



Frodsham Solar

Environmental Statement: Volume 2

Appendix 6-5: Landscape Character Baseline

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Revision P01

Appendix 6-5

Landscape Character Baseline

Prepared for: Frodsham Solar Ltd
May 2025
EN010153/DR/6.2

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 This Appendix of the Environmental Statement ('ES') sets out the landscape character baseline against which the effects of the Proposed Development have been assessed. It summarises the following, in so far as they relate to the Study Area for the LVIA:

- i) National Character Areas ('NCA');
- ii) Cheshire West and Chester Council ('CWaCC') Landscape Character Areas ('LCA')
- iii) Halton Borough Council ('HBC') LCA.

1.1.2 The locations of each NCA and LCA within the Study Area are illustrated on **ES Volume 3 Figures 6-2a-b [EN010153/DR/6/3]**.

2.0 NATIONAL CHARACTER AREAS

Data Source

2.1.1 NCAs provide background and context to more detailed landscape character assessments produced at county and district levels. Their broad geographic reach means that the key characteristics identified as typical of a particular NCA may not necessarily apply to a specific location within that NCA.

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- 2.1.2 There are three NCAs located within the LVIA Study Area. Most of the Order Limits are located within NCA60: Mersey Valley. The western edge of the Access Road is located within NCA61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain. That part of the Study Area to the south and south-west of Frodsham and Helsby is located within NCA62: Cheshire Sandstone Ridge. Descriptions of each NCA are available via the Natural England websiteⁱ.
- 2.1.3 The Table below summarises the key characteristics and statements of environmental opportunities for each NCA.

Table 1 – National Character Areas

| NCA | Key Characteristics | Statements of Environmental Opportunity |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| NCA60: Mersey Valley | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The landscape is low-lying, focusing on the broad linear valley of the River Mersey; it is estuarine in the west and has extensive areas of reclaimed mossland in the east. ○ Underlain by Triassic sandstone, the surface geology is principally drift material: marine and river alluvium in the valley bottom, extensive areas of till, pockets of glacial sands and gravels, with peat in some drainage hollows. ○ The Mersey Estuary is a defining element in the landscape, with expansive intertidal mudflats/sand flats and low exposed cliffs. ○ The River Mersey flows from east to west, joined by associated tributaries, although the Mersey itself is often obscured from view. ○ Trees and woodland are mainly associated with settlements, occasional parkland and isolated woodland blocks; and in recent years new community woodlands have been planted. ○ Large-scale, open, predominantly flat, high-quality farmland occurs between developments, with primarily arable farming to the north of the valley and a mixture of arable and dairying to the south. ○ The field pattern is regular and large scale, often defined by hedgerows with isolated hedgerow trees; many hedgerows are intermittent and have been replaced by post-and-wire fencing, while field boundaries on the mosses are marked by ditches ○ A range of important wetland habitats remain, including estuarine mudflats/sand flats and fringing salt marshes in the west, remnants of semi-natural mosslands and pockets of basin peats in the east, with the broad river valley in between. ○ The predominant building material is red brick though some sandstone construction remains, and some survival of earlier timber frame. ○ There are densely populated urban and suburban areas, with major towns particularly at the river crossings, including Runcorn, Widnes and Warrington. ○ There is large-scale, highly visible industrial development, with docks, chemical works and oil refineries. ○ The river valley has a dense communication network with motorways, roads, railways and canals running east–west, and power lines are also prominent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SEO 1: Conserve and enhance the Mersey Valley's rivers, tributaries and estuary, improving the ability of the fluvial and estuarine systems to adapt to climate change and mitigate flood risk while also enhancing habitats for wildlife and for people's enjoyment of the landscape. ○ SEO 2: Promote the Mersey Valley's historic environment and landscape character and positively integrate the environmental resource with industry and development, providing greenspace within existing and new development, to further the benefits provided by a healthy natural environment, as a framework for habitat restoration and for public amenity. ○ SEO 3: Manage the arable and mixed farmland along the broad linear Mersey Valley, and create semi-natural habitats, woodlands and ecological networks, to protect soils and water, enhance biodiversity, increase connectivity and improve the character of the landscape, while enabling sustainable food production. ○ SEO 4: Manage and enhance the mossland landscape in the east, safeguarding wetlands including the internationally important lowland raised bogs, to conserve peat soils, protect and enhance biodiversity, conserve archaeological deposits, contribute to landscape character and store carbon |
| NCA61: Shropshire, Cheshire and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extensive, gently undulating plain, dominated by thick glacial till from the late Pleistocene Period, producing productive, clay soils and exemplifying characteristic glacial landforms including eskers, glacial fans, kettle holes, moraines and a landscape of meres and mosses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SEO 1: Restore, manage and protect from diffuse pollution the rivers, streams, lakes, ponds and wetland habitats (including flood plain grazing |

