

Wirral Site Specific Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

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Contents

Chapter 1	1
Introduction	
Policy context	4
Landscape context	5
Using this study	6
Structure of this report	7
Chapter 2	9
Methodology	
Assessment approach	9
Development types and scenarios considered	18
Assessment process	19
Chapter 3	22
Project findings	
Overall landscape sensitivity assessment results	22
Appendix A	27
Landscape Sensitivity Assessments	
Area reference: SP001	
Area reference: SP002A/SP002B	
Area reference: SP002C	
Area reference: SP003	

Contents

Area reference: SP004A / SP005A

Area reference: SP010A

Area reference: SP013

Area reference: SP015A

Area reference: SP016

Area reference: SP019B

Area reference: SP025B

Area reference: SP030 / SP031

Area reference: SP032

Area reference SP033, SP034, SP035, SP036, SP037 and SP041

Area reference: SP038 and SP039

Area reference: SP040

Area reference: SP042

Area reference: SP043

Area reference: SP044

Area reference: SP045

Area reference: SP046

Area reference: SP047 and SP048

Area reference: SP049

Area reference: SP050

Area reference: SP051

Area reference: SP052

Area reference: SP054 and SP055

Area reference: SP058C / SP058D / SP058E

Area reference: SP059B / SP059C / SP059D

Area reference: SP059E

Area reference: SP060

Area reference: SP061 / SP062

Area reference: SP064E

Area reference: SP071

Area reference: SP108

Area reference: SP109

Contents

Appendix B **325**
Glossary of Terms

References **328**

Chapter 1

Introduction

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council commissioned LUC in April 2019 to undertake a landscape sensitivity assessment (hereafter referred to as the 'study') of specific areas of the open countryside within the Borough.

Purpose of the study

1.1 The purpose of this study is to provide an assessment of the extent to which the character and quality of the landscape of these sites would, in principle, be susceptible to change as a result of the introduction of built development.

1.2 The study forms part of the evidence base to support the emerging Local Plan, which is in the early stages of preparation by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.

1.3 The outputs of this work will be used by the Council to:

- Inform the evaluation of potential development locations;
- Identify land where development would be most appropriate to minimise impact on landscape, such as by identifying areas of least sensitivity; and
- Provide a tool for informing mitigation for any future changes to the landscape.

Assessment scope

1.4 This study considers the landscape sensitivity of 53 specific areas of land identified for further investigation within the Green Belt in the Council's review of development options published for public comment in September 2018 [\[See reference 1\]](#).

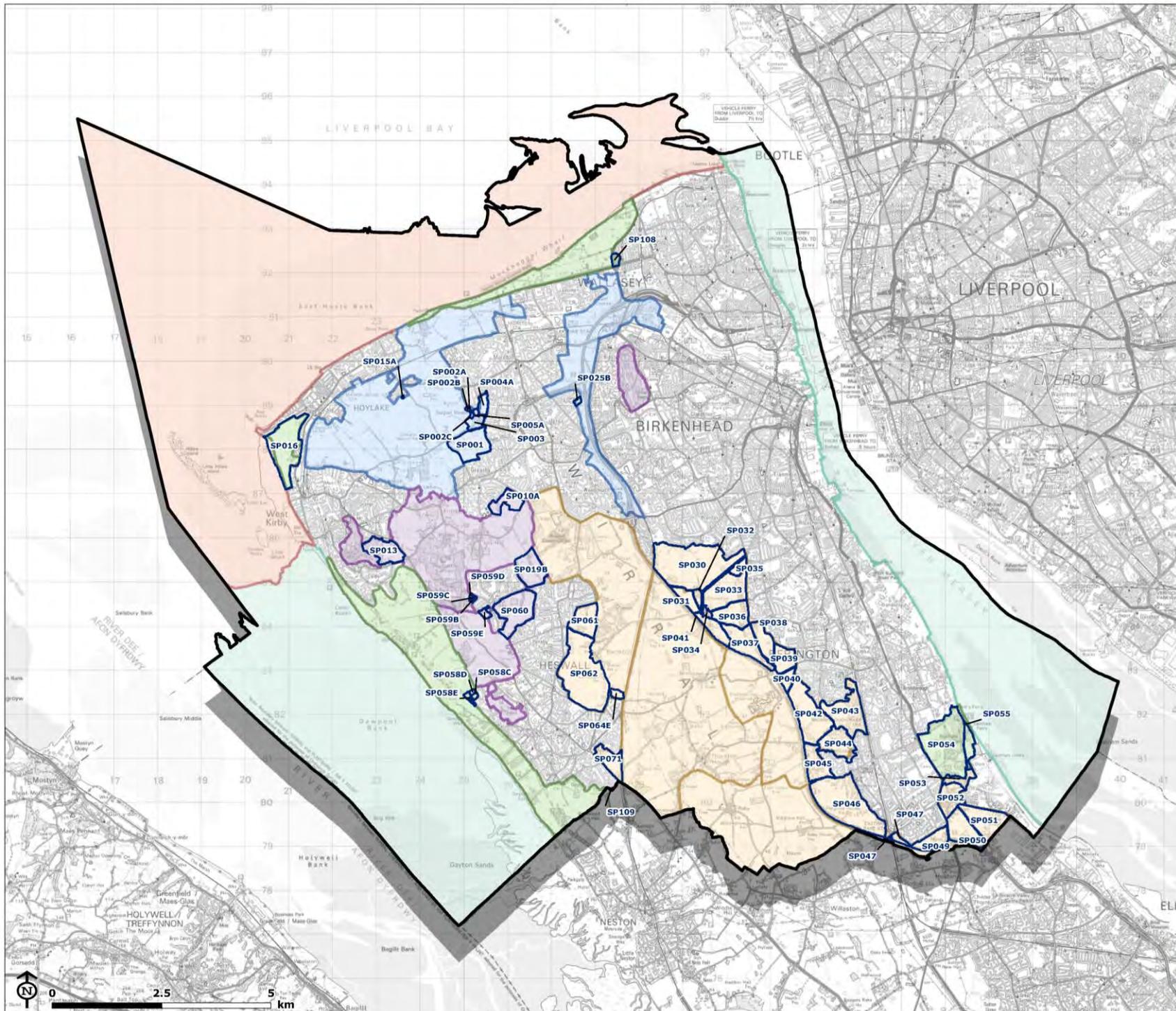
1.5 To assess landscape sensitivity, it was agreed with Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council that some smaller sites could be amalgamated. These amalgamations were 'nested' within the spatial framework of the Wirral Landscape Character Assessment [\[See reference 2\]](#) so that only areas of consistent landscape character were amalgamated.

1.6 Figure 1.1 below, illustrates the sites that have been assessed, grouped within their associated Landscape Character Type and Landscape Character Areas.

**Wirral Local Plan
Landscape Assessment**

Fig 1.1: Landscape Sensitivity Parcels

-  Wirral Borough boundary
-  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
-  Landscape Sensitivity Parcels



Map Scale @A3: 1:85,000



Policy context

National

1.7 The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 [See reference 3] is explicit in its requirement for development plan policies to protect and where appropriate, enhance the natural environment.

Key National Planning Policy Framework policies in relation to landscape sensitivity

1.8 Paragraph 170 states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and "...recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside..." (para 170.b).

1.9 At paragraph 127(c) it states that "Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments...are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding environment and landscape setting".

1.10 Paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework contains one reference to sensitivity as follows:

"Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development..."

1.11 Landscape sensitivity can inform policy development and appropriate locations for development, and can also be one of the considerations to be taken into account when making decisions on planning applications.

Landscape context

1.12 Extending between the Dee and Mersey Estuaries, the landscape of Wirral is a mixture of rural areas, formal landscapes of former large country estates, natural coastal scenery and wooded sandstone ridges. Urban and industrial areas of Birkenhead lie east of the M53 and the mid-Wirral sandstone ridge, while to the west a rich pastoral landscape is interspersed with smaller settlements.

1.13 Landscape considered to be amongst the most outstanding within the borough were identified within the existing Unitary Development Plan **[See reference 4]**, adopted in February 2000, in Proposal LA2 as Areas of Special Landscape Value. These local landscape designations are illustrated on Figure 1.2.

1.14 The Wirral Landscape Character Assessment **[See reference 5]** identifies six Landscape Character Types and 16 Landscape Character Areas, which form the primary evidence base for this Landscape Sensitivity Assessment. Figure 1.1 illustrates the landscape character framework.

Using this study

Limitation of the landscape sensitivity assessment

1.15 This study provides an assessment of the relative landscape sensitivities of the different sites to notional residential and/or employment development, without knowing the exact location, layout, design or mitigation proposed. It therefore should not be interpreted as a definitive statement on the suitability of a certain location for a particular development and it is not a replacement for detailed studies for specific siting and design, as any final developments will need to be assessed on their individual merits.

1.16 The study is based on an assessment of landscape character using carefully defined criteria. Landscape sensitivity is the result of a complex interplay of often unequally weighted variables (or 'criteria'). We have sought to address this in our summary of overall landscape sensitivity given for each assessment area – which considers how the criteria based assessments combine to give an overall sensitivity result for the development type under consideration. The assessments are based on professional judgement, taking account of the interplay between criteria, as well as those which might be more important to the landscape character of the area being assessed.

1.17 The assessment considers:

- The natural character of the landscape but not specific ecological issues in relation to species or habitats;
- The historic and cultural character of the landscape but not the specific cultural heritage or archaeological issues associated with individual designated heritage assets and their settings; and
- The visual character of the landscape but not visual amenity issues associated with specific receptors, such as local residents.

1.18 These are all issues that will need to be taken into account and any additional specific impacts will need to be reported at the time when individual proposals or site allocations are put forward.

1.19 This study concentrates on understanding the sensitivities of each area to development and does not address the capacity of each area or density of development. The final capacity of each area is a further stage of assessment that requires the relative consideration of cumulative development, landscape objectives, and thresholds of acceptable change.

Structure of this report

1.20 This report is set out as follows:

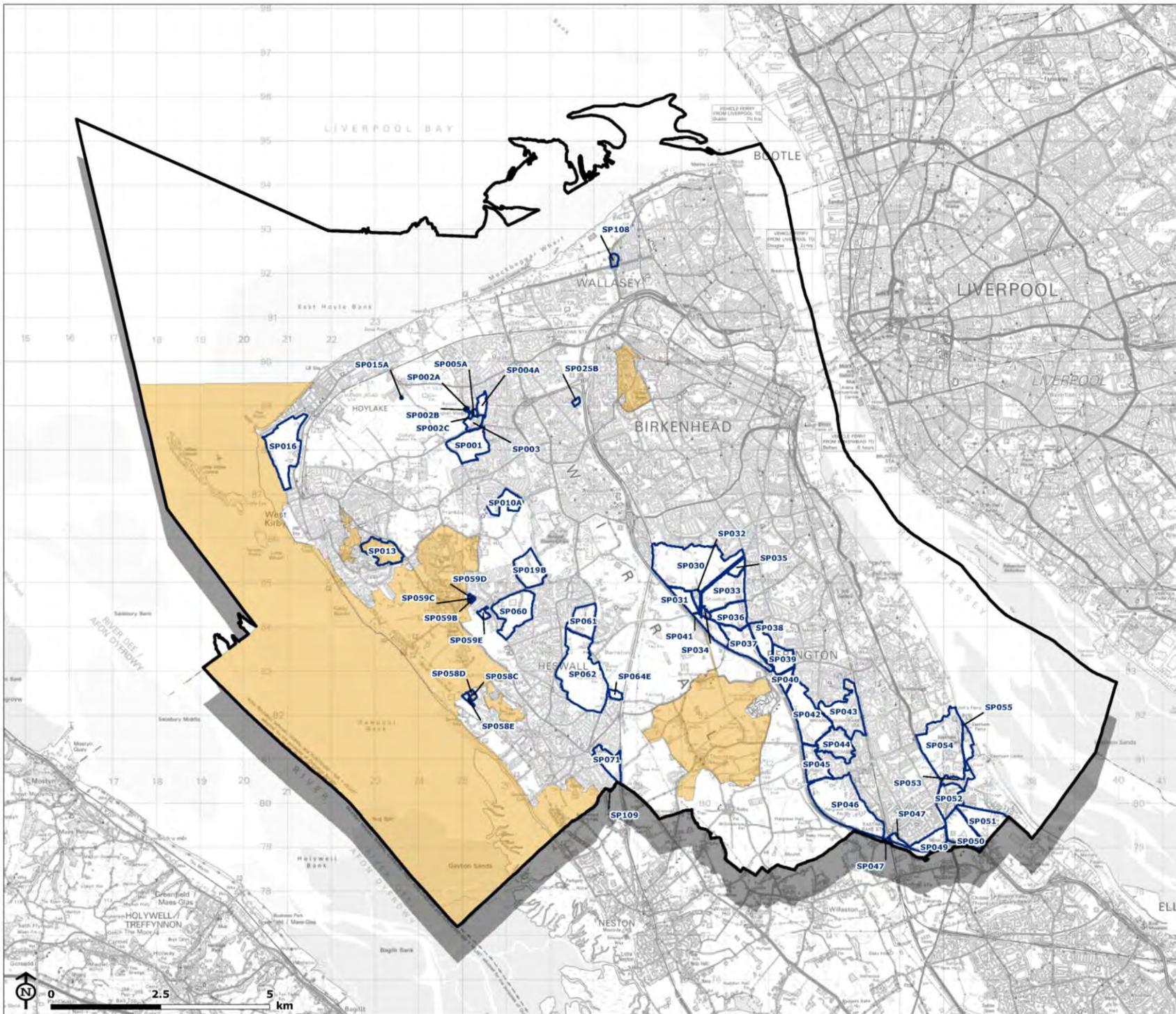
- Chapter 1 presents an introduction and policy context;
- Chapter 2 presents the methodology and approach to the landscape sensitivity assessment, together with the assessment criteria;
- Chapter 3 presents the overall landscape sensitivity assessment results.

1.21 This report is supported by:

- Appendix A which presents the landscape sensitivity assessment area profiles.
- Appendix B which provides a glossary of terms.

Fig 1.2: Areas of Special Landscape Value

- Wirral Borough boundary
- Area of Special Landscape Value
- Landscape Sensitivity Parcel



Map Scale @A3: 1:85,000



Chapter 2

Methodology

2.1 This section sets out the methodology for the landscape sensitivity assessment. This includes information on approach, the assessment criteria and process followed.

Assessment approach

Defining assessment criteria

2.2 The approach taken in this study builds on the process set out in Natural England's An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment [See reference 6] which has replaced Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity (Scottish Heritage and the former Countryside Agency, 2004), as well as LUC's considerable experience from previous and on-going studies of a similar nature. LUC sensitivity assessments have been accepted at Local Plan examination and used to inform development appeal decisions.

2.3 In the Natural England approach, landscape sensitivity is defined as follows:

Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value.

A criteria-based assessment

2.4 In line with Natural England's An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment [See reference 7], this study uses carefully defined criteria so that judgements can be clearly traced back to the underlying landscape and visual baseline. These indicators of landscape sensitivity are set out below.

2.5 Criteria selection is based on the attributes of the landscape most likely to be affected by residential and employment development. It considers both 'landscape' and 'visual' aspects of landscape sensitivity and those relating to value. The criteria provide examples of the types of landscape character or features that could indicate low, moderate or high sensitivity under each criterion.

2.6 The Natural England approach suggests that the indicators of value may include designations, sense of place, valued attributes, community values, recreational value and ecosystem services.

2.7 The landscape of each assessment area and its surroundings is appraised against the individual criteria to provide an indication of the relative sensitivity of the landscape to new development.

Making an overall judgement on levels of sensitivity

2.8 A five-point rating from 'low' to 'high' landscape sensitivity is used to indicate overall levels of landscape sensitivity within each assessment area, with supporting justification. Definitions for each of these ratings are provided in Table 2.1. The overall rating is based on professional judgement, taking account of all the individual criteria set out below. In some cases, one criterion alone may be sufficient to result in a judgement of high sensitivity but more often the judgement is informed by a number of criteria.

Sensitivity assessment criteria and definitions

Physical character (including topography and scale)

This considers the shape and scale of the landform, landscape pattern and landscape elements in relation to the scale of potential development. Smooth, gently undulating or flat landforms are likely to be less sensitive to development than a landscape with a more dramatic landform, distinct landform features or incised valleys with prominent slopes.

This criterion considers how developments fit with the scale of the landform (understanding the scale of the development proposed is important when applying this criterion). Larger scale, simple landforms are likely to be less sensitive to larger scale developments than smaller scale, enclosed landforms (where large scale developments could appear out of scale with the underlying landform). Conversely, smaller developments may be able to be screened within enclosed landforms, therefore reducing landscape sensitivity. Existing small-scale features in the landscape in the form of existing buildings or trees will influence the scale of development that can be accommodated in the landscape.

Sensitivity ratings definitions:

- Low sensitivity - the landscape has smooth, gently undulating or featureless landform with uniform largescale landscape pattern and low density of overlying landscape features
- Low-moderate sensitivity
- Moderate sensitivity - the landscape has an undulating landform and some distinct landform features; it is overlain by a mixture of small-scale and larger scale field patterns and a moderate density of small-scale landscape features
- Moderate-high sensitivity

- High sensitivity - the landscape has a dramatic landform or distinct landform features that contribute positively to landscape character, the area has a high density of small-scale landscape features and is overlain by a small-scale field pattern

Natural character

This criterion considers the 'natural' qualities of the landscape in terms of coverage of semi-natural habitats and valued natural features (e.g. trees, hedgerows) which could be vulnerable to loss from development. Areas with frequent natural features (including large areas of nationally or internationally designated habitats) result in increased sensitivity to development, while landscapes with limited natural features (including intensively farmed areas or areas with high levels of existing development) will be less sensitive. This criterion also looks at role as part of a wider network of natural features (Nature Recovery Network).

Sensitivity rating definitions:

- Low sensitivity - much of the landscape is intensively farmed or developed with little seminatural habitat coverage and few valued natural features
- Low-moderate sensitivity
- Moderate sensitivity - there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats and features found in parts of the landscape, whilst other parts are intensively farmed or developed
- Moderate-high sensitivity
- High sensitivity - large areas of the landscape are nationally or internationally designated for their nature conservation interest; there is a frequent occurrence of valued natural features across the landscape

Historic landscape character

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

Landscapes with small-scale, more irregular field patterns of historic origin are likely to be more sensitive to the introduction of modern development than landscapes with large, regular scale parliamentary field patterns).

Sensitivity rating definitions:

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

Character and setting of existing settlement

This considers the overall settlement form and character of existing settlement and considers whether development in the landscape would be in accordance with the general pattern, setting and form of current development and relationship with the existing settlement edge. It includes an understanding of the landscape pattern associated with settlement edges (where relevant), for

example if it is well integrated by woodland cover or open and exposed to form a 'hard edge' to the adjoining landscape.

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

Sensitivity rating definitions:

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

Views and visual character including skyline

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

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

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

Sensitivity rating definitions:

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

- High sensitivity - the area is open and/or has a high degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes, and/or the area forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline

Perceptual and experiential qualities

This considers qualities such as the rural character of the landscape (traditional land uses with few modern human influences), sense of remoteness or tranquillity. Landscapes that are relatively remote or tranquil (due to freedom from human activity and disturbance and having a perceived naturalness or a traditional rural feel with few modern human influences) tend to increase levels of sensitivity to development compared to landscapes that contain signs of modern development. High scenic value and dark night skies also add to sensitivity in relation to this criterion. This is because development will introduce new and uncharacteristic features which may detract from a sense of tranquillity and or remoteness/naturalness.

Sensitivity rating definitions:

- Low sensitivity - the area is significantly influenced by development/ human activity, where new development would not be out of character
- Low-moderate sensitivity
- Moderate sensitivity - a landscape with some sense of rural character, but with some modern elements and human influences
- Moderate-high sensitivity
- High sensitivity - a tranquil or highly rural landscape, lacking strong intrusive elements. A landscape of high scenic value with dark skies and a high perceived degree of rural character and naturalness with few modern human influences

Table 2.1: Five-point scale of landscape sensitivity

Sensitivity Judgement	Definition
High	Landscape and/or visual characteristics of the assessment unit are very susceptible to change and /or its values are high or moderate-high and it is unable to accommodate the relevant type of development without significant change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are very low.
Moderate-high	Landscape and/or visual characteristics of the assessment unit are susceptible to change and /or its values are moderate through to high. It may be able to accommodate the relevant type of development but only in limited situations without significant change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are low.
Moderate	Landscape and/or visual characteristics of the assessment unit are susceptible to change and /or its values are low-moderate through to moderate-high, or it may have some potential to accommodate the relevant type of development in some defined situations without significant change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are intermediate
Low-moderate	Landscape and/or visual characteristics of the assessment unit are resilient and of low susceptibility to change and /or its values are low-moderate or low and it can accommodate the relevant type of development in many situations without significant change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are high.
Low	Landscape and/or visual characteristics of the assessment unit are robust or degraded and are not susceptible to change and /or its values are low and it can accommodate the relevant type of development without significant change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are very high.

Development types and scenarios considered

2.9 This study considers the sensitivity of the landscape to the principle of development without knowing the specific size or exact location of that development. However, two general development types are considered by this assessment, as described below:

Residential development

2.10 Scenario description: housing development including typical dwellings of 2 storeys with gardens, with some 3 storey flats along roads, at a density of around 30 dwellings per hectare.

Employment development

2.11 Scenario description: large block warehouse-type buildings, typically two storeys high. These could be stand-alone buildings or located within a large complex of similar warehouses.

2.12 There are only two sites within this study with potential identified for employment development at Eastham, near Ellesmere Port (SP50/51).

Assessment process

Desk study

2.13 The first task in the assessment process, following the definition of the sites for assessment, was to carry out a desk-top analysis for each area. This involved the mapping of multiple data sets within ArcGIS (Geographical Information System) to identify the potential sensitivities of each area. An example of the data sets utilised for the study is shown in Figure 2.1.

Field verification

2.14 A structured process of field survey verification was undertaken by landscape environment experts in order to test and refine the outputs from the desk study. Each area for assessment was visited in turn to record information and take photographs. The field survey was undertaken from roads and public rights of way.

2.15 The survey work looked in particular at the visual relationships between the assessment area and adjoining settlement, landscape settings and wider views, the condition of individual landscape features, and perceptual qualities (i.e. levels of tranquillity).

Reporting

2.16 The report sets out the purpose, policy context and methodology of the study, and the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for each assessment area.

2.17 The evaluation for each assessment area as part of this study includes the following information:

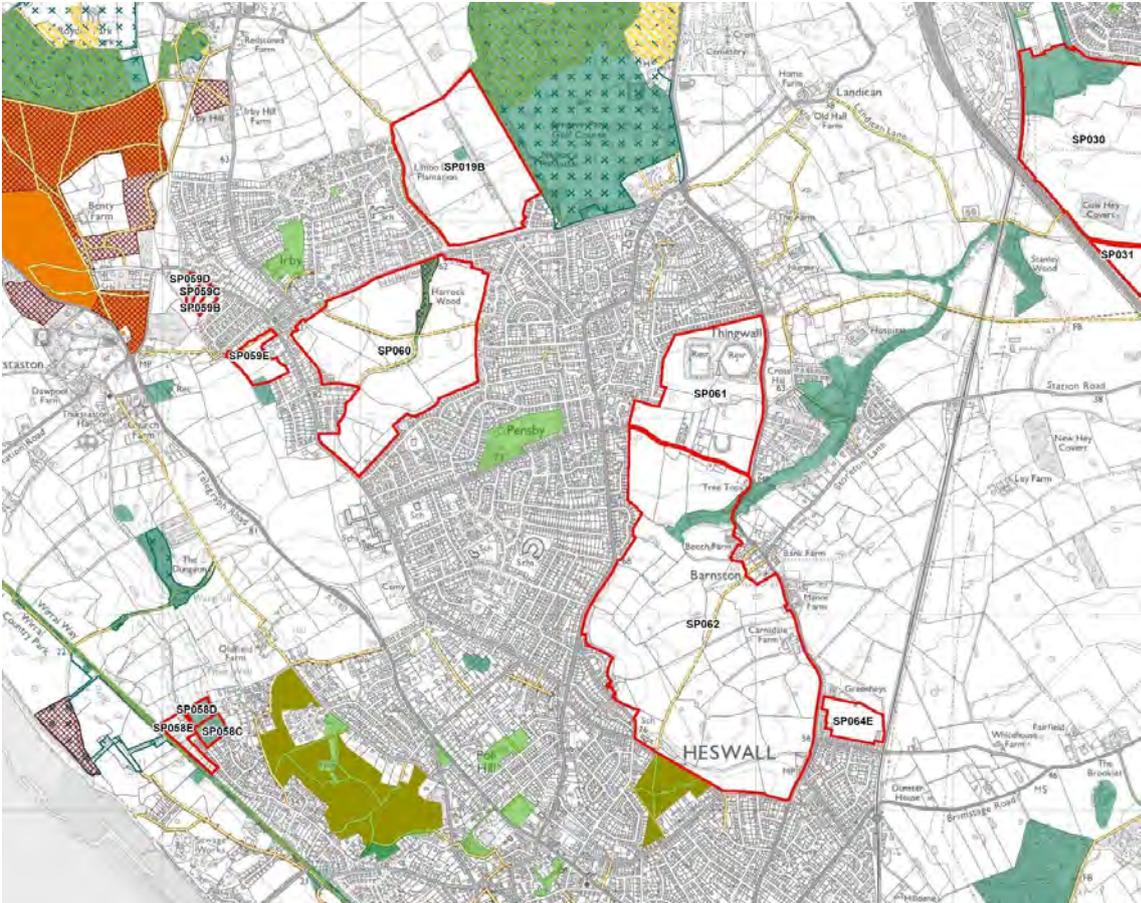
- A short description of the area including location and landscape character context;
- Landscape value context, in terms of any relevant national and local landscape designations;
- Analysis against the assessment criteria with a description given against each of the assessment criteria;
- Evaluation of landscape sensitivity for the assessment area with an overall judgement/rating (as defined in Table 2.1); and
- Broad guidance applicable to potential development within each area.

2.18 Each area evaluation also includes:

- An Ordnance Survey based map (plotted to 1:25,000 scale) showing the boundary of the assessment area and relevant designations;
- An aerial photograph showing the boundary of the assessment area (which may include a single site or a number of sites) and its immediate context; and
- Representative photographs.

2.19 Assessment results are summarised in tabular form in Table 3.1 and a map is provided to visualise the results of the assessment of landscape sensitivity in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: ArcGIS screenshot showing some of the data sets utilised for spatial sensitivity analysis



Chapter 3

Project findings

Overall landscape sensitivity assessment results

3.1 A summary of the overall landscape sensitivity ratings for each of the assessment areas is provided in Table 3.1. These ratings are also mapped in Figure 3.1.

3.2 Detailed findings for each landscape assessment area are presented in Appendix A. Please note that the overall judgement scores should always be interpreted in conjunction with the information contained in the detailed profiles.

Table 3.1: Summary of results

Landscape sensitivity area	Landscape sensitivity assessment
SP001	Moderate
SP002A	Low
SP002B	Low
SP002C	Moderate
SP003	High
SP004A	Moderate-High
SP005A	Moderate-High
SP010A	Low-Moderate
SP013	High / Moderate-High

Landscape sensitivity area	Landscape sensitivity assessment
SP015A	Low
SP016	High
SP019B	Moderate
SP025B	Low
SP030	Moderate
SP031	Moderate
SP032	Moderate-High
SP033	Moderate-High
SP034	Moderate-High
SP035	Moderate-High
SP036	Moderate-High
SP037	Moderate-High
SP038	Low
SP039	Low
SP040	Low-Moderate
SP041	Moderate-High
SP042	Moderate
SP043	Moderate-High / Moderate
SP044	Moderate-High
SP045	Moderate
SP046	Low-Moderate
SP047	Moderate
SP048	Moderate
SP049	Low-Moderate
SP050	Moderate

Landscape sensitivity area	Landscape sensitivity assessment
SP051	Low-Moderate
SP052	High
SP054	High / Moderate
SP055	Moderate
SP058C	Moderate-High
SP058D	Moderate-High
SP058E	Moderate
SP059B	Low
SP059C	Low
SP059D	Low
SP059E	Moderate
SP060	Moderate
SP061	Low-Moderate
SP062	Moderate-High
SP064E	Low-Moderate
SP071	Low-Moderate
SP108	Low
SP109	Low-Moderate

Appendix A: Landscape Sensitivity Assessments



Appendix A

Landscape Sensitivity Assessments

Area reference: SP001

Figure A.1: Map of the area with designations / constraints

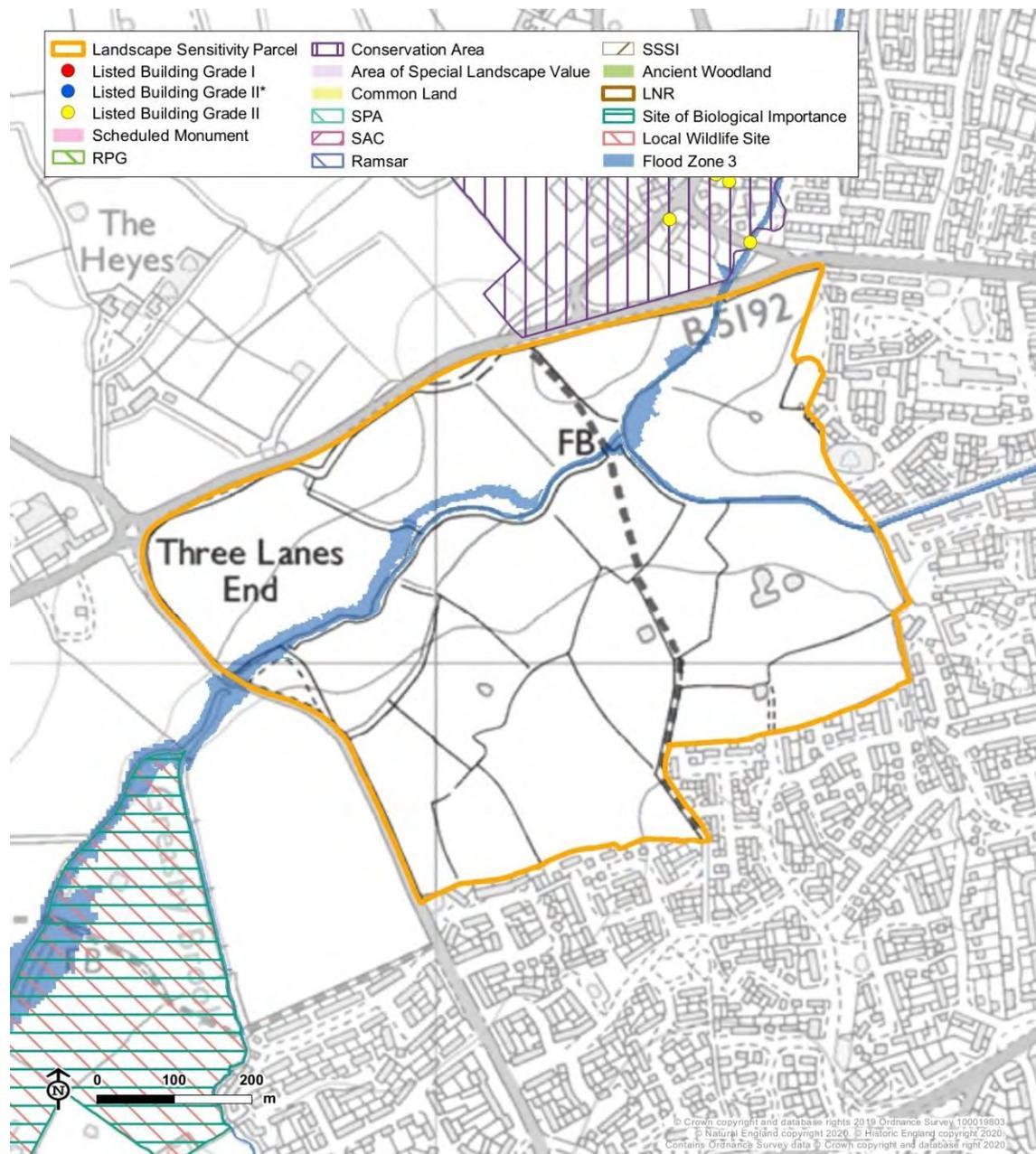


Figure A.2: Aerial photograph of the area



**Woodland copse and informal open space in the east set
against the settlement edge of Greasby**



Gently undulating landform with fragmented hedgerows



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the north-west of the borough and lies to the north-west of Greasby. The B5192 Saughall Massie Road and Pump Lane form the northern and western boundaries respectively. The village of Saughall Massie is situated adjacent to the north-eastern corner of the area.

The area lies within the The Birket Landscape Character Area, forming part of the River Floodplain Landscape Character Type. It comprises low-lying gently undulating ground with Arrowe Brook and Greasby Brook meandering through the landscape and small-medium scale pastoral fields. The area accommodates Saughall Massie Community fire station in the north-east and areas used for equestrian activities, including stables in the north-west and Greasby Equestrian Centre south-east.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, Arrowe Brook and Greasby Brook are key features distinctive for their meandering nature which have influenced the irregular field pattern of the area. The Conservation Area at Saughall Massie (which lies adjacent to the north of the area) contributes to the overall value, although there is very limited intervisibility between it and the area.

The area's use as pastoral farmland for livestock limits its recreational value, although there is a public right of way that crosses the area, providing a connection between Saughall Massie (and the B5192) in the north and Bromsgrove Road in Greasby in the south, as well as a network of informal paths on public open space in the north-east.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP001 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The gentle sloping landform falls from both the B5192 in the north (15m AOD) and the settlement edge of Greasby in the south (20m AOD) towards Arrowe Brook and Greasby Brook which flow west to east through the middle of the area indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development. Around the brooks the topography is more undulating and rising ground exists towards woodland on the edge of Greasby increasing the sensitivity to residential development.

The area has a pattern of irregular fields (partly due to the meandering nature of Arrowe Brook and Greasby Brook) that are small to medium in size and mostly formed by mature hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees, providing a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The majority of the area consists of pasture used for livestock grazing with smaller areas relating to equestrian activities. The area accommodates some existing development (Saughall Massie Community Fire Station in the north-east, a collection of stables in the south-east and single stable building in the north-west), resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

Pockets of higher sensitivity to residential development exist where there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats and valued natural features including a wooded copse in the east, hedgerows (including those lining the courses of Arrowe Brook and Greasby Brook) enhanced occasionally with hedgerow trees, small pockets of trees/ shrubs surrounding occasional field ponds and mature trees along the settlement edge. In some places, hedgerows are fragmented

and post and wire fencing occurs which lowers the sensitivity to residential development.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains a relatively diverse time depth which increases sensitivity to residential development.

The area comprises a high concentration of ancient fieldscapes (pre-1600); namely the small-medium scale irregular field pattern along the northern edge which is categorised as Medieval Town Fields and a larger proportion of irregular Ancient Field Systems forming the southern part of the area, which increases sensitivity to residential development in these areas.

Lower levels of sensitivity to residential development exist in the north-eastern part of the area which is categorised as 20th Century Settlement and contains the Saughall Massie Community Fire Station set within an area of informal open space.

There are no heritage assets within the area; however the area lies directly south of the village of Saughall Massie (located north of the B5192) which is designated as a Conservation Area and an area of archaeological importance. The area is also screened as medium for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area plays a role in the separation of Saughall Massie in the north and the settlement edge in the south at Greasby, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. The gap is best perceived when travelling along the public right of way running through the area which provides a connection between Saughall Massie (and the B5192) in the north and Bromsgrove Road in Greasby in the south.

Appendix A Area reference: SP001

The area provides a rural setting to Saughall Massie, although a high hedgerow along the northern edge of the B5192 (marking the edge of the Conservation Area) and the wooded character of the village restricts intervisibility with the area. It is however acknowledged that any residential development proposed close to the B5192 could overlook the hedge and be visible from the village, adversely affecting its setting, which indicates higher levels of sensitivity to residential development in this area.

The area also provides a rural setting to the Greasby settlement edge; however vegetation along the boundary of the area integrates this settlement edge into the landscape and limits the intervisibility with the area. Development may therefore adversely affect the existing settlement edge to some extent, resulting in higher sensitivity to residential development. Parts of Greasby are of lower sensitivity to residential development where the setting is already influenced by the built form associated with the fire station and stables.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development to the south and east, as well as by woodland in the east and around Saughall Massie, indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development. The mature field boundary hedgerows, accented by the relatively flat landform, result in a sense of enclosure, limiting the intervisibility with the surrounding landscape which also lowers the sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

Although largely a rural agricultural landscape, the area is influenced by urban fringe elements including the equestrian uses and fire station in the east, reducing sensitivity. The area is already influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources, and therefore decreasing the sensitivity to residential development. The B5192 in the north is a relatively busy road resulting in aural intrusion.

The north-eastern part of the area exists as an area with informal grass paths providing a circular route, accessible from the edge of Greasby. There is a sense of separation and remoteness away from the urban edge provided by the wooded copse and the vegetated meanders along the brooks which create enclosure and a perceived naturalness, resulting in a higher sensitivity to residential development in this area.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate

The gently sloping landform, the presence of buildings (mainly in the east), surrounding human influences and equestrian uses (which are typical of the urban fringe) lower sensitivity across the area. However sensitivity is increased given the presence of the vegetated meandering brooks, semi-natural habitats (including the wooded copse), small-medium scale irregular historic field patterns, the rural setting of the area and to the Saughall Massie Conservation Area and Greasby settlement edge and its role in contributing towards a perceived gap between settlements. Overall, the area is considered to have moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.

- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented and replace post and wire fencing with native hedgerow species.
- Preserve the natural meandering character of Arrowe Brook and Greasby Brook, avoiding development that will change their course or introduce artificial banks.
- Retain and manage the area of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland, new hedgerows and tree lines across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape (consistent with the priorities of the River Birket Corridor Nature Improvement Area), as well as to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve the rural character and small to medium scale intact historic field pattern, particularly ancient fieldscapes in proximity to Saughall Massie where the area contributes towards the setting of the Conservation Area.
- Conserve the mixture of vegetated and open field ponds which are characteristic features of the area.
- Ensure the function of the area as a perceived gap is maintained by providing a clear physical and visual separation between adjacent settlements.
- Protect and enhance the public right of way connecting Saughall Massie to Bromsgrove Road (Greasby) and promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape, particularly along the river corridors, in association with any new development.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP002A/SP002B

Figure A.3: Map of the area with designations / constraints

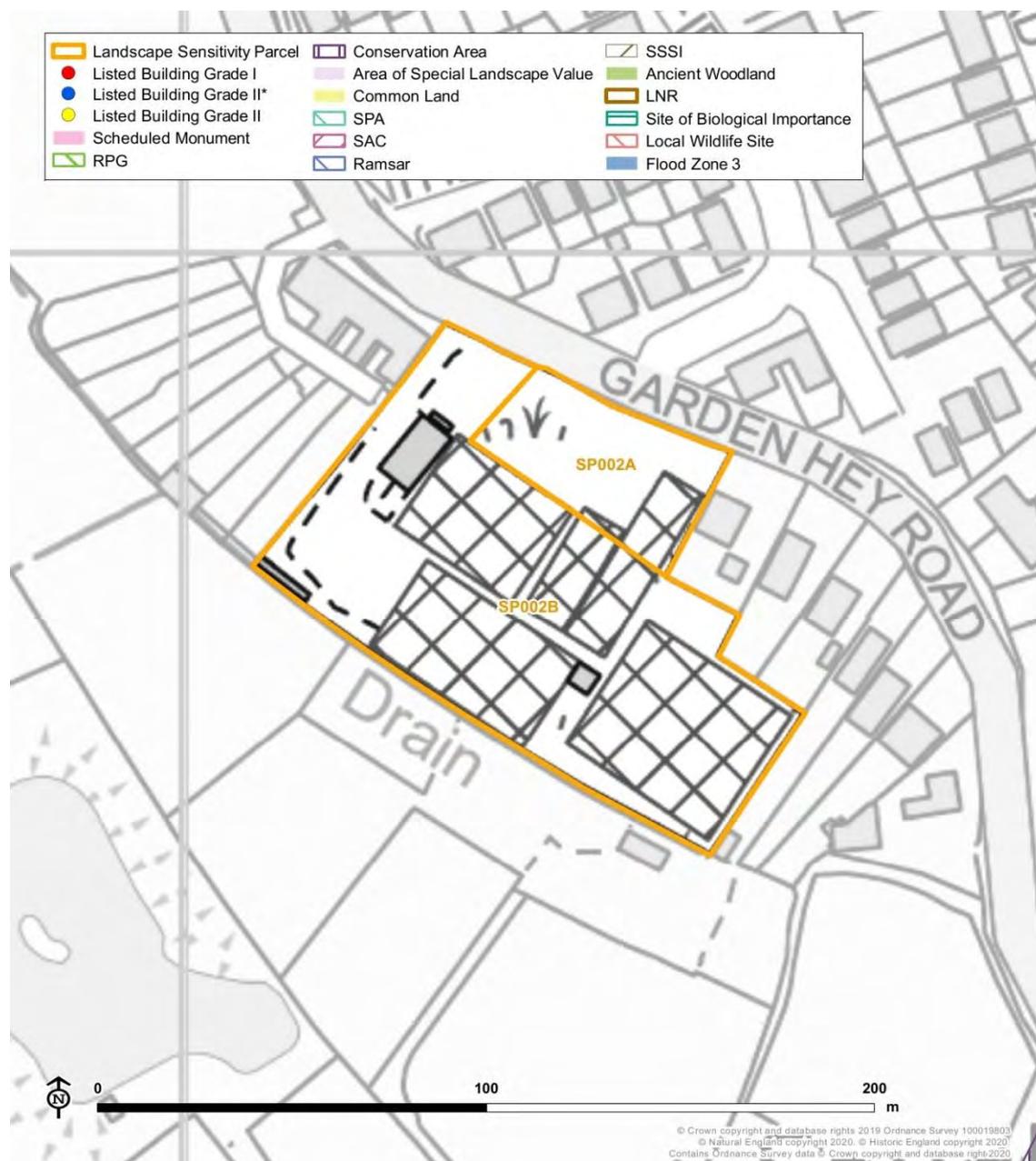
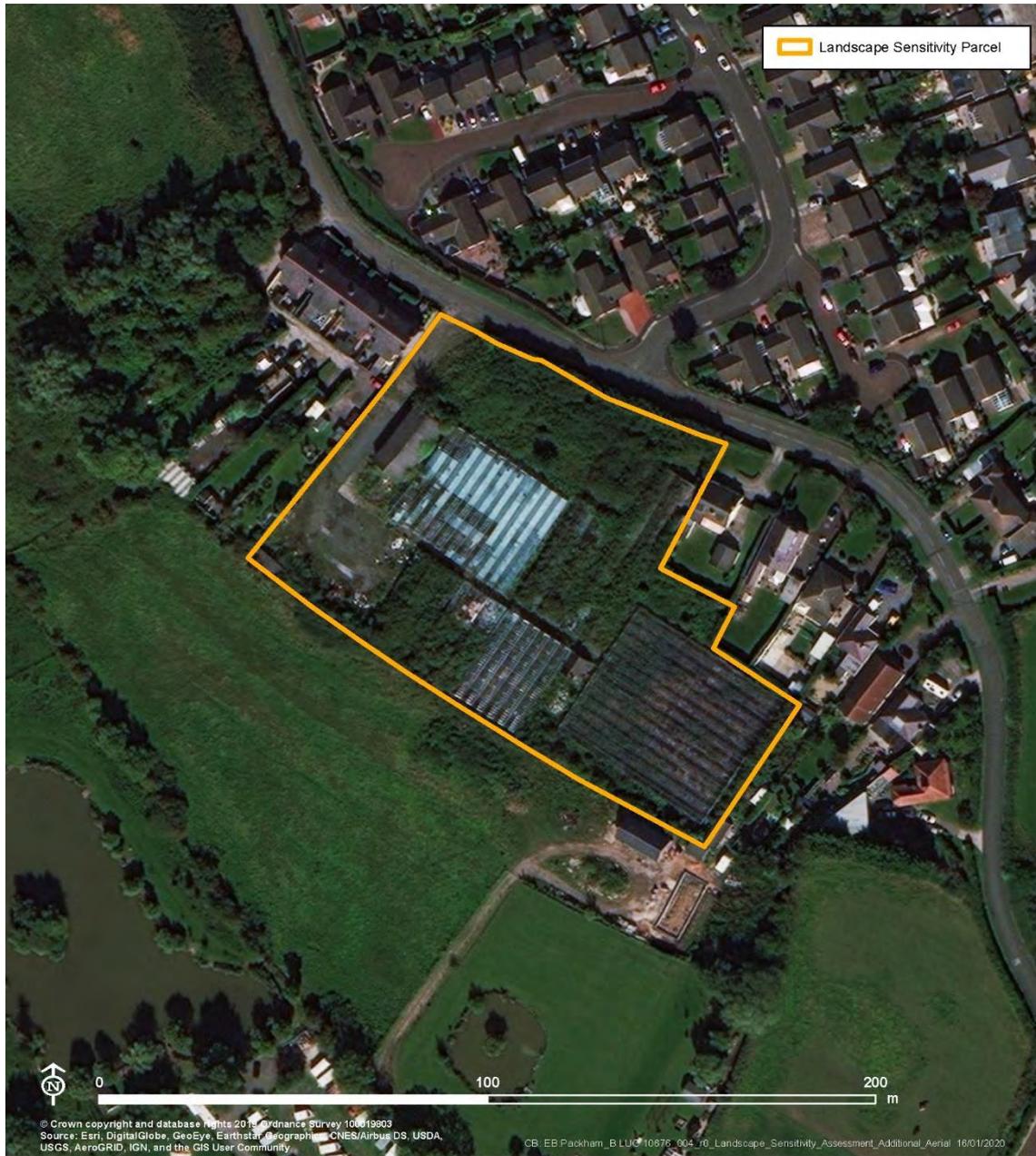


Figure A.4: Aerial photograph of the area



Sheds and glasshouses in a dilapidated condition



Overgrown scrub vegetation dominates throughout the area



Location and landscape character context

The area (incorporating SP002A and SP002B) is situated in the north-west of the borough and lies to the south-west of Moreton and north-west of Saughall Massie village, along the south-western edge of Garden Hey Road. The area lies between properties that are situated along the road and which abut its eastern and western boundaries. A hedgerow defines the southern boundary with fields and Barnacre Coarse Fishing Lake located beyond.

