

# Landscape Character Assessment for **St Helens**

**Final Report**

prepared for  
**St Helens Council**

by  
**Land Use Consultants**

**January 2006**





**ST HELENS BOROUGH  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER  
ASSESSMENT**

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# I. INTRODUCTION

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## BACKGROUND

- I.1. The landscape of the Borough of St Helens is facing a number of contrasting pressures and complex landscape planning issues. Much of the borough can be described as urban fringe, a transitional character zone between the urban and rural landscape (**Figure 1**). These areas have an inherent sensitivity as they are often identified as the most appropriate areas to accommodate the ever-increasing requirement for developable land. These landscapes however, often play an important role providing a landscape setting and contrast to urban areas as well as offering opportunities for recreation.
- I.2. This study aims to provide an effective tool for assessing the character of urban, rural and transitional character zones and to inform the future growth of the Borough of St Helens and neighbouring settlements. This should involve directing a positive landscape change considering a range of management approaches including conservation, enhancement and creation of landscape character. This is especially important in areas where St Helens' important industrial heritage has had a significant influence on landscape.

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- I.3. The main purpose of this study was to undertake a comprehensive landscape character assessment (LCA) of the urban, urban fringe and rural landscapes of the Borough of St Helens (the Study Area) to ensure it informs future planning and development. As such, the Study Area comprises the town of St Helens, and the surrounding settlements of Newton-le-Willows, Haydock, Rainhill, Rainford and Billinge.
- I.4. The objectives of the LCA were set out as follows:
  - to assess and describe the landscape character of the Borough of St Helens, to identify and classify its component landscape character types and / or landscape character areas, where relevant to the scale of the landscape and features identified therein;
  - to identify any significant trends or relationships between settlements and adjoining countryside, both positive and negative;
  - to identify where and how development can be accommodated and recommend appropriate planning policies on landscape (which although not part of the scope of this study, could lead to design guidance);
  - to specify the broad landscape management approach within each character type respecting the key characteristics, quality and sensitivity of the landscape therein focussed on creation, enhancement, conservation and repair of character, including the identification of management regimes to be avoided due to the potential for detrimental impact on landscape.

## STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

1.5. The key chapters of this study are as follows:

- **Methodology;**
- **Forces for Change** involves the consideration of the key forces for change acting on the landscape, combining a consideration of current planning policy that are shaping and directing these changes;
- **Formative Influences** containing desk-based research on current influences on the landscape;
- **Landscape Characterisation** discusses visibility analysis and important views, feeding into classification of landscape character types and landscape character areas (including townscape character). This section will also incorporate the evaluation of each character area and lead to the judgements of sensitivity and value (still to be undertaken), leading to judgements of overall sensitivity;
- **Use of the Landscape Assessment** contains a landscape management plan and objectives that feed into the proposed development framework;
- **Landscape Policies** are developed from landscape characterisation.

*(Glossary of terms, References, Appendices)*

## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### BACKGROUND

- 2.1. A key part of the landscape character assessment process is to maintain a clear separation between the landscape character assessment work and the application of the results to inform the planning process and recommend landscape management guidance. This separation has assisted in producing a robust and independent input to the consideration of the landscape character of the Borough of St Helens, to produce a flexible planning tool that can inform development growth as well as other current and future projects and strategies.

### Desk Study

- 2.2. The aim of this part of the study was to develop a comprehensive picture of the factors that jointly contribute to landscape character. Layers of information were built up, commencing with topography and geology, moving on to consider habitats and other natural and semi-natural influences, the pattern of land use of land cover and culminating in the pattern of settlement, including the presence of historic sites.
- 2.3. The information reviewed at this stage included:
- Digital 2D and 3D map tiles;
  - Aerial photos;
  - Geology and soil maps and agricultural land classification;
  - Habitat and ecological surveys;
  - St Helens City Growth Strategy (woodland audit);
  - Historic Parks and Gardens data held on the English Heritage Register;
  - The National Datasets, including Landform, Settlement Patterns, Woodland Cover, Field Density & Pattern, Designed Parkland;
  - National Countryside Character Areas and other adjacent landscape assessments;
  - Development Plans;
  - Historic Maps and the Historic Landscape Character Assessment information covering the Borough.
- 2.4. GIS was used to draw together these different strands of analysis and to identify draft landscape character types and areas. This layered information and draft types provided the basis for testing during fieldwork.

## **Historic Landscape Character Assessment (HLCA)**

- 2.5. The on-going characterisation of the historic landscape within St Helens carried out as part of the wider Merseyside Historic Landscape Character Assessment<sup>1</sup> (HLCA) has been used to inform the development of the landscape character types and areas. Whilst the historic landscape assessment has been undertaken at a more detailed level and classifies landscape types only, the analysis produced thus far has been used to support the assessment and classification of the wider landscape and townscape types. In particular the detailed analysis of field pattern in the rural landscape has influenced the development of agricultural character types. Whilst in the townscape analysis the detailed HLCA Settlement Studies and classification work by development age, formed an important part of the desk study analysis to identify the broader townscape types.
- 2.6. Whilst there are different objectives and scales of study between the Merseyside HLCA and the St Helens Landscape Character Assessment, it is anticipated that the more detailed classification work of the Historic Assessment can sit within the broader Landscape Assessment. Where more detailed analysis of the underlying historic landscape and settlement patterns, is necessary, the relevant section of the Merseyside HLCA can then be consulted. Through use of GIS mapping, this cross-referencing between the two studies can be effectively achieved.
- 2.7. For further information regarding the relationship between landscape and historic landscape character assessment consultation of Topic Paper 5: Understanding Historic Landscape Character<sup>2</sup> is recommended.

## **Field and Visual Survey**

- 2.8. The field survey provided the ground level view and allowed for the draft character types and emerging character areas to be tested and verified on the ground. The fieldwork was also important for identifying aesthetic and perceptual qualities and to gather information on strength of character, quality, sensitivity and opportunities for enhancement for use in the evaluation. In addition, this allowed for the development and deconsolidation of any character areas that were emerging from within the generic landscape types.
- 2.9. Survey forms were tailored to incorporate criteria that were developed to record landscape and visual features, and elements that may be important to inform discussion regarding the urban, rural and transitional zones. These were separated into specific landscape and townscape forms to facilitate the recording of both urban and rural landscape features. These forms were also used to identify important views and the intervisibility between different places, including an assessment of approaches to the settlements and entrances. The visual envelope of main approach routes were also considered to indicate important features or positive aspects of St Helens.

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<sup>1</sup> Merseyside Archaeological Service Merseyside Historic Landscape Characterisation (On-going work, which commenced in ST Helens November 2004) English Heritage

<sup>2</sup> *Topic Paper 5: Understanding Historic Landscape Character*. (200) The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland and English Heritage.

- 2.10. In addition to the survey forms, GPS referenced digital photography was undertaken to build a record of landscapes across the study area.

### **Characterisation**

- 2.11. The aim of the characterisation was to collate the desk study data and information collected in the field to produce landscape character maps, each with a series of summarising statements which capture the key characteristics of the character of the landscape and character type. Characterisation also develops generic landscape character types, which in most instances are classified into specific character areas.
- 2.12. Final characterisation of landscape character areas was considered important as this allows the unique quality and identity of 'place' to be fully understood and described. In particular, the character areas help to inform landscape policy and the understanding of sense of place and the changing character of the Green Belt urban edge landscape, informing management and planning policies as appropriate.

### ***Townscape and Landscape Character Areas***

- 2.13. As part of the brief for this study, both urban and rural landscapes were assessed. The categorisation of these landscapes, produced both landscape and townscape character areas. At the regional scale of assessment at 1:25,000, the classification of 'landscape' character proved to be relatively straight forward, with the development of a series of character types and areas. In the main urban landscape and the surrounding settlements, there is a greater potential for variety and diversity of key characteristics and features. In addition the location of these areas and the interaction they have within the wider Borough landscape has entailed a slight difference in the classification of the main townscape 'core' and the surrounding settlement.
- 2.14. Townscape character of St Helens has been classified primarily according to the broad patterns of land use and age of development to produce a number of townscape character types and areas such as the *St Helens Terraces* and *Ravenhead (Urban Industrial Valley)*. For the surrounding settlements of Billinge, Rainford, Garswood and Newton-le-Willows and the adjoining settlements of Haydock and Rainhill to identify similar patterns of land use and development form, would have proved too detailed an exercise for the scope of this study. As such these settlements have been classified under the broader character type of *Separate Settlements*. At this scale the assessment draws out the key relationships of the form and character of the individual settlements in terms of their immediate locale, (considering the underlying landform, urban form of the settlement and the settlement edge) and within the wider Borough landscape (proximity to the urban centre of St Helens and sense of arrival into the settlements). It is felt that this approach draws out the broader individual character of the settlements. To classify the *Separate Settlements* in more detailed character types and areas would require further study at 1:10,000.

- 2.15. Positive and negative aspects of the elements and characteristics recorded for both townscape and landscape character areas were noted. In addition, the results of the visual survey and visual analysis of the settlement including the approaches to the settlements, the setting identified and unique or important views have been mapped.

### **Making Judgements / Evaluation**

- 2.16. The evaluative stage was the final step in the assessment process. The type of evaluation has largely depended on the purpose of the report tied into the identification of landscape and character sensitivity, quality and condition, and the sensitivity of individual elements contributing to the landscape. In addition the visual sensitivity of the landscape character, both in terms of general visibility and the potential scope to mitigate visual impacts, was considered.
- 2.17. Based on the above, evaluation judgements on the broad opportunities and constraints for each character area with respect to future change has been provided. From the LCA Guidelines and Topic Paper 6<sup>3</sup>, an approach has been adopted that evaluates the character areas in terms of their individual and sometimes opposing landscape and visual sensitivity of individual elements contributing to the landscape.

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<sup>3</sup> Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002), and Topic Paper 6 Techniques for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity. The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.

### **3. FORCES FOR CHANGE**

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- 3.1. St Helens is currently undergoing a period of regeneration and development which reflects the ongoing transformation of former industrial areas throughout the North West. This section of the report explores some of the main policy trends which are guiding this transformation and which will have implications for landscape character and future landscape management within the Borough. This has included an examination of national, regional and local planning policy and relevant economic and environmental strategies. These policies have been explored within the context of 'forces for change' within the Borough, demonstrating influence on land use, development and, ultimately, landscape character.

#### **BUILT DEVELOPMENT**

- 3.2. There is pressure for change in the approach to built development within the North West, through the continuing decline of the traditional manufacturing base and the poor condition of some of the current building stock. The Urban White Paper, *Our Towns and Cities: The Future* (ODPM, 2000) sets out a vision of urban renaissance based on towns and cities that have strong communities, that are attractive and well kept and which have design and planning that encourages environmental sustainability. It states that, essentially, towns and cities should be designed to provide the following:
- attractive homes;
  - good quality public spaces in which people feel safe;
  - easy access to services on foot and bike; and
  - places which are sustainable and well served by efficient and reliable public transport.

#### **Residential Development**

- 3.3. Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG 13) sets out a housing strategy based on improving the housing stock and residential environments. Key aims within this include maximising the use of brownfield land for new housing, ensuring that levels of vacant dwellings are decreased and the regeneration of areas suffering from low demand and market failure. Levels for new housing provision are also set out within RPG and this states that St Helens should have an annual rate of housing provision of 400 dwellings – one of the highest rates within Merseyside outside of Liverpool. A key aspect of this is the reuse of vacant and underused buildings.
- 3.4. The St Helens City Growth Strategy outlines that several major residential developments are planned within the Borough aiming to diversify the residential base. These include a Masterplan for Lea Green Colliery Urban Village for > 400-500 new residential units and 500-600 new residential units for Vulcan Urban Village, both of which are private sector led projects. A Masterplan has also been prepared for Worsley Brow Urban Village with the potential to generate up to 1200 new houses. Planning permission has been granted for the Lea Green Urban Village, whilst applications have been submitted for all the other projects.

- 3.5. The expansion of housing areas could potentially have significant landscape implications within the Borough. New areas of housing can lead to the erosion of existing character through by the introduction of abrupt urban edges that can impose urban characteristics onto rural areas often leading to, or enforcing, urban fringe character. This is especially relevant in rural 'buffer' areas between adjacent areas of settlement. In dramatic scenarios, the construction of large areas of housing can completely alter the character from rural to urban.
- 3.6. New housing within existing townscape areas can also lead to the erosion of existing character. For example, the strong character of the brick terraces that radiate around the town centre of St Helens could be eroded by the introduction of new housing shapes, styles and materials especially if new housing alters the existing street structure and pattern.
- 3.7. In some cases new housing could improve weak or degraded areas of landscape character. This may be pertinent to derelict areas and / or areas of former industrial use.

### **Industrial and Retail Development**

- 3.8. RPG 13 includes an urban concentration policy for the focus of new development to be centred on the North West Metropolitan Area (NWMA), which includes the priority settlements of Liverpool and Manchester and a number of complementary centres including St Helens. The aim for the complementary centres is to enhance quality of life where there are concentrations of social, economic and environmental problems. Key elements of economic development in these areas is urban regeneration, the re-use of previously developed land and creative improvements to the public realm to *'create a more dynamic, attractive and competitive Metropolitan Area.'*
- 3.9. Reflecting the importance of economic regeneration to the Borough, the St Helens City Growth Strategy aims to transform the business base within the Borough based on growth in a number of local clusters. These growth sectors are:
  - building materials and construction;
  - distribution and logistics (road haulage, storage, distribution, warehousing);
  - furniture and furnishings (raw material production, manufacture and retailing);
  - high technology (technical testing and R&D); and
  - tourism and leisure.
- 3.10. The focus on these sectors is based on their current concentration within the Borough and Action Plans have been formulated to help achieve growth and business development within these areas. Tourism is discussed as a separate section below.
- 3.11. The St Helens City Growth Strategy (2003), which sets out a vision and action plan for growth and development in the Borough, outlines the following key aims under 'Theme C: Achieving a Physical Transformation':

- radically developing St Helen's town centre into a distinctive town centre of five quarters;
  - developing the 'Town in the Forest' – with green arrival routes all the way in to the town centre making it at the heart of a maturing series of linear trees;
  - developing key nodes of leisure and sporting facilities – a unique package making St Helens a 21<sup>st</sup> century regional playground (both indoor and outdoor) and including the 'Kew of the North' concept for a huge glass arboretum.
- 3.12. Many of these plans will be achievable with the aid of Objective I funding. Merseyside as a whole is designated as a European Union Objective I area, due to poor economic performance, and will receive £840million of structural funds over the 2000-2006 funding programme. The primary aims of this are to improve the economy, reduce unemployment, raise educational attainment and create an environment for growth that will stimulate economic activity in Merseyside. Of particular importance to the development of the area are a number of spatial designations one of which is the **St Helens Southern Corridor Strategic Investment Area**.
- 3.13. It has also been recently announced that Objective I funding, along with funding from St Helens MBC and the single regeneration budget, will be used to transform St Helens town centre, based on an initial grant of £2million<sup>4</sup>. The remodelling work will focus on the area around Church Street and Church Square, complimenting the award winning work which has taken place in the nearby George Street Cultural Quarter. Work will involve quality streets furniture, new facades, high level street lighting and feature lighting for buildings, and an electricity network to allow the town centre to host events.
- 3.14. Ambitious plans have also been launched to create a £100million regional leisure and retail destination in St Helens on the former United Glass site. The proposed development will include a new rugby league stadium, a large retail store and leisure destination incorporating restaurants, bars, exhibition and conference facilities.
- 3.15. Industrial development has the capacity for large scale landscape change. This could occur in many ways. The introduction of new 'clean' industry and the reduction of tradition 'dirty' industry may improve the perception of the urban fabric of St Helens. However, in contrast, it may also lead to the change on the St Helens skyline with the loss of chimneys, the gasometer and buildings which all contribute to the character of St Helens' and its distinctiveness.
- 3.16. The size of industrial development would effect how it would be accommodated within the landscape. Smaller units with sympathetic styles and materials are easier to accommodate within the landscape and townscape compared with large homogeneous units. Large scale industrial development places pressures on Greenbelt and urban fringe landscapes as these areas are often regarded as the only areas with the spatial capacity to accommodate this scale of development. Within the

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<sup>4</sup> Office of The Deputy Prime Minister (North West) January 2005  
<http://www.gnn.gov.uk/content/detail.asp?NewsAreaID=2&ReleaseID=140843>

Borough of St Helens this is especially relevant to the south and south east degraded agricultural areas with good transportation links. The introduction of large scale industrial development within these areas could potentially further erode the agricultural character of these landscapes as well as leading to the fragmentation of rural areas.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Transport**

- 3.17. One of the key assets of St Helens is its strategic position and good motorway access links. The Local Transport Plan for Merseyside covers the period 2001/2 to 2005/6 and has been jointly prepared by the five Merseyside local authorities and Merseytravel. The focus of the plan is to provide a more integrated approach to transport including strong linkages with land use planning.
- 3.18. The four main objectives of the Plan are:
- to ensure that transport supports sustainable economic development and regeneration;
  - to moderate the upward trend in car use and secure a shift to more sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport;
  - to secure the most efficient and effective use of the existing transport network;
  - to enhance the quality of life of those who live, work in, and visit Merseyside.
- 3.19. Key elements of the emerging Merseyside Freight Strategy are:
- the identification of strategic locations for freight distribution and intermodal facilities;
  - the enhancement of a strategic freight rail and road network to improve access, minimise environmental intrusion and maximise modal choice;
  - the development of Freight Quality Partnerships;
  - action to overcome external constraints.
- 3.20. The Borough has excellent locational characteristics having boundaries with five other local authorities and a strategic position as the Gateway to Merseyside from the east. St. Helens has also defined a Freight Priority Network that seeks to ensure that infrastructure constraints such as bridge height and weight restrictions do not restrict the movement of freight into and out of the Borough. This Freight Priority Network comprises:
- the M6;
  - the M62;
  - the A580 (Liverpool - Manchester);
  - the A58 (Liverpool - Wigan);
  - the A570 (Ormskirk to the M62).

- 3.21. With key motorway connections at J23 of the M6 (Haydock) and J7 of the M62 (Rainhill) within its boundaries, St. Helens has key gateways to national highway networks, and the development of J8 of the M62 at Burtonwood will also bring significant opportunities to the Borough.
- 3.22. There is also a reasonably comprehensive rail network within St. Helens that offers good opportunities for future rail freight development. However, whilst it is important to promote rail freight and encourage modal choice for freight distribution, a large modal shift to rail would not result in a significant decrease of road freight traffic within the Borough. To contribute towards promoting other modes of freight transport the Council will also investigate the use of all other forms of freight transport such as air, canals and pipelines<sup>5</sup>.
- 3.23. The City Growth Strategy also outlines that major improvements are now programmed for the design and rebuild of St Helens Central Station which will upgrade an important gateway into the town.

## **INDUSTRIAL RESTORATION / MINERAL EXTRACTION / LANDFILL**

- 3.24. The industrial past of St Helens has left a legacy of derelict and underused land including spoil heaps and unmanaged grassland. Since the late 1980s the Wasteland to Woodland Initiative has been the primary vehicle for the remediation and reclamation of this land, with the main aim of facilitating *'the treatment of derelict and neglected land by landscape enhancement based on woodland creation.'*<sup>6</sup> The Initiative is a public/private sector environmental partnership including the local authority and Forestry Commission and private sector landowners, with a project officer from St Helen's Groundwork Trust.
- 3.25. The approach used by Wasteland to Woodland includes the positive involvement of local communities including provision for public access to restored sites where possible. Nature conservation is also a priority, including respect for the flora and fauna which has developed naturally over time on the sites. A particular feature of the Initiative is the diversity of the new woodland landscape in contrast to often used heavy engineering restorations.
- 3.26. Projects have included the creation of Colliers Moss Common from the former Bold Colliery and Power Station. The site now includes paths, wooded slopes and lagoons and is an important recreation resource.
- 3.27. The Regional Waste Strategy for the North West 2004 sets out the way forward for sustainable waste management in the region. This includes a reduction in the overall production of waste accompanied by new infrastructure and treatment facilities. The St Helens Unitary Development Plan notes that a movement away from landfill will take time and that there will be a need for landfill capacity beyond 2008/2009. In addition Material recycling and composting facilities and perhaps waste incinerators will need to be constructed if the percentage of waste landfilled is to be reduced.

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<sup>5</sup> St Helens UDP Review, Key Issues Paper: Transport (December 2001) [www.sthelens.gov.uk](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk)

<sup>6</sup> Groundwork St Helens (1998), Wasteland to Woodland: 10 Years of Landscape Change in St Helens, page 4.

- 3.28. The generation of energy from coal spoil could have an effect on the landscape and lead to landscape change. Although little is currently known of this process, there is a potential that this could affect the spoil heaps in the south east of the Borough which form distinctive landscape features as well as new areas of woodland planting. The removal of spoil for energy production could alter the shape and height of the heaps and the associated woodland coverage. It could potentially lead to the reduction of 'natural' green character and return it to one of industry. This is an important consideration given that the spoil heaps often form strong edges and buffers between adjacent urban rural areas as well as adjacent settlement areas.

## **AGRICULTURE AND LAND MANAGEMENT**

- 3.29. Approximately half of the borough of St Helens is countryside, the majority of which is farmland. Agriculture in general has been in a period of change and restructuring resulting in land use and landscape change, however despite this wider situation, the rural areas of St Helens have further issues related to their proximity to the urban area. In particular the majority of rural land within St Helens is within the Green Belt where new development is restricted. However, the issue of possible Green Belt release to support the Borough's need for economic land is discussed within the Local Development Framework Issues Paper.
- 3.30. According to the St Helen's Greenspace Strategy there are a number of other pressures affecting agricultural land including recent development of golf courses, the management of land for shooting and the development of stables and riding facilities. The Strategy also states that there has been a transfer of farmland to woodland, particularly within the Bold and Clock Face areas where the Forestry Commission is extending the woodland estate to include public access and recreational use.
- 3.31. From the Nature Conservation Profiles, factors affecting the habitats associated with arable farmland are cited as:
- modern agricultural techniques have led to cleaner (i.e. more weed-free) crops to the detriment of many plants once regarded as weeds. The rate of extinction among farmland ruderals is higher than that in most other habitats;
  - autumn sowing of cereals, which is now the norm in many areas, reduces the fallow period in which animals can forage among crop residues. Early removal of such residues after harvest, by ploughing, chemical treatment or burning, deprives some animals of an important source of food;
  - set-aside of surplus arable land can assist nature conservation, but is not a substitute for sustained but, less-intensive agriculture.
- 3.32. The designation of Merseyside as a European Objective I area provides support for a range of activities eligible for funding under the two measures of 'Adaptation and Development of Rural Areas' and 'Food Processing and Marketing'. Projects are then allocated funding under these headings, including those that create new tourism, craft or recreational facilities (based on clear market demand) and land management and diversification projects which provide alternative uses for farm land.

- 3.33. Funding is also available under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (administered by DEFRA) and this has also had an impact on agricultural diversification within the rural areas of Merseyside. Countryside Stewardship offers payments to farmers and land managers to improve the natural beauty and diversity of the countryside. This has included the repair and reinstatement of hedgerows and the provision of access routes. However the scheme is now closed to new applicants and has been replaced by a new Environmental Stewardship Scheme, made up of three elements: Entry Level Stewardship, Organic Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship. The new scheme will have similar objectives to the former agri-environment schemes including, biodiversity, protection of historic and landscape features and access, but there will be a new primary objective of resource protection and new secondary objectives of flood protection and genetic conservation.

## **FORESTRY AND WOODLAND**

- 3.34. According to DEFRA<sup>7</sup>, less than 6% of the North West Region is tree covered, compared with 8% for England as a whole. The region is host to the Mersey Forest, the largest community forest in England which covers Merseyside and North Cheshire. The aim of the project is to transform the landscape of the area, enhancing degraded and neglected land and creating opportunities for communities, for nature and for business. The Wasteland to Woodland Initiative, as previously mentioned, seeks to work to develop the aims of the Mersey Forest within St Helens.
- 3.35. The Mersey Forest Plan aims to increase woodland cover in the urban fringe areas of the Borough to between 20-30% by 2025. Trees and Woodland Objectives in the St Helens Greenspace Strategy outline the aims of protecting, increasing and managing the trees and woodland resource.
- 3.36. The importance of the role of woodland within regeneration is highlighted within the North West Development Agency's Regional Economic Strategy (2003). The strategy notes that one of the main issues facing St Helens is derelict and underused land and buildings and that the economic benefits of regional parks and woodland should be maximised to aid this.
- 3.37. Tree planting within the rural urban fringe could strengthen and enhance the urban edge to St Helens providing a more 'natural' setting for the town and surrounding settlements and a softer urban edge. The restoration and enhancement of existing agricultural blocks, shelterbelts and hedgerows would strengthen the rural characteristics of the urban fringe areas, and in doing so provide a contrast to the urban areas. Although any consideration of management to the existing woodland resource should be appropriate to the site characteristics, as for example, further woodland planting can affect the qualities of openness in the landscape.
- 3.38. As identified in the Nature Conservation Profiles, current factors affecting areas of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, and Secondary and Plantation Woodland habitats in the Mersey Urban Valley are:

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<sup>7</sup> DEFRA England Rural Development Programme  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/docs/nwchapter/section14/NW142.htm>

- the presence of non-native trees, particularly Sycamore, in significant proportion, is regarded as detrimental in ancient woodland;
  - invasion by Rhododendron and Himalayan Balsam is detrimental to ground flora diversity;
  - heavy recreational pressure, resulting in trampling and disturbance to animal life, affects some sites;
  - illegal tipping, fires and casual vandalism affect most woods close to urban areas;
  - development can lead to loss of woodland edge habitat and increase disturbance to vegetation and animal life if no open land is left around the woodland margin;
  - floristic diversity is likely to be reduced where positive management operations such as thinning, coppicing and replanting are carried out too infrequently.
- 3.39. Some problems, such as those associated with invasive non-native plant species are more prevalent in secondary woodland.

## **TOURISM AND RECREATION**

### ***Heritage and Culture***

- 3.40. The town has a rich industrial heritage, much of which is still evident. Sites such as Colliers Moss, Sutton Manor and Clock Face are former mining spoil heaps reclaimed as an informal open space whilst the ongoing development of the Sankey Canal Trail and Newton Heritage Trail offers opportunities to preserve and promote the locally and nationally important heritage of the Borough.
- 3.41. The St Helen's Cultural Strategy has the aim of 'protecting, enhancing and promoting, habitat, parks, and open spaces and countryside so that they can be enjoyed and valued'.
- 3.42. Issues to be addressed in relation to greenspaces and heritage and culture:
- protecting and enhancing the greenspace resource and celebrating the character of St Helen's;
  - using the greenspaces to develop visitor attractions;
  - ensuring greenspaces are well managed, safe and welcoming;
  - interpreting of greenspace to record the Borough's history.

### ***A Tourism Vision for England's North West NWDA 2002***

- 3.43. Focuses on a number of winning themes including 'On the Waterfront; which aims to create a special sense of place for the region's lakes, rivers and canals, with the development of the Mersey waterfront.

### ***St Helen's Visitor and Tourism Strategy 2002-2006***

3.44. Under the theme of 'Developing Quality Attractions and Facilities' Environmental Improvement Schemes are listed for:

- Sherdley Park environmental enhancements – 2002;
- Taylor Park environmental enhancements – 2005;
- A580 corridor improvements – tree planting/boulevard effect – 2003;
- Southern Corridor Landscape Masterplan Study – 2002;
- Sankey Canal Restoration – 2005.

### ***Major possible Development Proposals in relation to Tourism and Leisure***

3.45. The St Helen's City Growth Strategy is a £300million, 10 year economic development plan for the borough. The Strategy is based on a number of themes, one of which is 'transforming the business base'. Within this theme there are five 'target growth clusters' which includes Tourism and Leisure. The Tourism and Leisure Cluster Action Plan includes the following opportunity areas:

- improving the range of tourism and leisure offer for the borough, including the following key schemes:
  - focal point (church square);
  - Carr Mill Dam redevelopment;
  - Sankey Canal development;
  - Sherdley Park expansion;
  - transport museum development;
  - Kew Gardens of the North flagship initiative.
- ensure that transport infrastructure and future planning policy supports tourism and leisure:
  - introduce new or enhanced signage (motorways and town centre);
  - implement new station proposals (St Helens Central and Carr Mill).

## **WATERWAYS**

3.46. All the main waterways in the town such as the Sankey Canal, Eccleston Dams, Carr Mill Dam, Sutton Mill Dam and Monastery Dam were developed in response to industrial need but are now considered as an important recreation and biodiversity resource. Significant progress has been made in recent years in improving water quality in local watercourses.

3.47. Sankey River Valley Initiative was launched in 1995 to promote environmental improvements in the Sankey Brook catchment area – large improvements in water quality. Key Issues relating to wetlands and waterways are:

- need to achieve a balance between recreation and safeguarding the natural environment;
  - role of ponds and wetland in Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SUDS).
- 3.48. From the Nature Conservation Profiles for the Mersey Urban Valley, some key issues are highlighted as:
- poor water quality continues to be the major obstacle to re-establishing natural communities in both major rivers and many tributaries;
  - progressive restoration of navigation on canals poses problems for conservation of scarce aquatic plants and invertebrates;
  - loss of reservoirs which are surplus to water supply requirements represents a potential reduction of aquatic habitat;
  - natural vegetation succession can result in suppression of scarce plant populations, especially in canals;
  - canal dredging leads to problems or spoil disposal which may impact on waterside habitats.
- 3.49. In addition, one of the projects outlined within the St Helen's City Growth Strategy is the reinstatement of the existing canal through the Eastside area of the town centre with the creation of a canal basin. It is hoped that this will act as a catalyst for other activity such as residential development.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

- 3.50. Potential climate change impacts are a major consideration in planning for future development. RPG13 discusses the main implications for the North West in terms of climate change and states that the landscapes likely to be most sensitive to climate change will be the coastal zone and rural uplands. The RPG also noted that the longer term impacts of climate change must be critically assessed and integrated into strategies developed by business leaders and policy makers in the region [para 8.3].
- 3.51. The North West Regional Assembly report 'Spatial Implications of Climate Change for the North West' (2003) examines the implications of climate change for planning policy within the region. This highlights the possible impacts of the urban concentration policy for the North West Metropolitan Area:
- new urban design for climate change and protection – concentrations of urban development will need to incorporate ecological corridors, water features and tree shading in order to adapt to hot summers;
  - new spatial development for mitigation of climate emissions concentrating on the role of public transport.
- 3.52. Further implications of this are:
- reclamation of vacant derelict land may destroy vegetation and ecological niches.

## **Spatial Implications of Climate Change for the North West (NWRA) 2003**

- 3.53. Urban concentration following RPG policy for the NWMA (para 8.3.2) – ‘this urban concentration policy generally helps to reinforce the climate mitigation policy of spatial clustering (enhancing public transport and reducing emissions) – however there are certain risks:
- reclamation of vacant derelict land may destroy vegetation and ecological niches;
  - concentrations of urban development need to incorporate ecological corridors, water features and tree shading in order to adapt to hot summer conditions;
  - densification of existing areas will need to take a close account of building in proximity to trees, on shrinkable soils.
- 3.54. From the DEFRA Rural Economy Climate Change Study, of the Landscape Domains Most Sensitive to Climate Change, covering aspects such as the coastal landscape and uplands, areas with transport links and woodlands are highlighted as sensitive to longer term climate change:
- Transport - Several of the canals in the region are especially vulnerable to low summer rainfall and can suffer from lack of water, reducing recreational and commercial use of the canals as well as having impacts on biodiversity.
  - Forestry - The North West is the most poorly wooded region in the UK, with only 6% of land afforested. The predicted changes in climate along with increased levels of carbon dioxide are likely to result in increased tree growth. The milder winters may also allow for a wider range of species such as beech. In the uplands the altitudinal limit to production may increase, but will be restricted by exposure and the effects of strong winds. However milder winters could result in increased incidence of pest outbreaks.

### **Forthcoming Planning Framework is set out within the following issues paper:**

[http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/website/publications.nsf/Lookup/Issues&Options\\_Report/\\$file/Issues&Options\\_Report.pdf](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/website/publications.nsf/Lookup/Issues&Options_Report/$file/Issues&Options_Report.pdf)



## 4. FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

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- 4.1. This section provides a summary of the main influences on the contemporary landscape and urban fringe character as an introduction to the detailed assessment.

### PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- 4.2. The character of the landscape has evolved in response to the basic physical factors such as geology, landform and drainage that in turn influence the soils, landcover and land use of an area. The following gives an account of the physical influences on the landscape of the Borough of St. Helens.

#### Geology

- 4.3. The basic structure of any landscape is formed by its underlying geology and relief. The action of weathering, erosion and deposition alter the form of the landscape, drainage and soils and in turn patterns of vegetation and land use.
- 4.4. The solid geology of the majority of the study area is composed of two broad areas of geology. The north of the study area is typified by a broad band of Carboniferous Sileasian, more familiarly known as the southern edge of the much wider Lancashire Coalfield, which underlies much of the landscape of adjacent Wigan, Bolton Rochdale and Burnley. These coal measures are typical of the age of most of the coal that has been mined in Britain laid down between 318 and 303 million years ago. These Upper Coal Measures, laid down in the Palaeozoic period, contrast with the later Permian and Triassic undifferentiated New Red Sandstone which underlay the landscape to the south of the Borough. The coal measures underlie a plateau which varies between 50 and 150m altitude. In places coal is close enough to the surface to permit opencast extraction. To the west and south the coal measure are too deeply buried to have any direct influence on the landscape.
- 4.5. These broad areas of geology are separated by irregular fault lines which resulted from earth movements towards the end of the Carboniferous period and which are characteristic of the disturbance of faulting in measure which typify much of the separating of these two areas along these fault lines are layers of further Carboniferous geology. These Triassic rocks, whilst widespread, are relatively soft and have been weathered and eroded forming the lower lying coastal landscape in the vicinity of Liverpool Bay and the Mersey Valley.
- 4.6. Within the predominant area of the Carboniferous Rock a thin slice of Carboniferous Millstone Grit protrudes as a result of differential erosion leaving the harder rocks protruding above the adjacent softer carboniferous deposits. This exposed rock, forms the prominent Up Holland - Billinge ridgeline, extending northwards as the ridgeline underlying Beacon Country Park at Skelmersdale.
- 4.7. The present day landscape owes much to the erosion and weathering over millions of years, but particularly the relatively contemporaneous actions of Pleistocene glaciation which have eroded and deepened existing softer rocks and fault valleys and sculpted and moulded the harder rocks. Glacial deposition, or drift geology is extensive throughout the Merseyside landscape, and in St Helens makes a significant contribution to the landforms and particularly the soils visible.

- 4.8. The generalised direction of ice movement was broadly from Liverpool Bay south down through the border landscape between England and Wales and extending into what is now the Irish Sea. Many boulders and pebbles found in the Mersey Valley have been identified as originating in the Lake District and Southern Uplands of Scotland. Following a broadly similar separation of geology between the north and south of the Borough (although more simple a division of geology) the north is characterised by deposits of blown sand, whilst to the south, given the direction of glaciation, is characterised by predominantly Boulder Clay and Morainic Drift. The relatively thick covering of glacial and post glacial deposits means that the underlying sandstone rarely emerges as surface geology.
- 4.9. The warmer, post-glacial climate led to wetter conditions and increasing vegetation, in addition to localised waterlogging which impeded the spread of woodland. Bogs expanded and peat accumulated where trees had previously grown. Interspersed within the blown sand of the north, are large deposits of this peat, which are located on the lower and flatter areas within the Borough and reflect the areas of extensive mosses, both existing in their 'natural' state and drained for cultivation. These peat areas were formed by hollows in the boulder clay which effectively dammed water flow and became filled with post-glacial peat. Place names including Holiday Moss, Holland Moss, and Reed's Moss occur to the north west of the Borough are typified by a network of drainage ditches and drains which give rise to black peaty soils. The flat landform and dark colour of the soils impart a unique character to the landscape.

### **Soils**

- 4.10. Soils are the visible product of weathering and one of the key factors in contributing to, in particular the agricultural landscape where they affect the types of agriculture possible and landscape variety and seasonal changes.
- 4.11. Soils covering St Helens Borough are typically Podzolic soils comprising well drained to poorly drained soils with black, dark brown or ochreous subsurface horizons, which impart a pronounced character to the cultivated agricultural landscape. Within this, the soils broadly reflect the division of geology between the flatter lowlying soils to the south and the undulating farmlands and poorly drained mosses to the north. The component soils of the area can be divided into two main types:
- Gley podzols, which are defined by a sandy soil horizon over loamy or clayey soils in stratified deposits with dark brown or black subsurface pan affected by fluctuating groundwater or impeded drainage. These soils are normally associated with poorly drained soils without pan (a typically indurate, hard thin horizon) or well-drained soils with pan, which is typical of a gently undulating landscape;
  - Stagnogley soils are brown earth soils, characterised as non-calcareous loamy, clayey and loamy over clayey soils. This soil is found in shale, clay and associated drift, in which drainage is impeded at moderate depths by a relatively impermeable subsurface layer; mainly associated with better drained loamy soils.

- 4.12. Prior to the eighteen-century reclamation of the areas of the mosses, for an emotive description of the special character that the mosses gave the landscape, Whittow (1992)<sup>8</sup> interestingly quotes from Defoe's 1725 description of the relatively nearby Chat Moss, situated between Liverpool and Manchester:

*The surface, at a distance looks black and dirty, and is indeed frightful to think of, for it will bear neither horse or man...what nature meant by such a useless production, 'tis hard to imagine; but the land is entirely waste.*

### **Landform**

- 4.13. At first glance the landform of the Borough, with the exception of Billinge Hill, is of a predominantly flat landscape which gently tips down towards the Mersey Valley to the south. However, whilst not a landform of drama and strong contrasts, the reality is still complex, reflecting the more subtle interplay between the open flat landscape to the north west and south, and the series of subtle ridgelines which are situated between them (**Figure 2**). This is typified by the smooth gentle gradients of the landscape, the elevation of which ranges between below 20metres AOD in the far southeast corner, to the series of broad ridgeline which on average extend to only 60metres AOD in height. These changes in level over the extent of the Borough (distances of approximately 17 kilometres from northwest to south east) give rise to these subtle changes in level and shallow gradients.
- 4.14. The principal landform feature to the north of the Borough is Billinge Hill. This is a pronounced ridgeline rising relatively sharply, particularly on the western slopes, to a height of 179m AOD at the summit. Running from west to east, Billinge Hill has an asymmetrical form. Steeper slopes and a pronounced escarpment in the west contrast with eastern slopes which have a much gentler gradient and which bleeds imperceptibly into the surrounding lower lying farmland. The prominence of this hill, in particular in views from the southwest, is heightened by the contrast with the strongly horizontal form of the surrounding low-lying farmland. The ridgeline is primarily orientated north to south, of which Billinge Hill forms the southern-most, and marginally highest, top of the ridge. To the north, Ashurst's Beacon sits on the other main top, positioned at just over 170m AOD.
- 4.15. This orientation of the ridgeline is particularly pronounced when viewed from the immediate south and southeast, where the asymmetrical conical form and escarpment can be clearly discerned. Alternatively, in views from the south west and west, the longer axis of the ridgeline become apparent and the hill appears more as a broad, relatively even upland horizon (see **Figure 2**).
- 4.16. South from Billinge Hill, the landscape rolls out in a series of almost imperceptible broad ridgelines which increasingly are orientated northwest to southeast (resulting from the predominant flow of ice in the vicinity). With the possible exception of the Rainford ridge, which runs parallel to the south of Billinge Hill, most of these ridgelines are truncated in form, such that they appear as a series of subtly elevated islands or ellipses. Overall the interplay between these ellipses of differing height and shape give no overall form or 'grain' to the landscape, which adds a sense of complexity to the underlying gently undulating landform of most of the Borough.

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<sup>8</sup> Whittow, J. Geology and Scenery in Britain (1992) Chapman & Hall

- 4.17. To the south and east of the Borough, the landscape becomes broad and mostly horizontal in composition, the relatively flat gradient subtly descending into the broad and expansive Mersey Valley to the south of (and outwith) the Borough.
- 4.18. In recently history, the past industrial activity has also played a role in influencing the landform of St Helens. On the transition between the undulating ridges and the very flat open landscape extending in the Mersey valley, former spoil heaps, reprofiled and restored are forming a 'ring' of low but prominent hills or man-made 'knolls'. Typically these artificial knolls range in height between 30 to 50 metres, and whilst reprofiling and ground modelling has softened the steep angle of the former spoil heaps, their contrast in height with the flatness of the Mersey Valley and their relatively small 'form', create locally prominent features.
- 4.19. Gaining an understanding of the St Helens landscape is perhaps hampered by the lack of a prominent landform that is typical or even and unique to St Helens. Moreover, apart from Billinge Hill and the Sankey Valley, there are no clear 'edges' or 'breaks' which signify an obvious start and finish to the landscape within the administrative boundary of St Helens.

### **Hydrology**

- 4.20. The Study Area is drained to the south-east by a number of water courses, (**Figure 3**) the principal of which, the Sankey Brook, runs from the central low-lying landscape of the Borough, east and then south, into the River Mersey at Sankey Bridges in Warrington. For a section of the watercourse south of Newton-le-Willows, the river path denotes the Administrative County boundary with Warrington.
- 4.21. Feeding into this river, draining the central areas of the Borough is a radial pattern of tributaries, the courses of which extend as broad valleys between the ridgelines. They include Black Brook draining the north and running west of Billinge Hill, Rainford Brook and Windle Brook to the northwest and west respectively, and Sutton Brook to the south draining Rainhill. These rivers and brooks form important landscape features, although in places their presence and prominence has often become obscured by adjacent development and canalising, or completely removed by culverting, leading to a fractured river corridors and isolated 'pools' with no context.
- 4.22. Feeding into these brooks is a dense network of drainage channels and ditches at the micro level. In particular these features occur in the moss landscapes to the northeast and typically define field boundaries. In the flat landscape to the south, field ditches and drains also exist in tandem with field ponds, the latter of which are often highlighted in the landscape by the presence of small woodland copses.
- 4.23. In the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century it had been desirable to investigate the navigability of the Sankey Brook which would provide a transportation route between the coal measures in St Helens and the River Mersey. The complications of navigating the brook itself led to the construction of a completely separate channel, the St Helens Canal which runs parallel to the Sankey Brook. Although the canal still retains water it is broken in some places. The canal is fed by the Sankey Brook and Carr Mill Dam.

- 4.24. Carr Mill Dam occupies the valley of Black Brook and The Goyt watercourses and is the largest water body in the Borough and surrounding area. Although the Dam feeds the Sankey Canal it was also constructed for industrial purposes to provide hydraulic power for the local mills. This was common practice for a number of watercourses throughout the Borough and the majority still retain small dams and reservoirs along their length, contributing distinctive features of interest in today's landscape.
- 4.25. Historically there were a number of mossland areas within the Borough, where conditions were usually waterlogged as a result of poor natural drainage. This led to the creation of peat which was often excavated for fuel. From as early as the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century these areas have mainly been artificially drained for agricultural purposes. Holiday Moss was converted relatively recently in the 1980s for use as a landfill.

## ECOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT

- 4.26. Human activity has had an important influence on the ecology of the area through the modification of waterways, draining of moss areas, land management, extensive mining activities, and the planting and managing of woodland. As a result, with the exception of a few semi-natural woodland Cloughs, there are very few areas of natural or semi natural habitat within the Borough.

### Nature Conservation Profiles

- 4.27. English Nature has identified and mapped the countryside according to the distribution of habitats and natural features, referred to as 'natural areas'. These 'natural areas' of countryside are identified by their particular combination of physical attributes, wildlife, land use and culture. Whilst these natural area profiles feed into the definition and classification of landscape character, discussion of the key aspects of the larger natural areas is included below, to help explain the broad patterns of ecology found across the landscape.
- 4.28. The landscape of the Study Area is covered by two Nature Conservation Profiles, which reflect the change in landform and predominant land use from the relatively intact and agricultural landscape to the northwest of the Study Area and the densely settled and developed landscape to the middle and south of the area.
- 4.29. To the north the **Lancashire Plain and Valleys** Natural Area is defined by the following characteristics:
- *nature conservation significance relating to the proximity to the coast, with huge flocks of migratory wildfowl and wading birds that take up residence on the coast during the winter months;*
  - *intensively farmed landscape, with agricultural intensification over the past two centuries becoming fragmented remnants;*
  - *historical drainage of extensive areas of lowland Coastal raised mire, to convert to arable land, around Pilling and Cokerham and in West Lancashire, such that few remnants remain;*
  - *other habitats including species rich grasslands, lowland heath and sand dunes have also become fragmented and isolated by agricultural improvements.*

- 4.30. This Natural Area identifies Farming as the major landuse. Within St Helens Borough extensive areas are under arable cultivation especially where rich peaty soils have been created through the drainage of lowland mosses. These areas often are not recognised for their ecological value.
- 4.31. There is virtually no semi-natural woodland of ancient origin within this Natural Area although a number of semi-natural woodland areas have developed on remnant lowland mosses around Rainford as well as areas of willow and alder woodland within the field water pits. These areas of semi-natural woodland tend to be small, usually less than 5ha.
- 4.32. The majority of woodlands within the Natural Area are plantations, usually comprising a deciduous and coniferous species mix. These are also usually small in size and few in number. They were planted predominantly for shelterbelts or for game cover (i.e. for pheasants).
- 4.33. Lowland mosses have mainly been drained and converted for agricultural use.
- 4.34. Covering the main extent of the Study Area and the most developed landscape, **The Urban Mersey Basin** Natural Area, is defined by the following characteristics:
- *covers some of the most densely-populated urban areas in Britain, although agriculture remains the most widespread use of land;*
  - *recreation is also a land use of major importance in both extent and intensity;*
  - *most natural habitats include peat mosses, woodland cloughs and on the coast, salt marshes and sand dunes;*
  - *other important habitats, such as wood-pasture, hay meadows and field ponds, were created by agricultural practices, largely discontinued;*
  - *reservoirs, canal, mining subsidence lakes and even some kinds of industrial spoil have added to the variety of habitats and species.*
- 4.35. Around one fifth of the woodland in this Natural Area is identified as Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (area supporting woodland since 1600AD), although this is concentrated to the west and east out with the Borough. The borough itself supports relatively little ancient woodland with respect to the wider Natural Area covering the Urban Mersey Valley. Where ancient woodland does occur, it tends to be small in scale, the majority occupying less than 5ha in size and often contain planted trees including non-native species of Beech, Sweet Chestnut, Sycamore and European Larch.
- 4.36. The most distinctive ancient woodlands in the Borough and ones which contribute readily to landscape character are associated with narrow valleys – cloughs- formed by streams cutting deeply into the underlying strata. Examples of Cloughs can be found at Barton Clough, north east of Billinge and The Goyt to the north of Carr Mill Dam.

- 4.37. The remaining extent of woodland in the Natural Area falls within the broad category of Secondary and Plantation Woodland, which varies considerably across the area depending upon size, the degree of naturalness, the variety and age-structure of tree species populations and the variety and type of the associated flora and fauna, the terrain and other factors.
- 4.38. Freshwater wetlands, includes all running water habitats and standing water bodies, whether natural or man-made and therefore cover rivers, tributaries, reservoirs and canals. In particular the canal system has gained a reputation as a significant nature conservation resource with a rich and varied community of aquatic plants and animals.
- 4.39. The lowland peat mossland areas within the Borough are mostly lost as a result of peat cutting for fuel and conversion to arable farmland through drainage and although the areas retain topographical characteristics, their rare ecological habitats have also been diminished.
- 4.40. As for the rest of the Natural Area, comparatively little arable farming within the Borough study area still rely on traditional management practice and this puts at risk many species which were once common. The open habitat of periodically ploughed land is of importance to a range of plants which require bare areas to avoid competition from longer-lived species.
- 4.41. In addition to the above the North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) identifies the following habitats, which are present within St Helens Borough and for which action plans have been prepared:

#### ***Broad Habitats***

- **Boundary and Linear Features** which include hedgerows, walls and dry ditches as well as some road and path verges;
- **Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland** which have more than 20% cover made up of broadleaved and Yew species;
- **Coniferous Woodland** where broadleaved species make up less than 20%.

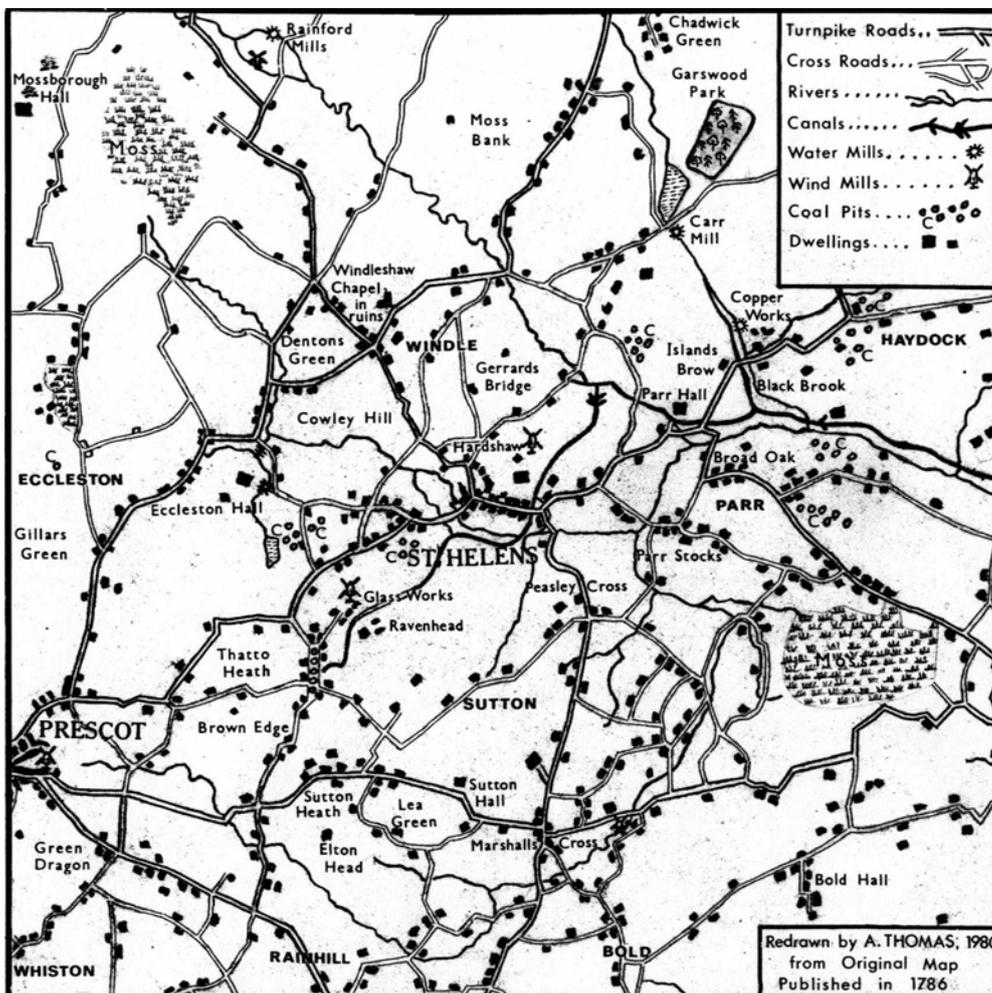
#### ***Priority Habitats***

- **Cereal Field Margins**, land lying between cereal crops and the field boundary;
- **Lowland Dry Acid Grassland** occurs on nutrient-poor, free draining soils with a low pH, and often on superficial deposits such as sand and gravel;
- **Lowland Heathland** is found generally below 300m and characterised by heather, dwarf gorse, and cross-leaved heath;
- **Reedbeds** are wetlands dominated by the common reed;
- **Lowland Wood-pasture and Parkland** has developed from a historic land management system and typically consists of a mix of large trees and grassland areas with occasional woodland flora and heathland areas;
- **Wet Woodland** occurs on poorly drained soils with predominantly birch, alder and willow.

