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# Stockport Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Study

## Produced for Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Final Report
Prepared by LUC
August 2018

*Front cover photograph: The edge of Ludworth Moor, looking back towards Greater Manchester*

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| | | | | | |

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# Contents


**1 Executive Summary 1**
Background 1
Purpose of the Stockport Landscape Character Assessment 1
How was the Landscape Character Assessment prepared? 1
How is this report structured? 2

**2 Introduction and background 4**
Introduction 4
Background and policy context 4
Landscape baseline 6

**3 Methodology 12**
Stage 1: Desk study 12
Stage 2: Stakeholder engagement 20
Stage 3: Field verification 21
Stage 4: Reporting 21

**4 Landscape Character classification and overall Landscape Sensitivity results 23**
Landscape Character Assessment classification for Stockport 23
Overall Landscape Sensitivity Assessment results 23
Next steps: monitoring options for policy 23

**5 Landscape Character Area profiles 32**
A: Woodford 33
B: Heald Green Fringe 39
C: Ladybrook Valley 45
D: River Mersey 51
E: Tame Valley and Brinnington East 56
F: Etherow Parklands 62
G: Goyt Valley 68
H: Offerton and Poise Brook 74
I: Hazel Grove - High Lane 79
J: Marple Bridge 85
K: Mellor Moor 91
L: Ludworth Moor 97

**Appendix 1 : Data and literature list 104**

**Appendix 2 : Workshop report (event held 15.1.18) 106**
List of attendees 115

**Appendix 3 : Glossary 116**


## Tables


Table 2.1: Relevant special qualities of the Peak District National Park 5

Table 3.1: The five-point scale of landscape sensitivity 14

Table 3.2: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment criteria and definitions 16

Table 4.1: Overall landscape sensitivity assessment scores, by LCA 27

## Figures

Figure 2.1: Study Area showing relationship with adjacent authorities and the Peak District National Park 7

Figure 2.2: National Character Areas covering Stockport 9

Figure 2.3: Greater Manchester Landscape Character Types within and outside Stockport 10

Figure 4.1: Stockport's Landscape Character Areas (2018) 25

Figure 4.2: Stockport Landscape Character Areas and Greater Manchester Landscape Character Types 26

Figure 4.3: Overall Landscape Sensitivity Assessment results for residential development / related transport infrastructure 28

Figure 4.4: Overall Landscape Sensitivity Assessment results for small-scale commercial / solar PV developments 29

Figure 4.5: Overall Landscape Sensitivity Assessment results for single, 75m wind turbines 30

# 1

# Executive Summary

# 1 Executive Summary

## Background

1.1 LUC was commissioned by Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) in September 2017 to produce up-to-date landscape evidence to support Stockport's Local Plan.

1.2 This study involved undertaking a critical review of the landscape character evidence included in the UDP Review (2006) to produce a comprehensive and up-to-date assessment of the landscape character and sensitivity of the Borough of Stockport.

## Purpose of the Stockport Landscape Character Assessment

1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) calls for valued landscapes to be protected and enhanced (para 109), also recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services. An up-to-date Landscape Character Assessment is also recommended to support planning decisions and underpin criteria-based policies against which development proposals will be judged, with landscape sensitivity assessments undertaken where expansion options are being considered.

1.4 SMBC is planning for its future through to the year 2035 and is commissioning a series of reports, including this Landscape Character Assessment, to contribute towards the evidence base of the plan. The evidence presented in this LCA will provide the context for policies and allocations within the emerging Local Plan and act as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, as well as being available for other uses by SMBC, partners, stakeholders and communities. This study forms part of a series of reports commissioned to underpin the policies in the new Local Plan for Stockport.

1.5 In addition, the Local Plan will need to have regard to the emerging work on the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) and the proposal for housing and employment numbers, with allocations and strategic priorities set across the whole of Greater Manchester.

1.6 Understanding the character of a place is a key part of ensuring the protection and enhancement of built and natural environments, managing sustainable economic growth and improving the health and wellbeing of local communities.

## How was the Landscape Character Assessment prepared?

1.7 A number of stages were followed in the preparation of the Stockport Landscape Character Assessment, which are summarised as follows:

- **Evidence gathering**: a review of existing evidence on landscape character, including the 2006 Landscape Character Assessment for Stockport, information from Natural England's National Character Areas and assessments available for adjacent authorities, including the Peak District National Park. This stage also collated and reviewed the full range of mapped (GIS) and descriptive information available to inform an understanding of current landscape character and sensitivity across Stockport.
- **Desk-top research:** including a preliminary classification of Stockport into 12 unique 'Landscape Character Areas' (LCAs), followed by the population of desk-based information on current landscape character and sensitivity to three development scenarios (residential/transport infrastructure, light commercial/solar photovoltaic developments and wind turbines).

- **Stakeholder engagement:** a workshop was held in January 2018 to discuss the study and invite inputs from a range of stakeholders and local community representatives.
- **Field verification:** A structured process of field survey verification was undertaken in order to test and refine the outputs from the desk study and stakeholder consultation, both in terms of the landscape classification and the desk-based information.

1.8 The Stockport Landscape Character Assessment was prepared in parallel with the Greater Manchester-wide Landscape Character Assessment (to be published later in 2018), ensuring that the local work undertaken for Stockport complements the more strategic GM-wide study, including through the identified spatial framework of landscape character units.

1.9 The approach taken in the preparation of this Landscape Character Assessment is in line with national guidance published by Natural England (2014)[1].

## How is this report structured?

1.10 The report is structured into a number of chapters, as follows:

- **Chapter 2** provides more a more detailed introduction to this study, including its policy context and an overview of the existing landscape baseline.
- **Chapter 3** sets out the methodology followed to produce the Landscape Character Assessment and linked criteria-based landscape sensitivity study.
- **Chapter 4** presents the Landscape Character Assessment classification for Stockport, overall landscape sensitivity results and suggests monitoring options for policy.
- **Chapter 5** includes the full assessment profiles for the 12 Landscape Character Areas identified for Stockport.
- **Appendix 1** lists the main data and information sources used to inform this study.
- **Appendix 2** comprises a report of the workshop held on 15 January 2018 to inform the Landscape Character Assessment.

[1] For further information please see https://www.gov.uk/guidance/landscape-and-seascape-character-assessments

# 2 Introduction and background

*Image: The Middlewood Way, near Marple*

# 2 Introduction and background

## Introduction

2.1 LUC was commissioned by Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) in September 2017 to produce up-to-date landscape evidence to support Stockport's Local Plan.

2.2 This study involved undertaking a critical review of the existing (2006) landscape character evidence to produce a comprehensive and up-to-date assessment of landscape character and sensitivity of the Borough of Stockport. The new landscape evidence will provide the context for policies and allocations within the emerging Local Plan and act as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, as well as being available for other uses by SMBC, partners, stakeholders and communities. This study forms part of a series of reports commissioned to underpin the policies in the new Local Plan for Stockport.

2.3 Understanding the character of a place is a key part of ensuring the protection and enhancement of built and natural environments, managing sustainable economic growth and improving the health and wellbeing of local communities.

## Background and policy context

### The European Landscape Convention

2.4 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) 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.

2.5 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"*

2.6 Signing up to the ELC means that the UK is committed on the one hand to protect, manage and develop our landscapes and on the other to raise landscape awareness, involvement and enjoyment amongst local and visiting communities. Landscape character is defined by the ELC as *'a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse'.*

### National planning policy context

2.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in 2012 and under review at the time of writing, 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"*.

2.8 The NPPF (2012) calls for valued landscapes to be protected and enhanced (para 109), also recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services. An up-to-date Landscape Character Assessment is also recommended to support planning decisions and underpin criteria-based policies against which development proposals will be judged, with landscape sensitivity assessments undertaken where expansion options are being considered.

2.9 SMBC is planning for its future through to the year 2035 and is commissioning a series of reports, including this Landscape Character Assessment, to contribute towards the evidence base of the plan. The Local Plan will need to have regard to the emerging work on the Greater Manchester

Spatial Framework (GMSF) and the proposal for housing and employment numbers, with allocations and strategic priorities set across the whole of Greater Manchester.

2.10 As set out in the 2012 NPPF, all local authorities need to identify a local housing target and to plan for its delivery over the plan period. The emerging work on the GMSF will set the overall housing figure for Stockport, and will provide large-scale housing allocations where necessary. At this stage, Stockport's requirement is 19,300 additional new dwellings between 2015 and 2035, although it is subject to change. This works out at 965 dwellings per year. In addition to the Greater Manchester authorities, the neighbouring authority Cheshire East has an adopted Local Plan Strategy that identifies both 'Sites' and 'Strategic Locations'. Of relevance to Stockport is the 'North Cheshire Growth Village, Handforth East' which includes the provision of around 1,500 new homes, up to 12 hectares of employment land, and new mixed-use local centre(s).

2.11 This Landscape Character Assessment provides evidence to ensure that new development within and neighbouring Stockport takes into account the character and qualities of the landscape that contribute to local distinctiveness.

### Relationship with the Peak District National Park

2.12 The Peak District National Park lies immediately adjacent to the east of the borough (just beyond Ludworth Moor), and wraps around to form a distinctive upland landscape setting to the eastern and south-eastern parts of Stockport. **Figure 2.1** shows the location of the National Park in the context of Stockport. Designated as the first National Park in England and Wales in 1952 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the two statutory National Park purposes, as updated in the Environment Act 1995, are:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park; and
- to promote the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

2.13 The Environment Act also requires National Park Authorities to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities when carrying out the above duties. Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011 sets out the 'Duty to Co-operate' which applies to all local planning and national park authorities in the planning of sustainable development, including through the Local Plan process.

2.14 Although this study does not cover land within the Park, consideration has been made of the visual and character relationships between Stockport and the National Park, as well as the seven 'special qualities' that underpin the Peak District's national landscape designation. Those of key relevance to this study in Stockport are set out in **Table 2.1** below.

**Table 2.1: Relevant special qualities of the Peak District National Park[2]**

| Special quality | Aspects of particular relevance to this study |
|---|---|
| **Beautiful views created by contrasting landscapes and dramatic geology** | *…' uninterrupted moorland views across miles of blanket bog, heather and peat and out over the neighbouring cities'.*<br>*'Experience the unique position of the Peak District National Park, with beautiful views surrounded by urban life'.* |
| **Undeveloped places of tranquillity and dark night skies within reach of millions** | *…'an accessible backdoor wilderness allowing millions of people to find a welcome sense of tranquillity'.*<br>*'For generations, working people have escaped from towns and cities to visit the Peak District National Park and enjoy its tranquillity'.*<br>*'Being immersed in tranquil, undeveloped places allows people to step outside their busy lives and be refreshed. It improves mental and physical wellbeing and is one of the most sought-after qualities of the countryside'.* |

[2] Taken from the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2018-23 (Final Consultation draft, March 2018).

| Special quality | Aspects of particular relevance to this study |
|---|---|
| **An inspiring space for escape, adventure, discovery and quiet reflection** | *'The Peak District National Park is bordered on all sides by major towns and cities. It is within an hour's travel for around 16 million people, providing a rural oasis in stark contrast to its urban neighbours'.* |
| **Vital benefits for millions of people that flow beyond the landscape boundary** | *'Being surrounded by urban areas makes the Peak District National Park's protected space of even greater significance as a breathing lung and green oasis for the millions of people who live in close proximity. The landscape character flows beyond the National Park's boundary, creating a valued setting and positively impacting the surrounding areas'.*<br><br>*'Live downstream and benefit from a reduced risk of flooding due to the Peak District National Park's upstream habitats, which store and slow the flow of water'.* |

2.15 The study has also referred to the information contained in the Peak District Landscape Strategy (2009)[3] for those parts of Stockport that lie adjacent to the National Park. The Landscape Strategy is based on a framework of eight landscape character areas representing broad areas of landscape across the National Park which share a common identity, e.g. the Dark Peak, within which are a number of landscape character types defined based upon the pattern of natural and cultural characteristics. Eastern Stockport lies adjacent to the Dark Peak Western Fringe landscape character area and component Enclosed Gritstone Upland landscape character type in the National Park's assessment.

2.16 Each Landscape Character Type defined for the National Park includes a strategy and guidelines for protecting and managing the landscape into the future. The Strategy is due to be reviewed after 10 years of its publication (2019).

## Landscape baseline

### Existing landscape evidence base (prior to this study)

2.17 Stockport's 1998 UDP Proposals Map defined the boundaries of a Special Landscape Area covering a large part of the countryside in the eastern part of the borough. In the UDP Review (adopted May 2006), the Council revised its approach to landscape protection to reflect the advice of the Countryside Agency (Natural England's predecessor) to recognise that all landscapes have intrinsic qualities and values and require treatment appropriate to their particular characteristics.

2.18 This resulted in the publication of a Landscape Character Assessment for the borough to support Policies LCR 1.1 and LCR 1.1a of the UDP Review, concentrating on the areas of landscape within the Green Belt, including the four main river valleys draining through Stockport. These areas are classified and described using a framework of 13 Landscape Character Areas. This information has formed the basis for this study, to bring the landscape evidence up-to-date and in line with current best practice in the process of Landscape Character Assessment[4].

### Other national and regional landscape evidence

2.19 England is divided into a total of 159 National Character Areas (NCAs)[5], which identify areas based on their landscape character, biodiversity and geodiversity. Stockport falls within four NCAs:

- NCA 51: Dark Peak
- NCA 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe
- NCA 55: Manchester Conurbation

[3] http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/looking-after/strategies-and-policies/landscape-strategy

[4] As set out in Natural England (2014) *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types

[5] For more information and to access the NCA profiles, please see: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/587130

Stockport Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 2.1: Study Area

Stockport Borough
Neighbouring authority
Peak District National Park

Map Scale @A3: 1:70,000

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CB:KS EB:Stenson_K LUC FIG2_1_10115_Study_Area_A3L 27/03/2018

Source: NE, OS

- NCA 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain

2.20 NCA 53: South West Peak lies immediately adjacent to High Lane and the Ladybrook valley in the south-east of Stockport. Please see the map at **Figure 2.2.**

2.21 At a more regional level, this study was running in parallel with a separate contract (also undertaken by LUC) to create a new Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment for Greater Manchester (GM), across all ten local authorities, including Stockport. This GM-wide study sits as a tier above the local-scale work, with larger 'Landscape Character Types' (LCTs) representing the main types of landscape found across Greater Manchester. The Greater Manchester classification is spatially compatible with the local-scale Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) defined for Stockport (as presented in Chapter 4), and reference is provided to the GM LCTs in the LCA profiles provided at Chapter 5. A map of the Greater Manchester LCTs within and adjoining Stockport is included at **Figure 2.3** at the end of this chapter**.**

2.22 For areas of Stockport bordering Cheshire East, consideration was made of the emerging Landscape Character Assessment & Strategy and Local Landscape Designations review for Cheshire East (2018, LUC). Similarly, High Peak District's Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document was considered, although this information is now relatively dated (adopted in 2006). Please note that the other neighbouring Greater Manchester authorities – Tameside and Manchester Districts – do not have their own Landscape Character Assessments, but are included in the GM-wide work referred to above.

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CB:KS EB:Stenson_K LUC FIG2_2_10115_NCA_A3L 30/05/2018

Source: NE, OS

Stockport Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 2.2: Stockport in the context of National Character Areas

- Stockport Borough
- Neighbouring authority
- Peak District National Park

National Character Areas

- 51: Dark Peak
- 53: South West Peak
- 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe
- 55: Manchester Conurbation
- 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain

Map Scale @A3: 1:70,000

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Stockport Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 2.3: Greater Manchester Landscape Character Types

Map Scale @A3: 1:60,000

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CB:KS EB:Stenson_K LUC FIG2_3_10115_GM_LCT_A3L 31/05/2018 Source: NE, OS

# 3
# Methodology

*Image: The Peak Forest Canal in the Goyt Valley*

# 3 Methodology

3.1 This new landscape evidence comprises an integrated landscape character and sensitivity assessment for Stockport, based on a framework of geographically unique Landscape Character Areas. The key stages of the method followed are set out below, with the results set out in Chapter 4.

## Stage 1: Desk study

### Evidence gathering

3.2 All relevant documents and available GIS data were compiled and reviewed to form the starting point and overall context for the study. These are set out in Appendix 1.

### Preliminary landscape classification

3.3 Feedback from the Council was sought on the framework of 13 Landscape Character Areas defined by the 2006 UDP Proposals Map. In general they were felt to be fit for purpose in terms of scale, and represented the main areas of non-urban landscapes found across the borough. The first task was to review this classification against up-to-date spatial information, including in particular the current extent of urban development (which is outside the scope of this study) and the boundaries of the Green Belt.

3.4 Some amendments were made to boundaries as a result of this task in agreement with SMBC – largely to achieve better alignment with the Green Belt, to include other open, non-urban areas (which are not currently within the Green Belt), and to exclude some areas which have been developed since the 2006 assessment was completed. It was also agreed to merge the two formerly separate but directly adjacent LCAs for the Tame Valley and Brinnington East – the latter small area including a tributary of the Tame and being of consistent character to the wider Tame Valley. It was also agreed to alter the classification of the higher ground in the south-east of the Goyt Valley to become part of the adjacent Marple Bridge LCA, as the elevated/undulating land cut by wooded cloughs surrounded by rural farmland is more consistent with the character or the Marple Bridge LCA.

3.5 The updated Landscape Character Assessment for Stockport therefore comprises the following 12 Landscape Character Areas:

- A: Woodford
- B: Heald Green Fringe
- C: Ladybrook Valley
- D: River Mersey
- E: Tame Valley and Brinnington East
- F: Etherow Parklands
- G: Goyt Valley
- H: Offerton - Poise Brook
- I: Hazel Grove- High Lane
- J: Marple Bridge
- K: Mellor Moor
- L: Ludworth Moor

3.6 These are mapped at **Figure 4.1** in the next chapter.

*Relationship with the Greater Manchester Landscape Character Assessment*

3.7 As explained in the previous chapter, this study was ongoing at the same time as a wider contract to produce a Landscape Character Assessment for Greater Manchester, which includes Stockport.

Therefore, the Stockport LCAs were considered as part of the broader framework of GM-wide Landscape Character Types (nesting as a finer grained, geographic-specific classification below the GM LCTs) which flow across the boundaries of the ten constituent local authorities. The relationship between the Stockport LCAs and GM LCTs is shown at **Figure 4.2** in the next chapter.

### Confirming the approach to assessing landscape sensitivity

*Background and definitions*

3.8 There is currently no prescribed method for assessing landscape sensitivity. However, the *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity* (Scottish Natural Heritage and the former Countryside Agency, 2004) is a discussion paper on landscape sensitivity and capacity and has informed LUC's approach over the years.

3.9 Paragraph 4.2 of Topic Paper 6 states that:

*'Judging landscape character sensitivity requires professional judgement about the degree to which the landscape in question is robust, in that it is able to accommodate change without adverse impacts on character. This involves making decisions about whether or not significant characteristic elements of the landscape will be liable to loss... and whether important aesthetic aspects of character will be liable to change'.*

3.10 In this study the following definition of sensitivity has been used, which is based on the principles set out in Topic Paper 6. It is also compliant with the third edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA 3, 2013) as well as definitions used in other landscape sensitivity studies of this type:

***Landscape sensitivity is the relative extent to which the character and quality of an area (including its visual attributes) is likely to change.***

*Types of development considered*

3.11 The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for Stockport assesses the landscape of each LCA in terms of its sensitivity to the 'principle' of built development, without knowing the specific size, configuration or exact location (as this would be detailed at the planning application level). The assessment considers the types of development deemed most likely to come forward across Stockport in the coming years. The three development scenarios considered across all Stockport LCAs are:

- **Residential development and related transport infrastructure** – defined as two to three storey semi-detached or detached houses with gardens. This scenario also considers landscape sensitivity to new transport infrastructure in support of residential developments (A/B roads and rail branch-lines). *Note the sensitivity judgement relates to the principle of these development types and does not equate to an assessment of the cumulative effects of both scenarios being developed in tandem.*
- **Light commercial development / ground-mounted solar PV developments** – defined as small-scale office, light industry or small sheds (B1/B2 use). This scenario also considers ground-mounted solar PV developments occupying a footprint of no more than 10ha. *Note the sensitivity judgement relates to the principle of these development types and does not equate to an assessment of the cumulative effects of both scenarios being developed in tandem.*
- **Wind turbines** –single, medium-scale wind turbines of approximately 75m to blade tip[6]. *Note this assessment is based on an average turbine height of 75m to blade tip – turbines higher or lower than this height would need to be assessed separately. While this study provides an initial indication of landscape sensitivity to medium-scale wind turbine developments at the LCA scale, it does not replace the requirement for a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) to be undertaken for individual development proposals.* LCA D: River Mersey was not assessed against this scenario as per the Energy Opportunities plan in the Core Strategy.

[6] For comparison, the Hat Works mill chimney is 61m high, the Lancashire Hill towers are 61m, Stockport Viaduct is 34m and Houldsworth Mill (Reddish) chimney is 33.5 metres high.

3.12 In addition, a scenario for large-scale commercial development – defined as large distribution /warehousing / logistics (B8 use) – was considered for LCA E: Tame Valley and Brinnington East – the only LCA with an employment land site allocation coming through the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework.

*A criteria-based assessment*

3.13 In line with the recommendations in Topic Paper 6 and NPPF, the landscape sensitivity assessment is based on an assessment of landscape character using carefully defined criteria – drawing on the experience of other similar studies in Leicestershire and elsewhere in the UK. Criteria selection is based on the attributes of the landscape most likely to be affected by development, and considers both 'landscape' and 'visual' aspects of sensitivity. The criteria used by this study are defined in **Table 3.2**Error! Reference source not found., providing examples of the types of landscape character or features that could indicate low or high sensitivity against each.

*Making an overall judgement on levels of landscape sensitivity*

3.14 A five-point rating from 'low' to high' landscape sensitivity is used to illustrate overall levels of landscape sensitivity – i.e. how susceptible the character and quality of the landscape would be to change. These definitions are shown in the **Table 3.1** below.

**Table 3.1: The five-point scale of landscape sensitivity**

| Sensitivity judgement | Definition |
|---|---|
| **High** | The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are highly sensitive to change. |
| **Moderate-high** | The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change. |
| **Moderate** | Some of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change. |
| **Low-moderate** | Few of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change. |
| **Low** | The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are robust and are unlikely to be subject to change. |

3.15 **As with all assessments based upon data and information which is to a greater or lesser extent subjective, some caution is required in its interpretation.** This is particularly to avoid the suggestion that certain landscape features or qualities can automatically be associated with certain sensitivities – the reality is that an assessment of landscape sensitivity is the result of a complex interplay of often unequally weighted variables (i.e. 'criteria').

3.16 Each LCA is assessed against each criterion in turn, with explanatory text indicating specific locations, features or attributes of lower or higher sensitivity. This culminates in an overall landscape sensitivity judgement (using the five-point scale above), taking account of the inter-relationships between the different criteria and the specific characteristics of the landscape being assessed. These overall judgements are also displayed in summary tabular and mapped format for all LCAs in **Chapter 4** with LCA-specific detail provided in the individual profiles at **Chapter 5.**

3.17 Landscape sensitivity often varies within LCAs, with areas exhibiting of higher and lower sensitivity. It is therefore very important to take note of the explanatory text supporting the assessments in each LCA profile in Chapter 5, particularly the boxes entitled *'Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity'* and *'Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities'*. Whilst the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment results provide an initial indication of landscape sensitivity, they **should not be interpreted as definitive statements on the suitability of individual sites for a particular development**. All proposals will need to be assessed on their own merits

through the planning process, including – where required – through proposal-specific Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs).

### Table 3.2: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment criteria and definitions

| Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criteria | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Physical character (including topography and scale)*** | | | | |
| This considers the shape and scale of the landform, landscape pattern and landscape elements in relation to the scale of potential development. Smooth, gently undulating or flat landforms are likely to be less sensitive to development than a landscape with a dramatic landform, distinct landform features or incised valleys with prominent slopes. This is because developments may mask distinctive topographical features which contribute to landscape character.<br>This criterion considers how developments fit with the scale of the landform (understanding the scale of the development proposed is important when applying this criterion). Larger scale, simple landforms are likely to be less sensitive to larger scale developments than smaller scale, enclosed landforms (where large scale developments could appear out of scale with the underlying landform). Conversely, smaller developments may be able to be screened within enclosed landforms, therefore reducing landscape sensitivity. Existing small-scale features in the landscape in the form of existing buildings or trees will influence the scale of development that can be accommodated in the landscape. | | | | |
| **Low sensitivity** | **Low-moderate sensitivity** | **Moderate sensitivity** | **Moderate-high sensitivity** | **High sensitivity** |
| *e.g. the landscape has smooth, gently undulating or featureless landform with uniform large-scale landscape pattern and low density of overlying landscape features.* | | *e.g. the landscape has an undulating landform and some distinct landform features; it is overlain by a mixture of small-scale and larger scale field patterns and a moderate density of small-scale landscape features.* | | *e.g. the landscape has a dramatic landform or distinct landform features that contribute positively to landscape character; the area has a high density of small-scale landscape features and is overlain by a small-scale field pattern.* |
| ***Natural character*** | | | | |
| This criterion considers the 'naturalistic' qualities of the landscape in terms of coverage of semi-natural habitats and valued natural features (e.g. trees, hedgerows) which could be vulnerable to loss from development. Areas with frequent natural features (including large areas of nationally or internationally designated habitats) result in increased sensitivity to development, while landscapes with limited natural features (including intensively farmed areas or areas with high levels of existing development) will be less sensitive. | | | | |
| **Low sensitivity** | **Low-moderate sensitivity** | **Moderate sensitivity** | **Moderate-high sensitivity** | **High sensitivity** |
| *e.g. much of the landscape is intensively farmed or developed with little semi-natural habitat coverage and few valued natural features.* | | *e.g. there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats and features found in parts of the landscape, whilst other parts are intensively farmed or developed.* | | *e.g. large areas of the landscape are nationally or internationally designated for their nature conservation interest; there is a frequent occurance of valued natural features across the landscape.* |

## Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criteria

***Historic landscape character***

This considers the extent to which the landscape has 'time-depth' (a sense of being an historic landscape, with reference to the Historic Landscape Characterisation) and/or the presence of heritage assets that are important to landscape character (i.e. Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, listed buildings, archaeological features and remains or other features listed in the landscape character assessment).

Landscapes with small-scale, more irregular field patterns of historic origin are likely to be more sensitive to the introduction of modern development than landscapes with large, regular scale field patterns because of the risk of losing characteristic landscape patterns.

| Low sensitivity | Low-moderate sensitivity | Moderate sensitivity | Moderate-high sensitivity | High sensitivity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *e.g. A landscape with relatively few historic features important to the character of the area and little time depth (i.e. large intensively farmed fields).* | | *e.g. A landscape with some visible historic features of importance to character, and a variety of time depths.* | | *e.g. A landscape with a high density of historic features important to the character of the area and great time depth (i.e. piecemeal enclosure with irregular boundaries, ridge and furrow)* |

***Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development***

This considers the overall settlement form and character of existing settlement edges and considers whether development in the landscape would be in accordance with the general pattern, setting and form of current development. It also relates to the landscape pattern associated with existing settlement edges (where relevant), for example if it is well integrated by woodland cover or open and exposed to form a 'hard edge' to the adjoining landscape.

This criterion also considers the extent to which the landscape contributes to the identity and distinctiveness of settlements, by way of its character and/or scenic quality, for example by providing an attractive backdrop/ setting, or playing an important part in views from a settlement. This also considers the extent to which the area contributes to a perceived gap between settlements (the loss of which would increase coalescence).

| Low sensitivity | Low-moderate sensitivity | Moderate sensitivity | Moderate-high sensitivity | High sensitivity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *e.g. the area does not contribute positively to the setting of the settlement or play a separation role. Development in the assessment area would have a good relationship with the existing settlement form/ pattern, and could provide the opportunity to improve an existing settlement edge.* | | *e.g. the area provides some contribution to the setting of the settlement by providing, or plays some part in views from the settlement, or play a role in the perception of a gap between settlements. Development in the assessment area may be slightly at odds with the settlement form/ pattern, and may adversely affect the existing edge to some extent.* | | *e.g. the area provides an attractive backdrop/ setting to the settlement, plays an important part in views from the settlement, or forms an important part in the perception of a gap between settlements. Development in the assessment area would have a poor relationship with the existing settlement form/pattern, and would adversely affect an existing settlement edge (which may be historic or distinctive).* |

## Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criteria

**Views and visual character including skylines**

This considers the visual prominence of the assessment area, reflecting the extent of openness or enclosure in the landscape (due to landform or land cover), and the degree of intervisibility with the surrounding landscape (i.e. the extent to which potential development would be visible).

