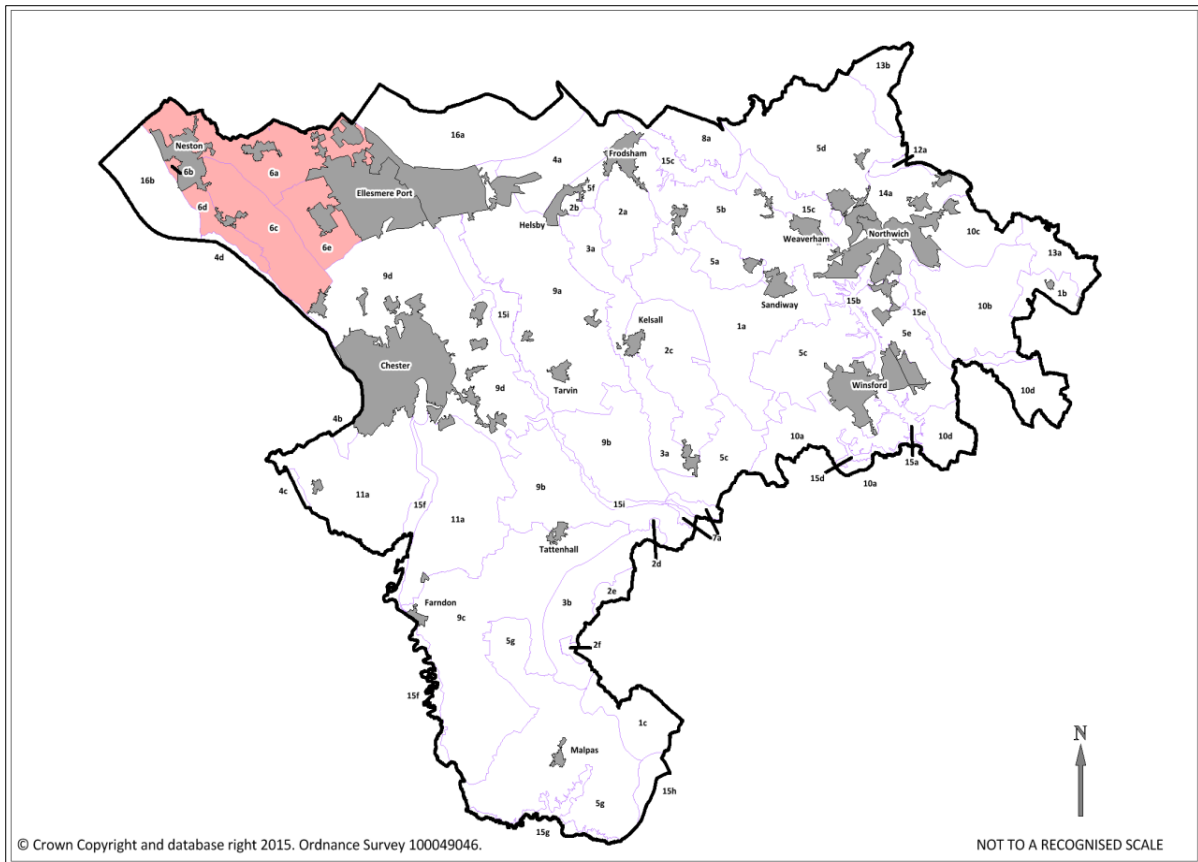


LCT 6: ENCLOSED FARMLAND



General Description

This landscape character type is located on a peninsula formed by the Mersey and Dee estuaries. The landscape comprises low lying, very gently undulating or gently sloping topography and a distinctly rural, small to medium scale field pattern into which it is divided. Key characteristics are the strong field patterns, small woodlands, ponds and streams, nucleated rural villages and scattered farmsteads. Land use is a mix of arable and pasture.

The area was originally part of the Royal Forest of Wirral, cleared by the end of the Roman period for fuel and building materials, and subsequently colonised by heathland as shown by the names Heath Farm and Heath Hey – now almost completely lost as farming practices have expanded.

Woodlands form an important feature within this landscape and dominate many localities. Where these combine with an intact and prominent hedgerow system the scale of the landscape is effectively reduced by the increased enclosure.

Natural coastal scenery with long distance views westwards across the Dee contrasts with the built-up, predominantly industrial character of the eastern side of the area heavily influenced by the outskirts of Ellesmere Port, the M56 motorway corridor, other main roads and railway.

Visual Character

Many of the more elevated and open locations enjoy expansive views westward across the Dee estuary towards North Wales and the Clwydian Hills. There are views to the south towards the Shotton industrial area where both the Connah's Quay power station and the dramatic Dee Bridge

are visible. Where low tree cover and poor hedges allow more extensive views over very gently undulating farmland, large scale industrial works on the edge of Ellesmere Port can dominate the landscape and detract from the original agricultural character, exerting a strong visual influence over a wide area.

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 church spires and electricity pylons emanating from Connah's Quay. 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 sea level to a maximum height of around 70m AOD. The main A540 follows a straight, slightly elevated ridge through the centre of the area, gently sloping down towards the Dee estuary. There are localised areas of flatter ground.

Lowland heathlands show a strong association with the underlying geology and are found on Podsollic soils where glacial till overlies Triassic red mudstones and sandstones. 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 intermittent clipped hedgerows with an abundance of hedgerow trees. There are grass leys for pasture, although increasing areas are cultivated for silage or feed crops including cereals and maize.

Woodland is predominantly broadleaved, although there are areas of mixed and conifer plantations; levels are higher than those of the neighbouring plain and concentrated mainly upon former estates such as at Burton. Shotwick Wood is ancient broadleaved woodland. Small farm copses and coverts are associated with unimproved or semi-improved grassland habitats which have escaped modern farming practices. Large woodlands are increasingly being split into multiple parcels with different owners and management regimes.

Drainage is into the Dee estuary in the west and Mersey estuary in the east, with a network of small streams and drainage ditches.

The extensive estuarine habitats of the Dee estuary are of considerable wildlife and ornithological significance. Much of the farmland provides wildlife habitat, including for feeding and roosting birds.

Cultural Influences

Documentary (mainly Domesday Book) and place-name evidence (mainly Scandinavian and Anglo Saxon) suggests there wasn't much woodland on the Wirral by the time of the establishment of the Royal Forest.

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 earlier field systems is a network of footpaths, some of which may be of some antiquity.

Open land, where not farmed, often has uses such as grazing for horses, such as at Neston, or recreational uses offering opportunities for the enjoyment of the natural environment, including coastal footpath and cycleway and RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands reserve. The Wirral Country Park lies to the southwest of Willaston. Some small meadows of unimproved neutral grassland are local wildlife sites.

Settlement density is relatively high. The close proximity of a number of large urban areas, including Neston to the north, Burton in the central area, Saughall to the south and Capenhurst and Ellesmere Port to the east, has a significant influence upon landscape character. Some nucleated villages, such as Willaston and Hooton, have seen 20th century expansion reflecting their location close to larger places of work and the communications network. The urban influence is further reinforced where a number of busy highways such as the A540 to Liverpool and the A550 and A5117, and the Birkenhead-Chester railway dissect the area.

Elsewhere settlement comprises a mix of small picturesque villages such as Puddington and Shotwick, Conservation Areas, surrounded by a dispersed pattern of hamlets, farms and halls linked by a network of rural lanes, bridleways and footpaths.

Building materials are commonly brick, in the areas of modern housing expansion where this takes the form of a range of colours and textures, rough hurl render with occasional red sandstone vernacular domestic buildings and boundaries. There are a small number of old houses including Shotwick Hall (Grade II*) and Puddington Old Hall (Grade II). Impressive examples of 19th century black and white timber framed buildings survive.

Sites of archaeological interest span a vast period of time and include an Iron Age promontory fort at Burton Point and a heavy WWII anti-aircraft gun-site at Puddington. There are two Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens from Heritage England's National Heritage List for England – Ness Botanic Gardens and Burton Manor. There is a medieval Deer Park at Shotwick. The Neston Cutting, which is now a disused railway has been designated as a RIGG.

There are **five Landscape Character Areas** within LCT 6:

