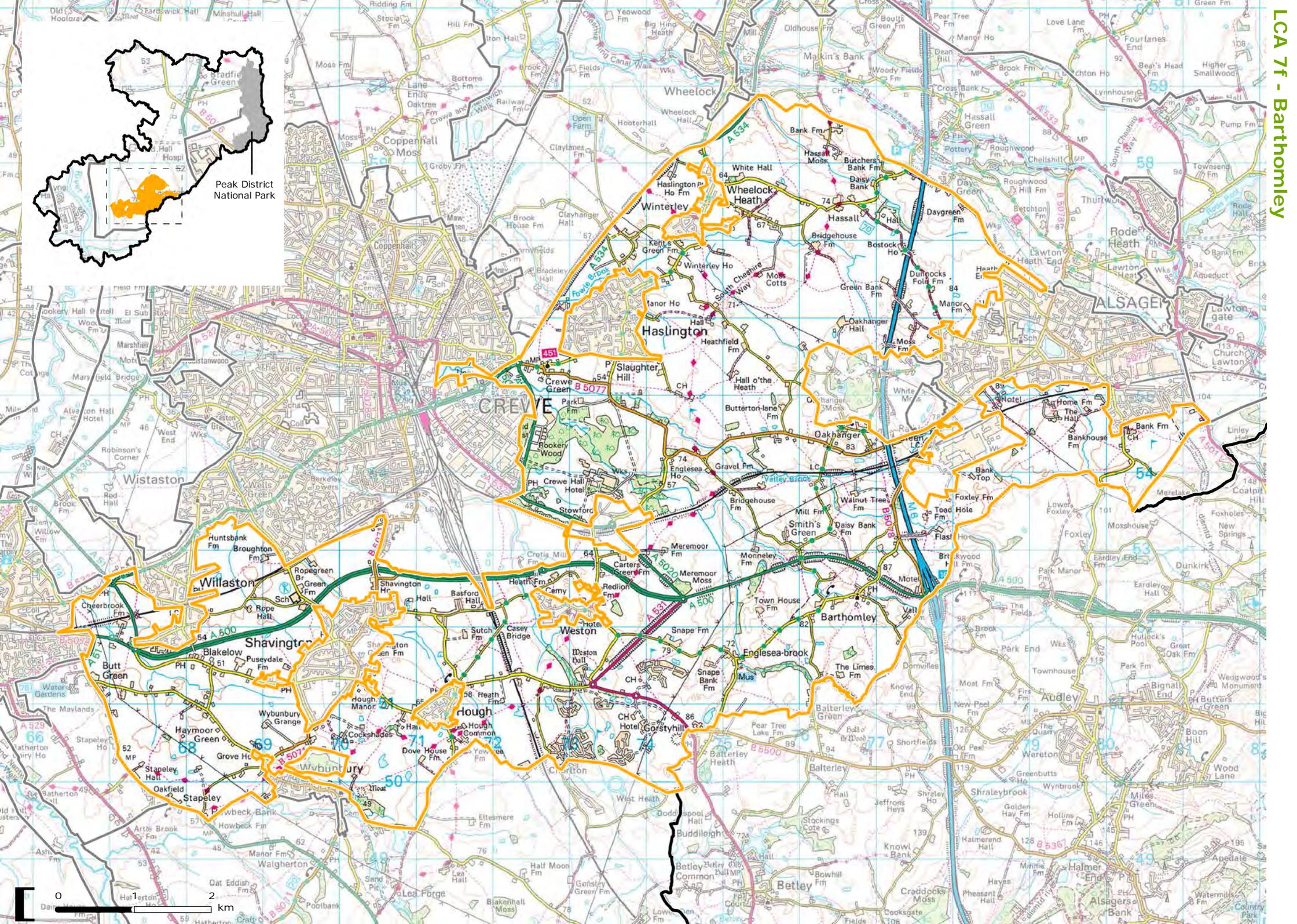
Peak District National Park

CONGLETON

SANDBACH

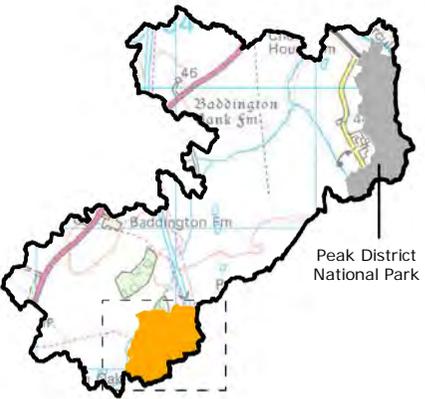
ASTBURY



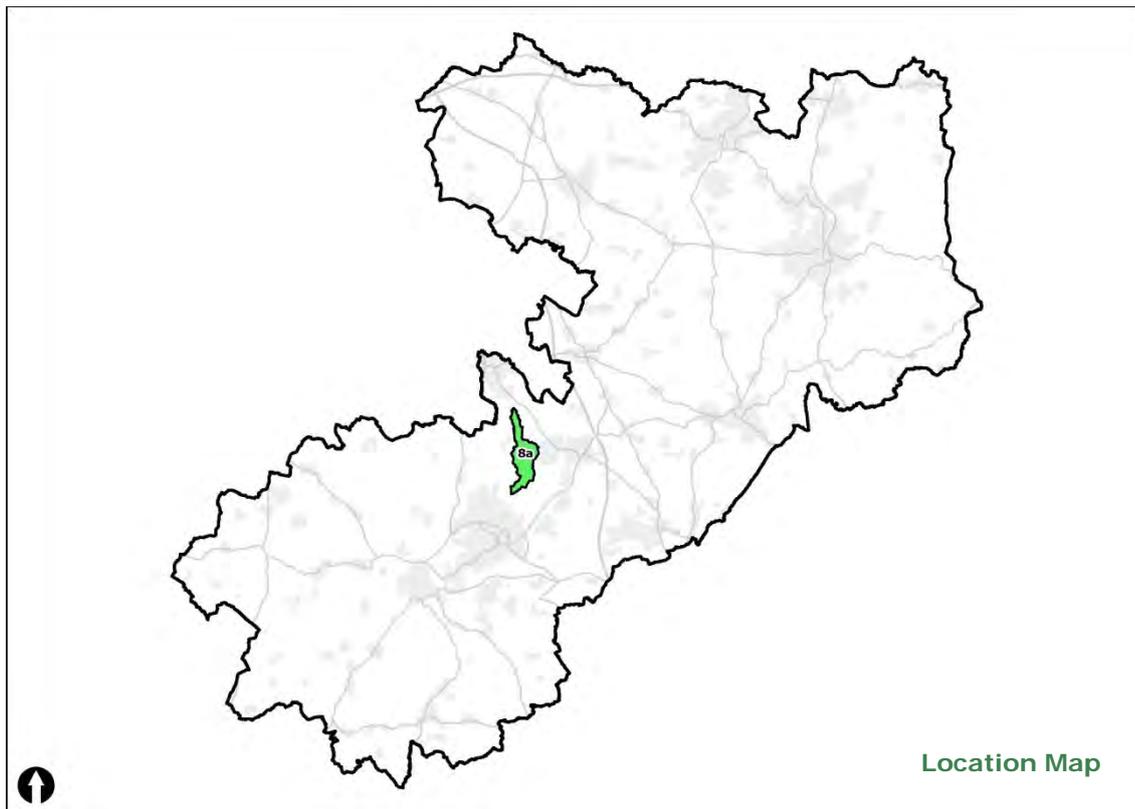


Peak District National Park





## LCT 8: Salt Flashes



### Summary of location and landscape character

This landscape type is found in the centre of the Borough, west of Sandbach and incorporates an area of pools or 'flashes' associated with former salt works. The presence of salt has had a dramatic impact on the local landscape resulting in unique and valuable inland saline habitats. What began as the small-scale exploitation of natural brine springs escalated and intensified following the Industrial Revolution leading to the creation and eventual collapse of a number of large underground cavities, thus forming salt flashes, which are effectively water-filled craters surrounded by salt marsh. The factories and infrastructure associated with the salt industry have been cleared away and areas of derelict land regenerated.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCAs

- LCA 8a: Sandbach Flashes

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- Extremely flat, low lying landform lying between 40-50m AOD. The underlying geology comprises halite rock overlain by glacial till interspersed with sand and gravel.
- A series of elongated pools or 'Flashes' characterise the landscape, formed due to the removal of underlying salt deposits. Small watercourses including a number of brooks and the River Wheelock cross the landscape.

#### *Woodland cover*

- Broadleaved woodland and wet woodland (alder and willow) associated with the watercourses give the appearance of a well-wooded landscape.

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- A strong pattern of small irregular field pattern dating back to the Middle Ages, with 20<sup>th</sup> century amalgamation in some areas. Fields are enclosed by hedgerows, with some use of post and wire fencing predominantly used for pasture for dairy cattle.
- The flashes are mostly reserved for angling with little public access.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- High biodiversity interest is associated with the nationally designated Sandbach Flashes (SSSI). These extremely rare inland saline habitats support a diversity of associated species including significant numbers of breeding wildfowl and wading birds. Habitats associated with the flashes include areas of inland saltmarsh, lowland fen, reedbeds, and semi-improved grassland.

#### *Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- The flashes are a cultural link to the former salt mining industry that shaped this unique local landscape.

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- A network of winding lanes serve a dispersed pattern of farms occasionally running between high hedgerows, busier where they link larger settlements. Several public rights including the long distance Crewe and Nantwich Circular Walk cross through the landscape.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- The flat landform affords open, expansive views across the surrounding farmland, sometimes curtailed by hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- In places, views are dominated by skyline structures, such as large dairy sheds, industrial buildings on the edge of Elworth, the main line railway embankment and overhead power lines.
- The proximity of Sandbach, Elworth and Crewe, the Crewe to Manchester main line and busy car parks adjacent to the flashes (due to their use as fishing lakes), dilute perceptions of tranquillity and remoteness locally.

**Physical and Natural Influences**

The solid geology beneath the salt flashes comprises Wilkesley Halite. This is overlain by Devensian till interspersed with glacio-fluvial sand and gravel. Soils are pelo-stagnogleys and typical stagnogleys.

Rock salt deposits in Cheshire are not exposed and always terminate some distance below the ground surface. Salt therefore has been obtained by mining or brine pumping or in the early days from natural brine springs, it is never worked from the surface.

A series of elongated lakes or 'Flashes' formed due to the removal of underlying salt deposits characterise the landscape. These vary from highly saline flashes fed by natural brine springs to freshwater pools fed by the watercourses which cross the landscape.

Inland saline habitats are extremely rare and are of considerable interest because of the unusual associations of plants and animals normally found near the coast.



These areas are also of considerable interest for breeding wildfowl in the summer and wading birds in the winter including lapwing, snipe and wigeon. The shallow water and muddy margins of the subsidence flashes attract wildfowl and waders. A number of watercourses cross the landscape including the River Wheelock and the Fowler Brook.

Away from the salt flashes, the flat landscape is enclosed by hedgerows and used for pasture for dairy cattle. Small watercourses lined with riparian woodland cross the landscape.

**Historic and Cultural Influences**

Salt production has been an important industry in Cheshire since the Iron Age and there is considerable evidence of Roman production of salt from brine springs found in archaeological excavations at Middlewich and Nantwich. 19<sup>th</sup> century brine pumping led to cavities forming in the halite rock below the surface and these cavities, in addition to those created by mining, led to subsidence, forming a depression in the landscape that often filled with water.



**Visual and Perceptual Character**

Expansive views across the flat landform of the pastoral farmland are sometimes curtailed by hedgerows and trees. Views are dominated in places by skyline structures, such as large dairy sheds, industrial buildings on the edge of Middlewich and Ettiley Heath, the railway embankment of the Crewe to Manchester line and overhead power lines. Watercourses, including the River Wheelock and Trent & Mersey Canal are hidden from view.



## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- Distinctive landscape of subsidence flashes resulting from the local geology and history of salt extraction in the area. The elongated hollows and depressions have become integrated into the predominantly flat and open pastoral landscape providing a unique sense of place. The variety and complexity of these landscape features provide historic and natural interest.
- Blocks of woodland, particularly native deciduous woodland and wet woodland (which are unusual within Cheshire East), provide a strong sense of place, an important environment for flora and fauna and filter views to adjacent urban areas.
- The small irregular pattern of pastoral fields dating back to the Middle Ages which provides a sense of history and a sense of place.
- The diverse wetland habitat mosaic including flashes, salt marsh and wet woodland, which provide internationally recognised saline habitats valued for their biodiversity and an environment for flora and fauna rarely found at inland sites environment. The wetlands also provide texture and visual interest, scenic beauty and a strong sense of naturalness.
- An historic industrial landscape where the industrial processes have shaped the landscape through the creation of flashes now actively managed for recreation, habitat and other green infrastructure benefits.
- Rural lanes sometimes bordered by hedgerows and grass verges which provide enjoyment of the countryside.
- The network of walking routes, including the Crewe and Nantwich circular walk, which provides the health benefits of recreation in a semi-natural environment.
- The experience of the wide open spaces of a lowland landscape which provides an escape from more settled parts of the Borough.
- The open, expansive views across the surrounding pastoral farmland which enable an appreciation of the landscape.
- The undeveloped character of the area due to the predominance of semi-natural habitats, open water and deciduous woodland which provides a sense of naturalness and rural tranquillity in close proximity to urban areas.

### Landscape condition

The landscape has seen dramatic change since the decline of the salt industry. Much of the landscape has been regenerated and is currently well-managed as Local Nature Reserves. Past loss of hedgerows has diluted the field pattern in places and their replacement with post and wire fencing does not provide the biodiversity benefits of hedgerows.

### Forces for change

- **Decline in traditional woodland management practices** leading to under management of woodland, particularly wet woodland leading to general deterioration.
- **Changes in agricultural practices** including the replacement of traditional dairy farming with intensified practices, leading to a trend towards silage production and erection of large dairy sheds.
- **Loss of historic field pattern** due to decline in hedgerow management with resulting increase in use of fencing.
- **Loss, fragmentation or deterioration of semi-natural habitats** due to lack of appropriate management, particularly the salt flashes and associated wetland habitats leading to a deterioration of this unique saline habitat, for example due to colonisation by scrub woodland.
- **Recreational pressure** associated with angling around the salt flashes, 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.
- **Continued pressure for development** associated with the urban and industrial expansion of Crewe and Middlewich. The route of HS2 will pass approximately 1.5km to the west of the area.

## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

### Overall vision and landscape strategy

A well-managed pastoral landscape interspersed with valued semi-natural wetland habitats and areas of deciduous and wet woodland. A network of mature hedgerows marks historic field patterns.

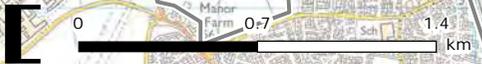
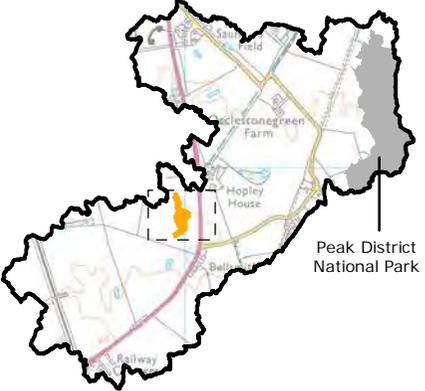
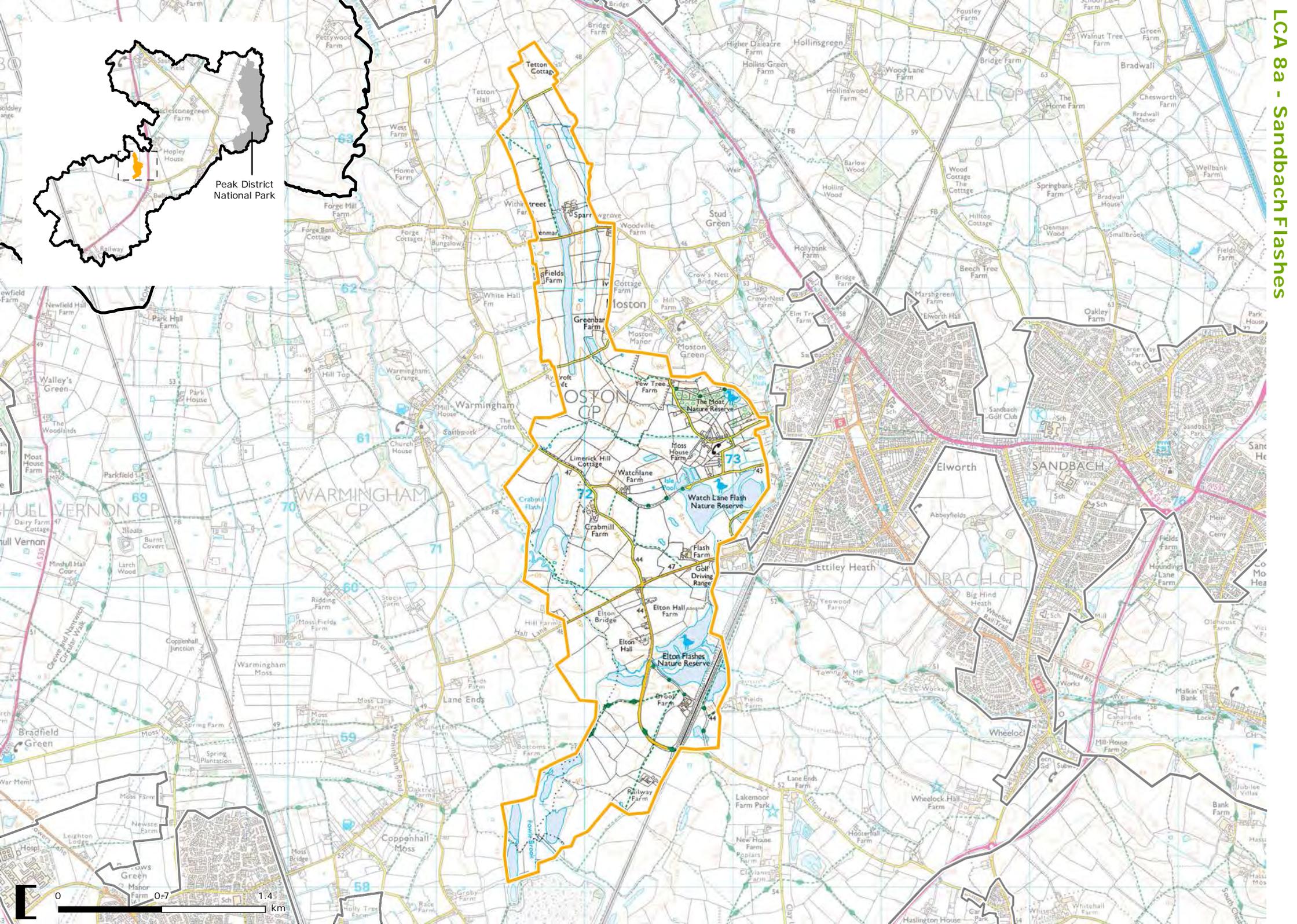
Provision for recreation in the landscape is good and aligns with ecological and heritage conservation

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to conserve the unique wetland sites through continued management and to restore the traditional field pattern with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees where these have been lost.

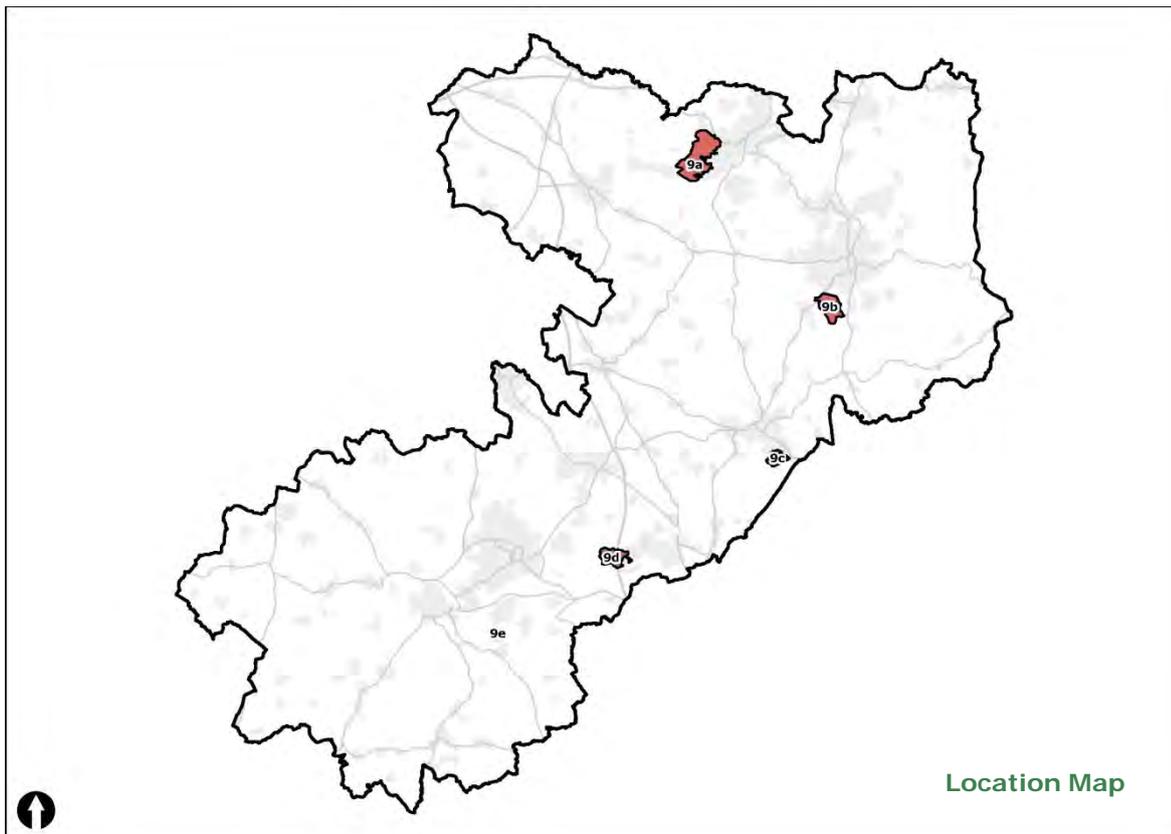
### Landscape Guidance

The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:

- Protect and manage the geologically distinctive landscape of subsidence flashes and implement appropriate management regimes.
- Protect the overall wooded character of the area through appropriate management of the semi-natural woodlands, including wet woodland which characterise the LCT maintaining a diverse age structure for the benefit of biodiversity.
- Conserve the existing hedgerow network which provides valued linkages between woodland habitats.
- Retain the historic field patterns and restore the network of hedgerows where they have been lost or degraded and maintain a diverse age and species structure for the benefits of biodiversity.
- Protect the rural pastoral character of the lowland plain, through continued livestock grazing.
- Manage and enhance the valued semi-natural habitats of the unique mosaic of wetland habitats around the flashes through preserving and managing water flows and controlling scrub. Create, extend and link wetland habitats retaining areas of importance for species diversity and balancing this with the need for recreation and enjoyment of the landscape. Management of agricultural land should aim to reduce nutrient run off to these habitats.
- Protect and appropriately manage the flashes as part of the cultural heritage of the area, promoting interpretation of these features to enhance public understanding.
- Retain the rural character of the narrow, winding roads and avoid the over-engineering of roads which could create an urbanising influence within the strongly rural landscape.
- Maintain and promote the Crewe and Nantwich circular walk and provide further linkages to the rights of way network where appropriate. Plan for increased enjoyment of the landscape through increased public access to landscape features.
- Retain the rural character of the landscape with its sparse settlement pattern resisting significant intrusions (including lighting).
- Maintain the open views across the surrounding pastoral farmland to enable continued appreciation of the landscape. Avoid siting development (both buildings and other structures) in visually prominent locations.



## LCT 9: Mossland



### Summary of location and landscape character

The Mossland is a small but distinctive landscape type which occurs in five locations across the Borough. The type relates to surviving fragments of peat bog, known locally as mosses. Mosses were once a widespread natural habitat in Cheshire East but drainage in particular, as well as peat cutting and settlement expansion has subsequently reduced this rare habitat to a handful of areas.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCAs

- LCA 9a: Lindow Moss
- LCA 9b: Danes Moss
- LCA 9c: Congleton Moss
- LCA 9d: Oakhanger Moss
- LCA 9e: Wybunbury Moss

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- A largely flat low-lying landscape with altitudes from 70m AOD at Lindow up to 160m at Danes Moss. Formed above a bedrock of mudstone overlain by a surface geology of glacial sands and peat.
- The landscape is characterised by peat bogs that developed over many thousands of years in water-logged depressions and hollows created by the retreat of the glaciers.

#### *Woodland/tree cover*

- Varied woodland, including dense birch woodland and scrub, and wet alder and willow woodland.

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- An ancient field pattern of long thin fields enclosed by hedgerows, known as 'moss rooms' which resulted from the enclosure of strips of common land from which individuals had the right to extract peat for fuel. A particularly fine example is found at Lindow Moss.
- Land uses include a mixture of dairy pasture, horsiculture and recreational facilities (sports grounds). Landfill is prevalent at Danes Moss and Lindow Moss. Limited commercial peat extraction continues in the area at Lindow and White Mosses.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- This type represents a geographically discrete series of nationally important peatland sites designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The lowland heath at Lindow Common (SSSI) is extremely rare. The cut-over raised mire at Danes Moss (SSSI) is one of the scarcest and most threatened habitats in the UK and the quaking bog (or 'schwingmoor') at Wybunbury Moss, is considered to be of international importance (Ramsar).
- These rare peatlands and the diverse patchwork of habitats associated with them, including small water bodies, wet grassland and wet woodland support a host of rare and endangered flora and fauna, such as cotton grass, cross-leaved heath and sphagnum mosses, bog asphodel, and the carnivorous sundew, as well as species of dragonfly, damselfly and butterflies.

#### *Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- A continuity of land use dating back to the medieval period and archaeologically important finds in the peat including 'Lindow Man' and Iron Age burial sites provide a sense of history. Local place names reflect the long association of the area with peat cutting.

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- The boggy mire historically provided an unappealing location for settlements and villages developed on the edge of the moss (such as Row of Trees near Wilmslow). However, with the loss of much of the original moss, this type is now located adjacent to urban areas.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- Perceived as remote and inaccessible despite the proximity to urban areas, such as Macclesfield and Wilmslow. Blocks of dense birch woodland provide a high degree of enclosure, while open wet grassland allow extensive views out to distant hills in other areas.

### Physical and Natural Influences

Cheshire East was formerly dotted with mosses and mires, even the smallest individually named and known to local inhabitants. This landscape character type refers to the larger mosses that survive today despite intensive drainage and peat cutting.

