

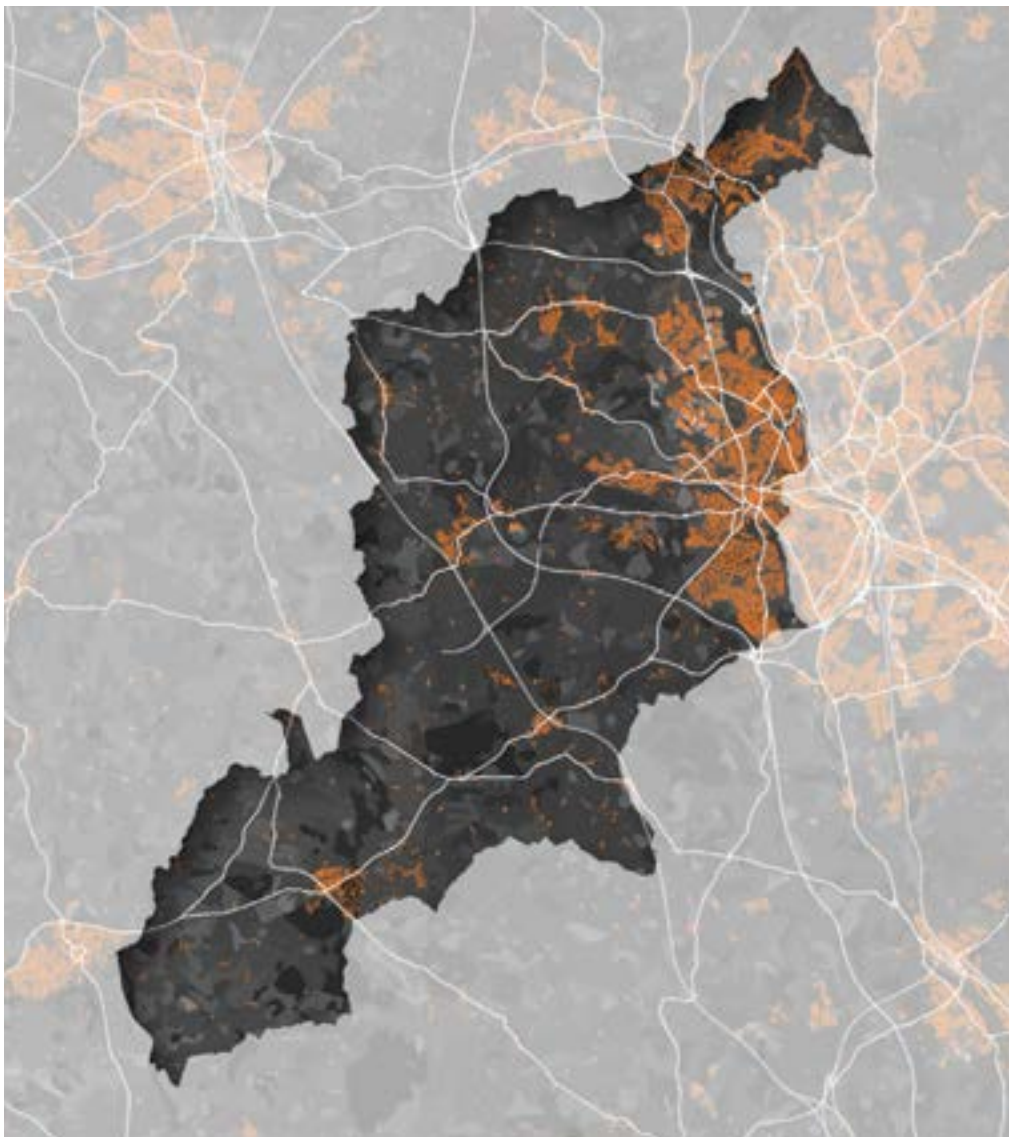


NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Newcastle-under-Lyme Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment Study

Part 1 Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment



February 2022



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Approved

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Date

15 February 2022

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Context

1.2 The Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment Study

1.3 Structure of the Report

2.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

2.1 National Landscape Context

2.2 County Landscape Context

2.3 Local Landscape Context

2.4 Landscape Policy Context

3.0 EVOLUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

3.1 Physical Influences

3.2 Human and Cultural Influences

3.3 Perceptions of the Landscape

3.4 State of the Landscape Today

4.0 LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

4.1 Landscape Classification

4.2 Evaluation of the Landscape

4.3 Landscape Planning Policy Recommendations

4.4 Character Descriptions

FIGURES

- 1.1 Location & Context**
- 2.1 National Character Areas**
- 2.2 Regional Character Areas**
- 2.3 County Landscape Character Types**
- 3.1 Bedrock Geology**
- 3.2 Surface Geology**
- 3.3 Topography & Hydrology**
- 3.4 Woodland & Trees**
- 3.5 Habitats**
- 3.6 Natural Environment Designations**
- 3.7A Historic Landscape Character: Fieldscapes**
- 3.7B Historic Landscape Character: Woodland**
- 3.7C Historic Landscape Character: Industrial & Extractive**
- 3.7D Historic Landscape Character: Water**
- 3.8 Historic Environment Designations**
- 3.9 Land Cover & Field Pattern**
- 3.10 Settlement Pattern**
- 3.11 Access to the Landscape**
- 4.1 Landscape Character Types & Areas**
- 4.2 Condition of the Landscape**
- 4.3 Strength of Character of the Landscape**

APPENDICES

- 1 Assessment Methodology**
- 2 Relationship to Existing Landscape Character Assessments**
- 3 GIS Data Sources**
- 4 Glossary of Terms**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment forms Part 1 of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment Study. It informs Part 2, the Landscape Strategy. Together, the two documents, 'the Study' form part of the evidence base to inform the new Local Plan.

The Study Area comprises the rural landscapes within the Borough outside of the main urban areas of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Kidsgrove. In line with the principles of Natural England's guidance set out in [paragraph 1.2.4](#), the Study was informed by desk studies, field survey and stakeholder consultation.

Part 1 of the Study identifies and records the patterns, features and elements of the various generic types of landscape and areas of distinctive character in the Study Area that contribute to making one landscape different from another. It is these factors that contribute to defining local distinctiveness and sense of place.

The evidence provided by the Study will be used by the Council to inform planning decisions about where new development should be located, and also to help shape the policy approach to landscape and settlement character in the new Local Plan with respect to design, place-making and green infrastructure considerations in particular.

The Study provides a basis for developing an integrated, positive approach to managing landscape change by all those involved with, or that have an interest in, the planning, design and management of the Borough's landscapes.

Landscape Classification

The Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment sets out how physical and cultural influences have combined to create the unique character of the Study Area's landscape.

The variations and differences across the Study Area's landscape are represented by **7 Landscape Character Types**. Each of these generic Landscape Character Types has a distinct and homogenous character that shares broadly similar patterns of physical and cultural attributes in terms of geology, topography, drainage patterns, land cover, ecology and historic evolution.

The Landscape Character Types have been further sub-divided into **18 Landscape Character Areas**, which are unique, individual, geographical areas that share common characteristics with other areas of the same type. Each Landscape Character Area has a distinct and recognisable local identity and sense of place.

The landscape classification is outlined in the table below (and mapped on **Figure 4.1**):

Landscape Character Types	Landscape Character Areas
A. Gritstone Uplands	A1: Mow Cop Gritstone Uplands
B. Coalfield Farmlands	B1: North Kildsgrove Coalfield Farmlands B2: East Kildsgrove Coalfield Farmlands B3: South Kildsgrove Coalfield Farmlands B4: Apedale Coalfield Farmlands
C. Ancient Redland Farmlands	C1: Madeley Ancient Redland Farmlands C2: Keele Ancient Redland Farmlands C3: Whitmore Ancient Redland Farmlands
D. Ancient Clay Farmlands	D1: Audley Ancient Clay Farmlands D2: Betley Ancient Clay Farmlands D3: Wrinehill Ancient Clay Farmlands
E. Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	E1: Chapel Chorlton Sandstone Hills & Farmlands E2: Maer Sandstone Hills & Farmlands E3: Loggerheads Sandstone Hills & Farmlands E4: Hales Sandstone Hills & Farmlands
F. Ancient Sandstone Farmlands	F1: Knighton Ancient Sandstone Farmlands F2: Oakley Ancient Sandstone Farmlands
G. River Valley	G1: Lyme River Valley

Landscape Character Descriptions

The Landscape Character Type descriptions are structured as below:

Description

- Key Characteristics
- Physical Influences
- Biodiversity
- Historic Landscape Character
- Settlement Form and Built Character
- Access to the Landscape

Evaluation

- Condition
- Strength of Character
- Key Landscape Sensitivities

The Landscape Character Area descriptions are structured as below:

Description

- Key Characteristics
- Landscape Character
- Settlement Fringe Character

Evaluation

- Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

The condition and strength of character of the Landscape Character Types are summarised in the table below (and mapped on **Figures 4.2** and **4.3** respectively):

Landscape Character Type	Landscape Condition	Strength of Character
A. Gritstone Uplands	Moderate	Strong
B. Coalfield Farmlands	Moderate	Strong
C. Ancient Redland Farmlands	Good	Strong
D. Ancient Clay Farmlands	Good	Strong
E. Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Good	Strong
F. Ancient Sandstone Farmlands	Moderate	Moderate
G. River Valley	Moderate	Moderate

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity

Based on the key settlements and development scenarios agreed with the Council, the landscape sensitivity of the settlement fringes has been assessed within the context of the appropriate Landscape Character Areas as summarised in the table below:

Landscape Character Area	Settlement Fringe	Sensitivity
A1 Mow Cop Gritstone Uplands	N/A	N/A
B1 North Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands	Kidsgrove Urban Fringe	Medium
B2 East Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands	Kidsgrove Urban Fringe	Medium
B3 South Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands	Kidsgrove Urban Fringe	Medium
	Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe	Medium
B4 Apedale Coalfield Farmlands	Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe	Medium
	Audley Fringe	High
	Halmer End Fringe	High
C1 Madeley Ancient Redland Farmlands	Madeley Fringe	Medium
	Aston Fringe	High
	Madeley Park Fringe	High
C2 Keele Ancient Redland Farmlands	Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe	High
	Keele Fringe	High
C3 Whitmore Ancient Redland Farmlands	Madeley Park Fringe	High
	Baldwin's Gate Fringe	Medium
D1 Audley Ancient Clay Farmlands	Audley Fringe	High
D2 Betley Ancient Clay Farmlands	Balterley Fringe	High
	Betley Fringe	High
	Wrinehill Fringe	Medium
D3 Wrinehill Ancient Clay Farmlands	Onneley Fringe	High
E1 Chapel Chorlton Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Whitmore Fringe	High
	Baldwin's Gate Fringe	High
	Chapel Chorlton Fringe	High
E2 Maer Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Blackbrook Fringe	High

Landscape Character Area	Settlement Fringe	Sensitivity
	Maer Fringe	High
E3 Loggerheads Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Mucklestone Fringe	High
	Loggerheads Fringe	Medium
E4 Hales Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Loggerheads Fringe	High
	Almington Fringe	High
	Hales Fringe	High
F1 Knighton Ancient Sandstone Farmlands	Aston Fringe	High
	Knighton Fringe	High
F2 Oakley Ancient Sandstone Farmlands	Almington Fringe	High
G1 Lyme River Valley	Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe	High

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Context

- 1.1.1 Located in the north-west of Staffordshire, the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme covers approximately 211 square kilometres and has a population of 129,490¹.
- 1.1.2 It contains rural areas with a number of villages of varying sizes, the main urban settlement and economic centre of Newcastle-under-Lyme and the town of Kidsgrove (see **Figure 1.1**). Newcastle-under-Lyme forms part of a contiguous urban conurbation with the City of Stoke-on-Trent to the east and is surrounded by Green Belt to the west.
- 1.1.3 Outside of the main urban areas, the majority of the Borough is dominated by undulating rural landscapes with farmlands, woodlands and villages.
- 1.1.4 A new Local Plan is currently being prepared for the Borough, which will set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development required to meet the future needs of a growing population up to 2040. The Local Plan will also include strategic policies for conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment including landscapes.

1.2 The Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment Study

- 1.2.1 Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council commissioned CBA to prepare a new Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment Study as part of the evidence base to inform the new Local Plan. The Study replaces landscape character assessment work undertaken in 2000 by Staffordshire County Council.
- 1.2.2 The Study comprises two parts that should be considered in conjunction with each other:
- Part 1 (this document) – Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment (including Sensitivity Assessments of Settlement Fringe Landscapes)
 - Part 2 (separate document) – Landscape Strategy
- 1.2.3 The Study Area for the assessment comprises the rural landscapes within the Borough outside of the main urban areas of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Kidsgrove as defined on **Figure 1.1**.

¹ 2018 ONS Population estimates (NOMIS)

1.2.4 Part 1 of the Study has been undertaken in accordance with the principles of Natural England's latest technical guidance set out in:

- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014)
- An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – to Inform Spatial Planning and Land Management (2019)

1.2.5 Details of the assessment methodology can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

1.2.6 Natural England's guidance defines "landscape" as:

'...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.' (European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe 2000)

1.2.7 Landscape provides the ever-changing backdrop to people's daily lives and is more than just 'the view' – it is about the relationship between people, place and nature. It results from the way that different components of the natural and cultural environment interact and are experienced and perceived by people. As people value landscape for many different reasons, understanding what the landscape is like today, how it evolved and how it is likely to change in the future is important.

1.2.8 The Study identifies and records the patterns, features and elements of the various generic types of landscape and areas of distinctive character in the Study Area that contribute to making one landscape different from another. It is these factors that contribute to defining local distinctiveness and sense of place.

1.2.9 The evidence provided by the Study will be used by the Council to inform planning decisions about where new development should be located, and also to help shape the policy approach to landscape and settlement character in the new Local Plan with respect to design, place-making and green infrastructure considerations in particular.

1.2.10 The Study provides a basis for developing an integrated, positive approach to managing landscape change by all those involved with, or that have an interest in, the planning, design and management of the Borough's landscapes.

1.3 Structure of the Report

- **Chapter 2: Landscape Character Context** – this chapter outlines the national, county and local landscape character context and landscape policy context for the Study.
- **Chapter 3: Evolution of the Landscape** – this chapter describes the main physical and human/cultural influences that have shaped the character of the landscape, highlights perceptions of the landscape and considers the state of the landscape today.
- **Chapter 4: Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment** – following an overview of the landscape classification, this chapter sets out detailed descriptions and evaluations of the Landscape Character Types and component Landscape Character Areas (including the landscape character and sensitivity of key settlement fringes).

1.3.1 A glossary of terms can be found in [Appendix 4](#).

2.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

This chapter outlines the national, county and local landscape character context and landscape policy context for the Study.

2.1 National Landscape Context

2.1.1 The Study has been prepared within the framework of the Character of England Map, which identifies broad-brush National Character Areas (NCAs) defined at a scale of 1:250,000. As shown on **Figure 2.1**, the Study Area's landscapes are represented at the national level by:

- **NCA 61: Shropshire, Cheshire & Staffordshire Plain** - covering the southern and western part of the Study Area, this NCA is an expanse of flat or gently undulating, lush, pastoral farmland, with a series of small sandstone ridges which cut across the plain and are very prominent features within the open landscape
- **NCA 64: Potteries & Churnet Valley** - covering the north-eastern part of the Study Area, this NCA exhibits a strong contrast between the industrialised landscape of the Potteries and the pastoral, strongly dissected hills and small plateaux

2.1.2 Profiles for the National Character Areas published by Natural England have been used to inform the Study where appropriate.

2.2 County Landscape Context

2.2.1 The Study has also been prepared within the framework of the landscape character assessment work undertaken in 2000 by Staffordshire County Council², which identified nine Regional Character Areas (RCAs) within the County based on the NCAs - two of which are within the Study Area as shown on **Figure 2.2**:

- **RCA 61: Staffordshire Plain** – is a gently rolling lowland landscape of dairy farms with an irregular pattern of hedged fields, ancient hedgerows and large numbers of hedgerow oaks. This RCA includes two subdivisions based on geological differences: the Northern Mosses & Meres (an old cultural landscape with a strong structure of medium sized irregular hedged fields with large numbers of hedgerow oaks, and meres and mosses of glacial origin) and the Woodland Quarter (a distinctive region of sandstone hills and large woodlands).

² [Staffordshire County Council \(2000\) Planning for Landscape Change: Supplementary Planning Guidance](#)

- **RCA 64: Potteries & Churnet Valley** - a zone of transition between lowlands and uplands comprising heavily dissected hills.

2.2.2 The Staffordshire assessment also identified broadly defined Landscape Character Types (LCTs) within the framework of the RCAs, six of which are within the Study Area as shown on **Figure 2.3**:

RCA 61: Staffordshire Plain:

- **Ancient Clay Farmlands LCT** – characterised by the irregular pattern of hedged fields with ancient hedgerows and oaks, by subtle evidence of former heathland, and by a dispersed settlement pattern. There are estateland and parkland variants.
- **Ancient Redlands LCT** – occurs on older rocks, characterised by Upper Palaeozoic mudstones and sandstones and a dissected undulating topography with muted upland feel. Dispersed settlement pattern, with hamlets and scattered farmsteads.
- **Sandstone Hills & Heaths LCT** – more pronounced landform than the Sandstone Estatelands, comprising hills and dissected plateaux. Large, hedged fields of a regular pattern and clusters of ancient woodland, with dispersed expanded hamlets.
- **Sandstone Estatelands LCT** – woodlands and parklands of traditional estates that once characterised the rolling lowland, are largely lost. The major land use is cropping and settlement is sparse, characterised by expanded hamlets and wayside cottages.

RCA 64: Potteries & Churnet Valley:

- **Ancient Slope & Valley Farmlands LCT** – varied, undulating topography with small woodlands and small, hedged, irregular fields located on slopes and valleys that run down from the plateau tops.
- **Coalfield Farmlands LCT** – sparsely wooded landscape of former mining villages and small to medium sized hedged fields on undulating plateaux close to population centres.

2.3 Local Landscape Context

- 2.3.1 The local landscape context for the Study Area is provided by the relationship to existing neighbouring Landscape Character Assessments detailed in [Appendix 2](#).

2.4 Landscape Policy Context

- 2.4.1 The Study reflects the principles of the European Landscape Convention, the Government's National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance, and Natural England's guidance. It provides a valuable context for spatial planning by informing our understanding of the intrinsic character and value of the Borough's landscapes.

European Landscape Convention

- 2.4.2 Natural England encourages local authorities to adopt an integrated, positive approach to managing landscape change in line with the principles of the European Landscape Convention.
- 2.4.3 Created by the Council of Europe in 2000, the European Landscape Convention promotes landscape protection, management and planning, and European co-operation on landscape issues. Signed by the UK Government in February 2006, the Convention came into force in the UK in March 2007. The Convention derives from the Council of Europe (not the European Commission) and was ratified by the UK outside its membership of the EU. The Landscape Institute currently advises that the Convention continues to apply now that the UK has exited the EU.
- 2.4.4 It applies to all landscapes, towns and villages, as well as open countryside; the coast and inland areas; and ordinary or even degraded landscapes, as well as those that are afforded protection. The European Landscape Convention highlights the importance of developing policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes, and establishing procedures for the general public and other stakeholders to participate in policy creation and implementation.
- 2.4.5 Landscape Character Assessment offers a key tool for the delivery of the European Landscape Convention in the context of the Study Area's landscapes.

National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

- 2.4.6 With regards to plan-making and landscape considerations, the Government's [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF), updated in July 2021, requires strategic policies to make sufficient provision for the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure (para 20).
- 2.4.7 With regards to achieving well-designed places, para 130 requires that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.
- 2.4.8 Para 174 of the NPPF requires that planning policies and decisions should contribute to protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and improving local environmental condition by remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 2.4.9 With regards to guidance for local planning authorities on how planning policies can conserve and enhance landscapes, the [Planning Practice Guidance \(PPG\) on the Natural Environment](#) advises:

'The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.

Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed.

Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary.

The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.'

- 2.4.10 With regards to guidance for local planning authorities on how the character of landscapes can be assessed, the PPG states:

'To help assess the type and scale of development that might be able to be accommodated without compromising landscape character, a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment can be completed. To demonstrate the likely effects of a proposed development on the landscape, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment can be used'.

- 2.4.11 In accordance with the above, this Study provides evidence to inform the development of the new Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Local Plan.

- 2.4.12 The PPG also includes guidance for local planning authorities on implementing policy to protect and enhance green infrastructure. It recognises that green infrastructure exists within a wider landscape context and can reinforce and enhance local landscape character, contributing to a sense of place and natural beauty.

25-Year Environment Plan

- 2.4.13 The [25-Year Environment Plan](#) (2018) sets out the Government's approach to protecting and enhancing the environment in England. Target areas for action in the 25-year Environment Plan include:

- Using and managing land sustainably
- Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscape
- Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing
- Increasing resource efficiency, reducing pollution and waste
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change

Environment Act

- 2.4.14 The [Environment Act 2021](#) puts the environment at the centre of policy making in England, introducing action to create a cleaner, greener and more resilient country. The Act aims to manage the impact of human activity on the environment, creating a more sustainable and resilient economy, and enhancing well-being and quality of life. Amongst other things, the Act creates a new governance framework for the environment, introduces a mandatory requirement for development to deliver a biodiversity net gain and includes mechanisms for enhancing green spaces.

Agricultural Act

- 2.4.15 The [Agriculture Act 2020](#) establishes a new agricultural system based on the principle of paying public money to farmers, foresters and other land managers for public goods that provide societal benefits – such as better environmental protection, improved public access to the countryside or higher animal welfare standards.
- 2.4.16 The UK Government has set out a 3 year transition plan that introduces a replacement for the current Environmental Stewardship scheme called Environmental Land Management (ELM). The new ELM scheme aims to incentivise sustainable farming practices, create habitats for nature recovery and establish new woodland to help tackle climate change.
- 2.4.17 Agriculture and farming practices shape our rural environment and our distinctive natural and cultural landscape features. The ELM scheme represents a key delivery mechanism to achieve the landscape management objectives identified in the Landscape Strategy presented in Part 2 of this Study.
- 2.4.18 The Study has a role to play in helping target agri-environmental payments to farmers and other land managers for maintaining and enhancing the intrinsic character and value of the landscape. It provides a robust evidence base and context for informing appropriate management strategies for maintaining or enhancing assets at a landscape-scale, in a manner that can conserve and strengthen landscape character.

3.0 EVOLUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

This chapter describes the main physical and human/cultural influences that have shaped the evolution and character of the landscape, highlights perceptions of the landscape and considers the state of the landscape today.

3.1 Physical Influences

Geology and Soils

- 3.1.1 As illustrated on **Figure 3.1**, the underlying geology of the northern half of Staffordshire primarily consists of Carboniferous rock in the form of Limestone, Millstone Grits, Coal Measures and Barren Measures, partially covered with a veneer of Late Glacial sediments³.
- 3.1.2 The north-eastern part of the Study Area is dominated by the Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation, comprising mudstone, siltstone, sandstone, coal, ironstone and ferricrete. The expansion and collapse of the coal and ironstone mining industry in the 18th and 19th century, along with the extraction of clay deposits for the pottery industry from the Coal Measures and Barren Measures, has given rise to the landforms observed over much of Newcastle-under-Lyme today⁴. Marl holes from clay extraction are common features within the landscape.
- 3.1.3 Further south and west is a wedge of Triassic sandstone and conglomerate, interbedded. Pockets of siltstone and sandstone with subordinate mudstone from the Warwickshire Group are found throughout the Study Area.
- 3.1.4 At the north-west and southern extents of the Borough are slithers of Triassic mudstone, siltstone and sandstone, which extend west into Cheshire and Shropshire, and south into Stafford Borough.
- 3.1.5 Geological deposits on the surface are shown on **Figure 3.2**. These include Till within the north-west of the District which stretches into Cheshire and Shropshire, as well as occurring in isolated patches elsewhere. There are also Glacial Sand and Gravel and Alluvium in low lying areas, and a small area of River Terrace Deposits in the north-west.
- 3.1.6 The underlying geology has influenced the variation in soils across the Study Area, with generally more fertile soils in the lowlands and less fertile, thinner soils in the uplands. Deep red soils are a characteristic feature south-west of Newcastle-under-Lyme and are often visible in ploughed fields.

³ [The Wildlife Trusts Staffordshire \(2014\) Newcastle Under Lyme Borough Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping](#)

⁴ [The Wildlife Trusts Staffordshire \(2014\) Newcastle Under Lyme Borough Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping](#)

- 3.1.7 The extensive conifer plantations and remnant heathland in the Maer and Hanchurch Hills are a result of the acidic sands and brown soils overlying sandstones, which cover the sandstone hills south-west of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Further north, glacial drift overlies Triassic mudstone, giving rise to neutral or acidic stagnogleys with pockets of sandy soils.

Topography and Hydrology

- 3.1.8 As illustrated on **Figure 3.3**, the Study Area comprises an undulating landscape with strongly dissected hills and small plateaux in the north, and a combination of gently undulating farmland and sandstone ridges in the south. A ridge runs from the north-east through the centre of the Study Area to the south-west, dissected by several valleys.
- 3.1.9 The landscape rises to the north-east and east from approximately 60m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) around Betley Mere, south-west of Betley in the west of the Study Area. The highest topography within the Study Area is in the north-east at approximately 130m AOD, north of Mow Cop.
- 3.1.10 The Borough contains the watershed between the Humber, Severn and North West River Basin Districts, so there is a radial pattern of valleys within the district extending from stream sources and extending towards the south-east, south-west and west. The Lyme Brook is a tributary to the River Trent, which flows south-west through Newcastle-under-Lyme and was historically the town's principal watercourse.
- 3.1.11 The main risk of fluvial flooding is from the Lyme Brook in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Silverdale and Knutton. There is also a risk of flooding from the River Lea in Madeley and Madeley Heath and smaller tributaries across the Borough⁵.
- 3.1.12 Two canals are within the Study Area. The Trent & Mersey Canal flows through Kids Grove in the north-east, and the Shropshire Union Canal closely follows the south-western boundary of the Borough.
- 3.1.13 Several meres, waterbodies in hollows formed during the retreat of the last glaciers⁶, are found within isolated parcels throughout the Borough.

Ecological Character

- 3.1.14 The Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme hosts a number ecologically important habitats, with the most characteristic and valuable described below. It contains a diversity of habitats particularly associated with the Coal Measures, as a result of different substrates and past human practices.

⁵ [JBA Consulting \(2019\) Newcastle-under-Lyme Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](#)

⁶ [The Wildlife Trusts Staffordshire \(2014\) Newcastle Under Lyme Borough Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping](#)

- 3.1.15 There are substantial pockets of Broadleaved and Coniferous Woodland in the Study Area, illustrated in **Figure 3.4**, which are largely distributed in the southern region of the Borough, with smaller clusters dispersed across the north. Ancient Woodlands are among these (most notably Bishops Wood), which have become especially valued and important landscape features, because of the diverse flora and fauna communities that they develop.
- 3.1.16 **Figure 3.5** presents the distribution of the following priority habitats of principal importance for conservation in the Study Area:
- Floodplain grazing marsh
 - Deciduous woodland
 - Good quality semi-improved grassland
 - Lowland raised bog
 - Mosaic habitats
 - Purple Moor Grass
- 3.1.17 These habitats support a range of species, with those identified as principal importance for conservation within the Study Area including⁷:
- Great crested newt
 - Otter
 - Water Vole
 - Barn owl
 - Lapwing
 - Grass Snake
 - Pipistrelle Bat
 - Yellowhammer
- 3.1.18 As illustrated in **Figure 3.6**, there are several woodland, grassland and wetland sites in the Borough that are designated for their biodiversity conservation value. The designated sites include two Ramsar sites in the north-west of the Study Area and four Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). In addition to this the Staffordshire Ecological Record⁸ identifies various locally designated nature sites including Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) and Biodiversity Alert Sites (BAS).