6a: Willaston

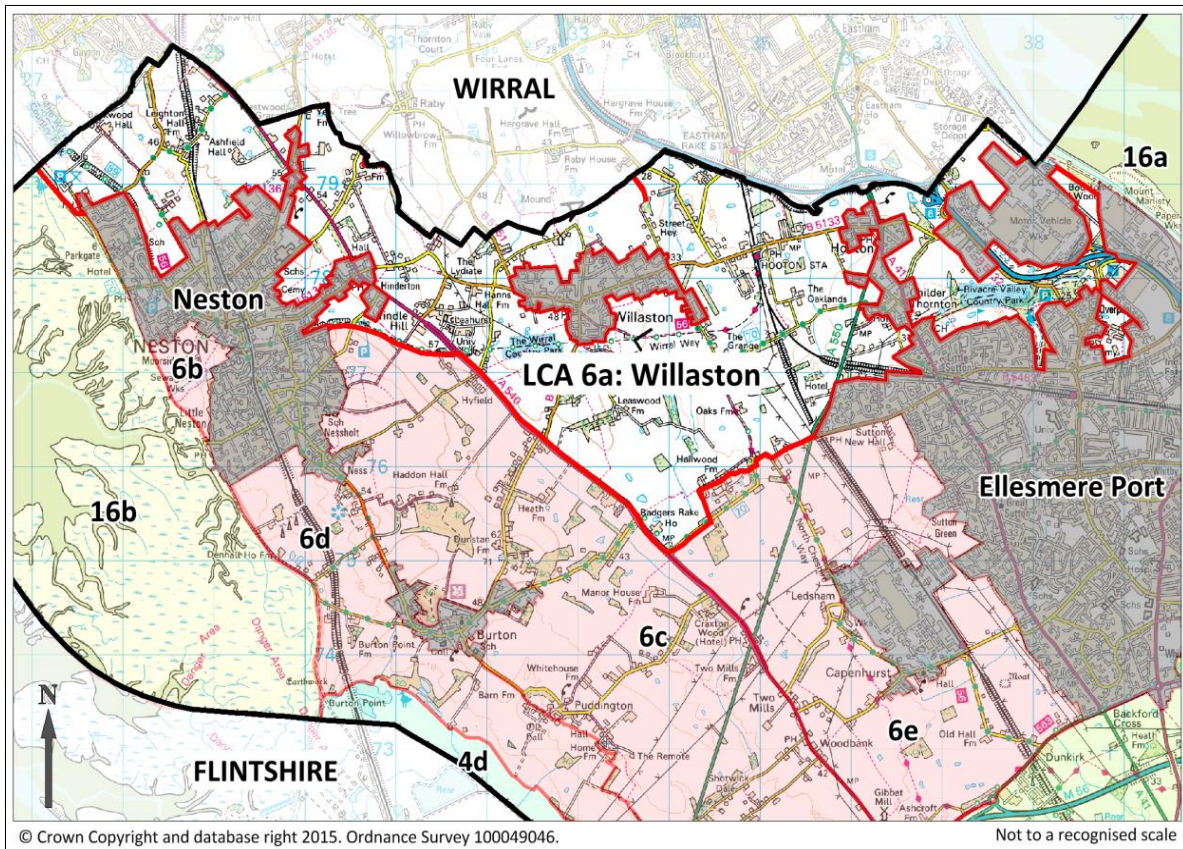
6b: Neston

6c: Neston to Saughall

6d: Ness, Burton, Puddington & Shotwick Slopes

6e: Capenhurst Plateau

LCA 6a: Willaston



Location and Boundaries

The *Willaston Enclosed Farmland* landscape character type is located towards the north-western edge of CWaC, between the *Mudflats and Saltmarsh* of the Dee and Mersey Estuaries. It extends from the northern boundary with Wirral borough southwards to the *Capenhurst Plateau*, also within the *Enclosed Farmland* character type, and Elsmere Port.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 6a: Willaston

- A bedrock geology of Mercia Mudstones covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits that gives rise to a gently undulating topography between 5m and 70m AOD
- 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
- Close proximity to a number of settlements and other urban influences including main roads and industrial areas, has a significant effect on the character of some areas
- Small to medium scale fields formerly part of the Royal Forest of Wirral – patches of small, semi-regular ancient medieval enclosure, such as north of Willaston, regular post-medieval enclosures, and larger, mostly regular fields resulting from reorganisation of earlier field systems, such as south of Willaston
- Fields are mostly bounded by a strong, intact, hedgerow system, with hedgerow trees prominent in some areas but less so in others. Where these are accompanied by blocks of woodland, copses and wooded linear screening belts there is a strongly verdant character, such as on the edge of settlement and around manor houses and industrial areas
- Sandstone walls and metal ‘Cheshire Railings’ are also boundary features in some areas
- Field ponds are a feature of the landscape around Willaston, with a large lake and mixed ornamental plantation at The Duckery to the east of Leaswood Farm
- Hallwood Farm Marl Pit is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Streams are minor and inconspicuous, but Rivacre Brook provides a valuable, wooded green valley corridor and local wildlife interest through Ellesmere Port and out to the River Mersey
- A small area to the north of Neston is designated at the county level as part of the Dee Coastal Area of Special County Value (ASCV) by the former Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council for its high landscape quality
- Large manor houses and halls, most are listed buildings, some associated with former farm estates, including Backwood Hall, Leighton Hall Farm, Ashfield Hall Farm, Hinderton Hall, The Lydiate, Hanns Hall Farm and Inglewood Manor, often with impressive entrances and drives, lodge houses and set in extensive parkland
- A number of plant nurseries, including Greenwood Nursery (part of the Greenwood Group) to the west of Willaston. Other large land holdings, including the University of Liverpool’s Leahurst Campus and industrial units at Hooton Station
- Opportunities for recreation are provided by the Wirral Country Park and Sustrans NCR 56 Wirral Way Recreational Route (dismantled railway) which also links to the North Cheshire Way long distance footpath, Ellesmere Port Golf Club and Rivacre Valley Country Park north of Ellesmere Port
- Settlement is centred along roads; the main settlement of Willaston has expanded along the B5151 and B5133, with smaller nucleated villages at Hooton and Childer Thornton along the main A550 and A41, whilst linear development has occurred along the ‘B’ roads radiating out from Neston and along the main A540; farmsteads, cottages and large detached properties are scattered throughout the area
- A range of building materials throughout the area, but typically brick (in a range of colours and textures) with occasional red sandstone vernacular domestic buildings and boundaries; impressive examples of traditional black and white timber framed buildings
- Landscape scale, enclosure and views are dependent on location; from small scale enclosure where views are limited by hedgerows, trees and woodland, to larger scale open views from elevated vantage points such as north of Neston with expansive views westward across the Dee estuary towards North Wales and the Clwydian Hills
- Electricity pylons, the Birkenhead-Chester railway and M53 to the north are visually intrusive

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- The gently undulating topography, between 5m and 70m AOD, generally falling from a high point along the A540 Chester High Road near Windle Hill eastwards to the River Mersey and westwards to the River Dee, flattening out to the south;
- 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 to medium scale fields mostly bounded by a strong, intact, hedgerow system, with hedgerow trees prominent in some areas but less so in others;
- The blocks of woodland, copses and wooded linear screening belts that give a strongly verdant character to some areas, particularly around Hinderton and Willaston, south of Willaston, within parkland around manor houses and halls, the industrial areas at Hooton Station and between Ellesmere Port and the M53;
- Field ponds are a feature of the landscape around Willaston and to the south, where there is a large lake and mixed ornamental plantation at The Duckery to the east of Leaswood Farm;
- Hallwood Farm Marl Pit is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- Streams are minor and inconspicuous, but Rivacre Brook follows a steep, wooded green valley corridor through Ellesmere Port and out to the River Mersey, with a diverse ground flora typical of ancient woodland and small patches of species-rich neutral grassland of local wildlife interest;
- A small area to the north of Neston/Parkgate is designated at the county level as part of the Dee Coastal Area of Special County Value (ASCV) by the former Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council for its high landscape quality – this area to the north of Boathouse Lane comprises mixed arable and pasture fields, including equestrian facilities associated with Barkwood Hall and Farm, gently falling from 60m to 5m AOD with extensive, panoramic views across the Dee Estuary to the Welsh hills.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The small to medium scale fields that were formerly part of the Royal Forest of Wirral – patches of small, semi-regular ancient medieval enclosure, such as north of Willaston, regular post-medieval enclosures, and larger, mostly regular fields resulting from reorganisation of earlier field systems, such as south of Willaston;
- Areas of parkland around manor houses, halls and large estate farms, such as Backwood Hall, Leighton Hall Farm, Ashfield Hall Farm, Hinderton Hall, The Lydiate, Hanns Hall Farm and Inglewood Manor, often with impressive entrances and drives, lodge houses and set in extensive parkland;
- A number of listed buildings are scattered throughout the area, including most of the manor houses and halls, and The Old Mill on Mill Lane to the north of Willaston; the historic core of Willaston at the junction of the B5151 and B5133 is a Conservation Area, as is the site of Parkgate Old Baths;
- The number of plant nurseries, including Greenwood Nursery (part of the Greenwood Group) to the west of Willaston, is an indication of the quality of the soils;
- Opportunities for recreation are provided by the Wirral Country Park south of Willaston, Rivacre Valley Country Park and the Ellesmere Port Golf Club north of Ellesmere Port;
- Passive recreation is catered for by the Sustrans National Cycle Route 56 Wirral Way Recreational Route (utilising the dismantled railway south of Willaston) which also links to the North Cheshire Way long distance footpath.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- Close proximity to a number of settlements (Neston, Ellesmere Port and Eastham) and other urban influences (A41, A540, A550, M53, the Birkenhead-Chester railway, industrial areas at Hooton Station, North Road Industrial Estate including the Vauxhall car plant north of the M53 and the massive Capenhurst industrial complex to the south which acts as a focus for numerous overhead power lines) has a significant effect on the character of some areas;
- Settlement is centred along roads; the main settlement of Willaston has expanded along the B5151 and B5133, with smaller nucleated villages at Hooton and Childer Thornton along the main A550 and A41, whilst linear development has occurred along the 'B' roads radiating out from Neston and along the main A540;
- Manor houses, halls, farmsteads, cottages and large detached properties are scattered throughout the area; some of the manor houses and halls have been divided into luxury apartments and mews houses e.g. The Lydiate and Leighton Hall;
- A range of building materials is evident throughout the area, but typically brick (in a range of colours and textures) with occasional red sandstone vernacular domestic buildings and boundaries; impressive examples of traditional black and white timber framed buildings at Inglewood Manor Hotel and The Brook Meadow Hotel;
- Other large land holdings, including the University of Liverpool's Leahurst Campus and industrial units at Hooton Station;
- Sandstone walls and metal 'Cheshire Railings' are boundary features in some areas.

