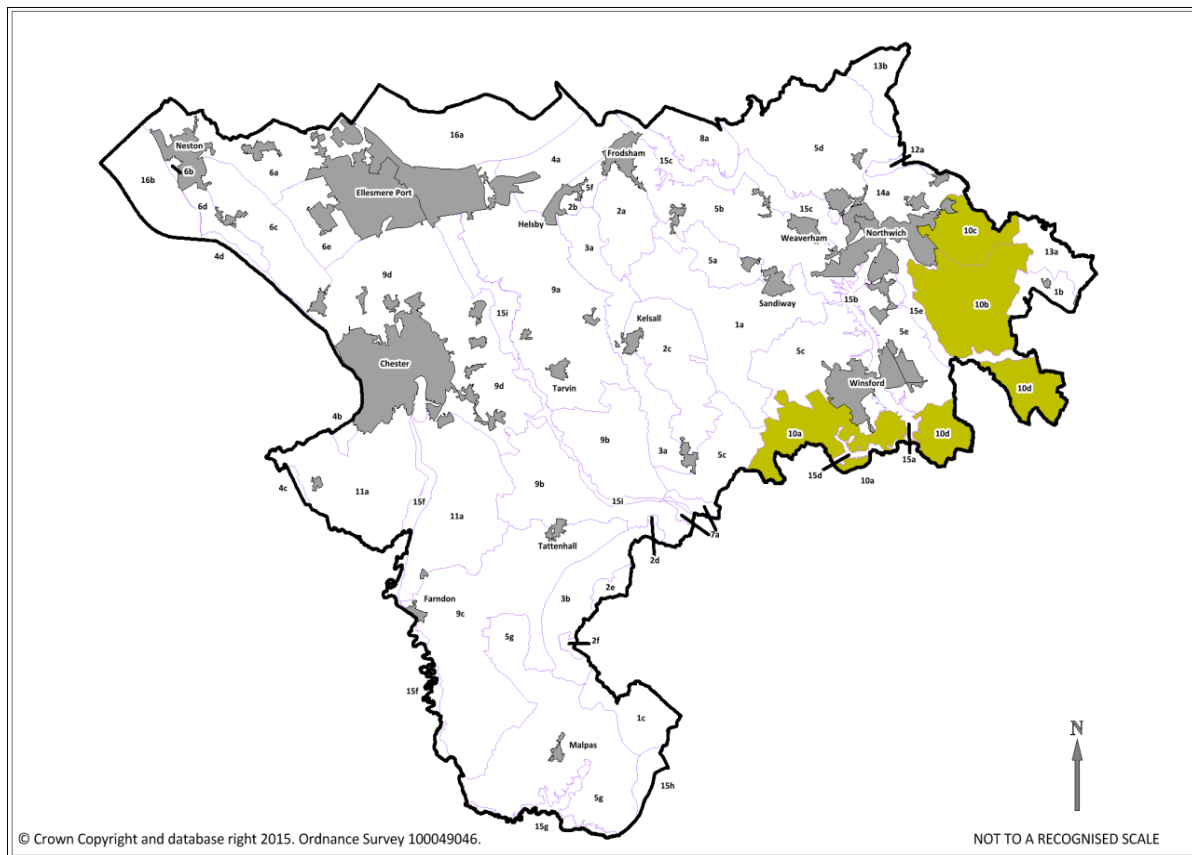


LCT 10: CHESHIRE PLAIN EAST



General Description

In many respects the *Cheshire Plain East* character type shares key characteristics with landscape character type 8 *Cheshire Plain West*, together forming a large expanse of flat and very slightly undulating, predominantly pastoral land covering a large proportion of the Cheshire West and Chester landscape, separated by the physical barrier of the prominent north-south *Sandstone Ridge*. There are subtle variations in character across the *Cheshire Plain East* reflected in its subdivision into four landscape character areas.

The *Cheshire Plain East* landscape is part of the famous dairy farming countryside of Cheshire. It extends across the majority of the Cheshire West and Chester landscape to the east of Northwich and to the south of Winsford.

Fields are small (less than 4ha) to medium sized (up to approximately 8ha) with a mixed regular and semi-regular pattern of ancient enclosure and post medieval improvement, more recently by intensive farming practices. Woodland cover is low, with small, mixed broadleaved and coniferous copses and coverts, some ancient, scattered intermittently across the landscape between a strong network of low cut thorn hedges punctuated by hedgerow trees in abundance, and occasional riparian woodland. Mature wooded parkland around Bostock Hall is an exception.

Large numbers of field ponds, formed during the 19th century when pits were dug to extract marl for improving fields, are a common feature of the plain. The area is drained by drainage ditches and

a small number of natural brooks, some within minor valleys that provide local undulations in the landscape.

There is a low density dispersed settlement pattern across the plain. Typical construction materials are red brick, with whitewashed and timber framed buildings in a distinctive black and white style.

Visual Character

This landscape type is represented by a generally flat agricultural plain where the prevailing field pattern and condition of the hedgerows can account for subtle differences in landscape character. Where fields are smaller, hedges higher and hedgerow trees more abundant, the sense of enclosure is much stronger. Long distance views are blocked or filtered and the perception is of a small scale and much more verdant landscape. Where the fields are larger, with low trimmed hedgerows and fewer trees, the lack of enclosure means that the landscape character appears to be more open and larger scale. At such locations the views are much more extensive and panoramic and often extend as far as the high ground of the surrounding character areas. Mid to long distance views to the west extend to the Sandstone Ridge and eastwards from a limited number of areas to the Pennine Hills.

Hedgerows and the large number of hedgerow trees, mainly oak, across the plain can lead to a false perception of woodland density. Most viewpoints are low due to the absence of high vantage points and the nearest tall hedgerow tends to form the visual horizon. Views from more open ground tend to feature a succession of hedgerows receding into the distance, and these can coalesce visually into a single mass of tree crowns creating a false impression of woodland cover.

Farmsteads and the occasional church spire (located in adjacent character areas) form landmarks in the distance.

Physical Influences

The *Cheshire Plain East* is low-lying at generally between 30m-55m AOD (slightly higher than the *Cheshire Plain West* which only occasionally reaches 40m AOD).

The underlying bedrock is a mix of Eldersfield Mudstone and Northwich Halite Formation. This supports drift deposits of Devensian Till interspersed to the east with small pockets of glaciofluvial sand and gravel and peat. The overlying soils are pelo-stagnogleys and stagnogleys which are poorly drained and suited to dairying on permanent grassland, interspersed with some arable fields (potatoes and maize).

Clay was dug for use in daub in the construction of vernacular structures and later to make bricks. Secondary deposits of calcium carbonate are common at a depth of 1-2m in the till, and before cheap lime was made available in the 19th century this was dug and spread on the surrounding fields to reduce acidity. On sandy soils this practice of marling also increases fertility and moisture holding capacity. The digging of these marl pits led to the creation of ponds as the pits filled with water and were colonised by a rich variety of plants and animals from other wetland habitats of greater antiquity, for example, meres and mosses. Vegetation succession has reduced many ponds to small, shallow features, over shaded with trees and with little open water.

Cultural Influences

Settlement is limited to a small number of small, dispersed nucleated or linear villages/hamlets, such as Lostock Green, Lache Dennis, Sproston Green, Wimboldsley and Darnhall, situated along rural unmarked lanes. Dispersed farms and cottages are relatively inaccessible. Other than Whatcroft, large mansion houses and halls are uncommon. Estates are scattered, with limited holdings of private land owners. Hulme Hall is an example of a medieval moated site taking advantage of the

poor drainage on the plain. This and other similarly moated farmsteads and earthworks are all protected as Scheduled Monuments.

An irregular and semi-regular field pattern is typical of surviving medieval fields and associated improvement in the post-medieval period. In some areas there is a greater concentration of post medieval field patterns, which are associated with later phases of enclosure. There are also small areas of 20th century intensification of farming practices where field boundaries have been lost and field size extended, also leading to loss of species-rich grassland.

There are a number of significant communication routes cross the *Cheshire Plain East*, taking advantage of the flat topography. These include the A530 Roman Road (King Street) between Northwich and Middlewich, railway lines, the Shropshire Union Canal and the Trent and Mersey Canal. Two major rivers flow northwards through the area, the Weaver Navigation and the Dane, both of which are identified as *River Valley* landscape types. Other land uses have also taken advantage of the flat topography, such as airfields.