Visually prominent landscapes are likely to be more sensitive to development than those which are not so visually prominent. Landscapes which are visually prominent and inter-visible with adjacent landscapes (both urban and rural) are likely to be more sensitive to development than those which are more hidden or less widely visible.

It also considers the skyline character of the area including whether it forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline. Prominent and distinctive and/or undeveloped skylines, or skylines with important landmark features, are likely to be more sensitive to development because new buildings/structures may detract from these skylines as features in the landscape. Important landmark features on the skyline might include historic features or monuments.

| Low sensitivity | Low-moderate sensitivity | Moderate sensitivity | Moderate-high sensitivity | High sensitivity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *e.g. the area is enclosed/visually contained and/or has a low degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes and the area does not form a visually distinctive or important undeveloped skyline* | | *e.g. the area is semi-enclosed or has some enclosed and some open areas. It is likely to have some inter-visibility with surrounding landscapes, and may have some visually distinctive or undeveloped skylines within the area.* | | *e.g. the area is open and/or has a high degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes, and/or the area forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline.* |

***Access and recreation***

This criterion considers the presence of features and facilities which enable enjoyment of the landscape, and the importance of these. They may include public rights of way, bridleways, open access land, and outdoor tourist / visitor attractions with facilities. Recreation activities such as walking, cycling, horse riding or more formal recreation activities where enjoyment of the landscape is important to the experience. Importance of features may be indicated by designation as long distance footpaths or recreation routes, national cycle routes, proximity to areas of local population, presence of National Trust land ownership, and outdoor tourist attractions often marked on Ordnance Survey maps.

| Low sensitivity | Low-moderate sensitivity | Moderate sensitivity | Moderate-high sensitivity | High sensitivity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *e.g. recreation value limited to community sports facilities and local open spaces.*<br><br>*Limited provision of access routes which are likely to be of community importance, e.g. local footpaths, bridleways and limited areas of open access land.* | | *e.g. landscapes with green spaces or recreation areas valued in the local context.*<br><br>*Well-used landscapes with some access land, footpaths and public rights of way, possibly with long distance recreation routes or presence of land under National* | | *e.g. landscapes regionally important for access and enjoyment of the landscape, e.g. with popular outdoor tourist attractions, country parks, land under National Trust ownership, or a concentration of locally important outdoor attractions with visitor* |

| Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criteria | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Trust ownership.* | | *facilities.*<br>*Presence of well-connected long distance routes and public rights of way linking centres of population.* |
| ***Perceptual and experiential qualities***<br>This considers qualities such as the rural character of the landscape (traditional land uses with few modern human influences), sense of remoteness or tranquillity. Landscapes that are relatively remote or tranquil (due to freedom from human activity and disturbance and having a perceived naturalness or a traditional rural feel with few modern human influences) tend to increase levels of sensitivity to development compared to landscapes that contain signs of modern development. High scenic value and dark night skies also add to sensitivity in relation to this criterion. This is because development will introduce new and uncharacteristic features which may detract from a sense of tranquillity and or remoteness/naturalness. | | | | |
| **Low sensitivity** | **Low-moderate sensitivity** | **Moderate sensitivity** | **Moderate-high sensitivity** | **High sensitivity** |
| *e.g. the area is significantly influenced by development/ human activity, where new development would not be out of character.* | | *e.g. A landscape with some sense of rural character, but with some modern elements and human influences.* | | *e.g. A tranquil or highly rural landscape, lacking strong intrusive elements. A landscape of high scenic value with dark skies and a high perceived degree of rural character and naturalness with few modern human influences.* |

### Desk-based LCA character and sensitivity assessments

3.18 All available spatial and descriptive information was interrogated against the framework of 12 Landscape Character Areas, to draft into descriptive/evaluative profiles to form the basis for the final versions (following the stakeholder engagement and fieldwork verification stages) presented in Chapter 5. The profiles are structured into four main sections as follows:

- **Overview map, representative photographs and a summary description** of the LCA's location and overall character.
- **Landscape character description**, comprising bullet-pointed key characteristics under the following sub-headings for ease of reference:
    - Topography, geology and drainage
    - Land use and field patterns
    - Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover
    - Archaeology and cultural heritage
    - Settlement, road pattern and rights of way
    - Views and perceptual qualities
- **Landscape evaluation**, comprising the following sections:
    - Summary of current landscape condition
    - A bullet-pointed list of the forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition – both past and current forces, and potential future ones.
- **Landscape sensitivity assessment**, comprising the following:
    - An assessment of landscape sensitivity against the individual criteria set out in Table 3.2, using the five-point low to high sensitivity scale described at Table 3.1.
    - An overall assessment of landscape sensitivity for the LCA as a whole to the relevant development scenarios as described at para 3.11 – again using the five-point scale of sensitivity.
    - Notes on any key variations in landscape sensitivity – outlining any locations within the LCA which might be of higher or lower sensitivity to the overall assessment score
    - Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities: a bullet-point summary of the landscape features or attributes that would be most sensitive to change
    - Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within the LCA.

3.19 The draft desk-based information compiled at this stage was used as a basis for stakeholder engagement and field verification, as described below.

## Stage 2: Stakeholder engagement

3.20 A stakeholder workshop was held at SMBC headquarters on 15 January 2018 to:

- Explain the aims and objectives of the project and links to the Local Plan process;
- Describe the process of landscape character assessment and present the classification of Stockport Landscape Character Areas;
- Through break-out sessions, gauge views from attendees on aspects of importance to character, key views, and forces for change currently and potentially impacting on landscape condition in future.

3.21 A report from the workshop is included at **Appendix 2**, including a list of attendees – a total of 30 community and statutory representatives were present. The helpful local information obtained from this event was considered during the next stages of the study and fed into the LCA analysis presented at Chapter 5.

Stakeholder engagement workshop held on 15 January 2018

## Stage 3: Field verification

3.22 A structured process of field survey verification was undertaken in order to test and refine the outputs from the desk study and stakeholder consultation, both in terms of the landscape classification (including definition of key characteristics) and the desk-based information populated into draft LCA profiles. Each LCA was visited in turn, with a number of viewpoints visited and public rights of way walked (in addition to driving through and around each LCA on public highways) to record information and take photographs.

3.23 The field survey exercise was particularly helpful in gathering information on current landscape condition, relationships with existing development locations and patterns, aesthetic/perceptual qualities (e.g. feelings of tranquillity) and important views. The latter considered both views within each LCA and visual relationships between adjacent urban areas, surrounding authority areas and the Peak District National Park. It also noted any important landmark features/ areas within each LCA that would be sensitive to change.

3.24 As well as the two representative photographs selected for each LCA profile in Chapter 4, the field survey exercise resulted in the collation of a large number of high resolution photographs of Stockport's landscapes, made available as a project output for SMBC to use for a range of future purposes.

## Stage 4: Reporting

3.25 This report was produced in draft at the end of March 2018, for consideration by SMBC. Comments received were accounted for in this final report.

# 4

# Landscape Character classification and overall Landscape Sensitivity results

*Image: The countryside surrounding the Grade II listed church of St Thomas, Mellor*

# 4 Landscape Character classification and overall Landscape Sensitivity results

## Landscape Character Assessment classification for Stockport

4.1 The framework of 12 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), as described in the previous chapter, is shown at **Figure 4.1**, comprising:

- A: Woodford
- B: Heald Green Fringe
- C: Ladybrook Valley
- D: River Mersey
- E: Tame Valley and Brinnington East
- F: Etherow Parklands
- G: Goyt Valley
- H: Offerton - Poise Brook
- I: Hazel Grove- High Lane
- J: Marple Bridge
- K: Mellor Moor
- L: Ludworth Moor

4.2 **Figure 4.2** shows how these relate to the broader Greater Manchester-wide classification of Landscape Character Types (LCTs), of which four cover the landscapes of Stockport:

- Unenclosed Uplands and Fringes (Dark Peak) – covering Stockport LCAs L and K
- Pennine Foothills (Dark Peak) – covering Stockport LCAs F, I and J
- Urban Fringe Farmland – covering Stockport LCAs A, B, I and H
- Urban Fringe Valleys – covering Stockport LCAs C, D, E, G and H

4.3 The individual LCA profiles provided in Chapter 5 also provide cross-reference to the GM LCTs.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity Assessment results

4.4 **Table 4.1** provides a summary of the overall judgement scores for each of the LCAs by the three development scenarios. These scores are also shown in mapped format at **Figures 4.3 to 4.5.**

**Please note that the overall judgement scores should always be interpreted in conjunction with the information contained in the detailed LCA profiles at Chapter 5.**

## Next steps: monitoring options for policy

4.1 This new Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment could provide the basis for monitoring the effects of SMBC's new Local Plan policies. While it would be possible to define a suite of monitoring indicators based on the key characteristics defined for each LCA, this would be onerous and would require field assessment to inform annual monitoring reports.

4.2 A more realistic option would be to base policy monitoring on the development scenarios underpinning the landscape sensitivity assessment. Therefore four indicators are proposed:

- The number of residential planning applications granted in LCAs classified as being of moderate-high / high landscape sensitivity to this development scenario;
- The number of light commercial development planning applications granted in LCAs classified as being of moderate-high / high landscape sensitivity to this development scenario;
- The number of ground mounted, solar PV development applications (10ha or less) granted in LCAs classified as being of moderate-high / high landscape sensitivity to this development scenario; and
- The number of wind turbines (single, 75m to blade tip) applications granted in LCAs classified as being of moderate-high / high landscape sensitivity to this development scenario.

4.3 At this stage it is suggested that monitoring effort concentrates on those landscapes assessed as of greatest sensitivity to the different development scenarios; however, SMBC may like to monitor against all five sensitivity categories (low to high) for a fuller picture.

4.4 This approach would allow the effectiveness of Local Plan policies in steering development to locations least likely to be adversely affected in landscape character/quality terms to be monitored.

Stockport Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 4.1: Landscape Character Areas

Stockport Borough

Neighbouring authority

Peak District National Park

Landscape Character Areas

- LCA A: Woodford
- LCA B: Heald Green Fringe
- LCA C: Ladybrook Valley
- LCA D: River Mersey
- LCA E: Tame Valley and Brinnington East
- LCA F: Etherow Parklands
- LCA G: Goyt Valley
- LCA H: Offerton - Poise Brook
- LCA I: Hazel Grove - High Lane
- LCA J: Marple Bridge
- LCA K: Mellor Moor
- LCA L: Ludworth Moor

Map Scale @A3: 1:60,000

LUC

STOCKPORT METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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CB:KS EB:Stenson_K LUC FIG4_1_10115_LCA_A3L 30/05/2018

Source: NE, OS

# Stockport Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 4.2: Landscape Character Areas and Greater Manchester Landscape Character Types

- Stockport Borough
- Neighbouring authority
- Peak District National Park
- Landscape Character Areas

A Woodford

B Heald Green Fringe

C Ladybrook Valley

D River Mersey

E Tame Valley and Brinnington East

F Etherow Parklands

G Goyt Valley

H Offerton - Poise Brook

I Hazel Grove - High Lane

J Marple Bridge

K Mellor Moor

L Ludworth Moor

Greater Manchester Landscape Character Types

- Pennine Foothills (Dark Peak)
- Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes (Dark Peak)
- Urban Fringe Farmland
- Broad Urban Fringe Valleys
- Incised Urban Fringe Valleys

Map Scale @A3: 1:60,000

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CB:KS EB:Stenson_K LUC FIG4_2_10115_LCA_and_GM_LCT_A3L 31/05/2018

Source: NE, OS

**Table 4.1: Overall landscape sensitivity assessment scores, by LCA and development scenario**

| LCA | Scenario | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure | Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories) / solar PV developments (up to 10ha) | Wind turbines (75m to blade tip) |
| A – Woodford | **L-M** | **L-M** | **M-H** |
| B – Heald Green Fringe | **L-M** | **L-M** | **M-H** |
| C – Ladybrook Valley | **M** | **M** | **H** |
| D – River Mersey | **L-M** | **M** | **Not assessed** |
| E – Tame Valley and Brinnington East* | **M** | **M** | **H** |
| F – Etherow Parklands | **M** | **M-H** | **M-H** |
| G – Goyt Valley | **M-H** | **M-H** | **H** |
| H – Offerton-Poise Brook | **M** | **M** | **M-H** |
| I – Hazel Grove - High Lane | **M** | **M-H** | **M-H** |
| J – Marple Bridge | **M** | **M-H** | **M-H** |
| K - Mellor Moor | **M-H** | **H** | **M-H** |
| L – Ludworth Moor | **M-H** | **H** | **M-H** |

*This LCA is also assessed for landscape sensitivity to large-scale commercial development (large distribution / warehousing / logistics (B8 use)), due to an employment land allocation within the area. The assessment resulted in an overall **moderate-high** sensitivity scoring for this development scenario in the Tame Valley and Brinnington East LCA.

# Stockport Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 4.3: Overall Landscape Sensitivity Results by LCA: 2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure

- Stockport Borough
- Neighbouring authority
- Peak District National Park

Landscape Character Areas

- A Woodford
- B Heald Green Fringe
- C Ladybrook Valley
- D River Mersey
- E Tame Valley and Brinnington East
- F Etherow Parklands
- G Goyt Valley
- H Offerton - Poise Brook
- I Hazel Grove - High Lane
- J Marple Bridge
- K Mellor Moor
- L Ludworth Moor

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

- Low-Moderate
- Moderate
- Moderate-High

Map Scale @A3: 1:60,000

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CB:KS EB:Stenson_K LUC FIG4_3_10115_Sensitivity_Resi_and_Transport_A3L 30/05/2018

Source: NE, OS

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CB:KS EB:Stenson_K LUC FIG4_4_10115_Sensitivity_Small_Commercial_or_Solar_PV_A3L 30/05/2018

Source: NE, OS

Stockport Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 4.4: Overall Landscape Sensitivity Results by LCA: Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories) / solar PV developments (up to 10ha)

- Stockport Borough
- Neighbouring authority
- Peak District National Park

Landscape Character Areas

- A Woodford
- B Heald Green Fringe
- C Ladybrook Valley
- D River Mersey
- E Tame Valley and Brinnington East
- F Etherow Parklands
- G Goyt Valley
- H Offerton - Poise Brook
- I Hazel Grove - High Lane
- J Marple Bridge
- K Mellor Moor
- L Ludworth Moor

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

- Low-Moderate
- Moderate
- Moderate-High
- High

Map Scale @A3: 1:60,000

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CB:KS EB:Stenson_K LUC FIG4_5_10115_Sensitivity_Wind_Turbines_A3L 30/05/2018

Source: NE, OS

Stockport Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 4.5: Overall Landscape Sensitivity Results by LCA: Wind turbines (75m to blade tip)

Stockport Borough

Neighbouring authority

Peak District National Park

Landscape Character Areas

A Woodford

B Heald Green Fringe

C Ladybrook Valley

D River Mersey

E Tame Valley and Brinnington East

F Etherow Parklands

G Goyt Valley

H Offerton - Poise Brook

I Hazel Grove - High Lane

J Marple Bridge

K Mellor Moor

L Ludworth Moor

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate-High

High

Not assessed

Map Scale @A3: 1:60,000

LUC

STOCKPORT METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

# 5 Landscape Character Area profiles

*Image: The Macclesfield Canal within the Ladybrook valley*

# 5 Landscape Character Area profiles

5.1 The following chapter contains the full profiles for each Landscape Character Area, including the Landscape Character Assessments and Landscape Sensitivity Assessments. Use the contents table below to navigate to the profiles by clicking on the hyper-linked page number.

### Contents table


| Landscape Character Area (code and name) | Page number (Ctrl+click to navigate to profile) |
|---|---|
| A: Woodford | 33 |
| B: Heald Green Fringe | 39 |
| C: Ladybrook Valley | 45 |
| D: River Mersey | 51 |
| E: Tame Valley and Brinnington East | 56 |
| F: Etherow Parklands | 62 |
| G: Goyt Valley | 68 |
| H: Offerton-Poise Brook | 74 |
| I: Hazel Grove – High Lane | 79 |
| J: Marple Bridge | 85 |
| K: Mellor Moor | 91 |
| L: Ludworth Moor | 97 |

## A: Woodford

### Representative photographs

Traditionally grazed farmland with in-field oaks west of Woodford

Long views south into Cheshire East

### Location and summary of overall character

**This Landscape Character Area falls within GM Landscape Character Type: Urban Fringe Farmland.**

Located at the extreme south of the borough fringing the suburb of Kitts Moss and containing the linear settlement of Woodford, this urban fringe landscape comprises a mix of land uses. This includes the large former Woodford Aerodrome (current being developed for housing), pockets of pasture in hedged fields, golf courses, amenity land uses, pony paddocks and the Adlington Industrial Estate. There are visual links with the rural landscapes of Cheshire East immediately to the south, including Alderley Edge, and beyond to high land within the Peak District National Park.

## Landscape character description

### Key characteristics

*Topography, geology and drainage*

- Gently rolling topography between 80 and 95m AOD, draining to the River Dean valley (forming the administrative boundary) to the south.
- Aerodrome site characterised by its flat, open landform, enclosed to the south by an elevated ridgeline before dropping down to the Dean valley below.
- Bedrock geology of interbedded Triassic sandstone and conglomerate, topped by glacial till. Alluvial sand and gravel deposits are associated with the River Dean.
- Predominately loamy soils with some sandy areas reflecting underlying geology. The agricultural land is classed as Grade 3[7].

*Land use and field patterns*

- South-eastern half of the LCA dominated by Woodford aerodrome with high fencing, now under development for housing (Woodford Garden Village).
- Agricultural land under improved pasture; a mixture of dairying, sheep farming and pony paddocks.
- Piecemeal medium-scale fields of 19th and 20th century origin. Amalgamation has created larger fields in places; conversely sub-division into pony paddocks is a feature of the rural landscape.
- Regular field pattern, with rectangular fields. The HLC indicates some earlier irregular enclosures remain west of the aerodrome. Tall hedges are intact in places, with gaps and replacement by fencing common.
- Other land uses include golf courses and patches of amenity grassland around schools.

*Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover[8]*

- Mature hedgerow and in-field oak standards, linking to the hedgerow network (including species-rich lengths) to create locally valued habitat networks.
- Individual trees across the landscape combine with occasional small deciduous woodland blocks to produce wooded skylines.
- Frequent field ponds and ditches form locally important landscape and ecological features within agricultural land.

*Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- Woodford is famously associated with the Avro factory, opened in 1925 as a production centre for military aircraft (including the Lancaster and Vulcan bombers). Closing in 2011, it is now home to the Avro Heritage Museum.
- LCA includes a scattering of Listed Buildings, such as the Grade II red-brick estate farm buildings at Old Hall and New Hall Farms, and the Grade II Christ Church (Woodford), with prominent tower and typical Victorian architecture.

*Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- Linear urban fringe settlement strung along roads, including the main A5149 which intersects the LCA.
- Development generally of 20th century origin, with 1930s semi-detached housing characteristic (vernacular styles reflected in new development at Woodford Garden Village).
- Small, traditional farms found on the periphery of settlement.
- Industrial warehousing associated with the aerodrome and Adlington Industrial Estate.
- Public footpaths provide access from settlement into the surrounding countryside.

*Views and perceptual qualities*

- Elevated land affords views south into the rural landscape of Cheshire East, including the wooded slopes of the Bollin Valley and the distinctive ridgeline of Alderley Edge rising beyond.
- From some locations, horizons are formed by the Peak District National Park, including Lyme Park, Kinder Scout, Shutlingsloe, Saddleworth Moor and Macclesfield Forest.
- Pockets of relative tranquillity found away from the main roads and settlement, though this is broken by the thundering sound of planes travelling to/from the nearby Manchester Airport.

[7] For further information on the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) please see http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35012?cache=1527674845.22

[8] More detailed information on the semi-natural habitats and ecological features found within the LCA is available from the Woodford Landscape and Environment Study (Woodford Neighbourhood Forum, 2015-17) and Cheshire Wildlife Trust's report '*Protecting and Enhancing Woodford's Natural Environment*', both available on the Neighbourhood Forum's website at http://woodfordnf.co.uk

## Landscape evaluation

**Summary of current landscape condition**

This is a pocket of rural landscape forming the southern-most point of the borough, grading into the wider countryside of Cheshire East. The open, flat expanse of the former Woodford aerodrome dominates, now being developed for housing. The linear creep of suburban development has impacted on the integrity of the landscape over the 20th century, with busy main roads and activity contrasting with pockets of relative tranquillity away from development. While areas of traditionally farmed agricultural land remain, a dilution of this land use is evident through land falling out of management, converted into other uses (e.g. pony paddocks) and an associated loss of characteristic hedgerows. In-field and boundary oaks provide a continuation of the character of Cheshire East, evoking a sense of time depth in association with traditional red-brick buildings. The frequent loud sounds and movement of aeroplanes travelling to/from Manchester Airport has an overriding influence on the perceptual qualities of this landscape.

### Forces for change

*Past and current forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition*

- The roads through the area are characterised by varying degrees of 20th century ribbon and infill development making up the settlement of Woodford.
- Major new development in progress at Woodford Garden Village (within the former aerodrome), along with the Poynton Bypass, which will cross through the eastern part of the LCA.
- The northern part of the area is influenced by the Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road, with busy traffic impacting on levels of tranquillity.
- Frequent air traffic movements to/from the airport also impact on tranquillity.
- Amalgamated and sub-divided fields diluting or erasing historic field patterns.
- A degraded hedgerow network, with lengths replaced by fencing, pony tape, or lost altogether. Surviving sections can be over-flailed, or conversely, overgrown.
- Degraded/ 'neglected' farmland – falling out of traditional agricultural uses (e.g. overgrown vegetation, fields abandoned and used for storage of machinery and construction materials).
- Traditional farm buildings falling into disrepair as the agricultural economy declines in this urban fringe landscape.
- Loss of traditional grazing land to pony paddocks, with associated structures and features such as fencing replacing hedgerows, and poached/tightly grazed land.
- Incidences of fly tipping and other examples of anti-social behaviour.
- Sparse public right of way network including sustainable transport options (e.g. safe cycling routes).

*Future forces for change likely to impact on landscape character and condition*

- Further development pressure within and outside the LCA, including potential for the North Cheshire Garden Village adjacent to the west.
- Knock-on effects from an increase in population on the doorstep of the LCA, including levels of traffic impacting on tranquillity and demand for countryside access.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), further threatening the viability of the remaining farms.
- Further diversification to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping).
- Individual oaks may become more susceptible to damage from more frequent and intense storm events as a result of climate change.
- Need for increased hedgerow and woodland planting and wetland restoration to help alleviate flooding and reduce diffuse pollution.
- Demand for domestic and community-scale renewable energy installations such as solar panels, wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps.

## Landscape sensitivity assessment

| Criteria | Description | Rating |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical character (including topography and scale)** | • Gently rolling topography between 80 and 95m AOD.<br>• Aerodrome site characterised by its flat open landform, enclosed to the south by an elevated ridgeline before dropping down to the Dean valley.<br>• Agricultural land enclosed by a mix of medium- and large-scale fields.<br>• Small-scale landscape features include hedgerows, individual trees and housing. | **L-M** |
| **Natural character** | • The aerodrome site occupies a significant proportion of the southern LCA.<br>• In-between roads and linear development is a mixture of pasture, pony paddocks, golf courses and amenity grassland.<br>• Natural character limited to hedgerows, individual trees, field ponds and small woodland blocks. | **L-M** |
| **Historic landscape character** | • Famous associations with the Avro factory, opened in 1925 as a production centre for military aircraft (now a heritage museum).<br>• A scattering of Listed Buildings, such as Grade II red-brick estate farm buildings and local landmark of Christ Church.<br>• Piecemeal medium-scale fields of 19th and 20th century origin, along with more recent enlarged fields.<br>• The HLC indicates some earlier irregular enclosures remain west of the aerodrome. | **L-M** |
| **Form, density and setting of existing settlement/ development** | • Linear urban fringe settlement strung along roads, including the main A5149.<br>• Development generally of 20th century origin, with 1930s semi-detached housing characteristic.<br>• Significant new development (under construction at time of writing) at Woodford Garden Village – replicating 1930s styles.<br>• Small, traditional farms found on the periphery of settlement.<br>• Industrial warehousing associated with the aerodrome and Adlington Industrial Estate.<br>• Farmland provides a setting and separation function to development, with rural character continuing into Cheshire East. | **M** |
| **Views and visual character including skylines** | • Views from elevated land in the south to the wooded slopes of the Bollin Valley and the distinctive ridgeline of Alderley Edge rising beyond (both locally designated for their landscape value).<br>• Horizons formed by the Peak District National Park in clear conditions, including Lyme Park, Kinder Scout, Shutlingsloe, Saddleworth Moor and Macclesfield Forest.<br>• Contrasting views characterised by dense urban development to the north (Bramhall).<br>• The LCA is characterised by low, generally flat skylines marked by trees, woodland and housing. | **M** |
| **Access and recreation** | • Public footpaths provide access from settlement into the surrounding countryside.<br>• Amenity uses associated with golf courses and school playing pitches. | **L-M** |
| **Perceptual and experiential qualities** | • Pockets of relative tranquillity found away from the main roads and settlement.<br>• Tranquillity broken by the thundering sound of planes travelling to/from the nearby Manchester Airport. | **L-M** |

### Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

| Development scenario | Sensitivity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure | | **L-M** | | | |
| Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories) / solar PV developments (up to 10ha) | | **L-M** | | | |
| Wind turbines (75m to blade tip) | | | | **M-H** | |

| Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity |
|---|
| The ridgeline and slopes of the Dean Valley in the south of the LCA would be highly sensitive to any development due to their prominence and strong visual relationships with locally designated landscapes in Cheshire East (the Bollin Valley and Alderley Edge). The flat, brownfield land on the former aerodrome site would be of low sensitivity to new development, providing the guidance below is followed (noting that Woodford Garden Village is under construction at the time of writing). |

### Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

**The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):**

- The prominent slope and ridgeline above the Dean Valley, with strong visual connections with the Bollin Valley and Alderley Edge in Cheshire East.
- Views afforded to the Peak District National Park, including Lyme Park, Kinder Scout, Shutlingsloe, Saddleworth Moor and Macclesfield Forest.
- Skylines frequently marked by trees (including important veteran specimens) and woodland, helping screen views of development.
- Surviving historic field systems forming irregular patterns (west of the aerodrome), along with lengths of intact hedgerows and frequent mature oak standards.
- Field ponds, ditches, species-rich hedgerows, veteran trees and woodland blocks providing valued pockets of natural habitat.
- Historic estate farmlands (Grade II listed) and the local landmark of Christ Church at Woodford.
- Important historic associations with military aircraft production at Woodford Aerodrome.
- Key role the LCA plays in providing a traditionally farmed, countryside setting to development, including the southern edge of Bramhall and linear development at Woodford.
- Pockets of relative tranquillity away from main roads and settlement.

### Guidance and opportunities for future development

**Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:**

- Avoid siting any development on the prominent, elevated slopes and ridgeline above the River Dean in the south of the LCA – intervisible with locally designated landscapes in Cheshire East.
- Conserve long views towards the Peak District National Park to the south-east and east.
- Protect the landscape's role as a traditionally farmed countryside setting to development, with character continuing across the administrative boundary.
- Utilise the tight valley landform and extensive woodland cover to integrate new development into the landscape. New housing or light industrial development should be connected to the existing settlement of Woodfordl, limiting its overall spread into the surrounding landscape wherever

possible.

- Strengthen the hedgerow network in association with any new development, using locally prevalent and climate resilient species. Any new boundaries should also reflect local characteristics, including the planting of a new generation of hedgerow trees.
- Protect and where possible restore and re-create semi-natural habitats to reduce their fragmentation, including woodlands linking to an intact hedgerow network, individual oak specimens and characteristic field ponds.
- Ensure any new development does not dilute the remaining areas of irregular historic field patterns west of the aerodrome.
- Respect local building styles and materials in new housing developments, seeking to reflect these in their design and build (particularly the use of red brick and 1930s styles/materials – the latter being the case in Woodford Garden Village).
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology and flood risk (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off).
- Protect the LCA's relative sense of tranquillity away from main roads and linear development. Avoid the further spread of development along roads and resisting settlement coalescence.
- Improve and enhance sustainable opportunities for access and enjoyment by nearby communities, linking new and existing development to the LCA's countryside via multi-user trails, including routes extending into the wider countryside of Cheshire East.