Perceptual / Visual

- Generally perceived as a pleasant agricultural landscape along winding country lanes, but with significant intrusion from 20th century residential and industrial development, busy transport infrastructure and other man-made structures significantly affect views and tranquillity;
- Close proximity to a number of settlements and other urban influences including main roads and industrial areas, has a significant effect on the character of some areas;
- Away from the intrusive features, the simplicity of the agricultural land use and the pattern of elements such as hedgerows and trees provides landscape unity, texture and seasonal colour;
- Landscape scale, enclosure and views are dependent on location; from small scale enclosure where views are limited by hedgerows, trees and woodland, to larger scale open views from elevated vantage points such as north of Neston with expansive views westward across the Dee estuary towards North Wales and the Clwydian Hills;
- Electricity pylons are visually intrusive features on the skyline in many views from within and beyond the character area with the exception of the high quality landscape to the north of Neston/Parkgate;
- The presence of 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 *Willaston 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 significant areas of 20th century residential and industrial development, especially alongside roads, that give the landscape a 'suburban' appearance in many places.

CWaC Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 6a: Willaston:

- Green Belt;
- Area designated at the county level as part of the Dee Coastal Area of Special County Value (ASCV) to the north of Neston/Parkgate;
- 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

- 20th century development, in particular ribbon development alongside roads has resulted in the gradual suburbanisation of significant parts of the area;
- Conversion of manor houses and halls into luxury apartments and mews houses has included the incorporation of inappropriate materials such as fencing, car parking, kerbing and signage, with a suburbanising effect;
- Conversion of barns and outbuildings into residential development, e.g. Leighton Hall;
- Agricultural intensification has resulted in loss of unimproved and species-rich neutral grassland;
- 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;
- Erection of large structures out of scale with the landscape e.g. Aldi distribution depot on the northern edge of Neston;
- Farm diversification including equestrian facilities such as stables and paddocks.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 6a: Willaston

- Pressure for residential development, particularly on the edge of Neston, Willaston and Hooton;
- Pressure for employment/industrial development especially where there are good communication links to main roads including the M53;
- Pressure for conversion of farm buildings for other uses including residential, business and industrial use;
- Expansion of plant nurseries with erection of modern portal sheds and glasshouses;
- Pressure for built development associated with the M53 and other main roads that pass through the landscape;
- Planting of small woodlands and hedgerow trees (planting policies within the 2014 Mersey Forest Plan) could help to screen developments and transport infrastructure.

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 6a: Willaston

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** the traditional historic field pattern of small to medium scale semi-regular fields bounded by hedgerows and trees, and **enhance** woodland cover to reduce the influence of urban intrusions on the landscape.

Landscape Management Guidelines

1. Maintain an intact hedgerow network through management of existing hedges and new planting ensuring a young stock of hedgerow trees.
2. Manage existing woodlands to ensure a diverse canopy structure and rich ground flora.
3. Consider opportunities to plant trees and small woodlands as a screen to reduce the influence of urban intrusions on the landscape and to ensure the continuation of these characteristic landscape features. Avoid planting in areas of ecological value and ensure no detriment to historic assets.
4. Conserve the small to medium scale pattern of fields, particularly earlier field systems around Willaston, which provide historic continuity in the landscape.
5. Use ASCV designation to protect the area north of Neston/Parkgate from inappropriate development.
6. 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, and create ponds.
7. Encourage sympathetic integration of horse paddocks through maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries, rather than sub-division of fields and erection of fencing - ensure the land use does not break up traditional field patterns.
8. Encourage sympathetic integration of conversions of manor houses and halls 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.
9. Conserve the remnant fragments of unimproved grassland that is of nature conservation value and consider opportunities to extend / recreate this habitat.
10. 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.

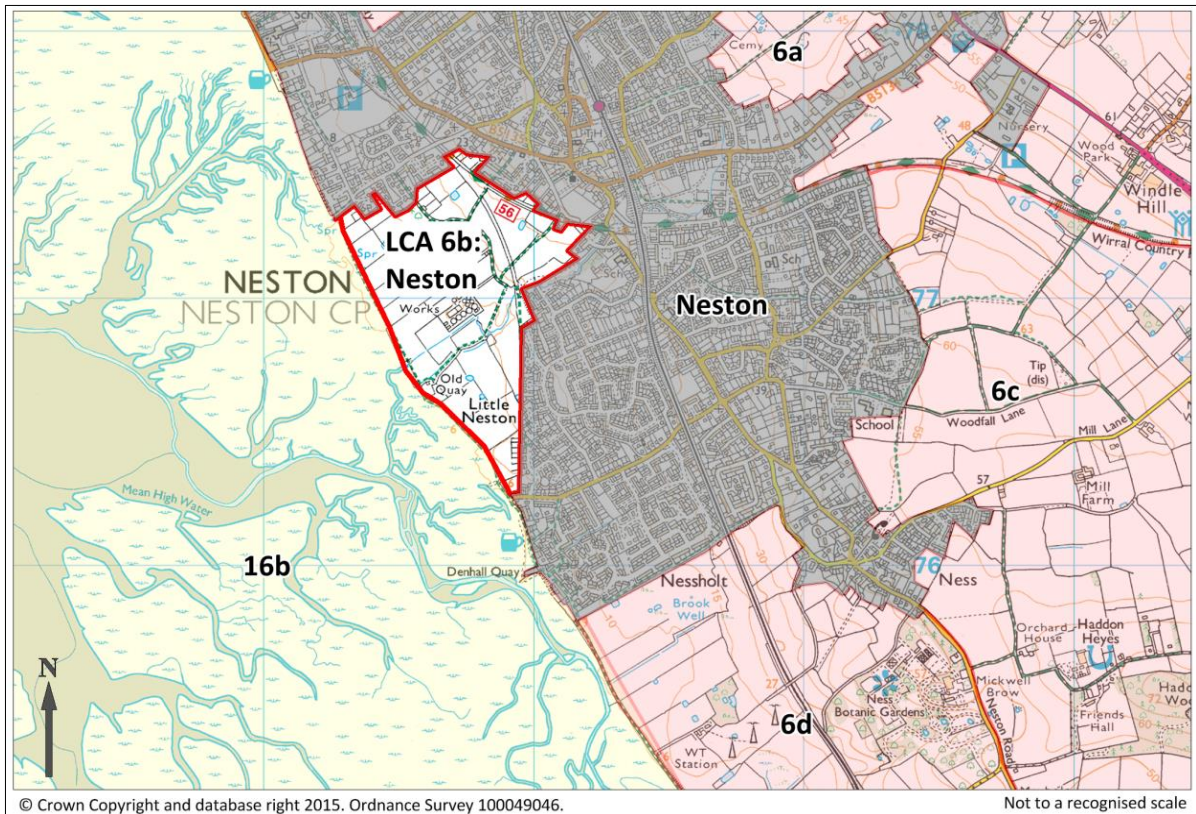
11. Conserve the sense of peace and quiet away from the main roads and other intrusive features, and conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that 'suburbanise' the landscape such as kerbs and large scale signage.
12. Conserve views from high vantage points, including views across the Dee Estuary to the Clwydian hills to the west, and 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, farmsteads and isolated cottages, retaining Willaston as the main focus for development.
2. Ensure the separate identities of settlements are retained by avoiding development that would lead to coalescence, e.g. retain the narrow open gap between Hooton and Childer Thornton.
3. Conserve the local vernacular built form where this is still in evidence – timber-framed or simple red-orange brick buildings. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and styles. Encourage retention / introduction of boundary sandstone walls and 'Cheshire Railings' and 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 and aim to integrate large intrusive structures into the landscape using native planting, and ensure proposals are accompanied by enhancement of existing hedgerows, trees and woodland in the vicinity of the site to ensure the landscape structure around any new facility is maintained / improved.
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 long distance footpaths and consider views to the Clwydian Hills in relation to any change.
8. Maintain the rural setting to villages and farmsteads which are features of the landscape.



LCA 6b: *Neston*



Location and Boundaries

The ***Neston Enclosed Farmland*** landscape character type is a very small character area enclosed to the north, east and south by the built up suburbs of Neston. To the west lies the *Dee Estuary*, a contrasting area of open Mudflats and Saltmarsh.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 6b: Neston

- A low lying area (0-20m AOD) which slopes gently westwards down towards the coast
- The strong field pattern of post medieval regular, rectangular small to medium sized fields bounded by hedgerows and trees
- Fields are used as horse paddocks, with shelters evident in a number of fields
- Small woodland blocks in field corners
- Linear wooded green corridors along two dismantled railways provide enclosure to the eastern part of the character area, whilst tall relatively dense vegetation along the northern and southern boundaries allows only glimpsed views of Neston
- An area of small ponds and unimproved neutral grassland in the north-eastern corner, known as 'The Intake', is recognised as a local wildlife site
- A series of springs and ponds located across the character area
- A predominantly open, unsettled area with only one small farmstead and a couple of cottages towards the centre of the area - a sewage works occupies a similar location
- Designated at the county level as part of the Dee Coastal Area of Special County Value (ASCV) by the former Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council for its high landscape quality
- Dismantled railways and other evidence of past coal mining activity close to the shoreline in the southern corner at Little Neston – now reclaimed with trees and shrubs
- 'Old Quay' was located on a tidal creek at the junction of Great and Little Neston providing evidence of the past importance of the areas location on the coast. Sandstone walls and steps are retained along the old shoreline
- Panoramic views westwards across the Dee Estuary towards north Wales and the Clwydian Hills from most parts of the character area, including from a popular footpath that follows the shore line
- Other rights of way along field boundaries and Old Quay Lane provide access between the estuary inland to Neston, including links to the Sustrans NCR 56 Wirral Way Recreational Route / Wirral Country Park (disused railway)
- Extensive views to the south towards the Shotton industrial area where both the Connah's Quay power station and the dramatic new Dee Bridge are conspicuous
- Tall structures at the sewage works and Neston Church provide visual landmarks inland