A low-lying flat landform at a variety of altitudes, the type occurs where there is a high water table or where drainage is restricted. The underlying geology is predominantly mudstone (Bollin and Eldersfield). Mosses typically occur in areas of glacio-fluvial sand where the hummocky relief has depressions that reach the water table.



The thickness of peat varies from a thin peaty surface to 10m in deep kettle holes depending on the depth of the depression and the length of time that it has been accumulating. Most have an earthy surface and are classified as oligo-fibrous earthy peat soils.

Many areas still remain in a semi-natural condition of boggy peatland dominated by dense birch woodland or open areas of wet grassland (sedges and grasses such as purple moor-grass). Peat continues to be harvested for horticultural purposes at Lindow and White Mosses.

When drained the fertile soil is ideally suited to cereals and horticultural crops such as roots and Brassicas and horticultural crops, while less well drained areas can support grass crops.

This character type supports a variety of fauna scarce species of damselfly and dragonfly and butterflies such as brimstone. Adders are found at Oakhanger Moss.

### Historic and Cultural Influences

Human activity in the mosses can be traced into prehistory and because of the anaerobic conditions provided by the peat, archaeological finds have been well preserved, most famously Lindow Man, a ritually deposited body dated to

the Iron Age/Romano British period (c 700 BC – AD 500). A section of an undated timber causeway was also discovered at Lindow Moss. These were treacherous places to cross and fatalities caused by people getting lost are well documented.



In the medieval period people had 'rights of turbury', to cut peat for fuel and mosses were divided into long, thin strips known as 'moss rooms'. This unusual field pattern is fossilised as hedgerows enclosing the open area. Other fields are large and regular in layout and relate to later phases of enclosure.

Settlement accumulated on the drained periphery of the moss and this type is located on the edge of large settlements such as Wilmslow and Congleton. Local place names reflect the long association with peat, such as Moss Farm. Both Danes Moss and Lindow Moss have landfill sites and other modern land uses include leisure facilities such as school playing fields and cricket grounds.

### Visual and Perceptual Character

Visual character varies considerably depending upon the dominant land use and the extent of natural vegetation.



Protected areas are characterised by an intimate enclosed landscape of impenetrable block of woodland and small, dank pools contrasting with open areas of wet grassland. Where the ground has been drained and cleared of woodland, the lack of natural screening can allow the surrounding urban edge and land use activities to dominate the flat landscape with extensive views out to distant hills.

## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- A unique and distinctive glacially shaped landform which contributes to the richness and variety of the local landscape.
- Varied woodland which are important habitats and provide a strong sense of place. Woodland also helps to filter views to the surrounding settlement.
- The distinctive ancient 'moss rooms' which are testament to the long association of the area with peat cutting and offer a cultural record of the past illustrating the local continuity of land use dating back to the medieval period.
- The diverse wetland habitat mosaic of standing water, lowland raised bog, quaking bog, fen, lowland heath and wet woodland, which provide an important environment for flora and fauna. Lowland raised bog is a relatively rare feature in the context of the UK and quaking bog is internationally rare. These valued as natural heritage features provide a unique sense of place and opportunities for recreation.
- Remnant peatlands that developed over many thousands of years and the Iron Age archaeological remains found within them which hold significantly high cultural value and give the landscape a strong sense of time depth
- The wild and hidden mosses which offer mystery and tranquillity within a stone's throw of the towns and an escape from the adjacent urban environment.
- The visual variation between the open peatlands which offer long view to the distant hills and the high degree of enclosure provided by the dense woodland.

### Landscape condition

This small cohesive type is unified by its linked habitats and cultural, ecological and functional integrity. Protected area managed by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust (Danes Moss, Lindow Common) or Natural England (Wynbury Moss NNR) appear well maintained, with provision for recreation and education. In other areas appear poorly managed or have urban edge land uses such as horse pasture or landfill. There is an encroachment of scrub onto the mosslands in some areas.

### Forces for change

- **Continued pressure for commercial peat extraction** which may perpetuate the loss of important natural habitats and historical resource.
- **Loss of the distinctive 'moss room' field pattern** due to field enlargement or decline in hedgerow management with resulting increase in use of fencing. Under management of these areas threatens their historic character.
- **Loss, fragmentation or deterioration of nationally important semi-natural wetland habitats due to lack of appropriate management** including a loss of historic drainage systems or drainage improvement in the surrounding areas resulting in changes in water levels. These may be associated with development or commercial peat cutting. As the moss becomes drier it allows scrub and bracken to colonise, reducing the extent and quality of open mossland habitats. Nutrient run-off from surrounding agricultural areas may also adversely affect habitats.
- **Loss, fragmentation or deterioration of semi-natural habitats due to potential effects of climate change** which may include drought conditions in summer and drying out of wetland habitats causing potential damage to habitats and species.
- **Changes in agricultural practises** including an increase in horse grazing.
- **Continued pressure for development** associated with expansion of the neighbouring urban areas or demand for urban edge facilities such as land fill, sports fields or equestrian facilities, changing the character of the type and encroaching into the mosses.

## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

### Overall vision and landscape strategy

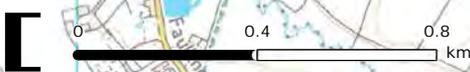
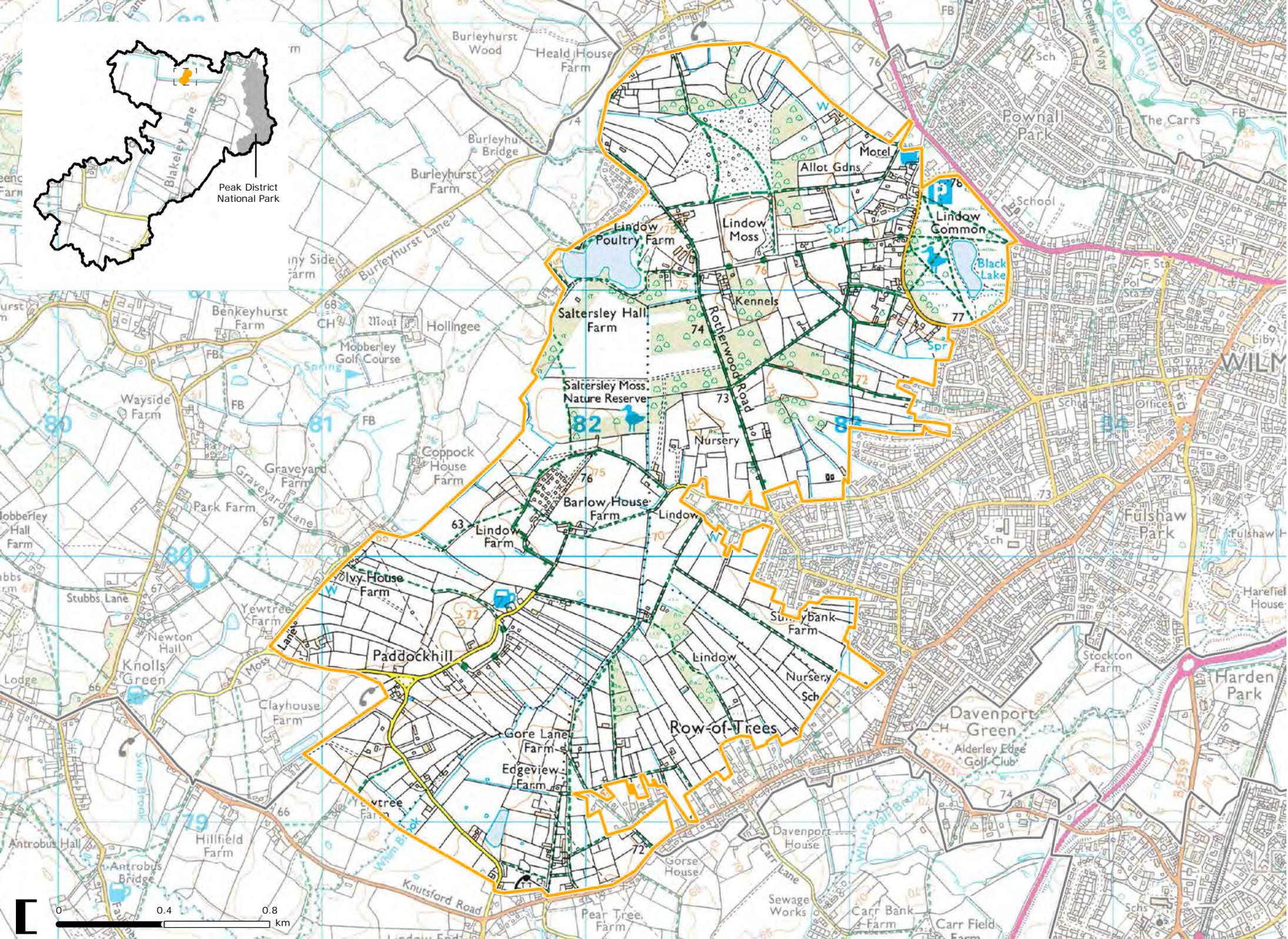
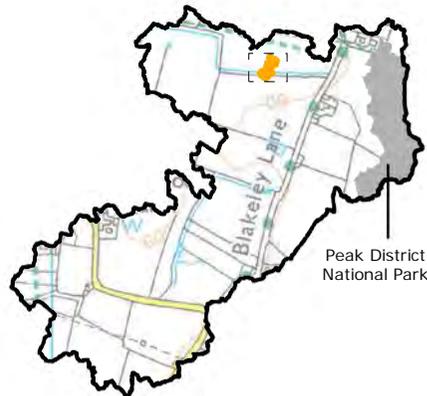
The Mossland is a small but highly distinctive landscape within Cheshire East which contributes to the richness and diversity of the area and holds high natural and cultural values. It provides a distinct atmospheric landscape which is seemingly remote and tranquil despite its close proximity to urban areas.

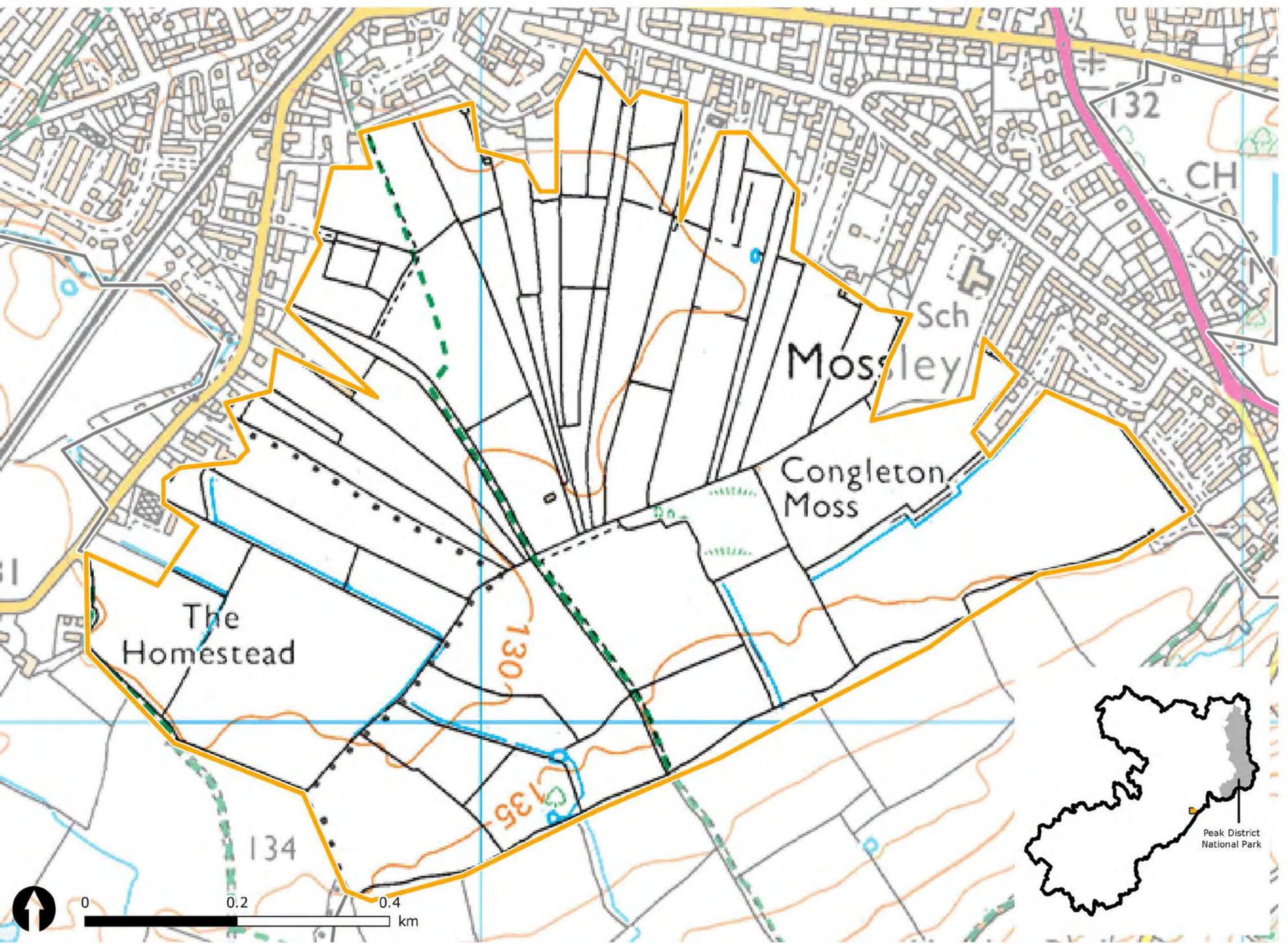
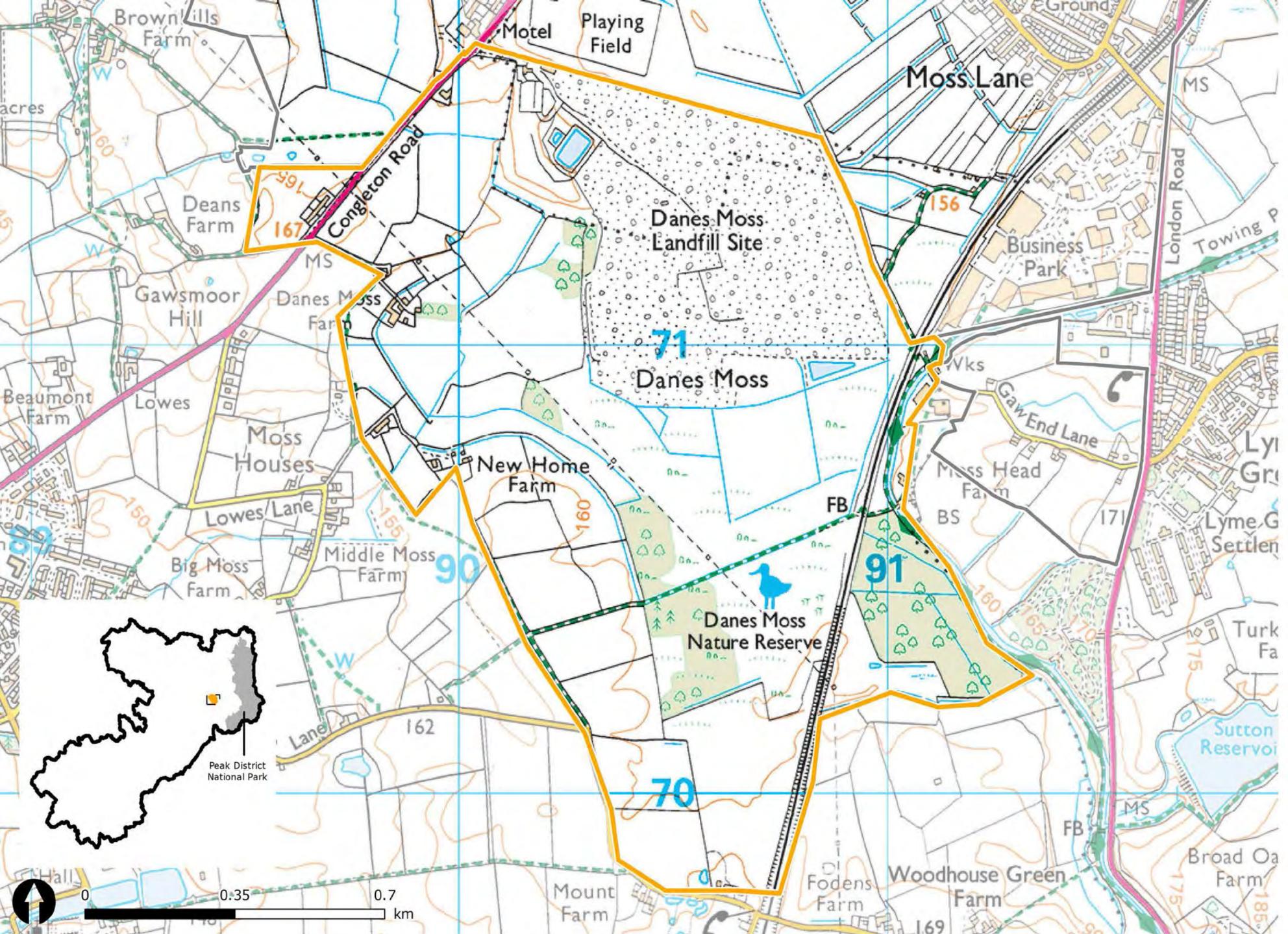
The strategy for this LCT should be to protect and manage the extant areas of peat and mossland in order to maximise the biodiversity and spirit of place and maintain its open character and the distinctive 'moss rooms'. The diversity and extent of areas of wetland habitat should be protected and managed.

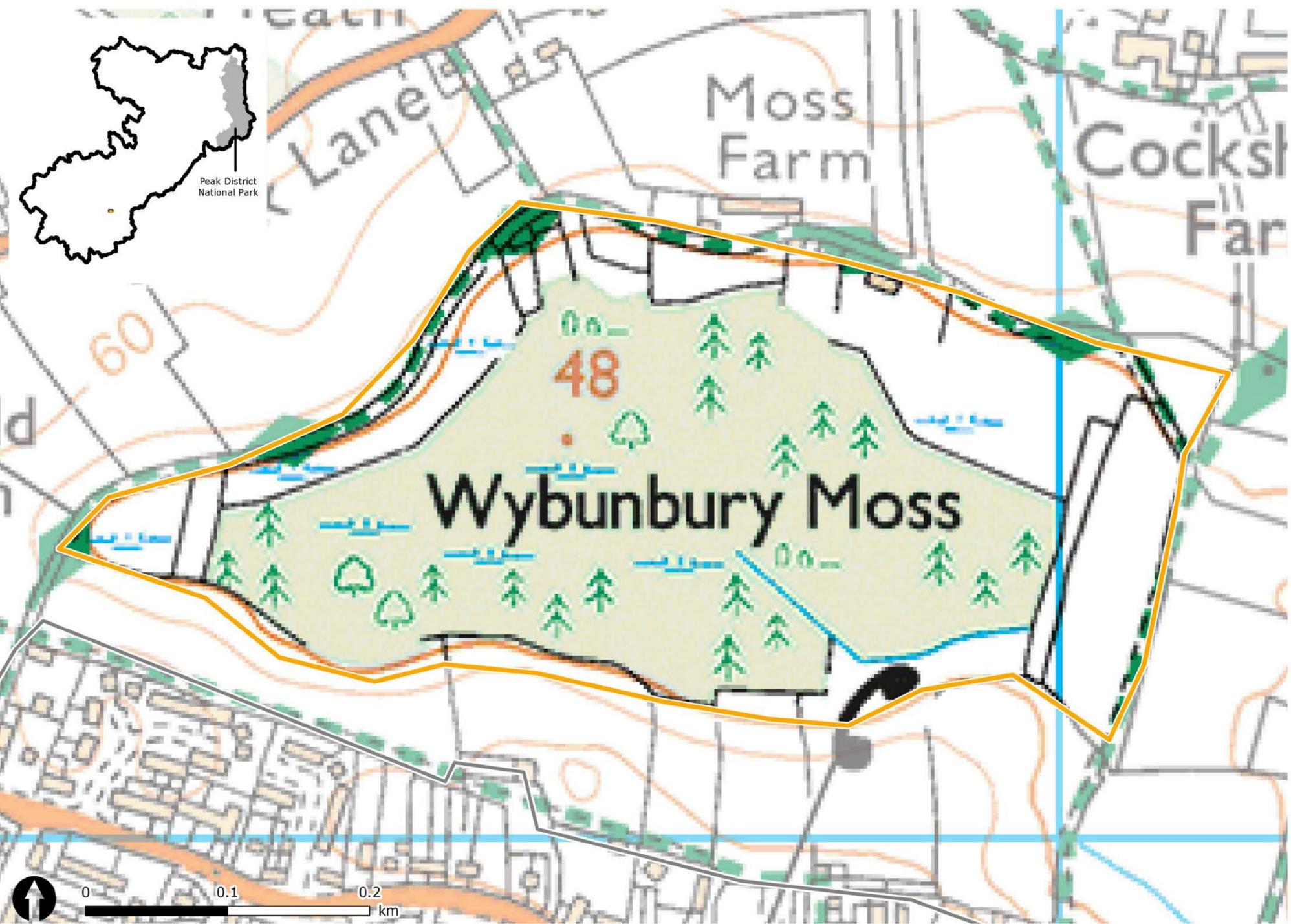
### Landscape Guidance

The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:

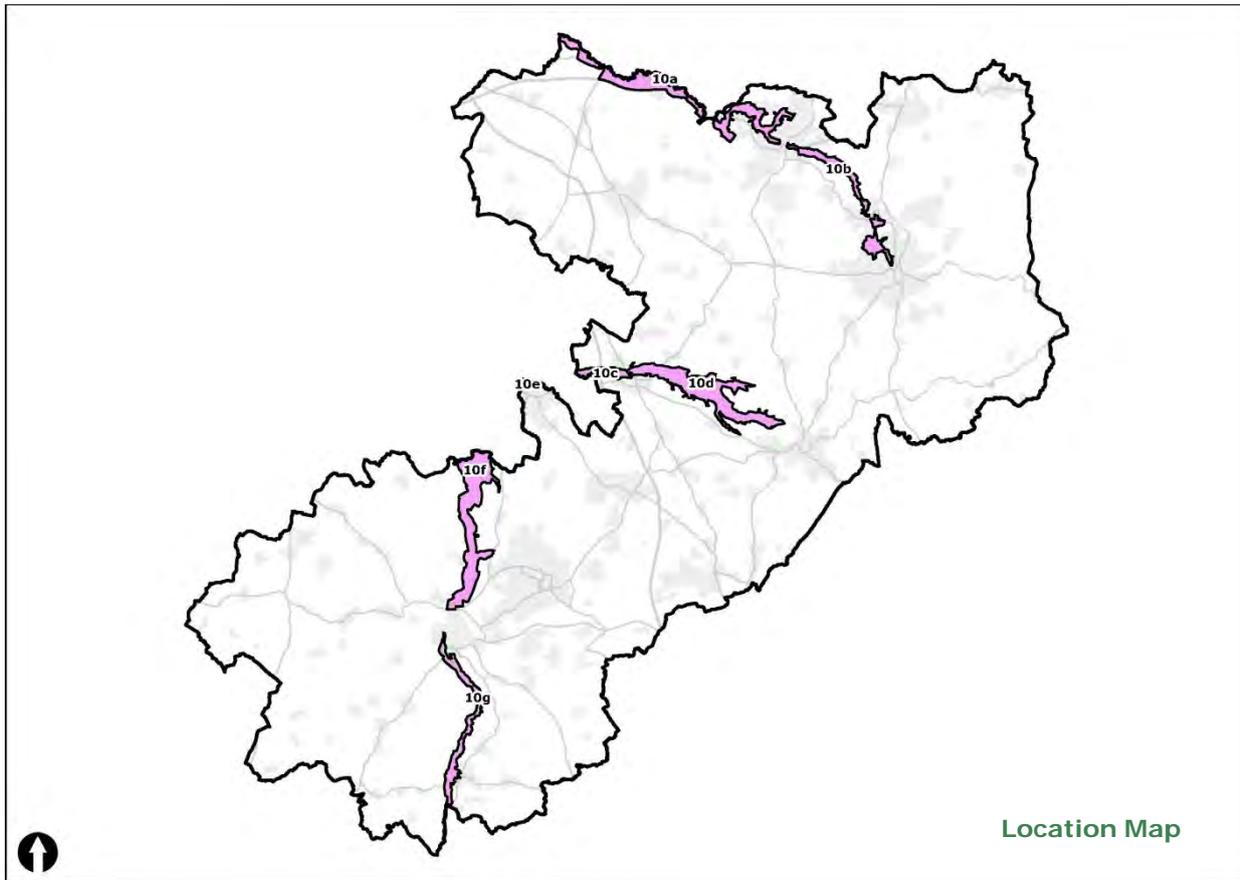
- Ensure commercial peat extraction does not detract from the naturalistic and cultural qualities of the area. Seek positive restoration schemes for peat extraction sites to mossland habitats. Seek opportunities for recreational use of restored sites where this is compatible with nature conservation objectives.
- Protect, manage and enhance the valued semi-natural habitats, particularly the relic mosses and associated wetland habitats mosaic of standing water, lowland raised bog (a nationally rare and threatened habitat), fen, lowland heath and wet woodland through appropriate management.
- Balance the need for continued positive conservation and management of the valuable habitats for flora and fauna, re-creating lost habitats, with the provision of recreation and enjoyment of the landscape.
- Manage the surrounding agricultural land in a way which (by reducing abstraction and nutrient run off) conserves the character and quality of the mosses.
- Protect the distinctive open character of the diverse wetlands by managing the woodlands, including selective thinning and clearance of invasive scrub species.
- Protect and appropriately manage the remnant areas mosses for cultural heritage purposes. Promote interpretation of the cultural heritage of the area where this would not be at odds with conservation.
- Conserve and strengthen the distinctive field pattern of the ancient 'moss room', by managing the hedgerows to ensure their long term survival, replanting areas of lost hedgerow and encouraging traditional land uses of these areas.
- Manage change arising from future development by exploring requirements for landscape mitigation to minimise the impacts felt within the LCT and plan for the improved integration of existing urban edges. Ensure any future development helps to preserve and improve the role of the LCT as Green Infrastructure, reinforcing positive connections between this area and neighbouring urban areas.
- Protect the distinct and atmospheric character of the area and the sense of mystery and tranquillity it provides, protecting areas of woodland that provide a screening function to adjacent development.







