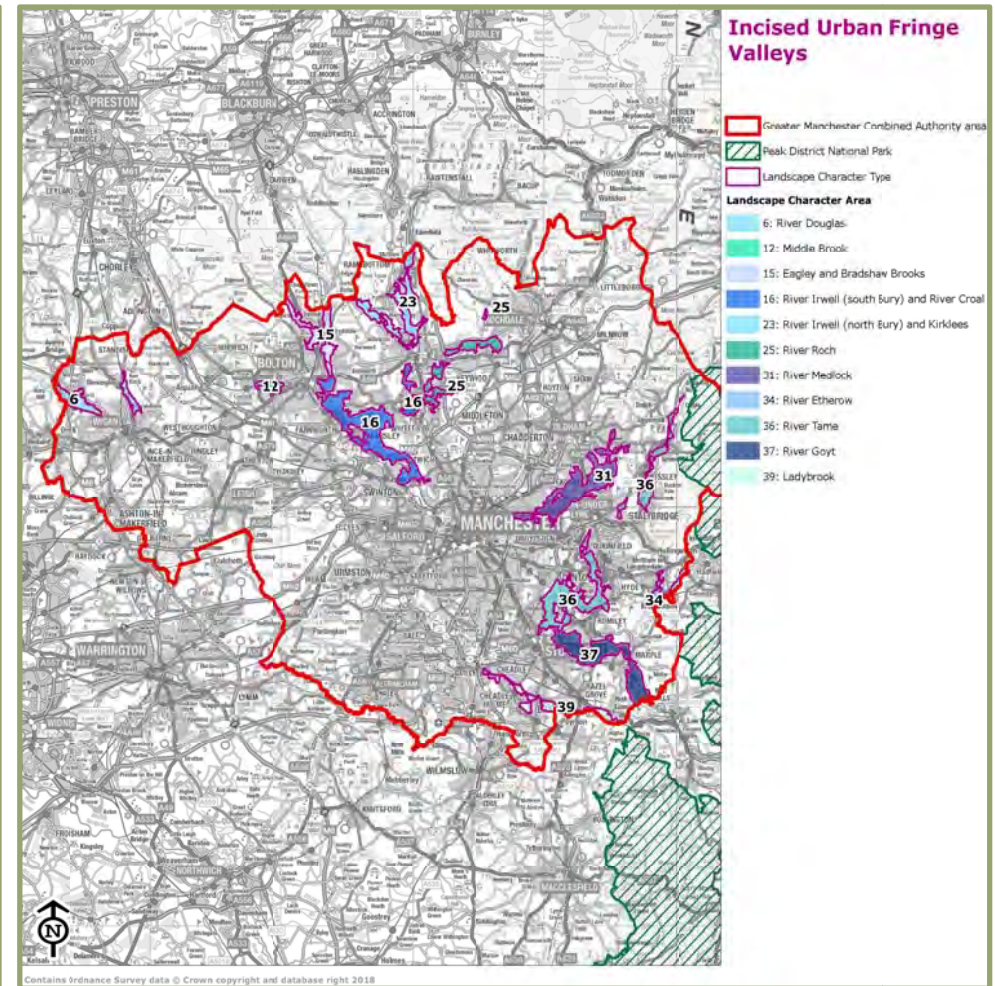
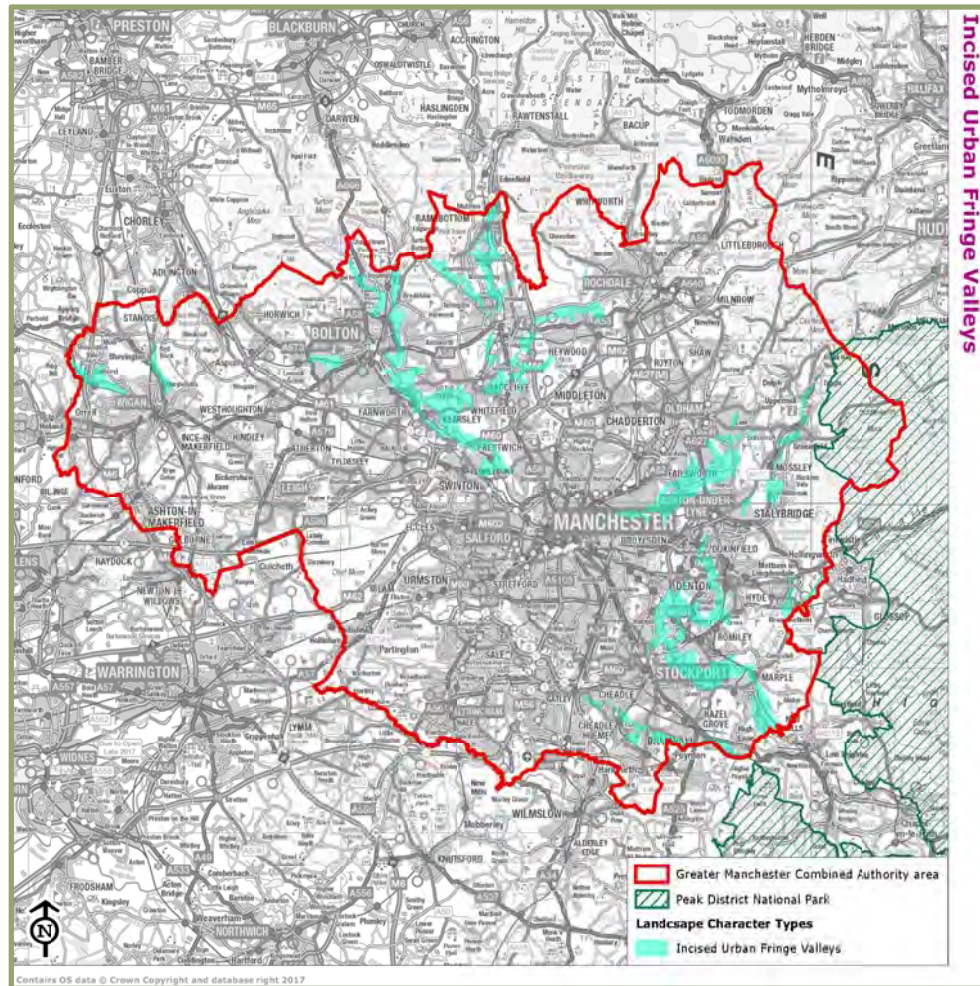


LCT: Incised Urban Fringe Valleys



This Landscape Character Type (LCT) is found in Wigan, Bolton, Bury, Salford, Rochdale, Oldham, Manchester, Tameside and Stockport Districts.

Representative photographs



Narrow incised valley of the Hurstclough Brook with Ancient Woodland and public footpaths, Tameside



M6 motorway and railway bridges crossing the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, Wigan



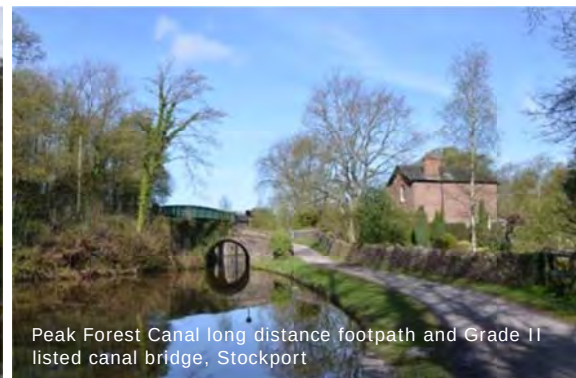
Modern town houses located within the narrow wooded Kirklees Valley, Bury



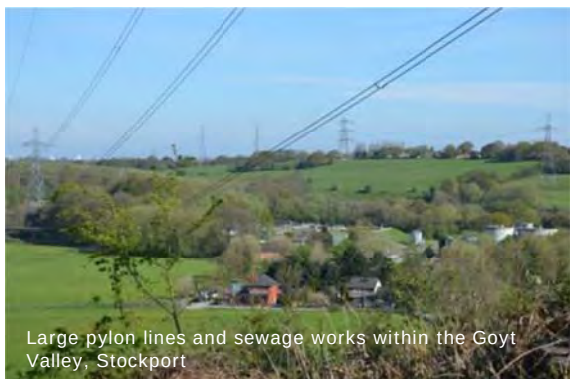
Views of Uppermill and Uppermill Viaduct (Grade II listed) within the settled Tame Valley, Oldham



Brooksbottoms Mill, part of the Brooksbottoms Conservation Area within the Irwell Valley, Bury



Peak Forest Canal long distance footpath and Grade II listed canal bridge, Stockport



Large pylon lines and sewage works within the Goyt Valley, Stockport



Ancient beech woodland, Broad Hey Wood (SBI) within the incised Irwell Valley near Brooksbottoms, Bury



Pony keeping and Kearsley Mill (Grade II listed) within the Irwell Valley, Bolton

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- Typically narrow, incised valleys cutting through rolling hills which include the Pennine and Dark Peak foothills (where the enclosing landform rises to around 300m AOD).
- Upstream the rivers and tributaries are typically narrow and fast flowing, forming steep sided V-shape valleys and gorges. Further downstream the rivers widen and meander across flatter valley bottoms.
- Underlying bedrock geology dominated by Pennine Coal Measures, comprising mudstones, siltstones and sandstones topped by fluvial deposits. Bedrock strata are exposed in places due to fluvial erosion.
- Small tributary cloughs formed by seasonal streams flowing straight down valley sides, characterised by fast-moving streams, pools and falls.

Land use and field patterns

- The valleys cut through thick glacial deposits supporting lower quality, in places poorly draining farmland.
- Small to medium pastoral fields and horse paddocks on the valley sides and areas of wet grassland and scrub along the valley floor. Some arable fields are found on the drier, flatter ground on the valley floors.
- Semi-regular fields of 19th century origin marked by (often gappy) hedgerows and post-and-wire fencing. Areas of arable farmland include agglomerated 20th century fields. There are rare examples of medieval strip fields around settlements.
- Dry stone walls (some in a state of disrepair) delineate pastures on higher slopes, reflecting the character of nearby upland foothill landscapes.
- A significant amount of the land with the valleys is used for recreation with amenity grassland associated with golf courses, frequent playing fields and Country Parks.
- Other land uses include utility infrastructure with numerous reservoirs and water treatment works, flood alleviation schemes, industrial development, and large electricity substations.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Valleys typically traced by riparian woodland with banks of dense broadleaved woodland (some ancient), distinctive moss-covered trees and a wildflower-rich understorey.
- Woodland and areas of parkland create important wildlife corridors between densely populated urban areas, with significant areas designated as Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) and managed as Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).
- SSSI-designated habitats found at Nob End and Ashclough in the Irwell Valley; the Lowside Brickworks and Hollinwood Branch Canal in the Medlock Valley; Ladcastle & Den Quarries and Huddersfield Narrow Canal within the Tame Valley.
- Post-industrial and reclaimed land at various stages of regeneration, with locally valued mosaics of scrub, herbaceous vegetation and reedbeds. These include LNRs at Moses Gate Country Park, Clifton Country Park, Glodwick Lows¹ and Reddish Vale Country Park.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- The valleys have a long industrial heritage as a power source for the 19th and 20th century cotton industry. Rivers are often flanked by large, sometimes derelict, mills built of gritstone or red brick with tall chimneys forming distinctive skyline features.
- Other industrial relics include canals (including the Peak Forest Canal Conservation Area), railways, weirs, cobbled roads, and scheduled sites such as Samuel Oldknow's lime kilns in Stockport and Ringley Old Bridge (Bolton).
- Landmark viaducts and aqueducts including Marple Aqueduct (Grade I Listed, Scheduled Monument), Uppermill (Oldham), Broadbottom (Stockport), Tame (Tameside) and Darcy Lever (Bolton) – all Grade II listed viaducts.
- Earlier scheduled sites include the remains of a Castlesteads promontory fort on the east bank of the Irwell (Bury) and the site of a post-medieval glassworks near Clarke's Bridge within the Tame Valley.
- A number of Conservation Areas, some now forming part of larger urban areas, often linked to historic river crossings. Examples include the Eagley Bank, Brooksbottoms, Ramsbottom and Summerseat.
- Historically important buildings include churches, traditional farmstead buildings, occasional medieval