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- The underlying Mercia Mudstones covered by a mantle of glacial till deposits (boulder clay) which give rise to a predominance of poorly draining clay soils;
- A low lying area between 0-20m AOD sloping gently westwards down from Neston towards the coast;
- A series of springs and ponds are located across the character area, indicating the impervious nature of the underlying clays;
- The fields bounded by hedgerows, tall scrub and hedgerow trees; hedges are generally tall and un-trimmed but kept short alongside Old Quay Lane;
- Small woodland blocks in field corners, linear wooded green corridors along disused railways, and tall, relatively dense vegetation along the northern and southern boundaries are features of the landscape;
- The Intake, a local wildlife site, is an area of unimproved neutral grassland with yellow rattle and sea clubrush and small ponds with lesser reedmace and cyperus sedge.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The strong field pattern of post medieval regular, rectangular small to medium sized fields (4ha-8ha) that divides the landscape;
- Fields are mostly used as horse paddocks, with shelters evident in a number of fields – a silage crop is taken from some fields;
- Small woodland blocks in field corners, linear wooded green corridors along disused railways, and tall, relatively dense vegetation along the northern and southern boundaries contribute to the perception of a small scale, enclosed landscape when looking inland;
- This enclosure contrasts with the open western boundary of the character area adjacent to the Dee Estuary which provides an opportunity to observe the wildlife of the marshland in the near distance, a quality recognised in its designation at the county level as part of the Dee Coastal Area of Special County Value (ASCV);
- The dismantled railways and other evidence of past coal mining activity close to the shoreline in the southern corner at Little Neston;
- The Old Quay or “New Haven” was first mentioned in 1541, located on a tidal creek at the junction of Great and Little Neston. It was used throughout the 17th century but by 1732 it had become known as the Old Quay and had been superseded by the quay at Parkgate;
- Good public access through the area via public rights of way, including a popular footpath that follows the shore line, with links between the estuary inland to Neston and the Sustrans NCR 56 Wirral Way Recreational Route / Wirral Country Park (disused railway);
- Good public access provides an opportunity to observe the internationally important populations of waders and wildfowl, and other wildlife on the Dee marshland in the near distance.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- Enclosed to the north, east and south by the built up suburbs of Neston, the character area is predominantly open and unsettled with one small farmstead and a couple of cottages towards the centre of the area - a sewage works occupies the same location;
- The cottages are built from sandstone and red brick with white wash;
- Sandstone walling and steps around the Old Quay.

Perceptual / Visual

- A quiet, peaceful landscape despite being close to Neston;
- The strong field pattern of tall hedgerows and trees, small woodland blocks in field corners, linear wooded green corridors along disused railways, and tall, relatively dense vegetation along the northern and southern boundaries contribute to the perception of a small scale, enclosed landscape when looking inland;
- However, the character area is distinctly west facing with open, panoramic views across the Dee Estuary into north Wales and the Clwydian Hills;
- Extensive views to the south towards the Shotton industrial area where both the Connah’s Quay power station and the dramatic new Dee Bridge are conspicuous;
- Tall structures at the sewage works and Neston Church provide visual landmarks inland.

Landscape Condition

The grass paddocks, horse shelters, tall un-trimmed hedges and post and wire fencing, and stored materials around the farmstead provide an air of neglect. However, there is evidence of hedgerow gapping up with new hedge planting, and hedges and fencing around the farmstead and cottages in the central area and along Old Quay Lane are well maintained.

CWaC Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 6b: *Neston*:

- Green Belt;
- Part of the Dee Coastal Area of Special County Value (ASCV);
- Natural heritage sites of local importance.

Forces for Landscape Change

Past change

- Limited boundary management in some areas, with evidence of decline in hedgerow boundaries; however there is evidence of new hedgerow planting in other areas;
- Increase in fencing to replace hedgerow boundaries leading to loss of historic field pattern;
- Steady intensification of horse grazing has resulted in pasture ‘improvement’ and the gradual loss of unimproved grassland.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 6b: *Neston*

- Pressure for residential development with the growth of the surrounding Neston housing estates;
- Possible loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and replacement with fencing leading to loss of historic field pattern ;
- Decline in woodland management could reduce the effectiveness of surrounding woodland belts and open the area up to views from Neston;
- Reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of ponds and unimproved grassland habitats;
- Increase in provision of equestrian facilities including fencing, buildings.

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 6b: Neston

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** the traditional historic field pattern of small scale regular fields bounded by hedgerows and trees, and to **conserve** its enclosed inland character and open estuary coastline with extensive views.

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. Use ASCV designation to protect the character area from inappropriate development.
6. Support retention of pasture and grazing to maintain the pastoral character of the landscape.
7. Seek opportunities to re-create herb rich hay pastures.
8. Increase the biodiversity of the grassland paddocks – 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 fencing - ensure the land use does not break up traditional field patterns.
10. Conserve the area of unimproved neutral grassland at 'The Intake' that is of nature conservation value and consider opportunities to extend / recreate this habitat.
11. Conserve and manage remaining field ponds and springs that are of importance for biodiversity as well as contributing to the diversity of the landscape.
12. Manage existing woodlands to ensure a diverse canopy structure and rich ground flora.
13. Conserve the sense of peace and quiet. Avoid features that 'suburbanise' the landscape such as kerbs and signage.

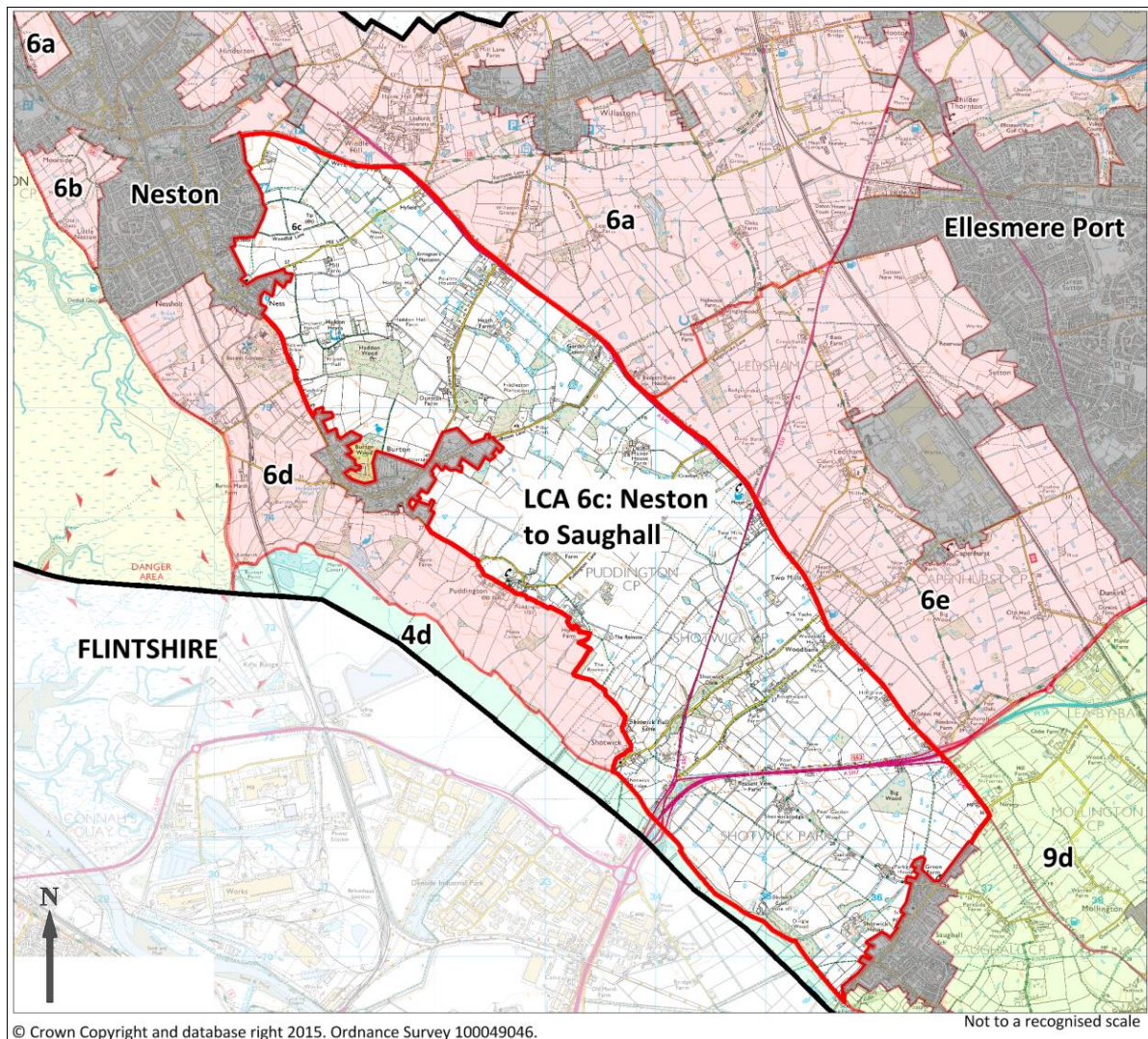
14. Conserve panoramic views over the Dee Estuary and views inland to Neston Church. Consider these key views when planning locations for new planting.