## HUMAN INFLUENCES

### Historic Evolution

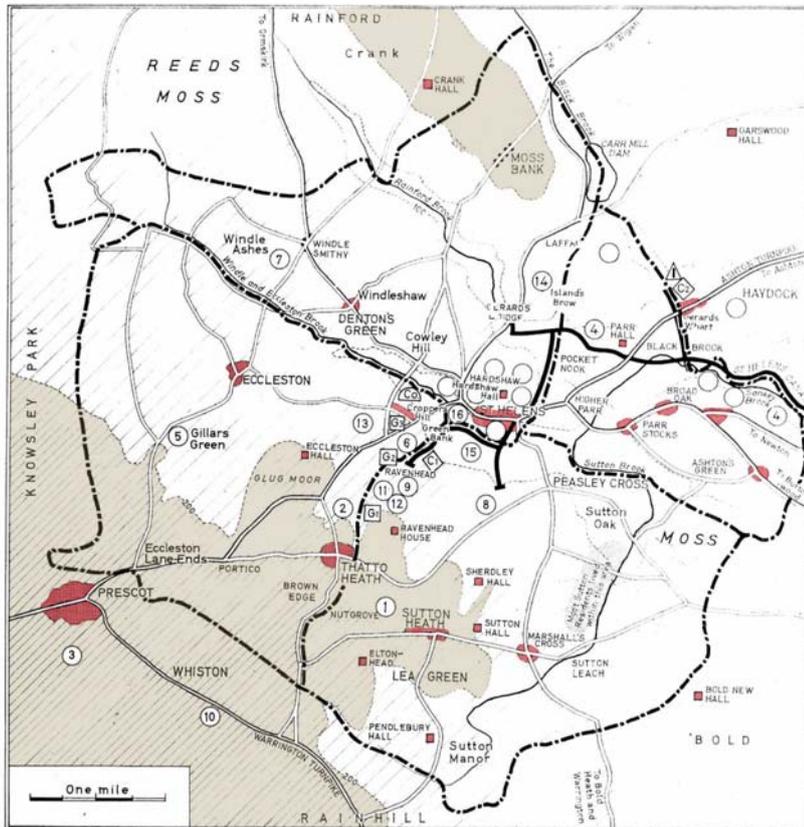
- 4.42. The historic evolution of St Helens Borough is closely linked to the area's rapid expansion during the industrial revolution (the extensive nature of this development is illustrated on **Figure 4**). Prior to this (as illustrated on Yates 1786 map), St Helens consisted of a small chapel (St Helens) located at Hardshaw, near the crossroads of the Warrington to Ormskirk, and the Prescott to Wigan roads (which is now St Helens town centre). This was at a central point between the four thinly populated townships of Eccleston, Parr, Windle and Sutton. The population was low as a result of the surrounding poor agricultural landscape of heaths and mosses. The main roads crossed the area on higher and drier ridgelines and slopes.



- 4.43. As the industrial revolution took hold of the country in the 18<sup>th</sup> century there became an ever increasing need for coal as a source of fuel. Coal mining was recorded in the St Helens area as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century and this rapidly grew during the industrial revolution to become one of the key industries that would shape the landscape of the Borough over the next 200 years.

- 4.44. The constraints of coal mining in the area at the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century were transportation links. The coal that provided fuel for the rock salt refining process in Cheshire was transported by pack horse. However, due to the rapid expansion of Liverpool's industry and population, the turnpike road between Liverpool and Prescot was extended to St Helens and beyond in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, the Sankey Canal, Britain's first canal was constructed to allow coal to be transported directly from the coal measures of the St Helens area to the River Mersey and Liverpool.
- 4.45. With the combination of a plentiful fuel supply and good transportation links, St Helens became an ideal location for heavy industry such as Glass making, for which the town is still famous for today. Heavy industry was developed within the broad valley that bounded the four original townships (the expansion between the eighteenth and nineteenth century is illustrated below). Here, the natural watercourses could be utilised through the construction of dams and canals and for cooling processes.

# ST. HELENS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.



## THE MAIN COLLIERIES (Approximate sites)

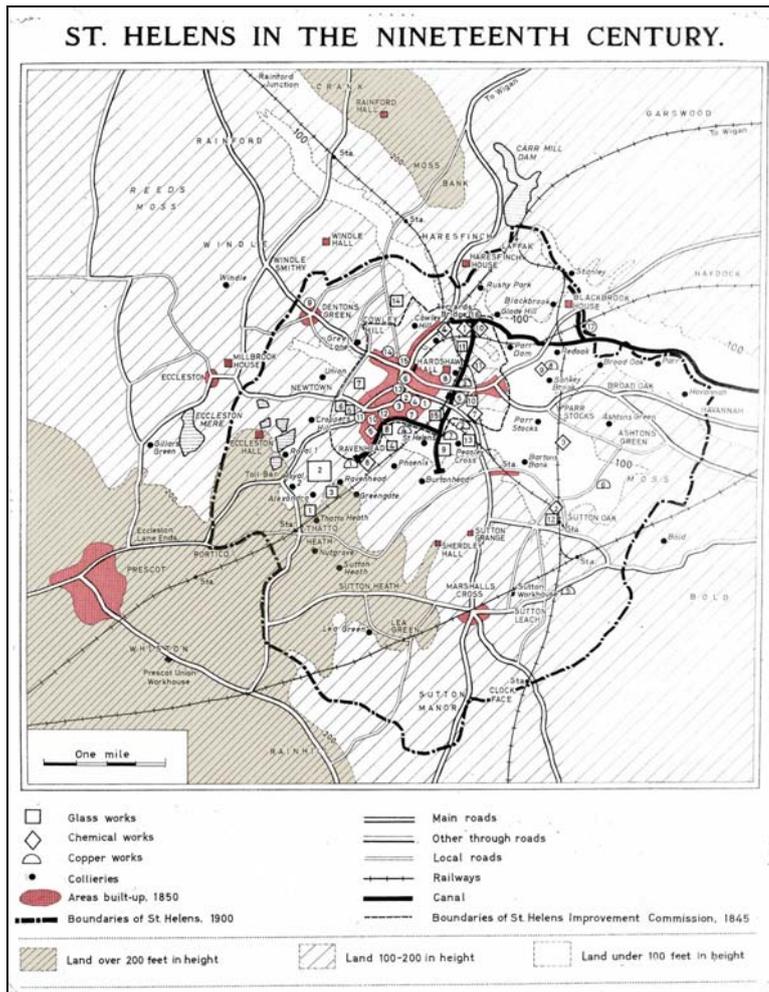
- 1 The first area mined for coal, 1540
- 2 Thatto Heath developments, late 17th century
- 3 Prescott Hall mine
- 4 Sarah Clayton's Parr Collieries
- 5 Gillars Green mines, 1750
- 6 Dagnalls Eccleston mines, 1746-56
- 7 Windle Ashes mines, 1760-66
- 8 Mackay's Burtonhead mines, 1762
- 9 Mackay's Ravenhead mines, 1768
- 10 The Carr Colliery (Case), 1769
- 11 Case Colliery, Ravenhead, 1769
- 12 Mackay's Collieries, 1765 and 1772
- 13 Case's Rushy Park mine, 1775
- 14 The Rushy Park Colliery, 1801
- 15 Ashton's Colliery, 1800 (later St Helens Colliery)
- 16 Peter Berry's mine, 1758
- Other colliery sites, generally founded before 1780

- Land over 200 feet in height
- Land 100-200 " " "
- Land under 100 " " "

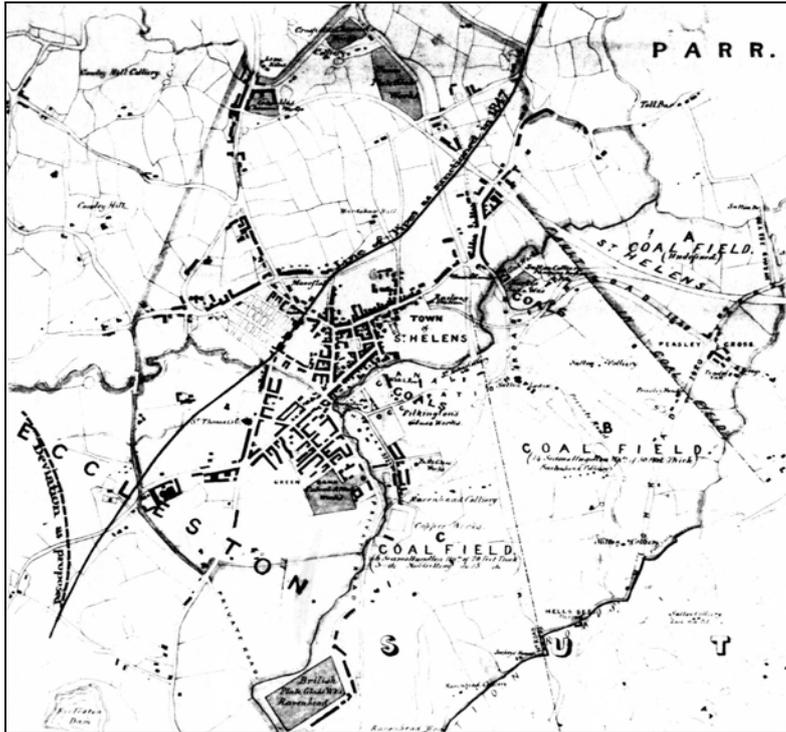
## OTHER INDUSTRIES

- ### GLASS WORKS
- G1 Thatto Heath Bottle Works
  - G2 Ravenhead Plate Glass Works,
  - G3 The Mackay West & Co. Eccleston Street, 1792
- ### COPPER WORKS
- C1 Pary's Mine Co. Ravenhead, 1780
  - C2 Stanley Works, Blackbrook, 1772
- ### IRON
- I1 Iron Slitting Mill
- ### COTTON MILL
- Co The Eccleston Cotton Mill, 1784

- Red shaded area: Areas most nearly built-up. (Most of the district was covered by scattered dwellings)
- Dashed line: Boundaries of the four townships
- Thick line: Canal
- Wavy line: Streams
- Double line: ROADS
- Thin line: Turnpikes
- Thin line: Other through roads
- Thin line: Local roads



4.46. With the rapid expansion of industry in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries came a rapid increase in population. Housing conditions were poor and this led to the expansion of terraced housing on the broad valley slopes usually within close proximity to industrial areas. In the extract from the map below which details the proposed housing improvements, the proposed grid of terraces to the northwest and the large spread of coalfield to the south and southeast are delineated. This relationship of industry and infrastructure, and the residential development to service this industry, has played a key role in the present day patterns of settlement within St Helens. Further expansion occurred along the main transportation routes.



- 4.47. The industrial revolution also had its impact on rural areas. In response to the expanding population, large areas of land around the country were converted to provide arable fields for food production. Around St Helens, this involved extensive drainage of heath and moss areas to provide land for agriculture. This has led to the flat, agricultural character of the surrounding rural areas of St Helens that exist today.
- 4.48. The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the loss of most of the area's heavy industry and coal mining. The various industries have left their mark on the landscape today. These include terraces, canals, disused railways, numerous dams and reservoirs, shafts and pits as well as distinctive colliery tips and waste heaps. Suburban growth in the post war period and late 20<sup>th</sup> century has led to the expansion of the urban area often creating an abrupt urban edge with rural areas.
- 4.49. Other settlements in the Borough have a more medieval cultural heritage. Newton le Willows, Billinge and Rainford were all small medieval market towns. Newton le Willows also saw some industrial expansion due to its close proximity to the Sankey Canal.
- 4.50. The landscape influences on the historical development (as shown in **Figure 4**) of the area enable an important understanding of some of the existing landscape patterns which are still visible and provide opportunities for landscape enhancement.

### The 'Urban Fringe'

- 4.51. Comments by Mahoney and Porter<sup>9</sup>, aptly summaries the issues pertaining to the complexity of the urban fringe:

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<sup>9</sup> Mahony, P. and Porter, J. *Landscape Character in the Urban Fringe* Landscape No. 2 The Landscape Institute Journal Feb 2004.

*One of the greatest challenges facing development in the urban fringe is tackling the diversity of landscape types adjacent to urban areas. It's no longer a case of describing the urban fringe as a 'zone of transition' – from mainly rural to mainly urban. Rather it is now more widely perceived as land lying between urban areas and countryside with its own distinct characteristics.*

- 4.52. Perhaps it is this abrupt and relatively 'quick' change that provides the complexity – where there is a sharply defined urban edge, the relationship between town and country is simple to appreciate and understand, especially where strongly relating to strong natural or man made features of containment or separation. However where the distinction between town and country is blurred – creating a fringe with less distinctive patterns of development and open space, our understanding and more importantly the future management of this landscape comes into question.

### **Countryside Character Initiative: North West**

- 4.53. At the national level of landscape assessment, The Character Map of England<sup>10</sup> provides a broad consideration of landscape character covering the study area. For each of the character areas identified, landscape character descriptions are provided, along with discussion of the influences that determine that change and some of the main pressures for change in each area. At this national scale there is only discussion of character areas detailing the unique landscape character of these broad areas; generic classification into landscape types is not addressed.
- 4.54. At this level the landscape of the Borough of St Helens has been classified into 3 character areas (**Figure 5**) of:
- Character Area 32      Lancashire and Amounderness Plain;
  - Character Area 56      Lancashire Coal Measures;
  - Character Area 60      Mersey Valley.
- 4.55. The Study Area is predominantly characterised by the landscape described for the Lancashire Coal Measure, extending across the main densely settled band to the northeast. To the north of this, the improved quality and less fragmented character of the agricultural landscape, is brought out by the change in landscape character area to the Lancashire and Amounderness Plain.
- 4.56. The key characteristics and key landscape and management issues for each relevant character area are described below. Important in this consideration of the broad landscape character, is that key characteristics relate to the landscape of the much wider landscape of the adjacent Lancashire and Merseyside landscapes and conurbations, and as such some characteristics and issues noted may not be found in the St Helens landscape.

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<sup>10</sup> Countryside Commission (1998) Countryside Character. Volume 2. CCP536. Countryside Commission, Cheltenham.

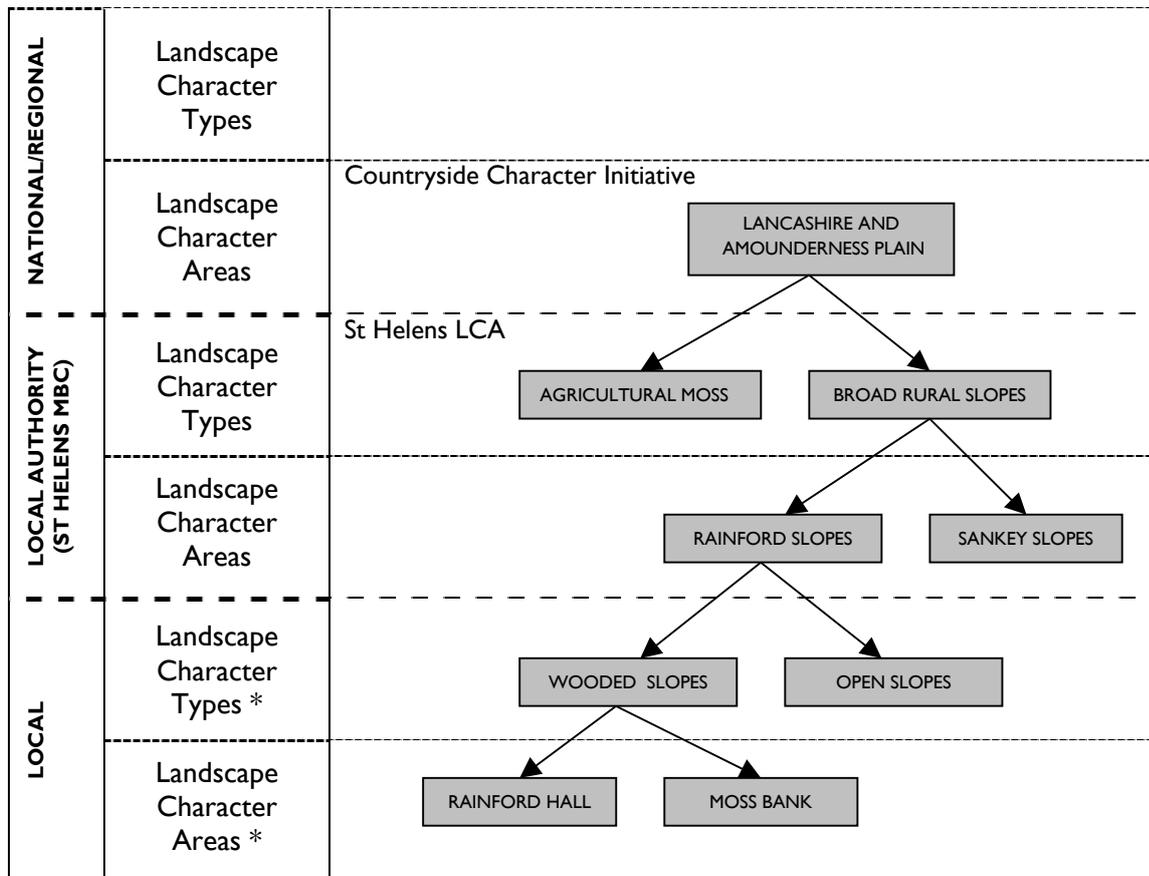
<b>CA 32 Lancashire and Amounderness Plain</b>
<b>Key Characteristics</b>
<p><i>Relatively flat and gently rolling plain broken by isolated hills such as Parbold Hill, Beacon Park and Ashurst's Beacon.</i></p> <p><i>Large-scale agricultural landscape with a patchwork of pasture and arable fields and blocks of wind-sculptured mixed woodland.</i></p> <p><i>Medium- to large-scale field pattern with a high density of field ponds to the east and extensive drainage systems of raised ditches and dykes to the west.</i></p> <p><i>Remnants of lowland mires and mosses in the west.</i></p> <p><i>Salt marshes are prominent at the heads of estuaries.</i></p> <p><i>A rectilinear network of lanes and tracks, usually without fences or hedges.</i></p> <p><i>Predominantly isolated brick farmsteads in rural areas with the main urban settlement concentrated in the planned Victorian coastal resorts and inland towns.</i></p>
<b>Key Landscape Issues – The Changing Countryside</b>
<p><i>Disused airfields and former RAF and army camps.</i></p> <p><i>Changes in land use including increased numbers of golf courses, motorbike scrambling, horsification and caravan parks.</i></p> <p><i>Changes in agricultural practices resulting in loss of traditional field structure.</i></p> <p><i>Loss of localised reed beds and field ponds.</i></p> <p><i>Loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.</i></p> <p><i>Lack of woodland management resulting in the significant loss of woodland cover.</i></p> <p><i>Urban encroachment and expansion of greenhouses.</i></p> <p><i>Conflict between boat activity and other recreational users in the Wyre estuary.</i></p>
<b>Key Management Issues – Shaping the Future</b>
<p><i>The retention and appropriate management of hedgerows needs to be addressed.</i></p> <p><i>The conservation of remaining lowland mosses is important for the character of the area.</i></p> <p><i>There is scope for the conservation and management of field ponds.</i></p> <p><i>The retention of contrasting landscape types within the character area should respect the differences between the Fylde and the South Lancashire Plain.</i></p>

<b>CA 56 Lancashire Coal Measures</b>
<b>Key Characteristics</b>
<p><i>Fragmented landscape created by complex pattern of mining and industrial activity intermixed with housing set within a soft but varied topography.</i></p> <p><i>Elevated landscape of gently corrugated hills and valleys running northwest/southeast.</i></p> <p><i>Low-grade agricultural land found both in expansive tracts of medium to large open, arable fields north of St Helens and often in degraded isolated pockets.</i></p> <p><i>Strong cultural identity significantly influenced and scarred by heavy industry and past and present coal mining activity. Derelict and reclaimed mine workings particularly south of Wigan.</i></p> <p><i>Densely populated area with scattered settlement pattern based around the development of mines and industry.</i></p>
<p><i>Extensive areas of derelict land, landfill sites and spoil heaps, particularly around Wigan and St Helens.</i></p> <p><i>Hedges, hedgerow trees and small woodlands, mostly in poor condition, are generally limited to the area around Garswood, Billinge Hill and northwest of Wigan.</i></p> <p><i>Numerous flashes, resulting from subsidence of former mine workings, and a scattering of small ponds.</i></p>
<b>Key Landscape Issues – The Changing Countryside</b>
<p><i>Changes are associated with the decline of traditional deep coal-mining and the move towards open-cast operations. They include landscaping of spoil heaps, reclamation of derelict land and loss of traditional deep mining structures.</i></p> <p><i>Expansion of large-scale opencast operations and the subsequent reclamation scheme.</i></p> <p><i>Urban fringe pressures on farmland and changes in farming practices have caused degradation and loss of field boundaries and infilling of ponds. Dense populations of the urban areas have placed heavy demands for community use on open space areas and led to increased pressures for landfill.</i></p>
<b>Key Management Issues – Shaping the Future</b>
<p><i>The retention and management of ponds and subsidence flashes is important.</i></p> <p><i>There is scope for the restoration and enhancement of degraded land south of Wigan through major forestry planting.</i></p> <p><i>The conservation of important elements of industrial heritage would help retain the area's strong cultural identity.</i></p> <p><i>The conservation and enhancement of important open countryside between scattered urban areas should be addressed.</i></p>

<b>CA 60 Mersey Valley</b>
<b>Key Characteristics</b>
<p><i>A very distinctive river-valley landscape focusing on the Mersey, its estuary and associated tributaries and waterways, although the Mersey itself is often obscured.</i></p> <p><i>A range of landscape types, including salt marshes around the estuary, remnants of semi-natural mosslands and pockets of basin peats towards Manchester, with the broad river valley in between.</i></p> <p><i>Broad linear valley with large scale, open, predominantly flat farmland supporting substantial bands of mixed agriculture.</i></p> <p><i>Trees and woodland are scarce and are mainly associates with settlements.</i></p> <p><i>Field pattern is regular and large-scale, often defined by degraded hedgerows.</i></p> <p><i>Large-scale highly visible industrial development, particularly at the river crossings of Runcorn, Widnes and Warrington.</i></p> <p><i>The valley has a dense communication network with motorways, roads, railways and canals producing a large number of bridge crossings. Power lines are also prominent along this corridor.</i></p> <p><i>Distinctive cultural landscape with major towns of Runcorn, Warrington and Widnes having much in common ion relation to past and existing development pressures.</i></p>
<b>Key Landscape Issues – The Changing Countryside</b>
<p><i>The industrialised nature of much of the area has resulted in ongoing pressure for the encroachment of industry into adjacent countryside, particularly at Runcorn. Changes which have been evident include degradation of farmland around existing industrial development.</i></p> <p><i>There has been pressure for expansion of housing land particularly southeast of Merseyside. The high density of urban areas has produced requirement for landfill space. A number of unsympathetic landfill developments (e.g. Butchersfield) appear prominently in the landscape.</i></p> <p><i>The extraction of peat and ongoing land reclamation continue to erode the character of the peatlands and mosslands.</i></p>
<b>Key Management Issues – Shaping the Future</b>
<p><i>Vacant land within existing industrial areas has potential for development or more intensive use.</i></p> <p><i>Landfill schemes should be planned and designed to fit in with the valley landscape.</i></p> <p><i>The management of over-mature hedgerows and the need for woodland planting should be addressed.</i></p> <p><i>The conservation and management of mossland areas are particularly important to the east of the area.</i></p>

- 4.57. Comparison of **Figures 5** and **8** illustrate the extent to which the St Helens classification of landscape character at the Regional level 'slot' into the much broader National assessment. In particular the delineation between the *Lancashire and Amounderness Plain* and the *Lancashire Coal Measures* character areas which cover most of the Borough, are reflected in the regional classification of larger rural character areas to the northwest, and the smaller scale and mosaic of rural and townscape landscapes to the southeast. The open flat landscapes to the extreme south of the Borough reflect the broader scale change in classification to the *Mersey Valley* character area.
- 4.58. **Diagram 4.1** below explains the application of landscape character assessment at the national and regional levels of assessment. In particular the diagram illustrates the 'nesting' of the regional character areas and types, within the national Countryside Character Initiative framework. As illustrated, local assessments adding further detail to consider a country park spoil heap or former estate landscape, could be developed from the regional St Helens Landscape Assessment.

**Diagram 4.1 The Landscape Character Assessment spatial hierarchy<sup>11</sup>**



\* For illustrative purposes only.

<sup>11</sup> Based on Figure 2.2: The Landscape Character Assessment spatial hierarchy – an example of the relationship between the different levels. Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland. CA and SNH (April 2002)

## 5. LANDSCAPE CLASSIFICATION

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### VISUAL CHARACTER AND SKYLINES

- 5.1. From the classification of landscape character it has become apparent that one of the determining factors in the defining of different character areas is the elevation at which the landscape sits and its topography and thus its visual relationship with the surrounding landscape. The discussion that follows sets out the main factors which influence the changing patterns of intervisibility across St Helens Borough.

#### Settlement and Landscape Setting

- 5.2. The townscape of St Helens initially appears to have a relatively simple relationship with the broad valley in which it is contained. The following paragraphs describe the extent to which the landscape contributes to the setting of settlement within the Borough of St Helens and how it alters across the rural landscape.

#### Topographic Setting

- 5.3. A contour based topographic analysis of the study area was undertaken, which clearly shows the relationship of settlement pattern (**Figure 6**). The 'settled urban' landscape of St Helens is broadly located in one main area; the broad valley basin and slopes where various brooks converge such as Windle Brook, Mill Brook, Sutton Brook, Rainford Brook and Black Brook. Historically, the first settlement areas would have developed in association with mills and industry harnessing the flow of water for power. Settlement expansion would have increased when the brooks were converted into canals on their lower reaches which allowed the development of heavy industry. A general pattern developed where industrial areas were associated with the lowest points of the valley near the watercourses with terraced housing located on the valley slopes. These terraces still exist radiating around the town centre and industrial chimneys and buildings often form focal points at the end of streets.
- 5.4. The rapid expansion of settlement during the industrial revolution led to settlement occupying ground between 25 – 50 AOD within the valley basin. Further expansion occurred along the main road thoroughfares that radiated from the valley basin. These were usually located on higher and drier land. This expansion resulted in the merging of St Helens with nearby townships and villages such as Haydock, Parr, Sutton and Denton's Green and led to a radiating 'fingered' pattern. During expansion of settlement over the last century which led to the in filling of areas between these 'fingers' landform such as Rainford ridgeline, Windle Hill, and the ridgeline at Grange Park, to some degree, has played a role in the containment settlement. At locations where settlement has developed on higher ground, such as over the Grange Park ridgeline (75 AOD), it has often led to highly visible and abrupt urban edges.

- 5.5. The smaller settlements of Billinge, Newton-le-Willows, and Rainford are physically separate from St Helens and within each the topographic setting has had an influence on their setting and character: The location of Billinge at between 60 – 100 AOD enforces the sense of separation between it and St Helens; The Sankey Valley to the south of Newton-le-Willows has restricted settlement expansion to the south; and Rainford is located on a higher and drier ridgeline above former mossland areas.

### **Access and Connectivity**

- 5.6. Typically most of the major arterial routes crossing the Borough of St Helens between Liverpool to the west and Manchester to the east run along generally flat landscape. These include the A580 to the north of St Helens and the M6 and Liverpool – Manchester railway to the south of St Helens. These routes predominantly pass close to the edge of or pass through suburban / industrial settlement and thus the urban fringe character of the Borough is reinforced. This is also the case for the St Helens link road which passes through a modern industrial landscape with degraded character.
- 5.7. The majority of the remaining road and rail routes within the Borough radiate from the town centre and will follow a passage of transition between urban to urban fringe landscapes before entering the next adjacent urban area. These roads are often characterised by street lighting, kerbs and pavements etc.
- 5.8. Although the M6 which passes north – south on the east edge of the Borough passes through predominantly rural areas and cuttings, only a few 'B' and minor roads pass through rural landscape.

### **Key Visual Gateways**

- 5.9. A number of visual gateways were identified within the Borough of St Helens which identifies the movement from one type of landscape to another such as from urban to rural, or from upland to lowland (**Figure 7**). Gateways which are particularly pronounced are those which highlight a transition in more than one aspect such as from urban to rural and upland to lowland, and as such are key features in signifying arrival at a certain place or landscape and are important in contributing to first impressions of a settlement or landscape.
- 5.10. Within the Borough of St Helens it is the subtle reduction in elevation of landform from the north to the south and the broad separation between upland rural and broad valley urban areas that create a number of important gateways. These have been identified as follows:
- travelling south along A599 west of Garswood Park;
  - travelling south over Billinge Hill ridgeline on the minor roads north of Garswood;
  - travelling south along the A571 over Billinge Hill ridgeline north of Billinge;
  - travelling south along the Crank Road over Billinge Hill;
  - travelling south along the minor road between Skelmersdale and Kings Moss;

- travelling east along the A580 near the B5203 junction;
  - travelling north along the St Helens Link Road north of Sherdley Park;
  - travelling along elevated sections of the M6 in either directions;
  - travelling along elevated sections of the M62 in either directions;
  - travelling south along the A570 within the urban fabric of St Helens at Denton's Green;
  - travelling south along the A599 within the urban fabric of St Helens at Haydock;
  - travelling south along the minor road between Cowley Hill and Gerard's Bridge;
  - travelling east along the road between Prescot and St Helens at Grange Park.
- 5.11. On arrival by train into the Borough from the north, brief views into the Borough are gained when crossing the M6 road corridor to the north. Billinge Hill forms a distant backdrop. Further south the main oblique views start when the train runs out of the cutting at Garswood and onto the elevated embankments which ascend up the bridge to cross the Sankey Valley. Dramatic views are possible to the north over Car Mill Dam set against the backdrop of Billinge Hill. Whilst southwards views extend across the adjacent urban landscape and the Sankey Valley before the train descends into the urban fabric. With the elevation of the views possible from the train there is a far greater appreciation of the relationship between the urban and rural landscapes which imparts a heightened experience of arrival into the core of St Helens.
- 5.12. Travelling from the south into St Helens, some more distant oblique views are possible from immediately outside the Borough at Prescot when the train crosses the M57 road corridor. After which the train runs at grade or in cutting and views are restricted by adjacent development. However on the Liverpool to Manchester route further south, before entering Newton-le-Willows the train runs at grade and onto an embankment which allows views along the Sankey Valley and to the Sutton Moss spoil heap (which partially screen views to the north).

## **DEFINING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES AND AREAS**

- 5.13. For each of the draft character types and the respective character areas classified (see Table 5.1 below and **Figure 8**), there follows a summary of the key characteristics found in the character type. An initial analysis has also been incorporated, which assesses whether these feature make a positive or negative contribution to landscape character.

- 5.14. For each of the defined character areas and types, the boundary lines delineated indicate where the key characteristics are found within the 'core' of the character type and area. These lines generally delineate a transitional zone between neighbouring types and areas, where the landscape characteristics are less distinctive. On the edges and transition of the boundary the characteristics can become diluted and influenced by adjacent character types and areas. Whilst this transitional character is generally present in defining landscape character, the townscape character types and areas by the very nature of the urban land use, typically have more defined boundary edges which reflect the change from urban to rural or differences between built forms.

**Table 5.1 Landscape & Townscape Character Types and Areas**

No.	Ref.	Character Types	Character Areas	Page No.
1	PH	Prominent Hill	PH1 Billinge Hill Summit	46
			PH2 Billinge Hill Slopes	49
2	AM	Agricultural Moss	AM1 Holiday Moss	55
			AM2 Holland Moss	58
			AM3 Simmonswood Moss	61
			AM4 Highfield Moss	65
			AM5 Reed's Moss	70
3	BRS	Broad Rural Slopes	BRS1 Arch Lane Slopes	76
			BRS2 Weathercock Slopes	80
			BRS3 Rainford Slopes	85
			BRS4 Sankey Slopes	89
			BRS5 Rainhill Slopes	93
4	RV	River Valley	RV1 Carr Mill Dam	98
			RV2 Sankey Valley	103
5	WFE	Wooded Former Estate	WFE1 Garswood Park	108
			WFE2 Haydock Park	111
			WFE3 Old Garswood Park	116
			WFE4 Bold Hall	120
6	EF	Edge Farmland	EF1 Elton Head Hall Farm	124
			EF2 Blundell's Hill	128
7	FF	Floodplain Farmland	FF1 Sutton Fringe	132
			FF2 Sutton Manor Fringe	135
			FF3 Clock Face Farming	138
			FF4 Bold Heath	141
8	UFW	Undulating Farmland with Woodland	UFW1 Agricultural Mossborough	144
9	IFV	Intimate Farmed Valley	IFV1 Agricultural Ecclestone	148
10	RSH	Raised Spoil Heap	RSH1 Sutton Manor	153
			RSH2 Clock Face	155
			RSH3 Sutton Moss	158
			RSH4 Lea Green	160
			RSH5 Lyme and Wood Pit	163

No.	Ref.	Character Types	Character Areas	Page No.	
11	IF	Industrial Fringe	IF1	Link Road	168
			IF2	Haydock Industrial Estate	172
12	SS	Separate Settlement	SS1	Newton-le-Willows	178
			SS2	Billinge	183
			SS3	Rainford	188
			SS4	Garswood	193
			SS5	Haydock	196
			SS6	Rainhill	200
13	SLV	Settled Lowlying Valley	SLV1	St Helens Historic Core	206
			SLV2	St Helens Retail Ring	209
			SLV3	St Helens Terraces	212
14	UG	Urban Greenspace	UG1	Big Dam	217
			UG2	Sherdley Park	222
			UG3	Rainhill Golf Course	226
15	RFS	Raised Fringe Settlement	RFS1	Grange Park	232
			RFS2	Mossbank	236
			RFS3	Derbyshire Hill / Parr	240
			RFS4	Sutton	245
16	UIV	Urban Industrial Valley	UIV1	Gerard's Bridge	250
			UIV2	Sutton Brook	253
			UIV3	Ravenhead	257
17	RVI	Residential Valley Infill	RVI1	Thatto Heath	262
			RVI2	Eccleston	267
			RVI3	Laffak	272

## LANDSCAPE EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 5.15. For each of the criteria used in the evaluation to come to a judgement about the opportunities and constraints of the landscape character areas identified, there follows a definition of the criteria.

### Landscape Analysis

Identification of the main positive influences which reinforce landscape character and negative influences which could erode landscape character.

### Developed Edge Analysis

This aspect of the analysis considers the overriding character and robustness of existing urban: rural interface, which helps to inform discussion of settlement setting and existing edges which could be affected by development. The strength of the urban rural interface is illustrated using the legend below and is discussed in terms of:

- the relationship of the built form to landscape;
- presence of any natural breaks – changes in slope, water features;
- presence of infrastructure – road, rail – types and size, associated features;
- character of the human influences – historical, contemporary, industrial etc.



This discussion of the existing edge takes into consideration whether these elements above, occur in isolation (e.g. a single tree line) or in combination (e.g. a recent road with kerbs and lighting, but backed by a mature treeline and steep slope). This analysis does not apply to every landscape character area.

The analysis provided indicates the predominant character of the developed edge. So where 'residential' is indicated, this will highlight a visually prominent edge. In combination with these maps, reference should be made to the text and description of the adjoining character area(s) to assess whether this settlement character is appropriate and in turn contributes a positive or negative feature in the wider landscape. Where more than one settlement edge character is illustrated, this indicates that several factors may contribute to the edge and in turn affect visual and physical prominence and robustness.

Robustness of this interface between rural and townscape character areas has been evaluated in terms of **Weak, Weak to Moderate, Moderate, Moderate to Strong and Strong**. In many instances, the complexity and variation along the urban edge has led to an *overall* judgement to be provided. For more detailed comment, the text and accompanying diagram should be consulted.

## Landscape Evaluation

### Landscape Sensitivity (Figure 10)

This is the overall classification of the inherent sensitivity of the landscape resource in terms of landscape character as a whole and the individual elements contributing to character – considering the robustness of the landscape and the extent to which it can accommodate change without adverse impacts on character.

Evaluated in terms of **High, Medium to High, Medium and Low to Medium and Low**.

Considers issues of:

Strength of typical Character - the individual elements that contribute to character, their significance and vulnerability to change (*Weak, Moderate, Strong*);

Condition/intactness – the overall quality and condition of the landscape in terms of its intactness, representation of typical character and condition or state of repair of individual elements contributing to character (*Good, Moderate, Poor*);

Aesthetic character – landscape experience discussing interplay of attributes such as the level of enclosure, diversity, colour, form, line, pattern and texture of the landscape (*Weak, Moderate, Strong*).

### Visual Sensitivity (Figure 11)

Evaluated in terms of **High, Medium to High, Medium and Low to Medium and Low**.

This is the overall classification of the inherent sensitivity of the visual resource, which considers:

General visibility – primarily a function of the landform and presence of potentially screening land cover, especially trees and woodland;

Population – the numbers and types of people who are likely to perceive the landscape and any changes occurring within it;

Mitigation potential – the potential scope to mitigate the visual effects of any change that might take place, using appropriate methods.

## Landscape Strategy

- 5.16. Landscape strategy objectives are determined by the combined assessment of both strength of character and landscape condition (illustrated on **Figure 12**).

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
	<b>Strength of Character</b>			

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape management judgement based on landscape strategy and sensitivity analysis, taking cognisance of forces for change and positive/negative aspects of landscape character.

### **Woodland Recommendations (Figure 13)**

Judgements relating specifically to the future management of the woodland resource appropriate for each area set within the context of the wider landscape character.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development (Figure 14)**

Considering the separate judgements of the sensitivity evaluation, landscape strategy and aspects such as urban edge analysis, this allows a judgement about accommodating development to be made in context of both the character and condition of landscape and the inherent sensitivity of that landscape – i.e. in many degraded urban fringe landscapes where often the strength of character and condition is poor, these are seen as an ‘open-house’ for any sort of development – however on the edges of settlements they often occupy the most sensitive sites – this evaluation aims to redress this imbalance.

- 5.17. It is important to stress and clarify that the evaluation of the landscape and townscape character reflects a landscape and visual approach to defining inherent sensitivity with respect to change. The resulting judgements on sensitivity to, and accommodation of, change no way confers any development status or commitment by St Helens Council to the comments made.

## CHARACTER TYPE I PROMINENT HILL

### **Character Areas:**

- Billinge Hill Summit (PH1)
- Billinge Hill Lower Slopes (PH2)

### **Key Characteristics**

- pronounced elevated elongated hill summit and ridge ranging in height from approximately 75m to 179 at the hill summit. The pronounced elevation provides a unique contrast in landform, in comparison to the surrounding lowlying agricultural landscape;
- open although small scale landscape with a lack of strong field pattern due to constraints of elevated slope. Predominant landuse comprising rough grazing pasture land;
- evidence of past estate landscape features with elements of formal woodland structure, stone walls and stone beacon);
- wide panoramic views from summit and upper slopes over surrounding urban and rural landscape and often to distant hills;
- place of recreation (walking and golf) providing contrast of experience to surrounding lowland farmland and settled landscape;
- visible as prominent feature from large part of surrounding area and acts as a backdrop or orientation feature in many views from across the Borough. Hill profile emphasised where change of slope visible in views from immediately south. Form and prominence of hill emphasised by the location of telecom masts on summit, although these infrastructure elements with urban character detract from the rural upland character, and dominate the experience of the hill summit.

### **Location and Boundaries**

Character type and areas is situated in one location to the north of St Helens Borough extending up to the administrative boundary. The character type is likely to extend northwards into the neighbouring council area.

## Billinge Hill Summit (I PH I)



### ***Area Description***

- small character area of an elevated hill summit with a relatively limited change in elevation between 160m and 179m AOD, to form a flat plateau top;
- the landcover is predominantly rough grassland and gorse scrub with little in the way of mature woodland and / or trees. This contributes to the impression of a rugged 'upland' character. This is enforced by the sense of remoteness and separation from the surrounding settled landscape;
- in contrast with the remote character, telecom masts located on the summit impose prominent vertical features and an urban character which dominate the hill summit. This is reinforced by associated infrastructure and security fencing and other urban elements such as an underground bunker. These elements all detract from the appreciation of the rural upland character;
- the historic Napoleonic stone beacon creates a prominent feature in immediate views and is visible in the wider landscape. The beacon imposes a sense of historical importance on the landscape although the imposing character, when viewed in close proximity, is weakened by graffiti and boarded up windows. In addition, the presence of degraded brick walls and eroded paths in the vicinity of the beacon reinforce the generally degraded and neglected character of the summit;
- there is evidence of former quarrying. This includes reclamation and open, bare recently top soiled slopes with some immature planting, access roads (particularly visible from elevated break of slope with the summit) and urban character of compound fencing;
- the area is a popular recreational area with network of generally eroded footpaths. The relatively high elevation offers panoramic views of surrounding area. The sense of elevation and drama, is heightened as the convex hill slopes are hidden from the view by the foreground topography;

- there is a general sense of degraded character with elements of littering, graffiti, derelict broken fences and gates. The elevated location of the masts emphasise their vertical height and prominence in views from the surrounding landscape;
- a limited number of vernacular buildings of blonde sandstone with adjacent more recent residential development area located along the narrow minor road which runs along the ridgeline.

### **Landscape Analysis**

<b>Positive Features</b>
Rugged upland character contrasting with surrounding agricultural and well settled lowlands.
Unique elevation enabling wide panoramic views. Prominent orientation feature. Backdrop to surrounding landscape.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Dereliction of historic features, walls.
Large scale vertical telecom masts and associated infrastructure prominent on summit and dominate experience, in particular in views north. Encroaching urban elements and undesirable human influences – security fencing, signage, graffiti etc. Scarring and disturbance from previous quarry activity, although now in restoration.

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
The area is a rural area surrounded by the lower slopes of Billinge Hill.

### **Landscape Evaluation**

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – unique upland elevated character.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – upland character degraded and neglected by negative urban influences.
Aesthetic Character	Strong – unique experience of upland character with wide open views and experience of exposure. Some historical heritage.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>High</b>
General Visibility	High - There is a strong intervisibility with other areas and the area forms a backdrop for surrounding landscape due to its high elevation.
Population	High - Although there are a few properties on the summit and a minor road crosses the area, the majority of people will view the character area as a visual horizon from the wider lowlying landscape character.
Mitigation Potential	Low mitigation potential (high sensitivity). The elevation and lack of natural mature vegetation would make it difficult to mitigate any change.

### Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

#### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Important to conserve the open upland character maintaining views and reflecting the character of the estate landscape. Landscape restoration should remove the urban influences which detract from the rugged upland landscape character. Options to consider the future site sharing of masts is strongly recommended to reduce the visual clutter of the cumulative vertical features.

#### **Woodland Recommendations**

There are limited opportunities to develop woodland within this area as a result of exposed nature of the hill summit. Woodland may obscure the unique profile and visual horizon and restrict views from, and reduce the visual prominence of, the stone beacon. For this reason it would be advisable to avoid woodland planting in the vicinity of the small hump on which the stone beacon is located.

There may be potential to expand the existing mixed broadleaf woodland areas on the west side of the hill summit. This should incorporate the existing masts and buildings into woodland which would reduce the visual prominence of these structures.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

Generally this area is unsuitable for development due to its elevated landform and backdrop to other areas.

### **Billinge Hill Lower Slopes (1 PH 2)**



#### ***Area Description***

- the area is formed by steep, generally concave slopes orientated northwest – southeast with southern aspect ranging in height from 75 to 160m AOD. The steep slopes are the abrupt pronounced change in elevation from low lying landscape to upland plateau summit;
- there are panoramic views of the surrounding landscape to the south and west including long views to distant hills and Liverpool. The distinctive skyline of St Helens incorporating chimneys and the gasometer at Pocket Nook are clearly visible;
- intermittent small streams with associated mature riparian vegetation or ‘cloughs’ typical of the steep-sided narrow streams dissect the slopes and are a distinctive element;
- irregular medium scale fields orientated to run down the slopes with post and wire fencing and some hedgerow boundaries occupy the lower to middle slopes. On upper slopes the fenced pastures give way to unfenced rough grazing and have a more open character;
- a golf course occupies some of the middle slopes and the smooth managed fairways and greens contrast with the rougher texture of the surrounding agricultural land;
- the gradient constraints of the steep slopes are typically uninhabited with some residential and farm properties developing along a minor road at the break of the lower slopes in the transition to the lower lying agricultural landscapes. More recent construction has seen residential development encroaching onto the lower slopes;
- extensive well-developed network of footpaths and tracks cross the slopes linking the lowlands up to the summit of Billinge Hill;

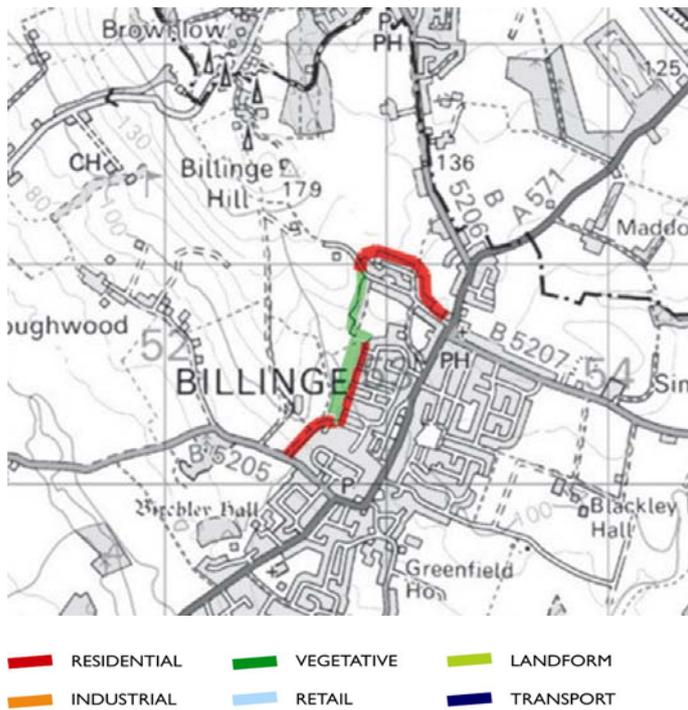
- a 'B' road ascends the slope linking the landscapes east and west of Billinge Hill but the narrow road alignment is generally well contained within a localised valley and mature woodland;
- an access road to the quarry also ascends the southern slopes. The larger scale and urban design (wide engineered road with kerbing and signage) of the road is uncharacteristic of the narrow rural road network area as it displays urban elements.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Contrast of landform with surrounding low-lying agricultural landscape.
Semi natural riparian vegetation follows small streams.
Intermittent panoramic views from slope sides where not screened by mature woodland.
Backdrop to surrounding landscape.
Popular recreation area (golf and walking).

<b>Negative Features</b>
Encroachment of newer residential development on lower slopes.
Dereliction of field pattern and loss of hedgerows.
The golf course layout contrasts with the surrounding rural landscape in particular the smooth grain of the fairways cutting across the field pattern and the layout of the golf course tracks.
Some loss of riparian vegetation.
Encroachment of large scale features such as the quarry access road which has an uncharacteristic urban design.

### Developed Edge Analysis



The area is a rural with a partially developed edge of Billinge to the east. The main elements that form the developed edge for Billinge Lower Slopes are as follows:

- back gardens and associated vegetation;
- residential roads including street ends;
- landform;

The edge of Billinge forms an abrupt prominent developed edge that contrasts with the grain of the slope although the some garden vegetation and a nearby hedgerow helps to soften the edge.

The development at Roby Well Way has the weakest developed edge as there front gardens overlook a large ‘engineered’ road. The road has no field boundaries or vegetation. The development has also crossed the localised valley and stream and therefore has little relationship with the landform or any natural features. Overall the developed edge has been assessed as **Weak**.

### Landscape Evaluation

Landscape Sensitivity	Medium to High
Strength of Typical Character	Strong. There are a number of distinctive elements that constitute a strong character including the steep sloping landform and the semi-natural riparian vegetation and streams that dissect the slopes.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate. The golf course tracks and degradation of the hedgerows and woodland as well as the quarry access road.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate to Strong – distinctive pattern and interplay of steep slopes, field pattern and woodland with a unique aspect and elevated landform.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>High</b>
General Visibility	High. There is a strong intervisibility with other areas and the area forms a backdrop for surrounding landscape due to its elevation.
Population	High. Although there are a few properties at the bottom of the slope the majority of people in the area will be recreation users – highly visible from adjacent settlements and surrounding road network as backdrop in immediate and wider views.
Mitigation Potential	Low-medium - mitigation potential (medium high sensitivity). The elevation and high visibility (As with the golf course) would make it difficult to mitigate any change.

### Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

#### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Conservation of interplay and orientation of woodland belts and fields affecting the open and enclosed space and intactness of woodland cloughs. More suitable landscape treatment of the golf course would be desirable i.e. More sympathetic consideration of materials, colours and planting. Management of the riparian woodlands and hedgerows is a key issue of the character of the area as well as the management of the footpath network.

Restoration of unsympathetic urban characteristics for example the quarry access road.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The existing riparian woodland cloughs that follow the stream courses down the hill slopes should be conserved. They should also be enhanced and expanded along watercourses through the planting of additional riparian species including Ash, Birch and Alder.

In addition, there are also opportunities to restore mixed broadleaf hedgerows and small woodland blocks associated with buildings and properties on the lower slopes – situated on the transition and developed with associated urban edge reinforcement.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

Generally this area is unsuitable for development due to its elevated steep sided landform, with high visibility creating a backdrop the surrounding lower landscapes. There may be limited opportunities for some small scale development on the edge of Billinge where development could contribute to an improved edge and relate the settlement to the landform and the edges could be strengthened with planting. Any development should be sensitivity sited to avoid encroachment of development onto Billinge Hill.

There is a small stream and localised valley to the west of the settlement that potentially could offer a strong edge to future development especially if it were combined with strengthening its riparian vegetation.

## CHARACTER TYPE 2 AGRICULTURAL MOSS

### **Character Areas:**

- Holiday Moss (AM1)
- Holland Moss (AM2)
- Simmonswood Moss (AM3)
- Highfield Moss (AM4)
- Reeds Moss (AM5)

### **Key Characteristics**

- flat open agricultural land with limited changes in elevation of 40-45m AOD over wide areas;
- open views to surrounding landscape (especially to the north – Billinge Hill and in the distance The Pennines) to a variety of urban, fringe and rural landscapes;
- strong horizontal composition provides foreshortening of views and can make it difficult to judge distance;
- large scale, regular field pattern is emphasised where the smaller scale historical field pattern has been amalgamated. Landscape typically lacks historical vegetated field boundaries of hedgerows and woodland belts due to the poorly drained moss;
- drainage ditches often form field boundaries, emphasising openness of landscape, interspersed with remnant lines of some hedgerow and shelterbelt field boundaries;
- the dark brown and black cultivated soils of the mosses have a light texture suited to growing vegetable crops and contrast markedly with the lighter coloured soils and grassland on adjacent undulating slopes;
- undeveloped moss areas infrequently located within agricultural land – provides contrast of character with rugged texture and muted colours contrasting with uniform colour and smooth texture of arable landscape;
- open unwooded landscape character with a lack of dominant woodland blocks. Where present small blocks of woodland are set within the field pattern and can frame and enclose views;
- internal areas of the mosses are generally accessible by footpath or track which typically run along the field boundaries or along the historical straight roads;
- the area is largely uninhabited, with individual farm steadings and small clusters of settlement located on dry sites on the edge of the moss landscape at the transition with neighbouring character types.

### ***Location and Boundaries***

Relatively extensive character type where the main location of the moss landscape is to the northwest of the Borough, occurring in the flat low lying landscape either side of the Rainford ridge line. A smaller area of this character type is situated at the extreme eastern boundary of the Borough east of Newton le Willows. In both instances this character type runs up to the administrative boundary and is likely to extend across into the landscape of the neighbouring Council.

### **Holiday Moss (2 AM 1)**



### ***Area Description***

- the area is a flat, horizontal, open landscape with little change in landform at 65m AOD giving a uniform composition. The character area is defined by the enclosing slopes of the adjacent character areas - Broad Rural Slopes to the west and south, and Billinge Hill Slopes which form a backdrop to the area to the east. The landscape is flat and open and extends northwards up to the Borough boundary;
- the large scale field pattern is emphasised by the amalgamation of the historically smaller scale fields. The majority of field boundaries are formed by ditches and drainage channels with rough access tracks located to the edges of the moss landscape. Lack of visually prominent field boundaries reinforces the experience of openness and scale;
- a large landfill site is located in the centre of the former moss area which is slightly elevated above a surrounding large arable field pattern. This is emphasised by the lack of field boundaries within the arable fields and the growth of pioneer scrub woodland on the elevated landfill site;
- there is minimal settlement within the area with only dispersed individual farmsteads and small clusters of housing on dry sites. The vernacular housing is of red brick with slate roofs and some building of blonde sandstone associated with small woodland copses. More recent housing is in contrast to the vernacular character with inappropriate scale and siting and materials used and is of increased prominence in the landscape;

- wide open views across the landscape with foreshortening of landscape scale due to overriding wide horizontal landscape. Views contained to the east and west by the Rainford ridgeline and Billinge Hill. The elevated historical settlement core of Rainford is particularly prominent where it skylines in the views. Billinge Hill is an important visual backdrop in views north;
- small blocks of plantation woodland form geometric dark green uniform features contrasting with the open moss landscape and are prominent in wider views interrupting the horizontal landform composition;
- dark coloured cultivated moss soils have a strong visual character in particular when soils are exposed and contrast with the adjacent colours and textures of the more undulating upland landscape;
- strong rural character emphasised by the lack of a dominant or large scale infrastructure such as dual roads and pylons.

