

Wirral Local Landscape

Designations

Review and Recommendations

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

September 2021



Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1	First draft	A Knight K Davies	K Davies	K Ahern	03.04.2021
2	Final report	A Knight	K Davies	K Ahern	24.04.2021
3	Final report updated with consultation comments	A Knight	K Davies	K Davies	09.07.2021



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Wirral Local Landscape Designations

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council commissioned LUC in February 2020 to undertake a review of local landscape designations across the Borough to form part of the emerging Wirral Local Plan 2020 to 2035. This report presents the results of the review and recommendations on local landscape designations.

Background

1.2 Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council has existing local landscape designations that require special attention to be given to landscapes considered to be 'amongst the most outstanding within the Borough'. These are primarily designated for their scenic importance and represent 'outstanding landmarks and other characteristic landscapes which make a prominent or positive contribution to the distinctive image and attractiveness of the peninsula' **[See reference 1]**.

1.3 Four Areas of Special Landscape Value are identified in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan **[See reference 2]**:

- Bidston Hill Area of Special Landscape Value;
- Dee Coast including Heswall Dales, Thurstaston Common and Royden Park Areas of Special Landscape Value;
- Caldy Hill including Stapledon Wood Area of Special Landscape Value; and
- Thornton Hough Area of Special Landscape Value.

1.4 The Dee Coast, Caldy Hill and Thornton Hough Areas of Special Landscape Value were originally designated in the Merseyside Structure Plan (1980),

although the Dee Coastline Area of Special Landscape Value was originally designated as a heritage landscape.

1.5 Bidston Hill Area of Special Landscape Value was designated in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

This study

1.6 Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council's Areas of Special Landscape Value have little evidence setting out the reasons behind their initial designation in the 1980s and in 2000. To address this, LUC was commissioned to provide a full review of the landscape across the Borough to provide evidence to underpin a robust set of up-to-date Local Landscape Designation areas, to inform landscape policies in the Wirral Local Plan.

1.7 In summary, the objectives of this study are to:

- Review the Wirral landscape to identify the landscapes of the highest quality and most value in the Borough that could potentially merit local designation in line with current best practice;
- Provide up to date evidence and justification for the recommended Local Landscape Designation areas and their boundaries.

1.8 Local landscape designations can play an important part in protecting and enhancing landscapes with special qualities. Information on Local Landscape Designation areas can be useful to inform development management and potential site allocation and landscape policies. Local Landscape Designation areas do not prevent development from taking place, but can be used to ensure the special landscape qualities are considered.

Clarification note on meaning of Valued Landscapes

1.9 A summary of current thinking on the meaning and terms relating to valued landscapes is set out below, with an indication of what this means for the Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council Review.

All landscapes are of value

At the outset it is important to note that all landscape is of value. This principle was established by the European Landscape Convention, which came into force in the UK in March 2007. The European Landscape Convention recognises that landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas. The European Landscape Convention definition of 'landscape' considers that all landscapes matter, be they ordinary, degraded or outstanding. It defines landscape as: "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors".

The European Landscape Convention 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. The 'all landscape' approach in Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council is represented by the comprehensive updated Wirral Landscape Character Assessment [\[See reference 3\]](#).

Valued Landscapes and the National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework [See reference 4], re-issued in February 2019, recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services that it provides.

In paragraph 170, it states that: “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: ...protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...(in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);”

It goes on to say in paragraph 171 that “Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.”

The National Planning Policy Framework does not offer a definition of what constitutes a ‘valued landscape’. However, case law has reached a broad consensus among planning, law and landscape professionals on issues around valued landscapes. While designated landscapes, including Local Landscape Designations, are likely to be considered ‘valued’ for the purposes of para 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework, it is important to note that non-designated areas can also be ‘valued’.

Case law indicates that:

- Many areas of countryside are understandably valued by local residents, but to be considered “valued” in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework, there needs to be something “special” or out of the ordinary that can be defined;
- To be valued a site is required to show some demonstrable physical attributes rather than just popularity.

What does this mean for Local Landscape Designation in Wirral?

The retention of Local Landscape Designations in Wirral is in line with the National Planning Policy Framework. This review is therefore timely and will help:

- elucidate those ‘special’ landscapes within Wirral that are valued;
- define the attributes and identify the qualities (ref National Planning Policy Framework) that make them worthy of local designation;
- ensure a robust and consistent criteria-based approach to defining locally designated landscapes;
- develop appropriate recommendations for policy implementation.

As noted above, there will also be areas outside the Local Landscape Designations that may also have a high landscape value, be locally valued and popular or possess features, attributes or qualities of value that may also merit protection. This ‘all landscapes’ approach is the basis of the Wirral Landscape Character Assessment (2019) which should be used to inform decisions.

Chapter 2

Method

2.1 An essential element in reviewing and proposing areas for local landscape designation is the adoption of a consistent systematic and transparent process.

2.2 There is no current generally accepted methodology for reviewing or updating Local Landscape Designations in England. Natural England recommended 'Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' [See reference 5] includes a definition of 'Landscape Value' in Annex 1, stated as:

"The relative value or importance attached to a landscape... which expresses national or local consensus, because of its quality, special qualities including perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness, cultural associations or other conservation issues".

2.3 The current Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (third edition) [See reference 6] also includes a helpful summary of the range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes, set out in Box 5.1:

- Landscape quality (condition);
- Scenic qualities;
- Rarity;
- Representativeness;
- Conservation interests;
- Recreation value;
- Perceptual aspects; and
- Associations.

2.4 Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland jointly published Guidance on Local Landscape Designations in 2006, the revision of which (Draft – Guidance on Local Landscape Areas, Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland, 2017) was being finalised at the time of this review. This includes recommendations on the key steps to follow and criteria to use when undertaking local landscape designation studies.

2.5 The methodology for this study of Wirral draws from the above guidance as well as LUC's experience in undertaking designation reviews elsewhere in the UK.

Geographic scope

2.6 The scope of this study includes a full review of the whole of the Borough, including the existing Areas of Special Landscape Value, shown on Figure 2.1.

Links to the Wirral Landscape Character Assessment

2.7 This review has been undertaken following the update of the Wirral Landscape Character Assessment (2019), also by LUC. The review uses the framework of the Landscape Character Areas, of which there are 16 within the Borough, including three Seascape Character Areas. However, it should be noted that the Landscape Character Assessment is based on broad variations in landscape character and not quality and value. There may, therefore, be differences in boundaries between the Landscape Character Areas and Local Landscape Designation areas. In general, where an Landscape Character Area is indicated to merit designation, the neighbouring Landscape Character Area has also been reviewed to assess how it relates to the area and relevant qualities. It should also be noted that all Landscape Character Areas within Wirral are likely to include some valued qualities or features, even if they do not form part of a Local Landscape Designation area.

2.8 Figure 2.2 illustrates the landscape character framework and the existing landscape designations (Areas of Special Landscape Value).

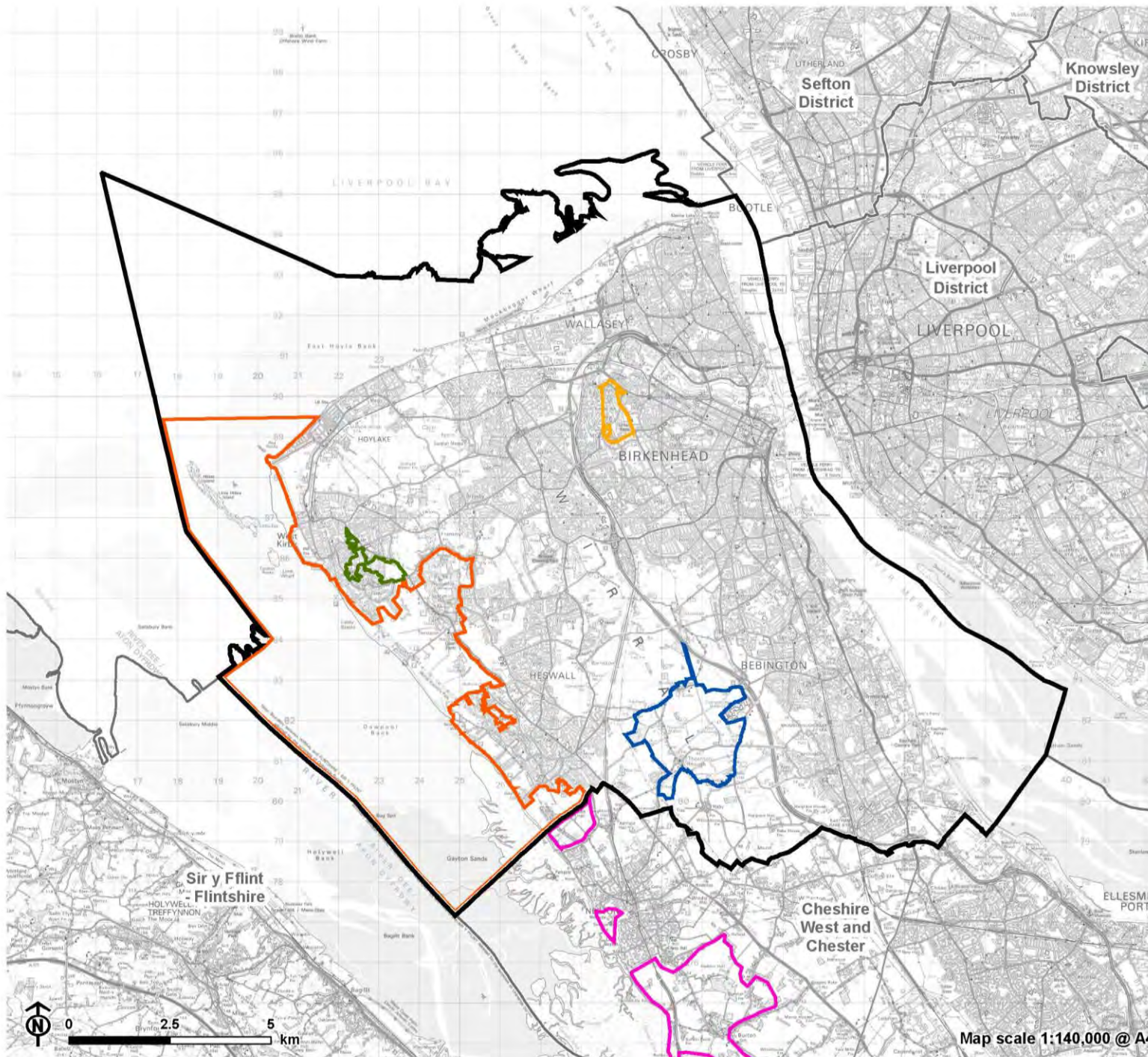
Size and coherence

2.9 Local Landscape Designation areas should be of a sufficient size and form a coherent recognisable area. An important feature or site is not, on its own, enough to merit landscape designation. The following points are relevant:

- Is the area of sufficient size to make it practical to develop policies for its protection, management and planning?
- Is the area recognisable as a cohesive place or entity, of consistent character?

2.10 There will be many individual places, sites and features within the wider landscape of the Borough which are of high quality but not within a Local Landscape Designation area due to the reasons above.

Figure 2.1: Areas of Special Landscape Value



- Wirral boundary
- Adjacent Local Authority boundary

Existing Area of Special Landscape Value

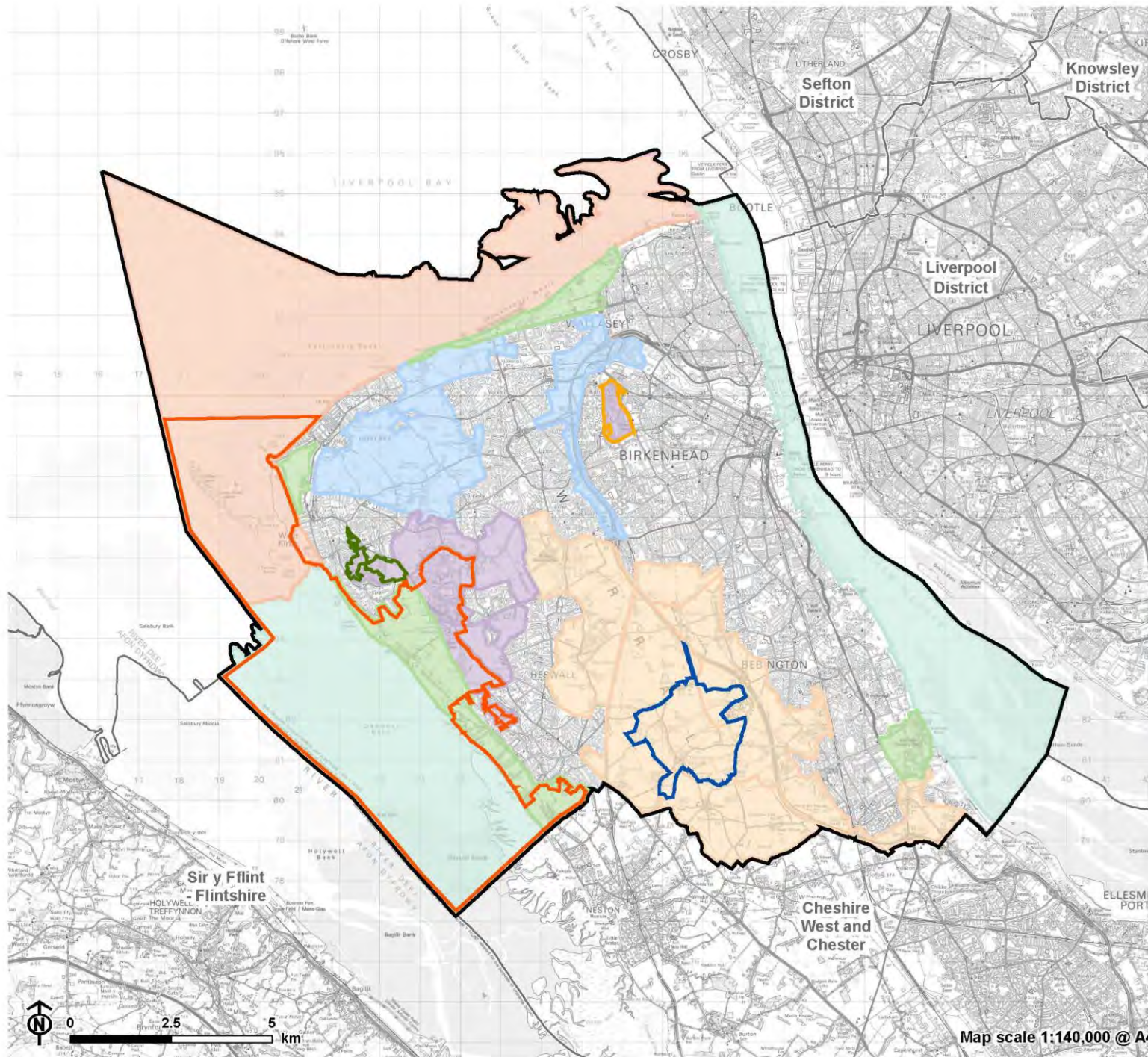
- Bidston Hill
- Dee Coast, including Heswall Dales, Thurstaston Common and Royden Park
- Caldy Hill, including Stapledon Wood
- Thornton Hough