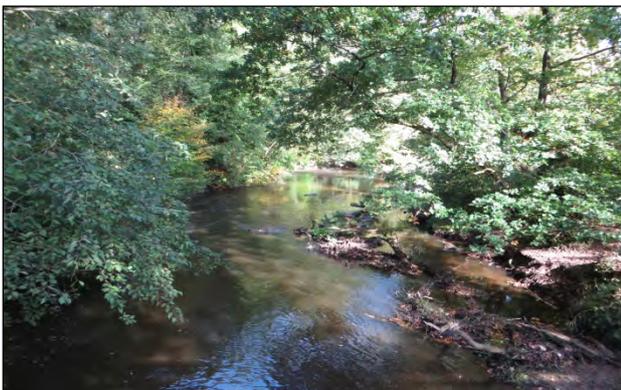
## LCT 10: River Valleys



### Summary of location and landscape character

This landscape type contains the major rivers within the Borough; the Weaver, Dane and Bollin. Many of the largest settlements within the Borough are associated with the river valleys. The water power provided by the rivers to support textile mills increased their importance during the Industrial Revolution. The slopes of the valleys are densely wooded and sparsely settled, creating intimate landscapes. In the present day, they are important natural habitats and form popular destinations for recreation.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCAs

- LCA 10a: Lower Bollin
- LCA 10b: Upper Bollin
- LCA 10c: Lower Dane
- LCA 10d: Upper Dane
- LCA 10e: High Dane
- LCA 10f: Upper Weaver
- LCA 10f: High Weaver

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- Distinctive steep sided valleys containing meandering river courses and their associated tributaries. The physical form of the valleys varies; some of the valleys are flat-bottomed and wide, whilst others are narrow with a more dramatic landform.
- The valleys have been carved into the underlying bedrock by glacial meltwater at the end of the last ice age. The River Dane is an important site for the study of fluvial geomorphology and is designated as a geological SSSI.

#### *Woodland/tree cover*

- There are high levels of woodland along the river and tributary valleys, of which a significant proportion is ancient woodland. Many of the woodlands are designated for their wildlife value.
- Mature in-field trees are a frequent feature within the pastures on the valley floor.

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- The primary land use is farming, with wet pasture fields along the valley floor divided into medieval enclosures with a mix of post and wire and hedgerows forming boundaries.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- Many important semi-natural habitats are located on the valley floors including areas of unimproved acid grassland and wetlands which are frequently nationally or locally designated for their wildlife value.

#### *Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- Archaeology and cultural heritage includes a Roman Fort, medieval moated sites and mills located along rivers which provide evidence of the industrial heritage of the area. Distinctive bridges and viaducts crossing the valleys, including the brick built Twemlow Viaduct which is a prominent feature in the Dane Valley.
- Styal Conservation Area contains a number of historic industrial and residential buildings.

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- Roads are infrequent and usually cross over the valleys on characterful bridges. There are some major routes which run through the area, including the A5102, A538 and the M6 which crosses the Dane valley close to Holmes Chapel.
- A popular landscape for recreation which is accessible via numerous rights of way, often following the watercourses. Promoted routes include the Dane Valley Way, North Cheshire Way, South Cheshire Way and Crewe and Nantwich Circular Walk.
- There are few villages within the valleys, with settlement generally limited to isolated halls and farms. Larger settlements, including Nantwich, Wilmslow, Congleton and Holmes Chapel are often associated with the rivers and can be prominent in views.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- Varied views, although there are often high levels of enclosure due to the presence of woodland and wooded skylines are a common feature. Some parts of the landscape are more open with views funnelled along the valley which also include occasional glimpses of higher ground including the Pennine Hills.
- Perceptual qualities within the landscape are mostly highly tranquil and naturalistic. There are some urban fringe influences close to larger settlements including sewage works and industrial parks. Noise from nearby infrastructure including Manchester Airport and the M6 can have an adverse effect on tranquillity.

### Physical and Natural Influences

Most of the rivers were formed during the glaciation of the last ice age, carved into the underlying bedrock and are overlain by alluvium deposited by the watercourses. The topography of the valley sides is varied along the course of the rivers, with some very steep sides and others which are shallower.

Many of the valley sides are clothed in mature woodland, much of which is also ancient. Trees and shrubs also line the river banks, with willows commonly found. In-field oak trees in pasture fields on the valley floors are also a feature.

Land cover mostly comprises wet pastures along the valley floors, divided into fields of medieval and post-medieval origin which are enclosed by a mixture of post and wire fencing and hedgerows. The pastures are interspersed with valued semi-natural habitats including unimproved species rich grassland. A number of sites are nationally or locally designated for their wildlife value, including Holly Banks SSSI.



### Historic and Cultural Influences

Rivers are distinctive features within the landscape and the importance of the Cheshire rivers as a means of transport has led to some major changes in the landscape. The rivers were important during the Industrial Age; water power provided by the rivers supported textile mills on the Bollin and the Shropshire Union Canal which was constructed in 1835. Quarry Bank Mill in Styal is a Grade II\* listed mill which now serves as a museum, documenting the industrial history of the area. Managed by the National Trust, the red brick mill and surrounding gardens of Styal Country Park is a significant site within the Bollin Valley.

Settlement within the river valleys is sparse and mostly consists of scattered farms and hamlets, often constructed in a traditional vernacular of white render or red brick. Despite this, the rivers are also associated with larger towns, including Nantwich, Wilmslow, Congleton and Holmes Chapel. Water treatment works and industrial parks are associated with the edges of settlements.

A number of highways cross the river valleys on distinctive, characterful bridges which reflect the local vernacular. Twemlow Viaduct is a distinctive brick-built structure crossing the Dane Valley. Elsewhere, modern bridging structures of steel and concrete can appear incongruous and out of scale. Major routes include the A5102, A538 and the M6.



### Visual and Perceptual Character

Perceptual qualities vary greatly between the different character areas according to the topography of the landscape, the presence of a flood plain and the depth of the valley. Views are generally restricted within the valley due to the steep topography and the dense vegetation. Any longer distance views tend to be funnelled along the watercourse. There are some longer views towards the higher ground of Alderley Edge and the Pennine Hills.



The steep valley sides often provide a sense of enclosure and remoteness with little or no intervisibility with adjacent landscapes and the trees on the slopes create wooded skylines. These areas are valued for recreation, providing a tranquil refuge adjacent to large settlements.

There are some urban fringe influences adjacent to the larger settlements within the valleys, including areas of horsiculture and golf courses. The perceptual qualities of the landscape are also influenced by adjacent major infrastructure including Manchester Airport. Where a major transport route traverses the valley this is often accompanied by traffic noise and a subsequent loss of tranquillity.

## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- The steeply enclosed valley slopes of the rivers incised into the bedrock which give each valley a distinctive character and provide a sense of place.
- Important geological sites, including the nationally designated River Dane SSSI which provides evidence of geomorphological processes which have shaped the landscape.
- Dense woodland along the valley sides, including large amounts which are ancient in origin. The woodland provides a valued habitat and recreation destination, as well as offering other ecosystem services include carbon sequestration and flood alleviation.
- Remnant historic field pattern of medieval origin delineated by hedgerows which give the landscape structure and time depth and also provide a valued biodiversity resource and a link between habitats.
- Semi-natural habitat including wetland grassland, meadows, rivers and streams (often nationally or locally designated) which contribute to biodiversity and provide scenic interest.
- Important heritage features from various periods of history including a Roman Fort, medieval moated sites and industrial age mills which provide evidence of land use over time and a strong sense of time depth.
- Sparsely settled character which contributes to the rural character, although often associated with the origin and subsequent growth of larger settlements. A number of historic settlements are designated as Conservation Areas including Church Minshull and Styal and contain buildings of a local vernacular which provide a sense of place.
- The valleys provide a valued location for recreation and a tranquil refuge from nearby urban areas. Long-distance promoted routes are often associated with the valleys including the North Cheshire Way, Dane Valley Way and Crewe and Nantwich Circular Walk.
- Funnelled views along the valleys and between the valley sides. Longer views from higher ground which include glimpses of the Pennine uplands and enable appreciation of the wider landscape.
- The strong sense of enclosure due to the topography and high levels of tree cover which contribute to the sense of remoteness and tranquillity away from modern intrusions e.g. major roads and Manchester Airport. These also create prominent wooded skylines above the valley floors, providing a sense of place.

### Landscape condition

Some areas of the landscape are well-managed (e.g. National Trust land around Styal Park), while others have seen changes in farming and management practices. Woodland areas are mostly in good condition with a diverse age structure and abundant ground flora although some woodlands have been eroded or degraded by stock grazing. In some places, intensification of farming has led to a loss of hedgerows as field boundaries and also resulted in issues such as overgrazing and poaching. The introduction of non-native species and injurious weeds is an issue in some localised areas and has an adverse effect on semi-natural habitats. Tranquillity in some localised areas is eroded by the close proximity of large transport corridors and urban fringe influences from major settlements.

### Forces for change

- **Decline of important ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats** through reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of clough and riparian woodland. Some woodland areas affected by encroachment from development and farming activities. Ancient and semi-natural woodlands are often inappropriately managed. Mismanagement can prevent natural regeneration, e.g. stock grazing. Some sites have had inappropriate species introduced, such as rhododendron.
- **Felling of woodland to prevent the spread of pests and diseases**, leading to a loss of semi-natural habitat and dramatic change in landscape character, particularly adjacent to the watercourses.
- **Visitor pressure at some locations** leading to loss of tranquillity, loss and fragmentation of habitats, and demand for additional facilities.
- **Intensification of farming** leading to a deterioration of landscape condition and loss of the traditional pastoral character and an increase in large scale dairy sheds.
- **Loss of historic field pattern** due to field enlargement, decline in hedgerow management and

changes in land ownership, with a resulting increase in the use of fencing.

- **Reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of wetland habitats** through drainage and in-fill plus nutrient run-off from surrounding farmland. Some grassland habitats impacted by scrub encroachment.
- **Demand for waterside locations for new residential developments** due to changes to public attitudes as former industrial sites become desirable locations.
- **Changes to established pattern of industrial development** with potential new uses for established sites and deterioration or dereliction of redundant sites.
- **An increase in traffic levels**, particularly on the narrow rural lanes, which is likely to diminish levels of tranquillity and pressure to widen/ standardise roads eroding rural character.
- **On-going decline in traditional woodland management practices** leading to under management of farm woodlands, leading to general deterioration. Many hedgerow trees over-mature and in decline.
- **Erosion of built environment character through incremental development** which 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.

## Landscape Strategy and Guidance

### Overall vision and landscape strategy

The valleys are naturalistic, tranquil landscapes where wetland habitats and watercourses are managed for the benefit of biodiversity and flood alleviation. The characteristic woodland habitats are conserved and within the farmed landscape hedgerows are restored where there have been losses in the past. Recreation is managed so that it is sustainable, compatible with the conservation objectives and visitor pressure does not degrade landscape character. The landscape is sparsely settled.

The overall landscape strategy for the river valley type is to conserve the valued natural and cultural heritage features, enhance areas which are not in good condition and promote sustainable recreation activity.

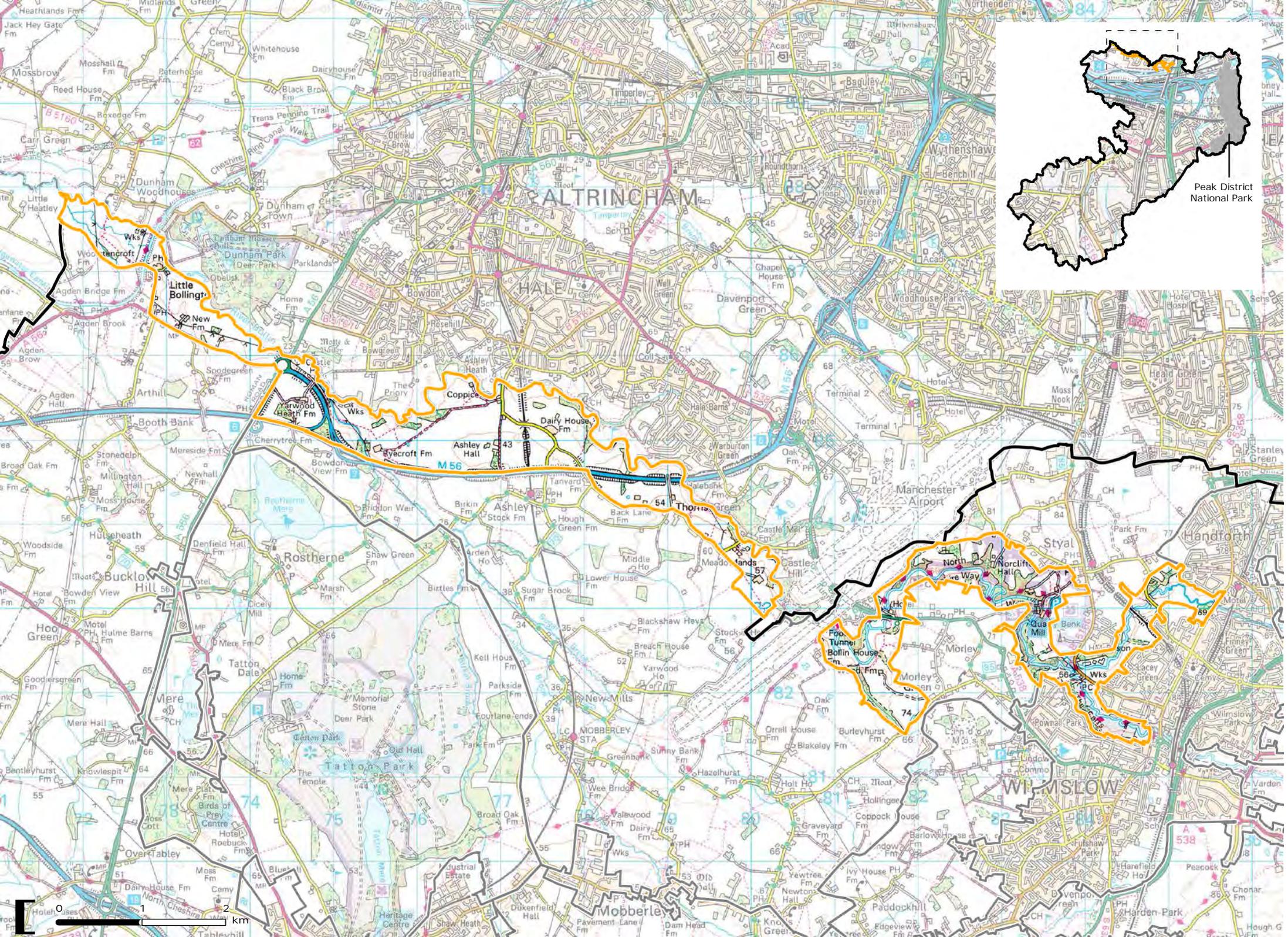
### Landscape Guidance

The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:

- Avoid locating development (buildings and other structures) in visually prominent locations, particularly on the valley slopes.
- Appropriately manage the valued ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats, including prevention measures for tree pests and diseases to avoid the need for felling. Seek to replace non-native species with native species.
- Retain valued historic field patterns and replace hedgerows where there have been past losses to reinforce field patterns and provide valued linkages between habitats.
- Manage and enhance valued semi-natural habitats, particularly the rivers and the lowland meadows, fens and riparian vegetation along the river valleys through appropriate management/farming practices. Management of agricultural land should aim to reduce nutrient run off to these habitats.
- Create linkages between habitats where feasible, particularly wetlands, woodlands and semi-natural grasslands, retaining areas of importance for species diversity and balancing this with the need for recreation and enjoyment of the landscape.
- Create linkages between existing woodland by enlarging existing woodland or creating new woodlands, particularly on steep slopes.
- Maintain and promote the North Cheshire Way, Dane Valley Way and Crewe and Nantwich Circular Walk and provide further linkages to the rights of way network where appropriate.
- Protect valued heritage features within the landscape, including the canals associated with the area's industrial past. Promote interpretation of these features where it can be sustainably

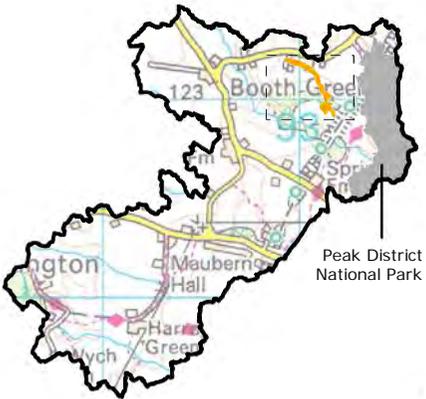
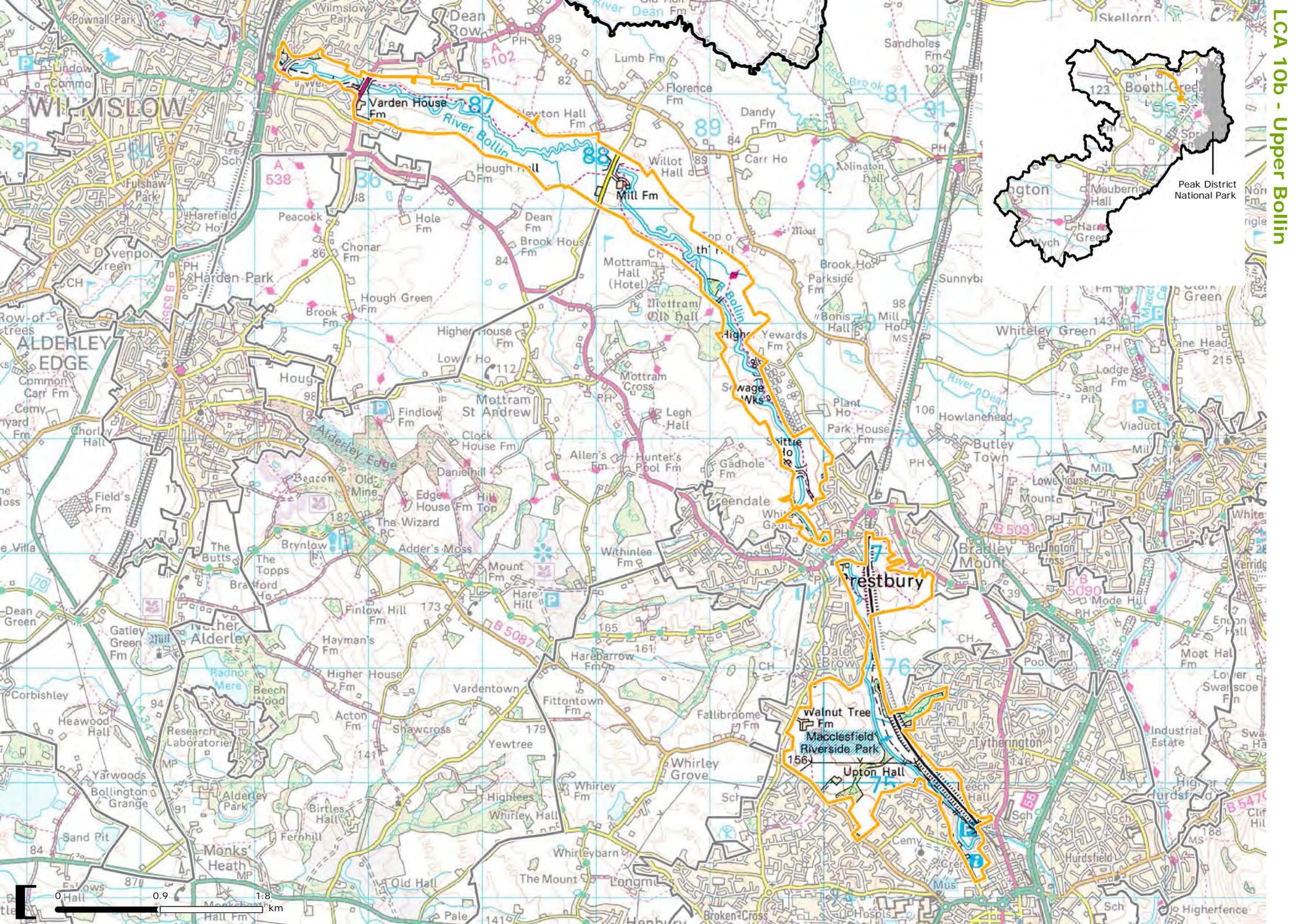
managed alongside conservation.

- Respect the sparsely settled character of the landscape and the existing built vernacular. Ensure that any conversions of farm buildings retain a rural character, including their surrounds.
- Retain the rural character of the narrow, winding roads and avoid the over-engineering of roads which could create an urbanising influence within the strongly rural landscape.
- Utilise trees and woodland to screen the visual and audial effects of intrusive infrastructure where appropriate.
- Retain the high levels of tranquillity experienced throughout much of the landscape.
- Retain the sense of enclosure experienced in the valleys as a result of the landform and tree cover, while also maintaining the distinctive funnelled views.

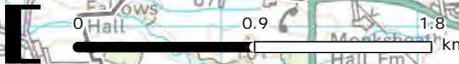


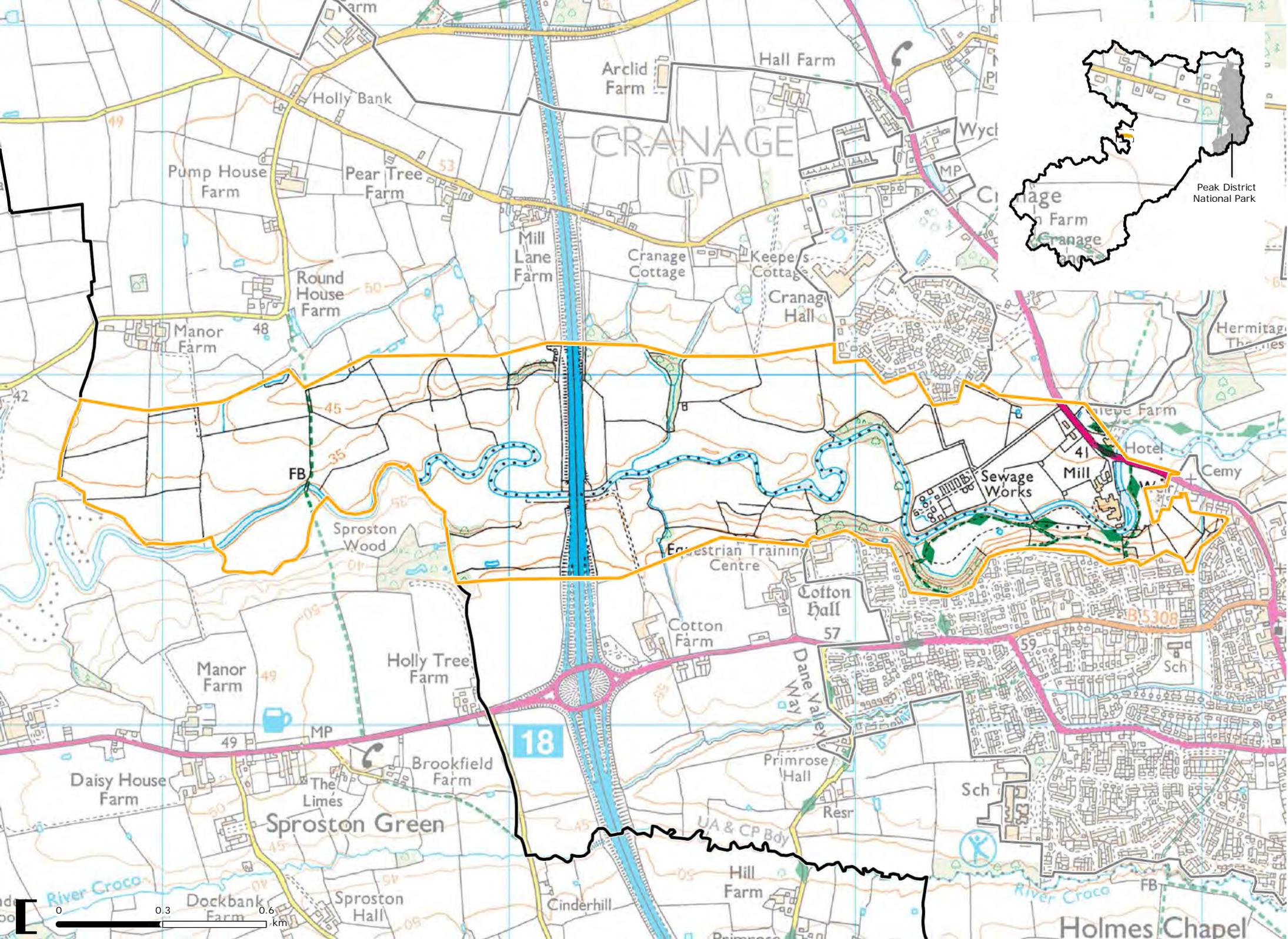
LCA 10a - Lower Bollin





Peak District National Park



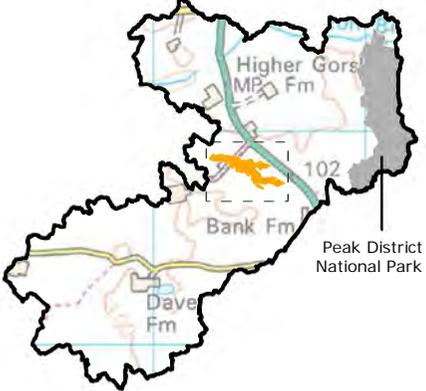
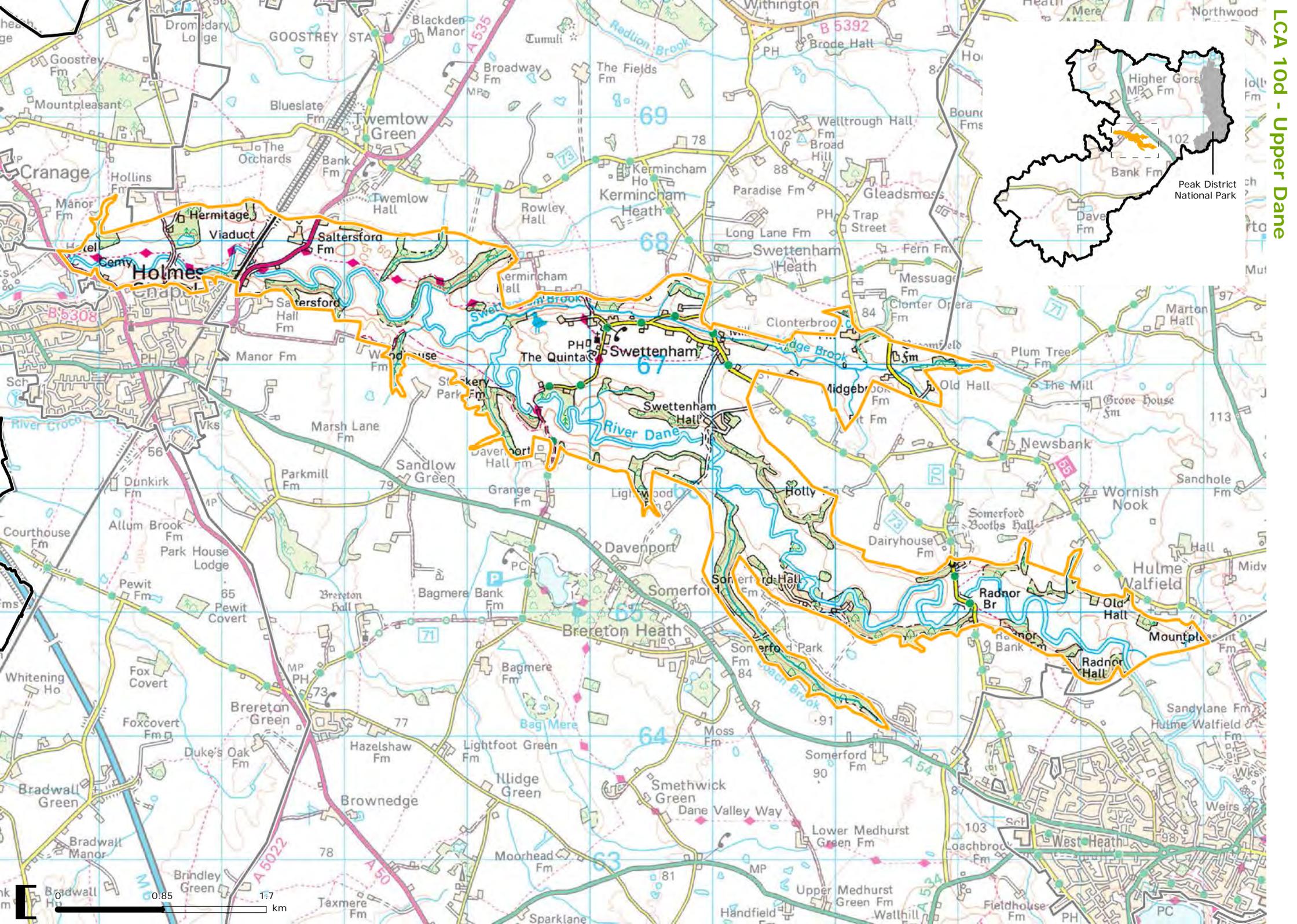


