

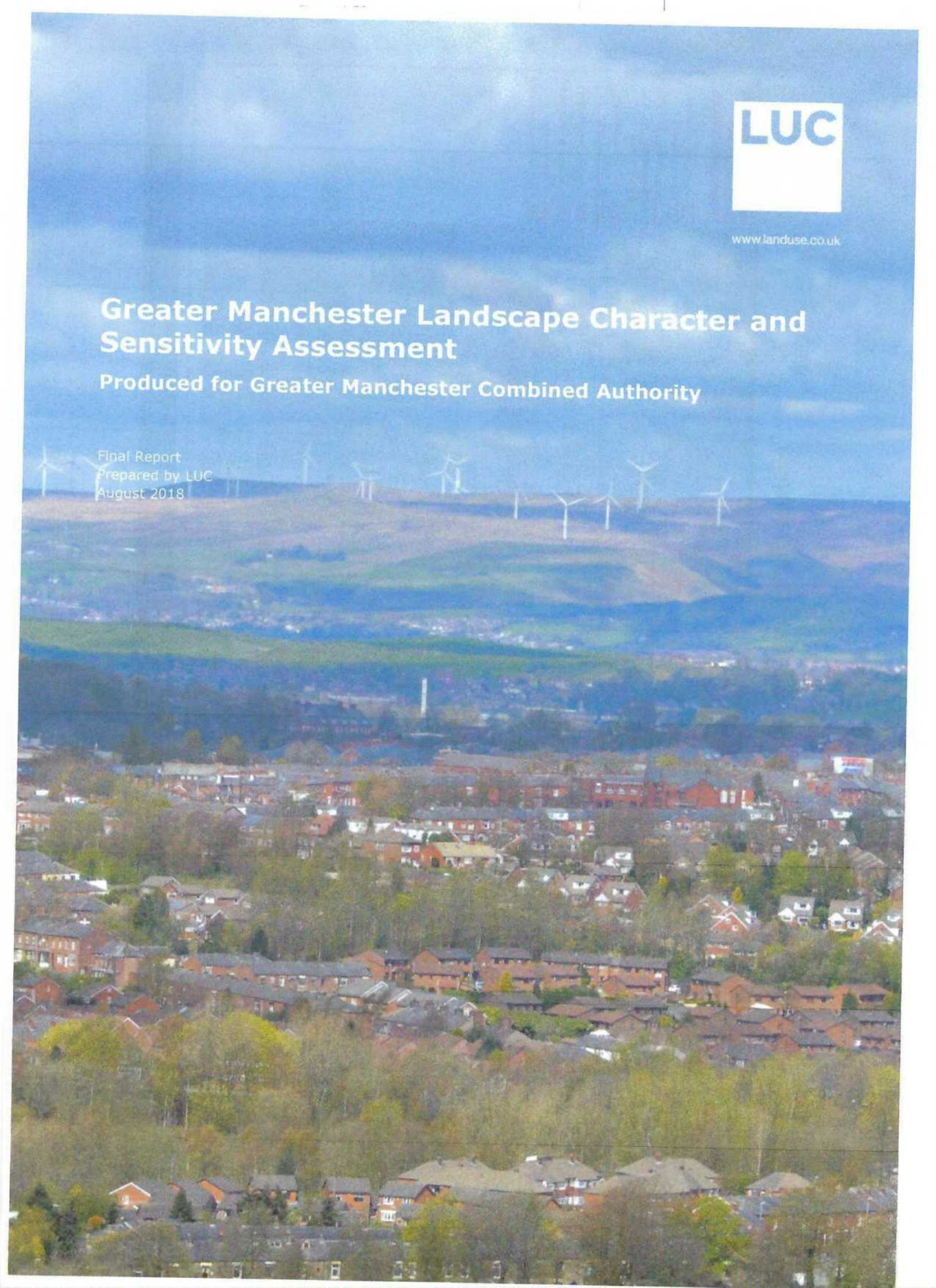


www.landuse.co.uk

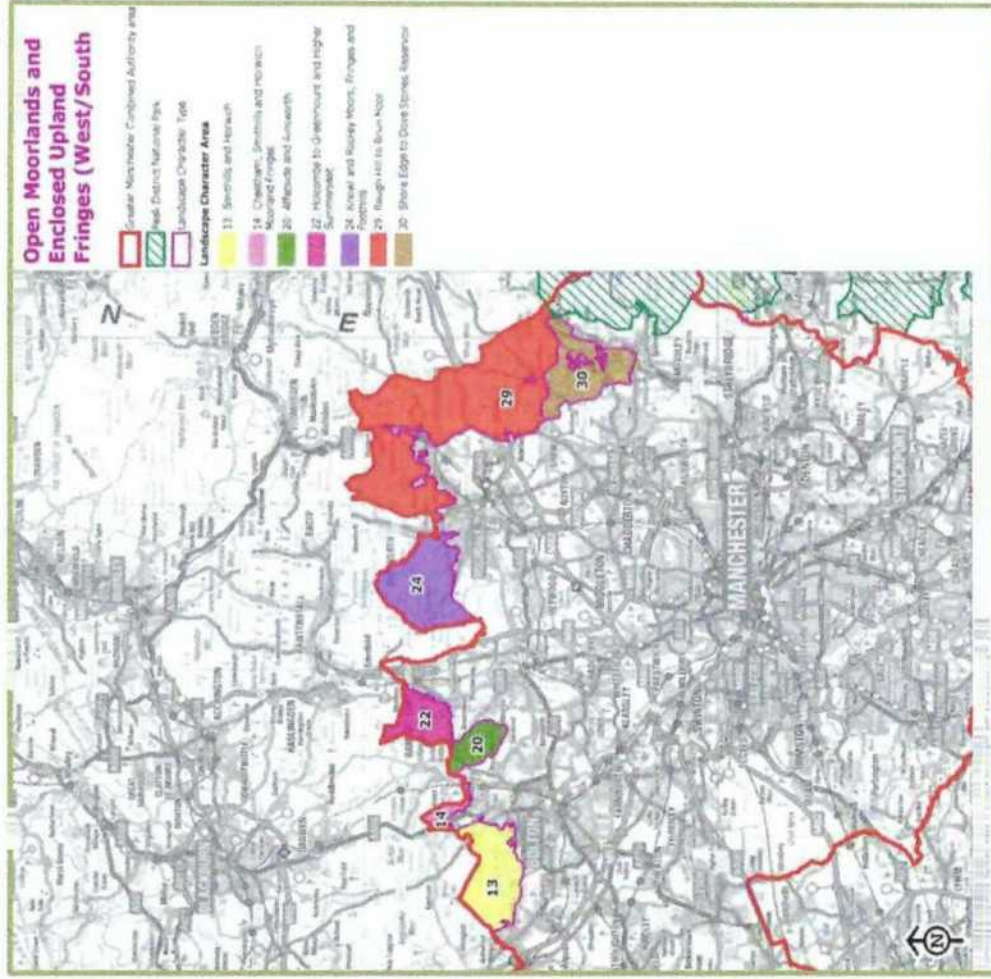
