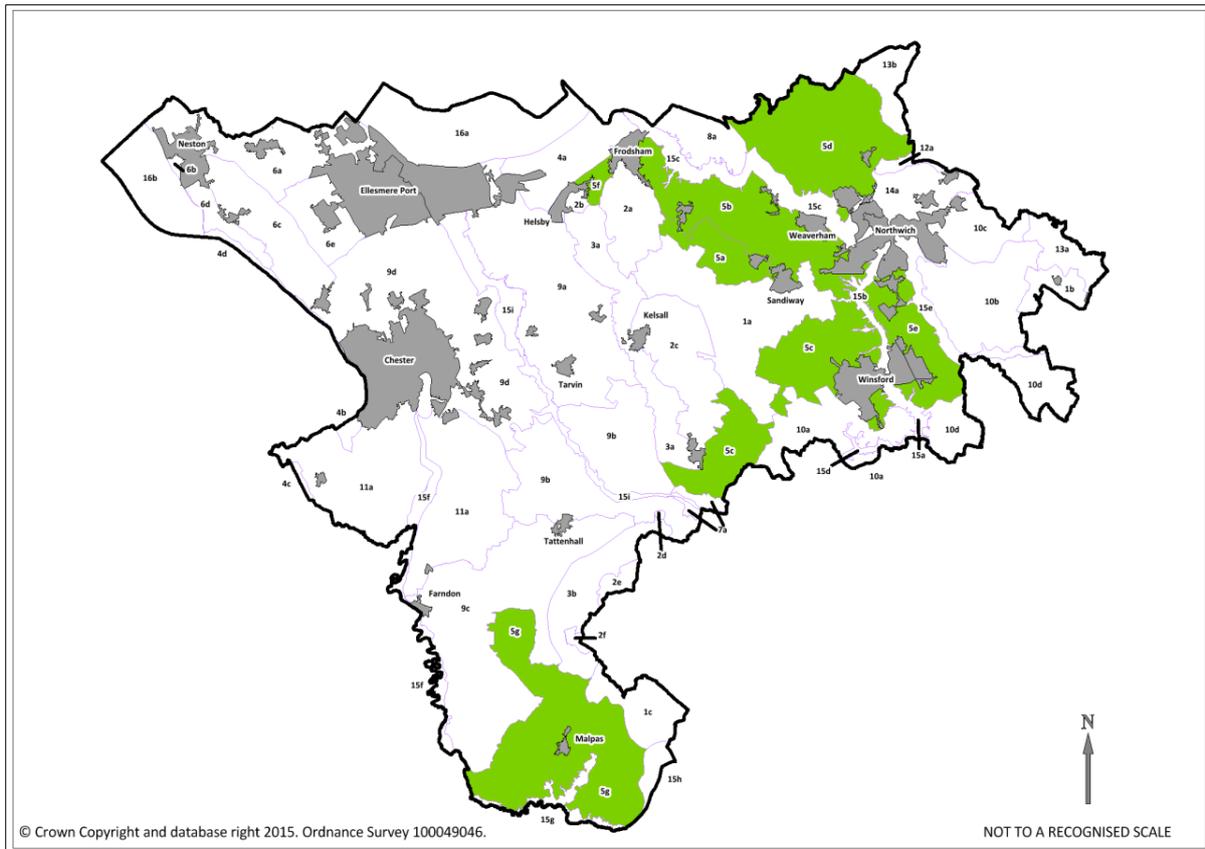


LCT 5: UNDULATING ENCLOSED FARMLAND



General Description

This character type is defined by undulating topography and the associated small to medium scale enclosure into which it is divided. Key characteristics are the generally cohesive and un-fragmented historic landscape in the south of the borough, small woodlands, ponds and streams, nucleated rural villages and scattered farmsteads. Land use is mainly pasture.

Away from main roads, railways and settlement the landscape is generally quiet and rural. Views within this type very much depend upon location and the nature of the immediate topography. There is a range of monuments from Bronze Age barrows to post medieval canal locks.

The character type is found across a large part of the Cheshire West and Chester borough; to the east between Northwich and the *Sandstone Ridge* and in the south of the borough.

Visual Character

The location of this landscape type is reflected in the prevailing views which extend to adjacent character areas, either out over the low-lying plain or up towards the often dominant *Sandstone Ridge*. Roads typically follow the rolling topography, offering extensive views from high vantage points out over the immediate field pattern and extending to the high ground in the far distance such as the Pennines in the east. Long distance views are sometimes affected by large scale industrial works in adjacent areas.

From low ground the landscape appears smaller in scale due to the increase in enclosure and the contained views where skylines are typically formed by hedgerow trees, woodland and farmsteads, with occasional electricity pylons and church spires. At many locations tree cover appears to be high, an obvious departure from the adjacent Cheshire plain. This can be attributed to the intact hedgerow system, complemented by numerous small farm woodlands or coverts upon locally prominent areas of high ground.

In certain areas arable farming predominates, especially upon better-drained ground. Where this is associated with loss of hedgerows, post and wire fences and fewer hedgerow trees, the scale of the landscape increases considerably and views become more extensive.

Physical Influences

The topography of this type varies from around 10m-135m AOD. Solid geology is a bedrock of Mercia Mudstones, overlain by till and glacio-fluvial deposits. Soils comprise slowly permeable clay stagnogleys ideally suited to grass and were a major factor in the development of the Cheshire dairy farming industry. In the south of the borough around Carden and Overton sandstone outcrops in a series of escarpments and dip slopes, creating a distinctive local landscape.

Secondary calcium carbonate deposits are common at a depth of 1-2m in the till, and prior to the 19th century was dug and spread for agricultural improvement. These marl pits led to the creation of field ponds which 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.

Small, irregular ancient field enclosures and larger late post medieval enclosures are bounded by hedgerows with an abundance of hedgerow trees. The area around Malpas contains a regionally significant late medieval landscape which preserves elements of the earlier medieval open fields. The historic landscape of this area is generally cohesive and un-fragmented and is considered to contain some of the best preserved late medieval field systems and ridge and furrow in Cheshire (together with LCA 9b: *Hargrave, Hoofield & Beeston Plain* and LCA 9c: *Tattenhall to Shocklach Plain*).

The majority of fields are grass leys for pasture, although increasing areas are cultivated for silage or feed crops including cereals and maize.

Woodland levels are higher than those of the neighbouring plain but still relatively low, concentrated mainly upon former estates such as Carden and along smaller stream sides like the Wych Valley in the south of the county where there are fragments of ancient woodland. Frequently they are associated with unimproved or semi-improved grassland habitats which have escaped modern farming practices such as the species-rich Carden meadows. Small farm copses and coverts are mainly broadleaved and there are mixed woodlands on sandier soils.

The undulating landform supports a complex natural drainage system and in some areas every stream or open ditch supports a line of mature trees.

Cultural Influences

Settlement density is relatively high. Some nucleated villages, such as Acton Bridge, have seen 20th century expansion reflecting their location close to larger places of work and the communications network. Elsewhere settlement comprises a mix of small picturesque villages such as Eaton, Little Budworth and Malpas, surrounded by a dispersed pattern of hamlets, farms and halls linked by a network of rural lanes, overlaid by main roads.

The character of the built environment includes timber framed buildings, some of which date back to the 17th century, and red and brown brick buildings. Large red brick dairy barns a particular feature of this type.

The area was divided amongst a number of estates and the holdings of major land owners are intermingled throughout the character type. Designed parkland landscapes and woodland associated with 19th century halls indicate the previous wealth of parts of the character type. Some former large parkland areas are now degraded or converted to recreational use such as golf courses, for example at Carden.

The small to medium scale field pattern reflects irregular medieval fields created by the assarting of moss, heath and woodland and the regular fields reflecting post medieval improvement. Parts of the type are also enclosed from former Royal Forest. Associated with the early fields is a network of footpaths, some of which may be of some antiquity.

Evidence of past activity include Bronze Age (c2000 -700 BC) barrows, such as the round barrow at Gallowsclough Cob, an Iron Age (c700 BC – AD 50) promontory fort at Bradley above Beech Brook, numerous medieval moated sites such as Crowton and Peel, and a rare example of a Roman Villa at Eaton (the only one known in Cheshire).

The discovery of items such as flints, burnt stones, the tip of a Neolithic axe and Bronze Age pottery indicate that rock shelters and caves located in Carden Park were likely to have been occupied in the prehistoric period. One cave was also deepened in the 18th century to house John Harris, an eccentric who lived on the estate for 20 years.

There are **seven Landscape Character Areas** within LCT 5:

5a: Norley

5b: Frodsham to Northwich

5c: Eaton, Marton & Over

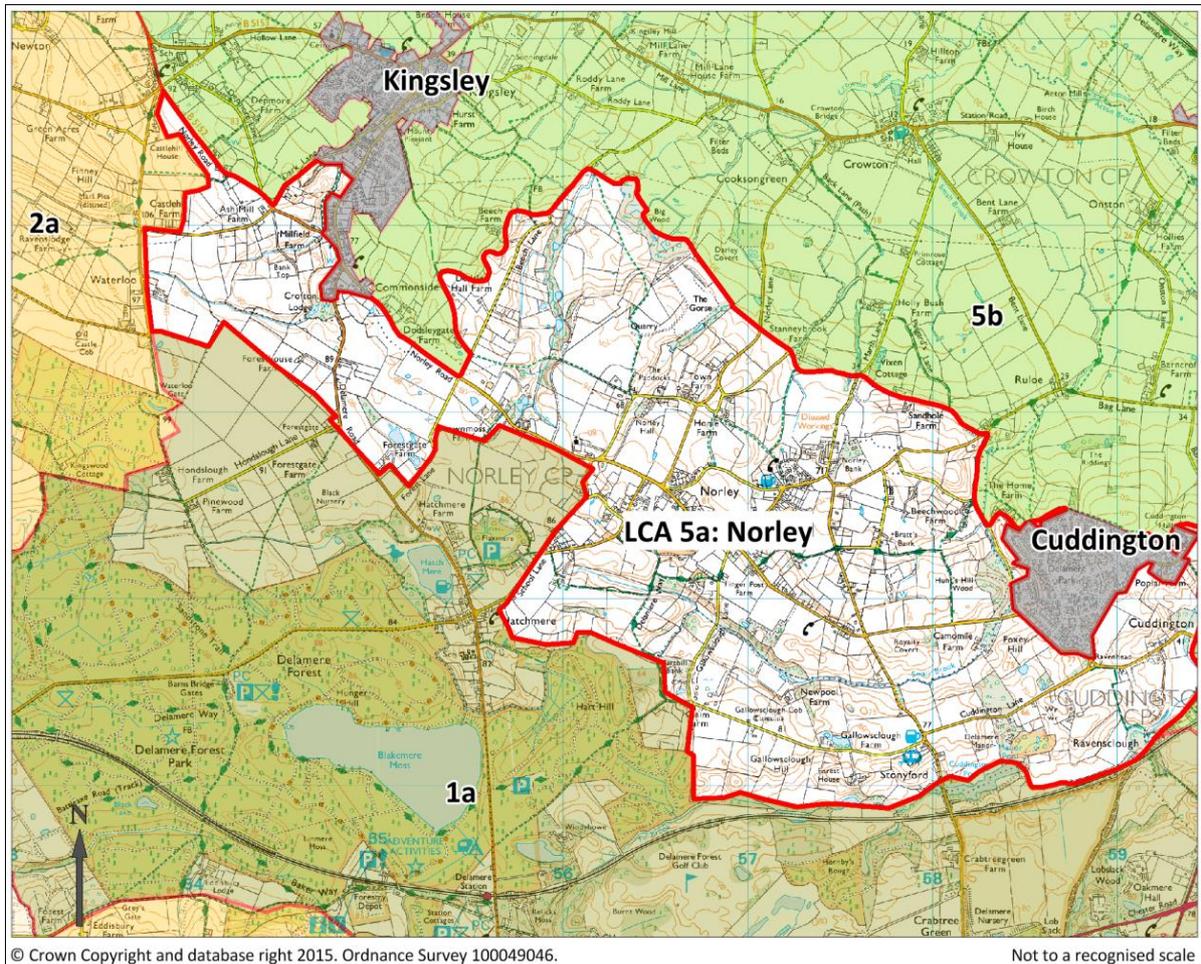
5d: Whitley and Comberbach

5e: East Winsford

5f: Helsby to Frodsham

5g: Malpas

LCA 5a: Norley



Location and Boundaries

The **Norley Undulating Enclosed Farmland** represents a particularly undulating area of farmland, influenced by glacial drift deposits, located to the north of Delamere. The boundary between Delamere and *Norley Undulating Enclosed Farmland* is defined by a change in topography and the extent of glacio-fluvial sand and gravel deposits. To the north is the *Frodsham to Northwich Undulating Enclosed Farmland* which is lower lying and less steeply undulating.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 5a: Norley

- A bedrock geology of Bollin Mudstones (part of the Mercia Mudstone Group) covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits that gives rise to an undulating topography between 35m and 90m AOD
- Steep, wooded valleys incise the hills, containing small brooks that drain towards the River Weaver. Gorse occupies steep slopes
- Glacio-fluvial deposits mask the underlying mudstones giving rise to well drained sandy and coarse loamy soils. These soils support a mixture of dairying on short term grassland and arable crops
- Small scale fields resulting from late eighteenth and early nineteenth century enclosure by private agreement and Parliamentary Act are bounded by hedgerows with hedgerow trees
- The sheltered valleys and steeper slopes support woodland – for example along Small Brook and the upper reaches of Crowton Brook
- Remnant historic orchards e.g. to the south-west of Kingsley (previously designated as Areas of Significant Local Environmental Value (ASLEV))
- Glacio-fluvial deposits have been quarried in the past
- Areas of former parkland at Norley Hall, Norley Bank, around Royalty Covert and at Delamere Park
- Passive recreation in the form of public footpaths, including part of the Delamere Way which provides access to the adjacent Delamere Forest. Breech Moss is a small area of Registered Common Land with open access
- A network of small sunken lanes link scattered farms and hamlets while the post-medieval settlement of Norley forms a focus for the area
- Characteristic vernacular architecture including sandstone farmsteads and a sandstone church at Norley
- Steep undulations and woodland contribute to an enclosed, intimate landscape
- Views across Delamere to the south-west and across *Frodsham to Northwich Undulating Enclosed Farmland* to the north-east

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- The distinctive, highly undulating topography with narrow valleys carved by small brooks that drain the area;
- The incised valleys containing small brooks that support important woodland and wetland habitats and provide landscape diversity;
- The prominent ridge at Gallowsclough Hill and steep valleys;
- The underlying Bollin Mudstones covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits (a mixture of boulder clay and glacio-fluvial sand and gravels) which give rise to a mixture of clay soils and deep, well drained sandy and coarse, that support a predominantly pastoral landscape;
- Disused sand and gravel pits and quarries, for example at Gallowsclough Lane, Norley Bank and The Gorse;
- The woodland in sheltered valleys and steeper slopes, e.g. along Small Brook and the upper reaches of Crowton Brook;
- The isolated pocket of peat on the southern edge of Norley that supports scrub woodland on an old mossland site (Breech Moss).

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The small scale field pattern that divides the landscape - a mixture of ancient irregular enclosures along the north-east facing slopes and regular Parliamentary and planned enclosures along the ridge top at Gallowsclough Hill;
- The strong intact hedgerow network along field boundaries, with hedgerow trees;
- Areas of former parkland at Norley Hall, Norley Bank, and around Royalty Covert – now all farmland - and at Delamere Park, now an area of 20th century housing (forming an extension to Cuddington Hall Conservation Area);
- Remnant historic orchards to the south-west of Kingsley, typically small domestic orchards attached to farms. Previously designated as Areas of Significant Local Environmental Value (ASLEV)(i) to protect the further decline and loss of numbers and variety of orchards that make a significant contribution to the character of settlements, and (ii) to protect the decline and loss of traditional crafts, wildlife heavens and attractive landscapes;
- The network of public footpaths, including the Delamere Way long distance recreational route which provides access to the adjacent Delamere Forest;
- Breech Moss peat mossland is a small area of Registered Common Land with open access;
- The remnants of the Motte and Bailey at Harthill Bank and the tumulus at Gallowsclough Hill are an indication that the area had been settled long before the Medieval period;
- The heavy WWII anti-aircraft battery close to Finger Post Farm which is recognised as a Scheduled Monument.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- A low density of settlement, with a network of small lanes that link scattered farms and hamlets while the post-medieval settlement of Norley forms a focus for the area. There are also a number of scattered residential properties along the roads surrounding Norley; Delamere Park is a new settlement on former estate grounds abutting the LCA;
- Building materials include red brick and sandstone with slate roofs;
- Sandstone buildings are a particular feature of the area, reflecting its location close to the *Sandstone Ridge*.