The area lies within The Birket Landscape Character Area, forming part of the River Floodplain Landscape Character Type. It is derelict, containing an array of glasshouses and sheds, and has been left to colonise resulting in overgrown scrub vegetation covering the area.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). Lack of management has resulted in the formation of natural scrub habitats.

Public access into the area is restricted, resulting in no recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP002A / SP002B Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The flat and featureless landform indicates low levels of sensitivity to residential development. The existing buildings within the area, comprising large glasshouses and sheds, also lower levels of sensitivity as they influence the scale of development that can be accommodated in the landscape.

Natural Character

The existing glasshouses and sheds form a large proportion of the area, therefore lowering the sensitivity to residential development. The overgrown nature of the area has resulted in the formation of natural habitats, predominantly scrub vegetation that covers most of the area as well as the boundary hedgerows, resulting in higher levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Historic Landscape Character

The area does not contain an identifiable field pattern given its developed and overgrown nature. There is no sense of time depth and the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation categorises it as 20th Century Industry, indicating low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

There are no heritage assets within the area.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area does not contribute positively to the setting of Moreton, given its dilapidated condition or play a separation role between Moreton and Saughall

Massie. Future development in the area would have a good relationship with the existing settlement form and pattern, and would improve the existing settlement edge of Moreton, therefore indicating low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development and tall hedgerow boundaries that contain it, resulting in a low degree of visibility from the surrounding landscape and indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The area is significantly influenced by development and human activity within and surrounding it. New development would not be out of character and would be an improvement from the areas neglected state, resulting in low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low

The flat landform, dilapidated character, presence of large buildings, surrounding human influences, absence of historic features and visual containment lower the sensitivity across the area. The natural habitats that have formed from the scrub vegetation that covers the area slightly increases sensitivity. However, overall, the area is considered to have a low sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and manage hedgerows as important wildlife habitats and landscape features.
- Conserve, enhance and manage any other valued habitats that have formed within the area.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP002C

Figure A.5: Map of the area with designations / constraints

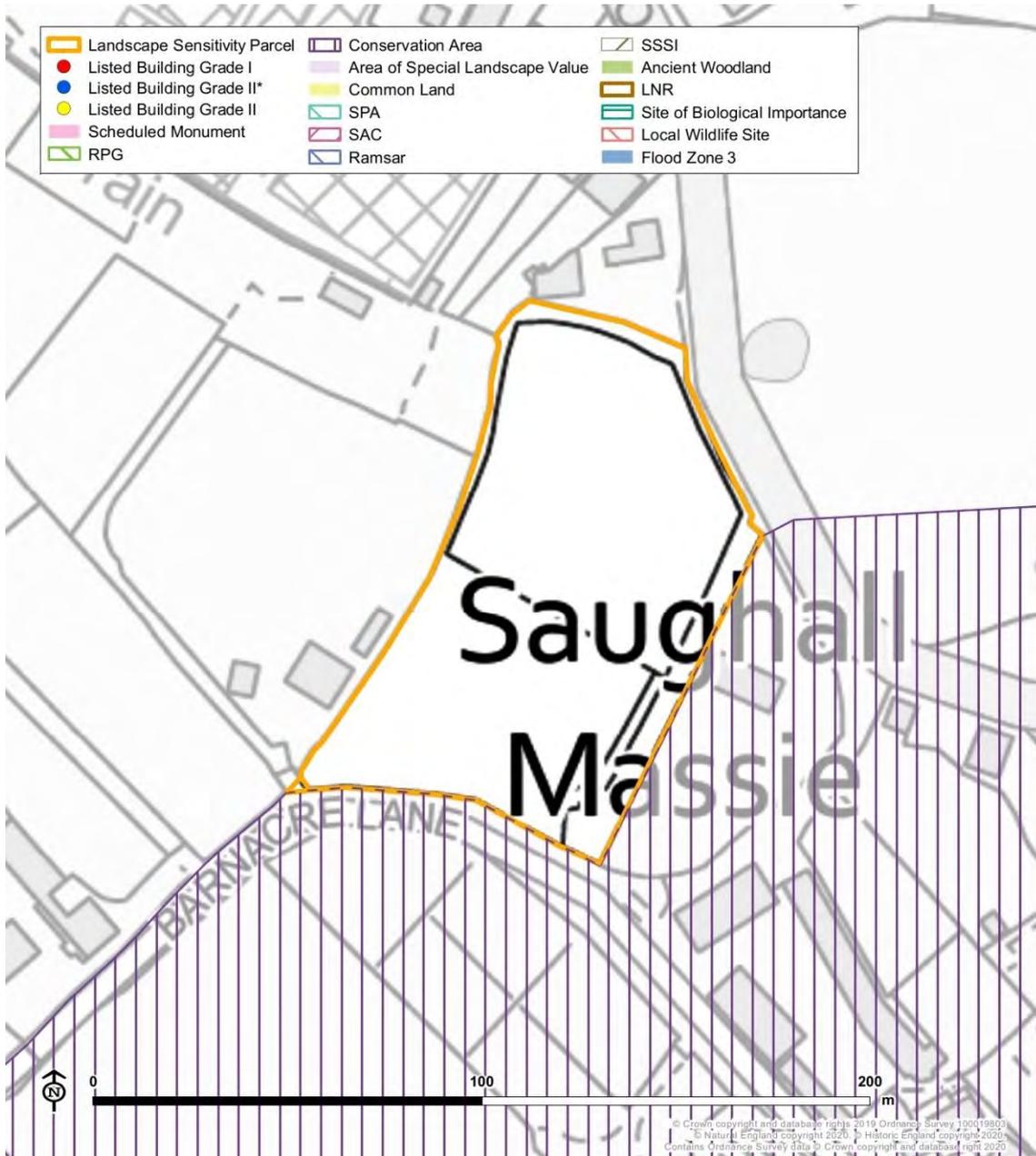


Figure A.6: Aerial photograph of the area



Pastoral field used for horse grazing



Surrounding development encloses the area



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the north-west of the borough and lies to the south of Moreton and to the north-west of Saughall Massie village. Garden Hey Road runs along its north-eastern boundary and Barnacre Lane forms the southern boundary. Detached properties surround the area to the north, east and west.

The area lies within The Birket Landscape Character Area, forming part of the River Floodplain Landscape Character Type. It comprises a small pastoral field grazed by horses and bounded by hedgerows with occasional trees.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). The Conservation Area at Saughall Massie which lies directly adjacent to the area contributes to the overall value, given the role that the area plays in providing a rural setting to it.

The area's use as working farmland for grazing restricts public access resulting in there being no recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP002C Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The flat and featureless landform indicates low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Hedgerows form the boundaries of the area with occasional hedgerow trees, providing some small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The area consists of pasture used for grazing by horses and does not contain any built development, although fencing and fencing tape is a frequent feature across the area. There is limited coverage by semi-natural habitats resulting in a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Valued natural features consist of the hedgerows that bound the area enhanced occasionally with hedgerow trees (although these typically lie within property boundaries abutting the area), which increases the sensitivity to residential development.

Historic Landscape Character

The area forms part of a wider field pattern of ancient fieldscapes (pre-1600), being categorised in the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation as Medieval Town Fields which surround the village of Saughall Massie. This results in the area having a sense of time depth, increasing the sensitivity to residential development.

There are no heritage assets within the area; however the Saughall Massie Conservation Area wraps around the southern and eastern boundaries of the

area and is an area of archaeological importance. The area was also screened as medium for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area plays a role in the separation of Saughall Massie village from development that has occurred to the north along Garden Hey Road (forming part of Moreton), resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. The gap is best perceived when travelling along Garden Hey Road.

The area also provides a rural setting to Saughall Massie village which residential development would adversely affect, as recognised in the Saughall Massie Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan [See reference 8] which states, '*The agricultural land outside the conservation area is also critical to its setting and visual character.*' This indicates higher levels of sensitivity to residential development.

The existing development surrounding the area is relatively well integrated into the landscape by trees and hedgerows and collectively comprises a dispersed settlement pattern where dwellings are typically located within large property boundaries. Development in the area is therefore likely to be at odds with the surrounding settlement pattern, resulting in higher sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The low-lying area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development, hedgerows and woodland around Saughall Massie, indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development. Intervisibility is restricted with the wider landscape because of the surrounding coverage of built form and vegetation.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

Although being an undeveloped and rural agricultural landscape, the area is influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources, and therefore decreasing the sensitivity to residential development. In addition, the fencing and fencing tape scattered across the area form a visual detractor.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate

The flat and featureless landform, the limited coverage of semi-natural habitats, the visual enclosure and surrounding human influences lower sensitivity across the area. However sensitivity is increased as the area forms part of a historic field pattern, as well as the role it plays in providing a rural setting to Saughall Massie Conservation Area and contributing towards a perceived gap between settlements. Overall, the area is considered to have moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Preserve the area's contribution towards the wider pattern of ancient fieldscapes in proximity to Saughall Massie village.

- Conserve the rural character of the area which contributes towards the setting of the Saughall Massie Conservation Area.
- Ensure the function of the area as a perceived gap is maintained by providing a clear physical and visual separation between adjacent settlements.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP003

Figure A.7: Map of the area with designations / constraints

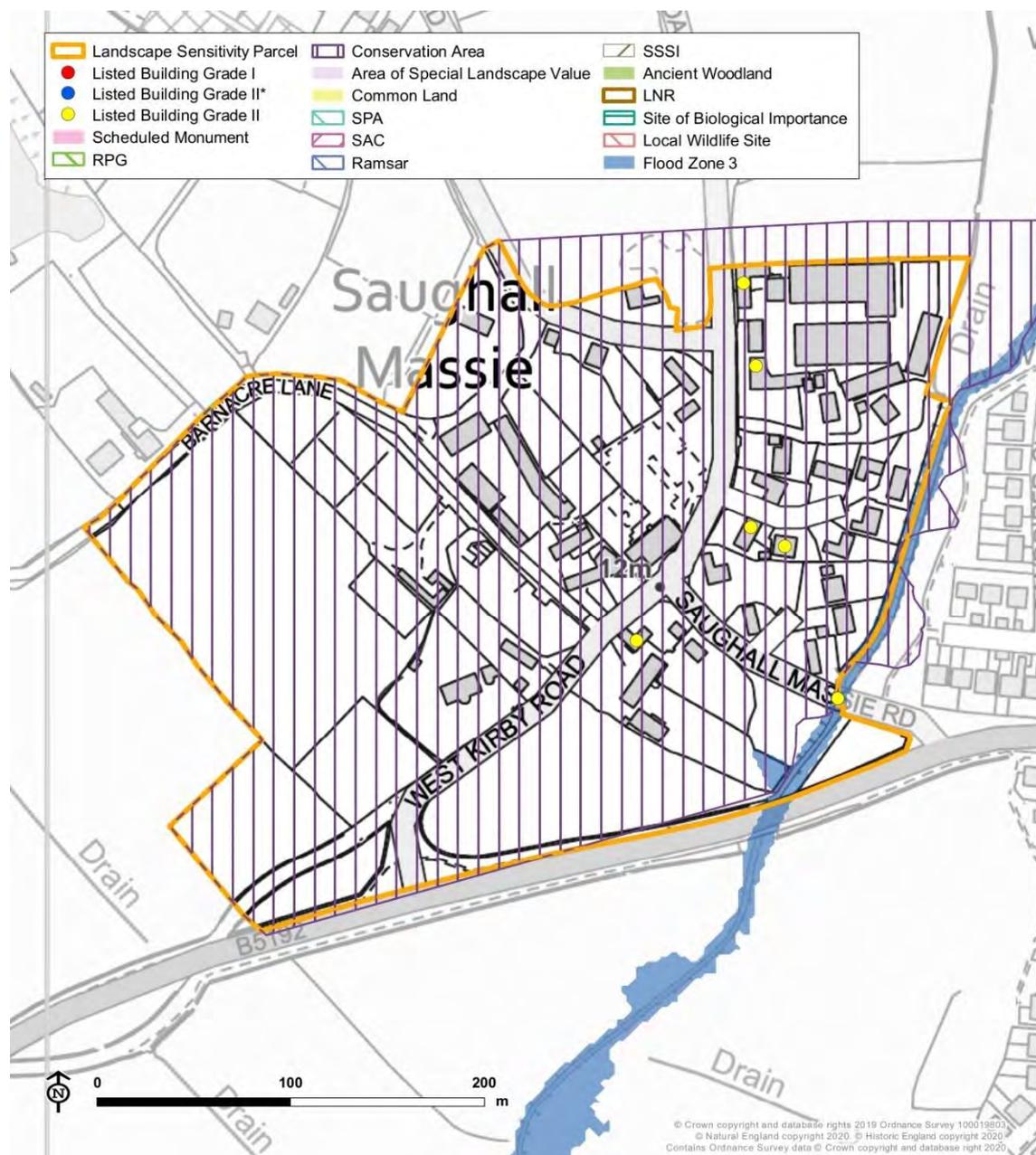


Figure A.8: Aerial photograph of the area



Small pastoral field in the south enclosed by the wooded character of the village and bounded by Arrow Brook



Fragmented hedgerow boundary to the western ifield reinforced by post and wire fencing



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the north-west of the borough and lies to the south and west of Moreton. It follows the Saughall Massie Conservation Area boundary and is separated from the surrounding settlements by agricultural fields to the north and Arroe Brook and associated floodplain to the east. It is contained by the B5192 Saughall Massie Road along its southern edge.

The area lies within The Birket Landscape Character Area, forming part of the River Floodplain Landscape Character Type. It is occupied by the historic village of Saughall Massie which includes residential dwellings and two working farms. It is adjoined by small scale pastoral fields to the south and west which lie within the area boundary.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, the Conservation Area at Saughall Massie (which is encompassed fully by the area) contributes significantly to the overall value. Arroe Brook is a key feature along the eastern edge of the area, contributing towards the setting of Saughall Massie as well as the Moreton settlement edge to the east.

The area is accessible from a number of roads that run through the village including Saughall Road (providing a connection between the B5192 in the south and Moreton in the north). Access to the village is also provided by a public right of way that runs between the B5192 Saughall Massie Road (in the south-west) and Bromsgrove Road in Greasby in the south, providing some recreational value. The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP003 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The landform falls gently from the western edge of the village (15m AOD) to Arrove Brook (10m AOD) which flows south to north along the eastern boundary, indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Most of the area is occupied by the village and is characterised by existing dwellings and larger sheds associated with two working farms, influencing the scale of development that can be accommodated in the landscape. Sensitivity to residential development increases as the village comprises a wooded character with frequent trees providing a modest density of small-scale landscape features, along with mature hedgerows that bound the fields to the south and west of the village.

Natural Character

Given that the majority of the area consists of built form associated with the village and the adjoining fields to the south and west are managed as pasture, there is limited coverage of semi-natural habitats resulting in a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Pockets of higher sensitivity to residential development exist where there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats and valued natural features including priority habitat lowland mixed broad-leaf woodland copse in the south-east, clumps of trees throughout the village and hedgerows (including those bounding the pastoral fields to the south and west of the village) enhanced occasionally with hedgerow trees.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains a sense of time depth which increases the sensitivity to residential

development. Ancient fieldscapes (pre-1600) that have been categorised as Medieval Town Fields immediately surround the village and form part of a wider pattern of ancient fieldscapes that stretch towards the settlement of Meols in the north-west. Sensitivity to residential development slightly decreases where 20th century development has occurred around the periphery of the village core.

The area encompasses the Saughall Massie Conservation Area, which is also an area of archaeological importance, along with its associated historic buildings and bridge (all Grade II listed), resulting in a high level of sensitivity to residential development.

The area was screened as high for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The village of Saughall Massie is a distinctive settlement of historic origin which is reflected in its designation as a Conservation Area. As most of the area is overlain by existing dwellings there is little opportunity for the area to accommodate additional development, which would be limited to infill development within the village or within the surrounding fields to the south and west. However, these fields also lie within the Conservation Area, and contribute towards providing a rural setting for the village. This is recognised in the Saughall Massie Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan **[See reference 9]** which states, 'The agricultural land outside the conservation area is also critical to its setting and visual character'.

Further development would have a poor relationship with the existing loose form and informal pattern of the village and would lead to its expansion, resulting in a loss of identity, and diminishing the sense of arrival when entering the village off the B5192 Saughall Massie Road in the south. This therefore indicates high levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by its wooded character and by the surrounding settlement of Moreton to the north and east, resulting in lower levels of sensitivity to residential development. The groups of trees within the village

provide a backdrop and form features on the skyline when viewed from the edge of Moreton in the north and when approaching the village along Saughall Road, indicating higher sensitivity to residential development.

There is clear intervisibility between the village and Moreton in the east given their proximity to one another (<40m). The adjoining fields to the south are less visible from the surrounding landscape as they are enclosed by mature hedgerows and groups of trees, indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development. The flat open fields to the west are also bounded by hedgerows; however these are more fragmented (and reinforced by post and wire fencing) resulting in some intervisibility with the surrounding landscape to the west, indicating higher sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

Much of the area contains existing development that contributes towards the identity of the historic village through its vernacular design. Despite the proximity of surrounding settlements, the village retains a strong rural character. However light glow from within the village limits dark night skies through existing light sources including street lighting along Saughall Road, indicating lower sensitivity to residential development. There is also some aural intrusion from Saughall Road and Saughall Massie Road (B5192) to the south.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

High

The gentle sloping landform, the limited coverage of semi-natural habitats, the visual enclosure provided by trees within the village and surrounding human influences lower sensitivity. However, the historic associations of the area as a Conservation Area, the historic field patterns, the contribution of the surrounding fields towards the setting of the village and the identity of the village through its settlement pattern, strong vernacular and wooded character increase sensitivity.

Although there are some characteristics that lower sensitivity to residential development (as noted above), future development would lead to significant change to the Conservation Area. Therefore, the area is considered to have a high sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Retain and manage the area of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland, new hedgerows and tree lines across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape (consistent with the priorities of the River Birket Corridor Nature Improvement Area), as well as to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve the rural character and small scale intact historic field pattern, particularly as these ancient fieldscapes contribute towards the setting of the Conservation Area.
- Preserve the areas contribution towards the wider pattern of ancient fieldscapes in proximity to Saughall Massie.

- Preserve rural views out from and surrounding Saughall Massie Conservation Area.
- Ensure the identity of the village is maintained by retaining its existing settlement pattern, strong vernacular and wooded character.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP004A / SP005A

Figure A.9: Map of the area with designations / constraints

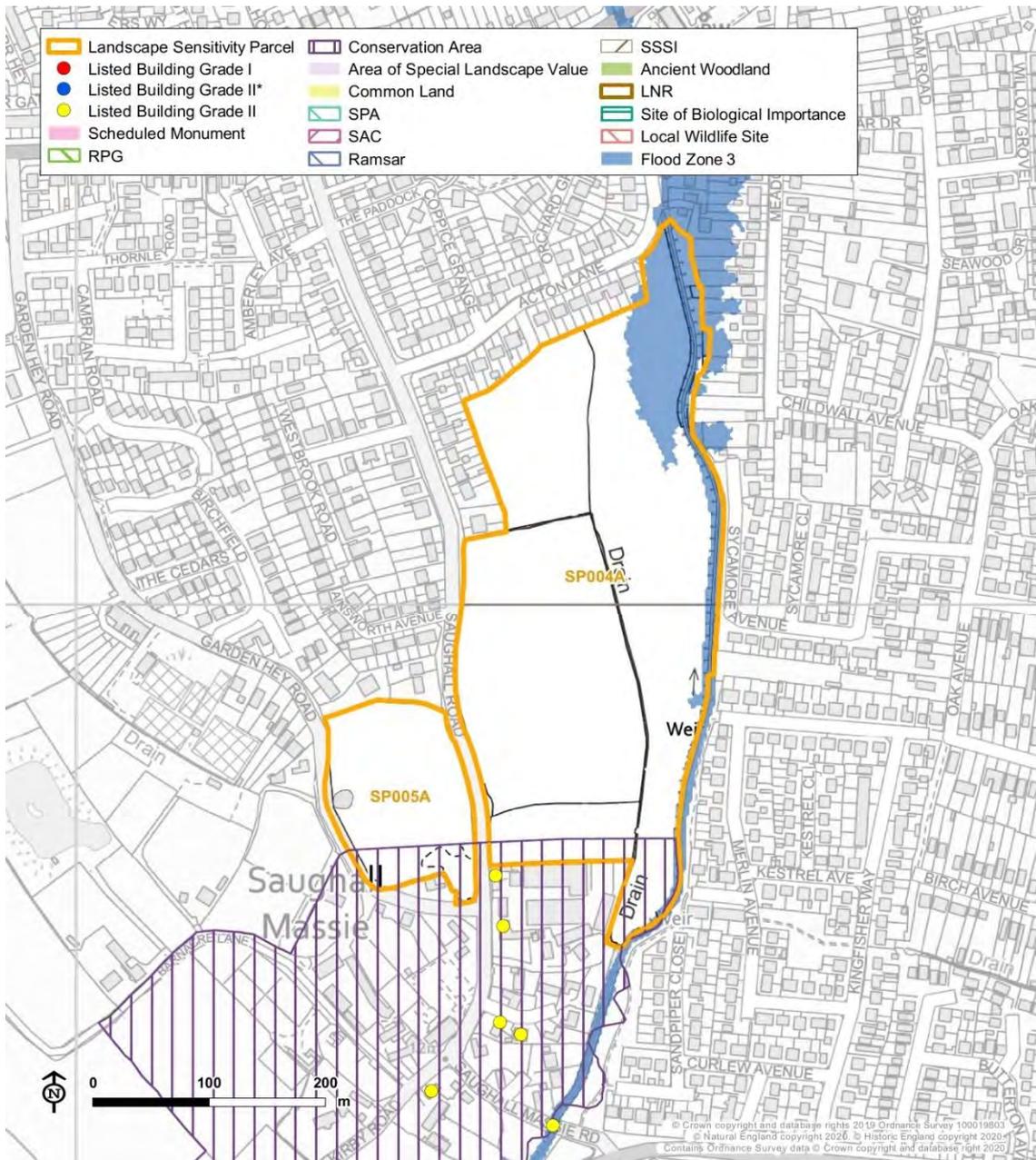


Figure A.10: Aerial photograph of the area



Diamond Farm on the edge of Saughall Massie Conservation Area



Edge of Moreton beyond fragmented hedgerow boundaries bounding pastoral fields



Location and landscape character context

The area (incorporating SP004A and SP005A) is situated in the north-west of the borough and lies to the south and west of Moreton, and to the north of Saughall Massie village. Garden Hey Road forms the western boundary and Saughall Road bisects the area (marking the division of the two land parcels).

The area lies within The Birket Landscape Character Area, forming part of the River Floodplain Landscape Character Type. It comprises small-medium scale pastoral fields on gently sloping ground, falling towards Arrove Brook which runs along the eastern edge of the area.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, Arrove Brook is a key feature along the eastern edge of the area, contributing to the setting of both Moreton and Saughall Massie settlement edges. The Conservation Area at Saughall Massie contributes to the overall value, extending into the southern edge of the area, and with clear intervisibility with most of the area.

The area's use as working farmland for grazing restricts public access, resulting in no recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP004A / SP005A Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The landform gently falls from the edge of Saughall Massie in the south-west (15m AOD) to Arrowse Brook (10m AOD) which flows south to north along the eastern boundary, indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development.

The area has a mixture of regular and irregular fields, which are small to medium in size and mostly bound by mature hedgerows/ The field pattern is partly due to the meandering nature of Arrowse Brook and Saughall Road which bisects the area. These hedgerows and the occasional trees that line Arrowse Brook, provide a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The area comprises areas that are farmed or managed for pastoral use and apart from Saughall Road which cuts through the area, is absent of existing development. However overall, there is limited coverage of seminatural habitats resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

Pockets of valued natural features consisting of hedgerows and hedgerow trees (including those lining the course of Arrowse Brook and along either side of Saughall Road and Garden Hey Road) and the group of shrubs surrounding a field pond in the south-west indicate higher sensitivity to residential development. In some places, hedgerows are fragmented and post and wire fencing occurs which lowers the sensitivity to residential development

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area comprises ancient fieldscapes (pre-1600) that have been categorised as Medieval Town Fields indicating a sense of time depth. This is characteristic of the landscape surrounding Saughall Massie and increases the sensitivity to residential development.

Land to the south within the area, which buffers the village core of Saughall Massie, forms part of its conservation area, making this part of the area highly sensitive to residential development. SP005A lies within an area of archaeological importance.

There are no other heritage assets within the area.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area plays a role in the separation of Moreton to the north and east from Saughall Massie village in the south, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. There is intervisibility between the two settlements, although the gap is best perceived when travelling along both Saughall Road and Garden Hey Road.

The area also provides a highly rural setting to Saughall Massie village which residential development would adversely affect, particularly alongside the Conservation Area where it contributes towards the setting of Diamond Farmhouse and attached barn (Grade II listed) where there is clear intervisibility with the area. This is recognised in the Saughall Massie Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan [\[See reference 10\]](#) which states, 'The agricultural land outside the conservation area is also critical to its setting and visual character.' This indicates higher levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Much of the Moreton urban area is exposed to the area, and further development could be in accordance with the pattern and form of this existing development, while providing opportunities to improve and integrate the hard settlement edge. However the area provides a rural setting to these settlement

edges with uninterrupted views afforded from some areas towards Saughall Massie, where groups of trees within the village provide a backdrop and form features on the skyline indicating a higher level of sensitivity. Arrowe Brook contributes towards the identity of the Moreton settlement edge along the eastern boundary of the area, increasing the sensitivity to residential development in this area.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed on most of its sides by surrounding built development, including large farm sheds to the south, restricting intervisibility with the wider landscape and indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development. However, the ground is slightly elevated along its eastern edge above Arrowe Brook resulting in some visual prominence when viewed from areas to the east, increasing sensitivity to residential development in this area. The area also contributes towards the setting of Arrowe Brook, with varying levels of openness and enclosure along its course.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

Although largely a rural agricultural landscape, the area is influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources including street lighting along Saughall Road, and therefore decreasing the sensitivity to residential development. There is also some aural intrusion from Saughall Road.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate-High

The presence of the vegetated Arrowe Brook (contributing towards the identity of the Moreton settlement edge), elevated ground in the west (resulting in some visual prominence), historic field patterns, the role the area plays in contributing towards a perceived gap between settlements and its contribution towards the setting of Saughall Massie Conservation Area, increases sensitivity. Sensitivity is slightly lowered by the gently sloping landform, limited coverage of semi-natural habitats high mature hedgerows along road boundaries and surrounding human influences. Overall, the area is considered to have a moderate-high sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing native woodland planting.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented and replace post and wire fencing with native hedgerow species.
- Pursue opportunities to plant native woodland, new hedgerows and tree lines across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape (consistent with the priorities of the River Birket Corridor Nature Improvement Area), as well as to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Preserve the open setting and natural meandering character of Arrowe Brook, avoiding development that will change its course or introduce artificial banks.
- Conserve the rural character and small to medium scale intact historic field pattern, particularly in proximity to Saughall Massie village where the area contributes towards the setting of the Conservation Area.

- Conserve the field pond which is a characteristic feature of the area.
- Avoid visually intrusive development on more elevated areas along the western edge of the area.
- Ensure the function of the area as a perceived gap is maintained by providing a clear physical and visual separation between Saughall Massie, Moreton and Upton.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP010A

Figure A.11: Map of the area with designations / constraints

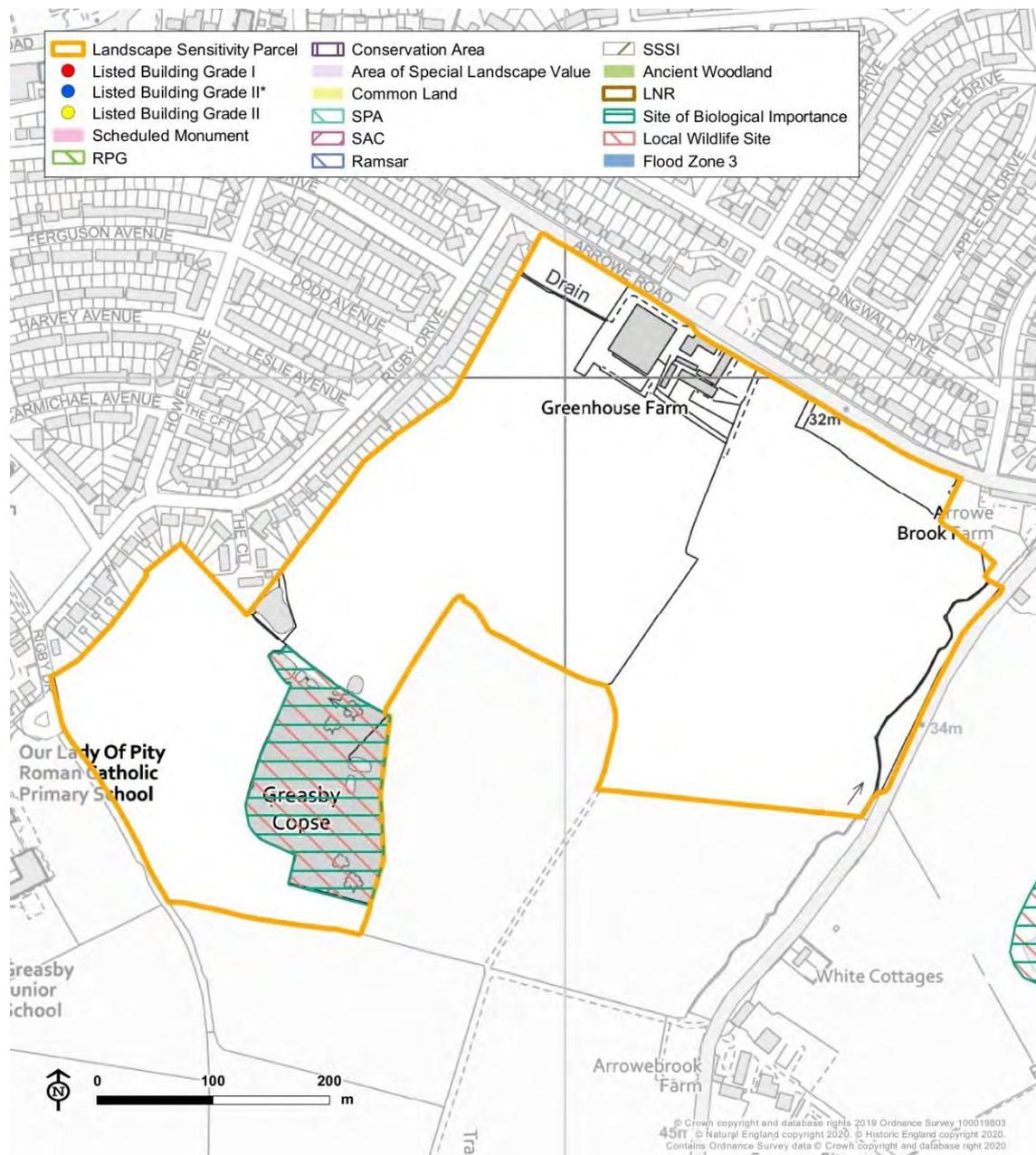


Figure A.12: Aerial photograph of the area



Pastoral fields on sloping ground



Greasby Copse



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the west of the borough and lies to the south-east of Greasby. It is irregular in shape with field boundaries defining the majority of its edges. Arrowe Road and Arrowe Brook Lane run along the north-eastern and eastern boundaries respectively.

The area lies within the Thurstaston and Greasby Landscape Character Area, forming part of the Sandstone Hills Landscape Character Type. Gentle slopes falling towards Arrowe Brook in the north and east and Greasby Brook in the west characterise the area, which comprises pasture farmland in the form of small-medium scale fields.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, the Greasby Copse and Ponds is a key feature, distinctive for its vegetation and valued for its contribution to biodiversity, designated as a Local Wildlife Site / Site of Biological Importance.

The area's use as working farmland for grazing restricts public access resulting in there being no recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP010A Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The gently undulating landform falls to the east and north-west (from 50m to 30m AOD) from a local high point just south of the area, indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development.

The area is overlain by a pattern of geometric and rectangular fields that are small to medium in size and mostly formed by hedgerows (although hedgerow trees are largely absent within the area). Greasby Copse lies in the south-west and a small amount of tree cover lines a drain along the eastern boundary. Overall there is a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

Much of the area comprises areas that are farmed or managed for pastoral use, associated with dairy production at Appleby's Farm off Arrowe Road in the north. There is some existing development present; namely a cluster of buildings at the farm, and a limited coverage of semi-natural habitats resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

A higher sensitivity to residential development exists where there is an area of priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland at Greasby Copse (forming part of the designated Greasby Copse and Ponds Local Wildlife Site / Site of Biological Importance). Valued natural features include hedgerows and small pockets of trees/ shrubs surrounding field ponds in the south-west as well as lining a field drain along the eastern boundary.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains little time depth which decreases sensitivity to residential development.

A large proportion of the area consists of Post Medieval Fieldsapes, with fields categorised as Late Post Medieval Agricultural Improvement in the west. Greasby Copse is characterised as a Post Medieval Plantation. In the east, the land is categorised as 20th Century Field Systems.

There are no designated heritage assets within the area, however it was screened as high for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area is located within a larger area that separates the settlements of Greasby in the north from Irby in the south, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. The gap is best perceived when travelling along Mill Lane/Mill Hill Road which provides a connection between the two settlements; however the gap is weakened by limited intervisibility between the two settlements and ribbon development along the road.

Much of the Greasby urban area is exposed to the area, and further development could be in accordance with the pattern and form of this existing development, while providing opportunities to improve and integrate the hard settlement edge. The area provides a rural setting to this settlement edge with uninterrupted views afforded towards wooded skylines that include Greasby Copse and other surrounding woodland, indicating a high level of sensitivity.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is semi-enclosed by surrounding built development and by the woodland at Greasby Copse indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development. Although field boundaries are typically formed by low hedgerows within the area, intervisibility with the surrounding landscape is limited by the rising topography to the south.

Mature vegetated boundaries exist along the north-eastern and eastern edges of the area; namely the high hedgerow along Arrowe Road and the wooded character along Arrowe Brook, which also restrict views from the wider landscape.

Elevated ground in the south results in some visual prominence from surrounding areas (particularly from areas to the north-east) and increases the sensitivity to residential development in this area. Greasby Copse also provides a visually distinctive feature on the skyline from surrounding areas resulting in a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

Although largely an undeveloped and rural agricultural landscape, the area is influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources, which decreases the sensitivity to residential development. A small margin of land running along the edge of Arrowe Road in the north is used for equestrian related activities, and being associated as an urban fringe element, reduces sensitivity to residential development. There are pockets of tranquillity located away from the urban edge and enclosed by Greasby Copse which results in higher levels of tranquillity.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low-Moderate

The elevated nature of the landscape in the south (resulting in some visual prominence), the localised natural habitats and features, the role the area plays in contributing towards a perceived gap between settlements, and the role Greasby Copse plays in providing a distinctive skyline feature increase sensitivity. However, the limited coverage of semi-natural habitats (outside of

Greasby Copse and Ponds), the surrounding human influences and equestrian uses (which are typical of the urban fringe) and the visual enclosure to the area lower sensitivity. Overall, the area is considered to have low-moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

There is a higher sensitivity in areas close to Greasby Copse where development could affect its wooded character and its contribution towards tranquillity.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Retain and manage the area of deciduous woodland at Greasby Copse. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve the wooded field ponds which are characteristic features of the area.
- Avoid visually intrusive development on prominent slopes and elevated areas in the south, ensuring that views towards Greasby Copse are conserved and enhanced through additional planting.
- Ensure the function of the area as a perceived gap is maintained by providing a clear physical and visual separation between adjacent settlements.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP013

Figure A.13: Map of the area with designations / constraints

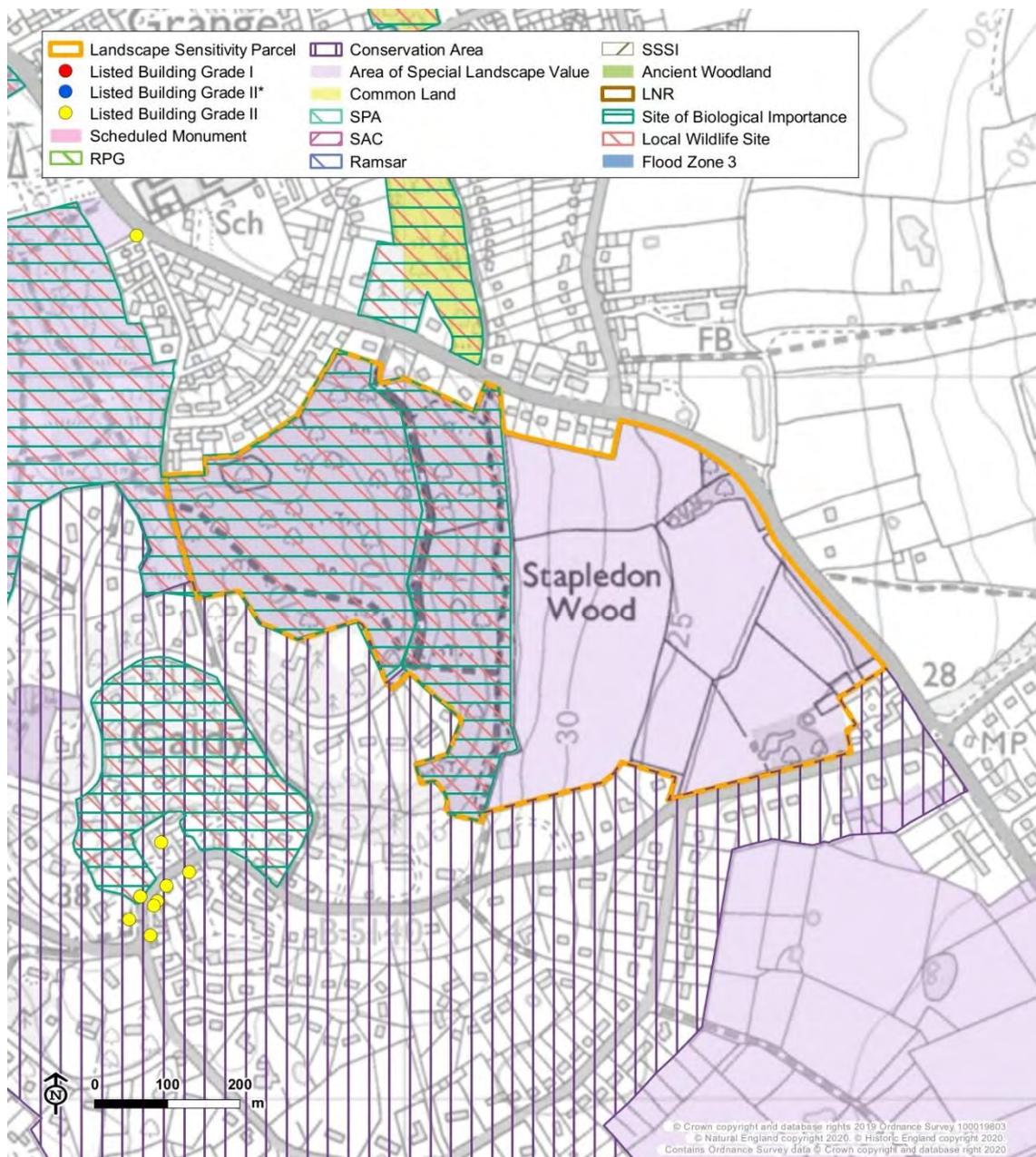


Figure A.14: Aerial photograph of the area



Stapledon Wood on elevated ground forming a skyline feature



Views across the area from the edge of Stapledon Wood



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the north-west of the borough and lies to the north of Caldy and south of Newton. It is irregular in shape with the A540 Column Road wrapping around the northern and north-eastern boundaries. Caldy Road (B5140) runs along the southern boundary and detached dwellings surrounded by woodland at Caldy Hill forms the southwestern edge. Properties along Boundary Road define the north-western boundary.

The area lies within the Thurstaston and Greasby Landscape Character Area, forming part of the Sandstone Hills Landscape Character Type. The western half of the area is covered by woodland (Stapledon Wood and Caldy Hill) and a mix of arable and pastoral fields of a small-medium scale are in the east.

Landscape value

The area forms part of an Area of Special Landscape Value which covers Stapledon Wood and Caldy Hill. These woodlands are key features distinctive for their vegetation, and valued for their contribution to biodiversity, both being a Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site. The Conservation Area at Caldy (which lies adjacent to the area) also contributes to the overall value, given the intervisibility between it and the area.

The woodlands within the west are accessible by public rights of way that run through it, providing recreational value to the area. The working farmland for crops and livestock limits the recreational value in the eastern half of the area. The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP013 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The area comprises a varied landform. In the east, fields are relatively flat and low lying (25m AOD), indicating lower sensitivity to residential development. The land then rises to the west where it becomes very steep along the eastern edge of Stapledon Wood forming a relatively distinctive feature resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. The landform continues to rise steeply within the wooded areas towards high ground (75m AOD) along the western edge of the area.