⁷ [The Wildlife Trusts Staffordshire \(2014\) Newcastle Under Lyme Borough Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping](#)

⁸ [Staffordshire Ecological Record \(2015\) Nature Conservation Sites in Staffordshire: Interactive Map](#)

- 3.1.19 There are two substantial areas of Meres and Mosses on the north-west edge of the Borough at Balterley Heath and Betley. These are internationally and nationally designated as RAMSAR and SSSI, and are of significant importance and generally well-maintained, although under pressure. Black Firs & Cranberry Bog is a nationally important peatland site⁹ and Betley Mere is an inland water body which hosts a range of significant wildfowl.
- 3.1.20 There are two other designated SSSIs within the Study Area, namely Burnt Wood SSSI, which is designated for the ancient semi-natural oak woodland communities it hosts, with 672 species of invertebrates recorded¹⁰, and Maer Pool which forms part of the local network of wetland sites.
- 3.1.21 There are a number of local sites of importance in the Study Area, including LNRs; namely Bateswood, Bathpool Park and Bradwell Woods, all of which are located in the north of the Borough. Once part of the mining activities in the Borough, Bateswood LNR has become a site of ecological importance, supporting skylarks, great crested newts and over 13 species of dragonfly¹¹. There are also over 70 Sites of Biological Importance distributed across the Study Area.

3.2 Human and Cultural Influences

- 3.2.1 The landscape of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough is the product of a series of changes through which its character has been transformed by the interaction of natural and human or anthropogenic processes. Like most areas of Britain, the landscape in the Study Area bears the imprint of successive periods of human habitation and land use. The underlying geology and resultant landforms have remained the same and have heavily influenced the overlying land uses and how vegetation and settlement patterns have evolved over time. These changes are important not only from an archaeological perspective but also in determining the overall character of the Study Area. The following is a summary of the past human and cultural influences on the evolution of the Newcastle-under-Lyme landscape.
- 3.2.2 The [Local Plan Heritage Topic Paper](#) provides a detailed description of historic land use and development across the Borough and allows an understanding of how this has influenced the landscape of today. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the key historic influences on the landscape of the Study Area.

⁹ [Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Black Firs & Cranberry Bog](#)

¹⁰ [Forestry Commission England, North Staffordshire Forest Plan 2019-2028](#)

¹¹ [Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Bateswood](#)

Neolithic to Iron Age c. 4000BC – AD43

- 3.2.3 This period saw huge changes in human activity, technology and exploitation of the landscape. This is evidenced in the Borough by finds of stone, bronze and iron tools as well as other artefacts. Other evidence of Neolithic and Bronze Age settlement in the Borough includes a possible Neolithic burial chamber and several barrows and ditches in the parishes of Madeley and Audley. There is also an Iron Age hillfort near Maer and traces of Bronze or Iron Age round houses on the site of Hales Roman Villa near Loggerheads.

The Roman-British and Anglo Saxon Periods AD43 – 1066

- 3.2.4 There is little evidence of Romano-British settlement within the Study Area. A villa complex dating from the late 1st century, has been identified at Hales near Loggerheads. A 1st-3rd century Romano-British settlement has also been excavated within the urban area to the north of Newcastle town centre.
- 3.2.5 Place-names across the Borough suggest Mercian settlement across much of the area during the 8th to 10th centuries. The limited early settlement through the Borough could be due to the heavily wooded upland areas across Staffordshire being unattractive to earlier settlers.

The Medieval to Post-Medieval Periods 1066 – 1800

- 3.2.6 The Norman conquest of England replaced an English-speaking elite with a French-speaking nobility, based in castles and manor houses. This saw the establishment of medieval parishes, replacing any earlier land ownership systems.
- 3.2.7 According to the Domesday Survey of 1086, there were few Norman land owners within the Borough. As the Middle Ages progressed, large tracts of upland within Staffordshire were acquired by new religious houses. The Norman family of Audley were responsible for building the church and the castle along the ridge where the village of Audley developed. The economic viability of the land began to increase, principally through sheep rearing.
- 3.2.8 Many of the villages and hamlets in the Study Area were established during the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods. These include the larger settlements in the Borough such as Audley, Madeley, Loggerheads, Keele and Betley, which retain their historic centres and several of the Medieval buildings.
- 3.2.9 The town of Newcastle-under-Lyme was founded around a castle in the 12th century, when it gained its royal charter. It was established as a Medieval market town with a rural hinterland and developed relatively slowly thereafter.

- 3.2.10 The Medieval Church of St Giles, located on the edge of the sandstone ridge on which the town is located, is a prominent feature in the landscape.
- 3.2.11 Industry during the Medieval and post-Medieval period was largely concentrated in the area of the Lyme Brook and the town grew up around this. Iron working was an important industry, with local smelting in the 15th century. Tanning, felt making, hat making and pottery industries are also evidenced within the town. Industrial intensification in the 17th century was fuelled by rich coal and, to a lesser extent, iron and clay resources, and resulted in significant expansion of the town.
- 3.2.12 Building materials within the rural landscape reflect the importance of the pottery industry in the local area, including red brick, Staffordshire blue brick and clay roof tiles. Timber frame construction was also common to this time period and remains evident in the rural landscape, particularly at Betley.
- 3.2.13 During this period, inhabitants of the town combined their trading activities with farming, which is reflected in the largely rural character of the landscape that surrounds the industrial town.
- 3.2.14 The coal industry in Newcastle-under-Lyme also expanded during this time period, due to demand from the pottery and iron industries in the area. Associated with this was the establishment of new transport systems. One of the first canals was constructed in Newcastle in 1778 by Sir Nigel Gresley, to enable transportation of coal from his collieries at Apedale into the town centre.
- 3.2.15 The Trent and Mersey Canal, which passes through the north of the Study Area, was also completed around this time. Josiah Wedgwood was the driving force behind the plans to construct this canal, in order to provide safe transportation for his pottery out of Stoke-on-Trent to the River Mersey. Part of this canal passes through a tunnel under Kidsgrove, where it leaves the Study Area.

The Early Modern and Modern Period 1800 – present

- 3.2.16 As a result of industrial demand in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme, this period saw rapid expansion of the coal mining industry, particularly around Silverdale and Kidsgrove. The legacy of the mining industry is evidenced by a number of features in the landscape including the reclaimed spoil heaps at Silverdale and Apedale Country Parks.
- 3.2.17 Quarrying also became an important industry, particularly around Mow Cop, where gritstone is a prominent feature in the very north of the Study Area.

- 3.2.18 There is some evidence of former railways in the landscape, which were established in the early to mid-1800s largely to provide transportation of minerals and pottery around and out of the area. The west coast main line dissects the Study Area, between Hill Chorlton and Madeley, of which the overhead lines and poles are prominent features in the landscape.
- 3.2.19 This time period has also seen rapid expansion of the urban edges of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Kidsgrove, as well as expansion of some of the larger villages within the rural landscape.
- 3.2.20 Red-brick, terraced workers' houses are a key built element in settlements pertaining to the extractive industries in the north of the Study Area. The form of these was largely determined by the availability of land but is generally sympathetic to the distinctive topography of the area.
- 3.2.21 The economy of the Borough was traditionally dominated by coal mining and heavy manufacturing industries. In Newcastle the economy has been historically reliant upon the ceramics industry. The decline of these industries throughout the latter half of the 20th century has had a significant impact upon the environmental, economic and social landscape of the area.

Historic Landscape Character

- 3.2.22 The Newcastle-under-Lyme landscape is the product of various influences which have acted upon it over time. The character of the landscape has altered based on actors such as its underlying geology, the topography and hydrology. These have influenced the human activity in the landscape and thus the patterns of land use. It is these patterns of land use which demonstrate the cultural dimension of the present day landscape.
- 3.2.23 The [Staffordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation \(HLC\)](#) (Revised April 2011) provides a tool for helping understand the "time depth" in the present landscape shaped by episodes of changing land uses, activities and attitudes associated with cultures in different eras through the millennia in response to the physical environment, natural resources and prevailing climate. The Staffordshire HLC identifies seven Historic Character Broad Types within the Study Area. This information has been used to inform the landscape character descriptions.

- 3.2.24 The seven Historic Landscape Broad Character Types within the Study Area are:
- Fieldsapes (see **Figure 3.7A**)
 - Woodland (see **Figure 3.7B**)
 - Industrial and Extractive (see **Figure 3.7C**)
 - Water (see **Figure 3.7D**)
 - Communications
 - Ornamental, Parkland and Recreational
 - Settlement
 - Unenclosed Land
- 3.2.25 The over-riding rural character of the Borough is evidenced by the most dominant Historic Landscape Broad Character Type being fieldsapes, with the large urban area outside of the Study Area, to the north-east.
- 3.2.26 The [Refined HLC for Staffordshire](#) identifies and describes Refined Historic Landscape Character Types that provide more detailed information to inform a finer grained understanding of the Study Area's historic landscape character. Within the Study Area, the fieldsapes broad type is sub-divided into 15 refined HLC types that reflect the variation in character of the field patterns across the Study Area. Whilst there is considerable localised variation, in general small irregular and rectilinear fields are more common in the north, and large assarts, large irregular fields and other large fields are more common in the central and southern part of the district.
- 3.2.27 Other broad historic landscape types identifiable within the Study Area include settlement, woodland, industrial and extractive. Smaller areas of land within the Borough are defined as ornamental, parkland and recreation, communications, water and valley floor and unenclosed land.

Heritage Assets in the Landscape

- 3.2.28 Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough contains a variety of valued significant assets. These contribute to the local distinctiveness and landscape character which is special and diverse.
- 3.2.29 As illustrated on **Figure 3.8** there are a variety of nationally designated sites with statutory protection as well as non-statutory sites scattered across the Study Area. Heritage assets include listed buildings, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens and scheduled monuments. In addition to this, there are a number of undesigned heritage assets including locally listed buildings and sites of archaeological potential.

- 3.2.30 There are 279 listed buildings and structures in the Study Area. Of these, three are Grade I, 25 are Grade II* and 353 are Grade II.
- 3.2.31 There are two Registered Parks and Gardens, namely Keele Hall (Grade II) and Maer Hall (Grade II).
- 3.2.32 There are 11 Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Study Area, which include Bowl Barrow on Maer hills, which is a funerary monument dating from the Late Neolithic period to the Late Bronze Age¹², as well as the site of Old Madeley Manor, which was a moated site with a house, gardens and watermill from the 16th Century¹³.
- 3.2.33 There are 11 Conservation Areas within the Study Area which have the purpose of enhancing or preserving the character and appearance of areas that are of special architectural or historical interest. These largely comprise of the historic centres of villages including Audley, Betley, Madeley, Keele and Mucklestone, as well as a more substantial area around Maer including Maer Pool and the hillfort to the north, and parkland pertaining to Keele Hall.
- 3.2.34 In addition to the designated sites there are 43 notable historic buildings and other structures within the Study Area identified in Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures (last updated in 2020).

3.3 Perceptions of the Landscape

- 3.3.1 The Study Area's landscape is generally not well represented in literature and the arts.

The Arts

- 3.3.2 The artist, Jack Simcock, lived in the village of Mow Cop, an isolated village and hill on the Staffordshire-Cheshire border, from 1958 until his death in 2012. He produced paintings of the area for over 20 years, which uniquely capture and interpret the Mow Cop landscape. He spent hours travelling through the landscape, paying acute attention to the details and elements of the Mow Cop area, which subsequently led to the production of a body of 'wonderful and important paintings'¹⁴.

¹² [Historic England, Bowl Barrow on Maer Hills](#)

¹³ [Historic England, Site of Old Madeley Manor](#)

¹⁴ [Henry Birks \(2019\) At one with the elements: the paintings of Jack Simcock](#)

- 3.3.3 The Wedgwood Monument, unveiled in 1845 at Bignall Hill, as a memorial to John Wedgwood, is still a prominent landscape feature today. Wedgwood, a local coal mine owner, died in 1839 and declared in his will that a monument would be erected in his memory. The Wedgwood-owned colliery, in which there were notable coal mine disasters, was located just below the hill. The monument now acts as a reminder within the landscape of this colliery and its history¹⁵.

Writers and Poets

- 3.3.4 The English novelist, Alan Garner, bases many of his novels on the landscape and history of Mow Cop and the surrounding areas. 'Red Shift', his fantasy novel, first published in 1973, sees the characters seeking refuge at Mow Cop rock¹⁶. His 1966 children's storybook, 'The Old Man of Mow', is also rooted in the landscape of Mow Cop, in which two children discover people and factories at the top of the rocky hill¹⁷.
- 3.3.5 The landscape of the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme has influenced many poets; notably John Stratham, who wrote 'Sit a moment on my crest: my views are beautiful', in his poem 'Watershed at Maer', about the hills above Maer Hall¹⁸.
- 3.3.6 English novelist and journalist, Arnold Bennett (1867-1931), wrote several fictional novels based on 'The Potteries' area. In his writings, he observes and draws attention to the processes which contribute to landscape change in the area, as well as seeking to reveal the human experience of the places and landscape.¹⁹

3.4 State of the Landscape Today

- 3.4.1 The current condition of the Borough's landscapes is strongly determined by changes in land use in response to changing economic, social and environmental forces for change. The current pattern of land use can be seen in the aerial photographs on **Figure 3.9**. An overview of the state of the Borough's landscape today is provided below.

Settlement Form, Pattern and Built Character

- 3.4.2 As illustrated on **Figure 3.10**, villages of varying sizes are dispersed on a generally loose pattern through the rural landscape of the Borough. The main settlement and economic centre of the Borough is Newcastle-under-Lyme and Kidsgrove is the second principal town (outside of the Study Area).

¹⁵ [The Potteries, Monument to John Wedgwood at Bignall Hill](#)

¹⁶ Alan Garner (2002) Red Shift

¹⁷ Alan Garner (1966) The Old Man of Mow

¹⁸ [John Stratham, Watershed at Maer](#)

¹⁹ [Brian J Hudson \(2016\) Arnold Bennett, transport and urban development](#)

- 3.4.3 Residential development on the edge of the urban areas is often visible in the landscape, particularly in the north of the Study Area where it is located on the rising slopes of the undulating landform. Here, it is viewed as layers of predominantly residential properties, climbing the hillsides. Further south, the urban area of Newcastle is viewed from the uplands as a sprawling industrial town extending to merge with Stoke-on-Trent, on flatter, low-lying landform to the east of the Study Area.
- 3.4.4 There are several larger villages, dispersed through the Study Area, namely Audley in the north, Madeley in the centre and Loggerheads in the south. Audley and Madeley have historic centres and are located on slopes that form the sides of valleys of small watercourses. Loggerheads is a more recent settlement that has expanded from a small number of properties along the A53. It is also located on sloping landform, either side of a watercourse in the north and across heathland to the south.
- 3.4.5 Between these larger settlements are a small number of medium sized villages and several smaller villages that vary in form and location. Many of them have origins as linear villages, along routeways. Several of the village settlements are wholly or in-part designated as conservation areas. The relevant [Conservation Area Appraisals](#) provide detail on the historic origins of these villages and an understanding of their key features including vernacular and building materials.
- 3.4.6 In places the villages have expanded, both in linear form further along the main routeway and also sideways from the routeway to have a more nucleated character, expanded from the historic core. The edges of more recent extensions to the villages often stand out in the rural landscape, particularly where they have extended upslope.
- 3.4.7 There are a large number of hamlets and farmsteads dispersed through the rural landscape. These are an integral part of the rural landscape of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Small hamlets are often loosely clustered, with houses spreading out along the hedge-lined, country lanes. Farmsteads are generally associated with 18th and 19th century development formed around one or more courtyards.
- 3.4.8 Farmsteads tend to be associated with hamlets or form loose clusters, with only a small number forming isolated farmsteads. Farmsteads are now largely absent to the east of the Borough due to urban expansion and former extractive industrial sites. Small-scale farmsteads (38%) slightly outnumber the large-scale courtyard farmsteads (35%). 20% of farmsteads are defined as regular courtyard L-plans and are concentrated to the south around Ashley Heath/Loggerheads and to the north between Audley/Balterley and the county boundary. These farmsteads are associated with small-scale dairying and are particularly characteristic of the Borough²⁰.

²⁰ [Staffordshire County Council & English Heritage \(2015\) Farmsteads in Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough](#)

- 3.4.9 The presence of landed estates has also influenced the landscape and built heritage of the Study Area. There are a number of halls or their remnants and ancillary buildings, manor houses and large farmhouses of tenant farms throughout the Study Area, but more common through the east and south. The estate landscapes are characterised by clear boundaries, often stone or brick walling, woodland plantations and straight track and roadways. A particularly good example is Oakley Hall, on the west Study Area boundary.
- 3.4.10 Keele is an example of an estate landscape that has been substantially altered by a variety of land uses that have evolved over time. The Sneyd family exploited the estate for coal and iron, as well as arable and dairy farming on their land. Following the estates decline, the now Keele University was established in the mid-20th century. The present day university is a 600 acre campus university that has established within the estate landscape. The hall, much of the woodland and ponds are retained as part of the landscape. Modern commercial mixed-use buildings have grown up within the former estate field pattern.

Climate Change

- 3.4.11 We are in a climate crisis and climate change is increasingly acknowledged as a key driver of future landscape change. The [UK Climate Projections 2018](#) (UKCP18) reviewed the trends and predicted the type of climate changes that might be expected in the future. The general climate change trends projected in the UK for the 21st century include:
- All areas of the UK will be warmer, with warming greater in summer than winter
 - Seasonal and regional variation in rainfall, but overall resulting in drier summers and wetter winters
 - An increase in hourly precipitation extremes
 - A decrease in soil moisture during summers, consistent with reduction in summer rainfall
- 3.4.12 Climate change is likely to result in more unpredictable weather, including more intense rainfall events, which would result in more flooding events along the local watercourses, including the Lyme Brook and River Lea. Heavy rainfall would destabilise watercourse valleys and contribute to increased soil erosion and pollution, which would impact on the water quality of the watercourses.
- 3.4.13 Warmer summer temperatures would contribute to warmer water temperatures, which would result in increased incidences of algal bloom on waterbodies, for example lakes, reservoirs, meres and ponds throughout the Study Area. Levels of phosphates and pesticides in the water could also increase during dry periods.

- 3.4.14 Extended periods of drought may change the suitability of the current agricultural crops and methods of cultivation, particularly on free-draining soils.
- 3.4.15 Climate change is likely to exacerbate the risk of spread of non-native species, insect pests and pathogens, for example the spread of the *Chalara fraxinea* fungus in ash, acute oak decline poses a threat to oaks, along with the oak processionary moth, and red band beetle threatening a number of species of pine. All of these have the potential to fundamentally alter the landscape.
- 3.4.16 Veteran trees, particularly on higher land would be more susceptible to the stresses of weather extremes including wind damage.
- 3.4.17 The recent UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) has resulted in various commitments to help combat climate change. In the UK, proposals that will likely impact on the landscape include planting more trees, helping farmers to tackle environmental decline through changes to their farming practices and increasing use of renewable energy.
- 3.4.18 The network of protected sites through Newcastle-under-Lyme will continue to play a valuable role in conservation of the variety of nature sites and species, but there will be changes in populations, communities and ecosystems at individual sites as a result of climate change.
- 3.4.19 As a response to climate change, there is a strong emphasis on moving towards generating energy from renewable as opposed to finite sources. Renewable energy can include a number of forms, from wind technology (single turbines and wind farms) to biomass, solar and hydro-electric technologies, all of which are likely to have impacts on the landscape if not sensitively designed and sited.

Agriculture

- 3.4.20 The Study Area has a range of agricultural landscapes, supporting pastoral grazing, dairy farming and arable crop production. Farming plays an important role in creating a 'sense of place' across the Study Area. Ongoing changes in farming practices have altered the landscape over time. This continues to happen due to a variety of pressures.
- 3.4.21 There is ongoing decline in the number of agricultural holdings in the Study Area, particularly small-scale dairying. Equestrian holdings are replacing parts of the pastoral landscape, resulting in alteration of traditional boundary features and fragmentation of habitats.
- 3.4.22 Intensification of cultivation of the lighter, freely draining soils on the sloping landform increases the risk of soil erosion due to reduced organic matter.

- 3.4.23 The rise of vegan and plant-based diets, in response to climate change pressures, is altering demand for meat. Continued trends could lead to reduced numbers of livestock and, therefore, changes in land use and appearance of the landscape.
- 3.4.24 Farmers are increasingly taking a leading role in finding appropriate solutions to climate change through improvements in efficiency and sustainability of farming practices. Farms need to adapt to new agricultural and environmental policies, which require farmers to deliver greater environmental goods alongside high value produce. Championing the Farmed Environment is a local partnership that supports farmers to deliver environmental benefits within a productive farm business. This will result in benefits to wildlife, soil and water resources. Within the Study Area this could contribute to an improved network of wildlife sites and less fragmentation of habitats.
- 3.4.25 Field boundaries in the Study Area are made up from hedgerows and trees. Key threats to these are neglect and over management. Hedges have, in places, lost their function as stock proof barriers and are uneconomic to maintain. Hedgerow trees are an ecological feature.
- 3.4.26 Over time, farmsteads in the Study Area have experienced a variety of changes as a result of modification of farming methods and a pressure to expand and diversify. This is represented in the various states of survival of the farmsteads across the Borough, as identified in the [Historic Farmsteads and Landscape Character in Staffordshire](#). There is continued pressure for changes in farming techniques and products, which would result in further alteration and loss of farmsteads that contribute to the rural landscape character of the Borough.

Development and Infrastructure

- 3.4.27 Well-designed buildings can make a valuable contribution to the identity and character of the landscape. There is likely to be intense development pressure in the future on the landscape, not only from new housing but also from other types of development.
- 3.4.28 The key potential future forces for change relating to development in the Study Area may include:
- Suburbanisation of towns and villages, as a result of expansions to existing settlements
 - Infringement of the green belt for new clusters of housing settlements, recreational facilities and/ or employment sites
 - Increasing traffic pressures on the dense road network
 - Demand for farmstead conversion projects
 - The HS2 network is set to pass through the Study Area, which is likely to have a visual, acoustic and scenic impact on the landscape

- Trend in an increase of tall, vertical infrastructure developments such as electricity pylons, wind turbines, communication masts
- Expansion of mineral extraction sites as a result of development, which is likely to produce a rise in lorry movements in the area.

- 3.4.29 The proposed HS2 line is set to travel through the centre of the Study Area, in a west to east direction. Its suggested route will pass through a residential area, as well as a handful of woodland clusters. Dislocating woodland areas could lead to habitat fragmentation, reduction in species richness and the loss of a unique sense of place. The introduction of a high-speed rail service to this landscape is likely to completely alter the scenic and tranquil values of the surrounding rural landscape.
- 3.4.30 There is continued pressure for new housing development. Whilst the local authority aims to direct most of its development in the urban centres, it is likely that development pressures will result in some green belt reclamation and urban encroachment on the rural landscape. This will result in a reduction of green space that provides recreation and biodiversity value.
- 3.4.31 Strategic sites for development have been located to try and focus the impact of landscape change, including possible sites for Strategic Employment Development at Keele University Growth Corridor and the land south-east of junction 16 on the M6. These may be conspicuous and result in increased urban influences in the surrounding rural landscape.
- 3.4.32 As a result of housing development pressures there is also likely to be development required outside of the urban areas, resulting in expansion of rural village settlements across the Study Area. Modern building does not always reflect the vernacular, for example use of uncharacteristic/non-local building materials, signage, inappropriate street furniture and urban style highway improvements, which puts local character and distinctiveness under threat.
- 3.4.33 New roads required as part of developments can introduce a source of noise and disturbance into the surrounding landscape. If present trends in car use continue, congestion will become an increasing problem especially in and around the towns and larger villages. This may result in the overall sense of remoteness and tranquillity being lost in rural areas. Measures to avoid this should be encouraged.
- 3.4.34 The use of standardised solutions in highway design in terms of minimum curves, visibility, safety barriers and signage have eroded the rural character of roads in places which are characterised by hedges, trees, ditches, hedgebanks and stone walls.

- 3.4.35 Traditional farmsteads make a significant contribution to the local distinctiveness and sense of place of the rural landscape, as a result of their unique and varied development through time. Since the mid-late 20th century, farm amalgamation and conversion has increased. This has resulted in the conversion of historic farmsteads to residential, and to a lesser extent, commercial use, as a result of the decoupling of agricultural productivity from farmsteads. It is likely that the future could see farmsteads in the Borough, especially the smaller holdings, come under more pressure for conversion. This distinctive and unique landscape feature is under threat of decay²¹.
- 3.4.36 The gradual move towards renewable energy and a low carbon future also puts pressure on the landscape to accommodate the associated infrastructure and integrate with new development.

Minerals and extraction

- 3.4.37 There is evidence of previous mineral extraction in the landscape, particularly in the upland areas in the north of the Study Area. Former spoil heaps are now distinctive country parks around Silverdale and Apedale.
- 3.4.38 Use of vernacular building materials, particularly stone, is considered important in maintaining and strengthening the character of settlements within the Study Area. Development pressures to use local materials could increase demand for raw materials, which could increase productivity of existing extraction sites in the Study Area and potential need to extend these sites or develop new ones.
- 3.4.39 Extensions to extraction sites or development of new sites will result in changes to landform, land use and vegetation cover. The sites may be prominent within views depending on location and topography. Recent quarrying activity can create artificial landforms and the colour contrast of exposed rock can increase the visual prominence of the quarry. Banks or planting intended to screen extraction sites may introduce new and discordant features into the landscape, particularly where local species or boundary features are not used. Increased productivity may cause an increased number of large vehicles in rural areas detracting from the tranquillity of the area and increasing pressure on the road system.
- 3.4.40 There is considerable scope for mitigating the landscape and visual impacts of extraction. Vegetation cover can be easily re-established, and the former sites can become valuable habitats or recreational areas, as seen around Apedale and Silverdale.
- 3.4.41 It should be noted that Staffordshire County Council is the minerals and waste planning authority with statutory responsibility for minerals planning within Newcastle-under-Lyme.

²¹[Staffordshire County Council in Conjunction with Historic England \(2012\) 'Historic Farmsteads and Landscape Character in Staffordshire'](#)

Access to the Landscape

- 3.4.42 There is an increasing body of evidence to demonstrate that regular contact with nature and use of outdoor places for exercise can benefit physical and mental health and wellbeing. Access to the countryside can encourage exercise outdoors, helping to prevent and treat health problems including obesity, cardiovascular disease, chronic stress, depression and anxiety. Contact with nature has particular benefits for children's development and for addressing emotional and behavioural difficulties. Activities in natural greenspace can also help families and communities spend time together, strengthening social networks. Economically, high quality and wildlife-rich landscapes can reduce health and social care costs, prevent flooding and drive urban regeneration and economic renewal. This will attract visitors and businesses and investment in land and property
- 3.4.43 As shown in **Figure 3.11** there is a well-established network of Public Rights of Way (PROW), particularly in the north, that provide opportunities for accessing the countryside to experience the landscapes within the Study Area.
- 3.4.44 Public Rights of Way include: footpaths (a highway over which the public has a right of way on foot only); bridleways (a highway over which the public has a right of way on foot, horseback and on a pedal cycle including mountain-bikes); restricted byways (a highway over which the public is entitled to travel on foot, horseback and with non-mechanically propelled vehicles such as pedal cycles and horse drawn vehicles); and byways open to all traffic (a highway over which the public is entitled to travel on foot, horseback or pedal cycle and by wheeled vehicle of all kinds, including horse-drawn and motorised vehicles; these are routes used by the public mainly for walking or for riding with occasional use by motorised vehicles).
- 3.4.45 The Two Saints Way long distance path and National Cycle Route 555 pass through the Study Area, connecting from within the town centre west towards Crewe and north along the Trent and Mersey Canal, respectively.
- 3.4.46 The former colliery sites to the west of the Newcastle-under-Lyme urban area have been restored to provide a substantial area of Country Parks with numerous footpaths and open spaces that connect to nearby nature sites.

4.0 LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Following an overview of the landscape classification, this chapter sets out detailed descriptions and evaluations of the Landscape Character Types and component Landscape Character Areas (including the landscape character and sensitivity of key settlement fringes).