### ***Landscape Analysis`***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Relatively intact expansive rural character.
Open landscape with views to Billinge Hill and surrounding containing rural slopes.
Popular footpath Network.
'Natural' moss landscape with rugged character.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Encroachment of urban features i.e. kerbs and lighting along roads.
Inappropriate scale and siting of more recent suburban housing.
Landfill site in centre of area.
Loss of hedges where appropriate to the historical landscape patterns and replacement by post and wire fencing.

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
The area is a rural with no developed edge interface.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – open vast landscape with strong horizontal landscape composition.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate - although the landfill tip detracts.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong. Open rural agricultural landscape with view to the hills to the north contrasting vast horizontal character with adjacent more enclosed slopes.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium to high. There is high visibility with the surrounding landscape and landscape areas as a result of the open flat landscape.
Population	Medium -There are a number of isolated properties within the area as well as a number of footpaths that are popular with walkers.
Mitigation Potential	Low-medium -mitigation potential (medium high sensitivity). The open exposed landscape would make mitigation difficult to achieve.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Maintain open character of landscape. Tree planting to be limited with the sensitive reinstatement of hedgerows in the open landscape relating to the historic field pattern.

Management of landfill tip to reduce impact including consideration of materials used. Consideration of building materials and colours.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

The development of woodland within this area is generally inappropriate. Any woodland development would contrast and conflict with the open, flat characteristics and the strong horizontal composition. Historically there is a lack of hedgerows or vegetative field boundaries.

There is, however, an opportunity to encourage woodland growth on and immediately adjacent to the landfill site. Any woodland should contain a predominantly Birch, Ash and Alder coverage as this would probably have been the original wet woodland species mix prior to the drainage of the moss. This may allow some screening and 'softening' of the landfill site but should attempt to avoid the creation of large uniform geometric blocks of impermeable woodland.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

Generally this area is not suitable to accommodate development due to the large open landscape and high intervisibility across the horizontal landform. Avoidance of inappropriate sporadic development and landscape management which would interrupt the open horizontal composition and strong rural landscape character. Generally development of landscape should be avoided but where landscape change considered possible it should be small scale and tied into the field pattern with appropriate landscape treatment.

## **Holland Moss (2 AM 2)**



### **Area Description**

- the area is a flat, open landscape of elevation 65 to 70 metres AOD the edges of which are defined by the neighbouring undulating slopes of landscape character areas which semi enclosed and contain views within the landscape. The long profile of Billinge Hill appears in views across the agricultural land to the east;
- extensive large scale arable fields and in some places unbounded moss landscapes stretch into the flat and open landscape to the north (extending beyond the Borough);

- there are minimal vegetative field boundaries and most fields are separated by drainage ditches. Any mature trees are clearly visible in the flat horizontal plain;
- dark coloured cultivated moss soils have a strong visual character in particular when soils are exposed and contrast with the adjacent colours and textures of the more undulating upland landscape;
- there is minimal settlement within the area with only sporadic individual farmsteads. These vernacular building of red brick and slate roofs form prominent features in the flat and open landscape, reinforced by adjacent small woodland copses;
- the settled ridgeline of Rainford are important in views south from within this character area. Billinge Hill features in views to the north east. To the north the open landscape is contained by the urban edge of Skelmersdale and in particular the large industrial units of Pimbo to the north east that feature prominently in views and distract from the rural character;
- there are minimal tracks or footpaths and those that exist are used primarily for field access. Infrequently narrow minor roads cross this landscape and have a rural character with soft verges and a lack of obvious road markings and signage;
- a railway line crosses the area east to west and provides an additional horizontal feature, which is less pronounced where it runs in cutting. Some pioneer scrub woodland forms emphasises the alignment of the railway in combination with security fencing and forms a distinctive line of vegetation in the open landscape.

### ***Landscape Analysis`***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Open landscape with strong horizontal composition.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Visual influence of nearby industrial areas in West Pimbo.
Features of urban character including security fencing encroach upon rural landscape character.

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
The area is a rural area with no developed edge interface.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong - open flat landscape with cultivated mosses.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate - although the presence of the railway detracts the area.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - open rural landscape character where quality influenced by adjacent large scale prominent industrial development.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	High. There is high visibility with the surrounding landscape and landscape areas as a result of the open flat landscape.
Population	Medium to High - views from adjacent settlements and road users.
Mitigation Potential	Low to medium – important to maintain openness and flatness of landscape as key aspects to character.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Important to carefully balance the open character of the landscape with the potential for re-establishing hedgerow and treebelts. Tree planting to be limited with the sensitive reinstatement of hedgerows in the open landscape relating to the historic field pattern. Maintain links with historical landscape character.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

The development of woodland within this area is generally inappropriate. Any woodland development would contrast and conflict with the open, flat characteristics and the strong horizontal composition. Historically there is a lack of a dominant pattern of hedgerows or vegetative field boundaries.

There may, however, be opportunities to develop small 'wet woodland' areas of Willow, Birch and Alder in association with the small water pits and / or the limited number of buildings within the moss area.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

Generally this area is not suitable to accommodate development due to the large open landscape and moderate high visibility. Avoidance of inappropriate sporadic development and landscape management which would interrupt the open horizontal composition and strong rural landscape character. Generally development of landscape should be avoided but where landscape change considered possible it should be small scale and tied into the field pattern with appropriate landscape treatment.

### **Simonswood Moss (2 AM 3)**



### **Area Description**

- the area is a flat and open landscape with predominantly horizontal characteristics. This is emphasised by the flat topography of the surrounding landscape;
- the mostly arable field pattern is large scale and regularly shaped. There are minimal vegetative field boundaries. Some small maintained hedgerows are present, although the majority of the field boundaries are formed by drainage ditches. A network of informal footpaths often follow the course of these drainage ditches;
- whilst the moss landscape retains an overriding open character, there are a number of large geometric blocks of broadleaf woodland with a high percentage of conifer species. These woodland blocks interrupt the flat agricultural landscape pattern often partially enclosing a number of fields;

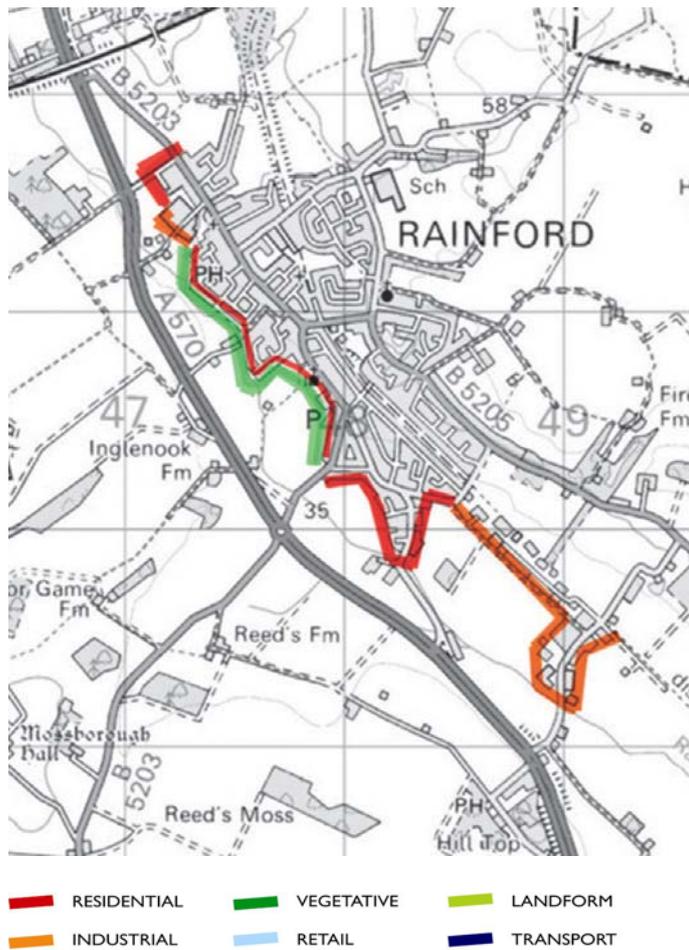
- within the character area to the northwestern boundary the mature mixed deciduous / coniferous tree belt surrounding the former army military depot create a distinct prominent feature, visible in the wider landscape;
- within the military depot the shelterbelt creates a pronounced sense of enclosure with views restricted by the trees to the immediate foreground of the depot. The visible remnants of the military architecture create a unique character and sense of place with the repetition of concrete bunkers at uniform spacing in a horseshoe backed by the tree belt. In addition the concrete access road (partially degraded) reinforces the experience of abandonment and neglect. The bunkers are primarily in use as private storage facilities and the wider tree belt are designated a Local Wildlife Site;
- minimal settlement with a number of large farmsteads of typical vernacular character of red brick and blonde sandstone are infrequently dispersed through the area;
- the historical cultivated moss landscape limits access through the area with a limited number of narrow minor rural roads crossing the area to the north and south. Long straight historical Coach Roads are primarily used in the footpath network. The busy A570 dual carriageway runs through the east of the area and the scale of the carriageway and associated lighting and signage and movement of traffic detracts from the rural character. Screen planting associated with the road emphasises the road alignment;
- the settlement of Rainford is prominent in views east and the notable square church tower of All Saint's Church acts as a prominent landmark on the skyline and an orientation feature. The long profile of Billinge Hill is visible beyond.

### ***Landscape Analysis`***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Open vast rural landscape with horizontal landform and strong landscape pattern.
Prominent geometric blocks of mixed mature woodland.
Extensive well-developed footpath network utilising historical coach roads.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Encroachment of unsympathetic agricultural buildings and materials such as lighting (on the A570) contrast with the open rural qualities.
Loss of hedgerows where historically important.

## Developed Edge Analysis



The area is rural with a partially developed edge with Rainford, which comprises:

- back gardens and associated mature vegetation;
- small woodland blocks / belts;
- change of slope.

Historically the settlement has developed on the dry site ridgeline up from the moss landscape and has generally remained concentrated on the upper slopes. There is a filtered edge to the development as a result of the mature trees and vegetation of the back gardens and small areas of woodland within the village itself. The edge is less strong for areas of new housing where there is a lack of mature woodland or vegetation.

The urban edge is assessed as **Moderate to Strong** in character as the settlement edge has remained on the upper slopes and reinforced with mature garden vegetation.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – flat horizontal rural moss landscape.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate to good - openness subtly reduced by woodland blocks creating different pattern of enclosure. The A570 and associated signage and lighting detract from the rural character.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate to Strong – experience of openness and pattern of vegetation creates landscape reinforced by historical patterns and military heritage. Potentially stronger aesthetic character than wide open moss landscape, due to relationship of open to enclosed space subtly altering the relative vastness of the moss landscape.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Medium. There is high visibility with the surrounding landscape as a result of the open flat landscape although the influence of mature woodland blocks creates a sense of enclosure / restricts views.
Population	Medium. There are limited views from a number of people that live in the area, but the landscape is visible from adjacent settlements and people travelling through the landscape.
Mitigation Potential	Low to medium – important to maintain openness and flatness of landscape as key aspects to character.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

Important in this landscape is balancing the openness of the moss landscape whilst maintaining and enhancing the woodland blocks, drainage, field boundaries and large field pattern.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

Although the development of woodland within other moss areas is generally inappropriate due to the contrast with the open and flat characteristics, large woodland and plantations already exist within this area. Historically there is a lack of hedgerows or vegetative field boundaries although large blocks of mixed deciduous and coniferous plantations have been created. These interrupt the large scale agricultural field patterns creating a unique landscape pattern and where appropriate to the historical landscape character they should be conserved. The mixed tree belt that surrounds and creates a unique backdrop and sense of place to the former military depot should be maintained and sensitivity enhanced through the appropriate management of woodland species considering the landscape character and wildlife interests.

Small coniferous plantation woodlands to be sensitivity restructured to avoid impacting on the current balance of open to enclosed landscape.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

Change should be carefully managed in this character area, in particular landscape changes which could influence the existing balance of open to enclosed space, in particular changes to the extent of tree cover and species used. Some opportunities may exist for the incorporation of small scale development into the area. Although this will be constrained by the open flat landform and careful siting is imperative to mitigate potential impacts.

## **Highfield Moss (2 AM 4)**



### ***Area Description***

- the area is generally flat and open with an overriding horizontal composition enabling panoramic views across the surrounding landscape to immediate development horizons and the more distant hills;

- there is a large regular field pattern historically part of the Parkside and Newton Parks landscape bordered by small maintained hedgerows with isolated trees and small pockets of scrub woodland. Often, informal earth footpaths follow the line of the hedgerows;
- access within the moss landscape is limited and where roads exist they are of a narrow rural character constructed in elevation above the surrounding moss landscape with soft verges;
- an area of undeveloped moss exists, comprising an area of rough grassland and scrub woodland;
- although the area is of rural character large scale infrastructure is present such as the M6 which crosses the area orientated northwest to southeast. Railway lines which border the area to the west and north and a pylon line are also prominent signs of infrastructure in the landscape. In addition, a number of urban elements, such as kerbs, street lighting and security fencing, are present and these together with the infrastructure elements contributes to a degraded rural character;
- in particular the unnaturally straight alignment of the M6 running at elevation on an embankment present a dominant landscape feature which physically and visually divides the character area. The embankment severs many of the land use patterns including tree belts and field boundaries which fragments the landscape character, and subdivides the character area into 'pockets' of this character area east and west of the M6 corridor;
- this subdivision of the character area is further reinforced by the more degraded landscape character to the west associated with the significant landscape disturbance attributed to Parkside Colliery. The former colliery site disrupts the field pattern with large areas of hard standing. In addition screening bunds to the east of the colliery are marked small scale unnatural linear features which create a prominent horizontal visual horizon and interrupts views across the landscape. The degraded character is emphasised by the line of pylons which crosses the former colliery to the north;
- there is minimal settlement within the area with only isolated scattered farmsteads. Vernacular buildings are constructed of red brick with slate roofs tied into the landscape pattern at field corners with small woodland copses and mature individual trees;
- small areas of woodland and / or shelterbelts are usually associated with these farmsteads including, in one example, a line of poplar trees that contrast with the horizontal form of the landscape. The presence of woodland increases to the west with wooded field boundaries to Netwon Park Farm and along the incised Newton Brook which delineates the administrative boundary to the south. This increase in woodland subtly reduces the experience of openness in this landscape, in particular where it encloses views from the minor rural roads.

## Landscape Analysis`

### Positive Features

Open rural landscape with retention of large rectangular historical field pattern.

### Negative Features

The degradation of hedgerows and tree belts.

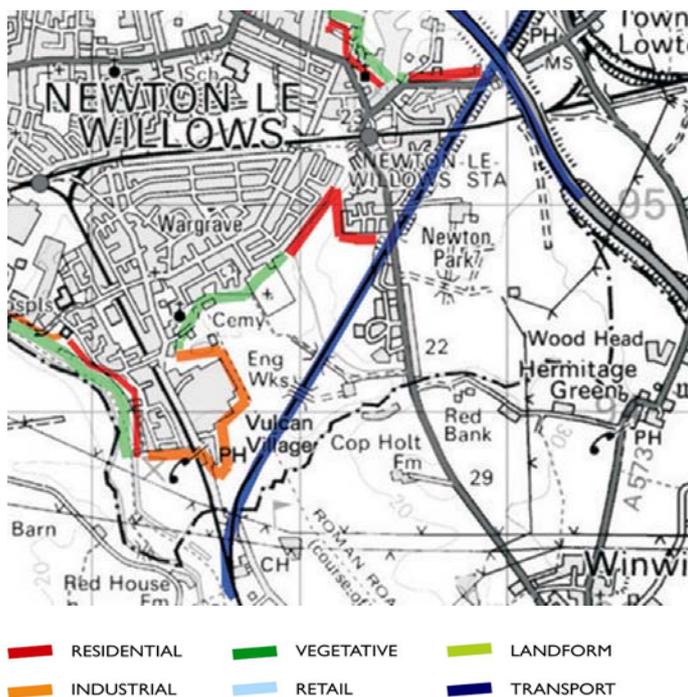
Large scale infrastructure creates a degraded and fragmented rural character, in particular the prominent M6 route corridor which runs at elevation.

inappropriate tree species such as poplar.

Encroachment of unsympathetic structure and materials (i.e. pylons, steel railings along railway).

Former colliery site imposing a degraded character to west of M6 corridor.

### Developed Edge Analysis



The area is a rural with a partially developed edge with Newton le Willows, which abuts the railway cutting and has associated screen planting. Although the railway line creates a hard urban edge, this provides a robust settlement edge which has been assessed as **Strong**.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – overriding flat open historical agricultural landscape still predominant landscape character – impacted and modified by infrastructure development.
Condition / Intactness	Low. Disturbance from former colliery site and features such as the M6, pylons and railways significantly detract and fragment the rural character.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate. There is some quality in the open landscape to the east and remnants of the former landscape to the west with views to the hills to the north and a rural character beyond.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Medium. There is high visibility with the surrounding landscape as a result of the open flat landscape.
Population	Medium. There are a limited number of people that live and work in the area but large number of people cross this landscape.
Mitigation Potential	Medium – difficult to mitigate changes by infrastructure to flat landscape, but possible to mitigate changes to vegetation structure.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Restore & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

Restore hedgerows and maintain existing hedgerows and woodland belts. Encourage native species and maintain moss. Encourage the use of more sympathetic rural materials in the landscape. Avoidance of further incremental encroachment of infrastructure with urban characteristics.

The former colliery site represents a major opportunity for the restoration of the underlying parkland landscape, which could be combined with opportunities for enhancement and landscape change. Any change proposed both development and/or landscape enhancement should carefully consider the relationship the current rural landscape to the south eastern edge of Newton-le-Willow. Currently the railway line represents a defined townscape edge which has retained a relatively compact settlement form. Further development could seek to visually and physically 'extend' the settlement up to the unnatural edge of the M6 corridor, which could heighten the impact of any development.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The development of extensive woodland within this area is generally inappropriate. Any woodland development would contrast and conflict with the open, flat characteristics and the strong horizontal composition. Large woodland blocks would restrict views towards the wider Pennines, which is an important characteristic of this area.

It is recognised that there is an increased wooded character to the west, which should be maintained. Further planting to reinforce these tree lines will maintain the experience of grandeur that the mature tree lines impart to this landscape. However, careful siting and design of woodland planting should seek to maintain the predominantly open character of this landscape.

The degraded small scale hedgerows should be restored and it is possible that 'wet woodlands' of predominantly Birch, Willow Ash and Alder should be created in association with moss pits and / or areas of poor drainage.

There is an opportunity to sensitively create more mixed broadleaf woodland cover in association with the M6 corridor where appropriate to the adjacent landscape patterns and the undulating landform on and adjacent to the land fill site at Parkside.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

To the east of the M6 corridor, there are constraints to further infrastructure development and inappropriate landscape enhancement that would emphasise the segregation and fragmentation of landscape character. There are potential opportunities for sensitive siting of small scale development, although this should use appropriate scale and types of materials to avoid further incremental encroachment of urban features into this landscape and should take into consideration the capacity of the landscape to accept further change. The western boundary of Newton le Willows should act as a constraint to the expansion of the settlement into this character area.

To the west, the existing disturbance caused by the former colliery site should be restored and enhanced. In any development and/or landscape enhancement proposals, careful consideration should be given to the visual and physical landscape relationship of the settlement edge of Newton-le-Willows and the defining linear form of the M6 corridor. It is recommended that should large scale landscape change be considered in this area that a more detailed landscape and visual assessment be used to inform any preliminary option appraisals.

### **Reeds Moss (2 AM 5)**



### ***Area Description***

- large flat open landscape. Broad Rural Slopes to the east and Undulating Farmland with Woodland to the west contains the character area and offers some enclosure;
- predominantly large scale regular arable field pattern with minimal vegetative field boundaries. Some small maintained hedgerows are present although the majority of the field boundaries are formed by drainage ditches which have a limited contribution to the landscape pattern of the area;
- a limited number of relatively large geometric woodland blocks comprising both deciduous and coniferous tree species interrupt the flat agricultural land;

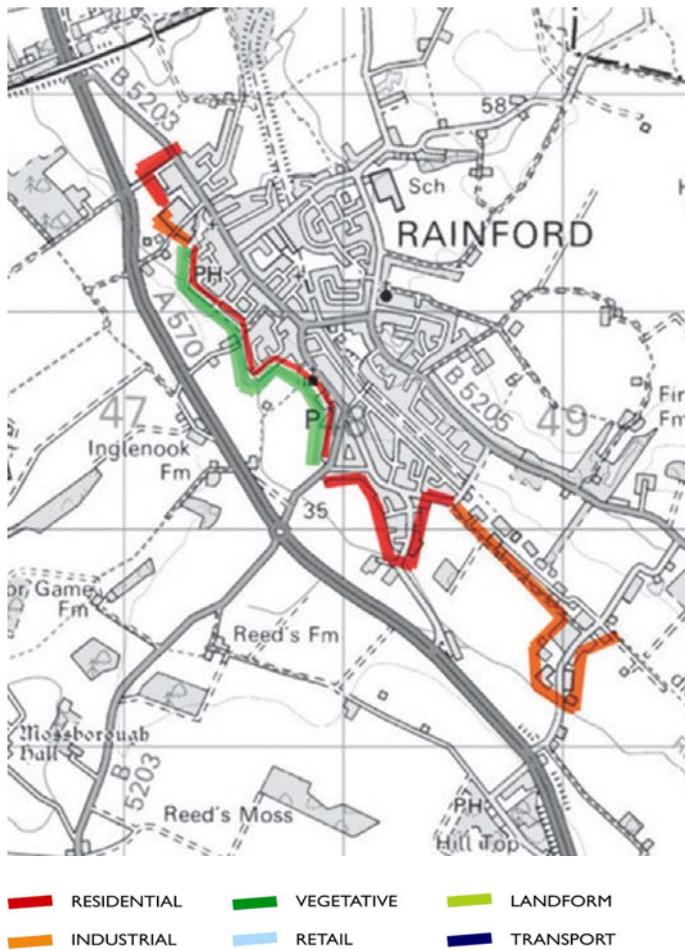
- the busy A570 dual carriageway runs through the area, the alignment reinforced by roadside planting, street lighting, signage and the movement of traffic. To the south a pylon line forms a series of prominent vertical features crossing the landscape;
- ribbon settlement development is along the southern extent of the A570 within the character area to the west of the carriageway. This development extends the urban character of St Helens north into the rural landscape and reinforces the line of the communication corridor. Elsewhere there is very little in the way of settlement with the exception of a small number of farmsteads with associated small woodland copses and individual trees.

### ***Landscape Analysis`***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Open flat rural landscape with horizontal composition.
Large blocks of mature woodland creating a unique pattern of open to enclosed space.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Encroachment of unsympathetic buildings and materials such as lighting (on the A570) contrast with the open rural qualities.
Infrastructure elements and pylon lines contrast with the rural character.
Ribbon development along A570 reinforces the communications corridor and fragmentation of landscape character.

### Developed Edge Analysis



The area is a rural with a partially developed edge with Rainford, which comprises:

- back gardens and associated mature vegetation;
- small woodland blocks / belts.

There is a filtered edge to the development as a result of the mature trees and vegetation of the back gardens and small areas of woodland within the village itself. The edge is less strong for areas of new housing where there is a lack of mature woodland or vegetation. The urban edge is assessed as **Moderate to Strong** in character as the settlement edge has remained on the upper slopes and reinforced with mature garden vegetation.

### Landscape Evaluation

Landscape Sensitivity	Medium to High
Strength of Typical Character	Strong. Dominance of horizontal flat moss landscape.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate. A570 crosses the landscapes and detracts from the rural character, reinforced by movement of traffic, ribbon development and pylon lines.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – relationship of open to enclosed space creates interesting landscape pattern.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Medium -There is high visibility with the surrounding landscape as a result of the open flat landscape although the large number of mature woodland blocks creates a sense of enclosure / restricts views.
Population	Medium – visible from settlements and residences in the area and high number of people travelling along busy road corridor.
Mitigation Potential	Medium - difficult to mitigate impacts to change sin flat landform. Some form of mitigation possible using appropriate scale and type of tree planting.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Maintain woodland blocks with sensitive restructuring, drainage, field boundaries and large field pattern. Important to maintain current balance of open to enclosed space and to avoid large scale woodland planting which could dramatically reduce simplicity of horizontal landform of moss.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

Although the development of woodland within other moss areas is generally inappropriate due to the contrast with the open and flat characteristics, large woodland and plantations already exist within this area. Historically there is a lack of hedgerows or vegetative field boundaries although large blocks of mixed deciduous have been created. These interrupt the large scale agricultural field patterns creating a unique landscape pattern and where appropriate to the historical landscape character they should be conserved. These can be enhanced through the increased planting of mixed broadleaf species especially Alder, Ash and Birch species.

Small coniferous plantation woodlands to be sensitivity restructured to avoid impacting on the current balance of open to enclosed landscape.

***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

Some small scale development maybe incorporated into the area. This may be limited as a result of the open landscape and large scale development may be detrimental to the area. There are some opportunities to mitigate change through the management / creation of woodland blocks and belts.

The existing urban edge and transition from flat lowlying moss landscape to undulating slopes should act as a constraint to further development. Development should not encroach from the upper slopes onto the flat moss landscape.

## CHARACTER TYPE 3 BROAD RURAL SLOPES

### *Character Areas:*

- Arch Lane Slopes (3 BRS 1)
- Weathercock Slopes (3 BRS 2)
- Rainford Slopes (3 BRS 3)
- Newton Slopes (3 BRS 4)
- Cronton Slopes (3 BRS 5)

### *Key Characteristics*

- raised, gently undulating farmland with simple broad slopes of mostly southern aspect although in some instances the undulating landform can form a broad smooth ridgeline with slopes of a northern aspect. The elevation of slopes ranges between approximately 30-80metres AOD which can enclose and contain surrounding lower landscapes;
- open views to the south especially to and over St Helens town, historic landmarks and industrial chimneys, although from the elevated ridgelines there is strong intervisibility with the immediate and wider landscape;
- generally intact woodland blocks and shelterbelts. This creates a strong interplay of open to enclosed space. Variety of woodland character from mature broadleaved groups of woodland within fields to cloughs along narrow streams defining field edges, to geometric single-species, coniferous plantations, creating a mosaic of texture in this landscape;
- landuse principally comprised of improved pastureland contained within structure of medium scale fields bounded by hedgerows with intermittent hedgerow trees. Pattern of field gives a strong rural character, which is heightened where the field pattern is regular running across the landscape grain and reinforcing the slope profile. Where the landform becomes more undulating the pattern of fields become more irregular and there is less repetition of hedgerow features;
- settlement types vary in size but are typically of small villages at minor crossroads, or a scatter of farm steading accessed off minor roads. In both instances the vernacular housing at the settlement core is of locally quarried blonde sandstone with slate roofs often associated with mature trees along the cartilage reinforcing the field pattern. Later infill housing is often poorly sited and the contemporary materials can be in contrast with the scale and materials of the vernacular housing. This contrast is further reinforced by incongruous curtilage design;
- a network of small 'B' roads cross landscape following contours the alignment reflecting the landscape grain. The roads have a minimal landscape impact with a narrow rural character enclosed by hedges limiting views and soft verges;

- the strong rural character emphasises the physical separation of the landscape elevated above the adjacent urban landscape.

### ***Location and Boundaries***

Large extent of landscape within this character type, found primarily to the central north of the Borough on the pronounced rolling slopes. A small area of this character type is also situated to the extreme south of the Borough south of Rainhill.

### **Arch Lane Slopes (3 BRS 1)**



### ***Area Description***

- the area is raised and gently undulating broadly simple slope landform running up from the edges of Haydock at 45m AOD to Weathercock Hill at 105m AOD, with a southern aspect offering wide and long views over surrounding areas to the south and west. The gasometer and chimneys of St Helens create a focal point as does the Fiddlers Ferry Power Station;
- this is an agricultural area with predominantly medium to large arable fields interspersed with some pastureland creating a repetitive landscape pattern;
- there are a number of mature, mainly broadleaf woodlands and shelterbelts. These 'cloughs' are often associated with streams and valleys and are riparian and semi natural in composition the prominent forms of the woodland reinforcing the gradient of the slope. Mature hedgerows typically intact usually form field boundaries;
- a number of isolated but large farms are the only form of settlement within the area. There is little in the way of substantial road infrastructure although there is a network of farm tracks and informal footpaths. A railway line descends the slope from northeast to southwest into St Helens. Where located at grade on embankments the railway line forms a prominent feature limiting views across the slope and fragmenting the character area;

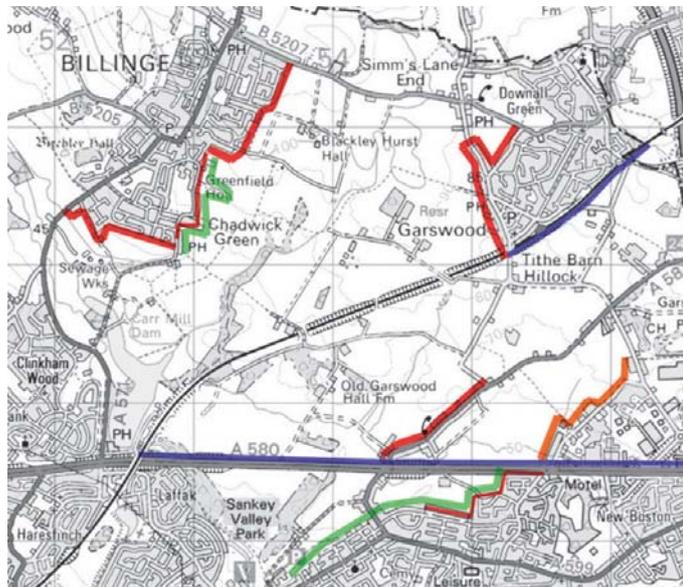
- there has been some encroachment of urban elements into this rural area such as kerbing along roads, lighting columns and small reservoirs. The experience of the urban landscape is reinforced by views to the prominent urban edge of Billinge to the west. In addition past mining activities have created localised changes to landform and scarring and disturbance to landcover.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Strong rural character composed of strong field pattern and relatively intact vegetated boundaries.
Experience of physical separation and contrast with adjacent settled landscape.
Wethercock Hill acts as important intermediate horizon in local and wider views.
Mature woodland blocks and hedgerows including some natural riparian woodland along streams.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Encroachment of urban elements.
Loss of field boundaries and hedgerows.
Fragmentation by railway line and embankments and changes in localised landform from past mining activities.

## Developed Edge Analysis



The area is rural with a partially developed edge at three locations;

- to the north east at Garswood;
- to the south at Haydock;
- to the northwest at Billinge.

To the east the Garswood edge is comprised by the railway and is robust especially as scrub and pioneer species vegetation has developed along the railway verges. To the west the edge is indented and forms a hard developed edge which appears prominent in the open, relatively flat landscape.

The section at Billinge is formed by the back gardens of a row of houses that contrasts with grain of slope and forms an abrupt highly visible edge.

The edge at Haydock is robust as it follows the line of a small stream and the break in slope. However, development has been permitted along the A58 to the north of the A580 and this encroaches into the rural character area. Overall the varied, complex edge has been assessed as **Weak to Moderate**.

## Landscape Evaluation

Landscape Sensitivity	Medium to High
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – strong simple fall of slope with overriding landscape pattern.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate- although there is some degradation of hedgerows and shelterbelts as well as some encroachment of urban elements.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong. Gently undulating farmland with agricultural field pattern and wide views over the surrounding landscape.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium-high. The area is elevated above the surrounding area and thus there is strong intervisibility.
Population	Medium. There are a few of properties within the area as well as a number of isolated farmsteads and limited access through and across the area. Appears as backdrop in views.
Mitigation Potential	Low to Medium – potential for some mitigation through appropriate tree planting.

### **Landscape Strategy**

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

#### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

Retain and reinforce rural character that separates various settlements. Avoid further encroachment of urban features that reduces strength of rural character. Management of woodland and restoration of hedgerows. The conservation and management of the natural riparian woodlands are especially important and the strengthening of these should also be considered.

#### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The mature riparian woodland along 'The Goyt' forms an area of important ancient woodland which should be conserved, enhanced and expanded through the planting of mixed broadleaf riparian woodland along watercourses.

There is also an opportunity for the restoration, enhancement and expansion of the existing pattern of woodland blocks, shelterbelts and hedgerows within the undulating agricultural field patterns.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

Generally this area is not suitable to accommodate development. Encroachment of development has already led to the degradation of the rural characteristics, most notably along the A58. Some opportunities for small scale development could potentially be accommodated along the developed edge at Billinge where it could contribute to strengthening the developed edge by relating it more sympathetically to the landform. The railway line at Garswood and the vegetated stream edge at Haydock should be considered constraints to further development.

### **Weathercock Slopes (3 BRS 2)**



#### ***Area Description***

- this area is formed by an elongated ridge rising from 85m AOD to Tatlock's Hillock at 125m AOD in the west, with localised undulations creating a raised plateau with panoramic views of the surrounding areas. Tatlock's Hillock form an important undeveloped visual horizon immediate and wider views;
- from within the character area views are focused south over St Helens and the industrial skyline. Limited views northeast are possible to the opencast mineral workings;
- the medium to large field patterns within the area are a mixture of arable and pastureland and are subdivided by mainly post and wire fencing although some small, often degraded hawthorn hedgerows are present. There are a number of isolated wind clipped trees within these hedgerows;
- there are some substantial areas of mature, semi natural woodland, such as the riparian woodland associated with Barton's Clough. Other areas of woodland are usually comprised of broad leaf species and are often associated with the number of farm buildings such as Blackley Hirst Hall Farm. Where the woodland skylines upon the horizon, such as the roundel on Tatlock's Hill, they form a prominent feature in the landscape;
- a well-developed informal footpath and track network follows the line of various field boundaries between woodland areas. The B5207 runs between Billinge and Garswood to the east, which forms the main point

of access in this character area. The roadway in where located adjacent to the urban edge becomes more urban in character with kerbs and street lighting;

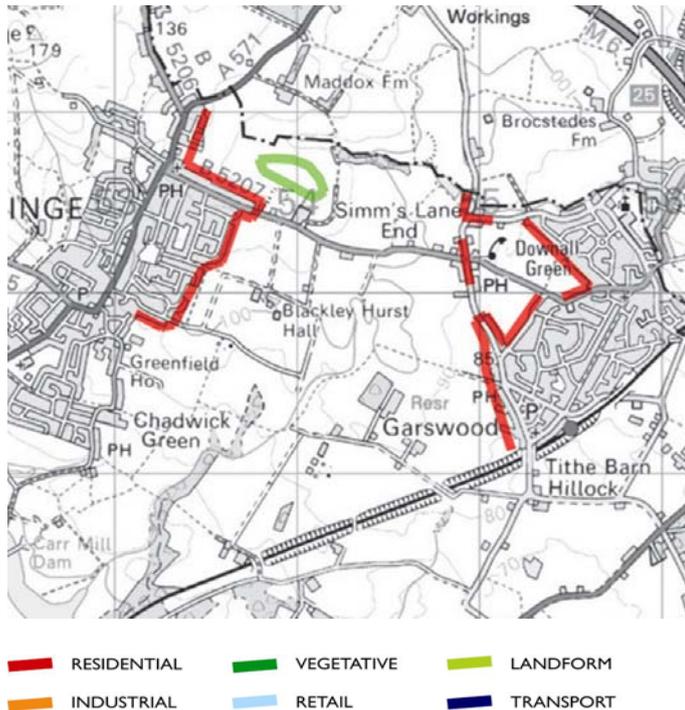
- some limited scattered settlement within the area is primarily concentrated along the B207 with more recent residential development contrasting prominent in scale and character and contrasting with the darker red brick of the vernacular buildings. The adjacent hard I urban edges of Billinge and Garswood are highly visible and contrast with the rural character of the area;
- the clustered farm building and dwelling of Blackley Hurst Hall are a prominent feature located on the lower slopes set within a mature woodland group.

### ***Landscape Analysis`***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Mature woodland blocks.
Elevated topography compared with panoramic views surrounding low-lying agricultural and urban landscape.
Backdrop to surrounding landscape areas.
Footpath Network.
The perception of separation from developed areas.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Encroachment of urban features i.e. kerbs and lighting along main access roads.
Dereliction of field pattern and removal of hedges/tree belts.
Ribbon development and increased scatter of residential housing along rural roads.

### Developed Edge Analysis



The area is rural with a partially developed edge to west and east at Billinge and Garswood respectively. The Billinge edge is formed by the back gardens of a row of houses that contrasts with grain of slope and forms an abrupt contemporary edge. The Garswood edge is less defined with a combination of road infrastructure and front gardens. The edge has expanded sporadically along roads and creating a complex edge with a less cohesive and defined edge, with pockets of development lining the roads, often giving the impression of more than one settlement, and as such the edges have been assessed as **Weak** to **Moderate**.

### Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – simple form of slope with strong landscape pattern.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate - Good - although there is general degradation of hedgerows and encroaching of urban features.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong - rural landscape character with wide views, although to hard urban edge and quarrying operations north.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	High. Prominent ridge with intervisibility to other areas.
Population	Medium. There are a number of isolated properties within the area as well as a number of footpaths that are popular with walkers – views from adjacent urban edges and users of busy B road. Views also from lower settled landscapes up to horizon.
Mitigation Potential	Low - Medium. Difficult to mitigate changes to landform but can reinforce woodland patterns

### **Landscape Strategy**

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

#### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

Management of woodland and strengthening of hedgerows. Important to retain rural character that separates Billinge and Garswood and provides strong contrast to urban landscape. Tatlock's Hill and associated elevated ridge acts as an important visual horizon which features in views from the south. It is important to maintain the undeveloped character as a wider backdrop to the developed lowland landscape.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The mature riparian woodland along 'Barton Clough' forms an area of important semi ancient / ancient woodland which should be conserved and enhanced with mixed broadleaf riparian woodland.

There is opportunity for the restoration and / or enhancement of existing small mixed broadleaf woodland blocks, such as the woodland associated with Blackey Hurst Hall Farm, and the restoration of degraded or absent hedgerows, in tandem with reinforcement of rural landscape character.

The development of large scale woodland is considered to be inappropriate in this area since this would alter the ratio of open to enclosed space and distract from the panoramic view that are an important characteristic of this area. In addition broad development of woodland could obscure the undeveloped visual horizon in views from the south.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

This area is not suitable to accommodate large scale change as a result of its high visibility and limited opportunities for mitigation. The upper visual horizon and ridgeline should impose a constraint to development and in particular vertical structures which would skyline in views. The wider rural landscape is generally limited to change which would cause the incremental encroachment of urban features into the landscape and which would dilute the rural character.

Further development at Garswood, may provide a more robust edge and improve the character and form of the settlement, although siting development here should be sensitive to the surrounding more elevated and prominent land. Development along this edge should seek to create a strong sense of arrival and setting to Garswood and a defined robust edge. The existing hard edge should be sensitivity mitigated by appropriate vegetation.

## Rainford Slopes (3 BRS 3)



### ***Area Description***

- this is one of the largest character areas within the Borough. The area has gently sloping topography with some large ridgeline undulations, comprising the broad ridgelines of Rainford and under Crank, orientated northwest to southeast;
- the undulating landscape with a change of aspect offers a variety of views from contained views along the broad valleys to the industrial skyline of St Helens to wide long views over the surrounding lower lying landscapes;
- the landscape is mostly intact arable agricultural land with some grazing. A sense of rich intact countryside is created through the combination of agriculture and small blocks of mature broad leaf woodland and shelterbelts creating an interplay of open to enclosed space. A large portion of these woodland blocks are parkland plantations to the former estates associated with Windle Hall, Rainford Hall and Birchley Hall. The mature woodland give a great variety and texture to the landscape and a sense of grandeur and strong historical associations reinforced by the remnants of estate landscape including stone boundary walls and feature entrance pillars;

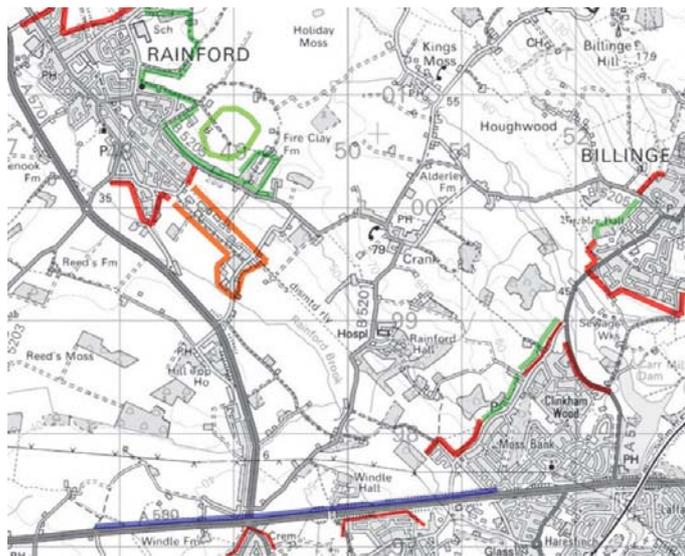
- medium to large scale field boundaries are typically comprised of post and wire fencing and relict hedgerows. The irregular field patterns create a complex texture which is reinforced by patterns of the woodland blocks and shelterbelts 'Water pits' are a distinctive landscape element and often comprise a small woodland pocket located centrally within the fields;
- frequent number of farm steading in the area, with a number of residential dwellings within the agricultural landscape including small clusters of housing and the small main settlement of Crank. The location of Crank is emphasised in the landscape by the siting of more recent development on settlement edge, which encroach on the upper visual horizon;
- several minor 'B' roads cross the area and have a narrow rural. Linking into this is a well developed series of tracks and footpaths which border the field pattern.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Strong interplay of landscape elements creates rich landscape pattern.
Medium scale woodland blocks and shelterbelts relatively intact and impose strong historical character when associated with former estate buildings and features.
Separation from developed areas through the raised topography to the south of the area.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Encroachment of urban features such as lighting, kerbs.
Some loss of field boundaries and hedgerows.
Encroachment of inappropriate scale and size of residential development.

### Developed Edge Analysis



- █ RESIDENTIAL      █ VEGETATIVE      █ LANDFORM
- █ INDUSTRIAL      █ RETAIL      █ TRANSPORT

The area is a rural area with a complex, partially developed edge to the east at Billinge, and also to the south where it meets the edge of St Helens. The Billinge edge is robust as it follows a small stream. The grounds and woodland of Birchley Hall also provides a robust edge and transition between the rural and urban character areas.

A large part of the developed edge to the south is defined by cuttings to the A580 and the slopes to Windle Hall, and thus the edge is strong. Development has extended along the road between Billinge and St Helens over the A580 to the north at Mossbank and although the developed edge at Mossbank contrasts with the contours, it is fairly robust due to the mature vegetation associated with the back gardens.

To the north development has been retained on the upper slopes of Rainford ridge, which is characteristic of the historical settlement form and has a mature robust edge. However more recent development has extended down slopes and created a more indented complex edge which cuts across the landscape grain and is unsympathetic to the form of the ridgeline. The varied, complex edge has overall been assessed as **Moderate**.

### Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – overriding simple landform with intact complex landscape texture.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate - although there is general degradation of hedgerows and urban features encroaching into landscape.
Aesthetic Character	Strong – interplay of field pattern and mature woodland with wide views from upper slopes.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium to high. The visibility varies throughout the area due to the nature of the undulating topography. Generally there is good indivisibility with the surrounding landscape areas.
Population	Medium to high. There are a relatively high number of residential properties in the area including small clusters of housing. Views possible into the area from surrounding landscape.
Mitigation Potential	Low-medium. Difficult to mitigate changes to landform but can reinforce woodland patterns.

### Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

#### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Important to maintain the existing balance of open to enclosed space with the management of woodland and restoration of hedgerows. Retain rural character avoiding encroachment of urban elements. Reinforcement of landscape character will emphasise separation and contrast between urban and rural landscape. The currently undeveloped visual horizon should be protected against intrusive development which would skyline in views.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

The existing mixed woodland blocks and shelterbelts should be conserved and enhanced especially the mature parkland woodlands associated with Windle Hall, Birchley Hall and Rainford Hall.

There is opportunity for the creation of new shelterbelts and / or small mixed broadleaf woodland areas along the undulating ridgelines of this area appropriate to the scale and character of the existing woodland. These may be associated with small settlements and building clusters such as Crank. These woodland areas would enhance the rich agricultural / woodland mosaic along the ridgelines and contrast with the adjacent moss areas.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

This area may be able to accommodate a limited amount of small scale development that is in keeping with the current development patterns and through opportunities of mitigation. There is a danger that development on the raised areas would be detrimental to the landscape character and impose on the visual horizons. Some opportunities for small scale development to improve the character and robustness of the urban edge at Rainford. Existing edges at Billinge Windle Hall and Mossbank should be a constraint to further development. Further development around the settlement of Crank should be avoided due to the high visual sensitivity of this landscape setting.

### **Sankey Slopes (3 BRS 4)**



#### **Area Description**

- the area lies on broad simple gently undulating slopes with southern aspect above the Sankey River Valley, gradually ascending up from the Sankey Valley at 20metres AOD to 40metres on the upper slopes;
- the agricultural field pattern is of small, slightly irregular and historical field sizes composed of hedgerows giving an intimate and enclosed character which feature prominently given the underlying simplicity of the landform and which reinforce the slope contours where the hedgerows cross;

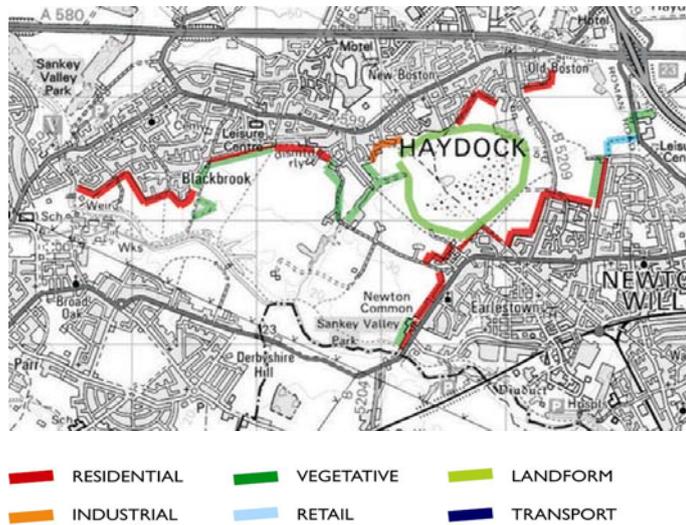
- there are riparian belts of broad leaf woodland ‘cloughs’ that follow small stream valleys up the slopes from the river valley and introduce a broader enclosing landscape structure that contain the field pattern;
- although there are no roads or major infrastructure elements within the character area which give a strong rural character, several tracks and footpaths criss-cross the area to create a dense network that is popular for recreation. However the surrounding urban edge located at a similar elevation and the wider industrial skyline is often present in views and imposes an urban character;
- there are a small number of isolated farmsteads prominent as point features on the southern facing slopes and reinforced in their location by associated woodland;
- views are possible from the upper slopes to the developed landscapes to the southeast backed by the prominent profiles of the spoil heaps beyond. There is limited visual connection to the course of the river and canal due to the incised character of the valley.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Simple slope with strong rural landscape pattern provides contrast to adjacent urban landscape and backdrop to Sankey Valley
Intact historic field pattern.
Prominent woodland clough features crossing landscape.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Industrial elements highlighted by elevated position especially slag heaps to the north east of the area.
Loss of some field boundaries and hedgerows.
Encroachment of highly visible developed edge.
Erosion of footpaths, littering, graffiti endemic from urban context.

## Developed Edge Analysis



The area is a rural landscape with a developed edge to the north at Haydock. The developed edge is elevated although generally responds to upper contours of slope are highly visible. To the south east the boundary of the character area abuts the developed edge of Newton le Willows which cuts across the landscape grain and forms an abrupt highly visible edge. Overall the edges have been assessed as **Weak**.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – simple form of slope with intact field boundaries strong rural character.
Condition / Intactness	Good – intact field boundaries with woodland structure.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong – strength of character provides contrast with urban landscape.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium to High – intervisibility of slopes with landscape to south of Sankey Valley
Population	Medium. Limited populations within character area, but visible from urban landscape surrounding character area to north, west and south
Mitigation Potential	Low to Medium – simple fall of slope and woodland boundaries possible to mitigate. Mature woodland difficult to mitigate against loss

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

The proximity of this relatively intact rural landscape provides an important backdrop and visual buffer and horizon to views from the Sankey Valley and surrounding urban landscape.

Management of woodland and restoration of hedgerows. Further incremental development should be avoided to retain rural a character that separates developed areas of Newton le Willows and Haydock.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The existing riparian woodland that is associated with the canal and various watercourses should be conserved and enhanced. This should be achieved by the expansion of riparian woodland, of predominantly Willow, Ash, Birch and Alder, along watercourses and adjacent to the canal corridor.

This should be complemented by the restoration and enhancement of existing broadleaf hedgerows throughout the area.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

Within the character area the landscape is unsuitable for development. Along the boundaries of Haydock and Newton le Willows opportunities exist for small scale development associated with sensitive landscape enhancement proposals, to contribute to improving the urban edges to sympathetically reflect the underlying landform.

### Rainhill Slopes (3 BRS 5)



#### ***Area Description***

- the area lies on gently undulating slopes with southern aspect which runs down from the adjacent broad summit of Blundell's Hill at 78m AOD to the flatter landscape which extends up to and is defined by the prominent embankments to the M62;
- the area is predominantly arable farmland with medium to large scale irregular fields overlaying the slope and highlighting the fall of the contours. The field boundaries are mostly drainage ditches with degraded hedgerows with some remnant mature trees, which give a degraded character to the landscape. In many cases the hedgerows have been lost;
- a golf course is located on the slopes within the area and creates a contrast in character by the smooth uniform green of the fairways and associated planting to the rural character of the fields;
- 'water pits' are a distinctive landscape feature located within depressions in the fields and are generally associated with small blocks of mature deciduous woodland;
- the M62 and a line of pylons cross the area to the south and are both dominant visual features. The embankments of the M62 create an unnatural defined hard edge to the character area. The frequent movement and noise of traffic along the motorway imposes a strong urban character on the rural landscape;
- area limited number of small residences and a farm steading is located off the B road which runs between Rainhill and Whiston. The historic urban edge of Rainhill is visually prominent on the ridgeline to the north. In particular the historic skyline with a prominent church tower is a distinct visual horizon in views from along the M62;
- views from the upper elevated slopes to Rainhill are across the M62 embankments to the floodplains of the Mersey which progressively flatten out to the highly developed Mersey Valley. The large cooling towers at Fiddlers Ferry Power Station are prominent features on the distant skyline.

## Landscape Analysis

### Positive Features

Rural landscape character with pattern of 'natural' water pool features.

Broad slopes and ridgeline acts as an important visual horizon and setting to Rainhill.