Built Development Guidelines

1. Maintain the essentially unsettled nature of the landscape, concentrating built development to the centre of the character area around the existing farmstead and cottages.
2. Conserve the local vernacular built form - red brick/sandstone or white washed 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.
3. Seek to integrate garden boundaries with the rural landscape through use of native hedgerows.
4. Ensure conversion of farm buildings is sensitive to the vernacular style of farmsteads in this area. 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.
6. Ensure equestrian development does not accumulate to detract from the rural character of the area – ensure sensitive integration of fencing, tracks, jumps and ancillary buildings.
7. Consider retention of the sandstone walls and steps at the Old Quay along the old shoreline as a legacy to the past importance of the area as a transhipment point.
8. Consider views from the popular footpath that follows the shore line and from the other public rights of way across the area in any new development proposals.
9. Conserve panoramic views over the Dee Estuary and views inland to Neston Church, and consider these key views when planning locations for new development.



LCA 6c: Neston to Saughall



Location and Boundaries

The *Neston to Saughall Enclosed Farmland* character area extends from Neston in the west to Saughall in the east. The A540 defines its northern boundary. To the south the ground falls more steeply on the *Ness, Burton, Puddington & Shotwick Slopes Enclosed Farmland* before flattening out on the *Burton and Shotwick Drained Marsh*.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 6c: Neston to Saughall

- A bedrock geology of Mercia Mudstones covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits that gives rise to a gently undulating topography between 5m and 72m AOD
- Glacio-fluvial deposits mask the underlying mudstones giving rise to coarse loamy soils and lighter soils on higher ground less influenced by glacial deposits. These soils generally support arable crops within the larger exposed fields, with grazing on the smaller pastures
- Small to medium scale fields in a rectilinear pattern of small, semi-regular ancient medieval enclosure such as around Puddington, regular post-medieval enclosures, and larger, mostly regular fields resulting from reorganisation of earlier field systems e.g. fields between Puddington and Shotwick
- Fields are mostly bounded by a strong, intact, hedgerow system, with hedgerow trees - where these are accompanied by blocks of woodland, copses and plantations there is a strongly verdant character
- Broadleaf, conifer and mixed woodlands form an important feature in some areas e.g. north of Burton, between Shotwick and Saughall and on the escarpment of the Old River Dee, which has species rich ground flora
- Area to the north of Burton is designated at the county level as part of the Dee Coastal Area of Special County Value (ASCV) by the former Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council for its high landscape quality
- Sandstone walls and metal 'Cheshire Railings' are also boundary features in some areas
- Minor roads and sunken green lanes respond to the topography, winding their way from the A540 to Burton and the small picturesque historic villages of Puddington and Shotwick dotted along the area's southern boundary; ribbon development lies along the roads either as continuous cottages such as that along Dunstan Lane north of Burton, or dispersed cottages and farmsteads
- Shotwick Brook follows a narrow, wooded, steeply incised valley through Shotwick Dale and Shotwick Wood, ancient broadleaf woodland
- Other minor streams and brooks; mill ponds and field ponds are a feature of the landscape
- Conservation Areas at Burton, Puddington and Shotwick, with numerous listed buildings including Puddington Old Hall and Shotwick Hall; the site of Shotwick Castle and a heavy anti-aircraft gun-site at Puddington are Scheduled Monuments
- Building materials are commonly red-orange brick with slate roofs in a simple design
- Urbanising influence of Neston and Saughall on the boundaries of the area, together main road corridors (A540, A550 and A5117); road junctions are particularly intrusive with commercial development such as petrol stations, car showrooms at Two Mills, garden centre etc.
- Recreational opportunities provided by access through Burton Wood nature reserve managed by the National Trust, the Wirral Country Park and Sustrans NCR 56 Wirral Way Recreational Route (dismantled railway), NCR 563 alongside the A5117, and equestrian facilities at Haddon House (The Wirral Riding Centre)
- Electricity power lines cross the southern half of the area from the Deeside power stations and are visually prominent
- From the southern boundary there are expansive views westward across the Dee estuary towards north Wales and the Clwydian Hills; also views to the south towards the Shotton industrial area where both the Connah's Quay power station and the dramatic new Dee Bridge are visible

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- The gently undulating topography, between 5m and 72m AOD. North of Burton the topography rises from the A540 to a wooded ridge, before gently falling southwards to the Dee Estuary; elsewhere the A540 follows the ridge of high ground, topography gently sloping southwards to the Dee;
- Glacio-fluvial deposits mask the underlying mudstones giving rise to coarse loamy soils and lighter soils on higher ground less influenced by glacial deposits. These soils generally support arable crops within the larger exposed fields, with grazing on the smaller pastures
- Small to medium scale fields (4ha-8ha) mostly bounded by a strong, intact, hedgerow system, with hedgerow trees prominent in some areas but less so in others. Where these are accompanied by blocks of woodland, copses and plantations there is a strongly verdant character;
- Broadleaved, conifer and mixed woodlands form an important feature within this landscape and dominate many localities, in particular north of Burton (e.g. Haddon Wood, Burton Wood and ancient woodland alongside Mudhouse Lane), between Shotwick and Saughall (e.g. Big Wood and Dingle Wood) and a strip of ancient woodland on the escarpment of the Old River Dee, which has species rich ground flora;
- Shotwick Brook follows an inconspicuous course parallel with the A540 before falling through a narrow, wooded, steeply incised valley through Shotwick Dale and to the east of the village; Shotwick Wood is ancient broadleaf woodland;
- Other minor streams and brooks, mill ponds and field ponds are a feature of the landscape and provide a valuable habitat for a diverse number of wetland species;
- An area to the north of Burton is designated at the county level as part of the Dee Coastal Area of Special County Value (ASCV) by the former Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council for its high landscape quality.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- The area was originally part of the Royal Forest of Wirral, cleared by the end of the Roman period for fuel and building materials, and subsequently colonised by heathland as shown by the names Heath Farm and Heath Hey – now almost completely lost as farming practices have expanded;
- The small to medium scale field pattern of small, semi-regular ancient medieval enclosure, such as around Puddington and Shotwick / Woodbank, regular post-medieval enclosures, and larger, mostly regular fields resulting from reorganisation of earlier field systems e.g. fields between Puddington and Shotwick;
- Conservation Areas at Burton, Puddington and Shotwick, with numerous listed buildings including Puddington Old Hall and Shotwick Hall; the site of Shotwick Castle and a heavy anti-aircraft gun-site at Puddington are Scheduled Monuments;
- Opportunities for recreation are provided by access through Burton Wood nature reserve managed by the National Trust, the Wirral Country Park and Sustrans NCR 56 Wirral Way Recreational Route (dismantled railway), NCR 563 alongside the A5117, and equestrian facilities at Haddon House (The Wirral Riding Centre).

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- Minor roads and sunken green lanes respond to the topography, winding their way from the A540 to Burton and the small picturesque historic villages of Puddington and Shotwick dotted along the area's southern boundary;
- In contrast the A540, A550 and A5117 are straight, major roads that cut across the area with no integration with the landscape;

- Ribbon development lies along the roads either as a continuous line of dwellings such as that along Dunstan Lane north of Burton, or dispersed cottages and farmsteads;
- A range of building materials is evident throughout the area, but typically brick (in a range of colours and textures) with slate roofs in a simple design;
- Sandstone walls and metal 'Cheshire Railings' are boundary features in some areas;
- Urbanising influence of Neston and Saughall on the boundaries of the area, together main road corridors (A540, A550 and A5117); road junctions are particularly intrusive with commercial development such as petrol stations, car showrooms at Two Mills, garden centre etc.

Perceptual / Visual

- Generally a quiet, rural landscape but with features that detract from the overall sense of tranquillity whilst providing sensitive visual receptors, in particular the main 'A' roads and the presence of settlements on the edge of the character area;
- Away from the intrusive features, the simplicity of the agricultural 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';
- Landscape scale, enclosure and views are dependent on location; from small scale enclosure where views are limited by hedgerows, trees and woodland, to larger scale open views from the southern boundary westward across the Dee estuary towards north Wales and the Clwydian Hills;
- Also views to the south towards the Shotton industrial area where both the Connah's Quay power station and the dramatic new Dee Bridge are visible;
- Electricity power lines cross the southern half of the area from the Deeside power stations and are visually prominent;
- The presence of 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 *Neston to Saughall 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 and some over-mature hedgerow trees. There is very little unimproved grassland or heathland remaining. Although the landscape generally has an appearance of being 'well cared for', development along the A540 and in particular at road junctions where commercial development such as petrol stations, car showrooms at Two Mills, garden centre etc. give the landscape a 'suburban' appearance.

CWac Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 6c: *Neston to Saughall*:

- Green Belt;
- Area designated at the county level as part of the Dee Coastal Area of Special County Value (ASCV) to the north, south and west of Burton;
- Natural heritage sites of local importance;
- Regionally / locally significant heritage assets;
- Flood risk and water management.

Forces for Landscape Change

Past change

- Loss of heathland and unimproved grassland due to agricultural intensification;
- Loss of the traditional nucleated settlement pattern with piecemeal dispersal of farmsteads and cottages along minor roads;
- Loss of water mills and windmills that were typical throughout the landscape (hence the name Two Mills);
- Construction of straight, major roads that cut across the area with no integration with the landscape;
- 20th century development along the A540 has resulted in the suburbanisation of significant parts of the road corridor;
- 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;
- 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;
- Erection of large barns and other farm buildings out of scale with the landscape;
- Farm diversification including equestrian facilities such as stables and paddocks.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 6c: *Neston to Saughall*

- Further farm diversification, for example equestrian facilities;
- Possible move towards biomass crops such as Miscanthus;
- On-going decline in traditional woodland management practices leading to general deterioration and increase in number of over-mature trees;
- Pressure for small scale residential development , principally around Neston, Burton and Saughall on the edge of 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 A540 road corridor and other main roads that pass through the landscape;
- Planting of small woodlands and hedgerow trees (planting policies within the 2014 Mersey Forest Plan) could help to screen developments and transport infrastructure.