Recreational use of the landscape is generally limited to a few public rights of way that follow tracks and field boundaries across the farmland. Some follow canal towpaths.

There are **four Landscape Character Areas** within LCT 10:

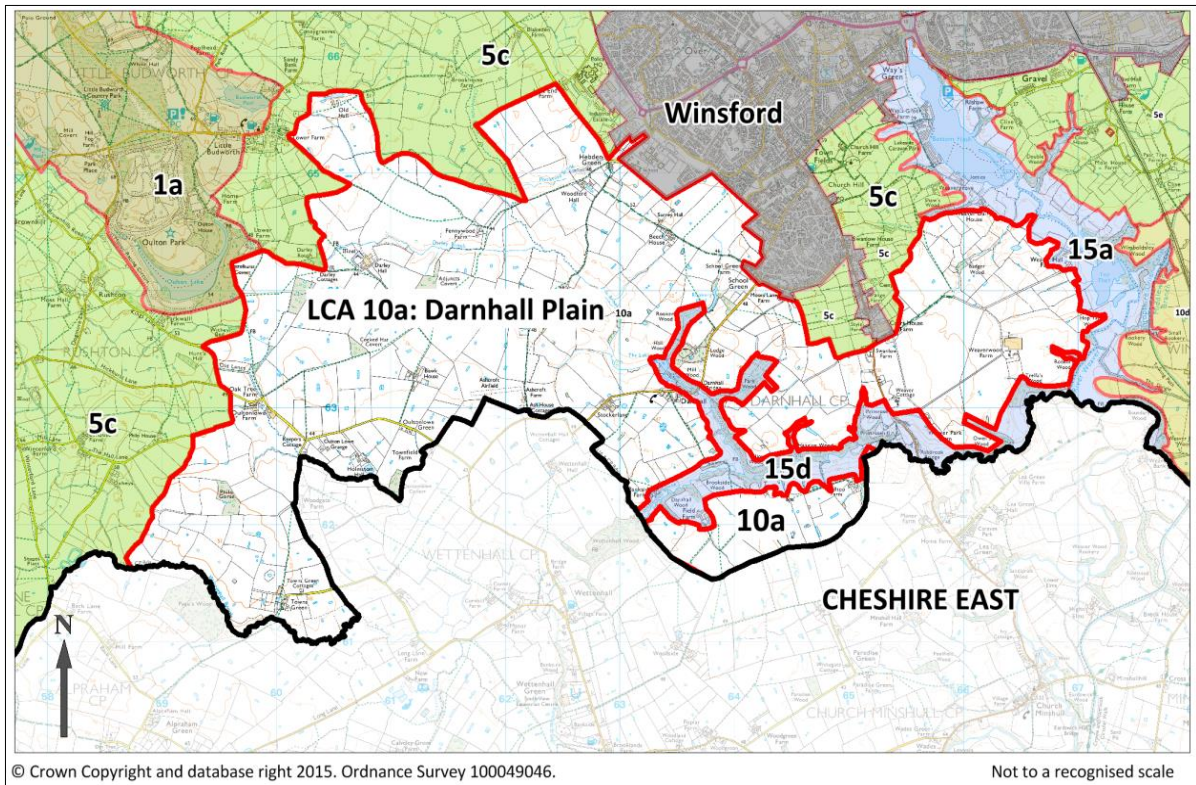
10a: *Darnhall Plain*

10b: *Stublach Plain*

10c: *Lostock Plain*

10d: *Wimboldsley and Sproston Plain*

LCA 10a: Darnhall Plain



Location and Boundaries

The **Darnhall Plain** is an open, flat plain lying on the southern borders of the borough. To the north the landscape makes a gradual transition to the more undulating landscape of the *Eaton, Marton & Over Undulating Enclosed Farmland*. The character area continues to the south beyond the *Ash Brook River Valley* (landscape character area 15d) and further south beyond the administrative boundary of Cheshire West and Chester Borough.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 10a: Darnhall Plain

- Flat plain-like topography resulting from the uniform characteristics of the underlying Eldersfield Mudstone bedrock
- The surface mantle of glacial till (boulder clay) gives rise to seasonally waterlogged soils that are suited to dairying on short term and permanent grassland, interspersed with some arable fields
- Variety of field sizes – from small ancient irregular shaped fields near the Weaver Valley to fields enlarged in the 20th century around Weaverwood Farm
- Fields are bounded by an intact network of low thorn hedgerows with relatively few hedgerow trees. Ditches are also present along field boundaries
- Woodland cover is generally absent, although the occasional covert or copse punctuates the landscape
- The area is drained by a small number of brooks that drain into the Upper Weaver e.g. Ash Brook
- Field ponds, formed when pits were dug to extract marl for improving fields, are a common feature of the plain
- Recreational use of the landscape is limited to a few public rights of way that follow tracks and field boundaries across the farmland
- Low density of settlement – the settlement pattern is defined by scattered red brick farmsteads with large red brick dairy barns (with round windows) and some farmsteads in the distinctive timber framed ‘black and white’ style. Darley Hall is a moated site
- The road network is typically comprised of narrow, rural unmarked lanes linking farmsteads, is relatively inaccessible and predominantly used by farm traffic
- Long range views across the open, flat landscape with trees and farmsteads forming the skyline
- The church spire of St John the Evangelist’s Church at Over is a feature visible across the plain.

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- The flat plain-like topography of between 45m-50m AOD resulting from the uniform characteristics of the underlying bedrock;
- The uniform covering of glacial till (boulder clay) that gives rise to a seasonally waterlogged stagnogley soil that is well suited to dairying and stock rearing;
- The field ponds (old marl pits) that provide an indication of the former use of the natural resources of the landscape;
- The fields bounded by an intact, low cut thorn hedgerow network and occasional hedgerow trees;
- The lack of woodland cover, limited to a scattering of small deciduous copses and scrub within the existing field pattern e.g. Darley Gorse and Crooked Hat Covert;
- The small number of brooks draining the landscape into the Upper Weaver e.g. Ash Brook.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The pastoral character of the landscape;
- The strong field pattern and presence of ancient field systems in a variety of shapes and sizes which provide an historic continuity; from the small ancient irregular shaped fields south of the Weaver Valley to the medium sized straight-sided late post-Medieval enclosures around Cocked Hat Covert, and the fields enlarged in the 20th century around Weaverwood Farm;
- The ponds, ditches and brooks which provide wildlife habitats and landscape diversity;

- The historic moated Darley Hall, a Scheduled Monument, that provides a sense of time depth in the landscape (being the only surviving site of what were once common features of this landscape);
- The historic designed parkland at Darnhall Park, site of the Cistercian Abbey (founded 1274) and the precursor to Vale Royal Abbey (founded 1281) that is of local significance;
- Some of the halls and barns are listed buildings;
- Recreational use of the landscape is limited to a few public rights of way that follow tracks and field boundaries across the farmland.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- The low density of settlement, with scattered farmsteads and red brick dairy barns (with round windows) that represent examples of the red brick and timber framed 'black and white' local vernacular building style;
- The narrow, unmarked lanes that contribute to the rural character of the area;
- Farm intensification has resulted in some large industrial / warehouse type barns in the landscape, e.g. at Weaverwood Farm and Court House Farm.

Perceptual / Visual

- The flat, expansive nature of the landform produces large scale landscape which is overlaid by an irregular pattern of hedged fields that provides a unity across the landscape;
- Hedgerow trees that are uncommon and important visual features of the landscape;
- The low density of settlement and absence of roads across much of the plain give it an 'empty' character. In places the landscape even feels 'remote', but the strong field pattern indicates that this landscape has been tamed by man;
- A tranquil, rural landscape;
- Occasional areas of woodland, marl pits and associated emergent vegetation, provide some texture and visual interest;
- The flat landform provides the opportunity for long ranging and expansive views; open skylines are a feature of the area;
- The views of trees and farmsteads as features on the skyline, and the church spire at Over;
- The open character means there is little opportunity for screening any large scale elements or for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves being highly visible - making it a visually sensitive landscape. However, there are relatively few sensitive visual receptors in the area.

Landscape Condition

Although the landscape is actively managed as farmland, many hedgerow trees have been lost and others are over-mature. Some of the hedgerows are in a declining condition. Some field ponds have been reduced to small, shallow features, over shaded with trees with little open water, while others have been incorporated into gardens as ornamental features.