Areas of Special County Value (CWaC)

- Dee Coastal Area

Map scale 1:140,000 @ A4

Figure 2.2: Areas of Special Landscape Value and Landscape Context



- Wirral boundary
- Adjacent Local Authority boundary

Landscape Character Type

- LCT 1: Coastal/Estuarine Edge
- LCT 2: River Floodplains
- LCT 3: Sandstone Hills
- LCT 4: Lowland Farmland and Estates
- LCT 5: Coastal Waters
- LCT 6: Estuaries

Existing Area of Special Landscape Value

- Bidston Hill
- Dee Coast, including Heswall Dales, Thurstason Common and Royden Park
- Caldry Hill, including Stapledon Wood
- Thornton Hough



Map scale 1:140,000 @ A4

Key stages and tasks

2.11 The review followed five main stages, each focussing in at a more detailed level to develop the confirmed Local Landscape Designations and identifying their qualities.

Stage 1: Method development

2.12 This required discussion with Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council to understand the background to Local Landscape Designations and the desired outcomes of the study.

Stage 2: Develop criteria

2.13 The evaluation criteria are drawn from the source documents listed in Chapter 1, including the Scottish Natural Heritage guidance and Box 5.1 in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (third edition) **[See reference 7]**. They also draw on criteria developed by LUC in previous local designation studies which have been assessed as robust through the Local Plan examination process. They have been refined to reflect the particular landscape of Wirral. They are based on the following six factors:

- Local distinctiveness and sense of place;
- Landscape quality;
- Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects;
- Natural and cultural qualities.
- Recreation value
- Associations

2.14 The relationship with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (third edition) criteria is provided below.

Wirral Local Landscape Designation Review Criteria

- Local distinctiveness and sense of place
- Landscape quality
- Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects
- Natural and cultural qualities
- Recreation value
- Associations

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (third edition) Box 5.1 Criteria

- Rarity
- Representativeness
- Landscape quality
- Scenic quality
- Perceptual aspects
- Conservation Interests
- Recreation value
- Associations

2.15 The criteria, potential indicators and evidence are set out at the end of this chapter.

Stage 3: Desk review and identification of 'areas of search'

2.16 The desk review involved a review of the Landscape Character Areas against the criteria to identify broad 'areas of search' that 'stood out' as potentially distinctive or of high landscape quality in the context of the Borough as a whole. Any area currently within an Area of Special Landscape Value was automatically taken forward to the more detailed study and additional potential areas were identified. The results are presented in Chapter 3.

Stage 4: Full evaluation of candidate Local Landscape Designation areas and definition of boundaries

2.17 A bespoke field survey of candidate Local Landscape Designation areas was undertaken to consider the criteria in more detail and identify appropriate and robust boundaries.

2.18 Landscape is a continuum and the Local Landscape Designation boundaries are generally drawn to follow identifiable features on the ground such as field boundaries or roads that provide a 'best fit' and are often drawn to character area boundaries for ease of reference. As boundaries generally represent zones of transition, there will therefore rarely be a perceptible change in landscape character and quality along every boundary.

2.19 The outputs of the evaluation exercise with the recommended Local Landscape Designation areas are presented in Chapter 4 of this report.

Stage 5: Confirmation of new Local Landscape Designation areas

2.20 Taking account of comments received from the Steering Group, the areas recommended for local landscape designation were confirmed with Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.

Method for identifying Valued Landscapes – Wirral

Note: To go forward as a Local Landscape Designation ‘area of search’ the Landscape Character Area will not need to fulfil all criteria equally. The area for Local Landscape Designation may be all or part of a Landscape Character Area, and the evaluation should indicate any spatial differences.

Criterion 1: Local distinctiveness and sense of place

Definition:

- A landscape which is rare/unique or special in the local Wirral context.
- A landscape with a strong sense of place derived from its combinations of elements.
- A landscape which contains character/features or elements which are considered to be important, typical or rare examples.

Potential indicators:

- A coherent landscape character conferring a recognisable sense of place

- A distinct landform or topography forming a discrete or recognisable area
- A distinctive rare or representative land cover
- An area representative of a particular phase in landscape history/development

Evidence:

- Landscape Character Assessment
- Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation
- Field Survey

Criterion 2: Landscape quality (Intactness/Condition)

Definition:

- The physical state of the landscape, intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual natural and cultural elements, such as hedgerows.

Potential indicators:

- Functional aspects of the landscape, such as ecological integrity, visually coherent
- Presence of characteristic and valued features (as listed in the Landscape Character Assessment)
- Presence of well managed features in good condition
- Absence of incongruous features/detractors or not visually intrusive

Evidence:

- Landscape Character Assessment
- Presence of other designations indicative of condition
- Field survey

Criterion 3: Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

Definition:

- A landscape that appeals to the senses – primarily visual.
- Perceptual and aesthetic qualities such as sense of tranquillity and remoteness.

Potential indicators:

- Strong visual character, such as patterns/composition of vegetation/landform
- Memorable, important or distinctive views
- Qualities of expansiveness, openness, enclosure, seclusion
- Tranquillity or perceptions of tranquillity – peace, quietness, birdsong, dark skies, presence of water – streams, estuary, sea
- Uninterrupted tracts of land with few built features
- Relative lack of human influence/absence of incongruous features

Evidence:

- Landscape Character Assessment

- CPRE Night Blight/Dark Skies
- CPRE Tranquillity
- Field Survey

Criterion 4: Natural and cultural qualities

Note: Note that this criterion alone will not be enough in its own right for a Local Landscape Designation as likely to be covered under other designations in the Local Plan

Definition:

- Presence of natural and cultural attributes or particular associations that contribute to the value of the landscape.

Potential indicators:

- Visible expression of geology creating distinctive sense of place
- Presence of wildlife and/or habitats/species that make a particular contribution to sense of place or scenic quality
- Presence of settlements, buildings or other structures that make a particular contribution to sense of place or scenic quality
- Visible presence of historic landscape types or specific landscape elements or features that provide evidence of time depth or historic influence on the landscape

Evidence:

- Landscape Character Assessment
- Designations (national and local)
- Conservation Areas

Criterion 5: Recreation value

Definition:

- Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where the experience of the landscape is important.

Potential indicators:

- Evidence of recreational activity based on experience of the landscape (such as walking routes, access opportunities, activities such as birdwatching)
- Note: needs to be more than just 'popularity'

Evidence:

- Landscape Character Assessment
- Field Survey
- OS map data

Criterion 6: Associations

Definition:

- Landscapes associated with particular people such as artists or writers or events in history that contribute to their character.

Potential indicators:

- Associations with written descriptions, artistic representations, and associations of the landscape with people places or events

Evidence:

- Local research
- Landscape Character Assessment

Chapter 3

Identifying Local Landscape Designation areas of search

3.1 This chapter presents the results of an initial desk study evaluation of all the 16 Landscape Character Areas against the agreed landscape value criteria.

This provides a conclusion on whether a Landscape Character Area:

- Meets criteria for local landscape designation;
- Does not meet criteria for local landscape designation; or
- Partially meets criteria for local landscape designation, noting that 'partially meets' may either relate to a part of a geographic area or that the Landscape Character Area as a whole has some value meriting designation.

3.2 This 'first principles approach' is a starting point for identifying areas that are likely to be worthy of local landscape designation and to scope out areas where further detailed work is not required. It also highlights where more detailed field survey is required to investigate the landscape and define boundaries.

3.3 The results of this desk study assessment are set out below and the resulting 'Areas of Search' are illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Desk Study assessments of all 16 Landscape Character Areas

Landscape Character Area 1a North Wirral Coastal Edge

Table 3.1: Landscape Character Area 1a North Wirral Coastal Edge desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	No
Area of Landscape Character Area within Areas of Special Landscape Value	0%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Fully meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Partially meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Partially meets
Recreation value	Fully meets
Associations	Partially meets
Local Landscape Designation area of search	Partially meets

Landscape Character Area 1a North Wirral Coastal Edge notes

- The North Wirral Coast is characterised by shoreside settlements stretching west to east between Hoylake and New Brighton and the naturalistic qualities of the remaining pockets of undeveloped foreshore are reduced by large-scale engineered sea defences and the visual intrusion of the surrounding settlements. The Royal Liverpool Golf Course at the mouth of the Dee Estuary retains a naturalistic foreshore with internationally designated maritime habitats.

- The pockets of undeveloped coastal landscape have expansive views over the open sea of Liverpool Bay to the north and Dee Estuary to the west characterised by large skies and changing sea moods, although offshore windfarms and industrial development at Liverpool Docks detract from the scenic qualities of these views. The landscape quality of these areas often is reduced by the presence of detracting features including glass houses and pockets of fragmented or underused land around Leasowe, urban expansion and development within golf courses
- Buildings such as the Leasowe Lighthouse reflect the area's heritage as a navigable passage to the Dee and Mersey Estuaries and contribute to the sense of place. Linear coastal parks such as Leasowe Common and footpaths provide access to the foreshore and beaches.

Landscape Character Area 1b Dee Estuarine Edge

Table 3.2: Landscape Character Area 1b Dee Estuarine Edge desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	Yes
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	80%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Fully meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Fully meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Fully meets
Recreation value	Fully meets
Associations	Does not meet
Local Landscape Designation area of search	Yes

Landscape Character Area 1b Dee Estuarine Edge notes

- Distinctive coastal landscape with large skies, changing light and expansive views over large expanses of saltmarsh, mudflats and open water towards the Welsh hills in the west. Estuarine-influenced habitats include intertidal mudflats and sandflat and cliffs often internationally designated. Wirral Country Park and the Wirral Way offer recreational enjoyment of the coastline.
- Some detracting built features, such as sewage works, caravan parks and ribbon development extending from the urban edge. Some areas are more influenced by the proximity of the settlement edge and fragmented land uses including horse pasture.

Landscape Character Area 1c Eastham Estuarine Edge

Table 3.3: Landscape Character Area 1c Eastham Estuarine Edge desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	No
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	0%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Partially meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Partially meets
Recreation value	Fully meets
Associations	Fully meets
Local Landscape Designation area of search	No

Landscape Character Area 1c Eastham Estuarine Edge notes

- A well wooded parkland and sports fields which are important for local recreation. The area has strong cultural associations due to its former use as a pleasure garden with ferry links to Liverpool. Coastal features including sandstone cliffs which drop to the Mersey and inter-tidal habitats.
- A small undeveloped area surrounded by extensive urban and industrial development along the Wirral bank of the Mersey. Channelled views across the estuary to Liverpool and oil refineries at Ellesmere Port.

Landscape Character Area 2a The Birket River Floodplain

Table 3.4: Landscape Character Area 2a The Birket River Floodplain desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	No
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	0%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Does not meet
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Partially meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Partially meets
Recreation value	Fully meets
Associations	Does not meet
Local Landscape Designation area of search	No

Landscape Character Area 2a The Birket River Floodplain notes

- A relatively coherent farmland landscape with areas of natural qualities due to the presence of inland wetland and grassland habitats important for birds. Extensive historic field patterns with a geometric pattern of streams and drainage ditches contribute to the cultural qualities of the landscape.
- However, visually intrusive industrial and commercial development on the urban edge, landfill and mineral operations, transport infrastructure and overhead powerlines detract from the scenic qualities of the landscape. Hedgerow fragmentation and increasing conversion and subdivision of fields for horse paddocks result in a landscape in poor condition and weaken landscape character.

Landscape Character Area 2b The Fender River Floodplain

Table 3.5: Landscape Character Area 2b The Fender River Floodplain desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	No
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	0%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Does not meet
Landscape quality	Does not meet
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Partially meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Partially meets
Recreation value	Partially meets
Associations	Does not meet
Local Landscape Designation area of search	No

Landscape Character Area 2b The Fender River Floodplain notes

- The landscape lacks a coherent or distinctive character due to the influence of the M53 which runs through the area and the proximity of the adjacent urban conurbation. Land uses including recreational sports fields and horse pasture or unmanaged land with fragmented or absent field boundaries resulting in a neglected appearance. Detracting features include transport links, sewage works and a large retail park.

Landscape Character Area 3a Bidston Sandstone Hills

Table 3.6: Landscape Character Area 3a Bidston Sandstone Hills desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	Yes
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	97%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Fully meets
Landscape quality	Fully meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Fully meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Fully meets
Recreation value	Fully meets
Associations	Fully meets
Local Landscape Designation area of search	Yes

Landscape Character Area 3a Bidston Sandstone Hills notes

- Locally distinctive wooded ridge with a strong sense of 'remoteness' despite its location within the Birkenhead urban area. The heathland and woodland provide a strong sense of place and are important habitats. Historic landmark buildings including the Bidston Windmill, Observatory and Lighthouse provide a link to the maritime and industrial history of Wirral. As a public park, the area is valued for its recreational activity and its panoramic views.
- Meets criteria but is a small isolated area of remaining undeveloped land.