¹ A brickpit within this LNR in Oldham falls within the Lowside Brickworks SSSI and is currently going through the process of notification as a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS).

manor houses and halls. Examples include the 14th century parish church of St Mary in Radcliffe (Bury) and the Tudor manor house of Bramhall Hall in Stockport.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Modern and historical industrial complexes, recreational buildings, scattered farmsteads and small settlements connected by winding lanes. Some steeper areas are inaccessible by road.
- The valleys are typically overlooked adjacent urban areas, with some redevelopment sites for housing located on exposed ridges, emphasising their close proximity to densely populated areas.
- Major rail and road routes, including the M60, M66, M67 and M6 cross and run partly through some of the valleys. These linear features incorporate extensive cuttings, embankments, bridges and junctions.
- Networks of footpaths criss-cross the valleys. Some are formal public rights of way; others simply desire lines running from the surrounding urban areas.
- Numerous long distance footpaths and cycle routes run through the valleys and along canals, including the Pennine Bridleway, Trans Pennine Trail and E2 European Long Distance Route. Other routes include the Tame Valley Way, Cheshire Ring Canal Walk, Midshires Way, Rotary Way and Irwell Sculpture Trail.
- The East Lancashire Heritage Railway in the Irwell Valley is a popular tourist attraction. It stops at historic stations at Summerseat and Ramsbottom and a new station at Burrs, and links up with the Irwell Sculpture Trail.
- Other disused railway lines provide recreation and nature conservation corridors, including within the Irwell, Kirklees, Medlock and Tame valleys.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Views are typically contained by the steep valley sides and woodland. From the more elevated locations along the valley sides there are views to the surrounding Pennine uplands (including the Peak District National Park) and over Greater Manchester.
- The elevated valley sides of the Irwell and Kirklees afford views to the landmark hills of Harcles Hill and Scout Moor, with the Peel Monument and Scout Moor Wind Farm forming focal points. Wimberry Stones Brow/Indian's Head is a distinctive upland landform feature visible from the Tame in Oldham.
- The Saddleworth War Memorial is a prominent skyline feature on Alderman's Hill (also known locally as "Pots and Pans Hill") above the Tame Valley.
- While proximity to urban areas, transport and other infrastructure can significantly affect their character, the narrow valley landforms and often dense woodland cover provide a sense of seclusion and tranquillity.
- Major transport infrastructure can sever the valleys' visual unity, influence local views and break perceptions of tranquillity and the small landform scale. Large pylons frequently dominate views.

Intactness and condition

The narrow incised valleys are typically wooded and have a natural character, with areas having a strong sense of seclusion and relative tranquillity, contrasting with surrounding densely populated urban areas. Their character is influenced by a complex mix of land uses and variations in topography. Traditional farming practices with enclosed pastures and areas of rough grazing land are intermingled with pony paddocks, recreation grounds, golf courses, industrial sites and large scale utility infrastructure forming a juxtaposition of scale and form. Some areas are strongly influenced by the visual presence of the adjoining urban edge and by numerous tall pylon lines and major road and rail routes which cross and run along the valleys. In places, modern housing has taken the place of industry with densely packed town houses, asphalt driveways and manicured lawns contrasting the naturalistic and historic qualities of the valleys. The farmland is largely intact and a relative abundance of mature native woodland (many identified as ancient) and traditional stone built buildings can provide a sense of time depth and a high scenic quality. A decline in landscape management detracts from this in parts, with issues including the neglect of hedgerows and their replacement with post and wire fencing, derelict sections of dry stone walls gapped up or completely replaced by fencing and the presence of over-grazed and subdivided horse paddocks. Antisocial behaviour is evident in some areas with issues such as fly tipping, littering, graffiti, and illicit motorbike use. The valleys have strong links to the industrial past with Conservation Areas, historic mills, canals, railways, cobbled roads and weirs crossing fast flowing rivers to present a sense of time depth.

Nob End SSSI, which occupies the site of former mid-19th Century alkali waste tip, is currently in 'unfavourable condition' due to the presence non-native species and bare ground caused by the construction of an access bridge. The Hollinwood Branch Canal and Huddersfield Narrow Canal SSSIs are the best examples of a mesotrophic standing water system and a flowing eutrophic water system in Greater Manchester and Merseyside, respectively. However, these SSSIs are currently both in unfavourable condition due to issues such as freshwater pollution, agricultural runoff, inappropriate weed control, inappropriate weirs, dams and other structures, and a lack of corrective works.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Sensitivity Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	- Narrow valleys cutting through Pennine and Dark Peak foothills defined by steep valley sides and surrounded by rolling hills rising to a height of 300m AOD. - Further downstream the landform comprises more gentle undulations at elevations between 10 – 60m AOD. - The valleys are typically an enclosed landform with a complex pattern of small and medium sized fields with hedgerows, stone walls, buildings and a relative abundance of woodland creating small-scale landscapes. - More open elevated valley sides and flatter lower-lying valleys are larger in scale. - Distinctive landscape features are a consequence of strong variations in local topography, prominent slopes and exposed bedrock.	M-H
Natural character	- Land use is mainly semi-improved pastoral farmland with occasional arable fields on the gentler slopes and lower-lying areas. - Recreation/amenity and industrial land uses are also common. - SSSI-designated habitats at Nob End and Ashclough in the Irwell Valley; the Lowside Brickworks and Hollinwood Branch Canal in the Medlock Valley; Ladcastle & Den Quarries and Huddersfield Narrow Canal within the Tame. - Ancient and semi-natural woodland forming important wildlife corridors between urban areas - many designated as SBIs and/or LNRs. - Post-industrial land supporting semi-natural habitats with scrub, herbaceous vegetation and reedbeds, with LNRs at Moses Gate Country Park, Clifton Country Park, Kirklees Valley, Glodwick Lows and Reddish Vale Country Park. - Networks of streams, ponds, lakes and reservoirs fringed by wet grassland and meadows also provide biodiversity value.	M-H
Historic landscape character	- Field patterns reflect piecemeal and Parliamentary enclosure, with some enlargement in the 20th century evident. There are rare examples of older strip fields around settlements. - Evidence of the area's industrial legacy includes large former cotton mills (with landmark chimneys), connected by associated railway sidings, canals (including the Peak Forest Canal Conservation Area) and cobbled roads. - A number of Conservation Areas with historic settlement focused on river crossings and growth during the early industrial age. - Numerous viaducts dating from the 19th century railway forming prominent landmarks. Marple is known for its nationally designated aqueduct. - A scattering of Listed Buildings; Grade I examples being the 14th century parish church of St Mary in Radcliffe (Bury) and Bramhall Hall in Stockport. - Other nationally designated heritage assets including a promontory fort in the Irwell Valley and post-medieval glassworks within the Tame.	M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement / development	- Modern industrial and historical industrial complexes, recreational buildings, a scattered pattern of farmhouses and small settlements connected by winding lanes. - Some modern housing estates are built on former industrial sites, contrasting with the otherwise small scale, naturalistic setting. - Other land uses include utility infrastructure with numerous reservoirs and water treatment works, flood alleviation schemes, industrial development, and large electricity substations. - Roads, railways, canals and associated bridges form frequent features – including several motorways and main railway routes. - Strong relationship with dense urban development surrounding the valleys – they form important green corridors separating discrete settlements and form a rural backdrop to modern development.	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	- Views within typically contained by the steep valley sides and woodland, with occasional views to the urban edge. - Occasional longer views from elevated locations, looking down a river's course and across to opposite side of the valley with distant hills beyond (including the Pennine uplands and Dark Peak uplands of the Peak District). - The Peel Monument and Scout Moor Wind Farm form focal points in views from the Irwell and Kirklees; as does the Saddleworth War Memorial above the Tame Valley. - Church spires and mills are historic landmarks within the valleys, along with historic stone built bridges, aqueducts and viaducts. - Large electricity pylons and major transport infrastructure dominate some views within the valleys as contrasting man-made features.	M-H

Access and recreation	• Networks of footpaths and desire lines running from the surrounding urban areas. • Numerous long distance footpaths and cycle routes running through the valleys and along canals, including the Pennine Bridleway, Trans Pennine Trail and E2 European Long Distance Route. Other routes include the Tame Valley Way, Cheshire Ring Canal Walk, Midshires Way, Rotary Way and Irwell Sculpture Trail. • The East Lancashire Heritage Railway in the Irwell Valley is a popular tourist attraction, linking with the Irwell Sculpture Trail. • Other disused railway lines provide recreation and nature conservation corridors, including within the Kirklees, Medlock and Tame valleys. • A significant amount of the land with the valleys is used for recreation with amenity grassland associated with golf courses and playing fields. • Vandalism, fly-tipping and antisocial motorbike used can be an issue with some access restricted as a consequence.	H
Perceptual and experiential qualities	• Tranquillity can be affected by proximity to urban areas, transport infrastructure and utility developments located within the valleys. • There can be sense of seclusion, however, in less accessible and less developed parts of the valleys. Here woodland and sound of running water are more prevalent. • Mature and ancient woodland cover and traditional field patterns give a sense of time depth. This contrasts with neighbouring urban areas. • Large roads and motorways the valleys sever the valleys' visual unity, introducing the sight and sound of moving traffic which often dominates. • Overhead power lines also weaken the rural character of the valleys.	M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity

Landscape Character Type level					
Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing developments				M-H	
Commercial/industrial developments					H
Narrower valleys cutting through the Pennine and Dark Peak foothills would have a higher sensitivity to both development scenarios (but particularly larger scale commercial/industrial developments) due to the enclosed and smaller-scale landform. The naturalistic setting of these valleys, with a typical abundance of mature native woodland, have a generally high scenic value with pockets of rural tranquillity and are assessed as being of high sensitivity to both development scenarios. Such areas are found within the Irwell and Kirklees valleys (LCA 23) Eagley and Bradshaw Brooks (LCA 15) the Etherow Valley (LCA 34), the Goyt Valley (LCA 37) and upstream areas of the Medlock (LCA 31) and Tame (LCA 36) valleys. It is therefore of paramount importance that the guidance below is closely followed when development proposals are considered within these parts of the LCT. The lower-lying and flatter areas of the river valleys that cut through dense urban areas typically contain development such as large utility and electricity infrastructure, water treatment works, industrial sites and some are crossed by major road and rail routes. These areas generally have a lower sensitivity to both scenarios due to the strong influence development already has on the rural qualities of the landscape.					
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity, by Landscape Character Area					
LCA 16: River Irwell and River Croal, LCA 25: River Roch, LCA 36: River Tame					
2-3 storey residential housing developments			M		
Commercial/industrial developments				M-H	

Explanation for variance in sensitivity from overall LCT scores:

These LCAs areas judged to be of **moderate-high** sensitivity to commercial / industrial developments and **moderate** sensitivity to 2-3 storey residential housing developments. They contain existing large development, such as electricity substations, water treatment works and industrial complexes, as well as being crossed by motorways, such as the M60, M66 and M67. The surrounding urban areas also have a strong influence, detracting from the rural qualities and naturalistic character of the valleys. This results in lower sensitivity judgements than the LCT as a whole.