CWaC Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 10a: *Darnhall Plain*:

- Countryside;
- Natural heritage sites of international, national, regional and/or local significance;
- Nationally designated heritage assets (on Historic England's National Heritage List for England) and locally significant heritage assets;
- Flood risk and water management.

Forces for Landscape Change

Past change

- Farm intensification has resulted in some large industrial / warehouse type barns in the landscape, e.g. at Weaverwood Farm and Court House Farm;
- Growth of arable and fodder crops, including maize/grass silage to support the dairy industry, within an otherwise predominantly pastoral landscape;
- Improved drainage and in-filling over the years has resulted in drying out of wetland habitats and ponds;
- Decline in hedgerow field boundaries and hedgerow trees, due to flail mowing which reduces diversity and kills emerging saplings, leading to loss of historic field pattern and increased use of fencing;
- Decline in traditional woodland management practices leading to under management of copses and coverts;
- Intensification of grassland management leading to loss of species-rich grassland.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 10a: *Darnhall Plain*

- Planting of new woodland and hedgerow trees (planting policies within the 2014 Mersey Forest Plan) as a buffer to ancient semi-natural woodland and to screen views of large scale industry (but without obstructing long distance views of the Sandstone Ridge and Peak District);
- There may be pressure for farm diversification including introduction of riding schools, stables and paddocks;
- Conversion of farm buildings to residential, business and industrial use, with erection of modern portal sheds to replace the lost space;
- Potential on better drained land for growing bio-energy crops such as Miscanthus.

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 10a: Darnhall Plain

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** the pastoral character and local built vernacular of the landscape, and **enhance** the condition of the hedgerow and tree network.

Landscape Management Guidelines

1. Conserve and manage grassland to conserve the pastoral character of the landscape and reduce soil erosion by minimising exposure of bare soil.
2. Maintain the hedgerow network, gapping up incomplete hedgerows where appropriate and avoiding harsh flail mowing, to ensure the network continues to provide a unity across the landscape as well as providing wildlife habitats.
3. Protect and encourage hedgerow trees, encouraging them to grow up at intervals along the hedgerow.
4. Conserve the small scale pattern of fields, particularly early field systems which provide historic continuity in the landscape e.g. south of the River Weaver.
5. Conserve the remaining hedgerow trees and seek opportunities to encourage a new generation of hedgerow trees to increase their presence in the landscape.
6. Aim to extend broadleaved woodlands along water courses where this does not impact other valuable riparian habitats, and plant small scale copses within existing field patterns.
7. Increase the biodiversity of intensively managed grassland and arable land – create and link buffer strips along linear features such as hedgerows to create a continuous network of wildlife corridors. Seek opportunities to re-create unimproved or semi-improved species rich grassland.
8. Encourage sympathetic integration of horse paddocks through maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries, rather than sub-division of fields and erection of high visibility fencing - ensure the land use does not break up traditional field patterns.
9. Conserve and manage the remaining ditches, field ponds and brooks that are of importance for biodiversity as well as contributing to the diversity of the landscape. Prevent further drying out of wetland habitats and seek opportunities to extent/recreate areas of wetland habitat including reedswamp and willow scrub.

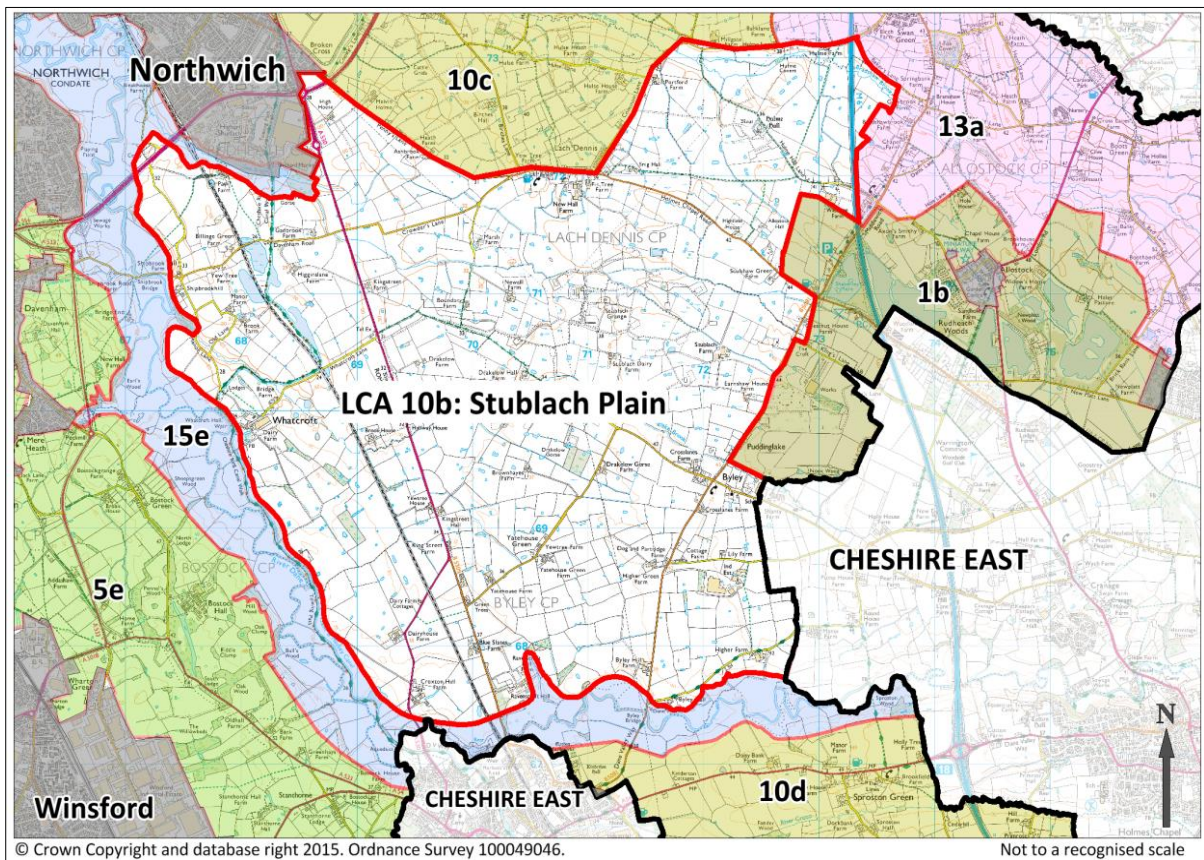
10. Monitor the impact of climate change and water levels on vegetation, particularly the hedgerow oaks.
11. Conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that 'suburbanise' the landscape such as close board fencing, kerbs, signage and lighting.
12. Protect above ground archaeological features, such as the moated site of Darley Hall, promoting sensitive agricultural practices in their vicinity (i.e. grazing not ploughing).
13. Conserve the designed parkland at Darnhall Park, and its setting.
14. Conserve views to the church spire at Over, Winsford.

Built Development Guidelines

1. Conserve the low density, scattered settlement pattern of farmsteads.
2. Conserve the local vernacular built style - including red brick farmsteads with large red brick dairy barns (containing round windows) and distinctive timber framed 'black and white' farmsteads resulting from the Victorian 'black and white revival' that is typical of Cheshire. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and styles.
3. Seek to ensure that new farm buildings do not threaten the settings of the older farmsteads, particularly the pre-Victorian and distinctive timber framed 'black and white' farmsteads.
4. Ensure conversion of farm buildings is sensitive to the vernacular style. Pay particular attention to the features which accompany the conversion such as driveways and gardens, ensuring that these features do not 'suburbanise' the landscape.
5. Ensure riding schools, stables and equestrian development does not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area – ensure sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, jumps and ancillary buildings.
6. Maintain the rural character of the narrow, unmarked lanes – resist improvements such as additions of kerbs and lighting that would erode the rural character of the landscape.



LCA 10b: Stublach Plain



Location and Boundaries

The **Stublach Plain** forms a flat pastoral plain influenced in part by features associated with the brine/salt extraction and gas storage industries. It is bounded to the west and south by the *River Dane* (landscape character area 15e), to the north by the more industrialised *Lostock Plain* (character area 10c) and to the east by the heathy landscape of the *Allstock Woodland, Heath, Meres and Mosses* character area (LCA 1b).