The extensive coverage of woodland across the western half of the area along with small woodland copses, hedgerows and hedgerow trees in the eastern half results in a high density of small-scale landscape features resulting in a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The east of the area is intensively farmed or managed (through both arable and pastoral practices), with some existing development present (stables with outdoor riding arena in the south-eastern corner), resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

Higher sensitivity to residential development exists where there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats, including Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland; the largest area being Stapledon Wood and Caldy Hill in the western half (both designated as a Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site). Other valued natural features include hedgerows enhanced occasionally with hedgerow trees, small woodland copses (Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Broad-leaf Woodland) and small pockets of trees/ shrubs surrounding field ponds.

Historic Landscape Character

The area consists of small to medium scale fields that have a semi-regular pattern as a result of the Post Medieval Planned Enclosure in the eastern half (as categorised by the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation), along with Post Medieval Woodland / Plantation. The area also includes land categorised as 20th Century Settlement in the south-eastern corner. The area therefore has little time depth indicating lower sensitivity to residential development.

There are no heritage assets within the area; however the area lies directly adjacent to the village of Caldy, located to the south, which is designated as a Conservation Area.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area plays a role in the separation of Newton in the north from Caldy in the south, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. The gap is best perceived when travelling along the public right of way running along the eastern edge of Stapledon Wood providing a connection between the two settlements.

The area also provides both a wooded and rural setting to Caldy which residential development could adversely affect, indicating a higher sensitivity to residential development. While the woodland in the western half provides a backdrop to views from within Caldy, the importance of the fields in the east are also recognised in the Caldy Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan [See reference 11] which states, 'On entering the village from Telegraph Road there are views out into the open fields lying on the north side of Caldy Road and south east of the hill'.

The surrounding settlement edges are generally well integrated into the landscape by woodland indicating higher sensitivity to residential development. Parts of Caldy in the south-east are of lower sensitivity to residential development where the setting is already influenced by equestrian related use.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development, as well as by woodland at Stapledon Wood and along the A540 Column Road, indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development. However, woodland in the western half of the area is located on elevated ground forming a skyline feature, increasing sensitivity. The steeper slope immediately to the east of Stapledon Wood also results in some visual prominence from surrounding areas.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The enclosure provided by the woodland in the western half of the area provides a sense of tranquillity and perceived naturalness indicating higher levels of sensitivity to residential development. Although largely a rural agricultural landscape, the eastern half of the area is influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources. It is also influenced by the equestrian uses in the south-western corner, and aural intrusion from the A540 which decreases the sensitivity to residential development.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate - High

The area is locally designated as part of an Area of Special Landscape Value. The steep sloping landform along the eastern edge of Stapledon Wood (resulting in some visual prominence), localised natural habitats and features and the role the area plays in contributing towards a perceived gap between settlements and the setting to Caldy Conservation Area increase sensitivity. The flatter landform further to the east, the presence of equestrian facilities and visual enclosure slightly reduces sensitivity. Overall, the eastern half of the area

is considered to have moderate-high sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development with lower sensitivity on lower more enclosed ground to the south east.

High

The elevated nature of the woodland in the western half of the area (resulting in it being a distinctive skyline feature), its contribution towards biodiversity as a natural habitat, its role in providing a wooded setting to Caldy, its recreational value and its contribution towards providing a sense of tranquillity results in a high sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous and broadleaf woodland within and along the edge of the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Maintain the extent and increase species diversity of existing grassland (and revert other areas to grassland) in order to support surrounding heathland (consistent with the priorities of the West Wirral Heathlands and Arroe Park Nature Improvement Area).
- Conserve the rural character particularly in proximity to Caldy where the area contributes towards the setting of the Conservation Area.

- Conserve the wooded field ponds.
- Preserve the woodlands in the western half of the area as landscape features and retain the role they play in the setting of Caldý, ensuring that their intimate character is retained.
- Preserve rural views out from and surrounding Caldý Conservation Area.
- Avoid visually intrusive development on prominent slopes and elevated areas along the eastern edge of Stapledon Wood, ensuring that wooded skylines are conserved and enhanced through additional planting.
- Ensure the function of the area as a perceived gap is maintained by providing a clear physical and visual separation between adjacent settlements.
- Protect and enhance the public rights of way running through the woodlands and promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP015A

Figure A.15: Map of the area with designations / constraints

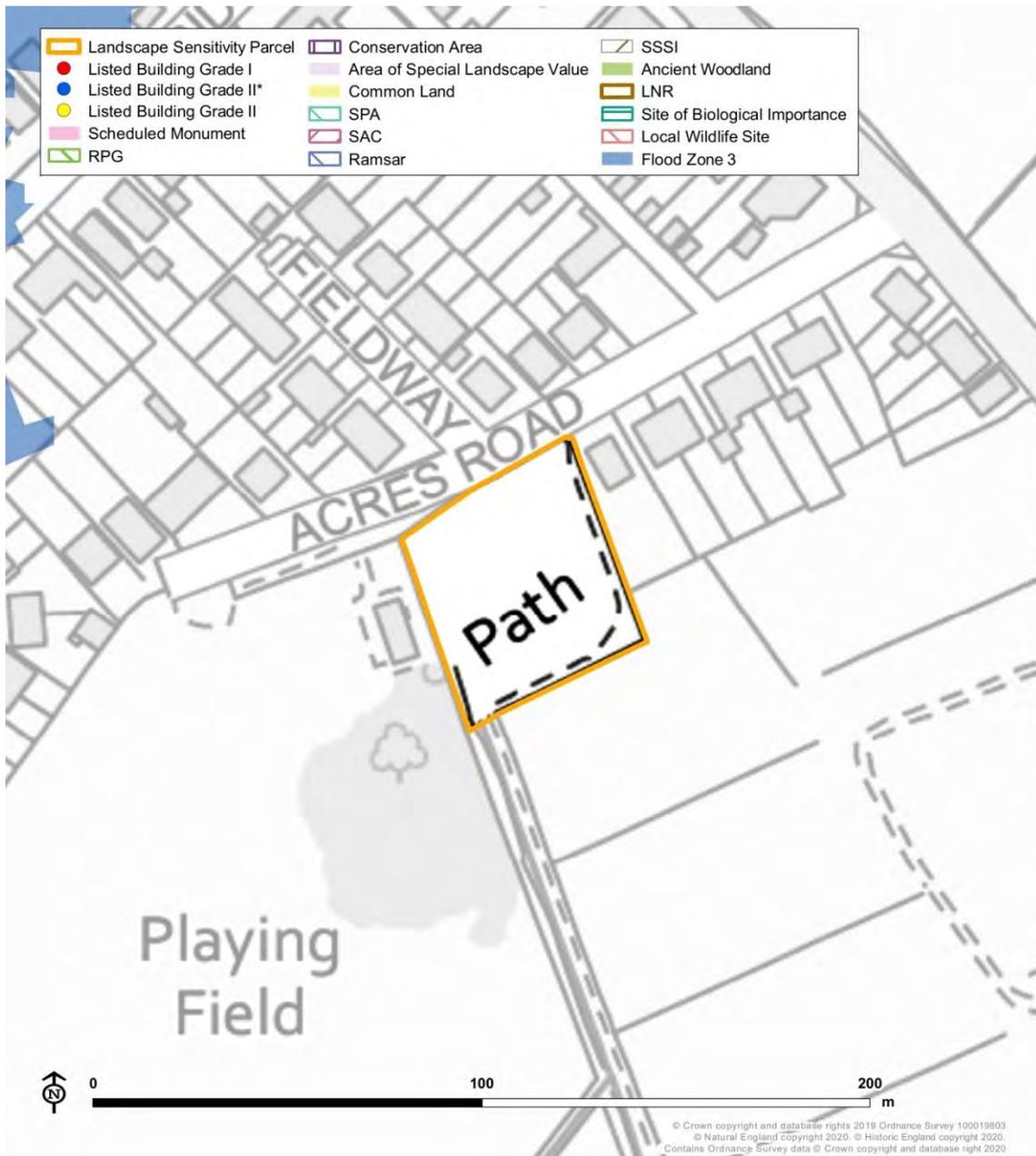


Figure A.16: Aerial photograph of the area



Public right of way along the eastern boundary, enclosed by fencing



Area colonised with overgrown scrub vegetation



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the north-west of the borough and lies to the south of Meols and along the southern edge of Acrea Road. Properties line the road with one abutting the eastern edge of the area. Playing fields are located to the west of the area and arable farmland to the south.

The area lies within The Birket Landscape Character Area, forming part of the River Floodplain Landscape Character Type. It is a former pond which has been infilled and left to colonise resulting in overgrown scrub vegetation covering the areas.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). Scrub vegetation covering the area has resulted in the formation of natural habitats.

Public rights of way run along the eastern and southern boundaries providing recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP015A Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The flat and featureless landform indicates low levels of sensitivity to residential development. A number of trees border the area which provides a limited density of small-scale landscape features and increases sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The overgrown nature of the area has resulted in the formation of natural habitats, predominantly from the scrub vegetation that covers the area and trees along its boundaries, resulting in some sensitivity to residential development.

Historic Landscape Character

The area does not contain an identifiable field pattern given its small size and overgrown state. There is no sense of time depth and the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation categorises it as 20th Century Settlement, indicating low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

There are also no heritage assets within the area.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area does not contribute positively to the setting of the settlement given its neglected appearance, and does not play a separation role between settlements. Future development in the area would have a good relationship with the existing settlement form and pattern, and would improve the existing

settlement edge of Meols, therefore indicating low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development, tall overgrown vegetation and fencing, resulting in a low degree of visibility from the surrounding landscape and indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The area is already influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources, and therefore decreasing the sensitivity to residential development. New development would not be out of character and would be an improvement from its neglected state, resulting in low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low

The flat landform, neglected character, surrounding human influences, absence of historic features and visual containment lower the sensitivity across the area. The natural habitats that have formed from the scrub vegetation that covers the area (including boundary trees) slightly increase the sensitivity. However, overall the area is considered to have a low sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and manage boundary trees as important wildlife habitats and landscape features.
- Conserve, enhance and manage any other valued habitats that have formed within the area.
- Protect and enhance the public right of way connecting Meols to Saughall Massie Road and promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP016

Figure A.17: Map of the area with designations / constraints

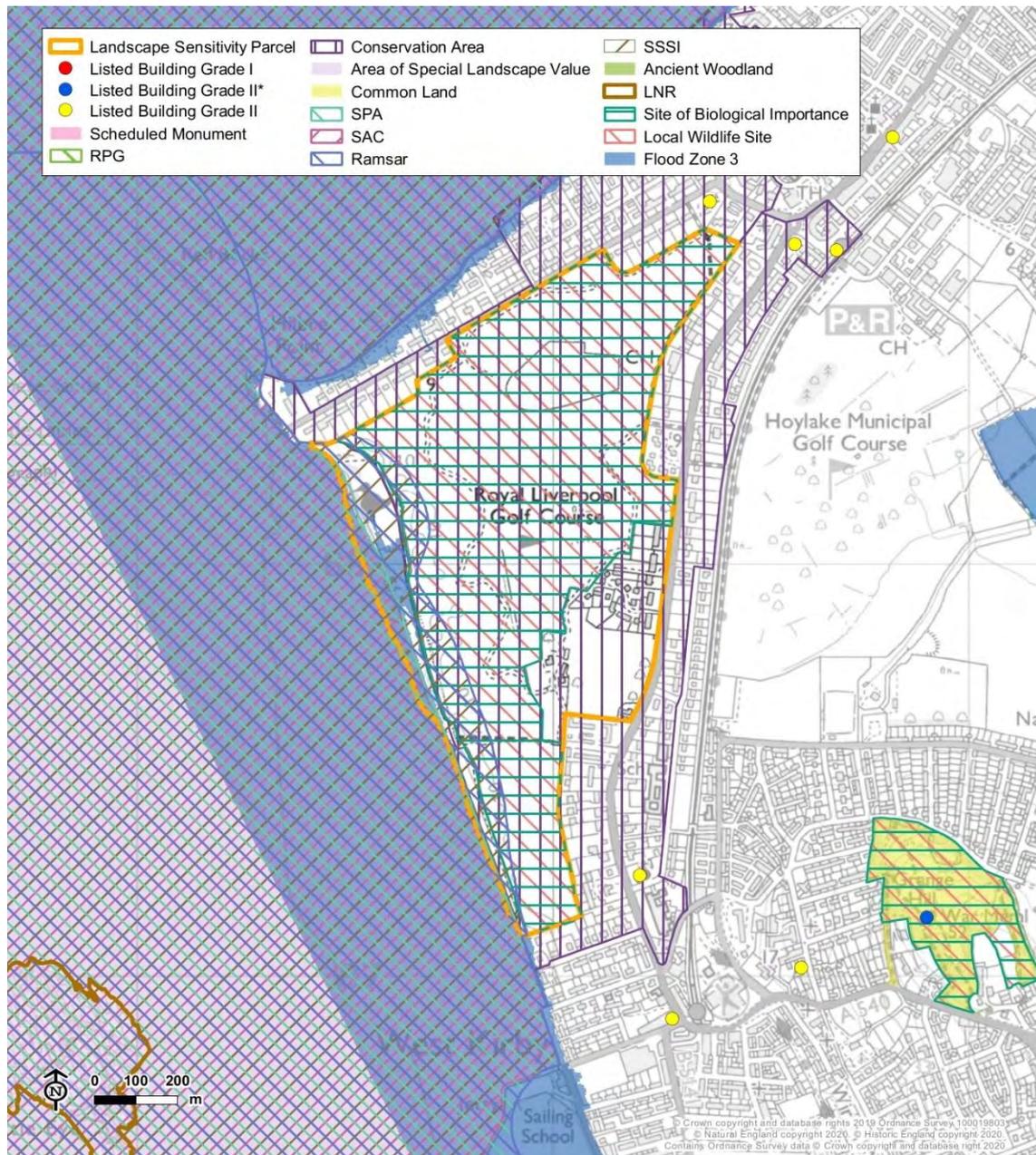
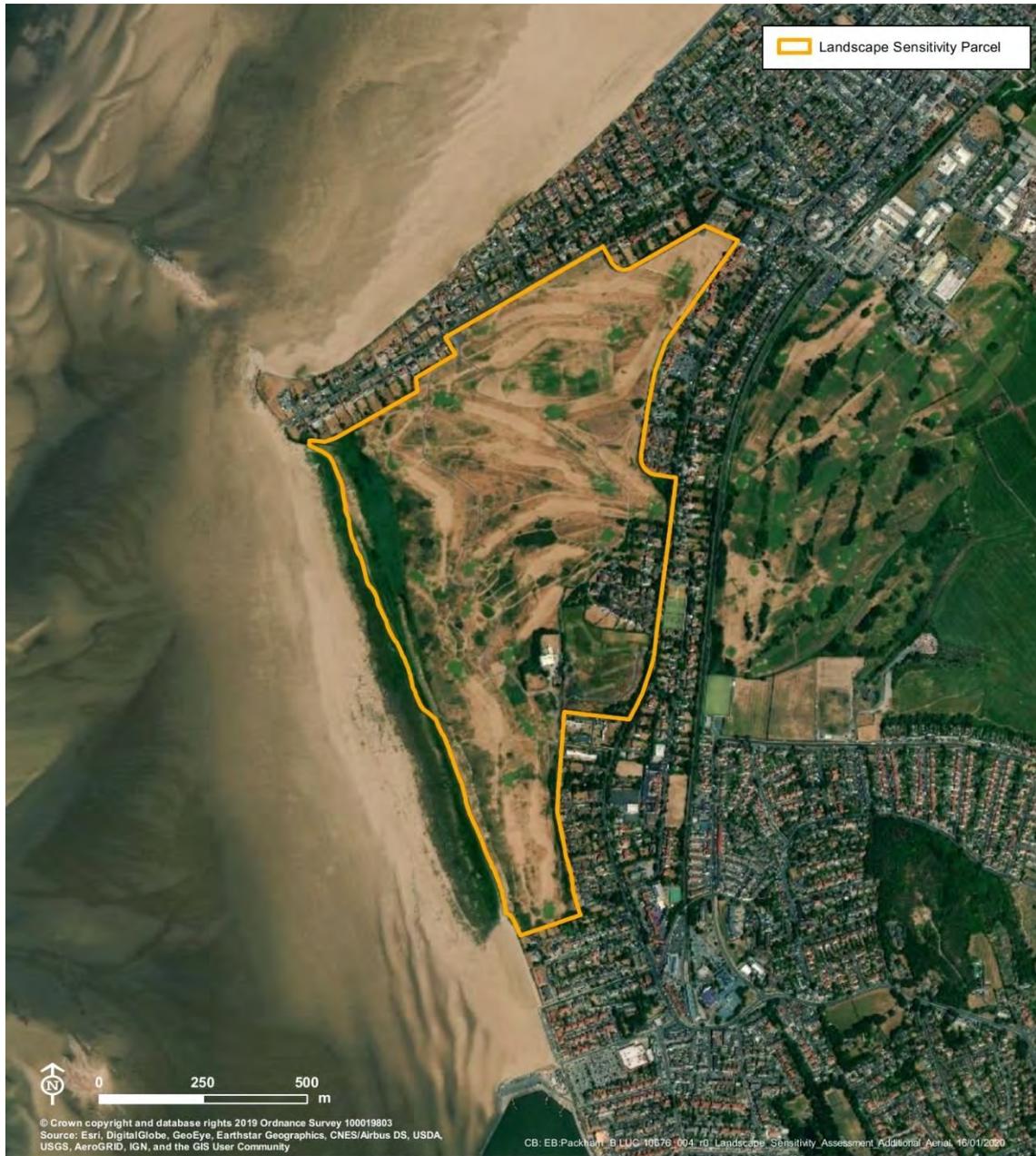


Figure A.18: Aerial photograph of the area



Royal Liverpool Golf Course



Red Rocks Site of Special Scientific Interest with views across the Dee Estuary towards Hilbre Island and North Wales



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated on the north-western corner of the borough, bounded by the coastline of the Dee Estuary. It extends between the towns of Hoylake to the north-east and West Kirby to the south-east with property boundaries adjoining its northern, eastern and southern edges.

The area lies in the North Wirral Landscape Character Area, forming part of the Coastal/Estuarine Edge Landscape Character Type. It comprises the Royal Liverpool Golf Course and a small area of residential development and forms part of the low-lying flat coastline with views extending across the Dee Estuary towards the Welsh coastline.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local), although lies adjacent to an Area of Special Landscape Value that covers part of the Dee Estuary to the west which is valued for its contribution towards biodiversity and is designated as a Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation, Site of Special Scientific Interest and Ramsar site. These nationally important designations extend across the seaward edge of the area.

The area itself is also of biodiversity value being a Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site for its coastal dune grassland. The partially accessible coastal sand dunes along the western boundary at Red Rocks are a key feature distinctive for their brackish dune slacks and reedbed, and valued for their contribution towards biodiversity. The sand dunes are also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The area is located within the Meols Drive Conservation Area which contributes towards the overall value. The Kings Gap Conservation Area also lies directly adjacent to the north eastern edge of the area with intervisibility between it and the area.

The area's use as a golf course provides recreational value for those playing or spectating and is crossed by a public right of way in the north-east and the south; the latter being a key access route to the coast from West Kirby.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP016 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The area forms part of a flat coastline with distinctive rolling sand dunes on its seaward side which increases sensitivity to residential development. The northern part of the area, once used as a racecourse, has a flatter landform.

The open character of the landscape, due to the low density of overlying landscape features (limited to a few small shelterbelts / clumps of trees), indicates lower sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

Although used as a golf course, the entirety of the area is overlain by Priority Habitats, with the majority consisting of Coastal Sand Dunes and a narrow strip comprising Coastal Saltmarsh and Reedbeds along the western boundary. This has led to the majority of the area being designated a Site of Biological

Importance / Local Wildlife Site and the western edge being a Site of Special Scientific Interest, indicating higher sensitivity to residential development.

There is some existing development along the eastern edge of the area resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

Historic Landscape Character

The Royal Liverpool Golf Course was established in 1869 and is the second oldest in England. Its association as a historic 'links' golf course indicates some sense of time depth and increases sensitivity to residential development. Lower levels of sensitivity to residential development exist in the east of the area which the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation categorises as 20th Century Settlement.

Meols Drive Conservation Area covers the majority of the area, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

The area was screened as high for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area plays some role in the separation of Hoylake from West Kirby resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. The gap is best perceived when travelling along the public right of way running through the southern part of the area and providing a connection between West Kirby and the coast. It is however acknowledged that some coalescence between the two settlements has already occurred along Meols Drive (A540) which runs along the eastern boundary of the area.

The golf course is important in providing a backdrop to the surrounding housing as recognised in the Meols Drive Conservation Area Appraisal [See reference 12] which states, 'The golf course and the surrounding housing on Meols Drive, Stanley Road and Lingdale Roads provide the setting for each other and are

mutually dependent'. The study also recognises the importance of the golf course for the wider borough stating, 'The Golf Course, dunes, and sands across to Hilbre Island provide a landscape and seascape of defining significance to Wirral and are important within the context of the North West's Irish Sea coastline'. Development would have a poor relationship with the existing settlement pattern and could adversely affect the distinctive settlement edge with its variety of architectural styles including Arts and Crafts villas. The area also allows for uninterrupted expansive views across to the Hilbre Islands and North Wales from surrounding settlement edges, indicating high levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by existing residential development to the north, east and south which lowers sensitivity. However, due to its location on the north west corner of the Wirral Peninsula and the open character of the coastal landscape, the area is visually prominent from the Dee Estuary, the Hilbre Islands and areas along the North Wales coastline to the west, indicating a high sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The setting of the golf course results in highly scenic perceptual qualities and a sense of tranquillity, indicating high levels of sensitivity to residential development. Sensitivity decreases slightly as the area is influenced by surrounding development, limiting dark night skies through existing light sources.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

High

The open character of the landscape due to the low density of overlying landscape features, and the visual enclosure by surrounding settlements lowers sensitivity. However, the rolling landform formed by sand dunes, large areas of landscape that are designated for their nature conservation interest (Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site), the historic associations of the area as a Conservation Area, the role the area plays in contributing towards a perceived gap between settlements, the setting that the area provides to surrounding settlements (with uninterrupted expansive views to the west resulting in a high scenic value) and its visual prominence when viewed from the Dee Estuary, the Hilbre Islands, and North Wales, increases sensitivity.

Future development would lead to significant change to a landscape that is highly valued for its natural character, historic associations, setting, visual character and perceptual qualities. Therefore, the area is considered to have a high sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Work with natural coastal processes to conserve and enhance the coastal landscape, including the distinctive pattern of intertidal mudflat, coastal saltmarshes and coastal sand dunes, enhancing the sense of place and conserving important coastal and estuarine habitats.
- Conserve the pattern of natural sand dunes across the area and carefully manage scrub regeneration to maintain the open grassed sand dunes and transitional shoreline vegetation.
- Conserve the open and largely undeveloped character of the landscape, ensuring any limited development or landscape change is unobtrusive and sensitively integrated and retains a well-defined distinction between the open coastline and urban areas.

- Ensure the function of the area as a perceived gap is maintained by providing a clear physical and visual separation between adjacent settlements.
- Avoid visually intrusive development in order to conserve the exposed character of the area and views towards the coast.
- Protect and enhance the public right of ways, particularly the footpath that provides access to the coast and coastal paths along the sand dunes.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP019B

Figure A.19: Map of the area with designations / constraints

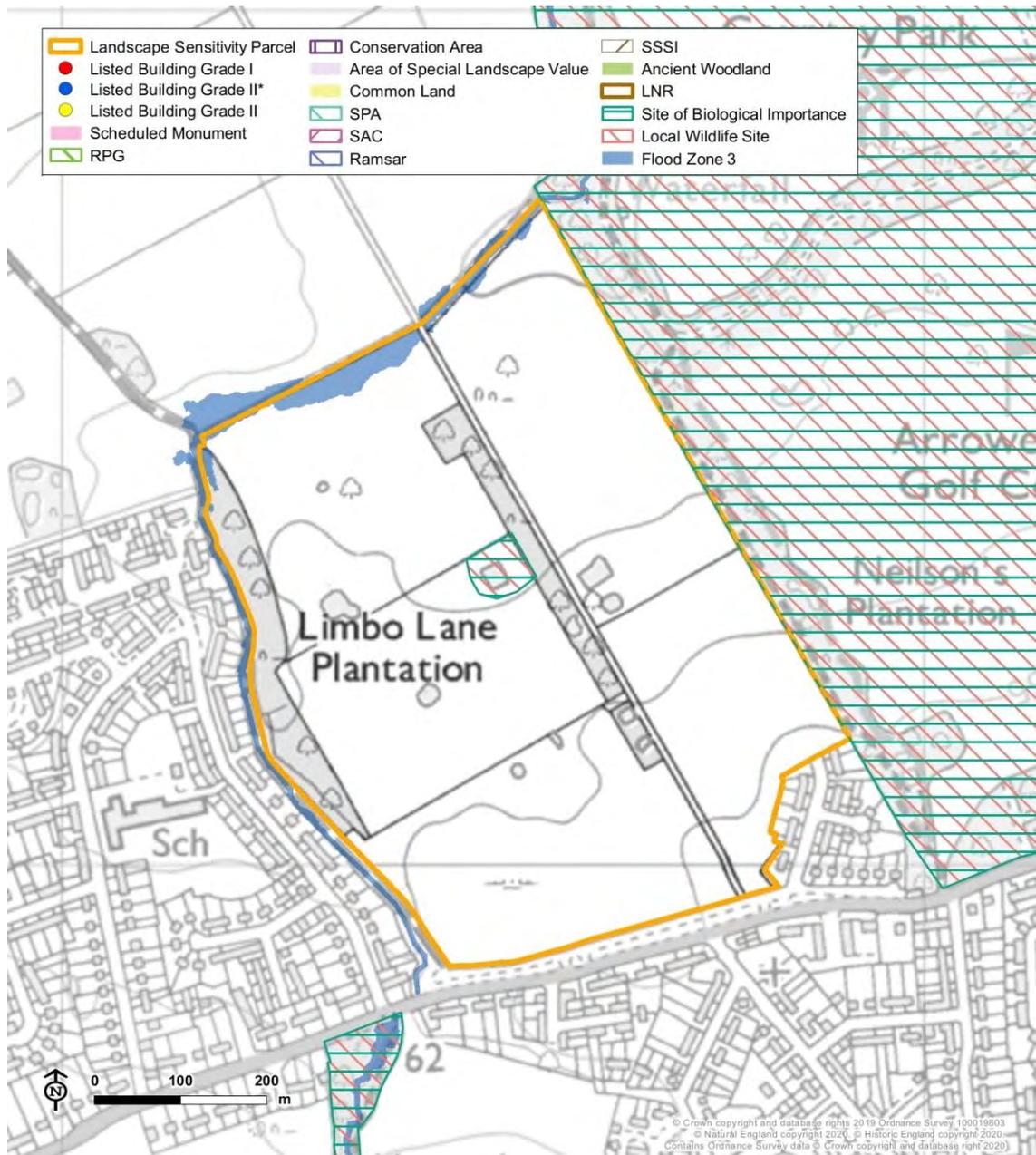


Figure A.20: Aerial photograph of the area



Linear belts of woodland forming skyline features



Rural setting to properties on the edge of Thingwall



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the west of the borough and lies to the north of Thingwall and east of Irby. Arrowe Country Park and Arrowe Park Golf Course forms its eastern boundary and a hedgerow along Arrowe Brook runs along the northern boundary.

The area lies within the Thurstaston and Greasby Landscape Character Area, forming part of the Sandstone Hills Landscape Character Type. It comprises small-medium scale arable fields (although low hedgerows running east-west result in fields appear larger), and characterised by linear woodland belts that run north-south within and around the edges of the area.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, the Limbo Lane Pond is a key feature that is distinctive as an open field pond, valued for its contribution to biodiversity, and designated as a Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site.

The area's use as working farmland for crops restricts public access. However, public rights of way follow the eastern and western boundaries of the area, and permissive paths run along a wide hedge lined farm track across the middle of the area between Thingwall Road and Arrowe Brooke Lane and east west across the area between Arrowe Park and Limbo Lane. Intervisibility with the area along these routes is restricted by intervening vegetation. The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP019B Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The gently sloping landform falls south to north (from 65m to 50m AOD) from higher ground on the settlement edge of Thingwall indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development.

The area is overlain by a pattern of regular fields that are small to medium in size and formed by hedgerows and linear belts of woodland, providing a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

Much of the area comprises areas that are intensively farmed through arable practices, and limited coverage of semi-natural habitats resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

Areas of valued semi-natural habitats, including Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (in the form of linear belts of woodland running centrally and along the western edge) and small areas of Reedbeds associated with field ponds, indicate areas of higher sensitivity to residential development. Valued natural features include hedgerows and small pockets of trees/ shrubs surrounding the frequent field ponds.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains Post Medieval Fieldscapes, categorised as Late Post Medieval Agricultural Improvement with Post Medieval Plantations. The resulting regular field pattern indicates lower levels of sensitivity to residential development.

There are no designated heritage assets within the area, however it was screened as medium for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area plays a role in the sense of separation between the larger part of Irby to the west and the remaining parts of Irby and Thingwall to the south and east, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. The gap is best perceived when travelling along Thingwall Road as intervisibility between these parts of the urban area is limited by the wooded character of the landscape which also contributes towards to the perceived separation. The area also provides a rural setting which residential development would adversely affect, as uninterrupted views from properties along Thingwall Road look across the area towards attractive wooded skylines (with distant turbines associated with the Burbo Bank Offshore Wind Farm also visible) which increases the sensitivity to residential development.

The existing development surrounding the area is relatively well integrated into the landscape by woodland, trees and hedgerows, and with intervisibility between the area and Irby restricted by a dense belt of woodland along the western edge of the area. Development could have good relationship with the existing settlement form/ pattern resulting in a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

Although field boundaries are generally formed by low and relatively fragmented hedgerows, the area is visually enclosed, by surrounding built development to the south, woodland to the east and west and the mature tree lined hedgerow along the northern boundary, indicating a lower visual sensitivity to residential development.

However, the linear belts of woodland located centrally and along the western edge of the area, contribute towards an undeveloped wooded skyline when viewed from more open areas in the north, indicating a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

Although largely a rural agricultural landscape, the area is influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources, and therefore decreasing the sensitivity to residential development. However the mature woodland provides a sense of separation from adjacent modern development which indicates higher sensitivity to residential development.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate

The linear belts of woodland (as semi-natural habitats and skyline features), the localised natural habitats and features (hedgerows and field ponds), the role the area plays in providing a rural setting to Irby and Thingwall (with uninterrupted wooded skyline views towards Liverpool Bay) and its contribution towards a perceived gap between parts of the urban area, increase sensitivity. However, the gently sloping landform, intensively farmed character, limited time depth, surrounding human influences and the visual enclosure provided by existing woodland lower the sensitivity. Overall, the area is considered to have a moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

It is considered that the level of sensitivity increases in areas located away from the existing settlement edges, where the containment from woodland provides a sense of separation from the settlement edge.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Revert areas to grassland in order to increase species diversity and to support surrounding heathland outside of the area (consistent with the priorities of the West Wirral Heathlands and Arrowe Park Nature Improvement Area).
- Conserve the mixture of wooded and open field ponds which are characteristic features of the area.
- Preserve rural views out from the Thingwall settlement edge ensuring that wooded skylines are conserved and enhanced through additional planting.
- Ensure the function of the area as a perceived gap is maintained by providing a clear physical and visual separation between adjacent parts of the urban area.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP025B

Figure A.21: Map of the area with designations / constraints

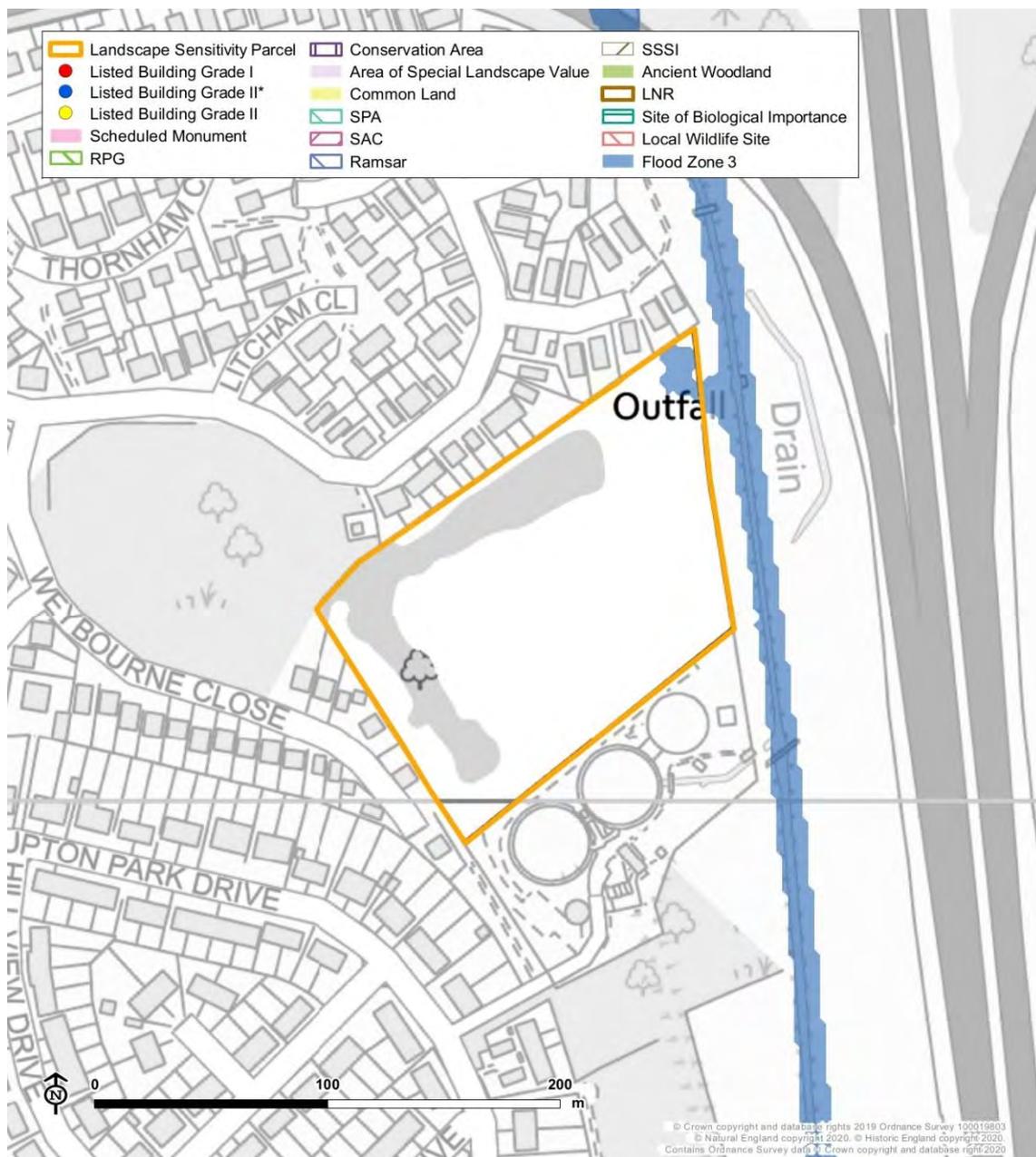
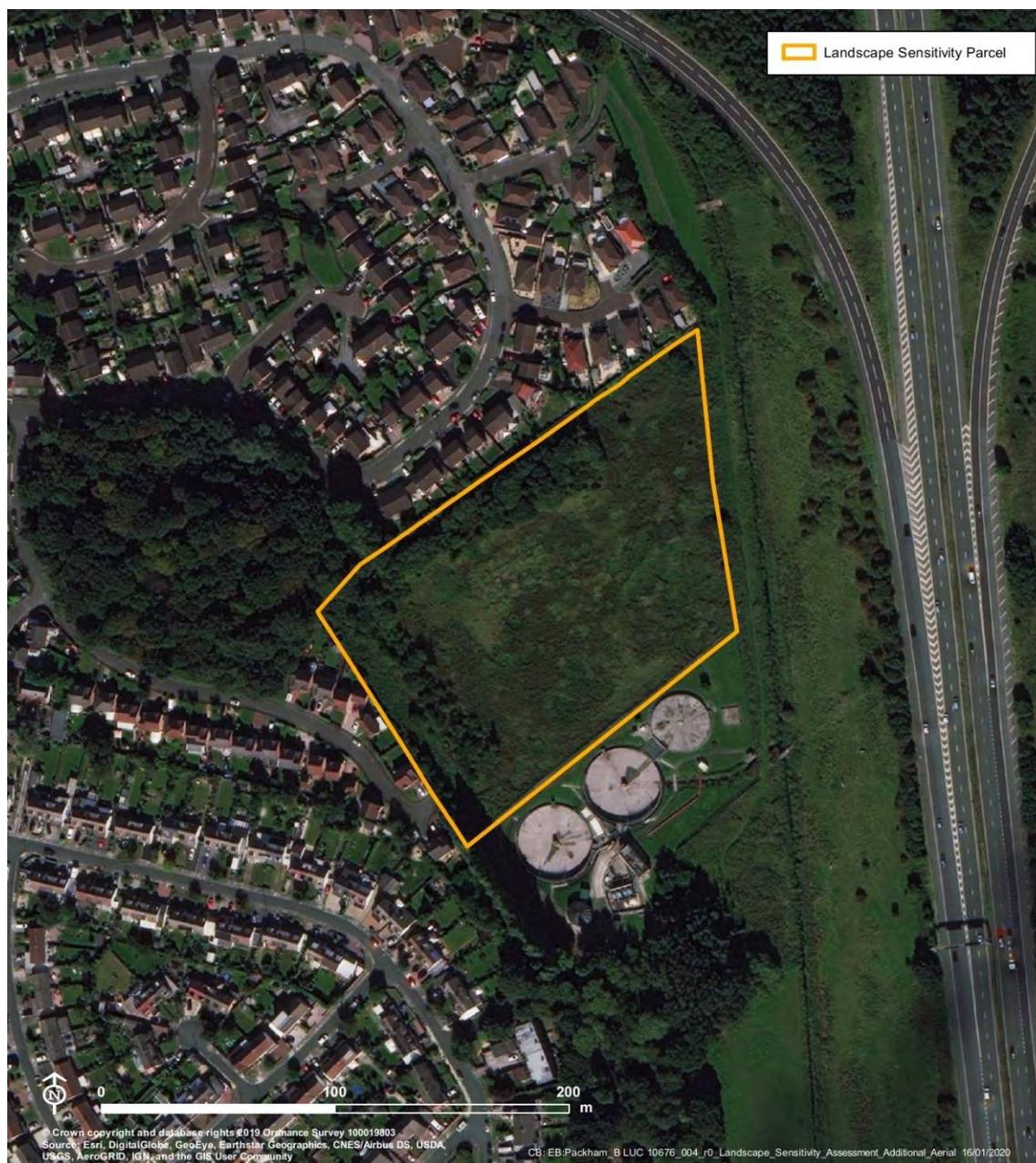


Figure A.22: Aerial photograph of the area



View of the unmanaged area from a public right of way bordering the western boundary



Sewage works adjacent to the southern boundary



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the north of the borough and lies between Upton and the M53. Properties line the northern and south-western boundaries, and there is a small area of woodland directly adjacent to the west. A sewage works is located adjacent to the southern edge of the area and a grass verge along the edge of the M53 forms the eastern boundary, which the River Fender cuts through as it flows from the south towards the River Birket in the north.

The area lies within The Fender Landscape Character Area, forming part of the River Floodplains Landscape Character Type. The area is unmanaged and fenced off, with areas consisting of overgrown scrub, wetland habitats and large trees along the northern and western boundaries.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). The area has been unmanaged for some time resulting in the colonisation of scrub and wetland vegetation, forming natural habitats.

A public right of way runs along the eastern boundary, and although separated from the area by a chain link fence, it provides recreational value as views into the area form part of the user's experience.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP025B Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The flat and featureless landform indicates low levels of sensitivity to residential development. A number of trees have established on artificial banks along the northern and western boundaries of the area which provides a limited density of small-scale landscape features and increases sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The unmanaged area has resulted in the formation of natural habitats, predominantly from the scrub and wetland vegetation that cover parts of it and trees along its northern and western boundaries, resulting in higher levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Historic Landscape Character

The area does not contain an identifiable field pattern given its small size and overgrown state. There is no sense of time depth and the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation categorises it as 20th Century Settlement, indicating low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

There are also no heritage assets within the area.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area does not contribute positively to the setting of the settlement edge given its unmanaged appearance.

Future development in the area would have a good relationship with the existing settlement form and pattern, and would improve the existing settlement edges of Upton, therefore indicating low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed to the north and west by surrounding built development and mature vegetation, to the south by the sewage works and woodland and to the east by mature vegetation lining the M53, resulting in a low degree of visibility from the surrounding landscape and indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The adjacent sewage works to the south and the M53 to the east provide both visual and aural detractors. Surrounding development to the north and west disturbs the area's scenic value and limits dark night skies through existing light sources, and therefore decreases the sensitivity to residential development. New development would not be out of character.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low

The flat landform, unmanaged character, surrounding human influences and detractors, absence of historic features, and visual containment lower the sensitivity across the area. The natural habitats that have formed from the scrub and wetland vegetation, as well as boundary trees, slightly increase the sensitivity. However, overall the area is considered to have a low sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and manage boundary trees as important wildlife habitats and landscape features.
- Conserve, enhance and manage any other valued habitats that have formed within the area.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP030 / SP031

Figure A.23: Map of the area with designations / constraints

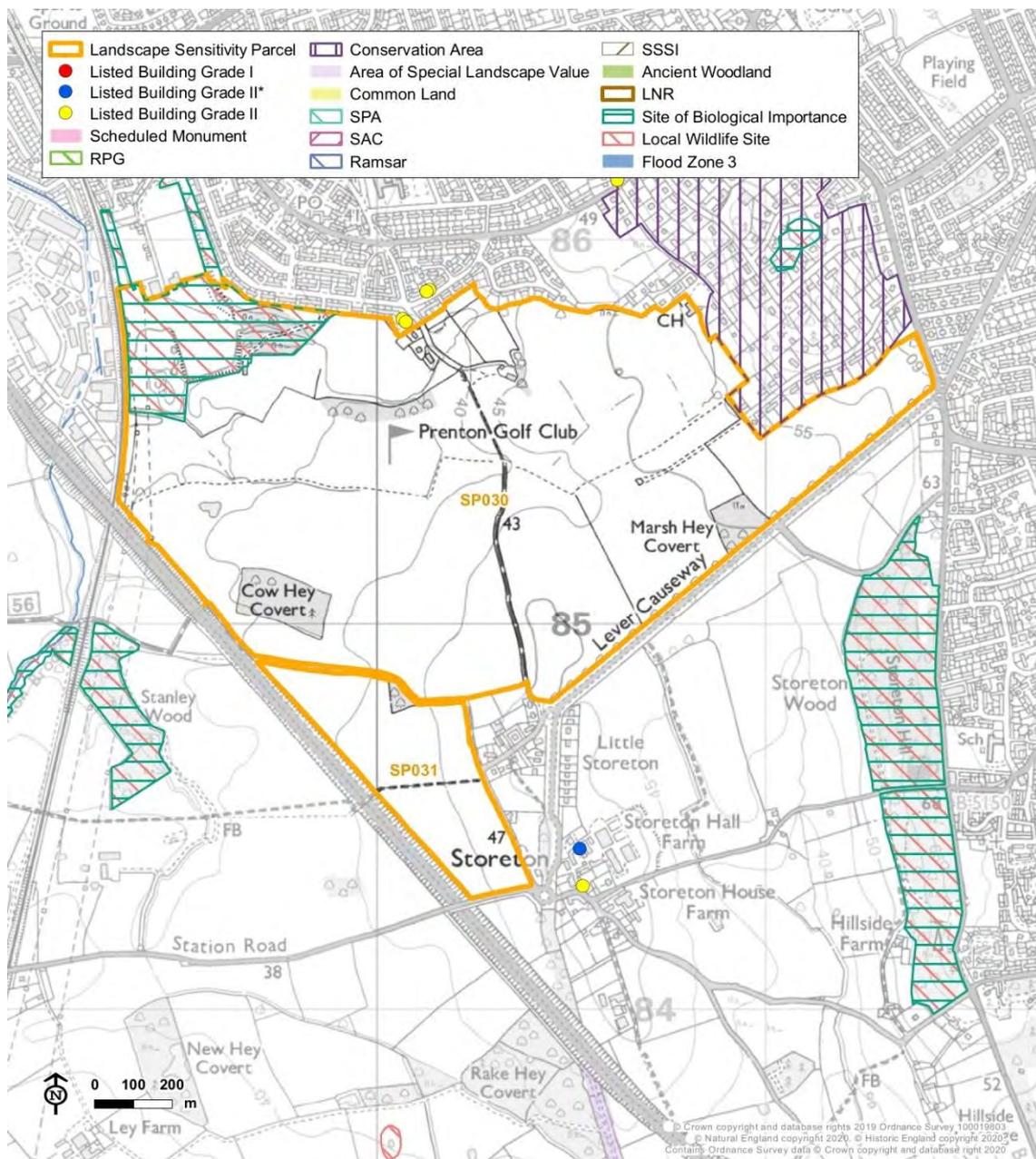


Figure A.24: Aerial photograph of the area



A hedgerow lined road, with open views across the M53 to rising topography in the west, featuring the distant Welsh Hills and pylons on the horizons



Gently sloping landform, surrounded by hedgerows, trees and small woodland copses



Location and landscape character context

The area (incorporating SP030 and SP031) is situated in the centre of the borough. It lies to the south of Prenton and to the west of Mountwood and Higher Bebington. The M53 forms the south-western boundary and a small section of the Borderlands railway line forms the western boundary. The tree-lined Lever Causeway and Station Road form the southeastern and southern boundaries respectively with the village of Little Storeton abutting these edges. The urban edge to Prenton, Mountwood and Bebington forms the northern and eastern boundaries.