Landscape Character Area 3b Thurstaston and Greasby Sandstone Hills

Table 3.7: Landscape Character Area 3b Thurstaston and Greasby Sandstone Hills desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	Yes
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	39%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Fully meets
Landscape quality	Fully meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Fully meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Fully meets
Recreation value	Fully meets
Associations	Partially meets
Local Landscape Designation area of search	Yes

Landscape Character Area 3b Thurstaston and Greasby Sandstone Hills notes

- Distinctive wooded hills forming part of the sandstone ridge running across Wirral. The expansive views from the ridgeline provide a sense of remoteness. The woodland and heathland contribute to the strong sense of place and are important habitats, much nationally designated. The historic parkland at Royden Park and open access land at Caldy Hill and Thurstaston Common are well managed and provide recreational value.
- Undulating farmland to the north and east of Royden Park although well maintained and with little evidence of loss of features, lacks the distinctive character and scenic qualities of the ridgeline and are more influenced by their proximity to the settlement edge of Newton, Greasby and Irby.

Landscape Character Area 3c Irby and Pensby Sandstone Hills

Table 3.8: Landscape Character Area 3c Irby and Pensby Sandstone Hills desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	Yes
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	44%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Partially meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Fully meets
Recreation value	Partially meets
Associations	Partially meets
Local Landscape Designation area of search	Partially meets

Landscape Character Area 3c Irby and Pensby Sandstone Hills notes

- Distinctive sandstone ridgeline which falls steeply to the Dee Estuary allowing expansive views over the Dee to the Welsh Hills. Mature woodland along watercourses and pastoral farmland with intact hedgerows add to the scenic qualities of the landscape. The historic village of Thurstaston and rural roads with sandstone walls add to the cultural qualities of the area.
- Flatter farmland to the east of the A540 Telegraph Road lacks the more scenic qualities of the farmland to the west, has more fragmented hedgerows which weaken landscape character and is more influenced by its proximity to the settlement edge of Irby, Pensby and Heswall which surround it on three sides.

Landscape Character Area 3d Heswall Dales Sandstone Hills

Table 3.9: Landscape Character Area 3d Heswall Dales Sandstone Hills desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	Yes
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	98%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Fully meets
Landscape quality	Fully meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Fully meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Fully meets
Recreation value	Fully meets
Associations	Partially meets
Local Landscape Designation area of search	Yes

Landscape Character Area 3d Heswall Dales Sandstone Hills notes

- Locally distinctive wooded ridge with a strong sense of 'remoteness' despite its location within the Heswall urban area. The heathland and woodland provide a strong sense of place and are important habitats. As open access land the area is valued for its recreational activity and its panoramic views over the Dee Estuary.
- Small area of remaining undeveloped land, although has continuity with sandstone ridge to the north.

Landscape Character Area 4a Landican and Thingwall Lowland Farmland and Estates

Table 3.10: Landscape Character Area 4a Landican and Thingwall Lowland Farmland and Estates desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	No
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	0%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Partially meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Partially meets
Recreation value	Partially meets
Associations	Does not meet
Local Landscape Designation area of search	No

Landscape Character Area 4a Landican and Thingwall Lowland Farmland and Estates notes

- Undulating mixed farmland with scattered woodland interspersed with recreational parkland. Valued locally for recreation value and natural attributes that contribute to the sense of place, such as Arrowe Park and Barnston Dale, but overall does not meet criteria due to the visual intrusion of surrounding urban settlements, the M53 and other transport infrastructure and overhead power lines. Field amalgamation as well as hedgerow fragmentation and urban edge land uses have created a slightly neglected appearance, weakening landscape character locally.

Landscape Character Area 4b Thornton Hough Lowland Farmland and Estates

**Table 3.11: Landscape Character Area 4b Thornton Hough
Lowland Farmland and Estates desk study assessment results**

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	Yes
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	38%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Fully meets
Landscape quality	Fully meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Fully meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Fully meets
Recreation value	Partially meets
Associations	Partially meets
Local Landscape Designation area of search	Yes

Landscape Character Area 4b Thornton Hough Lowland Farmland and Estates notes

- An intact agricultural landscape with a strong sense of place deriving from its distinctive estate character and association with Thornton Manor estate. The strong rural character, with historic sandstone villages and farmsteads, adds to the scenic qualities. The area around Thornton Hough is particularly well maintained and surrounded by woodland on higher ground which provides enclosure, separating it from the M53 and urban conurbation to the east.
- Areas along the Landscape Character Area boundaries only partially meets criteria; to the west the landscape is influenced by urban development on the edge of Heswall, transport infrastructure and an overhead powerline, while to the north and east the landscape is influenced by the M53 and development along the motorway.

Landscape Character Area 4c Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Lowland Farmland and Estates

Table 3.12: Landscape Character Area 4c Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Lowland Farmland and Estates desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	Yes
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	6%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Partially meets

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Natural and cultural qualities	Fully meets
Recreation value	Partially meets
Associations	Partially meets
Local Landscape Designation area of search	Partially meets

Landscape Character Area 4c Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Lowland Farmland and Estates notes

- The location of this Landscape Character Area, sandwiched between the Birkenhead conurbation and the M53 and the intrusion of development along the motorway, has led to fragmentation of land uses and loss of scenic qualities. As a result, the landscape only partially meets the criteria. The south east of the Landscape Character Area, adjacent to the Mersey Estuary, is also heavily influenced by industrial development and is not considered to meet the criteria.
- However, woodland on higher ground, including the internationally designated Dibbinsdale Site of Special Scientific Interest, reduces the influence of the adjacent conurbation resulting in pockets of tranquillity particularly around the historic village of Storeton, where mixed farmland and areas of parkland character, including distinctive features such as the avenue of trees along the Lever Causeway, provide a sense of place and time-depth.

Landscape Character Area 4d Raby Lowland Farmland and Estates

Table 3.13: Landscape Character Area 4d Raby Lowland Farmland and Estates desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	Yes
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	4%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Fully meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Fully meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Partially meets
Recreation value	Partially meets
Associations	Partially meets
Local Landscape Designation area of search	Partially meets

Landscape Character Area 4d Raby Lowland Farmland and Estates notes

- Coherent and tranquil rural farmland with intact historic field pattern and discernible estate character. The historic character of the small village of Raby and sparse settlement pattern of scattered sandstone farmhouses adds to the scenic qualities of the area. There is a strong sense of separation from larger settlements to the east and west.
- Perceptual qualities of the landscape on the edge of the Landscape Character Area to the east are disrupted by the M53 and to the south by settlements at Willaston and Neston.

Landscape Character Area 5a North Wirral Foreshore and Coastal Waters

**Table 3.14: Landscape Character Area 5a North Wirral
Foreshore and Coastal Waters desk study assessment results**

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	Yes
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	23%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Partially meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Fully meets
Recreation value	Fully meets
Associations	Partially meets
Local Landscape Designation area of search	Partially meets

Landscape Character Area 5a North Wirral Foreshore and Coastal Waters notes

- Coherent seascape with expansive views over Liverpool Bay. The area's habitats are internationally recognised through designation. Sandy beaches fronting coastal towns offer recreational value.
- Engineered seawalls, and a developed coastline reduce the sense of remoteness and dark skies, although this is less apparent in the west and at the mouth of the Dee Estuary. Offshore windfarms and the busy shipping lanes out to sea are also a detracting feature.
- The area at the mouth of the Dee Estuary has stronger seascape qualities due to the undeveloped shoreline and offshore features including the Hilbre Islands and Red Rocks.

Landscape Character Area 6a Dee Estuary

Table 3.15: Landscape Character Area 6a Dee Estuary desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	Yes
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	99%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Fully meets
Landscape quality	Fully meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Fully meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Fully meets
Recreation value	Partially meets
Associations	Fully meets
Local Landscape Designation area of search	Yes

Landscape Character Area 6a Dee Estuary notes

- Coherent seascape with strong sense of place and a natural coastline with an expanse of saltmarsh, mudflats and open water. These intertidal habitats are recognised through international designation, particularly for their importance for wading and migrating birds. The lack of human influence results in strong perceptual qualities of remoteness and tranquillity.

Landscape Character Area 6b Mersey Estuary

Table 3.16: Landscape Character Area 6b Mersey Estuary desk study assessment results

Criteria for identifying Areas of Search	Results
Within Area of Special Landscape Value designation	No
Area of Landscape Character Area within Area of Special Landscape Value	0%
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Partially meets
Landscape quality	Partially meets
Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Partially meets
Natural and cultural qualities	Partially meets
Recreation value	Partially meets
Associations	Partially meets
Local Landscape Designation area of search	No

Landscape Character Area 6b Mersey Estuary notes

- Seascape with expansive vistas up and down the Mersey and natural qualities due to the internationally important intertidal habitats.
- However, the character of the Mersey is heavily influenced by urban development on both shores, including industrial harbour facilities. Except for short stretches, the shoreline is constrained by seawalls reducing its scenic qualities. Busy industrial areas and shipping routes also influence the character of the seascape.

Results of desk assessment

3.4 The desk assessment indicates the following:

- Landscape Character Areas which are part of an existing Area of Special Landscape Value generally meet the Local Landscape Designation criteria; and
- Requirements for some boundary adjustments including some extensions and deletions.

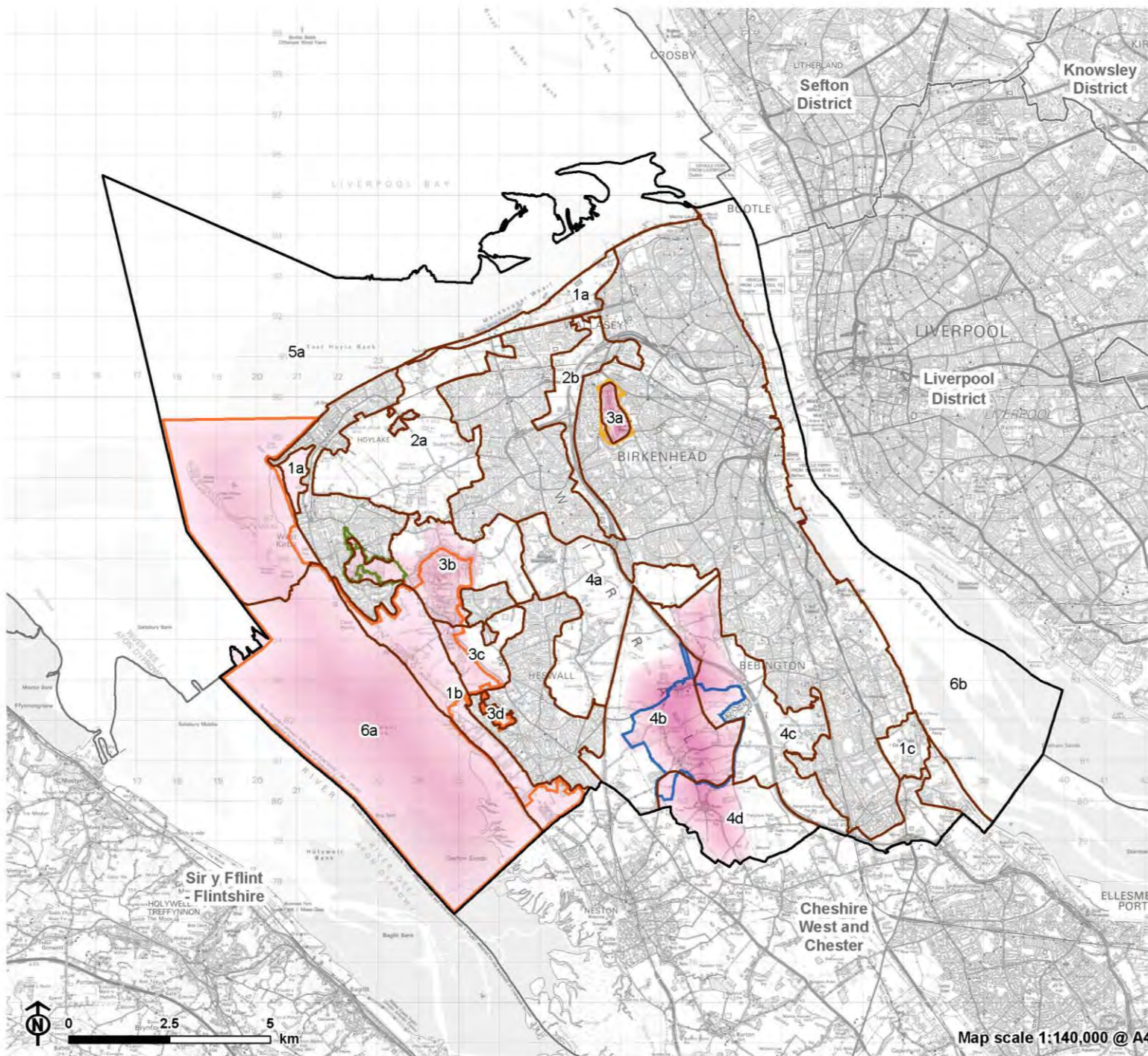
Local Landscape Designation Areas of Search

3.5 The Areas of Search for the Candidate Local Landscape Designations are indicated on Figure 3.1 and consist of:

- Dee Estuary (Landscape Character Area 1a/1b/5a/6a)
- Central Wirral Sandstone Hills (Landscape Character Area 3a/3b/3c/3d)
- Thornton Hough Estates (Landscape Character Area 4b/4c/4d)

3.6 These areas formed the basis for more detailed field survey and evaluation. The results are presented in the following sections of this report.