| NCA | Key Characteristics | Statements of Environmental Opportunity |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Sandstone Ridge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Prominent discontinuous sandstone ridges of Triassic age, characterised by steep sides and freely draining, generally infertile soil that supports broadleaved and mixed woodland. o Few woodlands, confined to the area around Northwich and to estates, cloughs and deciduous and mixed woods on the steeper slopes of the wind-swept sandstone ridges. Locally extensive tracts of coniferous woodland and locally distinctive orchards scattered throughout. o Strong field patterns with generally well-maintained boundaries, predominantly hedgerows, with dense, mature hedgerow trees. Sandstone walls occur on the ridges and estate walls and Cheshire-style (curved topped) metal railing fences occur locally on estates in Cheshire. o Dairy farming dominates on the plain, with patches of mixed farming and arable in the north and large areas in the south-east. o Diversity of wetland habitats includes internationally important meres and mosses comprising lowland raised bog, fen, wet woodland, reedbed and standing water, supporting populations of a host of rare wildlife, including some species of national and international importance o Extensive peat flood plains where flood plain grazing marsh habitats support regionally important populations of breeding waders in areas such as Baggy Moor, Weald Moor and Doxey Marshes. o Many main rivers and their flood plains lie in this area, including the Dee, Dane, Severn, Penk and Sow. Significant areas of grazing marsh, alluvial flood meadows and hay meadows associated with the rivers Dee, Sow, Gowy and Severn. The area has the highest density of field ponds in western Europe o Rich archaeological evidence of iron-age hill forts concentrated on the sandstone ridges and the Weald Moors. Remnant ridge and furrow and moated houses are features of the plain. The Roman road, Watling Street, crosses the plain linking London to Wales via Wroxeter. Chester was an important Roman settlement. o Regularly spaced, large farmsteads, dispersed hamlets, market towns and many other settlements including Macclesfield and Telford. Timber-frame buildings are a distinctive feature of the plain, often highly decorated in Cheshire, for example, the moated Little Moreton Hall. The historic towns including Stafford, Shrewsbury and the city of Chester have a wealth of 17th- and 18th-century half-timber, brick and red sandstone buildings. o Parklands and gardens associated with estates such as Chillington, Trentham, Tatton and Attingham; country houses such as Gawsorth Hall, Arley Hall and Adlington Hall; and fortified | <p>marsh and wet woodland) and support partnerships to maintain the integrity and unique conditions for the preservation of the internationally important meres and mosses and River Dee, to benefit water availability, water quality, landscape character, biodiversity and climate regulation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o SEO 2: Protect the landscape of the plain, recognising its importance to food production and incorporating well-maintained hedgerows, ponds and lowland grassland margins within agricultural systems, to secure resource protection and maintain productivity, while reducing fragmentation of semi-natural habitats to benefit a wide range of services, such as landscape character, sense of place, water quality and biodiversity o SEO 3: Manage and restore lowland heathland and ancient and plantation woodland, support partnerships to plan appropriately scaled new woodland cover, particularly where this will link and extend existing woodlands, restore and reinstate traditional orchards and increase biomass provision to mitigate the impact of climate change, where this will benefit biodiversity, landscape character and enhance the experiential qualities of the area o SEO 4: Protect and manage the nationally important geological sites and heritage features demonstrating how the interaction of natural and historical factors influenced the distinctive character of its landscape and settlement |

| NCA | Key Characteristics | Statements of Environmental Opportunity |
|--|--|--|
| | <p>manor houses and castles such as at Shrewsbury, Stafford, Beeston, Acton Burnell and Cholmondeley.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nationally important reserves of silica sand and salt. Active extraction of salt has developed a locally distinctive landscape of subsidence flashes, particularly around the area of Sandbach. Adjacent to these saline flashes are areas of salt marsh rarely found at inland sites. ○ The numerous canals are important for recreation as well as habitat. Several National Cycle Routes and nearly 5,000 km of public rights of way cross the plain. Six National Nature Reserves (NNRs) are scattered throughout, close to large population centres and well used for recreation. | <p>patterns, and help to promote greater understanding of the link between wildlife, heritage and geodiversity, particularly the importance of former extraction sites for both geodiversity and biodiversity.</p> |
| NCA62: Cheshire Sandstone Ridge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sandstone ridge with outcrops and bluffs over 100 m high which rise above the surrounding plain, comprising Triassic sandstone and conglomerate, exemplified by Beeston Crag. ○ Thin, sandy and gravelly soils in the east with scattered peatlands. Free-draining, thin and generally infertile soils along the ridge. ○ Strong mosaic of wet woodland, broadleaved mixed woodland comprising ancient woodland and some post-medieval conifer plantations, which contribute to the wooded character along with large blocks of commercially managed conifers on gravelly soils to the east. The medieval Royal Forest of Delamere, in the north of the area, once covered a vast area of Cheshire. ○ Fragmented orchards throughout Cheshire which were once more widespread. ○ Regular pattern of fields surrounded by generally well maintained hawthorn hedgerows with scattered mature hedgerow trees surrounded by sunken lanes. Hedgerows give way to drystone walls on the ridge. ○ Low-density dispersed livestock farms, with some dairy and arable on gentler slopes. ○ Large areas of lowland heathland survive on Bickerton Hill and at Little Budworth Common with fragmented areas of lowland meadow throughout the area, particularly along the Pettypool Brook Valley and along the line of the Shropshire Union Canal. ○ Diverse range of woodland and wetland habitats, such as Pettypool Brook Valley SSSI, that supports nationally important species of invertebrates ○ Numerous field ponds, scattered areas of glacial meres and mosses in varying stages of succession, exemplified by internationally important Oak Mere and Abbots Moss. ○ The meandering rivers Gowy and Weaver rise in the Peckforton Hills that form a local watershed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SEO 1: Manage and enhance the rivers, streams and wetland habitats, including flood plain grazing marsh and wet woodland, protecting them from diffuse pollution and maintaining the integrity and unique conditions for the preservation of the lakes and standing waters of internationally important sites such as Oak Mere and Abbots Moss to benefit water availability, water quality, landscape character, biodiversity and climate regulation ○ SEO 2: Manage and expand areas of semi-natural woodland, restore and reinstate hedgerows and hedgerow trees, protect and restore ancient woodland, for example in the Delamere Forest Park and throughout the Mersey Forest, thus reducing habitat fragmentation to benefit landscape character, biodiversity, resource protection and climate regulation while enhancing the recreational, educational and experiential qualities of the NCA ○ SEO 3: Protect and manage the geological sites, with an emphasis on demonstrating the strong link between geology and its influence on |