SP030 lies within the Landican and Thingwall Landscape Character Area and SP031 lies within Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Lowland Landscape Character Area; both of which form part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type. The area is characterised by gently sloping landform, falling from the eastern corner to the west. It comprises arable farmland in the form of medium-large sized fields, with scattered woodland copses, and pockets of trees surrounding field ponds and depressions. The northern section of the area contains Prenton Golf Course, playing fields, a small number of dwellings, and the Prenton Dell and Claypit Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). Prenton Dell and Claypit is valued for its contribution to biodiversity, and is designated as a Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site.

Mountwood Conservation Area is located directly adjacent to the north-eastern corner of the area although there is limited inter-visibility between it and the area due to mature hedgerow boundaries, and scattered woodland

throughout the centre of the Conservation Area. Lever Causeway, which forms the south-eastern boundary, is another valued feature. It comprises a straight avenue of mature trees and was originally designed to join Lord Leverhulme's Manor in Thornton Hough to Mount Road in Higher Bebington.

The area's primary use as arable farmland limits its recreational value, although there are two public rights of way crossing the area. These provide a north-south connection between Prenton and Lever Causeway, and between a footbridge crossing the M53 and Little Storeton. National Cycle Route 56 is also routed through the area, along Landican Lane and Station Road.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP030 / SP031 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The gently sloping landform falls from elevated ground on the Prenton / Higher Bebington settlement edge in the east to the north-western corner of the area (from 60m to 25m AOD) indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development.

The area has a mixed field pattern of geometric, rectangular and irregular fields that are medium to large in size and mostly formed by hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees, alongside frequent woodland copses and tree clumps within the golf course, providing a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Prenton Dell and Claypit is located in the north-western corner of the area and has a more distinctive undulating topography compared to the rest of the area due to previous quarrying activity, with wooded boundaries and scattered trees throughout and the urban area of Prenton, to the north, is on higher ground. This results in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

Much of the area comprises areas that are intensively farmed (although softened by the frequent woodland copses and mature hedgerow trees) or managed for recreational use at Prenton Golf Club. There is evidence of former industrial land use adjacent to Prenton and adjacent to the borough's principal electricity substation and some development extending into the area along Roman Road and adjacent to Prenton Golf Course. These factors contribute towards a lower sensitivity.

Pockets of higher sensitivity to residential development exist where there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats, including priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland; the largest area is concentrated in the north western corner of the area. Part of this area is also designated as a Local Wildlife Site/Site of Biological Importance. Other valued natural features include the mature avenue of trees along Lever Causeway, woodland copses along the settlement edge of both Prenton and Mountwood, and at Marsh Hey Covert and Cow Hey Covert, clumps of woodland within the Golf Club, hedgerows enhanced occasionally with hedgerow trees and small pockets of trees/ shrubs surrounding field ponds.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains a limited time depth which decreases sensitivity to residential development although there are some historic features important to the character of the area.

The eastern part of the area consists of Post Medieval Fieldscapes, with fields categorised as Late Post Medieval Agricultural Improvement and consists of

medium-scale fields, indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development. Post Medieval Plantations are also scattered across the area, all semi-regular in shape with straight edges. Frequent field ponds (marl pits) are scattered across the area and were historically used to extract marl deposits to be used as mineral fertilisers, indicating a higher sensitivity to residential development.

There is an early 20th century golf course located across the northern section of the area. Along the western boundary of the area is an area of 20th Century Field Systems, consisting of medium scale regular fields, and on the northern boundary are areas of 20th Century Settlement, 20th Century Industry and 20th Century Recreation, all reducing the sensitivity to residential development.

There is a footpath between Prenton and Little Storeton which is of archaeological importance, and SP030 was screened as high for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development.

The area wraps around the southern edges of Mountwood Conservation Area, in the north-eastern corner of the area. There are also several Grade II listed buildings on the northern boundary of the area, along Roman Road at Prenton.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area plays a role in the separation of Prenton in the north from Little Storeton in the south, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. The gap is best perceived when travelling along the public right of way between the two settlements.

The area provides a rural setting to the village of Little Storeton which residential development would adversely affect. Conversely, existing mature vegetation surrounding and built form within Mountwood Conservation Area limits inter-visibility with the area towards the north and east, resulting in a lower sensitivity. This is recognised in the Mountwood Conservation Area Appraisal [See reference 13], which states, "Views to the west are across mostly open / flat countryside. However, views to the west are limited from the public domain, being obscured by houses and mature planting."

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by the wooded edge of surrounding built development to the north and east, indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development. Mature hedgerow boundaries, featuring hedgerow trees, enclose much of the area and therefore, in combination with the frequent woodland copses, lowers the sensitivity to residential development. The mature avenue of trees along the Lever Causeway also provide strong visual separation between the land to the north and remaining open countryside to the south.

There are open views to the west and south, this includes from the public right of way along Roman Road and across to the M53 and rising topography in the west, with the distant Welsh Hills and pylon towers along the horizon line. This inter-visibility with the surrounding landscape will have a higher sensitivity. Oxton's church tower is also visible on the wooded skyline to the north.

The elevated land in the eastern corner of the area is visually prominent from surrounding areas, therefore resulting in a higher sensitivity.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

Although largely a rural agricultural landscape, within the north-western corner, the area is influenced by urban fringe elements including Prenton Golf Course, playing fields, an area of former industry and residential uses along Roman Road, reducing sensitivity. Prenton Dell and Claypit Local Wildlife Site/Site of Biological Importance is also located here, however, which indicates a higher sensitivity.

The existing development surrounding the area decreases the sensitivity to residential development. The busy M53 along the eastern boundary provides aural intrusion, although is not visible as it is located within a cutting and surrounded by woodland.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate

The presence of field ponds and woodland plantations, localised natural habitats, the role the area plays in contributing towards a perceived gap between settlements, and rural setting to Mountwood Conservation Area and Little Storeton increase sensitivity. However, the gently sloping landform, limited time depth, intensively farmed character, the presence of human influences along the urban fringes, including Prenton Golf Course and the M53, lower sensitivity. Overall, the area is considered to have moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

There is a higher sensitivity around the north eastern edge of Prenton due to the rising topography, and the role the area plays in providing a rural setting to the Mountwood Conservation Area, as well as areas close to Little Storeton where development could affect the rural character of the village and there is high inter-visibility with the surrounding landscape.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.

- Retain and manage the existing mature trees along Lever Causeway.
- Conserve the rural character in proximity to the Conservation Area at Mountwood and Little Storeton where the area contributes towards their setting.
- Conserve the mixture of wooded and open field ponds (marl pits) which are characteristic features of the area.
- Preserve rural views out from and to Mountwood Conservation Area.
- Avoid visually intrusive development on elevated areas along the eastern edge of the area, ensuring that wooded skylines are conserved and enhanced through additional planting.
- Ensure the function of the area as a perceived gap is maintained by providing a clear physical and visual separation between adjacent settlements.
- Protect and enhance the existing public rights of way and promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP032

Figure A.25: Map of the area with designations / constraints

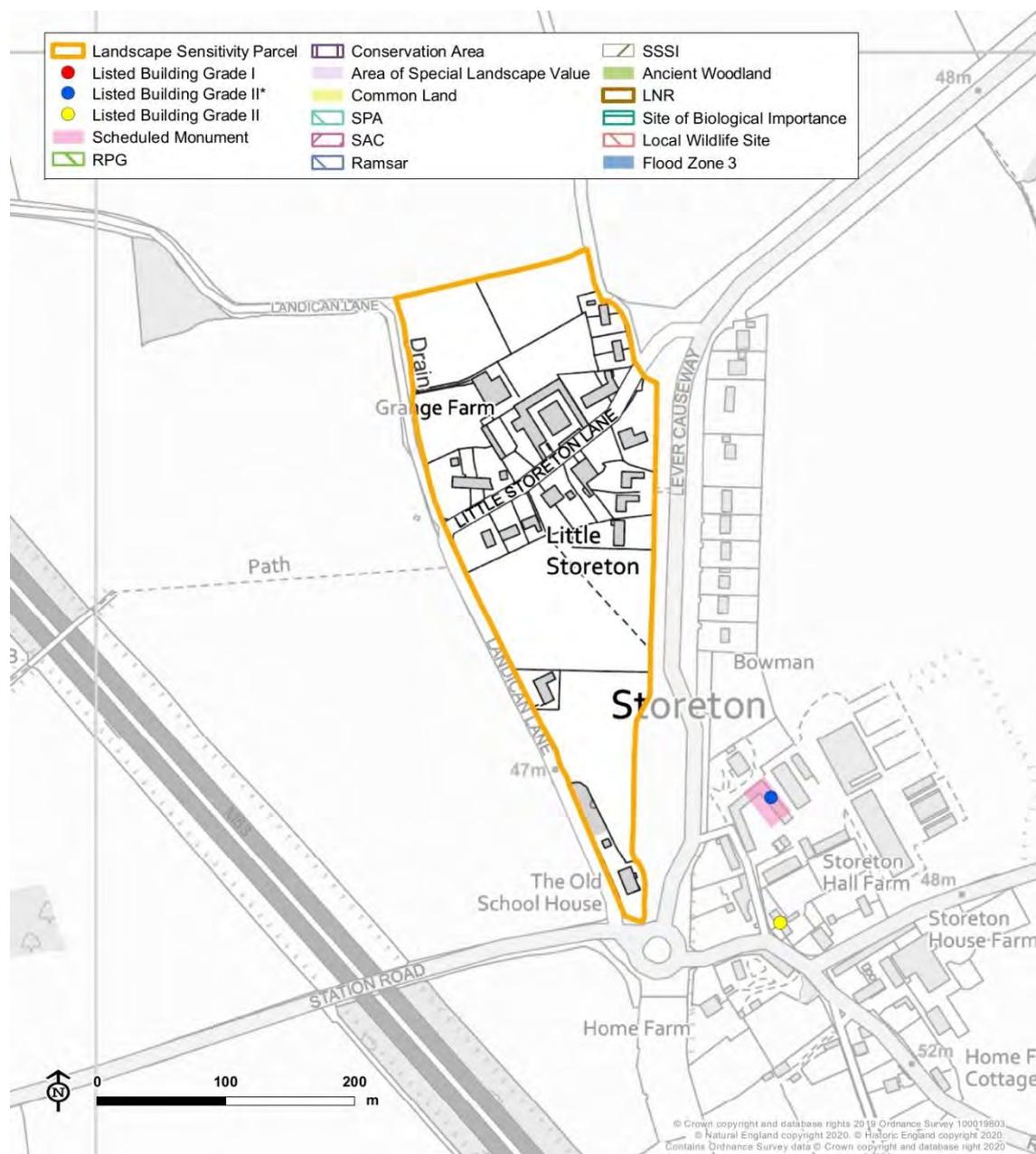


Figure A.26: Aerial photograph of the area



View from a public right of way on the southern edge of Little Storeton, towards the western boundary of the area



Pastoral fields, enclosed by hedgerows, within the northern section of the area



Location and landscape character context

The area lies in the centre of the borough. It comprises the land around the village of Little Storeton, to the north-west of Storeton village and the west of Higher Bebington. Lever Causeway and Landican Lane form the eastern and western boundaries respectively. A hedgerow forms the northern boundary.

Little Storeton Lane runs through the centre of the area. The Landican and Thingwall Landscape Character Area lies to the north of this road, while to the south of, and including Little Storeton Lane, is the Thornton Hough Landscape Character Area. Both form part of the Lowland Farmland and Estates Landscape Character Type. A gentle slope, falling east to west, characterises the area, which comprises the small, nucleated settlement of Little Storeton, with small scale horse paddocks to the north and enclosed pasture fields to the south. The area also accommodates a couple of scattered dwellings in the southern section of the area.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local).

Public rights of way run along parts of the eastern and western boundaries of the area and provide connections to the west across a footbridge over the M53. Another path crosses the area connecting Little Storeton Lane and Lever Causeway. National Cycle Route 56 runs along the western boundary of the area. All of these routes provide recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity

SP032 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The landform gently falls from the north eastern corner of the area at Little Storeton (50m AOD) to Landican Lane in the south-western corner (47m AOD). This indicates lower levels of sensitivity to residential development.

The area has a mixed field pattern of regular and irregular fields that are small to medium in size and are formed by both mature hedgerows and wooden post fencing. Together with occasional hedgerow trees and woodland copses along the boundaries, these provide a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

Much of the area comprises areas that are managed through pastoral practices, with existing development also present (both dwellings and a farm associated with Little Storeton village, and a couple of scattered residential dwellings along Landican Lane), and limited coverage of semi-natural habitats resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

Valued natural features consist of the hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees that bound some of the area boundaries, small woodland copses, the woodland in the south west corner of the area, which contains priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland, and Lever Causeway along the eastern boundary of the area, which is lined by mature trees. All of these increase the sensitivity to residential development.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the historic core of Little Storeton and The Old School House, located in the southern

corner of the area, have a sense of time depth as both are categorised as Post Medieval Settlement. This increases their sensitivity to residential development. The surrounding settlement dates from the 20th century.

The surrounding fields are a mixture of 20th Century Field Systems and Agricultural Improvement, which reduces the sensitivity.

The area lies adjacent to the footpath between Prenton and Little Storeton which is of archaeological importance. The area was also screened as medium for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development. Lever Causeway comprises a straight avenue of mature trees and was originally designed to join Lord Leverhulme's Manor in Thornton Hough to Mount Road in Higher Bebington.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area plays a role in the separation of Little Storeton and Storeton, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. The gap is best perceived when travelling along Lever Causeway, and from the public right of way which connects Little Storeton Lane with Lever Causeway.

The area also provides a rural setting to both Little Storeton and Storeton, which residential development would adversely affect.

Much of the existing residential dwellings within Little Storeton and elsewhere within the area are visible from the area. There are limited opportunities for infill development, and in combination with the issue of coalescence with Storeton, results in higher sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is semi-enclosed due to the open boundaries of some of the fields, in particular to the south of the area along Lever Causeway. There is also some inter-visibility with surrounding landscapes, particularly those to the west towards the M53 due to the falling topography, although the high hedgerow

along Landican Lane provides some enclosure This indicates a higher sensitivity to residential development.

The field to the north of the village is enclosed by hedgerows, indicating lower sensitivity. The surrounding built development associated with Storeton, along the eastern and southern boundaries of the area, also provides some visual containment therefore indicates a lower sensitivity.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

This is a largely rural, agricultural landscape with a working farm and orchard set within a rural village, with a strong sandstone vernacular. This results in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. Modern residential development to the east of the village and aural intrusion from the M53 to the west of the area, lower the sensitivity.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate-High

The gently sloping landform and some aspects of visual containment lower the sensitivity across the area. However, the rural character of the area, its small-medium scale field pattern, and the important role that it plays in providing separation between Little Storeton and Storeton, means the area is considered to have a moderate-high sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

It is also considered that there are limited opportunities for infill development within the area.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented and replace wooden fencing with native hedgerow species.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Retain and manage the existing mature trees along Lever Causeway.
- Ensure the function of the area as a perceived gap is maintained by providing a clear physical and visual separation between adjacent settlements.
- Protect and enhance the public rights of way and promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference SP033, SP034, SP035, SP036, SP037 and SP041

Figure A.27: Map of the area with designations / constraints

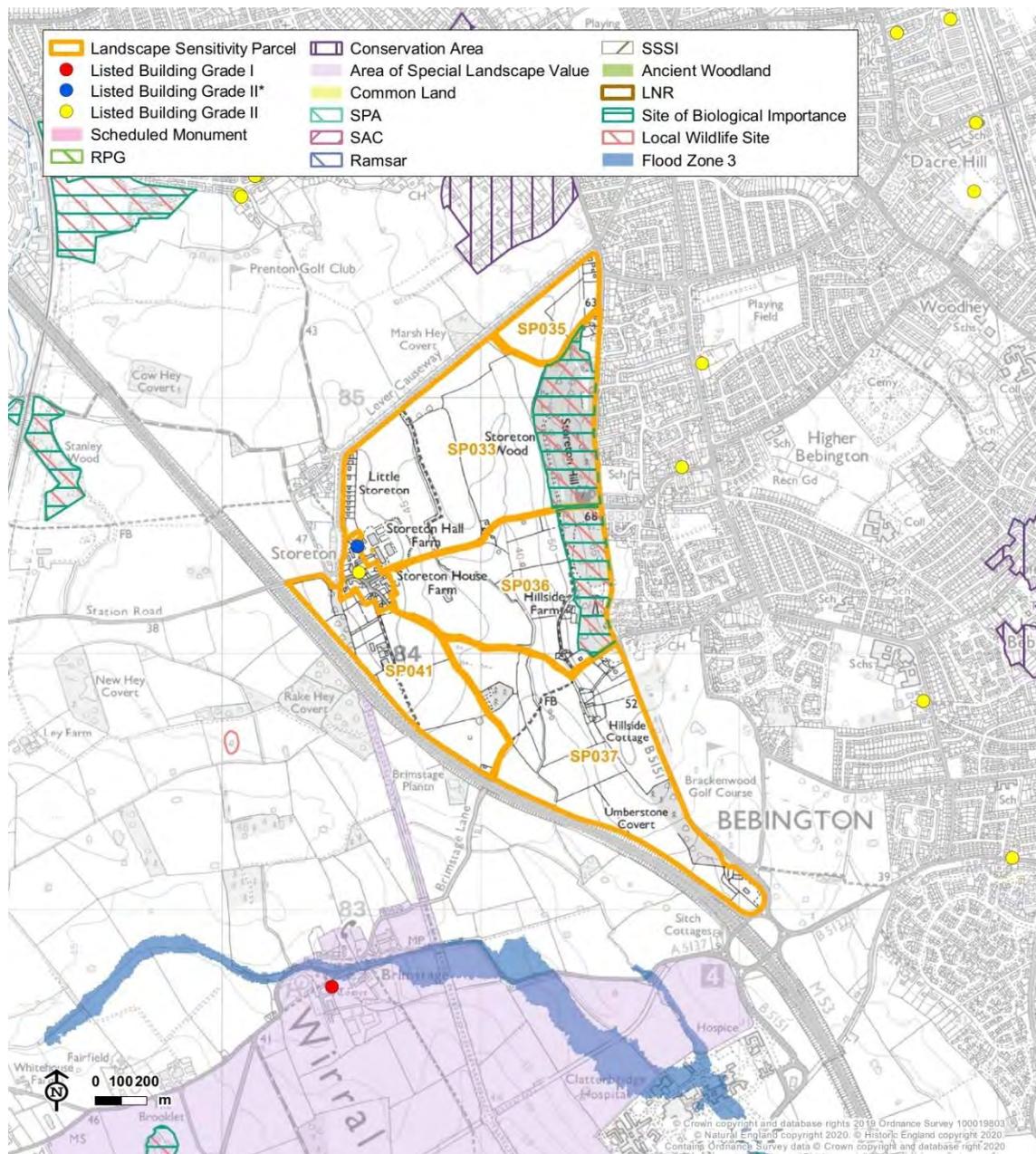


Figure A.28: Aerial photograph of the area



Undulating landform with medium to large scale fields, and existing development integrated into the landscape with mature hedgerow boundaries, featuring hedgerow trees



View east towards Storeton Wood with the radio mast located above the horizon line



Location and landscape character context

The area (incorporating SP033, SP034, SP035, SP036, SP037 and SP041) is situated in the centre of the borough. It lies to the south of Prenton and to the west of Bebington. The M53 forms the south-western boundary with Junction 4 abutting the southern edge of the area. Lever Causeway forms the north western and western boundary and the B5151 Mount Road forms the eastern boundary.

The area lies within Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Landscape Character Area, with SP041 extending into Thornton Hough Landscape Character Area, which both form part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type. The area has a valley landform, falling from a high point on Storeton Hill in the east to the valley bottom in the centre and up to Storeton in the west. It comprises pastoral fields, woodlands, pockets of trees surrounding field ponds and watercourses. The area includes Storeton village and some scattered development. The fields are typically medium to large scale in the centre of the area, with smaller fields on the edges of the area. The rising land towards Storeton Hill is highly visible across a wide area, from the M53, to the south and beyond.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, Storeton Wood is valued for its contribution to biodiversity, designated as a Local Wildlife Site/Site of Biological Importance.

The area's primary use as pastoral farmland limits its recreational value, however four public rights of way cross the area, allowing public enjoyment of the countryside. These provide connections between Storeton and Brimstage Lane along the western boundary, Red Hill Road and Brimstage

Lane through the centre of the area, Red Hill Road and Rest Hill Road in the north-eastern corner, and from Rest Hill Road to Lever Causeway in the north-western corner. National Cycle Route 56 runs along Brimstage Lane and Red Hill Road.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP033, SP034, SP035, SP036, SP037, and SP041 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The gently undulating landform falls from elevated sandstone ridge at Storeton Hill along the eastern boundary to the (70m to 35m AOD) the stream valley that runs north-south through the area east of Storeton. These landform features contribute positively to landscape character; indicating higher levels of sensitivity to residential development.

The area has a mixed field pattern comprising geometric, rectangular and irregular fields that are medium to large in size in the centre of the area, and small to medium scale around the periphery. The fields are mostly formed by hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees, alongside linear woodlands and woodland copses. These provide a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

Much of the area comprises areas that are farmed or managed (although softened by the linear woodlands and frequent woodland copses and mature hedgerow trees). There is some existing development present (dwellings on

Mount Road in the north-eastern corner, and a recycling centre in the southern corner), and in combination with a radio mast, results in a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Areas of valued semi-natural habitats, including priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland which could be vulnerable to loss from development indicate higher sensitivity; the largest area is concentrated at Storeton Wood and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site/Site of Biological Importance. The valley side in the east is designated as part of the East Wirral Heathlands Nature Improvement Area which prioritises the creation and management of lowland heathland, acid grassland and woodland habitats. Other valued natural features include hedgerows enhanced with hedgerow trees and small pockets of trees/shrubs surrounding field ponds and narrow watercourses and along the M53.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains a diverse time depth which increases sensitivity to residential development.

There are several ancient fieldscapes (pre-1600) within the area, namely the medium-scale irregular field pattern to the south-east of Storeton. There are also several Post Medieval Field Systems (post-1600) and Late Post Medieval Agricultural Improvement within the centre of the area. Frequent field ponds (marl pits) are scattered across the area, historically used to extract marl deposits to be used as mineral fertilisers, and a Post Medieval Plantation is located along Mount Road (Umberstone Covert). All of these features contribute towards a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Along the western boundary of the area is a mix of 20th Century Field Systems, consisting of medium scale fields, and 20th Century Settlement, all reducing the sensitivity to residential development.

Storeton, categorised as a Post Medieval Settlement, is a rural village with a strong sandstone vernacular that contains several Grade II and Grade II* listed buildings (including Storeton Hall), which contribute to landscape character and

result in a higher sensitivity. There are also areas of archaeological importance across parts of the area, which were also screened as medium and high for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area provides an attractive rural backdrop to Storeton and scattered development throughout the area which is integrated into the landscape by trees and hedgerows. Development in the area is therefore likely to be at odds with the existing settlement pattern, resulting in higher sensitivity to residential development.

The Bebington settlement edge, along the eastern boundary of the area, is well screened by woodland cover at Storeton Wood except for a small extent in the north east corner to the west of Marsh Lane, which indicates higher sensitivity.

Views and visual character including skylines

Mature hedgerow boundaries, featuring hedgerow trees, and frequent woodland copses enclose lower elevations within the area. However, the sloping topography of the valley side to the east and west results in high intervisibility across the valley. The distinctive wooded ridgeline of Storeton Hill along the eastern boundary creates a visually distinctive skyline when viewed from more open areas to the west, which results in higher sensitivity.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The traditional pastoral land uses and sense of remoteness through the enclosure provided by the ridgeline woodlands, woodland copses and high hedgerow boundaries along winding rural lanes, result in a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Sensitivity is lowered where fragmented urban fringe elements intrude into the area, including small areas of equestrian use, the radio mast on Storeton Hill, a recycling centre, and kennels. The area is influenced by light pollution from surrounding development limiting dark night skies through existing light sources, therefore decreasing sensitivity. The M53 along the western boundary, which runs on an embankment south of Storeton village, introduces significant aural and visual intrusion detracting from the sense of tranquillity.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate-High

The distinctive landform, linear belts of woodland (semi-natural habitats and skyline features), the localised natural habitats and features (hedgerows, woodland copses, stream and field ponds), the role the area plays in providing a rural setting to Storeton and other dispersed residential dwellings, the varied time depth, and the mixture of small-scale and larger scale field patterns with a moderate density of small-scale landscape features and prominence in long range views up the valley from the south and west, contribute towards a higher sensitivity. However, the intrusion of urbanising elements including the radio mast and the M53 lower sensitivity. Overall, the area is considered to have moderate-high sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.

- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve the mixture of wooded and open field ponds (marl pits) which are characteristic features of the area.
- Avoid visually intrusive development on elevated areas along the eastern edge of the area, ensuring that wooded skylines are conserved and enhanced through additional planting and long range views are maintained.
- Protect and enhance the existing public rights of way and promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development.
- Manage and create habitat in relation to the East Wirral Heathlands Nature Improvement Area. This includes restoring, maintaining and enhancing the heathland habitats, and enhancing the existing woodland to support the heathland.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP038 and SP039

Figure A.29: Map of the area with designations / constraints

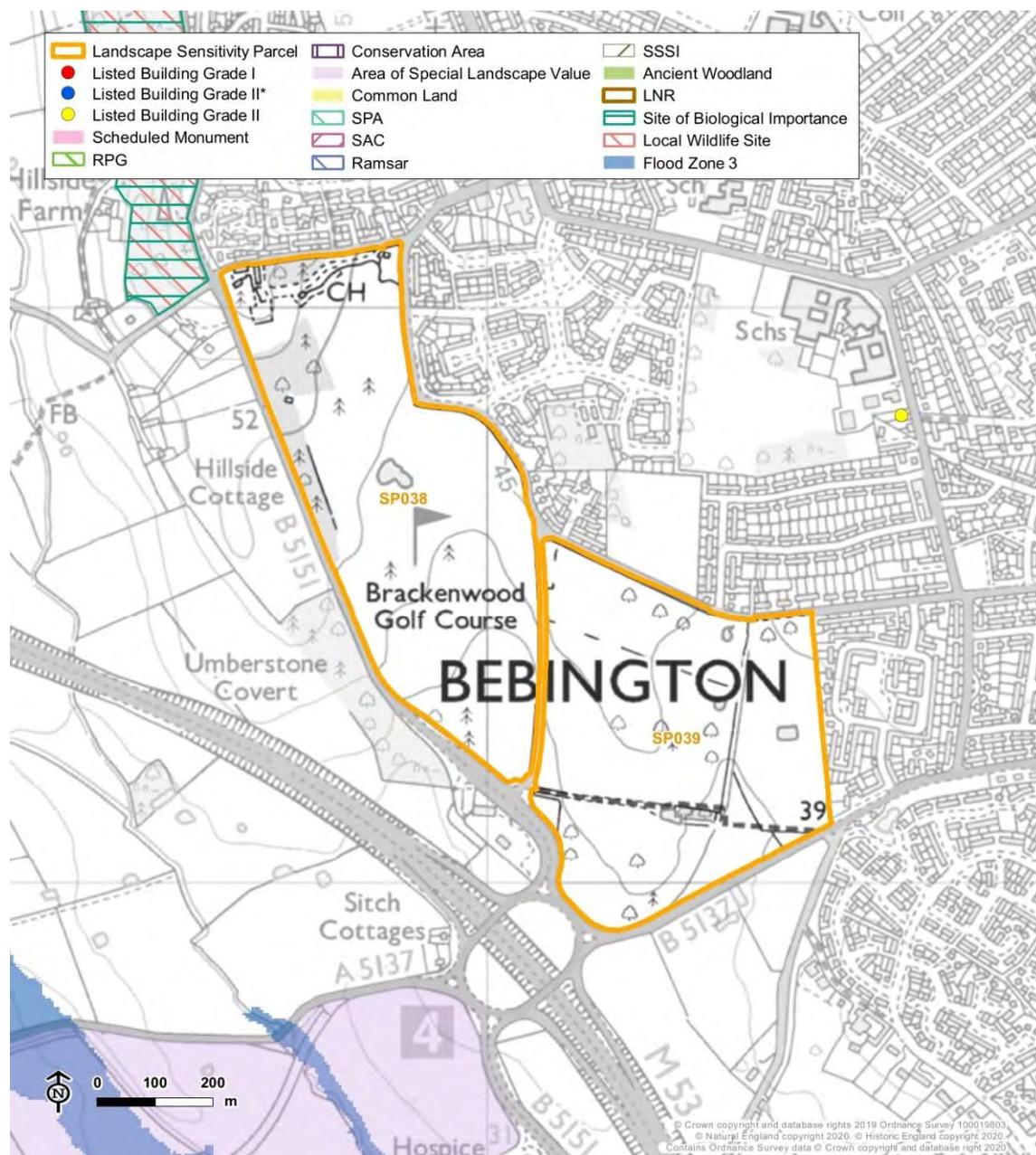


Figure A.30: Aerial photograph of the area



A pond and scattered mature trees within the playing field



The golf course with scattered mature tree belts



Location and landscape character context

The area (incorporating SP038 and SP039) is situated in the centre of the borough. It lies to the west of Bebington, and to the south of Higher Bebington. Bracken Lane forms the northern boundary, and both Bracken Lane and Peter Prices Lane form the north-eastern boundary. The eastern edge is formed by a hedgerow, and abutted by residential properties. The B1537 Brimstage Road and B5151 Mount Road form the southern and western boundaries respectively.

The area lies within Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Landscape Character Area, which forms part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type. Brackenwood Municipal Golf Course comprises the majority of the area and there is an open area of amenity grassland in the east at Poulton Recreation Ground. The gently sloping landform falls from north to south and a linear woodland belt is located along the western boundary. Brackenwood Road runs through the centre of the area.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local).

The area has a golf course with partially accessible woodland, a medium-scale public recreation area and several public rights of way cross the area. These provide connections along the length of the western and southern boundaries, and between Brackenwood Road and Brimstage Road, all contributing towards recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP038 and SP039 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The gently sloping landform falls from the north to the south within the area (from 60m AOD to 30m AOD) from elevated ground on the Higher Bebington settlement edge. In addition to the medium to large scale fields, this indicates lower levels of sensitivity to residential development.

A large section of the area comprises Brackenwood Municipal Golf Course. This features an artificial and undulating topography, established according to the configuration of golf holes, indicating a lower level of sensitivity to residential development. However the introduction of tree clump planting associated with the golf course greens contribute towards the density of small-scale landscape features and increases the sensitivity.

Natural Character

Much of the area comprises the man-made landscape at Brackenwood Municipal Golf Course and Poulton Recreation Ground, which results in a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Areas of valued semi-natural habitats, including scattered woodland throughout the area, much of which is cited as priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland. The linear woodland along the western boundary of the area on Mount Road extends along the ridgeline from Storeton Hill. Other valued natural features include small pockets of trees/ shrubs surrounding field ponds, including the large pond located within the recreation ground in the eastern section of the area.

Historic Landscape Character

The area does not contain an identifiable field pattern given its usage as a golf course and recreation ground. The consequent lack of time depth indicates low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

There are no heritage assets within the area, however it was screened as medium for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area is well integrated within the surrounding area, with the boundary formed by mature hedgerows and frequent trees, along with occasional woodland copses, indicating a higher sensitivity.

The southern section of the area has a more open edge and is defined by wooden fencing and mature trees or hedgerows. Further development in the southern section could be in accordance with the pattern and form of the existing development, while providing opportunities to improve and further integrate the settlement edge.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development to the north and east, indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development. Mature hedgerow boundaries, featuring hedgerow trees, enclose much of the area and therefore, in combination with the frequent woodland copses, there is a low degree of inter-visibility with surrounding landscapes which also lowers the sensitivity to residential development.

The recreation ground in the southern section of the area has semi-enclosed boundaries and has some intervisibility with the surrounding landscape, indicating a higher sensitivity.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

New development would not be out of character and there is a lower sensitivity to residential development. The busy M53 to the west of the area also provides aural intrusion and supports this low sensitivity.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low

The linear belt of woodland, and the localised natural habitats and features (mature trees, hedgerows and field ponds) contribute towards a higher sensitivity. However, the lack of rural character, primarily in the form of Brackenwood Municipal Golf Course, the proximity of busy surrounding road junctions and the visual enclosure of the area, lower sensitivity. Overall, the area is considered to have low sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.

Appendix A Area reference: SP038 and SP039

- Conserve the mixture of wooded and open field ponds (marl pits) which are characteristic features of the area.
- Protect and enhance the existing public rights of way and promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP040

Figure A.31: Map of the area with designations / constraints

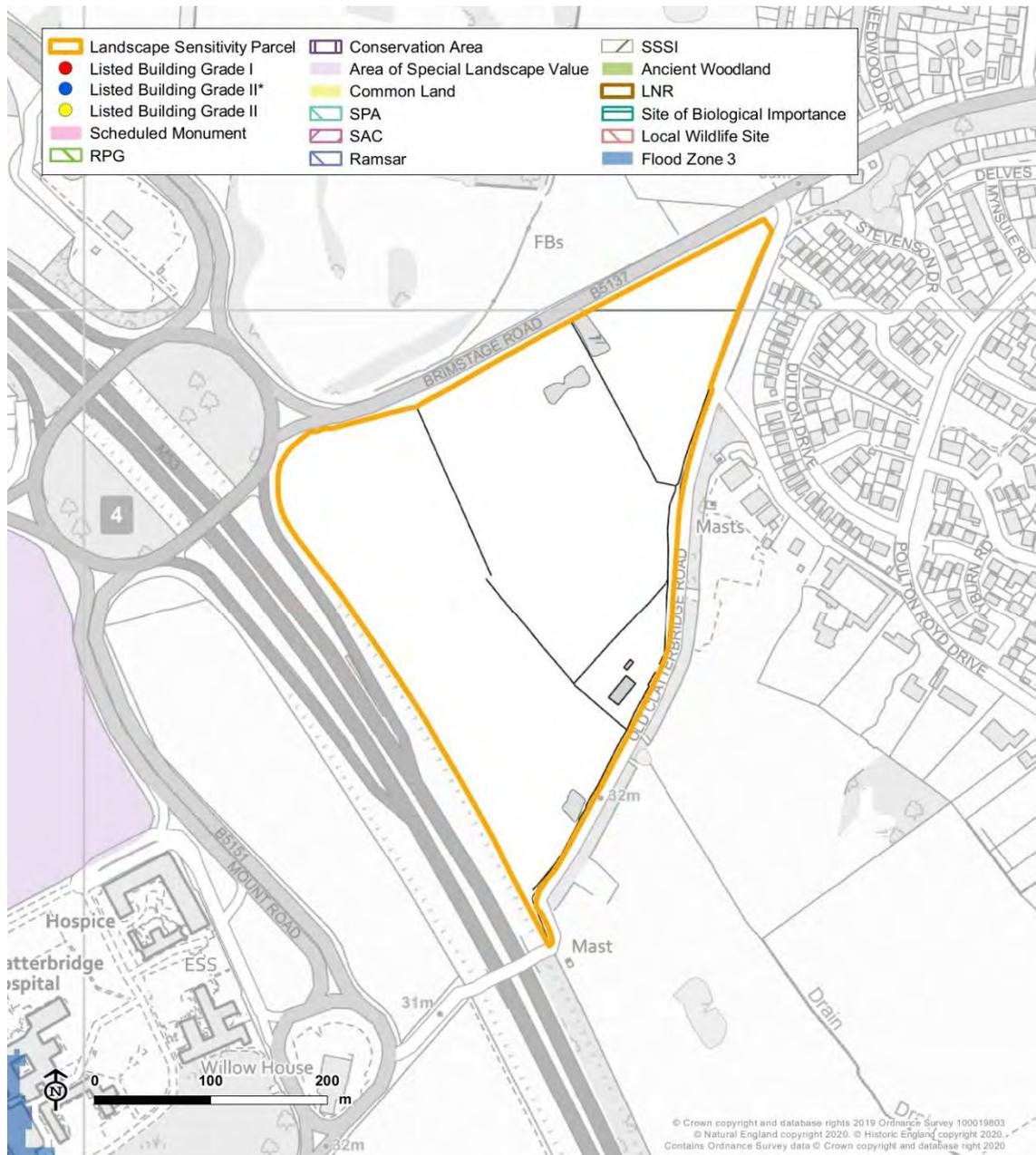


Figure A.32: Aerial photograph of the area



Open boundary at Old Clatterbridge Road and Brimstage Road with a view south west across pastoral fields



Mature hedgerow boundary along Old Clatterbridge Road



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated towards the centre of the borough, to the west of Poulton-Spital, and to the south west of Lower Bebington. The B5137 Brimstage Road and Old Clatterbridge Road form the northern and eastern boundaries respectively. The M53 forms the western boundary.

The area lies within Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Landscape Character Area, which forms part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type. The area is characterised by a flat to gently sloping landform. It comprises both arable and pastoral farmland in the form of small-medium sized fields, with hedgerow boundaries and scattered woodland copses, and pockets of trees surrounding field ponds. The settlement edge of Poulton-Spital abuts the north east corner of the area.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local).