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 6c: Neston to Saughall

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** and **enhance** the traditional historic field pattern of small to medium scale semi-regular fields bounded by hedgerows and trees, and **enhance** broadleaved woodland cover by planting new woodland to replace that lost.

Landscape Management Guidelines

1. Maintain an intact hedgerow network through management of hedges and ensuring a young stock of hedgerow trees.
2. Consider opportunities to replace hedgerows where they have been lost.
3. Continue to manage woodlands to ensure a diverse canopy structure, age and species diversity and rich ground flora.
4. Consider opportunities to plant trees and simple blocks of broadleaf woodland to ensure the continuation of these characteristic features in the landscape. Avoid planting in areas of ecological value and ensure no detriment to historic assets.
5. Conserve the small to medium scale pattern of fields, particularly earlier field systems around Puddington and Shotwick, which provide historic continuity in the landscape.
6. Use ASCV designation to protect the area to the north of Burton from inappropriate development.
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 fencing - ensure the land use does not break up traditional field patterns.
9. Encourage sympathetic integration of conversions of farm buildings 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.
10. Conserve the remnant fragments of unimproved grassland that is of nature conservation value and consider opportunities to extend / recreate this habitat.

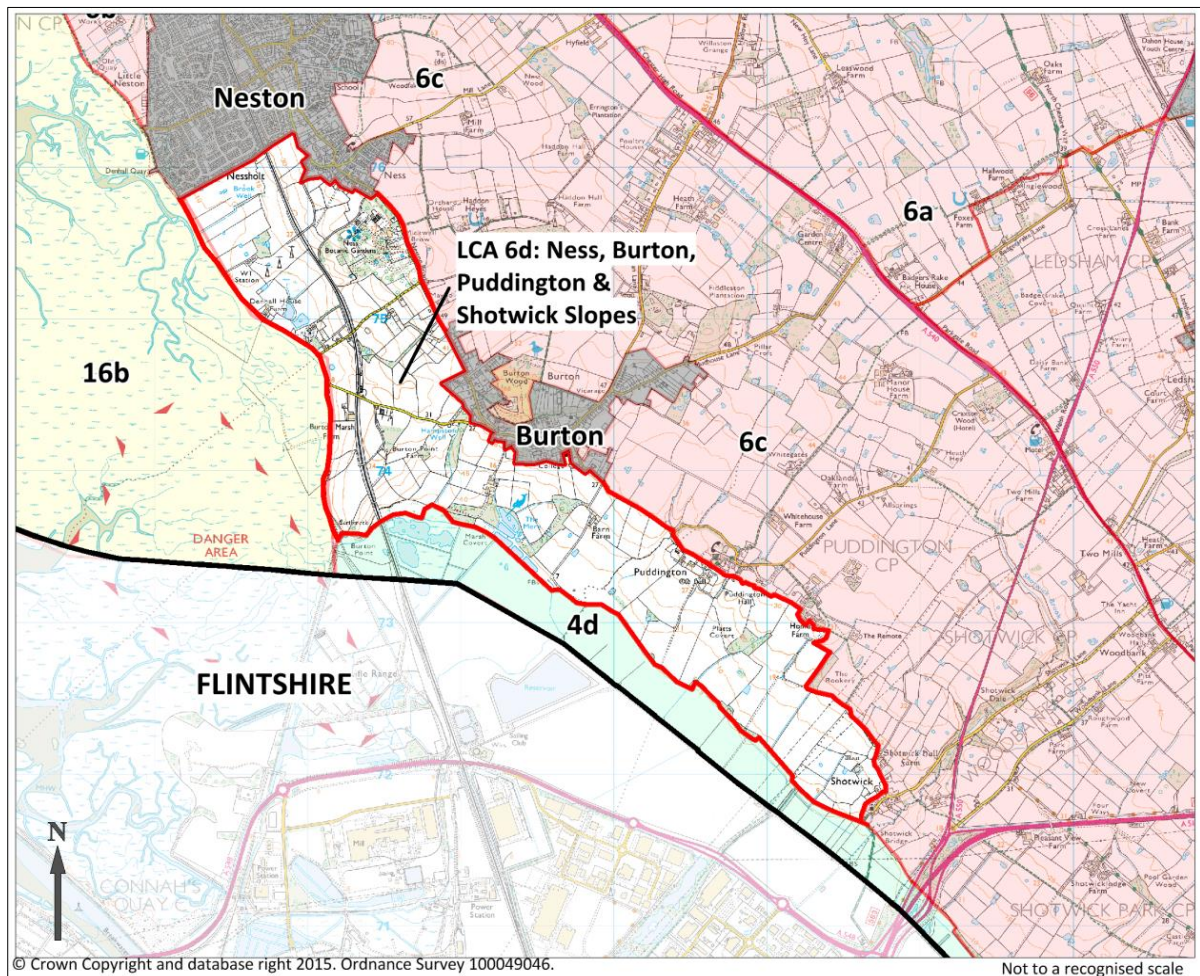
11. Conserve the remnant fragments of heathland and consider opportunities to extend / recreate this habitat.
12. Encourage the retention and management of field ponds and brooks that are of wildlife importance as well as contributing to the diversity of the landscape. Create new ponds.
13. Conserve the sense of peace and quiet away from the main roads and other intrusive features, and conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that 'suburbanise' the landscape such as kerbs and large scale signage.
14. Conserve views across the Dee Estuary to the Clwydian hills to the west, and 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, farmsteads and isolated cottages, retaining the main focus for development on the edges of neighbouring settlements of Neston, Burton and Saughall.
2. Conserve the local vernacular built form of simple red-orange brick buildings and slate roofs. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and simple styles. Encourage retention / introduction of boundary sandstone walls and 'Cheshire Railings' and 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 and aim to integrate large structures into the landscape using native planting, and ensure proposals are accompanied by enhancement of existing hedgerows, trees and woodland in the vicinity of the site to ensure the landscape structure around any new facility is maintained / improved.
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. Maintain the rural setting to villages and farmsteads which are features of the landscape.



LCA 6d: Ness, Burton, Puddington & Shotwick Slopes



Location and Boundaries

The Ness, Burton, Puddington & Shotwick Slopes Enclosed Farmland landscape character type extends from Neston in the west to Shotwick in the east. The southern edge of the *Burton to Shotwick Enclosed Farmland* defines its northern boundary. To the south the ground flattens out to the *Burton and Shotwick Drained Marsh* and the mudflats of the *Dee Estuary*.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 6d: *Ness, Burton, Puddington & Shotwick Slopes*

- A bedrock geology of Mercia Mudstones covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits, giving rise to a gently undulating topography that slopes down towards the Dee Estuary from around 50m to 5m AOD
- Elongated transitional area between the elevated farmland inland and the low lying Dee levels
- Predominantly used for arable crops within the larger exposed fields, with grazing on the smaller pastures around Puddington and Shotwick
- Rectilinear pattern of large fields facing north-east to south-west resulting from reorganisation of earlier field systems, with some semi-regular ancient medieval enclosure around Puddington, and Shotwick
- Fields are mostly bounded by gappy hawthorn hedges with few hedgerow trees and occasional copses and coverts, giving an open windswept appearance
- Ancient broadleaved woodland to the south of Burton is of local wildlife value
- Area to the south and west of Burton is designated at the county level as part of the Dee Coastal Area of Special County Value (ASCV) by the former Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council for its high landscape quality
- Settlement pattern restricted to a small number of dispersed farmsteads along minor rural green lanes and a nucleated group of large properties along Denhall Lane; the southern built edges of Neston, Burton, Puddington and Shotwick border the character area
- Building materials are commonly red-orange brick with slate roofs in a simple design. Sandstone walls are boundary features in some areas
- A few field ponds are inconspicuous features in the landscape, providing wildlife value; there are larger waterbodies at Denhall House Farm and Burton Mere RSPB Reserve
- Conservation Area at Ness, and at Burton, Puddington and Shotwick on the edge of the character area, with numerous listed buildings including Puddington Old Hall and Shotwick Hall; the moated site of Shotwick Castle and Ice House at Burton are Scheduled Monuments
- Ness Botanic Gardens and parkland at Burton Manor are on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens
- Recreational opportunities provided at The Mere fishing ponds and RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands reserve with a mosaic of wetland habitats important for birds including internationally designated Ramsar site
- A popular coastal footpath provides an opportunity to experience the Dee Estuary close-to
- Electricity power lines cross the southern end of the area from the Deeside power stations and are visually prominent; the Bidston to Wrexham railway passes through the western end of the area but is inconspicuous in the landscape
- Views to the north are limited by the wooded ridge north of Burton; views east are limited by the elevated southern edge of the *Burton to Shotwick Undulating Enclosed Farmland*
- Expansive views westward across the Dee Estuary towards north Wales and the Clwydian Hills; also views to the south towards the Shotton industrial area where both the Connah's Quay power station and the dramatic new Dee Bridge are visible