## B: Heald Green Fringe

### Representative photographs

Hedgerows which have been supplemented by post and wire fencing near Griffin Farm

Mature in-field oak tree with aeroplane landing at Manchester Airport visible in the background

### Location and summary of overall character

**This Landscape Character Area falls within GM Landscape Character Type: Urban Fringe Farmland.**

This LCA is located to the west, south and east of Heald Green. It includes land adjacent to the A34 to the west of Smithy Green and to the north of Gilbent. It is not contiguous, with residential development adjacent to Yew Tree Farm breaking the LCA into two separate parts. Land use includes small to medium agricultural fields, a plant nursery with industrial-scale greenhouses for commercial growing, schools, care homes, a park, rugby club and static caravan site.

## Landscape character description

| Key characteristics |
|---|
| *Topography, geology and drainage* |
| • Generally flat landform, gently undulating in parts, falling from 80m in the south to 55m AOD in the north-west near Gatley Brook. |
| • Bedrock geology of interbedded Triassic sandstone and conglomerate, topped by glacial till. |
| • Slowly permeable, seasonally wet loamy and clayey soils, giving rise to Grade 3 agricultural land. |
| *Land use and field patterns* |
| • Farmland under improved pasture, with sheep and some cattle grazing. |
| • The HLC indicates piecemeal small to medium scale fields of mid-19th century origin, with evidence of 20th century amalgamation in the west and immediately adjacent to the A34 in the east. |
| • Semi-regular field pattern, with some rectangular and irregular-shaped fields. Hawthorn hedgerows are often supplemented by post and wire fencing, particularly in the west. Hedgerow oak trees are common. |
| • Other land uses include a plant nursery with industrial-scale greenhouses for commercial growing, schools, care homes, a park, rugby club and static caravan site. |
| *Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover* |
| • Mature hedgerow and in-field oak standards, linking to the hedgerow network and small woodland blocks, create locally valued habitat networks and wooded skylines. |
| • Linear belts of woodland buffer the Crewe-Manchester railway line and the A34. |
| • Larger areas of broadleaved woodland are located in proximity to care home facilities, parks and sports grounds. |
| • Frequent field ponds form locally important landscape and ecological features, creating links with the wider network into Cheshire East. A pond and meadow at Heald Green is a Site of Biological Importance. |
| *Archaeology and cultural heritage* |
| • LCA includes a small number of Grade II Listed Buildings, including the red-brick Griffin farmhouse, Stanley Hall, Cheadle Hulme School and a 17th century timber-framed house on a stone plinth. |
| *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way* |
| • Development is generally of 20th century origin with schools, care homes, and linear residential development in the west and static caravans/chalets near Manchester rugby ground. |
| • Some 19th century farm settlement is dotted through the landscape and along the B5094. Industrial-scale greenhouses are associated with a commercial plant nursery in the west. |
| • Public footpaths provide access from nearby settlements into the farmland and recreational land. Over-bridges and underpasses provide access across railway lines and the A34, which dissects the LCA from north to south. |
| *Views and perceptual qualities* |
| • Busy main roads, such as the A34, A555, B5358 and B5166, create sound and movement in the landscape. |
| • Pockets of relative tranquillity found away from main roads and settlement, though this is broken by the thundering sounds of low planes travelling to/from the nearby Manchester Airport. |
| • Linear belts of woodland and the low-lying/flat landform provide a sense of enclosure and generally restrict views. |
| • The Peak District National Park is perceptible from the B5358 looking eastwards, with prominent commercial development along the A34 visible in the middle ground. |

## Landscape evaluation

**Summary of current landscape condition**

This LCA comprises an area of undeveloped landscape forming a gap between Cheadle Hulme and Heald Green and grading into the wider countryside of Cheshire East to the south. The surrounding suburban development has impacted on the integrity of the landscape over the 20th century, with busy main roads and activity contrasting with pockets of relative tranquillity away from development. The traditionally farmed agricultural land is generally intact, although some hedgerows have been lost and replaced by post and wire fencing. Other land uses give the landscape an urban fringe character, including industrial sized glasshouses, sports fields and a caravan park. In-field and boundary oaks provide a continuation of the character of Cheshire East, evoking a sense of time depth in association with traditional red-brick buildings. The frequent loud sounds and movement of aeroplanes travelling to/from Manchester Airport, combined with traffic noise, has an overriding influence on the perceptual qualities of this landscape.

### Forces for change

*Past and current forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition*

- In some areas the amalgamation of fields has occurred with the loss of hedgerows or their replacement with post and wire fencing.
- Road and air traffic impacting on relative levels of tranquillity and resulting in air pollution.
- Recent development further fragmenting remaining pockets of rural landscape.
- Some un-managed fields, including on the edge of Manchester rugby ground, overgrowth with thistles, nettles and tall shrubs.
- Incidences of fly tipping and litter which decrease the visual appeal of the landscape.
- The southern part of the area is influenced by the Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road, with busy traffic impacting on levels of tranquillity.
- Other land-uses replacing agricultural land, including static caravan site, glass houses and sports fields.

*Future forces for change likely to impact on landscape character and condition*

- Continued pressure on the survival of local green spaces and increased recreational pressures on those that remain, due to ongoing pressures for new development.
- Knock-on effects from an increase in population on the doorstep of the LCA, including levels of traffic impacting on tranquillity.
- Further diversification of land uses to non-agricultural enterprises, with associated loss of traditional landscape features such as the remaining hedgerow network and in-field ponds.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), which may lead to changes in management or land use.
- Individual in-field and hedgerow oak trees may become more susceptible to damage from more frequent and intense storm events as a result of climate change. The remaining stock will need replacing in the coming years to maintain their presence as key landscape features in the longer term.
- Need for increased woodland planting and wetland restoration to help alleviate flooding and reduce diffuse pollution.
- Demand for domestic and community-scale renewable energy installations such as solar panels, wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps.

## Landscape sensitivity assessment

| Criteria | Description and indication of sensitivity | Rating |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical character (including topography and scale)** | • Simple, generally flat landform which is gently undulating in some areas.<br>• Some gentle slopes associated with small streams including Gatley Brook.<br>• Fields generally comprise small-medium scale piecemeal enclosures.<br>• Large structures including industrial glasshouses and adjacent retail park buildings detract from the small scale of the fields. | **L-M** |
| **Natural character** | • Mature hedgerow and in-field oak standards, linking to the hedgerow network and small woodland blocks, create locally valued habitat networks and wooded skylines.<br>• Linear belts of woodland buffer the Crewe-Manchester railway line and the A34.<br>• Larger areas of broadleaved woodland are located in proximity to care home facilities, parks and sports grounds.<br>• Frequent field ponds form locally important landscape and ecological features.<br>• A pond and meadow at Heald Green is a Site of Biological Importance. | **M** |
| **Historic landscape character** | • A small number of Grade II Listed Buildings, including the red-brick Griffin farmhouse, Stanley Hall, Cheadle Hulme School and a 17th century timber-framed house on a stone plinth.<br>• Farmland mainly comprising piecemeal enclosures from the post medieval period, some of which have suffered 20th century boundary loss. | **L-M** |
| **Form, density and setting of existing development** | • Development is generally of 20th century origin with schools, care homes, and linear residential development in the west and static caravans/chalets near Manchester rugby ground.<br>• Some 19th century farm settlement is dotted through the landscape and along the B5094.<br>• Industrial-scale greenhouses are associated with a commercial plant nursery in the west.<br>• Prominent commercial development is found along the A34; visible in the middle ground.<br>• The LCA performs an important separation function between Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme, as well as providing a sense of separation between Heald Green and Handforth (Cheshire East district) and Wythenshawe (Manchester District). | **M** |
| **Views and visual character including skylines** | • The landscape is not visually prominent, although parts are overlooked form the adjacent urban development.<br>• The Peak District National Park is perceptible from the B5358 looking eastwards, with prominent commercial development along the A34 visible in the middle ground. There are also views south over Cheshire East.<br>• Individual trees across the landscape combine with occasional small deciduous woodland blocks to produce wooded skylines. Trees also provide a sense of enclosure and generally restrict views. | **L-M** |
| **Access and recreation** | • A network of public footpaths provides access to the landscape from nearby settlements.<br>• Recreational facilities in the LCA include Cheadle Hulme Cricket Club, Grove Park Squash Club and Manchester Rugby Club.<br>• National Cycle Network Route 558 follows the B5166. | **L-M** |
| **Perceptual and experiential qualities** | • The landscape is strongly associated with surrounding urban development.<br>• Busy main roads, such as the A34, A555, B5358 and B5166, create sound and movement in the landscape.<br>• Pockets of relative tranquillity are found away from main roads and settlement, though this is broken by the thundering sounds of low planes travelling to/from Manchester Airport. | **L-M** |

### Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

| Development scenario | Sensitivity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure | | **L-M** | | | |
| Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories) / solar PV developments (up to 10ha) | | **L-M** | | | |
| Wind turbines (75m to blade tip) | | | | **M-H** | |

| Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity |
|---|
| The areas surrounding Heald Green are more sensitive, due to the steeper slopes adjacent to Gatley Brook, the narrow gaps between settlements in this area (therefore providing an important separation function), locally valued semi-natural habitats and remaining rural character. The area to the south of Cheadle Hulme and east of the existing retail park may be less sensitive due to existing urban fringe influences. |

### Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

**The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):**

- Field ponds, hedgerows and mature trees which provide important natural habitats, including Heald Green Site of Biological Importance.
- The sense of separation the landscape provides between distinct areas within the urban conurbation of Stockport.
- Occasional historic buildings including the Grade II listed Stanley Hall, Griffin farmhouse and Cheadle Hulme School.
- Opportunities for access and informal recreation on the numerous public footpaths in the landscape.
- Intermittent views to the uplands of the Peak District National Park to the east/south-east and over the countryside of Cheshire East (to the south – including the National Trust's Styal Estate).
- Pockets of relative tranquillity away from main roads and settlement.

### Guidance and opportunities for future development

**Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:**

- Protect the important semi-natural habitats within the landscape including woodland, grassland and in-field ponds, which provide an oasis for wildlife in an urban area.
- Seek to restore hedgerows where they have been replaced by post and wire fencing in order to enhance habitat resource and landscape structure.
- Respect local building styles and materials in new housing developments, seeking to reflect these in their design and build (e.g. the use of red brick).
- Conserve the setting of the historic buildings within the landscape, particularly those which are Grade II Listed.
- Retain the sense of separation between distinct urban areas including Cheadle Hulme, Heald Green, Handforth and Wythenshawe. Avoid the further spread of development along roads and resist settlement coalescence.
- Encourage buffer planting alongside major roads and the railway to create audio and visual screening.

- Ensure that views to the Peak District National Park and south to the countryside of Cheshire East are conserved.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology and flood risk (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off). Gatley Brook is part of the Mersey catchment.
- Protect the LCA's relative sense of tranquillity away from main roads and areas of linear development.
- Improve and enhance sustainable opportunities for access and enjoyment by nearby communities, linking new and existing development to the LCA's countryside via well-connected multi-user trails, including routes extending into the wider countryside of Cheshire East.

## C: Ladybrook Valley

### Representative photographs

The Seven Arches Viaduct viewed from the Ladybrook Valley Interest Trail

In field oak trees near Norbury House Farm

### Location and summary of overall character

**This Landscape Character Area falls within GM Landscape Character Types: Urban Fringe Farmland and Urban Fringe Valleys**

This linear LCA covers the extent of the Ladybrook Valley within Stockport, from High Lane in the east to the junction with the Mersey Valley at Cheadle in the west. It is not a contiguous LCA and is broken by the presence of residential development in the vicinity of Cheadle Golf Course. The central part of the valley contains the parkland grounds of the Grade I listed Bramhall Hall. The predominant land use is for amenity and recreation, with the Ladybrook Nature Interest Trail meandering through most of the LCA.

## Landscape character description

| Key characteristics |
|---|
| *Topography, geology and drainage* |
| • Gently sloping valley topography, rising steadily from 40m AOD in the west at the Mersey Valley confluence to 167m AOD in the east in proximity to High Lane. In some places the valley appears flat. |
| • In the west, bedrock geology comprises interbedded Triassic sandstone and conglomerate, covered by river terrace deposits. To the east, it is a mixture of Permian mudstone, siltstone and sandstone, interbedded Permian sandstone and conglomerate and Pennine Middle Coal Measures; all topped by glacial till. |
| • Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils. East of Bramhall, agricultural land is classed as Grade 3, with a smaller area of Grade 4 land. |
| • Micker Brook, Ladybrook and Norbury Brook drain through the valley floor. |
| *Land use and field patterns* |
| • Amenity and recreational land uses prevail, such as urban green space, parks, golf courses, playing fields and recreational grounds. |
| • Pockets of agricultural land under pasture, with fields enclosed by hedgerows (often with gaps replaced by fencing) with frequent hedgerow trees. |
| • Piecemeal small to medium irregular and semi-regular fields. According to the HLC these are of post-medieval origin, with regular 19th century fields north-west of Bramhall Golf Club. Larger, 20th century amalgamated fields are found where Norbury Brook crosses the A523. |
| • Other land uses include stables, greenhouses for commercial growing and leisure centres. Ornamental parkland, with estate plantings, surrounds Bramhall Hall in the centre of the LCA. |
| *Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover* |
| • Linear belts of broadleaved woodland are located alongside the brooks and trails, including ancient woodland at Bramhall & Carr Woods, Happy Valley Local Nature Reserve and Norbury Brook & Middlewood (all locally designated as Sites of Biological Importance). |
| • Dense areas of broadleaved woodland interspersed with some coniferous trees surround Bramall Hall and Happy Valley Nature Reserve. Mature hedgerows and in-field oak standards link to the woodland network. |
| • The landscape's watercourses, ponds and lowland meadows form important wildlife habitats and networks. |
| *Archaeology and cultural heritage* |
| • The Grade I listed Bramhall Hall, a timber-framed Tudor manor house, is surrounded by ornamental parkland, estate woodland and several Grade II listed buildings. The entire park is a Conservation Area. An earthwork is also present in Bramhall Park Golf Club. |
| • The prominent Grade II red-bricked Seven Arches viaduct, the Macclesfield Canal (a Conservation Area) and the disused railway line (now the Middlewich Way) provide evidence of the area's industrial past. |
| • There are two Grade II Listed Buildings in the east: the 19th century red brick farmhouse of Marsden House, with a 17th century sandstone wing, and a mile post at the Middlewood Road/A6 junction. |
| *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way* |
| • The western valley is surrounded by urban development; largely 20th century housing, schools and leisure centres. East of Norbury House Farm, the valley abuts the open countryside of Cheshire East to the south. |
| • Some limited development (schools and housing) encroaches into the edges of the valley, but it is largely undeveloped with scattered 19th century farms and greenhouses near Bramhall Golf Club. |
| • Public footpaths provide access from adjacent settlements into the valley, which is traced by the Ladybrook Nature Interest Trail. The Cheshire Ring Canal walk and Middlewood Way cross through the eastern parts of the LCA. |
| • Roads cross the valley to link settlements. Two railway lines also pass through; the West Coast Mainline in the west and the Stockport to Buxton line in the east. |
| *Views and perceptual qualities* |
| • Views tend to be enclosed by woodland or funnelled along the valley. In the west, adjacent urban development is widely visible and encloses views out of the valley. In the east of the LCA the landscape is more open, with glimpsed views south into Cheshire East and Peak District National Park. |
| • Perceptual qualities are impacted by the close proximity of urban development with associated traffic noise and light pollution. Pockets of tranquillity can be found adjacent to the river, where woodland provides a naturalistic quality to the landscape. |

## Landscape evaluation

**Summary of current landscape condition**

The Ladybrook Valley is an undeveloped river corridor between the urban and rural environment, containing important heritage features and natural habitats. It forms a well-used recreational resource for people living in adjacent urban areas and is under significant recreation pressure. The landscape is impacted by its close proximity to urban development which is dominant in views and introduces light and noise pollution to the undeveloped valley. The recent and ongoing construction of new road infrastructure has created an additional source of traffic noise and movement in the landscape. The historic loss of hedgerows as field boundaries and their subsequent replacement by post and wire fencing has made the landscape more open and has diluted historic field patterns. The intensive management of land associated with golf courses contrasts with areas of farmland which have become marginal and less intensively managed.

### Forces for change

*Past and current forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition*

- Diverse land uses due to the location of the valley adjacent to urban development including horse paddocks, golf courses, leisure facilities, schools and transport infrastructure.
- The construction of the new bypass in the east of the LCA which has led to additional traffic with associated noise and movement within the landscape.
- Views often dominated by adjacent urban development, detracting from perceptions of tranquillity and emitting light pollution into the undeveloped valley landscape.
- Past loss of hedgerows and their subsequent replacement with post and wire fencing leading to a more open and less structured landscape with the dilution of historic field patterns.
- Significant recreation pressure on the parkland areas within the valley due to the large surrounding urban population.
- Differing levels of land maintenance/management depending on land use, with intensive management on golf courses and lower levels of management on marginal farmland.

*Future forces for change likely to impact on landscape character and condition*

- Climate change resulting in increased frequency of flooding events, leading to the loss of unbound footpaths and a change in the physical characteristics of the river. This may also cause loss/damage to the semi-natural habitats found throughout the valley and lead to the construction of new flood alleviation measures which could detract from the natural character of the river corridor.
- More intense periods of drought leading to the drying out of important wetlands – affecting their functions in reducing flood risk in the winter months.
- Further diversification to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. horse/pony keeping) eroding traditional landscape character.
- Change in woodland/tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytopthora pathogens) and invasive species become more prevalent. Disease may result in the loss of distinctive in-field oak trees.
- A decline in traditional farming activity and an uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock) may result in the change of management or land use within the valley.
- Continued development pressure within the landscape, including new development and the conversion of former industrial buildings to residential use. The urbanisation of the river corridor could lead to changes in water flow and quality.
- Need for the maintenance and expansion of multi-user access, particularly in and around the various parks within the valley, as these destinations are likely to have to accommodate more visitors / footfall (i.e. as a result of population increases in the wider area).
- A need for the continued management and preservation of heritage features which give a strong sense of place and setting to the valley, including industrial features (e.g. viaducts) and designed parkland at Bramall Hall.

## Landscape sensitivity assessment

| Criteria | Description and indication of sensitivity | Rating |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical character (including topography and scale)** | • Gently sloping valley topography associated with Micker Brook, Ladybrook and Norbury Brook. In localised areas adjacent to the watercourses, slopes are steeper and more dramatic. Other parts of the valley appear flat, particularly in the west.<br>• Some areas are small-scale and enclosed as a result of the intimate valley topography and woodland cover e.g. north of Cheadle Hulme. Others appear larger scale due to low fences and hedgerows creating an open landscape, particularly to the east of Bramhall. | **M** |
| **Natural character** | • Linear belts of broadleaved woodland located alongside the brooks and trails, including ancient woodland at Bramhall & Carr Woods, Happy Valley Local Nature Reserve and Norbury Brook & Middlewood (all also Sites of Biological Importance).<br>• Dense areas of broadleaved with some coniferous woodland surround Bramall Hall, Happy Valley Nature Reserve and close to Middlewood Station in the east of the LCA. Mature hedgerows and in-field oak standards link to the woodland network. Mature trees are also associated with golf courses.<br>• Brooks, streams, ponds and lowland meadows provide wildlife interest. | **M** |
| **Historic landscape character** | • The Grade I listed Bramall Hall, a timber-framed Tudor manor house, is surrounded by ornamental parkland, estate woodland and several Grade II listed buildings. The park is a Conservation Area.<br>• There are a number of other listed structures including the prominent Grade II red-bricked Seven Arches viaduct, the Macclesfield Canal (a Conservation Area) and the disused railway line (now the Middlewich Way) provide evidence of the area's industrial past and a sense of time-depth. There is also an earthwork in Bramhall Park Golf Club. | **M-H** |
| **Form, density and setting of existing development** | • The western valley is surrounded by urban development. East of Bramhall, the valley abuts the open countryside of Cheshire East to the south.<br>• There is some urban development in the west of the valley, however for the most part it is sparsely settled with scattered farms and large houses/halls located along the valley.<br>• The valley provides part of the setting to Cheadle Village Conservation Area. It also provides an important separation function between a number of urban areas including Cheadle Hulme, Bramhall, Norbury Moor and High Lane. | **M-H** |
| **Views and visual character including skylines** | • The valley is not visually prominent, yet is overlooked from adjacent urban areas. From within the valley the Seven Arches Viaduct is a prominent skyline feature.<br>• Where woodland cover allows, views are funnelled along the valley and include the surrounding urban development.<br>• In the eastern part of the valley, the landscape is more open with views south into Cheshire East and the Peak District National Park. | **M** |
| **Access and recreation** | • A network of public footpaths provides access from adjacent settlements into the valley, which is traced by the Ladybrook Nature Interest Trail. The Cheshire Ring Canal walk and Middlewood Way (mixed-use trail) cross through the eastern LCA, providing opportunities for informal recreation.<br>• Several parklands are located in the valley, including Brookfields Park, Bramhall Park, The Corral and Brookside Park.<br>• There are a number of golf courses including Bramhall Park Golf Club, Bramhall Golf Club and Cheadle Golf Club. A number of playing fields are also located in the valley. | **M** |
| **Perceptual and experiential qualities** | • Within the valley there is a strong sense of enclosure due to woodland cover and incised topography.<br>• Railway lines and major roads cross through the landscape and introduce noise and movement which detracts from tranquillity. The construction of the A555 relief road will also lead to further traffic movement.<br>• Perceptual qualities are varied along the length of the valley. An enclosed and urban character in the north of the valley contrasts with a sense of openness in the south/east with views to the Cheshire countryside to the south and Peak District National Park to the east | **M** |

### Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

| Development scenario | Sensitivity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure | | | M | | |
| Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories) / solar PV developments (up to 10ha) | | | M | | |
| Wind turbines (75m to blade tip) | | | | | H |

**Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity**

The narrow, wooded parts of the valley in the west are likely to have higher levels of sensitivity to all development types, due to the historic parkland character at Bramall Hall and the sense of separation the landscape provides between large areas of dense urban development.

The valley east of Bramhall is not as sensitive due to the less dramatic landform, suburban influences on the landscape, lower levels of woodland and the association with existing urban development.

The LCA as a whole would be highly sensitive to any major urban extensions or significant housing developments, with single or very small numbers of grouped dwellings most likely to be appropriately sited within this landscape (where linked to existing development), providing the guidance below is followed.

### Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

**The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):**

- The intricate valley landform and steep slopes associated with the river, which contrast with broad areas of floodplain on the valley floor.
- Tracts of broadleaved woodland along the river corridor, including areas of ancient woodland. Many of these habitats are locally designated for nature conservation.
- Historic landscapes and their component features which give the valley a strong sense of time-depth, particularly Bramall Hall (a Grade I Listed Building) and its surrounding park and garden, designated as a Conservation Area.
- Features alluding to the industrial past of the area are also important, including Macclesfield Canal and the Seven Arches Viaduct.
- A sparsely settled landscape, with occasional farms and halls (including some Listed Buildings), which is surrounded by dense urban development.
- Extensive and valued recreation routes, including Ladybrook Valley Interest Trail, Middlewood Way and the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk, which are supplemented by a good network of other rights of way. Parklands including Brookfields Park, Bramhall Park, The Corral and Brookside Park also form popular destinations, particularly for local people.
- The sense of escape from surrounding urban areas, with relatively high levels of tranquillity and naturalistic qualities.
- A sense of enclosure due to the dense woodland coverage, particularly on the steeper valley slopes and along the river corridor.
- Important views out of the valley south into Cheshire East (including the Peak Fringe Local Landscape Designation and the Grade II* Registered Lyme Park) and glimpses of the Peak District National Park.

### Guidance and opportunities for future development

**Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:**

- Avoid development on the valley sides, where it would be very prominent from within the valley. Development within highly visible, open areas should also be avoided.
- Protect and where possible restore and re-create important semi-natural habitats to reduce their fragmentation, including woodlands linking to an intact hedgerow network, individual oak specimens and characteristic field ponds. Ensure the role of the valley as an important wildlife corridor in a densely developed area is retained.
- Utilise existing woodland to screen development where appropriate.
- Ensure that the setting and integrity of the historic landscapes and heritage features within the valley is respected and retained.
- Secure, manage and maintain the important historical, industrial elements of the landscape such as former railway routes, bridges and the Macclesfield Canal, as these features play a major role in local identity and sense of place. Enhance the recreational value along these industrial transportation routes through promotional encouragement, heritage and wildlife information provision. Seek to improve links between rights of way where possible/appropriate.
- Balance the promotion of access and recreation within the landscape with the need for managing the landscape for wildlife.
- Ensure that the relative sense of tranquillity and naturalistic quality of the landscape is retained. Use woodland to provide a visual and audial buffer to major transport routes.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology and flood risk (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off and new development).
- Protect and promote the important views out of the valley into Cheshire East (including the Peak Fringe Local Landscape Designation Area and the Grade II* Registered Lyme Park) and glimpses of the Peak District National Park.
- Ensure any new development does not adversely affect the special qualities of the Peak District National Park, including its beautiful views, sense of tranquillity and dark night skies, and the vital benefits that flow beyond its boundary[9].

[9] Taken from the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2018-23 (Final consultation draft, March 2018)

## D: River Mersey

### Representative photographs

Young trees at Sidings Orchard within Mersey Vale Nature Park. The pylon line dominates the skyline.

Gatley Carrs Nature Reserve, with traffic on the M56 visible in the background

### Location and summary of overall character

**This Landscape Character Area falls within GM Landscape Character Type: Urban Fringe Valleys**

The M60/M56 motorway interchange is a dominant feature within this small LCA, which also includes the A34, a railway line and two disused railway lines. South of the M60 is a predominantly parkland character with prominent buildings set within dense woodland. Existing buildings include the 19th century Barnes Hospital and the Grade II* Abney Hall, surrounded by a Local Nature Reserve. To the north of the motorway is the open valley floor of the meandering River Mersey, which includes Mersey Vale Nature Park, a sewage works and an area of agricultural land.

## Landscape character description

**Key characteristics**

*Topography, geology and drainage*

- A very gently undulating / flat river plain landscape lying at around 40m AOD.
- Bedrock geology of interbedded Triassic sandstone and conglomerate, with a small area of Permian mudstone, siltstone and sandstone in the east. This is overlain by sand and gravel river terrace and alluvial deposits, with a small area of glacial till in the north.
- Loamy soils often subject to waterlogging in association with the Mersey and its tributaries. Agricultural land is classified as Grade 3.
- The River Mersey meanders through the LCA, forming the boundary with Manchester District west of Parrs Wood High School. Streams and ponds drain into the Mersey from the wider landscape.

*Land use and field patterns*

- Dominated by transport infrastructure fragmenting the landscape; the M60 motorway and M56 interchange, the A34, a functional railway line and two disused railway lines.
- Amenity open space associated with Abney Hall Park, Gatley Carrs Local Nature Reserve and Mersey Vale Nature Park.
- Other land uses include Cheadle Heath sewage works, a rugby club, sports ground, hospital, cemetery, allotments, garden centre, commercial premises and housing at the former Cheadle Bleach Works.
- Agricultural land (pasture) limited to piecemeal large-scale fields in the centre of the LCA, with intact 19$^{th}$ century hawthorn hedges. Rough grassland is found along the railway line. Orchards are located at Mersey Vale Nature Park and Abney Hall Park.

*Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover*

- High level of broadleaved woodland cover, particularly adjacent to and south of the M60/M56, along the railway line (with scrub), and in the east of the LCA at Mersey Vale Nature Park and along the river.
- Nature conservation importance of woodland and wetland habitats reflected in Local Nature Reserve/Site of Biological Interest (SBI) designations at Gatley Carrs, Abney Hall Park, Mersey Vale Nature Park and Parrs Wood. These provide links to areas of habitat in adjacent Manchester District.
- Created on the site of the former Heaton Mersey Bleach Works and railway sidings, Mersey Vale Nature Park includes woodland, wetlands, wildflower meadows, ponds and reservoirs – one used for angling.

*Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- Sense of time depth despite overriding influence of modern infrastructure, including the 19th century parkland and walled garden surrounding the red brick Grade II* Abney Hall.
- Industrial heritage associated with the former Cheadle Bleach Works (which was connected to the Manchester dye industry) with prominent mill chimney and associated leats; its origins thought to be a 12th century water-powered corn mill.
- Other historic buildings include the former convalescence Barnes Hospital (Grade II – now the centrepiece of a new residential village), Grade II two storey, red brick Hartdale House, and the Grade II 18th century Cheadle Wood Farmhouse.
- A small part of Cheadle Conservation Area extends into the south of the LCA; the Mersey floodplain also forms part of the setting of Heaton Mersey Conservation Area.

*Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- The LCA itself is lightly settled, with residential development limited to the Cheadle Bleach Works redevelopment. It is enclosed to the north, east and south by dense urban development.
- The M60/M56 has in an east-west orientation through the LCA. Roads accessing the motorway junctions are curvilinear in form, sweeping through the landscape.
- The Transpennine Trail follows the course of the River Mersey east of Parrs Wood, passing through Mersey Vale Nature Reserve. The Ladybrook Valley Interest Trail links to the Ladybrook Valley, skirting the edge of Abney Hall Park.

*Views and perceptual qualities*

- Views are generally enclosed by the dense woodland and low lying valley landform. There are occasional views to adjacent urban development. Where the landscape is more open, views are funnelled along the valley.
- Pockets of relative tranquillity within areas of dense woodland, although this is broken by overwhelming noise from the nearby transport infrastructure.

## Landscape evaluation

**Summary of current landscape condition**

The river valley divides the urban areas of East Disbury and Cheadle in the north of Stockport and provides a green corridor between them. The river corridor has traditionally been used for transport and is dominated by this land use with the M60 and M56 motorways running along the valley. Traffic noise and movement have an adverse effect on perceptions of relative tranquillity and can be overwhelming. There are a number of parks and nature reserves within the landscape, which are generally well managed and form valued destinations for local people. The restoration and creation of habitats (e.g. Sidings Orchard) in these areas has led to localised improvements in landscape condition. Woodland along road and river corridors also contributes to the natural character and provides a sense of escape from nearby urban areas. Other issues relating to current condition include the close proximity of adjacent urban development surrounding the valley (resulting in urban fringe issues such as littering and fly-tipping) and the decline of traditional farming on the remaining land.

### Forces for change

*Past and current forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition*

- The potential for new in-fill development which risks further fragmenting the habitats within the landscape and causing distinct urban areas to merge.
- Large amounts of road traffic on the motorways impacting on relative levels of tranquillity and negatively effecting air quality. Associated noise can be overwhelming in areas which are immediately adjacent.
- Fragmentation of the landscape as a result of the major transport corridors which cross through it.
- Marginal areas of degraded or neglected farmland falling out of traditional agricultural uses.
- Urban-fringe issues including litter and fly tipping, which contribute to pollution and reduce the visual appeal of the landscape. This is particularly noticeable along road corridors and in 'tide lines' along the Mersey.
- Former industrial buildings and infrastructure which have fallen into disrepair or have been converted to residential accommodation.
- Erosion of river banks due to increased flooding and extreme weather events.
- Large pylons and associated overhead lines detracting from the otherwise wooded skylines.
- Heavy use of the landscape for recreation due to its close proximity to dense urban areas.

*Future forces for change likely to impact on landscape character and condition*

- More frequent flooding events as a result of climate change, which may lead to the construction of new flood alleviation infrastructure and also result in loss/damage to the semi-natural habitats found throughout the valley. Opportunities for wetland habitat restoration/enhancements for water capture/storage could be a positive outcome.
- Climate change/urbanisation may also increase levels of run-off and affect the water quality of the River Mersey and its supported wildlife.
- The ongoing pressure for development and potential for future transport extensions and upgrades which may cross through or affect this landscape.
- Continued recreational pressure on the nature reserves and historic parkland. As a result there will be a requirement for maintenance and expansion of multi-user access, particularly in and around the parks and nature reserves which are likely to have an increase in visitors due to population increases in the wider area.
- Opportunities to preserve the history of sites such as Abney Hall as a site for future generations to understand the history of Stockport and this landscape.
- Change in woodland/tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytopthora pathogens) and invasive species become more prevalent.

## Landscape sensitivity assessment

| Criteria | Description and indication of sensitivity | Rating |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical character (including topography and scale)** | • A very gently undulating / flat river plain landscape lying at around 40m AOD. The River Mersey meanders through the LCA, with streams and ponds draining into the Mersey from the wider landscape.<br>• Dominated by large-scale transport infrastructure fragmenting the landscape; the M60 motorway and M56 interchange, the A34, a functional railway line and two disused railway lines.<br>• Elsewhere, land cover consists of piecemeal large-scale fields. Frequent trees/woodland in the landscape creates a sense of enclosure. | **L-M** |
| **Natural character** | • Pasture land with intact 19th century hawthorn hedges. Rough grassland is found along the railway line.<br>• High level of broadleaved woodland cover, particularly adjacent to and south of the M60/M56, along the railway line (with scrub), and in the east of the LCA at Mersey Vale Nature Park and along the river.<br>• Nature conservation importance of the river as well as woodland, wetland and grassland habitats reflected in LNR/SBI designations at Gatley Carrs, Abney Hall , Mersey Vale Nature Park and Parrs Wood. | **M** |
| **Historic landscape character** | • Remaining sense of time depth despite overriding influence of infrastructure, including the 19th century parkland surrounding the red brick Grade II* Abney Hall. Other historic buildings include the former convalescence Barnes Hospital (Grade II), Grade II Hartdale House, and the Grade II 18th century Cheadle Wood Farmhouse.<br>• Industrial heritage associated with the former Cheadle Bleach Works with prominent mill chimney and associated leats.<br>• A small part of Cheadle Conservation Area extends into the south of the LCA and the river also forms part of the setting to Heaton Mersey Conservation Area. | **L-M** |
| **Form, density and setting of existing development** | • The LCA itself is lightly settled, with residential development limited to the Cheadle Bleach Works redevelopment. It is enclosed to the north, east and south by dense urban development.<br>• This landscape provides a separation function between Cheadle and East Didsbury (Manchester District).<br>• Houses at Sharston overlook the western area of the LCA including Gatley Carrs Nature Reserve. | **M** |
| **Views and visual character including skylines** | • There are funnelled views along the river from within the valley.<br>• The landscape is not visually prominent from surrounding areas.<br>• Views to and from the landscape are generally limited by extensive woodland cover.<br>• The former Bleach Works Chimney is a prominent skyline feature. A pylon line crossing the northern part of the LCA is also a dominant feature. | **L-M** |
| **Access and recreation** | • The Transpennine Trail (which links Liverpool to Hull) follows an old railway line adjacent to the course of the River Mersey east of Parrs Wood, passing through Mersey Vale Nature Reserve. The Ladybrook Valley Interest Trail links to the Ladybrook Valley, skirting the edge of Abney Hall Park. National Cycle Route 62 and a number of bridleways also cross through this area.<br>• Amenity open space is associated with Abney Hall Park, Gatley Carrs Local Nature Reserve and Mersey Vale Country Park. These spaces are popular for informal recreation including walking and dog walking. | **M-H** |
| **Perceptual and experiential qualities** | • Pockets of relative tranquillity within areas of dense woodland, although this is broken by overwhelming noise from the nearby transport infrastructure.<br>• The landscape has a suburban character with sports pitches, sewage works and overhead power lines.<br>• Noise and movement from motorway and railway contrasts with birdsong. The road noise is overwhelming in some parts of the landscape, including near Abney Hall. | **L-M** |

### Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

| Development scenario | Sensitivity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Residential housing / ground-mounted solar photovoltaic developments | | **L-M** | | | |
| Commercial (light industrial) developments / transport infrastructure | | | **M** | | |

**Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity**

Throughout this character area there is juxtaposition between historic and natural features within the landscape and the extensive transport infrastructure and urban influences. Areas south of the M60 motorway corridor tend to have higher levels of sensitivity to all types of development, due to the historic parkland and semi-natural habitats. In particular, Abney Hall parkland would be highly sensitive to landscape change from all types of development.

Although it has low-moderate sensitivity to residential development, the valley of the River Mersey is not suitable for large-scale development or urban extensions due to its relatively small size and the important role it plays in separating areas of existing urban development.

### Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

**The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):**

- Semi-natural habitats locally designated for wildlife value including wetland, woodland and meadows.
- Historic features within the landscape including Grade II* Abney Hall and Grade II Barnes Hospital which contribute to the sense of time-depth, in addition to features relating to industrial heritage.
- Dense woodland which contributes to the naturalistic qualities of the landscape, provides a semi-natural habitat and also acts to screen intrusive transport infrastructure.
- Pockets of relative tranquillity with the landscape, despite the nearby major transport infrastructure.
- The role of the landscape as a destination for recreational activity, with features including Abney Hall Park, Gatley Carrs Local Nature Reserve and Mersey Vale Country Park.
- The sense of separation the landscape provides between the distinct urban areas of Cheadle and East Didsbury (Manchester District).

### Guidance and opportunities for future development

**Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:**

- Improve ecological connectivity between fragmented semi-natural habitats along the river corridor, including through the restoration of former industrial sites. Opportunities to conserve and plant new hedgerows and hedgerow trees where the landscape is fragmented should be encouraged.
- Respect the integrity and setting of the historic features within the landscape including the 19th century parkland associated with the Grade II* Abney Hall.
- Utilise existing woodland cover to visually screen new development and encourage the creation of new broadleaved woodlands in appropriate areas.
- Retain pockets of relative tranquillity throughout the landscape and reduce the audial and visual impact and intrusion of major roads through encouraging planting on the embankments.
- Ensure that the landscape remains accessible for recreation, and enhance provision where possible.
- Retain the sense of separation between Cheadle and East Didsbury (Manchester District) to the north.
- Any further transport corridor development should prevent and/or mitigate further severance of the character area.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology and flood risk (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agriculture and new development).

# E: Tame Valley and Brinnington East

## Representative photographs

View looking across the Mill Ponds at Reddish Vale Country Park towards the Tame Viaduct

View looking across traditional red brick farmhouse, pony paddock with clipped hedgerow field boundaries

## Location and summary of overall character

**This Landscape Character Area falls within GM Landscape Character Type: Urban Fringe Valleys**

This area creates a strong north-south rural gateway into Stockport Town Centre. The River Tame is a prominent feature carving through the LCA, creating a distinct valley profile with steep sided banks and an undulating landform throughout. Reddish Vale Country Park occupies a large area as a valued recreational resource on the doorstep of adjacent urban communities. A good network of trails and rights of way, including the Transpennine Trail, provide easy access into the landscape.

## Landscape character description

**Key characteristics**

*Topography, geology and drainage*

- Valley system associated with the River Tame which forms the boundary with Tameside District. Topography ranges from 45 to 80m AOD.
- Beyond the river and course of the Peak Forest Canal in the east of the LCA, land rises relatively steeply to over 130m AOD.
- The valley profile features steep-sided banks in areas and gentle undulations on the valley floor, following the River Tame's meandering course.
- Bedrock geology of Collyhurst sandstone formation in the west, grading to Pennine Middle and Lower Coal Measures (mudstones, siltrones, sandstones) in the east.
- Allluvial and glaciofluvial clay, silt, sand and gravel deposits associated with the fringes of the river, with glacial till in the east of the LCA.
- Predominately loamy clay and sandy floodplain soils with naturally high groundwater reflective of the River Tame watercourse. Agricultural land is classified as Grade 3.

*Land use and field patterns*

- Reddish Vale Country Park covers a large proportion of the valley in the west; predominately open parkland and recreational ground featuring riverside meadows, areas of shrubland and woodland belts.
- Agricultural land is a mixture of pastoral farming and pony paddocks.
- Semi-regular fields are largely post-medieval piecemeal enclosures of medium scale. Agglomerated 20$^{th}$ century fields are found in the east. Boundaries comprise gappy hedgerows and wooden fencing.
- Other land uses include schools and associated recreation grounds, Reddish Vale Golf Course, Denton Sewage Works and Willow Grove cemetery.

*Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover*

- Blocks and bands of ancient woodland are present in the east and deciduous broadleaved woodlands are common, particularly fringing the River Tame (many designated as Sites of Biological Importance), linking to habitats in Tameside District.
- Field ponds and mill ponds form locally important landscape ecological features, and the Peak Forest Canal is also locally designated as a Site of Biological Importance (SBI).
- Reddish Vale Local Nature Reserve combines with a number of locally designated woodlands in the west.

*Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- A scattering of Grade II listed buildings, including the imposing 16-arch Tame Viaduct (a local landmark), 16$^{th}$ century moated Arden Hall overlooking the Tame, and Castle Hill Farmhouse.
- Relicts from past industry include the Grade II red brick Meadow Mill (a former cotton and wool spinning mill), dams, weirs, and the Peak Forest Canal (a Conservation Area with Grade II bridge).

*Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- Settlement within the landscape is sparse, comprising isolated traditional red brick farms, individual 20$^{th}$ century properties and cottages focused at Castle Hill and in the vicinity of the Visitor Centre.
- The surrounding settlements of Reddish, Brinnington and Bredbury Park Industrial Estate are generally of 20$^{th}$ century origin.
- A network of rights of way link adjoining settlements. Routes include the Transpennine Trail, Midshires Way, the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk, Tame Valley Way and National Cycle Route 162.
- Reddish Vale Country Park separates the settlements of Reddish and Brinnington that border the LCA; a valued recreational resource on the doorstep of these communities.
- The M60 is a major road intersecting the LCA, with Junction 25 separating Brinnington and Bredbury. Other main roads include the A607 and A626. Elsewhere are narrow, hedge-lined lanes.
- Two railway lines cut through the landscape, connecting Brinnington and Reddish North in the west, and the Woodley to Hyde line in the east.

*Views and perceptual qualities*

- Dense woodland belts visually screen many views out and between surrounding settlements, with views opening up in the east where woodland cover is sparser.
- Road and rail noise and movements impact on perceived levels of tranquillity in the landscape.

## Landscape evaluation

**Summary of current landscape condition**

This rural landscape with a distinctive valley profile runs across the fringes of many urban communities and creates a major green corridor into the centre of Stockport. The southern tip of the LCA is where the River Tame and Goyt meet to form the River Mersey as it vanishes under the urban fabric of the town centre. The landscape is defined by the meandering course of the river and its associated habitat network and extensive woodland coverage that dominated most vantages. A number of well-wooded paths create quiet, tranquil routes into the countryside although in close proximity to many urban settlements. Issues around the current condition mainly relate to urban development nibbling away at the valley and threatening land that is regarded as one of Stockport's major green lungs.

### Forces for change

*Past and current forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition*

- Recent and proposed urban expansions and road schemes encroaching into the landscape, diluting its role as a 'green lung' between development and its associated biodiversity and amenity values.
- Litter and fly-tipping present on verges, particularly on land adjacent to Bredbury Park Industrial Estate. Litter 'tide lines' are also apparent along the course of the Tame.
- Mills and buildings of industrial heritage value remaining vacant or facing demolition.
- Degraded / neglected farmland used as storage for machinery and construction materials, having a particular impact along river banks.
- Decline in traditional hedgerow boundary management, with gappy sections prevalent.
- Loss of traditional grazing land to pony paddocks, with associated structures and features such as fencing replacing hedgerows, and poached/tightly grazed land.

*Future forces for change likely to impact on landscape character and condition*

- Further development pressures, including increasing levels of traffic impacting on air quality, tranquillity, biodiversity and a further demand for countryside access.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), further threatening the viability of the remaining farms.
- The impacts of climate change may contribute to more frequent flooding events and loss/damage to the semi-natural habitats found throughout the valley.
- Climate change / urbanisation may also increase levels of run-off and affect the water quality of the River Tame and its supported wildlife.
- Change in woodland / tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytopthora pathogens) and invasive species become more prevalent.
- New woodland planting may be introduced to improve air quality, manage carbon and improve the delivery of ecosystem services.
- Need for the maintenance and expansion of multi-user access, particularly in and around the Country Park as a key destination that is likely to have to accommodate more visitors / footfall (i.e. as a result of population increases in the wider area).
- Further diversification to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping).
- Opportunities to preserve the history of sites such as Arden Hall as a site for future generations to understand the history of Stockport and this landscape.

## Landscape sensitivity assessment

| Criteria | Description and indication of sensitivity | Rating |
|---|---|---|
| Physical character (including topography and scale) | • Valley profile associated with the River Tame featuring steep-sided banks in areas and gently undulating valley floor.<br>• Topography generally ranges from 45 to 80m AOD and rises steeply to 130m AOD in the east.<br>• Semi-regular fields of variable scale with tree lines boundaries which are more prominent in the east. | **M** |
| Natural character | • Reddish Vale Country Park and LNR covers a large proportion of the valley in the west, with meadows, shrub, wetlands, dense woodland and the River Tame.<br>• River Tame associated with linear woodland belts (many SBIs), smaller in-field woodland blocks, mill ponds, riverside meadows and areas of shrubland.<br>• The Peak Forest Canal is designated as a SBI.<br>• Pasture, pony paddocks and amenity land found across the area. | **M** |
| Historic landscape character | • Semi-regular fields are largely post-medieval piecemeal enclosures with agglomerated 20th century fields to the east.<br>• A scattering of Grade II listed buildings, including the Tame Viaduct, Arden Hall overlooking the Tame, and Castle Hill Farmhouse.<br>• Evidence of past industry include the Grade II listed Meadow Mill, Unity Mill, dams and weirs along the river, and the Peak Forest Canal (Conservation Area with Grade II bridge). | **L-M** |
| Form, density and setting of existing development | • Reddish Vale Country Park separates the 20th century settlements of Reddish and Brinnington.<br>• Valley mostly unsettled with a scattering of farms, cottages and 20th century properties.<br>• Other land uses include schools and associated recreation grounds, Reddish Vale Golf Course and Denton Sewage Works.<br>• Just outside the LCA, Bredbury Park industrial estate has a close influence on the central part of the valley.<br>• The valley provides a 'green lung' surrounded by urban development and directly influenced by major road infrastructures including the M60, A6017 and two railway lines. | **M-H** |
| Views and visual character including skylines | • Dense woodland belts visually screen and separate surrounding settlements and retain the countryside views.<br>• The Tame Viaduct is a prominent feature along the skyline in the west.<br>• Views are available along the river valley where there are breaks in the woodland.<br>• Contrasting views are characterised by high rise flats in Brinnington rising above the wooded horizon line which screens much of the urban settlement.<br>• Tower blocks in Tameside visible from higher ground near Bredbury Business Park. | **M** |
| Access and recreation | • Reddish Vale Country Park is a valued recreational resource on the doorstep of urban communities, with opportunity for informal recreation and fishing.<br>• A network of public footpaths provides access from settlement into the countryside of this valley, particularly in the south from the centre of Stockport.<br>• A network of footpaths, bridleways and cycle trails pass along the valley and link adjoining settlements. Routes include the Transpennine Trail, Midshires Way and National Cycle Route 162.<br>• Other amenity uses include a number of sports pitches, golf course and recreation facilities at Brinnington Park. | **M-H** |
| Perceptual and experiential qualities | • Woodland belts create a strong sense of visual enclosure as well as screening surrounding houses.<br>• Strong sense of being within a countryside setting.<br>• Tranquillity broken by high levels of traffic along the M60 and both train lines that cut through this LCA. Intermittent air traffic noise also has an impact.<br>• Litter and fly-tipping on edge of roads and Bredbury Park Industrial Estate evoke a sense of neglect. | **M** |

### Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

| Development scenario | Sensitivity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure | | | M | | |
| Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories) / solar PV developments (up to 10ha) | | | M | | |
| Large-scale commercial development (large distribution / warehousing / logistics (B8 use)) | | | | M-H | |
| Wind turbines (75m to blade tip) | | | | | H |

**Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity**

The area of the LCA to the west and north of the M60 would be highly sensitive to any significant new development, owing to the landscape, amenity and biodiversity importance of Reddish Vale Country Park, Local Nature Reserve and significant coverage of Sites of Biological Importance.

The LCA as a whole would be highly sensitive to any major urban extensions or significant housing developments, with single or very small numbers of grouped dwellings most likely to be appropriately sited within this landscape (where linked to existing development), providing the guidance below is followed.

Landscape sensitivity to small-scale commercial / solar PV and large-scale commercial developments is slightly less in the area immediately adjacent to Bredbury Park Industrial Estate, where industrial development already influences landscape character.

### Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

**The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):**

- The distinct valley profile of the Tame, with steep-sided wooded banks.
- Reddish Vale Country Park and Local Nature Reserve, supporting a rich wildlife habitat and providing a valued local community destination, recreational facility and access to a countryside setting.
- Valued bands of broadleaved woodlands including areas of ancient woodland and several SBIs; creating distinctive wooded skylines.
- Important wetland habitats, including mill ponds and wet grassland fringing the river – home to waterfowl. Mill ponds and fisheries also valued for recreational fishing.
- Areas of intact traditional hedgerow field boundaries contributing positively to the rural character of the landscape.
- Grade II listed buildings including vernacular farmhouses, Arden Hall and Meadow Mill.
- Important relicts from past industry, including the Peak Forest Canal (Conservation Area with Grade II bridge) and the landmark Grade II Tame Viaduct – an important focal point in the west.
- The rural separation function and screening provided by wooded valley to dense development either side – including the suburbs of Reddish, Brinnington, Haughton Green and Woodley.
- Well used recreational access routes including Midshires Way and the Transpennine Trail, allowing ease of access into the landscape by adjacent urban communities.
- A number of mill ponds and fisheries serve important ecological and recreational roles.
- Strong rural qualities and relative levels of tranquillity despite the close proximity of development and major transport infrastructure.
- The setting of the landscape as the 'green lung' connecting the centre of Stockport with the countryside on its doorstep.

### Guidance and opportunities for future development

**Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:**

- Avoid siting any development in more elevated locations that are overlooked, as well as the steep valley slopes.
- Protect the landscape's role as 'green lung' and immediate rural setting to surrounding development, along with its important separation function between the different Stockport suburbs.
- Utilise the valley landform and extensive woodland cover to integrate new development into the landscape. Limited new development should be connected to existing developed edges wherever possible, avoiding significant encroachment into the rural valley landscape.
- Strengthen the hedgerow network in association with any new development, using locally prevalent and climate resilient species. Any new boundaries should also reflect local characteristics, including the planting of a new generation of hedgerow trees.
- Protect, link and where possible restore and re-create semi-natural habitats to reduce their fragmentation and increase their role in flood alleviation, including woodlands linking to an intact hedgerow network, wetlands and ponds.
- Avoid siting development that would lead to a loss or fragmentation of the landscape's SBI-designated habitats, and those found within Reddish Vale Local Nature Reserve.
- Respect local building styles and materials in new housing developments, seeking to reflect these in their design and build (particularly the use of red brick, local stone and white/cream render).
- Conserve and protect the landscape's historic environment and heritage assets, including Grade II listed farmhouses, mill buildings, weirs and bridges – along with the character and setting of the Peak Forest Canal Conservation Area.
- Maintain views to the Grade II Tame Viaduct, and protect its role as a key focal point in the western valley.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology and flood risk (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution).
- Improve and enhance sustainable opportunities for access and enjoyment by nearby communities, such as a more attractive gateway into the Country Park at the current visitor centre site, and additional promoted multi-user access points linking to adjacent urban areas (including in Tameside).
- Protect the LCA's relative sense of tranquillity and unsettled character away from major infrastructure and existing urban/industrial development on its fringes.

## F: Etherow Parklands

### Representative photographs

View to Compstall with Marple Bridge beyond

View east across the LCA with the Peak District on the horizon

### Location and summary of overall character

**This Landscape Character Area falls within GM Landscape Character Type: Pennine Foothills (Dark Peak)**

The LCA is centred on the Etherow Valley and its valley slopes and summits, located in the north-east of the Borough adjoining the boundaries with Tameside and High Peak Borough.

The main river valley and its tributaries are cloaked in broadleaved and ancient woodland, and the Etherow itself has a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserve and Country Park. The main settlement in the area is the historic mill village of Compstall, with some 20th century development extending to the east. Land rises to the west from Romiley Golf Course towards the ridge of Werneth Low (offering expansive views over Greater Manchester), while at the far west the "Top o th' Hill" area forms a valuable elevated area between the built up areas of Romiley, Bredbury and Woodley. This is a valuable rural landscape on the doorstep of urban communities, framed by distant views south and east to the Peak District National Park.

## Landscape character description

**Key characteristics**

*Topography, geology and drainage*

- Steep valley system associated with the River Etherow, with tributary brooks and minor watercourses draining from the surrounding hills to create a complex, strongly undulating landform.
- Elevation ranges from 90m AOD in the valley bottom to 249m AOD at Werneth Low on the northern border with Tameside.
- Bedrock geology of Pennine Lower Coal Measures (mudstones, siltstones and sandstones), with bands of harder Woodhead Hill sandstone. Glaciofluvial, alluvial and river terrace sand and gravel deposits border the River Etherow.
- Generally loamy and clayey soils with low permeability and poor fertility (most of the agricultural land is classed as Grade 4, with Grade 3 associated with lighter, sandy/silty soils bordering the river).

*Land use and field patterns*

- A large proportion of land bordering the river is mixed woodland and meadows associated with Etherow Country Park, a popular recreational destination for local communities.
- Agricultural land is predominantly sheep-grazed rough and semi-improved pastures, enclosed by hedgerows and lines of fencing. Horse keeping is also a feature, within fenced paddocks.
- Irregular small to medium-scale fields are of mixed origins according to the HLC, including post-medieval piecemeal enclosures, assarts and more regular Parliamentary and 20th century agglomerated fields.
- Romiley Golf Course is located to the west, forming a transition to the adjacent urban fringe.

*Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover*

- Woodland, wetland and open water habitats are nationally recognised at Compstall Nature Reserve SSSI and of local importance at Etherow Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Site of Biological Interest (SBI). The river itself is an important ecological feature and wildlife habitat along its length.
- Large tracts of SBI-designated ancient and semi-natural broadleaved woodland bordering the Etherow, as well as re-planted mixed woodland of a parkland character.
- Other SBI-designated broadleaved woodlands tracing tributary streams, connecting with mature hedgerows to create a well-wooded landscape. This includes ancient woodland at Benfield Clough.
- The landscape's habitats form part of a connected ecological network linking with those found in the Goyt Valley (LCA G) and across the border into Tameside.

*Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- Compstall Conservation Area includes mill buildings, workers' cottages and a mill pond, as well as the Grade II Listed early 19th century Compstall Bridge, St Paul's Church and Church Houses Post Office.
- A number of vernacular stone-built farm buildings and barns are also Grade II Listed across the wider landscape.

*Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- This rural landscape abuts the hard urban edges of Woodley, Romiley and Marple Bridge.
- The historic village of Compstall is the only settlement; nestled along the banks of the River Etherow and contained by steep valley slopes.
- Compstall comprises a mixture of Victorian stone and rendered terraces and 20th century housing of various styles and materials – the latter extending east from the village's historic core.
- Elsewhere development is limited to dispersed farms and cottages.
- Landscape crossed by a rural network of hedged lanes, farm and forest tracks, supplemented by footpaths including the Midshires Way tracing the Etherow up onto the higher ground above.
- The A626 forms the eastern LCA boundary, with the B6104 connected Compstall and Romiley.

*Views and perceptual qualities*

- Expansive views from the Werneth Low ridgeline in the north over urban development in Tameside and Greater Manchester; tower blocks and mill chimneys punctuating skylines.
- Views south include the distant hills above Lyme Park in the Peak District National Park; the National Park also features in eastward views.
- Steep slopes, hedgerows and bands of woodland contain views within the valley system.
- A rural haven with valued relative levels of tranquillity, standing in contrast to adjacent urban areas.

## Landscape evaluation

**Summary of current landscape condition**

This rural landscape sits on the immediate doorstep of urban communities, evidenced by the presence of urban fringe land uses such as a golf course and pony paddocks, detracting from the traditional farmed character of the wider area. Views to urban development define the LCA's high vantage points, with associated impacts on perceptions of tranquillity, remoteness and dark night skies. Nevertheless, away from development this landscape comprises a pleasing undulating combination of woodland, pastoral fields and hedgerows. Issues relating to current condition mainly relate to proximity to urban development and a decline in the management of component landscape features, including a significant fragmentation of the hedgerow network, lack of management of remaining lengths, and replacement by uncharacteristic fencing (resulting in a dilution of historic field patterns).