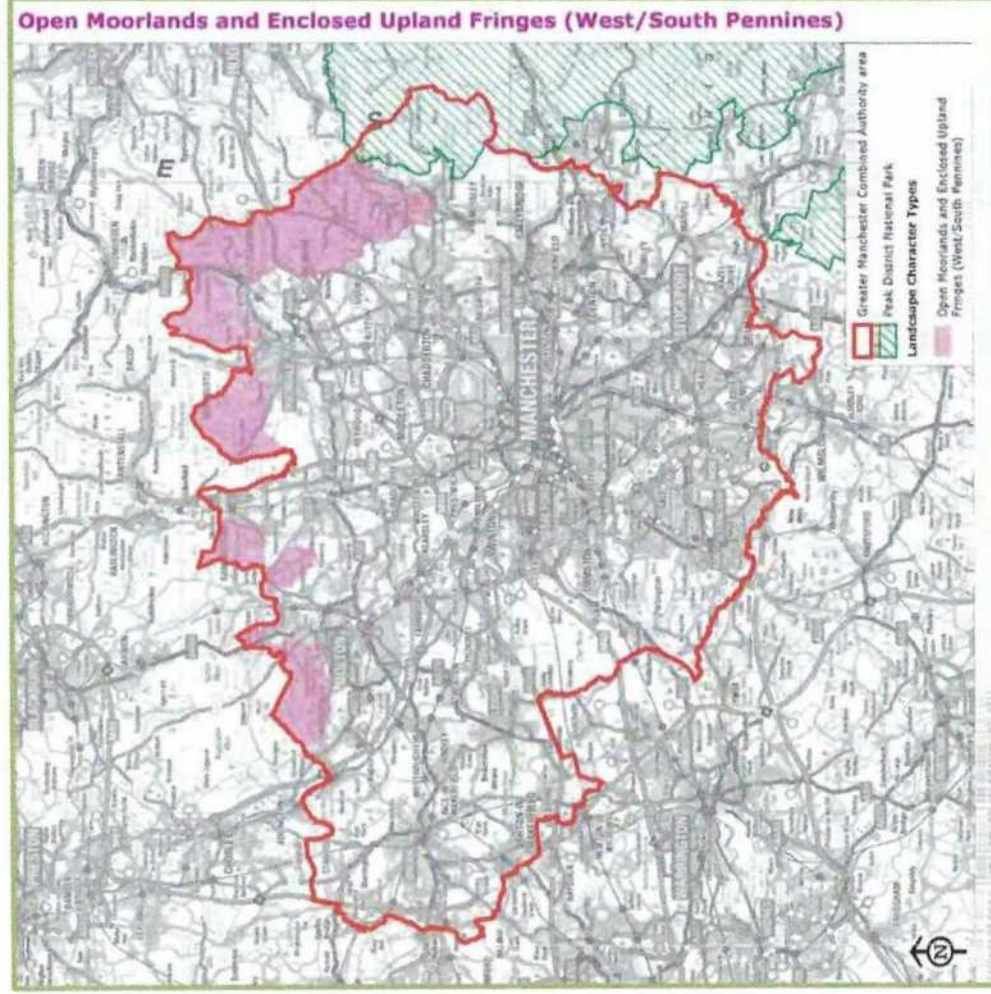
Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment

Produced for Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Final Report
Prepared by LUC
August 2018



LCT: Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes (West/South Pennines)



This Landscape Character Type (LCT) is found in Bolton, Bury, Rochdale and Oldham Districts.

Representative photographs



View of houses in Delph, nestled into a stream valley



Masts located on high ground near Height Barn, north of Ainsworth



Grassland pasture fields enclosed by gutstone walls, transitioning to unenclosed moorland habitats beyond



View of the historic village of Wardle, with the church spire and pylons forming dominant features



The site of a disused quarry remains visible in the landscape north of Summit



Waelegrove Reservoir, with mixed woodland and unenclosed moorland visible in the distance



Large wind turbines dominating the skyline on Knowl Moor



Incised clough containing the small stream of Red Brook



Farmland near the village of Holcombe, with Peel Tower visible on the skyline

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- An elevated, upland landscape rising up to the higher Pennine moorlands/plateaux in the north and east of Greater Manchester. The landform was formed by glacial action and is widely varied and locally distinct, with broad sweeping uplands, areas with dramatic folds, terraces and slopes and occasional stream valleys.
- Underlying bedrock geology of Pennine Coal Measures (mudstones, siltstones, sandstones) and Millstone Grit. The uplands are characterised by expansive peat deposits.
- Generally, soil fertility is poor; the majority of agricultural land is classed as Grade 4 or 5.
- Small streams and brooks drain the uplands into numerous reservoirs. Some also drain into major rivers including the River Tame and River Irwell.