Figure 3.1: Areas of Search



- Wirral boundary
- Adjacent Local Authority boundary
- Areas of search
- Landscape Character Area
 - 1a: North Wirral Coastal Edge
 - 1b: Dee Estuarine Edge
 - 1c: Eastham Estuarine Edge
 - 2a: The Birket River Floodplain
 - 2b: The Fender River Floodplain
 - 3a: Bidston Sandstone Hills
 - 3b: Thurstaston and Greasby Sandstone Hills
 - 3c: Irby and Pensby Sandstone Hills
 - 3d: Heswall Dales Sandstone Hills
 - 4a: Landican and Thingwall Lowland Farmland
 - 4b: Thornton Hough Lowland Farmland and Estates
 - 4c: Clatterbrook and Dibben Valley Lowland
 - 4d: Raby Lowland Farmland and Estates
 - 5a: North Wirral Foreshore and Coastal Waters
 - 6a: Dee Estuary
 - 6b: Mersey Estuary

Existing Area of Special Landscape Value

- Bidston Hill
- Dee Coast, including Heswall Dales, Thurstaston Common and Royden Park
- Caldy Hill, including Stapledon Wood
- Thornton Hough

Chapter 4

Local Landscape Designation Evaluation and Recommendations

4.1 The following sections present the results of the evaluation for the three candidate Local Landscape Designations, illustrated in conjunction with the existing Areas of Special Landscape Value on Figure 4.1 and in Figure 4.2 as the recommended candidate Local Landscape Designations.

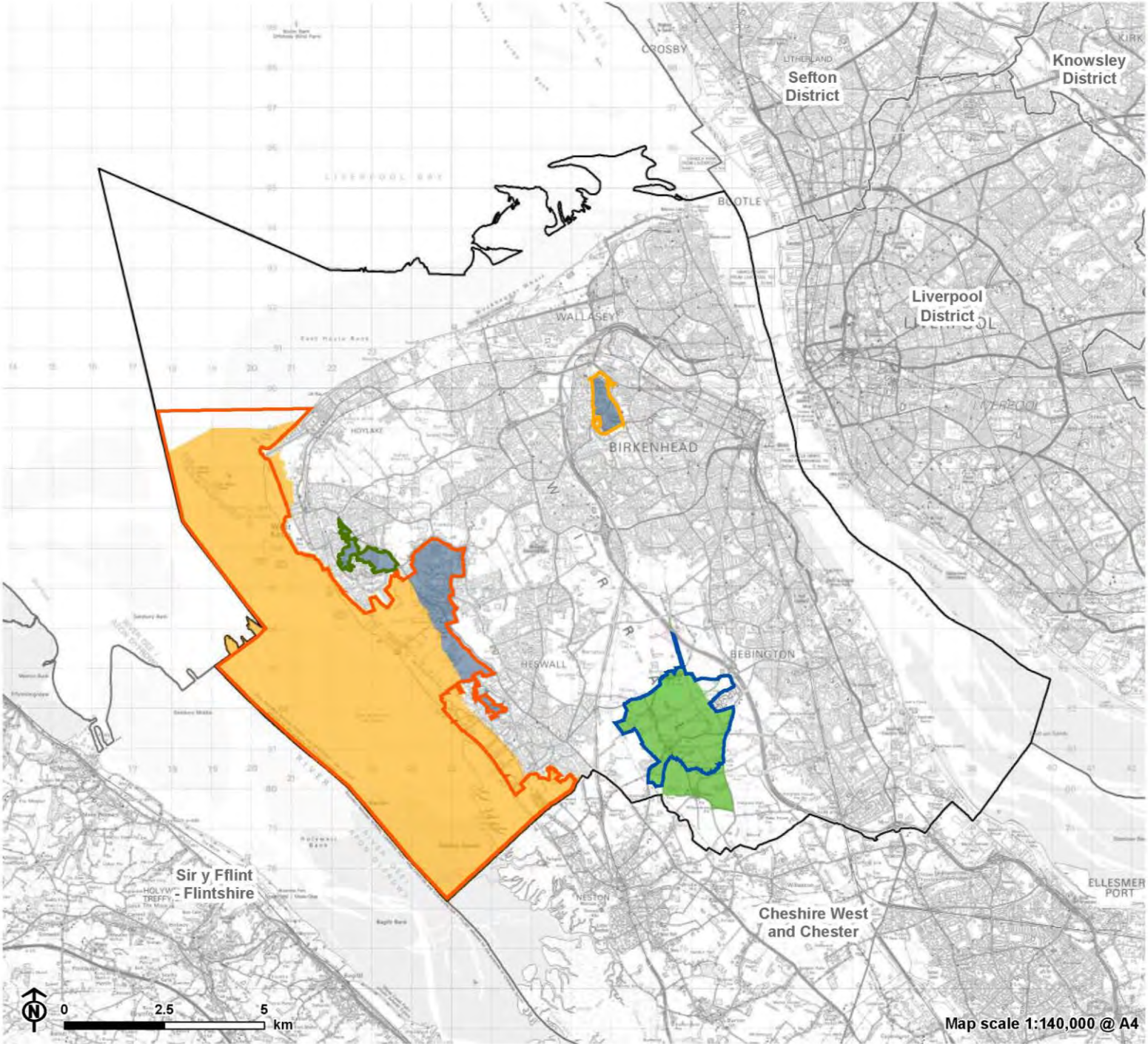
4.2 Each Local Landscape Designation evaluation contains:

- Summary and recommendations;
- Evaluation against the criteria;
- A photo sheet illustrating representative character; and
- Mapping.

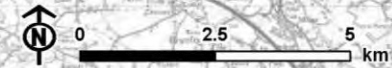
A note on boundaries

4.3 Landscape is a continuum and all boundaries will generally represent zones of transition. There will rarely be a sharp change in identified landscape qualities either side of a Local Landscape Designation boundary. For ease, boundaries are frequently drawn along best fit physical features including lanes and field boundaries and therefore may include areas of lesser or greater quality or areas of different character. In some cases, boundaries have been extended where an area for example adjoins an urban edge and would leave a small vulnerable gap. Likewise, there may be some areas within a Local Landscape Designation encapsulated by the boundary that do not fully meet the criteria but are part of a wider 'whole'.

Figure 4.1: Area of Special Landscape Value and Candidate Local Landscape Designations



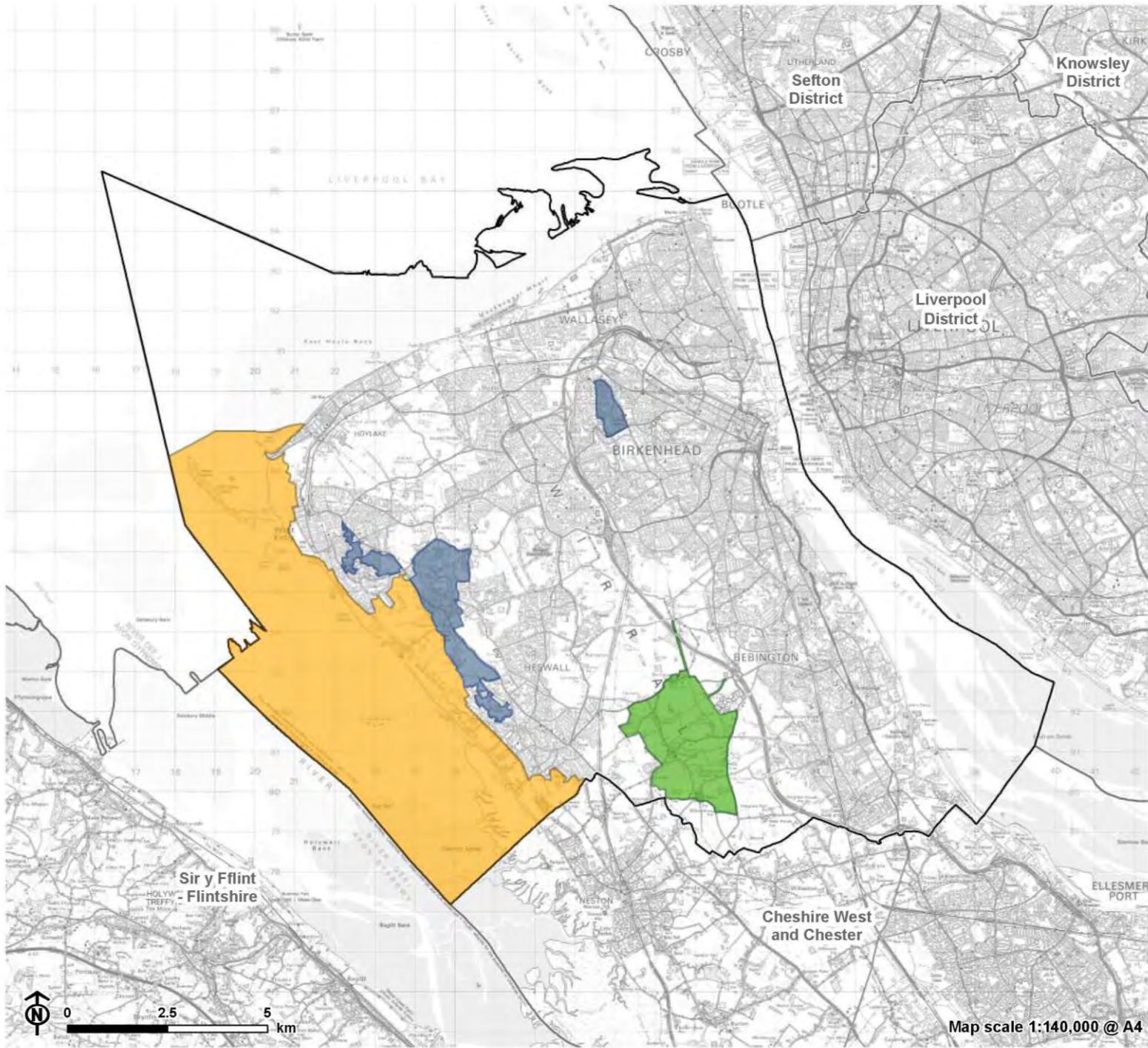
- Wirral boundary
- Adjacent Local Authority
- Proposed Local Landscape Designation**
 - Central Wirral Sandstone
 - Hills Dee Estuary
 - Thornton Hough Estates
- Existing Area of Special Landscape Value**
 - Bidston Hill
 - Dee Coast, including Heswall Dales, Thurstason Common and Royden Park
 - Caldy Hill, including stapledon Wood
 - Thornton Hough



Map scale 1:140,000 @ A4



Figure 4.2: Candidate Local Landscape Designations



-  Wirral boundary
-  Adjacent Local Authority boundary
- Proposed Local Landscape Designation**
-  Central Wirral Sandstone
-  Hills Dee Estuary
-  Thornton Hough Estates



A scenic landscape featuring a rocky path, green vegetation, and trees under a blue sky. The path is made of dark, flat rocks and winds through a lush area with tall grasses, yellow flowers, and purple heather. In the background, there are large trees, including a prominent one with bare branches on the left. The sky is clear and blue.

Central Wirral Sandstone Hills

Candidate Local Landscape Designation

Central Wirral Sandstone Hills Candidate Local Landscape Designation

Summary Information

Relationship to existing local landscape designation

The Wirral sandstone hills were designated as separate Areas of Special Landscape Value:

- Thurstaston Common, Heswall Dales and Royden Park were designated as part of the Dee Coast Area of Special Landscape Value, in the Merseyside Structure Plan (1980). This was originally identified as a heritage landscape.
- Caldy Hill, including Stapledon Wood Area of Special Landscape Value, was designated in the Merseyside Structure Plan (1980).
- Bidston Hill Area of Special Landscape Value was designated in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (2000).

Extent of area

The candidate Local Landscape Designation covers the sandstone hills and associated woodland between Caldy and Thurstaston in the west and extends to Heswall Dales in the south. It also covers Bidston Hill in the east. The sandstone ridges with exposed sandstone pavements and important woodland and heathland habitats are very distinctive and provide extensive views to the surrounding estuaries from higher elevations.

Landscape character context (% coverage by the existing Area of Special Landscape Value)

- 3a Bidston Sandstone Hills (97%)
- 3b Thurstaston and Greasby Sandstone Hills (39%)
- 3c Irby and Pensby Sandstone Hills (44%)
- 3d Heswall Dales Sandstone Hills (98%)

Evaluation of Area of Search

Desk review

Landscape Character Area 3a

Take forward: Yes

Notes:

- Bidston Hill is a locally distinctive wooded sandstone ridge which fully meets criteria despite its location within the Birkenhead urban area. However, this is a very small isolated area.

Landscape Character Area 3b

Take forward: Yes

Notes:

- Most of the Landscape Character Area is a distinctive area of wooded sandstone hills which fully meets the criteria.

- Review the current Area of Special Landscape Value boundaries around Royden Park.
- Field survey is required to assess the undulating farmland north and east of the park which lack the distinctive character and scenic qualities of the ridgeline and are more influenced by surrounding settlement.

Landscape Character Area 3c

Take forward: Part

Notes:

- Undulating farmland to the east of the Landscape Character Area is more influenced by the proximity of the surrounding settlement and has lower landscape quality overall meaning it does not meet the criteria for inclusion in the Local Landscape Designation.
- Part of the Landscape Character Area to the west of the A540 Telegraph Road fully meets the criteria due to the scenic qualities and strong rural character of the wooded farmland with its expansive views over the estuary.
- Focus review on current eastern boundary of the Area of Special Landscape Value - the area west of Telegraph Road and around Thurstaston.

Landscape Character Area 3d

Take forward: Yes

Notes:

- Locally distinctive wooded landscape which meets criteria despite its location within the urban area. Although a small area it has continuity with the sandstone ridge to the north.