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- The north side of the River Dee Estuary originally passed across the area during Roman times, when Chester City was an important port before silting up. The site of Shotwick Castle originally acted as a landing stage for sea-going boats;
- The gently undulating topography, between 5m and 50m AOD that slopes down to the west to the Dee Estuary;
- Glacio-fluvial deposits mask the underlying mudstones giving rise to coarse loamy soils and lighter sandy soils on higher ground less influenced by glacial deposits. These soils generally support arable crops within the larger exposed fields, with some grazing on the smaller pastures around Puddington and Shotwick;
- Fields are mostly bounded by gappy hawthorn hedges with few hedgerow trees and occasional copses and coverts e.g. Platts Covert;
- Ancient broadleaved woodland to the south of Burton which is of local wildlife value;
- A few field ponds are inconspicuous features in the landscape, providing wildlife value; there are larger waterbodies at Denhall House Farm and Burton Mere RSPB Reserve;
- An area to the south and west of Burton is designated at the county level as part of the Dee Coastal Area of Special County Value (ASCV) by the former Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council for its high landscape quality.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- Rectilinear pattern of large fields facing north-east to south-west resulting from reorganisation of earlier field systems, with some semi-regular ancient medieval enclosure around Puddington, and Shotwick;
- Conservation Area at Ness, and at Burton, Puddington and Shotwick on the edge of the character area, with numerous listed buildings including Puddington Old Hall and Shotwick Hall; the moated site of Shotwick Castle and Ice House at Burton are Scheduled Monuments;
- Ness Botanic Gardens and parkland at Burton Manor are on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens;
- Opportunities for recreation are provided at The Mere fishing ponds and RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands reserve with a mosaic of wetland habitats important for birds including internationally designated Ramsar site;
- A popular coastal footpath provides an opportunity to experience the Dee Estuary close-to.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- Settlement pattern restricted to a small number of dispersed farmsteads, including Denhall House Farm, Burton Marsh Farm, Burton Point Farm and Barn Farm along minor rural sunken green lanes, and a nucleated group of large properties along Denhall Lane;
- The southern built edges of Neston, Burton, Puddington and Shotwick border the character area;
- Building materials are commonly red-orange brick with slate roofs in a simple design;
- Sandstone walls are boundary features in some areas, for example along Denhall Lane.

Perceptual / Visual

- Generally a quiet, rural landscape;
- The simplicity of the agricultural 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’;
- A medium to large scale landscape with an open windswept appearance;
- Electricity power lines cross the southern end of the area from the Deeside power stations and are visually prominent; the Bidston to Wrexham railway passes through the western end of the area but is inconspicuous in the landscape;
- Views to the north are limited by the wooded ridge north of Burton; views east are limited by the elevated southern edge of the *Burton to Shotwick Undulating Enclosed Farmland*;
- Expansive views westward across the Dee Estuary towards north Wales and the Clwydian Hills; also views to the south towards the Shotton industrial area where both the Connah’s Quay power station and the dramatic new Dee Bridge are visible.

Landscape Condition

The *Ness, Burton, Puddington & Shotwick Slopes Enclosed Farmland* is in active agricultural use and is managed for these land uses. The landscape generally has an appearance of being ‘well cared for’ although the hedgerow network gappy and open.

CWaC Local Plan policies with an influence on the character of LCA 6d: *Ness, Burton, Puddington & Shotwick Slopes*:

- Green Belt;
- Area designated at the county level as part of the Dee Coastal Area of Special County Value (ASCV) to the south and west of Burton;
- 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

- Loss of hedgerow field boundaries and hedgerow trees;
- Increase in areas under arable crops with loss of grazing pasture;
- Under management of farm woodlands, coverts and copses leading to general deterioration.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 6d: *Ness, Burton, Puddington & Shotwick Slopes*

- Possible move towards biomass crops such as Miscanthus;
- On-going decline in traditional woodland management practices could lead to general deterioration in the ecological structure and function of the woodland;
- Pressure for small scale residential development , principally around Neston and Burton;
- Pressure for conversion of farm buildings for other uses including residential, business and industrial use.

***Overall Landscape Management Strategy for
LCA 6d: Ness, Burton, Puddington & Shotwick Slopes***

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

Landscape Management Guidelines

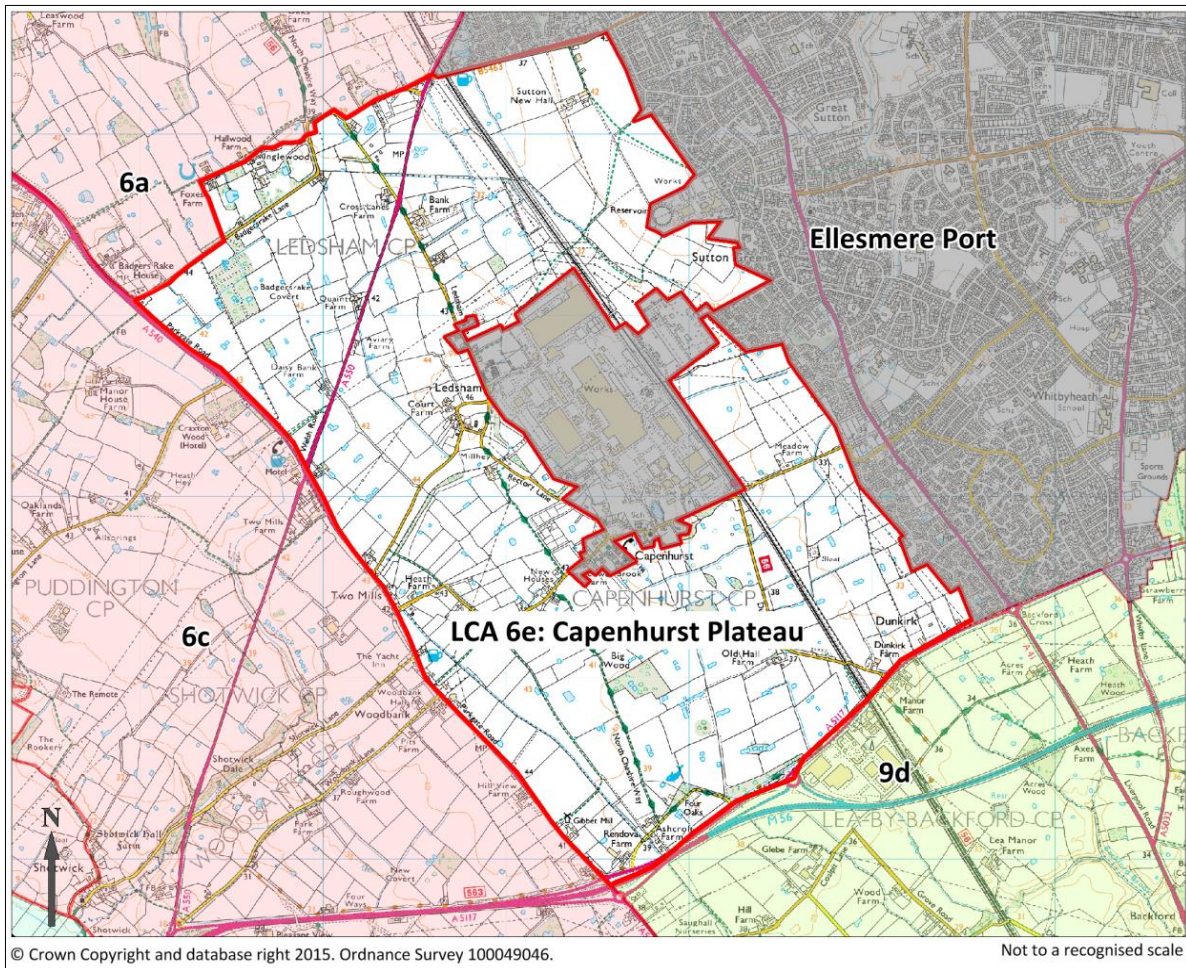
1. Manage the hedgerow network and replace hedgerows and hedgerow trees where they have been lost.
2. Manage woodlands to ensure a diverse canopy structure, age and species diversity and rich ground flora.
3. Consider opportunities to plant trees and simple blocks of broadleaved woodland to ensure the continuation of these characteristic features in the landscape. Avoid planting in areas of ecological value and ensure no detriment to historic assets.
4. Conserve the smaller scale pattern of pasture fields around Puddington and Shotwick, which provide historic continuity in the landscape.
5. Use ASCV designation to protect the area to the south and west of Burton from inappropriate development.
6. 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.
7. Encourage the retention and management of field ponds and streams that are of wildlife importance as well as contributing to the diversity of the landscape. Create new ponds.
8. Conserve the sense of peace and quiet and conserve the rural character of the lanes. Avoid features that ‘suburbanise’ the landscape such as kerbs and large scale signage.
9. Conserve views across the Dee Estuary to the Clwydian hills to the west, and 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, dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads, retaining the main focus for development on the edge of the neighbouring settlement of Neston.
2. Conserve the local vernacular built form of simple red-orange brick buildings and slate roofs. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and simple styles. Encourage retention / introduction of boundary sandstone walls and resist suburban style fencing, garden boundaries, kerbs and lighting.



LCA 6e: Capenhurst Plateau



Location and Boundaries

The **Capenhurst Plateau Enclosed Farmland** character type is an almost flat area of land surrounding the Capenhurst industrial complex to the west of Ellesmere Port. The A540 forms the western boundary to the character area, a transitional area with a poorly defined boundary with the *Burton to Shotwick Enclosed Farmland* further west. The *Willaston Enclosed Farmland* lies to the north and the lower lying *Saughall to Waverton Plain* to the south beyond the A5117.