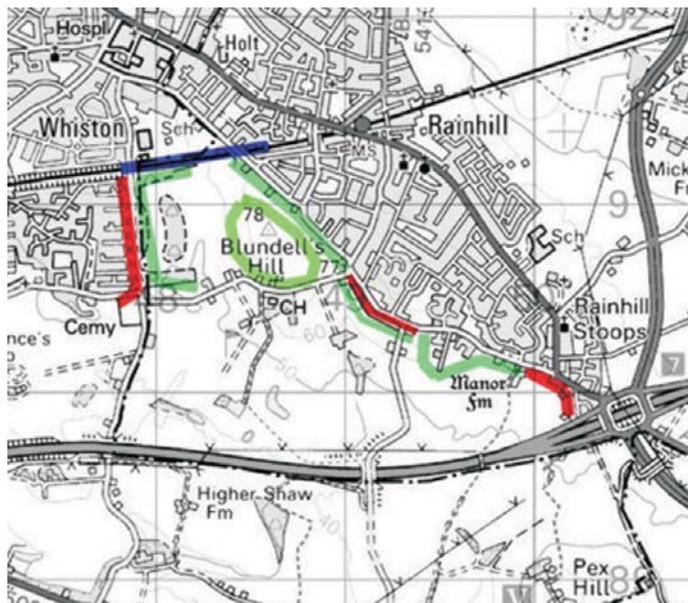
### Negative Features

Visually prominent urban elements including pylon lines in landscape to south.

Strong visual and physical influence of motorway corridor with unnatural embankments, noise, continuous movement and associate visual clutter of signage, including partial upgrading of rural road which cross motorway.

Degraded and loss of hedgerows and tree structure.

### Developed Edge Analysis



The area is rural with a partially developed edge to at Rainford. This is a robust edge as the mature historic developed edge runs along the upper break of slope to the ridgeline and the steep gradient creates a natural constraint to development. Overall the edge has been assessed as **Strong**.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – rural character of field and woodland groups and landscape pattern degraded.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – strong influence of surrounding urban features in particular the motorway corridor.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – historic visual horizon and natural patterns of tree groups but strong influence of infrastructure developments to south.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium - High – limited visibility from landscape to north, but strong intervisibility with flat landscape to south partially screen by motorway embankments.
Population	Medium - High - limited visibility by scatter of dwellings within character area and along the north settled edge. High visibility for short distance from elevated stretch of busy M62.
Mitigation Potential	Medium - opportunity to reinforce existing agricultural patterns where appropriate.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Important to conserve the existing relatively undeveloped upper slopes to retain important visual horizon and setting to historic skyline of Rainhill. Opportunity to enhance and strengthen existing landscape structure to reduce physical and visual presence of linear road corridor.

Water holes and associate planting should be retained and managed appropriately as interesting landscape feature.

**Woodland Recommendations**

The degraded mature shelterbelts and hedgerows should be restored and enhanced with mixed broadleaf trees. Inappropriate siting of woodland planting running along the verges of the M62 and reinforcing the strength of this corridor should be avoided. Reinforcement of adjacent landscape character should help to soften the prominence of this unnatural hard edge in the landscape.

The urban edge along the Rainhill ridge should be strengthened by the enhancement of mixed broadleaf woodland and shelterbelts, with due cognisance of maintaining the clarity of the historic skylines in views to the south.

In addition small 'wet' woodland pockets that are associated with distinctive water pits should be conserved and enhanced with the planting of Willow, Alder and Ash.

**Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

This area is generally unsuitable for development as this would further weaken the landscape character and reduce the clarity of the rural landscape as a setting of the historic skyline of Rainhill. The existing mature historic urban edge of Rainhill should pose a constraint to further development.

## CHARACTER TYPE 4 RIVER VALLEY

### **Character Areas:**

- Carr Mill Dam (4 RV 1)
- Sankey Canal (4 RV 2)

### **Key Characteristics**

- distinctive incised V-shaped river valley with slopes that can be steep or shallow sided, but it is always enclosed by sloping valley sides that provide a varying sense of enclosure and human scale that contrast with the adjacent larger scale open agricultural and industrial landscapes or wide flat open plain of water;
- key focus of the valley character areas is the central location of water features both man made and natural as linear meandering features or a flat plain of water. Within the Borough the water creates unique character areas by the interaction between the different characteristics of the water and the interplay with the adjacent landscape and the reflective qualities;
- narrow linear character of varying width with a strong sense of containment with views restricted and focused along the valley. The sense of containment is reinforced with vegetation. The extent of the valley is defined by the upper immediate visual horizon of adjacent slopes which is predominantly undeveloped in character. Where a curve of the river valley limits views ahead this increases the sense of containment and experience of intimacy and reduced scale of the landscape;
- deciduous woodland belts located along valley sides and riparian vegetation with scrub vegetation and rough grass along river/canal route give informal character, providing welcome contrast to urban landscape and can often reinforce the sense of enclosure of the landform;
- remnants of industrial heritage i.e. canal, aqueduct and dams are attractive features of interest and are useful for orientation;
- in locations despite being close to or surrounded by the urban landscape, the experience of containment can effectively reduce the visual experience of the urban landscape although the background hum is generally audible;
- popular location for recreation and corridor for movement often through surrounding residential or industrial landscapes with walking, dog walking, cycling, fishing. Some footpaths badly eroded due to poor drainage at base of slopes and high level of use and can impose a neglected and degraded character, which can be reinforced by littering and vandalism;
- whilst the canal and the dam are constructed industrial features, the landscapes created have a peaceful, 'natural' undeveloped character, but some recent light construction relates to facilitating recreational access including sign and interpretative boards, handrails, bridges and steps.

### ***Location and Boundaries***

This character area is located in two areas. Whilst both located in a river valley, the changing extent and character of water in relation to the surrounding land produces two character areas one focusing on the narrow Sankey Valley from the southeastern extremity of the Borough into St Helens incorporating the Sankey Brook and canal, and the other area incorporating Carr Mill Dam.

### **Carr Mill Dam (4 RV 1)**



### ***Area Description***

- the area is contained within a broader valley, the slopes of which are gently sloping convex slopes with the predominantly land use of arable fields. A large reservoir occupies the valley in an irregular elongated form broadly orientated north to south along the form river valley of the Black Brook. The Dam is wider to the south the edges more geometric in form defined by the communications infrastructure of the roads and railway. Narrowing to the north the dam has a more irregular 'natural' water's edge which responds more readily to the surrounding rural landscape;
- from the shoreline views are typically focused along the valley across the flat plain of the water to the opposing sides. With the irregular form of the dam the full extent of the water is difficult to view from one location;
- the unique character of the large body of open water provides a popular place for, often conflicting forms of recreation, including walking, fishing and power boat racing;
- the area provides an urban to rural transition in the surrounding landscape as to the south the reservoir is defined by the close proximity of the urban edge. To the north the reservoir is contained by the more pronounced form of the valley topography within which the reservoir. The valley sides have an agricultural character, beyond which Billinge Hill forms a distant backdrop and visual horizon reinforcing the more rural character and experience of the Dam landscape to the north;

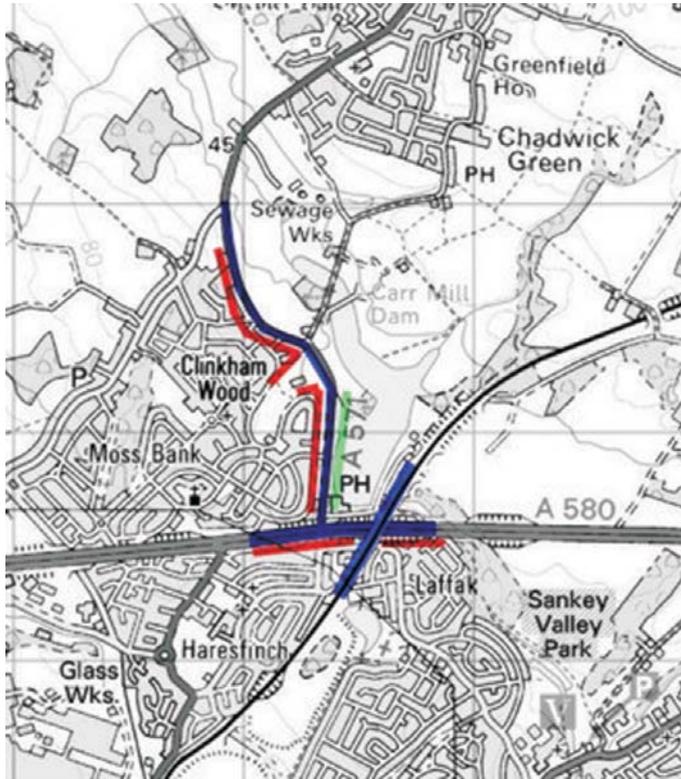
- large relatively narrow strips of mature woodland reinforce the edge to the reservoir, although where the woodland is thinning, the urban landscape beyond is visible through the trees in many places. Some natural riparian woodland exists within the valley tributaries including 'The Goyt';
- there are remnants of historic industrial use such as the Dam and railway which are features of interest emphasised by the movement of water to the southeast. There are a number of unsympathetic features associated with the development of leisure and facilitating access to the area which can impose the experience of neglect or dereliction to the area. These including degraded brick walls and unkempt mooring points.

### **Landscape Analysis**

<b>Positive Features</b>
Popular place for recreation.
Large water body provides welcome open character on edge of densely settled landscape.
Aesthetic value – large water body / mature woodland.
Industrial heritage.

<b>Negative Features</b>
The use of unsympathetic materials around the Dam (i.e. path materials, boat docking pontoons (concrete) and huts adjacent to the Power Boat Lodge building, brick walls etc.).
Run-down nature of the existing infrastructure i.e. poor state of walls, roads, the lack of use of the dam outlet.
Conflict of recreational user interests in development of access to Dam.
Loss of riparian woodland and degraded woodland belts.

## Developed Edge Analysis



The area is an urban fringe transitional area with a partially developed edge to the south and west. At this location there is a strong edge in the form of a combination of different elements:

- the A571;
- front gardens and residential access road;
- area of amenity grass land between the housing and the A571.
- in addition, to the east the character area is strongly defined by the embankment and bridge infrastructure where the railway crosses the Black Brook.

The edge has been assessed as **Strong**.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – contained valley landscape more pronounced to north. Water body defined by more urban edge to south.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate - varies across water body, but urban influences reduce further north.
Aesthetic Character	Strong - Strong visual/physical pull to large water body with partial rural surround with views to Billinge Hill. This is a unique landscape within the Borough.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Medium. As the area is contained within a valley it is relatively enclosed although there is some intervisibility with surrounding areas.
Population	Moderate. Although there are no people living within this area it is heavily used as a place of recreation, and visually accessed from adjacent road and rail network.
Mitigation Potential	Low – difficult to recreate open waterbody.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

Strategy of conservation and restoration reflects the urban and rural context of the water body and the important industrial and historical heritage of the Dam and associated infrastructure.

Management of historic and industrial structures. Restoration and management of woodland around Dam. Issues surround the future management of access to the water and shoreline, accommodating a variety of potential users whilst avoiding negative impacts on the rural character and sense of place to the north.

Opportunities exist to appropriately reinforce the adjacent landscape structure, which will maintain a setting to the reservoir and reinforce the sense of enclosure.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The existing mixed broadleaf woodland that surrounds the edge of the Dam should be conserved including the riparian woodland areas of the Dam's tributaries.

There is an opportunity to strengthen the woodland surround by the planting of gaps in the woodland edge with predominantly broadleaf species such as Oak, Alder and Ash.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

The water body acts as an obvious constraint to large scale change. However some opportunities exist to sensitively restore and develop the south eastern shoreline of the reservoir by the removal of unsympathetic urban features and develop access facilities for potential future users that will not impact on the enjoyment of the landscape. The more rural character and irregular shoreline of the reservoir further north and the surrounding agricultural context, pose constraints to development or change that will impose an unsympathetic and inappropriate urban character.

## Sankey Valley (4 RV 2)



### ***Area Description***

- the immediate character area is a narrow linear incised valley beyond which is enclosed by mostly gently sloping topography of the wider urban and rural landscape.
- the focus of the landscape is the sinuous alignment of the Sankey Water flowing southeast away from St Helens eventually flowing into the Mersey. In places the sinuous character of the river is reinforced by the route of the disused canal running parallel to river along some sections. The canal is often the visually and physically dominant water feature within the valley due to its elevated location up from the river and available access via the tow path;
- features of industrial heritage in varying conditions are found along the course of the valley from former locks and basins which are often in a derelict and overgrown state to the dramatic engineering of the Nine Arches Railway Viaduct, which spans across the valley southwest of Newton le Willows. The impressive architecture and dominant scale of the viaduct is realised from walks along the tow path, and it forms a prominent orientation feature along the valley;
- there is extensive mature woodland and riparian woodland along the valley consisting of oak, ash, willow and alder. The natural regeneration of oak and ash with a scrub layer of hazel and hawthorn gives a 'natural' informal character to the landscape which reinforces the sinuous form of the water and often restricts access and views to the Sankey Water. Elsewhere extensive areas of reed bed have colonised the disused sections of canal;
- the valley is a popular recreation area with several informal paths, interpretation signs, seating and litter bins. In places vandalism and graffiti and eroded footpaths create an experience of neglect;
- the surrounding slopes form the backdrop to the area and are predominantly agricultural fields although there is an industrial urban edge where the valley passes Newton le Willows. The 'Mucky Mountains' are also found at this location. These from small mounds of former chemical waste deposits but are now a nature reserve.

## Landscape Analysis

### Positive Features

Unique enclosed sinuous form of the valley and associated Sankey Water and canal.

Industrial heritage of canal and associated structures.

Aesthetic qualities of wooded valley.

Popular area of recreation.

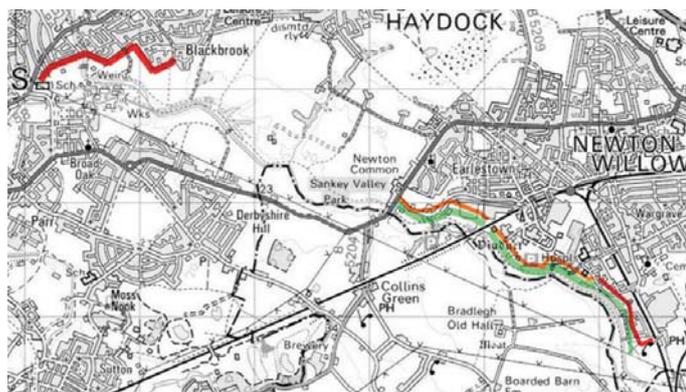
### Negative Features

The visual encroachment of the developed edge at some locations.

Loss of industrial heritage.

Lack of maintenance of existing structures and access to area.

### Developed Edge Analysis



RESIDENTIAL    VEGETATIVE    LANDFORM  
INDUSTRIAL    RETAIL    TRANSPORT

The area is fundamentally rural with a partially developed edge as at Mucky Mountains. At this location the developed edge comprises mainly industrial buildings and security fencing and boundaries with some residential back gardens. Although the change of slope at the edge of the valley provides a natural and strong transition between the two areas, where development is in close proximity the treatment and materials are unsympathetic. The edge has been assessed as **Strong**.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – narrow linear incised valley character with strong sense of enclosure and focus of river and canal.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate. The overall character of the valley and natural watercourse are intact, although much of the industrial structures in particular the continuity of the canal are degraded.
Aesthetic Character	Strong - Linear water courses with mostly rural character interspersed with industrial heritage. This is a unique landscape within the Borough.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Low. The area is well contained within the incised valley and as such there is limited intervisibility with surrounding areas.
Population	Moderate. Although there are no people living within this area it is heavily used as a place of recreation.
Mitigation Potential	Low – difficult to mitigate changes to the form or character of the incised valley and water features.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

The landscape strategy of conservation and restoration reflects the importance of maintaining the form of the incised valley and the character of the river and canal. Restoration in particular relates to the industrial heritage along the valley. In association with this restoration, enhancement and management of riparian and general woodland along valley. Management of access should respond to the character and context along the valley with maintenance of paths, furniture and infrastructure. Issues surround the development of the landscape in close proximity of the valley on the adjacent elevated landscape, where change may intrude upon the visual horizons to the valley.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The existing riparian woodland should be conserved with consideration to maintaining a safe pedestrian through route. The area should be enhanced through the additional planting of predominantly 'wet woodland' species such as Willow, Ash, Alder and Birch.

There is potential to use new woodland planting to strengthen the urban edge of the canal corridor especially where the canal passes adjacent to Newton le Willows.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

Given the narrow incised linear form of the character area with the river and canal the area is unsuitable for development due to its small intimate scale and recreation resource. Some opportunities exist to affect landscape change relating to the provision of access to and along the valley. Materials to facilitate pedestrian access should be sympathetic to the now strongly 'natural' character of the river valley, although due cognisance should be taken of the association with the industrial past now an important part of the heritage of this area.

Development of interpretation and landscape furniture should be low key and respond to the more rural landscape character and avoid the encroachment of urban characteristics.

Development where proposed along the elevated landscape s adjacent to river valley should avoid visual encroachment onto the sensitive visual horizons of the valley.

## CHARACTER TYPE 5 WOODED FORMER ESTATE

### **Character Area:**

- Garswood Park (5 WFE 1)
- Haydock Park (5 WFE 2)
- Old Garswood Park (5 WFE 3)
- Bold Hall (5 WFE 4)

### **Key Characteristics**

- number of character areas of varying size across the Borough, where the frequency and size of mature woodland groups associated with former estate landscapes is a principal feature. The preponderance of mature woodland creates a partially enclosed landscape which is draped over the agricultural landscape;
- the woodland appears in a variety of forms, typically of mature deciduous woodland belts enclosing areas of farmland, but in addition remnants of tree avenues, lines and belts and single mature specimen trees within field are present. The changing character of the mature woodland creates a sense of grandeur and maturity to the landscape;
- the strength of the former estates are reinforced by the presence of landscape features including prominent estate houses and building of similar construction and often in blonde sandstone quarried locally, stone walls and decorative entrance pillars;
- landform varies over the character type but is typically of a rolling undulating landform where the experience changes from being enclosed by adjacent topography to open wide views over the surrounding landscape only partially interrupted by the presence of woodland;
- in many instance the underlying larger agricultural landscape has medium to large scale fields and associated with mature blocks of woodland creates a large scale landscape;
- obvious aesthetic qualities to the landscapes, the place often form areas of interest for recreation.

### **Location and Boundaries**

Of this character type, most of the areas are located to the north and east of the Borough on the rolling undulating simple broad slopes to the north of the Sankey Valley. Only Bold Estate is located on the flat open floodplains to the extreme south of the Borough.

### **Garswood Park (5 WFE 1)**



### **Area Description**

- small fragmented former estate landscape with well defined edges delineated by stone walls and adjacent more recent infrastructure development;
- the landform is generally flat to gently undulating at an elevation averaging 70 metres AOD. The northern part of the area has been restored from previous mining activity and is currently formed into a small broad hill with pronounced cuttings to the north and south and appear visually and physically separate from the remainder of the area;
- to the south the landuse is a golf course. The uniform colour and texture of the fairways and greens contrast with the adjacent colours and texture of the agricultural landscape, but are enclosed by a mature woodland surround and intervisibility to the surrounding landscape is limited. New areas of scattered planting exist within the gently undulating golf course;
- in addition to the stone boundary walls, , and shelterbelt woodland the edge of the estate are strongly defined by communications infrastructure, sometimes at grade and large scale industrial warehouses to the south;
- there are remnants of former estate structures such as walls and ornamental gate entrance pillars, and feature buildings which are generally in good condition although some features have been lost or degraded.

### **Landscape Analysis**

<b>Positive features</b>
Decorative boundary walls and entrance pillar features remaining in association with former estate mature woodland belts and groups

## Negative Features

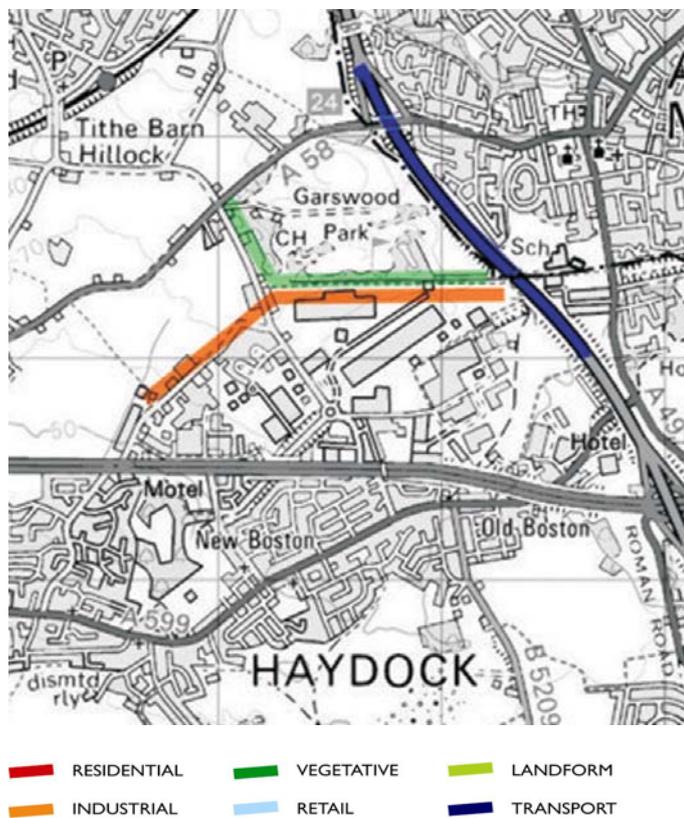
Loss and degradation of former estate features including woodland and buildings

Unsympathetic planting treatment within gold course

Disturbance to landform with former mining activity

Strong urban influence from surrounding communication route and associated activity and industrial estate to south

## Developed Edge Analysis



The area has a formal rural character with developed edges to the south and east. Haydock Industrial Estate defines the edge to the south comprises mainly industrial fencing and boundaries combined with mature woodland block creating a strong robust edge. The edge to the east is defined by the embankment and alignment of the western edge of the M6 corridor beyond which extends the urban landscape of Ashton-in-Makerfield. The simple straight form and scale of development along the edges create a robustness which is reinforced by mature woodland. The edge has been assessed as **Strong**.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate– remnants of mature woodland and estate features within recreational landscape.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – boundary and entrance features including mature woodland, entrance pillars and stone walls generally intact.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – contribution to local landscape context and some quality from mature woodland.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Low- Relatively enclosed and contained.
Population	Low to medium – visible from surrounding communication routes and used as a place of recreation.
Mitigation Potential	Medium-high – potential for landscape structure to be enhanced by further planting

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Strengthen & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy reflect the relatively weak landscape character and the remnants of the former estate still present and as such there are opportunities to both strengthen and protect the remnants of the landscape whilst enhancing the relatively unsympathetic character of the golf course and disturbance from the previous mining operations.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

The mature broadleaf woodland of Garswood Park should be conserved and enhanced. Any new woodland planting should be sympathetic to the original woodland structure

There may be opportunities to reinstate fragmented or derelict woodland areas. There may be opportunity to use a wide species palette including Oak, Beech, Horse Chestnut, Ash and Lime, sympathetic to the former design and layout of the estate.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

The development of the golf course poses a constraint to development by the recreational landuse. However opportunities exist to sensitivity design and locate a feature building or small scale development sympathetic to the former estate landscape.

## **Haydock Park (5 WFE 2)**



### **Area Description**

- the topography of this area is of a generally flat open landscape with strong horizontal composition, subtly rising in elevation from the course of the Newton Brook to the south east at 25m AOD up to 50 metres at the urban edge with Ashton-in-Makerfield;
- park landscape covering an extensive area to the extreme east of St Helens Borough, although highly fragmented and divided by the location of the M6 running north to south and the A580 running east to west often at elevation. In addition the character area has a complex indented boundary defined to the east by the location of the Council boundary and to the north, west and south by a varied and indented predominantly urban edge;
- the predominant landuse of the area is arable farmland cultivated within a largescale geometric regular field system. Hedged field boundaries vary in condition and where neglected they emphasise the sense of openness and scale of the landscape;

- mature woodland blocks, shelterbelts and plantations interrupt the field pattern to create an interesting spatial sequence and partially enclose several of the fields;
- to the north the character area is defined by layout of the Haydock Race Course, for which the grassed white-fenced course sits relatively unobtrusively within the large scale open park landscape. Associated development to the racecourse including the entrance buildings, entrance road and parking is identifiable with the racecourse and defined by regular formal ornamental planting of conifers to the entrance area, although the white stands extend above the tree crown;
- within the mature landscape structure a number of small dams and lakes /ponds and associated riparian woodland are found along the narrow valley to Newton Brook and tributaries which flows southwards and is dammed at intervals to form the Dean Dam and Newton Lake;
- there are remnants of former estate structures such as walls and ornamental gate features;
- the large grade separated elevated road junction of the M6 and A580 separate and divide the character area, dominating the experience of the landscape and detracting from the rural qualities of the area;
- within the area there is minimal settlement with buildings related to the functions of Haydock Park or a scatter of farm stabling. The proximity and visual prominence of the surrounding settled edges imposes an urban character on the landscape.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
<p>Flat large scale agricultural landscape.</p> <p>Large scale open parkland landscape with strong woodland structure creating interplay of open to enclosed space.</p>

<b>Negative Features</b>
<p>Encroachment of further urban elements and some unsympathetic buildings and landscape features associated with racecourse.</p> <p>Loss of hedgerows and field boundaries in some locations.</p> <p>Physical, visual and audible influence of the M6 and A580 within the area, fragmenting landscape character area.</p>

### Developed Edge Analysis



The area is fundamentally rural with a complex, predominantly developed edge incorporating sections of settlement edges at Newton le Willows, Haydock, Ashton-in-Makerfield (outwith Borough). To the east of Haydock the alignment of the M6 on embankment poses a strong robust edge to the industrial estate. More recent residential development to the south of Haydock and the north of Newton-le-Willow has produced highly visible hard urban edges. To the west of Newton-le-Willows the urban edge is indented with a typically historic pattern that relates well to the linear market town settlement pattern. East of this an area of narrow landscape has become fragmented from the main parkland by the raised embankments to the M6. As a result urban edges vary from **Strong** to **Weak** in character.

### Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – overriding flat landscape with large scale agricultural field pattern and interplay of mature woodland blocks.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – landscape fragmented by large scale development of communications infrastructure.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong. Woodland block retain strong character although influenced by infrastructure and visible urban edges.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Low to Medium. open flat landscape with limited visibility to other character types reinforced by road embankments. The mature woodland blocks often create a sense of enclosure and restrict views.
Population	Moderate. There are minimal numbers of people living within this area. But high level of viewers will travel through the area at elevation with views across landscape.
Mitigation Potential	Medium- difficult to mitigate changes to landform and loss of mature historic landscape structure.

### Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	<b>Conserve &amp; Enhance</b>	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

#### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape management should seek to conserve the open large scale character of the landscape and mature woodland blocks. Opportunities to sympathetically create setting to Haydock Park and various developments within landscape.

The fragmentation of the landscape by the development of communications infrastructure is difficult to mitigate given the scale of development. Important that narrow 'remnant' landscapes are still considered as part of wider landscape character. Woodland belts and landscape features of lakes and streams dissected by road corridors should be maintained and reinforced to retain links between areas and a strong landscape structure which can avoid emphasising the road corridor and withstand future development inappropriate to the landscape character

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The mature broadleaf woodland of Haydock Park should be conserved and enhanced sympathetically to the scale and form of the existing woodland structure.

It may be possible to reinstate fragmented or derelict woodland areas and / or shelterbelts and field boundaries hedgerows such as within the large field patterns between Haydock Park Race Course and the M6 / A580. This planting could use a wide species palette including Oak, Beech, Horse Chestnut, Ash and Lime.

In contrast a more riparian palette of Willow, Alder, Ash and Birch would be suitable for areas associated with the numerous dams and watercourses.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

This area is generally unsuitable for development due to its strong intact character and varied number of well established land uses. There maybe opportunities for limited small scale development reflecting the existing small scale patterns of development, which would avoid further fragmentation of the landscape and which would not interrupt the existing interplay of open to enclosed space.

The developed industrial edge to the east of Haydock reinforced by the elevated line of the M6 should pose a constraint to further development eastwards.

The contemporary raw immature edges to the south of Haydock and north of Newton-le-Willows should be strengthened using an appropriate large scale landscape structure which reflects the typical scale and grandeur of the woodland structure elsewhere in the estate. Within this narrow undeveloped corridor the landscape structure should be reinforced to improve the strength of character and maintain a contrast between the urban and rural landscapes.

## Old Garswood Park (5 WFE 3)



### ***Area Description***

- located on the south facing slopes immediately north of Black Brook valley, the landform consists of a simple broad slope ranging from 30metres along the river up to 75 metres AOD at the localised summit which forms a transition to the adjacent character type;
- to the east the area is dissected by the pronounced narrow tributary that flows down into the Black brook at the southeast corner of the area, and to the west the area is delineated by the incised form of The Goyt. Mature riparian woodland 'cloughs' follow the lines of the tributary and delineates their form in the wider landscape forming irregular bands of woodland which punctuated the hill slope;
- woodland forms a key characteristic of the landscape with the mature plantation woodland surrounding and enclosing the clusters of vernacular buildings to Old Garswood Hall Farm and Deer House Farm which are situated on the upper slopes. In addition there are various smaller woodland cloughs and copses located around small streams and field ponds giving a more natural woodland character which contrasts with the formal blocks of woodland surrounding the houses;
- the character area is fragmented by more recent infrastructure development with the railway line to the north running southwest partially elevated and the straight line of the A580 running partly at cutting and elevated east to west to the south. In particular the line of the A580 is pronounced in seeks severing the character area. The rural character of the smaller fragmented pocket of Stanley Bank Farm to the south of the road, is further influenced by the proximity of adjacent urban landscapes of Stanley Bank and Laffak to the east and west;
- the landcover is predominantly arable with some grazing although there is a large quarry to the north west of the area. The field boundaries are generally degraded hedgerows in places replaced with post and wire fencing;

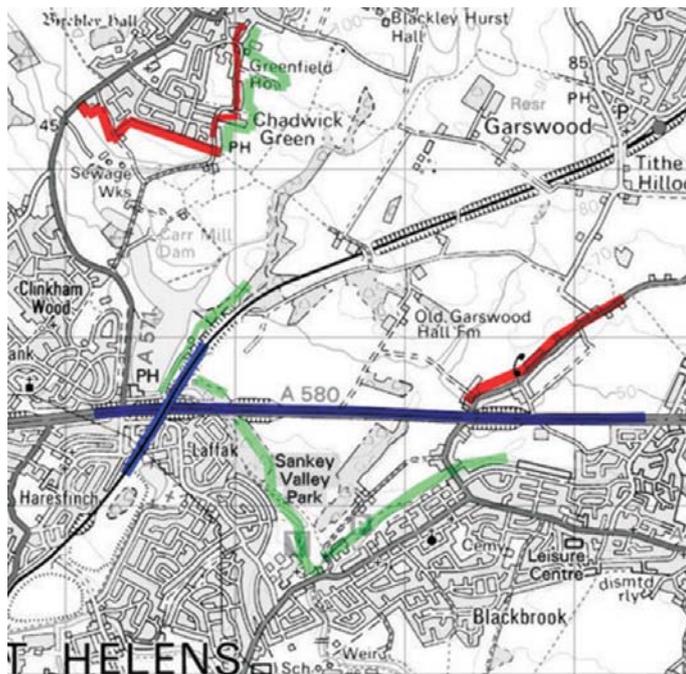
- views south to the industrial skyline and urban landscape of St Helens are pronounced from the upper slopes. At lower elevations views become enclosed and the surrounding woodland seeks to partially screen and frame views with the experience of the urban landscape lessened. Views north are limited by the upper slopes of Old Garswood Park which forms an important visual horizon.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Strong wooded character and variety of woodland forms.
Provides visual and physical containment to St Helens by elevated form.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Loss of field boundaries and hedgerows.
Disturbance of quarry scars the landscape.
A580 and line of railway fragments rural landscape weakening its character.

### Developed Edge Analysis



- █ RESIDENTIAL
- █ VEGETATIVE
- █ LANDFORM
- █ INDUSTRIAL
- █ RETAIL
- █ TRANSPORT

Rural area abutting the developed townscape at Black Brook and Laffak to the south. Separating the character area from the urban landscapes are the course of the Black Brook to the west and it's tributary to the east which form a pronounced 'V' shape the apex being at Stanley House Farm to the south. The incised form of these water courses and associated mature dense riparian vegetation creates a **Strong** robust edge.

### Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – strong wooded character and simple landform impacts by unnatural linear infrastructure routes.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – key features fragmented by infrastructure and weakened by declining landscape features.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – Strong wooded character with remnants of estate landscape with views over adjacent urban landscape.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium to high. The slightly elevated landscape increases the visibility with other areas.
Population	Medium - Although very few people live within the area, it is used as a place of recreation and many people will pass through the area on the A580 and railway line. Views up to landscape from urban landscape to south.
Mitigation Potential	Low to Medium- difficult to mitigate impacts from infrastructure and recreate mature policy woodland.

### **Landscape Strategy**

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

#### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

The landscape strategy recognises the importance of conserving the historical maturity of the landscape but that in locations the landscape requires restoration due to the declining and neglected character. Any additional woodland planting or reinforcement of landscape patterns should avoid strengthening the unnatural form of the road and rail corridors.

The upper elevated slopes form an important visual horizon the adjacent urban landscape.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

The existing woodland blocks and shelterbelts should be conserved and enhanced especially the riparian woodland along stream corridors. Of particular importance is the riparian corridor of Black Brook as any enhancement to this would strengthen the urban edge. Woodland belts should reflect the existing orientation of the landscape patterns running northeast to south west reinforcing the landscape character and retaining visual continuity of the landscape features where they have been dissected by infrastructure developments.

There is also an opportunity for new woodland planting at the existing quarry site as part of the restoration. This should incorporate mixed broadleaf woodland of predominantly Oak and Birch with Ash and Alder appropriate to the adjacent woodland character and setting of the existing estate buildings.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

Given the already fragmented nature of the area, further development would seek to incrementally weaken the rural landscape character. In addition the south facing slopes form an important part of the immediate and wider landscape and visual setting to the north of St Helens and have a heightened visual sensitivity. As such it is considered that further development would be inappropriate in this landscape. Existing urban edges are strong and robust in character and should pose a constraint to further development.

### **Bold Hall (5 WFE 4)**



### **Area Description**

- unlike the rolling elevated topography of the estate landscape to the north, Bold character area is located on the flat expansive floodplain landscape to the extreme south of the Borough, at an average elevation of 25metres AOD;
- this rural landscape has an open, strongly horizontal composition which is interrupted by a number of mature woodland plantations and shelterbelts that break up the large scale field patterns. Whilst many of the hedgerow field boundaries are still intact the large scale of the fields still retain a dominating open character. Within this open landscape and wider

woodland structure, a series of small field ponds are located in the field system, denoted by the associated small woodland groups which punctuate the horizontal landform;

- located on the floodplain which subtly slopes south down to the River Mersey views are typically focused southwards reinforced by the prominent vertical towers of Fiddlers Ferry Power Station which are focal point in many views although the woodland blocks help to screen views at many locations. Views northwards are limited by the pronounced small scale hill features of the spoil heaps which seek to physically and visually separate this character area from the urban landscape to the north;
- the character area is further separated from the settled landscape to the north by the M62 road corridor which borders the area to the north. Running at partial grade on subtle embankments the route corridor reinforces the experience of separation by the spoil heaps from the wider Borough to the north;
- the character area is relatively uninhabited with a prominent cluster of vernacular buildings at Old Bold Hall Farm, access from the surrounding road network by track. Small settlement at cross roads of bold heath where the vernacular settlement of dark red brick buildings have been extended by more recent development;
- reinforcing the historical landscape character are remnant features of past estate use such as ornamental gates and stone walls, although the former estate does not have a strongly defined edge within which the woodland landscape sits.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Strong open horizontal landform character.
Series of mature prominent woodland plantations.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Separation and fragmentation from wider Borough landscape by route of M62.
Degraded landscape structure with some loss of field boundaries.
Whilst the towers at Fiddlers Ferry form a series of dramatic features in views from the landscape, they do impose an industrial character on the rural landscape.
Ribbon development sprawling along from small vernacular settlements.

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
The area is a rural area with no developed edge.

### Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – wide open expansive horizontal landform with series of wooded plantations.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – some degrading of landscape pattern.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – open expansive character can seem dramatic or vast and bleak particular with views to power station.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Medium – open flat landscape with intervisibility south east and west, the views are partially restricted by large woodland blocks.
Population	Low - Moderate – few people live within the area but area well trafficked to north and south.
Mitigation Potential	Low – difficult to mitigate change in open and expansive landscape character.

### Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

The landscape strategy recommends conserving the strong landscape character and restoring the degraded landscape features which overlap the flat landform. The existing balance between open and enclosed landscape needs to be reflected in any landscape changes. In particular changes along the transition from the wooded to open floodplain landscapes needs to be carefully considered to ensure the appropriate landscape treatment is used.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The mature mixed broadleaf woodland of Bold Heath should be conserved and enhanced through the planting of mixed broadleaf species sympathetic to the existing woodland structure.

It may be possible to reinstate fragmented or derelict woodland, shelterbelts and hedgerows. Smaller 'wet woodland' blocks in association with numerous water pits could be created and enhancement where appropriate.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

Whilst the character area has a large scale landscape character with a number of prominent woodland blocks which offer screening, the horizontal landform is inherently sensitive to development and change which could interrupt the horizontal composition. Development could encroach upon the interplay of open to enclosed space and create a visually and physically 'cluttered' landscape fragmenting the large scale. However where carefully sited with the appropriate scale and form of development, there may be potential for small scale landscape change taking due cognisance of the existing landscape patterns.

## CHARACTER TYPE 6 EDGE FARMLAND

### *Character Areas*

- Elton Head Hall Farm (6 EF 1)
- Blundell's Hill (6 EF 2)

### *Key Characteristics*

- undulating fragment of larger settled landform incorporating local hill summit and broad gentle slope ;
- character type has a predominantly rural landuse, but is defined and physically/visually contained by a prominent urban edge on more than one side and encloses the landscape;
- the toothed edge between the rural and urban landscape creates an abrupt but complex urban rural interface where the experience of the rural landscape is dominated by the close proximity of the surrounding urban landscape;
- rural landscape character of irregular small to medium fields suffers from neglect of hedgerow field pattern which weakens underlying landscape pattern. In addition alternative recreational landuses are developed in open landscapes such as course, playing fields and community parks;
- open landscape provides opportunity to site more recent infrastructure requirements including pylon lines and roads, which increase the urban influence on landscape and fragment the character.

### *Location and Boundaries*

This character type is located in two relatively small areas to the southwest of the urban landscape of St Helens, separated by the raised linear settlement of Rainhill.

### **Elton Head Hall Farm (6 EF 1)**



### **Area Description**

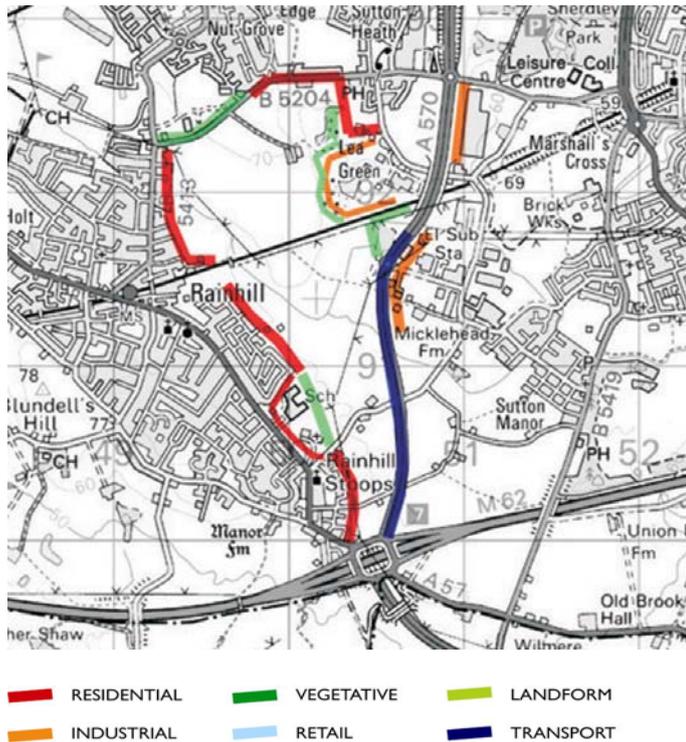
- this area is defined by the residential urban edge to the north, west and south and industrial development and A570 corridor to the east, creating an elongated triangle of open land which encompasses an elevated ridge rising up to 75metres at Elton Head, and sloping gradually south to 55metres AOD;
- the area has a predominantly agricultural land use with a series of large scale irregular fields bounded by hedgerows both intact and degraded. The open character of the landscape is reinforced by a lack of prominent woodland blocks, with small woodland groups and belts located along the field boundaries and around the principal building cluster of Elton Head Hall Farm;
- long wide views are possible south from the elevated open position in particular to the open floodplain to the south and the adjacent visually prominent urban edges of Rainhill and Lea Green;
- the urban influence of the rural landscape is reinforced by the railway line which crosses the centre of the area running east to west, movement and traffic on the A570 and the pylon lines which cross the landscape to the south;
- the area is generally inaccessible with most roads ringing around the area. A number of footpaths cross the area.

### **Landscape Analysis**

<b>Positive Features</b>
Elevated 'green' buffer between developed areas creates physical and visual setting. Relatively intact field pattern.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Strong urban influence degrades rural landscape experience and is reinforced by highly visible urban features and development within and on edge of character area. degraded landscape patterns of field boundaries.

### Developed Edge Analysis



The area is rural with an abrupt, hard developed edge to the west, north and east. The developed edge is especially prominent to the east where the raw edge of new housing contrasts with the mature woodland that covers the remaining horizon. To the west and south the residential development sits at a subtly lower elevation which reduces the prominence of the edge. The development is visible but is partially mitigated by a scatter of fringing woodland blocks. The edge varies between **Weak** and **Moderate** strength.

### Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – open elevated rural agricultural landscape character.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – whilst landscape patterns still prominent dominance of urban features.
Aesthetic Character	Weak - Moderate – rural character dominated by urban influences.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium to High - intervisibility with landscape to south.
Population	Medium – limited populations within area but visually prominent from surrounding landscape.
Mitigation Potential	Medium – difficult to mitigate against loss of field patterns.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

The landscape strategy recognises the importance of conserving the rural landscape patterns but in locations the landscape requires restoration due to the declining and neglected character. The elevated rural landscape has an important role in maintaining separation and setting to neighbouring settlements and acts as an important visual horizon.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

The existing shelterbelts and hedgerows should be enhanced with predominantly Hawthorn species with the addition of broadleaf hedgerow trees.

A mixed broadleaf woodland belt to the north of the area adjacent to Elton Head Road or the new housing at Sutton Heath would help strengthen the urban edge boundary at this prominent location.

Similarly, woodland planting along the western (residential) and eastern (industrial) boundaries would help soften the urban edges and strengthen the agricultural characteristics of the area.

Riparian woodland containing Ash and Alder species should be encouraged along the low lying stream at the Rainhill urban edge and would also help create a strong boundary to residential properties and the school playing fields.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

Further development should be avoided in this fragmented and degraded landscape strongly influenced by the surrounding urban landscape. Reinforcement of landscape character would be beneficial to strengthen the contrast between the rural and urban landscape creating a strong setting the south of St Helens. Development on the ridge should be avoided due to its high visibility. The visual and physical connection between the area and the rural floodplain areas should be maintained.

## Blundell's Hill (6 EF 2)



### **Area Description**

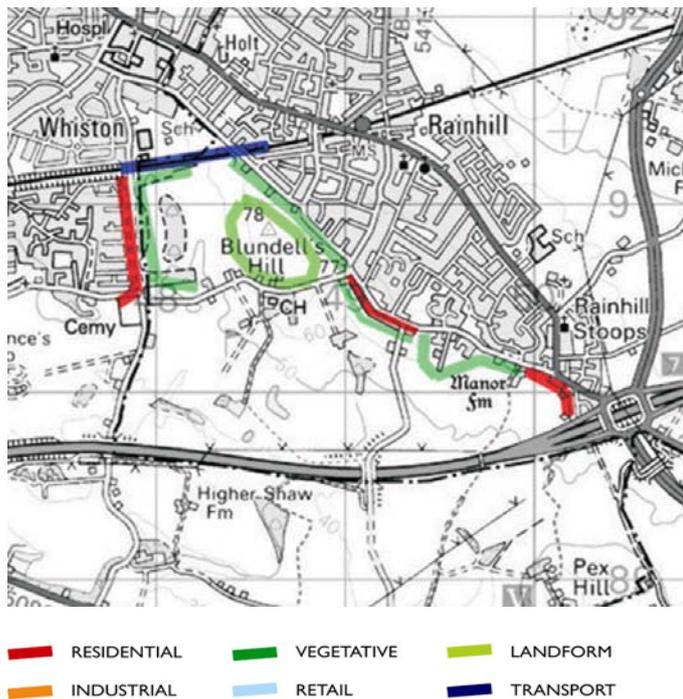
- this area is defined by the residential urban edge to the north, east and west creating a parcel of open land which encompasses a locally pronounced hill, Blundell's Hill, at 78metres AOD. The land falls away to the east and South down to 50metres AOD at the urban edge;
- the landuse comprises an area of enclosed arable land covering the hill summit and upper slopes, and to the west a recently planted community park, primarily wooded;
- views are wide and open from the upper slopes and summit focussing south and west over adjacent rural and urban landscapes, in particular the highly visible urban edge of Whiston to the west;
- the area is generally inaccessible except by a network of footpaths;
- field boundaries to the agricultural landscape are degraded with minimal mature hedgerows, trees and shelterbelts.

### **Landscape Analysis**

<b>Positive Features</b>
Elevated 'green' buffer between developed areas creates physical and visual setting. Areas of new planting – although immature not characteristic feature.

<b>Negative Features</b>
strong visual influence of surrounding urban landscape, reinforced by encroachment of urban features such as telecom masts. degraded landscape pattern and field boundaries.

### Developed Edge Analysis



Urban fringe area with a prominent recently developed edge to the west and a more mature settlement edge to the east. The raised settlement edge of Rainhill sits on the upper slope and ridgeline following the orientation of the landscape grain, northwest to southeast and generally has a robust mature edge. To the west the development edge whilst at a lower elevation, is prominent hard straight edge with a lack of vegetation, and creates an abrupt unnaturally hard edge, which varies between **Weak** and **Moderate**.

### Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – open elevated rural agricultural encroached by wooded community park.
Condition / Intactness	Poor – degraded landscape patterns with urban features.
Aesthetic Character	Weak -Moderate – rural character dominated by urban influences.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium to High intervisibility with landscape to south and west.
Population	Moderate – limited populations within area but visually prominent from surrounding landscape.
Mitigation Potential	Medium to high – possible to mitigate changes to landscape patterns.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Restore & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

The landscape strategy recognises the importance of restoring the rural landscape patterns but in locations the landscape requires enhancement the existing structure particularly in the future maturing of the wooded park to reflect the surrounding rural character and context. The elevated rural landscape has an important role in maintaining separation and setting to neighbouring settlements and acts as an important visual horizon.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

The existing hedgerows on the upper slopes of Blundell's Hill should be restored and enhanced with a broadleaf species mix. The new woodland planting on lower slopes should be retained and maintained appropriately to establish strong links to the rural context and adjacent landscape character, whilst softening the hard urban edge.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

Further development should be avoided in this fragmented and degraded landscape strongly influenced by the surrounding urban landscape. Reinforcement of landscape character would be beneficial to strengthen the contrast between the rural and urban landscape creating a strong setting the south of St Helens. Development on the ridge should be avoided due to its high visibility. The visual and physical connection between the area and the rural floodplain areas should be maintained.

## CHARACTER TYPE 7 FLOODPLAIN FARMLAND

### Character Areas:

- Sutton Fringe (7 FF 1)
- Sutton Manor Fringe (7 FF 2)
- Clock Face Farming (7 FF 3)
- Bold Heath (7 FF 4)

### Key Characteristics

- predominantly flat open and expansive landform subtly falling in elevation southwards to the River Mersey floodplain;
- large scale agricultural arable landscape with large fields, partially enclosed by hedgerow remnant, but interspersed with drainage ditches which retain an open character to the landscape;
- open landscape allows wide views across the flat land although there is a foreshortening of distance in the view. Strong visual pull southwards to the industrial skyline along the Mersey and in particular the prominent vertical chimneys to Fiddlers Ferry Power Station;
- open landscape with a lack of woodland blocks. Some isolated trees in hedgerows and tree copses associated with field ponds;
- agricultural land shows signs of degradation i.e. loss of field boundaries and hedgerows, and derelict agriculture buildings;
- encroaching urban elements are evident such as new housing along the roads, lighting, and kerbs. Main road corridors cross the landscape in simple straight alignments reflects horizontal flat landscape;
- isolated farms as well as some industrial and commercial buildings often found intermittently throughout the landscape;
- pronounced small scale hills of former spoil heap areas situated immediately to the north form visual horizon and elevated backdrop to the flat landscape;
- often prominent developed edge visible over wide distances.

### Location and Boundaries

Located in several medium to large character areas to the extreme south and east of the Borough on the flat landscape running down to the River Mersey floodplains.

## Sutton Fringe (7 FF I)



### **Area Description**

- the area is flat agricultural land with few or degraded vegetative field boundaries. The large scale field pattern is mostly separated by drainage ditches which retain an open character to the landscape;
- new boundary fence lines with immature hedge planting will begin to reinforce the field pattern on establishment;
- the area is open and exposed with a lack of screening vegetation offering wide views especially to the north where hills can be viewed on the distant horizon. Immediate views are contained by the close proximity and the scale of the large industrial buildings to the north and east and the pronounced elevated profiles of Sutton Moss spoil heap to the north and Clock Face Country Park to the immediate south;
- the former spoil heap mound at clock face with recent woodland and shrub planting provides a visual focus and 'green' edge to the south of the area although it contrasts with the open, flat fields;
- the highly developed industrial character of the immediate edge and views through to the industrial skyline of St Helens beyond imposes a strong urban character on the landscape. This experience is reinforced by the hard highly visible residential developed edges and the pylon lines which run along the northern boundary to the area;
- there is an extensive footpath network that mainly follows the numerous drainage ditch field boundary;
- there are a number of water pits within the area and are distinctive landscape features. Minimal settlement within the area maintains a more rural character although with the exception of the occasional isolated farm, there is often associated derelict buildings and structures which adds to the overall feeling of agricultural degradation creating an urban fringe landscape.

## Landscape Analysis

### Positive Features

Open flat landscape with remnants of field pattern.

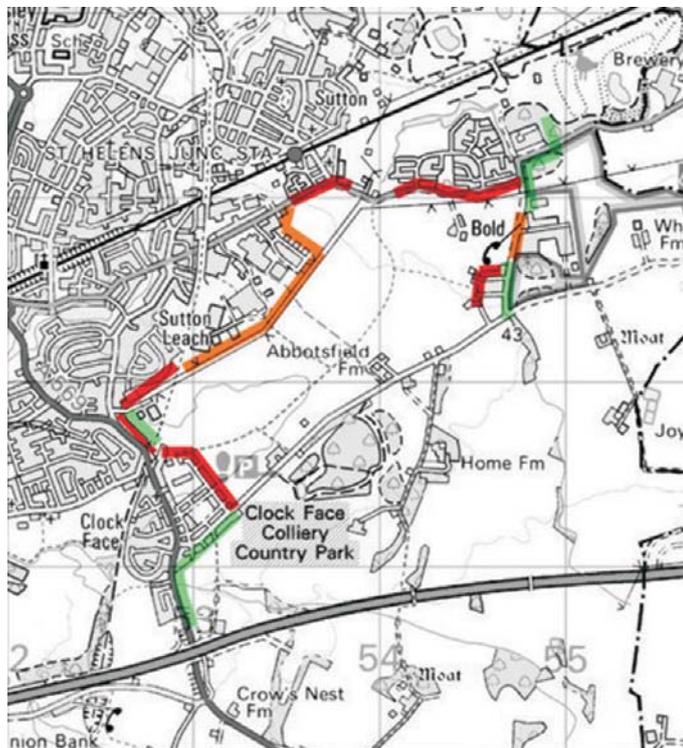
### Negative Features

Encroachment by features of urban character including pylon lines.

Prominent developed industrial and residential edge.

Agricultural degradation and dereliction.