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):

- Areas of complex varying topography with steep valley sides, flatter valley floors and undulating land overlain by a pattern of small scale farming practices, rough wet pasture, woodland and water bodies.
- The valleys' role as important wildlife corridors running between densely populated urban areas, with locally designated semi-natural habitats and networks, including a relative abundance of ancient and riparian woodland interspersed with areas of parkland and regenerating post-industrial land.
- SSSI-designated habitats at Nob End and Ashclough within the Irwell Valley; the Lowside Brickworks and Hollinwood Branch Canal within the Medlock Valley; and Ladcastle & Den Quarries and Huddersfield Narrow Canal within the Tame Valley.
- The strong connections the valleys have to the area's industrial past, including historic landmark mills, workers' housing, canals, railways, weirs, prominent listed viaducts and the nationally important Marple Aqueduct.
- Nationally designated heritage assets such as Samuel Oldknow's lime kilns, Ringley Old Bridge (Bolton), the remains of a promontory fort on the east bank of the Irwell (Bury) and the site of a post-medieval glassworks near Clarke's Bridge within the Tame Valley (Tameside).
- Conservation Areas located with the valleys or on the valley edge with the historic settlement pattern often associated with river crossings, including Brooksbottoms, Summerseat, Uppermill, Dobcross and Ramsbottom, as well as the role the landscape plays as a rural setting to these settlements.
- The scattering of Listed Buildings including the Grade I 14th century parish church of St Mary in Radcliffe (Bury) and Bramhall Hall in Stockport.
- Opportunities to access and enjoy the green corridors formed by the valleys via the strong public rights of way network, linking with adjacent urban areas and the elevated foothills beyond.
- Numerous long distance footpaths and cycle routes running through the valleys and along canals, including the Pennine Bridleway, Trans Pennine Trail and E2 European Long Distance Route, Tame Valley Way, Cheshire Ring Canal Walk, Midshires Way, Rotary Way and Irwell Sculpture Trail.
- Other natural and heritage features creating valued recreational spaces, including a number of Country Parks and disused railway lines now hosting multi-user trails.
- Wooded skylines defining the enclosed valley landscapes. Occasional longer views from elevated locations, including to the Pennine and Dark Peak uplands of the Peak District National Park, as well as locally renowned features including the Peel Monument, Saddleworth War Memorial and Wimberry Stones Brow/Indian's Head.
- The secluded and relatively tranquil character of the narrow valleys that contrast with adjoining urban areas. Strong rural qualities in parts with inaccessible areas having a sense of isolation and remoteness.

Guidance and opportunities for future development and landscape management/enhancement

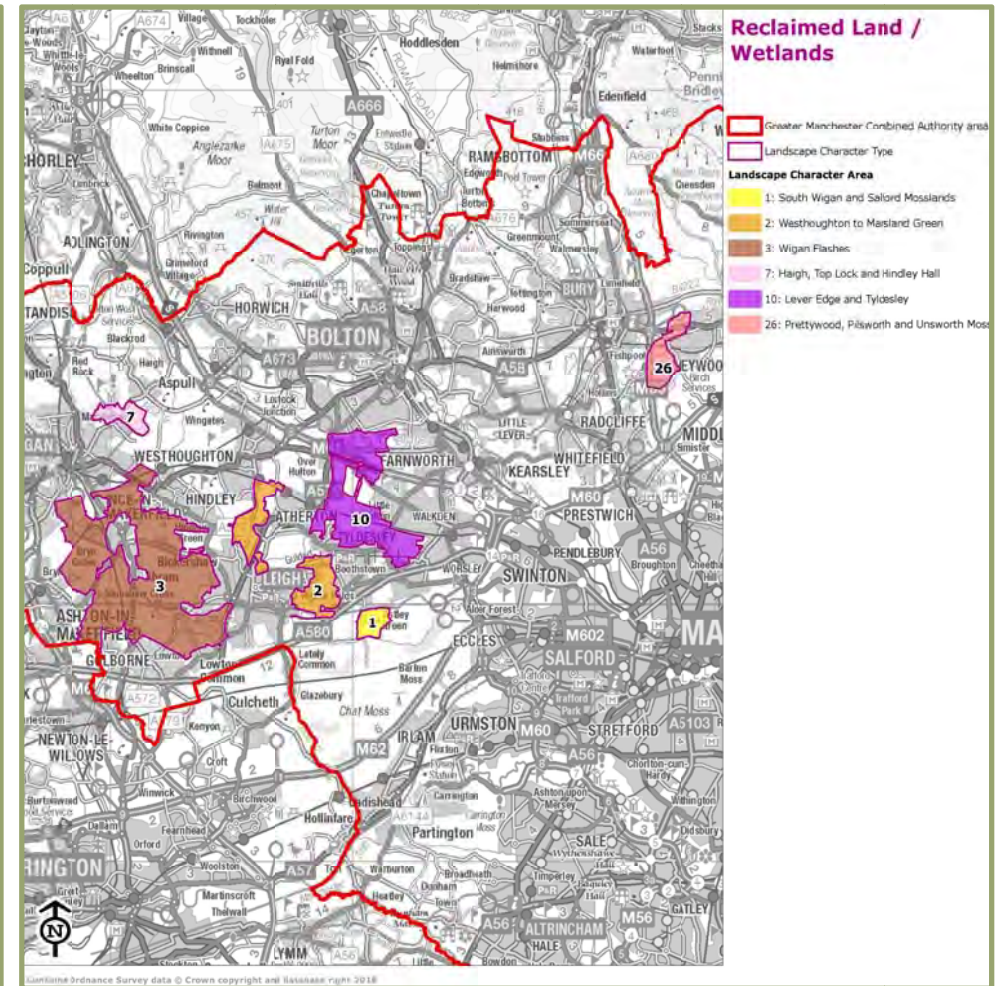
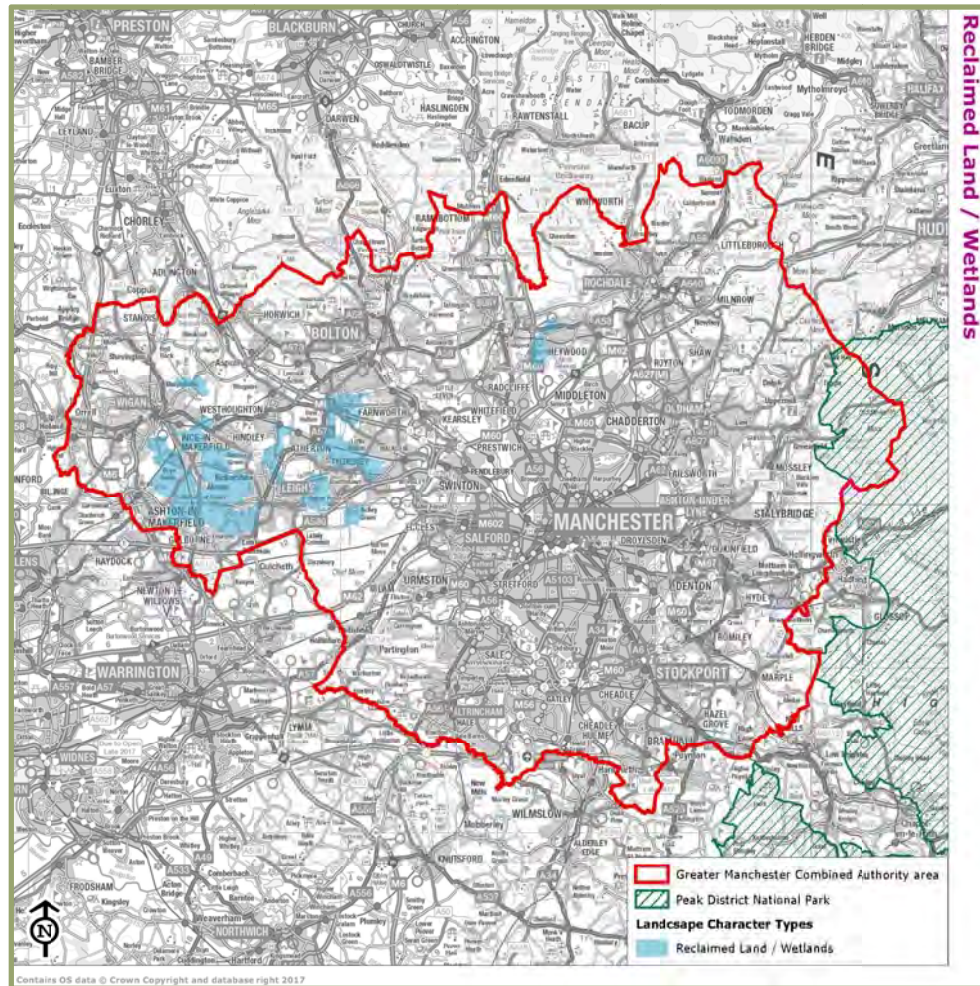
Guidance and opportunities to consider within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Avoid siting development on the edges of valley where buildings would be prominent on the skyline. Conserve wooded and open undeveloped skylines.
- Utilise the screening effects of the tight valley topography and existing tree/woodland cover to integrate limited new development into the landscape.
- Protect and where possible enhance semi-natural habitats and networks including riparian, broadleaved and ancient woodland, wet grasslands, meadows and regenerating habitats on former industrial land. Avoid siting development in locations that would lead to the loss or fragmentation of any locally or nationally designated wildlife site.

- Strengthen the dry stone wall network in association with any new development, reflecting local building styles and materials. Any new boundaries should also reflect local characteristics.
- Hedgerows should be preserved and enhanced where applicable the fill in gaps. New hedgerow planting should be encouraged where it has been removed and replaced by post and wire fencing.
- Avoid the felling of any significant areas of woodland to maintain the contained and secluded character of the valleys and to retain the existing screening of the urban edge.
- Explore opportunities to further develop post-industrial and reclaimed sites (such as at Lily Hill north of Whitefield) for habitat creation with possible links with The Northern Forest initiative².
- Conserve the character and setting of the Conservation Areas, as well as the role the landscape plays as a rural setting to historic settlements.
- Conserve remaining industrial relicts, including historic mill buildings, canals and railway lines. Development should be carefully sited in order to maintain the link between historic mills, canals, railways and roads.
- Conserve the nationally designated listed buildings and scheduled sites of Samuel Oldknow's lime kilns, the Marple Aqueduct, Ringley Old Bridge, as well as the sites of Castlesteads promontory fort and the post-medieval glassworks near Clarke's Bridge.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off). This is of particular importance as the LCT covers many of Greater Manchester's main river valleys.
- Encourage woodland creation schemes on areas of low grade agricultural land, including through the Northern Forest initiative.
- Conserve key views and intervisibility with the South/West Pennines and Dark Peak foothills, upland fringes and open moorlands and including the landmarks of Peel Tower, Saddleworth War Memorial and Wimberry Stones Brow/Indian's Head (within the Peak District National Park).
- Any new development should be sympathetic in style, vernacular and form to historic industrial development within the valleys (particularly the use of local stone and red brick).
- Recreational opportunities should be maintained and enhanced in order to preserve the high recreational value of the valleys as green fingers through densely populated areas. Opportunities should be sought to strengthen the links between valleys along public footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes and the various recreational destinations and heritage sites found within the landscape.
- Formal recognition should be sought for recreational routes with possible extensions of existing long-distance routes or the formation of new ones. Examples include the Leeds & Liverpool Canal towpath in Wigan (currently National Cycle Route 562) and old railway line running through the Kirklees Valley (National Cycle Route 6).
- Protect the pockets of seclusion and tranquillity associated with the tightly enclosed valleys and their woodlands, along with their strong sense of time depth and traditional rural qualities in an urban context.

² See the Government's news announcement for the initiative at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-northern-forest-gets-government-backing>

LCT: Reclaimed Land /Wetlands



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

Representative photographs



Carr woodland, Amberswood, Wigan



Pennington Flash Country Park, Wigan



Urban edge at Heady Hill, Rochdale



Housing at New Manchester, Wigan



Peaty soils at Edge Fold, Bolton



Top Lock, Wigan



Railway at Heap Bridge, Bury



Farmland near Four Lane Ends, Bolton



Wetland at Amberswood Common, Wigan

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- Landform generally flat to gently undulating overall, with some locally distinctive artificial landforms as a result of past mineral extraction and landfill (e.g. at Lower Green and Higher Folds in Wigan and Pilsworth in Bury).
- Low-lying, typically 20-30m AOD, with some areas rising to between 120m and 165m AOD e.g. south of Aspull (Wigan), Edge Fold / Lever Edge (Bolton) and Prettywood (Rochdale).
- Underlying bedrock geology of Coal Measures (mudstones, siltstones, sandstones) overlain by fluvio-glacial sands and gravels with pockets of peat and clay.
- Network of lowland wetland habitats and open water bodies (flashes), the latter formed as a result of coal mining subsidence and inundation. Low-lying basin areas drained by rivers and brooks, e.g. Hey Brook, Wigan.
- Soils have been heavily influenced by glacial till deposition resulting in clay loam. Agricultural land is mostly classed as Grade 3 with some small areas around Wigan classed as Grade 4.