| NCA | Key Characteristics | Statements of Environmental Opportunity |
|-----|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remains of iron-age hill forts, burial mounds, ring ditches and castles, and finds of stone tools, occur along the ridgetop. A Roman road crosses the area en route to Manchester from Chester. Large historic halls include Peckforton and Utkinton (both listed Grade I), and Tirley Garth to the south-west of Kelsall, a Grade II* Listed Building surrounded by a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. Beeston and Maiden castles are also popular visitor destinations. Sparsely populated with a dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farms and small villages, mostly of medieval origin. Red brick is the dominant building material, together with some local sandstone and timber-frame buildings. Former sand pits around Delamere provide a mosaic of wetland and woodland that is now important for biodiversity and recreation. The Shropshire Union Canal, the A54 and A51 cross the area and the Sandstone Trail, a long-distance footpath, offers elevated views across the NCA and beyond. Communication masts on the ridgetop and the war memorial at the northern end of the ridge are prominent local landmarks | <p>landscape and industrial development, and promoting greater understanding of the link between wildlife and geodiversity, particularly in the distribution of habitats and species, recognising the importance of former extraction sites for both geodiversity and biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEO 4: Manage and, where appropriate, expand areas of characteristic heathland and other priority habitats, including lowland meadows and lowland grassland, thus reducing habitat fragmentation to benefit landscape character, sense of place, biodiversity and resource protection while enhancing the recreational and experiential qualities of the NCA |

3.0 CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

3.1.1 A *Landscape Strategy for Cheshire West and Chester Boroughⁱⁱ* describes and classifies the landscape of the CWaCC area. Urban areas are excluded. The Order Limits are located almost entirely within Landscape Character Area ('LCA') 4a: Frodsham, Helsby and Lordship Marshes. The western end of the Access Road extends into LCA 9a: Dunham to Tarvin Plain, however no post-construction physical change would take place within this LCA. A full list of LCAs within the Study Area is set out below:

- i) 2a: Frodsham;
- ii) 2b: Helsby Hill;
- iii) 3a: Helsby to Tarporley Sandstone Fringe;
- iv) 4a: Frodsham, Helsby and Lordship Marshes;
- v) 5b: Frodsham to Northwich;
- vi) 5f: Helsby to Frodsham;
- vii) 8a: Aston;
- viii) 9a: Dunham to Tarvin Plain;
- ix) 15c: Lower Weaver Valley: and
- x) 16a: Stanlow and Ince Banks.

3.1.2 Further information regarding each LCA specific to solar energy development is set out in *Landscape Sensitivity Study and Guidance on Wind and Solar Photovoltaic Developmentsⁱⁱⁱ*. This identifies landscape sensitivity based on a series of different development typologies. The Proposed Development would fall within the 'very large solar farm category', which is defined as covering an area greater than 25 hectares. A series of criteria are also set out against which the sensitivity of different LCAs can be assessed.

3.1.3 The Table below summarises the key characteristics, and key landscape sensitivities, qualities and values for each CWaCC LCA within the LVIA Study Area.

- 3.1.4 In relation to those LCAs which would not be directly physically affected by the Proposed Development (i.e. all except LCA4a), only the perceptual key landscape sensitivities, qualities and values are set out. The other key sensitivities, qualities and values listed for each LCA (along with forces for change and management guidelines) relate to land within the LCA only and hence have little relevance to change that would occur outside their boundaries. Forces for change and management guidelines for LCA4a are included in the Table.