Perceptual / Visual

- The steeply undulating topography and presence of woodland and incised valleys gives a sense of enclosure;
- Exposed ridges, e.g. at Gallowsclough Hill, that are visually prominent and sensitive;
- Red sandstone and brick contrast with the green pasture, providing warm colours in the landscape;
- The area is unified by its undulating landform that is more pronounced than other character areas within this landscape type;
- The farmed landscape gives an impression of being manicured and ‘tamed’;
- Generally a quiet, rural landscape but with features that detract from the overall sense of tranquillity whilst providing sensitive visual receptors, including the relatively dense network of rural lanes, an area of ‘suburban’ style development at Delamere Park, a relatively high density of scattered settlement, and a caravan park;
- A water tower at Ravenhead forms a feature on the skyline;
- The *Norley Undulating Enclosed Farmland* forms a backdrop to views from the *Frodsham to Northwich Undulating Enclosed Farmland* to the north-east. The skyline is therefore prominent;
- Elevated and distant views from this area across *Delamere* to the south-west and across *Frodsham to Northwich Undulating Enclosed Farmland* to the north and east;
- The presence of undulating topography, woodland and hedgerow trees means there is some potential for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on the character of the landscape.

Landscape Condition

The *Norley Undulating Enclosed Farmland* is in active agricultural use and is managed for these land uses. Although the hedgerow network is generally intact, there are some gaps in the network and some over-mature hedgerow trees. Some woodlands are not being actively managed. Breech Moss has been succeeded to scrub/woodland.

CWaC Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 5a: *Norley*:

- Green Belt;
- 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

- Limited boundary management, with evidence of decline in hedgerow boundaries and decline/loss of hedgerow trees due to flail mowing;
- Under management and deterioration of some farm woodlands;
- Increase in fencing to replace hedgerow boundaries – including close board fencing associated with new garden boundaries – leading to loss of historic field pattern;
- Village expansion by way of ribbon development;
- The ‘suburbanisation’ of parts of the landscape by new built features such as kerbs, lighting, driveways and gateposts;
- A shift from grassland to crops, fallow and set-aside and a general reduction in number of farm units, accompanied by an increase in the proportion of larger holdings;
- Growth of potatoes and maize in traditionally pastoral areas resulting in soil erosion as a result of exposure of bare soil;
- Improved drainage and in-filling leading to loss of field ponds, bogs and mosses over the years. Breech moss has been succeeded to scrub/woodland;
- Steady intensification of grassland management has resulted in the loss of herb rich hay pastures;
- Loss of orchards;
- Loss of historic parkland to agricultural or recreational uses, or development;
- Under management of Breech Moss and invasion by scrub;
- Some of the broadleaved woodland resource has been replaced with non-native coniferous species in the past.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 5a: *Norley*

- Farm diversification including introduction of riding schools, stables and paddocks;
- On-going decline in traditional woodland management practices leading to general deterioration and increase in the proportion of over-mature trees;
- Location within The Mersey Forest indicates that there is likely to be additional tree planting in the area, principally on the steeper valley slopes, which would be a positive change;
- Erosion of built environment character through incremental development: pressure for small scale incremental residential development , principally around Norley and Kinngsley but also in the wider countryside;
- Pressure for conversion of farm buildings for other uses including residential, business and industrial use, with erection of modern portal sheds to replace the lost space;
- Located within an area of search for sand and gravel extraction.

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 5a: Norley

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** the rural pastoral character of the landscape and **enhance** the hedgerow and woodland network.

Landscape Management Guidelines

1. Maintain an intact hedgerow network through management of hedges and ensuring a young stock of hedgerow trees.
2. Avoid over-intensive flail mowing or ploughing too close to hedgerow boundaries – protect saplings and encourage trees to grow up at intervals along the hedgerow.
3. Consider opportunities to replace hedgerows where they have been lost.
4. Conserve the small scale pattern of fields, particularly earlier field systems which provide historic continuity in the landscape.
5. Maintain the pastoral character of the landscape and reduce soil erosion by minimising exposure of bare soil (for example as a result of increased crop growing).
6. Seek opportunities to re-create herb rich hay pastures.
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.
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 the remnant fragments of unimproved or semi-improved acid grassland on the sandy soils that are of nature conservation value and consider opportunities to extend / recreate this habitat.
10. Conserve and manage remaining field ponds, bogs and mosses that are of importance for biodiversity as well as contributing to the diversity of the landscape.
11. Seek to conserve and restore historic designed landscapes and their settings, encouraging the management/restoration of permanent pasture, parkland trees, clumps and avenues.

12. Conserve and manage earthworks, such as the remnants of the Motte and Bailey at Harthill Bank and the tumulus at Gallowsclough Hill, promoting sensitive agricultural practices in their vicinity (i.e. grazing not ploughing).
13. Support continued management of Breech Moss by Norley Wildlife Group / Cheshire Wildlife Trust.
14. Seek to replace coniferous woodlands with broadleaved woodlands.
15. Support plans to extend woodland cover, including planting on the steeper valley slopes where existing habitats are of low ecological value. Respect the small scale of the landscape when designing new woodland.
16. Seek opportunities to restore and create orchards at the farm scale – in the past nearly all farms would have had an orchard.
17. Manage existing woodlands to ensure a diverse canopy structure and rich ground flora.
18. Conserve the sense of peace and quiet away from the main roads, and conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that ‘suburbanise’ the landscape such as kerbs and large scale signage.
19. Conserve views across *Delamere* to the south-west and across *Frodsham to Northwich Undulating Enclosed Farmland* to the north and east. Consider key views when planning locations for new woodland associated with The Mersey Forest.

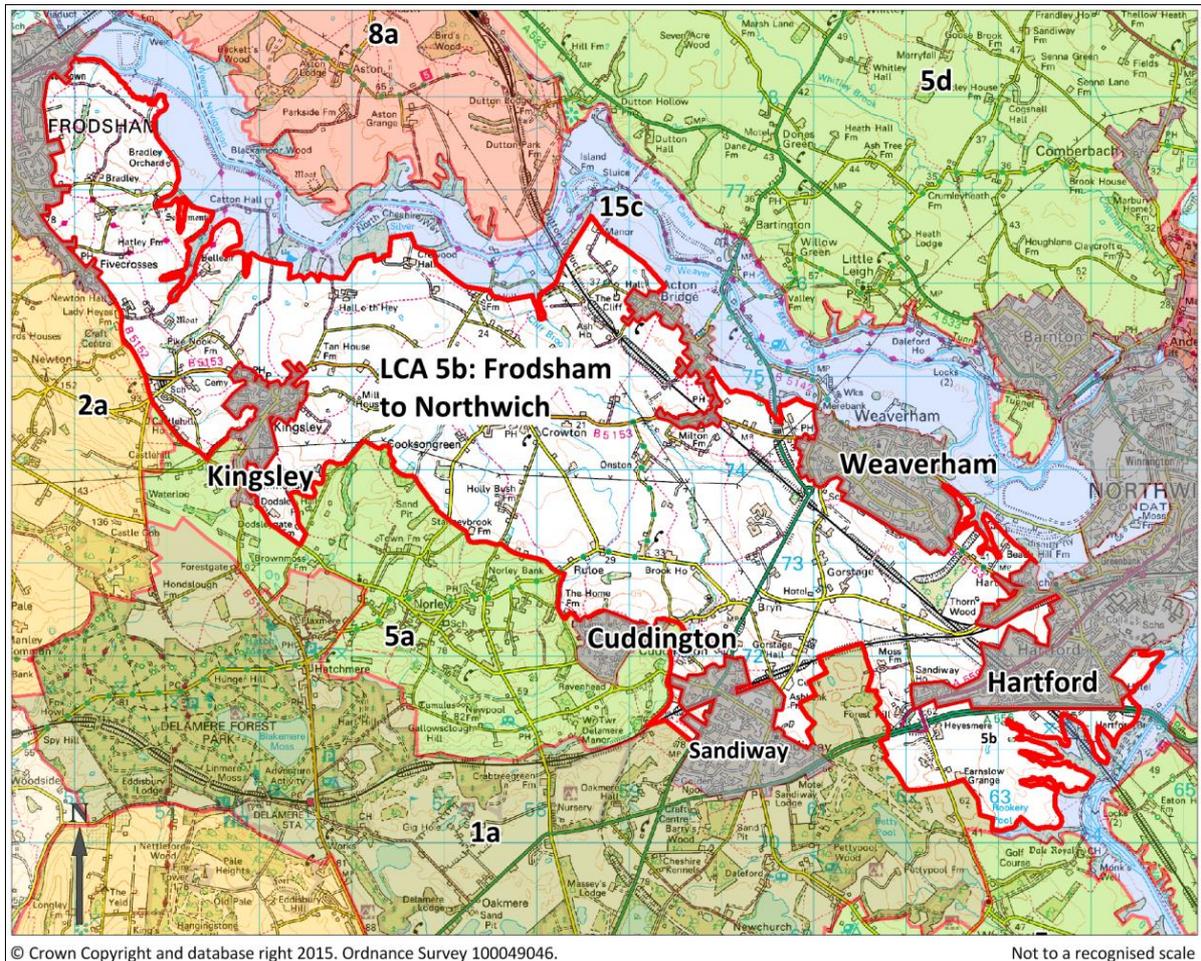
Built Development Guidelines

1. Maintain the low density, scattered settlement pattern of villages/hamlets and farmsteads, retaining Norley as the main focus for development.
2. Monitor the cumulative effect of piecemeal change in this area – ensure new built single dwellings and their gardens, drives, gates etc. do not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area through provision of appropriate guidance.
3. Conserve the local vernacular built form - red brick/sandstone buildings with slate roofs. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and styles. Resist suburban style fencing, garden boundaries, kerbs and lighting.
4. Ensure conversion of farm buildings is sensitive to the vernacular style of farmsteads in this area, by maintaining the existing structure of simple form and sandstone/red brick finish. 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. Soften built edges by introducing small scale planting schemes using native broadleaved species. Seek to integrate garden boundaries with the rural landscape through use of native hedgerows rather than close-board fencing.
6. Ensure riding schools, stables and equestrian development do not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area – ensure sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, jumps and ancillary buildings.
7. Conserve rural views from Delamere Way long distance footpath.
8. Maintain the rural setting to villages and sandstone farmsteads which are features of the landscape.
9. Consider views to the skyline ridges e.g. Gallowsclough Hill, and the function of these skyline ridges as a backdrop to the *Frodsham to Northwich Undulating Enclosed Farmland*, in relation to any change.
10. Restrict incremental linear development, which may see distinct rows of housing being connected causing suburbanisation.



LCA 5b: Frodsham to Northwich



Location and Boundaries

The **Frodsham to Northwich Undulating Enclosed Farmland** represents an area of large scale, gently undulating farmland located to the south of the Weaver Valley between Frodsham and Northwich. To the south-west is the more steeply undulating **Norley Undulating Enclosed Farmland** character area. The boundary between these two character areas is defined by a marked change in topography as the ground begins to rise towards the **Sandstone Ridge**.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 5b: *Frodsham to Northwich*

- A bedrock geology of Bollin Mudstones (part of the Mercia Mudstone Group) covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits that gives rise to a gently undulating topography between 25m and 50m AOD (rising to 90m where it joins the *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge*)
- Steep, wooded cloughs and valleys incise the hills, containing small brooks that drain towards the River Weaver, for example along Cliff Brook, and are of local wildlife importance
- Grassland meadows that are of local wildlife importance
- Boulder clay deposits mask the underlying mudstones giving rise to a predominance of poorly draining clay soils that support dairying and some arable crops
- Small scale fields resulting from late eighteenth and early nineteenth century enclosure by private agreement and Parliamentary Act are bounded by hedgerows with hedgerow trees and drainage ditches. Small scale Medieval townfields surround Kingsley
- Small farm woodlands and coverts are important features of a landscape with generally relatively low woodland cover
- Historic orchards throughout the area (previously designated as Areas of Significant Local Environmental Value (ASLEV))
- Field ponds are a feature of the lower lying areas, indicating the extraction of marl (calcareous deposits) from the boulder clay for past agricultural improvement
- Designed landscapes at Pike Nook Farm, Hefferston Grange, Weaver Holt, and Hollies Farm are associated with large country houses or farmsteads
- Passive recreation in the form of public footpaths, including parts of the Delamere Way, Eddisbury Way and North Cheshire Way
- Community woodland sites at Thorn Wood and Hazel Pear Wood are managed by the Woodland Trust and provide open access
- A network of small sunken lanes link scattered farms, hamlets and halls. Kingsley, Acton Bridge and Weaverham form nucleated settlements on the edge of the area
- Building materials are typically red brick with large red brick dairy barns a particular feature. Peel Hall is a medieval moated farmstead and a Scheduled Monument
- Promontory hillfort at Bradley, a Scheduled Monument
- Mainline railway lines, the disused ICI mineral railway, electricity pylons, the A49 and A556 pass through the area, contributing to the sense of movement and noise locally
- The *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge* and the *Norley Undulating Enclosed Farmland* form a backdrop to views, and Weaverham Church tower is a landmark on the skyline, but generally there is no strong skyline to this relatively low lying landscape
- There are panoramic views from the B5152 across the Weaver Valley

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- The narrow wooded valleys carved by small brooks that drain towards the River Weaver e.g. along Cliff Brook, and support grassland meadows of local wildlife importance e.g. at Hefferston Grange Farm;
- The wooded cloughs to the east of Brook Farm that form part of the Beechmill Wood & Pasture SSSI – these fall partly within the *Lower Weaver Valley* and partly in the *Frodsham to Northwich Undulating Enclosed Farmland* character area;
- Other important semi-natural broadleaved clough woodlands are found at Hob Hey Wood and Belleair Wood East, and are also of local wildlife importance;

- The underlying Bollin Mudstones covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits (boulder clay) which give rise to a predominance of poorly draining clay soils that support dairying and some arable crops;
- Fields bounded by thorn hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees a feature of the landscape;
- The large number of field ponds from past marl digging;
- The small farm woodlands, coverts and remnant historic orchards are important landscape features;
- Copses, clumps, avenues and mature trees associated with designed landscapes are also a feature, for example at Pike Nook Farm, Hefferston Grange, Weaverham Wood Farm, Weaver Holt, and Hollies Farm.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The small scale field pattern that divides the landscape - a mixture of ancient irregular enclosures and later planned and informal enclosures, including 20th century field reorganisation of units into larger fields. Of particular note area the small scale Medieval townfields that form a setting to Kingsley;
- The ancient irregular enclosures provide a sense of time depth in the landscape;
- The strong intact hedgerow network along field boundaries, with an abundance of hedgerow trees;
- Areas of parkland/formal designed planting associated with large houses and farmsteads, dating from the wealthy 19th century, for example Pike Nook Farm, Hefferston Grange, Weaverham Wood Farm, Weaver Holt, and Hollies Farm;
- Historic orchards scattered throughout the area, for example at Peel Hall, Hollow Lane, Mill Lane, and on the edge of Kingsley. Previously designated as Areas of Significant Local Environmental Value (ASLEV)(i) to protect the further decline and loss of numbers and variety of orchards that make a significant contribution to the character of settlements, and (ii) to protect the decline and loss of traditional crafts, wildlife heavens and attractive landscapes;
- The network of public footpaths, including parts of the Delamere Way, Eddisbury Way and North Cheshire Way long distance recreational routes;
- Community woodland sites at Thorn Wood and Hazel Pear Wood are managed by the Woodland Trust and provide open access with a network of informal paths and rides;
- The promontory fort at Bradley, a Scheduled Monument, indicates the strategic importance of the River Weaver;
- Peel Hall, a medieval moated farmstead and a Scheduled Monument.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- A low density of settlement, with a network of narrow lanes (often unmarked) that link scattered farms and hamlets such as Onston (a Conservation Area) and scattered properties including thatched cottages;
- Kingsley, Weaverham and Hartford (also Conservation Areas) and Acton Bridge form nucleated settlements on the edge of the *Frodsham to Northwich Undulating Enclosed Farmland* character area that have seen considerable 20th century growth, but retain historic cores;
- Building materials are typically red brick but with some sandstone and white-wash/rendered finishes, with large red brick dairy barns a particular feature – some of the farmsteads and barns are listed.