Land use and field patterns

- Network of lowland wetland habitats and large scale open water bodies (flashes), surrounded by a matrix of mixed farmland (pasture and cereal crops).
- Some areas of land have a neglected appearance or are in the process of being restored e.g. Landfill site at Lower Green, Astley (Wigan). Others have been recently restored for recreational use e.g. Cutacre Country Park (Bolton).
- Mainly medium scale, rectangular fields delineated by a network of drainage ditches and species poor hedgerows. Fields are of post-medieval (e.g. at Marsland Green, Hulton, Daisy Hill, Lightshaw Hall), 18th, 19th or 20th century origin.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Bryn Marsh and Ince Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Wigan supports some of the best swamp and tall fen vegetation in Greater Manchester, as well as important populations of dragonflies and breeding birds; and Abram Flashes SSSI (also Wigan) is of importance for breeding birds.
- Mosaic of habitats including open water, reed beds, wet meadows, lowland fen and carr scrub on reclaimed land, supporting wetland species including birds. Many areas recognised by local designation as Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs), and some are also Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).
- Naturally regenerated carr woodland associated with wetland areas also forms part of SBIs and LNRs. Some plantation woodland is also found across the landscape e.g. along motorway corridors.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- A landscape profoundly influenced by its industrial past, which includes surface coal mining, sand and clay extraction and peat extraction, providing a sense of time-depth.
- Many former industrial areas have been reclaimed, now forming important areas for recreation and wildlife e.g. Pennington Flash Country Park (Wigan) and the recently formed Cutacre Country Park (Bolton).
- Evidence of the area's industrial legacy include large former cotton mills, pit ventilation shafts, spoil heaps and water filled subsidence, connected by associated railway sidings, canals and roads.
- There are some, mostly Grade II, Listed Buildings across the area, including farmhouses and public houses. Lightshaw Hall in Wigan is Grade II* listed.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Settlement mainly comprises rural hamlets and farmsteads, with some traditional red-brick 'Moss Cottages'. Dense surrounding urban and large scale industrial development provides sharply defined boundaries to the LCT, forming the skyline in many views.
- Roads, railways and canals bisect the landscape, often on raised embankments to protect them from subsidence.
- A network of public footpaths mainly follows tracks and lanes, occasionally crossing fields. Long distance walking and cycling routes follow canals and former railway corridors e.g. the Leeds and

Liverpool Canal Walk and National Route 55.

- There is some Open Access land (heathland and woodland), and there are Country Parks at Pennington Flash (Wigan) and Cutacre (Bolton).

Views and perceptual qualities

- In lower-lying areas views tend to be restricted by landform, although there are some open views across large water bodies e.g. at Wigan Flashes including Pennington Flash.
- Some distant views from higher open ground at the urban edge are available e.g. south-west over the Wigan conurbation from Top Lock, south from Lever Edge (Bolton) over farmland to the Wigan/Salford conurbation and north-west from the A58 at Prettywood across the Roch Valley to the West Pennines.
- Areas are often overlooked by surrounding urban and industrial areas, particularly from higher ground e.g. at Lever Edge (Bolton), resulting in reduced perceptions of tranquillity. A sense of tranquillity can be experienced in the Wigan Flashes.

Intactness and condition

This is a rural landscape but one which remains influenced by its industrial legacy and proximity to surrounding urban and industrial areas. Some parts of the LCT provide an important sense of separation between distinct settlements and urban areas. A network of locally and nationally important wetland habitats, some formed as a result of past mineral extraction, provides ecological and recreational value, and a sense of naturalness and tranquillity can be experienced within them. In the Bryn Marsh and Ince Moss SSSI, Bryn Marsh and 'The Triangle' are assessed as being in favourable condition, Champion's Mire (bog) which was re-wet in 2004, is unfavourable recovering and Ince Moss is unfavourable declining, due to the presence of invasive species. The grasslands of the Abram Flashes SSSI are assessed as being in unfavourable recovering condition, as works are ongoing to maintain areas of open water and control invasive species.

Mixed farmland surrounds the wetland areas, with field boundaries formed by drainage ditches, post and wire fencing or hedgerows in decline. Some areas have a neglected appearance; others are in the process of being restored. Surrounding urban and large scale industrial development on the fringes of the LCT contributes to the degraded appearance of some areas.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Sensitivity Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	- Landform generally flat to gently undulating, with some locally distinctive artificial landforms associated with mineral extraction and/or landfill. - Generally low-lying, between 20-30m AOD, although with some more elevated areas rising to over 120m AOD. - Medium scale field pattern, with some large scale open water bodies. - Small-scale landscape features include drainage ditches, hedgerows and naturally regenerating woodland.	M
Natural character	- Land use largely mixed farmland - An important network of lowland wetland habitats and open water bodies on reclaimed land, some of which are recognised as SBIs and LNRs. - Some naturally regenerating carr woodland associated with wetland areas, also forming part of SBIs and LNRs. - There are two SSSIs along the Hey Brook corridor in Wigan (Bryn Marsh & Ince Moss SSSI and Abram Flashes SSSI).	M-H
Historic landscape character	- Fields are of post-medieval (e.g. at Marsland Green, Hulton, Daisy Hill, Lightshaw Hall), 18th, 19th or 20th century origin. - Evidence of the area's industrial legacy includes large former cotton mills, pit ventilation shafts, spoil heaps and water filled subsidence, connected by associated railway sidings, canals and roads. - A scattering of Listed Buildings, mainly comprising farmhouses and the occasional manor/hall, including the Grade II* Lightshaw Hall in Wigan.	L-M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement / development	- Rural hamlets and farmsteads, with some traditional red-brick 'Moss Cottages'. - Dense surrounding urban development and large scale industrial complexes provide sharply defined boundaries to the LCT. - Many parts of the LCT provide an important sense of separation between distinct settlements and urban areas.	L-M
Views and visual character including skylines	- Distant views tend to be restricted from low-lying and relatively flat areas although open views across large water bodies are available. - Some views out across the Greater Manchester conurbation from areas of higher ground e.g. south-west over the Wigan conurbation from Top Lock, south from Lever Edge over farmland to the Wigan/Salford conurbation and north-west from the A58 at Prettywood across the Roch Valley to the South Pennines. - Skylines are typically formed by the surrounding urban edge. - The low-lying landscape is typically overlooked, but not visually prominent from surrounding urban areas.	L-M
Access and recreation	- Network of public footpaths including long distance routes which follow canals and former railway corridors. - Some open access land (heathland and woodland). - Country Parks at Pennington Flash and Cutacre are valued destinations for local communities.	M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	- A rural landscape but one which is heavily influenced by its industrial past, providing a sense of time depth. - The proximity to and visual dominance of surrounding urban and industrial areas impacts on levels of perceived tranquillity. - Some wetland and woodland areas provide a sense of tranquillity and naturalness e.g. the Wigan Flashes.	L-M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity

Landscape Character Type level					
Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing developments		L-M			
Commercial/industrial developments			M		
Elevated areas of farmland including the area south of Aspull in Wigan (part of LCA 7), Edge Fold / Lever Edge in Bolton (part of LCA 10) and Prettywood in Rochdale (part of LCA 26) are judged to be of moderate sensitivity to housing development because of their elevation and role in providing separation between settlements.					
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity, by Landscape Character Area					
LCA 3: Wigan Flashes					
2-3 storey residential housing developments			M		
Commercial/industrial developments			M		
Explanation for variance in sensitivity from overall LCT scores: The Wigan Flashes LCA is judged to be of moderate sensitivity to both housing and commercial/industrial developments because its wetland and woodland areas provide ecological and recreational value and make a significant contribution to landscape character. There are two SSSIs within the LCA; Bryn Marsh and Ince Moss and the Abram Flashes. Owing to its size, there are parts of the LCA with a more rural and tranquil feel, where urban and industrial influences in the surrounding area are less perceptible.					

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):

- Elevated parts of the LCT which are widely visible from, and form the setting to, neighbouring urban areas e.g. south of Aspull (Wigan), Edge Fold / Lever Edge (Bolton) and Prettywood (Rochdale).
- The sense of separation that the landscape provides between distinct settlements.
- Nationally important habitats at Bryn Marsh and Ince Moss SSSI and Abram Flashes SSSI, located along the Hey Brook in Wigan.
- Network of rivers / brooks, open water bodies and lowland wetland habitats, including carr woodland, which are recognised for their ecological value as SBIs or LNRs.
- Evidence of the areas' industrial past, where these contribute positively to its character e.g. pit ventilation shafts and former cotton mills.
- Listed Buildings across the area, including the Grade II* listed Lightshaw Hall in Wigan.
- The Leeds and Liverpool Canal and former railways which now provide long distance walking and cycling routes including the Canal Walk and National Route 55.
- Restored industrial landscapes which now provide an important recreational resource, such as the newly created Cutacre Country Park (Bolton) and the 200-hectare Pennington Flash Country Park (Wigan).

- Views across open water bodies including Wigan Flashes and Pennington Flash, where a sense of naturalness and tranquillity can be experienced.
- Distant views from areas of higher ground at the urban edge: south-west across Wigan from New Springs / Top Lock (Wigan); south from Lever Edge (Bolton) across Wigan / Salford; and north-west from Prettywood (Rochdale) to the Pennine Foothills.