Table 2 – Cheshire West and Chester Council Landscape Character Areas

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
|--------------------|--|---|
| LCA2a: Frodsham | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outcrops of Triassic sandstone form a prominent ridge reaching over 150m with hills forming features at Beacon Hill, Harrol Edge and Birch Hill ○ Steep sandstone cliffs to the north and west of the ridge support dense woodland, including ancient oak woodland, for example at Alvanley Cliff Wood ○ Dry gorges, created by glacial meltwater, are features of the northern and western edges of the ridge ○ Brown sandy soils support permanent grassland, dwarf shrub heath, bracken and gorse scrub and woodland on steeper slopes, for example at Frodsham and Overton Woods ○ Groups of Scots pines form distinctive skyline elements ○ Quarries are features, particularly along the west-facing cliff ○ Less steep slopes support arable farmland ○ Regular geometric fields, resulting from late eighteenth and early nineteenth century enclosure by private agreement and Parliamentary Act, dominate the ridge ○ New Pale is a 17th century deer park with a distinctive boundary which is a feature in the landscape ○ Low density of dispersed farms and hamlets – many farm buildings are constructed from sandstone (quarried from the ridge) with Welsh slate roofs ○ Sunken lanes provide access over the ridge, responding to landform – there are no main roads ○ Late Bronze Age/Iron Age promontory hillfort at Woodhouse Hill on the western edge of the ridge, and a former Roman camp at Birch Hill, occupy prominent positions on the ridge (both Scheduled Monuments) ○ The War Memorial on Frodsham Hill is a landscape feature, from where there are panoramic views over the Mersey Estuary | <p><u>Perceptual/Visual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Large scale, open landscape; ○ The strong, prominent and simple skyline; ○ Long distance panoramic views across the Mersey Estuary to Runcorn, Liverpool and north Wales (in particular from the War Memorial on Frodsham Hill), and across Delamere and to the east to the distant Peak District; ○ The character area is visible from extensive areas of the borough and beyond making the ridge visually sensitive; ○ Clusters and belts of Scots pine and communication masts form distinctive skyline features are highly visible from many parts of the borough on a clear day; ○ Woodland helps to mitigate visual impacts, for example due to the large numbers of visitors to this landscape; ○ The sense of peace and quiet away from the popular areas; ○ Although population density is low, there are a large number of visitors to this landscape as a result of the recreational opportunities provided by the open access land and three long distance recreational footpaths. However, the presence of woodland as a key characteristic provides some potential for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on the character of the landscape |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long distance footpaths run along the length of the ridge from where there are some spectacular panoramic views from the ridge as far as Wales to the west and the Peak District to the east Locally designated as an Area of Special County Value (ASCV) recognising its landscape and scenic quality and its historic, archaeological and ecological importance | |
| LCA2b: Helsby Hill | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcrop of Triassic sandstone forms a prominent hill (Helsby Hill reaching 141m) with distinctive cliff profile Steep sandstone cliffs to the north and west of the hill support dense woodland and are used for rock climbing A rich variety of habitats; brown sandy soils support sheep grazed pasture, semi-natural grassland, dwarf shrub heath, bracken and gorse scrub, with woodland on steeper slopes Sandstone outcrops, sandstone quarries (Helsby Quarry) and cliffs are features, including the 'Old Man of Helsby' Regular rectangular fields resulting from late eighteenth and early nineteenth century enclosure of the Forest of Mara by Parliamentary Act Low density of dispersed farms; farm buildings are typically constructed from sandstone (quarried from the ridge) with Welsh slate roofs Narrow sunken lanes provide access up to the hill – there are no main roads A promontory hillfort at Helsby Hill (a Scheduled Monument) occupies a prominent position on the north-western edge of the outcrop overlooking the Mersey Estuary The Longster Trail long distance footpath crosses the outcrop, from where there are some spectacular panoramic views over the Mersey Estuary to the north and towards the Frodsham Sandstone Ridge to the east | <p><u>Perceptual/Visual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prominent, open landscape with a distinctive, simple skyline; Distinctive landform unifies the character area; Expansive 360 degree panoramic views from the top of the hill across the Mersey Estuary to Runcorn, Liverpool and north Wales and across Delamere and to the east to the distant Peak District, and southwards across the lower slopes of Helsby Hill; The character area is visible from extensive areas of the borough and beyond making the outcrop visually sensitive; The absence of communication masts and other prominent structures; Woodland helps to mitigate visual impacts, for example due to the large numbers of visitors to this landscape; The sense of peace and quiet away from the popular areas; Although population density is low, there are a relatively large number of visitors to this landscape as a result of the hill fort and the recreational opportunities provided by the public footpaths and woodland park. However, the presence of woodland as a key characteristic provides some potential for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on the character of the landscape. |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
|--|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locally designated as an Area of Special County Value (ASCV) recognising its landscape and scenic quality and its historic, archaeological and ecological importance | |
| LCA3a: Helsby to Tarporey Sandstone Fringe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitional zone between the prominent Sandstone Ridge and the low lying Cheshire Plain West forming a gently undulating landscape of intermediate elevation (mostly between 35m and 90m AOD) Underlying bedrock geology of Helsby and Wilmslow Sandstone Formations and Tarporey Siltstone that has been weathered and overlain by glacio-fluvial sands and gravels and till (boulder clay) deposits except along the western edge; Steep, gorse-clad sandstone outcrops, for example overlooking the Dunham to Tarvin Plain, marked by disused quarries e.g. Manor Farm Other disused quarries mark places where the underlying geology is not obscured by glacial deposits, for example at Birch Heath Farm Geology gives rise to brown sands and earths which support a mixed agricultural landscape of arable and grassland, with pasture dominating in the south, and some small woodland and fragments of acid grassland Fruit farming towards the centre of the character area around Kelsall and Willington Predominantly late eighteenth and early nineteenth century planned enclosure by private agreement and Parliamentary Act Fields are typically irregular, small to medium in size and enclosed by hawthorn hedges or low sandstone walls The clayey soils have a low permeability and give rise to a number of water bodies, including ponds, brooks and streams. Water filled marl pits are a reminder of the past use of the boulder clay to fertilise fields A generally low level of woodland cover but containing a number of small scattered woodland blocks, for example at Bentley Wood, Oxpasture Wood and Ash Wood, small copses and riparian woodland | <p><u>Perceptual/Visual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally quiet and rural character; Semi-enclosed landscape comprising a simple combination of farmland and woodland set against the backdrop of the Sandstone Ridge; The low sandstone walls associated with hedgerows or alongside roads contribute colour and texture to the landscape The gently undulating