4.1 Landscape Classification

- 4.1.1 The physical and cultural influences described in the previous chapter have combined to create the unique character of the Study Area's landscape.
- 4.1.2 The variations and differences across the Study Area's landscape are represented by seven generic **Landscape Character Types**. Each of the Landscape Character Types has a distinct and homogenous character that shares broadly similar patterns of physical and cultural attributes in terms of geology, topography, drainage patterns, land cover, ecology and historic evolution.
- 4.1.3 The Landscape Character Types have been further sub-divided into **Landscape Character Areas**, which are unique, individual, geographical areas that share common characteristics with other areas of the same type. Each Landscape Character Area has a distinct and recognisable local identity and sense of place.
- 4.1.4 The landscape classification for the Study Area is illustrated on **Figure 4.1** and outlined in **Table 4.1**.
- 4.1.5 The Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas shown on **Figure 4.1** have been prepared in a Geographic Information System (GIS) with mapping undertaken at a scale of 1:25,000. It should be noted that there are subtle differences between and within the individual types and areas. The boundaries illustrated usually indicate transitions rather than marked changes on the ground.
- 4.1.6 Full details of the methodology used to undertake the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment can be found in [Appendix 1](#).
- 4.1.7 The relationship of the landscape classification to Landscape Character Assessments for neighbouring areas is set out in [Appendix 2](#).

Table 4.1 – Landscape Classification

Landscape Character Types	Landscape Character Areas
A. Gritstone Uplands	A1: Mow Cop Gritstone Uplands
B. Coalfield Farmlands	B1: North Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands B2: East Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands B3: South Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands B4: Apedale Coalfield Farmlands
C. Ancient Redland Farmlands	C1: Madeley Ancient Redland Farmlands C2: Keele Ancient Redland Farmlands C3: Whitmore Ancient Redland Farmlands
D. Ancient Clay Farmlands	D1: Audley Ancient Clay Farmlands D2: Betley Ancient Clay Farmlands D3: Wrinehill Ancient Clay Farmlands
E. Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	E1: Chapel Chorlton Sandstone Hills & Farmlands E2: Maer Sandstone Hills & Farmlands E3: Loggerheads Sandstone Hills & Farmlands E4: Hales Sandstone Hills & Farmlands
F. Ancient Sandstone Farmlands	F1: Knighton Ancient Sandstone Farmlands F2: Oakley Ancient Sandstone Farmlands
G. River Valley	G1: Lyme River Valley

4.2 Evaluation of the Landscape

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

- 4.2.1 The condition of the landscape evaluated by Landscape Character Type is shown in **Table 4.2** and mapped on **Figure 4.2**. This is based on judgements about how the condition and intactness of the different landscape components create a perception of the overall condition of the landscape. Using professional judgement, landscape condition is defined on a three-point scale of poor, moderate or good, as evaluated within the character descriptions in [Section 4.4](#).
- 4.2.2 The strength of character of the landscape evaluated by Landscape Character Type is shown in **Table 4.2** and mapped on **Figure 4.3**. This is based on the combination of individual components and their contribution to landscape character. Strength of character is connected to distinctiveness and landscape integrity. It is based on judgements about how distinct and recognisable the pattern of physical and cultural attributes is that defines the character of the landscape, and the sense of place they evoke. Using professional judgement, strength of character is defined on a three-point scale of weak, moderate or strong, as evaluated within the character descriptions in [Section 4.4](#).

Table 4.2 – Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

Landscape Character Type	Landscape Condition	Strength of Character
A. Gritstone Uplands	Moderate	Strong
B. Coalfield Farmlands	Moderate	Strong
C. Ancient Redland Farmlands	Good	Strong
D. Ancient Clay Farmlands	Good	Strong
E. Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Good	Strong
F. Ancient Sandstone Farmlands	Moderate	Moderate
G. River Valley	Moderate	Moderate

Landscape Sensitivity

- 4.2.3 The key landscape sensitivities of each Landscape Character Type are evaluated within the character descriptions in [Section 4.4](#). These provide a framework for informing landscape sensitivity assessments of potential changes from specific development types or land management practices.
- 4.2.4 Based on the key settlements and development scenarios agreed with the Council (see [Appendix 1](#) for details), the landscape sensitivity of the settlement fringes has been assessed within the context of the appropriate Landscape Character Areas set out in [Section 4.4](#). Taking into account the criteria and indicators for assessing the susceptibility and value of the landscape, using professional judgement sensitivity is defined on a three-point scale of high, medium or low (see [Appendix 1](#) for details), as evaluated within the character descriptions in [Section 4.4](#) and summarised on **Table 4.3**.

Table 4.3 – Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape Character Area	Settlement Fringe	Sensitivity
A1 Mow Cop Gritstone Uplands	N/A	N/A
B1 North Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands	Kidsgrove Urban Fringe	Medium
B2 East Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands	Kidsgrove Urban Fringe	Medium
B3 South Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands	Kidsgrove Urban Fringe	Medium
	Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe	Medium
B4 Apedale Coalfield Farmlands	Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe	Medium
	Audley Fringe	High
	Halmer End Fringe	High
C1 Madeley Ancient Redland Farmlands	Madeley Fringe	Medium
	Aston Fringe	High
	Madeley Park Fringe	High
C2 Keele Ancient Redland Farmlands	Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe	High
	Keele Fringe	High
C3 Whitmore Ancient Redland Farmlands	Madeley Park Fringe	High
	Baldwin's Gate Fringe	Medium
D1 Audley Ancient Clay Farmlands	Audley Fringe	High
D2 Betley Ancient Clay Farmlands	Balterley Fringe	High
	Betley Fringe	High
	Wrinehill Fringe	Medium
D3 Wrinehill Ancient Clay Farmlands	Onneley Fringe	High
E1 Chapel Chorlton Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Whitmore Fringe	High
	Baldwin's Gate Fringe	High
	Chapel Chorlton Fringe	High
E2 Maer Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Blackbrook Fringe	High
	Maer Fringe	High
E3 Loggerheads Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Mucklestone Fringe	High
	Loggerheads Fringe	Medium
E4 Hales Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Loggerheads Fringe	High
	Almington Fringe	High
	Hales Fringe	High
F1 Knighton Ancient Sandstone Farmlands	Aston Fringe	High
	Knighton Fringe	High
F2 Oakley Ancient Sandstone Farmlands	Almington Fringe	High
G1 Lyme River Valley	Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe	High

4.3 Landscape Planning Policy Recommendations

- 4.3.1 It is recommended that the Council undertakes a review of the current approach to landscape protection in their adopted Local Plan in light of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance highlighted in [Section 2.4](#).
- 4.3.2 In line with the approach taken by the European Landscape Convention, Natural England and relevant planning appeal decisions²², it is considered that all landscapes have some degree of value and therefore not only landscapes protected by legislation or those which are locally designated in a development plan can be "valued landscapes".
- 4.3.3 The Council may wish to consider adopting either a "local landscape designations approach" or a "character-based approach" for meeting their overall objective with respect to landscape policy for protecting and enhancing the character and diversity of landscapes within the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- 4.3.4 Adopting a character-based approach, supported by the Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, would require a robust and clearly justified overarching landscape policy for the entire Local Plan area, rather than just for areas protected by local landscape designations.
- 4.3.5 It is recommended that this overarching landscape policy should:
- Highlight the importance of protecting and enhancing the character and diversity of landscapes within the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme
 - Emphasise, wherever possible, opportunities to introduce new landscape features to compensate for loss or degradation elsewhere as a result of a proposal. For example, this might include ensuring that where a particular habitat or area of planting is lost, habitat creation or planting is undertaken at a suitable location close by to offset the loss and in addition provide a net environmental gain
 - Seek to ensure that change is appropriate to the relevant Landscape Character Type and Landscape Character Area, and the features and characteristics that define their local distinctiveness (including experiential/perceptual aspects such as a sense of tranquillity)
- 4.3.6 The landscape policy should make reference to the Newcastle-under-Lyme Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, which can be used to help inform development proposals that respond positively to the distinctive character and valued qualities of the Borough's rural landscapes.
- 4.3.7 With regards to criteria-based policies for site allocations in the Local Plan, it is recommended that these include a requirement to provide strategic landscape mitigation and enhancement measures for integrating new development into the surrounding landscape. The site allocation policies should take into account the findings of the settlement fringe landscape sensitivity assessment set out in Part 1 of the Study, and be informed by the principles for decision making and landscape guidance for the relevant Landscape Character Types/Areas identified in Part 2 of the Study as appropriate.

²² For example, the 'Stroud' Appeal decision in 2014 (Gladman Developments Ltd v Stroud District Council)

4.4 Character Descriptions

- 4.4.1 The character descriptions set out in the following chapters are structured as outlined below:

Landscape Character Types

Location plan and illustrative photograph.

Description

- Key Characteristics
- Physical Influences
- Biodiversity
- Historic Landscape Character
- Settlement Form and Built Character
- Access to the Landscape

Evaluation

- Condition
- Strength of Character
- Key Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Areas

Map, location plan and illustrative photographs.

Description

- Key Characteristics
- Landscape Character
- Settlement Fringe Character

Evaluation

- Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE A: GRITSTONE UPLANDS

The Gritstone Uplands Landscape Character Type is a strongly undulating, upland landscape, characterised by rocky outcrops of gritstone and the folly on the hill at Mow Cop, at the northern extent of the Study Area, continuing north into the Staffordshire Moorlands District and Cheshire.

Description

Key Characteristics

- A strongly undulating, upland landscape, with upstanding ridgelines and distinctive gritstone outcrops
- Steep slopes cut by small watercourses in narrow, often wooded valleys
- A rural landscape dominated by small-scale, historic pastoral fields
- Characteristic dark gritstone building materials that represent the local rock type
- Steep, winding narrow roads often bound by gritstone walls
- Extensive, long-distance panoramic views across the Study Area from the gritstone outcrop at Mow Cop Castle
- Urban influence from settlement extensions to the north of the nearby towns of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Kidsgrove

Physical Influences

The Gritstone Uplands LCT is defined by underlying gritstone geology, which forms part of the larger block of mixed Carboniferous rock, with overlaying shallow, impoverished and loamy soil. The result is a relatively infertile, steeply sloping upland landscape, characterised by the distinctive gritstone outcrop of Mow Cop that is visible across the north of the Borough. This elevated point provides panoramic, long-distance views across the Study Area, as far as Wales on a clear day.

Mow Cop Folly Quarries in the north-west and Mount Pleasant Quarry in the south-west of the LCT, are designated as Regionally important Geological Sites for being an impressive outcrop of Millstone Grit and an example of Millstone Grit showing large fault structures with baryte mineral veins, respectively.

The LCT marks the most elevated area of the Borough, defined by the high point of Mow Cop at approximately 335m AOD, and falling to a low point of approximately 210m AOD on the western boundary of the Study Area. An elevated ridge extends through the LCT, beyond the Study Area, in a north-easterly direction from the high point at Mow Cop, forming north-west and south-east facing slopes.

There are a number of tree lined, minor watercourses that rise in the LCT, north of the Study Area, which flow down the steep sided slopes to the east and west.

Biodiversity

Much of the north-west region of the LCT, outside of the Study Area, is covered by deciduous woodland, including Limekiln and Hanging Woods SSSI which are ancient woodlands designated for their nature conservation value. Within the Study Area, there is also a small pocket of deciduous woodland, on the eastern boundary of Mow Cop.

Alongside deciduous woodland, priority habitats within the LCT include pockets of lowland heathland and mosaic habitats in and around Mow Cop castle and village, on the boundary of the Study Area.

Historic Landscape Character

Pastoral farmland and rough grazing are the predominant land uses within the Gritstone Uplands LCT. The pastoral farmland is made up of largely small to medium sized irregular and rectilinear fields.

The Historic Landscape Character Types (HLCT) within the LCT, in the Study Area are:

- Irregular squatter enclosure
- Rectilinear squatter enclosure
- Small irregular fields

These are reflective of the historic small-scale, low-intensity pastoral sheep and cattle farming that is still common in the rural landscape.

There are very few heritage assets within the Gritstone Uplands LCT, limited to a small number of listed buildings within Mow Cop village. These include the Grade II listed Church of St Thomas and Mow Cop Castle, a Georgian folly built on a visually prominent rocky outcrop at Mow Cop on the boundary of the Study Area.

Settlement Form and Built Character

Settlement within the Gritstone Uplands LCT, within the Study Area comprises the village of Mow Cop; a generally linear, expanded settlement that coalesces with the nucleated village of Mount Pleasant to the south-west and Harriseahead to the south of the LCT boundary.

The linear development that extends from the historic centre of Mow Cop to meet nearby settlements, gives rise to the urban and built-up sense of place.

Dark gritstone building materials are characteristic of the LCT, and representative of the history of gritstone mining in the area.

Outside the village and Study Area, farms and roadside dwellings are scattered throughout the LCT, and are connected by narrow, rural lanes.

Access to the Countryside

A limited number of public rights of way (PROW), including the Staffordshire Moorlands Walks, the South Cheshire Way and the Gritstone Trail promoted routes, provide access to the countryside from Mow Cop and Mount Pleasant and beyond the Study Area.

Evaluation

Condition

The landscape in the Gritstone Uplands LCT, within the Study Area, has been altered by former extraction and expansion of the settlements. Gritstone wall field margins are evident in places, but the replacement of hedgerows by fences is becoming more commonplace. The condition of the landscape is perceived to be **moderate**.

Strength of Character

The Gritstone Uplands LCT, within the Study Area, overall has a **strong** character, with distinctive rocky outcrops and ridges, the notable landmark of Mow Cop Castle that is visible across the north of the Borough and regionally characteristic dark gritstone building materials.

Key Landscape Sensitivities

- Distinctive gritstone outcrops and associated lowland heathland habitats
- Pockets of historic pastoral farmland with distinctive gritstone wall boundaries
- Historic landmark features including Mow Cop Castle and distinctive gritstone dwellings within the village

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

- A1: Mow Cop Gritstone Uplands

A1: Mow Cop Gritstone Uplands Landscape Character Area

Mow Cop Gritstone Uplands Landscape Character Area (LCA) is a well settled outcrop of gritstone, with the landmark feature of Mow Cop castle at the most elevated point.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Elevated outcrop of gritstone with landmark Mow Cop castle at the top, providing strong intervisibility with the northern region of the Study Area
- Historic small-scale pastoral farmland fieldscapes around the settlement fringes
- The generally linear development of Mow Cop, characterised by historic gritstone building materials

Landscape Character

Mow Cop Gritstone Uplands LCA is largely underlain by gritstone, characterised by large outcrops in the landscape. The landform is steep and upstanding, most notably at the rocky hill on which Mow Cop Castle is located. This LCA marks the most elevated point within the Study Area, with a high point of approximately 335m AOD at Mow Cop Castle. Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS), Mount Pleasant Quarry West, and Mow Cop Folly Quarries, are located within the LCA, indicative of geological and geomorphological value. There are limited hydrological features within the LCA.

Land cover largely comprises small-scale pastoral farmland around the settlement fringes. The small, intricate and irregular historic field pattern is particularly distinctive within the LCA, most notably in the east. Gritstone wall field boundaries are characteristic of the area, especially on the roadside margins. Electric fencing has more recently replaced hedgerows and walls in part.

There is limited woodland cover within the LCA, with a pocket of deciduous woodland to the east of Mow Cop. Patches of lowland heathland are located around Mow Cop Castle, on the outcrops of gritstone.

Historic landscape features within the LCA include the Grade II listed Mow Cop castle, a visually prominent and notable landmark within the area, as well as the Grade II listed Church of St Thomas, built in characteristic dark gritstone.

The village of Mow Cop forms the majority of the LCA within the Study Area. The generally linear settlement extends along the small, winding roads, coalescing with Mount Pleasant to the west of the LCA and Harseahead to the south. Gritstone building material gives the village a distinctive character. More recent linear development is often out of character with the historic building materials. There are two former farmsteads in the LCA, one dispersed and one loose courtyard, both of which are now integrated into the village as farmhouses.

Owned by the National Trust, Mow Cop castle is a recreational destination. The network of public rights of way (PROW) in the LCA connect beyond the Study Area, to long distance routes including the South Cheshire Way to the north and the Gritstone Trail to the west and north-east.

The rocky outcrop on the north-west boundary of the Study Area provides extensive, panoramic views across the wider Study Area and beyond to Cheshire, Shropshire and even Wales on a clear day. Mow Cop castle is a distinctive feature in the LCA and is visible from much of the north of the Study Area.

Due to proximity to Biddulph, Kidsgrove and the northern edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme there is an urban influence on this LCA, and perceptions of tranquillity are limited.

Settlement Fringe Character

Not applicable.

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Not applicable.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE B: COALFIELD FARMLANDS

The Coalfield Farmlands LCT is an undulating and elevated landscape that extends north through the Study Area, from the north-west edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme urban area and across the boundary into Cheshire and Staffordshire Moorlands.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Elevated landform with prominent undulations
- Minor watercourses cut narrow, often steep-sided valleys that contribute to the undulating landform
- A varied and restored mining landscape with old industrial features evident in the landscape
- Pockets of intact, ancient pastoral farmland, bounded by thick, mixed species hedgerows
- Areas of ancient woodland linked by newer woodland planting on restored land
- Network of country parks and nature sites
- Former mining settlements with brick terrace houses are located along rural lanes
- Urban influence of former industrial land uses and existing urban settlement edges
- Visible suburban, residential development on hillsides on the fringes of Kidsgrove and Newcastle-under-Lyme

Physical Influences

The Coalfield Farmlands LCT covers much of the higher landform within the Study Area, ranging from a low of approximately 125m AOD in the west to high points of between 225-250m AOD. The landform generally rises in a south-north direction through the LCT towards the Gritstone Uplands. It is characterised by prominent undulations that are a result of the differential erosion of the underlying Coal Measures that comprise a mix of mudstones, siltstones and sandstones, with deposits of coal and ironstone.

The underlying geology and superficial deposits of glacial till have given rise to non-calcareous, poorly drained loamy gley soils across the landscape type. This is reflected in the predominantly pastoral land use.

There are a number of minor watercourses that rise in the Coalfield Farmlands LCT. These generally flow east and west through narrow, often steep-sided valleys. These contribute to the undulating character of the landform but are often disguised by woodland cover.

Biodiversity

There are a number of locally designated nature sites in the central and southern parts of the Coalfield Farmlands LCT. These include mosaic habitats of grassland and woodland, and areas of woodland, acid grassland and pools. The main priority habitat in the Coalfield Farmlands LCT is deciduous woodland, with small pockets of lowland, meadows and semi-improved grassland.

Woodland cover is varied across the Coalfield Farmlands LCT. There are pockets of ancient woodland that survive on the edge of the urban areas and often along the small watercourses. Large blocks of woodland have been more recently established where former pits and spoil heaps have been regenerated into recreational country parks in the south of the LCT, to the west of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Historic Landscape Character

This is a largely pastoral landscape that has been altered over time by industrial activity and expansion of the nearby urban settlements of Newcastle-under-Lyme, Kidsgrove and Biddulph.

Pockets of ancient pastoral farmland survive between regenerated former mining areas. The pastoral farmland is characterised by small to medium sized, often irregular fields bounded by thick, mixed species hedgerows. There are large areas of pastoral farming in the north, becoming more dispersed through the central and southern part of the LCT where there has been greater alteration to the landscape by extractive works and the subsequent restoration of the landscape.

There are very few heritage assets within the Coalfield Farmlands LCT, limited to a small number of scattered listed buildings that are largely remnants of the mining industry in this region. The Wedgwood Monument is a visually prominent feature on elevated land in the centre of the LCT. Other listed structures include a blast furnace, remnant chimney and farmhouses.

There are a variety of Historic Landscape Character Types (HLCT) within the Coalfield Farmlands LCT, the key HLCT are:

- Small irregular fields
- Large irregular fields
- Other parklands
- Mixed/Other/Broadleaved plantation

The wider variety of HLCT within the Coalfield Farmlands LCT is reflective of the altered landscape. The Coalfield Farmlands LCT are largely defined by the impact of industrial activity that is imposed on the underlying pastoral farmland. Extensive coalmining and iron-working commenced on an industrial scale during the late 18th century, of which there is still evidence in the landscape today. This includes spoil heaps, old mine workings, disused railway lines and tramways, as well as evidence of more recent extractive works.

Settlement Form and Built Character

Urban and former industrial settlement is distributed throughout this landscape, ranging from small groups of red brick, terraced housing along roadsides, to former mining villages or expanded hamlets. Red brick is the common building material, mined from the local Etruria Marl and sandstone from the Coal Measures.

More recent urban expansion of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Kidsgrove particularly, contributes to the urbanised character perceived across this LCT. Modern industry is characteristic of the urban edges, often located on the main transport corridors.

Villages have also experienced expansion in this landscape type and have amalgamated into larger settlements or extensions of the urban areas. A large number of farms of varying size and character are dispersed across the landscape between the urban areas. Isolated, small to medium sized, courtyard farmsteads are the most common type, reflecting the historic pastoral character of the landscape type. Some farmsteads have been lost and a large proportion of these have been altered due to urbanisation and farming intensification, leading to modernisation, removal of older buildings and some introduction of modern barns.

Access to the Landscape

Country parks and a network of public rights of way (PROW) provide good access to the rural landscape within this landscape type, providing space for recreation outside of the urban areas. Footpaths and sunken country lanes link between the rural settlements and provide connections with the urban edges.

Evaluation

Condition

The Coalfield Farmlands LCT is an altered landscape. Former extractive sites have largely been sensitively restored and form a network of wildlife sites, country parks and woodland particularly in the south of the LCT. There are pockets of intact ancient pastoral farmland and small areas of ancient woodland. The landscape is influenced by the adjoining urban areas and has become fragmented in places, particularly in proximity to the urban edges. The overall condition of the landscape is perceived to be **moderate**.

Strength of Character

The Coalfield Farmlands LCT has an overall **strong** character, particularly in the north where there is a stronger sense of time depth associated with the small-scale pastoral fields and pattern of hedgerow/tree vegetation, and characteristic undulating topography with small, prominent hills. There is a greater urban influence through the central and southern parts of the LCT, with pockets of historic pastoral fields.

Key Landscape Sensitivities

- Pockets of ancient pastoral farmland with thick, mixed species hedgerows and hedgerow oaks
- Network of country parks, nature sites and woodland
- Landmark features that are remnants of the mining heritage

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

- B1: North Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands
- B2: East Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands
- B3: South Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands
- B4: Apedale Coalfield Farmlands

B1: North Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands Landscape Character Area

North Kidsgrove is a distinctively undulating landscape with an ancient field pattern.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Distinctive undulating landform with small streams in valleys
- Ancient field pattern
- Urban influences associated with the northern edge of Kidsgrove
- Open views across the undulating landscape, including towards the distinctive hill top folly at Mow Cop

Landscape Character

North Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands LCA is largely underlain by Pennine Coal Measures. The landform is undulating, with some steep slopes. It has a high point of approximately 230m AOD west of Blue Pot Farm, and a low point of approximately 140m AOD in the west. Watercourses include well vegetated small streams within valleys orientated towards the north-west.

Land cover largely comprises pastoral farmland. The early medieval enclosure field pattern is particularly distinctive on steeper and elevated ground in the east and south where hedgerows are generally thick and well cared for, although there are some areas where they are becoming fragmented. There are some larger, arable fields in the north and west of the LCA where the ground is flatter, and here field boundaries are more fragmented.

Aside from the field pattern, there are limited historic features. Whilst woodland is generally sparse in this LCA, there are several small blocks of deciduous woodland. A Site of Biological Importance at Dale Green in the east is locally designated for its acid grassland and heath mosaic.

Settlement is limited, however the northern edge of Kidsgrove is prominent, and there are buildings scattered throughout the landscape including several isolated farms, and linear development along the road between Mount Pleasant and Kidsgrove which forms the eastern boundary. Elsewhere, roads are limited to a single narrow, sunken lane.

A network of public rights of way (PROW) provide access to the landscape from Kidsgrove and Mount Pleasant, and a school playing field north of Kidsgrove provides recreational amenity.

Views across the landscape are open, including both countryside and distant villages at Mount Pleasant and Mow Cop to the north. The hilltop folly at Mow Cop is a distinctive landmark feature on skylines.

Scattered settlement, including the northern edge of Kidsgrove, and the proximity of the West Coast Mainline to the west mean that perceptions of tranquillity are limited.

Settlement Fringe Character

Kidsgrove Urban Fringe		
<p>The urban fringe of Kidsgrove forms the southern boundary of the North Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands LCA. The urban edge is largely residential, and a school is prominent in views from the north. Rooflines generally don't break the skyline, and edges of residential developments are occasionally softened by trees, however it is often harsh, and the rising topography means the edge is harsh and prominent in views within the surrounding landscape. Views from the edge of Kidsgrove into the countryside are generally long and open, and the urban fringe is prominent in views across the landscape. The urban edge has been influenced by 20th century residential development but is in generally good condition.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	N/A
	Water bodies/water courses	A small stream towards the east
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features/landmarks/viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	N/A
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
Kidsgrove Urban Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Few areas of valued, semi natural habitats• Poorly integrated settlement edges• Variety of human influences, with intrusive, urbanising features <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open, prominent landscape• Small-scale, historic field pattern• Open and exposed landscape• Characteristic landscape pattern is intact• Open landscape with extensive inward and outward views/landmark features in views• Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience	<p>Medium</p> <p>Some of the key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

B2: East Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands Landscape Character Area

East Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands LCA is a relatively fragmented, landscape with urban influences associated with the fringe of Kidsgrove.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Prominent, undulating landform
- Pastoral farmland with a generally small-scale, largely irregular field pattern
- Well maintained hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Narrow, sunken lanes
- Urban influences associated with the eastern fringe of Kidsgrove, western edge of Biddulph and northern edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme, as well as scattered and ribbon development within the LCA

Landscape Character

East Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands LCA is part of an undulating landform within the Coal Measures. It has a high point of approximately 257m AOD in the north, from which it slopes away to the east, south and west. Watercourses are limited to occasional small streams, in addition to a small number of ponds in the south.

Land cover largely comprises pastoral farmland. Fields are generally small, with the ancient small irregular pattern being particularly well preserved in the north-west. There are pockets of more regular enclosure in the east and south, but on the whole fields retain the historic, small-scale pattern. Hedgerows are generally well maintained, and mature hedgerow trees are common. Woodland generally is limited to small copses, most notable south of Kidsgrove, where Birchenwood Park is designated as a Site of Biological Importance. There are limited fragments of orchard in the north-east.

This LCA is influenced by its proximity to Newcastle-under-Lyme, Kidsgrove and Biddulph. Settlement within the LCA is largely limited to ribbon development associated with the village of Harriseahead along the road linking Kidsgrove and Mow Cop, and a number of isolated farms, generally organised around a loose courtyard. Several farms include the addition of modern sheds on the site of, or to the side of the historic farmstead footprint. Settlement is generally linked by a network of narrow, sunken lanes.

A network of public rights of way (PROW) provide access to the landscape from the surrounding settlements, and National Cycle Network Route 5 which follows a disused railway forms part of the southern boundary. Sports fields south of Kidsgrove have recreational value.

Views across the pastoral farmland are open, and generally include settlement. Hedgerow trees often coalesce to foreshorten views. The folly at Mow Cop is a prominent landmark on the skyline to the north. Elsewhere, skylines are frequently interrupted by built form and poles associated with the telecommunications network. Due to the settlement which almost encloses this LCA, it has an urbanised character, and the sense of tranquillity is limited.

Settlement Fringe Character

Kidsgrove Urban Fringe		
<p>The eastern urban edge of Kidsgrove forms much of the boundary of this LCA. The urban edge is largely residential. The edges are generally harsh, with limited woodland or trees to soften development. The eastern section is on elevated landform, so it is particularly prominent in views from the surrounding landscape. Rooftops are occasionally prominent on skylines. Views from the edge of Kidsgrove into the countryside are generally long and open, and there is strong intervisibility between the two. In places, the urban fringe has become fragmented, particularly where it is used for horticulture, and the condition is eroded.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	N/A
	Water bodies / water courses	Several small streams in the east
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	N/A
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
Kidsgrove Urban Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Few areas of valued, semi-natural habitats• Existing development, and poorly integrated settlement edges• Variety of human influences including urbanising influences <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open, prominent landscape• Small-scale, historic field pattern• Open and exposed landscape with few screening features• Characteristic landscape features are intact• Open landscape with extensive inward and outward views• Residents and people using PROW	<p>Medium</p> <p>Some of the key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

B3: South Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands Landscape Character Area

South Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands LCA is characterised by blocks of woodland, fragmented by transport corridors and influenced by settlement to the north and south.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landform with a small-scale, ancient pastoral field pattern
- Former mining landscape with mining heritage visible in the landscape as disused shafts
- Pattern of woodland including ancient woodland
- Recreational value of PROW, National Cycle Route 5, Bathpool Park and a ski slope
- Influenced by the urban edges of Kidsgrove and Newcastle-under-Lyme, as well as transport infrastructure
- Long, open views across pastoral farmland with urban backdrops
- Skylines feature the landmark Wedgwood Monument, but are broken elsewhere by a telecommunications mast, electricity pylons and large industrial buildings

Landscape Character

South Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands LCA is part of an undulating landform within the Coal Measures. The landform rises to approximately 236m AOD at the Wedgwood Monument in the south-west, and 220m AOD in the north-east, where the gap between Stoke-on-Trent and Kidsgrove is the narrowest. The lowest point is approximately 145m AOD in the west. Two Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS), Birchenwood Quarry and Bradwell Wood Quarry, are located within the LCA. Watercourses are generally limited to a small stream in the west, however the LCA does include a small section of the Trent and Mersey Canal, albeit within the Harecastle Tunnel and several ponds associated with former mining activity.