### Forces for change

*Past and current forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition*

- 20th century expansion of Compstall beyond its historic core, comprising a range of building styles/materials in housing estates to the east.
- Extension of the urban edges and associated land uses (e.g. golf course) into the landscape, diluting its traditional farmed character.
- Evidence of 20th century field enlargement as well as recent sub-division into pony paddocks.
- Loss of traditional grazing land to pony paddocks, with associated structures and features such as fencing replacing hedgerows, and poached/tightly grazed land.
- Decline and fragmentation of the hedgerow network, with long lengths completely replaced by fencing and existing hedgerows suffering from a lack of management.
- Pylons and overhead wires detracting from largely undeveloped, often wooded skylines.
- Views often dominated by urban development, detracting from perceptions of tranquillity and emitting light pollution into the rural landscape.
- Need for improved facilities for access and recreation, both associated with Etherow Country Park and the wider landscape via the rights of way network, linking to urban communities and Werneth Low Country Park in Tameside. At present there is poor and dated provision of on-site interpretation and visitor facilities at Compstall.

*Future forces for change likely to impact on landscape character and condition*

- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock).
- Further diversification to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping), diluting the traditional agricultural and uses associated with the landscape.
- Future development of doorstep urban centres and the wider Greater Manchester conurbation, leading to a further decrease in tranquillity and dark night skies, fragmentation of traditional land uses and increased demand for access and recreation (with associated impacts on traffic and pressure on countryside infrastructure).
- Change in woodland / tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytopthora pathogens) and invasive species become more prevalent. Individual trees may become more susceptible to damage from more frequent and intense storm events.
- More intense periods of drought leading to the drying out of important wetlands– affecting their functions in reducing flood risk in the winter months.
- Potential changes to renewable energy subsidies and markets leading to increased demand for wind turbines within the open, exposed landscapes parts of the LCA.
- Demand for domestic and community-scale renewable energy installations such as solar panels, small wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps.
- Increase in the area of woodlands and restored wetlands to enhance the landscape's roles in filtering water, minimising downstream flooding, and storing and sequestering carbon dioxide.

## Landscape sensitivity assessment

| Criteria | Description | Rating |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical character (including topography and scale)** | • Steep valley system associated with the River Etherow, carved by brooks and minor watercourses to create a complex, strongly undulating landform.<br>• Elevation ranges from 90m AOD in the valley bottom to 249m AOD at Werneth Low on the northern border with Tameside.<br>• Landform scale varies, from small-scale/enclosed within the valley system to open and expansive along the northern ridgeline.<br>• Landform superimposed by irregular small to medium-scale field patterns.<br>• Woodland, trees, hedgerows and field boundaries form frequent small-scale landscape elements. | **M** |
| **Natural character** | • Agricultural land is predominantly sheep-grazed rough and semi-improved pastures along with pony paddocks.<br>• Large tracts of ancient and semi-natural broadleaved woodland bordering the Etherow (Etherow Country Park SBI and LNR).<br>• Nationally designated woodland, wetland and open water habitats at Compstall Nature Reserve SSSI.<br>• Other SBI-designated broadleaved woodlands tracing tributary streams, including ancient woodland at Benfield Clough.<br>• A mature hedgerow network connects with woodlands to create a well-wooded landscape.<br>• Habitats, including the river and its tributaries, form part of a wider ecological network linking to the Goyt Valley and Tameside. | **M-H** |
| **Historic landscape character** | • Mixed field origins, including post-medieval piecemeal enclosures and assarts, regular Parliamentary enclosures and 20th century agglomerated fields.<br>• Compstall Conservation Area occupies a significant area, with mill buildings, workers' cottages and former mill pond.<br>• The early 19th century Compstall Bridge, St Paul's Church and Church Houses Post Office are all Grade II Listed.<br>• A number of vernacular farm buildings and barns are also Grade II Listed across the wider landscape. | **M** |
| **Form, density and setting of existing settlement/ development** | • This rural landscape abuts the urban areas of Woodley, Romiley and Marple Bridge, forming a rural edge to development and separation function between the settlements.<br>• The eastern edge of Compstall includes a 20th century housing estate, but the settlement is nestled within the tight valley of the Etherow, surrounded by woodland.<br>• Elsewhere development is limited to dispersed historic farms and cottages. | **M-H** |
| **Views and visual character including skylines** | • Expansive views from the Werneth Low ridgeline in the north over urban development in Tameside and Greater Manchester; tower blocks and mill chimneys punctuating skylines.<br>• Views south include the distant hills above Lyme Park in the Peak District National Park; the National Park also features in eastward views.<br>• Undeveloped skylines are marked by trees and bands of woodland.<br>• Steep slopes, hedgerows and bands of woodland contain views within the valley system. | **M-H** |
| **Access and recreation** | • A rural network of hedged lanes, farm and forest tracks is supplemented by footpaths including the Midshires Way.<br>• Etherow Country Park is a well-used recreational destination for nearby communities, with 'gateway' and visitor centre at Compstall. This includes easy walking trails and water-based activities, including model boat sailing and wildlife watching. | **H** |
| **Perceptual and experiential qualities** | • A rural haven with valued relative levels of tranquillity, standing in contrast to urban development on its immediate doorstep.<br>• Romiley Golf Course is located to the west, forming a transition to the adjacent urban fringe.<br>• Rural qualities eroded by creeping suburbanisation and associated land uses. | **M** |

### Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

| Development scenario | Sensitivity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure | | | M | | |
| Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories) / solar PV developments (up to 10ha) | | | | M-H | |
| Wind turbines (75m to blade tip) | | | | M-H | |

**Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity**

Due to the presence of existing largely well-screened development at Compstall (due to enclosing valley topography and woodland), this part of the LCA may provide opportunities for in-fill and limited settlement edge development providing the guidance below is followed. In addition, some limited additions to the urban areas to the west may be sensitively accommodated providing it does not lead to settlement coalescence or a significant intrusion into the surrounding rural countryside. The most elevated parts of the landscape, including Werneth Low, the adjacent ridgeline and Top-o-th'Hill, would be highly sensitive to any types of development, including wind turbines, due these locations' visual prominence (including in long views from the Peak District National Park) and undeveloped character.

### Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

**The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):**

- The highly prominent open ridgeline forming the northern edge of the LCA, rising to Werneth Low, overlooking the urban expanse of Tameside and Greater Manchester.
- The landscape's visual connections with the Cheshire (distant views to the hills above Lyme Park) and Derbyshire parts of the Peak District National Park - south and east respectively.
- The small-scale/ enclosed nature of the complex valley system of the Etherow.
- Naturalistic land cover provided by expansive SBI-designated woodland cover linking to a mature hedgerow network, including tracts of ancient woodland at Etherow Country Park SBI and LNR and Compstall Nature Reserve SSSI.
- Other locally and nationally important habitats including the river and its tributaries along with associated wetlands and open water habitats.
- Time depth provided by post-medieval piecemeal enclosures, assarts and Listed vernacular buildings across the landscape.
- Key role the LCA plays in the character and setting of Compstall Conservation Area, a former mill village set within woodland and nestled within the tight valley landform of the Etherow.
- The value of Etherow Country Park and the wider rural landscape (including the Midshires Way) as a recreational destination for a wide range of users and people from doorstep communities.
- Overriding rural qualities with dispersed and sparse settlement away from urban areas in the west and south.

### Guidance and opportunities for future development

**Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:**

- Avoid siting any development on the highly prominent, elevated ridgeline in the north of the LCA, including Werneth Low. This ridgeline forms a rural backdrop and containment to expansive urban

development at Tameside and Greater Manchester.

- Protect the landscape's role as an immediate rural hinterland to urban development at Woodley, Romiley and Marple Bridge. Ensure any new development retains their separate identities and elevated ground at Top-o-th' Hill is avoided.
- Utilise the tight valley landform and extensive woodland cover to integrate new development into the landscape. New housing or light industrial development should be connected to the existing settlement of Compstall, limiting its overall spread into the surrounding landscape wherever possible.
- Protect and where possible enhance the landscape's semi-natural habitats in association with new development, including ancient and broadleaved woodlands, wetlands and open water. Avoid development that would lead to a loss of SSSI or SBI-designated habitats.
- Strengthen the hedgerow network in association with any new development, using locally prevalent and climate resilient species. Any new boundaries should also reflect local characteristics, including the planting of a new generation of hedgerow trees.
- Ensure any new development does not dilute the characteristic field patterns associated with the landscape, particularly those of historic origin (post-medieval piecemeal enclosures and assarts).
- Respect local building styles and materials in new housing developments, seeking to reflect these in their design and build (particularly the use of local stone and cream/white render).
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off).
- Protect the landscape's contribution to the character and setting of Compstall Conservation Areas and its mill heritage, with Listed Buildings including bridge, church and post office.
- Protect the wider LCA's overriding sense of tranquillity with a dispersed pattern of stone-built farms and cottages, including a number of Grade II Listed buildings.
- Improve and enhance sustainable opportunities for access and enjoyment by nearby communities, such as a more attractive gateway into Etherow Country Park at Compstall and additional promoted multi-user access points, particularly linking to urban areas and adjacent landscapes (including Werneth Low Country Park in Tameside).
- Conserve expansive views from elevated land to the distinctive remote hills of the Peak District National Park, including the Lyme Park estate south of Stockport.
- Ensure any new development does not adversely affect the special qualities of the Peak District National Park, including its beautiful views, sense of tranquillity and dark night skies, and the vital benefits that flow beyond its boundary[10].

[10] Taken from the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2018-23 (Final consultation draft, March 2018)

## G: Goyt Valley

### Representative photographs

River Goyt near Chadkirk Country Estate, with overhead powerlines visible

Grade I listed Goyt Aqueduct and Grade II listed Marple Railway Viaduct

### Location and summary of overall character

**This Landscape Character Area falls within GM Landscape Character Type: Urban Fringe Valleys**

The LCA follows the course of the River Goyt from the Derbyshire / Cheshire East border at Strines towards Stockport Town Centre. The valley is densely wooded, with areas of Ancient Woodland and a high number of Sites of Biological Importance. Land use is predominantly agricultural, with variable field scale and pattern, and recreational including Vernon Park, Woodbank Park, Brabyns Park and Roman Lakes Leisure Park. In the east, the LCA includes the Peak Forest Canal and the Hope Valley railway line. There are numerous trails including Midshires Way, Cown Edge Way, Etherow Goyt Valley Way and the towpath along the Peak Forest Canal.

## Landscape character description

| Key characteristics |
|---|
| *Topography, geology and drainage* |
| • Dominated by the River Goyt Valley, its profile rising from 50 to 100m AOD in the western extent. In the east, there is a rise from 90 to 210m AOD from the River Goyt to Marple Ridge Fold. |
| • Bedrock geology of the Pennine Lower Coal Formation (mudstones, siltstones, sandstones), with Millstone Grit in the east and interbedded Permian sandstone and conglomerate in the west; all topped by glacial till. |
| • Seasonally wet acid loamy and clay soils, with freely draining floodplain soils to the north – adjacent to the river. Agricultural land is predominately classified as Grade 3, with some Grade 4 east of Marple. |
| • The river flows in a north-westerly direction to meet the confluence with the River Tame in Stockport. |
| *Land use and field patterns* |
| • A mix of arable and pastoral land in the centre of the LCA, with pastures forming a transition to a more Peak Fringe character in the east. |
| • Piecemeal regular and irregular fields of mid-19th century origin, ranging from small to large in scale, with larger amalgamated fields in the west. Hawthorn hedgerows are intact in places, supplemented by fencing. |
| • A valued recreational and wildlife space on the doorstep of urban communities, with many parks and recreation grounds, including Vernon, Woodbank, Brabyns and Roman Lakes parks and Chadkirk Country Estate. |
| • Other land uses include schools and playing fields, leisure facilities, sewage works, disused gravel pit workings, with areas of light industry and business parks close to Stockport Town Centre. |
| *Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover* |
| • Broadleaved and ancient woodland coverage is high, with almost continuous woodland cover along the course of the river and its tributaries. Woodland is also associated with parks, the Peak Forest Canal and the Hope Valley railway line. |
| • The river itself is an important ecological feature and wildlife habitat along its length. |
| • The importance of these habitats is reflected in numerous local designations, with extensive Sites of Biological Importance coverage and Local Nature Reserves at Woodland Park, Poise Brook and Chadkirk Country Estate. |
| • Isolated areas of semi-improved grassland, lowland fens and lowland meadows are found throughout. |
| *Archaeology and cultural heritage* |
| • A high number of Listed Buildings throughout, including the 30m high Goyt Aqueduct (Grade I Listed Building and Scheduled Monument) on the Peak Forest Canal. The canal features further Listed bridges and locks and is a Conservation Area. |
| • Vernon Park is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden, home to the Stockport Museum (Grade II Listed). It is Stockport's oldest public park, with Victorian/Edwardian formal and informal grounds and woodlands. |
| • The eastern valley includes parts of Chadkirk, Marple Bridge and All Saints (Marple) Conservation Areas. |
| *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way* |
| • Although contained by urban development, the valley itself is sparsely settled, with scattered farms (including many Listed Buildings) and linear 20th century housing along the B6101 Strines Road. |
| • The valley is crossed by a number of busy roads linking urban areas, including the A62, B6101 and B6104. The M60 and A560 form the northern boundary of the LCA. |
| • The Hope Valley railway line also passes through the east of the LCA, from Romiley through to Strines, running adjacent to the meandering River Goyt. |
| • Numerous recreational routes passing through the valley, including the Midshires Way, Cown Edge Way, Etherow Goyt Valley Way and the Peak Forest Canal towpath. These link to adjacent settlements via further public footpaths. |
| *Views and perceptual qualities* |
| • Views are generally contained within the valley – in more open areas views are funnelled along its length, while areas with dense woodland tend to be visually enclosed. |
| • The landscape is generally rural and tranquil, with the sound of flowing water experienced from river crossings. This contrasts with views to adjacent urban development and traffic noise from adjacent roads. |
| • In the east of the area the landscape is less influenced by the adjacent urban environment, with upper slopes conveying an upland fringe character with wind-sculpted trees, stone walls and long views to the Peak District National Park. |

## Landscape evaluation

**Summary of current landscape condition**

The Goyt Valley is an undeveloped corridor between the urban and rural environment, with a high concentration of important heritage features and natural habitats. It forms a valued recreational resource to people living in adjacent urban areas and is under significant recreation pressure. The numerous parks and gardens within the landscape are well managed, however within the farmed landscape there has been a decline of some characteristic features; particularly the loss of hedgerows and their subsequent replacement with post and wire fencing, resulting in a more open character and the dilution of historic field patterns within the valley. Traffic noise and light pollution emanating from adjacent urban areas detracts from the sense of tranquillity and escape experienced within the landscape and the generally undeveloped character. Overhead power lines and pylons running the length of the valley are also intrusive.

### Forces for change

*Past and current forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition*

- Pylons and overhead lines which run the length of the valley and detract from undeveloped (on the valley floor) or wooded skylines (on the valley sides).
- Views often dominated by adjacent urban development, detracting from perceptions of tranquillity and emitting light pollution into the undeveloped valley landscape.
- Past loss of hedgerows and their subsequent replacement with post and wire fencing leading to a more open landscape on the valley floor and less structured landscape with the dilution of historic field patterns.
- Significant recreation pressure on the parkland areas within the valley due to the large surrounding urban population.
- Modern development in the sparsely settled rural landscape, including linear development along roads.

*Future forces for change likely to impact on landscape character and condition*

- Continued development pressure within the landscape, including new housing developments, proposed new road infrastructure and the conversion of former industrial buildings to residential use.
- A decline in traditional farming activity and an uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock) may result in the change of management or land use within the valley.
- Urbanisation may increase levels of run-off and affect the water quality of the Goyt river system (including a rubbish 'tideline' following high flow events).
- The impacts of climate change may also contribute to more frequent flooding events and loss/damage to the semi-natural habitats found throughout the valley. This may also lead to the construction of new flood alleviation measures which could detract from natural character.
- Conversely, an increase in the area of woodlands and restored wetlands could be used to enhance the landscape's roles in filtering water, minimising downstream flooding, and storing and sequestering carbon dioxide.
- Change in woodland/tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytopthora pathogens) and invasive species become more prevalent.
- More intense periods of drought leading to the drying out of important wetlands – affecting their functions in reducing flood risk in the winter months.
- Need for the maintenance and expansion of multi-user access, particularly in and around the various parks within the valley, as these destinations area likely to have to accommodate more visitors / footfall (i.e. as a result of population increases in the wider area).
- Need for the improved management and preservation of heritage features which give a strong sense of time depth and provide a distinctive setting to the valley.

## Landscape sensitivity assessment

| Criteria | Description and indication of sensitivity | Rating |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical character (including topography and scale)** | • Dominated by the River Goyt Valley, its profile rising from 50 to 100m AOD in the western extent. In the east, there is a rise from 90 to 210m AOD from the River Goyt to Marpleridge.<br>• Varied in scale, with wide open areas on the floodplain contrasting with intimate woodlands and small-scale fields on the valley slopes. | **M-H** |
| **Natural character** | • A mix of arable and pastoral land in the centre of the LCA, with pastures forming a transition to a more Peak Fringe character in the east.<br>• High coverage of broadleaved and ancient woodland, with almost continuous woodland cover along the river and its tributaries. Woodland is also associated with parks, the canal and the Hope Valley railway line.<br>• Numerous locally designated wildlife sites, with extensive SBI coverage and LNRs at Woodland Park, Poise Brook and Chadkirk Country Estate.<br>• Isolated areas of semi-improved grassland, lowland fens and lowland meadows found throughout.<br>• The river system itself forms an important ecological corridor. | **M-H** |
| **Historic landscape character** | • Numerous heritage assets, including the Goyt Aqueduct (Grade I Listed and a Scheduled Monument) The Peak Forest Canal is a Conservation Area, with a number of Listed bridges and locks.<br>• Vernon Park is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden, which includes the Grade II Listed Stockport Museum.<br>• The eastern valley includes land within Chadkirk, Marple Bridge and All Saints (Marple) Conservation Areas.<br>• Agricultural land is largely piecemeal fields of post-medieval to 19th century in origin, although many have been subject to 20th century amalgamation. | **M-H** |
| **Form, density and setting of existing development** | • Although contained by urban development, the valley itself is sparsely settled, with scattered farms and halls. In the eastern part of the valley there is linear development along roads, including Strines and Mill Green.<br>• The valley is an important part of the landscape setting to a number of Conservation Areas including Chadkirk, Marple Bridge, All Saints (Marple) and Peak Forest Canal.<br>• It also plays an important role in separating the distinct settlements of Marple, Marple Bridge, Romiley, Bredbury and Offerton, as well as providing an undeveloped setting. | **M-H** |
| **Views and visual character including skylines** | • Prominent views to/from urban development on adjacent upper valley slopes.<br>• Viewpoint at Ridgefold looking east across the valley towards the uplands of the Peak District National Park.<br>• Views are generally funnelled along the valley, and woodland on the upper valley slopes creates wooded skylines from within the valley.<br>• The Goyt Viaduct forms a landmark feature on the skyline from within the valley. A pylon line running along the valley is a detracting skyline feature.<br>• On the floodplain, views tend to be open. Dense woodland can restrict views in other places and also acts to create wooded skylines. | **M** |
| **Access and recreation** | • The valley is a valued recreational destination for the surrounding urban areas, with multiple rights of way linking to/from the settlements.<br>• Linked by numerous recreational routes including the Midshires Way, Cown Edge Way, Etherow Goyt Valley Way and the Peak Forest Canal towpath. National Cycle Route 55 also provides access.<br>• Many parks and recreation grounds, including Vernon, Woodbank, Brabyns and Roman Lakes parks and Chadkirk Country Estate. | **M-H** |
| **Perceptual and experiential qualities** | • The landscape is generally rural and tranquil, with the sound of flowing water experienced from river crossings. This contrasts with views to adjacent urban development and traffic noise from adjacent roads.<br>• Upper slopes in the east convey an upland fringe character with wind-sculpted trees, stone walls and a sense of exposure.<br>• Experiential qualities vary depending on topography and land cover. Often, there is a sense of enclosure due to tree cover, with a more open character south of Marple/Hawk Green.<br>• A number of suburban influences, including masts, sewage works and an electricity substation with associated overhead lines. | **M-H** |

### Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

| Development scenario | Sensitivity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure | | | | M-H | |
| Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories) / solar PV developments (up to 10ha) | | | | M-H | |
| Wind turbines (75m to blade tip) | | | | | H |

**Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity**

The steep valley slopes and open areas of the valley floor which are visually prominent from adjacent areas (particularly the areas adjacent to Marple and those featuring in views from the Peak District National Park) would be particularly sensitive to all development scenarios.

No areas within the Goyt Valley are suitable for any major urban extensions or significant housing developments, with single or very small numbers of grouped dwellings most likely to be appropriately sited (where linked to existing development), providing the guidance below is followed.

### Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

**The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):**

- The steep slopes associated with the dramatic valley landform carved by the winding river.
- The extensive tracts of broadleaved woodland, much of which is ancient in origin and locally designated. These form important wildlife corridors connecting the rural and urban environment.
- Important semi-natural habitats including dense woodland, lowland meadow and wetland habitats along the floodplain.
- Evidence of the valley's industrial heritage with features including the Grade I Listed Goyt Aqueduct and Peak Forest Canal. Many of the bridges and locks are also Listed structures.
- The sparsely settled character within the valley, with occasional halls and farms (including a number which are Listed Buildings).
- Valued destination for recreation, with destinations including Woodbank Memorial Park, Chadkirk Country Estate and Roman Lakes Leisure Park providing a sense of escape from surrounding urban areas. Accessible by a number of rights of way and promoted routes.
- Picturesque setting and sense of place provided to nearby urban areas including historic Conservation Areas at Chadkirk, Marple Bridge, All Saints (Marple) and Peak Forest Canal.
- The sense of separation that the valley provides between the distinct urban areas of Marple, Marple Bridge, Romiley, Bredbury and Offerton.
- The distinctive visual character, with views funnelled down the valley. From the viewpoint at Ridgefold there are views over the Goyt Valley looking toward the Pennine Uplands, including areas within the Peak District National Park.
- A sense of relative tranquillity amongst dense areas of urban development.

### Guidance and opportunities for future development

**Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:**

- Avoiding siting development in areas where it will be visually prominent including areas on steep slopes and open areas of valley floor.
- Ensure that semi-natural habitats are retained. Enhance and increase habitat connectivity where possible and link up habitats to enhance to role of the valley as a wildlife corridor. Opportunities to plant new hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost or fragmented should be encouraged.

- Continue the maintenance and management of the existing woodland resource. Where possible link woodland sites to form larger, more cohesive units, providing that this action is not detrimental to other valuable wildlife habitats.
- Secure, manage and maintain the important historical and industrial elements of the landscape such as former railway routes, bridges, Peak Forest Canal and viaducts/aqueducts, as these features play a major role in local identity and sense of place.
- Ensure that the sparsely settled character of the valley (which have a sense of relative tranquillity) is retained and that any new development is not a dominant feature within the landscape. The sense of separation that the valley provides between distinct settlements should not be compromised.
- Balance the promotion of access and recreation within the landscape with the need for managing the landscape for wildlife.
- Improve rights of way and accessibility to the landscape, creating and improving linkages from settlements to the valley where appropriate. Upgrade rights of way to multi-use paths where appropriate to encourage sustainable travel to the landscape and between urban areas.
- Ensure that the picturesque setting the valley provides to numerous Conservation Areas in the surrounding urban areas is retained.
- Development in this area should not interfere with the distinct visual character of the valley, with views funnelled along the river and important views in and out, including from the viewpoint at Ridgefold looking towards the Pennine Uplands (including areas within the Peak District National Park).
- Any development should suitably blend in with the existing landscape character either through the use of sympathetic materials of by sensitive planting and screening (or both).
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology and flood risk (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off).

# H: Offerton and Poise Brook

## Representative photographs

View across the LCA looking east to Offerton Green and the Peak District National Park in the distance

View towards housing at Offerton from the Cown Edge Way

## Location and summary of overall character

**This Landscape Character Area falls within GM Landscape Character Types: Urban Fringe Valleys and Urban Fringe Farmland**

This small LCA lies within a valley landscape draining to Poise Brook. It is enclosed by residential development. The valley is predominantly pastoral agricultural land, with a small to medium scale semi-regular field pattern. Other land uses include schools, parks and green space, allotments and a riding school. There are long views across the landscape from higher ground, which include the Peak District National Park.

## Landscape character description

**Key characteristics**

*Topography, geology and drainage*

- Gently undulating landscape drained by Poise Brook and minor watercourses, forming a tributary of the River Goyt to the north.
- Elevation ranges from 70m AOD within the valley floor up to 90m AOD at the perimeter where the landscape meets urban development.
- Bedrock geology of interbedded Permian sandstone and conglomerate, with a small area of Permian mudstone, siltstone and sandstone in the far west, topped by glacial till.
- Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils. The agricultural land is classed as Grade 3.

*Land use and field patterns*

- Agricultural land under improved pasture, including areas used as pony paddocks.
- The HLC indicates piecemeal small and medium scale fields of post-medieval origin, with some boundary changes since the mid-19th century to accommodate residential development.
- Semi-regular field pattern, with sub-division by fencing apparent in places. Traditional boundaries are hedges, with some gappy sections filled by fencing.
- Other land uses include allotments, parks/recreational grounds, schools, community orchards and a riding school.

*Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover*

- Poise Brook is part of a wider Site of Biological Importance and Local Nature Reserve valued for its ancient woodland and wetland habitats. It connects directly with further locally designated habitats within the adjacent Goyt Valley (LCA G).
- Just to the south, woodland at Foggbrook is also designated as SBI.
- Mature in-field and hedgerow trees contribute to natural character. Areas of wetland amongst the agricultural land are important for bird species.

*Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- The Grade II Halliday Hill Farmhouse is located in the north of the LCA adjacent to the gravel pit in the Goyt Valley. Grade II Offerton Farmhouse is just outside of the area.
- 19th century mill reservoir and weir located in the south of the LCA – although the mill has been demolished, the reservoir remains as a legacy of the area's industrial heritage.
- The HLC indicates that the fields within this area are primarily post-medieval piecemeal enclosures, with several 20th century alterations including allotments, parks/recreational grounds, schools, and a riding school.

*Settlement, road pattern and rights of way*

- The LCA is tightly enclosed by 20th century housing estates, forming a largely undeveloped green wedge between areas of urban development.
- The northern and eastern boundaries are formed by the A626 and A627 respectively. Bean Leach Road dissects the LCA, centrally, on a north-east to south-west orientation.
- The LCA includes small, traditional farms dating from the 19th century surrounded by modern outbuildings.
- Public footpaths provide access between settlements across the agricultural land. These include parts of the Cown Edge Way.

*Views and perceptual qualities*

- Views are mostly open. There are prominent views to residential development on all sides, with the uplands of the Peak District National Park visible in the distance to the east from higher vantage points.
- Enclosed and relatively tranquil within the woodland along the brook in the north of the area. Within the large fields with long views across the landscape there is an expansive and open character.

## Landscape evaluation

**Summary of current landscape condition**

This landscape is generally an intact area of agricultural land, despite its close proximity to urban development. There are locally important areas of semi-natural habitat among the farmland, including wetlands which are important for birds. Some field boundaries have been lost and are supplemented by wire fences. Areas of pony paddocks in the centre of the character area are associated with the removal of hedgerows and their replacement with wire fencing. The landscape is generally well managed, and includes features such as community orchards.

### Forces for change

*Past and current forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition*

- Loss and fragmentation of hedgerows which has reduced habitat connectivity and made the landscape more visually open.
- Significant traffic and road congestion on the surrounding roads.
- Urban fringe issues including fly tipping which have an adverse effect on visual amenity of the area.
- Loss of traditional grazing land to pony paddocks, with associated structures and features such as fencing replacing hedgerows, and poached/tightly grazed land.
- Intensive use of the landscape as a destination for informal recreation and a need for improved facilities for access and recreation.
- Pylons and overhead wires detracting from the open skylines.
- Views are often dominated by adjacent urban development on all sides, detracting from perceptions of tranquillity.

*Future forces for change likely to impact on landscape character and condition*

- The potential for future transport extensions and upgrades which may cross through or affect this landscape.
- Continued development pressure from adjacent urban areas for new housing or other facilities such as schools or sports pitches.
- Creation of new open space at Dial Park on the former site of a school which will provide an improved resource for local people.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), which may lead to a change in management or use of existing agricultural land.
- Change in woodland/tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytopthora pathogens) and invasive species become more prevalent.
- The impacts of climate change may contribute to more frequent flooding events and loss/damage to the semi-natural habitats, particularly in the north of the area adjacent to watercourses.