Peak District National Park

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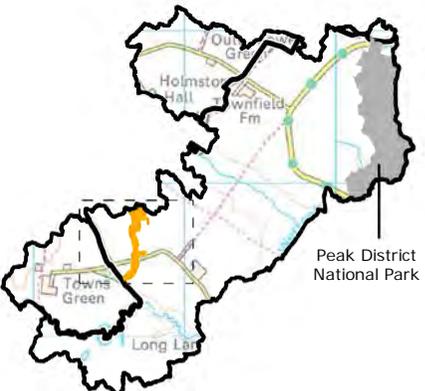
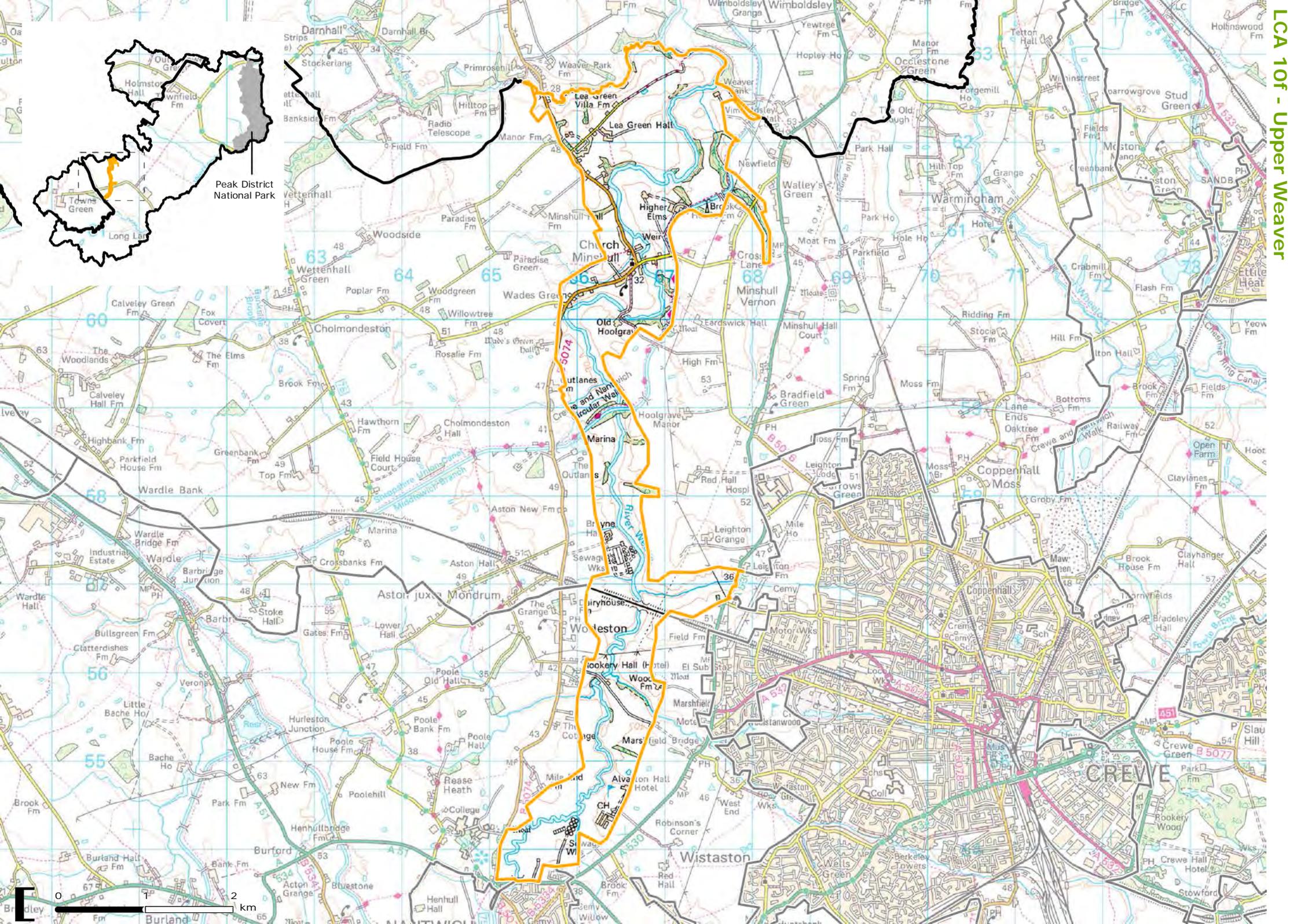
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Holmes Chapel



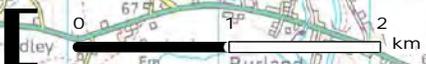
LCA 10d - Upper Dane

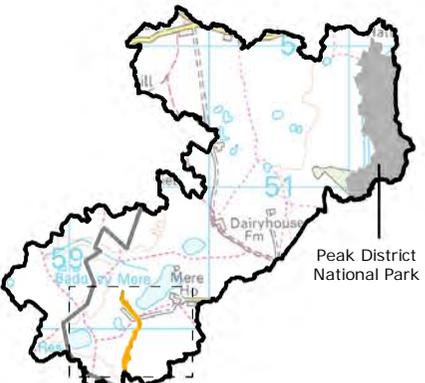




Peak District National Park

LCA 10f - Upper Weaver

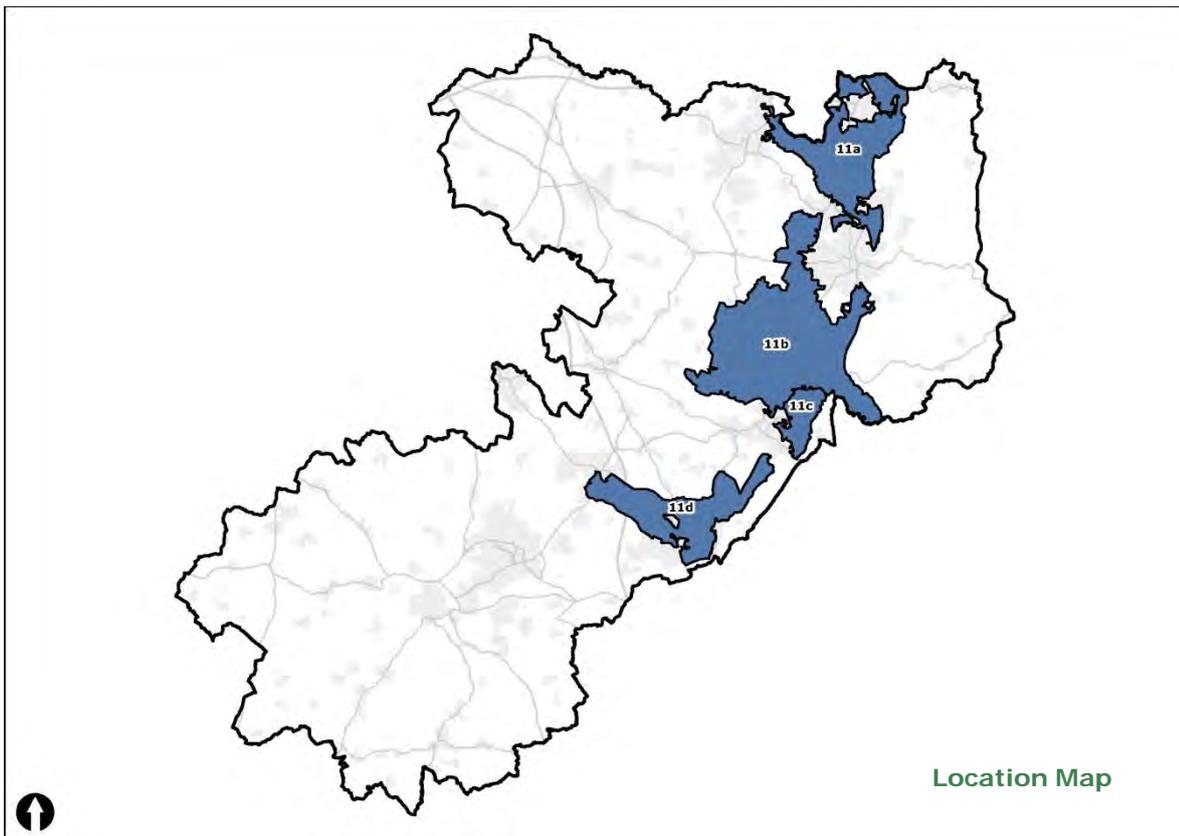




Peak District National Park



## LCT 11: Higher Wooded Farmland



### Summary of location and landscape character

The Higher Wooded Farmland LCT is located between the foothills to the east along the boundary with the Peak District National Park and the flatter expanses of the Cheshire lowlands to the west extending from Poynton in the north to Alsager in the south of the Borough.

This gently rolling landscape is dominated by dairy farming and valued for its rural character particularly given its proximity to urban areas and market towns. It is defined by a high density of woodland and veteran trees compared with much of the Borough, historic field patterns bounded by hedgerows, as well as small isolated ponds, mosses and meres which are dotted across the landscape.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCA

- LCA 11a: Adlington
- LCA 11b: Gawsworth
- LCA11c: Buglawton
- LCA11d: Little Moreton

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- A gently rolling and undulating landform becoming steeper as it reaches the Pennine footslopes ranging from c 80 -180m AOD crossed by numerous hidden brooks and small rivers. Ponds, small mosses occasional meres punctuate the landscape resulting from glacial deposits and accumulation of peat in the hummocky topography.
- The underlying geology is predominantly mudstone overlain by glacial till with some peat deposits except to the north of the LCT (LCA 11a) where the geology is dominated by sandstone.

#### *Woodland cover*

- A wooded landscape with blocks and coverts of broadleaved and riparian woodland. Ancient woodland survives on the historic estates and along the hidden river and brook valleys.
- A strong presence of hawthorn hedgerow boundaries with mature hedgerow trees, although wire fencing is common around arable fields resulting in an open character with isolated veteran oaks.

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- Traditional pasture for dairy farming dominates but there is increasing arable cultivation for silage or feed crops including cereals and maize.
- Fields of varying scale and pattern, with some of medieval origin but intensively reorganised during the post post-medieval period. More recent field amalgamation reflects the increase in arable farming.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- Extensive areas of deciduous woodland (often designated as Local Wildlife Sites) and semi-natural habitats associated with the rivers and brook valleys, including unimproved and semi-improved grassland, lowland raised bogs and remnant pockets of lowland meadows (including the species rich meadows of the Dane-in-Shaw SSSI).

#### *Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- A small number of historic estates, often associated with timber framed Tudor Halls such as Adlington Hall, Gawsworth Old Hall and Little Moreton Hall (all Grade 1 listed) with the 16<sup>th</sup>C gardens at Gawsworth and a number of moated sites designated as a Scheduled Monuments.
- Features relating to the area's association industrial past include cotton and silk mills and canals, (designated as Conservation Areas) crossed by characterful historic stone bridges plus the impressive Dane viaduct over the Macclesfield Canal and River Dane.

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- Predominantly low density dispersed settlement pattern of villages and farms with a distinctive local vernacular of timber-framed buildings with brick infill or red brick with slate tile roofs.
- Apart from key arterial routes, the settlements are connected by quiet winding lanes which rise and fall with the rolling landscape. The canals now provide popular recreational routes such as the Cheshire Ring Canal walk along the Macclesfield Canal.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- The area has the strong rural character of a working landscape and is relatively remote and tranquil despite the proximity of large towns, although there are a number of golf courses, garden centres and other suburban land uses near the towns. Views are varied depending on topography and vegetation, with higher ground offering extensive views to the distinctive high ridges of the Peak District in the east which overlook this area.

**Physical and Natural Influences**

Gently rolling and undulating landform between 80 and 180 metres AOD. The land becomes steeper along the many stream and river valleys and rises as it nears the Pennine foothills.

The solid geology is predominantly mudstone (e.g. Bollin and Eldersfield) with superficial deposits of Devensian till and glacial deposits. Glacial deposits which have accumulated in the hummocky topography mean that small mosses, ponds and occasionally meres occur in this type. Soils are nutrient poor and suited to grass; a major factor in the development of the Cheshire dairy farming industry.



Extensive areas of deciduous woodland (often designated as Local Wildlife Sites) mean that woodland levels are high compared with most of the Borough. Ancient woodland is concentrated on estates and along the banks of water courses.

Field patterns vary in size and pattern with fragmentary medieval field systems with post medieval and 18th and 19th century enclosures. Field boundaries are predominantly delineated by hawthorn hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees (oak, ash and sycamore) which contribute to the wooded character of the landscape. The majority of fields are grass leys for pasture, although increasing areas are cultivated for silage or feed crops including cereals and maize. This increased emphasis on arable farming and consequent hedgerow loss is resulting in a larger scale landscape in some areas where hedgerow trees appear as isolated elements in an open, rolling landscape.

**Historic and Cultural Influences**

Traces of prehistoric activity include a scheduled Bronze Age burial mound (south of Poynton). Canal side mills associated with the cotton and silk spinning industry illustrate the industrial heritage of the area, particularly at Congleton and Bollington. The network of canals (now designated as Conservation Areas)

provides recreational routes including the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk, and are crossed by characterful historic sandstone or gritstone bridges (plus the impressive Dane viaduct over the Macclesfield Canal and River Dane).



With the exception of a small number of nucleated settlements there is a low density of dispersed farms and houses. The character of the built environment includes both timber framed and red brick farmhouses and cottages including a number of fine half-timbered Tudor halls such as Adlington Hall, Gawsworth Old Hall and Little Moreton Hall (all Grade I listed).

Apart from the mainline railway, key arterial routes which cross the type and a short section of the M6, the settlements are connected by quiet winding lanes which rise and fall with the rolling landscape.

**Visual and Perceptual Character**

The character type retains a strong rural nature. The urbanising impact of the neighbouring towns is felt in the sprawl of golf courses, garden centres, horse paddocks and shelters, and overhead power lines around Macclesfield and Congleton as well as large scale industrial buildings to the south of Stockport.



Views are enclosed by the strong presence of woodland and high hedgerows but higher ground in the pronounced rolling topography can offer extensive views to the Peak District hills which provide prominent and distinctive land marks.

## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- The glacially shaped gently rolling and undulating landform, crossed by small rivers and brooks and punctuated by small isolated ponds, mosses and meres which provide visual and biological diversity.
- The high density of broadleaved woodland particularly on historic estates and along the hidden river and brook valleys, which is unusual in Cheshire East and provides a strong sense of place. Areas of woodland, many designated as LWS, provide landscape character and natural heritage value.
- Ancient woodland and unimproved grassland along the steep sided river and brook valleys, such as the River Dane LWS and Madams Wood SSI along the River Dane (ash and wych elm clough woodland), and the Dane-in-Shaw Pasture SSSI and surrounding woodland in the valley of the Dane-in-Shaw Brook. Ancient woodland is rare in the context of Cheshire and these habitats provide natural heritage value, biological and visual diversity.
- A legacy of historic field patterns with a strong presence of hawthorn hedgerow boundaries with numerous veteran oaks which provide an important environment for flora and fauna as well as a sense of history.
- Important heritage features from various periods, including a number of timbered Tudor halls such as the Grade I listed Gawsworth Old Hall and Adlington Hall with their surrounding estates (both Grade II\* listed) as well as the cotton and silk mills such as the Dane-in-Shaw Mill (built in 1784) and Clarence Mill in Bollington (built 1834). These features provide a cultural record of the past and attract visitors to the area.
- The dispersed settlement pattern of individual cottages and farmsteads with a distinct vernacular character including the historic settlements at Gawsworth and Butley Town which are designated as Conservation Areas. The characterful historic sandstone or gritstone bridges over the canals and rivers. These scenic features provide a historical record of the past.
- Popular walking routes including the network of restored canals which are designated as Conservation Areas as well as disused railways (e.g. Biddulph Valley Way or the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk) which provide glimpses of the industrial past and options for recreational routes which are valued for recreation and health benefits.
- Extensive views to the distinctive ridges of the Pennine ridge lines to the east which provide an opportunity to appreciate the surrounding landscape.
- Bucolic rural character of the landscape dominated by traditional dairy farming and relative tranquillity offered in close proximity to urban areas and market towns.
- The green wooded rolling farmland which provide a harmonious contrast and juxtaposition with the adjacent uplands.

### Landscape condition

Most of this rural farmed landscape is well-managed and in good condition with intact landscape features including numerous broadleaved woodlands, intact hedgerows and strong visual links to the adjacent uplands. In some locations development pressures from adjacent urban areas, such as Stockport, Macclesfield and Congleton has resulted in deterioration of landscape condition with an increasing sprawl of suburban features, such as linear roadside development, golf courses and garden centres in out of town locations, and a change in land use to horse pasture and associated buildings. Tranquillity is broken locally with proximity of major arterial roads and as well as power lines that cross the LCT. The decline in traditional dairy farming is leading to an expansion of arable farming, particularly maize, in some areas with a consequent loss of hedged field boundaries and their replacement with fencing which has diluted historic field patterns.

## Forces for change

- **Continuing decline in traditional woodland management practices** in some areas leading to under management of woodlands, coverts and copses. Many veteran trees are over-mature and in decline.
- **Changes in woodland / tree species composition** as new pests/diseases spread (particularly *phytophthora pathogens* and ash die-back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)). Loss of trees within hedgerows would be particularly noticeable in this landscape type.
- **Changes in agricultural practices** including a move from pasture to arable or fodder crops and a trend towards silage production and an increase in large scale dairy sheds.
- **Loss of historic field pattern** due to field enlargement for arable crops and decline in hedgerow management with resulting increase in use of fencing. Many hedgerow trees over-mature or in decline.
- **Changing patterns of ownership** and the purchase of agricultural holdings by non-farmers resulting in the conversion of farmhouses and farm buildings to residential use and subsequent changes in farm use, with a particular demand for equestrian facilities leading to a suburbanisation of the landscape around the larger towns.
- **Loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats** due to lack of appropriate management, including meres and mosses and grassland habitats associated with the numerous streams and rivers. Loss of ponds through drainage and in-fill plus nutrient run-off from surrounding farmland. Decline in species rich hedgerows and loss of ancient woodland through inappropriate management.
- **Loss of historic parkland** to agriculture and recreational use and decline in veteran trees which area a valuable biodiversity resource and an essential component of historic parkland.
- **Erosion of built environment character** through pressure for expansion of existing settlements and neighbouring urban areas including ribbon and in-fill residential development and an increased demand for equestrian or golf facilities changing the rural character. Unsympathetic renovation leading to the loss of vernacular character and the suburbanisation of rural properties and their curtilage.
- **Continued pressure for development** associated with major settlements including Poyton, Prestbury, Bollington, Macclesfield and Congleton. This includes major infrastructure such as the A6 Manchester Airport Relief Road, Congleton Link Road and Poynton Relief Road, as well as areas proposed for removal from the Green Belt for development (e.g. Congleton Business Park Extension).
- **An increase in traffic levels**, particularly associated with road improvements schemes and on narrow rural lanes near major settlements which is likely to diminish levels of tranquillity and pressure to widen and standardise roads eroding rural character.

## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

### Overall vision and landscape strategy

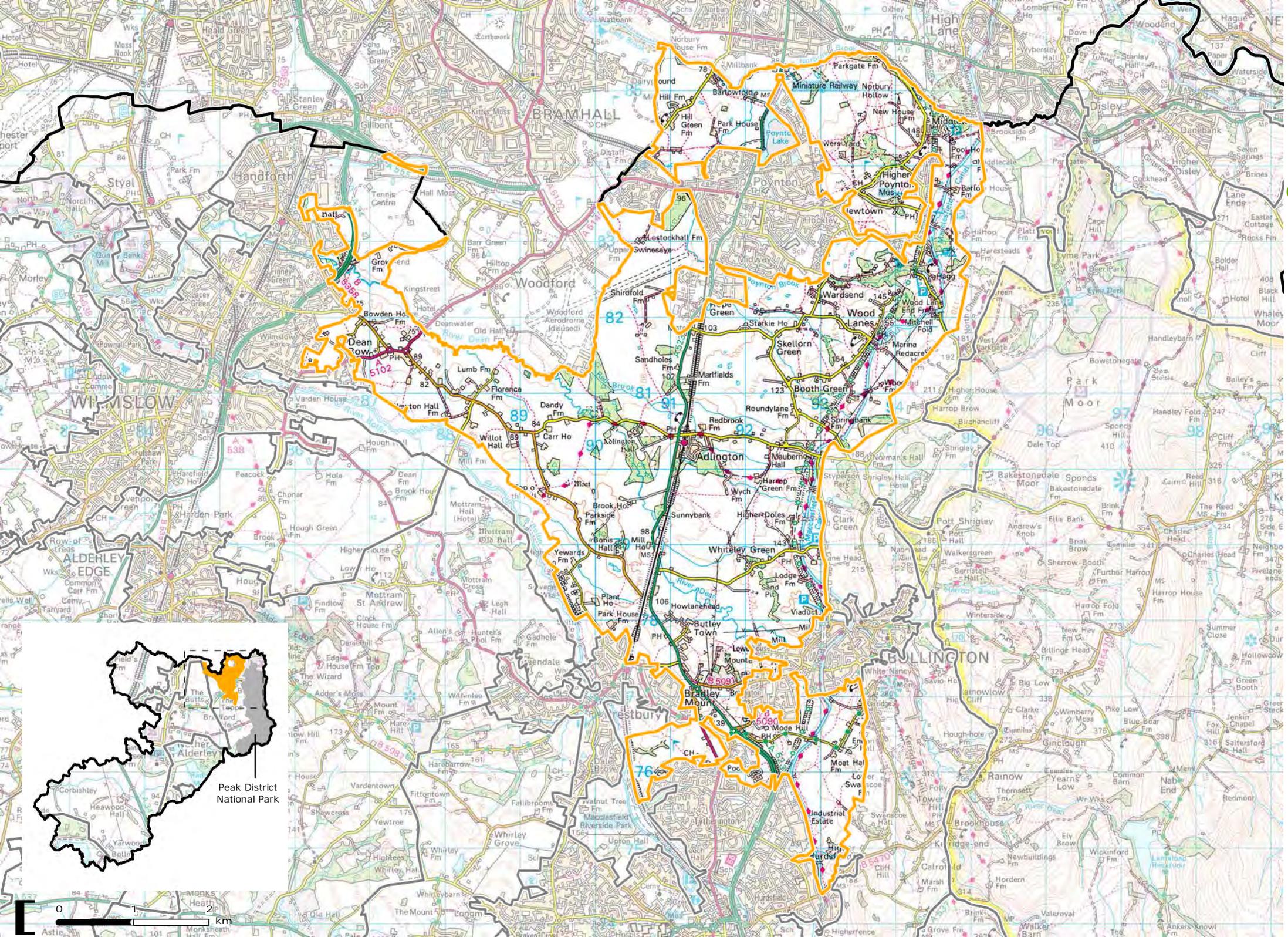
A well-managed rural landscape between the Peaks and the Plain valued for its rural character and qualities which are offered in close proximity to urban areas. It is characterised by a high density of woodland, historic field patterns, and interspersed with semi-natural habitats including lowland grassland and small mosses, meres and ponds. Provision for recreation in the landscape is good and aligns with ecological and heritage conservation. The rural farmland has a low density settlement pattern with a distinct vernacular.