Land cover is largely pastoral farmland, comprising small irregular fields with thick hedgerows and hedgerow trees are dominant, however there are some larger fields in the south-west where there is some arable land use. Priority habitats are largely limited to deciduous woodland, including several blocks of ancient woodland such as Parrot's Drumble, Harecastle Clump and Bradwell Wood. These are also locally designated as Local Nature Reserves, Sites of Biological Importance and Biodiversity Alert Sites.

Historically this was a mining landscape, and this is visible in the landscape which contains several disused shafts, as well as the Wedgwood Monument in the south. Also indicative of the LCAs industrial past are the Trent and Mersey Canal within the Harecastle Tunnel in the north-east, and a dismantled railway which forms much of the western boundary.

The LCA is heavily influenced by the towns of Kidsgrove and Newcastle-under-Lyme, however within the LCA, settlement is largely limited to isolated farmsteads, generally organised around a loose courtyard, and sometimes with modern sheds on the site of the original historic farmstead footprint. Transport infrastructure includes the A500, A34, West Coast Mainline, and several minor roads.

A number of sites within the LCA are used for recreation. These include a ski slope, playing field south of Hollins, Bathpool Park, National Cycle Network Route 5, the public rights of way (PROW) network, which is most concentrated south of Kidsgrove, but sparse elsewhere, and a motocross track.

Views are occasionally long and open, however woodland, trees and rising landform creates localised visual enclosure in places, and hedgerow trees coalesce to foreshorten views. The Wedgwood Monument is a prominent feature on the skyline in the south-west. Elsewhere, skylines are broken by a telecommunications mast, electricity pylons, and buildings on the skyline, including some large industrial units on the northern edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme and south-western edge of Kidsgrove

There is a limited sense of tranquillity due to the proximity of Kidsgrove and Newcastle-under-Lyme and transport infrastructure.

Settlement Fringe Character

Kidsgrove Urban Fringe		
<p>The urban fringe of Kidsgrove forms much of the northern boundary of South Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands LCA. The urban edge is largely residential, with two large industrial developments in the west. The undulating topography means that development is occasionally prominent where it is located on elevated landform. Blocks of trees and woodlands largely soften the edge of development, however the industrial units at the former Talke Pits are very visible from the north. Views from the edge of Kidsgrove are generally filtered by landform and vegetation which restricts intervisibility with the wider landscape. The urban edge has been influenced by 20th century residential development and mining activity, but restoration has been carried out and the condition is generally good.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	The urban edge is largely softened by trees, including woodland associated with restored former mining sites
	Water bodies / water courses	The Trent and Mersey Canal, in the Harecastle Tunnels, and scattered ponds
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Thick, mixed species hedgerows
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	Bathpool Park
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	Bathpool Park SBI Birchenwood Park SBI
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	Talke Conservation Area
	Other	

Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe		
<p>The urban fringe of Newcastle-under-Lyme forms much of the southern boundary of South Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands LCA. The urban edge is largely residential, with a large industrial development. Despite the undulating topography, blocks of trees and woodlands largely soften the edge of development, particularly in the east where woodland is mature and extensive. Views from the edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme are generally visually enclosed by trees which restricts intervisibility with the wider landscape. The urban edge has been influenced by 20th century residential and industrial development and mining activity at Bradwell Pit, but the condition is generally good.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	The urban edge is largely softened by trees, and woodland, including ancient woodland in the east
	Water bodies / water courses	Small stream within Bradwell Wood
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	A34, A500
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	High Carr Colliery BAS Bradwell Wood SBI Bradwell Pit SBI
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
Kidsgrove Urban Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area • Presence of existing development and infrastructure • Limited visibility from surrounding landscapes <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open, highly prominent landscape • Large or numerous areas of landscape designated for nature conservation interest • Legible landscape pattern • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>Medium</p> <p>Some of the key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>
Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area • Presence of existing development and infrastructure / variety of settlement scale and form / conspicuous large-scale buildings and structures • Visual containment by landscape features 	<p>Medium</p> <p>Some of the key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Busy landscape / variety of human influences / intrusive, urbanising features • Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dramatic landform • Large or numerous areas of landscape designated for nature conservation interest • Legible landscape pattern • Residents, communities where the landscape is part of the experience 	

B4: Apedale Coalfield Farmlands Landscape Character Area

The Apedale Coalfield Farmlands LCA is an open, rural landscape with large areas of former open cast mine sites restored to country parks, characterised by a distinctive pattern of woodland, interspersed with pockets of ancient pastoral farmland.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landform
- Former coal mining landscape with several areas restored as country parks characterised by woodland and ponds that are used for recreation
- Distinctive pattern of woodland, including ancient woodland, secondary woodland and plantation woodland
- Pockets of ancient pastoral farmland bound by thick, mixed species hedgerows and scattered hedgerow oaks
- Urban influences associated with the western edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme and several former mining villages
- Long views across undulating wooded countryside, and to the east over Newcastle-under-Lyme

Landscape Character

Apedale Coalfield Farmlands LCA is part of an undulating landform within the Coal Measures. It rises from approximately 110m AOD in the west to approximately 220m AOD at Scot Hay in the south. Two Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS), Miry Quarry and Apedale Furnace Quarry, are located within the LCA. Hydrological features include numerous ponds relating to mining activity, the Lyme Brook along the eastern boundary and an unnamed brook in the west.

Historically, this was a mining landscape, with former opencast coal mining and clay extraction which have influenced the present day landscape. Land cover in the largely restored landscape comprises a mixture of woodland, including ancient woodland, plantation woodland and secondary woodland; fieldscapes including small fields of varying regularity, with some planned enclosure and large, rectilinear fields in the south; and parkland where extractive sites have been restored. There are surviving pockets of ancient pastoral farmland in the north and central parts of the LCA, where pastoral fieldscapes are largely well-cared for, with thick, mixed species hedgerows and numerous mature oaks.

Many of the larger former pits and spoil tips have been regenerated into country parks, with lakes and woodlands, which are used for recreation. Bateswood Local Nature Reserve, once part of an opencast mine working, has been restored to grassland and woodland and is designated as a Local Nature Reserve with walking trails. There are also several Sites of Biological Interest including The Void, Silverdale Country Park LWS and Watermills Wood LWS, and Biodiversity Alert Sites including Burgess Wood.

Historic landscape features include Audley Conservation Area in the north-west, Springwood Blast Furnace Scheduled Monument and a small number of scattered listed buildings. There is widespread evidence of the area's industrial heritage, such as the Apedale Pit Wheel Memorial, spoil heaps, disused railway lines and old mine workings.

The Apedale Coalfield Farmlands LCA is influenced by its proximity to the urban edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Settlement comprises several small to medium former mining villages, which are generally nucleated in the north and linear in the south, and occasional isolated farms. Farmsteads are generally regular courtyard, or loose courtyards, and several include the addition of modern sheds to the site of historic farmstead footprint. Settlements are generally linked by small winding lanes, contrasting with the M6 which forms part of the south-western LCA boundary.

In addition to Bateswood Local Nature Reserve, other restored coal mining sites including Apedale Country Park and Silverdale Country Park are used for recreation. A network of public rights of way (PROW), including the Two Saints Way Long Distance Footpath provide access to the landscape.

Views from hill tops are long and open, encompassing Newcastle-under-Lyme to the east, and the surrounding countryside elsewhere. On lower ground, and where there is woodland, views are limited, and often hedgerow trees visually coalesce to foreshorten views across the landscape. The Wedgwood Monument in LCA B3: South Kidsgrove Coalfields Farmland to the north is notable landmark on the skyline in the north. Elsewhere, skylines are occasionally broken by features including a communications mast, electricity pylons and a wind turbine south of Apedale Country Park.

This LCA has an urbanised, industrial character and is occasionally fragmented close to the urban edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Proximity to Newcastle-under-Lyme means that generally, tranquillity is limited. There are pockets of tranquillity, such as within Apedale Country Park and Bateswood Nature Reserve.

Settlement Fringe Character

Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe		
<p>The urban edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme forms the eastern and part of the southern boundary of the Apedale Coalfield Farmlands LCA. Newcastle-under-Lyme urban fringe comprises both residential and industrial development. The edges of residential developments are generally softened by trees. Industrial development is largely softened by woodland associated with Apedale Country Park. The undulating landform means that the urban area is very prominent in views across the landscape, particularly where it is viewed from high points, including from the visitor centre at Apedale Country Park. It is also prominent where built form is located on rising ground in the north-east and south of the LCA. Views from the edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme into the countryside are locally enclosed by rising landform and woodland, however there are areas where views are long and open, particularly within elevated areas, and there is strong intervisibility between the urban area and high ground to the west. The urban edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme has been influenced by both 20th century urban residential expansion, and the restoration of former mine sites, which includes large areas of woodland and associated country parks.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	The urban edge is largely softened by trees, including a large amount of woodland associated with restored former open cast mining sites
	Water bodies / water courses	The Lyme Brook, associated ponds and its floodplain forms much of the urban boundary south of the Two Saints Way
	Floodplains	Floodplain associated with the Lyme Brook south of the Two Saints Way
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Thick, mixed species hedgerows, particularly in the north
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	Ongoing mineral working north-east of Silverdale
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watermills Wood SBI • Lymedale Business Park SBI • The Void, Silverdale Country Park SBI • Apedale Disused Tips BAS
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	Springwood Blast Furnace
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Audley Fringe		
<p>Audley comprises a cluster of villages (Audley, Bignall End, Boon Hill and Miles Green) in the north-west of Apedale Coalfield Farmlands LCA. The villages are generally nucleated in form, with Miles Green being more linear. In the east, Bignall End, Boon Hill and Miles Green have coalesced, and a narrow, treed gap separates Audley in the west. In general, the villages sit on lower ground in relation to the topography to the east within the LCA, and the edges are well treed, however Boon Hill is located on higher ground and is visible in the wider landscape. Views across the well settled landscape from settlement edges are generally long and open. Skylines are largely treed, however occasionally there are rooflines on the skyline in the north where there are residential properties on higher ground. This is a well settled rural landscape where the landscape is important in the setting of the villages. The Rye Hills form a distinctive green gap between the villages. This is a rural area comprising ancient, small-scale pastoral farmland with urban influences due to the presence of the villages which coalesce along country lanes.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	The village edges are generally well treed, however woodland is limited to south of Wood Lane
	Water bodies / water courses	Occasional small streams including the Dean Brook which flows east-west through Miles Green and south of Audley, an unnamed, well treed stream north of Wood Lane and an unnamed stream east of Audley
	Floodplains	Floodplain associated with the unnamed stream east of Audley
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Thick, mixed species hedgerows
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	Distinctive linear vegetation following the route of a dismantled railway that crosses the villages between Miles Green and Bignall End
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miles Green Farm Fields BAS • Burgess's Wood BAS
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	Audley Conservation Area
	Other	

Halmer End Fringe		
<p>Halmer End coalesces with Alsagers Bank in the west of Apedale Coalfield Farmlands LCA. The villages are linear in form with well treed, soft edges. Alsagers Bank is located on higher ground and is visible in the wider landscape, however Halmer End sits lower in the landscape. Views across the landscape from settlement edges are generally long and open, with the north appearing much more settled than the south. Skylines are largely treed, however occasionally there are rooflines on the skyline in Alsagers Bank. This is a settled rural landscape where the landscape is important in the setting of the villages. This is a rural area largely comprising ancient, small-scale pastoral farmland with occasional larger fields and urban influences due to the presence of the coalescing villages, and settlement to the north at Audley.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	The village edges are generally well treed, with woodland associated with Bateswood Nature Reserve to the south of Halmer End and Burgess's Wood north of Alsagers Bank
	Water bodies / water courses	Small stream south of Halmer End
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Thick, mixed species hedgerows
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bateswood Local Nature Reserve • Podmore Pool SBI • Hayes Wood and Dismantled Railway SBI • Burgess's Wood BAS • Bateswood BAS
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Landscape Sensitivity Level
Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively few historic features contribute to the character of the area • Presence of existing development and infrastructure with a variety of settlement form and some conspicuous large-scale buildings and structures with occasional poorly integrated settlement edges • Busy landscape with intrusive, urban features • Fragmented landscape pattern <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undulating landform • Numerous areas of landscape designated for local nature conservation interest • Visually prominent landscape • Residents on the edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme, and users of destinations such as Apedale Country Park 	<p>Medium</p> <p>Some of the key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>
Audley Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few areas of valued, semi-natural habitats • Presence of existing development and infrastructure / variety of settlement scale and form 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Landscape Sensitivity Level
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Busy landscape / variety of human influences <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open, highly prominent landscape • Small-scale, historic field pattern • Open and exposed landscape • Characteristic landscape features are intact • Open landscape with extensive inward and outward views • Residents, communities where the landscape is part of the experience 	
Halmer End Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of existing development and infrastructure • variety of human influences <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open, highly prominent landscape • Large or numerous areas of landscape designated for nature conservation interest • Small-scale, historic field pattern • Open and exposed landscape • Legible landscape pattern • Open landscape with extensive inward and outward views • Residents, communities where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE C: ANCIENT REDLAND FARMLANDS

The Ancient Redland Farmlands LCT is a strongly undulating ancient rural landscape with distinctive deep red soils to the south-west of Newcastle-under-Lyme

Description

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landscape with areas of rolling or strongly undulating landform
- Productive mixed farmland, generally with dense hedgerow field boundaries and hedgerow trees
- Pattern of small to medium, sinuous ancient woodland
- Tree lined watercourses and scattered field ponds
- Settled rural landscape with scattered, nucleated villages, hamlets and farmsteads connected by narrow, sunken lanes
- Open landscape with views towards distant, wooded horizons

Physical Influences

The Ancient Redland Farmlands LCT is associated with an area of Upper Palaeozoic mudstones and sandstones to the south-west of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

The landform varies from low points of approximately 105m AOD south of Madeley, to high points of approximately 215m AOD west of Silverdale. Landform variations are very important in defining the differing scales and character, with areas of rolling or strongly undulating landform allowing or controlling views across the landscape. The upstanding/undulating topography allows distant views out over the adjoining Cheshire Plain to the west.

The underlying geology gives rise to the deep red soils that are a characteristic feature of the area, and which are often visible in ploughed fields. The non-calcareous soils support stock rearing and mixed farming.

The land is drained by a network of streams which flow broadly north-west to south-east in the east, and from south-east to north-west in the west. Scattered field ponds are characteristic of the Ancient Redland Farmlands LCT.

Biodiversity

Several sites are locally designated for their nature conservation value. These are generally woodlands but also include wetlands, neutral and acid grassland and hedgerows.

Woodland, including broadleaved, plantation and ancient woodland, is widespread, often located on rocky outcrops. There is a scattering of mature hedgerow oaks, and most stream corridors are lined with poplars and willows. In places, views are enclosed by woodland, including distant woodland in the Sandstone Hills and Farmland LCT to the west, and numerous hedgerow trees that coalesce in places to enhance the wooded appearance of the landscape. This provides contrast to areas of more open character.

Priority habitats in the Ancient Redland Farmlands LCT include deciduous woodland, with small pockets of floodplain grazing marsh, lowland meadow, mosaic habitats and good quality semi improved grassland.

Historic Landscape Character

This is a landscape of mixed arable and pastoral farmland within a generally irregular pattern of medium sized, hedged fields, interspersed by small, mostly ancient woodlands. Field pattern varies, from being intact and a strong element in the landscape in areas where it continues its stock control function, to being a fairly weak visual element in other areas as the hedges are replaced by lines of fencing

Small irregular fields associated with older enclosed landscape with a strong ancient character contrast with more regular 18th-19th century planned enclosure. The amalgamation of fields in the 20th century is also a feature within this landscape, although the overall historic character is often still discernible within the surviving field boundaries.

There are a variety of Historic Landscape Character Types (HLCT) within the Ancient Redland Farmlands LCT. These include:

- Small irregular fields
- Other small rectilinear fields
- Piecemeal enclosure/reorganised piecemeal enclosure
- Large irregular fields
- Planned clearance/assartment
- Planned enclosure
- Very large post-war fields

Heritage assets include two Scheduled Monuments, a registered park and garden, four conservation areas, and a scattering of Listed Buildings throughout the landscape, with notable clusters south of Madeley, Keele and Keele Hall.

Settlement Form and Built Character

The settlement pattern is generally nucleated, with a small number of nucleated villages in the west, in addition to scattered farmsteads and hamlets. Settlement is linked by narrow winding lanes, often deeply sunken with steep hedgebanks, which contrast with the urban features of the M6, A525 and West Coast Mainline that are often experienced as distinct, interrupting features in this landscape.

Newcastle-under-Lyme forms the eastern edge of the Ancient Redland Farmlands LCT, and Keele University, located within a landscaped park, is a notable urban development within the east of the LCT.

Vernacular buildings tend to be of traditional red brick with plain clay tile roofs. The predominantly large regular farmsteads within this landscape reflect the influence of the rural estates during the 18th and 19th centuries. There are also areas of smaller farmsteads which may reflect an older settlement pattern associated with early assarting.

Although there is an impression of extensive tree cover, this is a landscape where views are generally open and extensive, including intrusive elements such as the M6, recent residential development, agricultural barns and electricity pylons.

Access to the Landscape

A network of public rights of way (PROW) particularly concentrated in the north and west provide access to the landscape. Often lanes and trackways end at isolated farmsteads, or proceed into bridleways and footpaths, all of which helps to emphasise the rural and secluded character of this landscape. There are two operational golf courses that contribute to local recreational value within the LCT. These include Onneley Golf Club and Newcastle-under-Lyme Golf Club.

Evaluation

Condition

The Ancient Redland Farmlands LCT is a relatively intact rural landscape, comprising ancient pastoral farmland with generally strong hedgerows and pockets of ancient woodland. The landscape is generally well cared for. The overall condition of the landscape is perceived to be **good**.

Strength of Character

The Ancient Redland Farmlands LCT has an overall **strong** character, due to the distinctive topography, the strong sense of time depth associated with ancient pastoral fields, the pattern of hedgerow vegetation and dispersed, rural settlement pattern.

Key Landscape Sensitivities

- Well treed stream corridors and scattered field ponds
- Ancient pastoral farmland with mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Dispersed pockets of broadleaved, plantation and ancient woodland
- Dispersed settlement pattern of rural villages, hamlets and farmsteads
- Open, often long distance views across rolling farmland
- Generally strong rural character

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

- C1 Madeley Ancient Redland Farmlands
- C2 Keele Ancient Redland Farmlands
- C3 Whitmore Ancient Redland Farmlands

C1: Madeley Ancient Redland Farmlands Landscape Character Area

Madeley Ancient Redland Farmlands LCA is a rural landscape with rolling landform characterised by scattered large farmsteads and pockets of remnant parkland.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Rolling landform
- Generally small-scale pastoral landscape but in places arable fields have been enlarged and hedgerows removed
- Large farmsteads and remnant parkland scattered across the hills that encompass Madeley
- Deciduous ancient woodland located on steep slopes and on outcrops of rock
- Urban influences including the M6, West Coast Mainline and vertical features often interrupt the skyline and locally erode the rural character and sense of tranquillity
- Locally designated ecological network, largely of woodland and grassland
- Recreational value of PROW, Bateswood Nature Reserve and Onneley Golf Club

Landscape Character

Madeley Ancient Redland Farmlands LCA is an undulating landform containing the shallow valleys of the River Lea and Checkley Brook in the west of the Ancient Redland Farmlands LCT. The sinuous and generally well treed watercourses broadly flow in a south-east to north-west direction, with low points of approximately 110m AOD at Madeley and Little Madeley. The valley sides generally rise gently to the east and west, but in places they are steep, rising to high points of approximately 170-180m AOD in the east and west. Two Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS), Heighley Lane Quarry and Madeley Heath Tileries (Ridgehill Clay Pit), are located within the LCA.

Land cover is generally ancient, irregular pastoral fields, with pockets of small-scale arable and occasional areas where the pattern is more regular. Internal hedgerows have sometimes been removed as part of field enlargement. Elsewhere, remaining hedges are generally intact and hedgerow trees are characteristic features of the landscape. Woodland, often ancient woodland, is medium sized and sinuous in the north, and smaller and rectilinear in the south. Trees associated with former parkland at Madeley Manor, well treed streams and trees along dismantled railways combine with woodland to create a well treed appearance.

Views across the undulating countryside are often open and become locally enclosed by the rising landform or woodland. Whilst this is a rural landscape, there are several detracting features in views which erode the otherwise strong rural character and reduce perceptions of tranquillity, including the M6, ongoing mineral extraction, vertical features on the skyline including a turbine, mast, occasional large farm buildings, overhead line equipment associated with the West Coast Mainline, electricity pylons and telecommunications poles.

Priority habitats are largely deciduous woodland, but there are also fragments of good quality semi improved grassland, fens and lowland grassland. Locally designated sites for nature conservation include the restored former opencast mine at Bateswood Local Nature Reserve, several woodlands designated as BAS and SBI, largely in the north, and Madeley Manor Fish Pond SBI. Two Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) at Madeley Heath Tileries and Heighley Lane Quarry are of national importance.

Time depth is provided by the ancient field pattern where it is intact, as well as Scheduled Monuments at Heighley Castle and a moated site of Old Madeley Manor. Madeley has a conservation area, and there are scattered listed buildings throughout the landscape, but concentrated within the village.

Settlement includes the large village of Madeley and scattered historic farmsteads, of which a large number have been altered through modernisation. Madeley has an historic, linear centre with a large, distinctive mill pool, but has undergone modern extension, which has changed the form of the village into a nucleated settlement. Modern development is prominent in some views, even though the settlement in general is well nestled into the valley landform. Historic farmsteads generally have a loose or rectangular courtyard layout and are often accompanied by large modern barns. The majority have undergone alterations, but a few retain their 19th century form. Settlement is connected by a combination of A-roads and smaller, rural lanes, which occasionally have steep hedgerow banks.

A network of public rights of way (PROW) provide access to the landscape, and Bateswood Local Nature Reserve has walking trails and a small car park. Onneley Golf Club in the west has further recreational value.

Settlement Fringe Character

Madeley Fringe		
<p>The historic village of Madeley is located in the centre of the Madeley Ancient Redland Farmlands LCA. It has coalesced with Middle Madeley and Little Madeley to the north-east. The fringe of Madeley, Middle Madeley and Little Madeley is generally residential, with Madeley School and the Madeley Centre larger developments on the edge of the settlement. The settlement edges are generally integrated into the landscape by virtue of it being nestled into the valley of the River Lea, and by small-scale fields with hedges. The northern fringe of the settlement includes remnants of parkland associated with Old Madeley Manor and Manor Park Farm and is more treed than the south, where fields are more open and there are fewer trees. In the south, there are views towards more recent development on the village edges, with rooftops generally below the elevated, distant wooded skylines. The settlement is nestled into the generally well treed landscape, which limits intervisibility between the settlement edge and the wider countryside, although there are occasional long views from the southern edges. The settlement is contained to the south-west by the West Coast Mainline. The northern fringe of the settlement is in generally good condition, whereas the southern fringe is moderate.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Parkland associated with Old Madeley Manor and Manor Park Farm to the north Beck Wood to the north of the settlement
	Water bodies / water courses	River Lea through the middle of the village, occasional small field ponds and the large, distinctive mill pond within Madeley.
	Floodplains	Floodplain associated with the River Lea
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	West Coast Mainline to the south-west of Madeley M6 east of Little Madeley
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Thick, mixed species hedgerows, particularly in the north
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	Ongoing mineral extraction east of Little Madeley visible from the eastern edge of the settlement
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Madeley Manor SBI • The Lum (River Lea Corridor) SBI • Beck Wood BAS
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A

Built Environment	Conservation Areas	Madeley Conservation Area
	Other	

Aston Fringe		
<p>Aston is a small, nucleated village in the south-west of the LCA, on the boundary with LCA F1 Knighton Ancient Sandstone Farmlands.</p> <p>The eastern village edge is residential. It sits low in the landscape, on gently undulating landform that rises steeply to the north and south either side of a small stream east of the village. Skylines are generally treed. The village edge is treed on the eastern site, with glimpses of buildings softened by trees and low hedges. In general, views are contained by topography and vegetation, however the eastern edge of the village around Holloway Lane has open views into the landscape to the east, and these views and properties can be seen in views. The village edge is in good condition, with small-scale pasture to the east.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Clumps of trees on the eastern side of the village
	Water bodies / water courses	A small stream flowing through the settlement
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	N/A
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	N/A
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Madeley Park Fringe		
<p>Madeley Park fringe is in the south-east of the Madeley Ancient Redland Farmlands LCA, with the settlement located to the east within Whitmore Ancient Redland Farmlands LCA. The settlement fringe within this LCA is steeply sloping to the south-west of the village, and more gently undulating to the north-west of the village where it is open. The settlement is generally not prominent within the wider landscape as it has well wooded edges, as well as trees within the settlement, and as such built form can only be seen in occasional glimpsed views. The woodland within which Madeley Park is located largely limits intervisibility with the wider landscape, as well as additional woodland to the south-west. Manor Road, to the west of the settlement generally forms a strong edge, however there are a few scattered houses within the woodland to the west. Fields to the north-west of the village have well maintained low hedges and are generally in good condition.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	The settlement is well treed, with small woodlands to the south-west
	Water bodies / water courses	Small streams and field ponds
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	N/A
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	N/A
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Landscape Sensitivity Level
Madeley Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth, gently undulating, lowland landscapes • large-scale, modern field pattern associated with the southern fringe • Presence of existing development and infrastructure • visual containment by landscape features • Busy landscape / variety of human influences • Landscape pattern is fragmented in the south • Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views / limited visibility from surrounding landscapes / detracting features or development visible in views <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large or numerous areas of landscape designated for nature conservation interest • small-scale, historic field pattern associated with the northern fringe • well-integrated settlement edges • Legible landscape pattern / characteristic landscape features are intact in the north • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>Medium</p> <p>Some of the key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Landscape Sensitivity Level
Aston Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few areas of valued, semi-natural habitats • Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dramatic landform • Distinctive rural settlement pattern/well-integrated settlement edges • Tranquil or highly rural landscape • Legible landscape pattern • Open landscape with extensive inward and outward views • Residents and communities where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>
Madeley Park Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few areas of valued, semi-natural habitats • Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area • Visual containment by landscape features <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dramatic landform • Distinctive rural settlement pattern / presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular settlement and buildings / well-integrated settlement edges 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Landscape Sensitivity Level
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tranquil or highly rural landscape • Legible landscape pattern / characteristic landscape features are intact • Open landscape with extensive inward and outward views • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	

C2: Keele Ancient Redland Farmlands Landscape Character Area

Keele Ancient Redland Farmlands LCA is an undulating mixed rural landscape with a pattern of woodland on steep slopes and locally influenced by the urban edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme and by Keele University.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Undulating elevated landform
- Small to medium sized woodlands, often on steep slopes
- Large arable fields in the south with hedgerows removed
- Localised urban influences include Keele University, the urban edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme and the M6
- Scattered field ponds
- Strong time depth associated with parkland at Keele Hall
- Panoramic views over Newcastle-under-Lyme in the north

Landscape Character

Keele Ancient Redland Farmlands LCA is an undulating, elevated landform south-west of Newcastle-under-Lyme. It has a high point of approximately 204m AOD east of Quarry Bank, falling to approximately 145m at the edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme in the north and 120m AOD where it meets the M6 in the south. Two Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS), Quarry Bank Quarry and Job's Wood Quarry, are located within the LCA. Hydrological features are limited to scattered, small ponds in fields and a short, wooded section of an unnamed stream in the south.