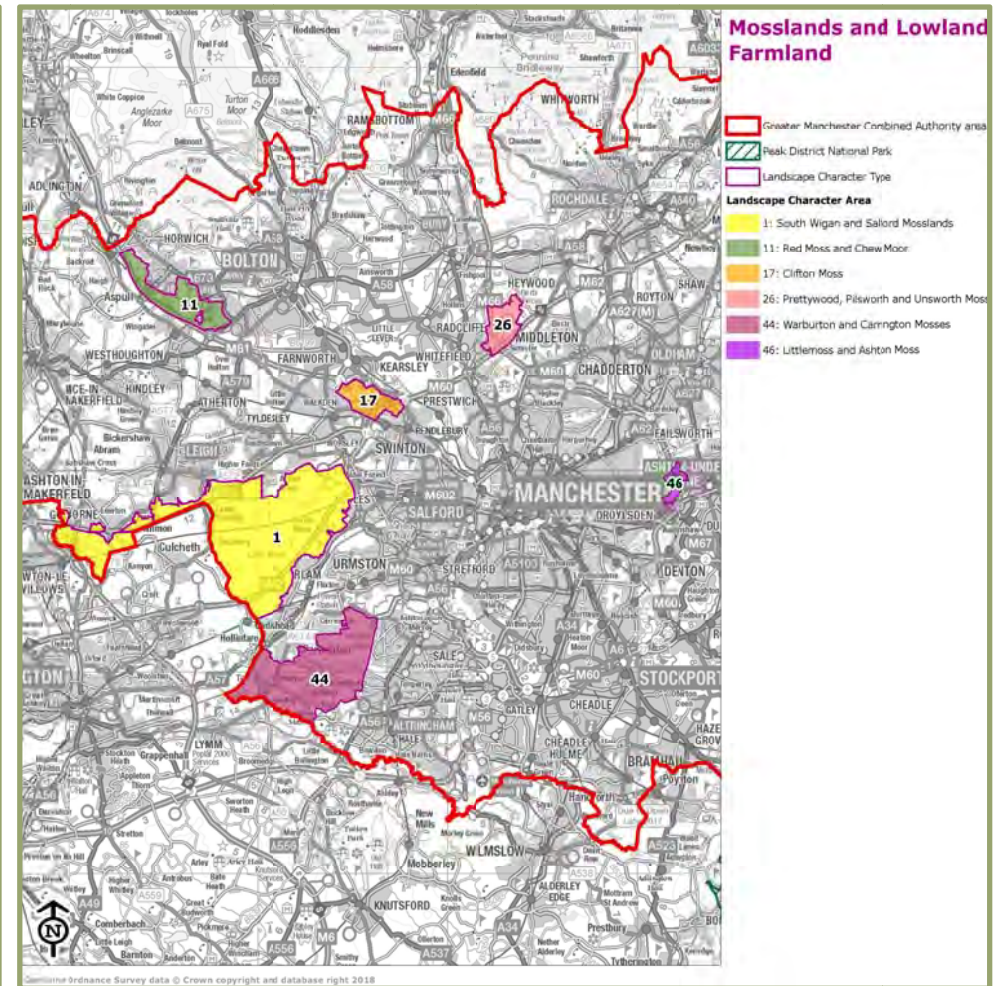
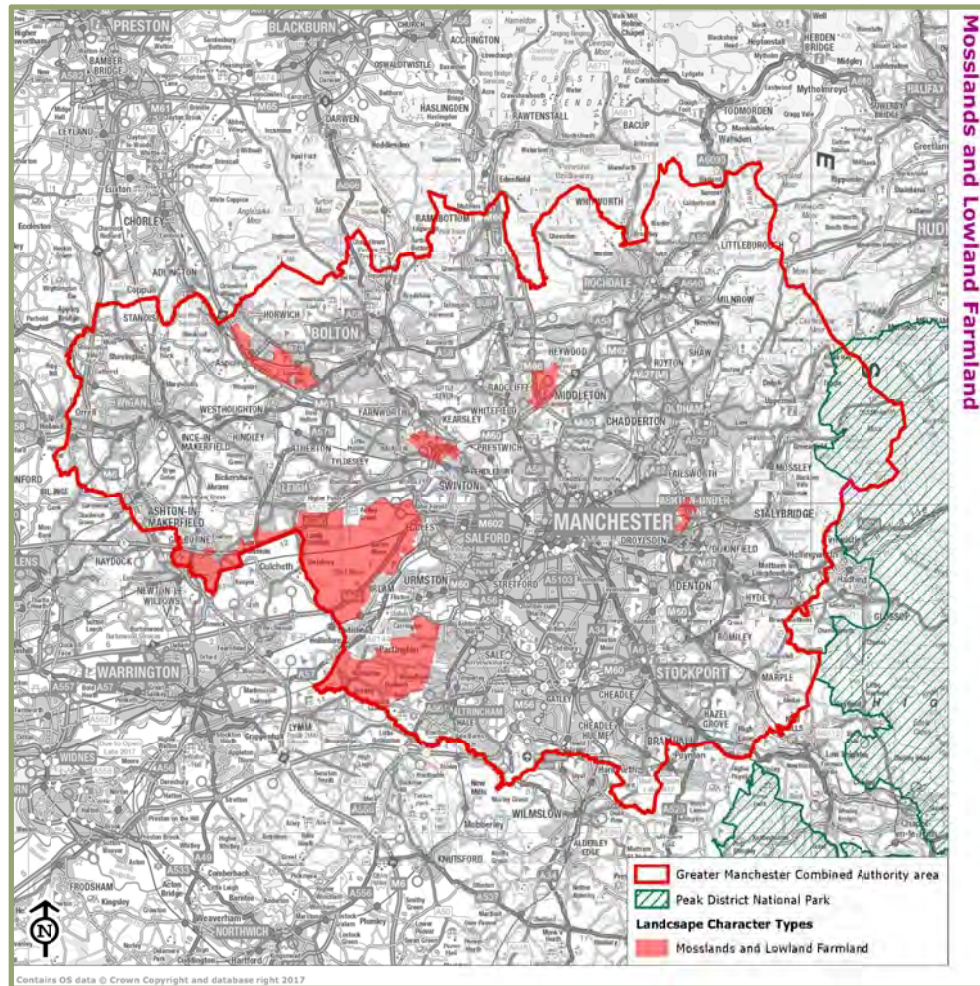
Guidance and opportunities for future development and landscape management/enhancement

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

- Avoid siting development on highly visible areas which form the skyline in views e.g. elevated areas on the urban fringe including south of Aspull (Wigan), Edge Fold / Lever Edge (Bolton), Pilsworth (Bury) and Prettywood (Rochdale).
- Ensure that the sense of separation the landscape provides between distinct settlements is retained.
- Ensure that any development is in keeping with the mainly rural character of the landscape in terms of form, density and vernacular.
- Utilise areas of existing woodland to integrate new development into the landscape, avoiding sites designated for their nature conservation importance.
- Protect areas of semi-natural habitat, including open water bodies, lowland wetland habitats and wet woodlands, which are locally designated SBI or nationally protected as SSSI. Seek to enhance these where possible and provide linkages to form robust habitat networks. Develop a catchment-wide strategy for managing wetland areas.
- Conserve and manage existing woodlands to encourage habitat diversity, using locally appropriate species and protecting from grazing during establishment.
- Consider additional woodland planting to enhance landscape structure, soften the urban fringe, screen industrial areas and reduce the noise and visual impacts of motorway corridors, where appropriate.
- Restore and enhance areas of deteriorating farmland including additional, species-rich, hedgerow planting to fill gaps and replace post and wire fencing. Reintroduce hedgerow trees where appropriate.
- Control the colonisation of invasive species, in particular Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed in wetland areas.
- 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.
- Conserve and protect important elements of industrial heritage, to retain the area's cultural identity e.g. pit ventilation shafts, canal architecture.
- Encourage the removal of eyesores such as derelict structures.
- Enhance existing public access and provide new informal recreational provision e.g. by creating circular routes with connections to the canal tow path, using derelict railways lines and field boundaries (rather than cutting through fields) where possible. Tie in with proposals for a "Carbon Trail"¹ under the Carbon Landscape project.
- Improve signage, interpretation and waymarking at areas used for informal recreation, with parking provision where appropriate.
- Conserve the sense of naturalness and tranquillity which can be experienced in many of the wetland areas e.g. Wigan Flashes.
- Maintain open and long ranging views across the Greater Manchester conurbation from elevated parts of the urban fringe e.g. at New Springs / Top Lock (Wigan), Lever Edge (Bolton) and Prettywood (Rochdale).

¹ <http://carbonlandscape.org.uk/carbon-trail>

LCT: Mosslands and Lowland Farmland



This Landscape Character Type (LCT) is found in Wigan, Bolton, Bury, Salford, Trafford and Tameside Districts.

Representative photographs



Woodland at Red Moss, Bolton



Ashton Moss Wetland, Tameside



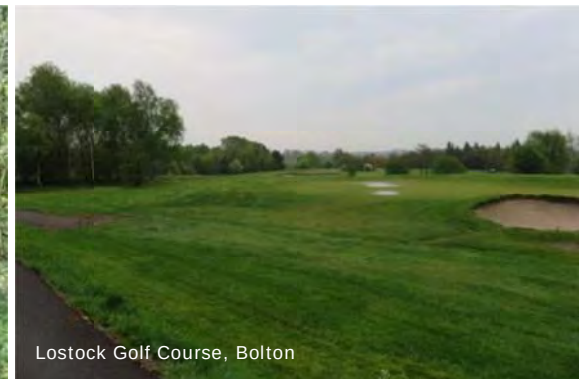
Cadishead Moss, Salford



Trans Pennine Trail, Dunham Woodhouses, Trafford



Woodland at Clifton Moss, Bolton/Salford



Lostock Golf Course, Bolton



Rumworth Reservoir from Lostock Junction, Bolton



Motorway Embankment, Unsworth, Bury



Road at Barton Moss, Salford

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- Landform generally flat or gently undulating, with elevation generally ranging from 0-30 metres AOD. It rises to over 100m in places, e.g. at Lostock Junction and Hunger Hill (Bolton), Ashton Moss (Tameside) and on the edge of Unsworth (Bury).
- Underlying bedrock geology of Coal Measures (mudstones, siltstones, sandstones) overlain by fluvio-glacial sands and gravels with pockets of peat and clay.
- Floodplain landscape, often poorly drained, with numerous brooks, occasional small reservoirs and a large number of ponds, flashes and ditches.
- Soil quality is variable; restored agricultural land typically has thin, sandy, poorly drained soils (Grade 3 or Grade 4) whereas areas of reclaimed mossland have rich, peaty soils, some of which are of high agricultural productivity (Grade 1 or Grade 2).

Land use and field patterns

- Land use largely reclaimed lowland farmland, mainly arable but with some pasture, interspersed with distinctive areas of remnant mossland.
- Areas of lowland farmland have a pattern of medium to large scale fields, generally defined by gappy hedgerows, with few hedgerow trees. Field are of post medieval (e.g. south of Lostock and Lostock Junction), 18th, 19th and 20th century origin.
- The mosslands are a simple, ordered landscape divided geometrically into a series of small to large sized fields with deep, open drainage ditches as field boundaries, interspersed with moss woodlands. Field are of post medieval (e.g. Warburton Park), 18th, 19th and 20th century origin.
- Some recreational provision including golf courses.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Remnant mosslands and large geometric moss woodlands are an important nature conservation resource, and many are locally designated as Sites of Biological Interest (SBI).
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) at Red Moss (Bolton), Brookheys Covert (Trafford), Highfield Moss (Wigan) and Astley and Bedford Mosses (Wigan), the latter of which is also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- In lowland farmland areas there are small pockets of woodland, either on small steep-sided valleys, along motorway edges or associated with settlement edges. Areas of willow and alder carr fringe wetlands, which include ponds, flashes and ditches.
- Farmland is drained by narrow brooks e.g. Middle Brook at Lostock (Bolton) and Whittle Brook at Unsworth (Bury), which contribute to the network of wetland habitats within the landscape.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- In ancient times, the mosses were regarded as “*dangerous wildernesses*”¹, and the unstable nature of the moss deterred the early development of settlement and roads, reflected in a current lack of development in contrast to surrounding settled areas.
- Mosses were also strategically important barriers to forces moving north or south e.g. in 1745 the Jacobite army was diverted towards Manchester at Wigan, rather than heading south across the mossland.
- Urban expansion and past widespread coal extraction has resulted in a fragmentation of the mosslands. Remnant spoil heaps and former railway corridors are now important for wildlife and recreation.
- Conservation Areas at Warburton and Dunham Woodhouses in Trafford, both containing a number of Listed Buildings including the Grade I listed Old Church of Saint Werburg in Warburton. Grade II* Listed Buildings include Morley’s Hall, Light Oaks Hall (Wigan) and Buckley Hill Farmhouse (Tameside).
- Scheduled Monuments include a promontory fort on the Glaze Brook at Great Woollen (Trafford) and a moated site at Morley’s Hall (Wigan).

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- In lowland farmland areas, settlement comprises small villages along country lanes, and scattered farmhouses.

¹ Agathoclis Beckmann for Wigan Council (March 2009) Wigan: A Landscape Character Assessment. Page 278.

- In the mosslands, farm buildings are located along the long, straight lanes at the edge of the mosses.
- Straight lanes known as 'rides' are often higher than the mossland (due to peat shrinkage), and are sometimes emphasised by trees and scrub.
- Parts of the landscape are influenced by large scale industrial and commercial development, housing, motorway corridors and railway lines e.g. large scale commercial development at Middlebrook (Bolton), Heywood (Rochdale), M60 at Clifton Moss (Bolton/Salford). There is also evidence of past mineral and extractive industries.
- Public footpaths tend to run along field boundaries. Some long distance routes cross the landscape, including the Trans Pennine Trail and National Route 62 at Dunham Massey and the Middle Brook Valley Trail at Lostock. There are small areas of Open Access land (moss and woodland).

Views and perceptual qualities

- Views tend to be internal due to the flat or gently undulating, low-lying nature of the land, with surrounding development often forming the backdrop. Overhead lines form prominent vertical elements e.g. crossing Barton Moss (Salford) and Carrington Moss (Trafford).
- Some distant views from elevated areas of farmland e.g. from Lostock Junction south across Chew Moor to the opposing settled ridge and from Lostock north to the Pennine Foothills at Rivington in Chorley / Blackburn with Darwen.
- Some wide, sweeping views across mossland areas are available from local high points, e.g. motorway flyovers and bridges over canals.
- There are some views south from Trafford into neighbouring Warrington and Cheshire East districts, across the Bollin Valley.
- The mosslands have a sense of remoteness, with few buildings and roads in poor condition, some of which terminate in dead ends. Mists and fogs are common on cooler nights. The sense of remoteness can be perceived as unsettling.
- Motorways are audibly and visually dominant in some areas, reducing tranquillity e.g. the M61 at Chew Moor and the M62 at Irlam/Barton.