### Developed Edge Analysis



RESIDENTIAL INDUSTRIAL VEGETATIVE RETAIL LANDFORM TRANSPORT

The area is rural with a prominent industrial and residential developed edge. Abbotsfield Road industrial estate abuts the landscape to the north and has a boundary created by the wayleave to the pylon lines. Eastwards the recent residential development has created a raw highly visible abrupt urban edge which is a pronounced feature in the landscape. To the west residential development at Clock face has an arbitrary development edge which is prominent. Overall the edge is assessed as **Weak**.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – flat open rural landscape character but pronounced loss of landscape pattern.
Condition / Intactness	Poor –remnants of agricultural landscape remaining but heavily impacted by urban encroachment.
Aesthetic Character	Weak - close proximity of heavily developed edges combines with weak landscape character.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low – Medium</b>
General Visibility	Low to medium – some intervisibility with adjacent character types.
Population	Moderate – limited within landscape but highly visible from surrounding developed edge.
Mitigation Potential	Medium to high – difficult to mitigate changes to landform.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Restore & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

With the degraded character of the landscape there is a real opportunity to restore the landscape character and enhance the landscape structure along the existing hard urban edges.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

The area is mainly degraded agricultural land and extensive lengths of hedgerows and shelterbelts should be restored and reinstated with a broadleaf species mix.

The small pockets of woodland in association with the numerous water pits in the area should be conserved and where appropriate should also be expanded and linked to form more substantial shelterbelts / woodland areas and the recently planted woodland. A 'wet woodland' mix of Willow, Alder, Ash and Birch should be adopted.

In addition the creation of a mixed broadleaf woodland / shelterbelt along the north of the area could provide a more natural buffer to the industrial urban edge incorporating the use of Oak and / or Lime species.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

There may be some limited opportunities for development along the edges of this character area which would strengthen the developed edges improving the landscape and visual character of the edge. Development within the character area should be avoided to maintain an open rural landscape character.

### **Sutton Manor Fringe (7 FF 2)**



### **Area Description**

- smaller fragmented pocket of agricultural landscape which is delineated to the west and south by the unnatural linear forms of the embankments to the A570 and M62 respectively. To the north the area abuts the residential and industrial developed edges of Sutton Manor and to the east the slopes of Clock Face spoil heap;
- the area is a flat agricultural landscape of small to medium irregular fields with degraded field boundaries;
- large industrial components and buildings to the north, as well as former spoil heaps, create focal points and seek to contain and direct views;
- a small network of small narrow rural roads link through the area and contrast with the larger elevated road corridor to the west and south;

- residential edge of Sutton Manor is remnants of narrow red brick terraces some of which have been demolished, and create an abrupt and neglected character.

**Landscape Analysis**

<b>Positive Features</b>
Historic terraced urban edge.
Contributes to green corridor extending northward into St Helens.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Degraded agricultural land.
Extensive encroachment of infrastructure and industrial/residential development creating fragmented landscape.

**Developed Edge Analysis**

█ RESIDENTIAL    █ VEGETATIVE    █ LANDFORM  
█ INDUSTRIAL    █ RETAIL    █ TRANSPORT

The area is rural with a developed edge to the north east and partially developed to the west at Rainhill. The developed edge to the north is formed by a residential and industrial transition. The partial edge to Rainhill has a stronger character as it is formed by back gardens and associated mature vegetation which extends up to the pylon line wayleave. The edge varies between **Weak** and **Moderate** strength.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – small agricultural area fragmented by more recent infrastructure development.
Condition / Intactness	Poor – neglected landscape character with urban encroachment.
Aesthetic Character	Weak - strong influence of urban and industrial development with little rural character remaining.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>
General Visibility	Low to medium – some intervisibility with adjacent character types.
Population	Medium – limited within landscape but highly visible from surrounding developed edge and elevated road corridors.
Mitigation Potential	Medium to high – difficult to mitigate changes to landform but in neglected landscape can impose landscape framework.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Restore & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	<b>Restore &amp; Enhance</b>	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

With the degraded character of the landscape there is a real opportunity to restore the landscape character and enhance the landscape structure along the existing hard urban edges.

Landscape change should avoid reinforcing the unnatural line of the road corridors.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

There is an opportunity for extensive hedgerow restoration and reinstatement along road and field boundaries using a broadleaf mix.

There is also an opportunity for riparian planting along the small stream, ditches and numerous water pits that are present within the area. Opportunity to tie the immature woodland planting of Clock Face Country Park into adjacent landscape structure.

### **Judgement about potential to accommodate Development**

There may be opportunities for small scale development in particular along, and sympathetic to, the residential edge of terraces to strengthen the developed edges.

### **Clock Face Farming (7 FF 3)**



### **Area Description**

- larger character area, of predominantly flat landform running down to the Mersey floodplain to the south. The area is open and exposed and any vertical elements become strong visual foci within views across the horizontal landscape composition. This is the case with pylon lines and especially Fiddlers Ferry Power Station to the south;
- mature shelterbelts and hedgerows are present bounding the few large scale irregular fields, although the majority are degraded and do little to impose a strong landscape pattern. Small irregular belts and pockets of mature woodland are associated with small tributary streams which cross the landscape. In addition small woodland copses denoted the location of field ponds;
- the unnatural strong line of the M62 motorway forms a boundary to the area to the north, and despite the proximity, due to the flat landscape, and low angle of view the road corridor is only delineated by the frequent movement of traffic along the route and the line of roadside vegetation along the verge;

- there are sporadic isolated large farms within the landscape although there are a number of unsympathetic buildings present. These include highly visible petrol stations and office buildings;
- pronounced hill features of the former spoil heaps are key focal points and form a physical setting to the flat landscape and often enclose or restrict views to the wider landscape.

### **Landscape Analysis**

<b>Positive Features</b>
Some mature woodland blocks along water features.  Flat horizontal landscape composition.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Degradation of field boundaries and shelterbelts.  Physical and visual influence of motorway corridor and movement of traffic.

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
Character area has a small section of landscape abutting the developed edge of Clock Face. However embankments to a former railway have created a robust development edge.

### **Landscape Evaluation**

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – flat landform with open rural landscape character.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – landscape patterns degraded by loss of vegetated boundaries.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – open expansive character.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Medium – intervisibility with adjacent flat landscapes.
Population	Medium – limited settlement within area but high number of viewers along M62.
Mitigation Potential	Medium – changes to flat landform difficult to mitigate but opportunities exist with vegetated structure.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Enhance**.

Condition	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy reflects the importance of conserving the flat open landscape character although there are opportunities to enhance the degraded landscape structure and agricultural patterns.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

The hedgerows and shelterbelts should be restored and reinstated with a broadleaf species mix including Hawthorn, Oak, Birch and Ash, and in wetter areas, Willow and Alder should be used.

At some locations, such along watercourses, these shelterbelts should be expanded to form more substantial areas of woodland and could incorporate water pits. Additional landscape planting should avoid further screening to or reinforcing of the M62 road corridor.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

Some limited opportunities exist for small scale development within the character area in tandem with the enhancement of an appropriate structure. Siting and scale of development should reflect the existing small farm clusters and seek to retain the balance of open to enclosed space.

## **Bold Heath (7 FF 4)**



### ***Area Description***

- largest of the floodplain landscapes located to the extreme south of the Borough. In places the southern boundary, defined by the administrative boundary is arbitrary and therefore the landscape character is likely to extend into adjacent council area;
- landform is overriding flat landform running down to the Mersey floodplain to the south. The area is open and exposed and any vertical elements become strong visual foci. This is the case with pylon lines and especially Fiddlers Ferry Power Station to the south;
- the arable agricultural landscape is composed of large scale geometric fields almost in a loose grid pattern situated perpendicular to the main parallel A roads which run north west to south east Between the M62 and Penketh. Mature shelterbelts and hedgerows bound the fields although the majority are degraded which reinforces the open landscape character. There are also small pockets of mature woodland associated with hedgerows and field ponds;
- to the northwest the grade separated motorway junction and associated embankments forms a pronounced boundary to the area and is a dominant visual feature containing views;
- there are sporadic isolated large farms some of vernacular stone or red brick construction within the landscape accessed immediately off the parallel roads. In addition there are a number of more recent buildings and residential dwellings along the road which are unsympathetic in scale and design to the vernacular. These include highly visible petrol stations and office buildings which form a ribbon of development;
- former spoil heaps are key focal points and backdrops to the landscape and often enclose or restrict views to the wider landscape;
- pylon lines to the south and west impose large scale vertical features which reinforce the influence of urban feature in the landscape unsympathetic to the rural character;

- highly visible residential developed edge to the south and south east, which whilst outwith the Borough landscape, form prominent hard visual edges to the character area.

### **Landscape Analysis**

<b>Positive Features</b>
Open flat landform creates undeveloped buffer between St Helens and developed Mersey corridor to south.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Degrading of the agricultural landscape patterns.  Encroachment of urban features such as pylons and prominent industrial skyline influence experience of rural landscape.

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
The area is a rural area without a developed edge.

### **Landscape Evaluation**

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low - Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – flat landform with open rural landscape character.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – landscape patterns degraded by loss of vegetated boundaries encroachment of urban features – road corridors and pylons.
Aesthetic Character	Weak– open expansive character but strongly influenced by adjacent large scale development.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Medium – intervisibility with adjacent flat landscapes.
Population	Medium – limited settlement within area but high number of viewers along A roads.
Mitigation Potential	Medium – changes to flat landform difficult to mitigate but opportunities exist with vegetated structure.

### **Landscape Strategy**

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

Whilst the strategy reflects that the open flat agricultural landscape should be conserved, there are also opportunities to enhance the landscape patterns. In addition due cognisance should be taken of the close proximity of the developed landscape outwith the Borough to avoid amalgamation of development.

***Woodland Recommendations***

There is potential for extensive hedgerows and shelterbelts restoration and reinstatement along road and field boundaries, and the creation of small woodland blocks using predominantly riparian floodplain species mix.

***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

The opportunity to incorporate a stronger landscape structure could be developed in tandem with some small scale development sympathetic to the vernacular clusters of buildings. Any development should avoid contributing to the ribbon development along the A roads.

## CHARACTER TYPE 8 UNDULATING FARMLAND WITH WOODLAND

### **Character Areas:**

- Agricultural Mossborough (8 UFW 1)

### **Key Characteristics**

- flat to gently undulating landform acting as a transition between flat agricultural moss landscapes and more pronounced ridgelines. As such the changes in elevation are subtle and range between 30 and 50 metres AOD;
- the agricultural predominantly arable and pastoral landscape retains an open character reinforced by the medium to large scale field pattern. Hedgerow field boundaries are typically intact and create a strong landscape pattern;
- within this landscape pattern are a number of geometric woodland blocks, both of deciduous and coniferous species which reflect the scale of the underlying field pattern and create an interesting interplay of open to enclosed space and series of sequences as you move through the landscape;
- the subtle changes in landform and the presence of woodland blocks alternatively screen and frame views within the landscape;
- usually 'B' roads pass through area and act as link roads / ring roads – busy.

### **Location and Boundaries**

Character type is located in one area to the extreme west of the Borough.

### **Agricultural Mossborough (8 UFW 1)**



### **Area Description**

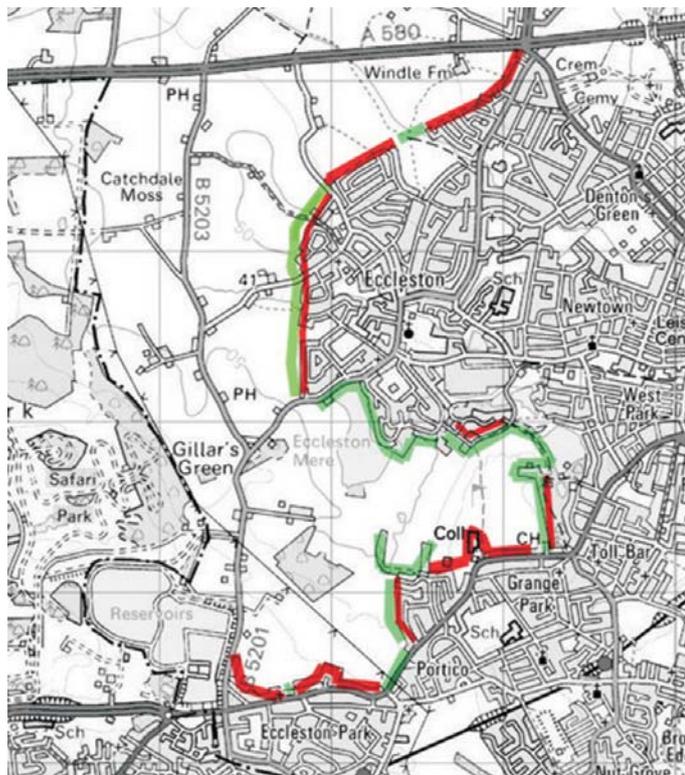
- the landform is slightly undulating over subtle ridgelines. It is slightly elevated above the adjacent Moss areas and there are wide views including to Billinge Hill to the north east and towards the St Helens skyline to the south east;
- the field pattern is of a large scale and geometric. This is broken up a number of large, mostly geometric, woodland blocks and shelterbelts. Several of the woodland blocks to the west are associated with former estate landscape and provide an important setting to imposing buildings and prominent farm clusters such as Mossborough Hall, Woodside Farm and Big Longborough, located on the elevated landscape to the west;
- to the south of the character area the unnatural straight alignment of the A580 cuts through the landscape. Urban elements have encroached upon the rural character including kerbs, lighting and signage and the frequent movement of traffic associated with the roads and a pylon line to the west of the area;
- elsewhere accessed off the narrow minor roads which run north to south through the landscape, are a number of small vernacular farm steadings built in blonde sandstone or in deep red brick. More recent isolated residential development contrasts with the scale and character of the vernacular housing and is prominent in the landscape;
- the character area abuts the residential landscape of Eccleston to the east, and the subtle changes in landform partial screens the abrupt urban edge.

### **Landscape Analysis**

<b>Positive Features</b>
Strong gently undulating landform with relatively intact agricultural landscape patterns.
Interplay of open to wooded landscape creating interesting spatial sequences.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Some loss of field boundaries weakening landscape character.
Encroachment of urban elements and character including road corridor and residential development.

## Developed Edge Analysis



Abrupt unnatural curved of residential developed edge of Eccleston delineates eastern boundary. In places the subtle changes in landform provides containment to the housing. In other locations the hard urban edge is prominent from views within the wider landscape. Edge varies between **Weak** and **Moderate** strength.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – undulating landform overlain with repetition of landscape pattern and woodland structure.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – relatively intact landscape although some influence of urban encroachment and infrastructure.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong – rural landscape character with interplay of woodland landscape.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Medium - undulating landscape with some indivisibility with adjacent character areas.
Population	Medium – limited population with character area but road network carries high number of viewers.
Mitigation Potential	Medium to Low – difficult to mitigate change to landform and relationship of open to enclosed space.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

Landscape management should recognise the inherent strength of character and relatively intact landscape patterns and the relationship of open to enclosed space which should be conserved. Opportunity to restore areas of degraded landscape in particular along road corridor to strengthen the landscape.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The existing hedgerows and woodland blocks should be conserved. These can be enhanced through the increased planting of mixed broadleaf species and the reduction of conifer species within these blocks.

There is an opportunity to create larger shelterbelts along the roads, tracks and field boundaries sympathetic to the underlying scale and landscape pattern and relationship of adjacent woodland blocks.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

There is limited opportunity to accommodate development within the character area without altering or interrupting the existing balance of open to enclosed space and impacting on the inherently strong rural character.

## CHARACTER TYPE 9 INTIMATE FARMED VALLEY

### *Character Areas:*

- Agricultural Eccleston (9 IFV 1)

### *Key Characteristics*

- gently undulating landform over broad slope gradient ranging between 45m and 60 metres;
- predominant landuse is arable / pastoral land, set within an irregular small scale field pattern reinforced by prominent hedgerow field boundaries with some isolated hedge trees and tree lines. The intactness and small scale of the hedgerows in combination with the undulating landform creates an intimate landscape character;
- some urban elements have crept in such as kerbs, lighting, pylons which weaken the rural landscape character, and pylon towers contrast in vertical scale with the intimate scale of the hedgerows;
- U narrow minor 'B' roads pass through area with typical rural character of soft verges and hedgerow enclosing the road. In places views are limited by the proximity and height of the hedgerows. These roads often link between adjacent urban landscapes and larger road corridors and can be busy with commuting traffic;
- small geometric blocks of woodland set within the field pattern interrupt repetition of fields.

### *Location and Boundaries*

Located in one area to the extreme west of the Borough, adjacent to Knowsley designed landscape.

### **Agricultural Eccleston (9 IFV 1)**



### ***Area Description***

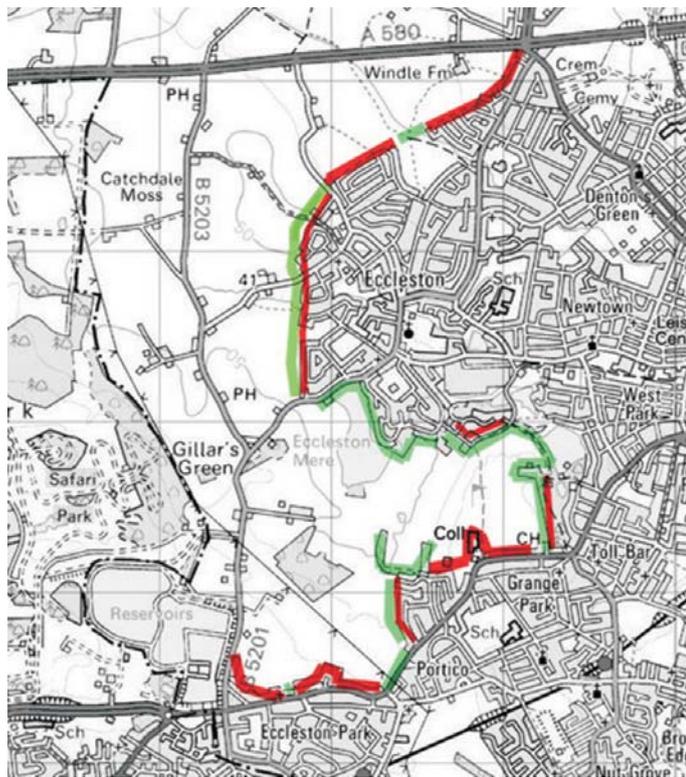
- the topography of this area gently undulates within an intimate valley;
- the mixed coniferous deciduous woodland blocks of Knowsley Estate to west creates a strong edge to character area and prominent visual physical boundary, reinforced by it's location on elevated ground and the intact estate stone wall;
- sandwiched between the woodland to the west and urban edge to the east the character area is experienced as a narrow area reinforced by the orientation of the Catchdale Moss Lane which runs north through the landscape;
- within the valley there is a small scale (historic) field pattern with mature hedgerows and some shelterbelts. Although there is minimal woodland within the area, the large woodland edge of Knowsley is a dominant visual feature;
- the road infrastructure of the area is formed by roads of rural character and follow historic routes;
- there is some encroachment of urban features such as recent isolated residential dwelling, which contrast with the scale and character of the vernacular stone and deep red brick housing and a line of pylons running parallel to the Knowsley woodland. In addition views are possible to the urban edge of Eccleston.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Intimate small scale agricultural landscape with unique landscape character.
Relatively intact landscape patterns.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Some loss of field boundaries.
Encroachment of urban elements and character.

### Developed Edge Analysis



Abrupt unnaturally straight developed edge to Eccleston, only partially screened by the undulating landform. Edge Varies between **Weak** and **Moderate** strength.

### Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – undulating landform with intimate small scale rural landscape character.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – relatively intact landscape features with some encroachment of urban character.
Aesthetic Character	Strong – unique intimate rural landscape character with repetition of elements.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Medium – subtle change in elevation visually links area to adjacent landscapes.
Population	Medium – limited population within character area, but views from access roads and adjacent urban edge.
Mitigation Potential	Low – difficult to mitigate changes to landform and repetition of elements.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Strategy recognises importance of conserving unique small scale of rural landscape character and the restoration of elements which contribute to that character.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

The existing pattern of hedgerows within the landscape should be conserved and enhanced with a mixed broadleaf species including hawthorn, appropriate to the area.

There are limited opportunities to develop woodland within this area as this would interrupt the existing repetition of landscape elements. Although some opportunity exists for the small scale development and reinforcement of existing tree belts and copses associated with farm steadings.

### **Judgement about potential to accommodate Development**

Due to the small size of the area and unique landscape character further development should be avoided within this character area.

## CHARACTER TYPE 10 RAISED SPOIL HEAP

### **Character Areas:**

- Sutton Manor (10 RSH 1)
- Clock Face (10 RSH 2)
- Sutton Moss (10 RSH 3)
- Lea Green (10 RSH 4)
- Lyme and Wood Pit (10 RSH 5)

### **Key Characteristics**

- former spoil heaps with pronounced small scale 'hillock' character providing strong contrast of form with the adjacent flatter local landscape. In places the reprofiled landform has created a variety of elevated forms from gently sloping to a more unnatural straight line and upper summit profile;
- typically the spoil heaps are recently reclaimed with extensive woodland planting, which gives a raw immature character. The woodland design varies according to the context of the spoil heap from more formal planting adjacent to urban edges, to a more relaxed informal character closer to the rural landscapes;
- differential colour and texture of spoil material visible often unnaturally black and grey with a rough stony texture can give rough character which appears degraded and neglected reinforced by a lack of formal edges to paths and sections of erosion through misuse by motorbikes;
- often used for recreation with close proximity to existing residential areas and containing a network of footpaths which typically provide views from the side slope and summit tops, giving unique wide panoramic views to the surrounding landscapes;
- the elevation and proximity of the spoil heaps contribute to a physical and visual setting to the southern edge of St Helens and create a varied visual horizon and series of orientation features between St Helens and the flatter landscape extending down to the Mersey River.

### **Location and Boundaries**

Located in a series of small character areas in a broad sweep to the south and east of the urban landscape of St Helens.

## Sutton Manor (10 RSH 1)



### ***Area Description***

- this is a former spoil heap that forms a large low mound or hill to the north of the M60. It contrasts with the surrounding flat landform of the Mersey floodplain. There are wide panoramic views of the surrounding areas from elevated positions on the former spoil heap;
- the spoil heap has been reclaimed and has been replanted with new woodland planting. As this still relatively new planting the landscape has an immaturity to it;
- there are a number of surfaced footpaths and cycle ways across the former spoil heap which proves popular for recreation. There are also a number of small ponds with reed vegetation;
- the adjacent surrounding area is predominantly urban with large residential areas to the north, west and east as well as the M60 immediately to the south.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b><i>Positive Features contributing to (strengthening) Landscape Character</i></b>
Popular recreation area.
Provides backdrop to views in surrounding area and distinctive landmark.
Industrial heritage and local value.
Orientation feature in the landscape.

<b><i>Negative Features detracting from (weakening) Landscape Character</i></b>
Immature planting and areas of poor growth and untidiness.

**Developed Edge Analysis**

Small section of the terraced urban edge of Sutton Manor abuts the wooded slopes of the spoil heap.

**Landscape Evaluation**

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – landscape character immature and only beginning to provide structure.
Condition / Intactness	Poor – immature woodland planting impacted by erosion of paths and some loss of woodland.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong – unique small scale character.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	High. The former spoil heap forms a small hill surrounded by relatively open landscape and as such is highly visible.
Population	Medium to high - area uninhabited but prominent in the surrounding landscape.
Mitigation Potential	Medium. Restoration is already underway.

**Landscape Strategy**

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Restore & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	<b>Restore &amp; Enhance</b>	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

**Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy recognises the importance of maintaining and restoring these new landscapes and their importance in terms of the physical and visual setting to the adjacent townscapes. In addition they have a relatively raw character which needs an enhancement of the existing immature tree stock.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

The existing new woodland planting should be conserved and maintained. On-going maintenance should be undertaken to ensure a varied plant stock is produced through selective thinning and re-stocking.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

The area should be considered a constraint to development given the unsuitable character of the material and the pronounced form and visible character of the spoil heap. In addition the spoil heaps have been developed and restored and now make an important contribution to the townscape character and local recreation.

### **Clock Face (10 RSH 2)**



### **Area Description**

- this is a former spoil heap that has been reprofiled to form a localised more subtly undulating form in the landscape. It contrasts with the surrounding flat landform of the Mersey floodplain to form a distinctive 'green' hill;
- even with a relatively small change in elevation from the slopes, there are wide panoramic views of the surrounding areas including over the motorway to the south and the power station chimneys, and north to the urban landscape and chimneys of St Helens;
- the heap has been reclaimed and extensively replanted to provide a country park for recreation. There is a car park, path network and small ponds which are used for fishing. With the newly created planting the landscape has an immature rough character. The gentle slopes create a series of interlocking broad hills and the recent planting is just starting to provide enclosure, particularly within the quicker growing pioneer species of birch and poplar;
- there is a combination of open swathes of maintained grass, long grass, curves of trees accessed by a network of informal paths. Open lagoon pools provide interest around the site;

- erosion of the footpaths and edges to the lagoon water features has created a neglected character which is reinforced by littering and some vandalism to plants and landscape furniture;
- adjacent to Clock Face is a small number of industrial warehouses and a disused boarded up public house, which reinforced the rough neglected character of the area;
- the adjacent land is predominantly flat, degraded agricultural fields although the urban residential and industrial edges to the north are prominent.

### **Landscape Analysis**

<b><i>Positive Features contributing to (strengthening) Landscape Character</i></b>
Popular recreation area. Provides backdrop to views in surrounding area and distinctive landmark. Industrial heritage and local value. Orientation feature in the landscape.

<b><i>Negative Features detracting from (weakening) Landscape Character</i></b>
Immature planting and areas of poor growth and untidiness.

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
There is no urban rural interface as the area is contained within rural environment between although bound on one side by a motorway.

### **Landscape Evaluation**

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – landscape character immature and only beginning to provide structure.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – woodland planting impacted by erosion of paths and some loss of woodland.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong – unique small scale character.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	High. The former spoil heap forms a small hill surrounded by relatively open landscape and as such is highly visible.
Population	Medium – whilst there are no inhabitants or workers within the area, the elevated area is highly visible from adjacent urban landscape and traffic on motorway to south.
Mitigation Potential	Medium. Restoration completed and young landscape beginning to develop.

### Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

#### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy recognises the importance of these new landscapes in terms of their contribution to the physical and visual setting of adjacent townscapes. In addition they have a relatively raw character which needs enhancement of the existing immature tree stock.

#### **Woodland Recommendations**

The existing new woodland planting should be conserved and maintained.

#### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

The area should be considered a constraint to development given the unsuitable character of the material and the pronounced form and visible character of the spoil heap. In addition the spoil heaps have been developed and restored and now make an important contribution to the townscape character and local recreation.

## Sutton Moss (10 RSH 3)



### **Area Description**

- this is a former spoil heap that forms a large distinctive hill and contrasts with the residential surrounding areas. There are wide panoramic views of the surrounding areas from elevated positions on the former spoil heap;
- the heap has been reclaimed and extensively replanted to provide an industrial designed park area for recreation. As the planting is relatively young, the landscape has a sense of immaturity;
- in some locations the area still retains a character of wasteland and dereliction;
- there are numerous industrial structures and elements that have been used as sculptural features within the park such as a new bridge and a former mining wheel.

### **Landscape Analysis**

<b>Positive Features contributing to (strengthening) Landscape Character</b>
Provides a transition between urban and rural areas.
Popular recreation area.
Provides backdrop to views in surrounding area and distinctive landmark from motorway.
Industrial heritage and local value.
Orientation feature in the landscape.

<b>Negative Features detracting from (weakening) Landscape Character</b>
Immature planting and areas of poor growth and untidiness.

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
There is no urban rural interface as the area is contained within rural environment between although bound on one side by a motorway.

### Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – landscape character immature and only beginning to provide structure.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – woodland planting impacted by erosion of paths and some loss of woodland.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong – unique small scale character.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	High. The former spoil heap forms a small hill surrounded by relatively open landscape and as such is highly visible.
Population	Medium whilst there are no inhabitants or workers within the area, elevated spoil heap visible from surrounding landscapes.
Mitigation Potential	Medium. Restoration almost completed, with immature landscape beginning to develop structure.

### Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

Landscape strategy recognises the importance of these new landscapes in terms of their contribution to the physical and visual setting of adjacent townscapes in particular 'Cement City'. In addition they have a relatively raw character which needs enhancement of the existing immature tree stock.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The existing new woodland planting should be conserved and maintained.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

The area should be considered a constraint to development given the unsuitable character of the material and the pronounced form and visible character of the spoil heap. In addition the spoil heaps have been developed and restored and now make an important contribution to the townscape character and local recreation. Further opportunities exist for the incorporation of artwork as an integral part of the landscape design. Artwork that has no strong sense of place should be avoided in these landscapes as they seek to further degrade and clutter open space.

## **Lea Green (10 RSH 4)**



### ***Area Description***

- this is a former spoil heap that sits adjacent to surrounding industrial areas. The spoil heap is under restoration and thus the landscape is in a state of flux and retains a character of industry and reclamation. The slopes of the site have unnatural straight profiles and consist of dark grey material which reinforce the artificial appearance of the site;
- the site is bordered to the north and west by a railway line and road, and sits adjacent to a brick works and prominent residential edge to the south. In addition the pylon lines which cross the site and the substation outwith the site bust immediately to the west emphasis the industrial degraded character;

- to the north of the site is the active Newtonmore landfill site. The raised for the landfill site has an unnatural profile which is open and degraded with the appearance of the dumped litter. The industrial character of the site is reinforced by the movement of large trucks on and around the site, and in particular where they skyline on the raise site;
- there are some minimal areas of scrub and woodland planting as well as some areas of extensive new woodland planting, which until the planting starts to mature and thicken, retains a raw character to the woodland.

### **Landscape Analysis**

<b><i>Positive Features contributing to (strengthening) Landscape Character</i></b>
---

Provides a separation between residential and industrial areas.
---

Former spoil heaps create areas of 'green' space, restoration from former degraded spoil waste.
---

Provides backdrop to views in surrounding area.
---

Industrial heritage and local value as orientation feature.
---

<b><i>Negative Features detracting from (weakening) Landscape Character</i></b>
---

Until restoration completed and planting attains a maturity, site still retains a disturbed raw character.
--

Forms abrupt, unnatural edge to some residential areas.
---

Currently experienced as visual and physical barrier within wider landscape.
--

Industrial character reinforced by industrial warehouse, substation and pylon lines within close proximity.
---

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
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Short section of prominent residential edge to the south, which the slopes of the spoil landscape extend to.
--

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Weak – site currently in state of flux between previous industrial character and restoration of spoil heaps.
Condition / Intactness	Poor - The area is in a state of transition between industrial spoil heap and 'green' hill.
Aesthetic Character	Weak - Degraded neglected character.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	High. The former spoil heap forms a small hill surrounded by relatively open landscape and as such is highly visible.
Population	Medium There are no inhabitants or workers within the area, but the elevated site is highly visible from the immediate well settled and trafficked site.
Mitigation Potential	High. Restoration is already underway.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Creation**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	<b>Creation</b>	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy recognises the need for the creation of landscape character on this degraded site. Plans for on-going restoration to be implemented and monitored as part of wider landscape management.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

The existing new woodland planting should be conserved and enhanced through planting of broadleaf species mix, with opportunities for creation and extension of wooded landscape character linking into and considering the woodland character of adjacent character areas.

### **Judgement about potential to accommodate Development**

The area should be considered a constraint to development given the unsuitable character of the material and the pronounced form and visible character of the spoil heap. In addition the spoil heaps have been developed and restored and now make an important contribution to the townscape character.

## **Lyme and Wood Pit (10 RSH 5)**



### **Area Description**

- this is a former spoil heap that sits adjacent to residential as well as agricultural areas. The spoil heap is under restoration and thus the landscape is in a state of flux and retains a character of industry and reclamation;
- the spoil head is currently relatively elevated in high in comparison to the scale of dwellings in the surrounding residential areas and provides an unnatural dark-grey profile and visual horizon in many views;
- leachate material running down the spoil heap, the lagoons and the surrounding security fencing give a strong industrial degraded character to the area;
- it physically and visually separates the settlement areas of Haydock to the north and Newton le Willows to the south;
- there are some minimal areas of scrub and woodland planting as well as some areas of new woodland planting, which until the planting starts to mature and thicken, retains a raw character to the woodland.

## Landscape Analysis

### Positive Features contributing to (strengthening) Landscape Character

Creates elevated physical and visual setting to adjacent residential areas, although currently of degraded character.

Restoration underway to create areas of 'green' space.

Industrial heritage and local value.

### Negative Features detracting from (weakening) Landscape Character

With immaturity of restoration, site still has disturbed degraded character.

Forms abrupt hard edge to some residential areas.

Currently due to on-going restoration, site acts as visual and physical barrier within wider landscape.

### Developed Edge Analysis



The area has a partially developed edge, which abuts onto the adjacent more rural landscape to the immediate east and west. The area forms a transition between rural and urban areas, forming an urban fringe landscape. Although of degraded character, the pronounced form of slope of spoil heap creates a **Strong** edge to the urban landscape.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Weak – restoration in early stages and spoil heap in state of flux.
Condition / Intactness	Poor. The area is in a state of transition between industrial spoil heap and 'green' hill.
Aesthetic Character	Weak - Degraded, neglected character.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	High. The former spoil heap forms a small hill surrounded by relatively open landscape and as such is highly visible.
Population	Medium – whilst there are no inhabitants or workers within the area, the elevated form means the spoil heap is highly visible from adjacent settled areas.
Mitigation Potential	High – lack of strong character with landscape currently being re-created and with restoration already underway.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Creation**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	<b>Creation</b>	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy recognises the need for the creation of landscape character on this degraded site. Plans for on-going restoration to be implemented and monitored as part of wider landscape management.

***Woodland Recommendations***

The existing new woodland planting should be conserved and enhanced through planting of broadleaf species mix with opportunities for creation and extension of wooded landscape character linking into and considering the woodland character of adjacent character areas.

***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

The area should be considered a constraint to development given the unsuitable character of the material and the pronounced form and visible character of the spoil heap. In addition the spoil heaps have been developed and restored and now make an important contribution to the townscape character.

## CHARACTER TYPE II INDUSTRIAL FRINGE

### **Character Areas:**

- Link Road (II IF 1)
- Haydock Industrial Estate (II IF 2)

### **Key Characteristics**

- relatively flat landform, consisting primarily of flat broad valley floors, creating a limited experience of enclosure from the subtle change in landscape along valley sides. Development on the surrounding subtly elevated slopes creates some sense of enclosure, particularly where combined with trees;
- close to main communication infrastructure (i.e. Motorway or dual carriageway link road);
- area often incorporates pockets of degraded agricultural land;
- clusters of large scale industrial warehouse and office units of various styles and forms in relatively open landscape;
- large scale of built form with greater ratio of built to open space. Surrounding remnant areas to buildings dominated by vast areas of hard landscape of wide open road carriageways and junctions, carparking, security fencing, and awkward remnants of small scale amenity planting;
- lack of domestic human scale elements – with the experience of being dwarfed by built form. Residential settlement on the these flat valley floor is uncommon, but frequent on the raised landscape adjacent;
- other characteristic features include dismantled and active railway lines and evidence of past industrial development give a neglected degraded character;
- small areas of scrub and trees scattered throughout the character area, often associated with reclaimed or abandoned land, dismantled railways, watercourses and newly landscaped areas;
- large scale road network and roundabouts that dominate open space reinforced by embankments and graded junctions which physically and visually reinforce the presence of the route and fragment the underlying landform.

### **Location and Boundaries**

Relatively small character areas located in two locations on the urban edge of St Helens to the southwest and northeast.

## Link Road (I I IF I)



### ***Area Description***

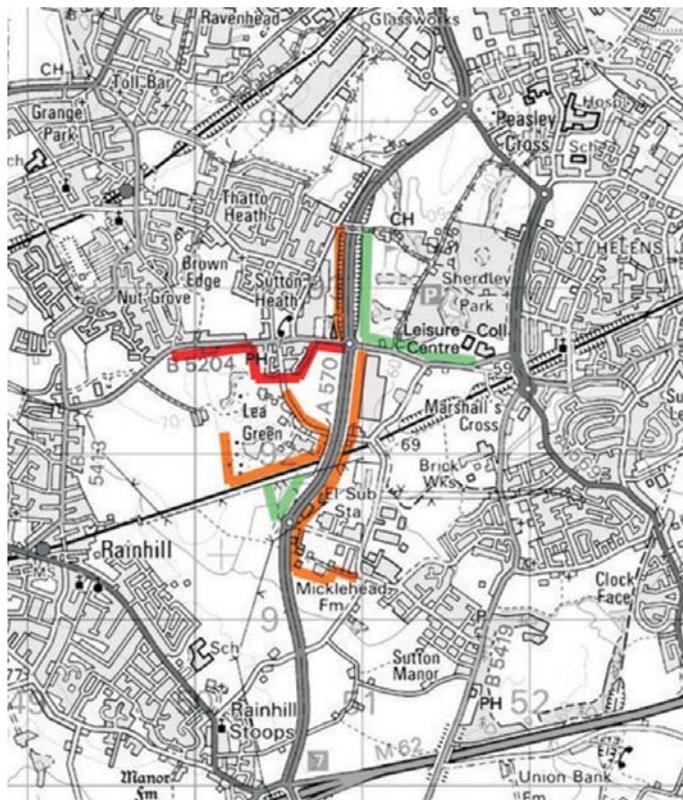
- the area is located on the broadly flat to subtly undulating slopes on the landscape which gradually falls south to the Mersey floodplain;
- a large road infrastructure dominates the character of the landscape and the way the landscape is accessed. Key elements of the road corridor include the wide straight dual carriageways, roundabouts, kerbs, pavements and lighting that reinforce and extend the urban character outwith the immediate confines of St Helens creating a 'fringe' landscape with less defined setting. This imposes a cluttered complex landscape with a lack of an overriding structure or hierarchy of landmarks that would aid orientation;
- presence of artificial mounding of former spoil heaps and road embankments overlying the natural landform gives perception of a valley landform in some locations and changing patterns of enclosure;
- the area forms a large industrial corridor with several large buildings and large former spoil heaps that selectively enclose and frame views over the generally open landscape;
- large industrial units are often located adjacent (or within) existing degraded agricultural field pattern and or historic rural road infrastructure;
- a large substation and high density of pylons impose prominent vertical structures in an otherwise open landscape;
- a railway crosses and further divides the area adding to the fragmented landscape character.

## ***Landscape Analysis***

<b><i>Positive Features contributing to (strengthening) Landscape Character</i></b>
Provides a transition between urban and rural landscape.
Former spoil heaps and large road embankments create 'green' hills and setting.

<b><i>Negative Features detracting from (weakening) Landscape Character</i></b>
Abrupt transition of landscape scales with surrounding rural and domestic scale residential landscapes.
Substation infrastructure highly functional industrial character – presence of danger heightens negative character.
Creates visual and physical separation within wider landscape and generally experienced as no-go areas.
Degraded or lack of strong landscape structure that would compliment the scale of built form.

## Developed Edge Analysis



The developed character area extends into the rural landscape to the south. To summarise the main elements that form the developed edge for Link Road are as follows:

- woodland block and hedgerows;
- disused tip and field boundaries;
- dual carriageway road;
- small 'rural' road.

There is a sharp contrast to west of area between open rural fields and abrupt landform of disused tip. There is a lack of any strong boundary between large scale industrial development and open fields to the south. Some urban elements encroaching within rural areas make the boundary edge unclear. The edge is more robust to the east and north where the residential areas are severed from the industrial Link Road area by a large former spoil heap.

The evaluation of the developed edge boundary is **Weak**.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Weak - There no overriding character.
Condition / Intactness	Poor - There is very little remaining of the underlying natural landform or historic rural character.
Aesthetic Character	Weak - Large scale landscape dominates human scale creating a threatening landscape. Lack of any landscape structure or pattern.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Medium. Some intervisibility with the elevated 6 EF 1 Elton Head Hall Farm to the west and the 10 RSH Lea Green to the south east and often occupying the middle ground and /or foreground in views from these elevated areas whilst forming the background to views from this area.  Few views to other areas due to the containment of the area by these areas and the large scale building development that restricts views.
Population	Medium. Although very few people live in this area, there are a high number of people that work in the area as well pass through the area on the St Helens Link Road and Railway.
Mitigation Potential	Medium - high. Landscape has undergone major change and redevelopment which can easily be replicated.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Creation**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	<b>Creation</b>	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

Creation of a strong landscape framework could strengthen the character of the area as well as providing a stronger edge to the surrounding rural and residential areas.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The creation of an overall landscape masterplan should be developed that would include the restoration of hedgerows and shelterbelts where these have been lost or degraded. It should include the introduction of extensive areas of woodland that would incorporate the existing industrial development. New woodland planting could help create a more cohesive landscape to replace the current discordant individual landscape treatment associated with individual industrial units. Provision for potential future development could be accommodated within this woodland framework. Overall, the use of native broadleaf species should be encouraged but there would be potential for the use of ornamental planting as design features within the landscape.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

Industrial development has had a significant influence on the character of the area. The townscape and landscape has suffered as a consequence of haphazard development. Opportunities for large scale development within the area exist. The area would benefit from the introduction of a strong landscape framework and structure with smooth urban rural transition and gateway to St Helens. The design and layout of which should ensure a positive and integrated approach. Future development could be incorporated into the framework.

## **Haydock Industrial Estate (I I IF 2)**



### ***Area Description***

- there is a subtly sloping landform with a generally southern aspect;
- experience of a relatively contained site with tangible enclosed boundaries as a result of the strong straight edges of the motorway embankments to the east and the A580 partially on embankments to the south and mature woodland blocks of the adjacent Garswood Park to the north. Within built environment, strong sense of enclosure due to proximity and scale of buildings. View to edge are typically framed or glimpsed through buildings;

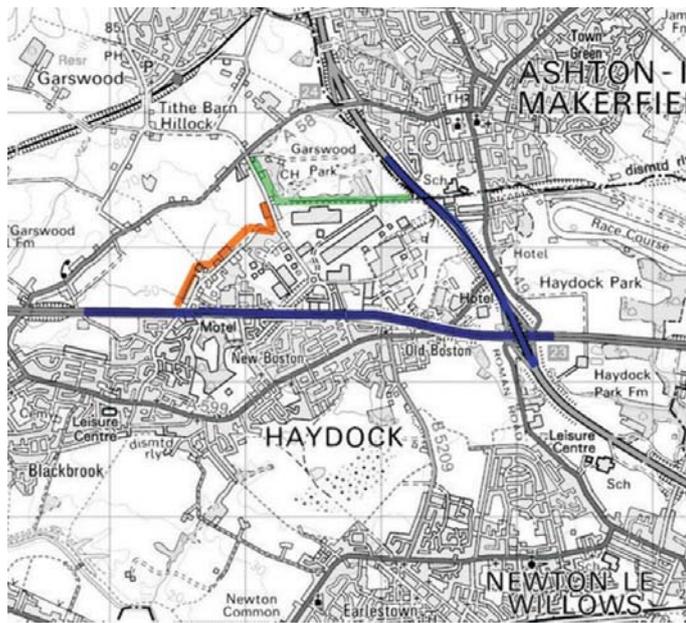
- various sizes, form and colour of relatively modern industrial units and business in a random layout with little form of structure between buildings create a discordant landscape of haphazard character. The large irregular and awkward spaces between buildings are mostly used for car parking, storage and some amenity planting, with variety of open spaces and poor verges;
- there are some minimal areas of amenity planting and pioneer woodland and scrub set around and to the northern boundaries of the site.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
<p>Strong boundaries on all sides.</p> <p>Relatively enclosed due to topography and Garswood Park to the north.</p> <p>Provides separation between Aston-in-Makerfield and Haydock residential areas.</p>

<b>Negative Features</b>
<p>Large industrial area on 'gateway' into St Helens.</p> <p>Encroachment of industrial scale elements into surrounding landscape.</p> <p>Lack of landscape structure.</p>

## Developed Edge Analysis



The developed character area with a partial, rural surround. The main elements that form the developed edge for Haydock Industrial estate are as follows:

- mature woodland belts;
- mature hedgerows;
- motorway;
- large dual carriageway.

There are a series of strong defensible features that form a robust development edge around this area including the motorway to the east and the mature woodland belts of Garswood Park to the north and west. There is an opportunity to further strengthen the western woodland belt with appropriate planting and boundary features.

Overall it is regarded that the developed edge is **Strong**.

## Landscape Evaluation

Landscape Sensitivity	Low
Strength of Typical Character	Weak – character dominated by complex arrangement large scale built environment with awkward areas of open space.
Condition / Intactness	Poor – poor framework to landscape due to arrangements of buildings and relationship to each other.
Aesthetic Character	Weak – large scale dominating building with little quality of open space environment.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Low. Very little visibility to other areas as a result of the strong physical boundaries and large scale buildings.
Population	Low medium. Many people will work within the Haydock Industrial Estate and whilst there is a lack of inhabitants in the area, there are populations to the north and southwest.
Mitigation Potential	Medium – high.

### **Landscape Strategy**

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Creation**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	<b>Creation</b>	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
	<b>Strength of Character</b>			

#### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Opportunity to create a strong landscape framework incorporating existing development and into which future development can be accommodated.  
 Opportunity to incorporate SUDS development into area, making effective use of open space.

#### **Woodland Recommendations**

The creation of an overall landscape masterplan should be developed. A cohesive scheme needs to be developed for the entire industrial estate that should include extensive woodland planting incorporating a broadleaf species mix. Woodland structure and individual tree planting should be responsive to the large scale of buildings and should be bold and dramatic, creating a landscape which will help make sense of the variety of open spaces created.

This would be especially beneficial at the estate's boundary where woodland planting should provide a strong natural edge and should supplement the existing mature planting at the boundary of Garswood Park and existing hedgerows.

***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

The significant industrial expansion has had a significant visual influence on the surrounding townscape. Limited scope for development due to occupation of the majority of the existing land. Limited development would be possible up to the robust natural edges of mature woodland and belts. Existing strong boundaries formed by communications and woodland should pose a constraint to further expansion of the industrial estate.

## CHARACTER TYPE 12 SEPARATE SETTLEMENT

### Character Area:

- Newton le Willows (12 SS 1)
- Billinge (12 SS 2)
- Rainford (12 SS 3)
- Garswood (12 SS 4)
- Haydock (12 SS 5)
- Rainhill (12 SS 6)

### Key Characteristics

- settled areas of landscape which have developed outside the main urban landscape of St Helens, and have a distinct settlement character and defined edges to create a separate settlement;
- distinctive separate character of the settlement is reinforced by the historic development on elevated landscapes on gentle slopes and broad ridgelines above, or on the edge of a broad valley;
- landuse primarily defined by developed settled land use, characterised by a variety of development forms, primarily residential;
- prominent church building with vertical spire often denotes historic core with associated old market street or main street lined by a number of individual sandstone stone houses. The prominence of the church in the wider landscape and as an orientation feature is emphasised by the elevated location developed as the modern core of the settlement;
- defined historic centre and street structure with varying degrees intactness and some original historic architecture;
- physically separated from St Helens and other settlements by rural or urban fringe landscape, but with settlement edge defined to a lesser or greater clarity to give a sense of arrival and departure from one settled landscape into another.

### Location and Boundaries

Separate settlements are located on the broad rolling landscape to the north and east which is subtly elevated from the lower 'bowl' of St Helens.

## Newton le Willows (12 SS 1)



### ***Area Description***

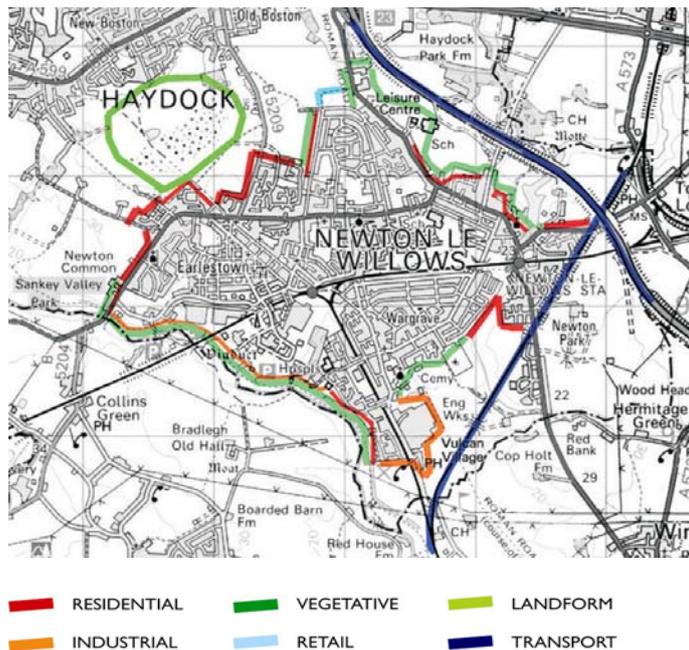
- the settlement is located on a raised area in the fork of two river valleys – the pronounced narrow valley to Sankey Brook and the Sankey Canal which borders to the southwest and Newton Brook to the east and south (dammed to form Newton Lake to the north east). Both river valleys offer some containment to the setting in particular the Sankey which denotes part of the administrative boundary to the Borough;
- the settlement is divided into two broad areas: Newton to the east contains a medieval centre retaining a strong historic street pattern centring on High Street and associated architecture, punctuated at the eastern end the prominent tower and building of St Peters Church. Earlestown to the west was established during the construction of viaduct over Sankey canal where extensive works and housing was provided for the construction workers in brick terraces that are common throughout the Borough.
- the striking line of terraces in and around Haydock Street respond to a former railway line, now dismantled, but the street orientation and adjacent grid pattern at Viaduct Street contrast markedly with more recent crescent development ;
- although more contemporary housing developments exist on the edge of the settlement, modern development within the town centre and medieval core has been less pronounced and still retains a strong character. This is supported by intact pockets of historic industrial terraced housing which creates a localised sense of place and adds to the diversity of the settlement;
- the Town contains the historic industrial Vulcan works and associated 'village' to the south of the settlement. The village has a strong identity and intimate scale which is reinforced by the dramatic scale and proximity of the adjacent buildings to the Vulcan Works.

## ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Historic heritage - Medieval core and street structure and historic terraces still exist and contrasts with the industrial works and terraces of Earlestown.
Natural boundary of the Sankey Canal to the south.
Sense of identity enforced by clarity of separation from neighbouring settlements.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Uninspiring suburban sprawl on edge of settlement to north creating abrupt edge with rural landscape.
Large industrial area visually encroaching into high value Sankey Valley area.

## Developed Edge Analysis



The area is urban with a rural surround and has a complex urban edge with different boundary characters, including:

- back gardens;
- residential roads;
- main roads;
- change of slope at top of river valley and associated woodland;
- industrial works boundary fencing;
- recreational sports ground;
- cemetery;
- railway.

The strongest edge is formed by the Sankey Valley to the south of the settlement. The sense of arrival from the west is emphasised by dipping down into the Sankey Valley and crossing the river. The boundary is formed by the (double) watercourse and the valley landform and also enforced by some riparian vegetation and property fencing. There is opportunity of enforcing this edge by enhancing the riparian vegetation along the valley slopes.

The south eastern edge is partially contained by the railway although the actual developed edge is often offset from the railway by landuses such as sports pitches and a cemetery. The Vulcan Village provides a strong sense of arrival to the south. The north eastern edge of the settlement forms a fairly robust settlement edge comprising back gardens and associated vegetation, and mature woodland belts to adjacent fields. Beyond which outwith the immediate settlement is the gently curving line of the M6 corridor raised on embankments, and forming an immediate visual horizon. Arriving from the north and west moving across or off of the M6 corridor creates a contrast of character and sense of arrival to the settlement.

The developed edge to the north west comprises an abrupt contemporary edge of residential road and / or contemporary housing that is poorly related to landform and comprises sharp edges and angles.

Overall the developed edge of Newton le Willows is regarded as **Moderate** reflecting its diverse nature and condition.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong. Very strong local character with historic core and spines, declining towards the edge of the settlement.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate The historic areas are still very much intact although some encroachment of modern elements.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong. Strong sense of setting and core to settlement.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Low - Medium. For its size, the settlement is relatively contained with few views in and out of area. Some intervisibility with rural area to north west.
Population	High. As large town and route through town there are a high number of receptors to change within the area.
Mitigation Potential	Low to Medium. Sensitive historic core, within which it would be difficult to mitigate changes. Beyond core opportunities to mitigate changes improve, although red brick terraces have a strong sense of character.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

Important to maintain the quality and clarity of the historic core in contrast with more recent surrounding development. In tandem with this the clarity of the historic church towers and spires in the wider settlement should be maintained. Future landscape change in the centre of the settlement should be restricted to development which can complement the historic and industrial character of the settlement.