Perceptual / Visual

- The large scale, undulating landscape overlaid by a small scale field pattern allows varying views, from enclosed low lying views to open long distance views from higher ground which is visually more sensitive;

- The simplicity of the mostly pastoral land use and the pattern of elements such as hedgerows and trees provides landscape unity, texture and seasonal colour;
- Red sandstone and brick contrast with the green pasture, providing warm colours in the landscape;
- The farmed landscape gives an impression of being manicured and ‘tamed’;
- Generally a quiet, rural landscape but with features that detract from the overall sense of tranquillity whilst providing sensitive visual receptors, including the main roads and railway, the relatively dense network of rural lanes, small scale industry (including sewage works) and the presence of sizeable settlements including ‘suburban’ development and industry on the edge of the character area;
- The *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge* and the *Norley Undulating Enclosed Farmland* form a backdrop to views, but generally there is no strong skyline to this relatively low lying landscape other than hedgerow trees and electricity pylons;
- Weaverham Church tower is a landmark on the skyline;
- The presence of undulating topography, woodland and hedgerow trees means there is some potential for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on the character of the landscape;
- The character area is visible from the *Whitley & Comberbach Undulating Enclosed Farmland* to the northeast.

Landscape Condition

The *Frodsham to Northwich Undulating Enclosed Farmland* is in active agricultural use and is managed for these land uses. Although the hedgerow network is generally intact, there are some gaps in the network and some over-mature hedgerow trees. Some woodlands are not being actively managed.

CWac Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 5b: *Frodsham to Northwich*:

- Green Belt;
- 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

- Limited boundary management, with evidence of decline in hedgerow boundaries and decline/loss of hedgerow trees due to flail mowing;
- Increase in fencing to replace hedgerow boundaries leading to loss of historic field pattern;
- A shift from grassland to crops, fallow and set-aside and a general reduction in number of farm units, accompanied by an increase in the proportion of larger holdings;
- Growth of potatoes and maize in traditionally pastoral areas, resulting in soil erosion as a result of exposure of bare soil;
- Improved drainage and in-filling leading to loss of field ponds, bogs and mosses;
- Steady intensification of grassland management has resulted in the loss of herb rich hay pastures;
- Loss of orchards.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 5b: *Frodsham to Northwich*

- Farm diversification including introduction of riding schools, stables and paddocks;
- Location within The Mersey Forest indicates that there is likely to be additional tree planting in the area, principally restoring and creating Cheshire orchards, copses and small woodlands within the existing field pattern which would be a positive change;
- Pressure for settlement expansion, and small scale residential development , principally around the main settlements abutting the character area but also in the wider countryside;
- Pressure for conversion of farm buildings for other uses including residential, business and industrial use, with erection of modern portal sheds to replace the lost space;
- Pressure for built development associated with the main roads that pass through the landscape (A49 and A556);
- Erosion of recreational sites by car parking;
- Located within an area of search for sand and gravel extraction.

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 5b: Frodsham to Northwich

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** the pastoral character of the landscape and to **enhance** the hedgerow and woodland network.

Landscape Management Guidelines

1. Maintain an intact hedgerow network through management of hedges and ensuring a young stock of hedgerow trees.
2. Avoid over-intensive flail mowing or ploughing too close to hedgerow boundaries – protect saplings and encourage trees to grow up at intervals along the hedgerow.
3. Consider opportunities to replace hedgerows where they have been lost.
4. Conserve the small scale pattern of fields, particularly earlier field systems which provide historic continuity in the landscape.
5. Support retention of pasture and grazing to maintain the pastoral character of the landscape and reduce soil erosion by minimising exposure of bare soil.
6. Seek opportunities to re-create herb rich hay pastures.
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.
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 the remnant fragments of unimproved or semi-improved grassland that are of nature conservation value and consider opportunities to extend / recreate this habitat.
10. Conserve and manage remaining field ponds that are of importance for biodiversity as well as contributing to the diversity of the landscape.
11. Seek to conserve and restore historic designed landscapes and their settings, encouraging the management/restoration of permanent pasture, parkland trees, clumps and avenues.
12. Conserve and manage earthworks, such as the moated sites, promoting sensitive agricultural practices in their vicinity (i.e. grazing not ploughing).

13. Support plans to enhance woodland cover in areas of low ecological value, including restoring and creating orchards, copses and small woodlands within the existing field pattern. Respect the small scale of the landscape when designing new woodland.
14. Manage existing woodlands to ensure a diverse canopy structure and rich ground flora.
15. Conserve the sense of peace and quiet away from the main roads, and conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that 'suburbanise' the landscape such as kerbs and large scale signage.
16. Conserve panoramic views from the B5152 across the Weaver Valley and views to the church tower at Weaverham, particularly from the Trent and Mersey Canal. Consider these key views when planning locations for new woodland, for example associated with The Mersey Forest.
17. Provide informal car parking areas adjacent to recreational sites to avoid erosion of the landscape in these areas.

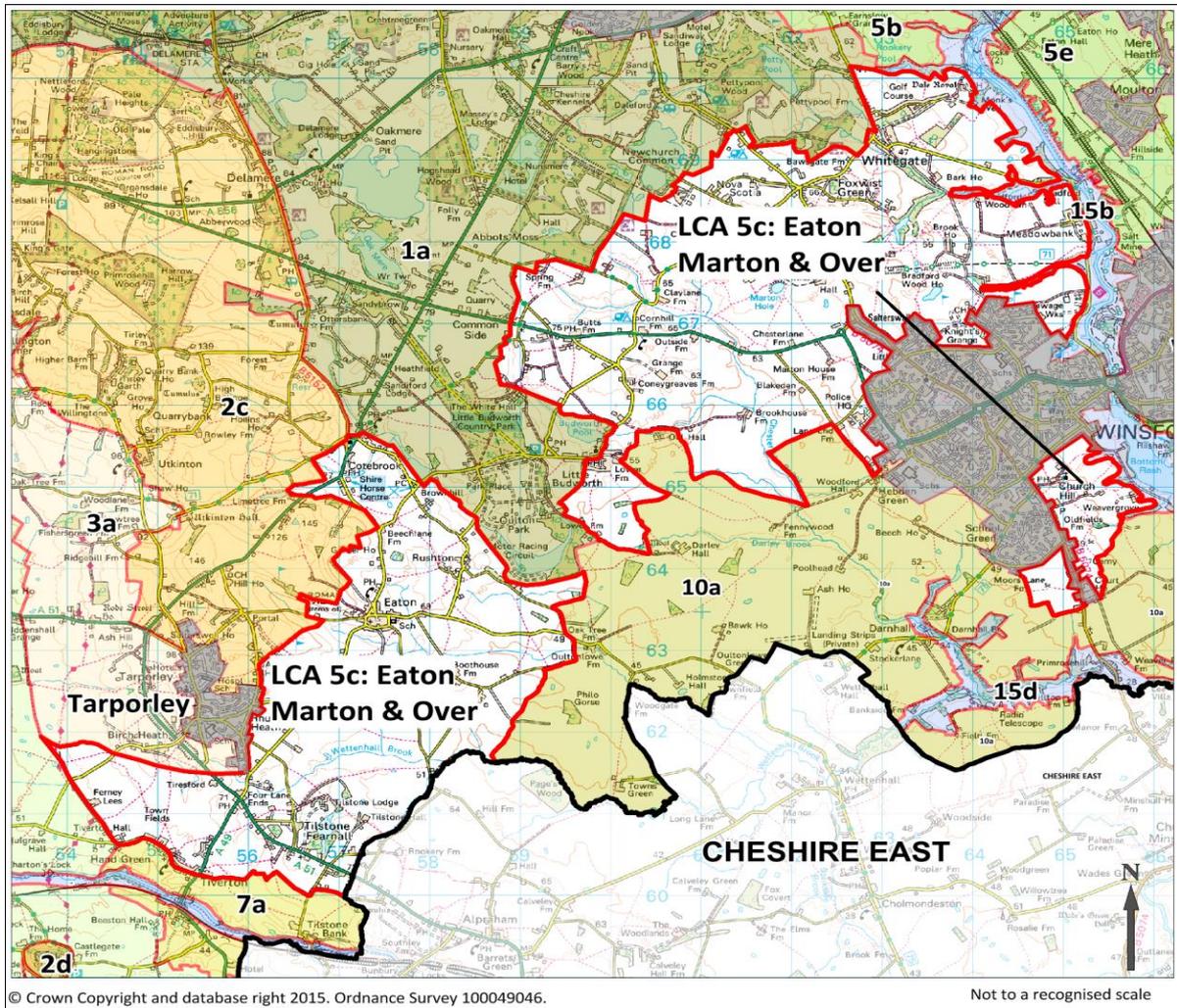
Built Development Guidelines

1. Maintain the low density, scattered settlement pattern of villages/hamlets and farmsteads.
2. Monitor the cumulative effect of piecemeal change in this area – ensure new built single dwellings and their gardens, drives, gates etc. do not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area through provision of appropriate guidance.
3. Conserve the local vernacular built form - red brick/sandstone or white washed farmsteads and buildings. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and styles. Resist suburban style fencing, garden boundaries, kerbs and lighting.
4. Seek to integrate garden boundaries with the rural landscape through use of native hedgerows.
5. Retain the red brick dairy barns and their rural settings as features of the landscape.
6. Local distinctiveness: maintain the rural setting to villages and sandstone farmsteads which are features of the landscape.
7. Ensure conversion of farm buildings is sensitive to the vernacular style of farmsteads in this area, by maintaining the existing structure of simple form and sandstone/red brick finish. Pay particular attention to the features which accompany the conversion such as driveways and gardens, ensuring that these features do not 'suburbanise' the landscape.

8. Soften built edges by introducing small scale planting schemes using native broadleaved species.
9. Ensure riding schools, stables and equestrian development do not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area – ensure sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, jumps and ancillary buildings.
10. Consider views from Delamere Way, Eddisbury Way and North Cheshire Way long distance footpaths in any new development proposals.
11. Ensure signage is appropriate to its setting.
12. Conserve the open setting of Weaverham Church on the skyline.
13. Refer to local Village Design Statement (VDS) and Neighbourhood Plans when considering change.



LCA 5c: Eaton, Marton & Over



Location and Boundaries

The **Eaton, Marton & Over Undulating Enclosed Farmland** is a transitional area of gently undulating farmland lying between the elevated areas of *Delamere* and the *Eddisbury Sandstone Ridge* to the west, and the flat lowland of the Cheshire plain to the south and west. It extends from Tiverton and Tarpurley in the west to wrap around the north western and southern edges of Winsford to the east, where it abuts the *Weaver Valley*.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 5c: Eaton, Marton & Over

- A bedrock geology of Bollin Mudstones (part of the Mercia Mudstone Group) covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits that gives rise to a gently undulating topography between 50m and 70m AOD
- Steep wooded cloughs incise the hills, containing small brooks that drain eastwards towards the River Weaver, for example Bogart Brook, Pettypool Brook, Cat's Clough (ancient woodland) and Firwood Brook, and are of local wildlife importance
- Glacio-fluvial outwash deposits of sands and gravels support some fragments of acid grassland/heathland
- Unimproved meadows and species rich grassland along brooks and on lower lying areas e.g. Beauty Bank and Brookhouse Farm Meadows
- Boulder clay deposits mask the underlying mudstones giving rise to a predominance of poorly draining clay soils that support dairying and some arable crops
- Small scale fields resulting from late eighteenth and early nineteenth century enclosure by private agreement and Parliamentary Act are bounded by hedgerows with hedgerow trees and drainage ditches. Small scale medieval townfields surround Eaton, Little Budworth, Tiverton, Marton House Farm and Church Hill
- Small farm woodlands, coverts and willow withy beds are important features of a landscape with generally relatively low woodland cover
- Field ponds are a feature of the lower lying areas, indicating the extraction of marl (calcareous deposits) from the boulder clay for past agricultural improvement
- Larger pools are also a feature of the area, e.g. Marton Hole, Bradford Wood Pool, Sixes Pool
- Designed landscape at Tilstone Hall with woodland and ornamental landscaped gardens associated with the hall, Tilstone lodge and Tilstone Hall Farm
- Recreational opportunities provided by public rights of way including the Whitegate Way (disused mineral railway mainly for transporting salt), picnic sites, fishing lakes and golf courses
- A network of small rural lanes link scattered farms, cottages, hamlets and halls. Eaton, Little Budworth and Whitegate form nucleated settlements; Tiverton is a linear village; with Winsford / Over a large conurbation on the eastern edge of the area
- Eaton, Little Budworth and Tiverton (and Tarporley abutting the LCA) are Conservation Areas, with a number of listed buildings, with others across the area e.g. Tilstone Hall Folly
- Building materials are typically red brick and sandstone, with large red brick dairy barns and thatched cottages particular features
- The 'Cheshire railings' – the black and white painted estate railings
- The site of Vale Royal Abbey, once the largest Cistercian abbey church in Britain, is a Scheduled Monument located in Vale Royal Park; the house is a Grade II* listed building
- Moated sites were once a feature – surviving medieval sites on the outskirts of Eaton and Marton Hall are Scheduled Monuments
- Roman Villa site at Eaton, the only such site in Cheshire
- The A49, A51 and A54 pass through the area, contributing to the sense of movement and noise locally (as does Oulton park race track which lies just outside the area)
- The skyline is punctuated by hedgerow trees, copses and farm buildings. The church spire at Over forms a prominent landmark feature
- Long distance views from high vantage ground including important views to Beeston Castle and Peckforton Castle on the wooded *Sandstone Ridge* to the south and Vale Royal Park on the edge of the Weaver Valley.

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- The undulating topography, being more elevated in the north west adjoining the *Sandstone Ridge* and generally flattening out to the south where it merges with the plain;
- The narrow valleys and wooded cloughs carved by small brooks that drain eastwards towards the River Weaver e.g., Shay's Lane Brook, Cat's Clough (ancient woodland), Pettypool Brook and Shaw's Wood that include areas of species rich unimproved grassland and important wetland habitats– these fall partly within the *Mid Weaver Valley/Lower Weaver Valley* and partly in the *Eaton, Marton and Over Undulating Enclosed Farmland* character areas;
- Meadows at Coach Road Farm, species rich grassland at Beauty Bank, wet woodland and ponds at Outside Farm, and wetland habitats at Sixes Pool (all recognised as local wildlife sites); also, depressions in the undulating landscape support wetland habitats such as reed swamp and willow scrub habitats at Bradford Wood Pond;
- The underlying Bollin Mudstones (Northwich Halite Formation) covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits (mostly boulder clay) which give rise to a predominance of poorly draining clay soils that support dairying and some arable crops;
- The isolated pockets of glacio-fluvial sand and gravels particularly adjacent to Delamere Forest which support some small areas of acid grassland or heathland (e.g. along Whitegate Way and off Bradford Way on the edge of the Weaver Valley). Some of the deposits have been quarried in the past – for example Marton Hole, Bradford Wood Pool and Sixes Pool are the result of land subsidence/quarrying;
- Fields bounded by thorn hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees a feature of the landscape;
- The large number of field ponds from past marl digging contribute to the wetland habitats;
- The small farm woodlands, coverts and withy beds are important landscape features;
- Copses, clumps, avenues and mature trees associated with the designed landscapes at Tilstone Hall and Vale Royal Park are also a feature.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The small scale field pattern that divides the landscape - a mixture of ancient irregular enclosures and larger, late post medieval enclosures. Of particular note area the small scale Medieval townfields that Eaton, Little Budworth, Tiverton, Marton House Farm and Church Hill;
- The ancient irregular enclosures provide a sense of time depth in the landscape;
- The strong intact hedgerow network along field boundaries, with an abundance of hedgerow trees;
- Areas of parkland associated with large houses and farmsteads, for example Tilstone Hall / Tilstone Hall Farm;
- The significant parkland site of Vale Royal Abbey (once the largest Cistercian abbey church in Britain, founded by Edward I and endowed in 1277) a Scheduled Monument, replaced by a mansion house now apartments and the club house for Vale Royal Golf Club;
- The network of public footpaths, including the Whitegate Way disused mineral railway which once transported salt;
- Other recreational opportunities include picnic facilities at the former Whitegate Station and north of Brownhill (close to Oulton Park), fishing at Sixes Pool and two golf courses;
- The two surviving moated sites, both Scheduled Monuments - an area of earthworks on the south-eastern outskirts of Eaton and a moated farmstead at Marton Hall;
- Roman Villa site at Eaton, the only such site in Cheshire;
- A number of road side cross bases are also Scheduled Monuments;
- Eaton, Little Budworth and Tiverton (and Tarporley abutting the LCA) are Conservation Areas, with a number of listed buildings.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- A low density of settlement, with a network of narrow lanes that link scattered farms, cottages and hamlets while Eaton, Little Budworth and Whitegate form nucleated settlements; Tiverton is a linear village;
- Winsford / Over is a large conurbation on the eastern edge of the area that has seen considerable 20th century growth, expanding into the landscape;
- Other 20th century linear residential development along roads e.g. north of Whitegate, Salterswell, Marton Green, and Meadowbank;
- Building materials are typically red brick, sandstone and white-wash finishes, with large red brick dairy barns and thatched cottages particular features – some of the farmsteads and barns are listed;
- The red brick walls surrounding the Rushton Estate also have a visual influence on the landscape;
- The ‘Cheshire railings’ – the black and white painted estate railings, some of which are in a declining condition.