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 10b: Stublach Plain

- Flat plain-like topography resulting from the uniform characteristics of the underlying Eldersfield Mudstone bedrock
- Salt bearing strata underlie the area – the landscape is influenced in part by features associated with the brine/salt extraction and gas storage industries with well-heads, fenced compounds and tracks visible
- The surface mantle of glacial till (boulder clay) gives rise to seasonally waterlogged soils that are suited to dairying on short term and permanent grassland, interspersed with some arable fields
- A pattern of small and medium sized fields is overlaid onto the flat plain providing unity across the landscape – some fields are Medieval in origin e.g. around Stublach Grange
- Fields are bounded by an intact network of low thorn hedgerows with some hedgerow trees that filter views across the area. Ditches are also present along field boundaries
- Woodland cover is generally absent, although the occasional covert or copse punctuates the landscape
- The area is drained by a small number of brooks and streams
- Field ponds, formed when pits were dug to extract marl for improving fields, are a common feature of the plain
- The Trent and Mersey Canal that includes associated structures and artefacts of industrial archaeology
- The Billinge flashes beside the canal, formed land subsidence due to brine pumping, now support important wetland habitats, including swamp
- Recreational use of the landscape is limited to a few public rights of way that follow tracks and field boundaries across the farmland and the canal towpath
- Low density of settlement – the settlement pattern is defined by scattered red brick or white washed farmsteads with distinctive red brick dairy barns (with round windows). Two moated medieval sites remain
- The road network is typically comprised of narrow, rural unmarked lanes linking farmsteads, although the M6 motorway, A530 and a small number of 'B' roads also pass through the character area
- A straight Roman Road that crosses the plain, connecting Middlewich to Northwich. A railway line follows a similar route across the plain
- Long range views across the open, flat landscape with electricity pylons prominent on the skyline. Industrial works at Northwich East have a visual influence on the *Stublach Plain*;
- Church spires at Moulton and Davenham are features in views across the plain.

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- The flat plain-like topography of between 30m-45m AOD resulting from the uniform characteristics of the underlying bedrock;
- The uniform covering of glacial till (boulder clay) that gives rise to a seasonally waterlogged stagnogley soil that is well suited to dairying and stock rearing;
- Salt bearing strata underlie the mudstones - brine pumping, salt extraction and gas storage has been carried out in this and surrounding areas in the past;
- The field ponds (old marl pits) that provide an indication of the former use of the natural resources of the landscape;

- Billinge Green Farm Pond forms part of the Billinge Flashes, an area of wetlands formed by land subsidence following brine pumping – a Local Wildlife Site due to its wetland habitats including a large area of swamp at the southern end which is floristically diverse;
- The fields bounded by an intact hedgerow network and hedgerow trees, mostly oak, that provides a unity across the landscape and contribute to biodiversity;
- Remaining isolated trees, mostly oak, where hedgerows have been removed;
- The lack of woodland cover, limited to a scattering of small deciduous copses and scrub within the existing field pattern e.g. Drakelow Gorse, providing visual and biological diversity and provide valuable cover in a landscape largely devoid of woodland;
- The small number of brooks draining the landscape e.g. Puddinglake Brook.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The pastoral character of the landscape;
- The strong field pattern and presence of ancient field systems which provide an historic continuity and a mixture of small and medium sized irregular shaped fields and larger regular fields where agricultural improvement has taken place;
- The ponds, ditches and brooks which provide wildlife habitats and landscape diversity;
- The Billinge flashes beside the canal that now support important wetland habitats, including swamp;
- The historic moated Drakelow Hall (now just a moat and earthwork) and Hulme Hall, both Scheduled Monuments, and the Roman Road (A530 King Street) that provide a sense of time depth in the landscape;
- The Trent and Mersey Canal and its setting, including associated structures and artefacts of industrial archaeology, that provides an indication of the past use of the landscape as an important link between the navigable River Trent and the River Mersey, and provides wetland habitats and recreational opportunities;
- Some of the halls and farmsteads are listed buildings;
- Recreational use of the landscape is limited to a few public rights of way that follow tracks and field boundaries across the farmland and the canal towpath that forms part of the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk long distance recreational route which links to the Dane Valley Way. There is no open access land.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- The low density of settlement, with scattered farmsteads that represent examples of the red brick and slate, and white washed finishes of the local vernacular building style;
- The narrow, unmarked lanes that contribute to the rural character of the area;
- Above ground structures associated with the brine/salt extraction industry include tracks, pipelines and compounds bounded by chicken wire.

Perceptual / Visual

- The flat, low lying, large scale, open landscape is itself not visually prominent;
- The presence of hedgerow oaks which are particularly distinctive and contribute to biodiversity, filter views and stand out against the open skyline;
- The low density of settlement and absence of roads across much of the plain give it an 'empty' character. In places the landscape even feels 'remote', but the strong field pattern indicates that this landscape has been tamed by man;
- A generally tranquil, still, rural landscape although the presence of the main road and railway contributes movement and noise locally;
- Occasional areas of woodland, marl pits and associated emergent vegetation, provide some texture and visual interest;

- The flat, low lying, open landscape (due to lack of vegetation) provides the opportunity for long ranging and expansive views across the landscape;
- Open skylines are a feature of the area – punctuated by the occasional hedgerow tree, farmstead, or pylon;
- The open character means there is little opportunity for screening any large scale elements or for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves being highly visible - making it a visually sensitive landscape. However, the low density of settlement and few recreational opportunities means there are relatively few sensitive visual receptors in the area;
- Large scale industrial buildings in adjacent areas (e.g. the distribution warehouses at Gadbrook Park, Rudheath and the Brunner Mond brine works at Northwich East) are visible on the skyline;
- There are views from the western edge of the plain over the Dane Valley with the spire of Moulton Church on the skyline.

Landscape Condition

Although the landscape is actively managed as farmland, many of the hedgerow trees are over-mature and some of the hedgerows are in a declining condition. Some field ponds have been reduced to small, shallow features, overshadowed with trees and with little open water, while others have been incorporated into gardens as ornamental features.

CWaC Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 10b: *Stublach Plain*:

- Countryside;
- Natural heritage sites of international, national, regional and/or local significance;
- Nationally designated heritage assets (on Historic England's National Heritage List for England) and locally significant heritage assets;
- Flood risk and water management.

Forces for Landscape Change

Past change

- Increasing size of farm units;
- Agricultural improvements have resulted in increased field sizes as hedgerows have been removed (leaving isolated trees in the centre of fields representing the line of former hedgerows);
- Farm diversification including introduction of stables and paddocks;
- Growth of arable and fodder crops, including maize/grass silage to support the dairy industry, within an otherwise predominantly pastoral landscape;
- Improved drainage and in-filling over the years has resulted in drying out of wetland habitats and ponds e.g. the swamp habitats at Billinge Flash;
- Decline in hedgerow field boundaries and hedgerow trees, due to flail mowing which reduces diversity and kills emerging saplings, leading to loss of historic field pattern and increased use of fencing.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 10b: *Stublach Plain*

- Planting of new woodland and hedgerow trees (planting policies within the 2014 Mersey Forest Plan) as a buffer to ancient semi-natural woodland and to screen views of large scale industry (but without obstructing long distance views of the Sandstone Ridge and Peak District);
- There may be increased pressure for farm diversification including introduction of riding schools, stables and paddocks, and gas storage proposals;
- Conversion of farm buildings to residential, business and industrial use, with erection of modern portal sheds to replace the lost space;
- Pressure for residential and commercial development, particularly on the edge of Northwich;
- Search area for sand and gravel extraction, and the preferred area for future controlled brine extraction;
- Possible improvements to the M6 corridor that runs through the north-eastern corner of this character area;
- High Speed Phase 2 (HS2) route will potentially pass north-south through the area, mostly on embankment.

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 10b: Stublach Plain

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** the pastoral character and local built vernacular of the landscape, and **enhance** the condition of the hedgerow and tree network.