Important to retain and improve the strong sense of arrival into Newton-le-Willows with improvements to the north and avoidance of ribbon development along the A49. There should be more management of the Sankey Valley edge through the introduction of more riparian woodland planting which would reinforce the natural settlement edge.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

Although Newton le Willows is predominantly an urban area, there are some opportunities to encourage a stronger woodland edge to the Sankey Valley to the south west as well as the Lyme and Wood Pit Spoil Heap to the north.

There are limited opportunities to enhance existing woodland 'corridors' that pass through the town such as the Newton Lake stream and the railway corridor with the use of broadleaf species.

In addition there are also opportunities to enhance the grounds of the town's schools through edge woodland planting.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

Minimal development may be possible on the northwestern fringes to create a more robust edge. Further industrial development at the Sankey Canal to the south of the settlement should be preventing from physically and visually encroaching further on the Sankey Valley.

Development to the north west should seek to improve the setting to the settlement whilst retaining a sense of separation with Haydock, in particular when travelling between the settlements.

Development of the fields which currently buffer the M6 corridor from Newton-le-Willows should be avoided to maintain a sense of setting and the currently quality of the historic core at Hewton.

## Billinge (12 SS 2)



### *Area Description*

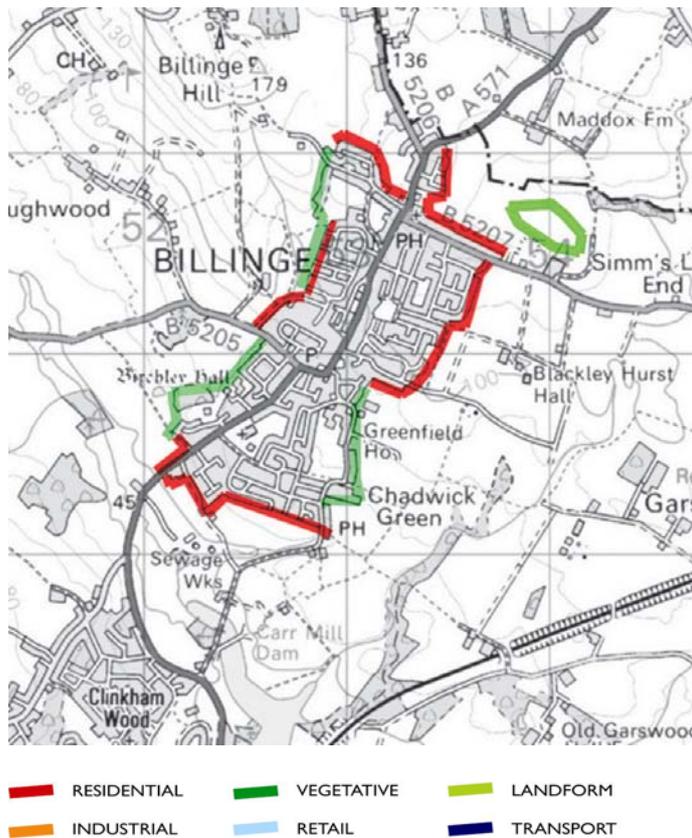
- the settlement is located on the south facing shoulder and adjacent rolling slopes of Billinge Hill. The elevated and relatively pronounced form of the topography in comparison with the flatter landscape to the south, highlights the settlement form and in particular the more recent settlement edges;
- the main street to Billinge runs north to south and creates a central 'spine' that runs perpendicular to the contours of the hill. As such when travelling through Billinge from the north, there is a strong sense of arrival into Billinge and the wider Borough of St Helens as you descend into the wider valley with extensive views south framed by the foreground buildings;
- historic core characterised by ribbon development running down Main Street from the upper northern end of village where the church and several other medieval buildings are clustered around a road junction. Numerous 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century sandstone houses constructed in small sandstone block units line the road running down slope. Stone curtilage walls often defined houses extending to the main road and create a strong townscape character with main a main focus along Main Street;
- the remaining side streets run mostly off the spine parallel to contours and are chiefly of more contemporary development;
- the Historic core of village is. At this junction blonde sandstone in small building units with slate roofs are prominently used as a building material;
- although there has been encroachment of inappropriate modern materials such as blonde brickwork and architectural styles the overall scale of the buildings have generally been developed in keeping with the small scale and rural setting of the village;
- there are remnants of small designed or estate landscapes on the edge of the settlement in the form of gate features and mature woodland areas.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Historic core and central spine structure has been retained.
Settlement retains some historic character through use of materials and details.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Hard settlements edges conflict with the landform.
Encroachment of some modern materials.

## Developed Edge Analysis



The area is urban with a rural surround. The main elements that form the developed edge for Billinge are as follows:

- back gardens and associated vegetation;
- residential roads including street ends;
- landform;

To the east of the settlement there is an abrupt contemporary developed edge encroaching onto hill slopes that contrasts with grain of slope. Although the landform of Billinge Hill does provide containment on the western boundary, some development has encroached onto the lower slopes and which does not relate directly to the landform or small nearby watercourse.

To the south there is a pronounced sense of arrival across the valley to the Black Brook and ascending the lower slopes up into Billinge. The development edge has started to encroach into the valley reducing the simplicity of the former edge.

To the north the settlement is well contained by the form and lower slopes of Tatlock's Hillock which provides a setting to the upper fringes of Billinge a sense of arrival as the main A571 road curves to the east and south around the slopes before entering Billinge.

Opportunities to strengthen edge by further development of southern / western edges and reinforcement of boundary planting. The robustness of the boundary is regarded as **Weak** to **Moderate**.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong - historical townscape and spine to settlement elevated and prominent in wider landscape and good contrast of character with adjacent more recent building types.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – historic core retains historical street pattern although partially impacted by more recent streetscape clutter. Less sensitive treatment of settlement setting with awkward development of edges.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong – strong sense of arrival into historic cores back by wider views south to the 'bowl' of St Helens.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>High</b>
General Visibility	High. High number of receptors to change within the settlement. The area is also slightly elevated above adjacent character areas and therefore there is some intervisibility to other areas.
Population	High. As large village there are a high number of receptors to change within the area.
Mitigation Potential	Medium – difficult to mitigate changes to historic core, but opportunity to improve settlement setting

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

Important to retain and enhance clarity of the historic core, which has to accommodate modern road system and street furniture which can cause clutter. Development in this historic core should compliment the existing scale, character and hierarchy of buildings and in particular not development inappropriate pastiche of the vernacular sandstone buildings.

The management of the former estate woodlands and features as well as the existing details around the village are important features and should be managed.

The settlement of Billinge in an elevated location is inherently visually prominent and as such recommendations considering future development and landscape change should not seek to necessarily 'hide' or screen development.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

Billinge is a small urban are and there is little scope for the creation of new woodland areas. There are, however, some opportunities to encourage a stronger woodland edge to the west of the settlement along existing field boundaries.

The conservation of mature trees and woodland in the historic core and Birchley Hall is important to the village character.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

There is limited potential for development due to the exposed nature of the village. There are opportunities for limited residential development to the south and west of the village that would allow a more robust edge relating to natural features such as existing woodland and small streams. In particular development should seek to respond to the grain of the contours and given the prominent location, high quality detailed siting and design should be incorporated to create a robust and justifiable settlement setting.

## Rainford (12 SS 3)



### ***Area Description***

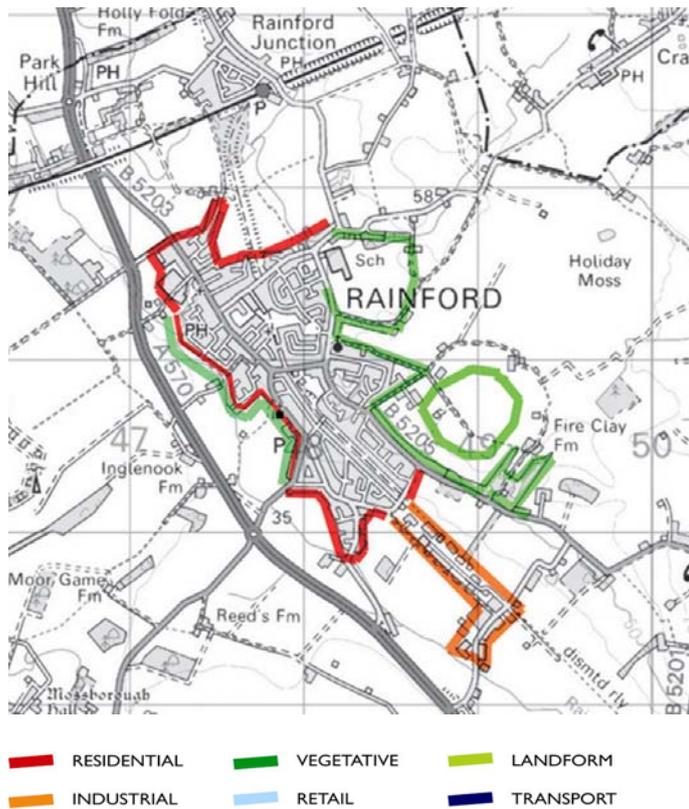
- compact linear settlement located on a low lying southwest facing slopes set on the rising land between two flatter plateaus of flat moss landscapes to the east and west;
- the historic building core is still relatively intact in linear form running along the elevated grain of the landscape. The prominent Church of All Saints and wide market street with a cluster of medieval blonde sandstone buildings creates a strong nucleated historic core;
- the settlement character is strongly tied to the underlying topography, which provides a 'dry site' on free draining sloping ground between the poorly drained moss landscapes. The core of Rainford developed on the western slope edge and has expanded along the contours northwest and southeast and across the slopes eastwards. From the lower landscape to the west the skyline punctuated with historic buildings is visually prominent in the landscape. More recent development in particular Rainford Industrial Estate has encroached westwards onto the lower slopes and flat moss landscapes and distracts from the clarity of the upper skyline and compact form of the settlement;
- there are remnants of past historic industrial use such as dismantled railway, brick terraces and estate walls and woodland;
- there has been a general expansion of modern housing on edge of settlement occasional creating a prominent urban edge;
- there appears to be balance between built form and woodland / mature trees across ridge.

## ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Historic core remains intact.
'Leafy' townscape with mature trees and woodland.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Expansion of modern housing development hard edge.

## Developed Edge Analysis



The area is urban with a rural surround. The developed edge of Rainford comprises:

- back gardens and associated mature vegetation;
- footpaths and associated trees;
- small woodland blocks / belts.

The south western and north eastern settlement edge corresponds to the landscape grain and creates a strong robust settlement setting. The mature vegetation / tree growth creates a smooth interface with the rural surround. The developed edge is less robust where it lies against the grain of the topography and contemporary development is encroaching down off the ridgeline and onto the lower flat landscapes. A number of natural elements such as landform, mature woodland blocks, belts, field boundaries offer opportunities to provide a robust edge along the ridgeline. The evaluation of the edge overall is regarded as strong to medium.

A strong sense of arrival is experienced when travelling south and into Rainford along the Higher Lane, past a number of mature woodland blocks and estate walls. The edge delineated by visually prominent development running down slope across the contours.

From the north and east with the heightened strength of rural character there is a greater contrast of moving into a settled landscape, although some sporadic historic and more recent development along News Land and Long Lane has partially reduced this clarity of transition. The complex developed edge has a varied strength between **Weak** and **Strong** character.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong. Strong linear historic and more contemporary settlement form, generally responsive to elevated, landscape grain.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate - Character of historical core generally intact but some modern development encroachment and sprawl.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong –higher in historic core, although some sprawl of more recent development and reduction in clarity of settlement setting.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium to High - High number of receptors to change within the settlement. The area is also slightly elevated above adjacent open character areas to west and therefore there is some intervisibility.
Population	Medium to high- area visible from within settlement and along busy communication route to south.
Mitigation Potential	Medium - difficult to mitigate changes to historic core, but opportunity to improve settlement setting.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

The management of the historic village centre as well as the 'estate' woodlands and structures are important features within the area. Important to conserve the compact but linear form of the settlement and extent to which it responds to underlying landscape grain. In particular clarity of the historic features which punctuate the skyline in views both within the settlement and from adjacent landscapes should be retained.

***Woodland Recommendations***

Rainford is predominantly urban and there is little scope for the creation of new woodland areas.

The conservation and enhancement of mature trees and woodland that exist in the settlement's historic core and estate areas to the north east are important to its character.

***Judgement about potential to accommodate Development***

Further housing development possible incorporating strong rural / urban edge. In danger of sprawling north south along ridgeline. Further development westwards down slope, and eastwards, onto the flat moss landscapes, should be avoided, to maintain a sense of setting. Opportunities to improve the sense of arrival in tandem with reinforcing the settlement edge should be considered in small scale development and landscape enhancement, to the north and south of the settlement.

## Garswood (12 SS 4)



### **Area Description**

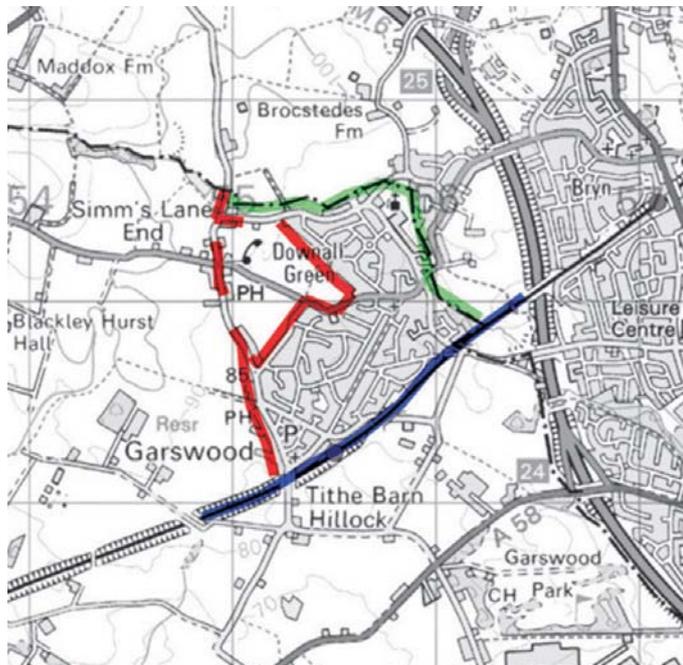
- relatively elevated settlement situated to the northeast of the borough, on gently undulating southeast facing slopes to the localised broad hilltops of Weathercock Hill and Tatlock's Hillock. These two hills provide containment and a physical/visual setting to the west of the settlement and separation from Billinge further west;
- although called Garswood for the purposes of the character area, the settlement has developed from two former 17<sup>th</sup> century hamlets; that of Downhall Green to the north focused around Rectory Road with Holy Trinity Church to the upper end, and Seneley Green to the south focused around the triangle of roads adjacent to the railway station. The settlement of Garswood has expanded between these hamlets, facilitated by the construction of the straight link road Victoria Road whilst retaining the medieval road layout in the current street pattern;
- Garswood is bounded to the southeast by the railway cuttings and to the east and north by the incised valley to the Down Brook which also delineates the administrative boundary. To the west the settlement boundary is less defined although is retained on the lower slopes. As such the settlement has an irregular layout only partially responding to landform characteristics.

### **Landscape Analysis**

<b>Positive Features</b>
Historic cores and associated road layout remain intact.
'Leafy' townscape with mature trees and woodland and elevated setting.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Expansion of modern housing with development of hard edge.

## Developed Edge Analysis



 RESIDENTIAL	 VEGETATIVE	 LANDFORM
 INDUSTRIAL	 RETAIL	 TRANSPORT

The area is a developed urban area with rural surround. The developed edge of Garswood is formed by the following:

- railway;
- back gardens;
- watercourse;
- main roads;
- sports pitches.

The railway to the south of the settlement forms a distinct edge especially where the railway line is in a cutting with associated mature woodland. To the east back gardens back onto a small watercourse, Down Brook, and associated riparian woodland and forms a robust edge to the settlement. The strong edge to Garswood to the south creates a pronounced experience of arrival into the settlement as you access over the railway. To the north east entrance into the settlement is less clear, as the road runs through North Ashton which bounds Garswood in Wigan Borough. Although the western developed edge occasionally follows a subtle break in topography it is less robust with an often abrupt modern and prominent edge that follows roads. The experience of arrival from the west is less defined, as whilst there is clear separation between Billinge and Garswood, the lack of a robust edge and the existing and more recent development centred on Leyland Green and Simm's Lane End creates a more confusing entry into the settlement. The broad contrast between the northeast/south, and the western developed edges creates a varied overall character, ranging from **Strong** to **Weak** respectively.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate. Historic cores still exist, irregular settlement layout less defined by underlying topography but existing road network still defined.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – historic cores and road layout intact, although dominated by later infill development to create less defined settlement.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – historic cores present, although lack of cohesive settlement layout responding to topography.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium to high. The area is also slightly elevated above adjacent character areas to west and therefore there is some intervisibility.
Population	High. As village there are a high number of receptors to change within the area.
Mitigation Potential	Medium - difficult to mitigate changes to historic cores, but opportunity to improve settlement setting.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy recognises the importance of conserving the historic core, but also identifies opportunities to enhance the settlement layout in particular to the east and north of Garswood.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

Garwood is a small urban area and there is little scope for new woodland planting except where it should be used to strengthen the edge of the settlement to the north west on the higher, more exposed topography.

Existing woodland along the Down Brook and railway corridors should be conserved and enhanced with further mixed broadleaf species with the addition of Willow and Alder in wetter areas.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

The existing strong urban edge to the north, east and south are to be constraints to further development of the settlement. To the west and north there are opportunities for some addition small scale development to improve the settlement layout and edges. Siting and design of any layout should seek to protect the clarity of separation between Billinge and Garswood by avoiding suburban sprawl along the Billinge Road. In addition improvements to the layout should improve the settlement edge which would emphasis the experience of arrival to Garswood.

## **Haydock (12 SS 5)**



### **Area Description**

- the settlement is located on the upper slopes of a gently undulating landscape comprising a subtly elevated broad ridgeline that slopes up from the Sankey Valley;
- settlement has a strong linear form which has developed along the former Haydock Turnpike which runs from St Helens along the low ridgeline;
- settlement has developed from an historic 'spine' of older blonde sandstone buildings in hamlets such as New Boston, Haydock Green and Haydock Park. Three or four historic centres along spine can be identified by cluster or density of historic buildings. Out from these medieval historic centres subsequent industrial expansion and terraced housing developed to support Haydock Colliery, which has a strong identity and character;

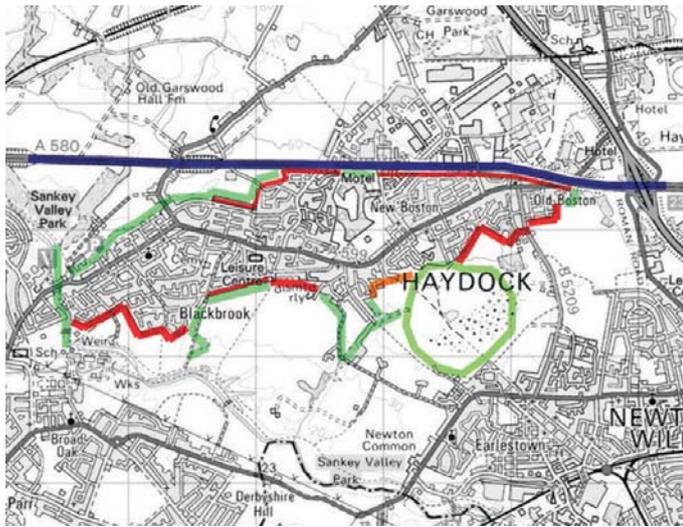
- contemporary housing development with a lack of distinctiveness is evident and generally located on urban edge or in gap sites, which erodes the strength of the existing townscape character;
- urban edge often dominated by former industrial use such as views to spoil heap, areas of scrub / derelict land, former canal basins;
- the elevated location which gently drops down into the Sankey Valley when travelling west, gives a strong sense of arrival entering into the St Helens bowl;
- churches with tall spires along West End Road are prominent local landmark features which skyline in views from the south and provide important orientation feature which are reinforced due to the elevated location;
- reduction in sense of separation at western edge of Haydock with separation to Laffak only afforded by the narrow valley of St Helen's Canal. Black Brook is culverted under housing and as such does not appear as a feature in the landscape.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Strong linear settlement form responds well to underlying landform. Historical medieval cores still visible, with later industrial heritage townscape.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Remnants of past industrial use are visible and often form the urban edge. Modern housing development encroaching into intact rural areas. Limited separation between Haydock and Laffak to west, reduction in distinctive character of Haydock.

## Developed Edge Analysis



Developed urban character area with partial rural surround and has a complex urban edge with several different boundary characters, including:

- front and back gardens, and roads;
- subtle landform;
- watercourse;
- main roads;
- industrial spoil heaps;
- small sections of the Sankey Valley.

Large sections of the northern edge is formed by the A580 forming a robust edge. A small watercourse and associated subtle landform and riparian vegetation also define a robust edge. The southern edge of the settlement is less robust and the urban rural interface can be abrupt with contemporary housing often overlooking rural fields. A large industrial spoil heap provides a partial robust edge. There may be opportunities to reinforce the edge through back garden edges. Overall the north boundary is regarded to be strong whereas the south boundary is regarded to be **Moderate**.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – linear settlement responding well to underlying landform.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – erosion of separate identity. Expansion of housing with lack of distinctiveness.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – strong linear character with historic core but highly visible industrial character adjacent.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium high – intervisibility with townscape to the south and west.
Population	High. Views from populations with area and from traffic along A580 and A58.
Mitigation Potential	Low - Medium – difficult to mitigate against change to historic character and linear townscape character in prominent location.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy recognises the strong links between landform and development of the settlement which would be important to conserve. However restoration and enhancement is required to maintain the 'separate' settlement character and reinforce the distinctiveness particularly at the boundary with Laffak. Existing pockets of medieval historic and industrial terraced housing are important to the overall character and diversity of Haydock and should feature strongly in proposals to conserve and reinforce the sense of identity of the townscape.

A key issue is to maintain the strength of separation afforded by the Green belt, of Rainhill from Newton-Le-Willows and Ashton Green to the south.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

Given that the area is predominantly urban, there is little opportunity for extensive woodland planting within this area.

There is scope, however, to use woodland to enhance the urban edge to the south of the settlement especially adjacent to the Lyme and Wood Pit spoil heap.

### ***Judgement about potential to accommodate Development***

There are limited opportunities for development given the importance of maintaining a distinct settlement character and the extent to which Haydock has extended south onto the lower slopes. Development could be accommodated on the lower slopes using the existing water courses and planting where it would contribute to a strong robust edge. However due cognisance would have to be given to this Green Belt landscape and the importance of maintaining and reinforcing the adjacent rural landscape character as a setting to this settlement.

Extension of Haydock northwards beyond Stanley Bank up to the A580, should be avoided as it breaks a naturally robust settlement edge, and the straight line of the road corridor would provide an unnatural hard urban edge to Haydock.

### **Rainhill (12 SS 6)**



#### ***Area Description***

- broad relatively narrow ridgeline, orientated northwest to southeast, ranging in height from approximately 60metres at the lower break of slope to the north, up to 85 metres along the upper ridge to the southeast (which reaches a peak at Blundell's Hill further south). The ridgeline has a more pronounced gradient with steeper slopes to the south as opposed to the north;
- this relatively subtle change in gradient has influenced the historical and more contemporary linear development reflecting the underlying landscape grain. The main historic core of Rainhill at Kendrick's Cross and a smaller adjacent core at Rainhill Stoops, both being located on the northern, more accommodating slopes. Subsequent development has extended along the lower slopes between and beyond these two hamlets, and up slope as far as the ridgeline access road. South of this road, for the most part, development has not extended creating a prominent elevated developed visual horizon in views from the south;
- the historic core comprises a small cluster of original sandstone buildings around a church located at cross roads. The intactness of the historic town centre is recognised in the Conservation Area status;

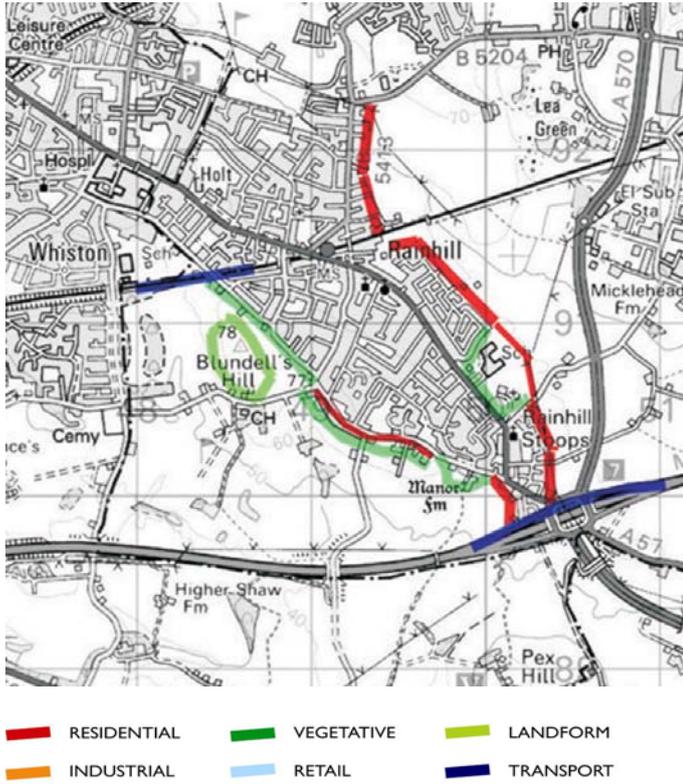
- where views are not limited by adjacent buildings, they tend to be focused north and framed in character when looking along the grid of roads which run down slope perpendicular to the contour lines;
- although a settled landscape there are prominent blocks of mature woodland and tree lines still present that were associated with the former significant properties of Rainhill House in the lower slopes (now Loyola Hall) and Manor House on the upper ridge summit (now the college) and along the roads. In addition further mature trees located in garden create a distinct townscape character in a more regular grid pattern interspersed with tree crowns skylining on the horizon.

***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Relatively intact town character with historic core.
Strong relationship between landscape grain and settlement form.
Wooded townscape character and skyline.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Extension of Rainhill onto flat landscape to north beyond lower break of slope.

### Developed Edge Analysis



The area is urban with a partial rural surround. The urban to rural interface comprises:

- back gardens;
- sports and playing fields;
- ridgeline road;
- upper break of slope.

The edge to the development is fairly robust as it predominantly follows the break in slope at both the top and bottom of a subtle ridgeline. The edge becomes less robust as the settlement deviates from this break in slope such as to the northeast of the settlement. Overall it is judged that the developed edge is **Moderate to Strong**.

### Landscape Evaluation

Landscape Sensitivity	Medium to High
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – strong relationship of settlement to landform and wooded townscape character.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate - some expansion of development off ridge and settlement linked through to Prescott in the west.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – character of historic cores and prominent skyline.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium high – prominent elevated landscape with intervisibility north and south
Population	High – views from population of Rainhill and also highly visible from adjacent settled landscape and busy M62 motorway corridor
Mitigation Potential	Low – difficult to mitigate changes to wooded townscape and where residential landscape has expanded beyond lower break of slope

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy recognises the strong links between landform and development of the settlement which would be important to conserve. However restoration is required to maintain the settlement character and reinforce the distinctiveness particularly at the boundary with Prescott. A key issue is to maintain the separation of Rainhill from Sutton Heath and Lea Green to the north.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

Given that the area is predominantly urban, there are few opportunities for extensive woodland planting within this area. There is scope, however, to use woodland to strengthen the urban edge along the top of the ridge to the south and especially at the break in slope to the north between the settlement and the existing watercourse. This should adopt a predominantly 'wet woodland' species of Alder, Willow, Ash and Birch. In addition tree lines and individual specimen trees are an important part of the townscape character and where possible should be retained and enhanced through continual replacement, in particular using oak, ash and lime species.

***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

There are limited opportunities for development given the importance of maintaining a distinct settlement character and the extent to which Rainhill has extended northwards onto the lower break of slope. Development could be accommodated on the lower slopes using the existing water courses and planting where it would contribute to a strong robust edge. However due cognisance would have to be given to this Green Belt landscape and the importance of maintaining and reinforcing the adjacent rural landscape character as a setting to this settlement.

## **CHARACTER TYPE 13 SETTLED LOWLYING VALLEY**

### ***Character Areas:***

- St Helens Historic Core (13 SLV 1)
- St Helens Retail Ring (13 SLV 2)
- St Helens Terraces (13 SLV 3)

### ***Key Characteristics***

- within subtle valley 'bowl' or on the immediate gentle slopes of broad low lying valley giving a sense of containment and enclosure to the landscape;
- high density urban built form dominates landuse and predominantly radiates from the lower lying central core. Settled side valleys and upper slopes mean strong intervisibility to adjacent settled landscapes and views are typically to built visual horizons;
- mixture of building styles and materials, but strong medieval and historic industrial presence in form of road layout and buildings, giving a 'core' character and in places strong sense of townscape character;
- dense street structure in many locations, which movement through and views into the surrounding townscape, with most views framed by adjacent townscapes which reinforces the sense of enclosure;
- high vitality of core landscape from densely populated residential areas and busy core landscape with movement and noise;
- close juxtaposition to industrial areas, with strong intervisibility to vertical chimneys and gasometers to aid orientation within enclosed street network.

### ***Location and Boundaries***

Compact and well related series of character areas located centrally to the Borough and incorporating a section of the Sankey Canal.

## St Helens Historic Core (13 SLV 1)



### Area Description

- the area is generally flat although the perception of topography and landform is difficult to determine due to dense built form. The landform is on the flat plateau basin within the broad valley. There are densely settled slopes rising up to the west, north and east. This creates a strong experience of enclosure in views north up to the adjacent dense terraces. Views south are limited due to the urban fabric and street pattern which radiates out to the southwest and typically blocks views;
- this is the civic and retail centre of St Helens with a generally dense built form and high vitality;
- late 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture, of simplistic design and constructed in concrete with large panels of fenestration contrasts markedly with the remnants of sandstone and deep-red brick built vernacular architecture. In many places this predominant building form, although broadly responding to the historic street pattern, encroaches upon and developed into some of the narrow road form and has markedly changed the scale proportions of built form to street pattern;
- the large scale development of late 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture and pedestrianisation have both led to the fragmentation of the historic street structure and patterns of movement and use in the core of St Helens. The present built form acts as a barrier creating a 'front' and 'back' to the urban core. The front focuses on the open character of Church Street and Victoria Square, whilst the back rings around this landscape, accessed by the pedestrian roads and defines the edges to the core character area. This is emphasised by the previous development of several historic thoroughfares including Market Street and the covering of St Mary's Market, reducing physical and visual links, and the later separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic;
- orientation through the enclosed retail street pattern is sometimes difficult due to the lack of a strong sense of urban character and place;

- several large areas of public realm have been pedestrianised which reduces the perception of road width and influences the experience of street scale. In many locations contemporary brick paving and concrete paviers have contributed to this loss of urban character and sense of place of St Helens. More recently some street development retaining the original street patterns and urban fabric, incorporate high quality materials such as natural stone and lighting, which seek to encourage movement and reinforce links within the urban landscape.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
<p>Historic street structure with retention of landmark buildings and remnants of vernacular retail built form.</p> <p>Vitality, with movement of people and traffic.</p> <p>Public/civic spaces retained and used as hard open space landscapes.</p> <p>Recent environmental improvements retaining street character and introducing palpable sense of place.</p>

<b>Negative Features</b>
<p>Uninspiring late 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture encroaching on historic core and street pattern resulting in partial loss of built form and street pattern.</p> <p>Lack of cohesion with, and loss of links to, surrounding areas.</p> <p>Segregation between vehicular and pedestrian access increases experience of barrier to historic core.</p>

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
<p>Although the area is contained within the urban fabric, the change in built character in particular to the south, the redevelopment in the neighbouring character type, and proximity of the A58 Link Road corridor have created a strong delineation of the civic and retail core of St Helens.</p>

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – remnants of historic street pattern and vernacular architecture dominated by more recent 20 <sup>th</sup> century landscape character.
Condition / Intactness	Poor– remnant of historic character and street pattern but more contemporary urban design does not reflect subtleties of scale and form of historic townscape.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate –whilst some vernacular streetscape and feature buildings retain interest, there is a loss of sense of place which in places is uninspiring.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium. Located within low broad valley so partial intervisibility with the elevated terrace areas that radiate from the town centre.
Population	High. Although there will be minimal people who actually live in the area, a large number of people will access the area for work and retail purposes.
Mitigation Potential	Medium – difficulties in large scale changes to urban fabric but opportunities for cosmetic changes to shop fronts and street character.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Restore & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

**Strength of Character**

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

The landscape strategy perhaps simplifies the more complex issues surrounding the civic core of St Helens, involving both the conservation and enhancement of the vernacular historic buildings, whilst strengthening and in some areas creating a more appropriate urban townscape character.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

As St Helens Core is an urban civic centre there is limited scope for woodland planting.

There are limited opportunities for the planting of street trees within the public realm of the streets, although this should be appropriate to the urban form and sensitive to the scale relationship of the built fabric to road width. Existing trees within the streets should ideally be conserved.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

More recent 20<sup>th</sup> century development has often had a detrimental influence on the townscape of St Helens core. Further redevelopment is possible but should reflect, enhance and or complement the existing street structure and scale. High quality architecture and public realm development would enhance the character of the area. There is limited opportunity for large scale development.

## **St Helens Retail Ring (I3 SLV 2)**



### **Area Description**

- character area occupies the flat broad valley floor wrapping round the historic core to the south. Although landform character is often difficult to determine as a result of the large number of large scale retail buildings and associated areas of car parking;
- for part of the area, the Sankey Canal cuts through the landscape, although this rarely forms the focus as it is difficult to visually and physically access due to the location of access roads and the railway at elevation;
- the area is characterised by a variety of buildings of various sizes and scales but they are predominantly built in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, large in scale, and of contemporary architecture and are sited in a poor physical relationship to each other. There is a partially open character form by the larger scale buildings and the open space voids between them. In addition the proximity to the open corridor of the A58 link road enables views further south. Many of the buildings incorporate signage and lighting to advertise their function which compete for attention and reinforce the visual clutter and chaotic character of the landscape;

- the character area lacks a cohesive street structure and identity, as the large scale modern development has inherited and subsequently dominated the historic street pattern. Railway line and embankments adds to fragmented character of landscape;
- as a result of the substantial areas of car parking, the area is predominantly hard landscape and heavily orientated towards the use of the car, with wide roads and a convoluted footpath network and a plethora of signage;
- there is limited soft landscape, which is largely constrained by the hard landscape and consists of narrow tree belts, minimal amenity planting, manicured grassed road verges and isolated lines of immature trees, the scale and character of which can often contrast with the surrounding urban landscape.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
<p>Proximity to historic core.</p> <p>Some individual landmark architecture of high quality, with design creating links between historic and contemporary townscape, such as the World of Glass Museum.</p> <p>Vitality.</p>

<b>Negative Features</b>
<p>Uninspiring architecture encroaching on historic core, and in places replacing it.</p> <p>Bypassing of main core by Link Road, which reduces experience of 'arrival' at St Helens centre.</p> <p>Lack of positive recognisable urban structure.</p> <p>Confusing interplay of built forms and cluttered landscape creates disorientation and reinforces perception of lack of urban structure and positive local identity.</p> <p>Convoluted pedestrian access between areas.</p>

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
<p>Although the area is contained within the urban fabric, the proximity of the A58 Link Road corridor creates a strong boundary to this character area.</p>

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Weak – lack of cohesion between historic and contemporary landscape structure with strong urban character.
Condition / Intactness	Poor – the urban fabric is fragmented in the layout and design of the buildings in this area.
Aesthetic Character	Weak – strong functional character with limited quality of the urban landscape.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Low - Medium. Situated in broad low valley but large scale buildings, limits intervisibility.
Population	High. Although not settled high number of visual receptors entering into and by-passing townscape.
Mitigation Potential	High – predominantly lack of distinctive building the character of which could be easily created.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Creation**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	<b>Creation</b>	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Creation of new landscape character although this may prove difficult considering the large scale development that has already taken place.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

Although there is little scope for the development of extensive woodland areas within this urban area, there are opportunities to strengthen the overall landscape framework and provide cohesion between the different areas of the retail ring.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

The area lacks any cohesion and or identity. It may be possible to reduce these impacts through the implementation of a strong landscape structure and infrastructure that integrates better with the adjacent areas. Further development may help to create a new identity and character for this area. The design and layout is important to ensure a positive contribution to the area.

### **St Helens Terraces (13 SLV 4)**



### ***Area Description***

- character area occupies the gentle broad sloping topography west, north and east of the more historic 'bowl';
- the street pattern forms a series of parallel bands of terraced housing in a dense grid pattern. The main access roads extend from the historic core radiating up to the terraces cutting across the contours. The terraces laid out running parallel to these road orientated perpendicular to the contours, allowing the buildings to step down slope where gradient allows;
- areas have a strong distinct character comprising small scale, but high density terraced housing in uniform bands constructed in deep red brick with slate roofs. The small scale of the terraced streetscape is heightened where experienced in close juxtaposition with large scale industry on the lower slopes. There is a repetition of fenestration, doors, and roof lines which give a highly consistent, distinct and recognisable character. Where the terraces front directly onto the narrow streets the experience of enclosure is emphasised and in places can feel oppressive and claustrophobic;
- the orientation of the main access roads towards the historic core, creates a strong visual relationship with often dramatic, framed vistas towards the historic/industrial centre and chimneys being commonplace;

- a number of churches are located within this terraced streetscape. The church spires punctuate the uniform roofscape of the terraces and create important landmarks and orientation features;
- typically hard landscape prevails with little or no greenspace giving a dense streetscape character where typically there is a repetition of urban elements which can be confusing and give a lack of orientation;
- the area comprises a number of distinct blocks or areas of terraces which radiate out from the lower urban core of St Helens – including Hardshaw, North Road, Denton’s Green, Newton, West Park, Toll Bar and Green Bank areas of terraces;
- street structure can be degraded or fragmented where more contemporary development has impacted on this strong uniform character including, inappropriate cosmetic facades to the terraces, replacement of terraces with contemporary ‘pastiche’ terraces and demolition of terraces leaving gap sites;
- where the terraces have small front gardens, there is a subtle change in the street proportions, which increase the openness of the road corridor with an increasing width of views to urban landscape and the introduction of garden vegetation and differing cartilage walls which adds variety into the streetscape and reduces the experience of uniformity.

***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
<p>Historic street structure and architecture relatively intact, combining to create distinctive townscape character with strong identity.</p> <p>Strong visual relationship with town centre.</p> <p>Front gardens increase scale of streetscape and introduces variety, although reducing strength of uniformity and repetition.</p> <p>Some excellent examples of industrial heritage architecture i.e. Factory Row.</p>

<b>Negative Features</b>
<p>Encroachment of inappropriate and unsympathetic modern housing and building materials.</p> <p>Some degradation of street pattern with modern housing.</p> <p>Close proximity to industrial areas.</p> <p>Sometimes incorporating gaps sites of derelict land in association with disused terraces giving neglected degraded landscape.</p> <p>Pockets of terraces can be isolated between industrial areas and busy roads.</p>

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
Although the area is contained within urban environment this character area possesses a relatively strong delineation of the boundaries, due to the strength of townscape character.

### Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong. The scale, proportions and repetition of the historic street structure and architecture create a strong identity.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate - Areas of terraces still mostly intact although some encroachment of modern elements, layouts and materials.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – Strong - the terraces retain a strong sense of place and uniqueness of historic character.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium. Little intervisibility to other areas as a result of the dense residential fabric. Occasionally long views to the town centre buildings and landmarks.
Population	High. And views from passing through townscape on arterial roads. High density population in area.
Mitigation Potential	Low. Although there is limited scope for further development and difficult to mitigate changes to urban fabric unless carried out sensitivity to existing character. Opportunities for redevelopment that is sensitive to the historic materials and street structure.

### Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

The landscape strategy recognises the important contribution that the character of the terraces contributes towards the urban fabric and character of St Helens, with the conservation of the strong character and identity of the terraces and the sympathetic restoration of the streetscape to retain this character.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

Woodland and tree planting within this predominantly high density hard street fabric would be inappropriate to the historic uniform character and repetition of built elements.

However, there are opportunities for the conservation and restoration of the trees and woodland planting within the various parks and gardens such as Victoria Park and Queens Park which is contained within the wider fabric of the terraces character areas.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

Generally there is limited scope for further development given the relatively high sensitivity due to the strong and distinctive historic townscape character. Recent development has been detrimental to the character of the area and sought to weaken the strength of character. Any development would have to reflect the scale and size of the existing street structure and architecture, although a poorly conceived 'pastiche' of a terraced house can often prove just as detrimental. There are opportunities to enhance the area through the sympathetic improvements of the public realm and limited public space.

## CHARACTER TYPE 14 URBAN GREENSPACE

### **Character Area:**

- Big Dam (14 UG 1)
- Sherdley Park (14 UG 2)
- Rainhill Golf Course (14 UG 3)

### **Key Characteristics**

- relatively large areas of planned open space delineated on three sides or completely enclosed by the adjacent settled landscape. The open landscape comprises flat to gently undulating landform partially covering a small localised hill or ridgeline;
- the open space is of a size and scale to physically and visually separate areas of adjacent townscape. In addition the townscape varies along the boundaries, which reinforces the distinctness of the open space as a discrete area, as opposed to open space within a wider residential area;
- large areas of amenity / recreational grass highlight landform and are divided by mature woodland blocks and tree belts which area typically access by footpath;
- areas contain elements and characteristics of former designed landscapes and parks such as mature woodland / trees, stone walls, path network or landscape framework;
- the open areas are generally uninhabited which reinforces the contrast of character with adjacent townscapes, although in some instances there are remnants of historic buildings and structures;
- there is varied sense of enclosure influenced by the proximity of mature woodland blocks and belts and elevation of view;
- popular places of recreation such as walking, dog exercise and golf.

### **Location and Boundaries**

Character type comprises three character areas located to the southwest of the historic core of St Helens, bounded by both large scale residential and industrial development.

## Big Dam (14 UG 1)



### ***Area Description***

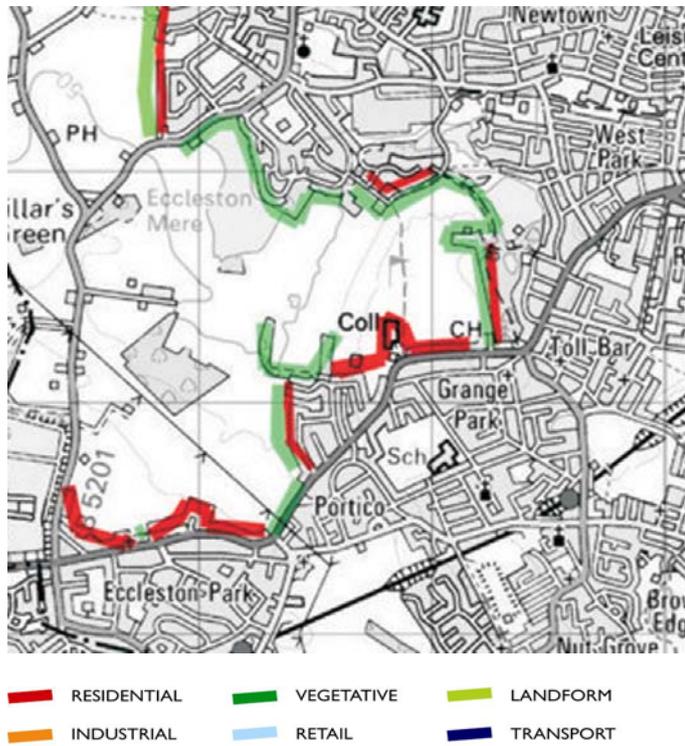
- the area is located on the slopes of a locally prominent hill and broad ridgeline and has a northern aspect;
- there are often panoramic wide views over the surrounding townscape towards Knowsley woodland edge to the west with Billinge Hill forming a distant elevated visual horizon and focal point to the north;
- the tall industrial chimneys of the St Helens skyline can also be seen towards the northeast and identifies the location of the town centre;
- mixed mature woodland forms a strong edge of the area. This, combined with the steep topography restricts views towards the adjacent urban fabric and creates a sense of urban separation;
- the area is a public park and is a popular place of recreation which includes a golf course;
- Big Dam is a large reservoir situated at the lower break of slope to the north east and is surrounded mature woodland and mixed tree belts to the north and south, incorporating a perimeter path and amenity grassland. The woodland belts partially contain and screen views into the character area from the adjacent residential landscape;
- the experience of openness on the slopes is reinforced by the open maintained fairways of the golf course on the middle slopes, and on the upper, slopes, sports pitches. Although there is a lack of cohesion in the woodland planting to the golf course which contrasts with the mature woodland to the base of slope;
- there are a few remnants of a designed landscape such as stone walls, the dam structure, mature mixed woodland and path network;
- Carmel College is a prominent building of recent construction which encroaches into the area on the crest of the hill adjacent to the ridgeline soft urban edge and introduces a number of urban features such as lighting, car parking and sports fencing.

## ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Creates a transition between the urban and rural landscapes.
Creates strong physical and visual separation between townscapes to north, east and south by elevated landform.
Wooded character and reservoir provide interest and reinforce strength of urban edge.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Loss of former designed landscape features.
Encroachment of urban elements.
Unsympathetic golf course planting.

### Developed Edge Analysis



Predominantly a large park and recreation area on the edge of a large hill, which forms a transition between urban and rural areas. The main edges of the developed areas comprise:

- mature woodland blocks and belts;
- change in slope;
- waterbodies;
- back gardens;
- sports pitches.

The developed edge is located at the break of slope to the north and east of the area. This is reinforced by large blocks and belts of mature woodland, and the slightly elevated 'Big Dam'. This forms a robust edge to the urban development. The urban edge to the south lies upon the crest of the hill and is visually prominent and less robust. Although the edge comprises mostly back gardens, it crosses the grain of the topography. Buildings of Marcel College are prominent, reinforced by the unnatural flat, uniform green colour and texture of the sports pitches.

Overall the developed edge evaluation is regarded as **Moderate to Strong** reflecting the variation along the edge.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – although the area has a pronounced largely undeveloped landform there is a lack of cohesion in the varying landuses.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – some remnants of the historic landscape and mature woodland remain, although these are largely concentrated on the lower slopes. Recent landscape treatment is poorly integrated.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong – varying sense of enclosure and character of landscapes from containment and attraction of water at Big Dam to open views on slopes.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	High. Prominent ridge with intervisibility forms locally important visual horizon.
Population	Medium to High. Largely uninhabited but surrounded by townscape.
Mitigation Potential	Low – Medium – difficult to mitigate changes to landform and mature trees but opportunities to mitigate more recent land uses.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

The higher the strength of character requires a more conservation orientated strategy, although there are opportunities to restore features and characteristics of the open space to maintain and reinforce the clarity of open space in relation to the surrounding urban landscapes.

Management of the woodland and Dam structures already being incorporated into a HLF funded project. Opportunities to encourage the Golf Course to adopt more appropriate materials and planting and potential to set the college buildings in more appropriate setting.

Important to retain the open undeveloped landform as important local visual horizon creating physical setting to adjacent townscapes.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The existing mature woodland structure should be conserved and enhanced through the planting of broadleaf species. Further appropriate woodland planting could be incorporated into the golf course and playing fields landscapes, to create a sense of cohesion over the extent of the open space.

### ***Judgement about potential to accommodate Development***

The area is important public parkland and recreation land with a distinctive functional open space character, contributing to setting and transition between the urban rural edges. The existing landuses are constraints to further development, which is reinforced by the robustness of the boundaries to the north and east. To the south further development should be avoided on the elevated visually sensitive ridgeline.

## Sherdley Park (14 UG 2)



### **Area Description**

- area of gently undulating landform broadly comprising two localised ridgelines interlocking to create two small valley depressions, ranging in elevation between 30 to 60 metres AOD across the landscape grain orientation north to south;
- historic former designed landscape dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century with formal and informal gardens, woodland and parkland laid out around Sherdley Hall and Sherdley House which are located on the south facing slopes in a slight valley;
- much of the estate structure of woodland, tree belts, tree lines and parkland specimen trees is still present (Sherdley Park) and reflects historical layouts, such as the roundel copses to the south of Sherdley Hall, although the former small scale field pattern has been lost; and the woodland of Pingot Plantation which forms the western belt to the golf driving range;
- in places the structure has become fragmented from more contemporaneous development. In particular the link roads to the west and north which delineate the park but have also contributed to a partial loss of the some of the estate woodland. To the east the dualled road has been upgraded from the historical road layout which formed a main road bounding the estate to the east, and as such the mature tree line along the eastern boundary has been retained and creates a grand arrival to the park from this direction;
- the historic path and formal estate road network is still present today and used as part of vehicular/pedestrian access throughout the park;
- some former 'estate' buildings and structures are still present and in use such as the farm, cottages and walls;

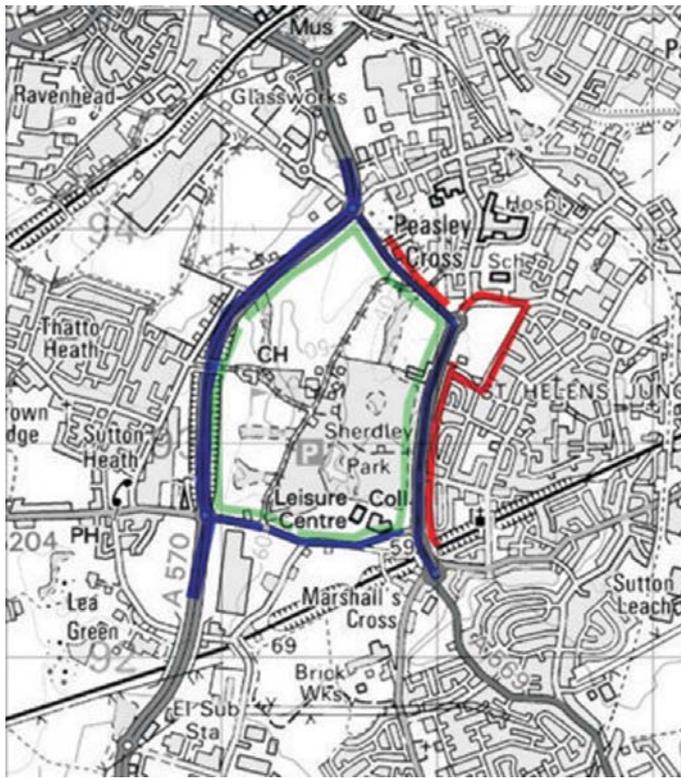
- range of views available to due elevated location with strong intervisibility to the west and north where the landform drops in height. The presence of woodland structure alternately opens, encloses and frames views. The contemporary feature vehicular bridge across the A570, which replaces the historical link that was severed, provides the opportunity for wide open panoramic views to the adjacent settled and park landscapes;
- to the south of the park beyond the wooded boundaries, the open, predominantly grassed landscape of the college playing fields is in stark contrast to the historic character and grandeur of the main park. The modern 'block' architecture of the college and the landscape interrupted by numerous street and pitch lighting emphasises this contrast.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Former designed estate landscape with strong wooded character.
Maturity and structure of woodland and landscape features including former layout and built character.
Green 'oasis' and sense of intimacy within larger industrial / retail / residential sprawl.
Variety of environments accessible and views available from elevated location.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Degradation and some loss of former designed landscape features.
Encroachment of urban and industrial elements reducing cohesion of estate landscape.
Some inappropriate landscape design elements and relating to current function as public park.
Open functional landscape of college with playing field and numerous light standards reduced strength and impacts on historical character of southern park boundary.

## Developed Edge Analysis



■ RESIDENTIAL    ■ VEGETATIVE    ■ LANDFORM  
■ INDUSTRIAL    ■ RETAIL    ■ TRANSPORT

The area forms a large park with an urban surround. Although there are some large areas of open land that edge this area, these are mostly associated with industrial use and therefore there is no urban rural interface. The park is bound on all sides by predominantly dualled road corridors (some of which are based on historic road alignments) and these provide a robust edge. The evaluation of the developed edge is regarded to be Strong.