Perceptual / Visual

- The large scale, undulating landscape overlaid by a small scale field pattern allows varying views, from enclosed low lying views to open long distance views from higher ground which is visually more sensitive e.g. views from Vale Royal Park north to the church spire at Northwich and south to the church spire at Over; important views from high ground above Tiverton to Beeston Castle and Peckforton Castle on the wooded *Sandstone Ridge* to the south;
- The simplicity of the mostly pastoral land use and the pattern of elements such as hedgerows and trees provides landscape unity, texture and seasonal colour;
- Red sandstone and brick contrast with the green pasture, providing warm colours in the landscape;
- The farmed landscape gives an impression of being manicured and ‘tamed’;
- The parkland at Vale Royal Abbey has a significant landscape and visual impact;
- Generally a quiet, rural landscape but with features that detract from the overall sense of tranquillity whilst providing sensitive visual receptors, including the main roads, the relatively dense network of rural lanes, the scattered settlement, the nearby presence of Oulton Park racing circuit, and the sizeable settlement of Winsford/Over including ‘suburban’ development, a sewage works and industry on the edge of the character area;
- No strong skyline to this relatively low lying landscape other than hedgerow trees, copses and farm buildings;
- The spire of John the Evangelist’s Church at Over is a prominent landmark;
- The presence of undulating topography, woodland and hedgerow trees means there is some potential for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on the character of the landscape;
- The western part of the area is visible from the *Eddisbury Sandstone Ridge* above Eaton. There are also some views into the area from *Delamere*, although these tend to be glimpsed.

Landscape Condition

The *Eaton, Marton & Over Undulating Enclosed Farmland* is in active agricultural use and is managed for these land uses. Although the hedgerow network is generally intact, there are some gaps in the network and some over-mature hedgerow trees. Some woodlands are not being actively managed. There is relatively little unimproved species rich grassland remaining. There are areas of 20th century linear residential development along roads e.g. north of Whitegate, Salterswell, and Marton Green which give the landscape a ‘suburban’ appearance in places.

CWaC Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 5c: *Eaton, Marton & Over*:

- 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;
- Candidate Key Settlement Gap between Tarpurley and Tilstone Fearnall / Four Lanes End.

Forces for Landscape Change

Past change

- Limited boundary management, with evidence of decline in hedgerow boundaries (trees left 'in-field') and decline/loss of hedgerow trees due to flail mowing or ploughing too close to hedgerow boundaries;
- Increase in fencing to replace hedgerow boundaries leading to loss of historic field pattern;
- A shift from grassland to crops, fallow and set-aside and a general reduction in number of farm units, accompanied by an increase in the proportion of larger holdings;
- Growth of potatoes and maize in traditionally pastoral areas, resulting in soil erosion as a result of exposure of bare soil;
- Improved drainage and in-filling leading to loss of field ponds but this appears to have halted;
- Steady intensification of grassland management has resulted in pasture 'improvement' and the gradual loss of unimproved species rich grassland, but this appears to have halted;
- Decline in interest in willow products has resulted in the lack of coppicing of withy beds and their loss over the 20th century;
- Industrial / employment development at Woodford Park on the western edge of Winsford, which is well integrated into the landscape.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 5c: *Eaton, Marton & Over*

- Farm diversification including introduction of riding schools, stables and paddocks;
- Location within The Mersey Forest indicates that there is likely to be additional tree planting in the area, principally the establishment of a well-wooded landscape around the periphery of Winsford and in particular around industrial estates, which would be a positive change;
- Regeneration of derelict and underused land on the edge of Winsford;
- Pressure for residential and industrial / employment development , principally on the outskirts of Winsford/Over abutting the character area but also in the wider countryside, that could affect the close relationship between town and country;
- There could be lack of management of farmland on the edge of urban areas in the hope that it becomes favoured for development;
- Pressure for conversion of farm buildings for other uses including residential, business and industrial use, with erection of modern portal sheds to replace the lost space;
- Decline in condition and extent of 'Cheshire railings' – the black and white painted estate railings;
- Pressure for built development associated with the main roads that pass through the landscape (A49, A51 and A54);
- Erosion of recreational sites by car parking;
- The area around Marton Green is an area of search for sand and gravel extraction.

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 5c: Eaton, Marton & Over

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** the rural, pastoral character of the landscape and to **enhance** the grassland, hedgerow and woodland network.

Landscape Management Guidelines

1. Maintain an intact hedgerow network through management of hedges and ensuring a young stock of hedgerow trees.
2. Avoid over-intensive flail mowing or ploughing too close to hedgerow boundaries – protect saplings and encourage trees to grow up at intervals along the hedgerow.
3. Consider opportunities to replace hedgerows where they have been lost.
4. Conserve the small scale pattern of fields, particularly earlier field systems which provide historic continuity in the landscape.
5. Support retention of pasture and grazing to maintain the pastoral character of the landscape and reduce soil erosion by minimising exposure of bare soil.
6. Seek opportunities to re-create / extend species rich grassland.
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.
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 the remnant fragments of unimproved and semi-improved grassland that are of nature conservation value and consider opportunities to extend this habitat.
10. Conserve and manage remaining field ponds, pools and ditches that are of importance for biodiversity as well as contributing to the diversity of the landscape.
11. Seek opportunities to extent/re-create areas of reed swamp and willow scrub and other wetland habitats.
12. Seek to conserve and restore historic designed landscapes and their settings, encouraging the management/restoration of permanent pasture, parkland trees, clumps and avenues.

13. Conserve and manage earthworks, such as the moated sites, promoting sensitive agricultural practices in their vicinity (i.e. grazing not ploughing).
14. Support plans to enhance woodland cover in areas of low ecological value, particularly extending broadleaved woodlands along cloughs, and willow scrub in wet areas. Respect the small scale of the landscape when designing new woodland.
15. Support plans to establish a well-wooded landscape around the periphery of Winsford, avoiding areas of ecological value. Consider views when designing new woodland - conserve panoramic views from Vale Royal Park to views to the landmark of the church spire at Over.
16. Manage existing woodlands to ensure a diverse native canopy structure and rich ground flora.
17. Consider bringing withy beds back into coppice management, exploring opportunities for use of the willow as wood-fuel and/or creating markets for traditional craft skills, for example withies for basket making.
18. Conserve the sense of peace and quiet away from the main roads, and conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that 'suburbanise' the landscape such as kerbs and large scale signage.
19. Conserve panoramic views when planning locations for new woodland, for example associated with The Mersey Forest - including views from Vale Royal Park to the landmark of the church spire at Over and to the church spire at Northwich, and important views from high ground above Tiverton to Beeston Castle and Peckforton Castle on the wooded *Sandstone Ridge* to the south.
20. Screen quarrying 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.
21. Protect above ground archaeological features, such as the moated sites, promoting sensitive agricultural practices in their vicinity (i.e. grazing not ploughing).

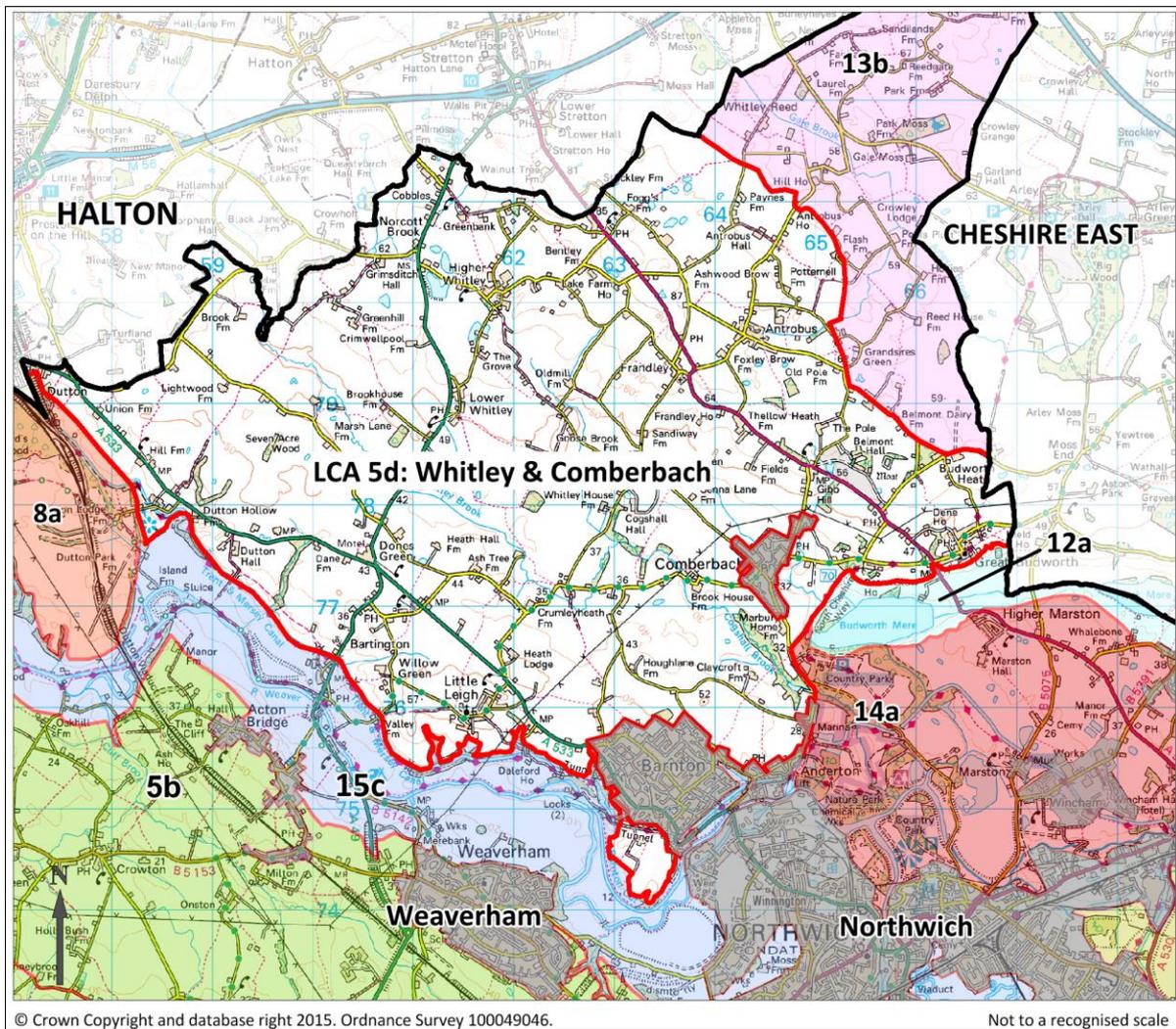
Built Development Guidelines

1. Maintain the low density, scattered settlement pattern of villages/hamlets and farmsteads.
2. Monitor the cumulative effect of piecemeal change in this area – ensure new built single dwellings and their gardens, drives, gates etc. do not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area through provision of appropriate guidance. Maintain a distinction between urban and rural areas.

3. Conserve the local vernacular built form - red brick/sandstone or white washed farmsteads and buildings, and thatched cottages. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and styles. Resist suburban style fencing, garden boundaries, kerbs and lighting.
4. Seek to integrate garden boundaries with the rural landscape through use of native hedgerows.
5. Retain the red brick dairy barns, including their round windows which are a characteristic feature, and their rural settings as features of the landscape.
6. Conserve the black and white estate railings known as 'Cheshire Railings'.
7. Maintain the rural setting to villages and sandstone farmsteads which are features of the landscape.
8. Ensure conversion of farm buildings is sensitive to the vernacular style of farmsteads in this area, by maintaining the existing structure of simple form and sandstone/red brick finish. Pay particular attention to the features which accompany the conversion such as driveways and gardens, ensuring that these features do not 'suburbanise' the landscape.
9. Soften built edges and views of infrastructure by introducing small scale planting schemes using native broadleaved species.
10. Ensure riding schools, stables and equestrian development do not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area – ensure sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, jumps and ancillary buildings.
11. Conserve rural views from the Whitegate Way and from the main picnic site areas when considering the location for new built development.
12. Ensure signage is appropriate to its setting.
13. Refer to local Village Design Statement (VDS) when considering change.
14. Maintain the close relationship between Winsford and its rural landscape, ensuring land on the edge of the urban area remains well managed.
15. Conserve the settings of Tarporley, Eaton, Little Budworth, Whitegate and St Chad's that are designated as Conservation Areas – refer to the Conservation Area Appraisals when considering change in these areas.
16. Conserve the open undeveloped area between Tarporley and Tilstone Fearnall / Four Lanes End 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.



LCA 5d: Whitley and Comberbach



Location and Boundaries

The **Whitley & Comberbach Undulating Enclosed Farmland** represents an area of large scale gently undulating farmland located to the north of Northwich/Barnton/Anderton and the Weaver Valley. To the west, separated by the Trent & Mersey Canal, lies the *Aston Heathy Farmland and Woodland*, to the north east the landscape gradually forms a transition to the peaty and alluvial lowlands of the *Arley West Lowland Farmland and Mosses* and to the south-east the landscape meets *Budworth Mere* LCA.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 5d: *Whitley and Comberbach*

- A bedrock geology of Bollin Mudstones (part of the Mercia Mudstone Group) covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits that gives rise to a gently undulating topography generally between 30m and 60m AOD, but rising to almost 90m north of Higher Whitley
- Steep wooded cloughs incise the hills, containing small brooks that drain westwards towards the River Weaver, for example Whitley Brook and Cogshall Brook. Semi-improved species rich grassland is found alongside some brooks
- The pastoral character of the landscape - boulder clay deposits mask the underlying mudstones giving rise to a predominance of poorly draining clay soils that support dairying and some arable crops
- Late eighteenth and early nineteenth century enclosure by private agreement and Parliamentary Act which produces a strong field pattern of hedgerows with hedgerow trees (mainly oak)
- Small farm woodlands, coverts and designed copses/clumps in parkland are important features of a landscape with generally relatively low woodland cover
- Field ponds are a feature of the lower lying areas, indicating the extraction of marl (calcareous deposits) from the boulder clay for past agricultural improvement
- Water bodies to the west of Higher Whitley result from sand/gravel extraction in an area of glacio-fluvial deposits
- Recreational opportunities provided by public rights of way including part of the Delamere Way long distance route, picnic sites, fishing lakes and golf courses
- A network of small rural lanes link scattered farms, cottages, hamlets and villages, with Comberbach the main settlement in the character area
- Great Budworth, Higher Whitley and Lower Whitley are Conservation Areas, with a number of listed buildings, with others across the area
- Building materials are typically red brick and sandstone, with large red brick dairy barns and thatched cottages particular features
- The 'Cheshire railings' – the black and white painted estate railings
- Moated sites were once a feature – a former moated farmstead beside Belmont Hall is a Scheduled Monument
- Generally a quiet, rural landscape although the A49, A533 and A559 pass through the area, contributing to the sense of movement and noise locally
- A comparatively low lying landscape without a strong skyline – formed by hedgerow trees, woodland and electricity pylons (south). The church at Great Budworth forms a prominent landmark feature
- Long distance views from the southern edge of the area across the Weaver Valley and from the A559 which runs along the ridge top to the east
- Views of large scale industrial works at Northwich (south) and Preston Brook (north west) that lie outside the character area's boundary