Intactness and condition

This is a rural landscape and one which provides an important sense of separation between distinct settlements and urban areas. In the lowland farmland areas there is a mixture of pasture and arable cultivation, and field boundaries tend to be defined by gappy hedgerows or post and wire fencing. In the mosslands, productive peaty soils have led to there being large arable fields, defined by drainage ditches and reinforced with geometric moss woodlands.

In places the landscape is strongly influenced by large scale industrial and commercial development, motorway corridors and railway lines, and there is also evidence of past mineral and extractive industries. Conversely, some parts of the mosses have a remote feel, due to a combination of few buildings and tracks in poor condition, some with dead ends. Overhead lines stand out in some of the flatter mossland areas.

Large parts of the mosslands contain important semi-natural habitat, protected as SSSI. Red Moss SSSI (Bolton) is one of only a few examples of lowland raised mire in Greater Manchester, currently classed as in unfavourable recovering condition as work continues to restore wetland habitats following past drainage. Brookheys Covert (Trafford) has a diverse range of woodland and wetland and is in favourable condition. Highfield Moss (Wigan) raised mire is in unfavourable recovering condition, as grasses and leaf litter are restricting the growth of desired plant species and one area has been drying out. Astley and Bedford Mosses (Wigan), also a SAC, is an area of lowland raised mire, mostly in unfavourable recovering condition with ongoing scrub removal and ditch blocking to raise water levels.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Sensitivity Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	- Landform generally flat or gently undulating resulting in a feeling of scale and openness, particularly in the mosslands. - Elevation ranges from approximately 0-30m to over 100m AOD in some areas of farmland (e.g. Lostock Junction and Hunger Hill in Bolton, Ashton Moss in Tameside and on the edge of Unsworth in Bury). - Mosslands have a simple, geometric pattern with variable scale fields, separated by drainage ditches and large moss woodlands. - Lowland farmland areas are more irregular and overlain by a medium scale field pattern delineated by gappy hedgerows. - Small-scale landscape elements include hedgerows and ditches.	M
Natural character	- Land use largely arable with some pasture, interspersed with remnant areas of mossland. - Large, geometric areas of moss woodland are ecologically important, many designated as SBI and some as SSSI. - Astley and Bedford Mosses (Wigan) is a SSSI and SAC. - Small pockets of woodland are found in lowland farmland areas. - Small brooks drain the landscape and there are numerous small ponds and flashes fringed by alder and willow carr.	M
Historic landscape character	- Field are of post medieval, 18th, 19th and 20th century origin. - Distinctive geometric landscape pattern in the mosslands. - Topography and geology led to widespread coal extraction which has also influenced the character of the landscape. - Conservation Areas are located in the south at Warburton and Dunham Woodhouses (Trafford), the former containing a Grade I listed church. - Grade II* Listed Buildings at Morley's Hall and Light Oaks Hall (Wigan) and Buckley Hill Farmhouse (Tameside). - Scheduled Monuments at Great Woollen (Trafford) and Morley's Hall (Wigan).	M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement / development	- In mossland areas, farmsteads are located along long, straight roads at the edge of the moss. - Elsewhere scattered farmsteads and small, historic villages are located along rural lanes. - Surrounding housing and large scale industrial / commercial development has a strong influence in some areas e.g. at Middlebrook in Bolton - The more elevated parts of the LCT (e.g. at Lostock) form part of the setting of overlooking settlements. - In a number of places, this LCT provides an important sense of separation and naturalistic buffer between distinct settlements and urban areas.	M
Views and visual character including skylines	- Internal views are common due to the typically flat or gently undulating and low lying topography, with surrounding development often forming the backdrop. - Some distant views are available from elevated areas of farmland e.g. from Lostock Junction south across Chew Moor to the opposing settled ridge and from Lostock north to the Pennine Foothills at Rivington in Chorley / Blackburn with Darwen. - Some wide, sweeping views across mossland areas are available from local high points, e.g. from motorway flyovers and bridges over canals. - Views south from Trafford into neighbouring Warrington and Cheshire East districts, across the Bollin Valley. - Overhead lines form prominent vertical elements in some areas.	M
Access and recreation	- Public footpaths tend to follow field boundaries. - Some long distance walking and cycling routes including the Trans Pennine Trail and National Route 62, and the Middle Brook Valley Trail. - Small areas of Open Access land (moss and woodland). - Frequent golf courses.	L-M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	- Mossland areas have a sense of remoteness, sometimes perceived as unsettling. - Motorways are visually and audibly dominant in some areas, reducing tranquillity.	M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity

Landscape Character Type level					
Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing developments			M		
Commercial/industrial developments			M		
Elevated areas which are widely visible from the surrounding landscape (e.g. Lostock Junction and Hunger Hill in Bolton, Ashton Moss in Tameside and on the edge of Unsworth in Bury) are judged to be of moderate-high sensitivity to both development scenarios. Parts of the mossland are designated as SSSI. These include Red Moss (Bolton) in LCA 11, Brookheys Covert (Trafford) in LCA 44, Highfield Moss and Astley and Bedford Mosses (Wigan) in LCA 1, the latter of which is also internationally designated as a SAC. It is judged that these areas, due to the importance of their semi-natural habitats and contribution to landscape character, would be of moderate-high sensitivity to residential and commercial / industrial development.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

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

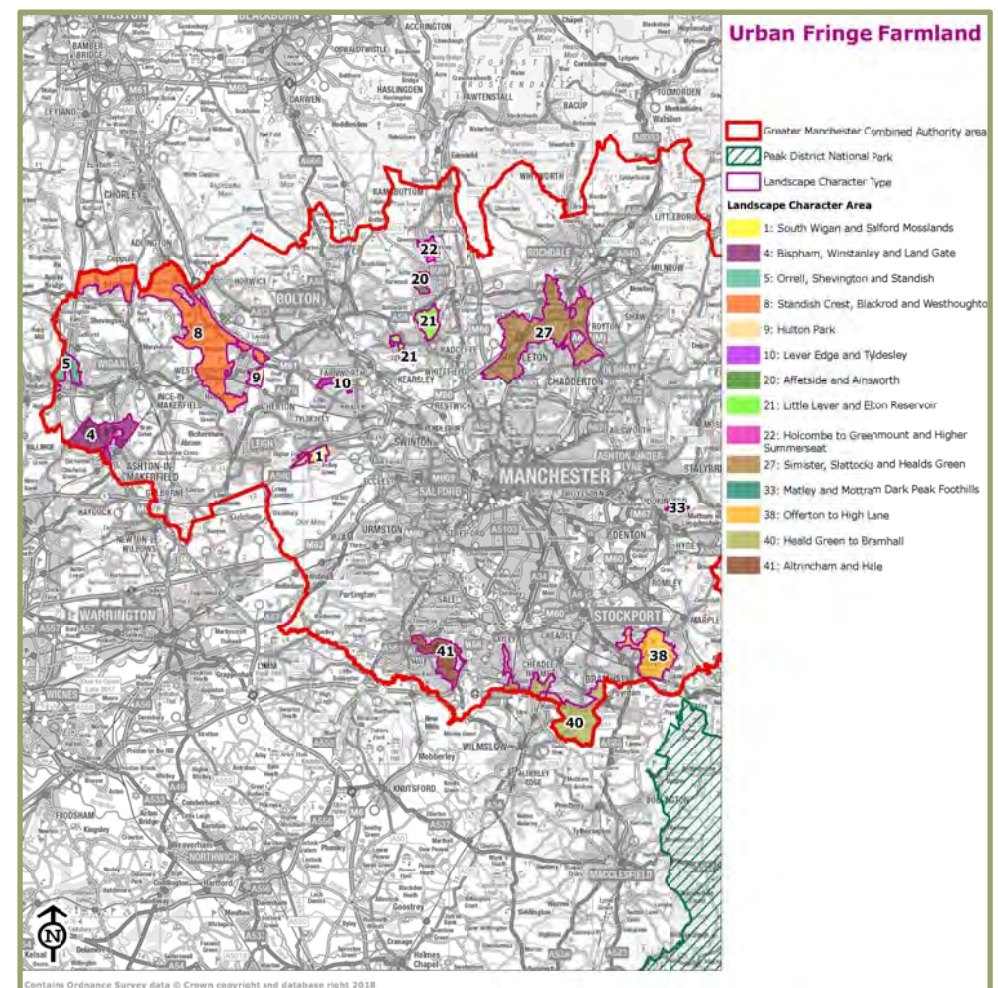
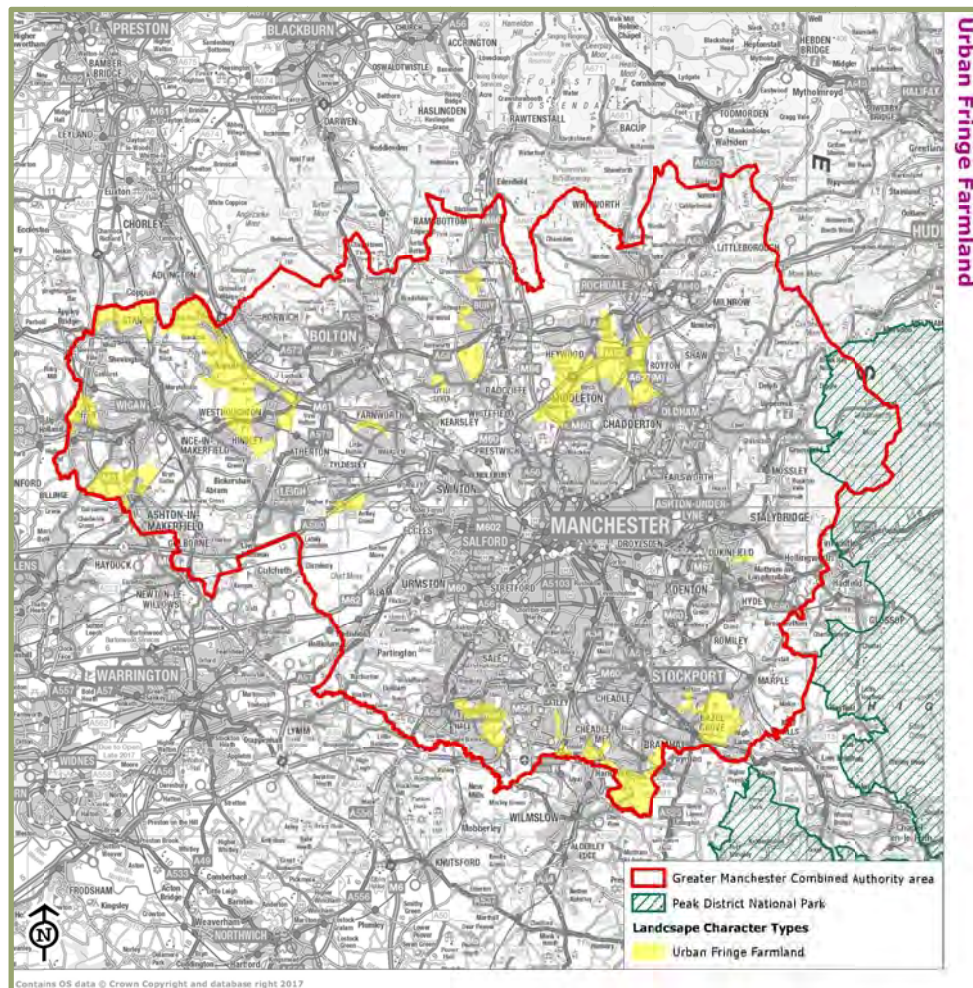
- Elevated parts of the LCT which are widely visible and form the setting to neighbouring urban areas e.g. at Lostock Junction and Hunger Hill in Bolton, Ashton Moss in Tameside and on the edge of Unsworth in Bury.
- Remnant mosslands and moss woodlands, many of which are designated locally as SBIs.
- Nationally important SSSI-designated habitats, including at Red Moss (Bolton), Brookheys Covert (Trafford), Highfield Moss (Wigan) and Astley and Bedford Mosses (Wigan), the latter of which is also a SAC.
- Small pockets of woodland in farmed areas, on small steep-side valleys, settlement edges or along motorways.
- Network of brooks, drainage ditches, occasional small reservoirs and wetland areas surrounded by carr woodland.
- The simple, open and ordered nature of the mosslands, which provides a contrast to surrounding dense urban and industrial development and is evidence of the cultural associations of the mosslands.
- Distinctive mossland 'rides' which are sometimes emphasised by scrub and trees.
- Conservation Areas at Warburton and Dunham Woodhouses in Trafford.
- Listed Buildings including the Grade I listed Old Church of Saint Werburg in Warburton, Grade II* listed Morley's Hall and Light Oaks Hall in Wigan and Grade II* listed Buckley Hill Farmhouse in Tameside.
- Scheduled Monuments including a promontory fort on the Glaze Brook at Great Woolden (Trafford) and a moated site at Morley's Hall (Wigan).
- Recreational opportunities in the form of public footpaths and long distance walking and cycling routes, including the Trans Pennine Trail and National Route 62.
- Panoramic views from elevated areas of rolling farmland, e.g. from Lostock Junction south across Chew Moor to the opposing settled ridge and from Lostock north to the Pennine Foothills at Rivington in Chorley / Blackburn with Darwen.
- Wide, sweeping views across the mossland from local high points e.g. motorway flyovers and bridges over canals.
- Views south from Trafford into neighbouring Warrington and Cheshire East districts, across the Bollin Valley.
- The sense of separation that the landscape provides between distinct settlements, and role as a rural backdrop to development.
- Important pockets of relative remoteness and tranquillity – valued in the wider urban context.