Land cover largely comprises small-scale, pastoral fields with larger, arable fields in the south. Hedgerows are generally low and well maintained, however in places arable fields have been enlarged and internal boundaries removed. Farmland is interspersed by woodland, including pockets of ancient woodland and a small amount of plantation in the south-east. In contrast to the rest of the LCA, there is a significant amount of tree cover on the urban edge associated with recreational spaces and the University campus, including historic parkland and trees associated with Keele Hall. Views across the undulating landscape are generally long and open, particularly in the north where there are panoramic views across Newcastle-under-Lyme.

A number of locally designated sites of nature conservation value are scattered throughout the landscape. These are largely woodland and wet woodland, but also include wetland habitats at Birchwood BAS and Bogs Wood BAS. Priority habitats are limited to deciduous woodland.

Historic features include conservation areas at Keele and Keele Hall, Keele Hall registered park & garden, and a number of listed buildings largely concentrated within the conservation areas.

Settlement comprises a small number of historic farmsteads organised around rectangular courtyards and the historic village of Keele. Keele is visible in the wider landscape due to its prominent church spire which is rare in the wider Borough. It is otherwise largely well-integrated into the landscape, but a modern extension to the west is prominent in the landscape. Keele University is generally well-integrated into the landscape by trees and woodland pertaining to the historic parkland, although in some places large buildings and sports facilities are prominent in views around the edges. The landscape is locally influenced by the urban edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme, and other urban elements including the M6, A525, two golf clubs and Keele University which combine to limit perceptions of tranquillity.

A small number of public rights of way (PROW) provide access to the landscape, but this is sparse in the south and east. Golf clubs, and sports facilities at Keele University have recreational value.

Settlement Fringe Character

Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe		
<p>The urban fringe of Newcastle-under-Lyme forms the north-eastern boundary of the Keele Ancient Redland Farmlands LCA. Newcastle-under-Lyme urban fringe is largely residential, with a landfill site located between Silverdale and Poolfields. The edges of residential developments are generally softened by trees, long back gardens, woodland, and distinctive linear vegetation associated with Newcastle-under-Lyme Golf Club and Keele Golf Range. The landform rises steeply south and west of the settlement edge, and the settlement is prominent in elevated views from the south, in particular from the A525. The settlement edge has been influenced by 20th century urban residential expansion but remains in generally good condition.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	The urban edge is largely softened by trees, including a large amount of woodland and two golf courses
	Water bodies / water courses	A minor stream in the south-east
	Floodplains	Floodplain associated with the minor stream in the south-east
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	A525, A53, M6
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	Operational landfill site between Silverdale and Poolfields
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rosemary Wood SBI • Clayton Fields SBI • Hayling Wood BAS • Redheath Plantation BAS • Bogs Wood BAS • Silverdale (south-east of BAS) • Rosemary Hill Wood BAS • Butt's Walk Fields BAS • Barker's Wood, Hands Wood and Pie Rough BAS • Ferndown Local Nature Reserve
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Keele Fringe		
<p>Keele is an historic village in the centre of Keele Ancient Redland Farmlands LCA. Keele has a broadly informal, organic layout, loosely nucleated around a road junction. The village is located on gently undulating landform, and not prominent in the wider landscape. The edges are softened by trees within gardens, hedgerows and the wider landscape, as well as blocks of woodland and parkland on the eastern side. There are glimpses of built form through the village's vegetated edges. The church spire is a distinctive feature which can be seen in the wider landscape, which is relatively unusual within the wider Borough. There are views from the edge of the village across large arable fields to the north, and smaller, pastoral fields to the south. The village edges are in good condition to the east and south, where parkland and small-scale pastoral fieldscapes are intact. The north and west edges of the village are in moderate condition, where fields have been enlarged and hedgerows removed.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Parkland and woodland associated with Keele Hall east of the settlement
	Water bodies / water courses	Small stream south-west of the settlement
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	A525
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Church spire is a landmark in the wider landscape
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	N/A
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	Keele Hall Registered Park & Garden
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	Keele Conservation Area
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Landscape Sensitivity Level
Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area • Presence of existing development and infrastructure • Busy landscape / variety of human influences / intrusive, urbanising features <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open, highly prominent landscape / dramatic landform • Large or numerous areas of landscape designated for nature conservation interest / variety of valued natural features e.g. trees, hedgerows, woodland, grassland • Open and exposed landscape • Legible landscape pattern / characteristic landscape features are intact • Open landscape with extensive inward and outward views / visually prominent landscape • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Landscape Sensitivity Level
Keele Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth, gently undulating, lowland landscapes • Few areas of valued, semi-natural habitats • Visual containment by landscape features • Landscape pattern is fragmented in the north <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong time depth / small-scale, historic field pattern • Distinctive rural settlement pattern / presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular settlement and buildings / well-integrated settlement edges • Tranquil or highly rural landscape • Legible landscape pattern / characteristic landscape features are intact in the south • Landmark features and characteristic features in views that contribute to sense of place • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

C3: Whitmore Ancient Redland Farmlands Landscape Character Area

Whitmore Ancient Redland Farmlands LCA is a sparsely settled undulating landscape with wooded slopes and scattered field ponds

Description

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landform incised by the valleys of small streams
- Sparsely settled landscape of dispersed farmsteads
- Distinctive wooded valley slopes in the west
- Mixed farming with small-scale pastoral fields and large-scale arable fields, interspersed with woodland and parkland
- Scattered field ponds and a distinctive network of fishing ponds in the south
- Generally open, long distance views enclosed by distant landform and woodland

Landscape Character

Whitmore Ancient Redland Farmlands LCA is an undulating, landscape containing the steep sided valley of a tributary of the River Lea in the west, and the well treed, shallow valley of Meece Brook in the centre. The landform rises steeply from the watercourse in the west, from approximately 125m AOD to low hills of approximately 170-180m AOD in the central and western part of the LCA. A Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS), Butterton Church Quarry, is located within the LCA. Field ponds are occasional features within the landscape, and there is a network of fishing lakes in the south associated with Pleck Farm.

Land cover is largely small-scale, irregular pastoral farmland, becoming more regular in the south and east. Dense hedgerows and hedgerow trees are present where the field size is smaller. In places, there are arable fields, and some fields have been enlarged and hedgerows removed or replaced with post and wire fences, with hedgerow trees indicating the historic field pattern. Farmland is interspersed with generally small, sinuous ancient woodlands, with occasional plantation woodland in the west. Parkland associated with Butterton Hall adds diversity to the landscape. Views are generally open and long distance and become enclosed by distant rising landform or woodlands. Electricity pylons are vertical features which interrupt the otherwise smooth and treed skyline. The overall strong rural character and sense of tranquillity of the LCA locally interrupted by the M6 in the north and the West Coast Mainline in the west.

Priority habitats include scattered small deciduous woodlands, an area of floodplain grazing marsh north-east of Madeley Park and a cluster of good quality semi improved grassland and fragments of lowland meadow east of the fishing lakes. Several woodlands are designated as SBI for their nature conservation value, as well as lowland meadows at Butterton Meadows SBI.

Historic landscape features are limited to Butterton Conservation Area, and a small number of scattered listed buildings

Settlement is generally sparse, and limited to isolated historic farmsteads, a small number of linear hamlets and two villages, namely Madeley Park and Baldwin's Gate, in the south of the LCT. Both villages are nucleated in form. Madeley Park is well-integrated on valley slopes as a low density settlement set within woodland. More recent development north of Baldwin's Gate is prominent in the wider landscape. Farmsteads are generally organised around a loose or rectangular courtyard, and in a few instances are accompanied by large modern barns to the side of the historic farmyard. Roads linking settlement are generally narrow and winding, sometimes with hedgebanks.

The public right of way (PROW) network is limited, and only a small number of PROW offer disjointed access to the landscape.

Settlement Fringe Character

Madeley Park Fringe		
<p>Madeley Park is in the south-west of the Whitmore Ancient Redland Farmlands LCA. The settlement is located on rising slopes to the west of a tributary stream, however it is not prominent within the wider landscape as it has well wooded edges, as well as trees within the settlement, and as such built form can only be seen in occasional glimpsed views. The woodland within which Madeley Park` is located limits intervisibility with the wider landscape. The West Coast Mainline is to the east of the settlement. Internal boundaries in the pastoral fields to the east have been fragmented, and the condition is moderate.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	The settlement is well treed, with small woodlands to the south and north-east
	Water bodies / water courses	River Lea tributary stream to the east
	Floodplains	Floodplain associated with stream to the east
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	West Coast Mainline to the east
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	N/A
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	N/A
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Baldwin's Gate Fringe		
<p>The village of Baldwin's Gate is located on the western boundary of the LCA and continues into LCA E1 Chapel Chorlton Sandstone Hills & Farmlands. The north-western part of the village edge is residential and situated low in the landscape which rises to the north-east and west. Rooflines generally don't break the skyline, and the edge is softened by trees. This edge is however harsh, with limited vegetation to integrate the development into the wider landscape. The open settlement fringe means that there is strong intervisibility between this settlement and the wider landscape. The urban edge has been influenced by 21st century residential development. Whilst it has a harsh edge, fields and hedgerows on the settlement fringe are in generally moderate condition.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Woodland associated with Chorlton Moss
	Water bodies / water courses	A small stream and pond south of the village
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	The West Coast Mainline A53
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Network of small-scale pastoral fields to the south of the village with dense hedgerows and hedgerow trees
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	Chorlton Moss SBI
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Landscape Sensitivity Level
Madeley Park Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Few areas of valued, semi-natural habitats• Presence of existing development and infrastructure• Visual containment by landscape features• Variety of human influences• Landscape features are degraded• Limited visibility from surrounding landscapes <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dramatic landform• Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area• well-integrated settlement edges• Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience	High Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Landscape Sensitivity Level
Baldwin's Gate Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gently undulating, lowland landscapes • Few areas of valued, semi-natural habitats • Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area • Presence of existing development and infrastructure • poorly integrated settlement edges • variety of human influences <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open and exposed landscape • Legible landscape pattern • Open landscape with extensive inward and outward views • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>Medium</p> <p>Some of the key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE D: ANCIENT CLAY FARMLANDS

The Ancient Clay Farmlands LCT is a gently rolling lowland pastoral landscape in the north-west of the Study Area and extending west into Cheshire characterised by a well-defined, irregular field pattern bounded by ancient hedgerows, with scattered oak trees.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling lowland plain
- Significant localised areas of meres and mosses
- Generally pastoral landscape with an irregular field pattern, defined by ancient hedgerows with scattered trees
- Trees along watercourses and in hedgerows coalesce to filter views
- Dispersed settlement pattern of small villages, hamlets, farmsteads and wayside dwellings, linked by winding country lanes
- Generally strong rural character and strong sense of tranquillity

Physical Influences

The Ancient Clay Farmlands LCT is located on lower landform in the west of the district, ranging from a low point of approximately 60m AOD around Betley Mere in the west, to a high point of approximately 155m AOD in the east, north of Butters Green. The landform generally falls in an east-west direction through the LCT.

Although underlain by Permo-Triassic rocks, the landform of this landscape, particularly in west Staffordshire and the northern meres and mosses, is influenced by a covering of glacial drift which forms a rolling lowland plain. Soils derived from the underlying glacial drift are heavy, slowly permeable, and seasonally waterlogged.

The land is drained by a network of small rivers and streams, which largely flow from the south-east to the north-west. Notable features in this landscape are marl pits, meres and mosses, many of which are surrounded by mature trees.

Biodiversity

The meres and mosses are internationally and nationally important habitats, designated as Ramsar Sites and SSSI. There are also several locally designated nature sites. These include mosses, woodland, acid grassland and semi improved grassland.

Whilst small, relict patches of ancient woodland and linear broadleaved woodlands are present in places. Tree cover in the Ancient Clay Farmlands LCT is largely provided by scattered hedgerow oaks and ash trees. These are often numerous enough to coalesce visually, filtering views through the countryside. Linear bands of willows and alders along watercourses, provide some structure in the more open arable areas and are important ecological resources.

Priority habitats in this LCT include deciduous woodland, good quality semi improved grassland, floodplain grazing marsh, lowland dry acid grassland and lowland raised bog.

Historic Landscape Character

This is a landscape of pastoral farmland with pockets of small-scale arable. The ancient character of this landscape is reflected by the irregular pattern of fields derived from the early piecemeal enclosure of former medieval open fields. Across the area there has been some enlargement of fields in the 20th century.

Much of the land has traditionally been associated with livestock farming, particularly dairying, and is managed as permanent pasture with a few fields of cultivated land. Many of the fields are enclosed by an irregular pattern of ancient mixed hedgerows, often on hedge banks.

There are a variety of Historic Landscape Character Types (HLCT) within the Ancient Clay Farmlands LCT. These include:

- Small irregular fields/other small rectilinear fields
- Large irregular fields/large rectilinear fields
- Reorganised piecemeal enclosure
- Large assarts with sinuous boundaries
- Very large post-war fields

Heritage assets include a Scheduled Monument, two conservation areas, and scattering of Listed Buildings, largely focused on the central part of the LCT.

Settlement Form and Built Character

The settlement pattern is dispersed with villages, hamlets, farmsteads and wayside dwellings scattered throughout the landscape. Settlements tend to be small and linear in the west and larger and nucleated in the east. They are connected by small, winding country lanes, lined by hedge banks which contrast with the urban features of the M6, A500 and West Coast Mainline that are experienced as distinct, interrupting features in this landscape.

Farmsteads are largely organised around loose or rectangular courtyards, and often have modern barns located to the side of, or on the site of the historic farmyard. Whilst a significant number have been subject to modifications, relatively few have been lost altogether.

A few timber-framed buildings occur in places and are characteristic of this rural landscape. Views are often enclosed by the tall hedgerows and mature hedgerow tree cover, however major road corridors have a significant localised effect in places.

Access to the Landscape

A dense network of bridleways and footpaths reflect the ancient character of the landscape. Many of the lanes and trackways end at isolated farmsteads, or proceed into bridleways and footpaths, all of which helps to emphasise the rural and secluded character of this landscape.

Evaluation

Condition

The Ancient Clay Farmlands LCT is a relatively intact landscape, comprising small-scale ancient pastoral farmland with generally strong hedgerows and pockets of ancient woodland. The landscape is rural and generally well cared for with occasional urban influences from the road network and larger villages in the east. The overall condition of the landscape is perceived to be **good**.

Strength of Character

The Ancient Clay Farmlands LCT has an overall **strong** character, due to the strong rural character, sense of time depth associated with ancient pastoral fields and the dense pattern of hedgerow vegetation.

Key Landscape Sensitivities

- Internationally and nationally important meres and mosses
- Strong hedgerow patterns and mature hedgerow oaks
- Small woodlands, including ancient woodlands
- Well treed stream corridors
- Dispersed settlement pattern
- Strong rural character

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

- D1: Audley Ancient Clay Farmlands
- D2: Betley Ancient Clay Farmlands
- D3: Wrinehill Ancient Clay Farmlands

D1: Audley Ancient Clay Farmlands Landscape Character Area

Audley Ancient Clay Farmlands LCA is an ancient, sparsely wooded rural landscape with a cluster of large villages in the south-east, and scattered historic farmsteads elsewhere

Description

Key Characteristics

- Ancient, pastoral farmland with generally dense hedges and hedgerow trees
- Scattered small field ponds
- Cluster of large, nucleated villages on the south-eastern boundary with settlement elsewhere comprising scattered historic farmsteads
- Elevated wooded skylines to the west, including the landmark Wedgwood Monument
- Open views across rolling countryside, punctuated by trees

Landscape Character

Audley Ancient Clay Farmlands LCA is a gently rolling lowland landscape which is elevated in the east. It has a high point of approximately 155m AOD in the north-east, north-west of Merelake, and falls to a low point within the west of the Study Area of approximately 85m AOD south of Dean Brook, continuing to gently fall in height as it extends into Cheshire to the west. A Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS), Kent Hill Quarry, is located within the LCA. Several small, meandering streams within shallow valleys include Valley Brook and Dean Brook and there are numerous small field ponds.

Land cover is generally ancient, pastoral farmland. Medium-scale fields are irregular and organised in a generally haphazard pattern, with occasional pockets of regularity. Hedgerows and hedgerow trees are generally intact and in good condition, although they are sometimes supplemented with wooden fences. Views across the rolling landform are generally open and punctuated by trees. Elevated skylines in the west include the distinctive landmark feature of the Wedgwood Monument on LCA B3: South Kids Grove Coalfield Farmlands, and in the north-east electricity pylons are prominent detracting features on the skyline.

This is a sparsely wooded landscape. Priority habitats are limited to small areas of deciduous woodland, generally associated with streams, and fragments of good quality semi improved grassland. Audley Castle Banks Bas, Bignall End Road BAS, and Bignall End Coal Yards SBI are locally designated for their grassland and heathland habitats.

The ancient field pattern provides time depth, as do the Conservation Area at Audley and the Castle Hill motte which is a Scheduled Monument.

Audley and Bignall End are large, nucleated villages on the eastern edge of the LCA. They are prominent, due to their location on elevated landform and rooflines and chimneys break the otherwise treed skyline. Elsewhere, settlement is largely limited to a high density of historic farmsteads, generally organised around a loose courtyard or rectangular courtyard, and often accompanied by large modern barns. Settlement is linked by narrow, occasionally sunken lanes, and there is generally strong rural character which contrast with the urban features of the A500 and M6 which locally erode the sense of tranquillity.

A network of public rights of way (PROW), including the Two Saints Way long distance footpath provide access to the landscape. Recreational facilities elsewhere are limited to sports facilities including a football and cricket ground on the northern edge of Audley and Bignall End.

Settlement Fringe Character

Audley Fringe		
<p>Audley comprises a cluster of villages, of which Audley and Bignall End are in the south-east of Audley Ancient Clay Farmlands LCA. The villages are generally nucleated in form. A narrow treed gap associated with a stream separates Audley from Bignall End. The villages sit on high ground in relation to the topography within the LCA, and are quite prominent, with a generally hard edge, and with rooflines and chimneys breaking the otherwise treed skyline. This is a settled rural landscape where the landscape is important in the setting of the villages. Views across the settled landscape from village edges are generally long and open, and the village is visible in the wider landscape. This is a rural area comprising ancient, medium scale pastoral farmland in generally good condition.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	N/A
	Water bodies / water courses	A small stream which separates Audley from Bignall End
	Floodplains	Floodplain associated with the unnamed stream east of Audley
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	A500 to the north
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Thick, mixed species hedgerows
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bignall End Coal Yards SBI • Bignall End Road BAS • Audley Castle Banks BAS
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castle Hill Motte Scheduled Monument
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	Audley Conservation Area
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
Audley Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of existing development and infrastructure / poorly integrated settlement edges • variety of human influences / intrusive, urbanising features <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open, highly prominent landscape • Large or numerous areas of landscape designated for nature conservation interest • High density of historic features that contribute to the character of the area / strong time depth / small-scale, historic field pattern • Open and exposed landscape / few screening features • Legible landscape pattern / characteristic landscape features are intact • Open landscape with extensive inward and outward views • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

D2: Betley Ancient Clay Farmlands Landscape Character Area

Betley Ancient Clay Farmlands LCA is a settled rural landscape characterised by mosses and meres, with large, linear rural villages interspersed with scattered historic farmsteads.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Strong parkland character associated with Betley
- Settled rural landscape with historic, linear villages and scattered historic farmsteads
- Internationally and nationally important nature value associated with meres and mosses
- Small-scale views across undulating arable and pastoral farmland towards treed horizons

Landscape Character

Betley Ancient Clay Farmlands LCA is a smooth, rolling, lowland landscape with localised, rounded low hills. It falls from a high point of approximately 140m AOD in the east to approximately 60m AOD in the west at Betley Mere. Watercourses are generally limited to the edges, with the Dean Brook along part of the northern boundary, tributaries of the Checkley Brook in the east and along the southern boundary, and Mere Gutter in the west. Watercourses are generally sinuous and well treed, but the Checkley Brook tributaries in the east have been straightened to form a distinctive, angular drainage network.

Land cover is generally small-scale ancient, pastoral farmland, with pockets of small-scale arable fields. Hedgerows are generally in good condition, with occasional gaps, and hedgerow trees, and the overall impression is of a treed landscape. Woodland and parkland contribute to the treed character, with scattered small-scale woodlands, occasionally ancient woodlands and pockets of historic parkland, largely focussed on the village of Betley. Views across rolling farmland are generally small-scale and enclosed by trees. Skylines are generally wooded, with vertical features limited to a wind turbine and occasional telecommunications poles.

Priority habitats include deciduous woodland, lowland dry acid grassland and good quality semi improved grassland largely associated with parkland focussed on Betley, as well as fragments of ,floodplain grazing marsh Black Firs and Cranberry Bog SSSI and Betley Mere SSSI are internationally recognised as RAMSAR sites for their meres and mosses. Several sites are locally designated for their woodland, including wet woodland, as SBI, and Craddocks Moss Woodland SBI is a glacially derived moss, albeit damaged by drainage.

Settlement comprises historic, linear villages located along the A531 in the west, and scattered halls and historic farmsteads throughout the rest of the landscape. Villages generally sit low in the landscape and have well vegetated edges. Betley has experienced some residential expansion, particularly to the east. Farmsteads are largely organised around loose or rectangular courtyards. Whilst some farmsteads have been altered and are occasionally accompanied by modern barns, a significant number remain unaltered from their 19th century appearance.

In addition to historic parkland associated with Betley Hall House, Betley Court Gardens and several estate farms with a parkland character, heritage features include the historic village of Betley which has a large conservation area and a cluster of listed buildings. Distinctive timber frame construction is common, particularly at Betley. The landscape has a generally strong rural character, and there is a strong sense of tranquillity in the west. The M6 motorway is a conspicuous urban feature which erodes the rural character and sense of tranquillity in the east.

A network of PROW provide access to the landscape for recreation.

Settlement Fringe Character

Balterley Fringe		
<p>Balterley is a small settlement in the north of the Betley Ancient Claylands LCA. The settlement is a small, dispersed hamlet, mainly linear in form along the B5500, but with some development to the north, along Dean's Lane. The settlement sits low in the landscape, and the edges are well vegetated, so the edges of built development are not prominent. Roof lines are generally below the tree line. The B500 is well vegetated, with dense hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and properties tend to have well vegetated gardens, so there is little intervisibility between the low density hamlet and the wider landscape. The fringe is in generally good condition.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Trees along the B5500
	Water bodies / water courses	Minor stream west of Dean's Lane
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	N/A
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Betley Fringe		
<p>Betley is a large historic village in the centre of the Betley Ancient Clay Farmlands LCA. Betley is largely a linear village, with some residential expansion to the east. It is located low in the landscape, with undulating topography to the west, and rising landform, at times steeply sloping, to the east. The settlement edges are generally well-integrated into the landscape by treed, historic parkland associated with Betley Old Hall to the north-east, a small amount of woodland to the south-west, and the rising topography to the east rooflines are generally below the treeline. The soft settlement edges limit intervisibility with the wider landscape. The settlement edge has been influenced by residential expansion, however in general, the fringes are in good condition.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Parkland to the north-east associated with Betley Old Hall Small blocks of woodland to the west
	Water bodies / water courses	Small streams to the east and west of the village, several field ponds, and a large lake associated with parkland at Betley Old Hall.
	Floodplains	Floodplain associated with the small stream to the west
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	A531
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midland Meres & Mosses – Phase 1 • Steele's Coppice, Stockings Cote & Betley Grose SBI • Betley Mere SSSI Wrench's Wood SBI
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	Betley Conservation Area
	Other	

Wrinehill Fringe		
<p>The village of Wrinehill is located on the A531, south of Betley, in the Betley Ancient Claylands LCA. The village is a linear village is located low in the landscape, with undulating topography to the west, and rising landform, at times steeply sloping, to the east. The settlement edges are generally well-integrated into the landscape by treed, historic parkland associated with Betley Old Hall to the north-east, a small amount of woodland to the south-west, and the rising topography to the east rooflines are generally below the treeline. The soft settlement edges limit intervisibility with the wider landscape. The settlement edge has been influenced by agricultural intensification, with large, arable fields where hedgerows have been removed to the east and west and the condition here is moderate. Small-scale fields to the north and south of the village are more intact, and in good condition.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Woodland associated with Cracow Moss to the west, and trees on the village edges
	Water bodies / water courses	Betley Mere and associated drainage network to the west, feeding Mere Gutter, as well as several small streams and ponds to the east, and Checkley Brook to the south
	Floodplains	Floodplain associated with Mere Gutter and Checkley Brook
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	A531
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midland Meres & Mosses – Phase 1 • Betley Mere SSSI • Wrench's Wood SBI • Shuffers Wood and Grassland SBI
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Landscape Sensitivity Level
Balterley Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth, gently undulating, lowland landscapes • Few areas of valued, semi-natural habitats / intensively farmed or developed landscape • Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area • visual containment by landscape features • Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular settlement and buildings / well-integrated settlement edges • Tranquil or highly rural landscape • Legible landscape pattern • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>
Betley Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual containment by landscape features • Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Landscape Sensitivity Level
	<p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dramatic landform • Large or numerous areas of landscape designated for nature conservation interest • High density of historic features that contribute to the character of the area / strong time depth / small-scale, historic field pattern • Distinctive rural settlement pattern / presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular settlement and buildings / well-integrated settlement edges • Tranquil or highly rural landscape • Legible landscape pattern / characteristic landscape features are intact • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	
Wrinehill Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual containment by landscape features • Tranquil or highly rural landscape • Landscape pattern is fragmented in places • Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dramatic landform 	<p>Medium</p> <p>Some of the key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Landscape Sensitivity Level
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large or numerous areas of landscape designated for nature conservation interest • Strong time depth / small-scale, historic field pattern • Distinctive rural settlement pattern / presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular settlement and buildings / well-integrated settlement edges • Legible landscape pattern • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	

D3: Wrinehill Ancient Clay Farmlands Landscape Character Area

Wrinehill Ancient Clay Farmlands LCA is a largely remote, sparsely settled pastoral landscape with dense tree cover associated with woodlands, streams and hedgerow trees

Description

Key Characteristics

- Small-scale pastoral farmland interspersed with blocks of woodland
- Well treed landscape with strong hedgerow fields and well treed streams
- Sparsely settled, largely inaccessible rural landscape
- Views generally enclosed by trees, with distant views towards Crewe from elevated locations
- Urban features on the skyline in the north including overhead lines for the West Coast Mainline, and electricity pylons contrast with the otherwise strong rural character

Landscape Character

Wrinehill Ancient Clay Farmlands LCA is a gently undulating landscape, continuing west into Cheshire and Shropshire. Within the Study Area, it has a high point of approximately 140m AOD north of Onneley, from which the land falls to the north and south, to a low point of approximately 80m AOD in the north. Tributaries of the River Lea, generally well treed, small, meandering streams, cross the LCA in a generally east-west direction to converge in the north, and there are clusters of field ponds, particularly in the south.

Land cover is generally small-scale, irregular pastoral fields organised in a haphazard pattern, with a larger, more open field pattern north of Wrinehill Wood. Hedgerows are generally in good condition, and hedgerow trees are commonplace. Pastoral fields are interspersed with occasional medium sized blocks of deciduous woodland including ancient woodland. Views across the undulating landscape towards smooth and wooded horizons tend to be more open in the north where the field pattern is larger and more intimate in the south. On elevated landform north of Onneley, there are distant views above trees in the middle-distance towards the urban edge of Crewe.

Within the Study Area priority habitats are limited to scattered deciduous woodlands. Three woodlands, Grafton's Wood, Wrinehill Wood and Beech Wood are designated as SBI for their local nature conservation value.

Historic features are limited to the ancient field pattern, which is particularly strong in the south.

Settlement is sparse within the Study Area, comprising the dispersed, generally linear hamlet of Onneley, scattered historic farmsteads, and a mill and cottages associated with Wrinehill Hall in the north. Settlement is generally well-integrated into the landscape by small-scale fields, hedges and trees. Historic farmsteads are generally organised around a loose or rectangular courtyard, often accompanied by large modern barns, and a number have been modified from their 19th century form or lost altogether.

The A525 provides east-west connectivity, but there is limited connectivity between the north and south, so this is a landscape with a strong rural character, and generally strong sense of tranquillity. This is eroded in part in the north by trains on the West Coast Mainline which add noise and movement to the LCA. The overhead line equipment and a line of electricity pylons interrupts the otherwise treed skyline.