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- The undulating topography, being more elevated in the north and east and generally falling to the south and west down to the River Weaver;

- The steep narrow valleys and wooded cloughs carved by small brooks that drain either to the south or west towards the River Weaver, e.g. ancient woodland at Dutton Dingles, Dutton Dean (along Dean Brook), and Kennel Wood and Hopyards Wood (both along Cogshall Brook);
- The underlying Bollin Mudstones (Northwich Halite Formation) covered by a mantle of glacial till deposits (mostly boulder clay with pockets of glacio-fluvial sand and gravel) which give rise to a predominance of poorly draining clay soils that support dairying and some arable crops;
- The isolated pockets of glacio-fluvial sand and gravel deposits to the west of Higher Whitley which have been quarried to leave water bodies in the landscape;
- Fields bounded by thorn hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees a feature of the landscape;
- The large number of field ponds from past marl digging contribute to the wetland habitats;
- The small farm woodlands, coverts and woodlands associated with designed landscapes are important landscape features;
- Copses, clumps, avenues and mature trees associated with the designed landscapes at Belmont Hall and Cogshall Hall (both on the local register of Historic Parks and Gardens) are also features in the landscape.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The variety of field sizes, with survival of a large number of small, irregular enclosures (ancient fields contributing a sense of time depth to the landscape) interspersed by larger, straight-sided fields relating to later enclosures, including 20th century field reorganisation of units into larger fields;
- Of particular note area the small scale Medieval townfields associated with Comberbach;
- The strong intact hedgerow network along field boundaries, with an abundance of hedgerow trees;
- Areas of parkland associated with large houses and farmsteads at Belmont Hall and Cogshall Hall;
- The network of public footpaths, including part of the Delamere Way long distance route;
- The Bowl Barrow at Whitley is an indication that the area had been settled long before the Medieval period;
- A surviving moated site, a Scheduled Monument, at Belmont Hall;
- Great Budworth, Higher Whitley and Lower Whitley are picturesque villages and Conservation Areas, with a number of listed buildings, with others across the area; Great Budworth is an estate village linked to Arley Hall with very distinct built form; the settlements at Whitley are very individual, still very rural with limited development.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- A network of rural lanes link scattered farms, cottages, hamlets and villages, with Comberbach the main settlement in the character area;
- Northwich/Barnton is a large conurbation on the southern edge of the area that has seen considerable 20th century growth, expanding into the landscape;
- Other modern development (including a motel and petrol station) where the routes of the A49 and A533 cross at Dones Green;
- Building materials are typically red brick, sandstone and white-wash finishes, with large red brick dairy barns and thatched cottages particular features – some of the farmsteads and barns are listed;
- The 'Cheshire railings' – the black and white painted estate railings are characteristic features.

Perceptual / Visual

- The large scale, undulating landscape overlaid by a small to medium scale field pattern allows varying views, from enclosed low lying views to open long distance views from higher ground

which is visually more sensitive e.g. views from the southern edge of the area across the Weaver Valley and from ridge top along the A559 Northwich Road near Higher Whitley;

- The simplicity of the mostly pastoral land use and the pattern of elements such as hedgerows and trees provides landscape unity, texture and seasonal colour;
- Red sandstone and brick contrast with the green pasture, providing warm colours in the landscape;
- The farmed landscape gives an impression of being manicured and ‘tamed’;
- Generally a quiet, rural landscape but with features that detract from the overall sense of tranquillity whilst providing sensitive visual receptors, including the main roads, the relatively dense network of rural lanes and the scattered settlement including Comberbach;
- The area is affected by views of large scale industrial works at Northwich/Barnton and Preston Brook that lie outside the character area’s boundary – these also detract from the sense of tranquillity;
- No strong skyline to this relatively low lying landscape other than hedgerow trees, woodland and electricity pylons – it is not greatly inter-visible with other landscapes, except the *Frodsham to Northwich Undulating Enclosed Farmland* on the opposite side of the *Lower Weaver Valley*;
- Traffic on the high ground along the A559 forms a subtle skyline in views from within the character area;
- The distinctive tower of Great Budworth’s church forms a significant landmark, with the church spire at Little Leigh also a prominent landmark;
- The presence of undulating topography, woodland and hedgerow trees means there is some potential for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on the character of the landscape;
- The views across the *Lower Weaver Valley* to the *Sandstone Ridge* beyond.

Landscape Condition

The ***Whitley & Comberbach Undulating Enclosed Farmland*** is in active agricultural use and is managed for these land uses. Although the hedgerow network is generally intact, there are some gaps in the network and some over mature hedgerow trees. Some woodlands are not being actively managed. Clough woodland at Dutton Dean and Dutton Hollow incorporates a canopy dominated by Sycamore which developed following Dutch elm disease. Ornamental garden species and suburban style boundaries are having an impact on the rural character of the landscape in places.

CWac Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 5d: *Whitley and Comberbach*:

- Green Belt;
- 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

- Limited boundary management, with evidence of decline in hedgerow boundaries and decline/loss of hedgerow trees due to flail mowing or ploughing too close to hedgerow boundaries;
- Increase in fencing to replace hedgerow boundaries leading to loss of historic field pattern;
- A shift from grassland to crops, fallow and set-aside and a general reduction in number of farm units, accompanied by an increase in the proportion of larger holdings;
- Growth of potatoes and maize in traditionally pastoral areas, resulting in soil erosion as a result of exposure of bare soil;
- Improved drainage and in-filling leading to loss of field ponds but this appears to have halted;
- Loss of historic parkland and houses;
- Decline in condition and extent of 'Cheshire Railings' – the black and white painted estate railings;
- Steady intensification of grassland management has resulted in pasture 'improvement' and the gradual loss of unimproved species rich grassland, but this appears to have halted;
- Visitor pressure is felt within smaller settlements, e.g. Great Budworth.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 5d: *Whitley and Comberbach*

- Farm diversification including introduction of riding schools, stables and paddocks;
- Location within The Mersey Forest indicates that there is likely to be additional tree planting in the area which would be a positive change;
- Pressure for residential and industrial / employment development, principally on the outskirts of Northwich/Barnton abutting the character area but also around Comberbach and in the wider countryside, that could affect the close relationship between town and country;
- There could be lack of management of farmland on the edge of urban areas in the hope that it becomes favoured for development;
- Pressure for conversion of farm buildings for other uses including residential, business and industrial use, with erection of modern portal sheds to replace the lost space;
- Pressure for built development associated with the main roads that pass through the landscape (A49, A533 and A559).

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 5d: Whitley and Comberbach

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** the rural pastoral character of the landscape and the settings to the picturesque villages, and to **enhance** the hedgerow and woodland network.

Landscape Management Guidelines

1. Maintain an intact hedgerow network through management of hedges and ensuring a young stock of hedgerow trees.
2. Avoid over-intensive flail mowing or ploughing too close to hedgerow boundaries – protect saplings and encourage trees to grow up at intervals along the hedgerow.
3. Conserve the strong field pattern, particularly earlier field systems which provide historic continuity in the landscape.
4. Support retention of pasture and grazing to maintain the pastoral character of the landscape and reduce soil erosion by minimising exposure of bare soil.
5. Seek opportunities to re-create species rich grasslands, particularly alongside the brooks.
6. Seek opportunities to restore and create orchards at the farm scale.
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.
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 remaining field ponds, pools and ditches that are of importance for biodiversity as well as contributing to the diversity of the landscape.
10. Seek to conserve and restore historic locally significant designed landscapes at Belmont Hall and Cogshall Hall and their settings, encouraging the management/restoration of permanent pasture, parkland trees, clumps and avenues.
11. Conserve and manage earthworks, such as the moated sites, promoting sensitive agricultural practices in their vicinity (i.e. grazing not ploughing).

12. Support plans to enhance woodland cover in areas of low ecological value, including restoring and creating valley woodlands and copses/small woodlands within the existing field pattern. Respect the small scale of the landscape when designing new woodland.
13. Consider views when designing new woodland - conserve long distance views from the southern edge of the area across the Weaver Valley and from the A559 that runs along the higher ground.
14. Manage existing woodlands to ensure a diverse native canopy structure and rich ground flora.
15. Conserve the sense of peace and quiet away from the main roads, and conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that 'suburbanise' the landscape such as kerbs and large scale signage.
16. Ensure appropriate after use, restoration and management of former gravel workings to meet biodiversity, landscape and recreation/access objectives.
17. Protect above ground archaeological features, such as the moated site near Belmont Hall, promoting sensitive agricultural practices in its vicinity (i.e. grazing not ploughing).
18. Monitor effects of visitor recreational pressure on the character of the villages.

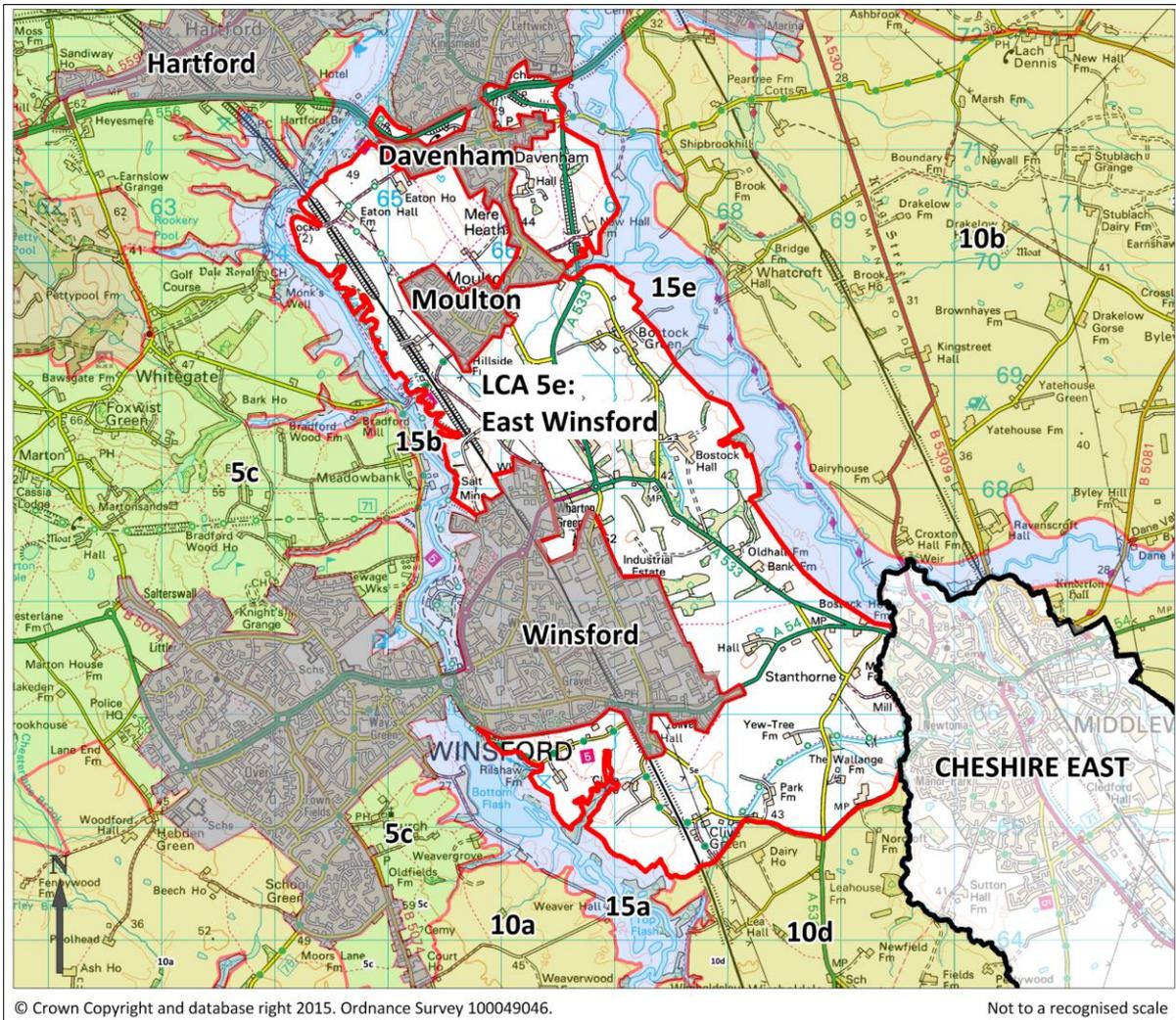
Built Development Guidelines

1. Maintain the low density, scattered settlement pattern of picturesque villages/hamlets, farmsteads and cottages.
2. Monitor the cumulative effect of piecemeal change in this area – ensure new built single dwellings and their gardens, drives, gates etc. do not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area through provision of appropriate guidance. Maintain a distinction between urban and rural areas.
3. Conserve the local vernacular built form - red brick/sandstone or white washed farmsteads and buildings, and thatched cottages. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and styles. Resist suburban style fencing, garden boundaries, kerbs and lighting outside the main settlements.
4. Seek to integrate garden boundaries with the rural landscape through use of native hedgerows.
5. Retain the red brick dairy barns, including their round windows which are a characteristic feature, and their rural settings as features of the landscape.
6. Conserve the black and white estate railings known as 'Cheshire Railings'.

7. Maintain the rural setting to villages and sandstone farmsteads which are features of the landscape.
8. Ensure conversion of farm buildings is sensitive to the vernacular style of farmsteads in this area, by maintaining the existing structure of simple form and sandstone/red brick finish. Pay particular attention to the features which accompany the conversion such as driveways and gardens, ensuring that these features do not 'suburbanise' the landscape.
9. Soften built edges and views of infrastructure by introducing small scale planting schemes using native broadleaved species. Use similar planting schemes to integrate new development into the landscape.
10. Ensure riding schools, stables and equestrian development do not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area – ensure sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, jumps and ancillary buildings.
11. Conserve the rural settings of villages and views to landmark features.
12. Preserve the distinctive characteristic of Great Budworth.
13. Resist expansion of Lower Whitely to preserve its distinctive rural character.
14. Conserve the open settings of the medieval church tower at Great Budworth and church spire at Little Leigh that form landmarks on the skyline when considering the location for new built development.
15. Consider views from Delamere Way when considering locations for new built development.
16. Ensure signage is appropriate to its setting.
17. Refer to the Whitley Village Plan when considering change in and around Whitley.