## Landscape sensitivity assessment

| Criteria | Description and indication of sensitivity | Rating |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical character (including topography and scale)** | • Gently undulating landscape drained by Poise Brook and minor watercourses, forming a tributary of the River Goyt to the north. Elevation ranges from 70m AOD within the valley floor up to 90m AOD at the perimeter where the landscape meets urban development. In the north of the LCA, there are some steeper slopes found within Offerton Wood.<br>• Piecemeal small and medium scale fields of post-medieval origin, with some boundary changes since the mid-19th century to accommodate residential development. Semi-regular field pattern, with sub-division by fencing apparent in places. Traditional boundaries are hedges, with some gappy sections filled by fencing. | **M** |
| **Natural character** | • The primary land use in this area is improved pasture, including areas used for keeping horses.<br>• Poise Brook is part of a wider SBI and LNR valued for its ancient woodland and wetland habitats. It connects directly with further locally designated habitats within the adjacent Goyt Valley (LCA G).<br>• Just to the south, woodland at Foggbrook is also designated as SBI.<br>• Mature in-field and hedgerow trees contribute to natural character. Areas of wetland amongst the agricultural land are important for bird species. | **M** |
| **Historic landscape character** | • The Grade II Halliday Hill Farmhouse is located in the north of the LCA adjacent to the gravel pit in the Goyt Valley. Grade II Offerton Farmhouse is just outside of the area.<br>• 19th century mill reservoir and weir located in the south of the LCA – although the mill has been demolished, the reservoir remains as a legacy of the area's industrial heritage.<br>• The HLC indicates that the fields within this area are primarily post-medieval piecemeal enclosures, with several 20th century alterations including allotments, parks/recreational grounds, schools, and a riding school. | **L** |
| **Form, density and setting of existing development** | • The LCA is tightly enclosed by 20th century housing estates, forming a largely undeveloped green wedge between development.<br>• The northern and eastern boundaries are formed by the A626 and A627 respectively. Bean Leach Road dissects the LCA, centrally, on a north-east to south-west orientation.<br>• The LCA includes small, traditional farms dating from the 19th century surrounded by modern outbuildings. | **M-H** |
| **Views and visual character including skylines** | • In areas which are densely wooded, there is a sense of visual enclosure. This is particularly the case in the north of the LCA within Offerton Wood.<br>• From within the valley there are prominent views of adjacent urban development which overlook this landscape.<br>• The skylines within this area are not prominent. Adjacent rows of houses and mature trees are usually visible on skylines. A pylon line in the east of the LCA is a dominant skyline feature.<br>• From the upper slopes there are long views over the valley to the uplands of the Peak District National Park. | **M** |
| **Access and recreation** | • Public footpaths provide access between settlements through the agricultural land and are also popular with dog walkers. Routes include the Cown Edge Way and Cow Lane which are used by people travelling between urban areas.<br>• Some parts of the landscape are relatively inaccessible.<br>• This LCA is a valued open space for local people, with numerous recreation grounds and parks. | **M** |
| **Perceptual and experiential qualities** | • Sense of enclosure within the woodland which also has high levels of relative tranquillity and provides a sense of escape from nearby urban areas.<br>• Urban fringe influences are evident within the landscape, including areas of horsiculture which have resulted in the replacement of hedgerows with fences.<br>• Traffic noise from nearby major roads is distant and is not a prominent characteristic. Naturalistic sounds including birdsong are experienced throughout the landscape. | **M** |

### Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

| Development scenario | Sensitivity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Residential housing / ground-mounted solar photovoltaic developments | | | **M** | | |
| Commercial (light industrial) developments / transport infrastructure | | | **M** | | |
| Wind turbines (average 75m in height) | | | | **M-H** | |

**Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity**

The intimate wooded valley in the north of the LCA will have higher levels of sensitivity to all kinds of development due to the locally designated ancient woodland coverage, relative levels of tranquillity and the lack of urban fringe influences in this area.

This LCA is not suitable for large-scale development or urban extensions due to its relatively small size and the important role it plays in separating areas of existing urban development.

### Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

**The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):**

- The small scale, intimate valley landform – particularly in the north of the LCA.
- Valued woodland and wetland habitats, including ancient woodland at Poise Brook SBI and LNR, linking to habitats within the adjacent Goyt Valley. SBI-designated woodland is also important at Foggbrook.
- Remaining evidence of industrial heritage within the landscape.
- The role of the landscape as an open green wedge between and a setting to urban areas.
- Opportunities for informal recreation, with accessibility along rights of way including Cow Lane and the Cown Edge Way.
- Areas of relative tranquillity which provide a sense of escape from the surrounding urban areas.

### Guidance and opportunities for future development

**Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:**

- Avoid development on the sloping land, where it would be prominent from within the landscape and from adjacent urban areas.
- Improve recreational amenity and access to the landscape, and explore opportunities to link up existing rights of way to promote sustainable travel between urban areas.
- Protect and where possible enhance the landscape's semi-natural habitats in association with new development, including ancient and broadleaved woodlands, wetlands and watercourses. Avoid development that would lead to a loss of locally designated habitats at Poise Brook and Foggbrook.
- Ensure that hedgerows, mature hedgerow trees and in-field trees are retained. Reinstate hedgerows where they have been replaced with fencing to improve connectivity between habitats.
- Ensure that extensive views over the valley from the higher slopes (which include the Pennine Fringe/Peak District National Park) are retained.
- Retain the sense of separation between urban areas and the green space provided by this landscape.
- Ensure that new development blends in with the existing landscape character through the use of sympathetic materials and sensitive planting and screening.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology and flood risk (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off or development).

# I: Hazel Grove - High Lane

## Representative photographs

View along Macclesfield Canal

View north towards Broadoak Farm

## Location and summary of overall character

**This Landscape Character Area falls within GM Landscape Character Types: Urban Fringe Farmland and Pennine Foothills (Dark Peak)**

This LCA is situated between Marple, High Lane, Hazel Grove and Offerton Green. Brooks and streams are a consistent feature with Torkington Brook being the more prominent with an extensive band of ancient woodland following its course. The Middlewood Way and Macclesfield Canal (Conservation Area) form two major access routes running north-south through the LCA. A network of other access routes and tracks provide good connectivity and views are generally dominated by a well wooded horizon revealing the occasional farmhouse.

## Landscape character description

| Key characteristics |
|---|
| *Topography, geology and drainage* |
| • Gently rolling topography rising from 90m in the west to over 200m AOD at Ridge Fold in the east. |
| • Steeper slopes associated with brooks draining through the landform, including Torkington, Ochrelay and Marple Brooks. Norbury Brook forms the boundary with Cheshire East borough to the south. |
| • Bedrock geology of Pennine Lower and Middle Coal Measures, comprising mudstone, siltstone, sandstone, coal, ironstone and ferricrete. Layers of interbedded Permian sandstone and conglomerate are found to the north-east. |
| • Glacial till overlies the underlying bedrock, giving rise to slowly permeable; seasonally wet loamy and clayey soils (classified as Grade 3). |
| *Land use and field patterns* |
| • Pastoral farming dominant, with riding schools and pony paddocks forming occasional features. |
| • The HLC indicates that the small to medium fields are of post-medieval, piecemeal origin forming semi-regular patterns, with some areas of 20th century field amalgamation. Mixed boundaries of hedgerows, tree belts and some wooden fencing. |
| • Stockport, Marple and Hazel Grove Golf Courses are well defined recreational features within the LCA. |
| • Other land uses include a sewage works and reservoirs near High Lane, as well as playing fields and a school to the east of Macclesfield Canal. |
| *Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover* |
| • Torkington/Marple Woods is a Site of Biological importance (SBI), with extensive areas of ancient and broadleaved woodland following the course of Torkington Brook. |
| • Other blocks and bands of broadleaved woodland (many SBIs) are also prominent throughout. Mature hedgerow and in-field oaks also contribute to a well-wooded character. |
| • In the south west of the area a number of grasslands are designated as SBIs, including Ox Hey Pastures, Torkington Road Meadow and Poise Bridge Flushes. |
| • Frequent field ponds and seasonally wet semi-improved pastures also form locally important landscape and ecological features within agricultural land. |
| *Archaeology and cultural heritage* |
| • A moated site on the edge of Stockport Golf Course is nationally designated as a Scheduled Monument. |
| • There are a number of Grade II listed farmhouses showcasing a traditional vernacular. |
| • A series of Grade II listed bridges are found along Macclesfield Canal, which is a Conservation Area along its length. |
| *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way* |
| • LCA fringed by the settlements of Torkington, Marple, High Lane and Bosden Farm with 20th century mixed housing developments on their edges. The landscape provides an undeveloped backdrop to existing settlement. |
| • There are scattered farms within the LCA which are generally of 19th century origin, linked by minor roads and tracks. Elsewhere settlement consists of individual large detached houses, bungalows and converted farmhouses. |
| • The Middlewood Way, a disused railway line, is now a major multi-use greenway that intersects the LCA connecting Middlewood and Marple in a north-south direction and is popular for informal recreation. |
| • Other prominent access routes include the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk to the east, and the Cown Edge Way linking Marple and Offerton. Other rights of way provide good connectivity throughout. |
| *Views and perceptual qualities* |
| • The landscape is devoid of any major vehicular routes or significant development, creating a quiet and rural environment despite the proximity of urban development. There is some distant traffic noise from the A6 and A626 roads which form boundaries of the LCA. |
| • Long distance views afforded across the undulating topography from localised high points. The urban areas of Stockport and Greater Manchester are often visible. There are vantage points across the Goyt Valley from Marpleridge in the east and the uplands in the Peak District National Park. |
| • Open views across the farmland are often broken by linear belts of trees, field boundaries and pylons. Other areas are visually enclosed due woodland cover e.g. along Middlewood Way. |

## Landscape evaluation

**Summary of current landscape condition**

This rural landscape sits on the immediate doorstep of a number of settlements including Hazel Grove, Marple, Offerton and High Lane. This close proximity to urban populations is evidenced by the strong presence of golf courses exhibiting urban fringe land use, detracting from the traditional farmed character of the wider area. A number of brooks, most notably Torkington Brook, are present within the gently undulating landform and support a rich habitat network and serve as a wildlife corridor across the LCA. Mixed hedgerows along narrow lanes present a boundary that is in-keeping with the gently rolling agricultural landscape character. Frequent gaps in field boundaries open up views influenced by agricultural activity in the foreground with dense woodland in the backdrop, pylons occasionally appearing above the woodland canopy. Towards the east the topography rises steeply towards Marpleridge offering expansive views across Stockport's historic skyline and the Peak District National Park.

### Forces for change

*Past and current forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition*

- Impacts of the new A6 link road to the south of the area resulting in additional traffic, congestion and air and noise pollution.
- Recreational pressure on the landscape, which has resulted in a change of land use from agriculture to golf courses, sports pitches and equestrian.
- Pylons and overhead lines which interrupt views and detract from the rural qualities of the landscape.
- Decline in traditional hedgerow boundary management, with gappy sections prevalent and frequent replacement by wooden or post and wire fencing.
- Amalgamated and sub-divided fields (including those used for pony paddocks) have diluted or erased historic field patterns, particularly around the edges of the LCA adjacent to residential development.

*Future forces for change likely to impact on landscape character and condition*

- Potential new road infrastructure may affect the setting and function of this agricultural landscape which is currently void of major access routes.
- Significant residential development in close proximity to farms could threaten their viability.
- Potential housing and infrastructure development and urban expansion on the fringes of the LCA could lead to the significant loss of green belt land and affect the setting of Macclesfield Canal (Conservation Area) and Torkington Woods (SBI).
- Further development and population increases put greater pressure on the demand for countryside access and may damage sensitive semi-natural habitats, including areas of ancient woodland.
- Further diversification to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping), diluting remaining areas of traditional farmland.
- Increasing urbanisation may increase pollution run-off into this landscape, particularly impacting the number of brooks.
- Much of the landscape is dominated by agricultural activity which may be affected by uncertainties around future levels of funding support and market prices for livestock. This may impact the management of this land and the ecosystem services/natural capital that it provides.

## Landscape sensitivity assessment

| Criteria | Description and indication of sensitivity | Rating |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical character (including topography and scale)** | • Gently rolling topography rising from 90m in the west to over 200m AOD at Ridge Fold in the east.<br>• Steeper slopes are associated with a number of brooks across LCA.<br>• Agricultural land is enclosed within a mix of small–medium scale fields.<br>• Small scale landscape features include hedgerows, individual trees and farmhouses. | **M** |
| **Natural character** | • The agricultural land within the LCA is primarily used for pasture.<br>• A number of golf courses occupy a significant proportion of the LCA.<br>• Natural character comprises of hedgerows, mature individual trees, linear belts of trees (sections of which are ancient woodland) field ponds, brooks, grasslands (some of which are SBIs) reservoirs and the Macclesfield Canal. | **M** |
| **Historic landscape character** | • There are a scattering of Listed Buildings including Grade II listed farmhouses and bridges along Macclesfield Canal (a Conservation Area).<br>• Fields are of post-medieval, piecemeal origin forming semi-regular, small-medium scale patterns.<br>• 20th century field amalgamation has occurred in places. | **L-M** |
| **Form, density and setting of existing development** | • A number of farms are scattered along access minor roads and tracks.<br>• Other settlement features in isolation, including individual large detached housing, bungalows and converted farmhouses.<br>• The LCA is fringed by the settlements of Torkington, Marple, High Lane and Bosden Farm with 20th century mixed housing developments on their periphery. The LCA provides an undeveloped, rural backdrop to these urban areas. | **M-H** |
| **Views and visual character including skylines** | • Long distance views across the undulating topography from localised high points with vantage points across the Goyt Valley from Marpleridge in the east to the Peak District National Park. There are also views of the Stockport and Greater Manchester skylines.<br>• Vantages typically capture agricultural settlement and farming with linear wooded or hedgerow field boundaries. Pylons are a common sight above the woodland canopy.<br>• Adjacent settlement is generally well screened by woodland, strengthening the rural character of the landscape. | **M-H** |
| **Access and recreation** | • An extensive public rights of way network provides good connectivity across the landscape to surrounding settlement. Prominent access routes include the mixed-use Middlewood Way, Cheshire Ring Canal Walk and Cown Edge Way.<br>• Amenity uses associated with golf courses, sports pitches and riding schools. | **M** |
| **Perceptual and experiential qualities** | • The LCA is devoid of any major vehicular routes or significant development, creating a quiet and rural environment in-keeping with the agricultural setting.<br>• Long distance views over the expansive, gently undulating agricultural land are available over low level hedgerows along boundaries creating a strong sense of openness.<br>• This contrasts with a sense of enclosure afforded by woodland along some routes, including the Middlewood Way. | **M** |

### Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

| Development scenario | Sensitivity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Residential housing / ground-mounted solar photovoltaic developments | | | M | | |
| Commercial (light industrial) developments / transport infrastructure | | | | M-H | |
| Wind turbines (75m to blade tip) | | | | M-H | |

| Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity |
|---|
| Towards Marpleridge the gradient of the land becomes steeper and this elevated part of the LCA would be more sensitive to development as it is visually prominent from the undulating farmland setting below. |

### Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

**The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):**

- The open rural character with long distance views, particularly from Macclesfield Canal (Conservation Area) and Marpleridge towards the skyline of Stockport and Greater Manchester and the Peak District National Park.
- The intact agricultural land use and character with sparse dispersed settlement.
- The attractive, undeveloped backdrop that the landscape provides to adjacent urban areas and the sense of separation the landscape provides between distinct urban areas.
- Well-used recreational routes such as Middlewood Way, Cheshire Ring Canal Walk and Cown Edge which provide access into the landscape and adjacent sports pitches and fields from Marple and linking other settlements outside the LCA.
- Locally important semi-natural habitats including bands of broadleaved woodland (some of which is ancient woodland), grasslands, meadows and pastures. Many of these areas are designated as SBIs.
- Localised changes in the undulating topography emphasising the character of various brooks that cross the landscape.
- Key role the landscape plays in providing a setting for Macclesfield Canal as a Conservation Area and its associated Grade II Listed bridges.
- The historic farmhouses (including some Grade II Listed Buildings) that provide a distinctive vernacular across the skyline above the network of hedgerow boundaries.
- The key role the landscape plays in providing a setting for the moated site adjacent to Broadoak Farm, which is nationally recognised as a Scheduled Monument.
- The opportunities provided by the landscape for access to the countryside and providing green linkages between adjacent settlements.
- The relatively peaceful atmosphere with only distant traffic noise given the lack of major access routes and expansive nature of the landscape.

### Guidance and opportunities for future development

**Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:**

- Ensure that any new developments respect the existing overall rural character of the area through retaining the overall sparsely settled character and complimenting traditional design in the built form.

- Utilise the undulating topography to integrate any development into the landscape. Avoid development on areas with locally distinct landform, including the slopes associated with the brooks which cross the landscape.
- Retain the undeveloped setting that the landscape provides to existing settlement and ensure the gap between settlements is not compromised.
- Protect and where possible enhance locally important semi-natural habitats including bands of broadleaved woodland (some of which is ancient woodland), grasslands, meadows and pastures. Avoid development in proximity to habitats which are designated as SBIs.
- Secure the rebuilding and gapping up of degraded hedgerows to improve habitat networks and enhance the structure of the landscape.
- Ensure that the respects the integrity of and the setting the landscape provides to the numerous heritage features within the landscape including the Broadoak Farm moated site (Scheduled Monument) and Macclesfield Canal. Promote interpretation of these features where possible.
- Ensure that the recreational amenity of the area is retained and made more accessible where possible. Explore opportunities to link up existing rights of way to promote sustainable travel between urban areas.
- Retain the sense of relative tranquillity and reduce the audial and visual impact and intrusion of adjacent major roads through encouraging planting on the embankments.
- Safeguard the character of rural roads and lanes by ensuring that improvements are sympathetic to any traditional features — including materials, banks, and boundaries.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology and flood risk (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off).
- Any development in this area should not interfere with the visual unity and views, including the long distance views from higher ground to the Stockport and Greater Manchester skyline and towards the Peak District National Park.
- Ensure any new development does not adversely affect the special qualities of the Peak District National Park, including its beautiful views, sense of tranquillity and dark night skies, and the vital benefits that flow beyond its boundary[11].

[11] Taken from the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2018-23 (Final consultation draft, March 2018)

## J: Marple Bridge

### Representative photographs

View east from Cote Green with Ludworth Moor on the horizon

View over the landscape from the south-east, featuring the linear settlement of Mellor and Greater Manchester beyond

### Location and summary of overall character

**This Landscape Character Area falls within GM Landscape Character Type: Pennine Foothills (Dark Peak)**

This is a transitional area in the east of the borough, lying between the Pennine Fringe and the Goyt and Etherow valleys. A strongly undulating landscape, it is carved by a number of east-west flowing stream valleys cloaked in woodland, transitioning in elevation and character towards the Peak Fringe in the east. On the doorstep of Marple Bridge, this is a landscape of pastoral fields enclosed by gritstone walls and hedges, with scattered farms linked by tracks and lanes. It includes the linear settlements of Mill Brow and Mellor, both of which are Conservation Areas. A strongly rural landscape with high levels of relative tranquillity, providing opportunities for nearby communities to access the countryside.

## Landscape character description

**Key characteristics**

*Topography, geology and drainage*

- Complex landform carved by several stream valleys draining into the River Goyt (LCA G) to the west.
- Land generally increases steeply in elevation towards the east, ranging from approximately 100m AOD on the edge of Marple Bridge to over 300m above Capstone.
- Bedrock geology largely comprising Carboniferous Millstone Grit, surrounded by rocks from the Pennine Lower Coal Measures formation. Bedrock is topped by glacial till deposits.
- Soils are mostly seasonally waterlogged and loamy, with agricultural land classified as Grade 4.

*Land use and field patterns*

- A pastoral landscape with a mixture of semi-improved and improved grassland for livestock grazing and hay cultivation.
- The HLC shows a mixture of field shapes and origins, including medium-large piecemeal enclosures of post-medieval origin, and 20th century agglomerated fields.
- Fields enclosed by a mixture of hedgerows, post-and-wire fencing and gritstone walls on higher ground. Frequent hedgerow/boundary trees contribute to a well-wooded character.
- Mellor and Townscliffe Golf Course, with landscaped fairways, woodland bands and minor watercourses, occupies a significant part of the southern LCA.

*Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover*

- Bands of broadleaved and ancient woodland tracing streams and tributaries, linking to the hedgerow and boundary tree network. A number are Sites of Biological Interest.
- Other valued habitats include the streams themselves, meadows, seasonally wet pastures and purple moor grass/rush pasture.

*Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- Conservation Areas at Mill Brow, Mellor and Brook Bottom (extending into High Peak Borough) include a number of Grade II listed buildings, including vernacular farmhouses, cottages and mill buildings.
- The Church of St Thomas (Grade II) occupies an elevated position above Mellor village, with 14th century origins and the oldest wooden pulpit in England.
- Two disused quarries are evidence for the area's rich geological and industrial heritage.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Linear, ribbon development spreads out of Marple Bridge along roads, including the settlements of Lane Ends, Mill Brow and Mellor.
- Elsewhere is a dispersed pattern of farmsteads linked by tracks.
- Fields are crossed by a number of pubic footpaths and bridleways, including the Cown Edge Way, providing ease of access into the countryside by the residents of Marple Bridge.

*Views and perceptual qualities*

- Rolling topography affords open, varied views. This higher ground in the east affords long views back to the urban areas of Stockport and Greater Manchester.
- Elevated land in the east also forms a backdrop to valley settlement and a transition to the higher Peak Fringe landscape beyond.
- There is also intervisibility with higher land in Mellor Moor (LCA K) and Ludworth Moor (LCA L) from open hill summits – with the Peak District National Park beyond.
- Strong rural qualities with an attractive patchwork of rolling pastures and woodlands, despite the proximity of urban areas.

## Landscape evaluation

**Summary of current landscape condition**

This is a strongly undulating, rural landscape with a patchwork of pastoral fields and woodlands grading towards the higher ground to the east. Open hill summits afford visual connections both with nearby urban areas and to the sweeping panoramas of the uplands to the east, including the Peak District. Today's landscape retains many of its traditional rural qualities, but has been fragmented by the presence of a golf course, creeping suburbanisation (including linear spread of development out from Marple Bridge), a decline in traditional agricultural management (with knock-on effects on characteristic strong walls and hedgerows) and pressures relating to access on tight rural roads. The use of agricultural land for pony paddocks is eroding landscape character in parts (e.g. on the fringes of Mellor), with an associated decline or loss of traditional field boundaries, incidences of poaching/overgrazing and the introduction of new structures and pony tape into the landscape.

### Forces for change

*Past and current forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition*

- Evidence of 20th century field enlargement, impacting on the otherwise strong pattern of moorland intakes and more irregular piecemeal enclosures of post-medieval origin.
- Decline in the condition of traditional dry stone walls and hedgerows, including gapping /replacement/ supplementation by fencing.
- Reduced viability of dairy farming, with traditional grazing land converted to pony paddocks, with associated structures and features such as white tape sub-dividing fields, fencing replacing dry stone walls, and poached/tightly grazed land.
- Linked conversion of traditional farm buildings to small holdings and other uses (e.g. residential).
- 20th century linear spread of development at Mellor, extending out from the south-eastern fringes of Marple Bridge. This development is strongly overlooked by elevated land.
- Mellor and Townscliffe Golf Course is a contrasting recreational land use, whose development led to the loss of previous landscape character.
- Increased incidences of flooding due to the tight profile of the area's cloughs and valleys – linking to increased run-off from the nearby uplands due to past drainage and improvement of moorland.
- Some evidence of overgrazing of rough pastures, with loss of sward diversity and poaching of ground.
- Light pollution from Greater Manchester impacting on the dark night skies associated with this more remote landscape.

*Future forces for change likely to impact on landscape character and condition*

- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock).
- Further diversification to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping), diluting the traditional land uses associated with the landscape.
- Future development in Greater Manchester leading to increased demand for access and recreation in this landscape and further light spill impacting on dark night skies.
- Climate change resulting in a longer growing season and enhanced growth rates of vegetation including bracken, gorse and secondary woodland resulting in a decrease in remaining open habitats.
- Impacts relating to more frequent intense periods of rainfall leading to more incidences of flooding.
- Conversely, more intense periods of drought leading to the drying out of important wetlands including rush pasture and characteristic ponds– affecting their functions in reducing flood risk in the winter months.
- Change in woodland / tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytopthora pathogens) and invasive species become more prevalent. Individual trees may become more susceptible to damage from more frequent and intense storm events.
- Potential changes to renewable energy subsidies and markets leading to increased demand for wind turbines within the more open and elevated landscapes in parts of the LCA.
- Demand for domestic and community-scale renewable energy installations such as solar panels, small wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps.
- Increase in the area of newly planted woodlands and restored wetlands to slow the flow of water within the landscape's tightly enclosed valleys – to minimise the frequency and intensity of flooding.

## Landscape sensitivity assessment

| Criteria | Description | Rating |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical character (including topography and scale)** | • Complex small to medium-scale landform carved by several stream valleys draining into the River Goyt to the west.<br>• Land generally increases steeply in elevation towards the east, ranging from approximately 100m AOD on the edge of Marple Bridge to over 300m above Capstone.<br>• Overlain by a mixture of field sizes from medium-large scale. | **M** |
| **Natural character** | • A pastoral landscape with a mixture of semi-improved and improved grassland.<br>• Bands of broadleaved and ancient woodland tracing streams and tributaries, linking to the hedgerow and boundary tree network. A number are Sites of Biological Interest.<br>• Other valued habitats include streams, meadows, seasonally wet pastures and purple moor grass/rush pasture. | **M** |
| **Historic landscape character** | • The HLC shows a mixture of field origins, including piecemeal enclosures of post-medieval origin dividing by traditional dry stone walls and hedgerows, and 20th century agglomerated fields.<br>• Conservation Areas at Mill Brow, Mellor and Brook Bottom (extending into High Peak Borough) with a number of Grade II listed buildings, including vernacular farmhouses and cottages.<br>• The Church of St Thomas (Grade II) occupies an elevated position above Mellor village, with 14th century origins.<br>• Two disused quarries are evidence for the area's rich geological and industrial heritage. | **M** |
| **Form, density and setting of existing settlement/ development** | • Linear, ribbon development spreads out of Marple Bridge along roads, including the settlements of Lane Ends, Mill Brow and Mellor.<br>• Elsewhere is a dispersed pattern of farmsteads linked by tracks.<br>• Elevated land in the east forms a setting to valley settlement. | **M-H** |
| **Views and visual character including skylines** | • Elevated land in the east forms a rural backdrop to valley settlement and a transition to the higher Peak Fringe landscape beyond.<br>• This higher ground also affords long views towards back to the urban areas of Stockport and Greater Manchester.<br>• There is also intervisibiltiy with higher land in Mellor Moor (LCA K) and Ludworth Moor (LCA L) from open hill summits – with the Peak District National Park beyond. | **M-H** |
| **Access and recreation** | • Fields are crossed by a number of pubic footpaths and bridleways, including the Cown Edge Way.<br>• A number of public rights of way connect the landscape with Marple Bridge. | **M** |
| **Perceptual and experiential qualities** | • Strong rural qualities with an attractive patchwork of rolling pastures and woodlands, despite the proximity of urban areas.<br>• In the south, Mellor and Townscliffe Golf Club introduces a recreational, planned land use into an otherwise rural, traditionally farmed landscape. | **M-H** |

### Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

| Development scenario | Sensitivity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure | | | M | | |
| Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories) / solar PV developments (up to 10ha) | | | | M-H | |
| Wind turbines (75m to blade tip) | | | | M-H | |

| Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity |
|---|
| The higher ground in the east of the LCA, upper tributary valley slopes and ridges would be highly sensitive to all development scenarios due to their visual prominence and important role as a rural, undeveloped backdrop to existing development. |

### Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

**The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):**

- The complex, small-medium scale landform carved by a number of tributary valleys of the Goyt with steep, visible slopes and intervening ridges.
- Visually prominent ridgeline and rising ground in the east of the LCA, forming a backdrop to valley settlement and character transition to the Peak Fringe beyond.
- Valued bands of broadleaved woodland, including ancient woodlands and Sites of Biological Interest.
- Important semi-natural habitats within the farmed landscape, including meadows, seasonally wet pastures and purple moor grass/rush pasture.
- Areas of irregular piecemeal enclosures of post-medieval origin and disused quarries providing a sense of time depth.
- The areas of intact hedgerow and traditional dry stone wall field boundaries.
- Land within and areas that form a setting to the Conservation Areas at Mill Brow, Mellor and Brook Bottom.
- Grade II Listed buildings, including vernacular farmhouses and cottages and the Church of St Thomas, which forms an important local landmark and focal point above Mellor village.
- Extensive views from elevated land in the east to the urban areas of Stockport and wider Greater Manchester at lower elevations to the west.
- Intervisibility with the Peak Fringe landscapes in the east of the borough (LCA K: Mellor Moor and L: Ludworth Moor).
- Opportunities to access and enjoy the rural landscape, including via the Cown Edge Way and a strong public rights of way network.
- Strong rural qualities despite the proximity of development at Marple Bridge.