A network of public rights of way (PROW) provide access to the landscape and connect with the Ancient Redland Farmlands LCT to the east.

Settlement Fringe Character

Onneley Fringe		
Onneley is a small, dispersed linear hamlet in the south of the LCA. The hamlet is largely residential, with a small number of large farm buildings on the edges. Settlement is low density, and largely located low in the landscape so buildings don't break the skyline. Trees provide a soft edge to the village, so buildings are generally not visible in the wider landscape. The soft settlement edge and small pastoral field pattern with dense hedgerows and hedgerow trees means there is limited intervisibility with the wider landscape. Views are generally short and enclosed by trees, however there are long distance views towards Crewe from elevated land towards the north of the settlement. The settlement edge is in generally well maintained and in good condition.		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	N/A
	Water bodies / water courses	N/A
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	N/A
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	N/A
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
Onneley Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth, gently undulating, lowland landscapes • Few areas of valued, semi-natural habitats • Visual containment by landscape features • Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-scale, historic field pattern • Distinctive rural settlement pattern / presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular settlement and buildings / well-integrated settlement edges • Tranquil or highly rural landscape • Legible landscape pattern / characteristic landscape features are intact • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE E: SANDSTONE HILLS & FARMLANDS

The Sandstone Hills & Farmlands LCT in the south of the Study Area is characterised by a pattern of large arable fields and large plantation woodlands located on distinctive undulating, rounded hills, interspersed by more intimate pastoral fieldscapes on steeper slopes.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Strongly undulating landform, with intimate valleys and localised, rounded hills with occasional steep slopes
- Large, hilltop plantation woodlands accompanied by fragments of heathland, interspersed with smaller, deciduous woodland, including ancient woodland, and parkland associated with landed estates
- Large-scale, open arable fields on flatter ground, with pockets of small-scale, pastoral farming bound by dense hedgerows on steeper slopes
- Treed landscape, with well vegetated watercourses and hedgerow trees along roads and in areas of pastoral fields enhancing the wooded character
- Views are generally enclosed by hedges, hedgerow trees and woodland
- Settled rural landscape, with small linear hamlets, and a small number of large, nucleated villages, and a high density of farmsteads and rural estates linked by a network of narrow, often sunken lanes

Physical Influences

The Sandstone Hills & Farmlands LCT is a strongly undulating landscape of rounded hills associated with a localised upland zone underlain by Permo-Triassic mudstones and sandstones, coarse-grained Pebble beds and older Upper Palaeozoic mudstones. The Pebble beds are more resistant to erosion and often form areas with a higher, more steeply sloping topography. The LCT has a high point of approximately 233m AOD at Ashely Heath, and a low point of approximately 85m in the Coal Brook Valley. The undulating landform provides distant views from high points over the lowlands to the west.

The underlying rocks generally produce characteristic fertile, easily cultivated reddish brown soils. This landscape is also distinguished by sandy, free draining, in places impoverished soils, which historically were covered by wood pasture and heath.

Several well treed watercourses flow through intimate valleys that contribute to the undulating landform. In the west they generally flow east-west and in the east, they flow from the north-west to the south-east.

Biodiversity

Two sites are designated as SSSI, for the nature conservation value of their woodland and wetland. There are also several local designations, including woodland, wetland, lowland acid grassland and lowland meadows habitats. Priority habitats are largely deciduous woodland, but there are also fragments of lowland heathland alongside coniferous plantations, lowland dry acid grassland, floodplain grazing marsh and good quality semi improved grassland.

Heritage assets include a registered park and garden, a small number of Scheduled Monuments indicating early settlement including bowl barrows, a hillfort, moated site and Roman villa, three conservation areas, and a number of scattered listed buildings, largely concentrated on settlement. There are also scattered historic parklands, not included on the register of parks and gardens.

Woodland cover includes ancient woodland, broadleaved woodland and large coniferous plantations on areas of pronounced landform, integrated by broadleaved edges. Scattered areas of parkland associated with landed estates, tree lined streams, pockets of pastoral fields with intact hedgerows and hedgerow trees combine to form a well wooded, ecologically valuable landscape associated with the localised upland zone within an otherwise productive agricultural landscape. In the more intensively farmed arable areas, hedgerow tree cover is sparse, resulting in a generally smooth textured landscape with extensive views.

Historic Landscape Character

This is a landscape of varying historic character, unified by large-scale hill and ridge top woodlands. Where the topography is flatter, land cover generally comprises intensively managed medium sized mixed and arable farms and interspersed by historic parkland associated with landed estates, whilst the ancient pattern of small fields and predominantly pastoral land-use of the steep valleys imparts a more peaceful character to the areas of smaller scale.

In several areas the field pattern is rectilinear, reflecting the late enclosure of heathland. In other parts, particularly adjoining ancient woodland, small areas of assarting have survived from an early phase of landscape development, creating an irregular pattern of field boundaries. Across this landscape there has also been some enlargement of fields in the 20th century, with hedgerows removed inside fields and horsiculture evident close to settlements.

Key Historic Landscape Character Types (HLCT) within the Sandstone Hills & Farmlands LCT are:

- Coniferous/broadleaved/mixed plantation
- Mixed/broadleaved ancient woodland
- Small irregular/small rectilinear fields
- Planned enclosure
- Large irregular fields/other large rectilinear fields
- Large assarts with sinuous boundaries/planned clearance/assartment
- Piecemeal enclosure/reorganised piecemeal enclosure
- Very large post-war fields

Settlement Form and Built Character

This landscape is largely characterised by a clustered pattern of settlement, including nucleated villages, linear hamlets, halls and scattered farmsteads. Some villages have experienced expansion and become commuter villages. Settlement is connected by a network of narrow, often sunken lanes. In the areas of more pronounced landform, many of these lanes have extensive sandstone banks, while former heathland areas are characterised by straight roads. Minor rural lanes contrast with the urban features of the A51, A53 and West Coast Mainline that are experienced as distinct, interrupting features that cut through this landscape.

Large regular farmsteads with extensive modern buildings, dominate the landscape, particularly in areas of planned enclosure, often being associated with large-scale dairying enterprises established during the 19th century. There are also clusters of small farmsteads, often associated with areas of early piecemeal enclosure, or small irregular fields (assarting). Regular L-shaped farmsteads are a particular feature associated with small-scale cattle rearing or dairying. Vernacular buildings tend to be of red brick construction with clay tile roofs.

Access to the Landscape

A network of public rights of way (PROW) provide access to the landscape, although this is fragmented in places and there are areas with limited access. National Cycle Network Route 552 and the towpath of the Shropshire Union Canal along the south-western boundary provides additional recreational access to the landscape.

Evaluation

Condition

The Sandstone Hills & Farmland LCT comprises a combination of large, arable fields with internal field boundaries removed, and smaller, more intimate pastoral landscapes with strong networks of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, interspersed by plantation woodland, historic parklands and ancient woodlands of varying size. Settlement is generally small-scale, but some villages have experienced small-scale expansion, which is generally well-integrated into the landscape. The overall condition of the landscape is perceived to be **good**.

Strength of Character

The Sandstone Hills & Farmland LCT has an overall **strong** character, due to the characteristic undulating topography which forms distinctive, rounded hills, with intimate valleys and prominent, hilltop coniferous plantation woodlands, interspersed by historic estates and pockets of small-scale pastoral fields with strong hedgerow networks and hedgerow trees.

Key Landscape Sensitivities

- Ancient woodland and large coniferous plantation accompanied by fragments of heathland on elevated landform
- Scattered areas of parkland associated with landed estates
- Pockets of intact hedgerow pattern with hedgerow oaks associated with small-scale, pastoral fields
- Well treed stream corridors
- Generally strong rural character
- Settled rural landscape with settlement linked by ancient narrow sunken lanes with sandstone hedgebanks

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

- E1: Chapel Chorlton Sandstone Hills & Farmlands
- E2: Maer Sandstone Hills & Farmlands
- E3: Loggerheads Sandstone Hills & Farmlands
- E4: Hales Sandstone Hills & Farmlands

E1: Chapel Chorlton Sandstone Hills & Farmlands Landscape Character Area

Chapel Chorlton Sandstone Hills & Farmlands LCA is a settled rural landscape with small, scattered woodlands and low rounded hills that combine to give long, open views

Description

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landform with low, rounded hills and localised steep slopes
- Low density of small, scattered woodlands
- Network of locally designated habitats including woodland, floodplain grazing marsh, lowland raised bog and good quality semi improved grassland
- Settled landscape with nucleated and linear villages and isolated farmsteads
- Generally strong rural character and strong sense of tranquillity, locally eroded by the West Coast Mainline, A51 and A53
- Long, open views punctuated by trees from high points

Landscape Character

Chapel Chorlton Sandstone Hills & Farmlands LCA is undulating, comprising low, rounded hills with localised steep slopes. It has a high point of approximately 185m AOD in the west, and a low point of approximately 100m AOD in the east, where the meandering Meece Brook forms part of the Borough boundary. The brook and its tributaries are generally well treed.

Land cover generally comprises pastoral and small-scale arable farmland, with waterside meadows along the Meece Brook, and historic parkland associated with Whitmore Hall in the north. Fieldscapes are predominantly large-scale and rectilinear, organised in a slightly haphazard way with pockets of regularity. Fields have been enlarged, and internal hedgerows removed in places. Where hedgerows are intact, they are generally robust and include hedgerow trees. Woodland cover is lower than elsewhere in the Sandstone Hills & Farmlands LCT, with several small blocks largely concentrated in the north of the LCA, establishing an open, wooded character. Views from high points are generally long and open, featuring trees on the skyline, whereas views from lower points are often visually contained by landform and trees. Skylines are occasionally interrupted by electricity pylons.

Historic features are largely limited to scattered listed buildings, historic parkland associated with Whitmore Hall, and Whitmore Conservation Area. Priority habitats include deciduous woodland and fragments of floodplain grazing marsh, lowland raised bog and good quality semi improved grassland. Several sites, including Holbrook's Wood, Chorlton Moss, Broughton Plantation and Coombes Dale, Swinchurch Rough and Bluebell Bank are locally designated as SBI for their nature conservation value.

Settlement is characterised by several small, linear, rural villages, namely Acton, Whitmore, Chapel Chorlton and Hill Chorlton; as well two larger villages in the west, Baldwin's Gate and Whitmore Heath, which have a nucleated form. There are also several isolated farmsteads, generally organised around loose or rectangular courtyards, occasionally with large modern barns to the side of the historic buildings. The West Coast Mainline railway line, the A51 and A53 add noise and movement to the otherwise strong rural character and sense of tranquillity across the LCA, and contrast with narrow, rural roads which connect the rural settlements.

A network of public rights of way (PROW) provide access to the landscape, and link settlements.

Settlement Fringe Character

Whitmore Fringe		
Whitmore is a distinctive, estate village in the north of the LCA. The village is largely residential, with Hillside Farm located to the north. Buildings are situated low in the landscape, and the skyline is wooded. The village is surrounded by dense woodland and trees associated with parkland at Whitmore Hall. The well vegetated village edge creates a strong sense of visual enclosure and largely limits intervisibility between the village and the wider landscape. The village edge has a parkland character and is in good condition.		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Woodland and parkland associated with Whitmore Hall
	Water bodies / water courses	A small stream and ponds associated with Whitmore Hall
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Whitmore Hall, located to the east of the village
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	Holbrook's Wood SBI
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	Historic Parkland (non-designated) associated with Whitmore Hall
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	Whitmore Conservation Area
	Other	

Baldwin's Gate Fringe		
<p>The village of Baldwin's Gate is located on the western boundary of the LCA and continues into LCA C3: Whitmore Ancient Redland Farmlands. The southern part of the village edge is residential and situated low in the landscape which rises to the north-east and south-east. Rooflines generally don't break the skyline, and the edge is softened by trees. The rising topography and vegetation at the edge of the village mean that there is limited intervisibility between the village and the wider landscape. The urban edge has been influenced by 20th century residential development and is in generally good condition.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Woodland associated with Chorlton Moss
	Water bodies / water courses	A small stream and pond south of the village
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	The West Coast Mainline A53
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Network of small-scale pastoral fields to the south of the village with dense hedgerows and hedgerow trees
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	Chorlton Moss SBI
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Chapel Chorlton Fringe		
<p>Chapel Chorlton is a small, dispersed village towards the south of the LCA. The small village is residential, with two farms located to the east. A number of properties are spread out along the north of Haddon Lane, with several larger dwellings set within substantial grounds to the east. The village is located on a ridge. The edges are vegetated, and buildings are softened but remain visible in the wider landscape. Occasionally rooftops break the skyline. Views from the edge of the village are long and open. Fields to the north and south of the village have been enlarged and internal hedgerows removed. The village fringe is in generally moderate condition.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Broughton Plantation to the north-west
	Water bodies / water courses	Several small ponds
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	N/A
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	Broughton Plantation and Coombes Dale SBI
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
Whitmore Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual containment by landscape features • Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-scale, complex and intricate landscape pattern variety of valued natural features e.g. trees, hedgerows, woodland, grassland • High density of historic features that contribute to the character of the area / strong time depth • Distinctive rural settlement pattern / presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular settlement and buildings / well-integrated settlement edges • Tranquil or highly rural landscape • Characteristic landscape features are intact • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience / visitors to the landscape whose interest is focussed on natural and built heritage assets that contribute to the landscape character 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>
Baldwin's Gate Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual containment by landscape features • Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views • Visual containment by landscape features • Intrusive, urbanising features • Limited visibility from surrounding landscapes <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-scale, complex and intricate landscape pattern • Variety of valued natural features e.g. trees, hedgerows, woodland, grassland • Small-scale, historic field pattern • Well-integrated settlement edges • Legible landscape pattern • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.
Chapel Chorlton Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few areas of valued, semi-natural habitats / intensively farmed or developed landscape • Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area / large-scale, modern field pattern • Landscape pattern is fragmented <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open, highly prominent landscape • Distinctive rural settlement pattern • Open and exposed landscape • Tranquil or highly rural landscape / limited human activity • Open landscape with extensive inward and outward views / visually prominent landscape • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	

E2: Maer Sandstone Hills & Farmlands Landscape Character Area

Maer Sandstone Hills & Farmlands LCA is characterised by scale-hilltop plantation woodland and large-scale, arable farmland

Description

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landform with localised, rounded hills north and south of the River Tern Valley
- Prominent wooded hills, including a large coniferous plantation, smaller deciduous woodlands and ancient woodland
- Arable fields are generally large, with internal boundaries removed
- Pockets of small-scale pastoral fields with strong hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees
- Strong sense of time depth associated with historic parkland at Maer Hall
- Important ecological network of woodland, grassland and wetland, including Maer Pond SSSI and The Bogs SBI
- Settled rural landscape with small villages and isolated farmsteads
- Generally strong rural character and strong sense of tranquillity, locally eroded by the A51 and A53
- Long views framed by landform and woodland

Landscape Character

Maer Sandstone Hills & Farmlands LCA is an undulating landscape, rising to form smooth, localised hills north and south of the shallow River Tern valley. The highest point is approximately 216m AOD within Camp Wood in the north, falling to approximately 115m AOD west of Maer Pool, and rising again to approximately 171m AOD west of Bates Farm. A Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS), Red Hill Rifle Range, is located within the LCA. The River Tern forms much of the south-western boundary, and is notable for its distinctive, straight channel. In places, it is accompanied by woodland, but is largely defined by hedgerow with occasional trees. Several ponds are scattered across the landscape, including Maer Pool within parkland at Maer Hall.

Land cover is a combination of woodland, parkland and mixed arable and pastoral farmland. Woodland on the Maer Hills comprises coniferous plantation with broadleaved woodland on the edges, which softens the appearance. Elsewhere woodland blocks are generally broadleaved, with fragments of ancient woodland. Historic parkland associated with Maer Hall is extensive and distinctive, contributing to the rural character. Fields are generally large and rectilinear, reflective of planned enclosure, and in places fields have been enlarged with internal hedgerows removed. There are pockets of small-scale, regular fields used for grazing with robust hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Views are generally channelled by landform, including the valley of the River Tern, and enclosed by the rising landform, woodland and clumps of trees. Vertical features such as telecommunications poles are generally below the skyline, however electricity pylons south of Maer interrupt the wooded skyline.

Maer Pool is a SSSI, designated for its nationally significant natural value. There are also locally significant sites of natural value at Maer Hills BAS and The Bogs SBI, designated for their woodland, grassland and plantation over dry heath. Priority habitats include deciduous woodland, with pockets of good quality semi improved grassland, floodplain grazing marsh and reedbeds.

The conservation area and Registered Park and Garden at Maer, and a cluster of listed buildings associated with the village provide time depth in this area, as well as a hillfort at Berth Hill.

This is a settled rural landscape, with small, well treed villages generally set low in the landscape, isolated farmsteads and occasional halls. Maer in particular is a distinctive estate village with stone and brick walls and a strong, sunken wooded character. Farmsteads are generally organised around a loose courtyard and are occasionally accompanied by large modern barns to the side. Settlement is linked by a combination of A roads and narrow, country lanes. The A51 and A53 add noise and movement to the LCA which has an otherwise strong rural character and pockets where there is a strong sense of tranquillity, particularly in the north and south.

A small number of public rights of way (PROW) provide access to the landscape and connect settlement but there are large areas in the south and west that are not accessible. The Dorothy Clive Garden has recreational value as a garden open to the public.

Settlement Fringe Character

Blackbrook Fringe		
<p>Blackbrook is a small, dispersed village established along the A51 and Maerway Lane in the west of the LCA. The village is located low in the landscape and has a soft edge that is permeated by the countryside. It is a residential settlement, with a farm located west of the village. Rooflines are generally below the skyline, and trees and hedgerows within gardens soften the edge of the settlement. The village has a strong relationship with the surrounding landscape. Views from the village edge are open, and buildings can be seen, albeit softened by trees, from the wider landscape. The village edge has been influenced by 20th century residential development, including a small development to the south. Generally the fringe is in good condition, with small, pastoral fields with strong hedgerows and hedgerow trees and woodland to the north, despite a slightly larger arable field pattern to the west.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Woodland to the north on the edge of the Maer Hills
	Water bodies / water courses	The straightened River Tern to the south and a pond south of Sidway Mill Farm
	Floodplains	Floodplain associated with the River Tern
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	A51
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Robust hedgerows to small-scale fields
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
	Green Belt	N/A
Designated Areas	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	The Bogs SBI Maer Hills BAS
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
	Conservation Areas	N/A
Built Environment	Other	

Maer Fringe		
<p>Maer is a distinctive, historic village associated with Maer Hall in the east of the LCA. The village sits low in the landscape and is generally softened by trees and woodland associated with Maer Hall parkland. The south is more open, however trees and hedgerows combine to soften the appearance of built form. Buildings generally sit below the skyline. The vegetated village edge generally restricts intervisibility with the wider landscape, although there are some open views from the southern part of the village. The village edge is largely associated with historic parkland at Maer Hall and is in good condition.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Woodland and parkland associated with Maer Hall
	Water bodies / water courses	An unnamed stream to the west and Maer Pool to the north-west
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Distinctive landmark entrance to the village from the north due to the combined effects of a former railway bridge and woodland
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	Maer Pool SSSI
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	Maer Hall Registered Park & Garden Scheduled Monument at Berth Hill
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	Maer Conservation Area
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
Blackbrook Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of existing development and infrastructure • Visual containment by landscape features • Busy landscape • Limited visibility from surrounding landscapes • Transport users <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-scale, complex and intricate landscape pattern • Variety of valued natural features e.g. trees, hedgerows, woodland, grassland • Small-scale, historic field pattern • Legible landscape pattern / characteristic landscape features are intact • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>
Maer Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual containment by landscape features • Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
	<p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctive features / small-scale, complex and intricate landscape pattern • Variety of valued natural features e.g. trees, hedgerows, woodland, grassland • High density of historic features that contribute to the character of the area / strong time depth / small-scale, historic field pattern • Distinctive rural settlement pattern / presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular settlement and buildings • Tranquil or highly rural landscape • Legible landscape pattern / characteristic landscape features are intact • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience / visitors to the landscape whose interest is focussed on natural and built heritage assets that contribute to the landscape character 	

E3: Loggerheads Sandstone Hills & Farmlands Landscape Character Area

Loggerheads Sandstone Hills & Farmlands LCA is a settled rural landscape characterised by large nucleated and small linear villages, and scattered medium to large woodlands, including plantation woodlands

Description

Key Characteristics

- Rolling landscape rising to a high point within the hilltop village of Loggerheads
- Scattered medium to large blocks of woodland, including plantation woodland
- High density of locally designated sites with natural value including woodland, and grassland
- Settled rural landscape with a large, expanded village and outlying, historic villages and hamlets
- Long views across arable and pastoral farmland to the west

Landscape Character

Loggerheads Sandstone Hills & Farmlands LCA is a rolling landscape, rising to a high point of approximately 233m AOD north of Ashley Heath in Loggerheads. The land falls to low points of approximately 110m AOD west of Muckleston in the west and south of Blackbrook in the north. Watercourses are limited to minor streams, including the sinuous, tree lined Hempmill Brook in the west.

Land cover is largely arable and pastoral farmland, interspersed with blocks of woodland of small to medium size. This is a former heathland landscape that has been planted with woodland. Woodland is generally broadleaf, with pockets of ancient woodland and occasional medium to large blocks of plantation woodland, which forms a distinctive skyline in the centre and west of the LCA. Arable fields are generally rectilinear, organised in a slightly haphazard pattern, with pockets of planned enclosure where the pattern is more regular. In places, large areas of biomass crop plantations have a distinctive character and contribute to a feeling of enclosure. Fields have occasionally been enlarged and internal hedgerows removed. Smaller, pastoral fields, which tend to be irregular, have robust hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Views are long and look over the Sandstone Hills & Farmlands LCA to the west. Electricity pylons interrupt the otherwise treed skyline in the south.

Priority habitats include lowland dry acid grassland, deciduous woodland and fragments of floodplain grazing marsh and good quality semi-improved grassland. Several sites are locally designated for their nature conservation value. These include a disused quarry at Lordsley Lane BAS, Woodland at Oakley Dale Wood BAS, woodland at Willoughbridge Park and Quarry SBI, lowland acid grassland and lowland meadow at the Wellings SBI, semi improved natural grassland at Buckley's Drumble SBI, and several other sites designated for their woodland.

Time depth is generally limited, however a moated site designated as a Scheduled Monument in the north and Muckleston Conservation Area are of historical value, as is parkland associated with Willoughbridge Lodge in the north.

Whilst this is a settled rural landscape, settlement is largely concentrated in the south, where the large, expanded village of Loggerheads and smaller, nucleated village of Ashley are located. Ashley Dale and Muckleston are smaller, linear villages within the LCA. Muckleston and Ashley can be identified in the wider landscape by prominent church towers which are unusual within the Borough. Scattered isolated farmsteads, often estate farms accessed from a long track, are generally organised around a loose courtyard. The A53 contrasts with small, often straight rural lanes with dense hedgerows that connect settlements. Whilst there is generally a strong rural character and strong sense of tranquillity, this is locally eroded in proximity to Loggerheads, the A53 and where there is ongoing mineral extraction in the north.

A small number of public rights of way (PROW) provide access to the landscape, although there are areas, particularly in the east where this is limited.

Settlement Fringe Character

Mucklestone Fringe		
Mucklestone is a small, historic village in the west of the LCA. Mucklestone is largely residential, organised in a linear pattern along Eccleshall Road, with two farms, Rectory Farm and Studley Farm, located to the west. It is located on a hill, however it is generally well-integrated into the landscape by trees and small woodlands on the village edges. The church tower is a landmark visible in the wider landscape, which is unusual in the wider Borough. Views from the edge of Mucklestone into the countryside are long and open, and in views from the wider landscape towards Mucklestone the village is seen in a treed context. Despite the enlargement of some fields and removal of hedgerows, the village edge is generally in good condition, with broadly intact hedgerows and trees.		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Small blocks of woodland to the north and south of the village
	Water bodies / water courses	A number of small ponds
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	The church tower within the village
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	N/A
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	Buckley's Drumble SBI
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	Mucklestone Conservation Area
	Other	

Loggerheads Fringe		
<p>Loggerheads is located in the south of the LCA, on the boundary with LCA E4 Hales Sandstone Hills & Farmlands. The fringe of the northern part of Loggerheads is largely residential. It is located on elevated ground, however it is extensively vegetated, with woodland at Ashley Heath to the east and rising ground, dense hedgerows and hedgerow trees in the west effectively screening the settlement from the wider landscape so that it is not prominent in views, and rooflines do not break the skyline. The extensive tree cover surrounding Loggerheads means that there is limited intervisibility with the wider landscape, and views from the edge of the village are generally short and wooded or enclosed by rising topography to the north. Whilst the edge of Loggerheads has been influenced by 20th century residential expansion, it is well defined by two roads to the north and east, and hedgerows, woodland and small-scale fields are largely intact and in generally good condition.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Woodland associated with Ashley Heath to the west
	Water bodies / water courses	Small stream flows through Loggerheads towards the north
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	A53
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Dense hedgerows and hedgerow trees
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	Sewage works
Designated Areas	Green Belt	N/A
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	Oakley Dale Wood BAS Leightons Drumble SBI The Forty Acres SBI
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
Mucklestone Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual containment by landscape features <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open, highly prominent landscape • variety of valued natural features e.g. trees, hedgerows, woodland, grassland • High density of historic features that contribute to the character of the area • Presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular settlement and buildings • Tranquil or highly rural landscape • Characteristic landscape features are intact • Landmark features and characteristic features in views that contribute to sense of place • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>
Loggerheads Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few areas of valued, semi natural habitats • Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area 	<p>Medium</p> <p>Some of the key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of existing development and infrastructure • visual containment by landscape features • Busy landscape / variety of human influences • Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open, highly prominent landscape • variety of valued natural features e.g. trees, hedgerows, woodland, grassland • Well-integrated settlement edges • Legible landscape pattern / characteristic landscape features are intact • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	

E4: Hales Sandstone Hills & Farmlands Landscape Character Area

Hales Sandstone Hills & Farmlands LCA is a sparsely settled rural landscape with medium to large woodland blocks incised by shallow stream valleys

Description

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landform forming rounded hills that fall away to the west
- Shallow valleys contain tree lined, sinuous streams
- Large areas of woodland, particularly in the east, that include plantation and ancient woodland, with high ecological value
- Woodland and hedgerow trees combine to create strong visual enclosure

Landscape Character

Hales Sandstone Hills & Farmlands LCA is characterised by undulating landform that forms rounded hills, incised by the shallow valleys of the sinuous and largely tree lined Coal Brook and Hempmill Brook. In places slopes are steep but they are generally gently undulating. The high point is approximately 220m AOD in the north, south of Loggerheads, falling to low point of approximately 83m in the valley of the Coal Brook. Ponds of varying sizes are common features within the landscape, and the Shropshire Union Canal forms much of the western boundary on a raised embankment.

Land cover is generally mixed arable and pastoral farmland, interspersed with woodland and occasional pockets of historic parkland. Arable fields are generally large and rectilinear, but organised in a haphazard pattern, with pockets of regularity. Hedgerows with hedgerow trees are generally intact, although in places they are supplemented by wooden post and wire fencing. Woodlands are large in the east, where they include areas of plantation and ancient woodland, and smaller and more organic in the west. Woodlands combine with hedgerow trees to filter views and create a wooded character with a sense of visual enclosure.

Priority habitats include deciduous woodland, lowland heath in the east, and fragments of good quality semi improved grassland and floodplain grazing marsh. Burnt Wood SSSI in the east is of national natural conservation value, and several other sites are locally designated as SBI or BAS for their woodland or wetland habitats

Historic landscape features include the Shropshire Union Canal Conservation Area in the west, a cluster of listed buildings in Hales, Audley's Cross and Hales Roman Villa Scheduled Monuments, and historic parkland associated with Old Springs Hall and Hales Hall.

Settlement is generally sparse but includes occasional small linear villages and a high density of farmsteads, generally organised around courtyards. The residential edge of Loggerheads to the north of the LCA, is well screened by woodland. Roads are generally narrow, and often sunken with hedgerows and hedgerow banks. Skylines are generally wooded, with occasional interruptions by telecommunications poles. Overall, there is a generally strong rural character and strong sense of tranquillity, which is locally eroded by the A53 along the northern boundary.