Land use and field patterns

- Higher elevations characterised by unenclosed open moorland used for rough grazing (predominantly by sheep). Large-scale wind farms occupy some of the higher moorland areas, notably Knowl Moor (Scout Moor Wind Farm) and Shore Moor. A military Danger Zone is located on the edge of Holcombe Moor.
- Upland fringes comprise semi-improved grassland pasture enclosed by a network of gritstone walls (with some replacement by post and wire fencing). Enclosures form a patchwork of small irregular and larger rectangular fields, including Parliamentary enclosures.
- Land use in the upland fringes is primarily sheep and cattle farming, with some remnants of unimproved upland pastures. Localised areas are used for horse and pony paddocks.
- Past and present quarrying activity has left frequent imprints on the landscape. A number of these sites have been restored as semi-natural habitat and some serve as destinations for recreational activity e.g. Crompton Moor. Golf courses form occasional features close to the urban edge.
- Reservoirs also form valued recreational destinations with visitor facilities, including Watergrove Reservoir and Ogden Reservoir. Smithills Country Park covers a large area around Smithills Moor.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Rich mosaic of upland habitats including heather moorland, blanket bog, acid grassland and wet and dry heathland. Extensive areas are internationally or nationally designated for their nature conservation value, including the South Pennine Moors SPA/SAC/SSSI/SBI and West Pennine Moors SSSI.
- Within the enclosed upland fringes, disused quarries, reservoirs, broadleaved valley woodlands, species rich grassland and wetlands are often locally designated as Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs).
- On the whole, woodland is sparse on the unenclosed uplands. Coniferous/mixed plantations are associated with reservoirs and quarries. Tracts of broadleaved woodland clothe the sides of valleys. Trees also feature along field boundaries within the enclosed upland fringe.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- Important archaeological landscape containing Scheduled remains including a Blackstone Edge Roman Road, a Roman Fort (near Castle Shaw) and Scheduled Bowl Barrow (near Knarr Barn). The peat deposits on the uplands are also likely to contain a rich record of preserved prehistoric archaeology.
- Evidence of the industrial heritage of the area, with numerous disused quarries and mines. Near to settlements, mills and chimneys form frequent landmarks.
- The enclosed landscape contains a number of historic settlements, many of which are designated as Conservation Areas with clusters of Listed Buildings, including prominent churches.
- Inspirational landscape, with well-known cultural associations. The open moorland provided inspiration for Ted Hughes (from neighbouring Calderdale) and poet Ammon Wrigley. Monuments including Peel Tower (Grade II listed) are located in elevated locations.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Remote with a lack of development within the open moors. The upland fringes have a sparsely settled character, with traditional millstone grit stone-built farms, dispersed cottages and houses and several historic villages with a unifying stone vernacular.
- Occasional halls, manors and country residences are also scattered throughout the landscape, including Smithills Hall (Grade I Listed) in Bolton District and Shore Hall (Grade II* Listed) in Rochdale District.
- Relatively sparse road network, with farms and settlements linked by minor roads and tracks. Some larger routes cross the landscape, including the M62 and numerous A-roads.
- Forms an attractive, undeveloped remote backdrop to and has a strong visual relationship with nearby urban areas.

- The unenclosed moorlands include large areas of Open Access Land. Long distance routes pass through the LCT, including the Pennine Way National Trail, Rochdale Way and Rotary Way, which link to a strong rights of way network. Many routes crossing the moorland are based on historic packhorse routes.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Long, panoramic views are afforded by the high elevation of the landscape. There is often intervisibility with the dramatic Dark Peak moorlands of the Peak District National Park, particularly in the eastern parts of the LCT.
- The landscape evokes a strongly rural, remote and continuation of character of the Pennine uplands with gritstone walls, traditional farms, sheep grazed pastures and rough moorland.
- The unenclosed moorland is characterised by muted colours with subtle colour changes. The landscape is strongly influenced by the changeable weather conditions.
- This landscape is often associated with a sense of openness, remoteness and isolation. This perception can be broken in places by views of urban development and the presence of intrusive modern features including the M62 motorway.
- Wind turbines and pylons/overhead lines punctuate the mostly open and undeveloped skylines. Masts are a feature of higher ground and are occasionally found in clusters.
- Within the stream valleys, there is a contrasting sense of enclosure due to topography and woodland cover.

Intactness and condition

The uplands and upland fringes are a remote, highly rural landscape. Generally the landscape is intact with an important mosaic of textured semi-natural upland habitats on the unenclosed moorland and grassland traditionally managed by sheep grazing in the enclosed fields. It forms a continuation of character from the wider Pennine upland landscapes, including the Dark Peak area of the Peak District National Park.