topography within the transitional area between the Sandstone Ridge and the low lying Cheshire Plain West unifies the character area; A landscape of strong contrasts – some areas enclosed with a small scale, verdant character, and other open elevated areas with extensive panoramic views with rural views to the east across the fringe to the adjacent Sandstone Ridge and westwards across the Cheshire plain in particular from the Sandstone Trail, and views from the Sandstone Ridge over the fringe; The position of this landscape character area in the shadow of part of the Sandstone Ridge means it is not as visually prominent as the ridge itself. However, the undulating topography allows opportunities for views across the landscape of the Helsby to Tarporey Sandstone Fringe. There is some settlement in this landscape (indicating the presence of sensitive residential receptors) and, although recreational use of the landscape is relatively low, there are views from the Sandstone Ridge across this landscape character area. The LCA is also visible from the Cheshire Plain West, to the west; Although there is a relative absence of woodland cover, the presence of undulating topography and hedgerow trees means there is some potential for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on the character of the landscape. |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>along the course of narrow streams e.g. Abbot's Clough Woodland along Moor's Brook is a Local Wildlife Site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mature hedgerow trees are important landscape elements, contributing to the overall tree cover ○ Some areas are designated as an Area of Special County Value (ASCV) recognising their landscape and scenic quality and their historic, archaeological and ecological importance ○ The settlement pattern is characterised by nucleated villages and scattered hamlets and farms, constructed from combinations of sandstone and red brick, or white washed sandstone walls and thatch are also a feature, linked by a network of historic lanes, some sunken ○ Nucleated village at Alvanley surrounded by distinctive small medieval townfields ○ Larger villages such as Tarporley and Kelsall straddle the boundary where the Sandstone Fringe meets the Sandstone Ridge ○ Grand mansion houses, for example Manley Old Hall ○ Although this area does not provide as many recreational opportunities as the adjacent Sandstone Ridge it contains a number of public footpaths, including the Longster Trail long distance recreational footpath and part of the Sandstone Trail as it descends off the ridge ○ The adjacent Sandstone Ridge forms a backdrop to views across the Sandstone Fringe. | |
| LCA4a: Frodsham, Helsby and Lordship Marshes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A flat, low lying landscape (up to 13m AOD) of former mudflats and saltmarsh alongside the Mersey Estuary, contrasting with surrounding built development (previously designated as an Area of Significant Local Environmental Value – ASLEV) ○ Strong interconnection and intervisibility with LCT 16 Mudflats and Saltmarsh to the north ○ Reclaimed as part of the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal in 1894, with further drainage following the Second World War to produce productive farmland | <p><u>Natural/Physical</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extensive alluvial deposits of sand, silt and clay left by the Mersey River overlying a solid bedrock of Chester Pebble Beds, the erosional base of the Sherwood Sandstones; ○ Once contiguous with the saltmarsh and mudflats of the Mersey Estuary, the area was embanked, ditched and drained in 1894 following the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal which lies to the north; ○ Pumps and new ditches added following the Second World War to produce productive farmland that are some of the most fertile soils in the county; |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
|-----|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The flat landscape is etched with a distinctive pattern of straight drainage ditches which delineates the field pattern of planned 19th century enclosure o There is an extensive ditch system, a stronghold for water voles in the borough o Incomplete hedgerow boundaries provide partial enclosure along some field boundaries o Land to the north of Lordship Lane is used as a deposit ground for dredgings from the Manchester Ship Canal and supports a range of wetland habitats o Land to the south of Lordship Lane is in agricultural use – a mixture of pasture and arable with incomplete thorn hedgerows o Canal dredging grounds defined by high earth embankments o The area is of local, national and international importance for its breeding, wintering and passage birds which add movement to the landscape o An isolated, bleak and open landscape - settlement is limited to isolated farms linked by rough tracks between ditches o A system of surfaced tracks and bridleways serve the area, including National Cycle Route (NCR) 5 o The M56 and railway utilise the flat landscape, crossing the marsh at the base of the Helsby to Frodsham Undulating Enclosed Farmland that gently rises to the south o Running parallel to the M56 area a number of large scale overhead power lines which are dominant features in this flat landscape o The flat, open landscape provides clear views to and from the adjacent Frodsham Sandstone Ridge and Helsby Hill o Industrial works at Ince Marshes, and at Halton and Rocksavage in Runcorn, form a backdrop in views to the west and east respectively o Permitted windfarm will become dominant creating a 'windfarm landscape' when constructed [<i>Author Note: this now been built</i>]. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Influenced by alluvial drift deposits, clayey humic and alluvial gley soils are deep and well drained, and well suited to both pasture and arable crops; o Field pattern delineated by the pattern of drainage ditches, with some fields also bounded by gappy hawthorn hedges; o The extensive ditch system is a stronghold for water voles in the borough o Important roosting sites for wildfowl and waders at high tide from the Mersey Estuary SSSI - the whole area provides a wintering ground for waders and raptors and extensive habitat for breeding birds and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site; o Large areas of land to the north of Lordship Lane are dredging deposit lagoons associated with the Manchester Ship Canal, exhibiting a sequence of ecologically rich habitats from bare mud to agricultural land <p><u>Cultural/Heritage/Historic</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The field pattern characterised by straight-sided fields bounded by ditches, dating from the 19th century planned enclosure of marshland; o Land north of Lordship Lane modified by 20th century field improvements (around Frodsham Marsh Farm) and creation of deposit dumps associated with the Manchester Ship Canal; o Traces of human activity are indicated by the discovery of Bronze Age (c 2000 BC) spearheads on Frodsham and Ince Marshes. More recently, this marginal area was used as a WWII bomb decoy; o The extensive network of public rights of way across the marshes, including NCR 5, which follow tracks and field boundaries and are used for passive forms of recreation such as jogging and dog walking. The Thornton-le-Moors to Frodsham Greenway crosses the area; o Small consented developments including model aircraft strip and Hoverforce (leisure hovercraft and segways) provide recreational facilities <p><u>Built Development and Settlement Pattern</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The absence of settlement except for scattered farms including Meadow Farm, Spring Farm, Hill View Farm, and Frodsham Marsh Farm, linked by a network of rough tracks that follow field boundaries and drainage ditches; |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