National Cycle Network Route 552 and a limited number of public rights of way (PROW) provide some access to the landscape, and Burnt Wood Nature Reserve, operated by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, has a range of paths open to the public

Settlement Fringe Character

Loggerheads Fringe		
<p>Loggerheads is located on the northern boundary of the LCA, with the majority of the settlement within LCA E3 Loggerheads Sandstone Hills & Farmlands. The southern fringe of Loggerheads is largely residential. It is located on elevated ground, however it is extensively vegetated, with woodland at Burnt Wood Nature Reserve effectively screening the settlement from the south so that it is not prominent in views, and rooflines do not break the skyline. The woodland to the south means that there is limited intervisibility with the wider landscape, and views from the edge of the village are generally short and wooded. Whilst the southern edge of Loggerheads has been influenced by 20th century residential development, the woodland is intact and in generally good condition.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Woodland associated with Burnt Wood Nature Reserve to the south
	Water bodies / water courses	N/A
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	A53
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	Sewage works
Designated Areas	Green Belt	N/A
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	Burnt Wood Nature Reserve (not designated)
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Almington Fringe		
<p>The small rural village of Almington is on the western edge of the LCA, on the boundary with LCA F2 Oakley Ancient Sandstone Farmlands. The village is largely associated with Almington Hall, with associated historic parkland and estate features such as a walled kitchen garden. The eastern edge of the village within this LCA is largely unsettled, containing only Upper House Farm, a farmstead with some large barns that are intermittently glimpsed in the wider landscape. It sits low in the landscape, and the rooflines are above the skyline. Views from the edge of Almington into the countryside are open, but visually contained by woodland to the east, and dense hedgerows associated with the road network. The condition is generally good although some fields to the north and south have had internal hedgerows removed.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Woodland to the east and parkland associated with Almington Hall to the west
	Water bodies / water courses	Small ponds to the east
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Distinctive brick wall associated with Almington Hall – possibly formerly a walled kitchen garden
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	N/A
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	N/A
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Hales Fringe		
<p>Hales is a small, dispersed rural village in the centre of the LCT. Residential development within the village largely follows the road network, with Hales Farm marking the western end of the village and Home Farm marking the eastern end of the village. The village is located low in the landscape, and the skyline is generally treed. Woodland and parkland associated with Hales Hall to the south of the village provides screening, and, in addition to long gardens, robust hedgerows and hedgerow trees to the north softens the edge of the settlement. Intervisibility between the village and wider landscape is limited due to the vegetation surrounding the village, however there are occasional long, open views and buildings can occasionally be glimpses within a treed context. The village edge is generally in good condition. Fields have been enlarged to the west, but elsewhere the hedgerow structure and parkland is intact.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Woodland and parkland associated with Hales Hall to the south
	Water bodies / water courses	Occasional small ponds
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Dense hedgerows Distinctive brick wall associated with Alington Hall – possibly formerly a walled kitchen garden
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	N/A
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	Lloyd Drumble BAS
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	Hales Roman Villa Scheduled Monument Hales Hall Parkland (not designated)
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
Loggerheads Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area • Visual containment by landscape features • Busy landscape / variety of human influences • Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open, highly prominent landscape • variety of valued natural features e.g. trees, hedgerows, woodland, grassland • Well-integrated settlement edges • characteristic landscape features are intact • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>
Almington Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth, gently undulating, lowland landscapes • Visual containment by landscape features • Limited visibility from surrounding landscapes 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
	<p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of valued natural features e.g. trees, hedgerows, woodland, grassland • Strong time depth • Presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular settlement and buildings • Tranquil or highly rural landscape • Legible landscape pattern / characteristic landscape features are intact • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience 	
Hales Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth, gently undulating, lowland landscapes • Visual containment by landscape features • Limited visibility from surrounding landscapes <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular settlement and buildings • Variety of valued natural features e.g. trees, hedgerows, woodland, grassland • High density of historic features that contribute to the character of the area / strong time depth / small-scale, historic field pattern • Distinctive rural settlement pattern / presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
	<p>settlement and buildings / well-integrated settlement edges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tranquil or highly rural landscape • Legible landscape pattern / characteristic landscape features are intact • Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience / visitors to the landscape whose interest is focussed on natural and built heritage assets that contribute to the landscape character 	

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE F: ANCIENT SANDSTONE FARMLANDS

The Ancient Sandstone Farmlands LCT are a gently undulating, sparsely settled, lowland productive rural landscape in the south-west of the Study Area, extending west into Shropshire

Description

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating lowland landform with well treed watercourses in shallow valleys
- Mixed arable and pastoral farming, with a well-defined, sub-regular field pattern which has been enlarged in places
- Sparsely wooded but historic parkland, hedgerow trees and well treed small streams create a well treed appearance
- Settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, estate farms and occasional small rural hamlets, linked by a network of narrow lanes, often with hedge banks

Physical Influences

The Ancient Sandstone Farmlands LCT covers much of the lower landform within the southern part of the Study Area. The landform ranges from a low of approximately 90m AOD in the valley of the Hempmill Brook, to a high point of approximately 130m AOD west of Napley. The underlying Permo-Triassic rocks comprise Mercia mudstones, which give rise to a well-rounded gently undulating topography dissected by numerous shallow valleys.

The underlying Triassic mudstones have produced fertile brown soils which give rise to a productive agricultural landscape of dairying and mixed farming.

There are a number of well treed minor watercourses within the LCT, broadly flowing in a north-east to south-west direction through shallow valleys.

Biodiversity

This is not an ecologically rich landscape, however there are a small number of sites locally designated for their nature value, generally wetlands and woodland.

Although not heavily wooded, the Ancient Sandstone Farmlands LCT appears relatively well treed due to the many hedgerow trees (oak with some ash) and the locally prominent lines of stream side willow and alder.

Priority habitats include occasional small blocks of deciduous woodland, of semi-natural grassland, and floodplain grazing marsh, especially in stream valleys and on more steeply sloping ground. These provide habitat diversity and ecological value in an otherwise productive agricultural landscape.

Historic Landscape Character

This is a productive mixed agricultural landscape characterised by small to medium sized hedged fields, many of which are post medieval origin. There is a pattern of smaller, more intact ancient fieldscapes close to villages with dense hedgerows and numerous hedgerow trees which limit views through the landscape, creating a strong sense of visual enclosure. Areas of later, larger scale planned enclosure is generally less intact, as fields have been enlarged and internal hedgerows removed. Here views are more open.

Heritage assets are limited to two Scheduled Monuments, a conservation area and a few scattered listed buildings. Pockets of parkland provide time depth within the landscape and contribute to the well treed character.

There are a variety of Historic Landscape Character Types (HLCT) within the Ancient Sandstone Farmlands LCT, the key HLCT are:

- Planned enclosure
- Other small rectilinear fields
- Very large post-war fields
- Piecemeal enclosure
- Large irregular fields

Settlement Form and Built Character

This is a sparsely settled rural landscape with a settlement pattern of ancient hamlets and scattered farmsteads. Larger red brick estate farms and discrete country houses, often surrounded by parkland, locally influence the character of this landscape.

Regular courtyard farms and a high density of farmsteads with loose courtyard-shaped plans are associated with the dairying industry. This diversity of farmsteads reflects the long agricultural history of the landscape. Buildings are predominantly of traditional red brick with clay tiles, notably Staffordshire Blues.

Settlement is connected by a network of narrow, often sunken, lanes enclosed by hedge banks with large numbers of hedgerow trees. Farmsteads are generally set back from the road and accessed via trackways

The settlement pattern and agricultural land use combine to create a peaceful, rural character

Access to the Landscape

A limited number of public rights of way (PROW) provide access to the landscape, although there are areas with limited access. National Cycle Network Route 552 and the towpath of the Shropshire Union Canal along the south-western boundary provide additional recreational access to the landscape.

Evaluation

Condition

The Ancient Sandstone Farmlands LCT is a landscape which has experienced some field enlargement and loss of internal hedgerows. there are pockets of intact, ancient pastoral farmland, and parkland and stream vegetation. The overall condition of the landscape is perceived to be **moderate**.

Strength of Character

The Ancient Sandstone LCT has an overall **moderate** character due to the instinct, gently undulating topography and enlarged, open arable fields. There are pockets of more intact landscape where there is a stronger sense of time depth associated with distinctive historic parkland, small-scale pastoral fields and a strong pattern of hedgerow/tree vegetation.

Key Landscape Sensitivities

- Pockets of ancient pastoral farmland, with well-defined hedgerow boundaries
- Pockets of historic parkland
- Hedgerow trees and well treed small streams
- Sparse settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, estate farms and historic rural hamlets

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

- F1 Knighton Ancient Sandstone Farmlands
- F2 Oakley Ancient Sandstone Farmlands

F1: Knighton Ancient Sandstone Farmlands Landscape Character Area

Knighton Ancient Sandstone Farmlands LCA is a well treed productive rural landscape with distinctive, broadly regular field pattern

Description

Key Characteristics

- Mixed arable and pastoral farming
- Hedgerow trees, and riparian trees along the River Tern contribute to a well treed character with a strong sense of enclosure
- Strong pattern of regular, planned enclosure in the south
- Settled rural landscape with small, villages and a high density of scattered farmsteads

Landscape Character

Knighton Ancient Sandstone Farmlands LCA is underlain by sandstone, with some superficial glacial sand and gravel continuing west across the county boundary into Shropshire. The landform is gently undulating, with high points within the Study Area of approximately 130m AOD in the north and west of Napley, and low points of approximately 100m AOD along the county boundary along the River Tern. The tree lined and meandering River Tern forms much of the county boundary, and there are several ponds.

Land cover is a mixture of arable and pastoral farmland. Field sizes are generally large, with a regular pattern indicative of planned enclosure in the south. In the north, fields tend to be organised in a more haphazard pattern.

Native hedgerows are generally robust and well maintained, although in places they are supplemented by wooden fences within fields. Woodland is sparse, although this is a well treed landscape, with hedgerow trees and trees within the Wooded Sandstone Hills to the south-east contributing to an estate farmland character and filtered views. This is a productive landscape with limited natural value. A single site associated with the River Tern is designated as a Site of Biological Interest for its wetland habitat. Priority habitats are limited to small fragments of deciduous woodland.

Historic features are limited to a moated site designated as a Scheduled Monument, and several listed buildings clustered within settlements.

Settlement within the Study Area is limited to the small villages of Knighton and Aston, and a number of farmsteads. Farmsteads are generally organised around loose or rectangular courtyard, and in several instances modern barns have been added to the side of the historic farmstead. Some farmsteads are largely unaltered from their late 19th century form, but others have seen noticeable or considerable change to buildings and three farmsteads have been lost.

Access to the landscape is limited to a small number of fragmented public rights of way (PROW). Skylines are generally treed, and there is a strong sense of tranquillity and rural character.

Settlement Fringe Character

Aston Fringe		
<p>Aston is a small, nucleated village in the north-east of the LCA, on the boundary with LCA C1 Madeley Ancient Redland Farmlands. The western village edge is residential, with large farm buildings to the south. It sits low in the landscape, on gently undulating landform, and skylines are generally treed. The village is treed on the western site, with glimpses of buildings softened by trees and hedges. The gently undulating topography and vegetation combine to limit intervisibility with the surrounding landscape to the west, so the village is only visible in glimpsed views. The village edge is in good condition, with small-scale pasture to the south and larger arable fields to the north.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Clumps of trees on the western side of the village
	Water bodies / water courses	A small stream to the west
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	N/A
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	N/A
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Knighton Fringe		
<p>Knighton is a small, broadly nucleated village in the west of the LCA. The village edge is residential, with several large farm buildings to the north. It sits low in the landscape, on gently undulating landform. Skylines are occasionally broken by rooflines. The village edge is generally open, although views of built form are softened by trees and hedges within gardens. The gently undulating topography and sparse vegetation combine make the village visible in the wider landscape, and there are open views from the village edges into the countryside. The village edge is in generally good condition, with small-scale pasture to the west and larger arable fields to the north, east and south.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Clumps of trees associated with pasture to the west
	Water bodies / water courses	A small stream and ponds to the west
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	N/A
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	N/A
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
Aston Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth, gently undulating, lowland landscapes • Few areas of valued, semi-natural habitats • Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area • Visual containment by landscape features • Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of built development and infrastructure/distinctive rural settlement pattern/well-integrated settlement edges • Tranquil or highly rural landscape/limited human activity and intrusive features • Legible landscape pattern • Undeveloped rural skyline • Residents, communities where the landscape is part of the experience 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>
Knighton Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth, gently undulating, lowland landscapes • Few areas of valued, semi-natural habitats • Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area 	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
	<p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctive rural settlement pattern • Few screening features • Tranquil or highly rural landscape • Characteristic landscape features are intact • Open landscape with extensive inward and outward views • Residents, communities where the landscape is part of the experience 	

F2: Oakley Ancient Sandstone Farmlands Landscape Character Area

Oakley Ancient Sandstone Farmlands LCA has strong time depth and a strong sense of enclosure associated with a pattern of historic parkland and woodland

Description

Key Characteristics

- Productive arable farmland comprising large fields, often with a distinctive, regular form associated with planned enclosure
- Scattered woodlands, well treed streams and hedgerow trees create visual enclosure
- Time depth associated with pattern of historic parkland
- Sparsely settled rural landscape with a generally strong rural character

Landscape Character

Oakley Ancient Sandstone Farmlands LCA is a gently undulating, largely flat landscape extending into Shropshire. The underlying geology is largely sandstone, with some superficial till in the west. The well treed and meandering River Tern forms much of the county boundary, and several of its tributaries including the Hempmill Brook and Coal Brook flow broadly east-west through the LCA towards it. The Shropshire Union Canal forms much of the western county boundary, on a raised embankment.

Land cover is primarily mixed arable and pastoral farmland and parkland interspersed with small, scattered woodlands. Fields are medium to large-scale, with some areas of regular, planned enclosure and other areas where fields are irregular. There has been some 20th century field enlargement and internal hedgerows have occasionally been removed in the north. The presence of numerous small woodlands, well treed stream corridors and hedgerow trees combine to make this a well treed landscape, and views across the landscape are generally contained and screened by vegetation.

Several sites are locally designated for their wetland and woodland habitats. Priority habitats include deciduous woodland, floodplain grazing marsh and pockets of good quality semi improved grassland in the north.

Historic features include Neolithic stones known as the 'Devil's Ring and Finger' on the boundary with LCA F2 Knighton Ancient Sandstone Farmlands, parkland associated with Oakley Hall and Peatswood, a Conservation Area associated with the Shropshire Union Canal (Tyrley), and clusters of listed buildings generally associated with historic parks and farmsteads.

Within the Study Area, settlement is limited to isolated farmsteads, halls and the small, linear village of Almington. Farmsteads are generally set out around a loose or rectangular courtyard, and these have often been altered. Whilst close to the Study Area, the market town of Market Drayton has a limited influence due the well treed landscape. Roads are limited, particularly south of the A53, where the small number of straight roads connecting settlement are generally narrow and sunken with high hedges and hedgerow banks in places. The sense of tranquillity is eroded in proximity to the A53, and vertical features such as telecommunications stand out in the largely flat landscape, but elsewhere there is a generally strong sense of tranquillity and rural character.

A limited network of public rights of way (PROW), and National Cycle Network Route 552 provide some access to the landscape. This is particularly concentrated east of Market Drayton.

Settlement Fringe Character

Almington Fringe		
<p>The small rural village of Almington is on the eastern edge of the LCA, on the boundary with LCA E4 Hales Sandstone Hills & Farmlands. The village is largely associated with Almington Hall, with associated historic parkland and estate features such as a walled kitchen garden. The western edge of the village includes a small number of 20th century properties along a road. Views from the edge of Almington into the countryside are open, but visually contained by parkland and woodland associated with Almington Hall to the west. 20th century residential development forms much of this settlement. The condition is generally good.</p>		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Woodland and parkland associated with Almington Hall
	Water bodies / water courses	Almington Hall Pool to the west
	Floodplains	N/A
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	Distinctive brick wall associated with Almington Hall – possibly formerly a walled kitchen garden
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	N/A
Designated Areas	Green Belt	N/A
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	Almington Hall Pool SBI
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	N/A
	Other	

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Sensitivity
Almington Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smooth, gently undulating, lowland landscapes• Visual containment by landscape features• Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Variety of valued natural features e.g. trees, hedgerows, woodland, grassland Strong time depth• Presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular settlement and buildings / well-integrated settlement edges• Tranquil or highly rural landscape• Legible landscape pattern / characteristic landscape features are intact• Residents, communities where the landscape is part of the experience	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE G: RIVER VALLEY

The River Valley Landscape Character Type is a valley landform with steep slopes containing a meandering river and an associated green corridor within the urban area of Newcastle-under-Lyme/Stoke-on-Trent

Description

Key Characteristics

- Distinctive green corridor within the Newcastle-under-Lyme/Stoke-on-Trent urban area
- Largely flat, low-lying alluvial floodplain with steep valley sides to the west
- Meandering river channel with lines of poplar, willow and alder growing along the watercourse
- Well treed, with woodland including ancient woodland which provides a generally strong sense of enclosure with occasional glimpses of the urban edge
- Well used landscape for recreation with several sports grounds and an urban park
- Pockets of ancient farmland and meadowland with hedgerow and ditch boundaries
- An unsettled landscape with very few roads

Physical Influences

The River Valley LCT is a valley landform containing the Lyme Brook that extends south-east of Newcastle-under-Lyme urban area, and across the boundary into Stoke-on-Trent to the east and Stafford District to the south.

The LCT covers the lower landform east of Newcastle-under Lyme, ranging from a low of approximately 103m AOD in the south, to high points of approximately 140m AOD in the west. The landform generally falls in a north-south direction through the LCT, with steeply rising landform on the western side.

The underlying geology and superficial deposits of alluvium have given rise to loamy and clayey soils with naturally high groundwater within the floodplain, and freely draining, slightly acid loamy soils in the west where the landform is higher.

The River Valley LCT is characterised by the Lyme Brook watercourse which flows from north to south, its floodplain and associated ponds. There are occasional ditches which drain into the Lyme Brook. The flat alluvial floodplain that flanks the river channel is subject to periodic flooding.

Biodiversity

There are a small number of locally designated nature sites in the central and south-western parts of the River Valley LCT. These include wetland and ancient woodland. Priority habitats in the LCT are limited to deciduous woodland.

Woodland includes ancient woodland on the valley sides in the south-west which are supplemented by several smaller scattered blocks of woodland in the north. The banks of the Lyme Brook are generally well treed, and there is marginal vegetation.

Historic Landscape Character

This is a landscape with both pastoral farmland and parkland elements. Its character has been altered over time by recreational and industrial activity associated with expansion of the nearby settlements of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent.

Pockets of pastoral farmland are mainly concentrated in the south, between areas of parkland, meadows associated with the river floodplain and woodland. The pastoral farmland is characterised by generally small to medium sized largely regular fields with thick, mixed species hedgerows, occasionally accompanied by an associated ditch on the river floodplain.

There are a variety of Historic Landscape Character Types (HLCT) within the River Valley LCT. These are:

- Miscellaneous floodplain fields
- Sports fields/other parkland
- Other small, rectilinear fields
- Small assarts
- Planned enclosure
- Replanted ancient woodland/other woodland

The variety of HLCT within the River Valley is reflective of the steeply sloping topography in the west, the river floodplain and the proximity to the urban centres of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent.

There are very few heritage assets within the River Valley, limited to a conservation area on the urban edge which extends to an area of woodland north of Dark Wood and contains a single listed building.

Settlement Form and Built Character

Although the River Valley LCT experiences urban influences from the surrounding urban settlements of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent, there is limited settlement and built form within the LCT itself. There is a cluster of historic farmsteads around Clayton Farm in the west, but two have been lost, and the remainder are now part of the urban edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

The urban edges of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent are largely screened by vegetation within the LCA, however there are occasional glimpses of residential properties, and in the north larger industrial buildings, and large areas of car parking which together with large areas of parkland and recreational land uses contribute to an urbanised character.

Access to the Landscape

A small number of public footpaths, particularly in the south, and a traffic free cycle route in the north provide access to the landscape within the River Valley LCT, providing space for recreation outside of the urban area. There are also playing fields, a sports centre, football, rugby and cricket grounds, and a park, Lyme Valley Parkway.

Roads within the LCT are generally limited, however the well treed Clayton Lane provides access between Springfields in Stoke-on-Trent and Clayton in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Evaluation

Condition

The River Valley LCT is an altered landscape. The landscape is influenced by the urban areas to the east and west and has become fragmented in places. A range of recreational land uses form a network of urban parks, sports facilities and woodland, with small pockets of intact ancient farmland and ancient woodland. The overall condition of the landscape is perceived to be **moderate**.

Strength of Character

The River Valley LCT has an overall **moderate** character, particularly in the north where there is a stronger urban character. However, the river valley is a distinctive, well treed green corridor which contrasts with the surrounding urban areas with localised prominent landform and pockets of ancient woodland and ancient farmland.

Key Landscape Sensitivities

- Green corridor forming an approach to Newcastle-under-Lyme from the south
- The well treed Lyme Brook, its floodplain and associated ponds
- Steeply sloping landform
- Ancient woodland on the valley sides
- Network of urban parks, local nature sites and woodland

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

- G1: Lyme River Valley

G1: Lyme River Valley Landscape Character Area

Lyme River Valley LCA is a well treed river valley which forms a green wedge separating Newcastle-under-Lyme from Stoke-on-Trent

Description

Key Characteristics

- Steep sided valley sides contrast with a relatively flat floodplain surrounding the Lyme Brook
- Well treed and wooded landscape, including ancient woodland on the valley sides
- High recreational value of sports facilities and an urban park
- Intimate landscape, generally visually enclosed by trees and woodlands, with glimpses of the surrounding urban area

Landscape Character

The Lyme River Valley LCA is part of a valley with steeply sloping sides in the west and a relatively flat valley bottom. It rises from approximately 103m AOD in the south to a high point of approximately 140m AOD in the west. The narrow, tree lined Lyme Brook forms the boundary between Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent, and the channel, floodplain and associated ponds are key characteristics of the LCA which have determined its development.

Land cover comprises a mixture of meadows, parkland and sports grounds on the valley floor, ancient woodland on the valley sides, and pockets of small-scale, ancient farmland in the south. Surviving pastoral fieldscapes are largely small to medium in scale, with thick mixed species hedgerows. Occasionally, hedgerows have been lost and there are pockets of horsiculture. Clayton Woodlands, three distinct blocks of ancient woodland on the western side of the LCT are locally designated as a Site of Biological Importance (SBI). On the whole, there is a strong sense of enclosure within the LCA due to its well treed nature and rising landform to the west.

Designated historic features are limited to Clayton Conservation Area in the west, which extends from the urban edge into the woodland surrounding Clayton Hall, which is a grade II listed building.

Lyme River Valley is influenced by the urban edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme, and by Stoke-on-Trent to the east in the north where it is narrower. Within the LCA, settlement is limited to occasional scattered buildings. Roads are limited, generally located on higher ground away from the floodplain.

Sports facilities include rugby, football and cricket grounds, which in addition to a small number of public rights of way (PROW), a traffic free cycle route in the north and Lyme Valley Parkway, an urban park with facilities including a playground and skate park, are important recreational provision for the surrounding urban areas.

Views are generally visually enclosed by trees, and to the west by the rising landform, but there are glimpses into the urban areas to the east and west. Towards the south, views are more open, and generally focussed down the valley. Buildings are largely screened by trees, and the skyline is generally treed, however it is occasionally broken by goalposts, lighting columns and a chimney, and there are glimpses of residential buildings and larger, industrial buildings to the east in the north.

The character is generally urban, due to the surrounding urban areas, urban park and sports facilities. Perceptions of tranquillity are limited, however there is a strong contrast with the surrounding urban area.

Settlement Fringe Character

Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe		
Newcastle-under-Lyme forms the western boundary of this LCA. The urban edge is largely residential. The edges are generally softened by trees and woodland within the LCA, however occasionally there are glimpses of built form on higher ground. The steep topography in the west of the LCA means that the edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme is elevated from the river valley. Views from the edge of Newcastle-under-Lyme into the LCA are generally well treed and intimate, limiting intervisibility. The steeply sloping urban fringe has been influenced by 20 th century urban residential expansion, and is well used for recreation, with numerous sports facilities. It is largely wooded and in generally good condition.		
Specific Landscape Features	Significant Vegetation (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, parkland, meres and mosses etc)	Woodland, including ancient woodland, tree clumps associated with Lyme Valley Parkway and linear lines of trees along the Lyme Brook
	Water bodies / water courses	The Lyme Brook
	Floodplains	The Lyme Brook floodplain
	Major routes (e.g. roads, railways, canals)	N/A
	Significant visual features / landmarks / viewpoints (e.g. hedgerows, stone walls, significant architectural features)	N/A
	Other significant landscape features (e.g. mineral workings)	Sports facilities
Designated Areas	Green Belt	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt
	Areas of Ecological Significance (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, nature reserve, SBIs, BAS)	Clayton Woodlands SBI
	Significant heritage assets (e.g. scheduled Monuments, historic parks)	N/A
Built Environment	Conservation Areas	Clayton Conservation Area
	Other	N/A

Evaluation

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Settlement	Key Susceptibility Indicators	Landscape Sensitivity Level
Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe	<p>Factors that make the landscape less susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visual containment by landscape features• Variety of human influences <p>Factors that make the landscape more susceptible to the development scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dramatic landform• Variety of valued natural features including trees, woodland and grassland• Pockets of small-scale, historic field pattern• Well-integrated settlement edges• Characteristic landscape features are intact• Visually prominent landscape• Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience	<p>High</p> <p>Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.</p>

APPENDIX 1

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

APPENDIX 1

Assessment Methodology

Overview

The Study has been undertaken in accordance with the principles of Natural England's latest technical guidance set out in:

- [An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment](#) (2014)
- [An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – to Inform Spatial Planning and Land Management](#) (2019)

The key steps involved in the process are set out below.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The purpose of the Study is set out in **Chapter 1.0** of the report.

The Study Area for the assessment comprises the rural landscapes within the Borough outside of the main urban areas of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Kidsgrove as defined on **Figure 1.1**.

Desk Studies

A Geographic Information Systems (GIS) was used throughout the study as the tool for collating, manipulating and presenting data. All relevant documents and available GIS data were compiled and reviewed as the starting point of the study. The references and data sources used to inform the desk studies are listed in [Appendix 3](#).

The main physical influences and human/cultural influences that have shaped the evolution and character of the landscape as a whole were assessed to inform the characterisation process.

The nature, extents and patterns created by the interplay of the following key landscape attributes were then examined using available data:

- Bedrock and surface geology (**Figures 3.1 and 3.2**)
- Topography and hydrology (**Figure 3.3**)
- Woodland and trees (**Figure 3.4**)
- Habitats (**Figure 3.5**)
- Natural Environment Designations (**Figure 3.6**)
- Historic Landscape Character (**Figures 3.7A-D**)
- Historic Environment Designations (**Figure 3.8**)
- Land Cover and Field Pattern (**Figure 3.9**)
- Settlement Pattern (**Figure 3.10**)
- Access to the Landscape (**Figure 3.11**)

These landscape attributes were identified through the review of relevant studies including relevant landscape character assessment studies and spatial analysis using the latest available GIS datasets, aerial imagery and OS mapping. A high level comparison of available aerial imagery and mapping was undertaken to provide an understanding of significant landscape changes in field shapes/sizes, land uses and land cover/vegetation over the last 20 years or so resulting from built development, agriculture, mineral extraction and climate change.

The two National Character Areas profiles ([NCA Profile: 61 Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain](#) and [NCA Profile: 64 Potteries and Churnet Valley](#)), defined at a scale of 1:250,000 by the Character of England Map that fall within the Study Area (**Figure 2.1**) were reviewed to inform the Study. These National Character Areas provide the national framework for classifying and describing the Study Area's landscapes.

The Study has been prepared within the framework of the Regional Character Areas and Landscape Character Types defined within '[Planning for landscape change](#)' supplementary planning guidance by Staffordshire County Council in 2000 (see **Figures 2.2** and **Figure 2.3**).

The relationship of the landscape classification of seven Landscape Character Types and 18 Landscape Character Areas within the Study Area (**Figure 4.1**) to those in existing Landscape Character Assessments within and adjoining the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme was reviewed (see [Appendix 2](#)).