Issues which impact on intactness and condition include stone-wall boundary loss and subsequent replacement by post and wire fencing and urban fringe influences adjacent to development, including the proliferation of horse keeping in some localised areas (with associated structures and features including pony tape). Large-scale wind turbines and pylon lines form dominant features on the otherwise undeveloped skylines. Active quarrying operations introduce noise and movement, which detract from the remote and tranquil qualities of the landscape. Litter (particularly along roads and in car parks) and fly tipping are also issues within this landscape. Some areas are frequently used for illegal off-roading (predominantly with dirt bikes and quads) resulting in damage to important habitats. Wildfires also impact upon the intactness and condition of semi-natural habitats. Designated habitats on the unenclosed moorland of the South Pennines are mostly in 'unfavourable recovering' condition. Areas within the West Pennine Moors SSSI vary in their condition from 'unfavourable - no change' to 'favourable'. Restorative works and active management are regularly undertaken on large areas of the moorland to improve habitat condition.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Sensitivity Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	- Elevated upland landscape, created via glaciation. Carved by intricate valleys containing streams and brooks. - Upland fringes are overlain by a patchwork of small-scale irregular and medium-scale rectilinear enclosures. - On upper slopes, the landscape is open and large scale, with features limited to large reservoirs and wind turbines. - The upland fringes contain a higher density of small-scale features on enclosed land including trees, stone walls and buildings.	H
Natural character	- Rich mosaic of upland habitats including heather moorland, blanket bog, acid grassland and wet and dry heathland. Extensive areas are internationally or nationally designated for their nature conservation value, including the South Pennine Moors SPA/SAC/SSSI/SBI and West Pennine Moors SSSI. - On the enclosed upland fringes, land use is primarily semi-improved pastures used for sheep and cattle grazing with limited areas of horsiculture. - Numerous SBIs, protecting habitats including reservoirs, broadleaved valley woodlands, species rich grassland and wetlands. - Bands of broadleaved (including some ancient) and mixed woodland tracing watercourses and cloaking the sides of stream valleys. Mixed woodland is also present as screening around quarries. - Hawthorn hedges are located along some field boundaries.	M-H
Historic landscape character	- Field origins include regular-shaped parliamentary enclosures and smaller scale 18th and 19th century piecemeal enclosures. - High archaeological potential of the peat deposits on the open moor. - Nationally important Scheduled Monuments at Blackstone Edge Roman Road, Castleshaw Roman Fort and a Bowl Barrow near Knarr Barn. - Occasional historic halls and manor houses including Smithills Hall (Grade I and within a Grade II Registered Park and Garden) and Shore Hall (Grade II*). - The enclosed landscape contains a number of historic settlements designated as Conservation Areas with clusters of Listed Buildings. - Evidence of industrial heritage throughout, including former quarries and mining pits, mill buildings and chimney stacks.	M-H
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development	- Settlement is limited to scattered farms and houses, often constructed of a distinctive millstone grit vernacular. The open moorland is generally devoid of buildings. - The nucleated historic settlements are nestled into the lower ground associated with the stream valleys. - The upland fringes and unenclosed uplands beyond provide an undeveloped and often dramatic rural backdrop and setting to adjacent urban areas.	H
Views and visual character including skylines	- Expansive, panoramic views across the urban conurbation of Greater Manchester and to adjacent moorland areas including those within the Peak District National Park to the east. - Characterised by open, expansive skylines. These are broken by features including masts, pylons (and associated overhead lines) and large-scale wind turbines (e.g. Shore Moor). - Church spires and towers in villages are often prominent, while occasional chimneys provide evidence of the area's industrial past. - Hill and moorland summits are occasionally marked by structures including Peel Tower on Harcles Hill (Grade II) and the Bishop Park Monument.	M-H
Access and recreation	- Some of the many reservoirs and former quarries within the LCT form popular visitor destinations, e.g. Watergrove Reservoir and Ogden Reservoir. - Smithills Country Park covers a large area around Smithills Moor in Bolton District. - Large swathes of the upland moorland are Open Access Land. The remainder of the landscape is served by a dense network of footpaths/bridleways including the Pennine Way National Trail, Rochdale Way and Rotary Way. - Some of these routes are based on paved packhorse trails which provided historic routes across the moorland. - A number of golf courses are located near to the urban fringe.	H
Perceptual and experiential qualities	- Strong sense of remoteness and isolation. This perception can be broken in places by dominating views of urban development and the presence of intrusive modern features including large-scale wind turbines, the pylon lines/overhead wires, masts, active quarrying operations and the M62 motorway. - The landscape evokes a strongly rural, remote and continuation of the character of the Pennines, with gritstone walls, traditional farms, sheep grazed pastures and rough moorland. - The landscape is exposed and windswept and perceptual qualities are changeable depending on weather conditions.	M-H

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity

Landscape Character Type level				
Development scenario	Sensitivity			
2-3 storey residential housing developments			M-H	
Commercial/industrial developments				H

The open unenclosed moorland areas would be of **high** sensitivity to any type or scale of development.