### Guidance and opportunities for future development

**Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:**

- Utilise the strongly rolling topography to integrate new development into the landscape (avoiding steeper, more prominent slopes particularly in the east of the LCA).

- Avoid further linear spread of development outside existing settlement limits, ensuring any new development respects the historic settlement form and landscape setting of existing development, including Marple Bridge.
- Maintain the sparsely settled, rural character of the wider landscape and its role as a backdrop to Marple Bridge and eastern Stockport.
- Take advantage of the screening effects of existing woodland and hedgerows, protecting existing features and enhancing ecological connections within and around any new development (i.e. through new hedgerow and tree planting using locally prevalent, climate resilient species).
- Protect and where possible enhance semi-natural habitats and networks, including meadows, seasonally wet pastures and purple moor grass/rush pasture. Avoid development which could impact upon ancient woodland sites and woodlands designated as Sites of Biological Interest.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off). This is particularly important on slopes within or above the tributaries of the Goyt.
- Strengthen the dry stone wall and hedgerow network in association with any new development, reflecting local building styles, materials and species. Any new boundaries should also reflect local characteristics.
- Respect the character and setting of the Conservation Areas at Mill Brow, Mellor and Brook Bottom, as well as Grade II listed buildings within the landscape.
- Conserve undeveloped skylines and ensure new development does not affect the appreciation of the landmark St Thomas' church above Mellor village.
- Protect long, uninterrupted views from higher ground over Marple Bridge and beyond to Greater Manchester, as well as open horizons marked by the Pennine Fringe landscapes (Mellor Moor and Ludworth Moor), with the Peak District beyond.

## K: Mellor Moor

### Representative photographs

The linear settlement of Moorend viewed from the south

View to the Derbyshire Hills from Cobden Edge

### Location and summary of overall character

**This Landscape Character Area falls within GM Landscape Character Type: Unenclosed Uplands and Fringes (Dark Peak)**

Mellor Moor LCA is located in the east of Stockport, its eastern and southern boundaries formed by the administrative boundary with High Peak Borough. The Peak District National Park lies to the north-east corner of the LCA.

This is a Pennine fringe area, with elevated hills marking the transition to the National Park and Derbyshire hills. Much of the landscape is used for livestock rearing in traditional stone-walled pastures, with fragmented areas of rush pasture, bands of woodland, ponds and relict heathland adding texture to the landscape. It is largely sparsely settled with isolated farms and stone cottages away from the linear village of Moorend. Elevation and open skylines afford expansive views both to Derbyshire and the National Park to the east and north-east and the settled areas to the west, including Marple, Marple Bridge, Stockport and the wider Greater Manchester conurbation.

## Landscape character description

**Key characteristics**

*Topography, geology and drainage*

- Elevated, rolling landscape rising steeply up in an east/south-easterly direction, reaching a maximum of 327m AOD.
- Underlying bedrock geology of Pennine Coal Measures (mudstones, siltstones, sandstones) with bands of Millstone Grit in the centre and south of the LCA.
- Seasonally waterlogged loamy soils producing low productivity Grade 4 agricultural land, with Mellor Moor classified as Grade 5.

*Land use and field patterns*

- An agricultural landscape of semi-improved pasture fields used for livestock grazing (predominantly sheep) and hay meadows.
- Strong pattern of rectilinear 18th/19th century Parliamentary enclosures and moorland intakes. Earlier irregular assarts are found around Birchenough Farm and 20th century agglomerated fields occur in places.
- Distinctive gritstone walls enclose fields, supplemented by post-and-wire fencing. Individual trees along boundaries form characteristic skyline features, including along the access road to Mellor Hall.

*Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover*

- Semi-natural habitats largely limited to small bands and blocks of broadleaved woodland, linking to boundary trees, ponds and areas of purple moor grass/rush pasture supporting bird populations.
- Meadows at Mellor Moor are within a Site of Biological Importance, as is relict heathland at Cobden Cross.
- Along with Ludworth Moor (LCA L), the habitats within this landscape form important connections with and 'stepping stones' to those found within the nearby Peak District National Park and High Peak.

*Archaeology and cultural heritage*

- The majority of Mellor/Moor End Conservation Area falls within the LCA. The landscape also forms a backdrop to Brook Bottom Conservation Area to the south, which straddles into High Peak borough.
- The 17th century Mellor Hall and Mellor Hall Farmhouse is Grade II* listed, situated on a ridgeline in the north of the LCA (bordering LCA L). Mellor Hall was historically the seat of the Mellor family, dating to the 15th century.
- Other Grade II listed buildings dispersed across the landscape include traditional stone-built farmhouses, such as the 18th century Cobden Farmhouse.
- A disused quarry at Cobden Cross provides evidence for the landscape's industrial and geological heritage.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Moorend village takes a linear roadside form in the centre of the LCA; elsewhere settlement is limited to dispersed farmsteads and cottages with strong gritstone vernacular.
- Three B-roads cross through/encircle the LCA, linking to a network of tracks (including rights of way) connecting farms and properties.

*Views and perceptual qualities*

- A strongly rural landscape with traditional Peak fringe qualities emphasised by unifying gritstone buildings and stone walls.
- Elevation affords expansive views west over low-lying urban development at Marple, Marple Bridge, Stockport and Greater Manchester beyond (with tall tower blocks featuring on the horizon).
- Land to the east rises towards the Peak District National Park – the remote hills looming dramatically on the immediate horizon.

## Landscape evaluation

**Summary of current landscape condition**

This is a remote, highly rural landscape with few modern influences away from existing settlement at Moorend. Character is influenced by traditional upland farming practices, dominated by sheep (and some cattle) grazing on enclosed pastures divided by dry stone walls. Open, sweeping skylines are punctuated by occasional wind-swept trees and tree lines – elevation affords expansive views to the hills of Derbyshire, the Peak District and over the Greater Manchester conurbation. Today's landscape is largely intact, with dry stone walls generally well maintained and vernacular buildings in good condition, including those converted to non-agricultural uses. The use of agricultural land for pony paddocks is eroding landscape character in parts (e.g. near Moorend), with an associated decline in boundaries and overgrazed paddocks sub-divided by pony tape.

### Forces for change

*Past and current forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition*

- Past agricultural improvement of open moorland habitats to grass moor, intakes and improved pasture, with only remnant upland heathland remaining.
- Evidence of 20th century field enlargement, impacting on the otherwise strong pattern of moorland intakes and more irregular piecemeal enclosures of post-medieval origin.
- Decline in the condition of traditional dry stone walls, including gapping /replacement/ supplementation by fencing.
- Loss of traditional grazing land and rush pasture (through drainage and improvement) to pony paddocks, with associated structures and features such as white tape sub-dividing fields, fencing replacing dry stone walls, and poached/tightly grazed land.
- Linked conversion of traditional farm buildings to other uses (e.g. residential), although sympathetic conversions of buildings are in evidence.
- 20th century linear spread of development at Moorend, extending out from Mellor and Marple Bridge to the west.
- Some evidence of overgrazing of rough pastures, with loss of sward diversity and poaching.
- Traffic congestion on the characteristically tight rural lanes, including as a result of poor public transport provision.
- Light pollution from Greater Manchester impacting on the dark night skies associated with this more remote landscape.

*Future forces for change likely to impact on landscape character and condition*

- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), potentially with further pressure to improve and drain remaining areas of rush pasture and species-rich meadows to create larger areas of productive agricultural land.
- Further diversification to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping), diluting the traditional upland land uses associated with the landscape.
- Future development in Greater Manchester leading to increased demand for access and recreation in this landscape and further light spill impacting on dark night skies.
- Climate change resulting in a longer growing season and enhanced growth rates of vegetation including bracken, gorse and secondary woodland resulting in a decrease in remaining open habitats.
- Change in woodland / tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytopthora pathogens) and invasive species become more prevalent. Individual trees may become more susceptible to damage from more frequent and intense storm events.
- More intense periods of drought leading to the drying out of important wetlands including rush pasture and characteristic ponds– affecting their functions in reducing flood risk in the winter months.
- Potential changes to renewable energy subsidies and markets leading to increased demand for wind turbines within the open, exposed landscapes parts of the LCA.
- Demand for domestic and community-scale renewable energy installations such as solar panels, small wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps.
- Increase in the area of woodlands and restored wetlands to enhance the landscape's roles in filtering water, minimising downstream flooding, and storing and sequestering carbon dioxide.

## Landscape sensitivity assessment

| Criteria | Description | Rating |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical character (including topography and scale)** | • Elevated, rolling landscape rising steeply up in an east/south-easterly direction, reaching a maximum of 327m AOD.<br>• An open, large scale landscape overlain by a medium-large field pattern.<br>• A more enclosed scale is associated with the landscape around Moorend.<br>• Occasional wind-swept trees form small-scale features across higher ground; buildings provide a human scale at Moorend. | **M** |
| **Natural character** | • An agricultural landscape of semi-improved pasture fields.<br>• Semi-natural habitats largely limited to small bands and blocks of broadleaved woodland, linking to boundary trees, ponds and some areas of rush pasture/purple moor grass of importance to birds.<br>• SBI-designated meadows at Mellor Moor and relict heathland at Cobden Cross.<br>• Important habitat connections with and 'stepping stones' to those found within the nearby Peak District National Park and High Peak. | **M-H** |
| **Historic landscape character** | • Strong pattern of rectilinear 18th/19th century Parliamentary enclosures and moorland intakes divided by gritstone walls.<br>• Earlier irregular assarts are found around Birchenough Farm and 20th century agglomerated fields occur in places.<br>• The majority of Mellor/Moor End Conservation Area falls within the LCA. It also forms a backdrop to Brook Bottom Conservation Area.<br>• Grade II* 17th century Mellor Hall and Mellor Hall Farmhouse, situated on a ridgeline in the north of the LCA (bordering LCA L).<br>• Other Grade II listed buildings dispersed across the landscape including traditional stone-built farmhouses.<br>• Disused quarry at Cobden Cross revealing area's industrial and geological heritage. | **M-H** |
| **Form, density and setting of existing settlement/ development** | • Moorend village takes a linear roadside form in the centre of the LCA, enclosed by slopes either side and integrated by woodland.<br>• Elsewhere settlement comprises dispersed farmsteads and cottages with strong gritstone vernacular.<br>• LCA forms part of the rural backdrop to settled low-lying areas to the west; Marple Bridge, Marple, Stockport and Greater Manchester beyond. | **M-H** |
| **Views and visual character including skylines** | • Grade II* Mellor Hall and Mellor Hall Farmhouse situated on an elevated ridgeline.<br>• Along with Mellor Hall, elevated land at Cobden Edge features views to the Grade II St Thomas Church above Mellor (LCA J).<br>• Individual trees along field and road boundaries punctuate undeveloped skylines.<br>• Elevation affords panoramic views west over Marple Bridge Marple, Stockport and Greater Manchester beyond.<br>• Land to the east affords views into Derbyshire and the Peak District National Park. | **H** |
| **Access and recreation** | • A network of tracks connects farms and properties, linking to public footpaths crossing through farmland.<br>• The area offers opportunities for open air recreation in a rural context for nearby communities. | **M** |
| **Perceptual and experiential qualities** | • A strongly rural landscape with traditional Peak fringe qualities emphasised by unifying gritstone buildings and stone walls.<br>• High levels of tranquillity and perceptions of relative isolation, particularly at higher elevations. | **H** |

### Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

| Development scenario | Sensitivity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure | | | | M-H | |
| Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories) / solar PV developments (up to 10ha) | | | | | H |
| Wind turbines (75m to blade tip) | | | | M-H | |

| Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity |
|---|
| None of this LCA would be suitable for large-scale housing developments or the development of industrial land uses (including solar PV developments) due to its strongly rural, largely isolated character. Folds in the landform and less elevated parts of the landscape, particularly at Moorend, might be less sensitive to individual or small-scale residential developments. The large scale of the landform at higher elevations reduces overall sensitivity to wind turbines, although inter-visibility and character connections with the Peak District National Park, and role of the LCA as an undeveloped rural backdrop to urban development, are key constraints. The guidance below should therefore be carefully followed. |

### Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

**The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):**

- Its elevated, open character with prominent (largely undeveloped) skylines forming a backdrop to views from valley settlements and the wider Greater Manchester conurbation.
- The landscape's visual and character connections with Derbyshire and the Peak District National Park to the east and north-east.
- Pockets of semi-natural habitat, including SBI-designated heathland at Cobden Cross, meadows at Mellor Moor SBI, ponds, rush pasture/purple moor grass and small bands and blocks of broadleaved woodland.
- Time depth provided by 18$^{th}$/19$^{th}$ century intakes, Parliamentary enclosures, and historic irregular assarts near Birchenough Farm – traditionally enclosed by a distinctive network of dry stone walls.
- Key role the landscape plays in the character and setting of Mellor/Moor End and Brook Bottom Conservation Areas.
- Strong historic vernacular of stone-built farmhouses and cottages (a number which are Grade II Listed), and the landmark Grade II* Mellor Hall and Farmhouse.
- Overriding rural qualities with dispersed and sparse settlement; development focused at the linear village of Moorend within a minor valley in the centre of the LCA.
- The opportunities the landscape provides to communities for open-air recreation in the wider countryside on their doorstep.

### Guidance and opportunities for future development

**Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:**

- Avoid siting any development on the highly prominent, elevated and undeveloped land (e.g. Mellor Moor) which forms part of the transition and wider setting of the National Park.
- Protect the landscape's role as a rural backdrop to urban development to the west, including Marple Bridge, Marple, Stockport and Greater Manchester beyond. Conserve expansive views from this LCA across adjacent landscapes.

- Utilise dips in the landform and existing tree/woodland cover to integrate limited new development into the landscape. New housing development should be connected to the existing settlement of Moorend, avoiding further linear spread eastwards along the road.
- Protect and where possible enhance the currently fragmented network of semi-natural habitats, including ponds, purple moor grass/rush pasture and small bands and blocks of broadleaved woodland. Avoid development that would lead to a loss of SBI-designated habitats at Mellor Moor and Cobden Cross.
- Strengthen and repair the dry stone wall network in association with any new development, reflecting local building styles and materials. Any new boundaries should also reflect local characteristics, including the planting of a new generation of boundary trees.
- Ensure any new development does not dilute the strong field patterns associated with the landscape.
- Respect local building styles and materials in new housing developments, seeking to reflect these in their design and build (particularly the use of local stone).
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off). This upland area is a catchment of the Goyt.
- Conserve open, undeveloped skylines often marked by trees, ensuring new development does not affect the appreciation of views to Mellor Hall and Farmhouse (Grade II*) and St Thomas Church (Grade II in LCA J).
- Protect the landscape's contribution to the character and setting of Mellor/Moor End and Brook Bottom Conservation Areas.
- Ensure any new development does not adversely affect the special qualities of the Peak District National Park, including its beautiful views, sense of tranquillity and dark night skies, and the vital benefits that flow beyond its boundary[12].
- Protect the LCA's overriding sense of remoteness and traditional upland qualities with a dispersed pattern of stone-built farms and cottages; improve and enhance sustainable opportunities for access and enjoyment by nearby communities.

[12] Taken from the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2018-23 (Final consultation draft, March 2018)

# L: Ludworth Moor

## Representative photographs

View of Lower Bradshaw Farm with Greater Manchester behind

View towards the western edge of Ludworth Moor from Chatterton Lane

## Location and summary of overall character

**This Landscape Character Area falls within GM Landscape Character Type: Unenclosed Uplands and Fringes (Dark Peak)**

Ludworth Moor LCA is located in the east of Stockport, its eastern boundary marked by the Peak District National Park and land to the north within High Peak Borough.

This is a Pennine fringe area, increasing in elevation and associated feelings of remoteness as land rises towards the National Park in the east. Much of the landscape is used for livestock rearing in traditional stone-walled pastures, with important open moorland habitats remaining at Ludworth Moor SBI. This is a sparsely settled landscape defined by traditional agriculture with isolated farms and stone cottages. Elevation and open skylines afford expansive views both to the National Park to the east and the settled areas to the west, including the wider Greater Manchester conurbation. The Cown Edge Way is a valued recreational route which crosses through the landscape.

## Landscape character description

| Key characteristics |
|---|
| *Topography, geology and drainage* |
| • Landform generally sloping up to the north-east, carved by an east-west flowing valley draining from the higher ground. |
| • Elevation ranges from approximately 170m in the valley bottom to over 300m on the boundary with the Peak District National Park. |
| • Underlying bedrock geology of Pennine Coal Measures (mudstones, siltstones, sandstones) with a band of Millstone Grit in the south-central part of the LCA. |
| • Landscape drained by streams feeding small ponds and flowing into the River Goyt beyond to the west. Ludworth Intake SSSI includes a nationally important example of a Quaternary meltwater channel. |
| • Variable loamy, sandy and peaty soils; soil fertility is poor – giving rise to low productivity Grade 4 agricultural land. Ludworth Moor classified as Grade 5. |
| *Land use and field patterns* |
| • Land use largely semi-improved pastures used for traditional sheep grazing, with rough grassland associated with Ludworth Moor and its fringes. Gritstone walls divide fields. |
| • 18th and 19th century moorland intakes creating a regular field pattern across higher land, with more irregular post-medieval piecemeal enclosures and 20th century enlarged fields elsewhere. |
| *Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover* |
| • A rich texture of upland habitats associated with unimproved land, including upland heathland, bracken, semi-natural grassland, rush pasture/purple moor grass, scrub and woodland – supporting important populations of breeding and migrating birds. |
| • All of Ludworth Moor is a Site of Biological Importance, with grassland, heathland and bog forming valued habitats for birds. |
| • Bands of broadleaved and mixed woodland tracing watercourses, linking with boundary trees and tree clumps to form skyline features. |
| • Along with Mellor Moor (LCA K), the habitats within this landscape form important connections with and 'stepping stones' to those found within the nearby Peak District National Park and High Peak. |
| *Archaeology and cultural heritage* |
| • A prehistoric bowl barrow, Brown Low, is designated as a Scheduled Monument. The site is largely concealed by woodland. At Ludworth Intakes is a Scheduled cairn, located in an elevated position. |
| • Robin Hood's Picking Rods is a Scheduled Monument in the north-eastern corner of the LCA. Believed to be the remains of a Mercian cross, its position reflects the importance of an historic trackway linking Glossop (Derbyshire) and Ludworth. |
| • A discussed coal mine, shafts, quarries and place names including Dirtylane and Smithy Lane indicate the working industrial heritage of the landscape. |
| • On the border with LCA J, the 17th century Mellor Hall and Mellor Hall Farmhouse is Grade II* listed. Mellor Hall was historically the seat of the Mellor family, dating to the 15th century. |
| *Settlement, road pattern and rights of way* |
| • Scattered pattern of stone-built farms and dispersed cottages (often associated with coniferous shelterbelts) linked by minor roads and tracks enclosed by gritstone walls. |
| • Public footpaths cross fields, linking farms and cottages. The Cown Edge Way traces the main valley from Hollywood End up and across Ludworth Moor. |
| *Views and perceptual qualities* |
| • The landscape evokes a strongly rural, remote and 'Peak District' feel with gritstone walls, traditional farms, sheep grazed pastures and rough moorland. |
| • Strong intervisibility and character connections with adjacent LCA K: Mellor Moor. Contrasting views over the settled Goyt Valley to the west, including Marple Bridge and Stockport beyond. |
| • Overhead pylons cutting through the centre of the LCA, detracting from open, undeveloped skylines and naturalistic character. |
| • Views south and east defined by the dramatic high moorland of the Peak District National Park. |

## Landscape evaluation

**Summary of current landscape condition**

This is a remote, highly rural landscape with few modern influences. Character is influenced by traditional upland farming practices, dominated by sheep (and some cattle) grazing on enclosed pastures and the open habitats of Ludworth Moor. The landscape is largely intact, with the main issues relating to a decline in landscape management – e.g. neglected stone wall boundaries, unkempt farms, some overgrazed fields. Open, undeveloped skylines are interrupted only by a pylon line cutting through the LCA.

### Forces for change

*Past and current forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition*

- Past agricultural improvement of open moorland habitats to grass moor, intakes and improved pasture, with only remnant upland heathland remaining.
- Evidence of 20th century field enlargement, impacting on the otherwise strong pattern of moorland intakes and more irregular piecemeal enclosures of post-medieval origin.
- Decline in the condition of traditional dry stone walls, including gapping /replacement/ supplementation by fencing. Some lengths are derelict.
- Some 'untidy' farms, with a collection of materials/old machinery stored in fields.
- Pylons and overhead wires detracting from open, undeveloped skylines and the semi-natural character of Ludworth Moor.
- Some evidence of overgrazing of rough pastures, with loss of sward diversity and poaching.
- Loss of traditional grazing land and rush pasture (through drainage and improvement) to more productive pasture with less diversity.
- Reported conflicts on rights of way between horse riders, walkers, mountain bikers and motorbikes (the latter also causing erosion in off-road areas).
- Lack of access to enjoy the landscape (e.g. space to park cars on minor roads).
- Light pollution from Greater Manchester impacting on the dark night skies associated with this more remote landscape.

*Future forces for change likely to impact on landscape character and condition*

- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), including for the commoners that put sheep out to graze on Ludworth Moor. There may potentially be further pressure to improve and drain remaining areas of rush pasture and species-rich meadows to create larger areas of productive agricultural land.
- Farm diversification to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping) may also result from these issues.
- Future development in Greater Manchester leading to increased demand for access and recreation in this landscape and further light spill impacting on dark night skies.
- Climate change resulting in a longer growing season and enhanced growth rates of vegetation including bracken, gorse and secondary woodland resulting in a decrease in remaining open habitats.
- Change in woodland / tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytopthora pathogens) and invasive species become more prevalent. Individual trees may become more susceptible to damage from more frequent and intense storm events.
- More intense periods of drought leading to the drying out of important wetlands including rush pasture, bogs and characteristic ponds– affecting their functions in reducing flood risk in the winter months.
- Potential changes to renewable energy subsidies and markets leading to increased demand for wind turbines within the open, exposed landscapes parts of the LCA.
- Demand for domestic and community-scale renewable energy installations such as solar panels, small wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps.
- Increase in the area of woodlands and restored wetlands to enhance the landscape's roles in filtering water, minimising downstream flooding, and storing and sequestering carbon dioxide.

## Landscape sensitivity assessment

| Criteria | Description | Rating |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical character (including topography and scale)** | • Landform generally sloping up to the north-east, carved by an east-west flowing valley draining from the higher ground.<br>• Elevation ranges from approximately 170m in the valley bottom to over 300m on the boundary with the Peak District National Park.<br>• Open, large-scale landform overlain by a medium-large field pattern.<br>• Trees, stone walls and buildings create contrasting small-scale features. | **M-H** |
| **Natural character** | • Land use largely semi-improved pastures used for traditional sheep grazing.<br>• Rich texture of upland habitats, including upland heathland, bracken, semi-natural grassland, rush pasture/purple moor grass, scrub, wetlands (including ponds) and woodland.<br>• Ludworth Moor SBI includes grassland, heathland and bog. The intakes north of the moor are nationally designated as a geological SSSI.<br>• Bands of broadleaved and mixed woodland tracing watercourses, linking with boundary trees and tree clumps.<br>• Important habitat connections with and 'stepping stones' to those found within the nearby Peak District National Park and High Peak. | **M-H** |
| **Historic landscape character** | • 18th and 19th century moorland intakes create regular patterns across higher land.<br>• More irregular post-medieval piecemeal enclosures and 20th century enlarged fields found elsewhere.<br>• Brown Low Scheduled Monument is largely concealed by woodland.<br>• A Scheduled cairn is located in an elevated position at Ludworth Intakes.<br>• Robin Hood's Picking Rods Scheduled Monument is in the north-eastern corner of the LCA; the remains of a Mercian cross.<br>• A disused coal mine, shafts, quarries and place names including Dirtylane and Smithy Lane indicate the LCA's industrial heritage.<br>• On the border with LCA J, the 17th century Mellor Hall and Mellor Hall Farmhouse is Grade II* listed. | **M** |
| **Form, density and setting of existing settlement/ development** | • Scattered pattern of farms and dispersed cottages linked by minor roads and tracks, the buildings often screened by shelterbelts.<br>• Landscape forms part of the elevated, rural backdrop to valley settlements (Marple and Marple Bridge), transitioning to the Peak District National Park immediately behind. | **H** |
| **Views and visual character including skylines** | • Expansive views afforded over the settled Goyt Valley to the west, including Marple Bridge, Stockport and distant views of Greater Manchester (including tall tower blocks) beyond.<br>• Views south and east defined by the dramatic high moorland of the Peak District National Park.<br>• An elevated, sweeping landscape creating open skylines often marked by trees/bands of woodland.<br>• Overhead pylons cut through the centre of the LCA, contrasting from the undeveloped nature of the landscape.<br>• The nationally designated cairn at Ludworth Intakes occupies an elevated skyline position. | **H** |
| **Access and recreation** | • Public footpaths cross fields, linking farms and cottages.<br>• The Cown Edge Way traces the main valley from Hollywood End up and across Ludworth Moor. | **M** |
| **Perceptual and experiential qualities** | • The landscape evokes a strongly rural, remote and 'Peak District' feel with gritstone walls, traditional farms, sheep grazed pastures and rough moorland.<br>• These qualities are broken locally by pylon lines/overhead wires cutting through the centre of the landscape. | **M-H** |

### Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

| Development scenario | Sensitivity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure | | | | M-H | |
| Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories) / solar PV developments (up to 10ha) | | | | | H |
| Wind turbines (75m to blade tip) | | | | M-H | |

| Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity |
|---|
| None of this LCA would be suitable for large-scale housing developments or the development of industrial land uses (including solar PV developments) due to its strongly rural, isolated character. Folds in the landform, lower valley slopes and less elevated parts of the landscape, particularly in the west (in proximity to existing residential developments) might be less sensitive to individual residential properties. The large scale of the landform and presence of localised skyline structures in the form of pylons reduces overall sensitivity to wind turbines, although inter-visibility and character connections with the Peak District National Park are key constraints. |

### Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

**The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):**

- Its elevated, open character with prominent (largely undeveloped) skylines forming a backdrop to views from valley settlements and the wider Greater Manchester conurbation.
- The landscape's visual and character connections with the Peak District National Park, which lies immediately adjacent to the east of the LCA.
- Important geological and geomorphological heritage, including the nationally designated meltwater channel at Ludworth Intake SSSI and evidence for former coal mining and quarrying activity.
- Rich texture of upland habitats (particularly valued within Ludworth Moor SBI), including upland heathland, bracken, semi-natural grassland, rush pasture/purple moor grass, ponds and scrub.
- Bands of broadleaved woodland, tree clumps and tree lines forming characteristic skyline features.
- Strong pattern of 18$^{th}$/19$^{th}$ century intakes and post-medieval piecemeal enclosures marked by traditional dry stone walls.
- The nationally designated heritage assets of Brown Low, a cairn at Ludworth Intakes and distinctive feature of Robin Hood's Picking Rods.
- Unifying vernacular of stone-built traditional farms and cottages, with the Grade II* Listed Mellor Hall and Farmhouse on the border with LCA J.
- Opportunities to access and enjoy the rural landscape, including via the Cown Edge Way and a strong public rights of way network.
- Strong rural qualities and an overriding sense of isolation and remoteness – unusual in the context of Stockport.

### Guidance and opportunities for future development

**Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:**

- Avoid siting any development on the highly prominent, elevated and very sparsely settled land in the east of the LCA (which forms part of the transition and wider setting of the National Park, visible in views from urban areas to the west).