Landscape Management Guidelines

1. Conserve and manage grassland to conserve the pastoral character of the landscape and reduce soil erosion by minimising exposure of bare soil.
2. Maintain the hedgerow network, gapping up incomplete hedgerows where appropriate and avoiding harsh flail mowing, to ensure the network continues to provide a unity across the landscape as well as providing wildlife habitats.
3. Protect and encourage hedgerow trees, encouraging them to grow up at intervals along the hedgerow.
4. Conserve the small scale pattern of fields, particularly early field systems which provide historic continuity in the landscape e.g. around Stublach Grange.
5. Conserve existing hedgerow trees and seek opportunities to encourage a new generation of hedgerow trees to increase their presence in the landscape.
6. Aim to extend broadleaved woodlands along water courses and plant small scale copses within existing field patterns.
7. Increase the biodiversity of intensively managed grassland and arable land – create and link buffer strips along linear features such as hedgerows to create a continuous network of wildlife corridors. Seek opportunities to re-create unimproved or semi-improved species rich grassland.
8. Encourage sympathetic integration of horse paddocks through maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries, rather than sub-division of fields and erection of high visibility fencing - ensure the land use does not break up traditional field patterns.
9. Conserve and manage the remaining ditches, field ponds and brooks that are of importance for biodiversity as well as contributing to the diversity of the landscape. Prevent further drying out of wetland habitats and seek opportunities to extent/recreate areas of wetland habitat including reed swamp and willow scrub.
10. Monitor the impact of climate change and water levels on vegetation, particularly the hedgerow oaks.
11. Conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that ‘suburbanise’ the landscape such as close board fencing, kerbs, signage and lighting.

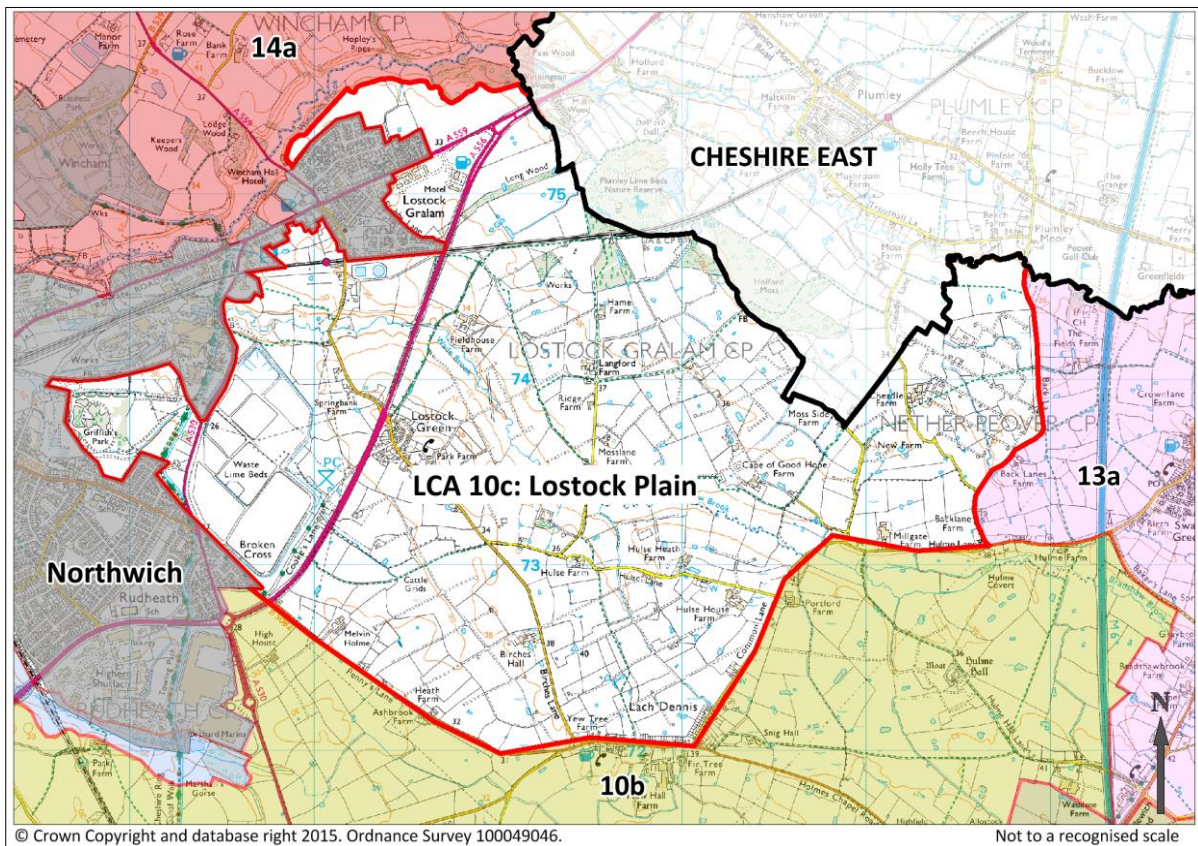
12. Protect above ground archaeological features, such as the moated sites of Hulme Hall and the former Drakelow Hall, promoting sensitive agricultural practices in their vicinity (i.e. grazing not ploughing).
13. Support plans to create a woodland setting for the industrial and business areas to the east of Northwich.
14. Conserve views to the church spires at Moulton and Davenham.

Built Development Guidelines

1. Conserve the low density, scattered settlement pattern of farmsteads.
2. Conserve the local vernacular built style - including red brick farmsteads and barns (containing round windows) with slate and white washed finishes. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and styles.
3. Seek to ensure that new farm buildings do not threaten the settings of the older farmsteads.
4. Ensure conversion of farm buildings is sensitive to the vernacular style. Pay particular attention to the features which accompany the conversion such as driveways and gardens, ensuring that these features do not 'suburbanise' the landscape.
5. Ensure riding schools, stables and equestrian development does not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area – ensure sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, jumps and ancillary buildings.
6. Maintain the rural character of the narrow, unmarked lanes – resist improvements such as additions of kerbs and lighting that would erode the rural character of the landscape.
7. Protect the character of Kings Street Roman Road, including the avenue of trees along its length.
8. Consider opportunities to screen development on the urban edge of Northwich using planting of broadleaved species.
9. Screen brine/salt extraction, gas storage and quarrying activities using planting of broadleaved species. Consider the long term restoration of these areas for the benefit of wildlife, creating new wetland habitats and recreational access where possible.
10. Preserve the industrial aesthetic of the Trent and Mersey Canal and its setting, including associated structures and artefacts of industrial archaeology. Consider views from the canal in planning new built development.
11. Ensure any structures associated with the brine/salt extraction, gas storage and quarrying industries are well integrated into the landscape using native planting, and proposals are accompanied by enhancement of existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees in the vicinity of the site to ensure the landscape structure around any new facility is maintained/improved.



LCA 10c: Lostock Plain



Location and Boundaries

The **Lostock Plain** is located to the east of Northwich between the built up area and the Cheshire West and Chester borough boundary. It is a distinct area defined by its function as a brine field and is influenced by above ground structures associated with brine/salt extraction and underground ethylene /gas storage.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 10c: Lostock Plain

- Flat plain-like topography resulting from the uniform characteristics of the underlying Eldersfield Mudstone bedrock, except for the banded waste lime beds
- Salt bearing strata underlie the area – this area is a large brine field used for extraction of salt and storage of gas in underground chambers with well-heads, fenced compound and tracks visible in the landscape
- The surface mantle of glacial till (boulder clay) gives rise to seasonally waterlogged soils that are suited to permanent grassland, interspersed with some arable fields
- A small scale pattern of irregular fields is overlaid onto the flat plain providing unity across the landscape – there are extensive areas of ancient and post medieval origin
- Fields are bounded by an intact network of low thorn hedgerows with some hedgerow trees that filter views across the area. Ditches are also present along field boundaries
- Woodland cover is generally absent, although the occasional copse or shelter belt punctuates the landscape. Part of Holford Moss Wood falls in this area
- Field ponds, formed when pits were dug to extract calcium carbonate for improving fields, are a common feature of the plain
- Crow Brook and Wade Brook are distinctive hydrological features, producing local variety in topography and creating important wetland habitats
- Part of the Trent and Mersey Canal passes through the area, including associated structures and artefacts of industrial archaeology
- Recreational use of the landscape is limited to a few public rights of way that follow tracks and field boundaries across the farmland
- Settlement pattern is defined by nucleated villages e.g. Lostock Gralam and Lostock Green, with dispersed farmsteads – those with distinctive red brick barns (with round windows) form points of focus in the landscape
- The road network is typically comprised of narrow, rural unmarked lanes linking farms and villages, although the A556 fragments and the area and creates movement and noise locally
- Long range views across the open, flat landscape with electricity pylons prominent on the skyline. Industrial works at Northwich East have a visual influence on and form a backcloth to the *Lostock Plain*;
- Church spires at Moulton and Davenham are features in views across the plain.