|-----|---------------------|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The M56 and railway transport corridor that utilise the flat land; ○ A number of large scale overhead power lines run parallel with the M56; ○ Industrial works at Ince Marshes, and at Halton and Rocksavage in Runcorn, form a backdrop in views to the west and east respectively; ○ Development of the Ince Resource Recovery Park has been approved on Ince Marshes; ○ The consented Frodsham Wind Farm comprising 19 wind turbines will occupy much of the land within the northern half of the Frodsham, Helsby and Lordship Marshes between Lordship Lane and the Mersey Canal [<i>Author Note: this now been built</i>] <p><u>Perceptual/Visual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The flat landform and long views contribute to the perception of a large scale, exposed landscape; ○ Presence of man-made embankments foreshorten views to the north across the Mersey Estuary; ○ Important views to and from the Frodsham Sandstone Ridge and Helsby Hill; ○ The consistent field pattern through planned enclosure gives the perception of a reclaimed, tamed landscape; ○ Vegetation-fringed ditches and rough ground and lagoons provide texture in the landscape; ○ Parts of the marsh are remote, but the presence of traffic on the M56 motorway brings noise and movement to the area; the presence of birds and proximity to John Lennon Airport also contribute to noise and movement; ○ Sense of naturalness of the marsh is diluted by man-made features and development; ○ No prominent skyline, but embankments, pylons and industrial development are visually prominent; ○ The open character means there is little opportunity for screening any large scale elements or for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves being highly visible - making it a visually sensitive landscape. There are relatively few sensitive visual receptors in the area, limited to a few |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
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| | | <p>residential properties and users of the PRoW network, but in adjacent areas overlooking the marsh there are views from Frodsham and Helsby as well as visitors to the viewpoints at the top of Helsby Hill and the War Memorial above Frodsham</p> <p><u>Landscape Condition</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although much of the area is actively farmed, the degraded hedgerows and broken fencing shows this to be a landscape in need of improved management. Some land to north of Lordship Lane remains in use for canal dredgings and has undergone change as a result of the preliminary works for the permitted windfarm. Wet grassland species have been lost and ditches are eutrophic as a result of the intensive agricultural use of the land. |
| | <p><u>Forces for Landscape Change: Past Change</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction of cultivated areas and increase in set-aside; Loss of wet grassland communities; Reduction in dredging lagoons with loss of wildlife interest; Increase in horse grazing around peripheral areas with associated changes to field boundaries and use of informal animal shelters, sheds etc.; Loss and fragmentation of hedgerows, and decline in fencing condition; Ditches are eutrophic as a result of nutrient run-off due to the intensive agricultural use of the land; Approved development of the Ince Resource Recovery Park on Ince Marshes; Small consented developments including model aircraft strip and Hoverforce (leisure hovercraft and segways); <p><u>Forces for Landscape Change: Potential Future Change/Key Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued dredging and dumping is likely to continue to affect the landscape of the marshes; Pressure for increase in transport infrastructure / improvements; Encroachment by industrial development and infrastructure: pressure for expansion of industry on the marshes, including renewable energy development; Visual impact of prominent development and traffic could be reduced by tree planting but this would change the open character of the area; Cost of artificial drainage could lead to withdrawal of pumping and loss/under-management of historic drainage systems and change in water levels on farmland; Climate change could lead to increased flooding affecting the use and management of the land; | |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved drainage measures could lead to local modification to hydrological characteristics of field system and may threaten paleo-environmental remains; When constructed the Frodsham Wind Farm will dominate the landscape, reduce the openness of the marshes and create a 'windfarm landscape [<i>Author Note: this now been built</i>]. | |
| | <p><u>Overall Management Strategy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to enhance and restore the condition of habitats and features of the marshes whilst safeguarding its open character. <p><u>Landscape Management Guidelines</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage recreational development as a means of managing some of the more derelict and degraded areas of the landscape. Encourage use of the area by walkers, cyclists, rowers and horse riders (including provision of picnic facilities and viewing opportunities) whilst safeguarding the nature conservation interest of the area, particularly its importance for birds. 2. Maintain the distinctive field pattern that reveals the planned 19th century enclosure of the marsh. 3. Seek to restore thorn hedgerows that are falling into decline. 4. Maintain and ecologically enhance the ditch system and riparian habitats and land supporting breeding, over wintering and passage birds. Seek opportunities to re-create habitats such as species rich grassland and reed beds. 5. Increase the biodiversity of intensively managed grassland and arable land – create and link buffer strips along linear features such as hedgerows and ditches to create a continuous network of wildlife corridors. 6. Improve water quality by encouraging less-intensive agricultural practices to reduce fertiliser run-off and nutrient levels in the ditches. 7. Encourage restoration of derelict industrial land including re-creation of salt-marsh and reintroduction of grazing to maintain the open character of the marsh. 8. Consider opportunities to create views across the Mersey Estuary. 9. Conserve the 'remote' character of the marshes away from the main transport corridor of the M56. 10. Retain the open character of the marsh by restricting planting to low growing scrubby species typically found in the local landscape, taking into account the importance of the area for ground nesting birds and wintering/passage birds. Woodland planting /screening using tall or ornamental species is not appropriate in the open marsh. <p><u>Built Development Guidelines</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conserve the remaining open, undeveloped areas of the marsh. 2. Consider using native scrubby vegetation to screen views of traffic on the north side of the M56 motorway (taller species may be appropriate on the southern side of the motorway adjacent to the Helsby to Frodsham Undulating Enclosed Farmland). 3. Consider views to and from the Frodsham Sandstone Ridge and Helsby Hill when planning any change. | |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