The key points arising from review of these Landscape Character Assessments at the national, county and local scales were:

- The whole of the Study Area is covered by existing landscape character assessments at varying scales
- The 2000 county-scale assessment defines landscape character types at 1:50,000 scale (but not landscape character areas) for the whole of the Study Area
- Naming varied in the studies

This landscape classification for the Study Area was developed from "first principles" to test and validate the classifications from existing assessments.

It should be noted that an unpublished review of the County Landscape Character Assessment was undertaken by Staffordshire County Council in 2013 but this information was not available for review as part of this Study. Further to this, an unpublished partially completed draft Landscape Character Assessment for Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough & the City of Stoke-on-Trent was developed in 2018-2019, which began reviewing landscape character type boundaries, names and descriptions.

The review of the existing landscape character assessments identified that there are gaps in data on various aspects of the landscape and variations in approaches to landscape classification, description and evaluation due to the different dates, purposes and emphasis of the various assessments. Further desk study was undertaken to bring the coverage to a consistent level.

Field Survey

The desk studies were supplemented by targeted field surveys undertaken during October and November 2021 to:

- Confirm the updated landscape classification
- Verify and refine the definition of draft Landscape Character Type/Landscape Character Area boundaries where necessary
- Validate and refine the draft Landscape Character Type and Landscape Character Area descriptions and inform the settlement fringe sensitivity assessments
- Record experiential and perceptual qualities for each Landscape Character Type/Landscape Character Area
- Evaluate current forces for change and landscape condition
- Take up-to-date photographs to illustrate the descriptions

Each of the draft Landscape Character Areas (LCA) were visited, a number of public rights of ways were walked and identified viewpoints visited, as well as driving through and around the Study Area on public highways. Information was recorded on Field Survey Sheets and photographs were taken for each LCA. Field survey information was also noted on 1:25,000 scale maps and incorporated into the Landscape Character Type and Landscape Character Area descriptions as appropriate.

The field surveys helped ensure that the Landscape Character Type and Landscape Character Area boundaries were treated consistently throughout the Study Area. The following points of clarification and confirmation were also targeted during fieldwork:

- Different approaches to boundaries and names in existing assessments (e.g. Coalfield Farmlands)
- Fit of updated boundaries to adjoining types and areas defined by existing assessments
- Confirming that the overall pattern of the Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas was appropriate in the context of the study's purpose and scale of assessment
- Resolving specific queries (e.g. understanding and defining the River Valley LCT to reflect the variation in landscape features from the classification as part of the Ancient Redlands LCT within the County Landscape Character Assessment)

Classification

Informed by desk study, field survey work and stakeholder consultation, the landscape classification was developed from existing studies. The approach follows best practice as promoted by Natural England's guidance set out in '*An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*' (2014) in maintaining a distinction between landscape types and character areas, and developing a hierarchical approach as follows:

- **Landscape Character Types** have a distinct and homogeneous character that share broadly similar patterns of physical and cultural attributes in terms of geology, topography, drainage patterns, land cover, ecology and historic evolution. They may occur repeatedly in the Study Area, or in just one place.
- **Landscape Character Areas** are unique, individual geographical areas that share common characteristics with other areas of the same type. Each Landscape Character Area has a distinct and recognisable local identity and sense of place.

The Landscape Character Types have generic characteristics which apply to all the areas within them. Landscape Character Areas share these characteristics with other areas of the same Landscape Character Type but have a particular 'sense of place'. Therefore, Landscape Character Types defined and described in this Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment share distinct patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field pattern etc. which contribute to their particular character. It is important to be aware that Landscape Character Areas are not homogeneous and that there is variation within them; for example, an area of woodland within a Landscape Character Area would have different characteristics to, say, an adjoining pastoral field but the overall character of the area may be unified by the presence of a number of woodlands set within pastoral fields or a distinctive landform.

The Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas have been prepared in a GIS with mapping undertaken at a scale of 1:25,000 and suitable for use at this scale. It should however be noted that there are subtle differences between and within the individual types and areas. The boundaries illustrated therefore usually indicate zones of transitions rather than marked changes on the ground. In practice, the boundaries have frequently been drawn to follow physical features such as roads/lanes, distinct changes in topography (such as break of slope) or field/woodland boundaries which provide 'best fit'.

Landscape Character Types were named to reflect the dominant influences on landscape character within the Study Area, which combine physiographic terms such as topographical, geological and hydrological features as appropriate – for example Sandstone Hills & Farmlands.

Landscape Character Areas were given names which are geographically specific based on a local place name (e.g. a landscape feature such as a river, a village or a parish), and also refer to the associated Landscape Character Type – for example Chapel Chorlton Sandstone Hills & Farmlands.

The study specifically excluded assessment within the main urban areas of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Kidsgrove. The rural settlements were considered as part of the landscape character area(s) within which they are located.

Landscape Character Type Descriptions

The Landscape Character Type (and Landscape Character Area) descriptions are based on the information available in existing studies, updated and amended as necessary to reflect landscape changes over the last 20 years or so informed by desk studies, field survey and stakeholder consultation.

The studies consulted include:

- [National Character Area Profile 61 – Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain](#) (2014)
- [National Character Area Profile 64 – Potteries and Churnet Valley](#) (2015)
- [Planning for Landscape Change SPG to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan](#) (2000)
- [Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment](#) (2008)
- [The Shropshire Landscape Typology](#) (2006)
- [Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment of Staffordshire Moorlands](#) (2008)
- [Newcastle-under-Lyme Heritage Topic Paper](#) (2021)
- [Refined HLC for Staffordshire](#) (2011)
- [Historic Farmsteads and Landscape Character in Staffordshire](#) (2012)
- Newcastle-under-Lyme [Conservation Area Appraisals](#)
- [Chapel and Hill Chorlton, Maer and Aston, Whitmore Heritage and Character Assessment](#)

For each Landscape Character Type, its Key Characteristics are identified and its Physical Influences, Biodiversity, Historic Landscape Character, Settlement Form and Built Character, and opportunities for Access to the Countryside are described. Photographs or aerial maps illustrating the key characteristics are included alongside plans showing the location of each LCT within the Study Area.

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

The overall condition of the landscape evaluated by Landscape Character Type is shown in **Table 4.2** and mapped on **Figure 4.2**. This is based on judgements about how the condition and intactness of the different landscape components create a perception of the overall condition of the landscape. Using professional judgement, landscape condition is defined on a three-point scale of poor, moderate or good, as evaluated within the character descriptions in [Section 4.4](#).

The strength of character of the landscape evaluated by Landscape Character Type is shown in **Table 4.2** and mapped on **Figure 4.3**. This is based on the combination of individual components and their contribution to landscape character. Strength of character is connected to distinctiveness and landscape integrity. It is based on judgements about how distinct and recognisable the pattern of physical and cultural attributes is that defines the character of the landscape, and the sense of place they evoke. Using professional judgement, strength of character is defined on a three-point scale of weak, moderate or strong, as evaluated within the character descriptions in [Section 4.4](#).

Key Landscape Sensitivities

The key landscape sensitivities of each Landscape Character Type are evaluated within the character descriptions in [Section 4.4](#). These provide a framework for informing landscape sensitivity assessments of potential changes from specific development types or land management practices.

Landscape Character Area Descriptions

For each Landscape Character Area, its key characteristics are identified and its landscape character is described.

The Study assesses the character and sensitivity of the following settlement fringe landscapes as agreed with the Council:

- Newcastle-under-Lyme Urban Fringe
- Kidsgrove Urban Fringe
- Audley
- Halmer End
- Balterley
- Betley
- Wrinehill
- Madeley
- Keele
- Onneley
- Aston
- Madeley Park
- Baldwin's Gate
- Whitmore
- Maer

- Chapel Chorlton
- Mucklestone
- Loggerheads
- Almington
- Hales

The character of any settlement fringes within the LCA are described in terms of the relationship of the settlement to its landscape context. These character descriptions build on the overview of the settlement form and built character from the Landscape Character Type, to provide a more in depth assessment of the character of each settlement fringe and identification of specific landscape features, designated areas and built environment elements.

Photographs or aerial maps illustrating the key characteristics are included within the report, alongside plans showing the location of each LCA within the relevant LCT.

Settlement Fringe Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

The assessment is undertaken in line with the good practice principles of Natural England's '[*An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – to inform Spatial Planning and Land Management*](#)', and taking into account latest best practice approaches developed for assessments undertaken by CBA and others.

Natural England's guidance defines **Landscape Sensitivity** as follows:

*'Within the context of spatial planning and land management, landscape sensitivity is a term applied to landscape character and the associated visual resource, combining judgements of their **susceptibility** to the specific development type/development scenario or other change being considered together with the **value(s)** related to that landscape and visual resource. Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value.'*

Natural England's guidance defines **Landscape Susceptibility** as follows:

'Within the context of spatial planning and land management, landscape susceptibility is the degree to which a defined landscape and its associated visual qualities and attributes might respond to the specific development type/development scenario or other change without undue negative effects on landscape character and the visual resource.'

Natural England's guidance defines **Landscape Value** as follows:

'The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.'

Judgements concerning whether a landscape may be able to accommodate change are informed by the likely interactions between the landscape and visual susceptibility and value of the defined area, and the key attributes of the type and scale of development under consideration. In line with the purpose of this Study, the following hypothetical development scenario was agreed with the Council for testing through the assessment process:

- **Residential and employment development:** on the urban fringe or edge of rural settlements, follow the typical height/scale of existing new developments: moderate to high density development, between 1-3 storeys for residential development comprising a mixture of terraced, detached and semi-detached houses, and 2-4 storeys for commercial development, with a mixture of office/warehouse units.

In line with '*An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment*' and the NPPF, a bespoke set of assessment criteria and indicators have been developed for assessing the susceptibility and value of the Study Area's landscape attributes that are most likely to be affected by the development scenario as identified from the landscape character descriptions. The sensitivity criteria are defined in **Table A1.1** and provide an example of the types of landscape character or features that indicate higher or lower sensitivity.

Table A1.1 – Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criteria and Susceptibility/Value Indicators

Sensitivity Criteria	Susceptibility/Value Indicator	
Physical Factors	This considers the shape and scale of the landform, landscape pattern and overlying landscape features	
	More susceptible	Less susceptible
	Open, highly prominent landscape/dramatic landform/distinctive features/small-scale, complex and intricate landscape pattern	Smooth, gently undulating, lowland landscapes/flat, indistinct, featureless landform/large-scale and simple pattern of landscape features
Natural Factors	This considers the 'naturalistic' qualities of the landscape, including vegetation, habitats and valued features	
	More susceptible	Less susceptible
	Large or numerous areas of landscape designated for nature conservation interest/variety of valued natural features e.g. trees, hedgerows, woodland, grassland	Few areas of valued, semi-natural habitats/intensively farmed or developed landscape/few valued natural features
Cultural Factors	This considers the historic landscape character and features and how they contribute to the sense of 'time-depth'. It also considers the nature, extent and pattern of land uses including settlement form and character	
	More susceptible	Less susceptible
	High density of historic features that contribute to the character of the area/strong time depth/small-scale, historic field pattern	Relatively few historic features that contribute to the character of the area/weak time depth/large-scale, modern field pattern
	Absence of built development and infrastructure/distinctive rural settlement pattern/presence of small-scale, historic/vernacular settlement and buildings/well-integrated settlement edges	Presence of existing development and infrastructure/variety of settlement scale and form/conspicuous large-scale buildings and structures/poorly integrated settlement edges
Perceptual/aesthetic Factors	This considers the sense of scale and enclosure of the landscape, created by presence of landscape pattern and features. It also considers how land uses and human influences contribute to landscape qualities such as rural character and sense of tranquillity and remoteness	
	More susceptible	Less susceptible
	Open and exposed landscape/few screening features	Enclosed landscape/visual containment by landscape features
	Tranquil or highly rural landscape/limited human activity and intrusive features/high scenic value	Busy landscape/variety of human influences/intrusive, urbanising features
Landscape quality/condition	This considers the overall state of the landscape, considering the condition and intactness of the key landscape features such as field pattern and boundary vegetation, woodland, trees and watercourses, as well as views.	
	More susceptible	Less susceptible
	Legible landscape pattern/characteristic landscape features are intact	Landscape pattern is fragmented landscape features are degraded

General visibility	This considers the level of intervisibility with the surrounding landscape, prominence of the landscape and its key characteristic features, skyline character of the area. It also considers the type/nature of visual receptors.	
	More susceptible	Less susceptible
	Open landscape with extensive inward and outward views / visually prominent landscape/landmark features and characteristic features in views that contribute to sense of place undeveloped, rural skyline	Contained landscape with limited inward and outward views/limited visibility from surrounding landscapes/detracting features or development visible in views/indistinctive skyline
	Residents, communities, people engaged in outdoor recreation where the landscape is part of the experience/visitors to the landscape whose interest is focussed on natural and built heritage assets that contribute to the landscape character/users of scenic routes	Transport users/more transient visitors to the area

Taking into account the criteria and indicators for assessing the susceptibility and value of the landscape, the bespoke sensitivity levels used for assessing the overall sensitivity of the settlement fringe landscapes to the development scenario are defined in **Table A1.2**.

Table A1.2 – Overall Landscape Sensitivity Definitions

Sensitivity Level	Definition
High	Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are highly susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.
Medium	Some of the key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.
Low	Key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape are less susceptible to the particular type and scale of change being assessed.

It should be noted that this Study provides an assessment of the relative sensitivity of settlement fringe landscapes within the Study Area at a strategic scale based on testing an indicative hypothetical development scenario. Care should be taken not to interpret the results as a definitive statement on the suitability of a specific location, layout or design for a particular development.

As with all criteria-based assessments, which are to a greater or lesser extent subjective, a degree of caution is required in its interpretation to avoid the suggestion that certain landscape features or qualities can be absolutely associated with certain sensitivities. In reality, landscape sensitivity is the result of a complex interplay of often unequally weighted variables based on professional judgement.

There may be some criteria which might be more important to landscape character in a particular area when assessed at a strategic scale. Where there are variations in relation to the sensitivity of individual landscape elements and land parcels within an overall assessment, these are highlighted in the assessment findings where appropriate.

This study does not provide an assessment of the landscape's capacity to accommodate a particular amount of development. In line with Natural England's guidance, the landscape sensitivity assessment findings can be used to influence where residential and employment development might be located in areas of lower landscape sensitivity without undesirable impacts on landscape character and the visual resource. However, judgements on 'how much' development might be accommodated cannot be based on landscape sensitivity alone and the results of this Study will need to be considered along with other constraints and wider policy considerations.

The landscape sensitivity assessment findings are not a substitute for detailed technical siting, design and landscape and visual impact assessments for specific developments, and all proposals will need to be assessed on their individual merits against suitable criteria-based policies in the Local Plan addressing additional site-specific planning issues not covered by this study such as:

- Ecological issues
- Cultural heritage/archaeological issues
- Visual amenity issues
- Technical design/feasibility issues

Each of the identified settlement fringes is assessed against each criterion in turn, with explanatory text indicating specific locations, features or attributes of lower or higher sensitivity. An overall landscape sensitivity judgement (using the three-point scale in **Table A1.2**) is given, taking account of the interrelationships between the different criteria and the specific characteristics of the landscape being assessed.

Stakeholder Consultation

Planning officers from Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council were involved in the commissioning and development of the Study and were engaged in shaping the approach to the study and commenting on draft outputs in order to capture their local knowledge and expertise.

A stakeholder workshop was held in November 2021 to discuss the draft classification of Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas, and capture local knowledge, expertise and information to help feed into the Study, including thoughts on forces for change across the Borough to feed into the Landscape Strategy (see below).

The workshop was attended by:

- Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council – Principal Planner
- Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council – Planning Policy Officers
- Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council – Conservation Officer
- Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council – Landscape Officer
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council – Planning Policy Officer
- Staffordshire County Council – Historic Environment Officer
- Staffordshire County Council – County Ecologist
- Audley Parish – Clerk and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Members

In addition to the workshop, the draft classification was also circulated to attendees and non-attendees to request comments on the draft classification and thoughts on forces for change. Responses were received from:

- Historic England – Development Adviser
- Natural England – Lead Adviser, West Midlands

Landscape Strategy (Part 2)

Part 2 of the Study sets out the Landscape Strategy for the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme, providing guidance for managing landscape change within each of the Landscape Character Types (and Landscape Character Areas where appropriate) identified in Part 1 of the Study. The approach to developing the Landscape Strategy is set out in Part 2.

APPENDIX 2

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

APPENDIX 2

Relationship to Existing Landscape Character Assessments

Newcastle-under-Lyme Landscape Character Type	Newcastle-under-Lyme Landscape Character Area	County Landscape Character Types (refer to Figure 2.3)	Neighbouring Landscape Character Assessments (refer to Figure 1.1)	Neighbouring Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Neighbouring Landscape Character Area (LCA)
A: Gritstone Uplands	A1: Mow Cop Gritstone Uplands	Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands	Staffordshire Moorlands Landscape Character Assessment	Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands	
			Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment 2008	LCT 18: Upland Foothills	UFS1: Mow Cop
B: Coalfield Farmlands	B1: North Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands	Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands	Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment 2008	LCT 18: Upland Foothills	UFS1: Mow Cop
	B2: East Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands	Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands	Staffordshire Moorlands Landscape Character Assessment	Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands	
	B3: South Kidsgrove Coalfield Farmlands	Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands	Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment 2008	LCT 18: Upland Foothills	UFS1: Mow Cop
	B4: Apedale Coalfield Farmlands	Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands Sub-type: Minerals working and restoration	(no neighbouring boundary)	N/A	N/A

Newcastle-under-Lyme Landscape Character Type	Newcastle-under-Lyme Landscape Character Area	County Landscape Character Types (refer to Figure 2.3)	Neighbouring Landscape Character Assessments (refer to Figure 1.1)	Neighbouring Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Neighbouring Landscape Character Area (LCA)
		Coalfield-Farmlands: Minerals working and restoration			
C: Ancient Redland Farmlands	C1: Madeley Ancient Redland Farmlands	Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands Ancient Redlands Ancient Clay Farmlands Sandstone Hills and Heaths	(no neighbouring boundary)	N/A	N/A
	C2: Keele Ancient Redland Farmlands	Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands Ancient Redlands			
	C3: Whitmore Ancient Redland Farmlands	Ancient Redlands	(refer to County Character Assessment)	N/A	N/A
D: Ancient Clay Farmlands	D1: Audley Ancient Clay Farmlands	Ancient Clay Farmlands	Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment 2008	LCT 18: Upland Footslopes LCT 10: Lower Farms and Woods	UFS1: Mow Cop LFW 7: Barthomeley
	D2: Betley Ancient Clay Farmlands D3: Wrinehill Ancient Clay Farmlands	Ancient Clay Farmlands Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands	Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment 2008	LCT 10: Lower Farms and Woods	LFW4: Audlem LFW 7: Barthomeley
	D3: Wrinehill Ancient Clay Farmlands	Ancient Clay Farmlands	Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment 2008 The Shropshire Landscape Typology	LCT 10: Lower Farms and Woods Timbered Pastures	LFW4: Audlem

Newcastle-under-Lyme Landscape Character Type	Newcastle-under-Lyme Landscape Character Area	County Landscape Character Types (refer to Figure 2.3)	Neighbouring Landscape Character Assessments (refer to Figure 1.1)	Neighbouring Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Neighbouring Landscape Character Area (LCA)
				Principal Settled Farmlands	
E: Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	E1: Chapel Chorlton Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Ancient Redlands Sandstone Hills and Heaths	(refer to County Character Assessment)	N/A	N/A
	E2: Maer Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Sandstone Hills and Heaths Sub-type: Forest			
	E3: Loggerheads Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Sandstone Hills and Heaths Sandstone Estatelands: Farmlands			
	E4: Hales Sandstone Hills & Farmlands	Sandstone Hills and Heaths: Estatelands Sandstone Estatelands: Farmlands	The Shropshire Landscape Typology	Riverside Meadows Principal Settled Farmlands Lowland Moors	
F: Ancient Sandstone Farmlands	F1: Knighton Ancient Sandstone Farmlands	Sandstone Hills and Heaths Sandstone Estatelands: Farmlands	The Shropshire Landscape Typology	Principal Settled Farmlands Timbered Pastures	
	F2: Oakley Sandstone Farmlands	Sandstone Estatelands: Farmlands			
G: River Valley	G1: Lyme River Valley	Ancient Redlands	(refer to County Character Assessment)	N/A	N/A

APPENDIX 3

GIS DATA SOURCES

APPENDIX 3

GIS Data Sources

Figure	Data Set	Data	Copyright	Source
Basemapping (All Figures)	Base mapping – Vector: Roads, Rail and Buildings	Ordnance Survey Vector Map District	Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2021	Ordnance Survey
	Hillshade	OS Terrain 50	Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2021	Ordnance Survey
1.1 Location and Context	Local Authority Boundary	Ordnance Survey Local Authority Boundaries	Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right (2021)	Ordnance Survey
	Stoke-on-Trent Green Belt	English Local Authority Green Belt Dataset	© MHCLG 2020	MHCLG
	Watercourses and Waterbodies	OS Vectormap District	Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2021	Ordnance Survey
	National Parks	National Parks (England)	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Natural England
	AONB	Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (England)	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Natural England
2.1 National Character Areas	National Character Areas	National Character Areas	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Natural England
2.2 Regional Character Areas	Regional Character Areas	Regional Character Areas	© Staffordshire County Council 2000	Staffordshire County Council 2000 Staffordshire Planning for Landscape Change and Character Assessment

Figure	Data Set	Data	Copyright	Source
2.3 County Landscape Character Types	Regional Landscape Character Types	Regional Landscape Character Types	© Staffordshire County Council 2000	Staffordshire County Council 2000 Staffordshire Planning for Landscape Change and Character Assessment
3.1 Bedrock Geology	Bedrock Geology	Bedrock Geology	Contains British Geological Survey materials © UKRI 2021	British Geological Survey
3.2 Surface Geology	Surface Geology	Surface Geology	Contains British Geological Survey materials © UKRI 2021	British Geological Survey
3.3 Topography and Hydrology	Watercourses and Waterbodies	OS Vectormap District	Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2021	Ordnance Survey
	Flood Plain	Flood Zone 3	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Environment Agency Open Data
	Height AOD (m)	OS Terrain 50	Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2021	Ordnance Survey
3.4 Woodland and Trees	Broadleaved Woodland/ Coniferous Woodland	National Woodland Inventory	© Forestry Commission 2015 National Forest Inventory Woodland England.	Forestry England
	Protected Woodland and Trees	Ancient Woodland	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Natural England
3.5 Habitats	Priority Habitats	Priority Habitats Inventory	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Natural England
3.6 Natural Environment Designations	European Sites (SACs/SPAs)	Special Areas of Conservation	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Natural England

Figure	Data Set	Data	Copyright	Source
		Special Protection Areas	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Natural England
	National Sites (SSSI, NNRs, RIGs)	Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Natural England
		National Nature Reserves	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Natural England
		Regionally Important Geological or Geomorphological Sites	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Natural England
	Local Sites	Local Nature Reserves	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Natural England
3.7A-D Historic Landscape Character	Historic Landscape Character Area: Broad Types	Historic Landscape Character Areas: Broad Types	© Staffordshire County Council 2011 Refined Historic Landscape Characterisation	Staffordshire County Council
3.8 Historic Environment Designations	Scheduled Monuments	Scheduled Monuments	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Historic England
	Historic Parks & Gardens	Registered Historic Parks & Garden	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Historic England
	Conservation Areas	Conservation Areas		Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
	Listed Buildings	Listed Buildings	Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.	Historic England
3.9 Land Cover and Field Pattern	Land cover and field pattern		© Google	Google Earth

Figure	Data Set	Data	Copyright	Source
3.10 Settlement Pattern	Settlement Pattern	Buildings	Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2021	Vectormap District
	Settlement Pattern	Satellite	© Google	Google
3.11 Access to the Landscape	Country Parks	Country Parks	© Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2021.	Natural England
	Public Rights of Way – Footpaths, Bridleways & Byways	Public Rights of Way – Footpaths, Bridleways & Byways		Staffordshire County Council via Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
	National Cycle Network Routes	National Cycle Network Routes	© Sustrans National Cycle Network	Sustrans via Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
4.1 Landscape Character Types and Areas	Landscape Character Types and Areas			Digitised by CBA
4.2 Condition of the Landscape	Landscape Character Types and Areas			Digitised by CBA
4.3 Strength of Character of the Landscape	Landscape Character Types and Areas			Digitised by CBA

APPENDIX 4

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

APPENDIX 4

Glossary of Terms²³

Ancient woodland Woods that are believed to have been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD.

Biodiversity The variation among living organisms in all environments, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems, and the ecological complexes of which they are part. It includes diversity within and between species, and between ecosystems.

Biodiversity Alert Sites**** are of local rather than county importance. These sites have some nature conservation value and have the potential to be of substantive nature conservation value through appropriate management.

Climate change The large-scale, long-term shift in weather patterns and average temperatures across the world. Humans have contributed to the release of greenhouse gases (most notably carbon dioxide) into the air since the mid-1800s – causing temperatures to rise and resulting in permanent changes to the climate, affecting people and ecosystems, through, for example, the flooding of coastal regions and damage to marine ecosystems.

Characterisation* The process of identifying areas of similar character, classifying and mapping them and describing their character.

Characteristics* Elements, or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to distinctive character.

Classification* Is concerned with dividing the landscape into areas of distinct, recognisable and consistent common character and grouping areas of similar character together.

Ecosystem Services are services provided by the natural environment, that benefit people. Some of these ecosystem services are well known including food, fibre and fuel provision and the cultural services that provide benefits to people through recreation and cultural appreciation of nature. Other services provided by ecosystems are not so well known. These include the regulation of the climate, purification of the air and water, flood protection, soil formation and nutrient recycling. (Defra (2007) An introductory guide to valuing Ecosystem services.)

Elements* are individual components which make up the landscape, such as trees and hedges.

Features* are particularly prominent or eye catching elements, like tree clumps, church towers, or wooded skylines.

Geodiversity: Geological diversity of the varied range of rocks, minerals and topographic characteristics/ landform, together with the processes instrumental in forming these features over geological time. The various components of our geological heritage can give insights into past climates, earlier environments and the development of life on earth.

Green corridor is a strip of green land that connects green areas or hubs and allows the movement and dispersal of wildlife, usually through urban landscapes. Green corridors can also be used to link

²³ Adapted from '[Natural England \(2014\) 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'](#)'

housing areas to, for example, cycle networks, places of employment, town centres and community facilities, thus promoting walking and cycling.

Key Characteristics*** Those combinations of elements which are particularly important to the current character of the landscape and help to give an area its particularly distinctive sense of place.

Land use: The social and economic purpose for which land is managed (housing, agriculture or transport, for example).

Landscape Character* is a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)* are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type. Each will have its own individual character and identity, even though it shares the same generic characteristics with other areas of the same type.

Landscape Character Assessment is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive. This process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment.

Landscape Character Types (LCTs)* are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historical land use, and settlement pattern.

Landscape Condition** is based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual, functional, and ecological perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements which make up the character in any one place.

Local Nature Reserves are accessible sites with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally, which offer people opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it.

Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) are designated locally for their geological importance

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens are sites placed on the national 'Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest' compiled and maintained by Historic England. The Register was established to identify and increase awareness of the existence of such sites and to help ensure that the features and qualities that make these parks and landscapes of national importance are protected and conserved. Local Planning Authorities are encouraged to create local registers.

Scheduled Monuments are monuments placed on the schedule compiled and maintained by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

Sites of Biological Importance (SBI)**** are sites designated for their wildlife value. These sites have a wide variety of good quality habitats and a range of species of county importance. They provide the backbone to Stafford Borough's rich natural environment.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are sites designated under the Wildlife and Conservation Act 1981 (as amended) for their outstanding interest in respect of flora, fauna, geology and or limnology (inland aquatic ecosystems).

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) are sites designated under Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna in respect of flora, fauna and habitats which are considered worthy of conservation at a European level.

Sources:

* The Countryside Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (CAX 84), the Countryside Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage, April 2002.

** The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2002), Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Second Edition, London: Spon Press.

*** Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013), Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, London: Routledge.

**** Staffordshire Borough Council website, [accessed online 30th November 2021 at: <https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/biodiversity-in-stafford-Borough>]

***** Guidelines for the selection of Local Wildlife Sites in Staffordshire (2017), Version 6



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