Key Landscape Characteristics of LCA 6e: Capenhurst Plateau

- A bedrock geology of Mercia Mudstones covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits that gives rise to a very gently undulating, plateau-like topography between 33m and 44m AOD
- Glacio-fluvial deposits mask the underlying mudstones giving rise to well drained sandy and coarse loamy soils. These soils support predominantly arable crops with some cattle grazing
- Close proximity to Ellesmere Port and other urban influences, including major transport corridors and industrial areas, has a significant effect on the character of the landscape
- Small to medium scale fields with a mixture of small, mostly regular, ancient medieval enclosure, regular post-medieval enclosures and larger, mostly regular fields resulting from reorganisation of earlier field systems
- Fields are mostly bounded by a predominantly intact hedgerow system, with hedgerow trees dominant and providing verdant enclosure
- Occasional copses to the north and south of the area add to the verdant character, some of which are local wildlife sites
- Sandstone walls, timber post and rail fencing and metal 'Cheshire Railings' are boundary features in some areas
- Field ponds are a feature of the landscape, some quite large and surrounded by vegetation; streams are minor and inconspicuous
- Opportunities for recreation are provided by Sustrans NCR 56 and the North Cheshire Way long distance footpath. There is a fishing pond at Four Oaks
- Settlement comprises the nucleated villages of Ledsham and Capenhurst, both Conservation Areas, with a number of dispersed farmsteads and cottages linked by secondary roads (not minor lanes).
- Sporadic ribbon development stretches out along the roads adding to the urban fringe character, including kennels, a large plant nursery at Ledsham, caravan storage at a number of farms, fields used for quod biking/motor cross
- A range of building materials throughout the area, but typically brick (in a range of colours and textures including re-claimed brick) with modern style rendering and white-washing
- Generally a small scale landscape and enclosure where views are limited by hedgerows, trees and copses despite the plateau-like topography
- The A540, A550, A5117 and the Birkenhead-Chester railway are major, visually intrusive transportation corridors affecting the character of the area
- The huge Capenhurst industrial complex lies at the heart of the area and is the focus for numerous electricity pylons and overhead power lines which are more visually intrusive than the industrial buildings themselves

Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Value

Natural / Physical

- The very gently undulating, plateau-like topography between 33m and 44m AOD;
- Glacio-fluvial deposits mask the underlying mudstones giving rise to well drained sandy and coarse loamy soils. These soils support predominantly arable crops with some cattle grazing;
- Small to medium scale fields formerly part of the Royal Forest of Wirral – cleared by the end of the Roman period for fuel and building materials, and subsequently colonised by heathland as shown by the name Heath Farm – now almost completely lost as farming practices have expanded;
- The occasional copses to the north and south of the area add to the verdant character, some of which are local wildlife sites e.g. Badgersrake Covert to the north and Big Wood to the south;

- Field ponds from past marl digging are a feature of the landscape and contribute to the wetland habitats, including some quite large ponds surrounded by vegetation. Streams are minor and inconspicuous.

Cultural / Heritage / Historic

- Field pattern of small, mostly regular, ancient medieval enclosure around Ledsham, regular post-medieval enclosures, and larger, mostly regular fields resulting from reorganisation of earlier field systems, such as between Sutton Green and Little Sutton;
- Ledsham and Capenhurst are both Conservation Areas, with a small number of listed buildings;
- Sites of archaeological /cultural heritage interest are not a feature of this landscape (they are more characteristic of other areas within the *Undulating Enclosed Farmland* landscape type); Gibbet Mill is a remaining windmill near Two Mills and is a listed building (water mills and windmills were typical throughout the landscape hence the name Two Mills);
- Opportunities for recreation are limited – there is a fishing pond at Four Oaks and a large plant nursery at Ledsham;
- Passive recreation is catered for by the Sustrans National Cycle Route 56 and the North Cheshire Way long distance footpath that pass north-south through the area.

Built Development and Settlement Pattern

- Close proximity to Ellesmere Port and other urban influences, in particular the A540, A550, A5117 and the Birkenhead-Chester railway transportation corridors, the Capenhurst industrial complex, electricity sub-station, pylons and overhead power lines provide a strong urban fringe character to the area;
- Medium settlement density comprises the nucleated villages of Ledsham and Capenhurst and a number of dispersed farmsteads and cottages linked by secondary roads (larger than minor lanes that are more characteristic of other areas within the *Undulating Enclosed Farmland* landscape type);
- Sporadic ribbon development stretches out along the roads adding to the urban fringe character, including kennels, a large plant nursery at Ledsham, caravan storage at a number of farms, fields used for quad biking/motor cross, etc.;
- A range of building materials is evident throughout the area, but typically brick (in a range of colours and textures) with slate roofs, and modern style rendering and white-washing;
- Sandstone walls, timber post and rail fencing and metal 'Cheshire Railings' are boundary features in some areas.

Perceptual / Visual

- Generally perceived as a pleasant agricultural landscape, but heavily influenced by 20th century industrial development, busy transport infrastructure, modern residential suburbs on the edge of Ellesmere Port, and other man-made influences that significantly affect views and tranquillity (although the Capenhurst industrial complex is relatively well screened);
- Away from the roads and intrusive features, the simplicity of the agricultural land use and the pattern of elements such as hedgerows and trees provides landscape unity, texture and seasonal colour;
- Generally a small scale landscape and enclosure where views are limited by hedgerows, trees and copses despite the plateau-like topography;
- Electricity pylons are visually intrusive features on the skyline in many views from within and beyond the character area;
- Distant views are not a feature of this landscape, unlike other character areas within the same character type;

- The presence of 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 *Capenhurst Plateau 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, some oak trees remain 'in-field' where hedges have been removed, and some hedgerow trees are becoming over-mature. Some woodlands/copses are not being actively managed. There is relatively little unimproved grassland or heathland remaining. There are significant areas of 20th century residential and industrial development, especially alongside roads, and some urban edge dereliction that give the landscape an unmanaged or 'suburban' appearance in many places.

CWaC Local Plan environmental policies applicable to LCA 6e: *Capenhurst Plateau*

- Mostly Green Belt, with the exception of the Ellesmere Port urban fringe between Sutton Green and Little Sutton allocated for residential development;
- Natural heritage sites of local importance;
- Nationally designated heritage assets (on Historic England's National Heritage List for England) and locally significant heritage assets.

Forces for Landscape Change

Past change

- Loss of heathland and unimproved grassland due to agricultural intensification;
- Loss of the traditional nucleated settlement pattern with piecemeal dispersal of farmsteads and cottages along minor roads;
- Loss of water mills and windmills that were typical throughout the landscape (hence the name Two Mills);
- 20th century residential and industrial development has resulted in the suburbanisation of significant parts of the character area;
- Limited management of field ponds has resulted in some silting up and drying out due to natural processes of vegetation succession, overshadowing from trees and muddying of pond edges by cattle;
- A shift from pasture to cultivation for silage and crops, fallow and set-aside;
- Farm diversification, including equestrian facilities such as stables and paddocks, kennels and caravan storage.

Potential future change / key issues affecting LCA 6e: *Capenhurst Plateau*

- Further farm diversification, for example equestrian facilities;
- Possible move towards biomass crops such as Miscanthus;
- On-going decline in traditional woodland management practices leading to general deterioration and increase in number of over-mature trees;
- Pressure for residential development, principally within the Ellesmere Port urban fringe between Sutton Green and Little Sutton with permission for 2000 houses;
- Pressure for conversion of farm buildings for other uses including residential, business and industrial use;
- Pressure for built development associated with the main road corridors and other secondary roads that pass through the landscape;
- Planting of small woodlands, hedgerows and hedgerow trees (planting policies within the 2014 Mersey Forest Plan) could help to screen developments and transport infrastructure.

Overall Landscape Management Strategy for LCA 6e: Capenhurst Plateau

The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to **conserve** the traditional historic field pattern of small to medium scale regular fields bounded by hedgerows and trees, and **enhance** woodland cover to reduce the influence of urban intrusions on the landscape.

Landscape Management Guidelines

1. Maintain an intact hedgerow network through management of hedges and ensuring a young stock of hedgerow trees.
2. Consider opportunities to replace hedgerows where they have been lost.
3. Manage existing woodlands to ensure a diverse canopy structure and rich ground flora.
4. Consider opportunities to plant trees and small woodlands as a screen to reduce the influence of urban intrusions on the landscape and to ensure the continuation of these characteristic features in the landscape. Avoid planting in areas of ecological value and ensure no detriment to historic assets.
5. Conserve the small to medium scale pattern of fields, particularly earlier field systems around Ledsham, which provide historic continuity in the landscape.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. Conserve the remaining example of a mill at Gibbet Mill (windmills and watermills were once typical features in the landscape).
9. Conserve the sense of peace and quiet away from the main roads and other intrusive features. Avoid features that ‘suburbanise’ the landscape such as kerbs and large scale signage.

Built Development Guidelines

1. Maintain the low density, nucleated settlement pattern of villages, farmsteads and cottages, retaining the urban fringe of Ellesmere Port as the main focus for development.
2. Conserve the local vernacular built form where this is still in evidence – simple red-orange brick buildings with slate roofs. Ensure new built development is of high quality design and responds to local materials and styles. Encourage retention / introduction of boundary sandstone walls and ‘Cheshire Railings’ and 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 and aim to integrate large intrusive structures into the landscape using native planting, and ensure proposals are accompanied by enhancement of existing hedgerows, trees and woodland in the vicinity of the site to ensure the landscape structure around any new facility is maintained / improved.
5. Consider views from Sustrans NCR 56 and the North Cheshire Way long distance footpath when considering the location of new built development.