Boundary commentary

See Figures 4.3 and 4.4

The proposed Local Landscape Designation boundaries have been defined to encompass the sandstone ridge which is characterised by woodland and heathland and distinctive interconnecting farmland.

The change in the current boundaries of The Dee Coast including Heswall Dales, Thurstaston Common and Royden Park Area of Special Landscape Value reflects the division of this area into the Central Wirral Sandstone Hills Local Landscape Designation and Dee Estuary Local Landscape Designation:

- Retain the northern boundaries around Royden Park which are formed by the B5140 Montgomery Hill, Hillbark Road and Mill Hill Road. These roads, which follow the historic park boundary and feature gated entrances and lodges, provide a strong defensible boundary feature. Farmland to the north of the Park towards the historic village of Frankby was assessed as part of the Area of Search but Frankby Cemetery and Greasby Brook valley are of lower landscape quality (with fragmented hedgerows and fields divided into horse pasture) and influenced by the proximity of Greasby.
- Retain the eastern boundary formed by Mill Hill Road and the settlement edge of Irby and its extension along A540 Telegraph Road. This includes heathland and woodland at Irby Hill and Thurstaston Common but excludes farmland of lower quality to the east which is impacted by its enclosure by surrounding settlements including Greasby, Irby and Pensby.
- The new western boundary aligns closer to the Irby and Pensby Sandstone Hills Landscape Character Area boundary and excludes the lower coastal area to the west of Thurstaston which is now proposed as part of the Dee Estuary Local Landscape Designation. The boundary follows the settlement edge of Caldby and A540 Telegraph Road, then a private road to the west of Dawpool Cottages, the settlement edge of

Thurstaston village and a farm track extending south from Thurstaston Hall Farm. The boundary then follows the western edge of The Dungeon woodland before meeting the settlement edge of Heswall (Fig 5a: point 1).

Caldy Hill and Stapledon Wood:

- Retain the existing boundaries of the Area of Special Landscape Value at Cald Hill which follow the settlement edge and extend to the junction of the A540 Column Road and B5140 Cald Road in the east. Although the open farmland along the roadside are at a lower elevation than the surrounding woodland, they provide an important connection between Cald Hill and Thurstaston Common.

Heswall Dales:

- Retain the existing boundaries of the Area of Special Landscape Value at Heswall which follow the settlement edge.

Bidston Hill:

- The existing northern boundary of the Area of Special Landscape Value at Bidston Hill extends to the settlement edge on the A553 Hoylake Road. The woodland between Hoylake Road and the B5151 Boundary Road is recommended for exclusion due to its lower elevation and lower landscape quality. This also aligns the Local Landscape Designation boundary more closely to the Bidston Sandstone Hills Landscape Character Area and Bidston Hill Local Wildlife Site/ Site of Biological Importance boundaries (Figure 4.4: point 2).
- Changes to the south-west boundary are recommended to exclude areas now within the urban area (Figure 4.4: point 3).

Recommendations

- Retain the existing Area of Special Landscape Value as a Local Landscape Designation but split the area to more closely reflect the Landscape Character Type/Landscape Character Area boundaries. The sandstone ridges and interconnecting farmland will form part of this Central Wirral Sandstone Hills Local Landscape Designation while the coastal areas to the west of Thurstaston will form part of the candidate Dee Estuary Local Landscape Designation.
- Retain existing boundaries which are robust and defensible, excluding areas now within urban settlements.
- Rename as Central Wirral Sandstone Hills Local Landscape Designation to match the naming of the Landscape Character Type in the Wirral Landscape Character Assessment.
- The aim should be to encourage integrated management within this area of heathland and woodland along the sandstone ridge. There is an opportunity to enhance the boundaries along the urban edges to maintain the distinction between rural landscape and urban areas. Enhance the interface with the A540 Telegraph Road where the condition of the more open farmland could be improved. Improve connections between Thurstaston Common and Heswall Dales and Thurstaston Common and Caldys Hill. The long open views across the surrounding countryside and across the Dee Estuary are particularly characteristic from this elevated area and any change or development that would block these views should be avoided.

Central Wirral Sandstone Hills Full Evaluation

Local distinctiveness and sense of place

The prominent sandstone ridgelines with steep-sided wooded hills and heathland rising out of the surrounding undulating farmland provide a coherent landscape character and a strong sense of place. The sandstone hills are a highly distinctive and unique landscape within Wirral, forming discrete recognisable areas, with their pattern of exposed sandstone pavements, woodland and heathland habitats. As high points within Wirral they provide a recognisable feature and backdrop to many parts of the Borough as they rise out of the surrounding urban areas. The ridges are interspersed with wooded farmland and historic parkland at Royden Park. Due to its lower elevation, the farmland often forms part of the wider view from more elevated areas and provides continuity to the wooded landscape.

Landscape quality

The sandstone hills of the Local Landscape Designation provide a visually coherent backdrop to many areas in Wirral, with woodland, heathland and grassland habitats providing ecological integrity. The landscape is generally well managed by the local authority and National Trust.

There are very few detracting features, although some heathland habitats, particularly at Bidston Hill and Heswall Dales, require further management where it is succeeding to birch and ultimately oak woodland, and maturing woodland is starting to impact on expansive views from the ridgelines. The Caldy RFC sportsground is visually conspicuous from Thurstaston Common, however the majority of other development is screened by woodland.

Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

The ridgelines form a distinctive skyline in views from adjacent areas. Elevated viewpoints provide spectacular views over the surrounding farmland across Wirral to Liverpool and the Pennine Hills in the east and west to the Dee Estuary and across to North Wales. Contrast is provided in areas of lower elevation where woodland provides a sense of enclosure.

The pattern of rolling heath and woodland has a strong visual character and provides a sense of separation from the surrounding settlement and a remote naturalistic character, particularly along the windblown ridgelines.

Proximity to urban areas results in lower tranquillity and light pollution in some parts.

Natural and cultural qualities

The Local Landscape Designation is the most wooded area within Wirral, and the presence of priority habitat deciduous woodland and lowland heathland in open areas makes a particular contribution to the sense of place. Thurstaston Common and Heswall Dales are both nationally designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest due to their lowland heath habitats, containing both wet and dry heath. Caldby Hill, Storeton Wood, Royden Park and Bidston Hill are locally designated as Local Wildlife Site/Site of Biological Importance. Pine woods are a characteristic feature. Distinctive sandstone outcrops are designated as Local Geological Sites at Caldby Hill, Thurstaston Common and Bidston Hill.

Rock carvings dating from c1000 AD are of possible Norse-Irish origin and provide time-depth at Bidston Hill. There are three landmark historic buildings on Bidston Hill: Grade II listed Bidston Lighthouse was built in 1873 to ensure ships avoided sandbanks in the channel on their approach to Liverpool; Grade II listed Bidston Observatory was built in 1866 to rate mariners' chronometers and later to analyse tidal flows; and Bidston Windmill was built in the late 18th century and is Grade II* listed. Bidston Village Conservation Area extends into the north of the area and includes the Grade II* Bidston Hall.

Chapter 4 Central Wirral Sandstone Hills Candidate Local Landscape Designation

The attractive village of Thurstaston has a strong vernacular of brick and red sandstone with characteristic sandstone boundary walls. St Bartholomew's church and Thurstaston Hall are both Grade II* listed buildings key to the identity of the historic core of the village. The cultural qualities of the village are recognised through its designation as a Conservation Area and the landscape forms an important part of its setting.

Royden Park contains three listed buildings including the Grade II* Hill Bark, and a number of Victorian buildings and structures including the coach house and walled garden.

Recreation value

The area is valued for recreation and is crossed by a number of footpaths and bridleways which provide links between the open access land at Thurstaston Common, Caldry Hill and Heswall Dales, much of which is managed by the National Trust. Thurstaston Common and Heswall Dales Local Nature Reserves add to the recreational value of the area. The Country Park at Royden Park provides formal and informal recreation opportunities, including a model railway and mere for fishing.

Bidston Hill is popular for recreation with a series of footpaths and a Heritage Trail. The lighthouse, observatory and windmill open regularly for public visits, and there is a small urban farm which provides educational and recreational facilities for local communities. The Rhododendron Gardens is an area of formal open space on the lower slopes of Bidston Hill, although this has been neglected in recent years.

Associations

The historic landmark buildings on Bidston Hill provide a link to the maritime and industrial history of Wirral. Bidston Hill was a popular subject with the Liverpool Pre-Raphaelites who valued it for the humble, rural and down-to-earth character of the landscape. William Davis, a Dublin-born artist who settled in Liverpool, painted a series of paintings of Bidston Hill from the 1840s-1860s.

Chapter 4 Central Wirral Sandstone Hills Candidate Local Landscape Designation

Thomas Henry Ismay, co-founder and chairman of the White Star Shipping Lane, which owned the Titanic, retired to Thurstaston and is buried in St Bartholomew's church. Ismay wanted an uninterrupted view of the Dee Estuary and Welsh Hills and therefore had the main Hoylake to Chester Road, now Telegraph Road, diverted, creating the Thurstaston cutting.

Thurstaston Common was acquired by the National Trust in 1916 in memory of those who died in the First World War. A memorial stone was erected in 2016 to mark the centenary of the donation.

Representative photos of the landscape

Sandstone pavement with heathland at Bidstone Hill



Heathland with views across Dee Estuary to Wales from Heswall Dales



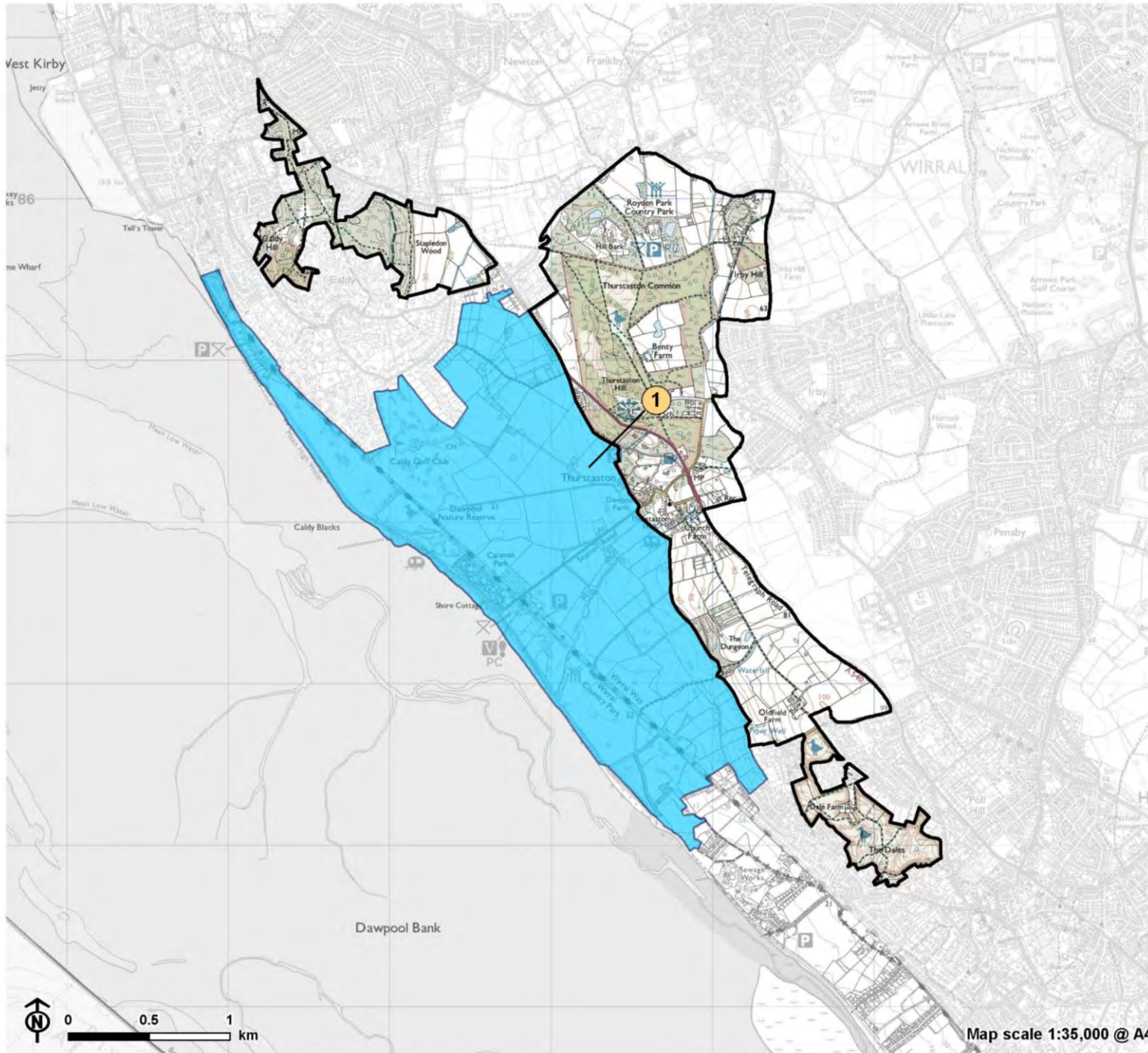
Sandstone pavement at Thurstaton Common, with Caldy Hill in the background



Pine woodland at Royden Park with red sandstone boundary walls



Figure 4.3: Central Wirral Sandstone Hills Candidate Local Landscape Designation (West)