LCA 5e: East Winsford



Location and Boundaries

The *East Winsford Undulating Enclosed Farmland* represents a finger of gently undulating farmland sandwiched between the valleys of the River Weaver and the River Dane which lie to the west and east respectively. The Kingsmead and Leftwich estates in south Northwich lie immediately to the north, with the industrial estates of Winsford to the west. To the south the landscape gradually forms a transition to the flat lowland of the *Wimboldesley & Sproston Plain*.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 5e: East Winsford

- A bedrock geology of Mercia Mudstone covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits that gives rise to a gently undulating, lush landscape generally between 30m and 50m AOD, gradually flattening out to the south
- Small, mostly wooded brooks in narrow valleys that drain westwards towards the River Weaver and eastwards to the River Dane.
- The lush pastoral character of the landscape - boulder clay deposits mask the underlying mudstones giving rise to a predominance of poorly draining clay soils that support dairying, with some arable crops
- Late eighteenth and early nineteenth century enclosure by private agreement and Parliamentary Act which produces a strong field pattern of hedgerows with hedgerow trees, and drainage ditches
- Isolated pockets of glacio-fluvial sands and gravels with potential to support acid grassland or heathland
- Low lying areas support wetland habitats such as willow beds that are important features of a landscape with generally relatively low woodland cover
- Designed parkland landscapes and woodland at Bostock Hall, Davenham Hall (historic park and garden of local significance) and Stanthorne Hall indicate the wealth of the 19th century and provide a well-manicured character
- Occasional field ponds
- Recreational opportunities provided by Sustrans' National Cycle Route 5 between Northwich and Winsford, and the towpath alongside the Shropshire Union Canal (Middlewich Branch) running through the southern tip of the area, both providing public access to the countryside
- A network of rural lanes link scattered farmsteads, hamlets and halls, while the character area wraps around the settlements of Davenham, Mere Heath and Moulton
- Significant 20th century development on the southern edge of Northwich, the eastern edge of Winsford (and the western edge of Middlewich beyond the borough boundary to the east) have a significant urbanising influence on the character of the area
- Open land between Davenham and Moulton, between Davenham and Leftwich, between Davenham and Kingsmead (Leftwich Grange), and between Moulton and Winsford previously designated as ASLEV and are now recognised as candidate Key Settlement Gaps
- Davenham Hall, Bostock Hall and Bostock Green (late 18th century planned estate village associated with Bostock Hall) are Conservation Areas, with a number of listed buildings
- Building materials are typically red brick and sandstone, with timber framed buildings, large red brick dairy barns and thatched cottages particular features
- 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 noted for its emergent vegetation and grassland
- Scheduled Monuments at Moultonbank Farm (Bowl Barrow) and Old Bostock Hall (moated site)
- Generally a quiet, rural landscape although the A533, A556 Davenham Bypass, A5018, A54 and mainline railway pass through the area, contributing to the sense of movement and noise locally
- Power lines running parallel with the railway, and cutting through the Winsford and Wharton Industrial estates also erode rural character and tranquillity
- A comparatively low lying landscape without a strong skyline – formed by hedgerow trees, woodland, farm buildings, industry (at Wharton/Winsford) and electricity pylons. The church spire at Davenham forms a prominent landmark feature

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- Gently undulating topography with a central 'spine' gradually falling to the river corridors to the east and west, and gradually flattening out to the south;
- The underlying Mercia Mudstones (Northwich Halite Formation) covered by a mantle of glacial till deposits (mostly boulder clay) which give rise to a predominance of poorly draining clay soils that support mostly dairying with some arable crops;
- Salt mine at Wharton indicates the exploitation of the underlying salt-bearing rock formation, known commonly as 'rock salt';
- Isolated pockets of glacio-fluvial sands and gravels e.g. at Bostock Green that have the potential to support acid grassland. The settlement at Mere Heath is an indication that heathland was once a feature of the area;
- Small, mostly wooded brooks have carved narrow valleys that drain westwards towards the River Weaver and eastwards to the River Dane;
- Fields bounded by thorn hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees and drainage ditches forming a strong field pattern and contributing to the sense of enclosure associated with this landscape;
- Wetland habitat of marsh and woods including willow beds between the Winsford Industrial Estate and the A533 is of local wildlife value and adds to the woodland cover;
- Occasional field ponds from past marl digging contribute to the wetland habitats;
- Woodlands associated with designed landscapes are important landscape feature, particularly around Bostock Hall.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The variety of field sizes, with survival of a large number of small, irregular ancient enclosures (particularly around the canal in the south contributing a sense of time depth to the landscape) and larger scale, late post-medieval straight-sided field improvements (on the outcrop of glacio-fluvial sand and gravel deposits around Eaton Hall Farm);
- The strong intact hedgerow network along field boundaries, with an abundance of hedgerow trees;
- Areas of designed parkland landscapes and woodland at Bostock Hall, Davenham Hall and Stanthorne Hall indicate the wealth of the 18th and 19th century and provide a well-manicured character. Bostock and Davenham Parks are on the local register of Historic Parks and Gardens;
- Davenham Hall, Bostock Hall and Bostock Green (late 18th century planned estate village associated with Bostock Hall) are Conservation Areas, with a number of listed buildings;
- The Bowl Barrow at Moultonbank Farm is a Scheduled Monument and an indication that the area was settled well before the medieval period;
- The site of Old Bostock Hall (the Old Hall was demolished in 1803) is the only surviving moated site in this landscape and a Scheduled Monument;
- Part of the Shropshire Union Canal (Middlewich Branch, including Stanthorne Lock) passes through this area linking the Trent and Mersey Canal to the Shropshire Union Main Line and provides an important part of the industrial archaeology of the area – it is also a local wildlife site for its rich marginal and emergent vegetation along its banks and also for the small areas of unimproved diverse grassland along the towpath;
- Much of the area is in private ownership and there is a relatively sparse network of public rights of way that include Sustrans' NCR 5 between Winsford and Northwich and the towpath alongside the Shropshire Union Canal which both provide an important contribution to public access to the countryside and opportunities for recreation. There is also good access to the Weaver Valley which provides many recreational opportunities.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- A network of rural lanes link scattered farmsteads, hamlets and halls, while the character area wraps around the settlements of Davenham, Mere Heath and Moulton;
- Northwich immediately to the north and Winsford to the west (and Middlewich beyond the CWaC boundary to the east) have seen considerable 20th century growth, expanding into the landscape;
- Despite this expansion there are important areas of open land between Davenham and Moulton, between Davenham and Leftwich, between Davenham and Kingsmead (Leftwich Grange), and between Moulton and Winsford which were previously designated as Areas of Significant Local Environmental Value (ASLEV) and are now recognised as candidate Key Settlement Gaps where development could lead to coalescence and the loss of identity of the separate settlements;
- Building materials are typically red brick and sandstone; timber framed buildings and large red brick dairy barns are particular features;
- Superimposed on this rural settlement pattern is a network of major roads (A533, A556 Davenham Bypass, A5018, and A54) and the mainline railway runs along the western edge.

Perceptual / Visual

- The small scale field pattern and sense of enclosure provided by woodland and hedgerows results in a perception of an intimate character with intermittent views. However, the area around Eaton Hall Farm is larger in scale due to the larger field patterns, more open character and ridge like landform;
- The simplicity of the lush pastoral fields and the pattern of elements such as hedgerows and trees provides landscape unity, texture and seasonal colour;
- Parkland landscapes contribute to a well-manicured character, particularly around Bostock Hall, and contribute colour to the landscape;
- The farmed landscape gives an impression of being manicured and 'tamed', and the presence of woodland, pasture and water contribute to a sense of 'naturalness', the presence of industry, extensive 20th century residential areas, electricity pylons, railway and main roads that cut across the landscape bearing no relation to landform or field pattern detract from the tranquillity of the area;
- Despite these detracting elements, the landscape is generally quiet and rural in areas some distance from, or visually screened from them. The most tranquil parts of the landscape include the area around Bostock Hall/Bostock Green where woodland screens views of these elements, and the area around the canal which is located away from the main built development and infrastructural elements of the landscape;
- A comparatively low lying landscape without a strong skyline – formed by hedgerow trees, woodland, farm buildings, industry (at Wharton/Winsford) and electricity pylons;
- Views are varied due to the undulating topography, where low lying areas are hidden while ridge tops are open and visually more sensitive;
- Scattered residential development indicates the presence of sensitive residential receptors. The Sustrans' NCR 5 between Winsford and Northwich and the canal towpath bring recreational users to the area who are likely to have a visual interest in their surrounding landscape;
- The church spire at Davenham forms a prominent landmark;
- The presence of undulating topography, woodland and hedgerow trees means there is some potential for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on the character of the landscape;
- The western edge of the area is visible from the opposite side of the Weaver Valley (from the *Eaton, Marton & Over Undulating Enclosed Farmland* landscape character area) and the eastern edge of the area is visible from the opposite side of the Dane Valley (the *Stublach Plain*).

Landscape Condition

The area is in active agricultural use and is managed for these land uses. The presence of designed parkland also gives the area an appearance of being 'well cared for'. Although the hedgerow network is generally intact, there are some gaps in the network and some over-mature hedgerow trees. Some woodlands are not being actively managed. There is very little unimproved species rich grassland remaining. There are considerable areas of 20th century residential development that give the landscape a 'suburban' appearance in places and main roads have cut across the landscape bearing no relation to landform or landscape patterns (particularly the A533).

CWaC Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 5e: *East Winsford*:

- Countryside;
- Candidate Key Settlement Gaps on open land between Davenham and Moulton, between Davenham and Leftwich, between Davenham and Kingsmead (Leftwich Grange), and between Moulton and Winsford previously designated as ASLEV;
- 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.

Forces for Landscape Change

Past change

- Limited boundary management, with evidence of decline in hedgerow boundaries and decline/loss of hedgerow trees due to flail mowing or ploughing too close to hedgerow boundaries;
- Increase in fencing to replace hedgerow boundaries leading to loss of historic field pattern;
- A shift from grassland to crops, fallow and set-aside and a general reduction in number of farm units, accompanied by an increase in the proportion of larger holdings;
- Increase in silage production;
- Growth of potatoes and maize in traditionally pastoral areas, resulting in soil erosion as a result of exposure of bare soil;
- Improved drainage and in-filling leading to loss of field ponds but this appears to have halted;
- Provision of buffer zones around fields, as part of Countryside Stewardship agreements, has had an effect on the landscape;
- Steady intensification of grassland management has resulted in pasture 'improvement' and the gradual loss of unimproved species rich grassland, but this appears to have halted;
- Visitor pressure is felt within smaller settlements, e.g. Great Budworth.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 5e: *East Winsford*

- Farm diversification including introduction of riding schools, stables and paddocks;
- Location within The Mersey Forest indicates that there is likely to be additional hedgerow and tree planting in the area which would be a positive change;
- Pressure for residential and industrial / employment development, principally on the outskirts of Northwich, Davenham, Mere Heath, Moulton and Winsford, that could lead to coalescence and the loss of identity of the separate settlements;
- There could be lack of management of farmland on the edge of urban areas in the hope that it becomes favoured for development;
- Pressure for conversion of farm buildings for other uses including residential, business and industrial use, with erection of modern portal sheds to replace the lost space;
- Expansion of settlement into parkland;
- Pressure for built development associated with the main roads that pass through the landscape (A533, A556 Davenham Bypass, A5018 & A54).

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 5e: East Winsford

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** the lush, pastoral character of the landscape and to **enhance** the urban edges as well as the hedgerows and unimproved grassland resource.

Landscape Management Guidelines

1. Maintain an intact hedgerow network through management of hedges and ensuring a young stock of hedgerow trees.
2. Avoid over-intensive flail mowing or ploughing too close to hedgerow boundaries – protect saplings and encourage trees to grow up at intervals along the hedgerow.
3. Conserve the strong field pattern, particularly earlier field systems which provide historic continuity in the landscape, for example around the canal. Consider opportunities to replace hedgerows where they have been lost.
4. Support retention of pasture and grazing to maintain the pastoral character of the landscape and reduce soil erosion by minimising exposure of bare soil.
5. Seek opportunities to re-create acid grassland in areas of glacio-fluvial outwash deposits of sands and gravels, e.g. around Bostock green and Eaton Hall Farm.
6. Seek opportunities to restore and create orchards at the farm scale.
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.
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 remaining field ponds, pools and ditches that are of importance for biodiversity as well as contributing to the diversity of the landscape.
10. Seek opportunities to extend/re-create areas of marsh, reed swamp, willow beds and other wetland habitats.
11. Seek to conserve and restore historic designed landscapes at Bostock Hall and Davenham Hall and their settings, encouraging the management/restoration of permanent pasture, parkland trees, clumps and avenues.

12. Conserve and manage earthworks, such as the moated site of Old Bostock Hall, promoting sensitive agricultural practices in their vicinity (i.e. grazing not ploughing).
13. Support plans to enhance woodland cover of native broadleaf species in areas of low ecological value - respect the small scale of the landscape when designing new woodland.
14. Support the establishment of a well-wooded landscape around the periphery of Northwich and Winsford in areas of low ecological value. Consider views when designing new woodland - conserve views to the church spire at Davenham.
15. Manage existing woodlands to ensure a diverse canopy structure and rich ground flora.
16. Conserve the sense of peace and quiet away from the main roads, and conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that 'suburbanise' the landscape such as close board fencing, kerbs and large scale signage.
17. Consider opportunities to improve public access in this area close to large centres of population.

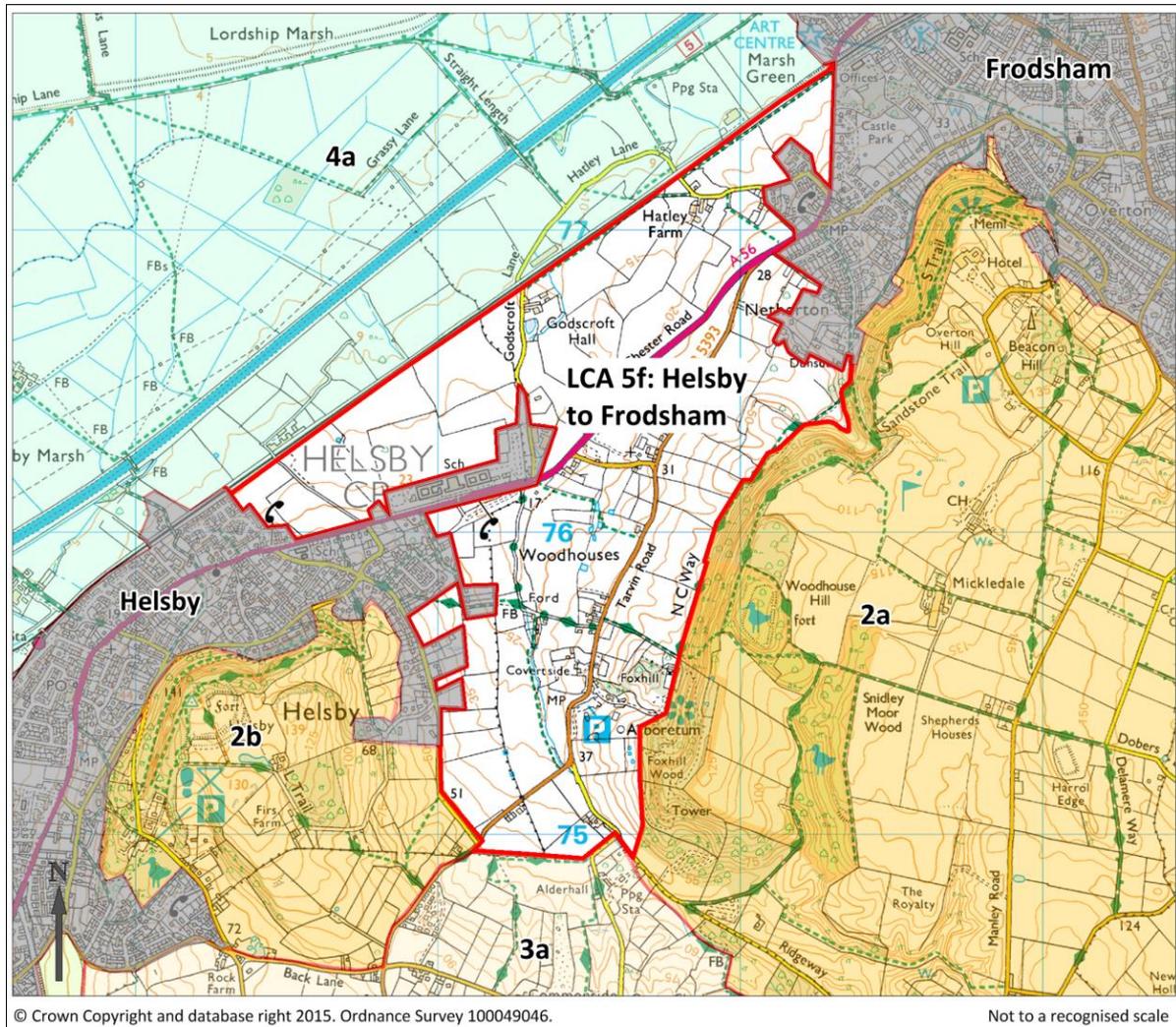
Built Development Guidelines

1. Conserve the rural settlement pattern comprising scattered farms, halls and hamlets linked by a network of rural lanes – ensure new built development does not obliterate this characteristic.
2. Conserve the open undeveloped areas between settlements that have been identified as a Candidate Key Settlement Gaps where development could lead to coalescence and the loss of identity of the separate communities of Davenham, Moulton and Northwich (Kingsmead and Leftwich).
3. Monitor the cumulative effect of piecemeal change in this area – ensure new built single dwellings and their gardens, drives, gates etc. do not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area through provision of appropriate guidance.
4. Conserve the local vernacular built form - red brick and sandstone, with timber framed buildings, large red brick dairy barns (with characteristic round windows) and thatched cottages. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and styles. Resist suburban style fencing, garden boundaries, kerbs and lighting outside the main settlements.
5. Seek to integrate garden boundaries with the rural landscape through use of native hedgerows.