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- The flat plain-like topography of between 30m-45m AOD resulting from the uniform characteristics of the underlying bedrock;
- The uniform covering of glacial till (boulder clay) that gives rise to a seasonally waterlogged stagnogley soil that is well suited to dairying and stock rearing;
- Salt bearing strata underlie the mudstones - brine pumping has been carried out, where salt is extracted in solution and the cavities left by this extraction is ideally suited for storage of products such as ethylene and gas;
- The field ponds (old calcium carbonate pits) that provide an indication of the former use of the natural resources of the landscape, some of which are local wildlife sites for their stands of emergent and floating vegetation e.g. Hame Farm Pond;
- The small area of woodland, grassland and rare inland salt marsh at Holford Moss is recognised as a local wildlife site;

- The fields bounded by an intact hedgerow network and occasional hedgerow trees, mostly oak, that provides a unity across the landscape and contribute to biodiversity;
- The lack of woodland cover, limited to the occasional copse or shelter belt providing visual and biological diversity and valuable cover in a landscape largely devoid of woodland, e.g. Long Wood is a narrow strip of broadleaved woodland with a diverse canopy located between the A556 and railway line that is recognised as a local wildlife site;
- The small number of brooks draining the landscape. Crow Brook and Wade Brook are distinctive hydrological features, producing variety in topography and creating important wetland habitats.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The pastoral character of the landscape;
- The small scale, strong field pattern and presence of ancient field systems which provide an historic continuity and a mixture of small and medium sized irregular shaped fields and larger regular fields where agricultural improvement has taken place;
- The ponds, ditches and brooks which provide wildlife habitats and landscape diversity;
- The Billinge flashes beside the canal that now support important wetland habitats, including swamp;
- The historic moated Drakelow Hall (now just a moat and earthwork) and Hulme Hall, both Scheduled Monuments, and the Roman Road (A530 King Street) that provide a sense of time depth in the landscape;
- The Trent and Mersey Canal and its setting, including associated structures and artefacts of industrial archaeology, that provides an indication of the past use of the landscape as an important link between the navigable River Trent and the River Mersey, and provides wetland habitats and recreational opportunities;
- Some of the halls and farmsteads are listed buildings;
- Recreational use of the landscape is limited to a few public rights of way that follow tracks and field boundaries across the farmland and the canal towpath. There is no open access land.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- The low density of settlement, with few nucleated villages e.g. Lostock Gralam and Lostock Green, and dispersed farmsteads that represent examples of the red brick local vernacular building style – those with distinctive red brick dairy barns (with round windows) form points of focus in the landscape;
- The narrow, unmarked lanes that contribute to the rural character of the area; however, the A556 cuts through the area creating a barrier to movement east/west across the area;
- Above ground structures associated with the brine extraction industry include tracks leading to well-heads, pipelines, and the well-heads themselves which are often enclosed in a compound bounded by chicken wire;
- Electricity pylons and bunded waste lime beds are also prominent built features in this flat landscape.

Perceptual / Visual

- The flat, low lying, large scale, open landscape that in itself is not visually prominent;
- Overlaid by a more intricate and irregular pattern of hedged fields and well-heads;
- The presence of hedgerow oaks which are particularly distinctive and contribute to biodiversity, filter views and stand out against the open skyline;
- The low density of settlement and quiet rural roads across much of the plain contribute to a generally tranquil landscape. However, the strong pattern of fields and presence of industrial structures and compounds contribute to an impression of this landscape tamed and exploited by man;

- A generally tranquil, still, rural landscape although the presence of the main road contributes movement and noise locally and industrial works on the edge of Rudheath and Northwich (just outside the area) also have a visual influence on the *Lostock Plain* – these aspects detract from the sense of tranquillity associated with this part of the *Cheshire Plain East*;
- Occasional areas of woodland, marl pits and associated emergent vegetation, provide some texture and visual interest;
- The flat, open landscape (due to lack of vegetation) provides the opportunity for long ranging and expansive views across the landscape;
- Open skylines are a feature of the area – punctuated by the occasional hedgerow tree, farmstead, or pylon;
- The open character means there is little opportunity for screening any large scale elements or for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves being highly visible - making it a visually sensitive landscape. The low density of settlement and few recreational opportunities means there are relatively few sensitive visual receptors in the area;
- Large scale industrial buildings in adjacent areas (e.g. the distribution warehouses at Gadbrook Park, Rudheath and the Brunner Mond brine works at Northwich East) are visible on the skyline;
- There are views from the western edge of the plain over the Dane Valley with the church spires at Moulton and Davenham on the skyline.

Landscape Condition

Although the landscape is actively managed as farmland (as well as being used for industrial extraction of brine and storage of ethylene/gas), many of the hedgerow trees are over mature and some of the hedgerows are in a declining condition. Although this is a major brine extraction area, the only above ground visible structures are modest well-heads, compounds and tracks that are generally well integrated into the landscape. Short term set –aside has resulted in isolated cases of fields containing invasive grasses and ruderal vegetation which contrasts with the otherwise well managed and maintained fields. Some field ponds have been reduced to small, shallow features, over shaded with trees and with little open water.

CWaC Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 10c: *Lostock Plain*:

- Green Belt (north of the A559);
- Countryside (south of the A559);
- Candidate Key Settlement Gap between Lostock Gralam and Northwich;
- Natural heritage sites of international, national, regional and/or local significance;
- Nationally designated heritage assets (on Historic England's National Heritage List for England) and locally significant heritage assets;
- Flood risk and water management.

Forces for Landscape Change

Past change

- Farm diversification including introduction of riding schools, stables and paddocks;
- Loss of permanent grassland and an increase in growth of arable and fodder crops, including maize/grass silage to support the dairy industry, within an otherwise predominantly pastoral landscape; this may also result in soil erosion as a result of exposure of bare soil;
- Improved drainage over the years has resulted in the gradual loss of bogs, ponds and mosses;
- Loss of hedgerows/trees due to salt pipeline spillages;
- Decline in hedgerow field boundaries and hedgerow trees, due to flail mowing which reduces diversity and kills emerging saplings, leading to loss of historic field pattern and increased use of fencing;
- Planning permission for a large scale business park and hotel at Lostock Gralam.

Potential future change/ key issues affecting LCA 10c: *Lostock Plain*

- Planting of new woodland and hedgerow trees (planting policies within the 2014 Mersey Forest Plan) as a buffer to ancient semi-natural woodland, to screen views of large scale industry and increase connectivity with Northwich (but without obstructing long distance views of the Sandstone Ridge and Peak District);
- There may be increased pressure for farm diversification including introduction of riding schools, stables and paddocks, and gas storage proposals;
- Conversion of farm buildings to residential, business and industrial use, with erection of modern portal sheds to replace the lost space;
- Pressure for residential and commercial (business and employment) development, particularly on the edge of Northwich; the open area between Northwich and Lostock Gralam has been identified as a potential Key Settlement Gap where development would lead to coalescence and the loss of identity of the two communities;
- Search area for sand and gravel extraction, and the preferred area for future controlled brine extraction;
- Increased development could lead to the suburbanisation of the character area through upgrading of roads, kerbing, lighting, signage etc.
- Pressure for increased gas storage;
- High Speed Phase 2 (HS2) route will potentially pass north-south through the area, mostly on embankment.

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 10c: Lostock Plain

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** the pastoral character and local built vernacular of the landscape, and **enhance** the condition of the hedgerow and tree network.

Landscape Management Guidelines

1. Conserve and manage grassland to conserve the pastoral character of the landscape and reduce soil erosion by minimising exposure of bare soil.
2. Maintain the hedgerow network, gapping up incomplete hedgerows where appropriate and avoiding harsh flail mowing, to ensure the network continues to provide a unity across the landscape as well as providing wildlife habitats.
3. Protect hedgerows and hedgerow trees from salt spillages, encouraging them to grow up at intervals along the hedgerow.
4. Conserve the small scale pattern of fields, particularly early field systems which provide historic continuity in the landscape.
5. Conserve existing hedgerow trees and seek opportunities to encourage a new generation of hedgerow trees to increase their presence in the landscape.
6. Conserve the area of woodland, grassland and rare inland salt marsh at Holford Moss.
7. Seek opportunities to create a woodland setting for the industrial and business areas to the east of Northwich.
8. Hedgerow, tree planting and small scale copses may be more appropriate on the plain itself. Aim to extend broadleaved woodlands along water courses where this does not impact other valuable riparian habitats. Respect the small scale of the landscape when designing new woodland.
9. Increase the biodiversity of intensively managed grassland and arable land – create and link buffer strips along linear features such as hedgerows to create a continuous network of wildlife corridors. Seek opportunities to re-create unimproved or semi-improved species rich grassland.
10. Encourage sympathetic integration of horse paddocks through maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries, rather than sub-division of fields and erection of high visibility fencing - ensure the land use does not break up traditional field patterns.