Wirral boundary

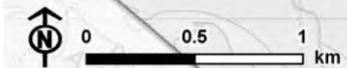
Candidate Local Landscape Designation

Central Wirral Sandstone Hills

Changes to Area of Special Landscape Value

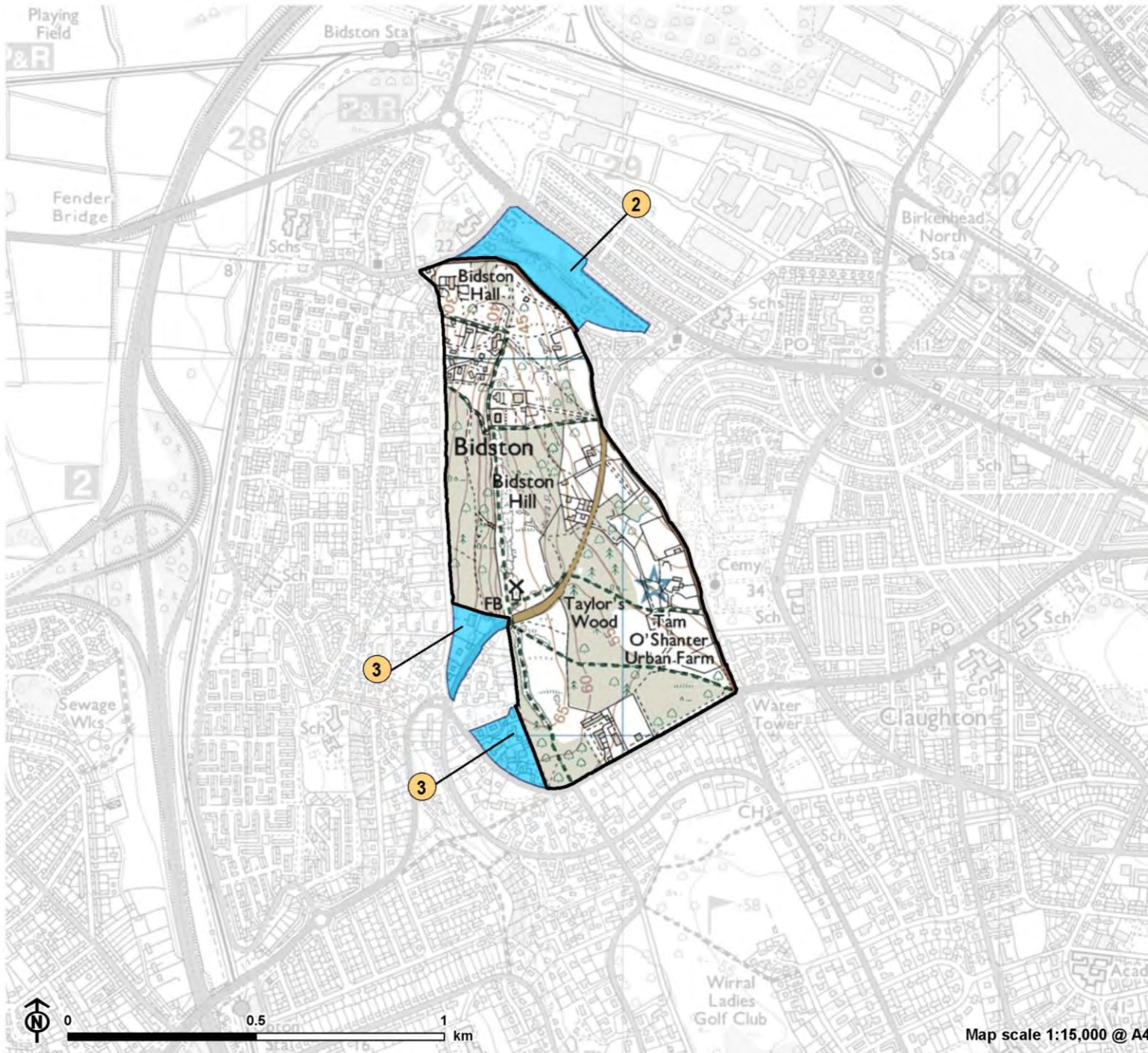
Remove

Boundary drawn to exclude the lower coastal farmland (proposed as part of the candidate Dee Estuary LLD)



Map scale 1:35,000 @ A4

**Figure 4.4: Sandstone Hills
Candidate Local Landscape
Designation (East)**



Wirral boundary

Candidate Local Landscape Designation

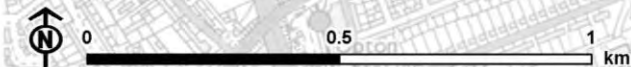
Central Wirral Sandstone Hills

Changes to Area of Special Landscape Value

Remove

2 Exclude woodland north of Boundary Road to better match the LCA and LWS/SBI boundaries

3 Exclude area now within the urban area



Map scale 1:15,000 @ A4

Dee Estuary
Candidate Local Landscape
Designation



Dee Estuary Candidate Local Landscape Designation

Summary Information

Relationship to existing local landscape designation

- The Dee Estuary and a small area of coastal landscape south of Gayton (between Cottage Lane and the Borough boundary) was designated as part of the Dee Estuary Area of Special Landscape Value in the Merseyside Structure Plan in 1980 and was identified as a heritage landscape.
- The south of the Dee Coast Area of Special Landscape Value is contiguous with the northern part of the Cheshire West and Chester Dee Coastal Area of Special County Value, designated in 2017).

Extent of area

The candidate Local Landscape Designation covers the Dee Estuary and the undeveloped areas of the Wirral coast between the mouth of the Estuary and the Borough boundary. It extends in the north to The King's Gap, where there is a strong visual connection across Red Rocks, Hilbre Islands and the Dee. The area represents the gradual transition from sloping farmland to intertidal coastal flats and the open water of the Dee.

Landscape character context (% coverage by the existing Area of Special Landscape Value)

- 1a North Wirral Coastal Edge (0%)
- 1b Dee Estuarine Edge (80%)
- 5a North Wirral Foreshore and Coastal Waters (23%)
- 6a Dee Estuary (99%)

Evaluation of Area of Search

Desk review

Landscape Character Area 1a

Take forward: Part

Notes:

- Much of the North Wirral Coastal Edge Landscape Character Area is characterised by shoreline settlements and the landscape quality of the remaining undeveloped land is reduced by the presence of development and large-scale engineered sea defences which reduce the naturalistic qualities of the area.
- Focus review on the undeveloped shoreline at the mouth of Dee Estuary at the Royal Liverpool Golf Course and its potential inclusion in the Local Landscape Designation.

Landscape Character Area 1b

Take forward: Yes

Notes:

- Distinctive landscape with a strong relationship with the Dee Estuary which transitions from sloping farmland to a flat inter-tidal coastal strip. Some detracting built features, such as sewage works, caravan parks and ribbon development.
- Further survey is required to assess the potential of including the entire undeveloped coastline along the Dee within the Local Landscape Designation due to the ability the area offers to enjoy a wider landscape context of land, sea and views to the Welsh hills beyond.

Landscape Character Area 5a

Take forward: Part

Notes:

- Coherent seascape with a strong sense of place and natural qualities which increase with distance from the human influence of industrial development on the Mersey shore as well as windfarms and shipping lanes in Liverpool Bay.
- Review the area at the mouth of Dee Estuary which has strong seascape character due to valued offshore features including the Hilbre Islands and scenic qualities due to expansive views to the North Wales coast.

Landscape Character Area 6b

Take forward: Yes

Notes:

- Coherent seascape with a strong sense of place due to the natural qualities of the coastline which is characterised by saltmarsh, mudflats and open water where the lack of human influence results in strong perceptual qualities of remoteness and tranquillity.

Boundary commentary

See Figures 4.5 and 4.6

The proposed Local Landscape Designation boundaries have been defined to encompass the Dee Estuary and the coastal flats and farmland along the Wirral shore.

The change in the current boundaries of The Dee Coast including Heswall Dales, Thurstaston Common and Royden Park Area of Special Landscape Value reflects the division of this area into the Dee Coast Local Landscape Designation and the Central Wirral Sandstone Hills Local Landscape Designation:

- Refine the northern boundary at the mouth of the Estuary from Hilbre Point, following the extent of the Site of Special Scientific Interest/ Ramsar designation so that Red Rocks and Hilbre Island are included within the Local Landscape Designation. Refine the north-eastern boundary to the end of the promenade at The King's Gap. The seascape beyond this boundary is more heavily influenced by human activity including the more urban edge of Hoylake at North Parade on the North Wirral shore, and a weaker visual connection with North Wales over Red Rocks and the Hilbre Islands. There are also increased

views to offshore windfarms and development on the Mersey shores (Fig 6a: point 1).

- Include the natural shoreline of the Royal Liverpool Golf Course using the track across the golf course as the eastern boundary line (Fig 6a: point 2).
- The new eastern boundary aligns more closely to the Dee Estuarine Edge Landscape Character Area boundary and excludes the farmland at higher elevations to the east which is now proposed as part of the Central Wirral Sandstone Hills Local Landscape Designation. The boundary follows the settlement edge of Caldy and A540 Telegraph Road, then a private road to the west of Dawpool Cottages, the settlement edge of Thurstaston village and a farm track extending south from Thurstaston Hall Farm. The boundary then follows the western edge of The Dungeon woodland before following the settlement edge of Heswall to the Borough boundary (Fig 6a: point 3).
- Include the coastal farmland between the open access land at Heswall Fields in the north and Cottage Lane in the south which is outside the current Area of Special Landscape Value. This aligns more closely with the Dee Estuarine Edge Landscape Character Area boundary. The eastern boundary will now follow the settlement edge of Heswall/Gayton (Fig 6b: point 1).
- Retain the western and southern boundary in the Dee Estuary along the Borough boundary.

Recommendations

Retain the existing Area of Special Landscape Value as an Local Landscape Designation but split the area to more closely reflect the Landscape Character Type/Landscape Character Area boundaries. The coastal areas to the west of Thurstaston will be included within the Dee Estuary Local Landscape Designation while the farmland at a higher

elevation to the east will form part of the candidate Central Wirral Sandstone Hills Local Landscape Designation.

Include the area between Heswall Fields and Cottage Lane within the Local Landscape Designation so that the whole of the undeveloped coastal strip along the Dee is protected and provides continuity with the Dee Estuary Area of Special County Value within Cheshire West and Chester Borough. This area meets the criteria currently except for landscape quality/condition:

- **Local distinctiveness:** A transitional coastal fringe landscape that has a strong relationship with the Estuary.
- **Landscape quality / condition:** Fragmented hedgerows and the division of fields into horse paddocks detracts from landscape quality.
- **Scenic qualities:** Expansive views over the Estuary to the Flintshire hills, with big skies, coastal light, seasonal and tidal change. However, tranquillity is more disrupted than other areas within the Local Landscape Designation due to proximity to human activity/ribbon development.
- **Natural / cultural qualities:** Wirral Way Local Wildlife Site extends across the area. Field patterns are a mix of Medieval Townfields and 20th century.
- **Recreation value:** The area allows access to the coastal saltmarshes/mudflats from shoreside car parks, the Wirral Way long distance footpath and other rights of way.

The area offers a coastal experience and the ability to enjoy a wider landscape context of land, sea and views to Wales. The objective would be to enhance the area, improving landscape condition and encourage enhancement of natural elements (such as hedgerows / hedgerow trees).

Include the natural coastline at the mouth of the Dee Estuary fronting the Royal Liverpool Golf Club. This area fully meets the criteria:

- **Local distinctiveness:** Coastal plain with a strong relationship with the Estuary.

- Landscape quality / condition: The shoreline is in good condition.
- Scenic qualities: Expansive views of the Hilbre Islands and the North Wales coast.
- Natural qualities: Nationally and internationally designated habitats extend across the coastal strip (Red Rock Site of Special Scientific Interest/Dee Estuary Ramsar).
- Recreation value: the area allows access to the Estuary through shoreline paths and is valued for birdwatching

The aim should be to encourage integrated management within this area of estuarine landscape/seascape. There is an opportunity to improve the coastal landscape and estuarine habitats. Enhance boundaries along the urban edges to retain a well-defined distinction between the open coastline of the Local Landscape Designation and these settlements. Improve conditions of the more fragmented farmland. Recreational facilities and connections along the coastline could be improved.

Rename as The Dee Estuary Local Landscape Designation.

Dee Estuary Full Evaluation

Local distinctiveness and sense of place

A highly distinctive landscape forming an important undeveloped landscape bordering the Dee Estuary. The landscape transitions from sloping mixed farmland, with golf courses or open recreational land, through to expansive sandflats, saltmarsh and the Dee Estuary. The changing character of the Dee has a strong influence on the coastal landscape, as sandy beaches with open water in the north change to the quieter coastline south of Heswall, which is separated from the narrow water channel by a broad green expanse of saltmarsh.

The whole area has a strong sense of place with open views over the mudflats, sandflats and saltmarsh of the Dee Estuary to north Wales.

Landscape quality

The Dee Estuary provides a visually coherent backdrop to the area and a strong degree of ecological integrity as evidenced by the numerous international ecological designations which extend along the coast. The landscape is well managed, and the majority of landscape features are intact.

There are very few detracting features, although the sub-division of fields for horse pasture has introduced post and tape fences, stabling and other ephemera into some areas.

Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

The area has strong scenic qualities with high levels of tranquillity even close to the settlements and a sense of 'wildness' and windswept remoteness where the call of wading birds can be heard. The wide skies and transient character of the Estuary which changes with the tide, weather and light add to the strong visual character of the area.

The sense of expansiveness is enhanced by the distinctive views over the Dee Estuary to the Welsh coast and the Clwydian Range beyond. These are expansive from the open coastline or framed by mature trees along the lanes extending from the settlements. Longer views to the three Hilbre Islands and Red Rocks at the mouth of the Estuary and offshore windfarms out to sea are possible from along the coastline. By contrast, linear wooded corridors along the banks of the dismantled railway on the Wirral Way provides a sense of enclosure.

Human influence is more evident at Hoylake, where gardens extend to the beach, and west of Heswall, where small-scale ribbon development extends to the coast and there is a sewage works and caravan parks. Distant views of industry on the Welsh coast to the south do not impact on the sense of remoteness.