There is no public access into the area which precludes recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP040 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The flat to gently sloping landform falls from east to west (from 39m AOD to 30m AOD) from the Poulton-Spital settlement edge toward the M53 in the south-western corner, indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development. However, the area contains a mixture of geometric and irregular small-medium sized fields, bound by hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees, alongside woodland copses, which provides a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

A large proportion of the area comprises areas that are farmed or managed, with limited coverage of seminatural habitats resulting in a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Valued natural features consist of the hedgerows (some fragmented) with mature hedgerow trees that bound the area boundaries, small woodland copses surrounding field ponds and woodland along the M53 which increase the sensitivity to residential development.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains time depth which increases sensitivity to residential development. The field pattern within the area is categorised as a Post Medieval Field System (post-1600) and consists of small-medium scale fields. Field ponds (marl pits) are scattered across the area and were historically areas used to extract marl deposits to be used as mineral fertilisers, also indicating a higher sensitivity to

residential development and the area may also have archaeological importance.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The settlement edge is well integrated by mature hedgerows and frequent hedgerow trees, along with occasional woodland copses, indicating a higher sensitivity.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is predominantly enclosed by hedgerows and woodland copses which indicate a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

Although largely an undeveloped and rural agricultural landscape, there is some influence from surrounding development, including audible intrusion from the busy B5137 Brimstage Road and the M53 limiting its sense of remoteness and tranquillity.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low-Moderate

The flat to gently sloping landform, limited natural character, visual enclosure and surrounding human influences, lower the sensitivity across the area. However, the small-medium scale fields, valued natural features (including field ponds, mature hedgerows and woodland copses) increase the sensitivity. Overall, the area is considered to have low-moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve the mixture of wooded and open field ponds (marl pits) which are characteristic features of the area.
- Avoid visually intrusive development on elevated areas along the north eastern corner of the area.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP042

Figure A.33: Map of the area with designations / constraints

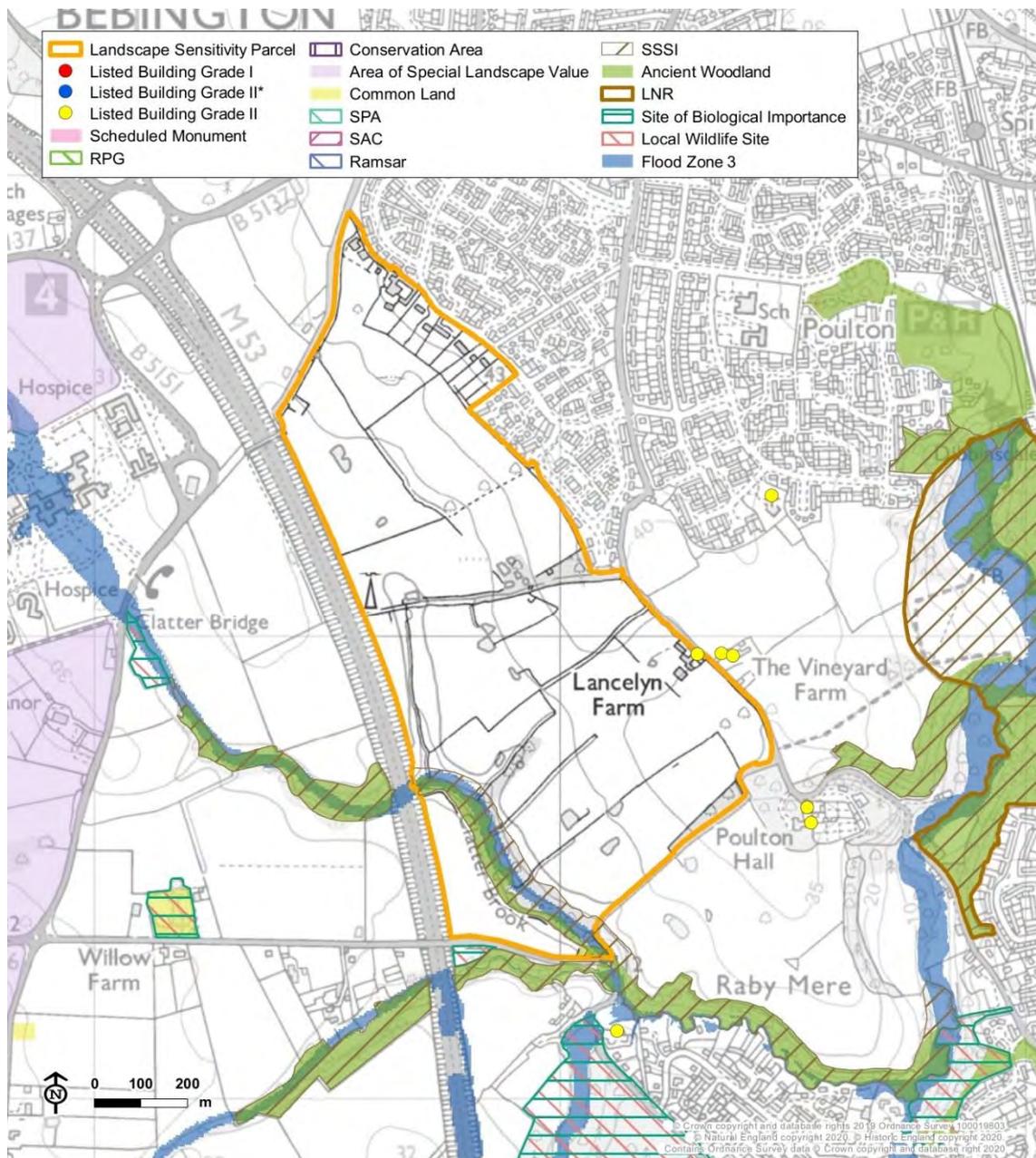
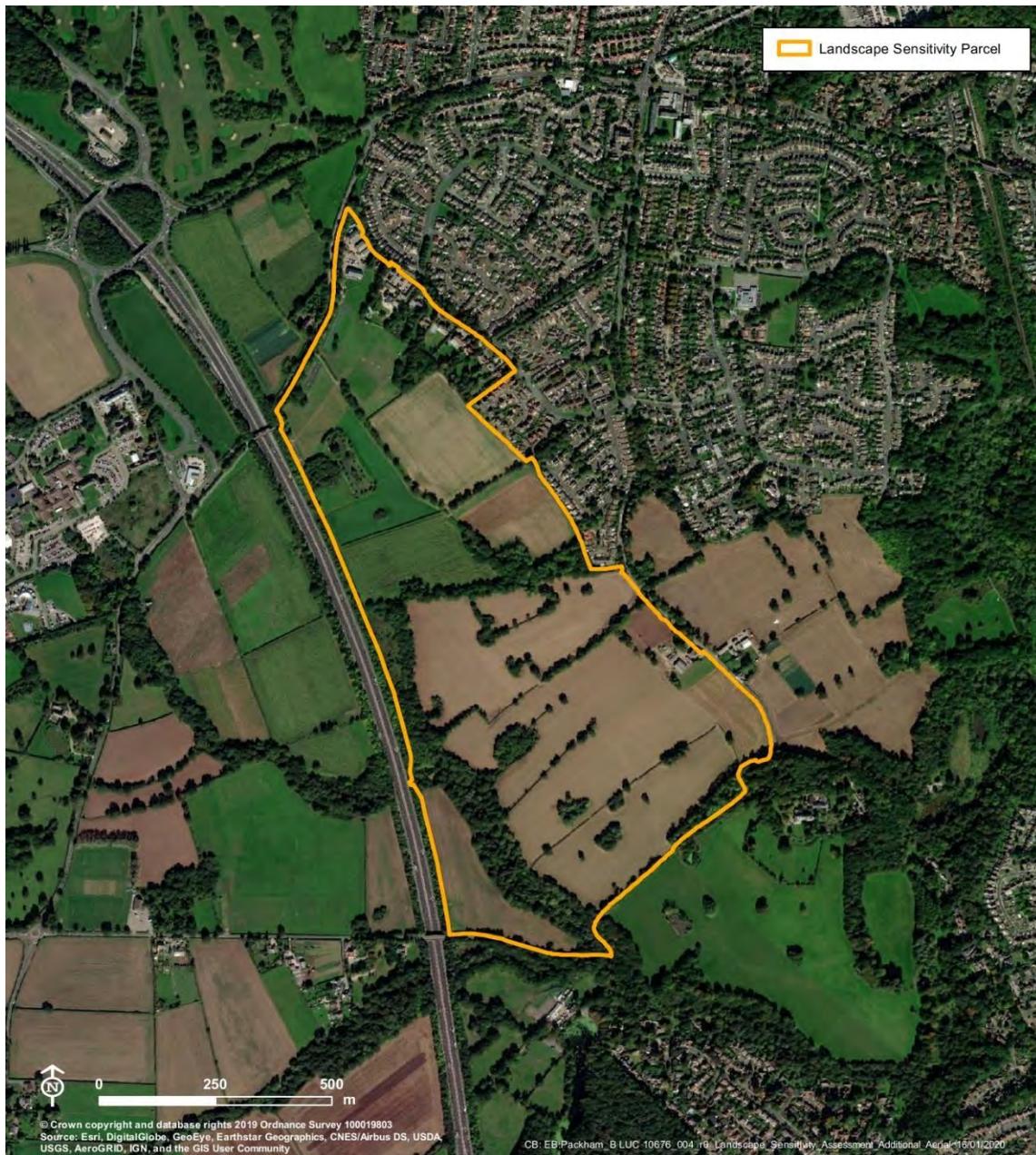


Figure A.34: Aerial photograph of the area



Gently sloping landform. Thornton Wood encloses the northern boundary of this medium scale field



Fragmented hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees from the boundaries of the fields in the centre of the area



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the south east of the borough and lies to the south west of Poulton-Spital. Old Clatterbridge Road forms the northern boundary, and both the settlement edge of Poulton-Spital and Poulton Road form the eastern boundary. Poulton Hall Road/Thornton Common Road and the M53 form the southern and western boundaries respectively.

The area lies within Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Landscape Character Area, which forms part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type.

The area is characterised by a gently sloping landform, falling from the northern eastern edge to the south, with an incised valley along the wooded course of Clatter Brook in the south west. It comprises arable farmland in the form of medium-large scale fields, with some pastoral farmland along the northern boundary with a network of permissive footpaths.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, the wooded valley along the Clatter Brook is designated as part of the Dibbinsdale Site of Special Scientific Interest for its ancient woodland.

There are fishing lakes in the north, however public access is limited, which limits recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP0042 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The gently sloping landform falls from east to west (from 43m AOD to 25m AOD) from high ground on the settlement edge near Poulton Royd Drive indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development. However, the narrow wooded valley along Clatter Brook cuts deeply through the landscape, increasing sensitivity to residential development locally.

The area is overlain by a pattern comprising a mixture of geometric, rectangular and irregular fields that are medium to large in size and formed by hedgerows (occasionally fragmented) with hedgerow trees and some linear woodland copses. This indicates a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

Much of the area comprises areas that are intensively farmed or managed, although this is softened by the frequent woodland copses and hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees. There is some limited existing development (dwellings and farms along Poulton Royd Drive, clusters of buildings along Old Clatterbridge Road, a farm along Poulton Road, a fishing lake, and a couple of masts) that results in a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Pockets of higher sensitivity to residential development exist where there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats, including Priority Habitats Lowland Mixed Broad-leaf Woodland, Wet Woodland and Reedbeds. The extensive ancient woodland in the Clatter Brook valley is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Other valued natural features include hedgerows enhanced with mature hedgerow trees (mostly oak) and small pockets of trees/ shrubs surrounding the numerous field ponds which characterise the area

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains a relatively diverse time depth which increases sensitivity to residential development.

There is a high concentration of Ancient Fieldscapes (pre-1600) within the area; namely the medium-scale irregular field pattern in the centre of the area, adjacent to Clatter Brook, which is categorised as Medieval Town Fields. Further north, there is also an area of semi-regular Post Medieval Fieldscapes, categorised as Post Medieval Planned Enclosures and in the south-western corner, categorised as Parliamentary Enclosures. This time depth and scale increases sensitivity to residential development in these areas. Frequent field ponds (marlpits) are scattered across the ancient fieldscapes and were historically used to extract marl deposits to be used as mineral fertilisers, also resulting in a higher sensitivity.

Along the eastern boundary of the area is an area of 20th Century Fieldscapes, categorised as 20th Century Agricultural Improvement consisting of a large scale field, and in the northern corner is an area of 20th Century Settlement, all reducing the sensitivity to residential development.

There are limited heritage assets important to landscape character except for a Grade II listed farmhouse along the eastern boundary on Poulton Road (Lancelyn Farmhouse). There is also an area of archaeological importance that falls partly within the area boundary in the south east.

The area was also screened as high for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area is well integrated within the surrounding area, with the boundaries formed by mature hedgerows (occasionally fragmented) and frequent mature trees, along with occasional woodland copses, indicating a higher sensitivity.

The area provides a rural setting to Poulton-Spital. This results in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is generally enclosed, particularly along the M53, due to hedgerows and trees and linear woodlands, indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development.

From more elevated areas there are views to the distant Welsh hills and pylon towers along the wooded horizon line. This inter-visibility with the surrounding landscape indicates a higher sensitivity.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

Although largely a rural agricultural landscape, the area is influenced by urban fringe elements including farm buildings, residential dwellings and radio masts reducing sensitivity. The area is influenced by the proximity of surrounding development, including the audible intrusion of the M53, disturbing tranquillity and therefore decreasing the sensitivity to residential development.

However, there is a sense of remoteness away from the urban edge within the area particularly along the wooded valley of Clatter Brook and its tributaries. This creates enclosure and a perceived naturalness, resulting in a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate

The presence of historic field patterns, a wooded valley, localised natural habitats, and the experiential sense of remoteness in parts of the area, increases the sensitivity to residential development. However, the gently sloping landform, intensively farmed character, the presence of human influences, including surrounding development and the M53, lower sensitivity. Overall, the area is considered to have moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented and retain mature hedgerow trees.
- Retain and manage mature trees and areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend the coverage of trees and native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve the mixture of wooded and open field ponds (marl pits) which are characteristic features of the area.

- Avoid visually intrusive development on elevated areas along the eastern edge of the area.
- Manage the area in accordance with the Dibbinsdale, Raby Mere and Eastham Country Park Nature Improvement Area ecological and habitat management priorities. This includes: woodland management to improve structure and quality of ancient woodland, wet woodland and rivers; management to eradicate Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam which pose significant threat to woodland and wetland habitats; and manage areas of existing wetland to maintain the extent of scrub growth.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP043

Figure A.35: Map of the area with designations / constraints

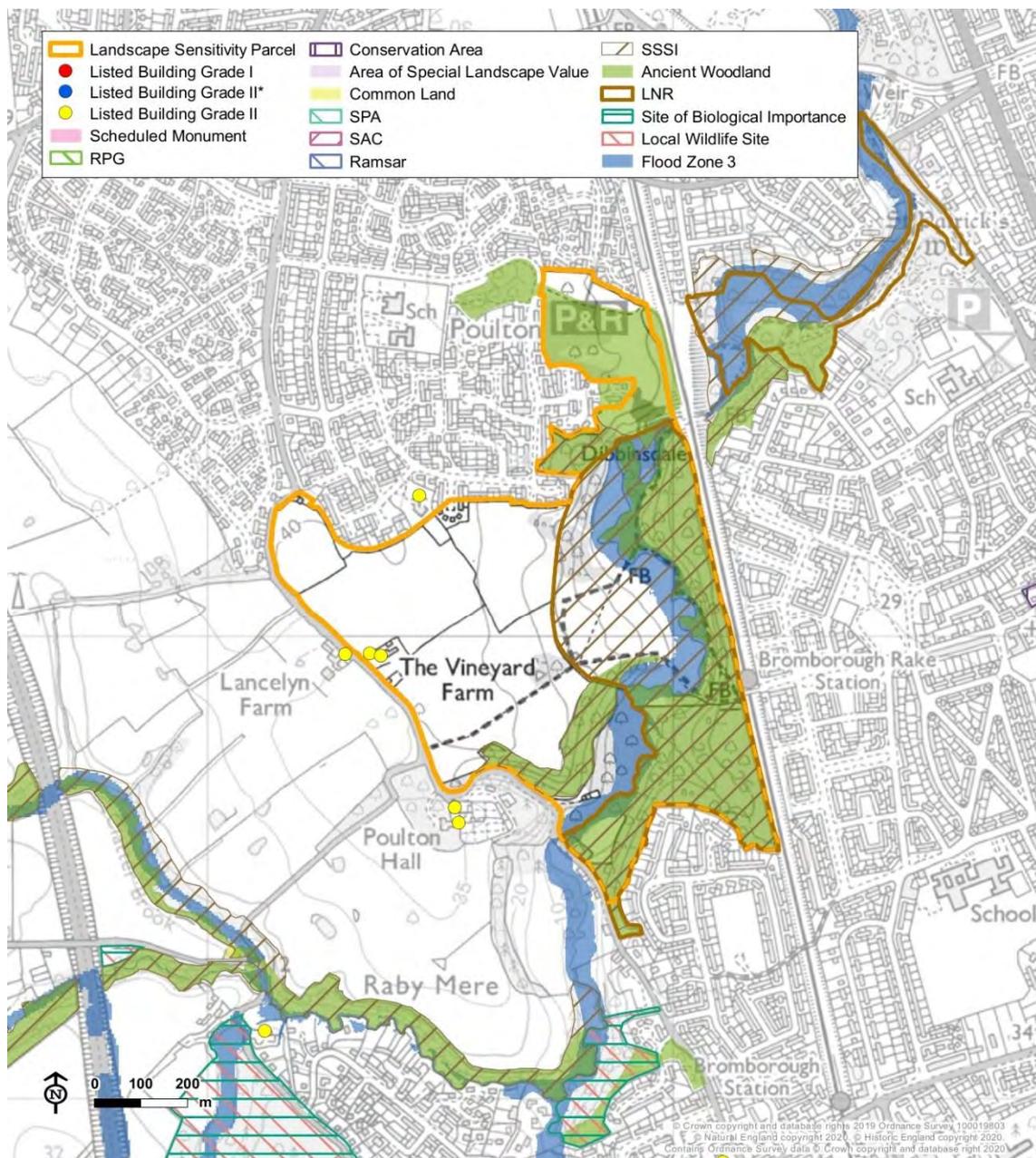


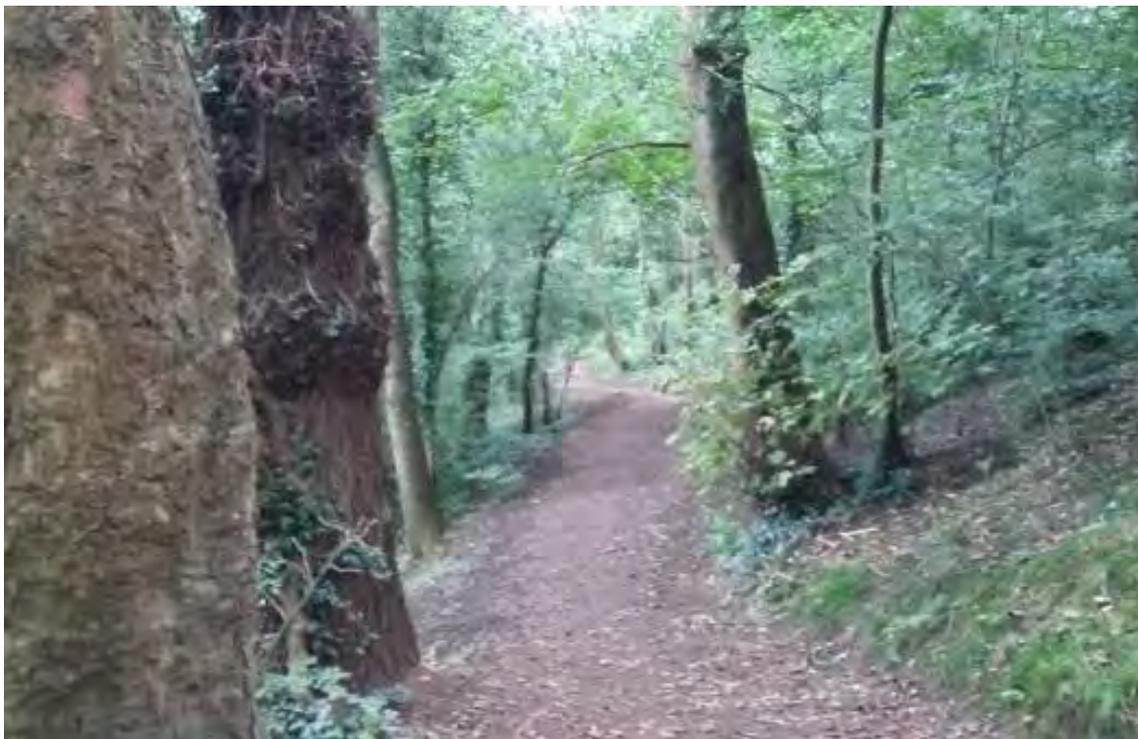
Figure A.36: Aerial photograph of the area



Semi-enclosed field boundaries and the visible Poulton-Spital settlement edge along the horizon line



Public right of way through the enclosed Marfords Wood



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the south-east of the borough. It lies to the south of Poulton, west of Bromborough, and north of Cunningham Drive, Brookhurst. The urban edge of Poulton-Spital forms the northern boundary and the Wirral Line railway line forms the eastern boundary. The urban edge of Cunningham Drive, Brookhurst and Poulton Road form the southern and south-western boundaries respectively. Poulton Road also forms the western boundary.

The area is situated in Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Landscape Character Area, which forms part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type. The eastern section of the area has an undulating landform, characterised by woodland, and open grassland. The western section of the area has a flat to gently sloping landform and comprises arable farmland.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, part of Brotherton Park and Dibbinsdale within the eastern section of the area is a key feature that is valued for its wildlife and is designated as a Local Nature Reserve. Footpath Wood, Marfords Wood, and Railway Wood are Ancient Woodland.

The Brotherton Park and Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve in the eastern section of the area is accessible via a strong network of public rights of way, routed throughout the woodland and provides a recreational resource for local residents. The western section of the area is used as working farmland for crops and therefore has limited recreational value except for a

public right of way which connects Poulton Road to the woodland in the eastern section of the area.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP0043 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The eastern section of the area has an undulating and distinct landform (from 10m AOD to 35m AOD), predominantly characterised by mature woodland, small enclosures of grassland, ponds and narrow watercourses. The topography and network of small-scale landscape features indicate a high sensitivity to residential development.

The western section of the area has a flat to gently sloping landform (from 40m AOD to 30m AOD), falling from north to south. Medium sized fields are formed by hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees, and there are scattered wooded copses and mature trees within the fields, providing a modest density of small-scale landscape features also resulting in a high level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The eastern section of the area is characterised by semi-natural broad-leaved woodland located along Dibbinsdale Brook, designated as part of the Brotherton Park and Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve and Dibbinsdale Site of Special Scientific Interest indicating a higher sensitivity to residential development. This includes extensive broadleaved woodland, including Ash-wych elm woodland and alder woodland along the valley floor, fen pasture and neutral grassland,

and reed swamps. Priority Habitats include Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, Wet Woodland, Lowland Wood-pasture and Parkland.

The western section of the area is farmed through arable practices (although softened by woodland copses, mature hedgerows and scattered trees), with extensive areas of Priority Habitat Lowland Fens.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains a limited time depth which decreases sensitivity to residential development, although there are some historic features important to the character of the area.

Marfords Wood, the area of woodland within the eastern section of the area, is Ancient Woodland. The woodland in the north eastern corner of the area, is also categorised as Post Medieval Woodland which indicates a high sensitivity to residential development. The woodland surrounding the open grassland in the centre of the area is categorised as 20th Century Woodland, indicating a lower sensitivity.

The fields in the western section of the area are medium-scale 20th Century Fieldscapes, categorised as 20th Century Agricultural Improvement which indicates a lower sensitivity.

A cluster of listed buildings at Vineyard Farm on Poulton Road are important to landscape character. There are also Grade II listed buildings adjacent to the northern and south-western boundaries of the area respectively and an area of archaeological importance that falls partly within the area boundary in the west, which indicates a higher sensitivity surrounding these locations.

The area was screened as high for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The existing development surrounding the area is generally well integrated into the landscape by hedgerows and woodlands, resulting in a high sensitivity to residential development.

A fairly limited section of the residential edge along the northern boundary is open and exposed in places, forming a 'hard edge' to the adjoining landscape and development could provide opportunities to improve and integrate the settlement edge, indicating lower levels of sensitivity. However, in general, the area provides a rural setting to this settlement edge with uninterrupted views afforded from some areas towards Marfords Wood, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by woodland along the eastern and southern boundaries, with a low degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes, indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development.

The elevated ground along its northern edge is open in some areas and therefore has some inter-visibility with the surrounding landscape. This results in a higher sensitivity.

Field boundaries within the eastern portion of the area are typically formed by low hedgerows resulting in a sense of openness and inter-visibility with the surrounding landscape, including to St Barnabas Church spire in Bromborough, above the wooded horizon, which increases sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

This is a largely undeveloped landscape with a strong rural character, with little influence from surrounding development. The wooded areas within the eastern

section of the area have a sense of remoteness and tranquillity, which indicates a higher sensitivity to residential development.

The busy M53 to the west provides aural intrusion, perceptible throughout the area, which in addition to the railway line along the eastern boundary, lowers sensitivity.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate - High

Within the eastern section of the area, the presence of Ancient Woodland, Dibbinsdale Site of Special Scientific Interest and Brotherton Park and Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve; localised natural habitats including Priority Habitat Lowland Fens; and the containment, sense of remoteness and tranquillity provided by the woodland increases sensitivity to residential development. However, the aural intrusion from the M53 and proximity to the railway line lowers sensitivity. Overall, the eastern section of the area is considered to have a moderate-high sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Moderate

Within the north-western section of the area, the localised natural habitats and valued natural features (hedgerows, mature trees and wooded copses), and the role the area plays in providing a rural setting to the existing residential development increase sensitivity. However, the flat to gently sloping landform, farmed character, little time depth, surrounding human influences and the visual openness provided along some boundaries lowers sensitivity. Overall, the north-western section of the area is considered to have a moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Retain and manage mature trees within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend the coverage of trees across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Ensure that the intimate character of the woodland is retained.
- Protect and enhance public right of way connections to promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development.
- Conserve, enhance and manage the other valued habitats within the area. Manage the area in accordance with the Dibbinsdale, Raby Mere and Eastham Country Park Nature Improvement Area ecological and habitat management priorities, which includes: woodland management to improve structure and quality of ancient woodland, wet woodland and rivers; management to eradicate Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam which pose significant threats to woodland and wetland habitats; and manage areas of existing wetland to maintain the extent of scrub growth.

Appendix A Area reference: SP043

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP044

Figure A.37: Map of the area with designations / constraints

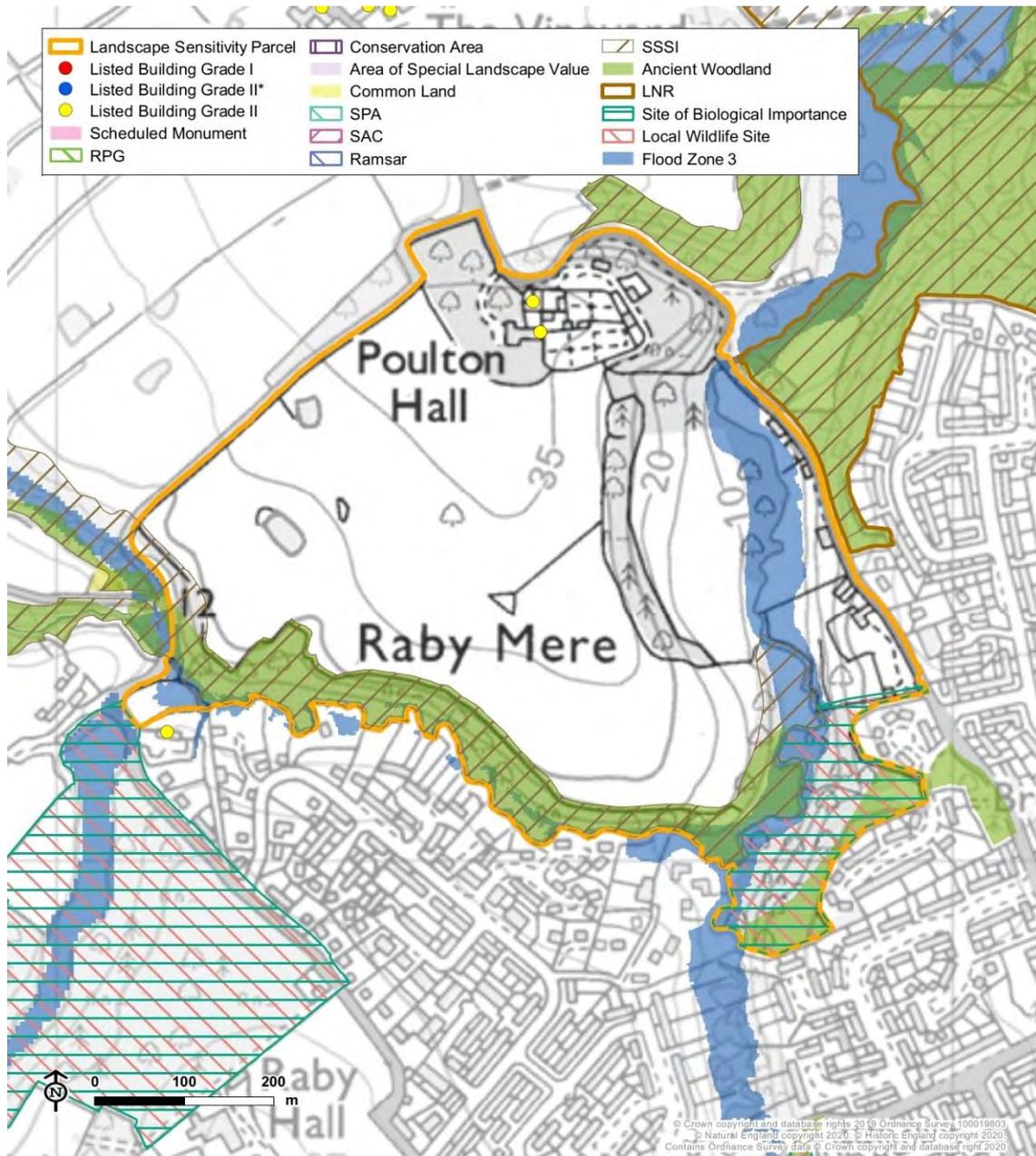


Figure A.38: Aerial photograph of the area



Wooded boundary to Poulton Hall, along Dibbinsdale Road



Pastoral farmland with wooded edges and scattered trees



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the south-east of the borough. It lies to the east of the settlements at Marfords Avenue, and to the north of Raby Drive.

Dibbinsdale Road forms the eastern boundary, Poulton Road the northern boundary and Poulton Hall Road the north-western and western boundaries. Poulton Hall is located within the area and its associated estate abuts these boundaries. The wooded settlement edge forms part of the eastern and southern boundary, and the course of Dibbinsdale Brook forms the south-western boundary.

The area is situated in Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Landscape Character Area, which forms part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type. The majority of the area comprises medium-large scale pastoral fields which are gently sloping, with the wooded course of Dibbinsdale Brook and Clatter Brook meandering along the periphery of the area.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, the wooded course of the brooks that cross the area are a key landscape feature valued for their nature conservation value and designated as part of the Dibbinsdale Site of Special Scientific Interest.

There is no public access into the area resulting in there being no recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP0044 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The area has a gently sloping landform that falls from the elevated ground at Poulton Hall on the north edge to the southern and western corners of the area (from 35m AOD to 10m AOD) indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development. However, the narrow wooded valley formed along the course of Dibbinsdale and Clatter Brook cuts through the landscape, increasing sensitivity to residential development.

The area is overlain by a landscape pattern comprising irregular fields that are medium to large in size, and mostly enclosed by wooded boundaries and hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees, providing a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

Much of the area comprises an area managed as pasture farmland, which indicates lower sensitivity to residential development, but this is softened by mature parkland trees and strong woodland edges. There is some limited development present at Poulton Hall and scattered dwellings along Dibbinsdale Road.

The strong natural qualities of the wooded course of the brooks increase the sensitivity of the area due to their nature conservation interest, including designation as part of the Dibbinsdale Site of Special Scientific Interest and as Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland and Wet Woodland. The Marfords, Brookhurst in the south east is designated as a Site of Biological Importance/Local Wildlife Site and there is extensive Ancient Woodland at Thornton Wood/Intake Wood along the southern boundary. Other valued natural

features include hedgerows enhanced occasionally with hedgerow trees and small pockets of trees/ shrubs surrounding field ponds.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains a varied time depth with some historic features important to landscape character which increases sensitivity to residential development.

The pasture farmland which covers much of the area is an area of 20th Century Enclosed Parkland, consisting of medium-large scale regular fields, reducing sensitivity to residential development.

Poulton Hall and the Old Brewhouse to the north east are both Grade II listed buildings and the north-eastern area of the area is an area of archaeological importance. The estate immediately surrounding the hall is categorised as Post Medieval Ornamental Parkland which increases sensitivity to residential development. Frequent field ponds (marl pits) are scattered across the area and were historically used to extract marl deposits to be used as mineral fertilisers, indicating a higher sensitivity to residential development.

The linear woodland in the centre of the area is categorised as a Post Medieval Plantation and Ancient Woodland extends along the brook valley.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area provides a rural setting to Poulton Hall, and the other clustered dwellings along Dibbinsdale Road, which residential development would adversely affect.

The area also provides a wooded setting to the settlement edges at Raby Drive and Marfords Avenue Bromborough. The area forms an important part in the perception of a gap between these settlements, indicating a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by the wooded edge on its boundaries to the north, east, and south while mature hedgerow boundaries with hedgerow trees, enclose the western boundary and as a result, there is a low degree of visibility with surrounding landscapes which lowers the sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The parkland character of the area is adjoined by narrow rural roads, with little influence from surrounding development, indicates a higher sensitivity to residential development. Aural intrusion from the M53, to the west of the area, disturbs tranquillity and lowers sensitivity.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate-High

The strong natural and rural qualities of the area, including the wooded course of the meandering brooks, much of which is ancient and the valued natural features (mature parkland trees, hedgerows and field ponds), the role the area plays in providing a rural setting to Poulton Hall and a perceived gap between surrounding settlements increase sensitivity. However, the generally flat landform, and the visual enclosure provided by the existing woodland lowers sensitivity. Overall, the area is considered to have moderate-high sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Preserve the natural meandering character of the Dibbinsdale Brook, avoiding development that will change their course or introduce artificial banks.
- Manage the area in accordance with the Dibbinsdale, Raby Mere and Eastham Country Park Nature Improvement Area ecological and habitat management priorities. This includes: woodland management to improve structure and quality of ancient woodland, wet woodland and rivers; management to eradicate Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam which pose significant threats to woodland and wetland habitats; and manage areas of existing wetland to maintain the extent of scrub growth.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP045

Figure A.39: Map of the area with designations / constraints

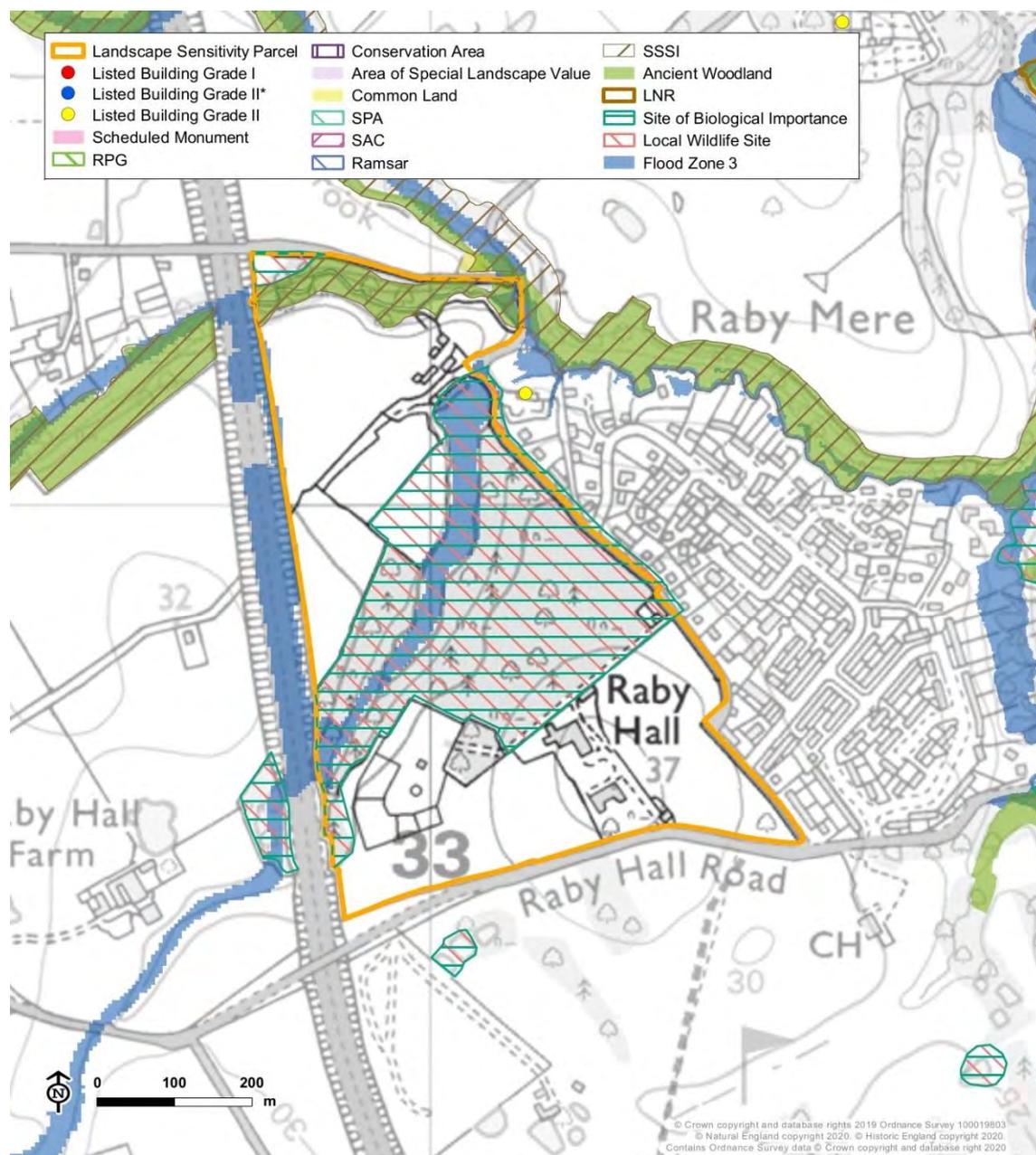
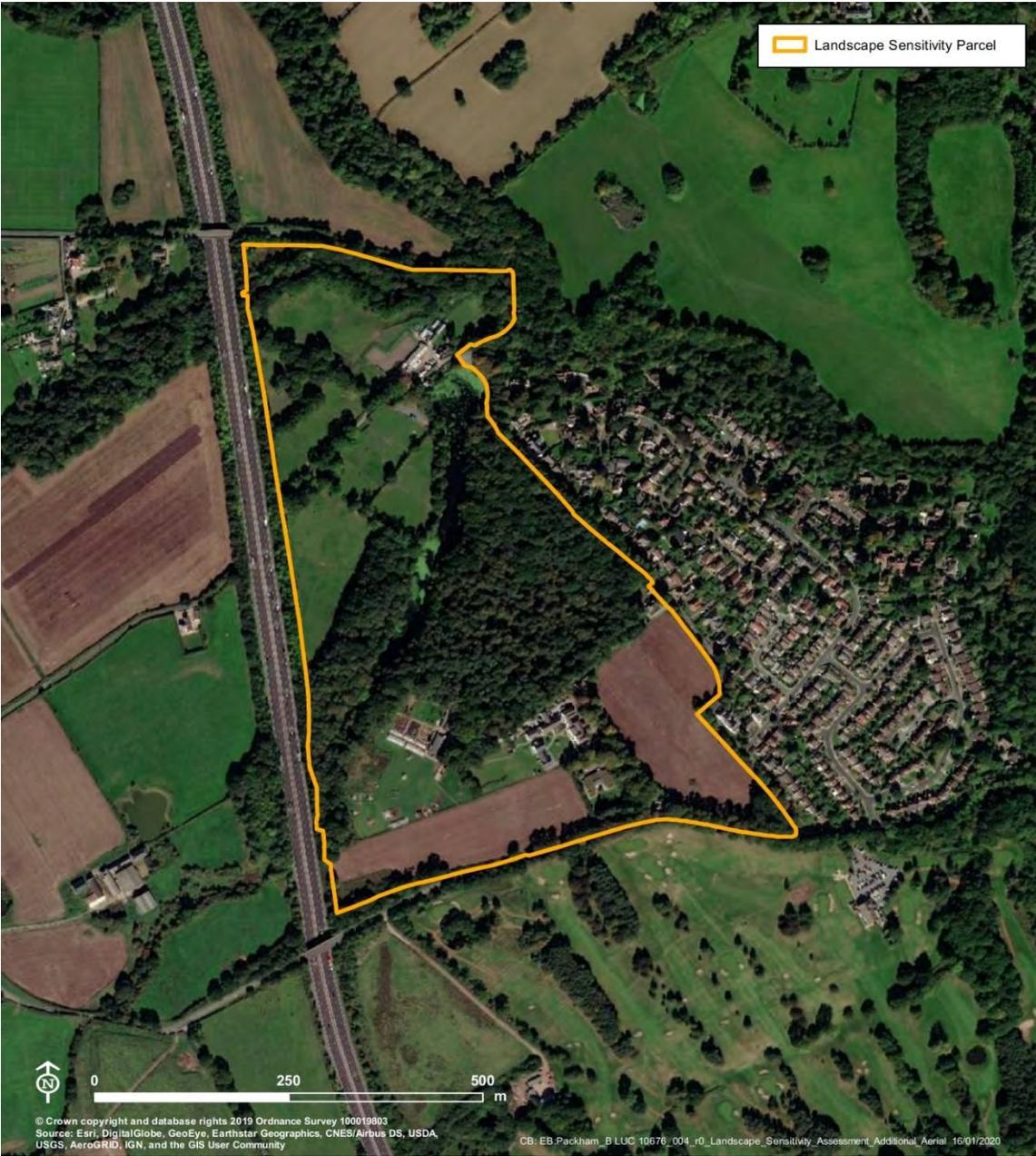


Figure A.40: Aerial photograph of the area



Gently sloping pasture, with the settlement edge at Raby Mere visible through the wooded boundary



The wooded edge along Blakeley Road, opposite the fishing lake



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the south-east of the borough. It lies to the west of the settlements at Raby Drive. Thornton Common Road forms the northern boundary, and Blakeley Road the eastern boundary, with the settlements at Raby Drive abutting this edge. Raby Hall Road and the M53 form the southern and western boundaries respectively.

The area lies within the Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Landscape Character Area, which forms part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type. The area contains a mix of woodland and both pastoral and arable small-medium sized fields. The area is gently undulating, with a narrow wooded valley along the northern boundary of the area, and a localised high point at Raby Hall along the southern boundary. The area also contains Raby Mere, which is managed for fishing, and a small number of residential dwellings.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, Raby Mere woodland, within the centre of the area, is valued for biodiversity, being a designated Site of Biological Importance /Local Wildlife Site. Foxes Wood, a linear woodland along the northern boundary, is Ancient Woodland.

Public access into the area is restricted, however Raby Mere is a popular fishing area, resulting in there being limited recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP0045 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The area has a gently undulating landform (from 37m AOD to 15m AOD); falling from elevated ground at Raby Hall in the south of the area, indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development. However, the incised wooded valley along the tributary of Clatter Brook along the northern boundary of the area and along the settlements at Raby Drive contributes positively to landscape character; indicating higher levels of sensitivity to residential development.

The area is overlain by a mix of geometric, rectangular and irregular fields to the north and south of the area, that are small to medium in size and mostly bound by hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees, providing a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The northern and southern sections of the area comprise areas that are farmed or managed, although softened by wooded boundaries and hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees. There is some existing development present (a farm and buildings associated with the fishing lake to the north, and Raby Hall and its ancillary buildings to the south of the area), although this is rural in character.

The Raby Mere lake and the large area of woodland in the centre is designated as Raby Mere Woodland Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site. The wooded valley along the northern boundary of the area is part of the Dibbinsdale Site of Special Scientific Interest and includes Foxes Wood Ancient Woodland. These are the largest of several areas of valued semi-natural habitats within the area, which include Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, Lowland Wood Pasture and Parkland and Wet

Woodland, which indicates a higher sensitivity to residential development. Other valued natural features include clumps of woodland along the area boundaries, narrow watercourses which feed into Raby Mere lake, field ponds surrounded by trees /shrubs, and hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains a diverse time depth which increases sensitivity to residential development.

The wooded valley along the northern boundary comprises Ancient Woodland. Raby Mere lake is a natural water body, and the woodland which surrounds it is categorised as Post Medieval Plantation. The area immediately around Raby Hall is categorised as Post Medieval Ornamental Parkland. The small-medium scale fields both north and south of the area are categorised as Late Post Medieval Agricultural Improvement. These features contribute towards a higher sensitivity to residential development.

There are no known heritage assets within the area. The area may be of archaeological importance.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area provides a rural setting to the settlement edge at Raby Drive, Raby Hall and the other residential dwellings within the area, which further residential development would adversely affect. The settlement edge is well integrated into the surrounding landscape with a mix of wooded boundaries and low hedgerows with mature trees, which indicates a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by woodland and hedgerows which indicates a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The pastoral and arable land uses and sense of remoteness through the enclosure provided by woodlands, woodland copses and hedgerow field boundaries, results in a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Sensitivity is lowered where modern development is present. The M53 along the western boundary, which runs through a cutting, introduces significant aural intrusion to the area.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate

The wooded watercourse, extensive natural habitats, much of which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Local Wildlife Site, and the rural wooded setting provided to the settlements at Raby Mere increases sensitivity. However, the influence of existing development and visual enclosure lowers sensitivity. Overall, the area is considered to have a moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development. The Raby Mere lake and its associated woodland and the wooded brook valley have a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.

- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Retain and manage mature trees within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend the coverage of trees across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Preserve the natural meandering character of the existing watercourses, avoiding development that will change their course or introduce artificial banks.
- Conserve, enhance and manage any other valued habitats that have formed within the area, including clumps of woodlands along the area boundaries, narrow watercourses which feed into Raby Mere lake, field ponds surrounded by trees /shrubs, and hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees.
- Manage the area in accordance with the Dibbinsdale, Raby Mere and Eastham Country Park Nature Improvement Area ecological and habitat management priorities. This includes: woodland management to improve structure and quality of ancient woodland, wet woodland and rivers; management to eradicate Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam which pose significant threats to woodland and wetland habitats; and manage areas of existing wetland to maintain the extent of scrub growth.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP046

Figure A.41: Map of the area with designations / constraints

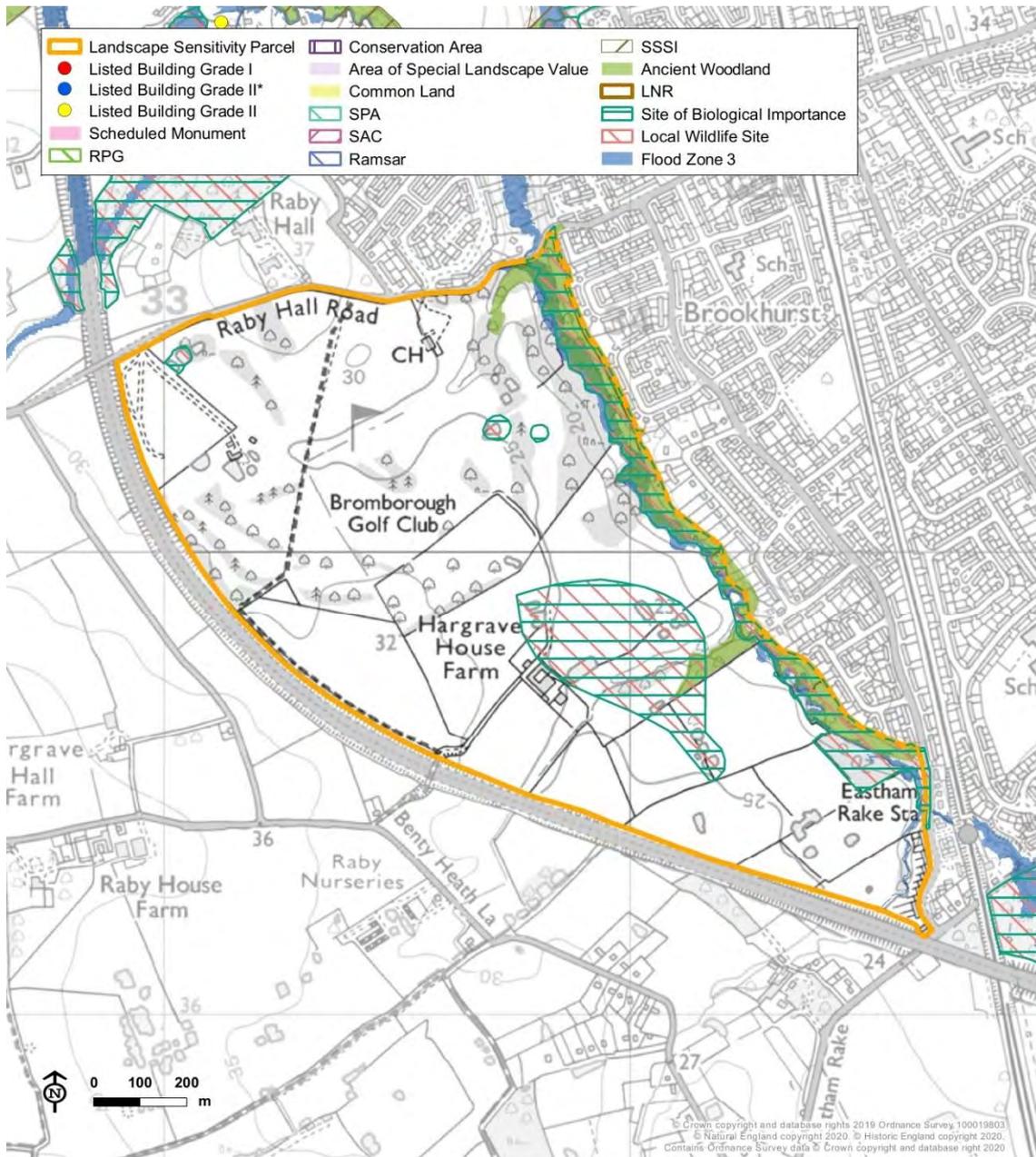


Figure A.42: Aerial photograph of the area



Amenity grass, clumps of trees and sand bunkers at Bromborough Golf Course



Gently undulating pasture with a woodland edge



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the south east of the borough. It lies to the west of Brookhurst, and to the south of the settlements at Raby Drive. Raby Hall Road forms the northern boundary, and the settlement edge of Brookhurst forms the eastern boundary. Brookhurst Avenue and the M53 form the south-eastern and western boundaries respectively.

The area lies within Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Landscape Character Area, which forms part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type. Bromborough Golf Course comprises the northern part of the area. Hargrave House Farm and an area of gently undulating arable and pastoral farmland comprise the southern part of the area. A linear woodland following the course of the meandering Dibbinsdale Brook runs along the eastern boundary of the area at Plymyard Dale and a small ribbon of residential development is located in the south east corner adjacent to the settlement edge at Brookhurst.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, the area has several locations valued for contribution to biodiversity which are designated as Sites of Biological Importance /Local Wildlife Sites. This includes Ancient Woodland within Plymyard Dale along the eastern boundary, Hargrave House Farm Ponds within the centre of the area, and small ponds within Bromborough Golf Course.

The area's primary uses as both a golf course and farmland limit its recreational value, although a public right of way crosses the area between Raby Hall Road and a footbridge crossing the M53. The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP0046 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The gently sloping landform falls from the west to the east (from 32m AOD to 10m AOD), including the artificial undulating topography within the Bromborough Golf Course which, indicates lower sensitivity to development. The slight undulation surrounding the narrow watercourses along the eastern boundary contributes positively to landscape character and indicates a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Tree clump planting and frequent ponds in the north contribute towards a density of small-scale landscape features within the golf course. The southern section of the area comprises a mixture of regular and irregular fields which are formed by mature hedgerows, with frequent field ponds surrounded by trees /shrubs and woodland copses. This modest density of small-scale landscape features results in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The man-made landscape at Bromborough Golf Course occupies the north, which results in a lower sensitivity to residential development.

The southern section of the area comprises areas that are farmed or managed (although softened by the linear woodlands and frequent woodland copses and mature hedgerow trees). There is some limited existing development (Hargrave House Farm, and a small ribbon of residential development in the south-east) that results in a lower sensitivity to residential development.

There are areas of valued semi-natural habitats, including scattered woodland throughout the area, much of which is Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland and includes the linear Ancient Woodland that extends the Brookhurst settlement edge and is designated as Plymyard Dale Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site. Wetlands and ponds also provide

valued features and are designated within the Hargrave House Farm Pond Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site and Bromborough Golf Course Ponds Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site.

The majority of the area is also included within Dibbinsdale, Raby Mere and Eastham Country Park Nature Improvement Area which prioritises woodland habitat creation and management. Other valued natural features include small pockets of trees/ shrubs surrounding field ponds, hedgerows, meandering water courses, and wooded copses.

Historic Landscape Character

The golf course in the north does not contain an identifiable field pattern. The consequent lack of time depth therefore indicates low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Within the southern section of the area, there is a diverse time depth which increases sensitivity to residential development. This includes an area of small-medium scale Ancient Fieldscapes in the centre of the area, categorised as Ancient Field Systems Irregular. Field ponds (marl pits) are scattered across this area of Ancient Fieldscapes and were historically used to extract marl deposits to be used as mineral fertilisers. The woodland along the eastern boundary is Ancient Woodland.

The fields along the western boundary of the area is categorised as 20th Century Agricultural Improvement, which reduces the sensitivity.

There are no heritage assets within the area. The area may also be of archaeological importance.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The settlement edge is well defined by linear woodlands which provide a rural setting, indicating a higher sensitivity.

Views and visual character including skylines

Woodland boundaries enclose much of the area and therefore there is a low degree of inter-visibility with surrounding landscapes which lowers the sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The man-made landscape in the north results in a lower sensitivity to residential development. Within the southern section of the area, the largely rural, agricultural landscape with a working farm, results in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. Aural intrusion from the M53 to the west of the area lowers the sense of tranquillity across the area.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low-Moderate

In the northern section of the area, the linear belt of woodland, and the localised natural habitats and features (woodlands, mature trees, hedgerows and field ponds) contribute towards a higher sensitivity. However, the man-made landscape associated with Bromborough Golf Course, the proximity of the M53, and the visual enclosure of the area lower sensitivity.

In the southern section of the area, the well-defined wooded settlement edge, the time-depth of the small-medium scale field pattern and small-scale landscape features indicate a higher sensitivity. However, the generally flat landform, visual containment and the proximity and audible intrusion from the M53 lower the sensitivity across the area.

Overall, the area is considered to have low- moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve the mixture of wooded and open field ponds (marl pits) which are characteristic features of the area.
- Preserve the natural meandering character of the existing watercourses, avoiding development that will change their course or introduce artificial banks.
- Conserve, enhance and manage any valued habitats within the area, including small pockets of trees/ shrubs surrounding field ponds, hedgerows, meandering water courses, and wooded copses.
- Protect and enhance the existing public rights of way and promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development.
- Manage the relevant areas of the area in accordance with the Dibbinsdale, Raby Mere and Eastham Country Park Nature Improvement Area ecological and habitat management priorities. This includes: the creation of new woodland to buffer ancient woodland; woodland management to improve structure and quality of ancient woodland, wet woodland, and river; and, management of Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam, which pose significant threats to woodland and wetland habitats.

- Conserve the rural character and small scale intact historic field pattern.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP047 and SP048

Figure A.43: Map of the area with designations / constraints

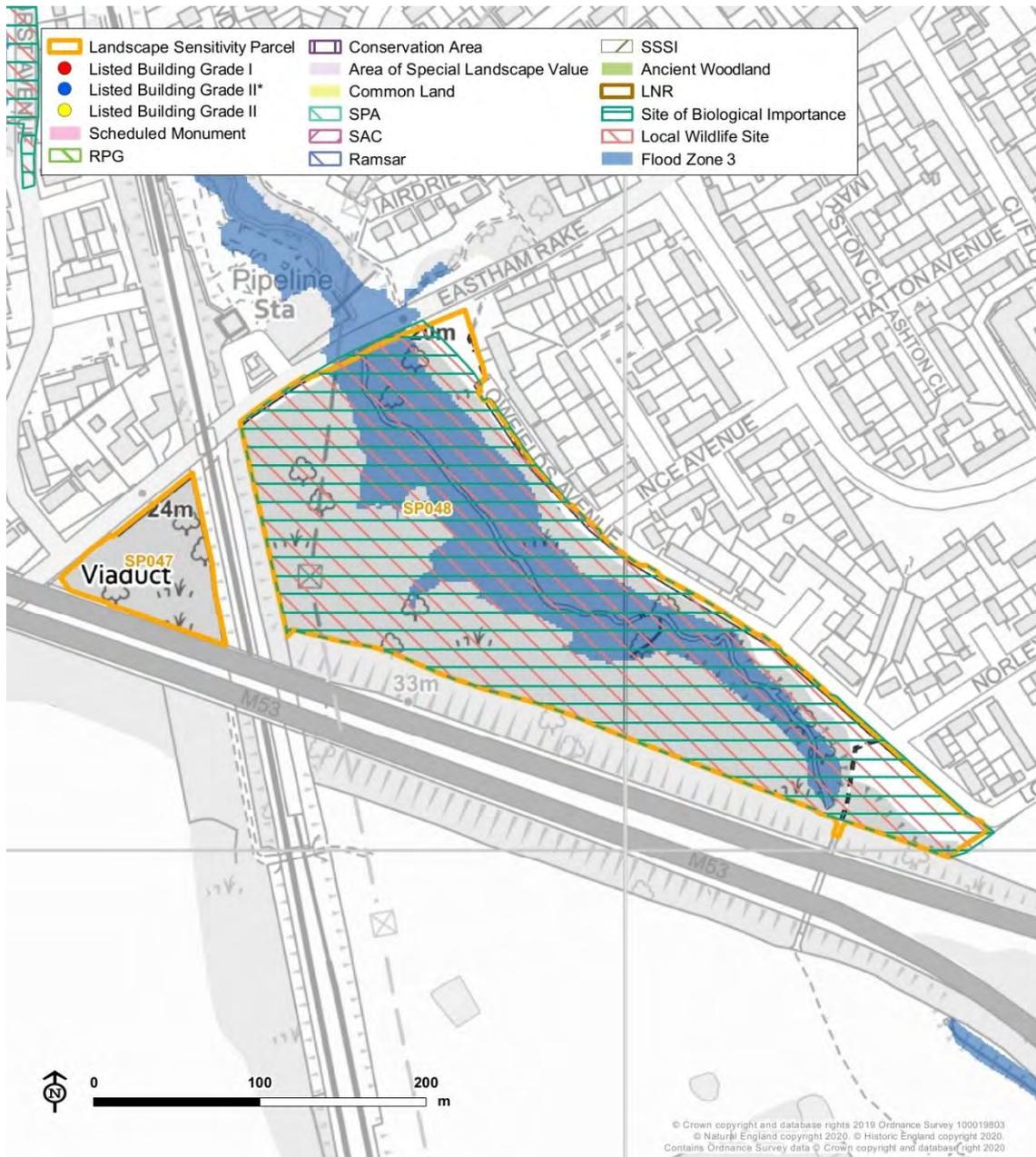


Figure A.44: Aerial photograph of the area



Amenity grassland in the east, surrounded by woodland



Public right of way routed through the area, enclosed by woodland



Location and landscape character context

The area (incorporating SP047 and SP048) is situated in the south east of the borough. Eastham Rake and Lowfields Avenue form the northern and eastern boundaries, with the M53 forming the southern boundary. It lies to the south of Brookhurst and west of Mill Park, with the settlement edge abutting both the north and eastern edges of the area.

The area lies within Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Landscape Character Area, which forms part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type. It has a flat to gently sloping landform and is covered by woodland, with a small area of amenity grassland. A railway line and overhead power line run through the centre of the area.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, Lowfields Woodland is valued for its contribution to biodiversity and is designated as a Site of Biological Importance /Local Wildlife Site.

A public right of way runs through the area providing recreational value and a connection between Lowfields Avenue and an underpass beneath the M53.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP047 and SP048 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The almost flat landform falls gently from the south western corner (30m AOD) to the eastern boundary at Lowfields Avenue (20m AOD) which indicates a lower sensitivity to residential development.

There is no identifiable field pattern as the area largely comprises woodland, with a small area of amenity grassland in the eastern corner adjacent to Lowfields Avenue. The extensive coverage of mature woodland results in a high density of landscape features, resulting in a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

Lowfields Woodland runs along the course of a narrow watercourse is valued as a semi-natural habitat, cited as Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland. The whole of SP048 is designated as a Site of Biological Importance/Local Wildlife Site and also designated as part of Dibbinsdale, Raby Mere and Eastham Country Park Nature Improvement Area which prioritises the management and creation of woodland, resulting in higher sensitivity to residential development.

The maintained amenity grassland in the eastern corner of the area, off Lowfields Avenue, has a less 'natural' quality lowering sensitivity to residential development

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation categorises the woodland within the area as Post Medieval Plantation (post-dating 1600AD), which increases sensitivity to residential development. The small area of amenity

grassland is categorised as 20th Century Settlement, which reduces the sensitivity.

There are no known heritage assets within the area.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area provides an attractive wooded backdrop to the surrounding settlement edges, separating them from the nearby M53, indicating a high sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

Due to its woodland cover, the area is visually enclosed and has a low degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The woodland has a scenic value indicating a higher sensitivity to residential development. However, the overhead power line that runs through the area, as well as aural intrusion from the railway and the adjacent M53 viaduct lowers sensitivity.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate

The flat to gently sloping landform and visual containment indicates a low sensitivity across the woodland-covered areas within the area. However, the coverage of valued semi-natural habitats and wooded backdrop that the area provides to the adjacent settlement edge, along with its important role in providing a buffer between the settlement edge and the M53, means SP047

and the majority of SP048 are considered to have a moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

It is considered that the level of sensitivity decreases within the small area of amenity grassland in the east of SP048 as development in this area would not result in the loss of valued habitats.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area.
Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Protect and enhance public rights of way and promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development.
- Preserve the natural meandering character of the existing watercourse, avoiding development that will change its course or introduce artificial banks.
- Conserve, enhance and manage any other valued habitats within the area, including the narrow watercourse.
- Manage the relevant areas of the area in accordance with the Dibbinsdale, Raby Mere and Eastham Country Park Nature Improvement Area ecological and habitat management priorities. This includes: woodland management to improve structure and quality; and management to eradicate Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam which pose significant threats to woodland.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP049

Figure A.45: Map of the area with designations / constraints

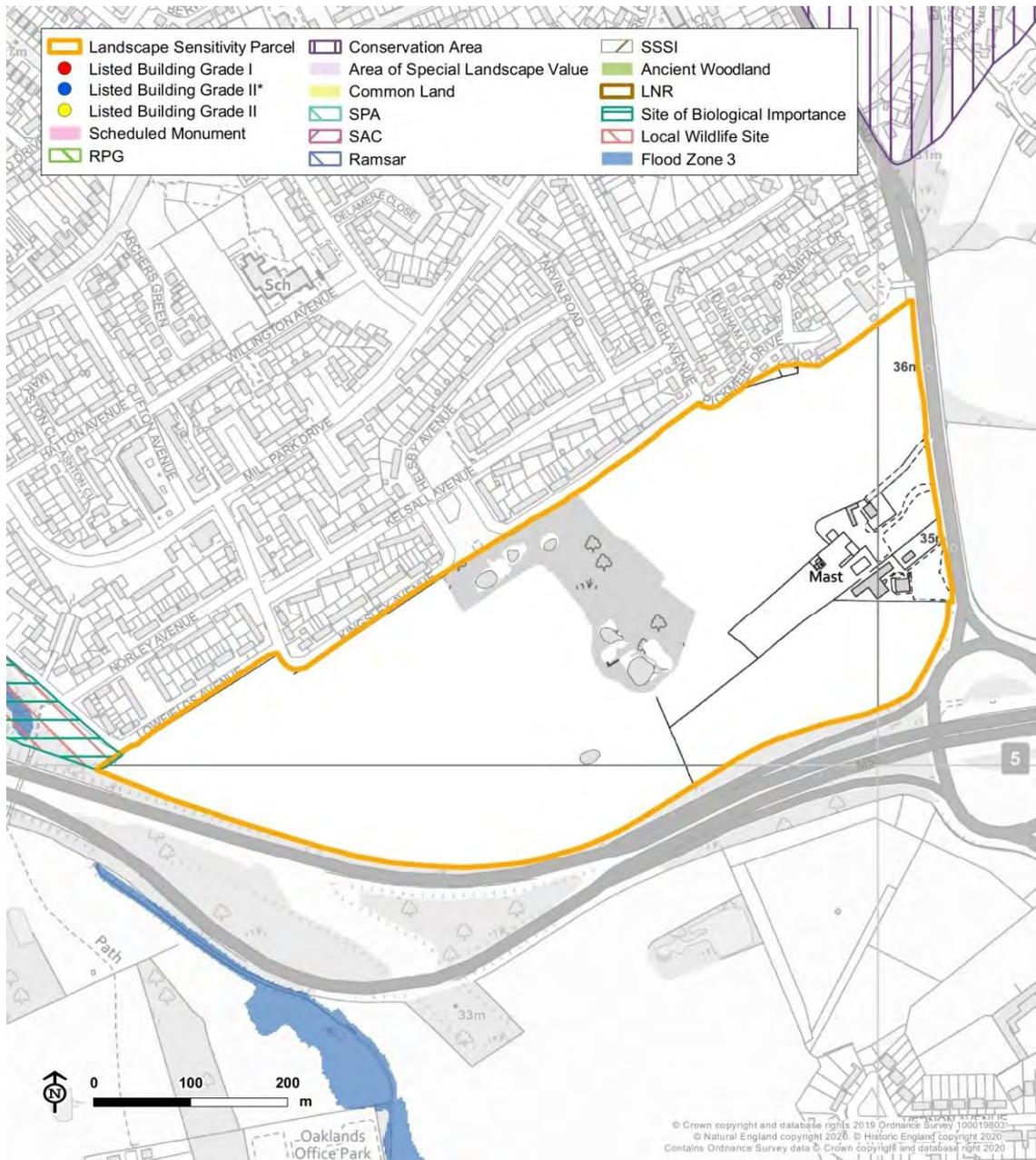


Figure A.46: Aerial photograph of the area



Gently sloping pasture with the Eastham settlement edge along the horizon line



Arable farmland enclosed by woodland copses and hedgerows, with glimpses of the M53 along the boundary



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the south east of the borough. It lies to the south of Mill Park in Eastham. The settlement edge of Eastham forms the northern boundary and the A41 New Chester Road forms the eastern boundary. The M53 forms the southern boundary, with Junction 5 abutting the south-eastern corner.

The area lies within Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Landscape Character Area, which forms part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type. It consists of arable and pastoral farmland with scattered woodland copses with a gently sloping landform. A hotel, coffee shop, garden centre and outdoor storage facility are also located within the area, along the eastern boundary.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local).

The area's primary use as farmland limits its recreational value, and there are no public rights of way across it.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP049 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The landform is gently sloping, with a fall from east to west (from 35m AOD to 25m AOD), overlain by medium-large scale fields indicating a low sensitivity to residential development.

The area comprises woodland copses and a mix of mature, intact and low, fragmented hedgerows. This modest density of small-scale landscape features results in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

The existing development within the area, comprising a hotel, coffee shop, garden centre and outdoor storage facility, lowers levels of sensitivity and will influence the scale of residential development that can be accommodated within the landscape.

Natural Character

Much of the area comprises areas that are farmed or managed (through both pastoral and arable practices), with some existing development present along the eastern edge of the area which indicates a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Pockets of higher sensitivity to residential development exist where there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats. This includes the medium scale woodland copse in the centre of the area, which is categorised as Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland which contains a number of field ponds with wetland habitats including Priority Habitat Reedbeds. Other valued natural features include hedgerows with hedgerow trees, mature in-field trees and trees along the motorway.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains little sense of time depth with medium-large scale fields of Post Medieval Fieldscapes, categorised as Late Post Medieval Agricultural Improvement, indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development.

The woodland copse is a Post Medieval Plantation. Field ponds (marl pits) are also scattered across the areas and were historically used to extract marl deposits to be used as mineral fertilisers. These features combine to indicate a higher sensitivity.

There is an area of archaeological importance near the hotel.

Character and setting of existing settlement

Eastham's existing settlement edge, along the northern boundary of the area is semi-enclosed, with fragmented and low hedgerows, which indicates a lower sensitivity. New development could have a good relationship with the existing settlement form/ pattern, and could provide the opportunity to improve the existing settlement edge.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is partially enclosed by hedgerow boundaries and woodland copses, although some of the hedgerows are low and fragmented. This results in some localised open areas and a degree of inter-visibility from the surrounding landscape, indicating a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The area is influenced by the proximity of modern development including the M53, development within the area on the eastern boundary, the settlement

boundary to the north and views to the Eastham Oil Refinery. This results in a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low-Moderate

The flat to gently undulating landform, surrounding human influences, and semi-enclosed settlement edge along the northern boundary lower the sensitivity across the area. Valued semi-natural habitats including a woodland copse and mature in-field and boundary trees increase sensitivity. Overall the area is considered to have a low-moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented and replace post and wire fencing with native hedgerow species.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.

Appendix A Area reference: SP049

- Conserve the mixture of wooded and open field ponds (marl pits) which are characteristic features of the area.
- Conserve, enhance and manage any other valued habitats within the area including hedgerows with hedgerow trees, mature in-field trees and trees along the motorway.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP050

Figure A.47: Map of the area with designations / constraints

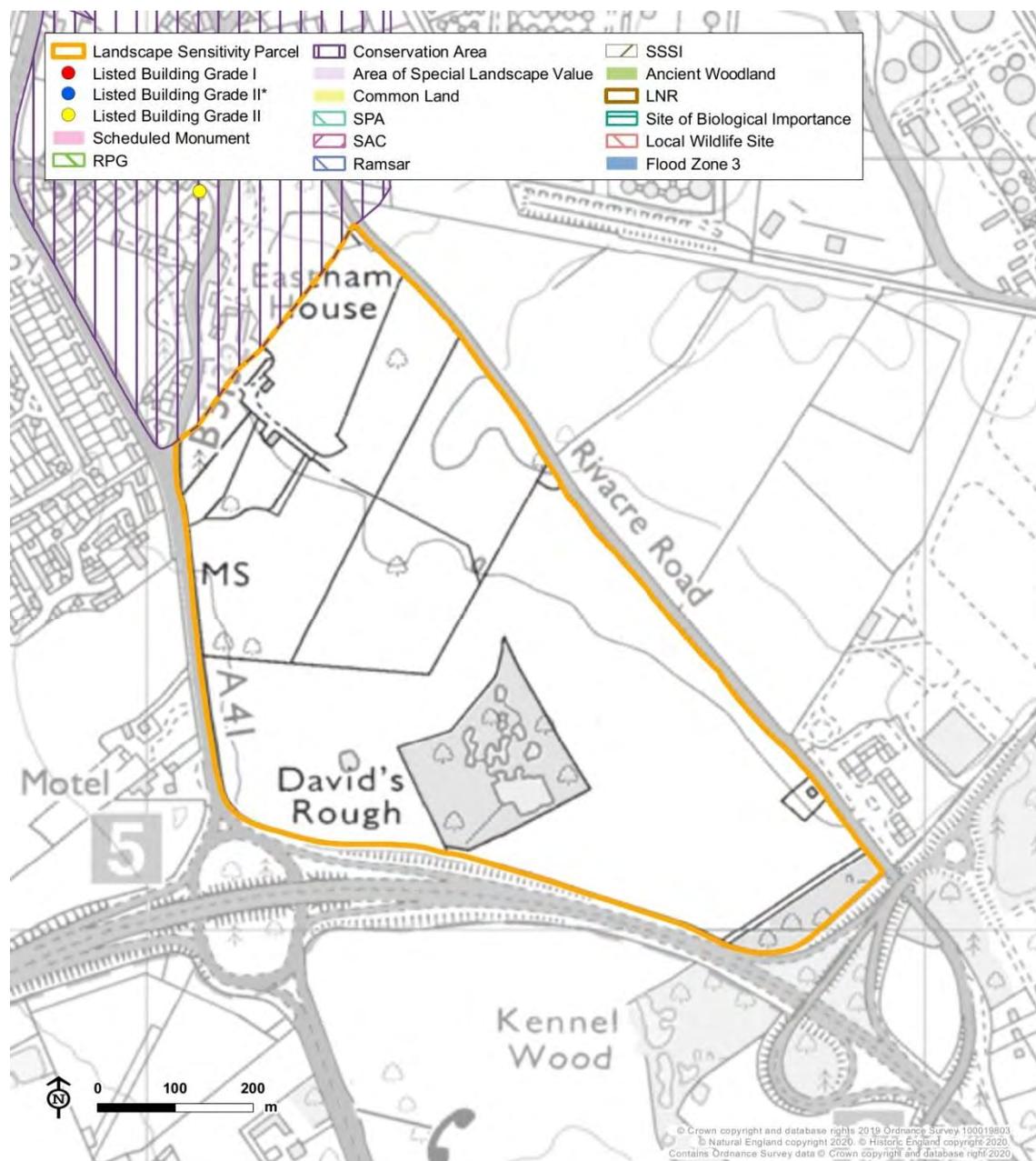


Figure A.48: Aerial photograph of the area



Flat to gently sloping arable fields, with woodland copses and scattered individual mature trees, creating a 'parkland' landscape character



The M53 and its associated infrastructure visible along the horizon line, beyond an open area of arable farmland



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the south east of the borough. It lies to the south-west of Eastham Oil Refinery and to the south east of Eastham. The north western boundary is formed by Eastham Village Conservation Area boundary, although there are no physical features defining this boundary. The eastern boundary is formed by the B5132 Rivacre Road. The M53 and New Chester Road form the southern and western boundaries respectively.

The area lies within Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Landscape Character Area, which forms part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type. It consists of arable farmland with scattered woodland copses, a large geometric woodland block and mature individual trees with a flat to gently undulating landform. Some scattered farm buildings, a residential dwelling, and an equine centre are located within the area.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local).

The area's primary use as an area of arable farmland limits its recreational value, and there are no public rights of way across the area.

Eastham Village Conservation Area is located directly adjacent to the north-western boundary of the area and contributes to overall value although there is limited inter-visibility between it and the area.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity

SP050 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The landform is generally flat with a fall from west to east (from 35m AOD to 25m AOD) indicating a low sensitivity to mixed and/or residential development.

The area is overlain by a mixture of medium to large scale fields that are geometric, regular and irregular in shape, and mostly formed by hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees and woodland copses. There are also frequent, mature in-field trees creating a 'parkland' character to the area. This modest density of small-scale landscape features results in a higher level of sensitivity to mixed and/or residential development.

Natural Character

Much of the area comprises areas that are farmed or managed (through arable practices), with some existing development present along the northern and southern edges of the area. This includes some scattered farm buildings, and associated farm paraphernalia, a 2-storey residential development and an equine centre, indicating a lower sensitivity to mixed and/or residential development.

Areas of higher sensitivity to employment development exist where there are valued semi-natural habitats, including Priority Habitats Lowland Mixed Broad-leaf Woodland; the largest area concentrated at David's Rough, a medium-scale woodland copse, central to the area. Other valued natural features include hedgerows with hedgerow trees, scattered mature in-field trees, and small pockets of trees/ shrubs surrounding field ponds.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation identifies the geometric fields in the north of the area are Post Medieval Ornamental Parkland, associated with the Eastham House estate, indicating time-depth and increasing sensitivity.

Lower levels of sensitivity to mixed and/or residential development exist in the south of the area, where the medium-large scale field is identified as a Post Medieval Fieldscape, categorised as Late Post Medieval Agricultural Improvement.

The medium-scale woodland copse central to the area is a Post Medieval Plantation, and also features a network of small field ponds. Field ponds (marl pits) are also scattered across the area and were historically used to extract marl deposits to be used as mineral fertilisers. All of these features combine to indicate a higher sensitivity.

Eastham Village Conservation Area is located adjacent to the north-western boundary. There are no designated heritage assets within the area, however it was screened as high for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area, which lies adjacent to the Eastham Village Conservation Area, provides part of the rural setting to the village. There is no physical boundary between the edge of the Conservation Area and the area, with the boundary routed through the arable farmland and the boundary planting adjacent to Eastham Village settlement edge, which restricts inter-visibility between the area and the village. Views within Eastham Village are mostly inward facing which is recognised in the Eastham Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan [\[See reference 14\]](#), which states, "Although there are a number of groups of buildings forming attractive visual compositions, most

views and vistas within the conservation area focus on the church, with the spire highly visible above the roofs of the much lower buildings surrounding it."

It is also recognised within the Eastham Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan [See reference 15] that there is a sense of separation between Eastham Village and the surrounding area, which states, "Unlike many places on the Wirral, Eastham Village has successfully maintained a degree of separation from neighbouring built up areas. The Green Belt surrounding the village has helped in maintaining this separation. Playing fields provide a break to the north and west and the grounds of Eastham House and Eastham Hall to the south and east. There are agricultural areas beyond to the south and east." Any development proposed in the north of the area could overlook the Conservation Area, adversely affecting its setting, which indicates higher levels of sensitivity to mixed and/or residential development in this area.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is partially enclosed by hedgerow boundaries and woodland copses although some of the hedgerows are low and fragmented which results in some localised open areas and a degree of inter-visibility with the surrounding landscape, indicating a higher sensitivity to mixed and/or residential development.

Views to the north of Eastham Village church spire, an important landmark feature within Eastham Village Conservation Area, is visible above the intervening woodland and built development, indicating a higher sensitivity to mixed and/or residential development.

Views of the Eastham Oil Refinery towers to the north and the M53 motorway infrastructure to the south form detracting features indicating a lower sensitivity.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The woodland copses and scattered mature trees in the north of the area, which result in a parkland character reflective of its historic relationship with Eastham

House and the role of the area in the setting of the Eastham Village Conservation Area, indicate higher sensitivity to mixed and/or residential development.

However, the busy road network surrounding the area, including the A41 and M53, exiting development within the area, reduces the sense of remoteness and introduces human influences which results in a lower sensitivity to mixed and/or residential development.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate

The generally flat landform, the influence of human activity, particularly the surrounding road network and some visual containment lower sensitivity to mixed and/or residential development within the area. However, the valued natural habitats, particularly the woodland copses, and the parkland character to the north of the area which is reflective of its historic relationship with Eastham House and the role the area plays in providing a rural setting to Eastham Village Conservation Area increases sensitivity. Overall the area is considered to have a moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from mixed and/or residential development. This sensitivity increases with proximity to the Conservation Area.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by

increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.

- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented and replace post and wire fencing with native hedgerow species.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve the mixture of wooded and open field ponds (marl pits) which are characteristic features of the area.
- Preserve rural views out from and surrounding Eastham Village Conservation Area.
- Conserve the rural character and ornamental parkland character of the landscape in proximity to Eastham Village where the area contributes towards the setting of the Conservation Area.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP051

Figure A.49: Map of the area with designations / constraints

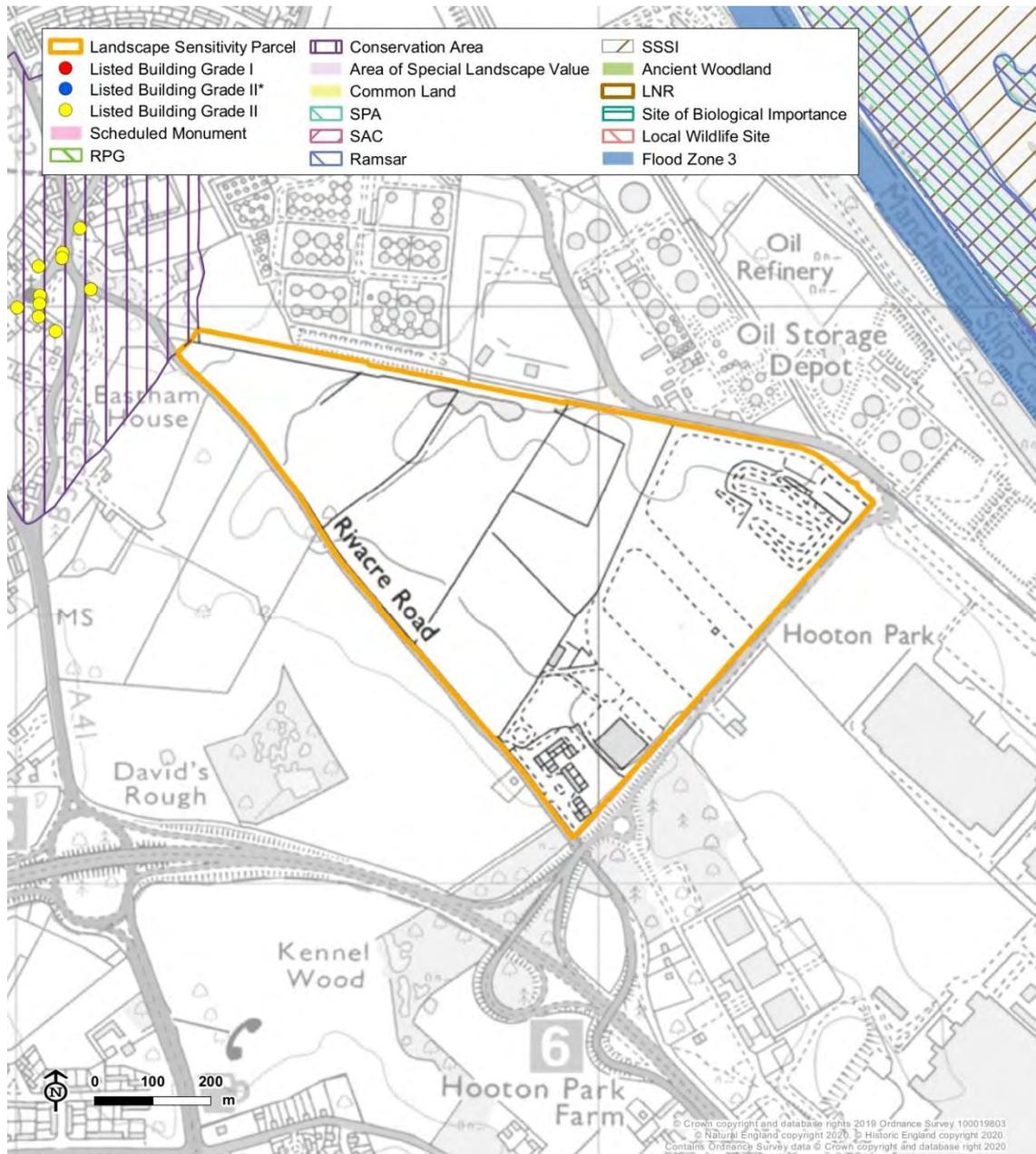


Figure A.50: Aerial photograph of the area



Gently sloping arable fields, with Eastham Oil Refinery and large scale development located along the horizon line



Mature trees and woodland copses along the boundary of the area, with views of the industrial area lining the River Mersey in the distance



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the south east of the borough. It lies to the south of Eastham Oil Refinery and to the south east of Eastham. Eastham Oil Refinery, Bankfields Drive, and North Road all form the northern boundary; West Road and Rivacre Road form the eastern and western boundaries respectively. The north western corner of the area is formed by Eastham Village Conservation Area boundary - there is no physical feature defining this boundary.

The area lies within Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Landscape Character Area, which forms part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type. It has a generally flat landform falling west to east, overlain by arable fields enclosed by hedgerows and small woodland copses. A small area of residential development, an outdoor storage facility, a distribution centre and lorry park and a go-karting track are located in the south east.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local).

The area's primary use as an area of arable farmland limits its recreational value, and there are no public rights of way across the area.

Eastham Village Conservation Area is located directly adjacent to the north west, and contributes to overall value although there is limited inter-visibility between it and the area.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP051 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The landform is generally flat, falling from west to east (from 30m AOD to 20m AOD) indicating a lower sensitivity to employment or residential development.

The north west of the area is overlain by a mixture of small to medium sized fields that are geometric and irregular in shape, and mostly formed by fragmented hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees and woodland copses. This modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to employment or residential development. Large scale development to the south east lowers sensitivity.

Natural Character

Much of the area is intensively farmed or managed through arable practices, while the south east contains existing development including residential areas, an outdoor storage facility, a distribution centre and lorry park, and a go-karting track. The limited coverage of semi-natural habitats results in a lower sensitivity to employment or residential development.

Semi-natural habitats are limited to small woodland copses along boundaries, including one along Rivacre Road on the western boundary, categorised as Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Broad-leaf Woodland. Other valued natural features include hedgerows with hedgerow trees and a single field pond.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains some limited time depth. The fields which comprise a large proportion of the area are Post Medieval Fieldscapes are categorised as Late Post Medieval Agricultural Improvement, indicating a lower sensitivity to employment

or residential development. The small woodland copse along the southern boundary is categorised as Post Medieval Plantation. This indicates a higher sensitivity to employment or residential development.

The site may have been part of the historic designed landscape of Hooton Park (within Cheshire East). Modern development has eroded this historic landscape but there may be archaeological potential.

The developed area in the south eastern section of the area is not included within the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation and lowers sensitivity.

Eastham Village Conservation Area is located adjacent to the north-western boundary and the area may be of some archaeological importance.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area plays some limited role in providing a rural setting to the residential development on the perimeter of Eastham and the Eastham Village Conservation Village, as well as to the residential dwellings in the south-eastern corner. This results in a higher sensitivity to employment or residential development in this area.

However, there is a degree of separation between the Conservation Area and the area, with a small woodland copse providing enclosure. There is little inter-visibility between the area and the Conservation Area, as many of the views within Eastham Village are inward facing. This is recognised in the Eastham Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan [\[See reference 16\]](#), which states, "Although there are a number of groups of buildings forming attractive visual compositions, most views and vistas within the conservation area focus on the church, with the spire highly visible above the roofs of the much lower buildings surrounding it."

However, new development would not be out of character in the south eastern section of the area where there is a concentration of existing large scale development. Future development here could have a good relationship with the existing built- form and pattern, and would improve the existing developed edge,

therefore indicating low levels of sensitivity to employment or residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is partially enclosed by the hedgerow boundaries and woodland copses within it, although some of the hedgerows are low and fragmented. This results in some localised open areas and a degree of visibility from the surrounding landscape, indicating a higher sensitivity to employment or residential development.

Views of Eastham Village church spire are visible to the west above the intervening woodland, an important landmark feature within Eastham Village Conservation Area, indicating a higher sensitivity to development.

Views of the adjacent Eastham Oil Refinery towers form a detracting skyline to east, indicating a lower sensitivity.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The arable character of the north western section of the area retains a rural character. However, the perceptual qualities of the area are significantly influenced by existing development within the area including housing, a karting track and other commercial development and the adjacent Eastham Oil Refinery, and the surrounding road network resulting in a lower sensitivity to employment or residential development.

Aural intrusion from Junction 6 of the M53 to the south west disturbs the tranquillity of the area.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low-Moderate

The generally flat landform, limited natural habitats, visual containment and influence of existing development both within and surrounding the area lower the sensitivity across the area. Despite the proximity to the Eastham Village Conservation Area, there is limited inter-visibility between it and the area. Overall the area is considered to have a low-moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from new development. Sensitivity increases with proximity to the Eastham Village Conservation Area.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented and replace post and wire fencing with native hedgerow species.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve the vegetated boundaries in proximity to Eastham Village Conservation Area.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP052

Figure A.51: Map of the area with designations / constraints

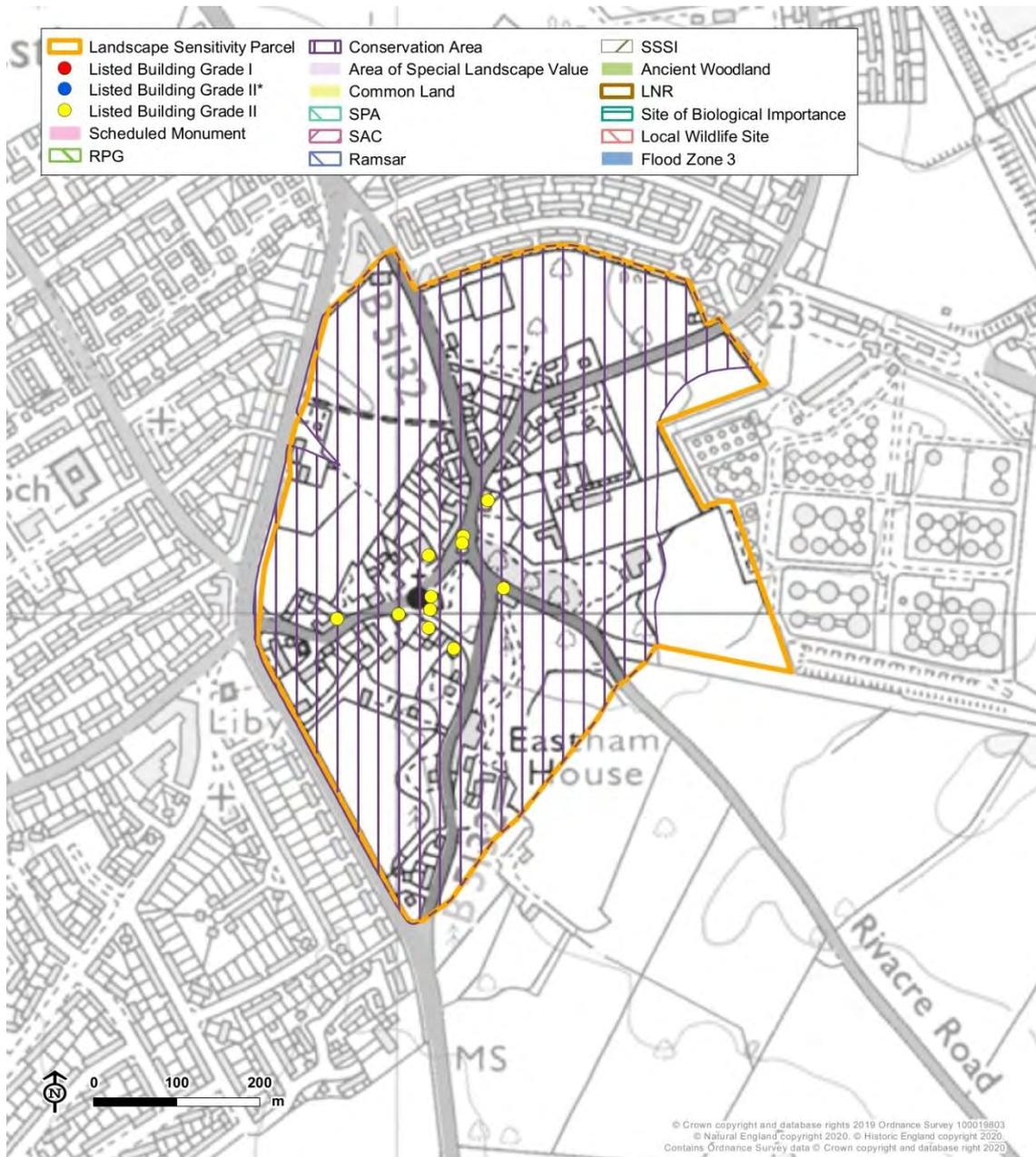


Figure A.52: Aerial photograph of the area



A playing field on the boundary of Eastham Village settlement edge, surrounded by mature hedgerows and woodland copses



The church central to Eastham Village, viewed along a characteristic narrow and irregularly winding road



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the south east of the borough, to the east and south of Eastham and to the west of Eastham Oil Refinery. The settlement edge of urban Eastham forms the northern boundary, and Eastham Oil Refinery forms the eastern boundary. There are no physical features which form the south-eastern boundary, as it transects arable fields, roads and hedgerows. New Chester Road forms the western boundary.