6. Conserve the settings of Davenham Hall (Grade II*) and Bostock Hall (Grade II*) (including Bostock Green estate village) that are designated Conservation Areas.
7. Ensure conversion of farm buildings is sensitive to the vernacular style of farmsteads in this area, by maintaining the existing structure of simple form and sandstone/red brick finish. Pay particular attention to the features which accompany the conversion such as driveways and gardens, ensuring that these features do not 'suburbanise' the landscape.
8. Soften built edges and views of infrastructure by introducing planting schemes using native broadleaved species. Use similar planting schemes to integrate new development into the landscape.
9. Ensure riding schools, stables and equestrian development do not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area – ensure sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, jumps and ancillary buildings.
10. Conserve the open setting of the church spire at Davenham that forms a landmark on the skyline when considering the location for new built development.
11. Consider views from Sustrans NCR 5 and the canal towpath when considering the location of new built development.
12. Refer local documents such as Village Design Statement (VDS), Conservation Area Appraisals and Neighbourhood Plans when considering change.



LCA 5f: Helsby to Frodsham



Location and Boundaries

The *Helsby to Frodsham Undulating Enclosed Farmland* is a small transitional character area lying between the steeply rising *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge* to the south and the steeply rising *Helsby Hill* to the west, and the flat, low lying *Frodsham, Helsby and Lordship Marches* and *Mersey Estuary* to the north. A railway line forms the northern boundary of the character area. Helsby lies immediately to the west and Frodsham to the east.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 5f: *Helsby to Frodsham*

- Transitional zone between the prominent and distinctive *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge* and *Helsby Hill*, and the flat, low lying *Frodsham, Helsby and Lordship Marches* forming an undulating landscape that gently rises from 10m to 60m AOD
- Underlying bedrock geology of Helsby Sandstone Formations that has been weathered and overlain by glacio-fluvial drift and till deposits
- Geology gives rise to brown sands and earths which support a mixed agricultural landscape of arable and grassland, with fragments of acid grassland
- Fields are typically small to medium in size, with a combination of irregular medieval enclosure and modern reorganisation and enclosure, enclosed by trimmed thorn hedgerows and trees
- Enclosed medieval townfields around Woodhouses, visible as small scale field divisions
- Low sandstone walls and black and white estate style ‘Cheshire Fencing’ also form boundaries
- The area is drained by a small stream running south to north, crossed by a footbridge and ford at Chestnut Lane, Woodhouses, and wooded at its southern end
- Otherwise woodland cover is low, with a small broadleaf copse around Foxhill
- Cluster of field ponds west of Tarvin Road and around Godscroft Hall
- A low density settlement pattern of scattered farms, individual dispersed detached properties and halls e.g. Godscroft Hall (a listed building) linked by a small network of minor roads either side of the A56
- Building materials include a mix of red brick and sandstone, with white wash and timber framed buildings, and large red brick barns
- A mix of other road side land uses including small workshops, two static caravan sites, tyre fitters, a nursery and Frodsham Cemetery, representing modern ribbon development on the outskirts of Helsby and Frodsham and blurring the distinction between urban and rural
- Recreational opportunities are provided by public rights of way including the North Cheshire Way long distance route passing through the area from *Helsby Hill* to join the Sandstone Trail along the *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge*. A parking area and footpath lead from the B5393 to the Arboretum on the *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge*
- The wooded high ground of Frodsham Hill and Helsby Hill dominates the southern and western parts of the area, where the very strong skyline terminates all views in these directions
- By contrast the northern boundary is visually indistinct and distant views extend over *Frodsham, Helsby and Lordship Marches* to the Mersey
- Generally a quiet, rural landscape although the A56 Chester Road passes through the area between Helsby and Frodsham, contributing to the sense of movement and noise locally
- The railway and traffic on the M56 just beyond the character area to the north also adds to the sense of movement and noise
- The area south of the A56 is designated as part of the Helsby & Frodsham Hills Area of Special County Value (ASCV)
- The area south of the A56 was also designated as an Area of Significant Local Environmental Value (ASLEV) by the former Vale Royal Borough Council
- The character area is overlooked from many high vantage points on the *Helsby Hill Sandstone Ridge* and *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge* and is visually sensitive
- The huge industrial complex at Runcorn is visible, as are electricity pylons that run parallel to the motorway beyond the character area to the north
- The church spire of Trinity Church at Frodsham is a landmark

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- Underlying bedrock geology of Helsby Sandstone Formations that has been weathered and overlain by glacio-fluvial drift (sands and gravels) and till (boulder clay) deposits that give rise to a gently undulating landscape, gradually rising from 10m to 60m AOD at the edge of the *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge* and *Helsby Hill Sandstone Ridge*;
- Geology gives rise to a deep, well drained sandy and coarse loamy soil known as brown sands that support a mixed agricultural landscape of arable and grassland, with fragments of acid grassland;
- Mature hedgerow trees, a broadleaf copse at Foxhill and trees and scrub along the southern end of a small stream that are valuable landscape features in a landscape with generally low woodland cover;
- Small to medium size fields bounded by thorn hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees forming a strong field pattern and contributing to the sense of enclosure associated with this landscape;
- The area south of the A56 is designated as part of the Helsby & Frodsham Hills Area of Special County Value (ASCV) recognised for its high scenic quality and value, and its location between *Helsby Hill Sandstone Ridge* and *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge* important to their setting;
- The area south of the A56 was also designated as an Area of Significant Local Environmental Value (ASLEV), essentially identifying the open gap between Helsby and Frodsham as important to maintain the identity and integrity of the two villages – Green Belt protection should prevent coalescence in the future.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The small to medium size fields, with a combination of irregular medieval enclosure and modern reorganisation and enclosure, enclosed by trimmed thorn hedgerows and trees, which provide historic continuity in the landscape. Fields are smaller and more regular on the steeper slopes, and larger and more irregularly shaped on the flatter ground to the north;
- The strong intact hedgerow network along field boundaries, with an abundance of hedgerow trees;
- Enclosed medieval townfields around Woodhouses, visible as small scale field divisions;
- Recreational opportunities are provided by public rights of way including the North Cheshire Way long distance route passing through the area from *Helsby Hill* to join the Sandstone Trail along the *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge*. A parking area and footpath lead from the B5393 to the Arboretum on the *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge*.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- The low density settlement pattern of scattered farms, individual dispersed detached properties and halls e.g. Godscroft Hall (a listed building) linked by a small network of minor roads either side of the A56;
- Building materials include a mix of red brick and sandstone, with white wash and timber framed buildings, and large red brick barns;
- A mix of other road side land uses including small workshops, two static caravan sites, tyre fitters, a nursery and Frodsham Cemetery representing modern ribbon development on the outskirts of Helsby and Frodsham and blurring the distinction between urban and rural;
- Low sandstone walls and black and white estate style 'Cheshire Fencing' also form boundaries.

Perceptual / Visual

- The small scale field pattern, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and distinctive backdrop of the wooded hills on the edge of the sandstone ridge gives a sense of enclosure to the south of the

character area where the strong skyline terminates views, and a perception of an intimate character;

- However, the area to the north is larger in scale due to the larger field patterns, more open character and more extensive views across the *Frodsham, Helsby and Lordship Marches* to the Mersey;
- Overall a semi-enclosed landscape generally composed of a simple combination of farmland, hedgerows and hedgerow trees with variety provided by the undulating topography, low sandstone walls, 'Cheshire Fencing' and buildings. The red sandstone and brick contrast with the green pasture and wooded backdrop, providing warm colours in the landscape. The area is unified by its location between the prominent sandstone ridge to the south and west and the flat marshland to the north;
- Generally a quiet, rural landscape although the A56 and railway pass through the area, contributing to the sense of movement and noise locally. The A56 is lit along its entire length through this character area between Helsby and Frodsham, providing a suburbanising influence both during the day and at night-time;
- The M56 just beyond the character area to the north also adds to the sense of movement and noise;
- Settlement edges of Helsby and Frodsham and other scattered residential development indicates the presence of sensitive residential receptors. The North Cheshire Way long distance footpath links to *Helsby Hill* to join the Sandstone Trail along the *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge* and brings recreational users to the area who are likely to have a visual interest in the surrounding landscape;
- The character area is overlooked from many high vantage points on the *Helsby Hill Sandstone Ridge* and *Frodsham Sandstone Ridge* and is visually sensitive, although not as visually prominent as the ridge itself;
- The huge industrial complex at Runcorn is visible, as are electricity pylons that run parallel to the motorway beyond the character area to the north, detracting from the rural character of the area;
- The church spire of Trinity Church at Frodsham is a landmark;
- Although there is a relative absence of woodland cover, the presence of undulating topography and hedgerow trees means there is some potential for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on the character of the landscape.

Landscape Condition

The *Helsby to Frodsham Undulating Enclosed Farmland* is in active agricultural use and is managed for these land uses. Although the hedgerow network is generally intact, there are some gaps in the network and some over-mature hedgerow trees. Some of the sandstone boundary walls and 'Cheshire Fencing' is in need of repair, particularly alongside roads. The areas of 20th century ribbon development give the landscape a 'suburban' appearance, particularly alongside the A56 which is lit along its entire length through this character area between Helsby and Frodsham.

CWaC Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 5f: *Helsby to Frodsham*:

- Green Belt;
- Area of Special County Value (ASCV) south of the A56;
- (Area south of A56 also previously designated as an Area of Significant Local Environmental Value (ASLEV) by the former Vale Royal Borough Council – Green Belt protection should prevent coalescence in the future);

- Natural heritage sites of 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

- Some evidence of decline in hedgerow boundaries;
- Some boundary sandstone walls and estate type 'Cheshire Fencing' is also in need of repair, particularly alongside roads;
- A shift from grassland to crops (in particular potatoes) and a general reduction in number of farm units, accompanied by an increase in the proportion of larger holdings;
- Steady intensification of grassland management has resulted in pasture 'improvement' and the gradual loss of unimproved species rich grassland;
- 20th century ribbon development particularly alongside the A56 has resulted in the gradual suburbanisation and narrowing of the open gap between Helsby and Frodsham;
- Conversion of traditional dairy barns into residential development, e.g. at Godscroft Hall

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 5f: *Helsby to Frodsham*

- Location within The Mersey Forest indicates that there is likely to be additional tree planting in the area to establish a woodland framework around Helsby and Frodsham and seek to create a woodland buffer on suitable land between the settlements and the motorway, which would be a positive change;
- Pressure for residential and employment development alongside roads and on the edge of Helsby and Frodsham that could lead to coalescence and the loss of identity of the two settlements;
- Pressure for conversion of farm buildings for other uses including residential, business and industrial use, with erection of modern portal sheds to replace the lost space;
- Farm diversification, especially to holiday chalets and caravan sites;
- Pressure for built development associated with the main A56 that passes through the landscape.

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 5f: Helsby to Frodsham

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve and enhance** the rural character, strong field pattern and views to and from the *Sandstone Ridge*.

Landscape Management Guidelines

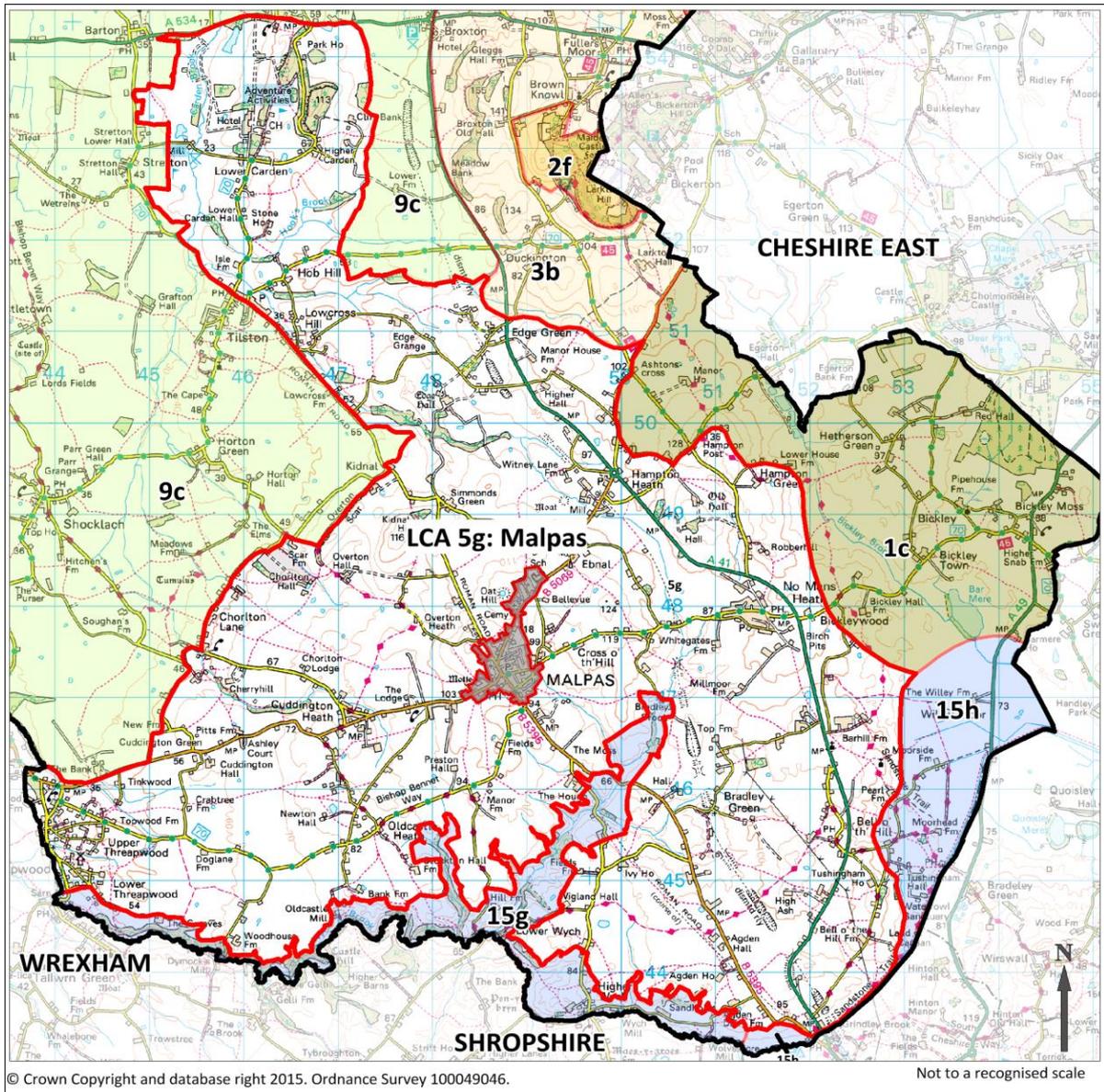
1. Maintain an intact hedgerow network through management of hedges and ensuring a young stock of hedgerow trees.
2. Conserve ancient field patterns, particularly those dating to the medieval period or earlier which provide historic continuity in the landscape.
3. Seek to repair sandstone walls and 'Cheshire Fencing' where they bound fields or align roads, to conserve these as a feature of the landscape.
4. 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.
5. Conserve the remnant fragments of unimproved or semi-improved acid grassland on the sandy soils that are of nature conservation value and consider opportunities to extend / recreate this habitat.
6. Consider further opportunities for recreational use of the landscape as long as this does not result in 'suburbanisation' of the countryside.
7. Encourage increased woodland cover, including the establishment of a woodland framework around Helsby and Frodsham and creation of a woodland buffer on suitable land of low ecological value between the settlements and the motorway. Small scattered broadleaved woodland blocks, copses and riparian woodland are the most appropriate forms of woodland in this area.
8. Manage existing woodlands to ensure a diverse canopy structure and rich ground flora.
9. Conserve the sense of peace and quiet away from the main roads, and conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that 'suburbanise' the landscape such as close board fencing, kerbs and large scale signage.
10. Conserve views to and from the adjacent *Sandstone Ridge* and the church spire at Frodsham. Consider key views when planning locations for new woodland associated with The Mersey Forest.

Built Development Guidelines

1. Maintain the low density settlement pattern of scattered farms, individual dispersed detached properties and halls away from the main urban areas.
2. Monitor the cumulative effect of piecemeal change in this area – ensure new built single dwellings and their gardens, drives, gates etc. do not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area through provision of appropriate guidance.
3. Conserve the local vernacular built style - red brick/sandstone or white washed farmsteads and timber framed buildings. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and styles.
4. Ensure built form including conversion of farm buildings is sensitive to the vernacular style of farmsteads in this area, by maintaining the existing structure of simple form and sandstone/red brick finish. 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. Don't located form buildings in prominent locations.
6. Maintain the rural gap between Frodsham and Helsby and maintain a rural setting to these settlements.
7. Seek to integrate the A56 into the landscape using roadside planting.
8. Conserve the open setting of the church spire at Frodsham that forms a landmark on the skyline when considering the location for new built development.
9. Consider views from the North Cheshire Way when considering the location of new built development.
10. Refer to local documents, Village Design Statement (VDS) and Neighbourhood Plans when considering change.