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| LCA5b: Frodsham to Northwich | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A bedrock geology of Bollin Mudstones (part of the Mercia Mudstone Group) covered by a mantle of glacial drift deposits that gives rise to a gently undulating topography between 25m and 50m AOD (rising to 90m where it joins the Frodsham Sandstone Ridge) o Steep, wooded cloughs and valleys incise the hills, containing small brooks that drain towards the River Weaver, for example along Cliff Brook, and are of local wildlife importance o Grassland meadows that are of local wildlife importance o Boulder clay deposits mask the underlying mudstones giving rise to a predominance of poorly draining clay soils that support dairying and some arable crops o Small scale fields resulting from late eighteenth and early nineteenth century enclosure by private agreement and Parliamentary Act are bounded by hedgerows with hedgerow trees and drainage ditches. Small scale Medieval townfields surround Kingsley o Small farm woodlands and coverts are important features of a landscape with generally relatively low woodland cover o Historic orchards throughout the area (previously designated as Areas of Significant Local Environmental Value (ASLEV) o Field ponds are a feature of the lower lying areas, indicating the extraction of marl (calcareous deposits) from the boulder clay for past agricultural improvement o Designed landscapes at Pike Nook Farm, Hefferston Grange, Weaver Holt, and Hollies Farm are associated with large country houses or farmsteads o Passive recreation in the form of public footpaths, including parts of the Delamere Way, Eddisbury Way and North Cheshire Way o Community woodland sites at Thorn Wood and Hazel Pear Wood are managed by the Woodland Trust and provide open access | <p><u>Perceptual/Visual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The large scale, undulating landscape overlaid by a small scale field pattern allows varying views, from enclosed low lying views to open long distance views from higher ground which is visually more sensitive. o The simplicity of the mostly pastoral land use and the pattern of elements such as hedgerows and trees provides landscape unity, texture and seasonal colour; o Red sandstone and brick contrast with the green pasture, providing warm colours in the landscape; o The farmed landscape gives an impression of being manicured and 'tamed'; o Generally a quiet, rural landscape but with features that detract from the overall sense of tranquillity whilst providing sensitive visual receptors, including the main roads and railway, the relatively dense network of rural lanes, small scale industry (including sewage works) and the presence of sizeable settlements including 'suburban' development and industry on the edge of the character area; o The Frodsham Sandstone Ridge and the Norley Undulating Enclosed Farmland form a backdrop to views, but generally there is no strong skyline to this relatively low lying landscape other than hedgerow trees and electricity pylons; o Weaverham Church tower is a landmark on the skyline; o The presence of undulating topography, woodland and hedgerow trees means there is some potential for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on the character of the landscape; o The character area is visible from the Whitley & Comberbach Undulating Enclosed Farmland to the northeast. |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A network of small sunken lanes link scattered farms, hamlets and halls. Kingsley, Acton Bridge and Weaverham form nucleated settlements on the edge of the area ○ Building materials are typically red brick with large red brick dairy barns a particular feature. Peel Hall is a medieval moated farmstead and a Scheduled Monument ○ Promontory hillfort at Bradley, a Scheduled Monument ○ Mainline railway lines, the disused ICI mineral railway, electricity pylons, the A49 and A556 pass through the area, contributing to the sense of movement and noise locally ○ The Frodsham Sandstone Ridge and the Norley Undulating Enclosed Farmland form a backdrop to views, and Weaverham Church tower is a landmark on the skyline, but generally there is no strong skyline to this relatively low lying landscape ○ There are panoramic views from the B5152 across the Weaver Valley. | |
| LCA5f: Helsby to Frodsham | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transitional zone between the prominent and distinctive Frodsham Sandstone Ridge and Helsby Hill, and the flat, low lying Frodsham, Helsby and Lordship Marches forming an undulating landscape that gently rises from 10m to 60m AOD ○ Underlying bedrock geology of Helsby Sandstone Formations that has been weathered and overlain by glacio-fluvial drift and till deposits ○ Geology gives rise to brown sands and earths which support a mixed agricultural landscape of arable and grassland, with fragments of acid grassland ○ Fields are typically small to medium in size, with a combination of irregular medieval enclosure and modern reorganisation and enclosure, enclosed by trimmed thorn hedgerows and trees ○ Enclosed medieval townfields around Woodhouses, visible as small scale field divisions ○ Low sandstone walls and black and white estate style 'Cheshire Fencing' also form boundaries | <p><u>Perceptual/Visual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The small scale field pattern, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and distinctive backdrop of the wooded hills on the edge of the sandstone ridge gives a sense of enclosure to the south of the character area where the strong skyline terminates views, and a perception of an intimate character; ○ However, the area to the north is larger in scale due to the larger field patterns, more open character and more extensive views across the Frodsham, Helsby and Lordship Marches to the Mersey; ○ Overall a semi-enclosed landscape generally composed of a simple combination of farmland, hedgerows and hedgerow trees with variety provided by the undulating topography, low sandstone walls, 'Cheshire Fencing' and buildings. The red sandstone and brick contrast with the green pasture and wooded backdrop, providing warm colours in the landscape. The area is unified by its location between the prominent sandstone ridge to the south and west and the flat marshland to the north; |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area is drained by a small stream running south to north, crossed by a footbridge and ford at Chestnut Lane, Woodhouses, and wooded at its southern end ○ Otherwise woodland cover is low, with a small broadleaf copse around Foxhill ○ Cluster of field ponds west of Tarvin Road and around Godscroft Hall ○ A low density settlement pattern of scattered farms, individual dispersed detached properties and halls e.g. Godscroft Hall (a listed building) linked by a small network of minor roads either side of the A56 ○ Building materials include a mix of red brick and sandstone, with white wash and timber framed buildings, and large red brick barns ○ A mix of other road side land uses including small workshops, two static caravan sites, tyre fitters, a nursery and Frodsham Cemetery, representing modern ribbon development on the outskirts of Helsby and Frodsham and blurring the distinction between urban and rural ○ Recreational opportunities are provided by public rights of way including the North Cheshire Way long distance route passing through the area from Helsby Hill to join the Sandstone Trail along the Frodsham Sandstone Ridge. A parking area and footpath lead from the B5393 to the Arboretum on the Frodsham Sandstone Ridge ○ The wooded high ground of Frodsham Hill and Helsby Hill dominates the southern and western parts of the area, where the very strong skyline terminates all views in these directions ○ By contrast the northern boundary is visually indistinct and distant views extend over Frodsham, Helsby and Lordship Marches to the Mersey ○ Generally a quiet, rural landscape although the A56 Chester Road passes through the area between Helsby and Frodsham, contributing to the sense of movement and noise locally | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Generally a quiet, rural landscape although the A56 and railway pass through the area, contributing to the sense of movement and noise locally. The A56 is lit along its entire length through this character area between Helsby and Frodsham, providing a suburbanising influence both during the day and at night-time; ○ The M56 just beyond the character area to the north also adds to the sense of movement and noise; ○ Settlement edges of Helsby and Frodsham and other scattered residential development indicates the presence of sensitive residential receptors. The North Cheshire Way long distance footpath links to Helsby Hill to join the Sandstone Trail along the Frodsham Sandstone Ridge and brings recreational users to the area who are likely to have a visual interest in the surrounding landscape; ○ The character area is overlooked from many high vantage points on the Helsby Hill Sandstone Ridge and Frodsham Sandstone Ridge and is visually sensitive, although not as visually prominent as the ridge itself; ○ The huge industrial complex at Runcorn is visible, as are electricity pylons that run parallel to the motorway beyond the character area to the north, detracting from the rural character of the area; ○ The church spire of Trinity Church at Frodsham is a landmark; ○ Although there is a relative absence of woodland cover, the presence of undulating topography and hedgerow trees means there is some potential for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on the character of the landscape |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The railway and traffic on the M56 just beyond the character area to the north also adds to the sense of movement and noise ○ The area south of the A56 is designated as part of the Helsby & Frodsham Hills Area of Special County Value (ASCV) ○ The area south of the A56 was also designated as an Area of Significant Local Environmental Value (ASLEV) by the former Vale Royal Borough Council ○ The character area is overlooked from many high vantage points on the Helsby Hill Sandstone Ridge and Frodsham Sandstone Ridge and is visually sensitive ○ The huge industrial complex at Runcorn is visible, as are electricity pylons that run parallel to the motorway beyond the character area to the north ○ The church spire of Trinity Church at Frodsham is a landmark. | |