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

- Avoid siting development on highly visible skylines e.g. elevated areas on the urban fringe including at Lostock Junction, Hunger Hill, Ashton Moss and Unsworth.
- Maintain open and long ranging views across the mossland from local high points, and long ranging views from more elevated areas of lowland farmland.
- Ensure that the sense of separation the landscape provides between distinct settlements is retained.
- Utilise areas of existing woodland (e.g. moss woodlands, valley woodlands, woodland along settlement edges) to integrate new development into the landscape, avoiding sites designated for their nature conservation importance.
- Protect areas of semi-natural habitat, including mosses and moss woodlands, which are locally designated as SBIs or nationally protected as SSSIs. Seek to enhance these where possible and provide linkages to form robust habitat networks.
- Conserve and manage the mosslands, including those areas which form part of SBIs and LNRs, to avoid drying and erosion. Consider the potential to restore less productive areas of farmland to lowland raised bog habitat where possible.
- Restore and enhance areas of deteriorating farmland including additional, species-rich, hedgerow planting to fill gaps and replace post and wire fencing. Reintroduce hedgerow trees where appropriate.
- Protect areas of moss woodland, which provide important semi-natural habitat and contribute to the distinctive geometric character of the mosslands. Utilise the screening effects of existing woodland to integrate development into the landscape where possible.
- Conserve and manage existing woodlands to encourage habitat diversity, using locally appropriate species and protecting from grazing during establishment.
- Improve the condition of the mossland 'rides', and restore ditches and field boundaries in the mosslands to improve grassland biodiversity.
- Consider additional woodland planting to enhance landscape structure, soften the urban fringe, screen industrial areas and reduce the noise and visual impacts of motorway corridors, where appropriate.
- 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.
- Ensure any new development respects the character and historic qualities of the Conservation Areas at Warburton and Dunham Woodhouses.
- Conserve and protect the setting of important heritage assets, including the Grade I listed Old Church of Saint Werburg in Warburton, the promontory fort at Great Woollen (Scheduled Monument) and moated site at Morley's Hall (Scheduled Monument).
- Consider the impact of overhead lines where these are proposed, and mitigate the impact of existing lines where appropriate.
- Enhance existing public access and provide new informal recreational provision e.g. by creating circular routes with connections to canal tow paths, using derelict railways lines where possible. Tie in with proposals for a "Carbon Trail"² under the Carbon Landscape project.
- Improve signage, interpretation and waymarking at areas used for informal recreation, with parking provision where appropriate.
- Ensure that any development is in keeping with the mainly rural character of the landscape in terms of form, density and vernacular.
- Retain the quiet and tranquil character of the mosses by discouraging inappropriate land uses and development.

² <http://carbonlandscape.org.uk/carbon-trail>

LCT: Urban Fringe Farmland



This Landscape Character Type (LCT) is found in Wigan, Bolton, Bury, Salford, Trafford, Rochdale, Oldham, Manchester, Tameside and Stockport Districts (all Greater Manchester authorities).

Representative photographs



Arable fields with gappy hedgerows and views of the settlement edge and Pennine Hills, Wigan



Pastoral field with hedgerow replaced by post and wire fencing, Wigan



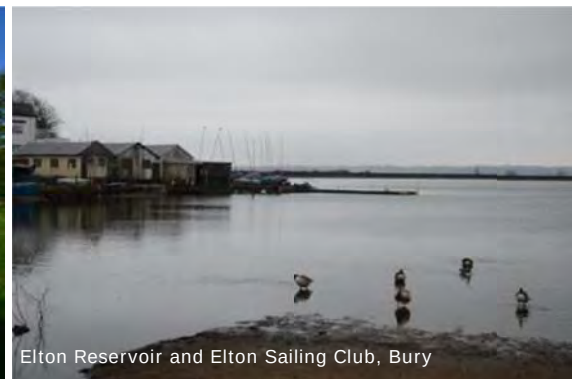
Degraded landscape with removal of boundary features, Wigan



Motorways with large embankments passing through undulating farmland, Rochdale



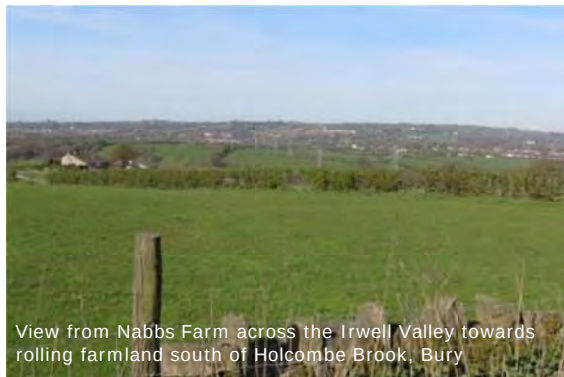
Smaller field of pasture with robust boundaries in the flatter Mersey Basin, Trafford



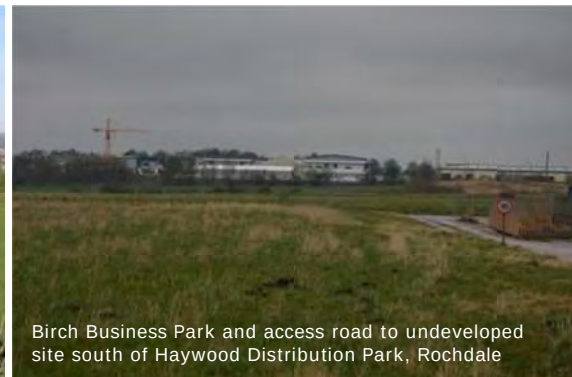
Elton Reservoir and Elton Sailing Club, Bury



Unused Brackley Municipal Golf Course, south of Farnworth, Salford



View from Nabbs Farm across the Irwell Valley towards rolling farmland south of Holcombe Brook, Bury



Birch Business Park and access road to undeveloped site south of Haywood Distribution Park, Rochdale

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- Rolling landscape with elevation ranging between 30 and 250m AOD. The landform becomes gentler as it falls towards the floodplains of the rivers Mersey and Bollin (from 10 to 60m AOD).
- Elevated farmland to the north and east, close to the Pennine and Dark Peak foothills, mainly comprising undulating hills and valleys.
- Landform dissected by narrow, often steep sided wooded cloughs, and drained by a network of streams and ponds (of local ecological value) throughout.
- Underlying bedrock geology at higher elevations dominated by Pennine Coal Measures mudstones, siltstones and sandstones. The Mersey and Bollin floodplains comprise sandstones of the Wilmslow and Chester formations, as well as deposits from the Sidmouth Mudstone Formation.
- Glacial till and fluvial deposits overlay the bedrock, creating the rolling landform.

Land use and field patterns

- Variable land use, with the more elevated land in the north and east typified by lower grade agricultural land used for dairy farming, horse grazing and sheep rearing. Pockets of dry heath, acid grassland and moorland fringe are also present.
- Pastoral land characterised by small and medium sized fields, forming various patterns from rectilinear to distinctive web shaped originating from Parliamentary enclosure.
- Flatter, more fertile floodplain areas give rise to a mix of pasture and arable cultivation. Fields tend to be larger with subtle boundary features, with occasional small pasture fields to the east of Altrincham.
- Field boundaries comprise often gappy, species-poor hedgerows with occasional established clumps of hedgerow trees. Post and wire fencing replaces hedges in many locations, whilst occasional stone walls provide definition at higher elevations, but many are in a degraded condition.
- Frequent recreational land uses with sports fields and golf courses located close to the urban edge. The manicured lush greens of the courses contrast sharply with areas of semi-improved grazing land.
- The open farmland contrasts strongly with adjoining residential and industrial urban areas, often forming a rural buffer to the Pennine and Dark Peak foothills.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Open landscape with sparse woodland cover generally limited to isolated plantation woodland, hedgerows and the steep cloughs that bisect the rolling farmland.
- A small number of Ancient Woodlands (e.g. Oaken Bank Wood and Glade Wood within Hopwood Woodlands Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Rochdale) provide important habitats and wildlife corridors.
- Established clumps of hawthorn and dog rose line some of the field boundaries and highways, with some incorporating mature broadleaved trees.
- Other SBI-designated habitats include areas of dry heath, acid and of species rich grassland. Elton Reservoir, south-east of Bury, remains a legacy of the area's industrial past and is an important site for water fowl. Flashes also form locally important wetland habitats of industrial origin.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- The Trans-Pennine railway, dismantled railway routes and canals serve as a reminder of the area's industrial past; the importance of the Macclesfield Canal is reflected in its Conservation Area status.
- Scheduled Monuments limited to moated sites north-west of Broadoak Farm (near Marple), another at Arley Hall east of Standish, and Astley Green Colliery engine house and headgear.
- Birch village (Rochdale) and part of Summerseat (Bury) are Conservation Areas. The landscape also forms part of the setting to a number of other Conservation Areas on its doorstep.
- Grade II Listed Buildings sparsely scattered throughout. The LCT includes the Grade II* Listed Brandlesholme Old Hall (Bury), Hopwood Hall (Rochdale) and Old Manor Farm (Stockport).

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Generally a dispersed pattern of scattered farmsteads and individual dwellings constructed of locally sourced gritstone. Occasional small settlements are linked by local roads and winding country lanes.
- In some areas settlement takes the form of 20th century ribbon development strung along roads. Some industrial development and distribution parks are also located close to major roads.
- A network of major road and rail routes, including the M62, M61 and A627(M) motorways, form

dominant features with extensive cuttings, embankments, bridges and junctions.

- Numerous rights of way and cycle routes permeate the landscape, linking to the surrounding urban areas. The Rotary Way and Rochdale Way are long distance footpaths connecting to the local network.
- Disused railway lines provide recreation and nature conservation corridors, including in Wigan and the Midshires Way in Stockport.

Views and perceptual qualities

- In general the more elevated, rolling farmland has an exposed and open character with little sense of enclosure and strong visual connections with surrounding landscapes.
- Views within the floodplains are typically restricted by hedgerows, hedgerow trees and development, creating a more enclosed landscape with pockets of seclusion and relative tranquillity.
- Wide panoramic views from high points over the Greater Manchester conurbation contained within a bowl dramatically flanked by the South/West Pennines and the Peak District National Park.
- Long views towards the coastal plain to the west stretch as far as Fiddler's Ferry Power Station near Widnes.
- Historic mills with tall chimneys and warehouses also form landmarks on the skyline.
- Transport corridors and pylon lines are very apparent, with the lack of tree cover within the rolling open farmland leaving the large roads and motorway visually exposed and audible.