## Landscape Evaluation

Landscape Sensitivity	High
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – historic designed landscape with variety of woodland structure and path network related to central buildings.
Condition / Intactness	Good – although fragmentation of estate has occurred this is primarily focused on the estate fringes. Much of the woodland structure and design ethos has been retained.
Aesthetic Character	Strong – often intimate woodland character with a variety of experiences and views from within area.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>High</b>
General Visibility	High. Prominent elevated landscape set within lower surrounding urban townscape as such indivisibility is strong.
Population	High – well visited popular recreational area, with well trafficked roads to west, north and east and settled area to east. Form important wooded visual horizon in views from surrounding urban landscape.
Mitigation Potential	Low – difficult to mitigate changes to historic landscape character and mature tree structure.

### **Landscape Strategy**

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

#### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

The landscape strategy recognises the high landscape and visual sensitivity of the park which aims to conserve both the historical importance and current place of recreation.

#### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The existing mature woodland structure should be conserved and enhanced through the planting of broadleaf species. Further woodland planting to reinforce the historic estate structure should be appropriate to the formal design. Ideally woodland management should form part of an estate management plan which would holistically consider the future development of the landscape taking due cognisance of its current uses.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

The area is important public parkland and recreation landscape with a strong and distinctive historic landscape character, This landscape contributes to the physical and visual setting between industrial and residential areas. Due to the sensitivity of the landscape this poses major constraints to further development and inappropriate landscape change which would impact on the integrity of the historic landscape. Ideally a management plan which considered the historic and more contemporary landscape character and use should be produced within which any development proposed should be considered. The robustness of the existing character areas is considered to be strong, and as such should pose a constraint to further development encroaching into the park.

### **Rainhill Golf Course (14 UG 3)**



### ***Area Description***

- generally flat gently undulating topography which forms the lower plateau base to an open 'bowl' partially enclosed by the surrounding settled more elevated landscape;
- large area of greenspace comprising a large golf course with an open character to the south, and a more enclosed area of amenity open space and woodland to the north. Open character of golf course incorporating fairways and tees contrasts with enclosed wooded character to the north;
- there are remnants of a former designed landscape, (traced to post 1850s and the advent of the railway) in the form of mature woodland avenues, including unique rows of pollarded trees and the oval path access layout as well as stone walls and former grass terrace;
- the mature woodland belts and avenues compartmentalise space and create a variety of different environments and provide structure to the area to the north of the golf course;
- there is a diverse mix of woodland species between natives and exotic species which adds a distinct character and variety to the landscape;

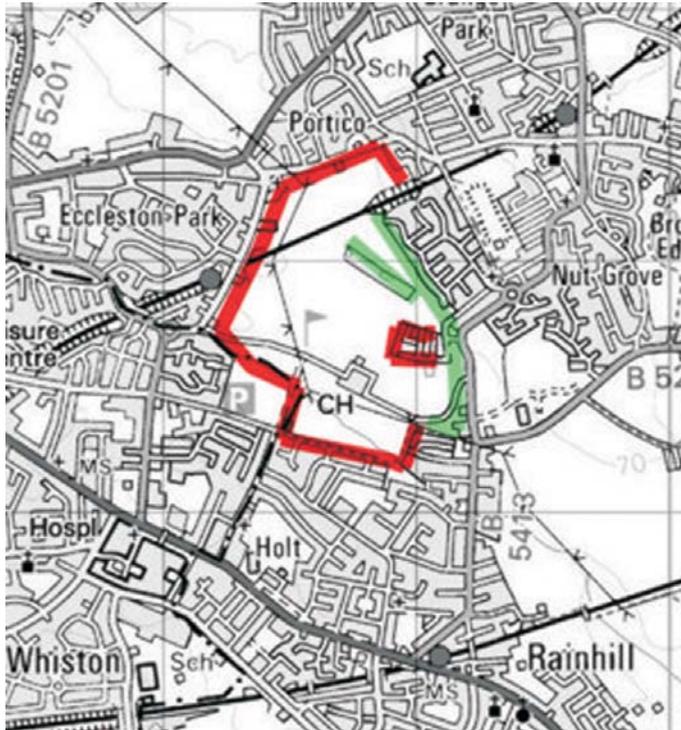
- the area is enclosed on all sides by new housing developments which form a hard developed edge surrounding the area. Urban characteristics are further introduced by the railway line which segregates a triangle of open land to the north and the pylon line which is routed through the open space;
- there is encroachment of modern housing development within the character area which fragments and weakens the landscape character.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Possible remnants of former designed landscape with distinctive layout and mature tree structure.
Variety of open and enclosed spaces and experiences defined by extent of tree cover, which contrasts markedly with adjacent settled landscapes.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Encroachment of modern housing creating hard visually prominent edge to area.
Encroachment of features with urban character such as security fencing, railway infrastructure and pylon lines.
Golf course planting contrasts and relates awkwardly to design and form of former, more, designed landscape character.

## Developed Edge Analysis



RESIDENTIAL	VEGETATIVE	LANDFORM
INDUSTRIAL	RETAIL	TRANSPORT

The area forms a large recreation area with an urban surround. The developed edge that surrounds the area comprises:

- back gardens;
- main roads;
- some woodland belts.

There is an abrupt contemporary edge on west and south edges. At these locations the edge has little relationship with landform or other features and is highly prominent. New housing on the east side of the area has encroached beyond the formerly robust edge of a mature woodland avenue. There is strong robust edge still present on the north of the area formed by the mature woodland and artificial break in slope of the site of former hospital. Overall the developed edge is regarded as **Weak to Moderate** reflecting the varying prominence of the developed edge.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – although some distinct designed landscape features this has been encroached upon with subsequent golf course and residential developments as such there is not a singular landscape character.
Condition / Intactness	Poor – areas of designed landscape impacted by prominence of urban edge and encroachment and fragmentation of urban features including railway line.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – designed landscape to north provides some distinctive features although degraded.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>
General Visibility	Low. Area partially set within broad 'subtle depression, so only visible by immediate adjacent character areas.
Population	Medium. Although sparsely settled, area functions as popular recreational area with intervisibility to immediate residential areas.
Mitigation Potential	Medium to High – difficult to mitigate loss of mature tree structure although areas only partially remaining.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Restore & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

The more varied landscape strategy reflects the more complex issues surrounding this golf course landscape, the character of which is dominated by the land use. This involves both the restoration of the designed landscape, whilst enhancing a more appropriate recreational landscape character, including creating more robust links with the golf course landscape.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The area of designed landscape with its ornamental tree planting structure to the north east of the area should be conserved and restored. The degraded woodland structure within the golf course should be restored. There is an opportunity to enhance the hard urban edge to this area in the south and west through shelterbelt / woodland planting appropriate to the character of the area.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

The area is important public parkland and recreation land contributing to separation and setting of urban areas. There is scope to enforce the former designed landscape character through the restoration and management of the landscape structure including woodland management and the restoration of prominent tree avenues. The existing urban edges should provide a constraint to further development encroaching into the area, which would seek to fragment the amenity function and remnant aesthetic character.

## CHARACTER TYPE 15 RAISED FRINGE SETTLEMENT

### **Character Area:**

- Grange Park (15 RFS 1)
- Mossbank (15 RFS 2)
- Derbyshire Hill / Parr (15 RFS 3)
- Sutton (15 RFS 4)

### **Key Characteristics**

- settled areas located on raised areas or broad ridgelines adjacent to the historic core of St Helens, ranging between approximately 30 and 80 metres AOD;
- geographically more amorphous forms of predominantly residential landscaper which have developed over a period of time and as such incorporate a number of successive residential layout and house styles. This imposes a more complex and less distinct residential character, which is primarily defined by the subtle elevation giving a more open urban character and the role these townscapes play in creating a sense of arrival into St Helens;
- areas usually associated with one of the main (historic) road arteries radiating from St Helens, but no defining road spine and as such have a varied road network;
- evidence of historic village centres such as original churches and historic buildings with the associated road layout. The elevated location of churches highlights their prominence locally, and they act as important local orientation features and landmarks;
- later residential development includes smaller pockets of industrial terraced housing in a grid and later pre and post war housing expansion defined by a curved crescent road layout and gardens;
- areas usually form suburbs of St Helens and an outer urban edge of varying prominence is created;
- landscape incorporates areas of open space sometimes associated with constraining ground conditions such as a slope of hill and prominent mature woodland blocks remnant from former field layouts or river courses.

### ***Location and Boundaries***

Geographically concentrated in a raised 'ring' surrounding the historic core and low lying industrial landscapes. Strong links to the industrial landscape and adjacent lower lying areas of residential infill, with often more transitional boundaries than tightly defined edges.

### **Grange Park (15 RFS I)**



### ***Area Description***

- geographically convoluted area extending in over gently undulating landform of between 55 and 75 metres AOD comprising two subtle ridgelines orientated northwest to southeast, which the more pronounced ridge under Grange Park only partially settled;
- settlement developed along former turnpike which linked Liverpool to the northeast through St Helens. The turnpike road, now the A58 cuts across the landscape grain over ridgeline and travelling north gives a strong perception of arrival into the urban industrial centre of St Helens;
- streets run perpendicular to contours and are located on relatively steep slopes, occasionally offering framed views down the road to surrounding areas;
- predominantly inter-war housing along long wide streets, but interspersed with pockets of distinct industrial red brick terraces at Brown Edge and more recent housing;
- housing is predominantly semi-detached suburban housing with gardens;
- streets often have mature tree avenues or garden vegetation which give an open wooded townscape character;
- a railway line transects the ridgeline to the south on the lower slopes and is situated partially in cutting and as such is reduced in prominence;
- small but pronounced historic core at Thatto Heath centred on the historic cross roads, developed on lower slopes with brick terraces is present adjacent to train station. In addition further core at Portico;

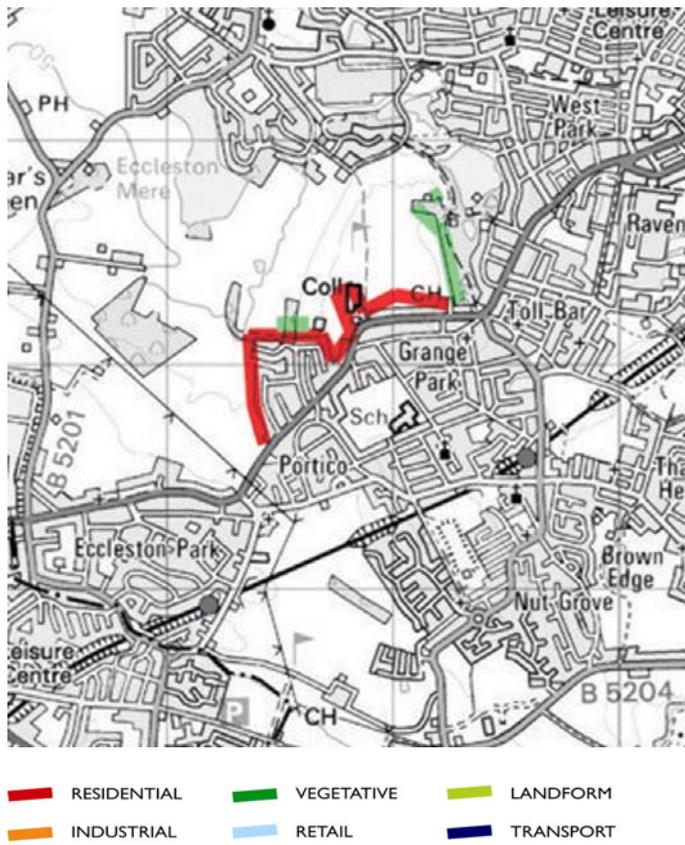
- some enclosed areas of modern housing in particular along southern edge in designed landscape framework of former asylum often forming hard edge to rural environment.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Positive 'leafy' mature suburban area.
Pockets of distinct historic building character including industrial terraces which create a sense of identity and variety.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Encroachment of variety of modern house styles and crescent street structure which reduces distinctiveness of pockets of urban landscape.
Remnants of industrial past i.e. derelict land and buildings.

### Developed Edge Analysis



The area is urban with a partial rural surround. A golf course and sports playing fields provide a transition between the urban rural interface. However there is a prominent developed edge at Grange Park which cuts across the hill ridgeline. At this location the developed edge is regarded as **Weak**. The edge is more robust at the bottom of the ridgeline at the break of slope, and is judged to be **Strong**.

### Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – less distinctive urban townscape with more historic townscape character weakened by more recent housing.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – townscape impacted in setting and style by more contemporary development.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – elevated townscape provides experience of arrival with historic cross roads at Thatto Heath.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium High</b>
General Visibility	Medium high – elevated townscape strong intervisibility to adjacent landscapes.
Population	High – visible from population within character area and from people passing through on busy road and railway routes.
Mitigation Potential	Medium – some options for mitigation with design and siting of more recent housing.

### Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
	<b>Strength of Character</b>			

#### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

The landscape strategy recognises the importance of conserving the historical core and industrial terraced landscape and road layout, as well as the leafy townscape character, whilst enhancing the urban edges and reinforcing the distinctiveness of place.

#### **Woodland Recommendations**

Given that the area predominantly is urban, there is little potential for extensive woodland planting within this area. However tree lines and individual specimen trees are an important part of the townscape character and where possible should be retained and enhanced through continual replacement, in particular using oak, ash and lime species.

There is scope, however, to use woodland to enhance the urban edge along the ridge to the north at Grange Park Golf Club and Carmel College.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

There are limited opportunities for new large scale residential development given the intact nature of the townscape character the adjacent sensitive Green Belt landscape and limited opportunities to expand outwith the settlement edges. However opportunities exist for redevelopment within the townscape area to maintain the wooded townscape structure and along the urban edges where development can contribute to a more robust edge.

### **Mossbank (15 RFS 2)**



### ***Area Description***

- settlement extended over the shoulder of the southern extremity of an undulating ridgeline orientated to the northwest which characterises much of the north of the Borough, ranging in height from 35metres in the south up to 85 metres just south of Shoot's Delph Farm;
- distinctive layout of townscape strongly defined by historic and more contemporary communications infrastructure of roads to the northwest and south west, the railway line (at cutting) to the southeast and the irregular form of Car Mill Dam, reinforced by the line of the A571 to the east and northeast. This forms a pronounced diamond shape settlement elevated on the slopes;
- streets usually on relatively steep slope occasionally offering views to surrounding areas;

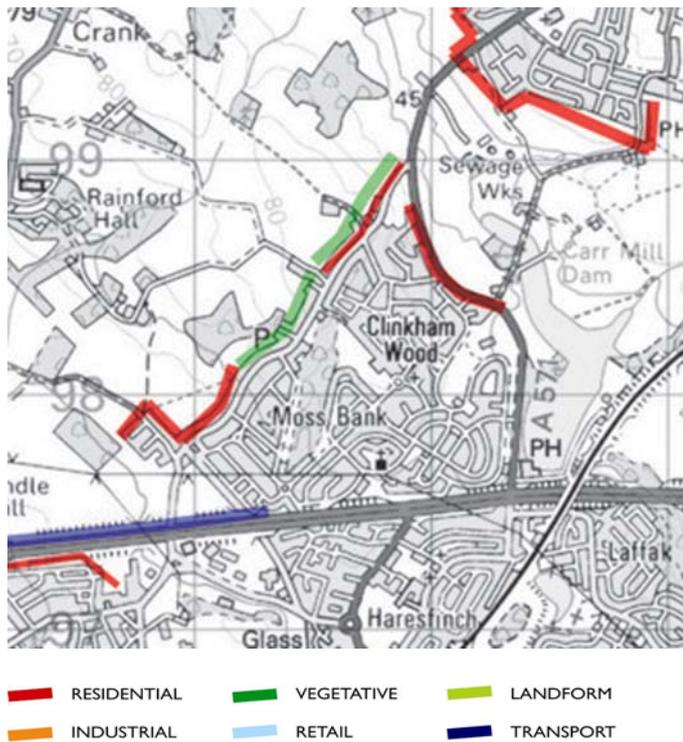
- historically settlement developed along Moss Bank Road combining smaller hamlets of Primrose Bank to the south and Moss Bank to the north. Vernacular housing is of sandstone houses and the settlement is distinct given the elevated location and the sense of arrival into St Helens when travelling south. Subsequent development has been largely post war housing development with formal street structure which has extended south and eastwards meeting up with Haresfinch. Haresfinch developed from the small hamlet of houses surrounding Rushy Park Row and Haresfinch House. The curved crescents of the townscape character have responded to the historical road layout and in particular Back Lane;
- area slightly raised above surrounding settlement to south although physically separated by the dual carriageway corridor of the A580 which runs partially at cutting but is more pronounced when elevated on embankment. The A580 has sought to fragment and dissect the historical road layout to the south of Moss Bank. Pylon line cuts across townscape running east to west, vertical scale is heightened by the small scale of residential buildings;
- area bound by the A571 which runs parallel along the relatively broad valley containing Carr Mill Dam to the east;
- streets often have mature tree avenues or garden vegetation which gives a wooded character to the townscape;
- some areas of mature woodlands or 'cloughs' in particular Clinkham Wood, which extends southwards down through the townscape and has been fragmented by successive development, but which affords an important wooded backdrop to residences.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Strong wooded townscape structure with intact historical core.
Elevated views from upper slopes.
Sense of arrival travelling south down into bowl of St Helens.
Well defined robust edge to settlement.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Southern townscape fragmented by route of A580.
Intrusion of pylon line impacts upon residential character.

### Developed Edge Analysis



The area is urban with a partial rural surround. The developed edge comprises:

- break of slope above large water body with main road;
- back gardens;
- road layout.

The developed edge to the west of the area is robust lying above a main road and water body and associated mature woodland. The edge to the north and north west is less robust as it crosses the shoulder of a ridgeline and lacks any relationship to its topography. The evaluation of the developed edge is thought to be **Moderate to Strong**.

### Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – defined settlement character although subsequent development form sits uncomfortably on landform.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – historical core but subsequent development of crescents unrelated to topography, impact by infrastructure development.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – views from elevated location, strong wooded character.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium high – intervisibility with townscape to the south.
Population	High. Views from populations with area and from traffic along A580 and adjacent railway line when elevated.
Mitigation Potential	Low - Medium – difficult to mitigate against change to historic character and townscape character in prominent location.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy recognises the strong historic core stemming from Moss Bank Road and maintenance of this as an edge to the settlement which would be important to conserve. However enhancement is required to maintain the settlement character and reinforce the distinctiveness which has been partially lost through fragmentation by infrastructure.

A key issue is to maintain the separation of Moss Bank from Billinge to the north.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

Given that the area is predominantly urban, there is little opportunity for extensive woodland planting within this area. However it is important to maintain and reinforce the existing woodland structure with management which will encourage a varied age structure and appropriate species mix.

There is also scope to use woodland to enhance the urban edge along the ridge to the north and west.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

There are limited opportunities for new large scale residential development given the intact nature of the townscape character the adjacent sensitive Green Belt landscape and limited opportunities to expand outside the settlement edges. However opportunities exist for redevelopment within the townscape area to maintain the wooded townscape structure and along the urban edges where development can contribute to a more robust edge.

### **Parr (15 RFS 3)**



### ***Area Description***

- settlement developed on gently undulating low-lying broad hill which ranges from 30 metres to 39 metres at Derbyshire Hill, immediately south of the Sankey Valley;
- cluster of former Hamlets such as Broad Oak, Ashton's Green and Moss House, expanded along roads and in support of the 19<sup>th</sup> century industry to form cluster of settlements all linked in a triangular form around the open flat summit of Derbyshire Hill ;
- historic 'spine' of brick terraces set adjacent to the medieval churches / buildings of the hamlets. Later development is a mix of pre and post war housing development, the most distinct being the strong radial pattern of 'Cement City';
- large areas of green open space are present within the distinct housing groups and form areas of passive recreation such as Derbyshire Hill and Ashton's Green south and subtly above the Sankey Valley. Due to the elevation and provision of open space there is a tangible sense of openness with view to wider landscape;
- large scale industrial units in adjacent estates often form hard edge delineation of townscape area to the west, and pylon line runs along development edge to the north, the wayleave creating a hard unnatural straight edge in contrast to the irregular alignment of the Sankey Valley;
- large, recently vegetated spoil heap of Sutton Moss to the immediately south forms a pronounced physical and visual setting to the residential areas in particular Cement City.

## ***Landscape Analysis***

### **Positive Features**

Large areas of elevated green open space.

Relatively compact areas of expanded housing.

Identifiable historic terraced core which provides a contrast in built density with later residential housing.

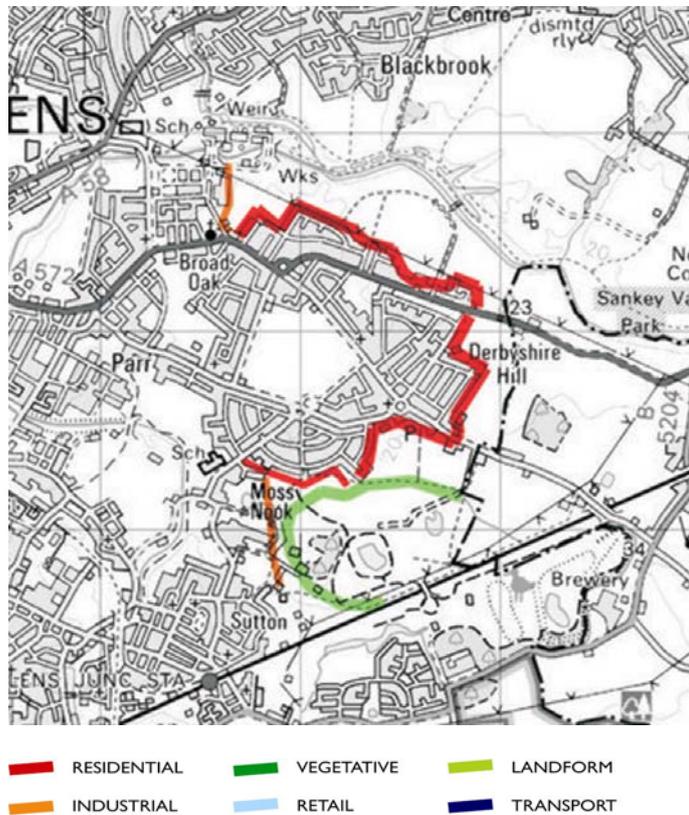
### **Negative Features**

Mix of housing types with lack of strong relationship between housing groups.

Uncomfortable relationship between housing and open space, usually defined by historic road layout.

Encroachment of modern indistinct housing into gap sites and open space within townscape and out into rural areas, and neglected industrial character.

## Developed Edge Analysis



Parr is urban, partly surrounded by rural areas. The main elements forming the developed edge to this character area are:

- back gardens;
- recreation and sports pitches;
- reclaimed spoil heaps;
- edge of Sankey Valley.

The edge of the Sankey Valley to the north of the area forms a fairly **Strong** edge although the development does not always relate to it directly. The reclaimed spoil heap to the south forms a robust edge to the development. The edge to the area is **Weak** in robustness to the east where the developed edge appears arbitrarily defined.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Weak – lack of robust or strongly defined settlement forms, although historic cores still present.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – historic cores and pockets of early industrial terraces still present although later residential housing styles dominate.
Aesthetic Character	Weak - Moderate – open residential character with proximity of large scale industrial estates and ‘raw’ spoil heaps gives degraded character.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
General Visibility	Medium – subtly elevated with some intervisibility to west and north and views over Parr from Sutton Moss.
Population	Medium to high – views from within residential area and from busy A572 which runs to the north.
Mitigation Potential	High – whilst difficult to mitigate against loss of historic cores, indistinct house styles can be easily reproduced.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Strengthen & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

The landscape strategy highlights the importance of enhancing the historic and industrial heritage of the townscape landscape whilst strengthening the settlement form and more recent residential character including the relationship and links to open space, both along the urban edges and within Derbyshire Hill.

Important to conserve the landscape immediately north of Ashton's Green which acts as an important buffer and landscape setting to both the settlement and the Sankey Valley. Due cognisance should be taken of the role of this landscape to the Green belt.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

Given that the area is predominantly urban, there is little opportunity for extensive woodland planting within this area.

The new woodland planting appropriate to the more open character of Derbyshire Hill should be conserved and maintained.

There may be potential to enhance the urban edge at the edge of the Sankey Brook valley through the use of woodland planting.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

The townscape has suffered as a consequence of past and recent residential development. There are some opportunities for further development to contribute to more robust settlement edges, in particular to the east which currently reflects the underlying historic field pattern. The design and layout are important to ensure a positive and integrated landscape and street structure which could draw out the distinctiveness of the individual areas. The open space of Derbyshire Hill should pose a constraint to development as it forms an elevated recreational parkland and subtle visual horizon to adjacent residential areas.

## Sutton (15 RFS 4)



### *Area Description*

- elevated settlement on broad undulating ridgeline which subtly gains height from the north southwards ranging from 30 metres to 50 metres AOD, out into a flat plateau character;
- the Sutton Brook flows southward through the area and has a limited visual presence due to the incised nature of the river and the extent of development extending up to the course of the river. The river is dammed to form Sutton Mill Dam and a reservoir further south, both of which form locally important features which are typically hidden from wider view;
- predominantly post war housing in a series of curves and crescents accessed by a hierarchy of local distributor and minor access roads feeding primarily from the A569 dual carriageway to the west. Small isolated pockets of industrial terraced housing to the south of the area. Lack of local distinctiveness to the style of residential landscapes;
- with a lack of a strong landform to define the townscape, the edges are formed by infrastructure in particular roads to the west and south and the line of a disused railway to the east (reinforced by large scale buildings from an industrial estate);
- the urban character is further reinforced by the railway lines which dissects the area although it has a reduced visual presence when running at cutting, and the dual pylon line which crosses to the south of the area;
- lack of dominant woodland blocks, although some trees associated with street and gardens. In addition there is remnant riparian woodland running along the course of the Sutton Brook which varies in character and condition. The eastern mature tree line to Sherdley Park forms a prominent wooded edge to the northwest and imposes a sense of grandeur when travelling along the boundary of this area.

## Landscape Analysis

### Positive Features

Water features and brook within townscape.

Robust edges to character area, although some defined by prominent infrastructure.

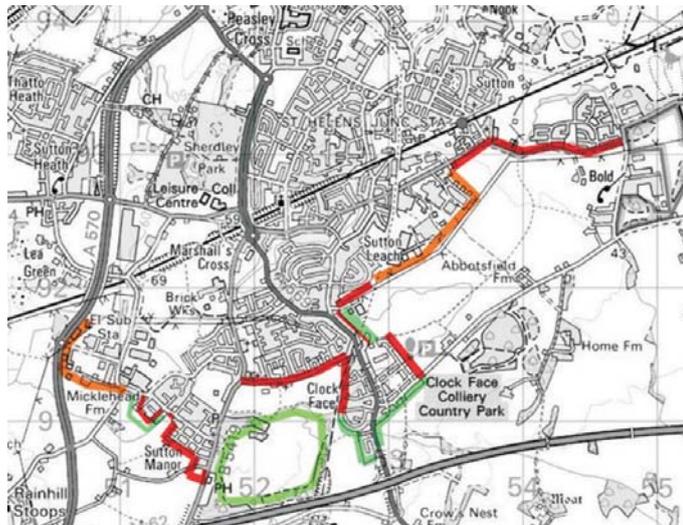
Small pockets of industrial pre-war terraced housing give a sense of local identity although they can appear isolated on the fringes of the wider townscape area, where they are not associated with an identifiable historic core.

### Negative Features

Lack of distinct urban character to residential area, with variety of predominantly post-war 'suburban' design.

Surrounded by prominent industrial edges and spoil heaps, imparting a strong urban character, reinforced and fragmented by roads, railway and pylon lines.

### Developed Edge Analysis



The developed are has a partial rural surround and complex urban to rural interface with different boundary characters, including:

- disused railway;
- main roads and back gardens;
- main roads and front gardens;
- industrial areas.

Due to the lack of strong landform, the developed edge is often abrupt and if formed by infrastructure. It is often prominent. The evaluation of the developed edge is regarded as **Weak to Moderate**.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Weak – lack of identifiable historical core or distinct character to area.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – area fragmented by infrastructure crossing the site and lack of woodland structure, some isolated pockets of terraced housing remain.
Aesthetic Character	Weak – lack of distinct character or historic core with strong central focus. Some partial views to surrounding area.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Medium - gently undulating landscape with some intervisibility to adjacent areas.
Population	High. Residential area with high number of viewer and adjacent link roads surrounding.
Mitigation Potential	High – lack of distinct high quality townscape.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Strengthen & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

Landscape strategy recommends enhancement of the existing urban townscape particularly with respect to reinforcing a sense of distinctiveness within the areas. This could be structured around the small pockets of terraced housing, which impose a distinct urban character where they contrast in built density with adjacent more recent residential development. The river course and dams should be strengthened as important landscape features, with enhancement of their role in providing a distinct character in local environments.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

Given that the area is predominantly urban, there is little opportunity for extensive woodland planting within this area with the exception of amenity planting in some open space and park areas. This should be of an appropriate scale and form to reflect the residential areas and used as an opportunity to create distinct places.

The main area that would benefit woodland enhancement is the Sutton Brook where the riparian species should be used to strengthen the brook corridor.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

The townscape has suffered as a consequence of mixed past and recent residential development. With strong defined urban edges primarily created by large scale infrastructure, and the extent of development within the area there are limited opportunities for further development. However one such area is to the south in the area between the current developed edge and the Sutton Manor Spoil heap. The spoil heap would act as a natural edge to the developed edge.

Opportunities do exist for small scale development which could contribute to the creation of a central focus or series of foci within the predominantly residential landscape which would help to in still a sense of local distinctiveness. This could be reinforced through an appropriate landscape structure.

## CHARACTER TYPE 16 URBAN INDUSTRIAL VALLEY

### *Character Areas:*

- Gerards Bridge (16 UIV1)
- Sutton Brook (16 UIV 2)
- Ravenhead (16 UIV 3)

### *Key Characteristics*

- typically low lying broad valley landscapes within the 'bowl' of St Helens located in landforms ranging from 20 to 40 metres AOD. Although in some instance large scale landform remodelling has been undertaken to facilitate the construction of large industrial blocks. This has created a series of locally prominent artificial slopes with unnatural straight edges and steep angles;
- land use primarily defined by series of large scale industrial buildings and warehouses which have a uniform bland character typically of a 'block' shape with generally muted colours and a lack of architectural detail which gives a reduced experience of scale of the development. Industrial buildings associated with range of chimney and gasometer vertical features which skyline on the townscape horizon and create important local and regional landmarks given their prominence;
- the scale of development and the irregular arrangement of buildings gives the appearance of incremental development with lack of strong landscape framework and can give a 'cluttered' and complex built form which is difficult to orientate around;
- lack of orientation is reinforced by the limited views out from the industrial landscape to adjacent areas due to the low lying valley location and the scale of the buildings blocking views;
- open space surrounding buildings is primarily given over to infrastructure and servicing of the buildings in hard landscape. Wide roads and car parking surround the buildings and remnants of 'green' landscape area invariably maintained grass verges with a limited number of trees and shrubs. Some remnant field patterns with neglected hedgerows and some limited pioneer species area also present in awkward corners, but area dwarfed by the scale of the buildings;
- often estates are in close proximity to large scale infrastructure including dualled roads, railway networks and pylon lines;
- lighting of areas in particular dominant industrial blocks and chimneys create significant and visually dramatic night time urban horizon;

- large scale building can create a harsh microclimate with ‘wind tunnels’ created between the buildings and extensive shadowing from the high warehouses, which in turn can reinforce the perception of a barren landscape
- within the broader overriding large scale industrial built form, pockets of dense pre-war industrial terraced housing exist. The small scale and dense built form of the terraces provide a pronounced contrast in scale when set against the wider industrial landscape, and impose a strong sense of identity.

### **Location and Boundaries**

Geographically concentrated on a lowlying ‘ring’ surrounding the historic core. Strong links to the immediate historic terraces and pockets of terraced housing which are remnant and incorporated into the adjacent infill and elevated residential areas, with often more transitional boundaries than tightly defined edges.

### **Gerard’s Bridge (16 UIV I)**



### **Area Description**

- broad wide lowland valley ranging from 20 to 40 metres AOD, incorporating small scale deeply incised brook valleys, and later canal development. The predominant flat landform and larger scale of areas dominates over the water features and as such they do not register as strong landscape features;
- generally geographically amorphous areas of industrial landscape formed by extensive pre-war industrial expansion around the historic core with further post-war redevelopment and expansion along successive and revised communication routes creating a more complex layout. Successive redevelopment and expansion has incorporated smaller pockets of residential housing which appear isolated due to the contrast of built character and close juxtaposition with the industrial landscape;

- dominated by large scale building development of warehouses and factories comprising a number of large vertical chimneys and gasometers which interrupt the skyline and create a series of important regional landmarks;
- the course of brook altered and transformed by canal and artificial sand heaps;
- building form ranges from large scale industrial Glassworks with tall chimneys to medium scale late 20<sup>th</sup> century low rise business campus development;
- large areas of remnant open space between buildings that lack strong structure and often incorporate wide road system to accommodate heavy plant traffic and areas of hard surfacing for car parking and servicing the buildings. Very limited formal woodland or landscape structure which can incorporate maintained simple grass verges and more neglected areas of scrub pioneer species of birch and willow and remnant lines of poplar, and groups of buddleia;
- low-lying landscape which is relatively enclosed and contained with limited intervisibility to adjacent areas. This sense of containment is reinforced by the large scale of buildings which restricts or focuses views.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
<p>Morden development offers some form and structure within unstructured industrial areas.</p> <p>Industry forms part of St Helens historical legacy.</p> <p>Chimneys and gasometer are important landmarks and orientation features which highlight core of St Helens.</p>

<b>Negative Features</b>
<p>Large scale industry forms large scale, complex landscape which can appear opens and barren.</p>

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
<p>There is no urban rural interface as the area is contained within urban environment. Although the scale of the industrial landscape does define a strong interface where it abuts a residential townscape.</p>

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Weak– large scale industrial character but lacks cohesiveness.
Condition / Intactness	Poor – fragmented and complex landscape with distinctiveness provided by vertical features in particular the gasometer.
Aesthetic Character	Weak – large scale landscape dominates and can present often barren neglected character.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>
General Visibility	Low to medium – low lying landscape with limited intervisibility although scale of buildings and vertical feature do intrude on the urban skyline and are visible.
Population	Medium – although largely uninhabited, landscape vied by high numbers of people during day and visible from main road and rail networks.
Mitigation Potential	High – landscape with a lack of distinct character that could be easily be recreated – main mitigation through masterplanning of buildings.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Creation**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	<b>Creation</b>	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy recognises the relative lack of a strong landscape structure and obvious opportunities to create an innovative and exciting landscape structure which can reflect the scale and character of the industrial landscape. However this should pay cognisance to the requirement to retain and enhance the existing and more recent feature of the industrial landscape which has become important landmarks.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

Although the landscape is predominantly industrial there are opportunities to create a strong woodland structure which could reflect the character of the urban landscape. This could be tied into restoration proposals for existing and future spoil heaps to ensure a cohesive design, which in turn will ameliorate the harsh microclimate.

There may be some opportunity to encourage broadleaf woodland planting at the area's edges and within derelict open space.

### **Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development**

The significant industrial expansion has had a significant visual influence on the surrounding townscape. Limited scope for development due to intact nature of industrial area. There is potential to enhance a stronger townscape framework with structural tree planting.

### **Sutton Brook (16 UIV 2)**



### **Area Description**

- broad low valley basin ranging between 25 and 30 metres AOD, gives a predominantly flat composition. Landform includes the meanders of the Sutton Brook, which has a limited visual presence given the flatness of the landform;
- Sutton Brook meanders through the valley and is often channelled through artificial large drainage ditches which imposes an unnatural hard landscape form;
- complex mixture and contrast of built form from large scale industrial use (included industrial estates), pockets of residential (including historic terraces) and large scale retail development. In particular areas including Pocket Nook, Peasley Cross and St Helens Junction provide small isolated historic cores with some pre-industrial feature buildings and churches, and later industrial brick terraces. These densely development small scale residential areas contrast markedly with the open and large scale fabric of the industrial landscape and creates a changeable perception of enclosure and openness when travelling through the area;

- whilst the industrial landscape is ringed by the larger scale dualled roads and railway, secondary access to the different areas is provided by a largely intact historical road network with remnants from the medieval farming landscape. In particular Peasley Cross provides a distinctive crossroads emphasised by a subtle change in elevation and the nearby churches and vertical spires, which is unexpected within the wider industrial landscape;
- pockets of recently constructed residential development with strong association with adjacent spoil heaps such as south of Sutton Moss, area also included in this character area which reflects the diverse changing townscape character of this area;
- large areas of 'empty' open space often contain remnants of past historical use i.e. derelict buildings, fragmented street structure and disused railways which can impose a neglected character;
- pockets of scrub / pioneer woodland are often located in the older industrial landscapes, which contrast with the more recent simplicity of the landscape associated with the new retail parks. This immature landscape comprises primarily maintained amenity grassland and lines of specimen trees, which have yet to create a strong framework.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
<p>Industrial heritage, in particular pockets of terraced housing and former street pattern, which contrast with industrial built form and massing.</p> <p>Chimneys and gasometer acts as important orientation features within wider landscape.</p> <p>Small pockets of historical terraces.</p>

<b>Negative Features</b>
<p>Lack of overall landscape fabric and structure.</p> <p>Lack of identity and sense of place.</p> <p>Confusing and 'cluttered' landscape.</p> <p>Derelict and 'soiled' industrial image with a lack of identity and experience of disorientation where views to prominent chimneys are not possible.</p> <p>Fragmentation and subsequent neglect and degradation of historical terraces.</p>

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
<p>There is no urban rural interface as the area is contained within urban environment.</p>

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Weak. Lack of overriding landscape character with number of distinct pockets. Highly fragmented.
Condition / Intactness	Poor. Sense of degradation and dereliction throughout the area.
Aesthetic Character	Weak - Moderate – typically industrial character but with some remnants of historical landscape still present.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>
General Visibility	Low. As the area is generally located within a wide valley there is little intervisibility with the surrounding area although some visibility to large scale buildings where they break the skyline.
Population	Medium. There are a number of properties within the area and a lot of people will work within the area.
Mitigation Potential	Medium – High. Difficult to mitigate changes to small pockets of historic core but wider landscape can accommodate change.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Creation**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	<b>Creation</b>	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

Exciting opportunity to create a new landscape character within the existing structure which should be implemented incorporating historic features and structures. Opportunities exist to incorporate the fragmented pockets of industrial heritage in particular the remnants of terraced streets in an innovative design. The terraces would offer a strong identity however the design should avoid creating a pastiche of form.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

The creation of an overall landscape masterplan should be developed that could introduce extensive areas of woodland where it is appropriate to the surrounding built landscape. The plan should provide a new cohesive landscape that can be effectively maintained on a large scale. Provision for potential future development could be accommodated.

Overall, the use of native broadleaf species should be encouraged but there would be potential for the use of ornamental planting as design features within the landscape.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

Past and present industrial development has had a significant influence on the character of the area. The townscape and landscape has suffered as a consequence of haphazard development. Opportunities for large scale development within the area. The area would benefit from the introduction of an overall masterplan for redevelopment and the creation of a new landscape / townscape character through the introduction of a strong landscape structure, the design and layout of which should ensure a positive and integrated approach.

This landscape masterplan should sympathetically and sensitively incorporate the existing historic structures and residential landscapes. In addition opportunities exist to incorporate the Sutton Brook into the landscape scheme and to utilise it as a dynamic landscape feature.

## Ravenhead (I6 UIV 3)



### *Area Description*

- the area lies on the south edge of a low lying broad valley basin which rises gently southwestwards over 40 metres towards a small ridge. To facilitate the construction of the large scale buildings extensive ground modelling has been undertaken which has create a series of unnatural straight and steep slopes which reinforce the form of the building;
- predominantly the major landuse is industrial with a large scale glassworks complex occupying the gentle slopes above the valley basin. Strong industrial heritage landscape, with a range of buildings from various periods. Whilst not of industrial use, this character area also incorporates the newly developed retail park to the northeast. The retail park, whilst it has a different form of architecture to the main Ravenhead works, has a similar scale of building form and adjacent open space, and is strongly contained within the wider industrial landscape by the dualled A570 link road which runs to the east;
- a major feature of this area is the number of large scale vertical chimneys which create a unique urban skyline and have become important landmarks in the Borough. In addition with the proximity to the historic core of St Helens, the chimneys define the urban centre and aid in orientation. Lighting of large scale buildings and chimneys provide a dramatic night time urban horizon;
- large reclaimed spoil heaps and water lagoon have been restored and newly planted and the resultant informal 'greenspace' contrasts greatly with the industrial built form. In places on-going regeneration of area has provided opportunities for prominent artworks, the scale and form of which reflect industrial heritage. In particular the impressive scale and location of the Anderton Shearer Mining Monument on the A570/A58 roundabout creates a prominent landmark and gateway feature to St Helens core and Ravenhead;

- the remaining open space between buildings form areas of large scale parking, wide roads and servicing for the buildings. Grassed verges and derelict land are also found throughout the area often associated with pioneer tree and woodland species;
- the boundaries to the area are defined by dramatic change in built form from large scale industrial to small scale residential landscapes in particular the dense urban form of the historic brick terraces, and the corridor of the dualled link road. Within the character area there are a few isolated pockets of terraced streets, which appear fragmented from the main grids of terraces to the west.

### **Landscape Analysis**

<b>Positive Features</b>
Industrial heritage associated with glass manufacture, pockets of historic building exist within the wider larger scale industrial landscape.
Chimneys act as important orientation features within wider landscape.
Regeneration including pronounced artworks.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Lack of strong landscape fabric.
Proximity of large scale industrial forms denote urban core.
In places area has poor neglected industrial image.

<b>Developed Edge Analysis</b>
There is no urban rural interface as the area is contained within urban environment.

### **Landscape Evaluation**

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – industrial character impacted by on-going changes and redevelopment of area – often leaving neglected areas.
Condition / Intactness	Poor – fragmentation of industrial character with subsequent development.
Aesthetic Character	Weak - Moderate – large scale industrial character, although impressive industrial skyline particularly at night.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Medium – whilst the landform is dipped in a broad valley, the large scale of buildings and vertical chimneys are highly visible.
Population	Medium – although area largely uninhabited, high number of people work or pass through landscape.
Mitigation Potential	Medium – changes to this landscape area typically large scale and as such main mitigation is in form of design and siting of development.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Restore & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy recognises the importance of restoring and enhancing the existing inherent sensitivity of the large scale massive industrial character of Ravenhead. However innovative opportunities also exist for the creation of a landscape framework that can reinforce the distinct sense of place and which is appropriate to the scale of the industrial character which taking due cognisance of the adjacent small scale residential landscape and historic core. Some areas require conservation such as Factory row.

### **Woodland Recommendations**

The creation of an overall landscape masterplan should be developed that could introduce extensive areas of woodland where it is appropriate to the surrounding built landscape and incorporate existing lagoon areas. The plan should provide a new cohesive landscape that can be effectively maintained on a large scale. Provision for potential future development could be accommodated.

Overall, the use of native broadleaf species should be encouraged but there would be potential for the use of ornamental planting as design features within the landscape.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

The significant past and present changes to this industrial townscape has had a significant visual influence on the surrounding areas. There is on-going changes and redevelopment of the industrial landscape, with a reduction in the inherent distinct urban character of Ravenhead and increasing areas of amorphous and indistinct retail provision. Exciting opportunities exist for both the on-going enhancement of the industrial landscape whilst the creation of a landscape framework that does not appear inappropriate to the overriding industrial character of the landscape. With the on-going redevelopment of any site some opportunities exist for accommodation of development. Potential exists for some innovative night time lighting effects to highlight the landmarks feature where possible.

## CHARACTER TYPE 17 RESIDENTIAL VALLEY INFILL

### **Character Areas:**

- Thatto Heath (17 RVI 1)
- Eccleston (17 RVI 2)
- Laffak (17 RVI 3)

### **Key Characteristics**

- residential infill townscape which has extended out from smaller historical centres and spread between adjacent more elevated landscapes. Located on low-lying areas between ridgelines and / or hills ranging between 30 and 50 metres AOD;
- geographically more amorphous forms of predominantly residential landscaper which have developed over a period of time and as such incorporate a number of successive residential layout and house styles. This imposes a more complex and less distinct residential character, which is primarily defined by the low lying 'valley' locations and the more contained and enclosed character;
- areas usually associated with one of the main (historic) road arteries radiating from St Helens, but no defining road spine and as such have a varied road network;
- evidence of historic village centres such as original churches and historic buildings with the associated road layout. Later residential development includes smaller pockets of industrial terraced housing in a grid and later pre and post war housing expansion defined by a curved crescent road layout and gardens;
- areas usually form suburbs of St Helens and an outer urban edge of varying prominence is created;
- landscape incorporates areas of open space sometimes associated with constraining ground conditions such as a slope of hill and prominent mature woodland blocks remnant from former field layouts or river courses;
- areas lack a centre or focal point, lack of orientation reinforced by developed skylines and limited intervisibility to adjacent character areas.

### **Location and Boundaries**

Geographically concentrated in a raised 'ring' surrounding the historic core and low lying industrial landscapes. Strong links to the industrial landscape and adjacent raised townscape areas, with often more transitional boundaries than tightly defined edges.

### **Thatto Heath (17 RVI 1)**



### **Area Description**

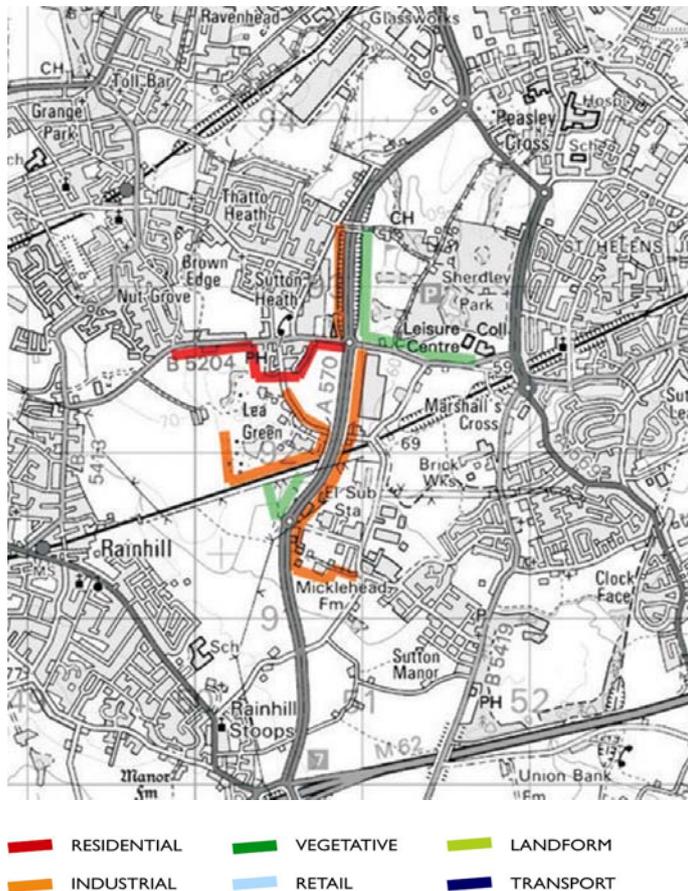
- Thatto Heath sits on low lying ground between a prominent ridgeline and the St Helens Link Road and therefore is relatively contained with little intervisibility to surrounding areas;
- it comprises a complex mix of residential styles and types predominantly late 20<sup>th</sup> century housing and recent housing developments. The area also includes small blocks of historic terraces the dense built form and strong formal grid pattern which sit uncomfortably adjacent to modern development;
- the modern housing is usually high density and incorporates a mix of architectural styles and materials. This produces a lack of cohesion to adjacent historic cores and can create 'suburban' townscape that has no distinct character;
- edge of character area to east defined by large scale form of the depot which creates a simple light colour horizontal visual horizon only partially screened by adjacent trees. Strong intervisibility to Ravenhead works and chimneys, imposes industrial partially degraded character on experience within residential landscape;
- small areas of amenity open space exist around and within housing areas;
- disused tip located centrally within residential landscape containing an old lagoon has been restored to scrub woodland and grassland, with an area of open water. This smaller landscape creates a more natural parkland character which provides a contrast to the residential landscape.

## ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
Contained character area avoiding urban sprawl creating simple urban edge.
Restored tip and lagoon area creates an informal open parkland landscape within wider residential landscape.

<b>Negative Features</b>
Unsympathetic modern housing creating prominent hard edge at south of area with a mix of architectural styles.
Lack of focal features and distinct urban character results in confusion and loss of orientation.
Lack of quality public realm / open space.

## Developed Edge Analysis



This character area is predominantly contained within the existing urban environment. The one section of urban to rural interface is to the south of the area and forms a prominent, abrupt edge across a ridgeline with little relationship with the topography. As a result the developed edge is evaluated as **Weak**. To the north and east the character area is defined by a change in scale from residential to industrial built form.

## Landscape Evaluation

Landscape Sensitivity	Low
Strength of Typical Character	Weak – residential area with historic core located on elevated landscape to west, townscape appears on fringes and has no distinct sense of place.
Condition / Intactness	Poor – mix of housing styles and design with poor open space quality.
Aesthetic Character	Weak – limited public open space, adjacent to disused tip and visual impacts of adjacent large scale industry. Some interest provided by restored lagoon and open water.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>
General Visibility	Low to medium – some intervisibility with adjacent more elevated landscape.
Population	Medium – landscape viewed by population within area, although limited viewers will pass through landscape.
Mitigation Potential	High – limited distinctiveness in character area easily recreated.

### **Landscape Strategy**

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Creation**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	<b>Creation</b>	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		<b>Strength of Character</b>		

#### ***Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities***

The landscape strategy reflects that this area is a suburban residential area which has a strong townscape link to the west with the historic core of Thatto Heath. Landscape management should seek to reinforce the link from Thatto Heath into adjacent areas. However opportunities exist to create a landscape structure to give identity and distinctiveness to the residential landscape. The restored disused tip and open lagoon could create opportunities to improve provision of open space and could be appropriately developed to improve the immediate and wider residential setting and create a sense of identity.

#### ***Woodland Recommendations***

Given that the area is predominantly residential, there is limited opportunity to encourage extensive woodland planting in this area apart from amenity tree planting within existing green open space areas. However opportunity exists to develop the existing scrub and woodland associated with the restored disused tip.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

There are limited opportunities for further large scale residential development given the current extent of housing in the area. However opportunities do exist for development of sensitivity designed and sited feature housing that could seek to promote a sense of focus within the residential landscape. This could address the lack of cohesion that exists in the area and be reinforced with an appropriate landscape structure. The past residential development has had a detrimental impact on the townscape character and where redevelopment of the area is required this should seek to look at distinctive styles and quality of design.

Any redevelopment or new development should be undertaken to ensure this does not undermine or conflict with the role of the historical core of Thatto Heath in the adjacent character area.

Extension of the development to the south should be avoided to maintain the effectiveness of the Green Belt landscape and separate between Thatto Heath and Rainhill.