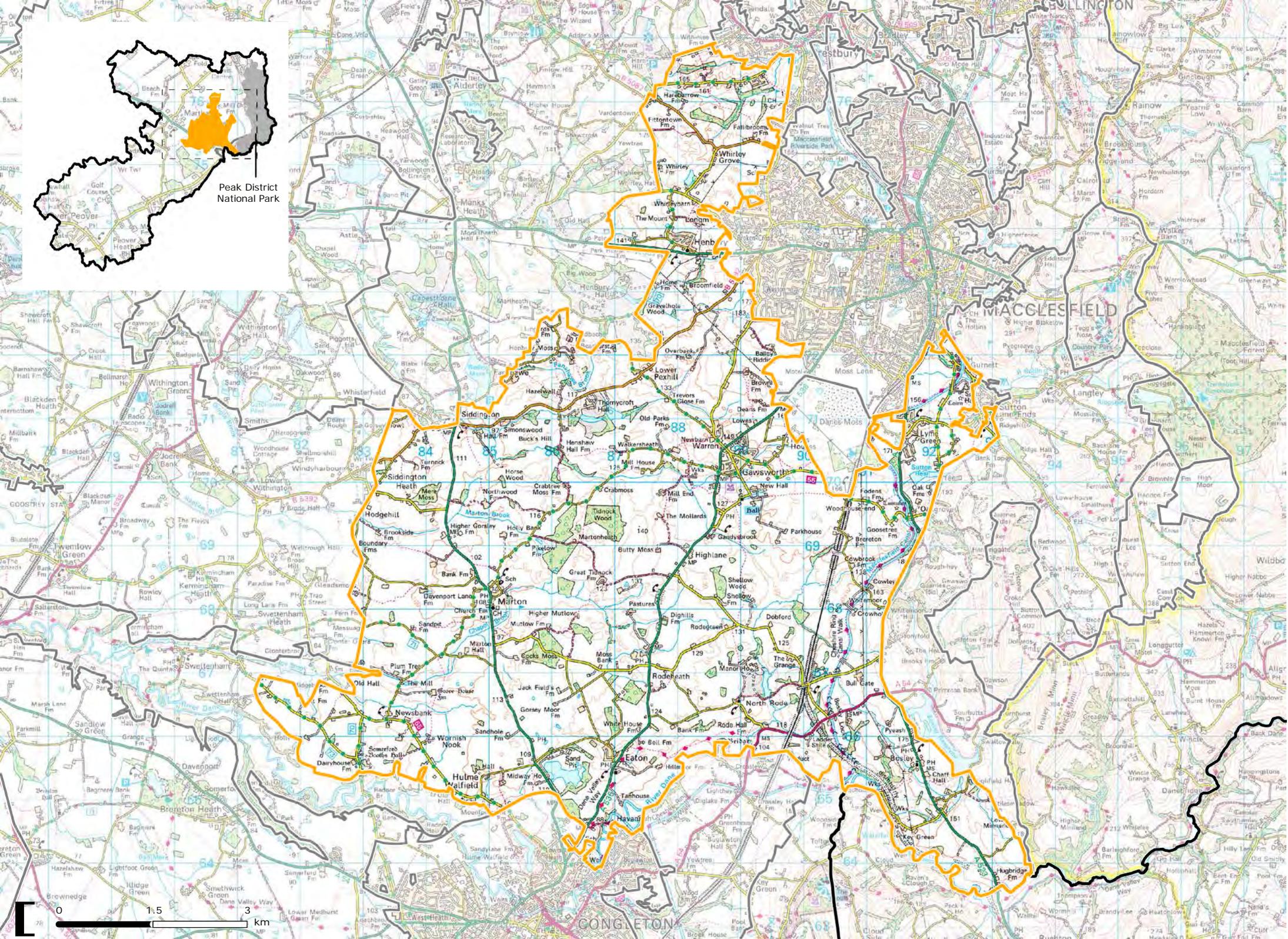
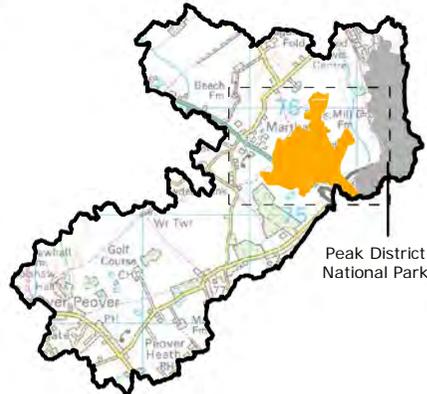
The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to conserve the rural character and quality of this densely wooded farmland, conserve the valued semi-natural habitats and restore the traditional field pattern with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees where these have been lost.

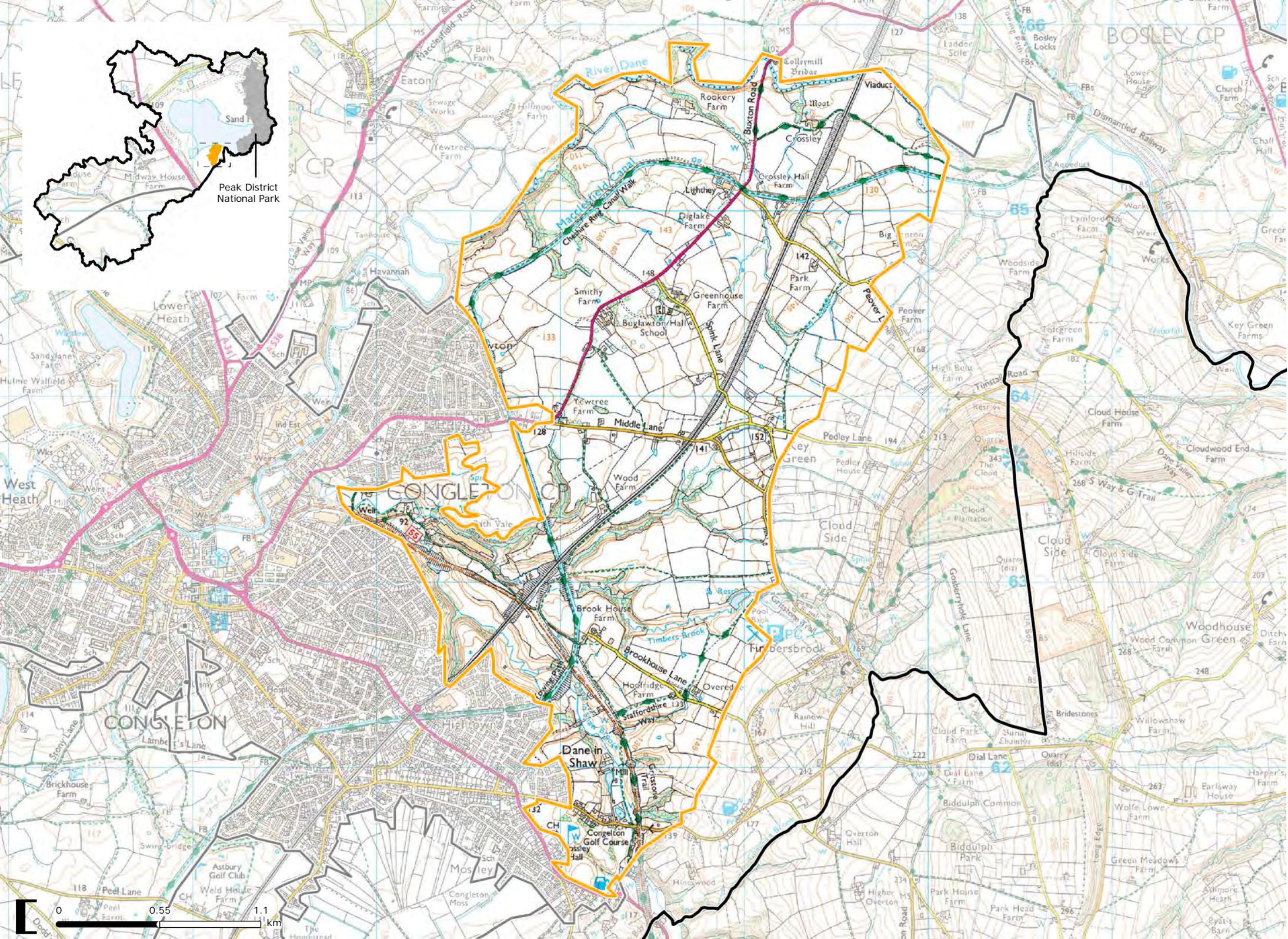
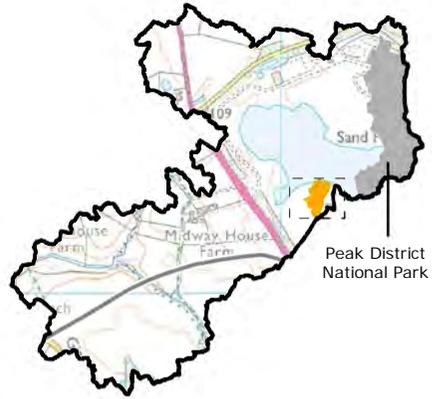
### Landscape Guidance

The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:

- Protect and manage the natural river and stream courses and small ponds for the benefit of flood alleviation and biodiversity.
- Protect the overall wooded character that characterises the area through appropriate management of blocks and coverts of broadleaved and riparian woodland (including ancient woodland), mature hedgerow trees and veteran trees.
- Extend and create woodland areas and hedgerows trees where appropriate within the landscape, and maintain a diverse age and species structure for the benefit of biodiversity.
- Protect the rural pastoral character of the wooded farmland through continued livestock grazing and avoiding a spread of suburban influences.
- Conserve the varied field pattern, particularly those of historic origin. Conserve and manage the existing hedgerow network which provides valued linkages between ancient woodland habitats and restore hedgerows where they have been lost or degraded.
- Protect and manage valued semi-natural habitats, notably the undesignated ponds, mosses, meres which punctuate the landscape and the lowland grasslands along the river valleys through appropriate management. Extend or link small isolated wetland habitats where feasible. Management of agricultural land should aim to reduce nutrient run off to these habitats.
- Protect and appropriately manage the cultural heritage of the area including the canals and mills associated with the area's industrial past.
- Conserve the historic character of estate landscapes and plan for the management and reinstatement of parkland features such as veteran trees.
- Retain the rural character of the farmed landscape with its dispersed settlement pattern of farms and small villages.
- Protect the unifying historic vernacular of red brick and timber framed buildings. New development or conversion of farm buildings should retain a rural character by utilising traditional building styles where possible.
- Retain the rural character of the narrow, winding roads and avoid the over-engineering of roads which could create an urbanising influence within the strongly rural landscape.
- Maintain and promote the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk, The Dane Valley Way and other walking routes and provide further linkages to the rights of way network where appropriate.
- Plan for the effects of large scale development such as major new transport routes and the expansion of existing settlements by exploring requirements for landscape mitigation to minimise or offset the impact impacts felt within the LCT.
- Ensure new development helps to meet green infrastructure objectives reinforcing positive connections between town and country and between this area and the uplands.
- Maintain the openness of characteristics view from this LCT across to the Peak District uplands.
- Protect the relative tranquillity of the area which provides a respite from nearby urban areas.

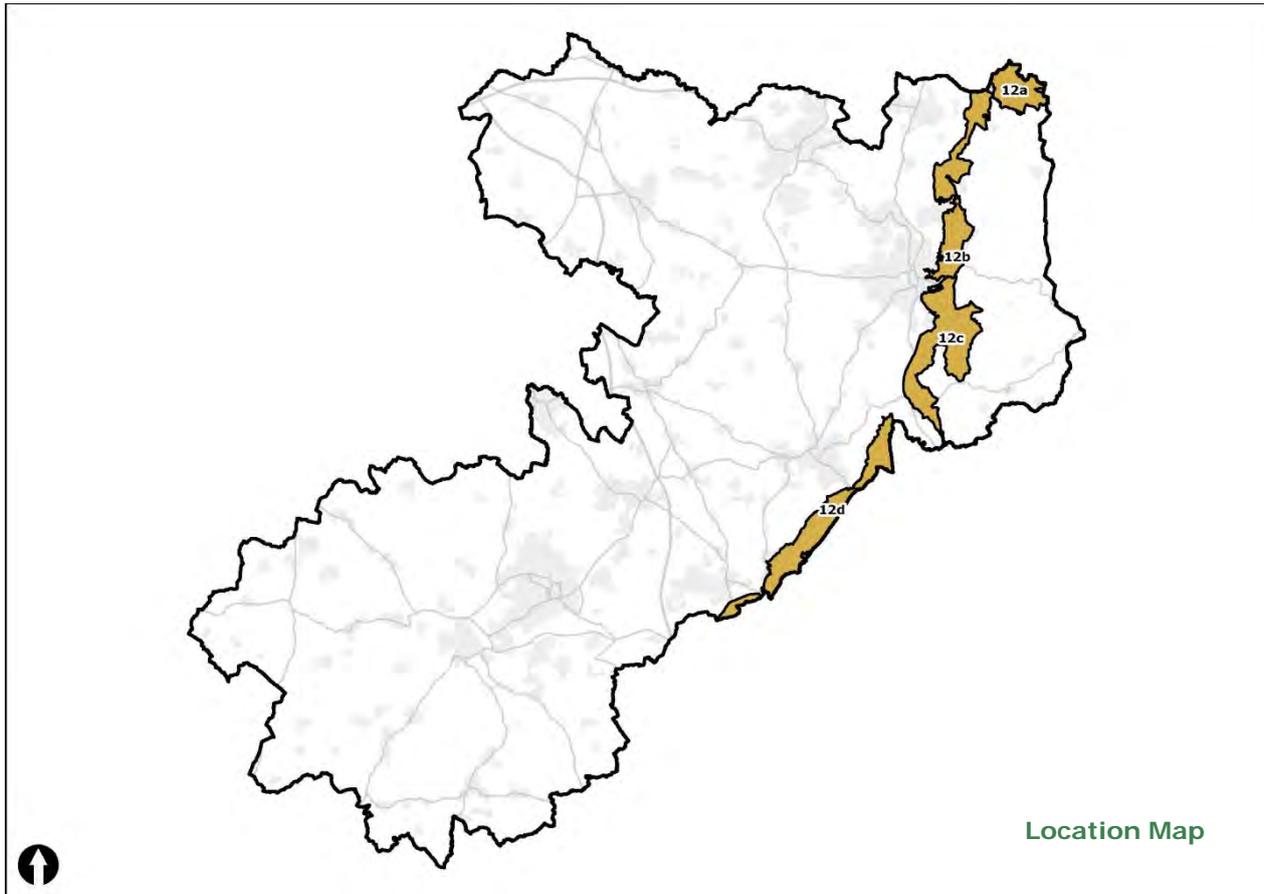








## LCT 12: Upland Footslopes



### Summary of location and landscape character

A distinctive upland landscape of steep slopes and wooded steam valleys running from Disley in the north to Alsager in the south, providing a buffer between urban areas (Stockport, Bollington, Macclesfield and Congleton) and the hills and scattered settlements of the Peak District National Park. Exposed linear ridges form prominent local landmarks from which there are panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. Dominated by livestock farming and dairying, the landscape has an intricate pattern of fields bounded by hedgerows and dry stone walls. The type has a strong cultural character with small villages and farms built of local stone as well as a scattering of features relating to past industrial activity including stone quarries, mills and canals.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCA

- LCA 12a: Higher Disley
- LCA 12b: Kerridge\*
- LCA 12c: Langley
- LCA 12d: Mow Cop Ridge

\* In the 2009 CLCA, this LCA extended into the Peak District National Park. Areas within the Peak District National Park are excluded from this assessment

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- A varied undulating landscape of wooded inclines and steep-sided river and stream valleys, lying between c100 – 370m AOD. The landscape is shaped by the erosion of the complex underlying bedrock of Coal Measure sandstones, Carboniferous limestone and Millstone Grit which form the prominent higher ground.
- Linear ridges include Kerridge and Mow Cop, form local landmarks and act as panoramic viewpoints, marked with distinctive follies including White Nancy and Mow Cop Castle.
- Network of sinuous brooks have their sources in the moorland core to the east, some feeding small upland reservoirs as they flow down stream.

#### *Woodland/tree cover*

- Irregular blocks of woodland and tree clusters on valley slopes and along the numerous minor valleys and watercourses combine with abundant trees along field boundaries to create a strongly wooded character, with a mosaic of texture and habitats. Much of the woodland is ancient (e.g. Dane Valley, Rosen Dale and along Clough Brook).

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- A verdant pastoral landscape dominated by stock rearing for sheep and cattle with dairy farming on lower slopes.
- An intricate pattern of medieval and post-medieval enclosures bounded by dry stone walls at higher elevations and hedgerows on lower slopes.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- A high occurrence of deciduous woodland much of which is ancient, including Roe Park Woods SSSI on the north west facing slope of Mow Cop ridge - the most extensive area of ancient oak woodland in Cheshire. Pockets of semi-improved and unimproved dry acid grassland and remnant heathland are located on steeper slopes, with lowland meadows along stream valleys.

#### *Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- Quarrying of the local gritstone continues on Kerridge Ridge while historic quarries now provide important wildlife or geological sites (such as Gannister Quarry SSSI). Features relating to the area's rich industrial past include coal mines near Disley, kilns on Kerridge Hill and the Ingersley Vale cotton mill near Rainow. Canals that cross the area are designated as Conservation Areas.

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- Dispersed settlement pattern characterised by numerous historic villages designated as Conservation Areas and farms linked by narrow, winding lanes. Some more recent development is associated with larger urban settlements on the edge of the type but generally the landscape has a strong local vernacular with buildings and boundary walls constructed of local stone and roofed with stone slates.
- A network of public rights of way including promoted routes such as the North and South Cheshire Way and the Gritstone Trail.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- Panoramic views from high ground extend west over the Cheshire Plain to distant hills as far as Wales, whilst views to the east include the wilder slopes of the Peak District National Park in the north, or the more settled hills in Staffordshire to the south .
- Proximity to large settlements allows ease of access for recreation and walking trails.
- A sense of rural tranquillity with scenic contrasts between the openness of the upland ridges, wooded slopes and cloughs and enclosed pastoral farmland.

**Physical and Natural Influences**

The character type is defined by upland slopes, distinctive ridges and a network of steep-sided, densely wooded river and stream valleys. Topography ranges from c 100 – 370m AOD and is underlain by a complex banding of linear outcrops of Carboniferous Limestone, Millstone Grit and Lower and Middle Coal Measures and Sandstones. The numerous brooks and small rivers have their sources in the moorland core, some feeding small upland reservoirs such as Bosley Reservoir built to feed the Macclesfield Canal.

There is a greater density of woodland than the Borough average (much of it ancient), with numerous woodland blocks on valley sides and linear woodlands following the minor valleys and sinuous water courses. Oak predominates with rowan and birch on the higher elevations.



Soils are typical well drained brown earths, suited to grassland with dairying on the lower slopes, rising to sheep pasture on the higher ground. Fields are a combination of irregular small-medium (up to 8ha) medieval and post-medieval enclosures. Field boundaries comprise intact hawthorn hedgerows and dry stone walls.

The undulating land has often escaped agricultural improvement, resulting in a concentration of local wildlife sites, including semi-natural woodland, pockets of unimproved and semi-improved acid and neutral grassland, including Kerridge Hill where the pasture is species-rich with some uncommon species such as adder’s tongue and moon wort.

**Historic and Cultural Influences**

The underlying gritstone is a valuable building material and both disused and active quarries are common (evidence of millstone quarrying at Mow Cop dates back to the Iron Age). Abandoned quarries have subsequently become important wildlife habitats or been designated as geological sites (RIGS), the largest of which are the quarries on Kerridge Hill.

The legacy of the area’s industrial past is visible through cotton and silk mills, including Ingersley Vale Mill near Rainow, the coal pits near Pott Shrigley and Disley and the canals that cross the area (designated as Conservation Areas).

The hill top follies at Mow Cop and White Nancy at Kerridge, both built for affluent families to be visited from their neighbouring halls, provide local landmarks and panoramic views of the surrounding area. The visibility afforded by the upland is also utilised by skyline features such as the Nab Head bowl barrow (designated as a Scheduled Monument) or the Old Man O’Mow.



There is a strong local vernacular and settlement is largely dispersed with small winding country lanes connecting farmsteads and small villages many with Conservation Areas, with few major roads and rail lines except A6 and the A54. There is a good network of public rights of way.

**Visual and Perceptual Character**

The landscape has a very rural feel, although the proximity of large urban centres including Stockport, Bollington, Macclesfield and Congleton, have an impact on character and form distinctive aspects of the surrounding views from higher elevations.



Views can be restricted due to the local topography, closely spaced hedgerows, abundant hedgerow trees and linear woodlands to create a strong sense of enclosure. Elevated vantage points on open slopes enjoy far-reaching panoramic views over the low-lying Cheshire Plain and beyond. Views to the east take in the wilder slopes of the Peak District National Park.

## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- The scenic beauty of the intricate landform, full of contrasts between the openness of the ridges, the intricate pattern of pastoral fields, wooded slopes and cloughs which provide a strong sense of place and a setting for recreation and enjoyment of the landscape.
- Distinctive ridges which form local landmarks with panoramic views, for example the Cloud and Tegg's Nose. Some are marked with historic follies such as White Nancy on Kerridge Hill (built to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo) and Mow Cop Castle (both listed Grade II) or skyline features such as the Old Man O'Mow or the scheduled bowl barrow at Nab Head which provide a sense of history and aesthetic appeal.
- The dense woodland along the cloughs and slopes much of which is ancient and designated as LWS which provide natural heritage value and a distinct wooded character which is unusual in the local context.
- A strong sense of place derived from the historic pattern of pastoral fields bounded by hedgerows and dry stone walls which provide a cultural record of the past.
- Small upland reservoirs fed by fast flowing streams.
- The natural heritage value of ancient woodland such as the Roe Park Woods SSSI and geological sites such as the Gannister Quarry SSSI. Remnant pockets of lowland heathland (e.g. The Cloud and Cliff Hill), semi-improved and unimproved neutral and acid grassland (Kerridge Hill and Cheshire's Close) which are a rare semi-natural habitat in the UK, often designated as LWS for their biodiversity value.
- Notable for the remains of its industrial past, including cotton and silk mills, coal pits and stone quarries and Victorian canals (both the Macclesfield Canal and Trent and Mersey Canal are designated as Conservation Areas) which provides links to the past.
- The sparsely settled character of the area of isolated farms and villages which provides an escape from the more settled parts of the Borough. This includes numerous conservation areas.
- Strong local vernacular of stone and slate reflecting the local geology and building traditions which provide aesthetic appeal and a distinct Pennine character.
- Popular walking routes including the Gritstone Trail and open access land on the ridge tops at The Cloud and Mow Cop, as well as the canal towpaths which are valued for recreation and health benefits.
- Spectacular views from the ridgeline summits to the more barren uplands of the Peak District and over the Cheshire Plain to the west which provide a sense of open space and enables appreciation of the wider landscape.
- Rural and tranquil farmed landscape, with a naturalistic and historic character which provide an experience of open spaces for many people including those living in adjacent urban areas.

### Landscape condition

This is a rural landscape with a strong sense of place with historic hamlets set within a mosaic of historic pastoral fields, wooded slopes and distinctive ridges with strong visual links to the nearby moorland hills and across the Cheshire plain. The landscape is generally in good condition although close proximity to urban areas has led to an increase in the density of development, conversion of farm buildings and changes in land use to former agricultural land. Continued mineral extraction has resulted in localised deterioration of landscape condition. Tranquillity is broken by the proximity of major roads around Disley, particularly the A6.

## Forces for change

- **Continued pressure for mineral extraction** particularly the demand for new quarries and expansion of existing site to supply local building stone for new development with resultant visual and noise impacts from quarrying activity, and may present a threat to habitats and the historic environment but also provide opportunities for habitat creation.
- **Decline in traditional woodland management practices** leading to under management or inappropriate management of woodland and copses. Some ancient and semi-natural woodland have had inappropriate species introduced such as rhododendron.
- **Changes in woodland composition** as new pests/diseases spread (particularly *phytophthora pathogens* and ash die-back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)). Loss of trees within hedgerows would be particularly noticeable in this landscape type.
- **Changes in agricultural practices** including a decline in livestock numbers leading to scrub encroachment on pastoral land.
- **Loss of historic field pattern** due to disrepair of drystone walls and decline in hedgerow management, with resulting increase in use of fencing. Many hedgerow trees over-mature or in decline.
- **Uncertain future for upland farming** and decline in traditional rural skills.
- **Changing patterns of land ownership** and purchase of agricultural holdings by non-farmers resulting in the conversion of farm houses and buildings and changes in farm use.
- **Loss, fragmentation or deterioration of semi-natural habitats due to lack of appropriate management**, including ancient woodland and hedgerows, heathland, species-rich neutral and acid grassland. Agricultural run-off affecting water quality of the many brooks and small rivers.
- **Recreational pressures** particularly related to popular recreational areas with visitor pressure at certain honey-pot locations such as the popular viewing points and ridge walks, leading to the 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 such as car parks and golf courses.
- **Erosion of built environment character** through unsympathetic renovation leading to the loss of vernacular character or the suburbanisation of rural properties and their curtilage.
- **Continued pressure for development** associated with the expansion of neighbouring urban settlements or an increase in the density of existing settlements which could change the traditional rural character of the area.
- **An increase in traffic levels**, particularly on narrow rural lanes, which is likely to diminish levels of tranquillity and pressure to widen/ standardise roads eroding rural character.
- **Pressure for new masts and potentially wind turbines** (if government subsidies are renewed) which would be potentially visible on prominent skylines.

## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

### Overall vision and landscape strategy

A well-managed pastoral landscape with a network of mature hedgerows and dry stone walls marking historic field patterns and large areas of ancient woodland interspersed with small villages with a strong local vernacular. The rural farmland has valued semi-natural heathland and grassland habitats. Provision for recreation in the landscape is good and aligns with ecological and heritage conservation. The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to conserve the distinctive wooded slopes and panoramic views from open ridges, and to restore the traditional field pattern with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees where these have been lost.