Within LCA 30: Shore Edge to Dove Stones Reservoir, Harrop Edge and locations which are directly adjacent to the Peak District National Park are judged as of **high** sensitivity to both development scenarios considered as part of this assessment. This is due to the highly prominent, widely visible character of these areas. Their location close to the Peak District National Park means that development could have an adverse effect on the special qualities of the protected landscape. **It is therefore of paramount importance that the guidance below is closely followed when development proposals are considered in these parts of the landscape.**

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

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

- The large scale uplands shaped by glaciation into locally distinctive landforms and carved by intricate stream valleys which contrast with the broad landscape.
- Internationally and nationally important mosaic of semi-natural habitats including heather moorland, blanket bog, acid grassland and wet and dry heathland. Large parts of the unenclosed uplands are designated as part of the South Pennine Moors SPA/SAC/SSSI/SBI and West Pennine Moors SSSI.
- Tracts of ancient woodland along stream cloughs, which form important habitats within the sparsely wooded landscape and create a sense of enclosure which contrasts with the experience of the open moor.
- The strongly rural character, with much of the landscape traditionally managed by sheep grazing.
- The sparsely settled landscape, with settlement mostly limited to scattered farms, occasional rows of houses and small historic villages (many of which are Conservation Areas) constructed of a unifying gritstone vernacular which are nestled into the stream valleys.
- The distinct regular field pattern of small irregular fields and regular shaped Parliamentary moorland intakes enclosed by gritstone walls.
- The setting of valued heritage assets within and adjacent to landscape, including Scheduled Monuments, historic churches, Conservation Areas and areas of historic parkland with associated halls/manors.
- Evidence of the past industrial heritage of the area throughout the landscape, including old mills and chimneys and disused quarries and mines – some now restored for the benefit of recreation/semi-natural habitat.
- The importance of the uplands for recreation activity, with large areas of the moor providing Open Access Land and many of the reservoirs forming visitor destinations. The landscape is accessible by a number of Rights of Way, including the Pennine Way National Trail, Rochdale Way and Rotary Way.
- Expansive, panoramic views from the uplands, including views across Greater Manchester.
- The prominent and mostly undeveloped skylines which are widely visible from across the Greater Manchester urban conurbation.
- Monuments are visible on skylines including the Grade II Listed Peel Tower and the Bishop Park Monument. These provide a sense of place and orientation within the landscape.
- The landscape's strong sense of remoteness and isolation (particularly on the unenclosed moorlands) which contrasts with the vast urban conurbation of Greater Manchester.

- The location of eastern parts of the landscape adjacent to the Peak District National Park. Here there are high levels of intervisibility and a continuation of character with the nationally protected landscape.

Guidance and opportunities for future development and landscape management/enhancement

Guidance and opportunities to consider within this Landscape Character Type include:

- Avoid siting any development on the unenclosed upland moorland and in areas on the immediate edge of the Peak District National Park. Also avoid development on steeply sloping areas or on complex landforms.
- Ensure that the design of any development is in-keeping with existing form, size and vernacular of the area, replicating traditional styles and materials where possible. Avoid any large scale developments due to the overall sparse settlement character.
- Protect and where possible enhance the valued mosaic of semi-natural habitats, including internationally designated areas of heather moorland, blanket bog, acid grassland and wet and dry heathland. Conserve semi-natural habitats within the upland fringe including broadleaved woodland, species rich grassland and wetlands.
- Seek to restore the landscape structure of the enclosed upland fringe areas through the ongoing maintenance of the distinctive gritstone walls and the restoration of areas which have been damaged or deteriorated.
- Utilise existing woodland cover to integrate any development into the landscape.
- Ensure that any required road upgrades are in-keeping with the existing character of the narrow tracks and lanes.
- Ensure the visual character of the landscape is retained. Avoid development where it would be prominent on the broad, sweeping skylines. Protect long, uninterrupted views from higher ground over the mill settlements in the valleys below, and Greater Manchester communities beyond.
- Conserve and protect the setting of valued heritage features, including the Scheduled remains at Blackstone Edge Moor, Castleshaw and Knott Hill, Smithills Hall and Park and Garden, historic villages and numerous historic buildings including churches and country houses.
- Retain the important recreation function of the landscape, which is important both locally and to the wider region.
- Protect the overriding rural, remote characteristics of the landscape. Ensure that the traditional management of the landscape continues, part sheep grazing.
- Ensure any new development does not adversely affect the special qualities of the Peak District National Park, including its beautiful views, sense of tranquillity and dark night skies, and the vital benefits that flow beyond its boundary¹.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology and subsequent knock-on effects, such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off which may impact on nearby major rivers including the River Tame, River Roch and River Tonge.

¹ Taken from the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2018-23 (Final consultation draft, March 2018)