## Eccleston (17 RVI 2)



### **Area Description**

- Eccleston is one of the larger residential areas that extend over a gently undulating low lying landscape which ranges between 30 and 50 metres AOD. The landform runs down from the ridgelines which define the bowl of ST Helens to the west and broadly Eccleston sits within a broad low valley defined by a number of low summits including Cowley Hill to the northeast, Bleak Hill to the north and the northern slopes of the Grange Park hill to the south;
- the former rural road structure is preserved within the current street pattern often forming the arterial streets and a number of historic sandstone buildings exist along these routes such as churches and old inns which services the routes.
- the remaining street fabric which has infilled the areas within the former rural pattern is mostly of a regular post war layout with typical curved crescent and residential housing with a well wooded character reflecting the large gardens to front and rear;
- main historic core is to the south of the character area focusing around Eccleston Hall and the policy woodlands adjacent to which there area Big Dam. The historic 'core' road pattern is still evident with street such as The Avenue creating a varied townscape character. This diversity is reinforced by small pockets of historic terraced streets at Denton's Green which are on the transition to the Historic Terraced character area to the east.
- there is a pronounced sense of arrival in moving from the lower level wooded landscape of Eccleston, over and into the denser built form of the Historic Terraces and down into the bowl of St Helens;
- to the northeast Windlehurst also has a historic core centred on Windlehurst Abbey and the associated designed memorial landscape. More recent expansion of this area has included St Thomas Crematorium on edge of town with contemporary designed layout. The mix of mature and new immature planting gives a variety of experiences with varying degrees of openness and enclosure;

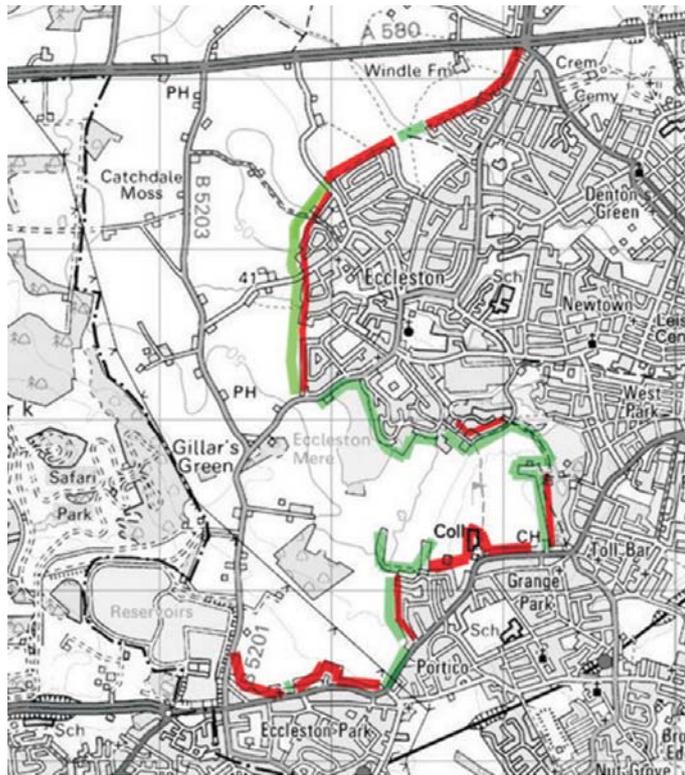
- a number of large grass recreational areas exist within the street fabric and offer open spaces areas that contrast with the relatively dense built form. Open space often focused on the two watercourses which flow through the area, Windle Brook to the north and Mill Brook to the south. Latterly residential development has been tied to accommodate the meanders of the brooks, but it can be seen that adjacent to the confluence of the two brooks, the alignment becomes unnaturally straight to accommodate development.

### ***Landscape Analysis***

<b>Positive Features</b>
<p>Treed character within residential landscape creates 'leafy' pleasant suburban area with perceived maturity of townscape character.</p> <p>Settled and balanced suburban area with focus of historic core and number of historic buildings (including pockets of industrial terraces) along main roads to give sense of place to areas.</p> <p>Positive designed landscape at crematorium with mature trees.</p> <p>Open watercourses running through residential fabric.</p>

<b>Negative Features</b>
<p>Prominent arbitrary urban edge to west and north.</p>

## Developed Edge Analysis



Urban area with a partial rural surround. The interface with the adjacent rural landscape is made up of:

- topography;
- road and front gardens;
- road and back gardens.

Generally the developed edge is contained within the subtle rises and depressions of the undulating landform. However in some instances along the developed edge to the north and west the urban edge has an unnatural curve which in sections does not respond to the underlying landform. This results in a prominent hard urban rural interface which sits 'on' rather than 'in' the landscape. The varied developed interface with the adjacent rural character area has been assessed as of

**Weak to Moderate.**

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium to High</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Strong – wooded suburban character developed from historic cores with strong identity.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – strong wooded character to residential landscape and historic buildings although more recent contemporary development encroaches on intact character.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate - Strong – leafy character with interest at local historic centres.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Low – character area set in broad lower landscape which has limited visibility to adjacent areas.
Population	Medium to High – visible by population within character area and from people passing through.
Mitigation Potential	Medium – difficult to mitigate changes to historic cores and mature wooded townscape, but opportunities to replicate massing of buildings.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Restore**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy reflects the inherent strong townscape character of Ecclestone, which future management should conserve and restore.

### ***Woodland Recommendations***

Given that the area is predominantly suburban, there is limited opportunity to encourage large scale woodland planting in this area. However opportunities exist for amenity tree planting within existing open space, the streetscape and along the two brooks.

There may be potential to create small community woodland areas along water courses and / or in association with school and recreation grounds. However it is important to consider the future maintenance of these areas to ensure the sites do not become neglected.

In addition, a broadleaf species mix should be used in conjunction with any development to create a robust edge to the urban area to the north west.

### ***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

Within the existing residential areas, there is limited opportunity for new development as this could impact upon the current relationship of open space to residential landscape. Where redevelopment is proposed this should reflect the current massing of buildings to enable opportunities for tree planting within gardens. There are potential opportunities to accommodate small scale development and/or landscape enhancement measures including appropriate woodland planting on the northern and western edges where it can contribute to a robust urban edge. Landscape management and a strong landscape framework should be used to set any changes proposed into the surrounding landform, and should take due cognisance of the adjacent character area(s). Any proposals for change should be considered in relation to the current Green Belt status of the adjacent rural landscape.

## Laffak (17 RVI 3)



### **Area Description**

- Laffak lies within the low lying topography between two watercourses. There is a sense of containment within the area as the Black Brook and its vegetative corridor forms a natural edge to the north east and a former industrial spoil (sand) heap forms the boundary to the west. To the south is the incised form of the St Helens Canal;
- Further south within Laffak views partially open out to the main lowland bowl of St Helens with the gasometer at Pocket Nook featuring prominently in many of the framed views between houses;
- semi detached, post war private housing is the predominant building type with a regular street layout. The properties have front and back gardens and the presence of mature vegetation creates a 'leafy' suburban character. To the north the curved street layout was dictated by the former railway line, along which Chain Lane now sits. A number of historical buildings are scattered along this road out from which Laffak has extended;
- there are several small areas of amenity open space which comprise mainly open managed grass areas with some tree planting;
- pylon line runs from the northwest, southwards down through the townscape and dominates the skyline in views.

## Landscape Analysis

### Positive Features

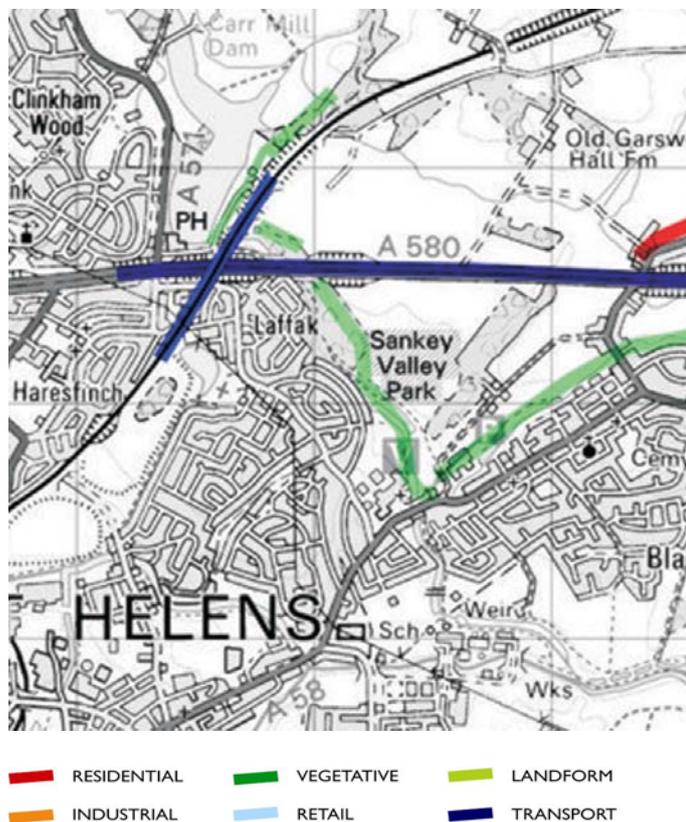
Strong robust townscape edges, particularly with wooded character to east and south.

Mature trees within townscape give wooded character.

### Negative Features

Sand heaps to west, railway line on embankment and the pylon lines impose large scale more industrial urban character on landscape.

### Developed Edge Analysis



The area is an urban area with a partial rural surround. The edge has a robust character to the northeast where the Black Brook and associated vegetation forms a **Strong** edge to the development.

## Landscape Evaluation

<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Strength of Typical Character	Moderate – lack of central historic core, but use of historic road layout to develop wooded townscape.
Condition / Intactness	Moderate – wooded townscape character although impact by large scale infrastructure.
Aesthetic Character	Moderate – ‘leafy’ townscape.

<b>Visual Sensitivity</b>	<b>Medium</b>
General Visibility	Medium – lower lying landscape entail some intervisibility with adjacent character areas.
Population	Medium to high – views from local population and from people passing through landscape and from railway.
Mitigation Potential	Medium –mitigation of townscape character possible although importance to create same massing and wooded character.

## Landscape Strategy

From the combined assessment of strength of character and landscape condition the landscape strategy is defined as **Conserve & Enhance**.

<b>Condition</b>	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Moderate	Strengthen & Enhance	<b>Conserve &amp; Enhance</b>	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
<b>Strength of Character</b>				

### **Landscape Management Issues & Opportunities**

Landscape strategy reflects the relatively intact wooded residential landscape which should be conserved, although there are opportunities to enhance the sense of distinctiveness along the main spinal road.

***Woodland Recommendations***

Given that the area predominantly residential, there is limited opportunity to encourage woodland planting in this area with the exception of appropriate amenity tree planting within open space and streetscape where appropriate.

One exception is the urban edge to the north east where woodland planting should complement the existing planting along the Black Brook at this location. The planting should predominantly be riparian incorporating Willow, Alder, Birch and Ash species.

***Judgement about Potential to Accommodate Development***

There is little opportunity for development given the intact nature of the urban environment and the constraints of its physical edges. However given the relatively intact nature of the residential fabric, any proposals for redevelopment should consider the same massing of built form and relationship of built to garden space, to achieve a coherent townscape character.



## 6. USING THE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

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### THE LANDSCAPE OF ST HELENS BOROUGH

- 6.1. The landscape of St Helens is diverse reflecting the complex interaction of the physical and human influences over time. The underlying geology has strongly influenced elevation, topography, hydrology, ecology and in particular the historical and subsequent industrial development of the Borough. In turn, the relatively subtle changes in topography and the combination of broad open moss and floodplain landscape and undulating raised slopes and ridges has led to a great contrast in landscapes from the concentration of development in the St Helens ‘bowl’ to the elevated settled and rural ridges and undeveloped mosses.
- 6.2. As identified in the characterisation of the landscape, the incremental ‘urbanisation’ of the rural landscape has in places blurred this contrast between urban and rural landscape, creating a more pronounced urban fringe. In turn this has important implications for the evaluation of character area sensitivity and the different strategies for the areas and their future management. This is reflected in **Figure 9**, which illustrates the relationship of developed to rural landscape character types identified in the classification.
- 6.3. To the north and northeast there is a much clearer delineation between the rural and urban character types. There is a pronounced separation between the outlying settlements of Rainford, Billinge and Garswood, which reinforces the concentration and tightly defined urban core. In contrast to the east and south, there is a far more complex interaction between the urban ‘core’ and adjacent areas of open space, whether they are formal parkland or farmland. This relationship is further complicated by the close proximity of the neighbouring settlements of Rainhill, Haydock and to a lesser extent Newton-le-Willows, the former two settlements now partially linked into the core.
- 6.4. Subsets of the urban landscape can also be separated into essentially urban (including residential and administrative landscape) and industrial. This adds a further level of complexity in the contrast of character of these landscapes and in addition the often negative effect that an industrial landscape can impose on adjacent landscapes when evaluating sensitivity. Conversely, however, in St Helens, as in many industrial centres in the North West, much of the character of the landscape can be attributed to the former and more recent industrial development, and as such should not necessarily incur a negative assessment – the chimneys and gasometers have become a key feature of the urban skyline in St Helens.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATIVE PROCESS

- 6.5. The landscape has been classified into 17 character types based on distinct combinations of characteristics: Prominent Hill, Agricultural Moss, Broad Rural Slopes, River Valley, Wooded Former Estate, Edge Farmland, Floodplain Farmland, Undulating Farmland with Woodland, Intimate Farmed Valley, Raised Spoil Heaps, Industrial Fringe, Separate Settlement, Settled Lowlying Valley, Urban Greenspace, Raised Fringe Settlement, Urban Industrial Valley and Residential Valley Infill. These character types cover both rural and urban 'landscapes' and typically draw out both the diverse and more subtle differences in topography, woodland and settlement across the landscape of St Helens. The character types have been subdivided into 55 unique character areas, each with a specific geographic location.
- 6.6. The landscape character assessment and evaluation considered the *sensitivity of the landscape* and *visual qualities* of the character areas. From on-going evaluation it was decided that these two evaluations should remain separate as it more accurately portrayed the varying and often contrasting judgements of landscape sensitivity and visual sensitivity across the Borough. The figures (**Figures 10** and **11**) illustrating patterns of landscape and visual sensitivity should not be read in isolation, but should be considered along with the accompanying character area descriptions and evaluations to ensure that the complexities of varying or opposing scores in sensitivity or value are fully understood.
- 6.7. From the consideration of landscape sensitivity and the identification of positive and negative characteristics for each character area, it has been possible to identify strategies for landscape management, which are illustrated on **Figure 12**. As a subset of this, specific recommendations have been provided with respect to the development of woodland, which should be read in conjunction with the wider landscape strategy recommendations.
- 6.8. In tandem with this evaluative work and the development of an overriding landscape strategy, it was considered that to inform judgements about the potential to accommodate change, analysis of both the character areas and the interface between urban and rural character areas should be considered. This analysis of the urban edge considers the robustness of the existing urban edge in relation to existing natural and built features. Considering the urban edge in this manner is an important mechanism to inform assessment of constraints and opportunities for future change, recognising the existing setting of settlements, in the Borough. This is viewed as a supplementary and perhaps a more detailed layer of information that would help inform these complex decisions regarding where and how 'change' could be targeted, taking into account the sometimes conflicting sensitivities and strategies of character areas along the urban edge. To clarify, 'change' for the purposes of this study considers targeted landscape management and enhancement (e.g. appropriate tree planting) and in some circumstance new development.

- 6.9. Judgements regarding the potential of an area to accept change reflect the inherent qualities of the landscape and townscape that already exist and the nature of any development that is proposed. Some character areas are highly sensitive and can receive little new development without destroying their special qualities, while other areas are less sensitive and can accommodate either further development or substantial renewal.
- 6.10. From the landscape strategy, the resulting management objectives identified can be used to inform landscape planning across the Borough. In addition comparison and cross referencing of the scores of landscape and visual sensitivity have enabled priority areas to be identified which would inform the landscape planning process. However, it is important to re-emphasise that these judgements on the sensitivity to, and accommodation of, change, ***in no way confers any development status or commitment by St Helens Council*** to the comments made.

### **Overview of Landscape Sensitivity**

- 6.11. Landscape sensitivity is classified as the inherent sensitivity of the landscape resource (in terms of both its character as a whole and the individual elements contributing to character). This considered the robustness of the landscape and the extent to which it can accommodate change without adverse impacts on character under three sub-headings:
- strength of typical character;
  - condition/intactness;
  - scenic qualities.
- 6.12. In the study the evaluation has determined that there is quite a distinct division of landscape sensitivity across the Borough. To the north of the Borough and the extremes of east and west, the landscape sensitivity is evaluated as uniformly *Medium* to *High*, and located both in hinterland areas and along the urban edge. These character areas relate to most of the various farmland classifications of landscape character. Despite its proximity to the urban landscape, the landscape has retained a relatively intact character and quality.
- 6.13. Within the central core and southern landscapes, the landscape sensitivity ranges primarily between *Low*, *Low to Medium* and *Medium*. These comprise urban character areas of both residential and industrial character, and farmland of less intact quality that has been fragmented by the spread of development and infrastructure. There is only one instance of *High* sensitivity landscape. This is related to the well wooded but isolated pocket of Urban Greenspace at Sherdley Park, where the designed landscape is sandwiched between the industrial core of St Helens and the wider residential townscape.
- 6.14. With only four exceptions, pockets of *Low* landscape sensitivity are related to the extensive band of industrial character areas which extend from the core of St Helens south eastwards. This relates to the large scale and often

fragmented character of the industrial landscape which can incorporate many negative landscape features including a lack of cohesion between industrial buildings. In addition the dominance of extensive areas of hard landscape and residual remnant green spaces emphasise this fragmented, neglected quality. However drawing attention to the important contribution that the Ravenhead character area makes in relation to the number of chimney landmarks, this area has been evaluated as *Low to Medium*.

- 6.15. Along the urban edge, areas of *Low* and *Low to Medium* landscape sensitivity are found where the underlying landform is still present but has been impacted by land use and associated intrusive elements, including pylon lines creating a 'wirescape' and large scale transport infrastructure, or in small pockets of the Raised Spoil Heap character type, which have an immature or raw landscape character.
- 6.16. A significant proportion of the residential landscape is included in the *Low to Medium* and *Medium* sensitivity bands. This evaluation reflects the fact that newer developments have an intrinsic impact on the cohesiveness and distinctiveness of more historic townscape character and by the perception of a more prominent 'raw' settled edge with little, or an immature landscape structure, to mitigate it.

### **Overview of Visual Sensitivity**

- 6.17. Visual sensitivity is a classification of the inherent sensitivity of the visual resource in terms of views within the character area, and the intervisibility of the character area with adjacent rural and urban landscapes of the Borough. The evaluation of visual sensitivity is considered under three sub-headings:
  - general visibility;
  - population;
  - mitigation potential.
- 6.18. Whilst St Helens Borough has a relatively flat to gently undulating landscape, the assessment of visual sensitivity records typically *Medium* and *Medium to High* scores. This reflects the often open flat and gently undulating landform which enables intervisibility between different character areas. This is typically picked up in the character areas displaying *Medium* landscape sensitivity, and is located in the moss and floodplain landscapes to the extreme west and east of the Borough.
- 6.19. Character areas which are subtly elevated as a series of low ridgelines and undulating slopes to the north, central and southwest in the Borough, have a heightened visual sensitivity of *Medium to High*. This reflects the extent to which these areas enable views into the adjacent and wider landscape, as well as the important role they play in providing immediate and wider visual horizons in views from the lower landscapes.

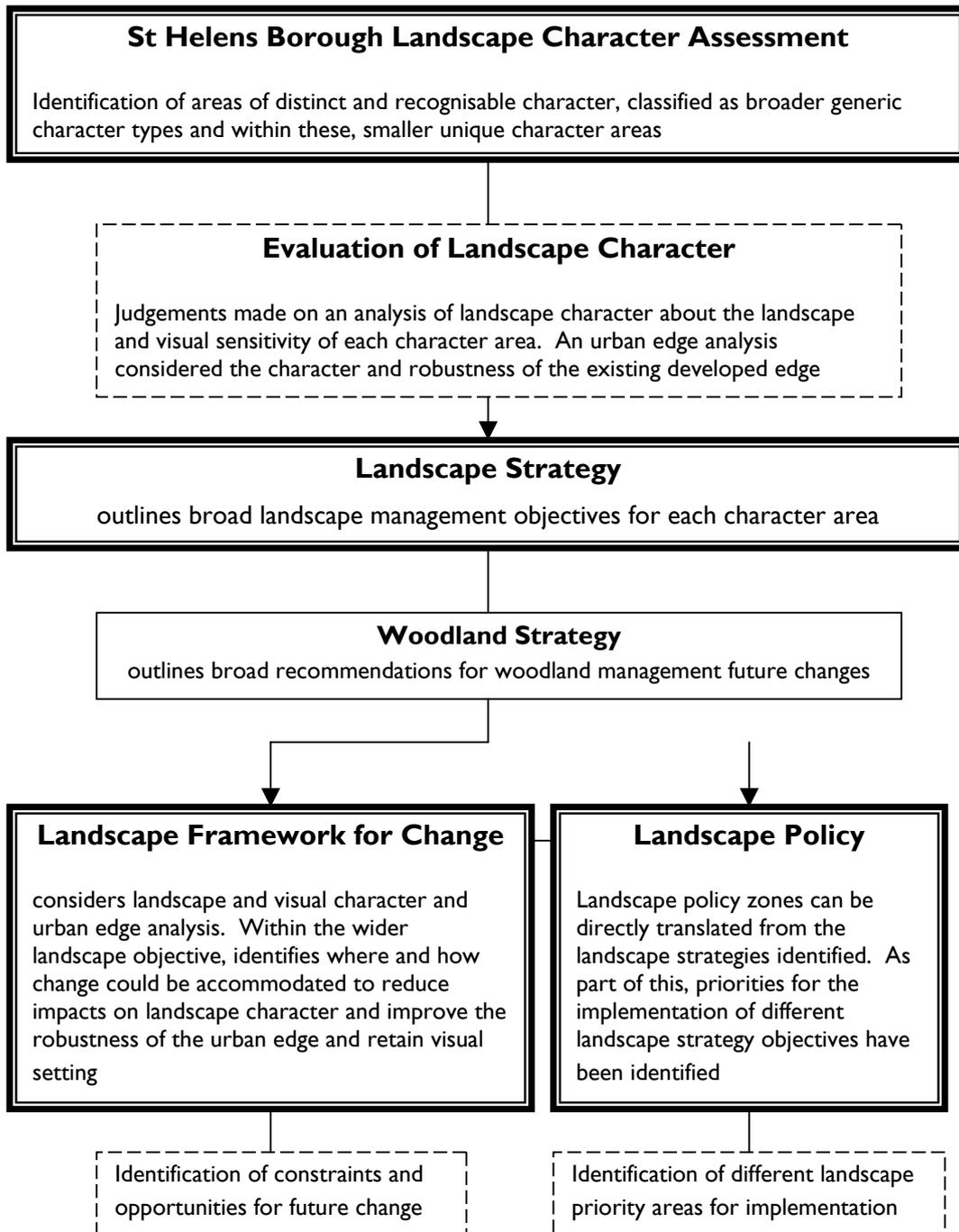
- 6.20. In particular those character areas of higher visual sensitivity which ring the industrial and settled landscapes to the immediate core of St Helens, can suggest the immediate visual envelope or setting to St Helen's central 'core'. The character areas within the *Raised Spoil Heaps* type contribute to enhancing this sense of setting to the southeast of St Helens. The small scale, yet pronounced, elevated profile of the spoil heaps have begun to visually and physically enclose and separate the 'core' from the wider landscape to the southeast. Identification of character areas which contribute to the visual setting broadly reinforces the role of the inner Green Belt in maintaining an immediate setting to St Helens and separation between settlements.
- 6.21. Four character areas are assessed as having *High* visual sensitivity. Billinge Hill summit and slopes are the highest landform in the Borough and form a key orientation feature and backdrop in many views. The higher score of visual sensitivity reflects this. The settlement of Billinge, whilst located on the lower slopes has a higher visual sensitivity given the population of viewer within this settlement which has increased the sensitivity. To the south, Sherdely Park has been assessed as having higher visual sensitivity. This takes into account, the high number of visitors to this popular park and the prominence and of the elevated landscape and mature tree crowns as a visual horizon in immediate views from the largely industrial surrounds.
- 6.22. Landscapes with a *Low to Medium* visual sensitivity are typically the industrial valley landscapes running from the southeast up into the centre of St Helens. This reflects the flat landform with limited intervisibility to surrounding areas and the scale of the built fabric. The high number of large buildings further limit views into the industrial landscape and out to the surrounding landscapes. The exception to this is the higher density of chimneys located at Ravenhead which form landmarks in views from the wider Borough landscape.
- 6.23. No character areas were assessed as having *Low* visual sensitivity, which illustrates the extent to which there is high intervisibility across the landscape, a function of the lower landform and higher number of viewing populations in the 'townscape' character areas which are strongly interrelated with the 'landscape' character areas. This has an important implication with respect to the accommodation of change within the Borough landscape, as there is the potential for smaller scale change to have a heightened visual impact.

## **APPLICATION OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT**

- 6.24. With the identification of landscape character areas and assessment of sensitivity, the application of this has been threefold:
- to identify broad objectives for landscape management in a Landscape Strategy, which could be translated into landscape policy zones;
  - to identify broad objectives for future woodland management which are developed from consideration of the contribution to landscape character that the woodland makes. Due cognisance of the wider landscape strategy and policy objectives have been taken when wider recommendation have been developed;

- to incorporate assessment of visual sensitivity and urban edge analysis into judgements made in the landscape assessment and landscape strategy, which has developed a Landscape Framework for Change; and
- undertaking a comparative exercise of the judgements of landscape and visual sensitivity to identify priorities for landscape change to inform future landscape planning.

6.25. The interrelation between these sets of analysis area highlighted below:



## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

6.26. The landscape strategy has sought to identify broad landscape management objectives for each character area identified. This has involved an application of the judgements of strength of character displayed in, the condition and intactness of, the character area used to assess landscape sensitivity. As such there are very strong links between the assessment of landscape sensitivity and the translation of this into broad strategies for landscape management.

6.27. Within the Borough, as outlined on **Figure 12**, there is a number of landscape objectives identified which need to be balanced with the current forces for change:

- **Conservation** and maintenance of existing character.

Character areas which have a high strength of landscape character which is vulnerable to change and where features contributing to character are well represented and typically intact. On-going maintenance of existing landscape character required to retain current balance of elements identified.

- **Conservation and restoration** of existing character.

Character areas which have a high strength of landscape character which is vulnerable to change. There is a reduction in the quality and condition of some of the individual elements contributing to character. Restoration of some landscape elements is required to maintain strong landscape character desired.

- **Conservation and enhancement** of existing character, where this is appropriate to the current land use activities and stakeholders' preferences.

Character areas which have a moderate strength of character which is vulnerable to some change and a reduction in the quality and condition of some of the individual elements contributing to character. The character area displays a strength of character which it is desirable to retain and reinforce.

- **Restoration and enhancement** of existing character, where this is appropriate to the current land use activities and stakeholders' preferences.

Character areas which have a moderate strength of character which is vulnerable to some change. However the overall quality and condition of the individual elements representing that character is low. The character area displays a strength of character which it is desirable to retain, however there is the potential to introduce additional elements or employ management approaches to improve that character.

- **Strengthening and enhancement** of character with the potential to develop existing character.  
Character areas which display a weak character which is less vulnerable to change, although the condition of other elements displayed within the landscape are generally in moderate condition. With a lack of strong distinctive character there is the opportunity to improve and expand upon the existing character, introducing new elements or employ different management approaches to improve that character.
- **Creation** of or accelerating change towards a new character  
Character areas which display a weak character which is less vulnerable to change and the overall quality and condition of the individual elements representing that character is low. As such there is real opportunity to create and develop a landscape character.

### **Broad Trends**

- 6.28. As observed above, the objectives of Conservation, Restoration and Enhancement of character, where the inherent landscape character is desirable to retain, generally corresponds to areas of medium and high landscape sensitivity. These character areas are located to the north, east and west of the Borough, and relate to landscape which have a simple strong landform, are relatively undeveloped and a distinctive landscape vegetative pattern, which is vulnerable to change.
- 6.29. Character areas where the overriding objective is not one of conservation, but restoration and enhancement of character are generally located in the central and southern character areas where the landscapes have been affected by past and present changes which have influenced the extent to which they display a strong character. These areas are less vulnerable to landscape change, as the elements which contribute to character are less distinct.
- 6.30. There are a small number of character areas where the landscape character and condition are both weak and as such they have a greater opportunity to incorporate a number of different elements to create and improve the landscape character. These character areas relate to the number of industrial and large scale communication corridors that are located centrally and to the south of St Helens core, where there is a lack of cohesion from types and forms of elements contributing to character. In addition two of the spoil heaps which have a poor landscape quality and lack of character.

### **Woodland Strategy**

- 6.31. Recommendations contained in the woodland strategy broadly reflect the overall objective for the landscape strategy and are illustrated on **Figure 13**. This recognises the inherent strength of character and sensitivity of landscape of the character areas to the north and west of the Borough. Typically recommendations centre on the maintenance and sensitive enhancement of the *existing* woodland structure. In particular this relates to the areas of semi natural woodland belts and blocks which have been fragmented or degraded over time, often from infrastructure development, or changes in landscape management.

- 6.32. Reinforcement and creation of woodland proposals are proposed for landscapes which are undergoing current or recent landscape change such as the industrial landscape and fringe landscapes where pockets of residential development are located. In these situations the creation and development of open space with woodland proposals which make a positive contribution and integrate well into that space are important. Many of the industrial landscapes, have a large scale character, within which fringes of formal tree lines can appear incongruous and too delicate a treatment. Within residential landscapes, woodland planting should be considered in tandem with the scale and density of the housing so that tree lines, avenues and belts can develop as part of the townscape fabric, such as for Eccleston.
- 6.33. Whilst generally given the existing wooded landscape character inherent across the Borough, sensitive woodland planting is generally to be encouraged, a key aspect of any woodland design is the *appropriateness* of the woodland proposals relative to the existing landscape and woodland character. In the Agricultural Moss landscapes, the overall landscape strategy is one of Conservation and Restoration of the open, large scale character. As such additional woodland planting would have an *adverse impact* on character, and the recommendations propose conservations and management of the existing woodland stock with appropriate restructuring. This type of maintenance can also be applicable to the urban character areas, for example in the historic terraces which front directly onto the street. These houses have a dense, uniform character, into which tree planting would interrupt the simplicity and formality of the grid pattern.

## **LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE – CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- 6.34. The identification of landscape and visual sensitivity across the Borough has broadly highlighted areas which are more and less vulnerable to landscape change. However discussion regarding change should be considered in the context that all of the fringe and undeveloped landscape surrounding and within St Helens is designated Green Belt. The protection in planning policy afforded to the Green Belt underlines the high *value* of the surrounding ‘rural’ and fringe landscapes. This inherent value of the landscape has not been the scope of this study, but the two layers of information, the landscape assessment and evaluation and the Green Belt designation can be used as overlaying layers to inform decisions regarding change. For example objectives of conservation and restoration of much of the surrounding landscape character, identified in the Landscape Strategy are also supportive of Green Belt objectives.
- 6.35. The landscape framework (as illustrated on **Figure 14**) has sought to provide an analysis of the assessment of character and landscape and visual sensitivity in relation to the strategy identified and the analysis of the urban edge. By approaching a complex number of judgements in this manner, it is recognised that only broad patterns of constraints and opportunities for change can be identified. For more detail the report should be consulted. This approach

and application *proactively* informs the consideration of change both within the urban and rural landscapes, but also at the urban edge and in the fragmented Green Belt fringe where much of the pressure for change in St Helens is occurring.

- 6.36. The identification of constraints and opportunities for change in the rural and fringe landscapes have sought to direct change to where there is less potential for adverse impact on landscape character – where the landscape character is less vulnerable to change.

### **Broad Trends**

- 6.37. Within the landscape framework, the rural landscape falls into two broad categories, which identify character that (**Figure 14**):
- *should pose a constraint to further development* and that strategies of conservation and restoration should aim to retain the existing balance of open to developed space and avoid the encroachment of urban elements that would weaken this character; and
  - *generally should pose a constraint to further development*, but opportunities may exist for small scale development which would support the overall landscape strategy objective identified. Typically these are character areas which have suffered from a neglect and dereliction of landscape pattern and encroachment of urban and industrial infrastructure. As such opportunities exist for development which can support the strategies of restoration and enhancement. Restoration and development of vernacular buildings and development of small hamlets can reinforce the wider settlement pattern within the rural landscape. In turn this can reduce the potential for incremental isolated housing in the countryside, which can often comprise dwellings of inappropriate location, scale and materials.
- 6.38. Many of the fringe landscapes which abut or are surrounded by residential and industrial development due to their inherent landscape and visual sensitivity pose a significant constraint to further development. These landscape and visual sensitivities are reinforced by the typically strong developed edge which creates a robust settlement edge. These character areas therefore illustrate an effective contribution to, and are supportive of, the Green Belt policy.
- 6.39. Townscape character areas that form or contribute to settlement edges have been considered both in relation to:
- *Boundary edges which pose a constraint to further change*, which comprise robust development edges which contribute to a strong settlement edge and setting; and
  - *Boundary edges where there is some potential for change and enhancement*, which comprise settlement edges that have a poor landscape fit. Change in the form of landscape enhancement and/or development could contribute to improving the settlement edge and reinforcing the character of the settlement. In several instances these townscape areas adjoin landscape fringe areas which have been judged to pose a constraint to

development, due to their landscape or visual sensitivity. In addition, development along these edges would also conflict with Green Belt policy, and as such there needs to be careful consideration of how change and more realistically landscape enhancement using a palette of woodland types and forms is incorporated.

- 6.40. This potential conflict of addressing future change balancing the conservation and protection of Green Belt landscape is also evident in the wider rural landscape which abuts the Separate Settlements. With the exception of Rainhill, all the Separate Settlement character areas have partial sections of their boundaries for which change and enhancement could contribute to an improved settlement edge. However in many instances these character areas adjoin sensitive landscapes which pose a constraint to further development (which support Green Belt policy). Change and more realistically, landscape enhancement featuring new woodland planting, in these sensitive locations needs to be carefully balanced.
- 6.41. Overlaying judgements regarding the urban edge, there is a broad assessment of the 'urban fabric' of the townscape areas. These generally support the:
- *Reinforcement* of townscape character, which support the strategies of conservation, restoration and enhancement of the Separate Settlements and the residential landscape of the Historic Terraces and Eccleston; and
  - *Redevelopment* of townscape character, which includes much of the residential and industrial core of St Helens that recognises opportunities for different scales of development and landscape enhancement. Any proposals should contribute to achieving the broad strategies identified.

## **PRIORITY AREAS TO INFORM LANDSCAPE POLICY**

- 6.42. The broad delineation of landscape objectives between conservation of existing character, and enhancement and creation of new character is illustrated on **Figure 15** between the north and south of the Borough. These landscape strategies can be effectively translated into Landscape Policy Zones across the Borough.
- 6.43. Further to this, from comparison of landscape and visual sensitivity for each character area, priorities for implementing the different landscape strategies can be identified. The discussion described in the following sections should be read in conjunction with the illustrative summary on **Figure 15**.

### **Priority Areas for the Protection of Landscape Resource**

- 6.44. ***Character Areas that have consistently Higher Scores in Landscape and Visual Sensitivity***

These character areas are an important landscape and visual resource to the Borough and effectively support the Green Belt designation and should be protected as such.

## **Conclusions**

Character areas which display consistently higher landscape and visual sensitivity are located mainly to the north of the Borough and include the prominent elevated summit and slopes of Billinge Hill and the immediate surrounding rolling undulating broad ridges and slopes. These elevated landscapes form a series of important visual horizons in views from the lower landscapes. The rural undeveloped backdrop of these hills contrasts markedly with the settled and industrialised lowlands and provide a strong sense of setting and containment.

On the fringes of the settled landscape the two pockets of Urban Greenspace are highly visible elevated character areas which provide locally important visual and physical setting to the adjacent residential landscapes. In particular Sherdley Park and the well wooded mature designed landscape creates an important orientation feature and imposes a pronounced historical character which is a welcome contrast to the surrounding residential and industrial landscapes on the south of the Borough, which are still experiencing dramatic landscape change and redevelopment.

Of the townscape character areas, with the exception of the historic terraced urban landscapes, it is the separate settlements which typically have a higher landscape and visual sensitivity. These character areas have a distinct well defined elevated linear composition which responds to an underlying broad ridge. The relatively contained smaller scale separate settlements provide an important contrast to the urban townscape of St Helens and reinforce the experience of a hierarchy of settlements within the Borough. In many instances these elevated settled skylines are a prominent feature from the surrounding rural landscapes and contrast with the more intensively developed 'bowl' of St Helens. Where opportunities exist for landscape enhancement in particular using built development, there is a real challenge facing designers to ensure that new architecture responds to the existing urban form and more elevated terrain.

The historic terraces which surrounding the urban core of St Helens to the north and west have a strong and highly visible repetitive urban form which partially contains views. The uniformity of character has a strong sense of place and imparts to St Helens an important cultural identity, which has been eroded in the past by large scale residential and industrial redevelopment. The terraced street which wrap around the urban core, create a distinct setting. The retention of this historic industrial character is made all the more fundamental when considered in the context that much of the adjacent historic core has been lost with post-war redevelopment. This setting is reinforced by the pronounced sense of arrival when travelling southeast into the centre created by the increase in density of the urban form and the characteristic dramatic, framed views along the terraced rows down into the urban core.

#### 6.45. **Character Areas that have Higher Landscape Sensitivity**

Whilst less visually sensitive, these areas have a higher landscape sensitivity, and should be maintained as part of the wider landscape resource of the Borough.

##### **Conclusions**

With the exception of the incised valley character areas, it is the agricultural moss landscapes and broader flatter agricultural landscapes to the west and south of the Borough that has higher landscape sensitivity but reduced intervisibility. These landscapes reinforce the strength of the wider rural landscape and Green Belt surrounding the urban landscapes. In addition the wide open landscape of the agricultural mosses provides a contrast in character and maintains a variety and diversity which imparts a strong sense of place and experience in the Borough. Of these character areas it is the agricultural mosses with the overriding simplicity of the horizontal composition that is acutely sensitive to landscape change.

In contrast to the open mosses, the incised valley landscapes despite their proximity to the urban landscape have a pronounced landscape sensitivity. This sensitivity recognises the key elements of the containing landform, the interplay of water and the historic development of St Helens. The valley landform creates a varied sense of containment along the linear form, which typically restricts views to the adjacent urban landscape creating a unique and intimate environment. Opportunities for development are limited by the constraints of slopes and open water, but these landscapes remain sensitive to change. In particular the potential for further access and recreational facilities could, if inappropriately designed and sited, detract from the very qualities these areas have become valued for.

Of the *Separate Settlements* Newton-Le-Willows, has a higher landscape sensitivity, but lower visual sensitivity, as the settlement is located on flatter topography to the east. As such, in contrast to the other settlements, where the linear settlements have responded to localised ridgelines, the settlement form of Newton-le-Willows is less defined by the underlying landform. Whilst the settlement has a strong and distinct medieval historic core and defined settlement edge to the south, the settlement is expanding incrementally northwards. As a priority for townscape protection, attention should be focused on landscape change to reinforce this edge and maintain the separate identity of Newton-le-Willows.

## **Priority Areas for the Improvement of Landscape Resource**

### **6.46. Character Areas consistently of Lower to Medium Landscape and Visual Sensitivity**

These character areas are identified as having lower sensitivity with some potential to accommodate change. It is important that future change and redevelopment in these areas makes a positive contribution to character.

#### **Conclusions**

Character areas which have a lower landscape and visual sensitivity are particularly vulnerable from inappropriate change as they have a weaker strength of character. This lower landscape sensitivity should not be the justification for continued poor quality or inappropriate development. The main aim should be to enhance or restore character, although this is of lower priority, than areas of higher visual sensitivity.

Within St Helens, a large proportion of the character areas which have combined lower sensitivity are the urban, industrial and residential townscapes that define the settled 'bowl' of St Helens and characterise the main approach from the south. The close proximity of these areas cumulatively creates a weak and neglected townscape image of St Helens. There are significant opportunities for new development, which can create logical links to the existing variety of built form. Using innovative design new architecture and urban planning can combat the current fragmentation and isolation of the remnant cultural heritage.

Adjacent to these townscape areas, there are a number of the Fringe Farmland character areas which have lower landscape and visual sensitivity. These areas have suffered from an incremental degrading of the landscape condition with a loss of landscape features. Whilst designated Green Belt and located at a greater distance from the urban core of St Helens, these character areas can continue to suffer from a loss of perceived landscape sensitivity through large scale development in areas beyond the Borough boundary. In particular the continued growth of Great Sankey (northwest Warrington), forming a highly prominent developed edge, can influence the perceived strength of rural character within these otherwise agricultural landscapes.

### **6.47. Character Areas that have Higher Visual Sensitivity but Lower Landscape Sensitivity**

These character areas make an important contribution to the immediate and wider visual resource in the Borough, in particular in terms of the setting of settlements. The weaker strength and condition of landscape character implicit in the lower scoring of landscape sensitivity, can impact on the quality of this visual setting.

### **Conclusions**

There are relatively few character areas that display higher visual sensitivity and lower landscape sensitivity. Landscape character areas are typically raised spoil heaps that are in the early stages of restoration. These have an immature and raw degraded character.

The lower condition and intactness of St Helens Core and the largely residential townscape area of Sutton Moss have partially suffered from landscape changes to adjacent industrial landscapes. Subsequent post war redevelopment has sometimes been insensitive to the existing urban fabric with a resultant lack of cohesiveness between the historic and contemporary architecture. It is imperative that these areas are recognised as playing an important role in the wider physical setting of St Helens and the creation of 'place' and local identity.

In particular, it is vital that any future regeneration and improvements to the historic core of St Helens should highlight and reflect the importance of this townscape, so that it is recognisable as the principal urban centre of the Borough.

#### **6.48. Character Areas that have Higher Visual Sensitivity and Medium Landscape Sensitivity**

These areas make an important contribution to the immediate and wider visual resource of the Borough. The aim should be to reflect this in measures to reinforce their existing landscape character.

### **Conclusions**

There are a number of character areas which display higher visual sensitivity and medium landscape sensitivity which can be broadly divided between elevated townscape areas and restored spoil heaps. The exception to this is the fragmented parcel of Broad Rural Slopes to the extreme south of the Borough and the Edge Farmland which separates Rainhill from the lower industrial valley to the north.

The Rainhill Slopes have a heightened visual sensitivity due to the proximity of the busy M62 road corridor. The slopes create a characteristic elevated setting to the separate settlement of Rainhill, and the prominent built skyline effectively defines the physical edge of St Helens.

The elevated Edge Farmland at Elton Head Hall Farm achieves a sense of containment to the industrial landscape to the northeast. More importantly it maintains the physical separation between Rainhill and St Helens which in latter years has become eroded by incremental small scale residential development.

Raised Spoil Heaps have become a key element in the provision of a backdrop and visual containment to the local residential landscapes, and a physical setting to the southeast of St Helens. By the severe constraints of the landform and planting substrate, the spoil heaps have an informal 'scrub' character which is emphasised by the immature character of the planting. Historically and by necessity the townscape has developed around these features but has not developed strong links, and consequently the restored spoil heaps can sit awkwardly in the contemporary urban landscape. Future landscape management faces the challenge of balancing the development of these landscapes as an important recreational resource, with their combined role as part of the wider urban setting and transition to the rural landscape to the southeast.

**6.49. Character Areas that have consistently Medium Landscape and Visual Sensitivity**

Improvements to the landscape resource of these character areas will increase their effective contribution to the landscapes surrounding settlements and their contribution to the Green Belt.

**Conclusions**

There is a general recognition that these areas have some inherent sensitivity but do not significantly contribute to the landscape and visual resource. For the most part these character areas are located on the urban edge or fringe to the east and south of the Borough which has undergone large scale landscape change and fragmentation from the development of transport infrastructure. The priority for future management should seek to recreate visual and physical links within the landscape. This is of particular importance where two of these areas combine to form a large proportion of the north and east urban edge to Newton-le-Willows.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR LANDSCAPE PLANNING

6.50. To summarise the detailed analysis above in terms of the implications these priority areas have for landscape planning, the following broad conclusions can be drawn:

- Most undeveloped parts of St Helens Borough lie within the Green Belt. The majority of the land to the north and west and one area in the south around Bold Heath are of higher landscape and visual sensitivity, where the protection of the landscape and visual resource will be the primary objective. Landscape management measures should prevail, including woodland and/or hedgerow planting and management designed to conserve and reinforce their existing character. Elsewhere within the Green Belt the emphasis should be on the improvement of the landscape and visual resource. This includes those areas with medium landscape and visual sensitivity on the fringes of St Helens and along the M6 corridor. The emphasis in these areas should be on securing landscape enhancement. A particular priority for landscape enhancement are those areas which the analysis indicated are both particularly visible (having a higher visual sensitivity) and a weaker or degraded landscape character (lower landscape sensitivity). This includes Lyme and Wood Pits. If development were acceptable in these areas the opportunity should be taken to link it to wider environmental improvements.
- There are more extensive areas of Green Belt with medium landscape and visual sensitivity and, all other things being equal, the emphasis in these areas should be on securing landscape enhancements rather than new development.
- Those areas of Green Belt with higher landscape and visual sensitivity should remain as Green Belt and should be subject to landscape management measures, including woodland planting and management designed to conserve and reinforce their existing character.
- Outside the designated areas of Green Belt (i.e. within developed areas), there are a small number of areas which have lower townscape sensitivity and higher visual sensitivity. This means they are both prominent and of lower visual quality. The priority in these areas should therefore be on securing environmental improvements, including new development that enables significant environmental enhancement. Improvements in these areas, such as the development of feature buildings, improvements to boundaries and entrances and appropriate structure planting to improve settlement setting, could have a significant influence on the way that the borough is perceived.

- There are also a number of areas where the townscape is of medium sensitivity and higher visual sensitivity. These are prominent locations where the aim should be to maintain and enhance the quality of the townscape. Again, improvements in the townscape quality of these areas could change the way that people view St Helens and other settlements in the borough. This could include improving the distinctiveness of place by defining and raising the profile of the existing historic core areas, and some consideration of the journey into and through the townscapes in terms of the massing of buildings to develop entrances and gateways, and using landscape enhancement to influence the transition from suburban streetscape to a denser built 'core'.
- More extensive parts of the urban area have lower or medium townscape and visual sensitivity. Where opportunities arise, the aim should be to maintain or enhance environmental quality, including through well designed new development. Opportunities to direct exciting and innovative urban and streetscape design should be investigated through the use of planning briefs. Development which can display quality of built and open space design, reflecting requirements of housing allocation and creating links to the fragments of historic townscape, could prove to be welcome changes to the local townscape which is supportive of the wider urban setting.
- The analysis suggests that a number of settlements have higher townscape and visual sensitivity. Strict planning controls, backed by design guidance should be used to maintain and further enhance the quality of the townscape in these areas.

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## **APPENDIX I**

### **Landscape Field Survey Sheet**



## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT FIELD SURVEY

Project:	Date:
Draft Landscape Type:	
Draft Landscape Areas:	
Photograph Nos:	

<b><i>Physical Influences</i></b>
Topography
Geology/Soils
Hydrology
Landcover

<b><i>Ecology/Biodiversity</i></b>
Predominant habitats
Diversity
Designations

<b><i>Landscape Patterns</i></b>
Communication
Settlement
Field Boundaries
Woodland/trees (form, pattern, species, condition)
Landmarks

<b><i>Visual Character</i></b>
Important views and key views to landmarks
Surrounding skyline
Typical character and visual sequences
Intervisibility (views from/to area)

<b>Cultural Influences</b>
Visible historic components
Period of predominant character
Designations
Archaeology

<b>Settlement within Landscape</b>
Pattern
Density
Age, style, materials
Relationship to landscape

**Sketch** (relationship of key characteristics)

<b>Aesthetic/Perceptual Qualities</b>				
SCALE	intimate	small	medium	large
ENCLOSURE	confined	enclosed	semi-enclosed	open/exposed
VARIETY	complex	varied	simple	uniform
TEXTURE	smooth	textured	rough	very rough
COLOUR	monochrome	muted	colourful	garish
MOVEMENT	remote/vacant	peaceful	intermittent	continuous
UNITY	unified	interrupted	fragmented	chaotic
NATURALNESS	undisturbed	restrained	tamed	disturbed

## ***Evaluation of Landscape Character***

<b>Initial evaluation</b>	<b>Features</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
Negative		
Positive		
Sensitivity		
Value		

Perception of landscape quality:

Unique or distinctive rural character:

### **Sensitivity and Value:**

Mechanisms of change:

Evidence of change:

Has change so far resulted in positive, negative or neutral impacts?

**Overall Objective:** Conserve/Enhance/Regenerate/Create



## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Townscape Field Survey Sheet**



## TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT FIELD SURVEY

Project:	Date:
Draft Landscape Type:	
Draft Landscape Areas:	
Photograph Nos:	

<b><i>Physical Influences</i></b>
Topography
Geology/Soils
Hydrology
Microclimate

<b><i>Ecology/Biodiversity</i></b>
Habitats
Diversity

<b><i>Archaeology/History</i></b>
Evidence of evolution of urban form
Key visible historic components
Period of predominant character
Archaeological interest
Historic Parks and Gardens

<b><i>Townscape character</i></b>
Street and Block Pattern
Relationship of public and private realms
3D Massing - scale and density of buildings
Enclosure and street proportions
Roofscape and skyline
Image (civic/urban/suburban/ecclesiastical/collegiate/rural...)

<b>Typical Streetscape</b>
Distinctive buildings and other landmarks
Building materials
Boundaries and edges
Street materials (paving/street furniture, lighting)
Trees and other vegetation (form, pattern, species, condition)

<b>Open Space</b>
Scale/distribution of open space
Interaction with built form
Public/private
Light and shade; colour
Boundaries and edges
Trees and other vegetation (form, pattern, species, condition)
Water elements
Access
Recreational use

<b>Land Use, Culture, Vitality</b>
Vitality
Use patterns
User conflicts
Day/night
Cultural Associations
Road hierarchy/congestion,
Other infrastructure: Rail, Canal, Bridleway, Towpath, Footpath, Pylons, Power Lines

<b>Views</b>
Important views or views to landmarks
Typical skyline
Visual sequences and patterns within area:

## Evaluation of Townscape Character

Initial evaluation	Features	Discussion
Negative		
Positive		
Sensitivity		
Value		

Perception of townscape quality:

Unique or distinctive urban character:

### **Sensitivity and Value:**

Mechanisms of change:

Evidence of change:

Has change so far resulted in positive, negative or neutral impacts?

**Overall Objective:** Conserve/Enhance/Regenerate/Create



## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Glossary**



## GLOSSARY

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Analysis (Landscape)	The process of breaking the landscape down into its component parts to understand how it is made up.
Assessment	An umbrella term for description, classification, analysis and evaluation.
Biodiversity Action Plan	The UK government's plan for the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity, published in 1994.
Broad habitat	One of a framework of simple habitat categories covering the whole land surface of the UK.
Classification	A process of sorting the landscape into different types using selected criteria but without attaching relative values to different sorts of landscape.
Character area	A tract of land, where common physical, historical and ecological associations impart a sense of unity to the landscape.
Element	A component part of the landscape (e.g. roads, hedges).
Enhancement	Landscape improvement through restoration, reconstruction or creation.
Evaluation	The process of weighing up and attaching value to a landscape - used synonymously with 'Appraisal'.
Feature	A prominent, eye-catching element (e.g. light house, rocks protruding above sea surface, wooded hill top,).
Habitat Action Plan	A document which describes the current status of a priority habitat, sets objectives for the management, restoration and creation of the habitat and actions necessary to achieve them.
Heritage	Historic or cultural associations for which landscapes are valued.
Land use	The primary use of the land, including both rural and urban activities.
Landcover	Combinations of land use and vegetation, that cover the land surface.
Landform	Combinations of slope and elevation, that produce the shape and form of the land.
Landscape	Human perception of the land conditioned by knowledge and identity with a place.
Landscape capacity	The amount of change on a particular type of landscape that the landscape can accept without adverse effects on its character or quality.
Landscape character	A distinct pattern or combination of elements that occurs consistently in parts of the landscape.

Landscape evaluation	The process of attaching value (non-monetary) to a particular landscape, usually by reference to an agreed set of criteria, including consultation and third party documents, in the context of the assessment.
Landscape feature	A prominent eye-catching element, e.g. wooded hill top or church spire.
Landscape effects	Change in the fabric, character and qualities of the landscape as a result of development. These can be positive or negative.
Landscape quality	Term used to indicate the state of repair or condition of landscape elements, the integrity and intactness of the landscape, and the extent to which its distinctive character is apparent in a particular area.
Landscape qualities	Term used to indicate intrinsic aesthetic characteristics of the landscape.
Landscape resource	The combination of elements that contributes to landscape context, character and value.
Landscape type	A tract of countryside where particular combinations of landform and land cover elements impart a sense of unity and consistency to the landscape character.
Methodology	The specific approach and techniques used for a given study.
Mitigation	Measures, including any process, activity or design to avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for adverse landscape and visual effects of a development project.
Perception	The psychology of seeing and attaching value and meaning to landscape.
Visual Effect	Change in the appearance of the landscape as a result of development. This can be positive (i.e. beneficial or an improvement) or negative (i.e. adverse or a detraction).
Visual Intrusion	Degree to which a development intrudes upon the field of view by nature of its size, colour or form.