Natural and cultural qualities

The presence of natural attributes makes a particular contribution to the sense of place. Estuarine habitats including expansive intertidal mudflats, sandflats and saltmarsh which support large populations of wetland birds are internationally designated as Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area, Marine Protection Area and Ramsar and nationally as the Dee Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest. The Dee Cliffs are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest for their nationally important staggered soft cliffs, and the Red Rocks are a nationally important sand dune system, also designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Small tree clumps, copses and shelter belts provide a wooded context to the area. Woodland is predominantly deciduous and is recorded as priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland, often locally designated as Local Wildlife Site/Site of Biological Importance.

Historic field patterns include pre-1600s enclosure south of Gayton and Medieval Townfields west of the town, and post-medieval enclosure south of Caldy. The field pattern has been lost in places due to golf courses and 20th century amalgamation.

Attractive historic buildings add to the cultural attributes of the area. There are two Grade II listed buildings on Hilbre Island: the telegraph station built in 1841 as part of a relay of seven stations from Point Lynus to Liverpool and the 1836 Buoy Master's house and buoy store. The Royal Liverpool golf course is the second oldest in England and is designated as part of the Meols Drive Conservation Area, valued because of the retention of natural landscape features. The King's Gap Conservation Area extends into the Local Landscape Designation in the north. Gayton Conservation Area, and the parkland at Gayton Hall extends into the Local Landscape Designation. Spectacular views over fields and the Heswall golf course to the Dee Estuary and North Wales are noted as one of the special features of the Conservation Area.

Recreation value

The landscape is valued for recreational activity and there is extensive access to the area, including shoreside footpaths, beaches and open access coastal areas. The mudflats, sandflats and saltmarsh make the Dee Estuary a very popular place for bird watching, and the south of the Dee Estuary is part of an RSPB reserve.

Hilbre Island Local Nature Reserve is open for visitors to walk across the sands at low tide and is popular for wildlife spotting including seals and birds. There is open access to Heswall Fields (owned by the National Trust) and Wirral Country Park, the first designated country park in Britain, which extends along the route of a former railway and forms a wooded linear feature through the landscape. The long-distance Wirral Way and National Cycle Route 56 follow the route of the former railway. Golf courses provide opportunities for formal recreation.

Associations

Sandstone walls and steps which remain along the old shoreline (such as at Cottage Lane) provide evidence of the past importance of the Dee Estuary as a historic trading route for local industries. Canalisation of the Dee in 1737, to stem the natural siltation, diverted the river's course to the Welsh side of the estuary, increasing siltation of the Wirral side.

Representative photos of the landscape

Open access land and the beach on the coastline at Caldy. The Hilbre Islands can be seen in the distance



Expansive views over the Dee Estuary to North Wales



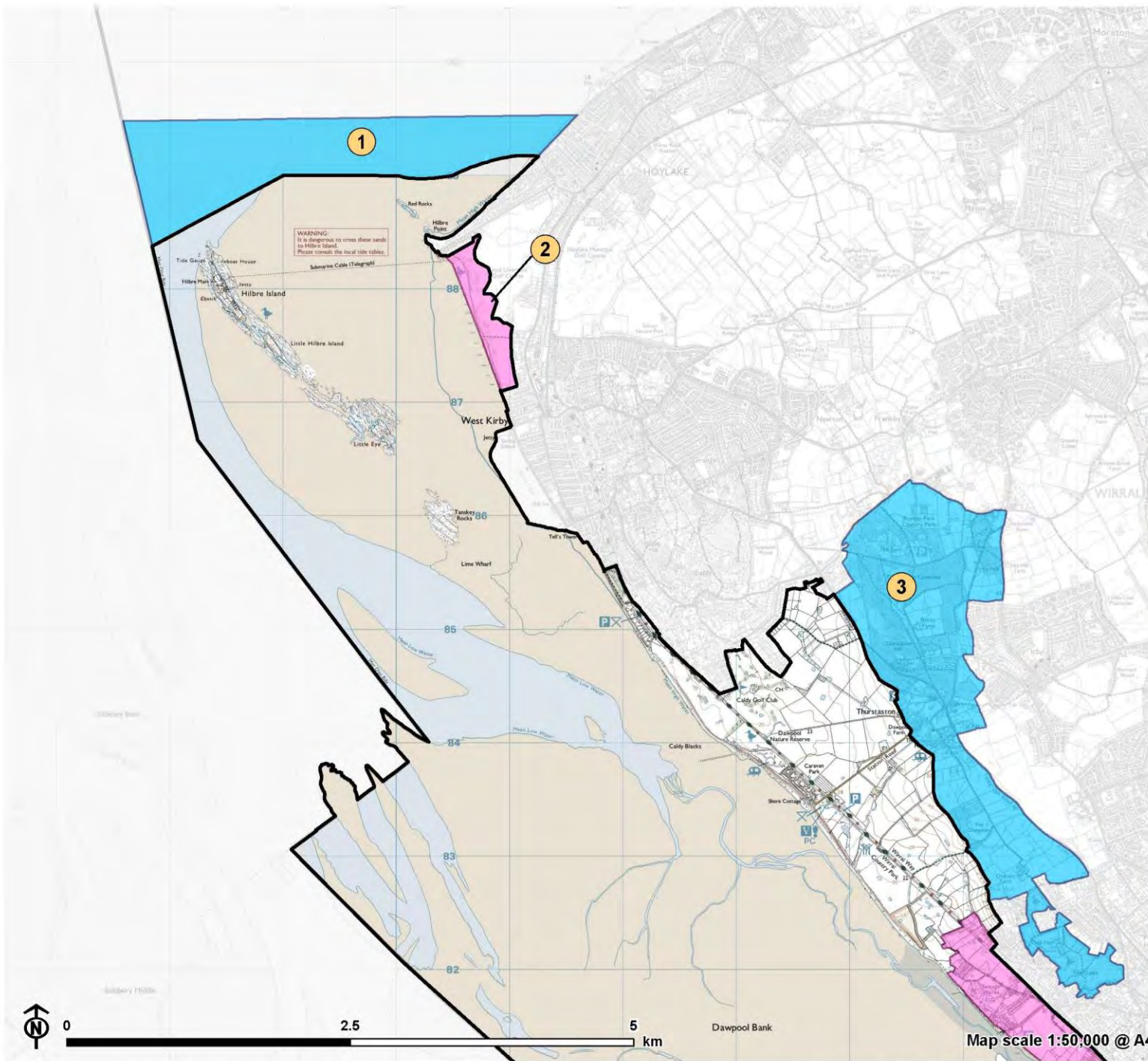
Saltmarsh in the south of the Dee Estuary with sandstone wall along the old shoreline



The Wirral Way Country Park and bridge over the former railway line



Figure 4.5: Dee Estuary Candidate Local Landscape Designation (South)



Wirral boundary

Candidate Local Landscape Designation

Dee Estuary

Changes to Area of Special Landscape Value

Addition

Remove

1 Boundary redrawn at the mouth of the Dee Estuary

2 Extend to include natural shoreline of the Royal Liverpool Golf Course

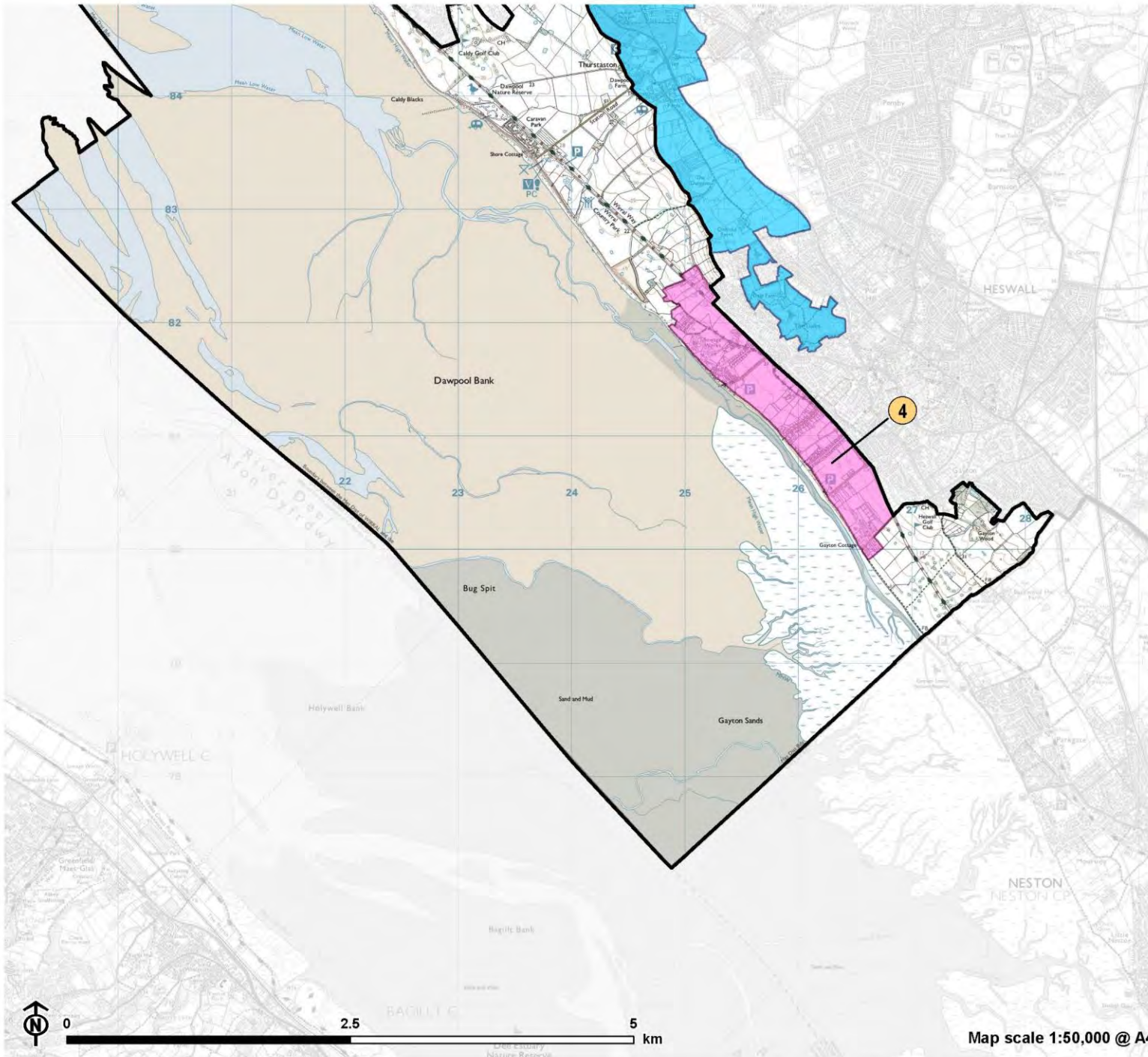
3 Boundary drawn to exclude the higher elevation farmland (proposed as part of the Central Wirral Sandstone Hills candidate LLD)



0 2.5 5 km

Map scale 1:50,000 @ A4

Figure 4.6: Dee Estuary Candidate Local Landscape Designation (South)



Wirral boundary

Candidate Local Landscape Designation

Dee Estuary

Changes to Area of Special Landscape Value

Addition

Remove

4 Extend to include coastal farmland



0 2.5 5 km

Map scale 1:50,000 @ A4

A landscape photograph showing a wide, green grassy field in the foreground. In the background, there is a dense, dark green forest covering a hillside. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The text is overlaid on a white rectangular box in the upper left corner.

Thornton Hough Estates
Candidate Local Landscape
Designation

Thornton Hough Estates Candidate Local Landscape Designation

Summary Information

Relationship to existing local landscape designation

- Thornton Hough Area of Special Landscape Value, designated in the Merseyside Structure Plan (1980) and retained in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (2000).

Extent of area

The candidate Local Landscape Designation is located in the centre of Wirral between the M53 in the east and the settlement edge of Heswall/Gayton in the west. It covers the villages of Thornton Hough, Brimstage and Raby and the surrounding gently rolling estate-influenced farmland.

Landscape character context (% coverage by the existing Area of Special Landscape Value)

- 4b Thornton Hough Lowland Farmland and Estates (38%)
- 4c Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Lowland Farmland and Estates (6%)
- 4d Raby Lowland Rural Farmland and Estates (4%)

Evaluation of Area of Search

Desk review

Landscape Character Area 4b

Take forward: Yes

Notes:

- Much of the Landscape Character Area, centred on Thornton Hough and Thornton Manor, fully meets the criteria. The area forms a coherent intact agricultural landscape with a strong sense of place deriving from its distinctive estate character, historic villages and farmsteads.
- Further survey is required to assess farmland to the north of Brimstage which is currently outside the Area of Special Landscape Value. This is included within the Area of Search.
- Review area to the south of the Clatterbridge Hospital.

Landscape Character Area 4c

Take forward: Part

Notes:

- Most of the Landscape Character Area does not meet the criteria due to disruption from the M53 and the proximity of the urban conurbation.
- Review the boundary of the Area of Special Landscape Value around Clatterbridge Hospital. These agricultural fields are currently within the Area of Special Landscape Value but have been impacted by further development at the hospital and their proximity to the M53 and the motorway junction.

- Field survey is required to assess the rural valley around Storeton which is currently outside the Area of Special Landscape Value. Despite its proximity to the M53 this area has a rural secluded character and a discernible estate character due to the Lever Causeway and traditional estate cottages and agricultural buildings within the village.

Landscape Character Area 4d

Take forward: Part

Notes:

- The Landscape Character Area currently lies outside the Area of Special Landscape Value but meets the criteria due to its coherent rural character and lack of human influence.
- Field survey is required to assess Raby village and the surrounding farmland and its connection to the Leverhulme Estate.