LCA 5g: Malpas



Location and Boundaries

The *Malpas Undulating Enclosed Farmland* lies in the south of CWaC borough, between Clutton to the north and the *Wych Valley* to the south. *Tattenhall to Shocklach Plain* wraps round the character area to the north and west; the *Beeston to Duckington Sandstone Fringe* and *Bickley Woodland, Heaths, Meres and Mosses* lie to the north-east, with the *Gringley Valley* to the south-east. The character area boundaries are generally defined by geology and topography, with the A534 forming the northern boundary.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 5g: Malpas

- Bedrock geology of Mudstones covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits (boulder clays) that gives rise to an undulating landform of interlocking hills
- In the north and west a series of escarpments and dip slopes create a locally distinctive landscape of sandstone outcrops identified as Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) and where disused quarries are found
- The topography ‘crowns’ at Malpas towards the centre of the character area rising to a maximum height of 134m AOD, falling to join the plain northwards to around 20m AOD at Barton and westwards to 45m AOD at Threapwood
- The north-south divide between drainage catchment areas: north of Malpas small brooks drain northwards and westwards towards the River Dee; south of Malpas small brooks drain southwards into the Wych Brook which then flows westwards into the Dee
- Steep wooded valleys of high conservation value, with a rich mosaic of broadleaved semi-natural woodland including coppice with a diverse ground flora, unimproved grassland, that incise the hills and contain small brooks
- Mixed broadleaf and coniferous woodland and copses are a feature on high ground in the north where they ‘skyline’ and give the impression of a well wooded landscape
- Unimproved grassland and woodland on stream sides, steep banks, sandstone outcrops and other places where agricultural improvement has been limited
- Varying sandy and clay soils, with agricultural land use predominantly arable cropping especially fodder crops such as maize, interspersed with some pasture, in contrast to dairying on the adjoining plain
- Cohesive and un-fragmented regionally significant historic landscape with extremely well preserved late medieval field systems and extensive ridge and furrow; abundant hedgerows and hedgerow trees creating a characteristic patchwork with preserved elements of the earlier medieval open fields and common land (which is sometimes associated with dispersed settlement)
- Dispersed settlement pattern with narrow sunken lanes weaving between high hedges and linear belts linking villages, hamlets, farmsteads and isolated cottages; roads radiate out from the main settlement of Malpas
- Sandstone walls sometimes atop the hedges, with timber fences and ‘Cheshire Railings’ also found along fields and roadside boundaries
- Field ponds (marl pits) are a feature of the lower lying areas; other water bodies include reservoirs on high ground and ornamental parkland lakes
- Elongated, dispersed Parish of Threapwood with distinctive settlement pattern of minor lanes linking small cottages set amongst hedgerow-bound meadows
- Built form is typically simple red/orange brick cottages with steeply pitching roofs and slate or clay pantiles, terminating in distinctive gable parapets; also timber-framed buildings; also decorative brick detailing at Carden Park
- The Carden Park Estate in the north, with its remaining lodges and ice house, extensive woodland belts and boundary walls, now a hotel, spa, golf resort and outdoor adventure centre
- The number of halls and small historic estates such as Chorlton, Overton and Cuddington; Chorlton Old Hall and Edge Hall have medieval moats
- Wide range of archaeological sites, e.g. Castel Hill Motte at Malpas and Round Barrow at Carden
- A rural, tranquil landscape away from the main A41 and A534
- Bishop Bennet Way long distance route and numerous other public rights of way
- Extensive views from high ground across the plain to the Clwydian hills to the west
- The sandstone fringe and sandstone ridge form a very dominant skyline to the north. St. Oswald’s Church in Malpas provides a significant landmark

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- Steeply undulating topography of interlocking hills with locally distinctive wooded sandstone outcrops at Carden Park (Parkers Hill), Overton Scar and Edge Scar; the escarpment and caves at Carden Park are identified as a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS);
- An east-west drainage catchment that ‘crowns’ at Malpas, with small brooks draining northwards and southwards through the character area and westwards into the River Dee;
- Solid bedrock geology of mudstones, overlain by glacio-fluvial drift deposits of boulder clay and stagnogley sandy and clay/loam soils that give rise to a predominantly arable land use, with some pasture;
- The steep wooded valleys with a rich mosaic of broadleaved semi-natural woodland including coppice with a diverse ground flora, unimproved grassland, that drain northwards towards the River Dee, e.g. Upper Wood and Lower Wood at Edge, Randall’s Rough and The Heir’s Wood west of Duckington;
- The incised hills that contain small brooks such as Bradley Brook, Carden Brook, Hooks Brook and their numerous tributaries that contain important concentrations of these habitats, some of which are local wildlife sites;
- Ancient woodland on stream sides, steep banks, sandstone outcrops and other places where agricultural improvement has been limited, e.g. Overton Scar outcrop is a local wildlife site;
- Unimproved grassland also on stream sides, steep banks, sandstone outcrops and other places where agricultural improvement has been limited, with notable areas around Carden, Duckington and Bradley;
- Mixed broadleaf and coniferous woodland and copses are a feature on high ground in the north around Carden Park, e.g. at Parker’s Hill and the conifer plantation at Round Hill.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The area contains a regionally significant late medieval landscape which preserves elements of the earlier medieval open fields. The historic landscape of this area is generally cohesive and un-fragmented and is considered to contain some of the best preserved late medieval field systems and ridge and furrow in Cheshire, providing historic continuity in the landscape;
- The townfields that are located in the vicinity of historic settlements;
- The landscape to the southwest, in Wales and known as the Maelor Saesneg, is included on the Countryside Council for Wales/CADW/International Council on Monuments and Sites (UK): Historic Landscapes Register; Part 2.2 Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales. England has no equivalent register, however this landscape is clearly of regional, if not national, importance;
- Sandstone walls sometimes atop the hedges, with other boundaries of timber fencing and ‘Cheshire Railings’;
- Examples of surviving common land as indicated by the place names Bradley Green, Edge Green, Overton Heath, Hampton Heath and Cuddington Heath;
- Field ponds are a feature of the lower lying areas, indicating the extraction of marl (calcareous deposits) from the boulder clay for past agricultural improvement;
- Other water bodies include reservoirs on high ground, ornamental parkland lakes and a mill pond at Stretton Water Mill;
- Disused quarries indicate the previous winning of sandstone in the area, for example at Edge Green and Overton;
- The historic Carden Park Estate in the north, previously the site of a 16th century timber framed hall (Carden Hall burnt down in 1912) and Deer Park. Today two lodges and an ice house remain, with other listed buildings/structures;

- Halls and small historic estates are located in the west of the character area, at Chorlton (including Chorlton Hall, Chorlton Old Hall, Chorlton House and Chorlton Lodge), at Overton (Overton Hall and Overton Manor), at Cuddington (Cuddington Hall), Newton Hall, Preston Hall, and Edge Hall towards the north;
- Chorlton Old Hall and Edge Hall are moated medieval sites;
- Watling Street Roman Road runs north-south through Malpas between Chester and Whitchurch;
- The A41 was originally an 18th century turnpike road;
- Former Chester/Whitchurch railway line;
- The nucleated historic settlement of Malpas is mentioned in the Domesday Book suggesting it was one of the more important settlements in Cheshire, with a castle and a market ;
- Wide range of archaeological sites, including Scheduled Monuments, e.g. Castle Hill Motte at Malpas; Bronze Age (c2200-1250BC) Round Barrow in Carden Park;
- The discovery of items such as flints, burnt stones, the tip of a Neolithic axe and Bronze Age pottery indicate that rock shelters and caves located in Carden Park were likely to have been occupied in the prehistoric period. One cave was also deepened in the 18th century to house John Harris, an eccentric who lived on the estate for 20 years;
- Conservation Areas at Edge, Higher Carden, Chorlton Lane and Malpas;
- There has been much modern conversion of parkland to recreational use or farmland;
- Recreational opportunities are provided at Carden Park where there is a hotel, spa, golf resort and outdoor activity centre;
- Passive recreation provided by the Bishop Bennet Way long distance footpath and numerous other public rights of way.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- The dispersed and relatively dense settlement pattern with narrow sunken green lanes weaving between high hedges and linear belts linking villages, hamlets, halls, farmsteads and isolated cottages. Roads radiate out from the main nucleated settlement of Malpas;
- Linear development has occurred alongside roads, including the modern dormitory village of No Mans Heath and an industrial estate at Hampton Heath, both near junctions on the A41;
- Built form is typically simple red/orange brick cottages with steeply pitching roofs and slate or clay pantiles, terminating in distinctive gable parapets; also timber-framed buildings;
- The Carden Estate is notable for the use of decorative polychromatic brick detail in cottages and model farms;
- The dispersed Parish of Threapwood has a particularly distinctive settlement pattern that comes from squatter settlement in the C18th, early C19th; small cottages alongside minor roads linking Upper Threapwood and Lower Threapwood and set amongst hedgerow-bound meadows.

Perceptual / Visual

- Generally a deeply rural, tranquil landscape away from the main A41 that passes north-south through the eastern side of the character area, and the A534 defining the northern boundary;
- The northern area around Carden Park appears to be heavily wooded due to the dominance of trees on the skyline;
- The adjacent wooded *Beeston to Duckington Sandstone Fringe* and the *Higher Burwardsley Sandstone Ridge* form a very dominant skyline to the north of the character area;
- Extensive views from high ground to the Clwydian hills;
- The Wrexham Industrial Estate is also visible to the west and appears as a massive incongruous element within the agricultural plain;
- St. Oswald's Church, Malpas provides a significant landmark, especially when approaching the settlement from the south;

- The presence of undulating topography, woodland and hedgerow trees means there is some potential for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on the character of the landscape.

Landscape Condition

The *Malpas Undulating Enclosed Farmland* is in active agricultural use and is managed for these land uses. Although the hedgerow network is generally intact, there are some gaps in the network and some over-mature hedgerow trees. Some of the sandstone boundary walls and 'Cheshire Fencing' is in need of repair, particularly alongside roads. The areas of 20th century ribbon development at No Mans Heath off the A41 give the landscape a 'suburban' appearance.

CWaC Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 5g: *Malpas*:

- 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;
- Candidate Key Settlement Gap between Malpas and Ebnal.

Forces for Landscape Change

Past change

- Limited boundary management, with evidence of gappy hedges and walls and fencing ('Cheshire Railings') being neglected and in need of repair;
- Agricultural intensification with enlargement of fields and loss of hedgerow boundaries (oak trees left 'in-field') with loss of historic field pattern;
- Under management and deterioration of some farm woodlands;
- A shift from pasture grazing with increasing areas being cultivated for arable cropping, silage or fodder crops including cereals and maize;
- Significant change has occurred on the former Carden Park estate (but topography, dense woodland and boundary walls have limited its impact on the landscape);
- Loss of historic parkland to recreational use (such as golf courses) or farmland;
- Loss of heathland to recreational use or farmland or invasion by scrub and bracken;
- Loss of unimproved grassland to farmland;
- Loss of ridge and furrow resulting from increase in arable land use replacing pasture;
- Limited management of field ponds has resulted in some silting up and drying out due to natural processes of vegetation succession and overshadowing from trees.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 5g: *Malpas*

- Farm diversification including introduction of riding schools, stables and paddocks;
- Pressure for (large scale) residential/employment development, in particular at Malpas and No Mans Heath;
- Further loss of ridge and furrow which is a key historic landscape characteristic of the area;
- Pressure for conversion of farm buildings for other uses including residential, business and industrial use, with erection of modern portal sheds to replace the lost space;
- Pressure for Solar PV farms;
- Pressure for built development associated with the main A41 that passes through the landscape, for example at road junctions at No Mans Heath and Hampton Heath;
- Pressure for more golf courses.

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 5g: Malpas

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** the regionally significant historic landscape comprising late medieval field systems and ridge and furrow, **restore** the historic field pattern of hawthorn hedgerows and hedgerow oak trees, and **enhance** the grassland and woodland network.

Landscape Management Guidelines

1. Maintain an intact hedgerow network through management of hedges and ensuring a young stock of hedgerow trees.
2. Avoid over-intensive flail mowing or ploughing too close to hedgerow boundaries – protect saplings and encourage trees to grow up at intervals along the hedgerow.
3. Consider opportunities to replace hedgerows where they have been lost.
4. Manage existing woodlands to ensure a diverse canopy structure and rich ground flora.
5. Consider opportunities to plant simple pockets of trees and small blocks of woodland in field corners, on land of low ecological value and ensuring no detriment to historic assets, to ensure the continuation of these characteristic features.
6. Conserve the small to medium scale pattern of fields, particularly earlier field systems which provide historic continuity in the landscape.
7. Maintain the pastoral character of the landscape and reduce soil erosion by minimising exposure of bare soil (for example as a result of increased crop growing).
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Encourage sympathetic integration of golf courses through maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries and existing woodland rather than planting of alien ornamental species - ensure the land use does not break up traditional field patterns.
11. Conserve the areas of unimproved grassland that is of nature conservation value and consider opportunities to extend / recreate this habitat.

12. Encourage the retention and management of field ponds and brooks that are of wildlife importance as well as contributing to the diversity of the landscape.
13. Conserve and manage large scale earthworks, such as ridge and furrow, promoting sensitive agricultural practices in their vicinity (i.e. grazing not ploughing).
14. Planting within Carden should retain the diversity and distinctive mix of tree species: Scots pine, birch and oak on the higher sandstone cliff; hawthorn, oak and lime in the lower parkland; and appropriate wetland species around Carden brook and the field ponds. Avoid planting in areas of ecological value.
15. Conserve and manage earthworks, such as the remnants of Castle Hill Motte at Malpas, and the Round Barrow at Carden, promoting sensitive agricultural practices in their vicinity (i.e. grazing not ploughing).
16. Seek to replace coniferous woodlands with broadleaved woodlands.
17. Conserve the sense of peace and quiet away from the main roads, and conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that 'suburbanise' the landscape such as kerbs and large scale signage.
18. Conserve views from high vantage points, including prominent views from within Carden, across the plain to the Clwydian hills to the west, and to St. Oswald's Church in Malpas. Consider opening up more views from new vantage points. Consider key views when planning locations for new woodland.

Built Development Guidelines

1. Maintain the low density, scattered settlement pattern of villages, hamlets, halls and farmsteads and isolated cottages, retaining Malpas and No Mans Heath (in that order) as the main focus for development.
2. Conserve the local vernacular built form – timber-framed or simple red/orange brick buildings with steeply pitching slate/pantile roofs with distinctive gable parapets. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and styles. Resist suburban style fencing, garden boundaries, kerbs and lighting.
3. Ensure conversion of farm buildings is sensitive to the vernacular style of farmsteads in this area, by maintaining the existing structure of simple form and sandstone/red brick finish. Pay particular attention to the features which accompany the conversion such as driveways and gardens, ensuring that these features do not 'suburbanise' the landscape.

4. Soften built edges by introducing small scale planting schemes using native broadleaved species. Seek to integrate garden boundaries with the rural landscape through use of native hedgerows rather than close-board fencing.
5. Ensure riding schools, stables and equestrian development do not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area – ensure sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, jumps and ancillary buildings.
6. Conserve rural views from Bishop Bennet Way long distance footpath and consider views to the Clwydian Hills and Malpas Church, which provides a significant landmark especially when approaching the settlement from the south, in relation to any change.
7. Maintain the rural setting to villages and farmsteads which are features of the landscape, with specific reference to Malpas.
8. Consider views northwards and eastwards to the skyline backdrop of the wooded sandstone fringe and sandstone ridge in relation to any change.
9. Protect views to and from St. Oswald’s Church, Malpas.
10. Refer to local documents, Village Design Statement (VDS) and Neighbourhood Plans when considering change.
11. Conserve the openness of the landscape between Malpas and Ebnal where the Candidate Key Settlement Gap is identified through which settlement identity and separation can be secured.



LCT 5: Undulating Enclosed Farmland