11. Conserve and manage the remaining ditches, field ponds and brooks that are of importance for biodiversity as well as contributing to the diversity of the landscape. Prevent further drying out of wetland habitats and seek opportunities to extent/recreate areas of wetland habitat including reed swamp and willow scrub.
12. Monitor the impact of climate change and water levels on vegetation, particularly the hedgerow oaks.
13. Conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that 'suburbanise' the landscape such as close board fencing, kerbs, signage and lighting.

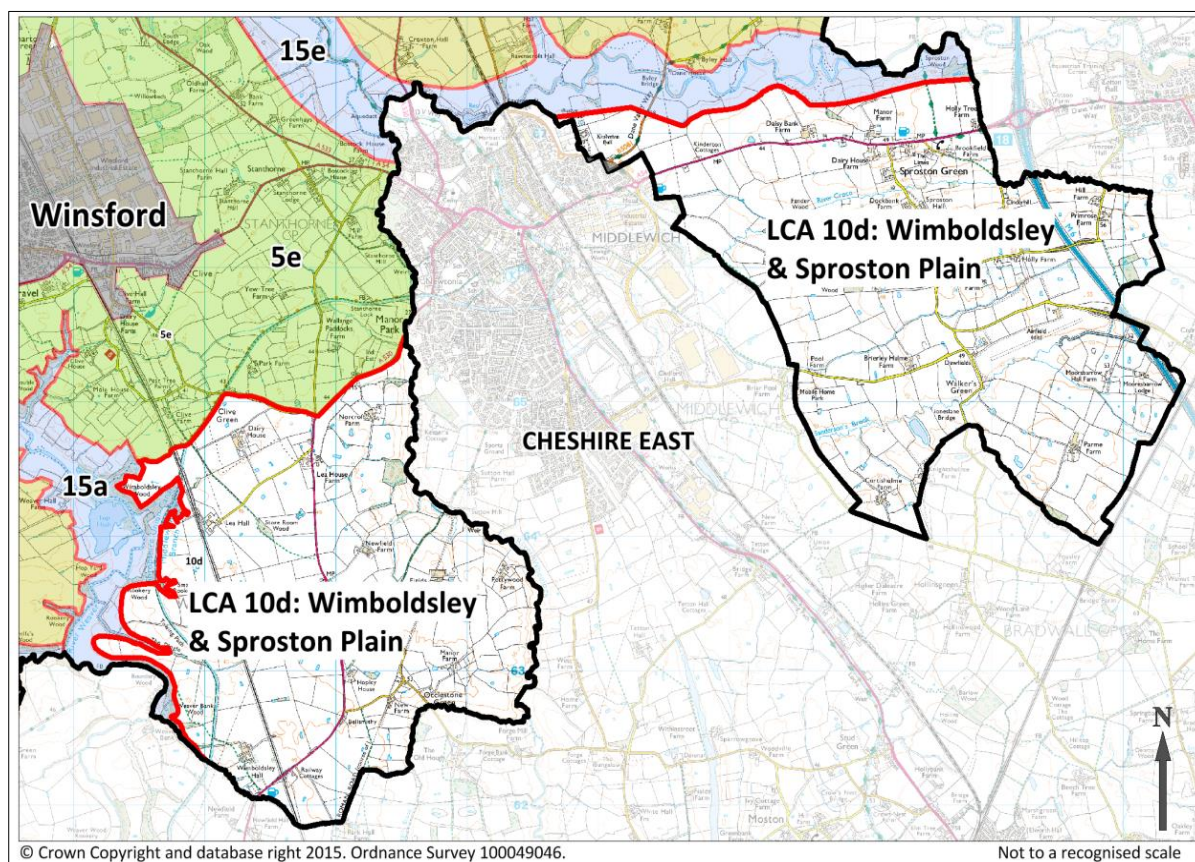
Built Development Guidelines

1. Conserve the low density, scattered settlement pattern of farmsteads, ensuring residential development takes place within existing villages.
2. Maintain the scattered farmsteads that represent examples of the red brick local vernacular building style – the red brick barns are particularly distinctive. Seek to ensure that new farm buildings do not threaten the settings of these farmsteads.
3. Conserve the open undeveloped area between Northwich and Lostock Gralam that has been identified as a Candidate Key Settlement Gap where development would lead to coalescence and the loss of identity of the two communities.
4. Conserve the local vernacular built style - including red brick or white washed farmsteads Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and styles.
5. Ensure riding schools, stables and equestrian development does not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area – ensure sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, jumps and ancillary buildings.
6. Maintain the rural character of the narrow, unmarked lanes – resist improvements such as additions of kerbs and lighting that would erode the rural character of the landscape.
7. Screen brine/salt extraction, gas storage and quarrying activities using broadleaved species. Consider the long term restoration of sand and gravel quarries for the benefit of wildlife, creating new wetland habitats and recreational access where possible.
8. Industrial structures associated with the brine/salt extraction and gas storage industries are generally well integrated into the landscape – however, any development should be accompanied by enhancement of existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees in the vicinity of the site to ensure the landscape structure around any new facility is maintained.

9. Soften built edges and views of main roads, commercial sheds and industry on the eastern edge of Northwich and Lostock Gralam by introducing planting schemes using native broadleaved species.
10. Preserve the industrial aesthetic of the Trent and Mersey Canal and its setting, including associated structures and artefacts of industrial archaeology. Consider views from the canal in planning new built development.



LCA 10d: *Wimboldsley and Sproston Plain*



Location and Boundaries

The ***Wimboldsley & Sproston Plain*** is located on the southern borders of the borough surrounding Middlewich. It is divided into two separate areas by the administrative boundary of the borough – in reality the plain is one continuous area and extends well beyond the borough boundary. To the north the plain meets the *East Winsford Undulating Enclosed Farmland* and the *Dane Valley*.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 10d: *Wimboldsley and Sproston Plain*

- Flat plain-like topography resulting from the uniform characteristics of the underlying Eldersfield Mudstone bedrock, with minor undulations around water courses
- The surface mantle of glacial till (boulder clay) gives rise to seasonally waterlogged soils that are suited to dairying on short term and permanent grassland
- A pattern of small and medium sized fields is overlaid onto the flat plain providing unity across the landscape – some fields are Medieval in origin e.g. townfields around Holly Farm, and to the east of Wimboldsley
- Fields are bounded by an intact network of low thorn hedgerows with some hedgerow trees that filter views across the area. Ditches are also present along field boundaries
- Woodland cover is generally absent, although the occasional covert or copse punctuates the landscape e.g. Spring Covert and Rookery Wood
- The area is drained by a small number of brooks and streams including Sanderson's Brook and River Croco which produce local undulations in the landform
- Field ponds, formed when pits were dug to extract marl for improving fields, are a common feature of the plain
- The Shropshire Union Canal (Middlewich Branch including Stanthorne Lock) is an important part of the industrial archaeology of the area – it is also a local wildlife site recognised for its emergent vegetation and grassland
- Recreational use of the landscape is limited to a few public rights of way that follow tracks and field boundaries across the farmland and the canal towpath that forms part of the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk
- Low density of settlement – the settlement pattern is defined by small hamlets at the intersection of rural roads, and scattered red brick farmsteads with large red brick dairy barns (with round windows) and halls, some in the distinctive timber framed 'black and white' style e.g. Wimboldsley Hall
- The road network is typically comprised of narrow, rural unmarked lanes linking farmsteads, although the M6 motorway, A54, A530 and the Winsford to Crew railway line pass through the character area
- Long range views across the open, flat landscape with trees and farmsteads punctuating the skyline. The hills of the Pennines are visible in the distance
- Large scale industrial works on the southern outskirts of Middlewich have a visual influence on the *Wimboldsley & Sproston Plain*.