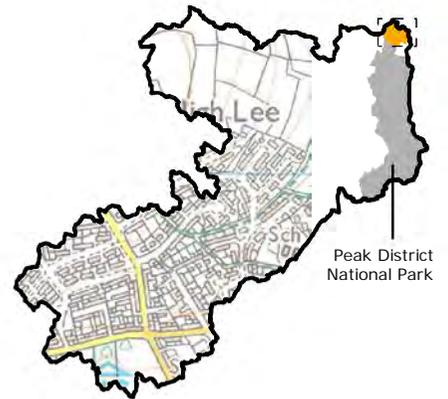
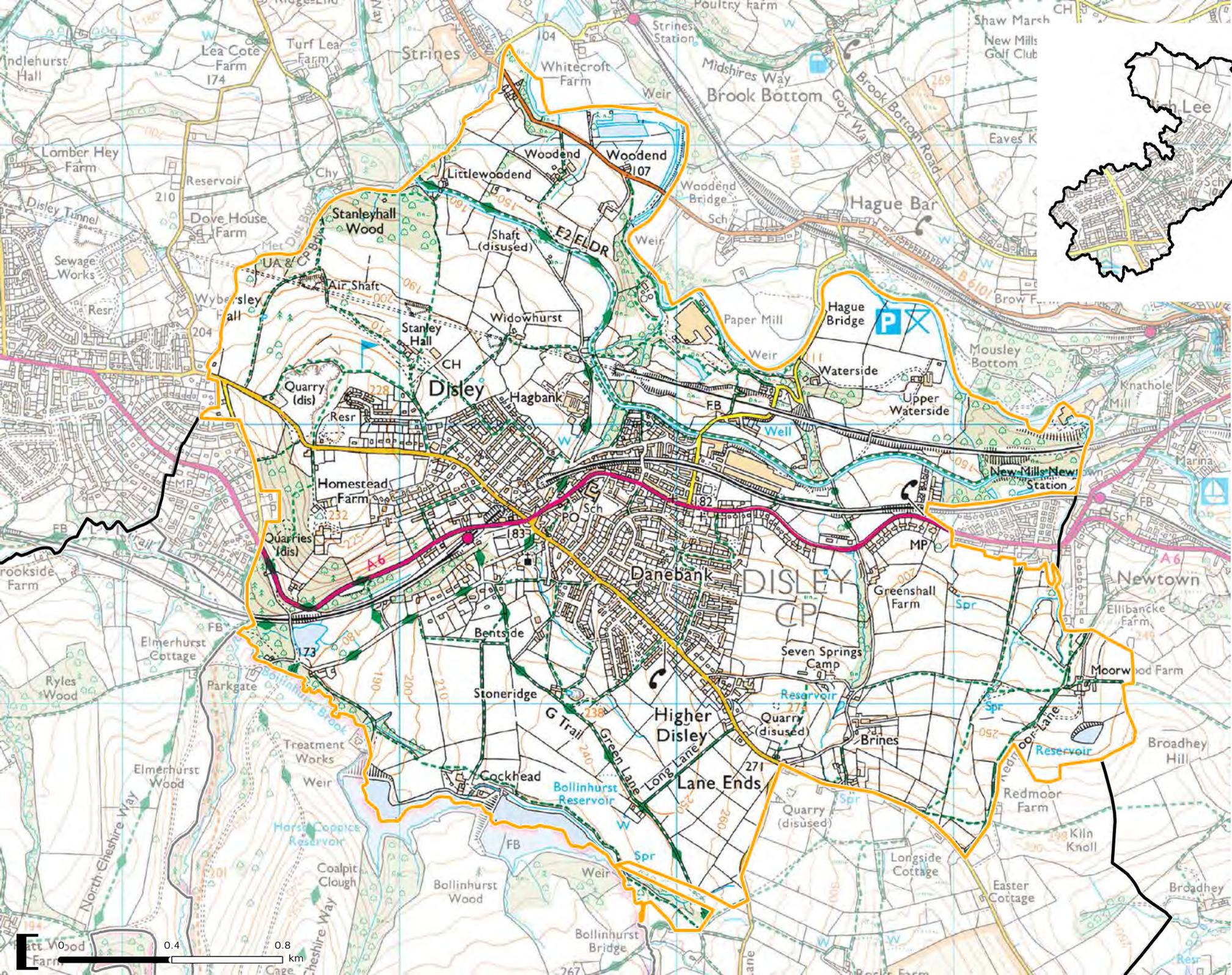
### Landscape Guidance

The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:

- Protect the distinctive upland ridges with their skyline features and avoid siting development (both buildings and other structures including masts and wind turbines) on the dramatic slopes or in visually prominent locations. Any new development should utilise the screening effects of the sloping topography and the landscape's woodlands to reduce its visual impact.
- Ensure mineral extraction does not detract from the naturalistic and tranquil qualities of the area. Seek positive restoration schemes for mineral extraction sites to heathland and or grassland habitats and woodland. Seek opportunities for recreational use of restored sites where this is compatible with nature conservation objectives.
- Protect and manage the watercourses for the benefit of flood alleviation, biodiversity and recreation purposes.
- Protect the overall wooded character of the area through appropriate management of the dense deciduous woodland, including ancient woodland and the existing hedgerow network that provides valued linkages between the woodland habitats.
- Extend and create new hedgerows and woodland areas where appropriate within the landscape, and maintain a diverse age and species structure for the benefit of biodiversity.
- Protect the traditional pastoral character of the Upland Foothills through continued livestock grazing and avoiding a spread of suburban influences.
- Conserve the small-scale, irregular field pattern of the landscape, particularly those of historic origin and restore the network of hedgerows and stone walls forming field boundaries where they have been lost or degraded.
- Manage and enhance valued semi-natural habitats, including the heathland and neutral and acid grassland which has seen significant losses across the Borough through appropriate farming practices. Manage scrub to protect the heathland/species rich grassland communities.
- Create, extend and link the upland habitats where feasible, retaining areas of importance for species diversity and balancing this with the need for recreation and enjoyment of the landscape.
- Protect and appropriately manage the cultural heritage of the area, including prehistoric monuments and follies on the hill summits and features associated with the remains of its industrial past such as mills, canals and mines to preserve a sense of history. Promote interpretation of these features where this would not be at odds with conservation of these assets.
- Retain the rural character of the landscape away from the main settlements with its dispersed settlement pattern of farms and small villages.
- Respect the setting, form and local vernacular of the existing historic settlement, including those designated as Conservation Areas.
- Protect the unifying local vernacular of local stone and slate and avoid the introduction of intrusive features. New development or conversion of farm buildings should retain a rural

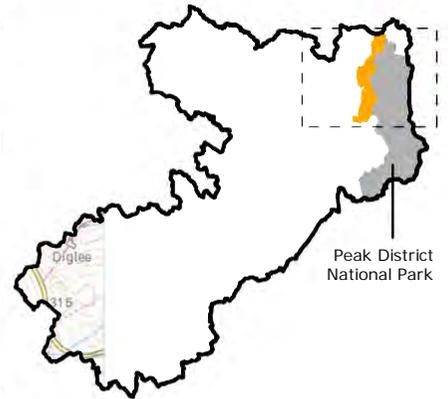
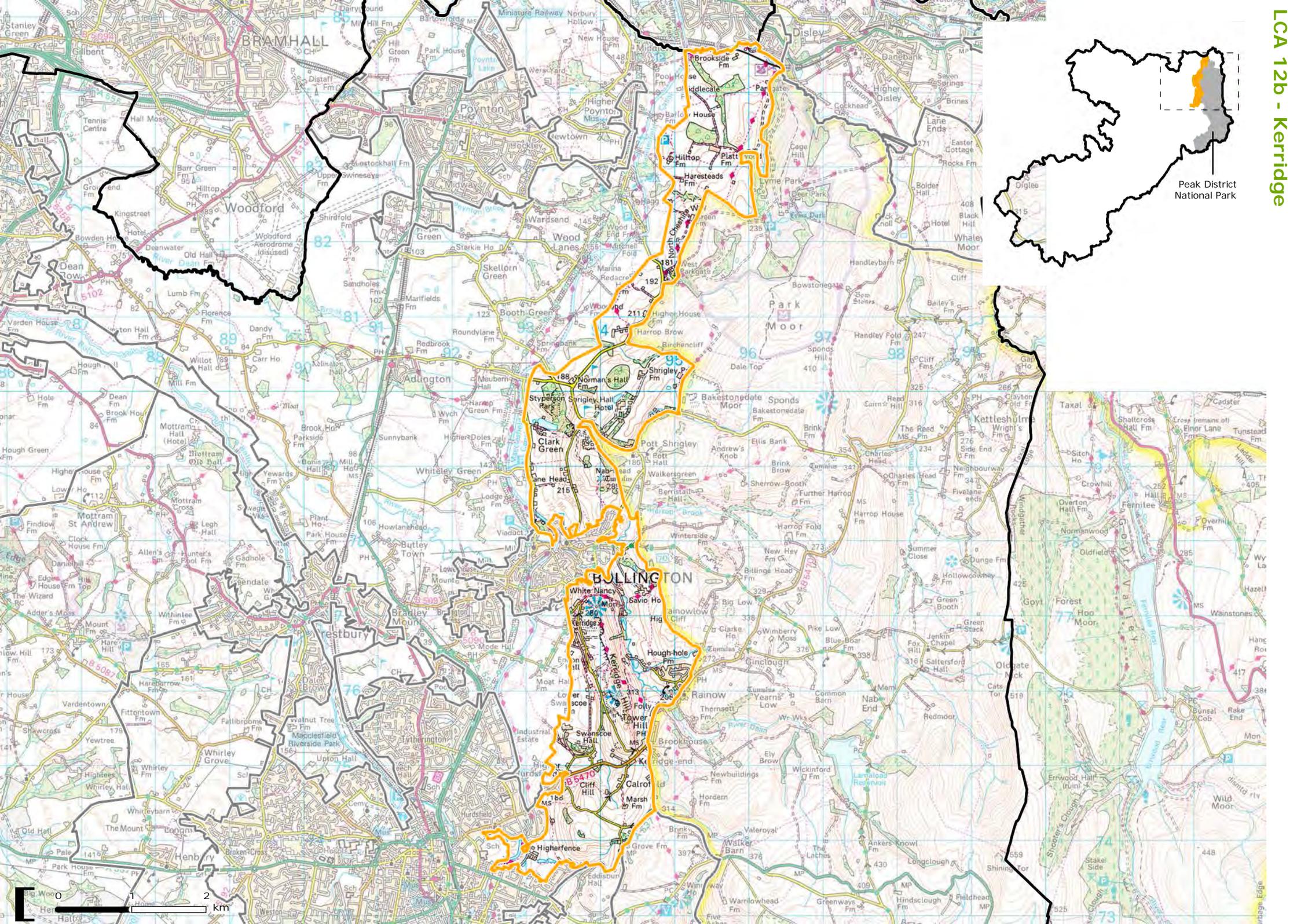
character by utilising traditional materials and building styles wherever possible.

- Promote sustainable transport routes to destinations for recreational purposes.
- Retain the rural character of the narrow, winding roads and avoid the over-engineering of roads which could create an urbanising influence within the strongly rural landscape.
- Maintain and promote the Gritstone Trail and South Cheshire Way and provide further linkages to the rights of way network where appropriate. Manage visitor numbers to avoid footpath erosion or harm to the heritage features in the landscape such as the follies at White Nancy and Mow Cop.
- Ensure any future development helps to meet Green Infrastructure objectives, reinforcing positive connections between neighbouring town and uplands.
- Maintain the openness of views across the Cheshire Plain and to uplands in the Peak District National Park. Avoid siting development (both buildings and other structures) in visually prominent locations.
- Protect the relative tranquillity and remoteness of the area which provides a respite from neighbouring urban areas including dark skies.



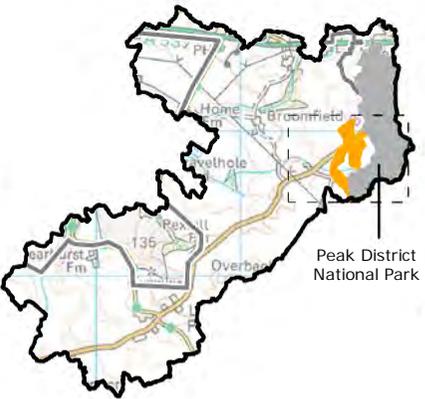
LCA 12a - Higher Disley



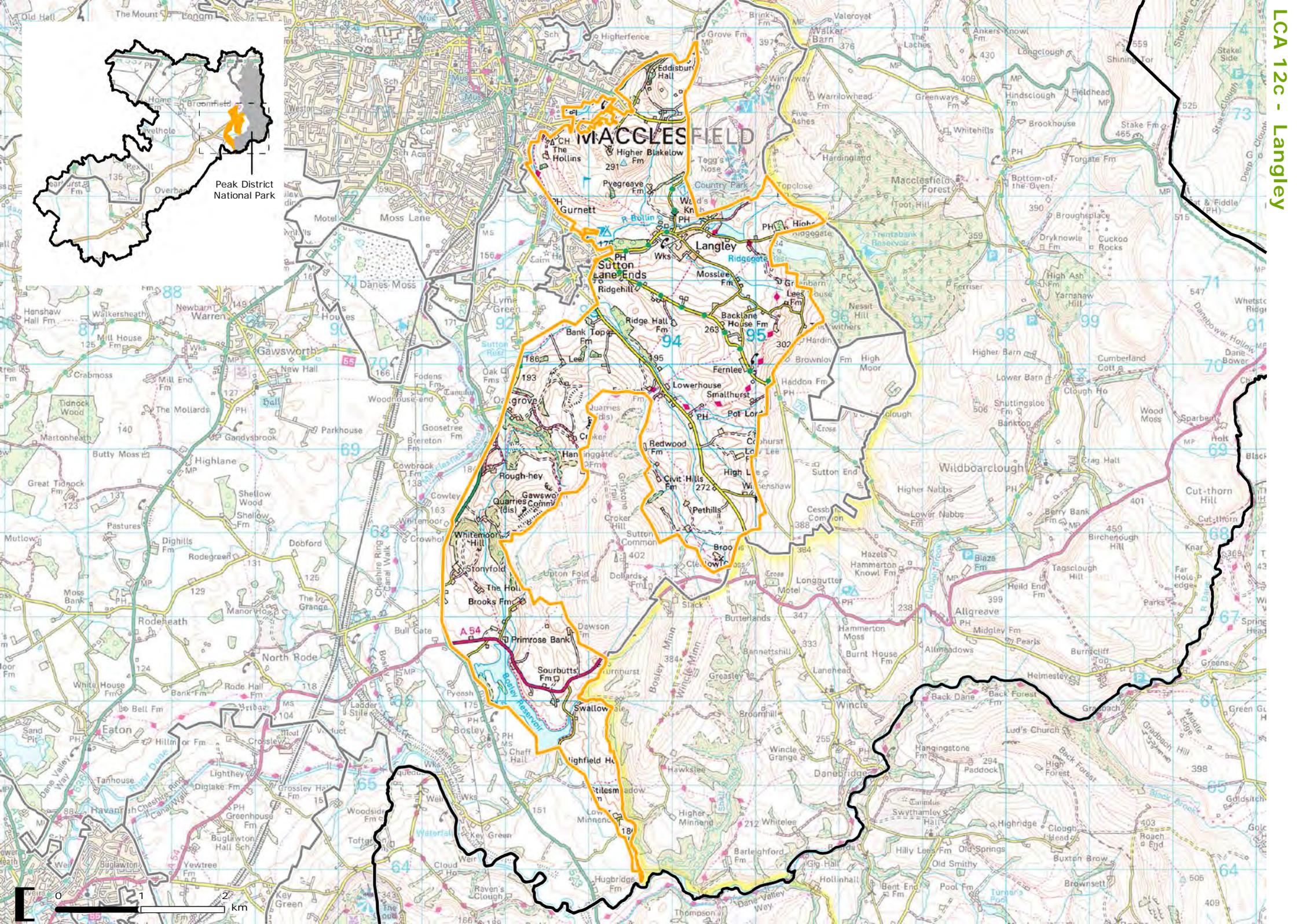


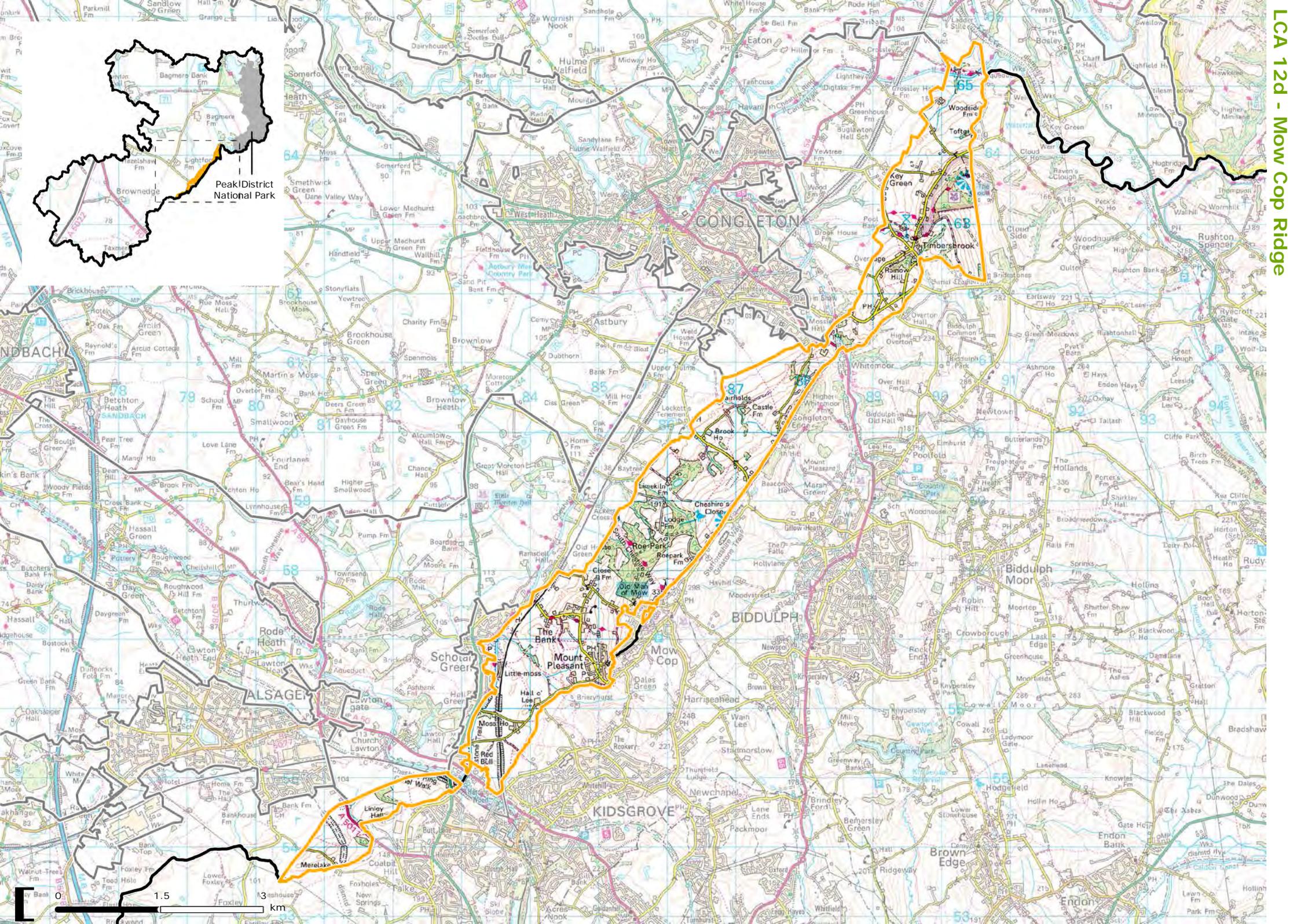
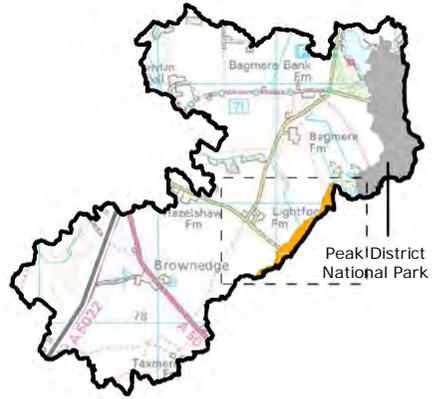
LCA 12b - Kerridge

Peak District National Park

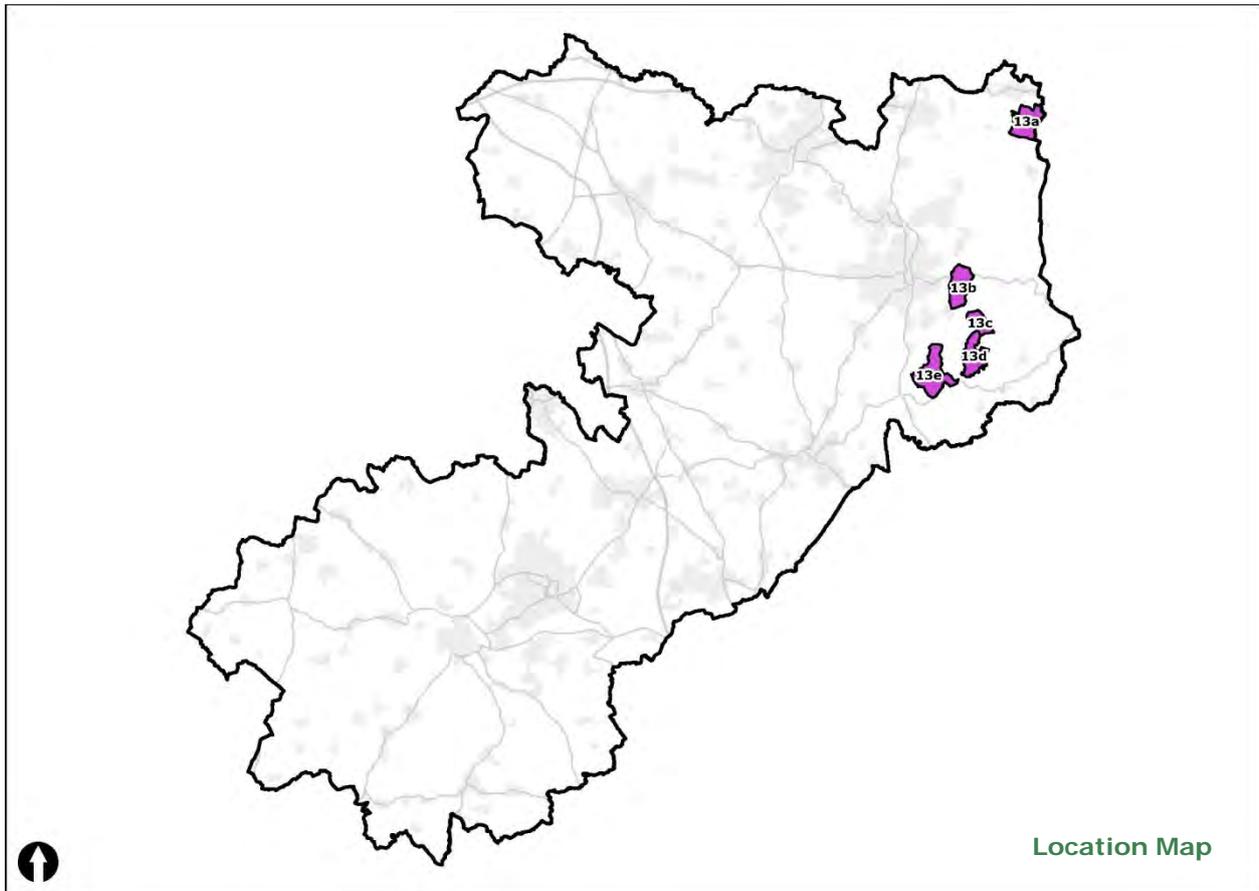


Peak District National Park





## LCT 13: Enclosed Gritstone Upland



### Summary of location and landscape character

The Enclosed Gritstone Upland is defined by high rolling hills located on the fringe of the open moorland of the Peak District National Park. This is a pastoral farming landscape enclosed by dry stone walls with remnant pockets of open heathland commons and typically low tree cover except for the extensive conifer plantations in the Macclesfield Forest. The area has high levels of tranquillity and high open slopes afford expansive views across surrounding landscapes.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCA

- LCA 13a: Whaley Moor
- LCA 13b: Tegg's Nose
- LCA 13c: Macclesfield Forest
- LCA 13d: Cessbank Common
- LCA 13e: Sutton Common

In the 2009 CLCA, these LCAs extended into the Peak District National Park. Areas within the Peak District National Park are excluded from this assessment.

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- An upland landscape characterised by open rolling hills with steep slopes and clough valleys lying between c.220 – c.400m AOD. The landform is shaped by erosion of the underlying bedrock of folded layers of gritstone which is occasionally exposed as rocky outcrops (e.g. Whaley Moor, Tegg's Nose).
- Distinctive hill summits, such as the rocky outcrops on Tegg's Nose and the radio station on Sutton Common, form local landmarks and act as panoramic viewpoints.
- Fast running brooks have their sources as springs on the higher moorland, sometimes fed by areas of blanket bog.

#### *Woodland/tree cover*

- A largely treeless landscape on the high slopes with some deciduous woodland (oak, ash sycamore) along steep sided stream valleys, field boundaries and around farmsteads. There are regular shaped 20th century coniferous plantations associated with Macclesfield Forest around Ridlegate and Trentabank Reservoirs.

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- A pastoral landscape dominated by sheep grazing with cattle on lower slopes. There are pockets of rough grazing land with some fields reverting to moorland habitat.
- An intricate pattern of post-medieval and 19<sup>th</sup> century 'intakes' from the open commons and waste bounded by low dry stone walls.
- On higher ground the enclosure occasionally gives way to open heathy commons, for example at Tegg's Nose and Whaley Moor, providing a contrast to the green farmland on lower slopes.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- Species-rich heathland and semi-improved or unimproved neutral and acid grassland on more elevated areas. Upland heath is characterised by heather, bilberry and crowberry and has particular importance for breeding birds such as golden plover, curlew and twite.

#### *Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- A scattering of features relating to area's industrial heritage including gritstone quarries, such as at Tegg's Nose (designated as a RIGS) and coal mines around Whaley Moor.

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- Largely unsettled with a small number of isolated farmsteads on the lower slopes often surrounded by woodland. The landscape has a strong local vernacular of local stone and slate.
- Farms are linked by a few narrow lanes or tracks. The area is crossed by a network of footpaths including the Gritstone Trail.
- A scattering of archaeological sites including the standing stones at Cessbank Common, and a medieval wayside cross near Sutton End.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- Panoramic views from the open slopes extend west over the footslopes to the Cheshire Plain and beyond to distant hills in Wales, while views to the east take in the wilder slopes of the Peak District National Park. A strong sense of remoteness and exposure.

### Physical and 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 slopes of altitudes above c.240m 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 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. There are some conifer plantations on the banks of Ridgeway and Trentabank reservoirs.



Throughout the type are patches of acid and neutral semi-improved and unimproved grassland. In some cases this is species rich, such as Cessbank Common.

Isolated heathland areas occur across this type. Such as on Whaley Moor where there is a complex of upland grassland, dry heath with heather and bilberry, and clough woodland. A small number of streams issue from the steep slopes of this character area.

### Historic and Cultural Influences

This character type 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, is the ‘Cross o’ the Moor’ near Sutton End Farm which would have indicated the route of a medieval track across the moors towards the east.

### Visual and Perceptual Character

It is a large scale landscape, with the pattern of low stone walls providing the dominant elements of enclosure. Clough woodlands are obvious along water courses. Elsewhere blocks of enclosed woodland or regular shaped coniferous plantations, such as those around the reservoirs on the edge of Macclesfield Forest appear locally dominant. 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 in the Peak District National Park. 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.

## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- The distinctive landform, full of scenic contrasts between the rocky hill summits with open grassland, the enclosed pastoral fields and narrow wooded cloughs which provide a strong sense of place, scenic beauty and a setting for recreation and enjoyment of the landscape.
- Hill summits, some with rocky outcrops, which form local landmarks with panoramic views which provide aesthetic appeal and enjoyment of the distinctive geology (e.g. Tegg's Nose Country Park which is designated as a RIGS).
- Strong sense of place derived from the historic pattern of pastoral fields bounded by dry stone walls which provide a cultural record of the past.
- Rich natural heritage value of varied semi-natural habitats supporting distinctive wildlife species often designated as Local Wildlife Sites for their biodiversity, including of pockets of heathland (e.g. Tegg's Nose and Whaley Moor), semi-improved and unimproved neutral and acid grassland (Cessbank Common) which are rare habitats in the UK.
- The scattering of historic sites such as the medieval wayside cross at Sutton End Farm, indicative of a former ecclesiastical routeways across upland areas and which indicate that these quiet isolated areas have seen human activity since the earliest time providing a sense of history.
- Features associated with the area's industrial heritage which provides a link to the past, including the stone quarries at Tegg's Nose (worked from the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the production of mill stones) and the coal mining remains at Whaley Moor.
- The sparsely settled character of the area of isolated farms linked by narrow lanes which provides an escape from the more settled parts of the Borough.
- Strong local vernacular of stone and slate reflecting the local geology and building traditions which provide aesthetic appeal and a distinct Pennine character.
- Popular trails and local walking routes including the Gritstone Trail which are valued for recreation and health benefits.
- Open landscape with spectacular views over the surrounding countryside which provides a sense of open space and enables appreciation of the wider landscape.
- Remote and isolated landscape, with a strong naturalistic character which provide an experience of tranquillity including dark skies for many people including those living in adjacent urban areas.

### Landscape condition

This is a strongly rural landscape set within a framework of historic fields with strong visual links to the open moorland in the National Park and across the Cheshire Plain. Overall it retains a distinctive sense of place, which remains sparsely settled. The predominantly pastoral character of the area is largely intact, although changing pressures on upland hill farming and increased recreational pressures have resulted in some localised deterioration of landscape condition.

## Forces for change

- **Decline in traditional woodland management practices** in some areas leading to under management of farm copses and decline of veteran trees leading to general deterioration. Grazing pressures on unenclosed clough woodlands linked to practicality of fencing these areas.
- **Restructuring of commercial forestry plantations** within Macclesfield Forest, which has implications for both visual character of these prominent conifer plantations and biodiversity of the woodland and the immediate surroundings.
- **Changes in woodland / tree species composition** as new pests/diseases spread (particularly *phytophthora pathogens* and ash die-back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)). Loss of trees would be particularly noticeable in this landscape type due to the loss density of woodland.
- **Changes in agricultural practices including uncertain future for upland farming** and decline in traditional rural skills to maintain landscape features such as dry stone walls and potentially a further decline in upland farming leading to abandonment of marginal grazing land.
- **Loss of historic field pattern** due to disrepair of drystone walls with resulting increase in use of post and wire fencing.
- **Pressure from farm diversification and changing patterns of land ownership** including the purchase of agricultural holdings by non-farmers resulting in changes in land use and the conversion of farm houses and buildings with the associated suburbanisation of rural properties and their curtilage and the loss of vernacular materials and features.
- **Loss, fragmentation or deterioration of semi-natural habitats due to a lack of appropriate management** including species rich grassland and heathland habitats. Intensification of grazing may lead to loss of neutral or acid grassland. Reduction or abandonment of grazing, often evident in smaller marginal enclosures, may lead to scrub encroachment and the deterioration of heathland.
- **Recreational pressures** particularly visitor pressure at certain honey-pot locations such as Tegg's Park Country Park, leading to the 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.
- **Erosion of built environment character** through unsympathetic renovation leading to the loss of vernacular character.
- **An increase in traffic levels**, particularly on lanes and minor roads, which is likely to diminish levels of tranquillity and pressure to widen or standardise roads further eroding rural character.
- **Pressure for new masts and potentially wind turbines** (if government subsidies are renewed) which would be potentially visible on prominent skylines.

## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

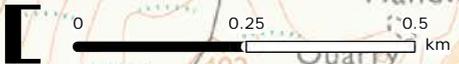
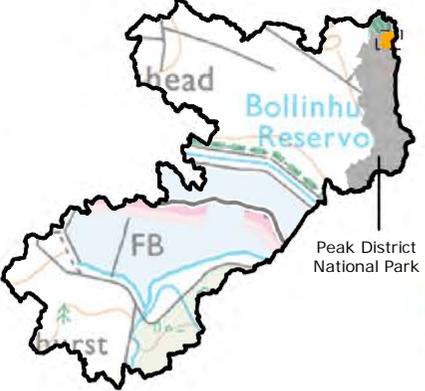
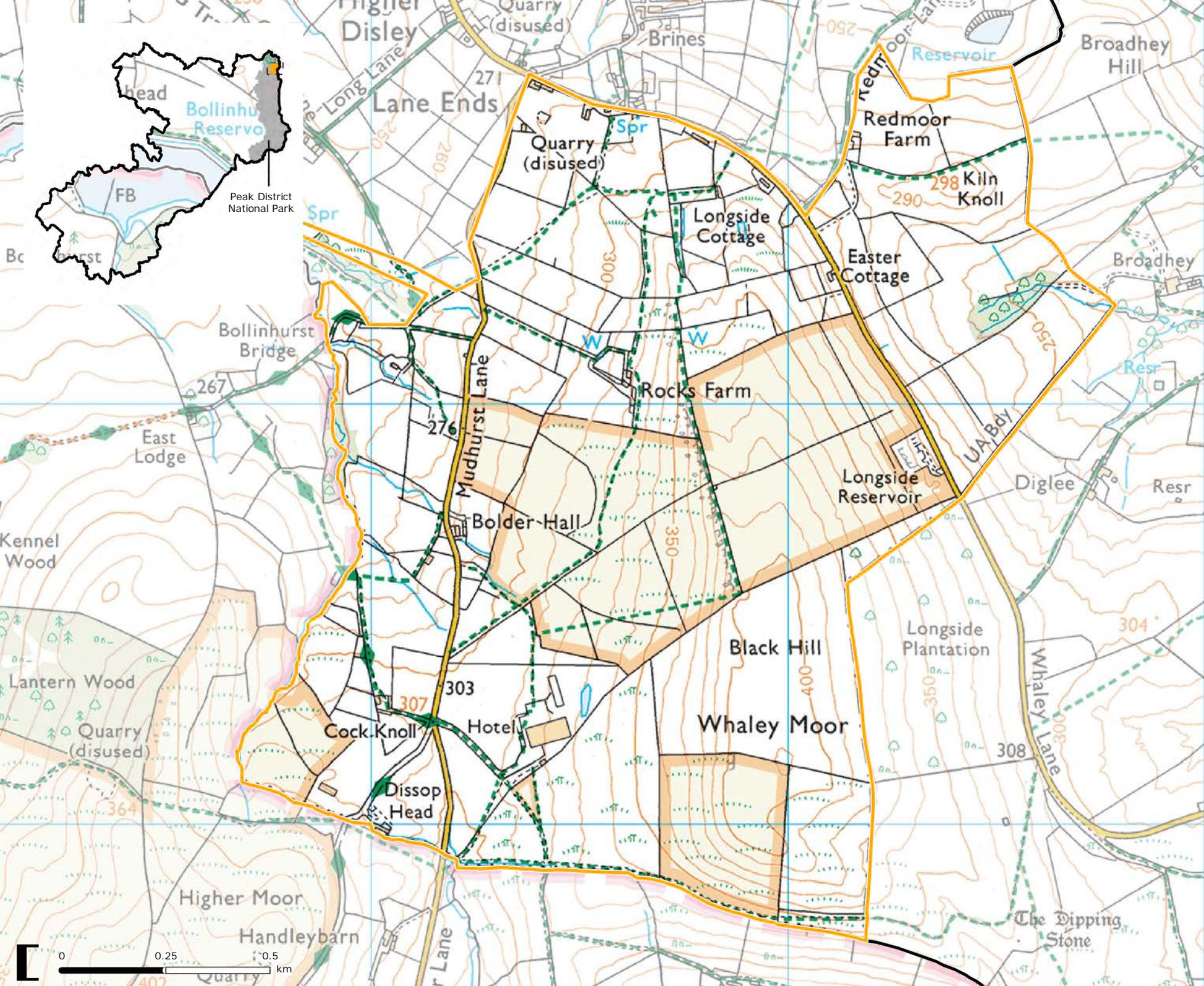
### Overall vision and landscape strategy

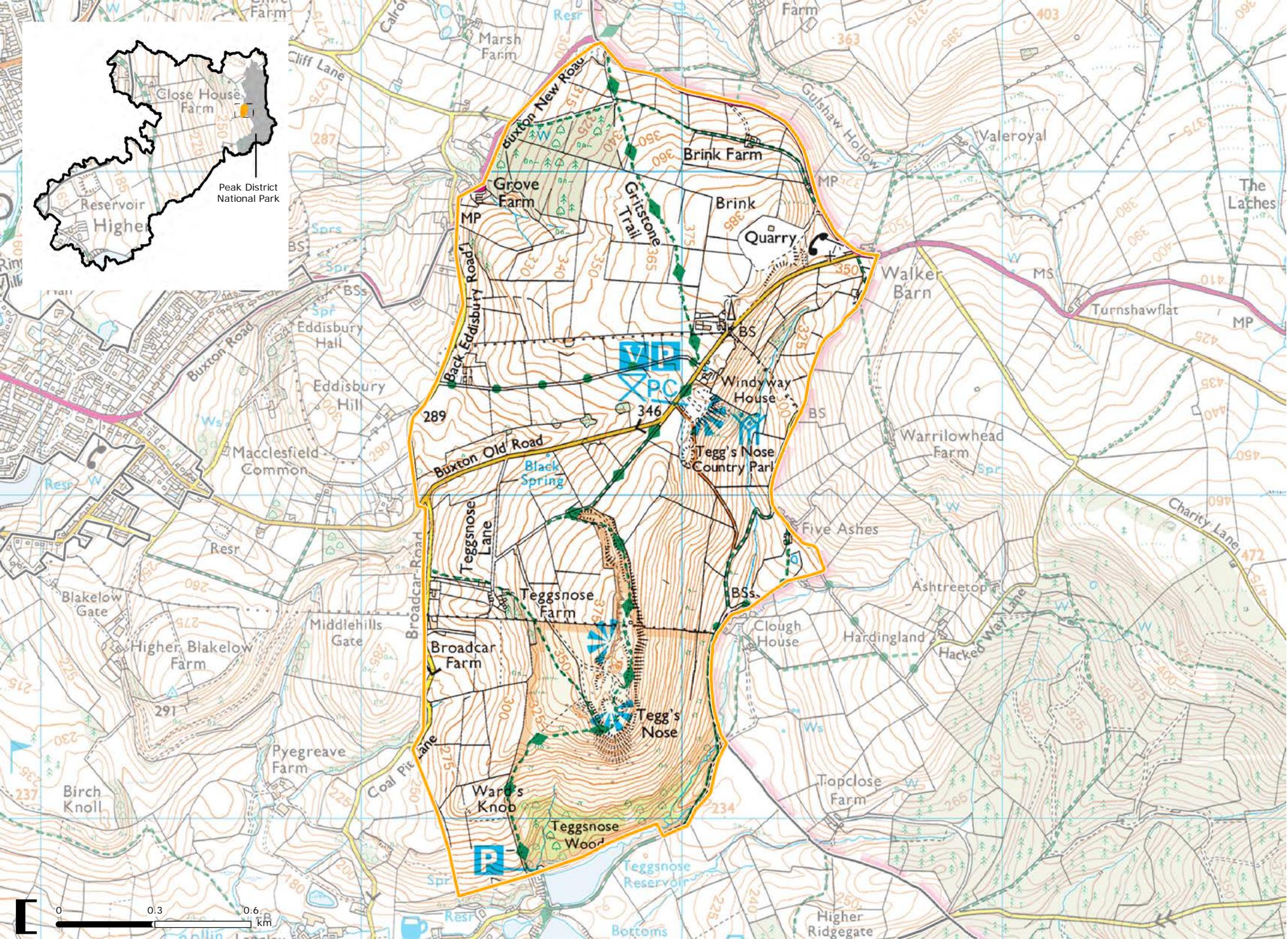
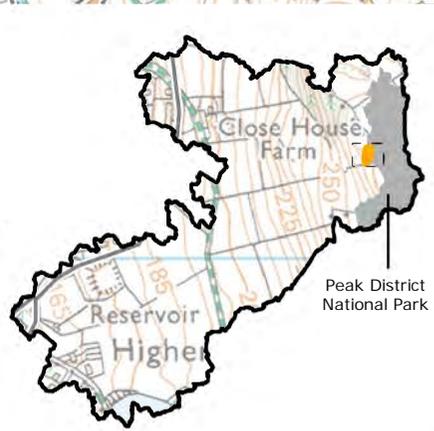
A well-managed pastoral landscape enclosed by a network of dry stone walls marking historic field patterns. The rural farmland is interspersed with valued semi-natural heathland and grassland habitats on higher slopes. Provision for recreation in the landscape is good and aligns with ecological and heritage conservation. The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to conserve the open upland summits and distinctive rocky outcrops with panoramic views, and to restore the traditional pastoral field pattern with dry stone boundaries where these have been lost.

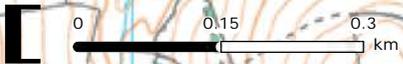
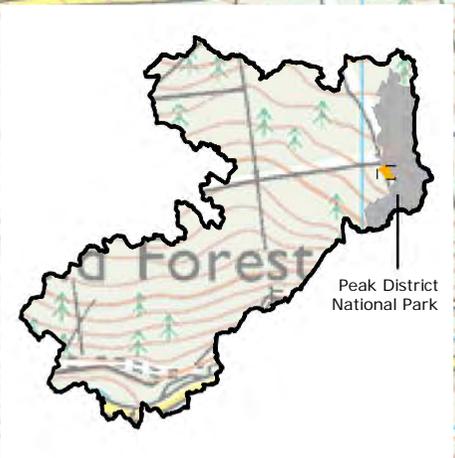
### Landscape Guidance

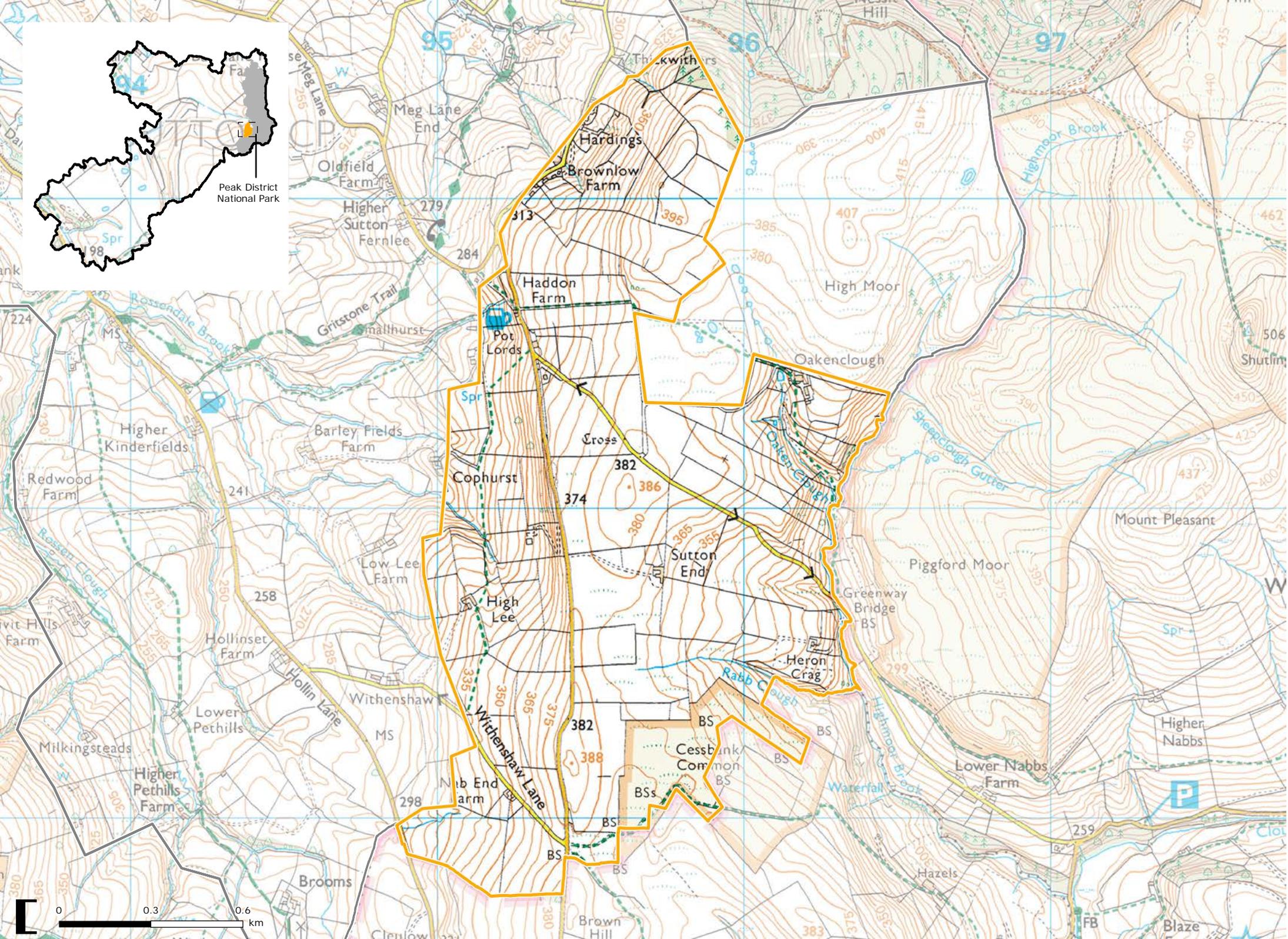
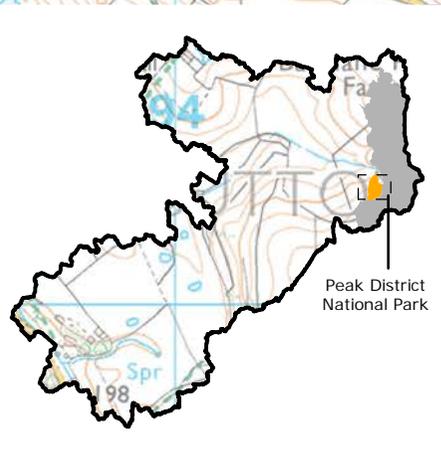
The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:

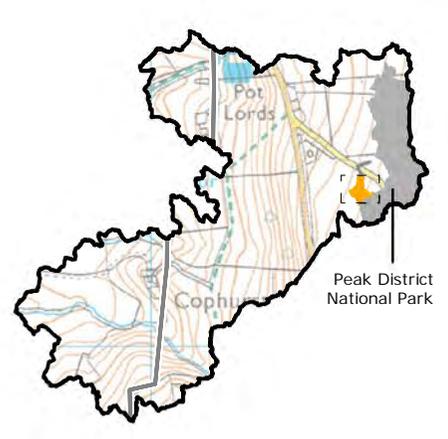
- Protect the distinct geological features of the landscape including the rocky outcrops and implement appropriate management regimes.
- Protect and manage the watercourses for the benefit of flood alleviation, biodiversity and recreation purposes.
- Protect the small pockets of deciduous woodland along the narrow cloughs and around farmsteads through appropriate management. Plan for maintenance of a diverse age and species structure for the benefit of biodiversity and for the replacement of non-native species with native broadleaved species in Macclesfield Forest.
- Protect the landscape's traditional upland pastoral character through continued livestock grazing.
- Retain the small scale historic field patterns and restore the stone walls forming field boundaries where they have been lost or degraded.
- Manage and enhance the valued semi-natural habitats, including the heathland and neutral and acid grassland (which has seen significant losses in the Borough) through appropriate farming practices. Avoid over-grazing and manage scrub to protect the heathland and species rich grassland communities.
- Create, extend and link the upland habitats where feasible, retaining areas of importance for species diversity and balancing this with the need for recreation and enjoyment of the landscape.
- Explore options to expand or create habitats and create linkages between them where feasible.
- Protect and appropriately manage the cultural heritage of the area, including boundary markers and features associated with the former quarries and mines. Promote interpretation of these features where this would not be at odds with conservation of these assets.
- Retain the undeveloped rural character of the landscape, with its sparse settlement pattern of isolated farms and unifying local vernacular of local stone and slate. New development or conversion of farm buildings should retain a rural character by utilising traditional materials and building styles wherever possible.
- Plan strategically for sustainable transport routes to recreational attractions. Avoid introduction of recreation facilities which may detract from the valued perceptual qualities of the landscape.
- Retain the rural character of the narrow roads and avoid the over-engineering of roads which could create an urbanising influence within the strongly rural landscape.
- Maintain and promote the Gritstone Trail and provide further linkages to the rights of way network where appropriate.
- Protect the distinctive upland hill summits, maintaining the openness of views across the surrounding countryside and avoid siting development (both buildings and other structures including masts and wind turbines) on the dramatic slopes or in visually prominent locations.
- Protect the tranquillity and remoteness of the area, including the dark night skies which provide a respite from neighbouring urban areas.



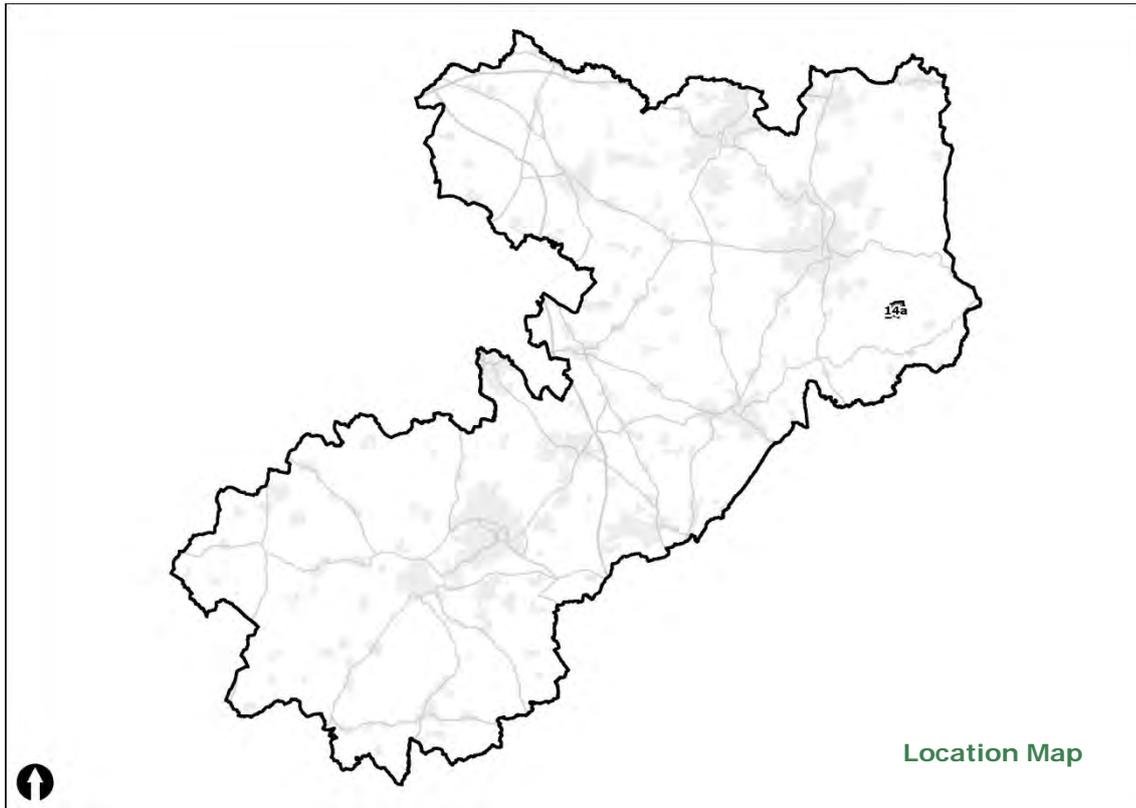








## LCT 14: Moorland Hills and Ridges



### Summary of location and landscape character

The Moorland Hills LCT forms a small area of unenclosed moor, which extends across into the Peak District National Park. It is located on the eastern boundary of the Borough, south of Macclesfield Forest. This wild unsettled landscape has panoramic views to the surrounding hills and over the undulating farmland to the west.

### Representative photographs



### Component LCAs

- LCA 14a: High Moor

*In the 2009 CLCA, this LCA (Shutlingsloe) extended into the Peak District National Park. Areas within the Peak District National Park are excluded from this assessment.*

## Landscape description

### Key Characteristics

#### *Topography, geology and drainage*

- A large scale landscape of rolling moorland and steep slopes interrupted by shallow stream valleys, with elevations ranging between 330m to just over 400m AOD.
- The underlying bedrock is primarily Millstone Grit overlain by large expanses of peat and poor acid peaty soils.
- Pond clusters within the moorland which feed small fast running streams.

#### *Woodland cover*

- A largely treeless landscape, with some linear coniferous woodland along the watercourses.

#### *Land use and field patterns*

- Largely unenclosed open moorland grazed by sheep, occasionally divided into large enclosures by gritstone wall.

#### *Semi-natural habitats*

- Moorland habitats including upland grass and heather heathland and areas of blanket bog where layers of peat are found. When in flower purple patches of heather provide the only relief from the visually dominant grassland.

#### *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- An unsettled landscape crossed by a single right of way. The High Moor Nature Conservation Reserve has restricted access.

#### *Views and perceptual qualities*

- The open moorland offers expansive views to the surrounding hills in the National Park and across the steep hills and ridges to the west. The telecommunication mast at Sutton Common is a significant landmark to the west.
- Overlooked by Shutlingsloe, a steep sided hill which lies within the National Park, whose distinctive profile forms a prominent landmark on the skyline to the east.
- A wild and windswept landscape with little human activity resulting in high levels of tranquillity and remoteness.

### Physical and Natural Influences

This is a landscape of high undulating moorland and steep slopes, with elevations ranging from 330m to a maximum of 407m AOD. Shallow incised stream valleys interrupt the otherwise flat or gently rolling plateau fed by the small ponds which are dotted across the landscape.

The landscape has been shaped by the structure and erosion of the underlying dipping beds of gritstone. This is overlain by large expanses of peat with areas of head (clay, silt, sand and gravel) and small patches of Devensian till on the lower elevations.



The high altitude and heavy rainfall on the moorland has resulted in acidic soils which support moorland vegetation. Blanket bog is characterised by cotton grasses with patches of heather, bilberry and crowberry. Dry heath is the characteristic habitat with a mixture of dwarf shrubs, especially bilberry and heather. Woodland cover is characteristically low.

The upland heaths support bird species such as the golden plover, curlew and many other upland birds.

### Historic and Cultural Influences

This character type is characterised by a lack of obvious human activity – there are no signs of habitation such as buildings. However, the very nature of the type was the result of human activity in the Bronze Age when clearances for arable cultivation on the high ground followed by climatic deterioration led to the degradation of soil quality and slow accumulation of peat. Subsequently the character of the moor has been maintained through regular controlled burning and intensive sheep grazing.