The area lies within Clatterbrook and Dibbin Valley Landscape Character Area, which forms part of the Lowland and Farmland Estates Landscape Character Type. The area is largely flat and comprises Eastham Village Conservation Area with the village at its core. The area also accommodates playing fields, and areas of both arable and pastoral farmland around its edges.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local).

The area comprises the whole of Eastham Village Conservation Area, with some of its surrounding fields and woodland.

Primarily, residential development limits recreational value, but there are playing fields in the north-west and south-west of the area and a public park to the north. A public right of way connects New Chester Road with Eastham Village Road through the north-western playing field.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP052 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The landform is largely flat, with a gently slope from west to east (from 35m AOD to 30m AOD) indicating a low sensitivity to residential development. There are a few slightly raised areas of landform, giving buildings such as the church additional prominence which indicates higher sensitivity to residential development within the localised area.

The centre of the area largely comprises the historic village of Eastham and there is no identifiable landscape pattern other than for the small-scale fields and recreational land located around the edges of the village. These fields are mostly bound by hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees, along with small woodland copses, providing a modest density of small-scale landscape features which indicates a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

Existing development associated with Eastham Village forms the central area of the area, and the resulting lack of semi-natural features lowers the sensitivity to residential development.

The small scale fields which enclose the village comprise areas of woodland, including Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland. Other valued natural features include hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees. This indicates a higher sensitivity within these areas.

Historic Landscape Character

The area encompasses the Eastham Village Conservation Area including 11 Grade II listed buildings, with a strong vernacular of Red Cheshire Sandstone

and red brick linked by narrow winding roads with sandstone boundary walls. This time depth indicates a high sensitivity to development.

The fields to the south east of the area are identified in the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation as Post Medieval Ornamental Parkland, associated with the Eastham House estate which also results in higher sensitivity.

Sensitivity to residential development decreases slightly where 20th century development has occurred around the periphery of the village core, or where fields are used for recreation. The fields surrounding the edge of the settlement are categorised primarily as 20th Century Settlement, 20th Century Recreation, with a small field in the east of the area categorised as Late Post Medieval Agricultural Improvement, which indicates a lower sensitivity to residential development.

The area may also have some archaeological importance.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The village of Eastham is a distinctive settlement of historic origin, reflected in its designation as a Conservation Area. As most of the area comprises existing dwellings there is little opportunity for the area to accommodate additional development, which would be limited to infill development within the village or in the surrounding fields.

The small scale fields surrounding Eastham Village comprise both arable and pastoral farmland, recreational land and landscaped grounds which provide an attractive backdrop to the settlement, and play an important role in separating Eastham Village from the surrounding industrial development and wider built-up areas resulting in higher sensitivity to residential development. This is recognised within the Eastham Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, which states, "Unlike many places on the Wirral, Eastham Village has successfully maintained a degree of separation from neighbouring built up areas. The Green Belt surrounding the village has helped in maintaining this separation. Playing fields provide a break to the north and west and the

grounds of Eastham House and Eastham Hall to the south and east. There are agricultural areas beyond to the south and east."

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is generally visually enclosed by surrounding built development, tall hedgerow boundaries and woodland copses, and this lack of inter-visibility with the surround areas indicates a lower sensitivity to residential development. This is recognised in the Eastham Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, which states, "Although there are a number of groups of buildings forming attractive visual compositions, most views and vistas within the conservation area focus on the church, with the spire highly visible above the roofs of the much lower buildings surrounding it."

However, further development in the area is likely to be at odds with the nucleated settlement pattern resulting in higher sensitivity.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The area has a rural character and a sense of remoteness and tranquillity as a result of Eastham Village's high quality architecture and its separation from the surrounding area provided by the surrounding fields and winding rural roads which indicates a higher sensitivity to residential development. Glimpsed views of adjacent industrial development, towards the River Mersey including Eastham Oil Refinery nevertheless detract from its scenic qualities.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

High

The designation of the majority of the area as a Conservation Area indicates that it is unable to accommodate additional residential development without significant change or adverse effects. The natural character of the small scale

fields which enclose the settlement provide an attractive backdrop to the settlement, and play a role in separating the area from the surrounding industrial development and wider built-up areas of Eastham, all indicating a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Overall, the area is considered to have a high sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve the special character and qualities of Eastham Village and the wider Conservation Area by retaining its existing settlement pattern, strong vernacular and wooded character.
- Conserve the rural character and surrounding small scale field pattern which contributes towards the setting of Eastham Village.
- Ensure the function of the area as a perceived gap is maintained by providing a clear physical and visual separation between Eastham Village and surrounding settlement and industrial development.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP054 and SP055

Figure A.53: Map of the area with designations / constraints

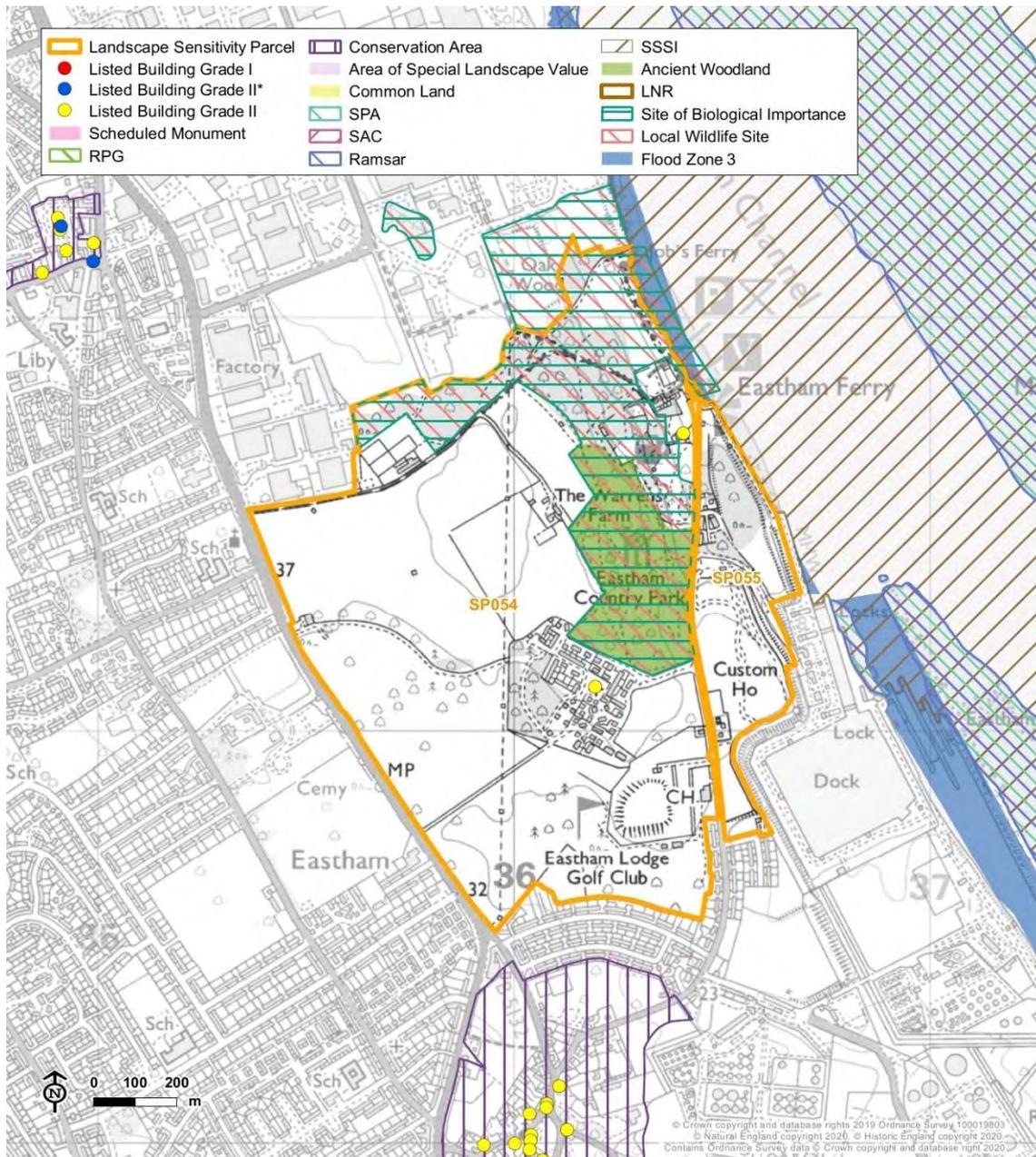


Figure A.54: Aerial photograph of the area



Enclosed mature woodland at Eastham Country Park



Amenity grassland adjacent to the residential development at Torr Drive



Location and landscape character context

The area (incorporating SP054 and SP055) is situated in the south east of the borough. It lies to the south of Bromborough, between urban Eastham to the west and the River Mersey to the east. The northern boundary is formed by both Green Lane and an area of woodland associated with Eastham Country Park. The eastern boundary is formed by the banks of the River Mersey and by its associated docks and industrial development. The settlement edge at urban Eastham and ribbon development at St David Road form the southern and western boundaries and predominantly features residential housing but also includes a recreation ground, allotments, and a cemetery.

The area lies within Eastham Landscape Character Area, which forms part of the Coastal/Estuarine Edge Landscape Character Type. Eastham Lodge Golf Club, and a small allotment area, comprise the southern part of the area. A small area of residential development is located centrally at Torr Drive, with Leverhulme Sports Field and Eastham Country Park forming the majority of the northern part of the area. The eastern edge of the area, adjacent to the River Mersey, comprises a public recreation area, wooded slopes overlooking the Estuary and Mayfield Remembrance Park, a woodland burial ground.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, Eastham Country Park is valued for its contribution to biodiversity, designated as a Site of Biological Importance /Local Wildlife Site.

Eastham Country Park has open access and is valued as a visitor resource. The area is well connected to the wider landscape by a network of public rights of way including the promoted route of the Wirral Circular Way. The park along with the Leverhulme playing fields and Eastham Lodge Golf Course add to the recreational value of the area.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP054 and SP055 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The gently undulating landform falls from west to east (from 30m AOD to 7m AOD), indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development. There is a localised high point within Leverhulme Sports Field (40m AOD), and a more undulating area within Eastham Country Park in the north east, indicating a higher sensitivity.

Eastham Lodge Golf Course lies in the south. This features an artificial and undulating topography, indicating a lower level of sensitivity to residential development.

The wide coverage of landscape features, including woodland and tree clump planting associated with the golf course and along access roads contribute towards a high density of small-scale landscape features and increases sensitivity.

Natural Character

Eastham Country Park comprises broadleaved woodland, much of which is ancient, which is valued as a seminatural habitat, cited as Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland and smaller areas of Lowland Wood-pasture and Parkland. This indicates a higher sensitivity to residential development. Eastham Woods are also designated as a Site of Biological Importance /Local Wildlife Site. The whole area, other than the playing fields and residential development, is also designated as part of Dibbinsdale, Raby Mere and Eastham Country Park Nature Improvement Area which prioritises the restoration, maintenance and enhancement of the woodland habitats.

The managed landscape at Eastham Lodge Golf Club and expansive areas of amenity grassland at Leverhulme Sports Fields, have more limited naturalistic qualities, resulting in lower sensitivity. However, the frequent occurrence of mature woodland copses and trees within the golf course and across the sports fields are valued natural features and the whole area is cited as Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland or Priority Habitat Lowland Wood-pasture and Parkland (except for small areas at Warrens Farm and south of the residential area in the centre of the area) raising sensitivity to residential development. Other valued features include mature hedgerows and woodland copses along the area boundaries.

Historic Landscape Character

Eastham Country Park is categorised by the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation as an area of Post Medieval Ornamental Parkland, which increases sensitivity to residential development.

The Eastham Lodge Golf Course to the south, the playing fields to the north and the woodland burial area to the east, do not contain an identifiable field pattern and lack time depth indicating low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

The Grade II listed chapel at Carlett Park area is the only heritage asset within the area. The area may also be of some archaeological importance. The area may also have some archaeological importance.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The settlement edges around the area are well integrated with the boundaries characterised by linear woodlands, mature hedgerows and frequent trees, along with occasional woodland copses, indicating a higher sensitivity.

The wooded character of the area also contributes positively towards the setting of the residential development located centrally within the area at Torr Drive, which additional residential development would adversely affect.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development and other urban fringe uses to the south, west and north of the area and woodland associated with both Eastham Country Park and Mayfield Remembrance Park encloses much of the eastern boundary which indicates lower sensitivity. However, promoted viewpoints along the banks of the Mersey with panoramic views up and down the estuary results in a higher sensitivity.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The playing fields, burial ground and golf course, and existing residential development in the north west and south lack a perceived naturalness which reduces sensitivity to residential development. Intrusion from the busy A41 along the western boundary disturbs tranquillity.

The woodland at Eastham Country Park and its visual relationship with the Mersey Estuary creates a tranquil and scenic character in the north-east, indicating a higher sensitivity.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate

The north-western and southern sections of the area, which consists of playing fields, a golf course, burial ground and residential development, has a lower sensitivity to residential development due to the landform, limited time-depth, visual enclosure and lack of rural character. However, the coverage of valued natural habitats and features (woodlands, mature trees, and hedgerows) contribute towards a higher sensitivity. Overall, this area is considered to have moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development. Overall, the area is considered to have a high sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

High

Eastham Country Park is valued as a visitor resource, with panoramic views over the Mersey and extensive seminatural habitats, which is recognised through its designation as a Country Park and Site of Biological Importance /Local Wildlife Site, where the tranquil wooded character contributes towards a higher sensitivity. Overall, this area is considered to have high sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.

Appendix A Area reference: SP054 and SP055

- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland, including ancient woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area, providing a buffer to these important areas, as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Retain and manage mature parkland trees, clumps and rides as key features within the area.
- Protect and enhance the existing public rights of way and promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development.
- Manage the relevant areas of the area in accordance with the Dibbinsdale, Raby Mere and Eastham Country Park Nature Improvement Area ecological and habitat management priorities. This includes restoring, maintaining and enhancing the woodland habitats.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP058C / SP058D / SP058E

Figure A.55: Map of the area with designations / constraints

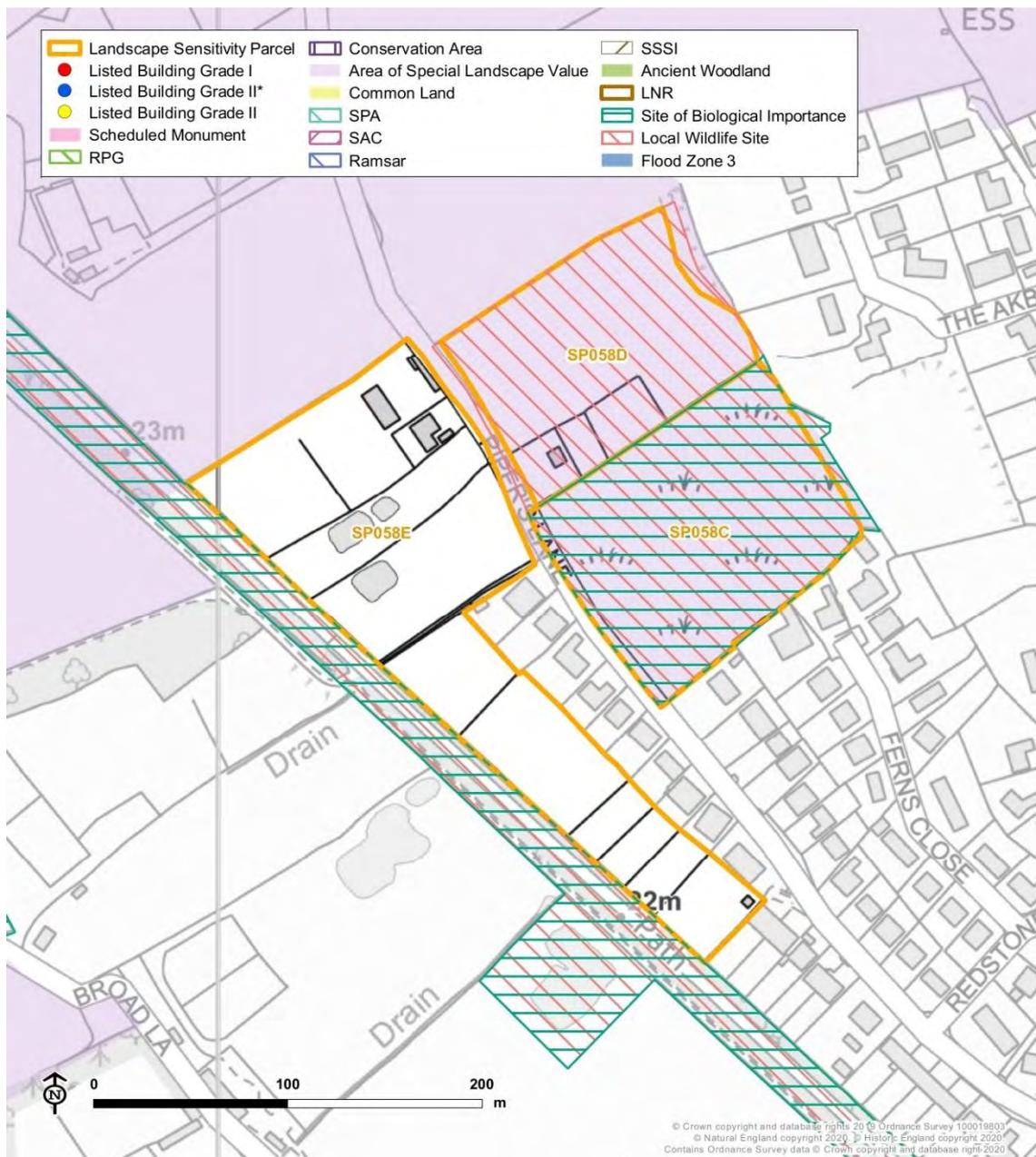


Figure A.56: Aerial photograph of the area



Piper's Lane Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site



Woodland enclosure with elevated views towards North Wales



Location and landscape character context

The area (incorporating SP058C, SP058D and SP058) is situated in the south-west of the borough and lies to the northwest of Heswall. Residential properties lie along its eastern and southern boundaries and the Wirral Way (Long Distance Footpath / National Cycle Route 89 and part of Wirral Country Park) forms the south-western boundary, with field boundaries defining the northern edge of the area. Piper's Lane bisects the area (marking the division of the land parcels).

The area lies within the Dee Estuary Landscape Character Area, forming part of the Coastal/Estuarine Edge Landscape Character Type. It comprises a relatively steep slope falling towards the Dee Estuary in the west and overlain by small pastoral fields with associated horsiculture.

Landscape value

The area to the north of Piper's Lane forms part of an Area of Special Landscape Value that covers the Dee Coast. The scrub and grassland vegetation in the east is valued for its contribution to biodiversity, being a Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site.

The area's use for horse grazing limits its recreational value. The Wirral Way follows the south-western boundary of the area; however intervisibility with the area along the route is restricted by intervening vegetation that lines the footpath.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity

SP058C / SP058D / SP058E Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The relatively steep sloping landform falls east to west (from 55m to 20m AOD) from high ground on the Heswall settlement edge towards the River Dee, forms part of a distinctive valley side, indicating higher levels of sensitivity to residential development.

The area has a small rectangular field pattern, bound by a mixture of post and rail fencing, fragmented hedgerows and woodland, providing a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

Much of the area comprises areas used for horse paddocks, with related paraphernalia scattered across the area. There is also some existing development present (bungalows, outbuildings and stables off Piper's Lane), resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

Higher sensitivity to residential development exist where there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats, including priority habitat grassland (designated as the Piper's Lane Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site) and lowland mixed deciduous woodland to the south. There is further priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland within the Wirral Way (Caldy to Heswall) Site of Biological Interest, which lies adjacent to the west. Other valued natural features include hedgerows enhanced occasionally with hedgerow trees and mature groups of trees.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains a relatively diverse time depth which increases sensitivity to residential development.

Most of the area comprises ancient fieldscapes (pre-1600); namely the small-scale rectangular field pattern to the north which is categorised as Medieval Town Fields which increases sensitivity to residential development in these areas. Lower levels of sensitivity to residential development exist in the south, which consists of paddocks and rear gardens to properties along Piper's Lane.

There are no heritage assets within the area.

Character and setting of existing settlement

Much of the surrounding development on the edge of Heswall is visible from the area. Further development could be in accordance with the pattern and form of this existing development, while providing opportunities to improve and integrate the hard settlement edge. The setting to some parts of Heswall is already influenced by existing bungalows, stables and other paraphernalia associated with the horsiculture character of the area, indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development.

The area provides a rural setting to other parts of this settlement edge with some uninterrupted views afforded from elevated areas across the Dee Estuary towards North Wales and to the wooded skyline of Caldý Hill and Thurstaston Common in the north, indicating a higher level of sensitivity.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development to the south and east, as well as by woodland along the Wirral Way and within the western part of the area indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development. However, the steeply sloping landform results in the area being visually prominent from

surrounding areas to the west including the Dee Estuary and as far as North Wales (albeit seen in the context of other development across the slope), increasing sensitivity to residential development. There is also a sense of openness to the north as low fragmented hedgerows along the boundary result in intervisibility with the surrounding landscape.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

Although a rural landscape, the area is influenced by fragmented urban fringe land uses including horsiculture and residential development along Piper's Lane. The area is also already influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources, and therefore decreasing the sensitivity to residential development.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate

The steep sloping topography and elevated nature of the landscape (resulting in visual prominence), the natural habitats and features (particularly north of Piper's Lane), presence of historic field patterns and the uninterrupted views across the Dee Estuary towards North Wales from some parts of Heswall increase sensitivity resulting in moderate-high sensitivity for SP058D and SP058C. This area is locally designated as part of the Area of Special Landscape Value.

Moderate-High

However, the urban fringe elements including existing development and horsiculture character, more enclosed nature and surrounding human influences reduce the sensitivity, particularly south of Piper's Lane. SP058E is considered to have moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented and replace post and wire fencing with native hedgerow species.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Maintain the extent and increase species diversity of existing grassland to support surrounding heathland (consistent with the priorities of the West Wirral Heathlands and Arrowe Park Nature Improvement Area).
- Conserve the rural character and small scale intact historic field pattern.
- Preserve rural and panoramic views out from the edge of Heswall.
- Avoid visually intrusive development on prominent slopes and elevated areas along the northern edge of the area.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP059B / SP059C / SP059D

Figure A.57: Map of the area with designations / constraints

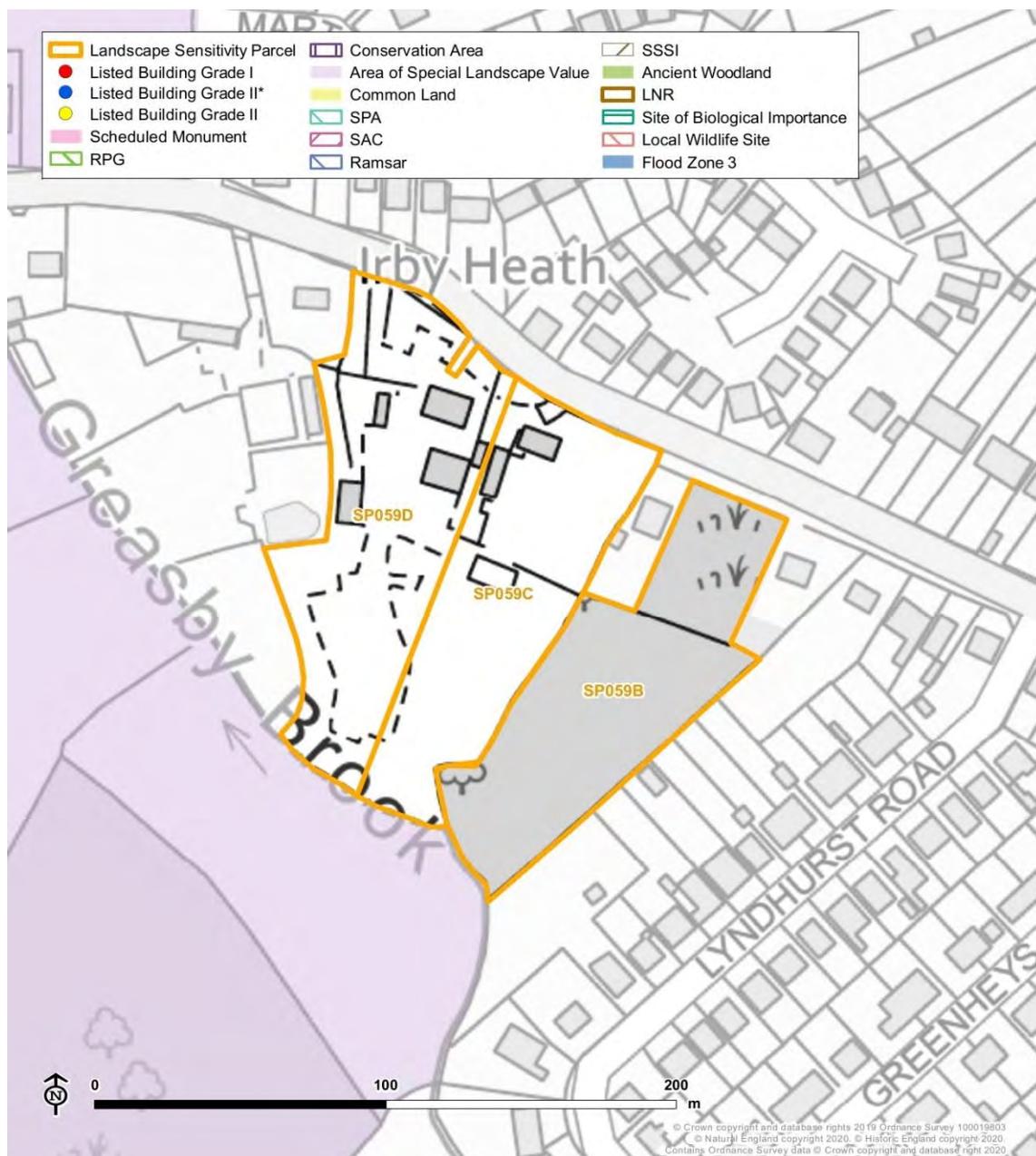


Figure A.58: Aerial photograph of the area



Existing dwelling located within the area



Overgrown vegetation covers the area



Location and landscape character context

The area (incorporating SP059B, SP059C and SP059D) is situated in the west of the borough and lies to the south-west of Irby. Thurstaston Road forms its northern boundary and properties along Lyndhurst Road lie along the south-eastern boundary. Mature tree groups define the western and south-western boundaries.

The area lies within the Thurstaston and Greasby Landscape Character Area, forming part of the Sandstone Hills Landscape Character Type. The area is partially developed with small houses along Thurstaston Road and unused / derelict plots overgrown with vegetation.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local), although lies adjacent to an Area of Special

Landscape Value that covers Thurstaston Hill and Common to the west. Lack of management has resulted in the formation of natural scrub habitats and mature tree groups that surround the area.

Public access into the area is restricted resulting in there being no recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity

SP059B / SP059C / SP059D Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The flat and featureless landform indicates low levels of sensitivity to residential development. The existing dwellings within the area also lower levels of sensitivity as they influence the scale of development that can be accommodated in the landscape.

Mature tree groups surround the area and provide some small-scale landscape features, increasing the sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The existing development within the area lowers the sensitivity to residential development. The overgrown character has resulted in the formation of natural habitats, predominantly scrub vegetation that covers most of the area as well as mature trees along the boundary, resulting in higher levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Historic Landscape Character

There is no identifiable field pattern due to the developed and overgrown nature of the area. However, the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates some sense of time depth as it categorises most of the area as Ancient Field Systems Irregular resulting in higher levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Existing development within the area has been categorised as Post Medieval Settlement and 20th Century Settlement which lowers sensitivity.

There are no heritage assets within the area.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area does not contribute positively to the setting of the settlement given its overgrown and unmanaged appearance or play a separation role between settlements. Future development in the area could have a good relationship with the existing settlement form and pattern, and could improve the existing settlement edge of Irby, therefore indicating low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development and mature hedgerow boundaries that contain it, resulting in a low degree of visibility from the surrounding landscape (including the Area of Special Landscape Value) and indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The area is influenced by existing development and human activity within and surrounding it. New development would not be out of character and would be an improvement from its overgrown state, resulting in low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low

The flat landform, overgrown character, presence of existing development, surrounding human influences and visual containment lower the sensitivity across the area. The natural habitats that have formed from the scrub vegetation that covers the area slightly increases sensitivity, as does the presence of an historic field pattern (although its legibility is lost through its

unmanaged state). Overall the area is considered to have a low sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve, enhance and manage any other valued habitats that have formed within the area.
- Maintain the extent and increase species diversity of existing grassland to support surrounding heathland (consistent with the priorities of the West Wirral Heathlands and Arrowe Park Nature Improvement Area).
- Restore the small scale intact historic field pattern.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP059E

Figure A.59: Map of the area with designations / constraints

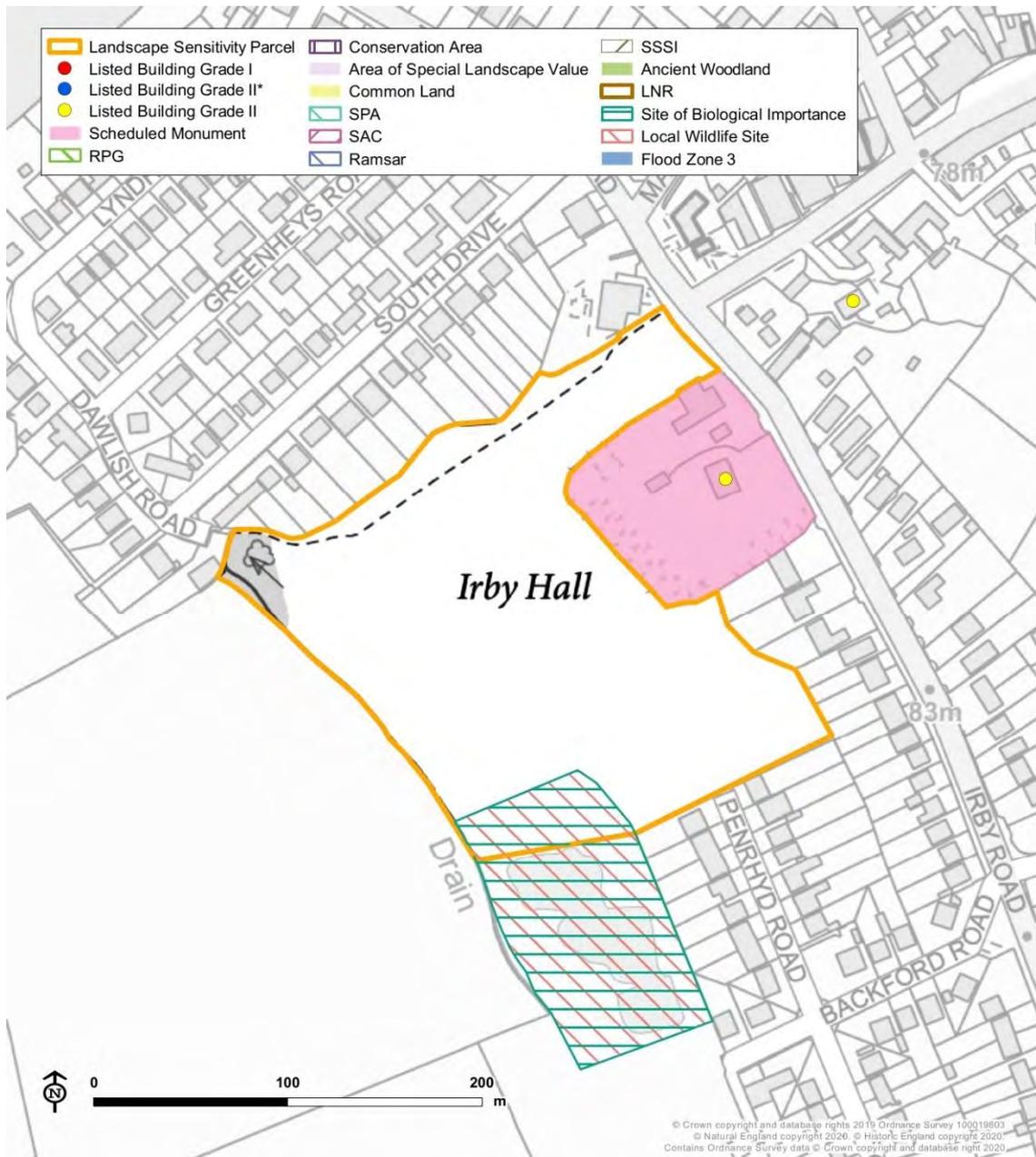


Figure A.60: Aerial photograph of the area



Intensively farmed arable fields and broadleaf woodland in the north-west corner



Woodland surrounding Irby hall



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the west of the borough and lies to the south and west of Irby. Property boundaries along South Drive lie along the northern edge. The eastern boundary is defined by properties along Irby Road (including Irby Hall) and the southern boundary is formed by properties along Penrhyd Road and the edge of Backford Road Pond. A field boundary hedgerow defines the western edge of the area.

The area lies within the Irby and Pensby Landscape Character Area, forming part of the Sandstone Hills Landscape Character Type. It comprises relatively flat landform overlain with two small arable fields bounded by woodland and hedgerows.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). There is a small woodland copse in the northwestern corner and other woodland surrounds the area. Part of the Backford Road Pond Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site encroaches into the southwestern corner of the area, valued for its contribution to biodiversity.

The area's use as working farmland for crops limits its recreational value, although there is a public right of way that runs along the northern boundary, providing a connection between Irby and Thurstaston.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity

SP059E Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

An elevated but relatively flat and featureless landform which results in lower levels of sensitivity to residential development.

The area comprises two small irregular fields, a small woodland copse in the north-western corner and mostly formed by hedgerows (albeit fragmented in places) providing a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The area comprises areas that are intensively farmed through arable practices and limited coverage of seminatural habitats resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

Valued natural features consist of Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Broad-leaf Woodland in the north-western corner and field boundary hedgerows, which increase the sensitivity to residential development.

The Backford Road Pond Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site is also valued for its contribution towards biodiversity. Although the boundary of this designation encroaches into the area, the pond and its associated marginal aquatic vegetation fall outside of the area. The area therefore provides a setting to this feature rather than encompassing it.

Historic Landscape Character

The area forms part of a wider field pattern of ancient fieldscapes (pre-1600), being categorised in the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation as

Ancient Field Systems Semi-regular. This results in the area having a sense of time depth, increasing the sensitivity to residential development.

The Grade II listed Irby Hall is a moated site which is designated as a Scheduled Monument, abuts the eastern boundary of the area. The whole area is also recognised as an area of archaeological importance. The moated site is relatively well enclosed by mature vegetation, although there are some gaps resulting in intervisibility with the area (particularly beneath tree canopies), and the area contributes to its historic setting, which indicates higher levels of sensitivity to residential development in this area.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area provides a rural setting to Irby which residential development would adversely affect, however much of the Irby settlement edge is well integrated by mature hedgerow boundaries and woodland. The exception to this is along the south-eastern edge of the area where existing development is visible within the area and where development could provide the opportunity to improve this edge, lowering sensitivity.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development to the north, east and south-east, as well as by mature hedgerows and woodland which define these settlement edges, indicating lower sensitivity to residential development. However, the sense of openness to the west and south-west, where field boundaries are low, results in some intervisibility with the surrounding rising agricultural land which increases sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The area is an undeveloped and rural agricultural landscape with open views to the surrounding agricultural land in the west and distant views to the hills in

North Wales. However, the area is influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources, and therefore decreasing the sensitivity to residential development.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate

The small woodland copse and hedgerows, presence of historic field patterns, rural setting provided to Irby Hall and uninterrupted views to the west increase sensitivity. However, the flat landform, intensively farmed character, limited coverage of semi-natural habitats, and surrounding human influences lower sensitivity. Overall, the area is considered to have moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows to prevent visual intrusion and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where these are fragmented.
- Retain and manage areas of broadleaf woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.

- Revert areas to grassland in order to increase species diversity (consistent with the priorities of the West Wirral Heathlands and Arrowe Park Nature Improvement Area).
- Conserve the rural character and small intact historic field pattern, particularly in proximity to Irby Hall where the area contributes towards the setting of the scheduled monument and listed building.
- Preserve the open setting and biodiversity value of the Backford Road Pond.
- Preserve open views to the west which look towards hills in North Wales.
- Protect and enhance the public right of way connecting Irby to Thurstaston and promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP060

Figure A.61: Map of the area with designations / constraints

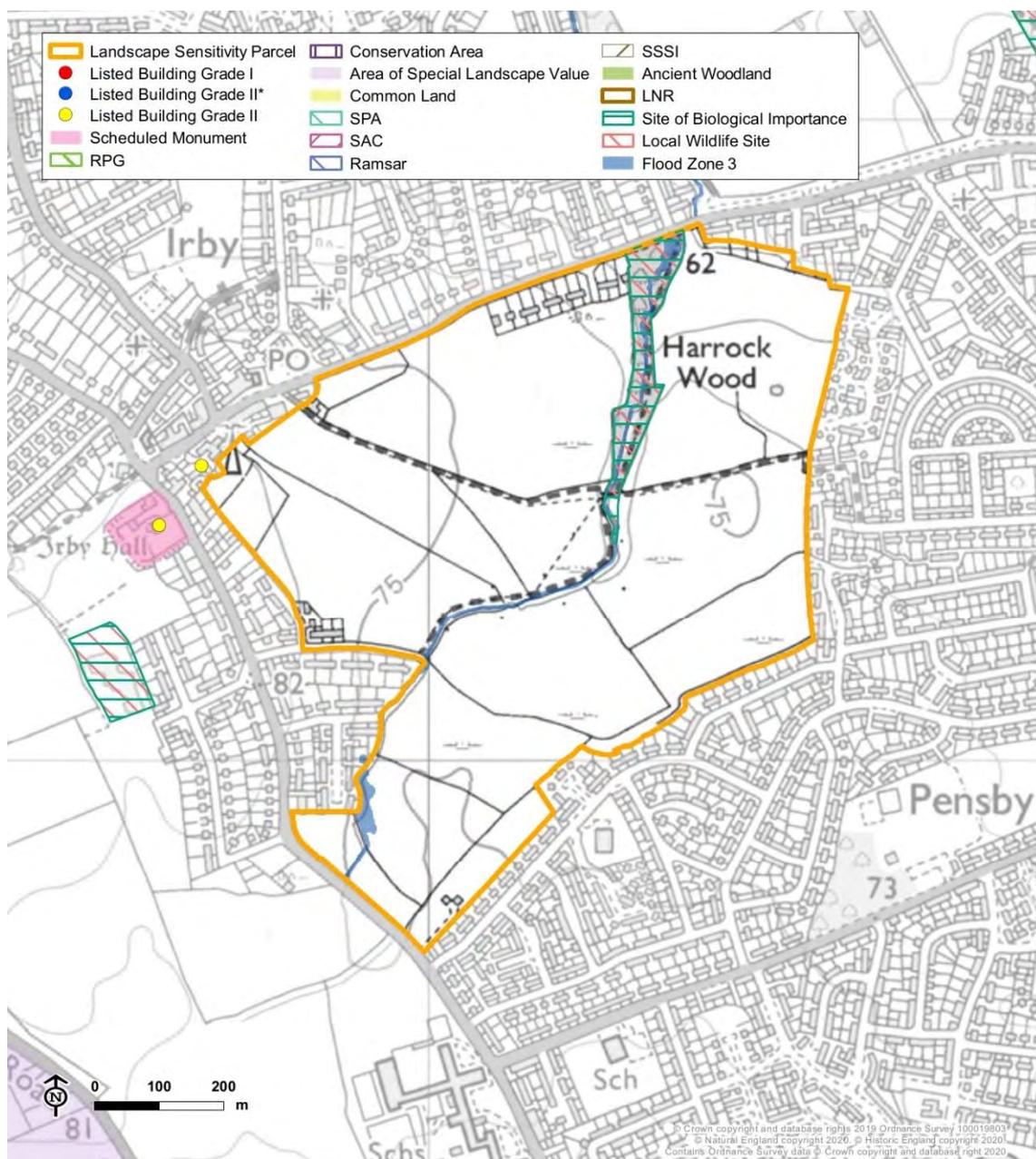


Figure A.62: Aerial photograph of the area



Fields comprising marshland grazed by livestock and surrounded by existing settlement



Harrock Wood Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the west of the borough and lies in an area enclosed by Irby and Pensby. The settlement of Irby wraps around the area to the north, east and west with Pensby to the south. Residential properties are located along the majority of the area's boundaries and Irby Road forms the only undeveloped edge to the south-west.

The area lies within the Irby and Pensby Landscape Character Area, forming part of the Sandstone Hills Landscape Character Type. Gently undulating valley slopes falling to Harrock Wood characterise the area, which comprises marshland with fields of varying scale. The area is largely used for livestock pasture but also accommodates some equestrian related uses.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, the wooded valley at Harrock Wood is a key feature that is distinctive for its topography and vegetation, and valued for its contribution to biodiversity, being a Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site.

The area's use as pastoral farmland limits its recreational value, although two public rights of way cross the area, providing connections to different parts of Irby and Harrock Wood, which is designated open access land.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP060 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The gentle undulating landform falls from the south, east and west to the north (from 75m to 65m AOD) from high ground on the settlement edges towards Thingwall Road, indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development. However the narrow wooded valley of Harrock Wood cuts deeply through the landscape, increasing sensitivity to residential development locally.

The area is overlain by a pattern of geometric and irregular fields of varying scale that have been mostly formed by Arrowe Brook that meanders from the south-western corner to the north and is lined with vegetation.

Fragmented hedgerow boundaries with occasional hedgerow trees have also largely defined the field pattern, providing a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The area comprises fields used for livestock grazing with smaller areas relating to equestrian activities, with some marshland on lower ground associated with the watercourses. There is some existing development (stables with outdoor riding arenas in the north-west and south-west), and a limited coverage of semi-natural habitats resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

Areas of higher sensitivity to residential development exist where there are valued semi-natural habitats, including Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland at Harrock Wood (designated as a Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site for its remnant Wych Elm woodland) which is managed by the National Trust. Wetland habitats (Priority Habitat Reedbeds) are scattered throughout the southern part of the area. Other valued natural

features include hedgerows enhanced occasionally with hedgerow trees and a small pocket of trees/ shrubs surrounding a field pond in the north-east.

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains a relatively diverse time depth which increases sensitivity to residential development.

There are ancient fieldscapes (pre-1600) in the south, with smaller scale fields of an irregular field pattern, being categorised as Medieval Town Fields, which increases sensitivity to residential development in this area.

Post Medieval fieldscapes also occur within the area, with fields of Late Post Medieval Agricultural Improvement in the north. These consist of larger-scale fields indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development.

The historic Irby Farmhouse (Grade II listed) lies adjacent to the north-western corner of the area, although intervisibility with the area is restricted by groups of trees. The northwest of the area is of archaeological importance.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area plays a role in the remaining separation of Pensby in the south from Irby in the north, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. There is intervisibility between the two settlements although the gap is only perceived when travelling along the public rights of way running through the area as well as when travelling along Irby Road (along the south-western area boundary) which provides a connection between the two settlements.