Intactness and condition

This is a predominantly rural landscape of typically low grade pasture land and semi-improved grassland associated with stock rearing and rough grazing. The elevated farmland in the north and east is a generally open and exposed containing few settlements, however some areas are strongly influenced by the visual presence of the adjoining urban edge and by numerous tall pylon lines and major road and rail routes which bisect the landscape. Other areas are quieter and host a smaller network of winding country lanes connecting dispersed and isolated dwellings. Woodland is generally sparse, though the lower-lying and flatter south contains tree belts and tall hedgerows which provide pockets of seclusion. The influence of adjoining urban areas has eroded and fragmented some of traditional land uses, with industrial buildings, distribution centres and golf courses detracting from rural qualities. The noise of traffic and activity along the motorways and fast moving traffic along A and B roads weaken the sense of rural tranquillity, as does the fairly regular noise of planes overhead, particularly closer to Manchester Airport in the south. Field boundaries comprise predominately species poor hedgerows that are often gappy and in some have been replaced by post and wire fencing. Other signs of physical deterioration include derelict sections of dry stone wall gapped up or completely replaced by fencing; a prevalence of horse keeping on urban fringe (with associated over-grazed paddocks); and evidence of anti-social behaviour such as fly tipping and littering.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Sensitivity Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	- The landform close to the Pennine and Dark Peak foothills is often strongly undulating, rising to a height of 250m AOD. - Within the lower lying floodplain areas the landform is flatter and gently sloping between 10 – 60m AOD. - The rolling elevated farmland is generally very open and windswept with a simple pattern of pastoral fields defined by subtle boundary features. - The elevated farmland is generally large in scale but with pockets of smaller scale within incised valleys. - Lower lying farmland areas are more irregular and overlain by a medium scale field pattern separated by gappy hedgerows that add a degree of complexity.	M
Natural character	- Land use is largely semi-improved pastoral farmland with occasional arable fields in lowland and floodplain areas. - The rolling landscape is sparsely wooded and dominated by grazing land with relatively poor levels of biodiversity. - Some isolated pockets of ancient and riparian woodland of ecological value (e.g. Hopwood Woodlands LNR). - Semi-natural areas of dry heath and acid grassland and some fields of species rich grassland are present and form important SBI-designated habitats for local wildlife. - Established clumps of hawthorn line some of the field boundaries, with some incorporating mature stands of broadleaf trees to offer a naturalistic character to the farmland.	M
Historic landscape character	18th and 19th century parliamentary enclosure create a semi-regular field patterns across the rolling farmland. - Dry stone walls delineate small pastures at higher elevations and provide a more traditional field pattern. Many are in poor repair. - Few Scheduled Monuments within the LCT – those that are present are two moated sites and Astley Green Colliery engine house and headgear. - A scattering of Grade II and II* listed buildings, mainly comprising manor houses and historic farmsteads. - Birch Village, part of Summerseat and the Macclesfield Canal Conservation Areas are located within the LCT; it also forms part of the setting to others. - Other industrial relicts are important evidence of past activities and land use.	L-M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement / development	- Relatively sparsely populated rural area with a scattered pattern of farms and small settlements linked by lanes and some larger roads. - Some areas are strongly influenced by adjoining urban areas with ribbon development along roads, utility infrastructure and large electricity overhead lines intruding into the rural landscape. - An extensive transport network with rail, large roads and motorways has a dominating influence in some areas. - Away from major transport networks there are quieter areas with local roads connecting dispersed settlements and isolated dwellings. - Industrial developments are located near to major roads and the large Birch Service Station is located along the M62. - The landscape forms a rural backdrop and important separation function between discrete urban areas, preventing coalescence.	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	- A predominantly elevated, rolling farmland with open and expansive views over the Greater Manchester conurbation. - Views in lower lying areas are generally more contained by hedgerows and buildings. - The tower blocks of central Manchester are visible on the horizon. - Historic mills with tall chimneys and warehouses also form landmarks. - The rural character is often interrupted by a network of large electricity pylons extending high above the skyline as they rise up and over Pennine and Dark Peak foothills.	M
Access and recreation	- Network of public rights of way, long distance footpaths and cycle routes and, closer to the urban edge, informal desire lines. - Many areas close to the urban edge are used for recreation with amenity grassland associated with golf courses and large areas of playing fields.	M-H
Perceptual and	Some areas retain strongly rural characteristics with historic field patterns and traditional stone farmsteads and dwellings.	M

experiential qualities	- The rolling elevated farmland has an exposed open character. - Pockets of seclusion and rural tranquillity are present within the lower lying areas, although these are largely open. - Major transport corridors severely detract from these qualities in places, introducing visual and aural impacts. - The rural character is further weakened by a network of large electricity pylons which extend urban influences. - The urban edge is almost always evident although in places a lack of development and relative inaccessibility provide a feeling of remoteness. - Anti-social behaviour, including fly-tipping, evokes a sense of neglect and urban fringe character in locations close to the urban edge.	
-------------------------------	---	--

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity

Landscape Character Type level					
Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing developments			M		
Commercial/industrial developments				M-H	
Steeper slopes and land at higher elevation along the Pennine and Peak fringes would have moderate-high sensitivity to residential housing developments and high sensitivity to commercial/industrial developments) due to visual prominence of this rural landscape from surrounding areas. Such areas include elevated land near Thronfields Farm and Chadderton Heights to the immediate west of the A627(M), the site of Dukinfield Golf Club in Tameside (LCA 33), land along the western edge of Hawk Green and High Lane in Stockport (LCA 38), and the western and southern slopes of Pennington Hill (LCA 8, Wigan) upon which Blackrod sits. Areas on the immediate urban edge and adjacent to main roads and motorways typically have a lower sensitivity to both scenarios, due to the strong influence development already has on the rural qualities of the landscape. Areas in Wigan particularly affected include land between the urban edge of Westhoughton and the M61, land adjacent to Astley and the A580 (both LCA 8), and land set between the urban edge of Farnworth and the M61 (LCA 10).					
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity, by Landscape Character Area					
LCA 22: Holcombe to Greenmount and Higher Summerseat					
2-3 storey residential housing developments				H-M	
Commercial/industrial developments					H
Explanation for variance in sensitivity from overall LCT scores: This LCA lies between Brandlesholme and Holcombe Brook, to the north of Bury. The undeveloped farmland within the LCA comprises elevated land on the Pennine fringe and forms the edges of the incised Irwell Valley to the east and Kirklees Valley to the west. The LCA is highly sensitive to any scale or type of development due to its visual prominence in long distance views and function as the undeveloped skyline of the Irwell Valley (with associated Summerseat and Brooksbottom Conservation Areas) and the Kirklees Valley. It is therefore assessed as of moderate-high sensitivity to housing and high sensitivity to commercial/industrial developments. Because of the sensitivity of this LCA, it is of paramount importance that the guidance below is closely followed when development proposals are considered within the landscape.					

LCA 27: Simister, Slattocks and Healds Green (Oldham)

2-3 storey residential housing developments

M

Commercial/industrial developments

M

Explanation for variance in sensitivity from overall LCT scores: The urban farmland between Heywood and Middleton is judged to have a **moderate** sensitivity to commercial/ industrial development (in addition to the housing scenario) as it lies adjacent to and contains existing large industrial development (Birch Business Park and Stakehill Industrial & Distribution Park) and is crossed by large road infrastructure such as the M62 and A627(M) which have a strong influence, detracting from the rural qualities of the landscape. However, the more elevated land in the east of this LCA (around Thornfields Farm) would be more sensitive to development due to its visual prominence from areas to the west.

LCA 40: Heald Green (Stockport) to Bramhall

2-3 storey residential housing developments

L-M

Commercial/industrial developments

L-M

Explanation for variance in sensitivity from overall LCT scores: This LCA is already strongly influenced by urban land uses, housing and industrial developments (including new developments on brownfield land), major transport infrastructure and the sounds/movements of air traffic associated with Manchester Airport. It is therefore of **low-moderate** sensitivity to both development scenarios, providing the guidance below is followed. Please also refer to the Stockport Landscape Character Assessment (2018).

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):

- Locations of elevated, open character with some prominent rural skylines forming a backdrop to views from adjacent urban areas.
- Areas of complex, undulating landform cut by distinctive steep wooded cloughs.
- Locally important semi-natural habitats and networks, including pockets of ancient and riparian woodland (e.g. Hopwood Woodlands LNR), patches of dry heath and acid grassland, remnant semi-natural grasslands, ponds and flashes.
- Intact lengths of gritstone walls, hedgerows and tree clumps along field boundaries forming ecological networks and bringing definition to the 18th and 19th century and post-medieval field patterns.
- Unifying vernacular of stone-built traditional farms and cottages, with some listed buildings including the Grade II* Brandlesholme Old Hall (Bury), Hopwood Hall (Rochdale) and Old Manor Farm (Stockport).
- Conservation Areas at Birch Village, Summerseat and the Macclesfield Canal, and the role the landscape plays as a rural setting to adjacent Conservation Areas.
- Industrial relicts, including disused railway lines, canals, mill buildings and the nationally designated Astley Green Colliery engine house and headgear.
- Two medieval moated sites near Marple and Standish which are nationally designated as Scheduled Monuments.
- Large areas defined by a sparse pattern of scattered stone-built farmsteads, individual properties and small settlements, linked by winding country lanes.
- Opportunities to access and enjoy the rural landscape, including the long distance footpaths (Rochdale Way, Rotary Way, Middlewich Way), cycle routes and a strong public rights of way network crossing the farmland and emanating from adjacent urban areas.

- The LCT's strong visual connections with foothills and uplands of the West/South Pennines and Peak District National Park, which lie to the north and east of Greater Manchester.
- Pockets of relative remoteness and tranquillity, including in the lower-lying south where robust hedgerows and lines of trees provide enclosure; elevated points in the north and east creating a sense of exposure.
- The LCT's role as an immediate rural backdrop to development and its important function in separating discrete urban areas, preventing coalescence.

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 highly prominent, elevated and very sparsely settled land in the elevated north and east. Conserve open, undeveloped skylines.
- Utilise dips in the landform, including valley slopes, and existing tree/woodland cover to integrate new development into the landscape.
- Protect and where possible enhance semi-natural habitats and networks, including pockets of ancient and riparian woodland (e.g. Hopwood Woodlands LNR), patches of dry heath and acid grassland, remnant semi-natural grasslands, ponds and flashes.
- Strengthen and restore the dry stone wall and hedgerow network in association with any new development, reflecting local characteristics (choice of stone and building style; hedgerow species and management regimes). Encourage the restoration of traditional boundaries where fencing is present.
- Ensure any new development does not dilute the strong field patterns associated with the landscape.
- Respect local building styles and materials in new housing developments, seeking to reflect these in their design and build (particularly the use of local gritstone).
- Conserve the character and setting of the Conservation Areas at Birch Village, Summerseat and the Macclesfield Canal, as well as the role the landscape plays as a rural setting to adjacent Conservation Areas.
- Conserve remaining industrial relicts, including disused railway lines, canals, mill buildings and the nationally designated Astley Green Colliery engine house and headgear.
- Protect the setting and integrity of the two moated sites within the LCT which are Scheduled Monuments.
- Explore opportunities to develop unused Brackley Municipal Golf Course, south of Farnworth, for habitat creation with possible links with The Northern Forest initiative¹.
- Explore opportunities to re-route the Rotary Way long distance footpath through Brackley Municipal Golf Course and thus avoid crossing over the M61.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off). This landscape is part of the wider catchment of a number of Greater Manchester's main river valleys.
- Encourage woodland creation schemes on areas of low grade agricultural land, including through the Northern Forest initiative. Woodland planting along motorways and staggered blocks of planting should be used to help screen views of traffic and reduce noise.
- Conserve the rural road network, ensuring any new highway design minimises unnecessary signage and lighting and reflects local characteristics (e.g. road verges/boundaries).
- Protect the pockets of tranquillity and relative remoteness associated with the landscape, and the role the LCT plays as a rural backdrop and buffer between discrete urban areas.
- Conserve key views and intervisibility with the South/West Pennines and Dark Peak foothills, upland fringes and open moorlands.

¹ See the Government's news announcement for the initiative at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-northern-forest-gets-government-backing>