- Utilise dips in the landform, including valley slopes, and existing tree/woodland cover to integrate limited new development into the landscape.
- Protect and where possible enhance semi-natural habitats and networks, including upland heathland, bracken, semi-natural grassland, rush pasture/purple moor grass, scrub and woodland. Avoid development in proximity to the open upland area of Ludworth Moor SBI (and nearby Ludworth Intake geological SSSI).
- Strengthen the dry stone wall network in association with any new development, reflecting local building styles and materials. Any new boundaries should also reflect local characteristics.
- Ensure any new development does not dilute the strong field patterns associated with the landscape.
- Respect local building styles and materials in new housing developments, seeking to reflect these in their design and build (particularly the use of local stone).
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off). This upland area is a catchment of the Goyt.
- Conserve open, undeveloped skylines often marked by trees, ensuring new development does not affect the appreciation of the Scheduled cairn at Ludworth Intakes.
- Ensure any new development does not adversely affect the special qualities of the Peak District National Park, including its beautiful views, sense of tranquillity and dark night skies, and the vital benefits that flow beyond its boundary[13].
- Protect long, uninterrupted views from higher ground over Marple Bridge, Marple and beyond to Stockport and Greater Manchester.
- Protect the overriding sense of isolation, strong sense of time depth and traditional rural qualities associated within the landscape.

[13] Taken from the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2018-23 (Final consultation draft, March 2018)

# Appendices

*Image: View across Marple from the north, to the Peak District beyond*

# Appendix 1: Data and literature list

### GIS information

Data used within the report, including data collated in the GIS database is shown in the Table below.

| Dataset | Owner |
|---|---|
| **General** | |
| Ordnance Survey 1:25K | Ordnance Survey |
| Ordnance Survey 1:50K | Ordnance Survey |
| Vector map local | Ordnance Survey |
| Administrative boundaries | Ordnance Survey |
| National Parks | Natural England |
| Aerial photography | ESRI |
| **Access** | |
| Public rights of way | Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council |
| Open space | Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council |
| Strategic open space | Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council |
| Country Parks | Natural England |
| Open access land | Natural England |
| National trails | Natural England |
| Railway stations/ lines | OS OML |
| Roads | OS OML |
| Cycling routes | Sustrans |
| Green space | Ordnance Survey |
| **Landscape** | |
| Landscape Character Areas | Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council |
| National Character Areas | Natural England |
| Manchester Green Belt | Greater Manchester Local Authorities |
| Dark skies | CPRE |
| Tranquillity | CPRE |
| **Biodiversity and woodland** | |
| Ancient woodland | Natural England |
| National Forest Inventory | Forestry Commission |
| Priority BAP Habitats | Natural England |
| Local Nature Reserves | Natural England |
| National Nature Reserves | Natural England |
| Site of Special Scientific Interest | Natural England |
| Ramsar | Natural England |
| Special Protection Area | Natural England |
| Special Area of Conservation | Natural England |
| Local Wildlife Site | Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council |
| Sites of biological importance | Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council |
| Countryside sites | Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council |
| Protected species data | Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council |
| Invasive species data | Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council |
| **Hydrology** | |
| Water courses/lakes | OS OML |
| Flood Zone 3 | Environment Agency |
| Flood Zone 2 | Environment Agency |
| **Heritage** | |
| Listed Buildings | Historic England |
| Conservation Areas | Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council |
| Registered Battlefields | Historic England |
| Registered Parks and Gardens | Historic England |

| | |
|---|---|
| Scheduled Monuments | Historic England |
| Historic Landscape Character | Archaeology data service |
| **Geology** | |
| Fault Geology | British Geological Survey |
| Superficial Geology | British Geological Survey |
| Bedrock Geology | British Geological Survey |
| Minerals | Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council |

### Key literature sources


Stockport Landscape Character Assessment. Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council. 2006 (Reviewed 2011).

High Peak Borough Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document. High Peak Borough Council, March 2006.

Peak District National Park Landscape Character Assessment. Peak District National Park Authority, 2009.

Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment. LUC for Cheshire East Council, 2018.

National Character Area Profile 51: Dark Peak. Natural England

National Character Area Profile 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe. Natural England

National Character Area Profile 55: Manchester Conurbation. Natural England

National Character Area Profile 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain. Natural England

Stockbort Borough Council Open Space Assessment. Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd for Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, August 2017.

Stockport Town Centre Urban Green Infrastructure Enhancement Strategy. Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, January 2015

Protecting and Enhancing Woodford's Natural Environment. Cheshire Wildlife Trust, January 2018.

Woodford Landscape and Environment Study. Woodford Neighbourhood Forum, 2015-2017.

# Appendix 2: Workshop report (event held 15.1.18)

**Exercise 1: What do you think is important about each Landscape Character Area? (also considering key views to or from the landscape)**

| Landscape Character Area (code and name) | What is important? | Key views to or from |
|---|---|---|
| A: Woodford | • Development threatening nature and character of area.<br>• Very interesting history with aerodrome etc needs to be made more of not just houses built – the museum linked with other sites.<br>• Surrounding development is causing even greater traffic around and through Woodford.<br>• Accessibility<br>• Houses built on brownfield site not green belt or agricultural land.<br>• Wildlife corridors should be protected by River Dean, adjacent to aerodrome in native hedgerows.<br>• Potential open access and recreational development.<br>• Native hedgerows, trees and ponds should be protected and encouraged.<br>• Openness, tranquillity and 'therapy' for wider area.<br>• End of Greater Manchester urban sprawl.<br>• Safe lanes for venerable users.<br>• Mature oaks.<br>• Farmland and clear air.<br>• Encourage opportunities for exercise and relaxation in the countryside – walking, cycling and horse riding.<br>• Transport link – New station.<br>• Preserving village life.<br>• Good network of footpaths but needs better maintenance. | • Open countryside.<br>• Views of Pennine Hills from several locations in Woodford (see ENV 2 Policy – Woodford Neighbourhood Plan)<br>• Views from footpaths being spoilt by development.<br>• Views of Church Lane and Blossoms Lane of countryside and distant hills.<br>• Views across central Woodford towards Pennines and Lyme Park.<br>• Views from Woodford to the West.<br>• Views out to Kinder Scout, Shutlingsloe, Saddleworth Moor, Macclesfield Forest. |
| B: Heald Green Fringe | • Local green areas are as important as large landscapes.<br>• Agricultural character.<br>• Rights of way and accessibility.<br>• Avoiding development on green areas that would further impact congestion.<br>• To protect from development given it is the only part of the | • Views over Cheshire.<br>• Green chain link.<br>• Views of Airport infrastructure detracts from setting. |

| Landscape Character Area (code and name) | What is important? | Key views to or from |
|---|---|---|
| | Cheshire Plain type of land in Stockport (with Woodford).<br>• To promote clean air.<br>• To prevent residential development, this is inappropriate given the location nearby Airport. | |
| C: Ladybrook Valley | • To keep the river clean, including litter off the banks.<br>• The riparian nature of much of the valley, a corridor for wildlife nearly 10 miles long.<br>• Benefitting from cleaner Mersey campaign – Kingfishers flourishing.<br>• Crucial corridor with scenic brook side routes and public rights of way.<br>• Accessibility and wayfinding.<br>• Important wildlife and recreational area close to large urban populations.<br>• Connections with Bramall Hall.<br>• The Middlewood Way, well used recreational area.<br>• Maintenance of green spaces outside of Bramhall Park. | • Views across farms and the Peak District.<br>• Important views are within the corridor given the well-wooded nature of the valley. |
| D: River Mersey | • Access to important leisure / fitness and wellbeing including Abney Park (5k run hosted monthly), Gatley Carrs and Mersey Vale.<br>• Heritage of the river and its importance to Stockport's development.<br>• Green corridor links all run along the river to the sea (river walking).<br>• Heavily used important recreational area and supports significant habitats and wildlife.<br>• Border keeping Stockport separate to Manchester. | • Views along the river are most important, not views in / out of the area. |
| E: Tame Valley and Brinnington East | • Excellent green space providing social, community benefits through events and friends groups.<br>• Mills and buildings of industrial heritage need to be converted to housing as opposed to demolition or remaining vacant.<br>• Important mixed habitat and wildlife corridor.<br>• Maintain links to industrial past, preserve heritage.<br>• Keep free from further development and more encroachment.<br>• Landscape has great multi-user potential. | • Views along the valley and out towards the hills.<br>• View from rail viaduct over valley onto River Tame and Vale Park. |

| Landscape Character Area (code and name) | What is important? | Key views to or from |
|---|---|---|
| | • Accessibility<br>• Part of the Goyt Valley and Tame Valley wildlife corridor.<br>• Maintain green spaces and access to countryside in this highly valued landscape. | |
| F: Etherow Parklands | • Wildlife and wildlife corridors must be protected (site for mushroom picking)<br>• Attractive place to visit, particularly for families.<br>• Well used Country Park and recreational area.<br>• Generally disability friendly.<br>• Lots of heritage for local industry<br>• Provides an attractive mix of hills and valleys.<br>• Becoming spoilt by creeping urbanisation.<br>• Generally well maintained and good parking options.<br>• Stages the only sailing club (model boats) in Stockport. | • Views of used water industry and wildlife<br>• Views towards and over neighbouring hills and moors into Derbyshire and other parts of Stockport and Cheshire. |
| G: Goyt Valley | • Respect and conserve industrial heritage, lime kilns, canal system, mill and valley.<br>• Long, varied landscape, canals and river walks important to local people for recreation and well-being.<br>• Highly valued for walking trails and various waterway character.<br>• Setting of Marple viaduct and aqueduct are of national importance.<br>• The rivers and canals provide a conduit through the landscape of SMBC, giving access to countryside, industrial archaeology, leisure activities and wildlife.<br>• Safe environment for families.<br>• Peak Forest and Macclesfield Canal are important wildlife corridors.<br>• Use of mills for small shops and businesses.<br>• Oldknow's legacy project has done much to raise the public interest in the Marple area and Goyt Valley. | • Goyt Mill is dominant in the landscape and essential to keep this view intact.<br>• View from Marple Ridge to Macclesfield Canal.<br>• Views towards and from Marple Aqueduct<br>• Views of Werneth Low and moors across the valleys.<br>• Views from the Macclesfield Canal, this has an unusually large number of embankments providing views of the Cheshire Plain.<br>• View from canal bridge over Brabyns Brow. |
| H: Offerton-Poise Brook | • Green spaces, wildlife corridor, waterway and walking paths.<br>• Important as a site for ecology and exposed geology / fossils.<br>• Accessibility difficult .<br>• Important open pocket of green space for local people's health and well-being within an urbanised setting. | |

| Landscape Character Area (code and name) | What is important? | Key views to or from |
|---|---|---|
| I: Hazel Grove – Highlane | • Well used paths, towpaths and recreational space including horse riding and canal boats.<br>• Footpath links between The Middlewood Way and the Macclesfield Canal.<br>• Sense of open countryside which is important to residents.<br>• Open landscape provides freedom from intrusive modern development.<br>• Farming, open countryside, wildlife with the presence of birds and foxes.<br>• Area sits on the Pennine Fringe, easy to access as a green space for recreational pursuits.<br>• Important ancient woodlands need to be preserved including Marple Woods and Donkey Wood.<br>• The canal, charity boat, new horizons, walks, fishing and cycling.<br>• Agricultural farming area with sheep and cows present across landscape.<br>• Setting of the Macclesfield Canal is important.<br>• Footpath network giving access to Highlane and Higher Poynton from Hazel Grove and Mill Lane. | • Views across Stockport's historic buildings.<br>• Views to Lyme Park round to the moors behind Marple from Hazel Grove.<br>• View out to Beetham Tower from Marple Ridge.<br>• Views of open farmland and countryside.<br>• Views of the Pennines from Hazel Grove.<br>• Views over Cheshire Plain, Manchester, Lancashire hills.<br>• Views over Mellor to Pennine foothills. View of Winterhill, Werneth Low and Manchester.<br>• Views north from Middlewood Way just east of the A6. |
| J: Marple Bridge | • Combination of old mill town and farmland with historic buildings and industrial heritage.<br>• Easy access to network of bridleways, footpaths, mountain bike trails, river and canal walks for residents.<br>• Rolling countryside character.<br>• Freedom from inappropriate modern development.<br>• Good access to shops but limited off road parking. | • Open varied views.<br>• Views to Peak District.<br>• Good views across Mersey Basin.<br>• River views.<br>• Views of village townscape.<br>• Views of railway and canal bridges.<br>• Views of hillsides on the way into Compstall.<br>• Attractive farmland landscape.<br>• Rural village character. |
| K: Mellor Moor | • Important for green space, history, well-being and recreation.<br>• Extremely important archaeological sites still to be extensively investigated.<br>• Industrial and archaeological heritage.<br>• Evidence of medieval farming.<br>• Accessibility and transport.<br>• Early industry in valley floors. | • Part of valued views from elsewhere in the area.<br>• Open views and panoramic vistas from the hills to the city from the highest point.<br>• Views over Derbyshire looking at other historic features of the landscape with ancient views. |

| Landscape Character Area (code and name) | What is important? | Key views to or from |
|---|---|---|
| | • Enclosure of field patterns.<br>• Upland area with a landscape rare within the borough.<br>• Ancient settlement and burials very important to identity of local people. | |
| L: Ludworth Moor | • Last remaining strongfolds of Lapwing, Snipe, Skylark and more. Bird population is in decline across the region.<br>• More woodland required to provide more varied habitats.<br>• Feeling of isolation, openness, tranquillity and remoteness important to preserve.<br>• Attractive walking setting.<br>• Farming is prominent and should be protected.<br>• Important heathland and site for sphagnum moss and croton species and ephemeroptera.<br>• Dry stone walls an important feature that should be enhanced and protected. | • Tranquil open space hilltop provides wide views across area. |

**Exercise 2: What are the past, current and future issues (and opportunities) affecting the different Landscape Character Areas?**

| Landscape Character Area (code and name) | Past / current issues | Future issues / opportunities |
|---|---|---|
| A: Woodford | • Fly tipping.<br>• Loss of agricultural land.<br>• Woodford Aerodrome housing development.<br>• Drainage and risk of flooding.<br>• Loss of hedgerows.<br>• Accessibility / public transport. | • To retain views of Kinder Scout, Macclesfield Forest, Lyme Park and Croker Hill.<br>• Improve footpath network.<br>• Improve the offer for cycling as opposed to just walking.<br>• Population increase may lead to rat-running through landscape.<br>• Protection of wildlife corridors, native planting etc.<br>• Provide green link maps.<br>• Join up with Cheshire East.<br>• Increase number of ponds / biodiversity.<br>• GMSF allocation impact of views<br>• Loss of agricultural land.<br>• Congestion and issues associated with the Handforth Growth Village A34.<br>• Opportunity to introduce Orchards. |
| B: Heald Green Fringe | • Air / noise pollution.<br>• Access / parking problems and traffic congestion.<br>• No facilities for cycling.<br>• A34 corridor. | • A community garden.<br>• Collaborative working with the Airport.<br>• Protect wildlife corridors.<br>• Mitigating pollution through Green Infrastructure network.<br>• Maintaining green spaces. |
| C: Ladybrook Valley | • Areas outside Bramall Hall not as well maintained / managed.<br>• Balance between maintaining biodiversity and encouraging access.<br>• Formal hard surfacing and footpaths within Bramall Hall Park have changed the character of that section of the valley.<br>• Rural / informal footpaths elsewhere are part of the landscape character. | • Uncertainty with Brexit and the impact of loss / replacement of subsidies.<br>• Climate change increases the threat and frequency of flooding with unbound footpaths being washed away.<br>• Pressure on recreation constrained by vehicular routes.<br>• A comprehensive access network is very important to this area. |

| Landscape Character Area (code and name) | Past / current issues | Future issues / opportunities |
|---|---|---|
| D: River Mersey | • Trans Pennine Trail (Liverpool to Hull). Forms part of the first designated European Long Distance Walkers' Route (E8) which links Galway, Ireland to Istanbul.<br>• Erosion of river banks due to flow.<br>• Anti-social behaviour in Abney Park.<br>• Widespread fly tipping. | • Metrolink extension from East Didsbury into Town Centre.<br>• Climate change (river overtopping) damage will increase and existing infrastructure requires updating.<br>• Opportunity to ensure ecological connectivity with the Mersey Valley.<br>• Barnes Hospital development impacts watercourses and habitats through construction and traffic increase. |
| E: Tame Valley and Brinnington East | • Impact and uncertainty of new road proposal.<br>• Care and maintenance of river banks.<br>• Reddish Vale Country Park, critical status to maintain (Friends Of The Vale).<br>• Urban areas well connected and accessibility throughout should be maintained.<br>• Preserve history such as Arden Hall site.<br>• Important to maintain what is a major wildlife corridor and green lung to the area. Continue this beyond SMBC boundary. | • New road proposals.<br>• Future development should not nibble away at this highly valued green space.<br>• Air quality is important and needs to be addressed.<br>• Opportunity for tramway extension.<br>• Cheshire Line Committee – extend into Stockport.<br>• Introduce new woodland planting to improve air quality and manage carbon. Protect existing trees in the process. |
| F: Etherow Parklands | • To retain and protect the Country Park.<br>• Lack of facilities of which are of poor quality.<br>• Development must be appropriate and sensitive to the history and industrial heritage.<br>• Retain the parkland buffer.<br>• Access to Goyt from the Country Park and beyond the LCA boundary.<br>• Poor quality access tracks.<br>• This area has the potential to offer more in terms of services and recreational opportunities.<br>• Important site of importance to be retained for wildlife, particularly waterfowl. | • Opportunity to link pathways and create a greater network of access with an overarching view on connectivity.<br>• Town centre access and linking of cycle routes across borough.<br>• Opportunity to improve trails and signage. (interactive / digital mapping options)<br>• Opportunity to refresh and modernise the existing facilities and social enterprise. |
| G: Goyt Valley | • To the south access / parking issues prevent access to Lakes Road.<br>• Setting of the Goyt Valley will be damaged by road | • Views and landscape character will be destroyed by proposed A6/M60 link road.<br>• Brexit issues for agricultural land although there are |

| Landscape Character Area (code and name) | Past / current issues | Future issues / opportunities |
|---|---|---|
| | proposals.<br>• Marple Bridge and Mellor are rural historic towns (Conservation Areas) that are also valuable for wildlife.<br>• Cobble-pebble bed to riverbed valuable for wildlife.<br>• Ford near Otterspool near Chadkirk Chapel.<br>• Surfacing issues on Mill Lane; bound surfacing changes character of area.<br>• Presence of pylons (noise and visual) affects PROW users.<br>• Roman Lakes Park has issues with access.<br>• Good agricultural land for growing - providing opportunity of food security. | different land uses operating side by side (stables, crops, pastoral). |
| H: Offerton-Poise Brook | • Needs protecting from bypass / development.<br>• Geologically very important (Permian, Triassic, cretaceous layers)<br>• Road and traffic congestion.<br>• Very urbanised area, the valley is the only remaining landscape and needs protecting.<br>• Area is the last bit of green breathing space.<br>• No sense of community. | • Opportunity for the tramway extension.<br>• Improve pedestrian access.<br>• Fly tipping needs to be addressed in all areas.<br>• Road acts as a barrier to community movement. |
| I: Hazel Grove – High Lane | • Preserve green belt and ancient woodland.<br>• A6 congestion, accessibility and pollution.<br>• Railway tunnel located underneath landscape.<br>• Poor disabled access.<br>• Footpath to Lyme Park.<br>• Poor bus service with anti-social behaviour known at station.<br>• Ancient woodland in tributary valleys good due to a lack of access.<br>• Housing pressure with 4,000 homes bringing a knock on effect on traffic levels. | • GMSF proposals.<br>• Mitigation of congestion.<br>• Concerns over new bypass.<br>• Loss of farming activities.<br>• Loss of wildlife corridors.<br>• More tree planting particularly on highways.<br>• Stepping Hill Link Road – opportunity for Green Infrastructure.<br>• Improving transport facilities and cycle routes.<br>• Publicising heritage trails. |
| J: Marple Bridge | • Golf courses contributed to loss of previous landscape character. | • Climate change brings the threat of wildlife loss, flooding, freeze thaw impacts. More acidic rain |

| Landscape Character Area (code and name) | Past / current issues | Future issues / opportunities |
|---|---|---|
| | • Decline in evidence of industrial heritage with a lack of conservation.<br>• Agricultural decline with fewer farms broken into small holdings with some domestic conversions.<br>• Horsiculture and dairy declines meaning less manure for wildlife (swallows).<br>• Need for wildlife protection. Decline in red grouse and swallows; known to be home to hares, lapwing, curlew, red kite (seen a recovery) and badgers – suggest looking at BTO monitoring results.<br>• More cars creating road congestion, particularly on narrow lanes along with parking issues.<br>• Poor public transport network.<br>• Flooding in tight valley profile due to uplands being drained and improved. Need to revert back to moorland / wetland to hold back water. | affecting ground stability and flora and fauna (although noted acid rain largely no longer an issue due to sulphur controls – CO2 now the issue).<br>• Patchy dry stone wall boundaries require maintenance.<br>• Need for hedgerow boundary reinstatement (all LCAs)<br>• New land owners bring new views on land use.<br>• EU funded £7.2m project run by Mellor Archaeological Trust is exploring impacts of climate change on archaeology.<br>• Potential for afforestation, wetland creation and moorland restoration. |
| K: Mellor Moor | • Management of woodlands.<br>• Afforestation possible as one of the few areas in Stockport where this is feasible.<br>• Pylons not seen as a major issue.<br>• Supports habitat for the Hen Harrier.<br>• Light pollution from Stockport and Greater Manchester. | See J: Marple Bridge |
| L: Ludworth Moor | • Historically more enclosed than Mellor Moor.<br>• Eastern part (+ LCA K) is of equal landscape importance to the Peak District National Park.<br>• Important Bronze Age remains stretching into Derbyshire.<br>• Conflict on PROW between horse riders, walkers, mountain bikes and motorbikes. Also evidence of off-road damage.<br>• Last privately owned coal mine in the UK.<br>• Parking and access issues.<br>• Enlarged fields / loss of boundaries.<br>• Moor provides a feeding area for golden plover which migrate in from Peak District National Park. | See J: Marple Bridge<br>• Ludworth Moor sheep grazed by commoners - uncertain future. |

## List of attendees

| Attendee | Organisation represented |
|---|---|
| Bob Anderson | Ladybrook Nursery |
| Petula Neilson | Natural England |
| Edgar Ernstbrunner | Ramblers Association |
| Lawrence Dark | Chester Road allotment |
| Simon Pateman | Senior Planning Policy Officer, Tameside |
| Anne Walker | High Lane Village Neighbourhood Forum |
| Janet Burks | High Lane Village Neighbourhood Forum |
| Eve Price | Stockport Historical Society |
| Hilary Stephenson | High Lane Residents Association |
| Tony Smith | Marple Neighbourhood Forum |
| Evelyn Frearson | Woodford Neighbourhood Forum |
| Kris Hayward | Woodford Neighbourhood Forum |
| Ann Young | High Lane Village Neighbourhood Forum |
| Norman Redhead | Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service |
| Michael Ibbotson | Swann Lane Residents Association |
| Margaret Myerscough | Librarian, Heritage & Archives |
| Jenny Dean | Librarian, Heritage & Archives |
| Coral Dranfield | Stockport Heritage trust |
| Jill Trumble | Stockport Heritage Trust |
| Susan Colman | Stockport Greenspace Forum |
| Janet Cuff | Stockport Green Party |
| Tony Wilkinson | British Trust for Ornithology. |
| Ann Hearle | Mellor Archaeological Trust |
| Bob Humpery-Taylor | Mellor Archaeological Trust |
| H Addenson | Marple Heritage |
| John Price | Stockport Heritage Trust |
| Peter Black | Marple Neighbourhood Forum |
| Nick Robinson | SMBC |
| Ian Walmsley | SMBC |
| Fiona Albarracin | SMBC |
| Sally Maguire | SMBC |
| Angie Jukes | SMBC |
| Vincent Mcintyre | SMBC |
| Sally Marshall | LUC |
| Jacqueline Whitworth-Allan | LUC |
| Chris Cox | LUC |

*Green shaded indicates facilitators from SMBC and LUC.*

# Appendix 3: Glossary

| Term | Description |
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| Aesthetic | Concerning the visual appeal of a feature or landscape |
| Agricultural Land Classification | The classification of agricultural land in England in Wales. |
| Alluvium | Loose soil or sediments, which have been eroded, reshaped by water in some form, and redeposited in a non-marine setting. |
| Amenity | The pleasantness or attractiveness of a place. |
| Ancient woodland | Woods that are believed to have been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. |
| AOD | Above Ordnance Datum (sea level). |
| 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. |
| 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 |
| Development Plan | A "development plan" is an aspect of town and country planning in the United Kingdom comprising a set of documents that set out the local authority's policies and proposals for the development and use of land in their area. The development plan guides and shapes day-to-day decisions as to whether or not planning permission should be granted. Components of the development plan are referred to as Development Plan Documents or DPDs. |
| 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. |
| Environmental impact assessment (EIA) | Environmental Impact Assessment is the process by which the anticipated effects on the environment of a proposed development or project are measured. If the likely effects are unacceptable, design measures or other relevant mitigation measures can be taken to reduce or avoid those effects |
| European Landscape Convention (ELC) | The European Landscape Convention promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues. It requires "landscape to be integrated into regional and town planning policies and in cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as any other policies with possible direct or indirect impacts on landscape". The ELC was signed by the UK government in February 2006, ratified in November 2006 and came into effect in March 2007. |
| 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. |
| Geographic Information System (GIS) | A geographic information system is a system designed to capture, store, manipulate, analyse, manage, and present mapped, spatial or geographic data. It is used, for example, to combine different 'layers' of information to help define variations in landscape character, to map the boundaries of landscape character types and landscape character areas and to map patterns of intervisibility. |
| 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). |

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| Greater Manchester Spatial Framework | The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework is a joint plan for Greater Manchester that will provide the land for jobs and new homes across the city region, setting out ambitious plans to make Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world. |
| Green Belt | A green belt or greenbelt is a policy and land use designation used in land use planning to retain areas of largely undeveloped, wild, or agricultural land surrounding or neighbouring urban areas. The purpose is to avoid urban sprawl, prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another, protect the countryside and conserve the setting of historic towns. By restricting the outward expansion of settlement, the policy aims to support urban regeneration by encouraging the re-use of derelict and other under-used land. |
| Green infrastructure | 'Green infrastructure' is a term used to describe the network of natural spaces and corridors in a given area. Green infrastructure includes open spaces such as parks and gardens, allotments, woodlands, fields, hedges, lakes, ponds, playing fields, coastal habitats, as well as footpaths, cycleways or rivers. These provide areas for recreation and education, habitats for wildlife and environmental services such as flood defence or absorption of air pollution |
| Habitat | The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism. |
| 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 |
| Intervisibility | The ability to see from one geographic point to another along unobstructed sight lines. GIS can be used to map patterns of theoretical intervisibility based on topography and sometimes including the screening effects of woodland, trees and buildings. The outputs are indicative and should be tested on the ground. |
| Land cover | The physical material at the surface of the earth. |
| 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. |
| Landscape | 'Landscape' is about the relationship between people and place. It provides the setting for people's day-to-day lives. The term does not mean just special or designated landscapes and it does not only apply to the countryside. It results from the way that different components of our environment - both natural (the influences of geology, soils, climate, flora and fauna) and cultural (the historical and current impact of land use, settlement, enclosure and other human interventions) - interact together and are perceived. People's perceptions turn land into the concept of landscape |
| Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) | An assessment of the effects of a proposed development or some other type of change on the character of the landscape and on the way that people experience that landscape. LVIA is often undertaken as part of a wider Environmental Impact Assessment. |
| 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 area (LCA) | Landscape Character Areas are geographically unique areas where a combination of factors such as topography, vegetation pattern, land use and cultural associations combine to create an area with a distinct, recognisable character. They are the single, unique areas that are the discrete geographical area of a particular landscape type. |
| Landscape character assessment | Landscape character assessments identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive by mapping and describing character types and areas. They also show how the landscape is perceived, experienced and valued by people. |
| Landscape character types (LCT) | Landscape Types are a generic classification for landscape character and may occur anywhere the same combinations of physical and cultural landscape attributes are found. They are defined to represent distinct types of landscape that are 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. |
| Landscape classification | Classification of the landscape into a series of generic landscape character types and / or geographically specific landscape character |

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| | areas. |
| Landscape sensitivity | Landscape sensitivity is the relative extent to which the character and quality of an area (including its visual attributes) is likely to change. |
| Moss | A bog, especially a peat bog. |
| National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) | The National Planning Policy Framework sets out government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied by local authorities in their development plans. It was last updated in July 2018. |
| Natural capital | Natural capital is the stock of natural resources, which includes geology, soils, air, water and all living organisms. Some natural capital assets provide people with goods and services, often called ecosystem services. These underpin our economy and society and make human life possible. |
| Naturalness | The quality or state of being natural. |
| National Character Area (NCA) | National Character Area – defined within the National Character Area Study, Natural England (2013) - 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 18th and 19th 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. |