Much of the Pensby and Irby settlement edges are visible from within the area and further development could be in accordance with the pattern and form of these existing developments, while providing opportunities to improve and integrate the hard settlement edges. The area provides a rural setting to the settlements with uninterrupted views afforded from some areas towards Harrock

Wood as well as longer distance views towards the wooded skyline in the south that extends from Ridgewood Park across to Heswall Dales, indicating a higher level of sensitivity. Parts of the settlement edges in the north-west and south-west are of lower sensitivity to residential development where the setting is already influenced by equestrian uses including stables.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is almost completely enclosed by surrounding built development, which along with Harrock Wood restricts intervisibility with the wider landscape indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

Although largely a rural agricultural landscape, the area is influenced by fragmented urban fringe elements relating to equestrian uses, reducing sensitivity. The area is already influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources, and therefore decreasing the sensitivity to residential development. Larger fields within the area are subdivided by post and wire fencing which form visual detractors. The telecommunications mast to the rear of the shopping centre at Irby is also a detracting feature.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Moderate

The presence of historic field patterns adjacent to Pensby, valued natural habitats along Arrowe Brook and wetland habitats to the south of the area, and the role the area plays in contributing towards a perceived gap between

settlements increases sensitivity. However, surrounding human influences and equestrian uses (which are typical of the urban fringe) lower sensitivity. Overall, the area is considered to have a moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

There is a higher sensitivity within areas close to Harrock Wood where development could affect the intimate and rural character of the wooded valley.

Guidance

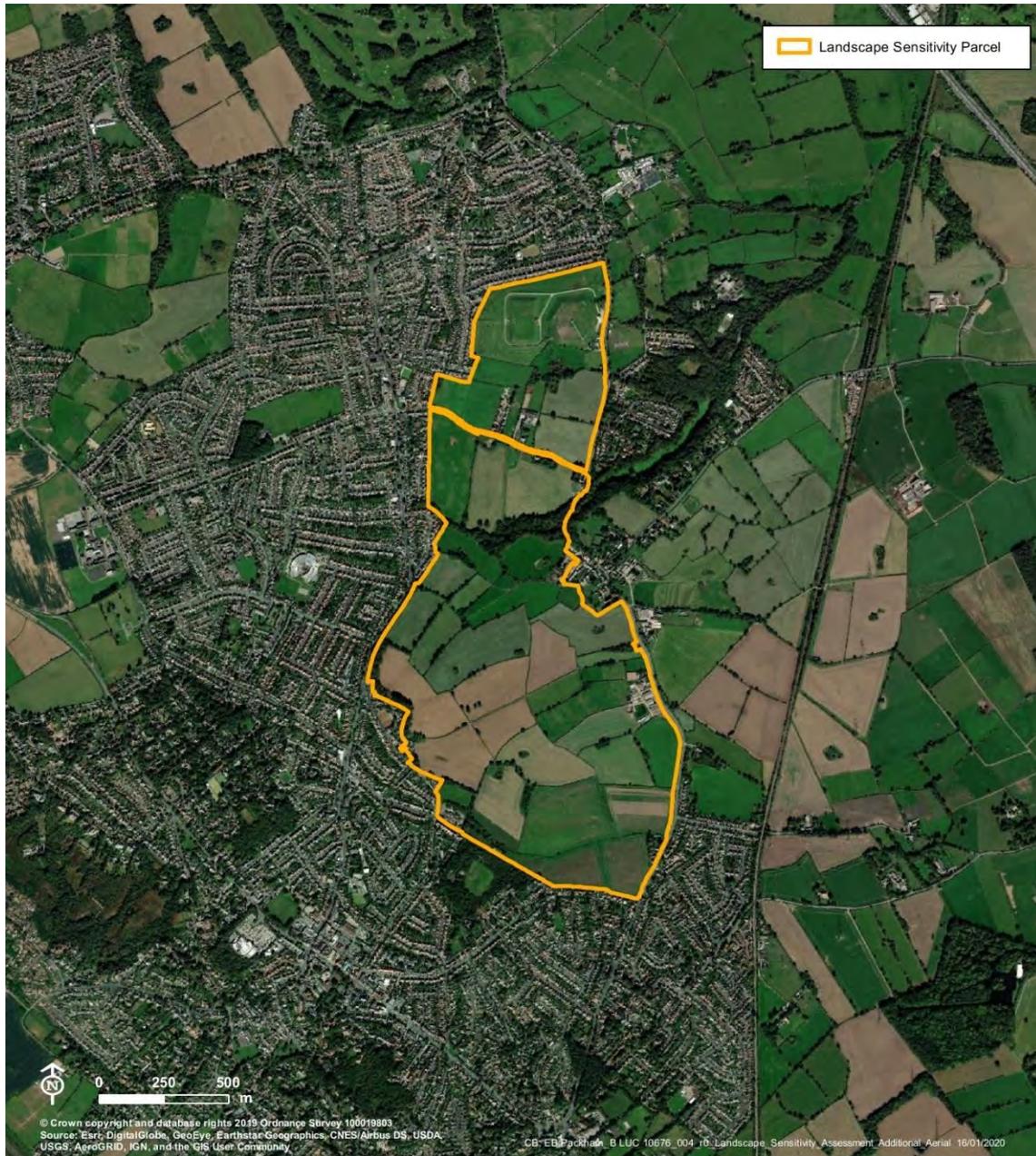
Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Maintain the extent and increase species diversity of existing grassland (consistent with the priorities of the West Wirral Heathlands and Arrowe Park Nature Improvement Area).
- Conserve the intact historic field pattern of ancient Medieval Townfields in proximity to Pensby.
- Conserve the wooded field pond in the north-west.
- Preserve the narrow wooded valley at Harrock Wood as a landscape feature, ensuring that the intimate character of the wooded valley is retained.
- Ensure the function of the area as a perceived gap between Pensby and Irby is maintained by providing a clear physical and visual separation between adjacent settlements.

- Protect and enhance the public rights of way connecting different parts of Irby as well as the Harrock Wood open access land and promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Figure A.64: Aerial photograph of the area



Gently sloping landform with elevated ground along the Pensby settlement edge in the west



Dwellings in Barnston along the eastern edge of the area



Location and landscape character context

The area (incorporating SP061 and SP062) is situated in the south-west of the borough and lies to the east of Pensby between Thingwall and Heswall. The A551 Barnston Road forms its eastern boundary, with the village of Barnston partly abutting this edge.

The area lies within the Landican and Thingwall Landscape Character Area, forming part of the Lowland Farmland and Estates Landscape Character Type. Gentle valley slopes, falling to the Prenton Brook along the wooded Barnston Dale, characterise the area, which comprise a mixture of arable and pasture farmland in the form of small-medium sized fields. The area also accommodates some engineered landform at Crosshill Reservoir in the north, large farm complexes, residential developments and equestrian related uses.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, the Prenton Brook and associated wooded valley at Barnston Dale is a key feature that is distinctive for its topography and vegetation, and valued for its contribution to biodiversity, being a Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife Site. The Conservation Area at Barnston village (which lies directly adjacent to the area) also contributes to the overall value, given the intervisibility between it and the area.

The area's use as working farmland for crops and livestock limits its recreational value, although there is a public right of way that crosses the area, providing a connection between Barnston, Heswall Primary School and Whitfield Common in Heswall. The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP061 / SP062 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The gently sloping landform falls east to west (from 85m to 55m AOD) from high ground on the settlement edge towards Barnston Road indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development. However the narrow wooded valley of the Barnston Dale along the Prenton Brook cuts deeply through the landscape, increasing sensitivity to residential development along its course.

The northern part of the area consists of two covered reservoirs with engineered grassed mounding surrounded by open grassland. These man-made structures protrude from the ground and lower sensitivity in this area to residential development.

There is a mixed field pattern comprising geometric, rectangular and irregular fields that are small to medium in size and mostly formed by hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees, providing a modest density of small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

Much of the area comprises areas that are intensively farmed or managed (through both arable and pastoral practices), with some existing ribbon development present (dwellings along Thorncroft Drive, Barnston Livery and Riding Centre off Gills Lane and a cluster of buildings at Carnsdale Farm off Barnston Road), and limited coverage of semi-natural habitats resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

Pockets of higher sensitivity to residential development exist where there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats, including priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland; the largest area concentrated along Prenton Brook (designated as the Barnston Dale Site of Biological Importance / Local Wildlife

Site), and on elevated ground along the edge of Heswall. Valued natural features include hedgerows enhanced occasionally with hedgerow trees and small pockets of trees/ shrubs surrounding frequent field ponds (marl pits).

Historic Landscape Character

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the area contains a relatively diverse time depth which increases sensitivity to residential development.

There is a high concentration of ancient fieldscapes (pre-1600) within the area; namely the small-scale irregular field pattern to the south-west of Barnston which is categorised as Medieval Town Fields, and also an area of archaeological importance. There is an area of semi-regular Ancient Field Systems further south, which increases sensitivity to residential development in these areas. Frequent field ponds (marl pits) are scattered across the ancient fieldscapes and were historically used to extract marl deposits to be used as mineral fertilisers.

Post Medieval fieldscapes also occur within the area, with fields of Post Medieval Planned Enclosure situated either side of Gills Lane, as well as Late Post Medieval Agricultural Improvement and 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure adjacent to the edge of Heswall. These consist of larger-scale fields indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development. The north of the area is dominated by man-made reservoirs and categorised as 20th century Industry which further reduces the sensitivity.

There are no heritage assets within the area; however the area wraps around the village of Barnston, located to the east along the A551, which is designated as a Conservation Area and is of archaeological importance.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area plays a role in the separation between the urban areas of Thingwall / Heswall / Pensby in the west from Barnston village in the east, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. The gap is best perceived

when travelling along the public right of way running through the area and providing a connection between Barnston, Heswall Primary School and Whitfield Common in Heswall.

The area also provides a highly rural setting to Barnston which residential development would adversely affect, particularly alongside the Conservation Area where it contributes towards the setting of Christ Church Barnston (Grade II listed) and its associated churchyard, as well as other historic buildings. Although the church is relatively well enclosed by mature vegetation, there are some gaps resulting in intervisibility with the area, as recognised in the Barnston Village Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan [See reference 17] which states, 'Particularly across the field to the south of the church, there are fine views across the open countryside'. The area therefore contributes towards the setting of the church, indicating higher levels of sensitivity to residential development in this area.

Much of the Thingwall / Pensby / Heswall urban area is highly visible to the area. Further development could be in accordance with the pattern and form of this existing development, while providing opportunities to improve and integrate the hard urban edge, indicating lower levels of sensitivity. The area does however provide a rural setting to this urban edge with uninterrupted views afforded from some areas towards the woodland along Prenton Brook, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity. Parts of Thingwall are of lower sensitivity to residential development where the setting is already influenced by the man-made reservoirs which impede long distance views, as well as the radio mast and sheds which form visual detractors.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development, as well as by woodland along Barton Dale and around Barnston, indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development. However, elevated ground along its western edge forms the highest part of the Landican and Thingwall Rural Fringe (with localised high points existing along the edge of Pensby) resulting in some visual prominence from surrounding areas and increasing sensitivity to residential development in this area. Field boundaries are typically formed by low

hedgerows resulting in a sense of openness and intervisibility with the surrounding landscape which increases sensitivity to residential development, whereas the brook corridor is visually enclosed by woodland indicating a lower sensitivity.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

Although largely a rural agricultural landscape, the area is influenced by fragmented urban fringe elements including the covered reservoirs in the north and the equestrian and residential uses around Gills Lane, reducing sensitivity. The area is already influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources, and therefore decreasing the sensitivity to residential development. The busy A551 along the eastern boundary provides aural intrusion.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low-Moderate

The elevated nature of the landscape along the settlement edge (resulting in some visual prominence), presence of historic field patterns (particularly around Barnston village), localised natural habitats and features and the role the area plays in contributing towards a perceived gap between Pensby, Thingwall and Heswall and as a setting to Barnston Conservation Area, increase sensitivity. However, the intensively farmed character (particularly in the south) and limited coverage of semi-natural habitats (outside Barnston Dale) slightly reduces sensitivity. Overall there is moderate-high sensitivity for the SP062 land parcel to the south of Gills Lane.

Moderate-High

To the north of Gills Lane, the presence of industrial development (including the above ground reservoirs, sheds and radio mast which detract from the landscape character), surrounding human influences and equestrian uses (which are typical of the urban fringe) lower sensitivity. Land parcel SP061 is considered to have low-moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve the rural character and small to medium scale intact historic field pattern, particularly ancient fieldscapes in proximity to Barnston village where the area contributes towards the setting of the Conservation Area and listed church.
- Conserve the mixture of wooded and open field ponds (marl pits) which are characteristic features of the area.
- Preserve the narrow wooded valley at Barnston Dale as a landscape feature and to retain the role it plays in the setting of Barnston village, ensuring that the intimate character of the wooded valley is retained.
- Preserve rural views out from and surrounding Barnston Conservation Area.

- Avoid visually intrusive development on prominent slopes and elevated areas along the western edge of the area, ensuring that wooded skylines, particularly on the fringes of Heswall, are conserved and enhanced through additional planting.
- Ensure the function of the area as a perceived gap is maintained by providing a clear physical and visual separation between adjacent settlements.
- Protect and enhance the public right of way connecting Barnston to Whitfield Common and promote further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP064E

Figure A.65: Map of the area with designations / constraints

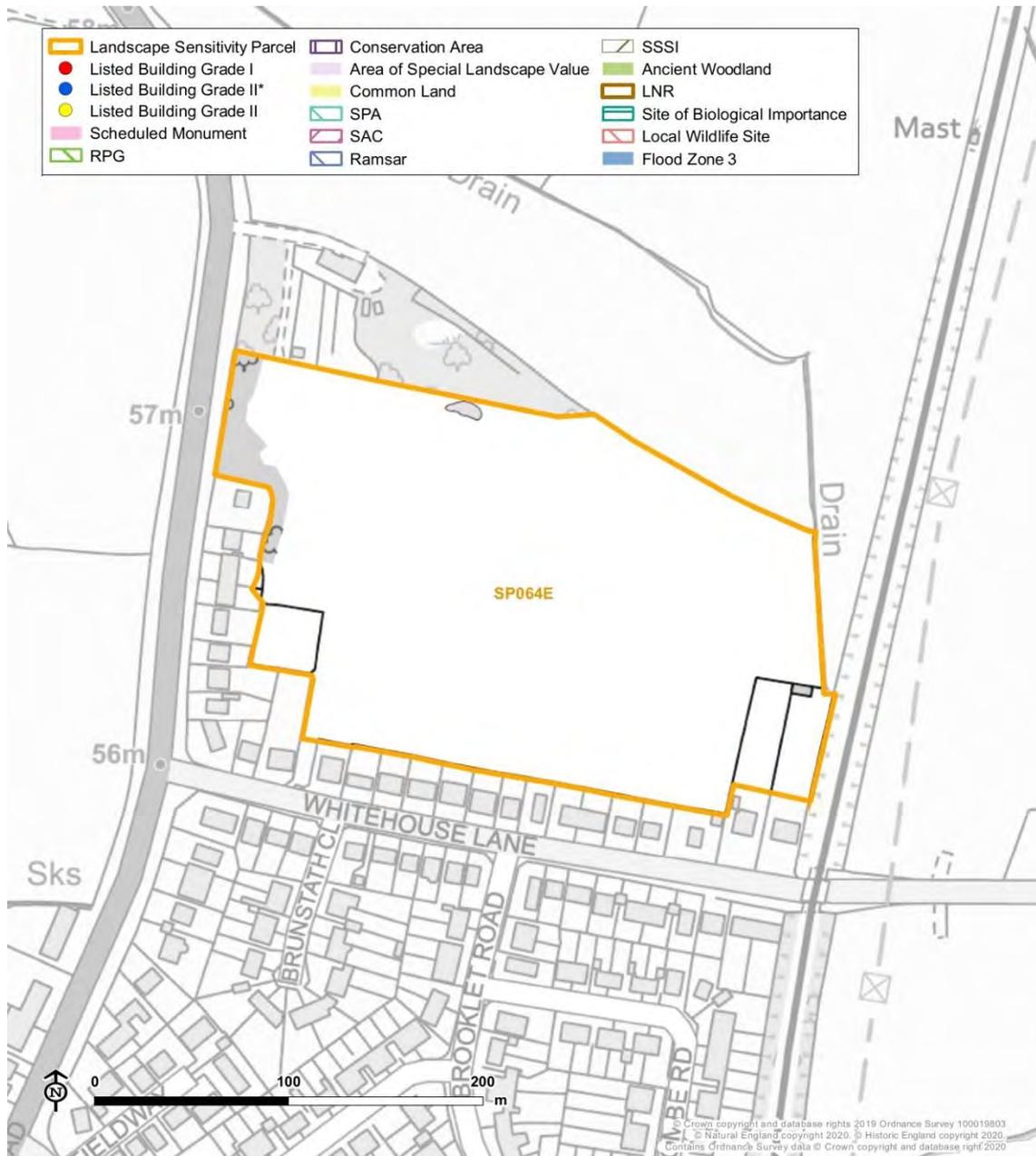


Figure A.66: Aerial photograph of the area



Pastoral field used for grazing and enclosed by vegetated boundaries



Broadleaf woodland along the north-western edge of the area



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the south-west of the borough and lies to the north of Heswall. Existing residential properties situated along Whitehouse Lane back on to the area and form its southern boundary. The A551 Barnston Road runs along the western boundary with properties also abutting the south-western edge of the area. The Borderlands railway line defines the eastern edge and a tree lined hedgerow contains the area in the north.

The area lies within the Landican and Thingwall Landscape Character Area, forming part of the Lowland Farmland and Estates Landscape Character Type. It comprises a small-scale pastoral field on gently sloping ground, with mature vegetated boundaries.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). A strip of wooded copse lies along the northwestern edge of the area and trees frequently feature within surrounding hedgerows.

The area's use as working farmland for grazing restricts public access resulting in there being no recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity

SP064E Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The area gently falls from the A551 Barnston Road in the west to the railway line in the east (from 55m to 50m AOD) indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Hedgerows form the boundaries of the area with frequent hedgerow trees and a small strip of wooded copse lies along the north-western edge, which together provides some small-scale landscape features, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The area consists of pasture used for grazing and does not contain any built development. There is a limited coverage of semi-natural habitats resulting in a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Valued natural features consist of Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Broad-leaf Woodland along the north-western edge as well as hedgerows that bound the area enhanced with hedgerow trees, which increases the sensitivity to residential development.

Historic Landscape Character

The area does not contain an identifiable field pattern given its small scale. There is no sense of time depth and the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation categorises it as 20th century Recreation, indicating low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

There are also no heritage assets within the area.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area does not play a separation role between settlements, particularly as ribbon development already occurs along the A551 Barnston Road which leads to Barnston to the north-west. Further development could be in accordance with the pattern and form of the existing development on the settlement edge, resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

The area provides a rural setting to this settlement edge with views afforded from some areas towards a woodland copse abutting the northern boundary, indicating a higher level of sensitivity.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development to the south and west, the railway embankment to the east and woodland copse / hedgerow to the north, indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Intervisibility is restricted with the wider landscape because of the surrounding coverage of built form and vegetation.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

Although being an undeveloped and rural agricultural landscape, the area is influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources, and therefore decreasing the sensitivity to residential development. In addition, the proximity of the railway line and the A551 Barnston Road result in aural intrusion.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low-Moderate

The gently sloping landform, the limited coverage of semi-natural habitats, the visual enclosure and surrounding human influences lower sensitivity across the area. Landscape features in the form of mature hedgerows, hedgerow trees and a woodland copse surround the area and increase the sensitivity slightly, as does the role the area plays in providing a rural setting to the Heswall settlement edge. Overall, the area is considered to have low-moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Retain and manage areas of broadleaf woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Preserve rural views from the Heswall settlement edge.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP071

Figure A.67: Map of the area with designations / constraints

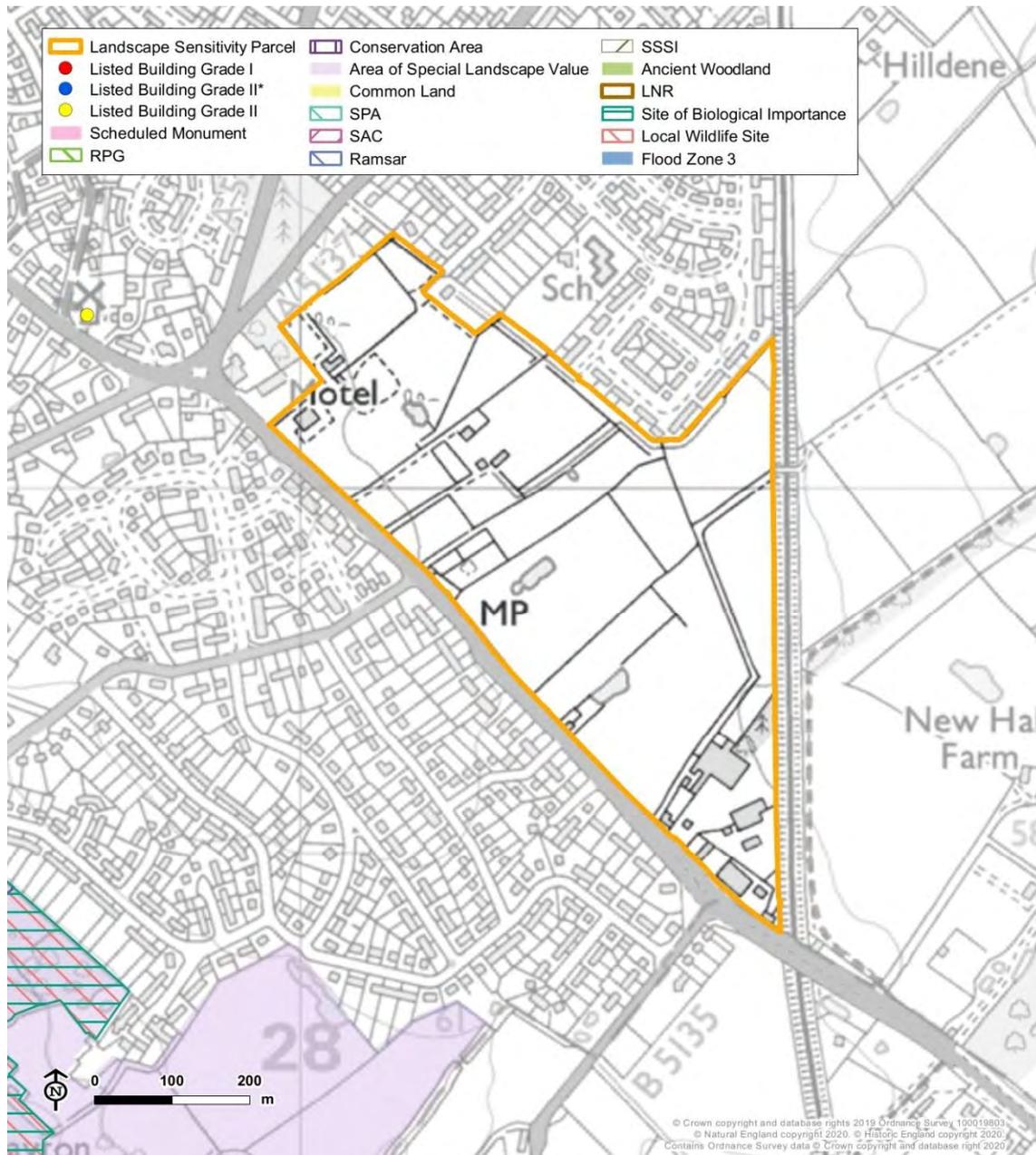


Figure A.68: Aerial photograph of the area



Gayton Playing Fields in the north of the area



Mature oak field boundaries (seen from the A540)



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the south-west of the borough and lies to the east of Gayton, to the south of Barnston. The A540 Chester Road forms its south-western boundary and the Bidston-Wrexham railway line runs along the eastern boundary. Existing residential properties, Barnston Primary School and the Heswall Premier Inn lie along the northern boundary.

The area lies within the Thornton Hough Landscape Character Area, forming part of the Lowland Farmland and Estates Landscape Character Type. The area consists predominantly of small-medium scale pastoral fields with mature oak field boundaries on flat ground. It also includes an area of commercial development in the south at Darlington's Yard and playing fields in the north at Gayton Park.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). However, the mature oak field boundaries are key distinctive features that are valued for their contribution towards biodiversity and visual amenity.

The area's use as working farmland in its southern half restricts public access. However Gayton Playing Fields in the north of the area provides recreational value.

The section below incorporates these indicators of value into the assessment of sensitivity

SP071 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The flat and featureless landform of the area indicates lower levels of sensitivity to residential development. The existing buildings within the area (notably the area of commercial development in the south) also lower levels of sensitivity as they influence the scale of development that can be accommodated in the landscape.

However, most of the area has a mixed small-medium scale field pattern and includes frequent mature oak field boundaries providing a modest density of small-scale landscape features, therefore increasing sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The area consists mostly of areas that are managed through pastoral practices as well as areas of permanent amenity grassland in the north. There is some existing development present (car dealerships and garages in the south, detached brick dwellings along the A540 Chester Road, stables, an adjacent dwelling in the centre of the area and indoor squash courts adjacent to playing fields in the north), and limited coverage of semi-natural habitats resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

Pockets of higher sensitivity to residential development exist where there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats, including a very small coverage of priority habitat lowland mixed broadleaf woodland bordering the playing fields in the north. Other valued natural features consist of field boundary hedgerows enhanced with frequent mature oak trees as well as small pockets of trees/shrubs surrounding field ponds.

Historic Landscape Character

The area consists of small–medium scale fields that have a regular pattern. The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation categories the southern half of the site as Post Medieval Planned Enclosure. The area also includes land categorised as 20th century Industry in the south and 20th century Recreation in the north. The area therefore has little time depth indicating lower sensitivity to residential development.

There are also no heritage assets within the area, however it was screened as medium for archaeological issues by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. The area would therefore require further archaeological investigation as part of any proposed development.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area plays some role in the separation of parts of Barnston in the north from parts of Gayton in the south, resulting in a higher level of sensitivity to residential development. There is however limited intervisibility between the two settlements as the mature oak field boundaries intervene.

The Barnston and Gayton urban areas are generally well integrated into the landscape by the hedgerow boundaries along the edges of the area and by the mature oak field boundaries which provide a sense of enclosure. The area also provides a rural setting to these settlement edges with the mature oak field boundaries providing skyline features when viewed from properties along the edge of the area, indicating higher levels of sensitivity to residential development. Parts of Gayton are of lower sensitivity to residential development where the setting is already influenced by the unscreened commercial development in the south and by residential development along the western boundaries.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development, as well as by the mature hedgerow boundaries along the edge of the area and the mature

oak field boundaries within the area which form visually distinctive features. This together with the flat landform of the area results in very limited intervisibility with the surrounding landscape, indicating lower sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The pastoral character of the area results in a rural setting to the surrounding settlements, with pockets of remoteness through the enclosure provided by the mature oak boundaries which results in a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Sensitivity is lowered where fragmented urban fringe elements intrude into the area including small areas of equestrian use in the centre of the area, a skate park in the north and the commercial development in the south. The area is also already influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources. The busy A540 Chester Road and associated street lighting along the south-western boundary and railway line along the eastern boundary provide a sense of visual and aural intrusion as well as a sense of enclosure to the area.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low-Moderate

The mature oak field boundaries, the natural habitats and features, the role the area plays in contributing towards a perceived gap between settlements and the rural setting it provides to the surrounding settlements increase sensitivity. However, the flat landform, the presence of commercial development in the south, the visual enclosure provided by field boundaries, and the surrounding human influences and equestrian uses (which are typical of the urban fringe) lower sensitivity. Overall, the area is considered to have low-moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

It is considered that the level of sensitivity decreases within the southern part of the area as commercial development and adjoining residential development detracts from the landscape character.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Conserve and reinforce the network of native hedgerows and seek to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting.
- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend native woodland across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve the mature oak field boundaries ensuring that they remain visually distinctive features within the landscape.
- Conserve the wooded field ponds which are characteristic features of the area.
- Ensure the function of the area as a perceived gap is maintained by providing a clear physical and visual separation between adjacent settlements.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP108

Figure A.69: Map of the area with international and national designations / constraints

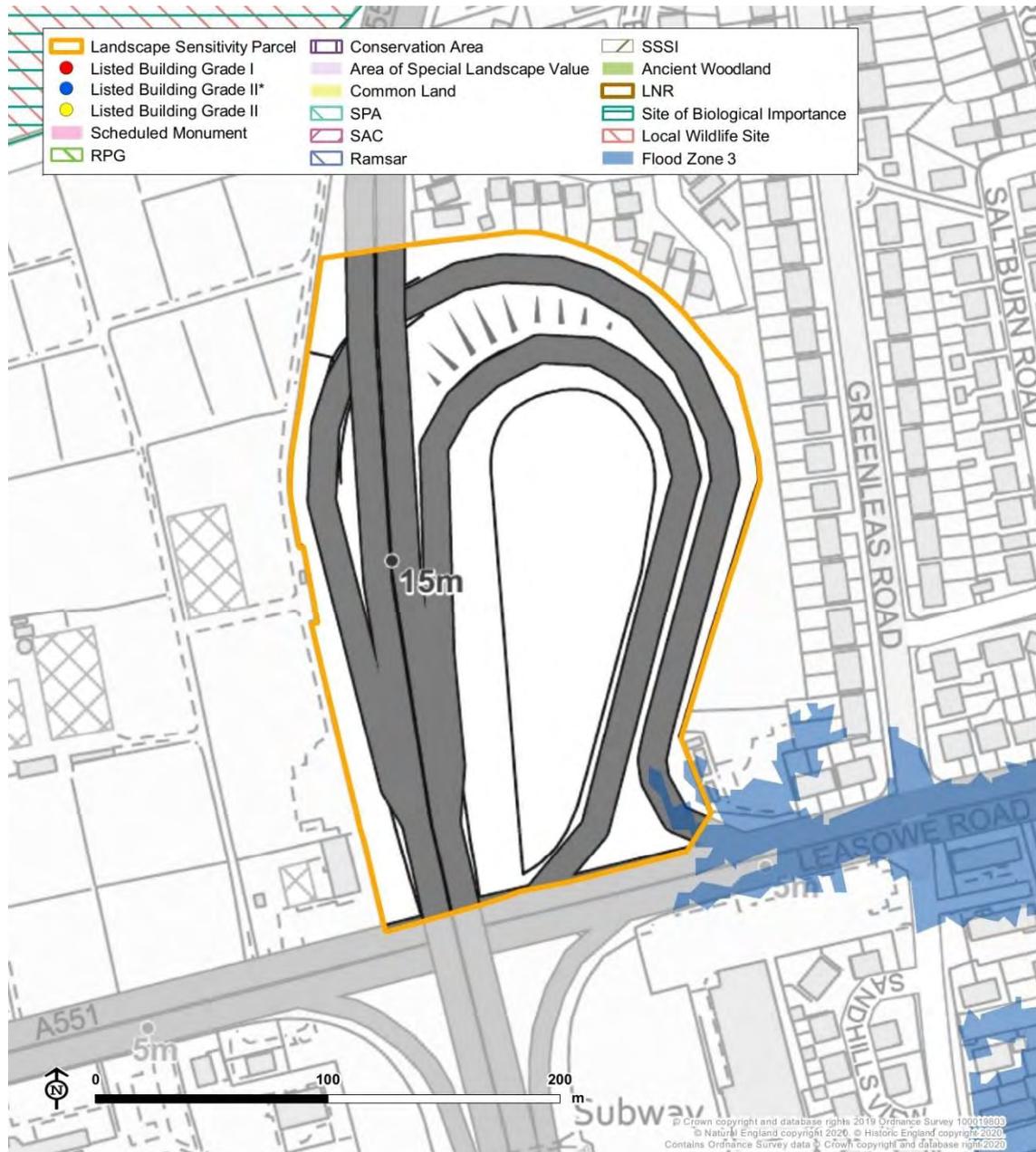


Figure A.70: Aerial photograph of the area



Verge in the north comprising rough grassland and properties along the edge of Wallasey Trees along the A554 embankment



Trees along the A554 embankment



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the north-east of the borough and lies to the west of Wallasey. It is bound on all sides by major roads with the A551 Leasowe Road forming the southern boundary, the A554 North Wallasey Approach Road running along the western boundary and slip roads (connecting the A551 and A554) looping around the northern and eastern edges of the area.

The area lies within the North Wirral Shore Landscape Character Area, forming part of the Coastal/ Estuarine Edge Landscape Character Type. It consists mainly of a single pastoral field that is sub-divided by fencing tape and used for horse grazing. One of the slip roads bisects the area in the north resulting in a wide verge consisting of rough grassland.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). Small areas of rough grassland provide natural habitats and some biodiversity interest. Major road boundaries restrict public access resulting in there being no recreational value.

The section below incorporates this indicator of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP0108 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

Most of the area is flat and featureless indicating lower levels of sensitivity to residential development. A steep embankment associated with the A554 runs along the western boundary, forming a prominent engineered feature associated with the busy road and running against the natural topography of the flat and low-lying coastal landscape, therefore further lowering the sensitivity to residential development.

There is also a low density of overlying features (limited to a few trees along the embankment) which lowers the sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

Most of the area is used for horse grazing surrounded by road infrastructure, with limited coverage of seminatural habitats resulting in lower sensitivity to residential development.

The overgrown nature of the grass verge in the north and mature trees on the road embankment are features that could be vulnerable to loss from residential development.

Historic Landscape Character

The area does not contain an identifiable field pattern given the presence of road infrastructure that surrounds and bisects it. There is no sense of time depth and the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation categorises it as 20th century Communications, indicating low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

There are also no heritage assets within the area.

Character and setting of existing settlement

Overall the area does not contribute positively to the setting of Wallasey or Leasowe as the busy road infrastructure is a dominant element, particularly as views towards the A554 (on top of the steep embankment) are afforded from surrounding properties which forms a visual detractor as moving vehicles are seen on the skyline, indicating low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development, as well as by the steep embankment to the west indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development. There is some intervisibility with the surrounding roads which slightly increases sensitivity, however it is recognised that views towards the area from the roads are oblique and fleeting.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The area is significantly influenced by the surrounding road infrastructure resulting in high levels of aural and visual intrusion. It is also influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources, and therefore decreasing sensitivity to residential development.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low

The flat landform, surrounding road infrastructure and human influences, absence of historic features, visual containment and the aural and visual detractors, lower the sensitivity across the area. The natural habitats that have formed within the verge to the north and the existing mature trees on the embankment slightly increase the sensitivity. However, overall the area is considered to have a low sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Retain and manage mature trees within the area. Pursue opportunities to extend the coverage of trees across undeveloped parts of the area as part of an integrated green infrastructure network connected to the surrounding landscape, to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.
- Conserve, enhance and manage any valued habitats that have formed within the area.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Area reference: SP109

Figure A.71: Map of the area with international and national designations / constraints

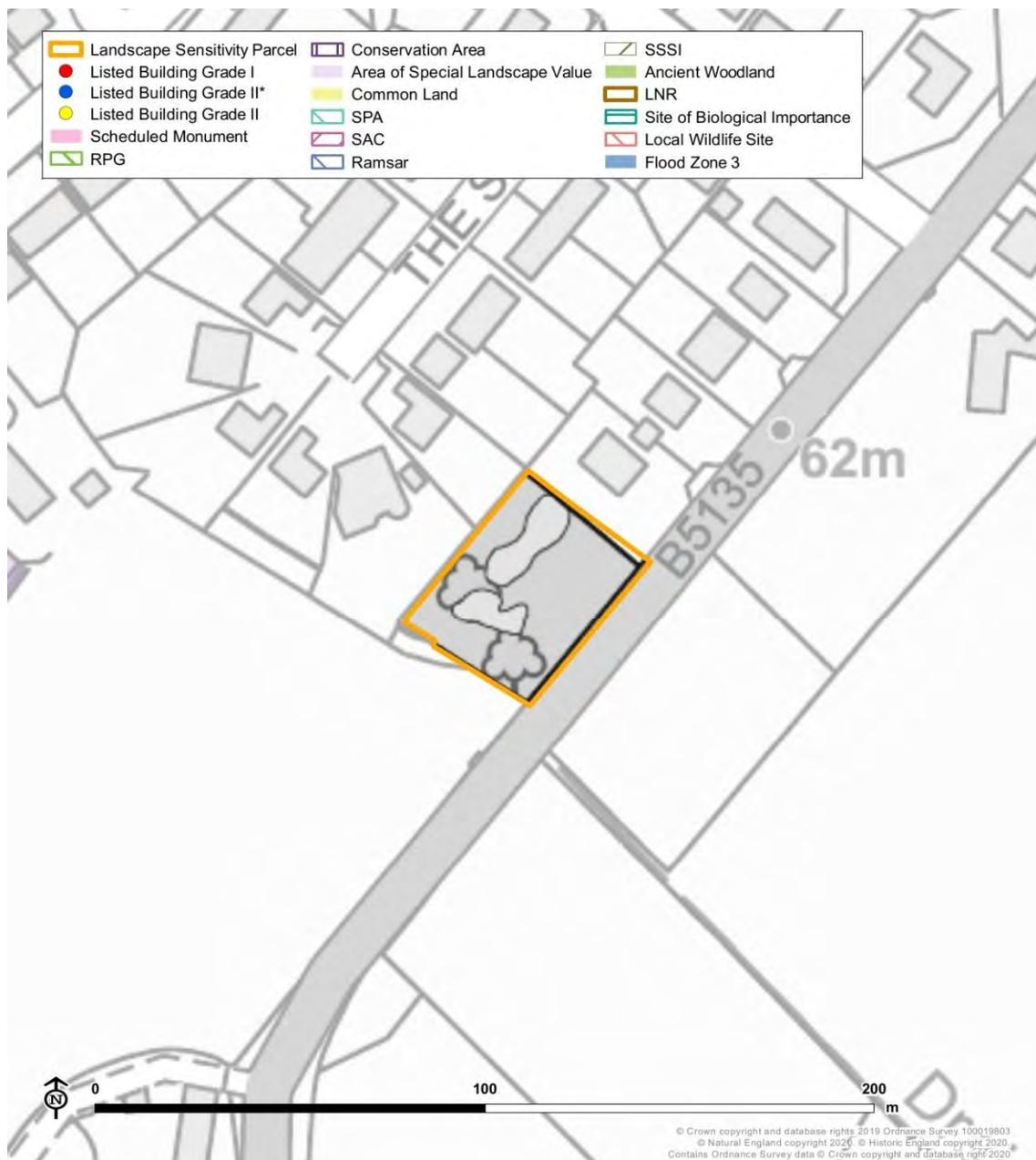


Figure A.72: Aerial photograph of the area



Mature oak wooded copse



B5135 Boathouse Lane along the south-eastern boundary



Location and landscape character context

The area is situated in the south-west of the borough and lies in the south-east of Gayton. The area is contained by the B5135 Boathouse Lane to the south-east and a hedgerow to the south-west which together form part of the borough boundary. Residential properties lie to the north-east and the north-west of the area.

The area comprises a small wooded copse (mainly mature oak trees), with two small ponds at the edge of the settlement boundary of Gayton.

Landscape value

This area is not subject to any landscape designations (national or local). The wooded copse and ponds provide natural habitats and some biodiversity interest. Public access is restricted resulting in there being no recreational value.

The section below incorporates this indicator of value into the assessment of sensitivity.

SP0109 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criterion

Physical Character (including topography and scale)

The flat landform indicates low levels of sensitivity to residential development. The wooded copse provides a small-scale landscape feature which increases the sensitivity to residential development.

Natural Character

The wooded copse that covers the area is a valued semi-natural habitat being a priority habitat lowland mixed broad-leaf woodland, indicating a higher sensitivity to residential development. However the variety of natural features within the area is very limited which reduces sensitivity.

Historic Landscape Character

The area does not contain an identifiable field pattern given that it exists entirely as a small wooded copse. There is no sense of time depth and the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation categorises it as 20th Century Settlement, indicating low levels of sensitivity to residential development.

There are also no heritage assets within the area.

Character and setting of existing settlement

The area provides some contribution to the setting of the settlement as it plays a role in integrating existing development into the landscape through providing woodland cover, resulting in a higher sensitivity to residential development.

Views and visual character including skylines

The area is visually enclosed by surrounding built development to the north-east and north-west and by mature boundary vegetation to the south-east and south-west, indicating a lower sensitivity to residential development.

Perceptual and experiential qualities

The wooded copse provides a sense of rural character indicating higher sensitivity to residential development. However the area is influenced by surrounding development, disturbing its scenic value and limiting dark night skies through existing light sources, as well as by aural intrusion from the B5135, therefore decreasing the sensitivity to residential development.

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential development

Low-Moderate

The flat landform, limited variety of natural habitats and features, absence of historic features, visual enclosure and surrounding human influences lower the sensitivity to residential development across the area. The wooded copse and its contribution to biodiversity and towards integrating existing development into the landscape increase the sensitivity. Overall, the area is considered to have a low-moderate sensitivity to any potential future change from residential development.

Guidance

Given the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity outlined above the following general guidance applies to any development on this area:

- Retain and manage areas of deciduous woodland within the area to protect visual amenity and to help integrate potential development into the landscape.

The guidance provided should not be interpreted to the effect that residential development of the scale assessed would be considered acceptable in principle in landscape terms.

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms



Appendix B

Glossary of Terms

Table 3.2: Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
AOD	Above Ordnance Data (sea level)
Ancient woodland	Woodland which evidence shows has had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD and has only been cleared for underwood or timber production. It is an extremely valuable ecological resource, with an exceptionally high diversity of flora and fauna.
Arable	Land for growing crops
Enclosure	The placing in private hands of land to which there were previously common rights; the merging of commonly held strip fields to form a block surrounded by hedges.
Floodplain	The area that would naturally be affected by flooding if a river rises above its banks, or if high tides and stormy seas caused flooding in coastal areas.
GIS	Geographical Information System
Grassland	Land used for grazing. Grassland can be improved (by management practices), semi-improved (modified by management practices and have a range of species less diverse than unimproved grassland), or unimproved (not treated with fertiliser, herbicide or intensively grazed and consequently species diversity is high).
Habitat	The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism.
Intact	Not changed or diminished.
Land cover	Combinations of land use and vegetation that covers the land surface.
Landscape Character Area	A unique geographic area with a consistent character and identity, which forms part of a landscape character type.

Appendix B Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Landscape Character Type	A generic term for landscape with a consistent, homogenous character. Landscape character types may occur in different parts of the county, but wherever they occur they will share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation or human influences.
Listed building	A building, object or structure that has been judged to be of national importance in terms of architectural or historic interest.
Marl	Sedimentary rock or soil consisting of clay and carbonate of lime, formerly used as fertiliser.
Marl pit	A small pit resulting from the extraction of marl, which has often subsequently been filled with water to form a small field pond.
Natural character	Character as a result of natural or semi-natural features such as woodland, grassland, and hedgerows.
OS	Ordnance Survey
Parliamentary fields / enclosure	Fields formed by a legal process of enclosure (or inclosure), typically during the 18 th and 19 th centuries, through passing laws causing or forcing enclosure to produce fields for use by the owner (in place of common land for communal use)
Pastoral	Land used for keeping or grazing sheep or cattle.
Ramsar	Wetlands of international importance especially for waterfowl habitat.
Remnant	A part of quantity left after the greater part has been used, removed, or destroyed.
Scheduled Monument	Nationally important archaeological sites or historic buildings, given protection against unauthorised changes.
Semi-natural vegetation	Any type of natural vegetation which has been influenced by human activities, either directly or indirectly.
Time depth	The time period expressed in the landscape, or the extent to which the landscape reflects a certain time period (a landscape with greater time depth will comprise older elements than a landscape with lesser time depth).

Appendix B Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Topography	Combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land surface.
Vernacular	Building constructed in the local style, from local materials. Concerned with ordinary rather than monumental buildings.

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