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- The flat plain-like topography of between 40m-50m AOD resulting from the uniform characteristics of the underlying bedrock;
- Small brooks (the River Croco and Sanderson's Brook) create gentle undulations in the surface and are bordered by riparian vegetation, drain towards Middlewich and into the River Dane;
- The uniform covering of glacial till (boulder clay) that gives rise to a seasonally waterlogged stagnogley soil that is well suited to dairying and stock rearing. There is also some growth of arable crops including fodder crops;
- The field ponds (old marl pits) that provide an indication of the former use of the natural resources of the landscape and provide important wetland habitats;

- The fields bounded by an intact hedgerow network and remnant hedgerow trees, mostly oak, that provides a unity across the landscape and contribute to biodiversity;
- Remaining isolated trees, mostly oak, where hedgerows have been removed;
- The lack of woodland cover, limited to a scattering of small deciduous copses and scrub within the existing field pattern e.g. Spring Covert and Rookery Wood, providing visual and biological diversity and provide valuable cover in a landscape largely devoid of woodland.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The pastoral character of the landscape;
- The strong, small scale field pattern and presence of ancient field systems which provide historic continuity and a mixture of small and medium sized irregular shaped fields (e.g. east of Wimboldsley and the A530 and around Catishulme Farm and Mooresbarrow Lodge) and larger regular fields where agricultural improvement has taken place (e.g. west of Wimboldsley and the A530);
- Medieval townfields around Holly Farm;
- The ponds, ditches and brooks which provide wildlife habitats and landscape diversity;
- The Shropshire Union Canal (Middlewich Branch) that provides an indication of the past use of the landscape and supports two listed bridges. The canal also provides valuable emergent vegetation and grassland habitats;
- Some of the halls and farmsteads are listed buildings;
- Recreational use of the landscape is limited to a few public rights of way that follow tracks and field boundaries across the farmland and the canal towpath that forms part of the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk long distance recreational route which links to the Dane Valley Way (which passes Sproston Green). There is no open access land.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- The low density of settlement, with small hamlets at the intersection of roads, such as Sproston Green, Wimboldsley and Occlestone Green, and scattered farmsteads that represent examples of the red brick and striking timber framed black and white local vernacular building style;
- Halls, e.g. Wimboldsley Hall, Lea Hall;
- The narrow, unmarked lanes that contribute to the rural character of the area;
- Large modern steel barns.

Perceptual / Visual

- The flat, low lying, large scale, open landscape is itself not visually prominent;
- The presence of hedgerow oaks which are particularly distinctive and contribute to biodiversity, filter views and stand out against the open skyline;
- A generally tranquil rural landscape although the main road and railway corridors contribute movement and noise locally;
- Occasional areas of woodland, marl pits and associated emergent vegetation, provide some texture and visual interest;
- The flat, open landscape (due to low vegetation cover) provides the opportunity for long ranging and expansive views across the landscape. Open skylines are a feature of the area, punctuated by the occasional hedgerow tree or farmstead;
- The open character means there is little opportunity for screening any large scale elements or for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves being highly visible - making it a visually sensitive landscape. However, the low density of settlement and few recreational opportunities means there are relatively few sensitive visual receptors in the area;
- The views to the distant Pennines.

Landscape Condition

Although the landscape is actively managed as farmland, many hedgerow trees have been lost. Some of the hedgerows are in a declining condition and others have been lost as a result of past field expansion. Some field ponds have been reduced to small, shallow features, over shaded with trees and with little open water, while others have been incorporated into gardens as ornamental features.

CWaC Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 10d: *Wimboldsley and Sproston Plain*:

- Countryside;
- Natural heritage sites of international, national, regional and/or local significance;
- Nationally designated heritage assets (on Historic England's National Heritage List for England) and locally significant heritage assets;
- Flood risk and water management.

Forces for Landscape Change

Past change

- Increasing size of farm units;
- Agricultural improvements have resulted in increased field sizes as hedgerows have been removed (leaving isolated trees in the centre of fields representing the line of former hedgerows);
- Farm diversification including introduction of riding schools, stables and paddocks;
- Loss of permanent grassland and an increase in growth of arable and fodder crops, including maize/grass silage to support the dairy industry, within an otherwise predominantly pastoral landscape; this may also result in soil erosion as a result of exposure of bare soil;
- Improved drainage and in-filling over the years has resulted in drying out of wetland habitats and ponds. Some field ponds have also been incorporated into gardens as ornamental features;
- Decline in hedgerow field boundaries and hedgerow trees, due to flail mowing which reduces diversity and kills emerging saplings, leading to loss of historic field pattern and increased use of fencing.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 10d: *Wimboldsley and Sproston Plain*

- There may be increased pressure for farm diversification including introduction of riding schools, stables and paddocks;
- Conversion of farm buildings to residential, business and industrial use, with erection of modern portal sheds to replace the lost space;
- Pressure for residential and commercial development, particularly expansion / overspill around Middlewich including the approved rural business hub development 'Cheshire FRESH';
- Planting of new woodland and hedgerow trees (planting policies within the 2014 Mersey Forest Plan) as a buffer to ancient semi-natural woodland and to screen views of large scale industry (but without obstructing long distance views of the Sandstone Ridge and Peak District);
- Search area for sand and gravel extraction;
- Clay extraction and landfill at Kinderton Lodge;
- Possible improvements to the main road corridors that run through this character area due to increase in HGVs, and M6 widening/capacity improvements;
- High Speed Phase 2 (HS2) route will potentially pass north-south through the area.

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 10d: Wimboldsley and Sproston Plain

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** the pastoral character and local built vernacular of the landscape, and **enhance** the condition of the hedgerow and tree network.

Landscape Management Guidelines

1. Conserve and manage grassland to conserve the pastoral character of the landscape and reduce soil erosion by minimising exposure of bare soil.
2. Maintain the hedgerow network, gapping up incomplete hedgerows where appropriate and avoiding harsh flail mowing, to ensure the network continues to provide a unity across the landscape as well as providing wildlife habitats.
3. Conserve the small scale pattern of fields, particularly early field systems which provide historic continuity in the landscape e.g. the small ancient irregular shaped fields to the east of the A530 and around Catishulme Farm and Mooresbarrow Lodge and the area of medieval townfields between Chapel House Farm and Holly Farm.
4. Conserve the remaining hedgerow trees and seek opportunities to encourage a new generation of hedgerow trees to increase their presence in the landscape.
5. Aim to extend broadleaved woodlands along water courses where this does not impact other valuable riparian habitats, and plant small scale copses within existing field patterns.
6. Protect and actively manage the remaining wetland habitats, including field ponds.
7. Increase the biodiversity of intensively managed grassland and arable land – create and link buffer strips along linear features such as hedgerows to create a continuous network of wildlife corridors. Seek opportunities to re-create unimproved or semi-improved species rich grassland.
8. Encourage sympathetic integration of horse paddocks through maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries, rather than sub-division of fields and erection of high visibility fencing - ensure the land use does not break up traditional field patterns.
9. Conserve and manage the remaining ditches, field ponds and brooks that are of importance for biodiversity as well as contributing to the diversity of the landscape. Prevent further drying out of wetland habitats and seek opportunities to extent/recreate areas of wetland habitat including reed swamp and willow scrub.

10. Monitor the impact of climate change and water levels on vegetation, particularly the hedgerow oaks.
11. Conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that 'suburbanise' the landscape such as close board fencing, kerbs, signage and lighting.
12. Conserve views to the distant Pennines.

Built Development Guidelines

1. Conserve the low density, scattered settlement pattern of small hamlets and farmsteads.
2. Conserve the local vernacular built style - including red brick farmsteads with large red brick dairy barns (containing round windows) and distinctive timber framed 'black and white' farmsteads. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and styles.
3. Seek to ensure that new farm buildings do not threaten the settings of older farmsteads.
4. Ensure conversion of farm buildings is sensitive to the vernacular style. Pay particular attention to the features which accompany the conversion such as driveways and gardens, ensuring that these features do not 'suburbanise' the landscape.
5. Ensure riding schools, stables and equestrian development does not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area – ensure sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, jumps and ancillary buildings.
6. Maintain the rural character of the narrow, unmarked lanes – resist improvements such as additions of kerbs and lighting that would erode the rural character of the landscape.
7. Screen extraction activity using broadleaved species. Consider the long term restoration of sand and gravel quarries for the benefit of wildlife, creating new wetland habitats and recreational access where possible.
8. Minimise the visual impact of intrusive features such as roads, railways and industrial buildings using native broadleaf planting.
9. Consider the effect of any changes on views to/from the Pennines.