The current farming of the area is based on the open areas of rough grazing which supports stock rearing.



### Visual and Perceptual Character

This is a very large scale, open landscape with extensive views in all directions across undulating moorland. Any boundaries are visually insignificant and comprise low wire fences or drystone walls. There is a marked absence of trees. There are few individual features to attract the eye apart from distant farmsteads. When in flower purple patches of heather provide the only relief from the visually dominant grassland.

The angular summit of Shutlingsloe in the Peak District National Park (outside the character type) is very distinctive. The telecommunication mast at Sutton Common (in the Gritstone Upland LCT) provides a significant landmark in views westward. Otherwise the skyline is dominant with a strong simple profile unencumbered by structures or high vegetation.

## Landscape evaluation

### Valued landscape features

- An iconic barren upland in harmonious juxtaposition with the contrasting wooded green farmland to the west which provides a unique sense of place and a setting for recreation and enjoyment of the landscape.
- A distinct landform of un-vegetated skylines with rounded profiles which offer a topographic contrast to the undulating plain which provides aesthetic appeal.
- Rich and varied semi-natural habitats of upland heathland and blanket mire, grazed by sheep and supporting distinctive flora and fauna valued for biodiversity which are a rare habitat in the UK.
- Important recreational resource with footpaths which provide a place for hill walking and bird watching and enjoyment of the countryside.
- Open and expansive landscape with extensive views which provide a sense of open space and enables appreciation of the wider landscape.
- Sense of isolation and exposure with dark night skies – a wild, bleak, remote and empty landscape which provides an experience of open spaces for many people including those living in adjacent urban areas.

### Landscape condition

Because this landscape is unsettled and remote with restricted access to High Moor, the structure of the open moorland is largely intact. The condition of the heather and grass moorland has experienced over-grazing in the past and the contemporary milder climate and reduced grazing has resulted in some loss of heathland character due to scrub encroachment. Past habitat damage caused by over-grazing, drainage and burning has also affected peat and blanket bog deposits.

### Forces for change

- **Changes in agricultural practices** including historic over-grazing and drainage measures resulting in drying out of blanket bog and low species diversity and current under-grazing due to a decline in traditional upland farming resulting in scrub or woodland encroachment on the open heathland.
- **Loss or deterioration of semi-natural habitats due to the potential effects of climate change.** This may include increased winter precipitation affecting water flows in upland streams and blanket bog, causing damage to habitats and species or drought conditions in summer leading to drying out of blanket bog, effects on peat formation and increased fire risk. Blanket bog is at its climatic limit in the Peak District, with future risks of decreased rainfall leading to drying out.
- **The spread of pests and diseases** in response to a changing climate which may affect species such as heather and bilberry.
- **Recreational pressure** leading to localised vegetation damage and possible disturbance to breeding birds.
- **Pressure for new masts and potentially wind turbines** (if government subsidies are renewed) in locations visible from the open moor.

## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

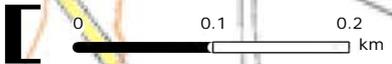
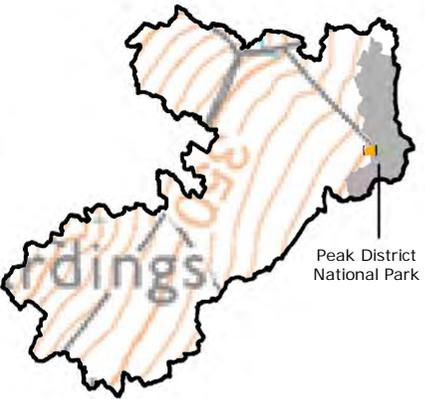
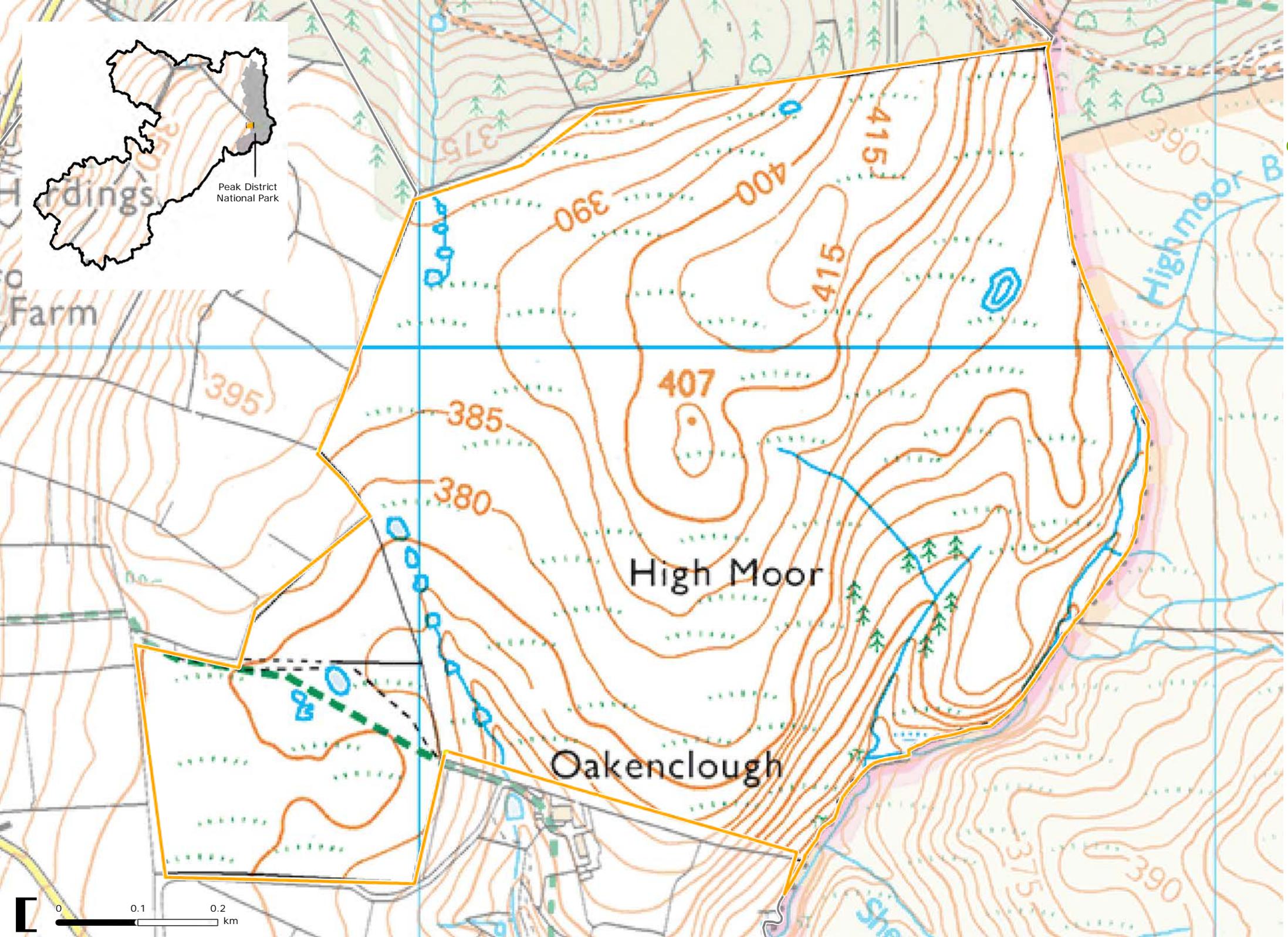
### Overall vision and landscape strategy

A moorland landscape with well-managed valued semi-natural upland heathland and blanket mire habitats. Provision for recreation in the landscape is good and aligns with ecological conservation and provides links with the National Park. The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to conserve the undeveloped distinctive skyline and panoramic views, and to manage the fragile moorland habitats.

### Landscape Guidance

The following points provide guidance for landscape management and built development within the LCT:

- Conserve the open character of the open moorland and avoid siting development of vertical structures or encroachment of woodland on the open slopes.
- Protect and maintain valued semi-natural habitats, including the tracts of heather and grass moorland through sustainable grazing, cutting and burning regimes at appropriate levels to help keep the variety of characteristic species including ground nesting birds.
- Manage and enhance important wetland habitats particularly blanket bogs through preserving and managing water flows and controlling invasive vegetation. This will enhance their roles in regulating stream flows.
- Plan for a provision of rights of way linking to those in the Peak District National Park, while balancing these against ecological concerns.
- Plan for the effect of large scale or vertical developments outside the character type, for example by exploring requirements for landscape scale mitigation to offset or minimise the impacts felt within the LCT.



**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 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Cholmondeley is a grade II\* 19<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 Footslopes* 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.

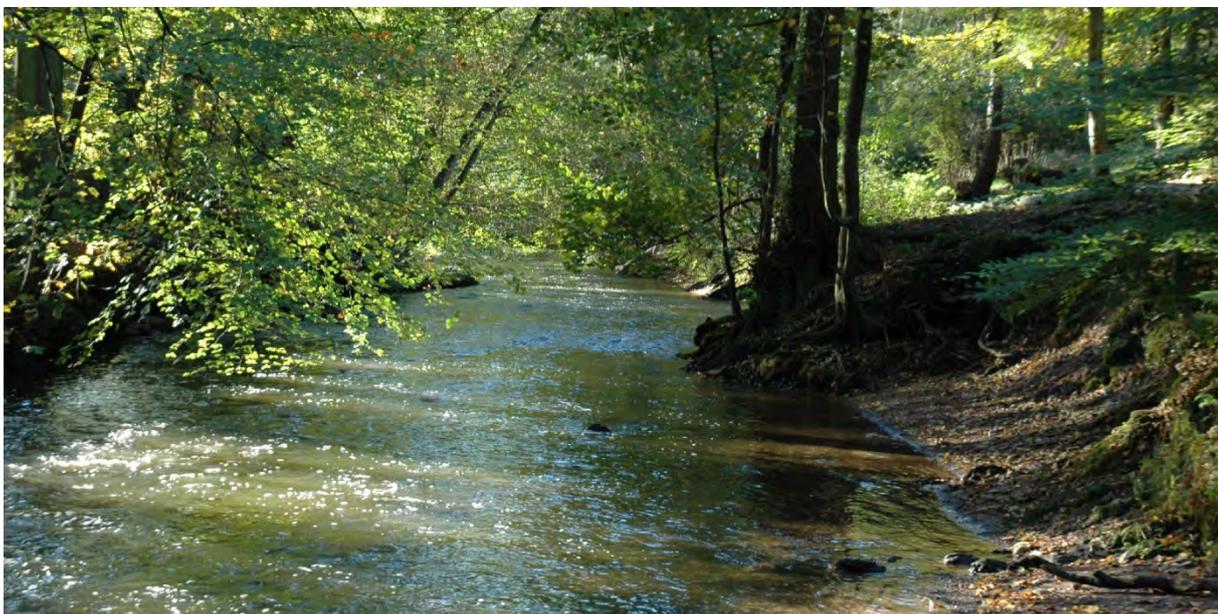
There is no inter-visibility with the surrounding character areas and the valley feels insular and almost remote. Between this point and the A538 further west the character of the area is exclusively that of a small river flowing between high, steep, densely wooded side slopes. A number of footpaths 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 Piginshaw 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.

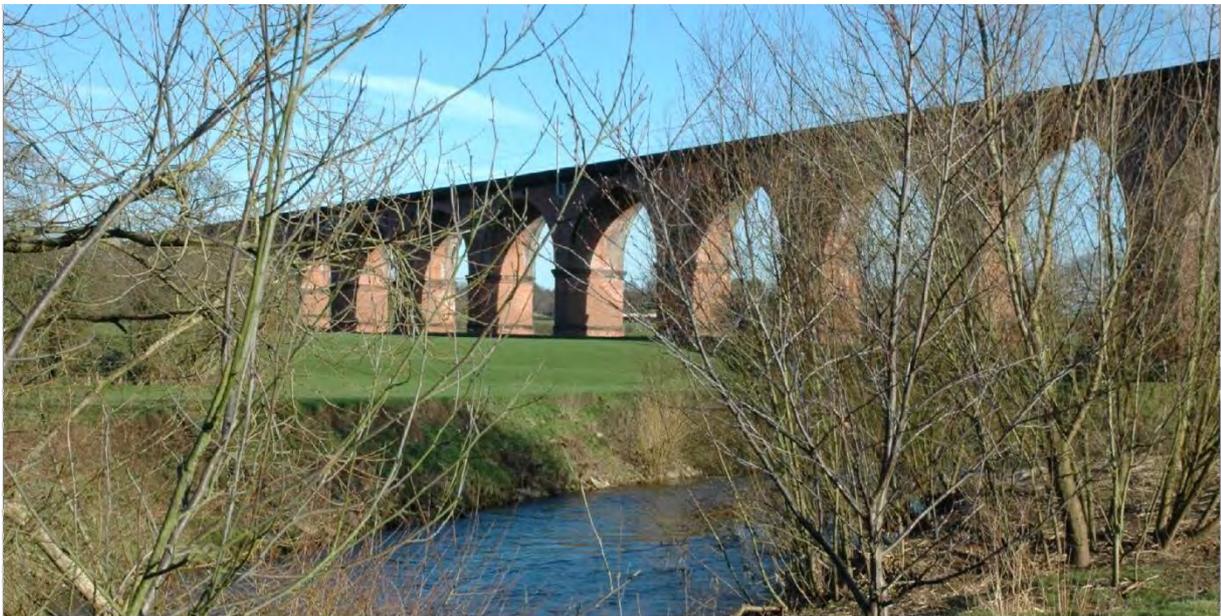
At Radnor Bridge a minor road follows a curving line across the broad valley floor. Linear woodlands follow the contours on both sides of the valley, with a number of individual properties visible amongst the trees. The riverside vegetation is very dense in parts and in places merges into the wooded 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's 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 cownheat, 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 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> century, having been in operation since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> 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 *Windle 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 19<sup>th</sup> century and found to contain a cremation burial, and the Cess Banks barrow, which was excavated in the 19<sup>th</sup> 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 *Shining 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'<sup>1</sup>, 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

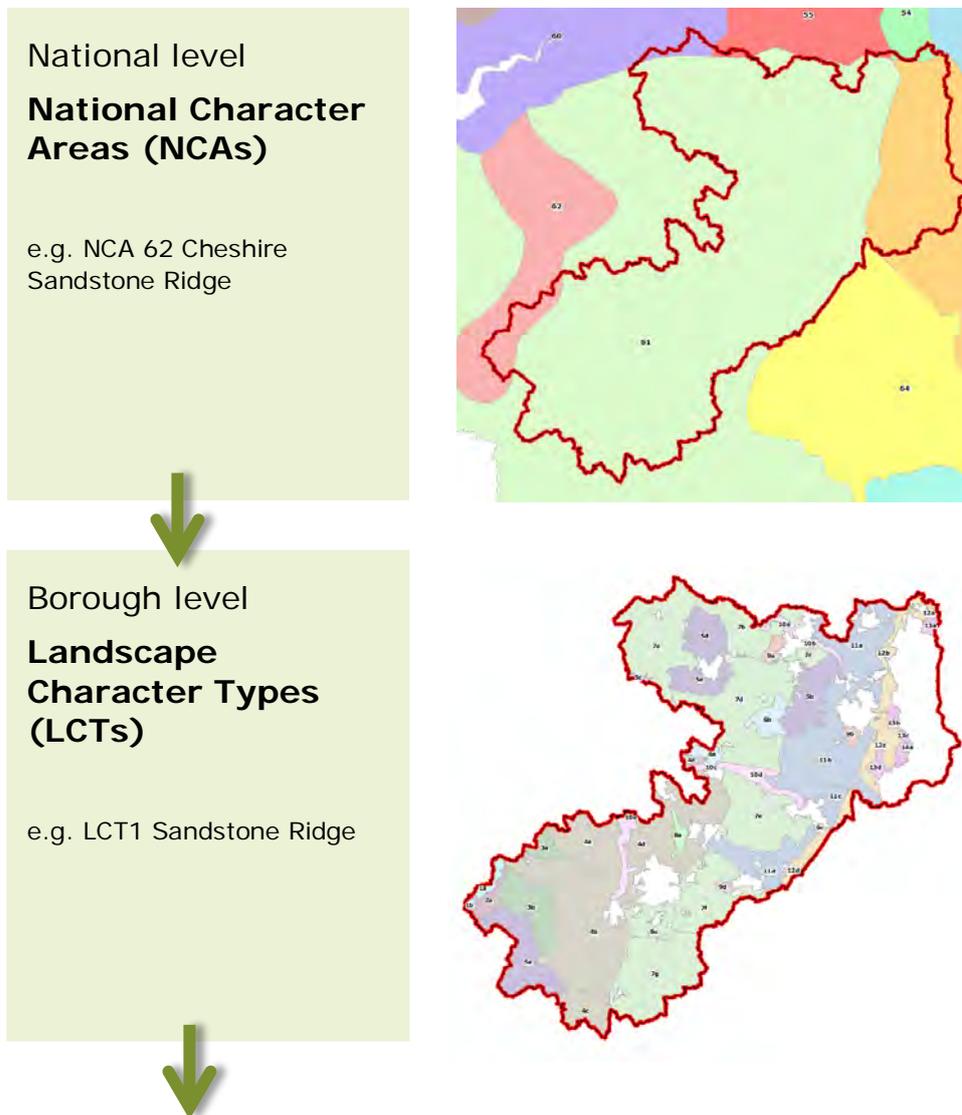
- A2.3 Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at a variety of scales and levels of detail, with the land within Cheshire East included within a hierarchy of landscape characterisation documents from the national down to the local level.
- A2.4 Landscape does not stop at administrative boundaries 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

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

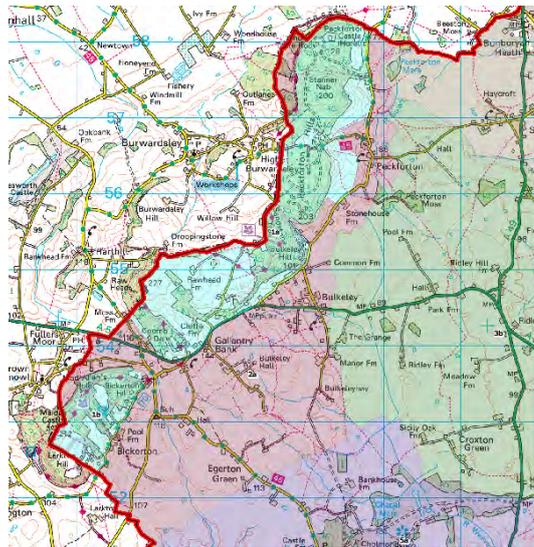
A2.7 The borough is dominated by one NCA, the expansive low-lying flat and gently undulating Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain (NCA 61). To the west of this expansive area is the distinctive Cheshire Sandstone Ridge (NCA62) which runs north-south and rising to the east are the upland slopes 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**



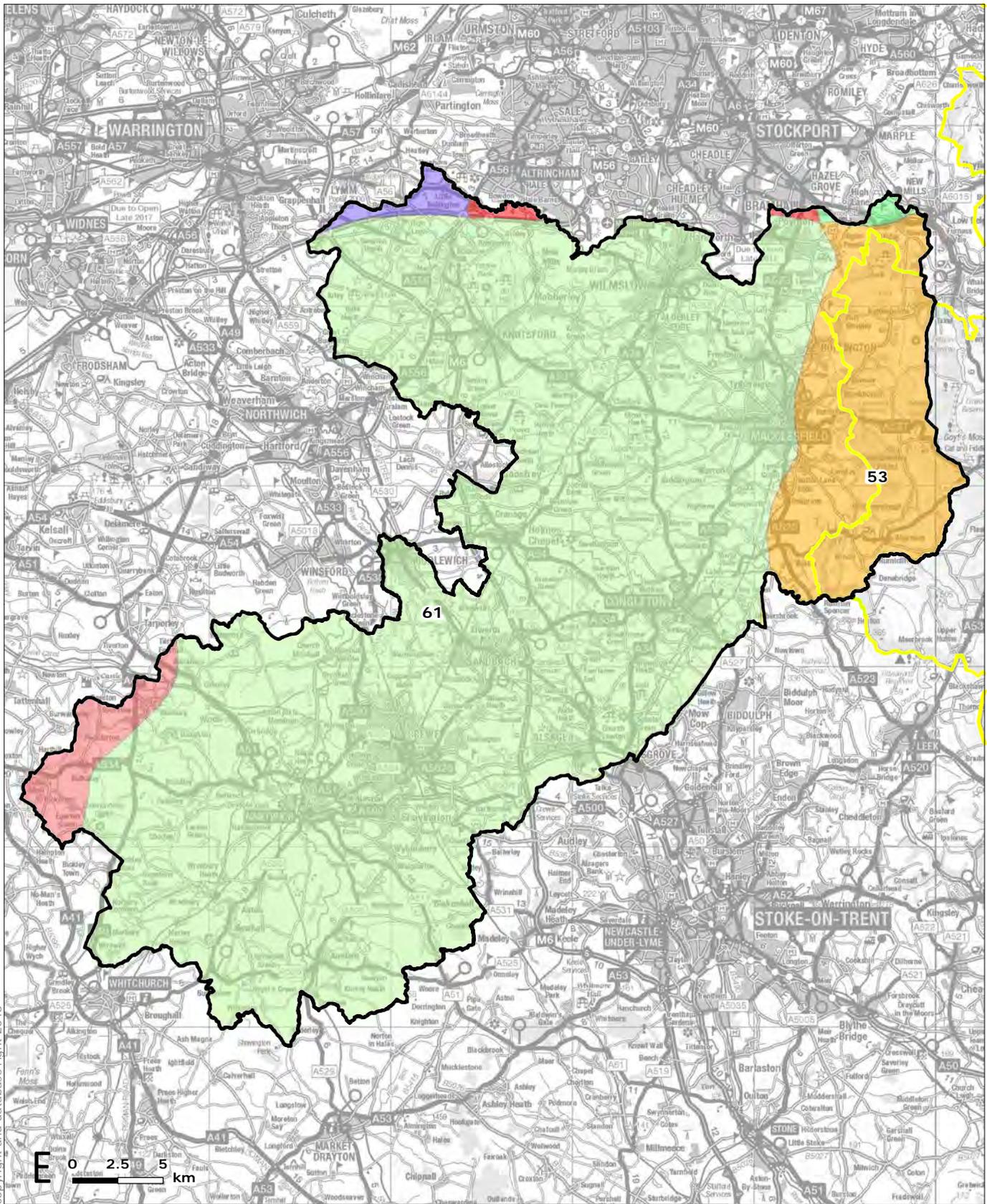
Borough level  
**Landscape  
Character Areas  
(LCAs)**

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

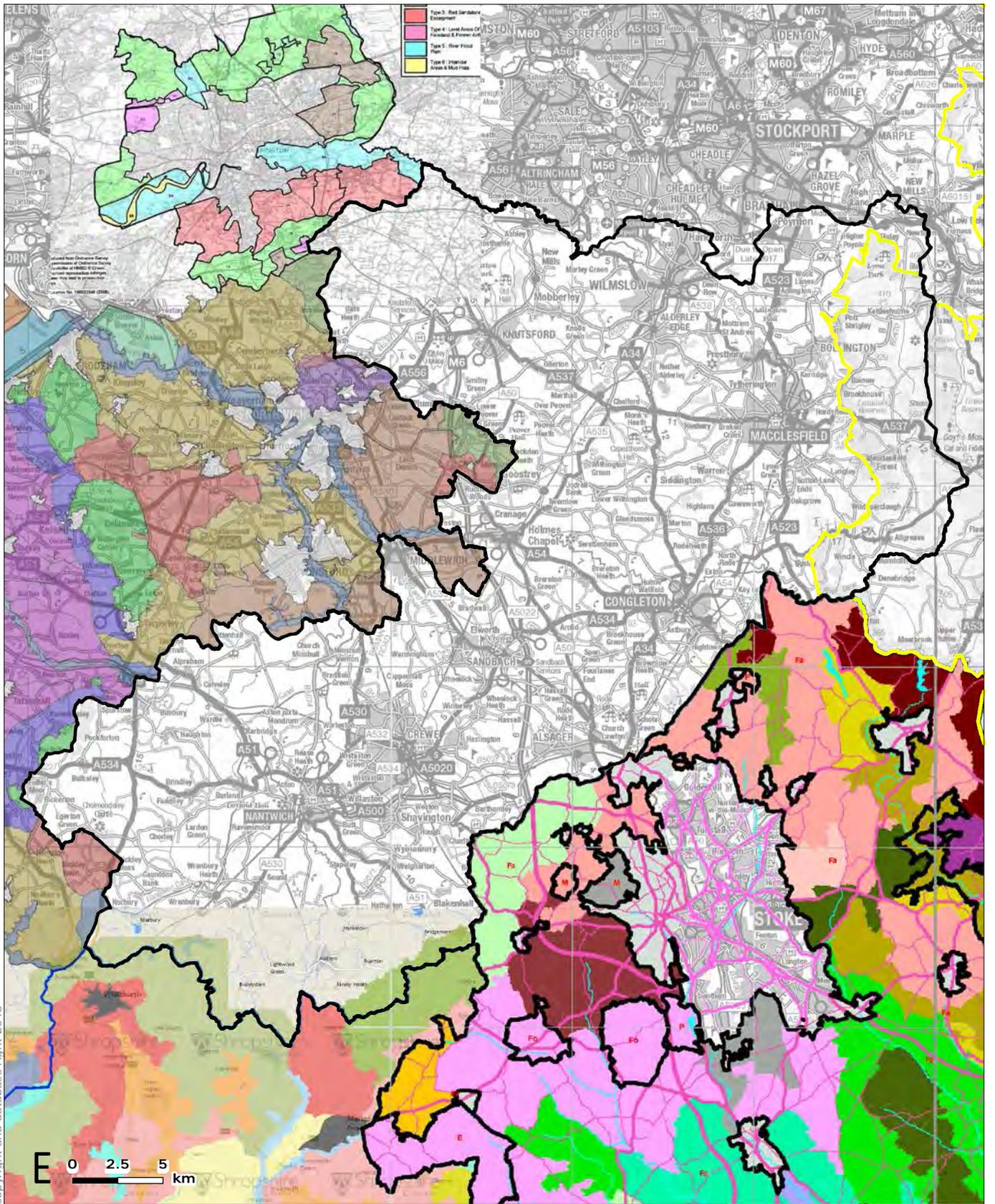
**Cheshire East Landscape Evidence Studies**

**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

Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018

## 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) <sup>2</sup>	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 profiles<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Cheshire HLC (2007),

<sup>3</sup> <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'<sup>4</sup>).

- **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.

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<sup>4</sup> '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				3b
	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	Capesthorne					5b	Capesthorne

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 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> 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.