Boundary commentary

See Figure 4.7

- The northern boundary along A5137 Brimstage Road/Brimstage Lane is considered to be correct. This excludes landscape to the north of the village which includes coniferous plantations and is disrupted by auditory intrusion from the M53 and the railway and influenced by the proximity of overhead powerlines. It also excludes areas to the east of the M53 between the village of Storeton and Storeton Hill which were reviewed as part of the Area of Search but considered to be a lower quality landscape and influenced by the proximity of the M53.
- Extend the boundary to the north to include the formal avenue of mature trees extending across the motorway to Storeton, as a valued historical

feature related to the Leverhulme Estate and a valued green corridor with potential recreational opportunities (Fig 7: point 1).

- The eastern boundary along B5151 Clatterbridge Road /Willaston Road is considered correct as landscape to the east of this boundary is of lower quality and more disrupted by the M53.
- Retain the formal avenue extending north of Clatterbridge Hospital to A5137 Brimstage Road within the Local Landscape Designation (Fig 7: point 2).
- Pull back the boundary to the east around Clatterbridge Hospital / M53 Junction 4 where the landscape is significantly influenced by human activity (including street lighting along the B5151 Mount Road and the junction with the M53 and traffic noise). Exclude fields north of the hospital currently under arable use but under-managed and with fragmented hedgerows. Draw the new Local Landscape Designation boundary to include agricultural fields on the rising landform to the west of the hospital. The landform and the wooded causeway along the ridgeline provide enclosure to the estate landscape around Thornton Hough and screens views to the motorway corridor to the east. This also aligns the candidate Local Landscape Designation boundary closer to the boundary of the Thornton Hough Lowland Farmland and Estates Landscape Character Area (Fig 7: point 3).
- Extend the Local Landscape Designation to the south from its current location along the Raby Brook to include the historic settlement of Raby and the tranquil rural farmland around the village. Extend the boundary south to Willow Lane and Willowbrow Road and along footpath 49 towards Yew Tree Farm. This area has similar characteristics to the landscape immediately north of Thornton Hough, with an intact historic field pattern and winding rural lanes lined by Cheshire rail fencing or mature hedgerows and scattered sandstone farmsteads. Mature hedgerow oaks and wooded field ponds create the sense of a wooded landscape and the area retains a sense of separation from larger settlements due to woodland on higher ground to the east. The extension to the Local Landscape Designation results in coverage of the wider setting of Thornton Hough village to the south where there are

clear views across the undulating farmland to the All Saints church spire and Thornton Hall Hotel (Fig 7: point 4).

- The western boundary along the B5136 Liverpool Road which includes Thornton Hall Hotel but excludes the housing development on the edge of Thornton Hough is considered to be correct. Further north, the Local Landscape Designation boundary includes fields which provide a setting to the Thornton Hough Conservation Area and the Thornton Manor Registered Park and Garden at Manor Wood.

Recommendations

Retain the existing Area of Special Landscape Value as an Local Landscape Designation, with modifications to the boundaries as noted above.

Extend the Local Landscape Designation to the north to include the formal avenue of trees into Storeton. The formal avenue meets the local distinctiveness, landscape quality and condition, and natural/cultural qualities criteria:

- Local distinctiveness: continuation of formal avenues of ornamental trees which create distinctive linear features across the landscape. The avenue is broken by the M53.
- Landscape quality / condition: the ornamental tree line is in reasonable condition.
- Scenic qualities: Classic vistas along the formal avenue. Noise from the M53 disrupts tranquillity.
- Natural / cultural qualities: The formal avenue is recorded as priority habitat deciduous woodland and wood pasture. Avenues are part of the estate character created by Lord Leverhulme.
- Recreation qualities: There is no public access to the formal avenues.

Extend the Local Landscape Designation to the south to include the village of Raby and surrounding farmland. The area meets all the criteria except for recreation quality.

- Local distinctiveness: Cheshire rail estate fencing and red sandstone walling give a recognisable estate character to Raby.
- Landscape quality / condition: Well-managed rural landscape in good condition with strong historic field pattern. Some subdivision of fields with timber and wire fencing.
- Scenic qualities: Views from Raby to Thornton Hough across farmland, including views to the distinctive spire of All Saints. Rural views channelled and framed by woodland blocks and hedgerows.
- Natural / cultural qualities: Intact historic field patterns around Raby correspond to estate organisation in the 18th and 19th centuries. Raby contains a number of Grade II listed historic agricultural buildings and estate cottages.
- Recreation qualities: There is one right of way in the area.

The aim should be to retain and enhance the estate character of the area, including the use of native hedgerows and Cheshire rail fencing for field boundaries and sandstone walling along roads. Conserve and enhance the wooded character of the landscape, particularly the oak trees that are characteristic of this area and promote the use of native woodland boundaries to provide visual screening in relation to the urban fringes and transport routes outside the Local Landscape Designation. Promote .

Thornton Hough Estates Full Evaluation

Local distinctiveness and sense of place

This Local Landscape Designation has a strong sense of place derived from the recognisable estate character of the landscape associated with Thornton Hough and Thornton Manor along with pockets of historic parkland around smaller halls (such as Stanacres and Rocklands). The landscape is characterised by Cheshire rail estate fencing, red sandstone walling and formal avenues of ornamental trees which create distinctive linear features extending across the landscape.

The enclosed wooded character of the landscape and ridgelines in the west and east create the impression of the landscape being set within a wide 'bowl', forming a discrete rural area free of disruption from adjacent urban areas.

Landscape quality

Overall, a visually coherent estate landscape which is well-managed and in good condition, with a strong historic field pattern bound by well-managed hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees, often oaks. The area has a degree of ecological integrity due to its network of woodland blocks, avenues, trees, hedgerows and wooded field ponds.

Some fields to the south of Clatterbridge Hospital and along Raby Road have been subdivided with timber or electric fences for horse paddocks which detracts from the rural character of the landscape. There is also some degradation of the parkland landscape associated with Thornton Manor, and the grounds of Thornton Manor are on the Heritage at Risk register. Overhead electricity wires and pylons outside of the Local Landscape Designation area are visually intrusive locally.

Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects

The area has a strong visual character, with rural views across the farmland channelled or framed by geometric woodland blocks and mature hedgerows with hedgerow trees, providing a wooded character and sense of enclosure to the landscape. Classic vistas can be experienced along the formal avenues extending from Thornton Manor through Brimstage to Storeton and east to A5137 Brimstage Road. The spire of All Saints, Thornton Hough is visible across much of the Local Landscape Designation, and is a distinctive feature in the landscape rising above the treeline. Rising ridgelines create a sense of seclusion and woodland screens development outside the Local Landscape Designation area. The strong rural and tranquil character is emphasised by the sparse settlement, confined to isolated sandstone farms and the small settlements of Thornton Hough, Brimstage and Raby.

Occasional views of electricity pylons outside of the Local Landscape Designation area to the west are an incongruous feature but do not detract from the rural character of the landscape in this area. Noise from the adjacent M53 disrupts tranquillity particularly to the north of the Local Landscape Designation, but a narrow corridor has been retained to include the causeway into Storeton.

Natural and cultural qualities

Throughout the area there are many habitats that contribute to the value of the landscape. Small watercourses and field ponds are common, often set within priority habitat deciduous woodland and reedbeds - Thornton Hough Ponds are designated as Local Wildlife Site/ Site of Biological Importance for their wetland habitats. Priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland is found throughout the area, mostly in the form of geometric woodland blocks, with a mix of deciduous species, predominantly oak. Manor Wood is designated as Local Wildlife Sites/Site of Biological Importance for its woodland habitats.

The concentration of intact historic field patterns of predominantly late post-medieval agricultural improvement around the villages of Thornton Hough and Raby is noted in the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation. This relates to the reorganisation of medieval open field systems in the 18th and 19th century.

Traditional buildings and locally distinct materials are a feature of the historic villages within the Local Landscape Designation. Thornton Hough, which was expanded as a model village in the 1880s by William Lever, is characterised by red roofs and black and white panelling above a red brick or sandstone base, with distinctive brickwork on chimneys. The village is designated as a Conservation Area and has a number of historic listed buildings, including the two churches - All Saints (Grade II listed) and St George (Grade II* listed) with their distinctive towers, and the Grade II* listed Thornton Manor (built in the 1840s and substantially altered in the 1890s by Viscount Leverhulme). The grounds and parkland of the Manor are designated as a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden.

Historic agricultural buildings and estate cottages in Brimstage and Raby, many of which were built by the Leverhulme Estate, also contribute to the scenic quality of the area. These include several listed buildings including the 12th century Brimstage Hall and Tower (Grade I listed) and Grade II listed agricultural buildings and cottages in Raby.

Recreation value

A few public rights of way, including National Cycle Route 56, provide limited recreational access to the area.

Associations

William Hesketh Lever, later Viscount Leverhulme, was a Victorian entrepreneur and founder of Lever Brothers, originally a soap manufacturing business based in Port Sunlight, that is now part of Unilever. Lever moved to Thornton Manor, buying much of the surrounding farmland to establish what is now the Leverhulme Estate. He built estate cottages at Brimstage, Raby and Storeton and remodelled the village of Thornton Hough in line with his earlier work at Port Sunlight. The formal avenues lined by ornamental trees are a distinctive feature of the Local Landscape Designation area and were designed as private roads for Lever to travel between Thornton Manor and his business at Port Sunlight.

Representative photos of the landscape

Pasture fields east of Raby with mature hedgerows and oaks, with the spire of All Saints, Thornton Hough in the distance



Arable fields bound by red sandstone walls with wooded ridgeline in backdrop



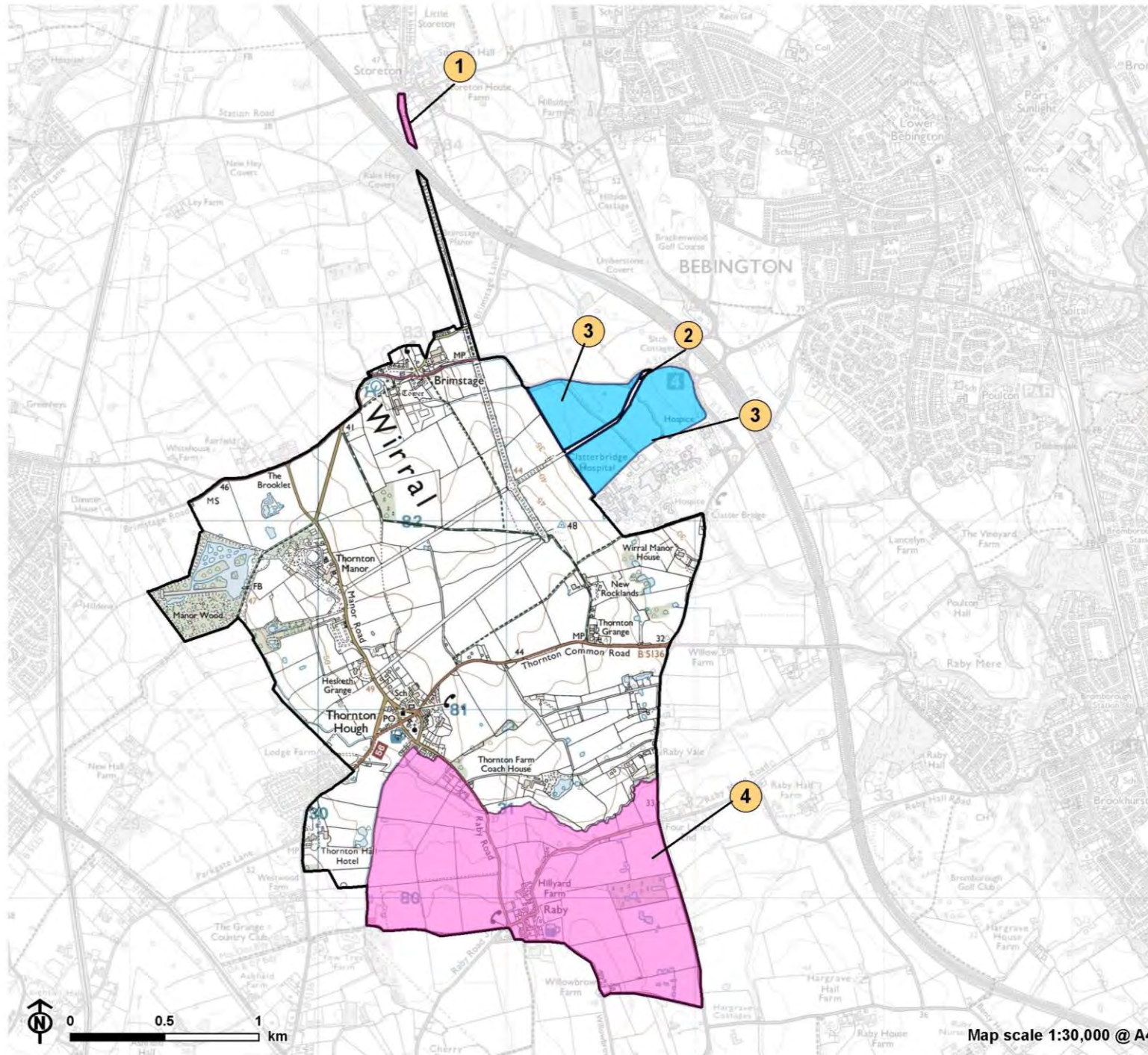
Formal tree-lined avenue leading from Thornton Manor with red sandstone boundary



Historic buildings in Brimstage with red sandstone boundaries and working farms

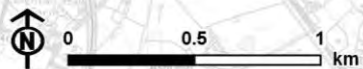


Figure 4.7: Thornton Hough Candidate Local Landscape Designation



- Wirral boundary
- Candidate Local Landscape Designation**
- Thornton Hough Estates
- Changes to Area of Special Landscape Value**
- Remove
- Addition

- 1** Extend to include continuation of formal linear avenue across M53 into Storeton
- 2** Retain continuation of formal linear avenue to A5137 Brimstage Road
- 3** Exclude under-managed fields north of Clatterbridge Hospital
- 4** Extend to include Raby and surrounding fields



Map scale 1:30,000 @ A4

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