| LCA8a: Aston | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An 'island' of farmland cut off from its context by a combination of railway lines, the M56 motorway, the Trent & Mersey Canal and River Weaver ○ Bedrock geology of Bollin Mudstones (forming part of the Mercia Mudstone Group) forms a prominent flat-topped ridge reaching 65m AOD ○ Sand, gravel and boulder clay deposits produce a mixture of slowly permeable clay soils and lighter sandy soils that support pasture, arable and former heath ○ Numerous brooks drain towards the Weaver into often in steep wooded valleys immediately to the south and east of the LCA; some have extensive displays of bluebells ○ Large areas of ancient deciduous woodland on the ridge slopes and along Longacre Brook provide some enclosure and changing colour with the seasons | <p><u>Perceptual/Visual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is a simple landscape, with a consistent and unified character as a result of the consistent land use and field size/pattern; ○ The scale of the landscape is large as a result of the large scale undulating topography and relatively large field units; ○ There is a sense of openness as a result of the low hedgerows, lack of hedgerow trees and long distance views from the ridge in all directions; ○ The presence of arable crops and deciduous woodland provides changing colour with the seasons; ○ The perceived naturalness of this landscape is diminished by the presence of intensive farming, electricity pylons, the M56 motorway, roads, railways, and proximity to built development and industry; ○ This area is perceived as a peaceful 'island' in a busy context. However, the tranquillity is fragile on the edges of the character area (particularly to the north-west, north and north-east) due to proximity to infrastructure and industry; |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dutton Park, 281ha woodland managed by the Woodland Trust with a rich mixture of habitats from open grassland, ponds, ancient woodland and grazed riverside meadows ○ Large poplar plantation at Dutton Lodge Farm ○ The designed parkland surrounding the former Aston Hall (now demolished) contributes to the wooded character of the ridge and is a locally important historic site ○ Field ponds are a feature of the landscape - formed by the digging of marl pits before the 19th century, they now form important landscape and ecological features ○ Relatively large scale fields resulting from late post-medieval agricultural improvement and 20th century field re-organisation / estate management associated with Aston Hall ○ Recreational opportunities are provided by public rights of way, and area of open access land at Longacre Wood and a golf course and driving range at Sutton Weaver ○ The scale of the landscape is large as a result of the large scale field units and sense of openness, emphasised by the low hedgerows, the lack of hedgerow trees and long distance views from the ridge in all directions ○ Part of the Trent and Mersey Canal passes along the eastern edge of the area adjacent to the railway, providing a link to the River Mersey ○ Settlement is sparse – scattered farms and the rural hamlets of Aston, Aston Heath and Sutton Weaver are linked by narrow lanes and tracks ○ Buildings are typically constructed from red brick and sandstone, with slate roofs ○ A peaceful 'island' in a busy context – surrounded by the M56 motorway, roads, railways, built development and industry ○ The 'ridge' forms a strong skyline in views from outside the character area, including from the Frodsham to Northwich Undulating Enclosed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This upstanding 'ridge' forms a strong skyline in views from outside the character area, including from the edge of Runcorn; ○ The ridge (and it's pylons) are inter-visible with adjacent landscapes, particularly from the Frodsham to Northwich Undulating Enclosed Farmland and the Whitley & Comberbach Undulating Enclosed Farmland; ○ There is little inter-visibility with the adjacent Weaver Valley due to the steep topography of the valley sides and its hidden nature; ○ From the top of the 'plateau' there are views to large scale industry at Rocksavage and Preston Brook; ○ The elevated, open character of this landscape and its inter-visibility with adjacent landscapes makes it visually sensitive to change. However, the area has a relatively low settlement density and therefore relatively few potential residential receptors that may experience visual impacts; ○ Although public rights of way cross the ridge, the main recreational opportunities (Cheshire Ring Canal Walk and open access land at Longacre Wood) are located in the Longacre Valley where views are constrained by landform. The presence of woodland provides some potential for mitigating visual impact of low level elements without the mitigation measures in themselves having an adverse effect on the character of the landscape. |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
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| | <p>Farmland and the Whitley & Comberbach Undulating Enclosed Farmland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the ridge views are influenced by industry, located to the north and west | |
| LCA9a: Dunham to Tarvin Plain | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A broad, gently shelving and mostly flat plain landscape characterised by hedges and hedgerow trees providing limited vistas Wide areas of improved grassland for dairy farming and fodder crops Limited woodland, confined to isolated coverts and copses, although hedgerow oaks are important elements of the landscape Historic medieval field patterns and increases in tree cover are still found around smaller settlements Extensive network of small field ponds which are generally inconspicuous in the landscape Larger settlements punctuate the plain where historic form has often been lost within areas of 20th century and later housing development, e.g. at Tarvin Elsewhere, settlement is scattered across the plain in small linear hamlets and freestanding farmsteads Petro-chemical and Industrial development outside the character area is prominent across the north of the LCA The Sandstone Ridge presents a more elevated skyline to the east of the LCA Where hedgerows and tree networks remain, the area can present some degree of limited enclosure due to an absence of elevation and viewpoints Some loss of field boundaries diminishes this enclosure where some arable farming has been established Significant transport infrastructure dissects the area and diminishes tranquillity and rurality, particularly across the north of the LCA | <p><u>Perceptual/Visual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Away from transport and energy infrastructure, the plain presents a pastoral and peaceful character with some degree of tranquillity possible, particularly across the footpath network; The relative elevation of Dunham-on-the-Hill provides views to the north over the flat, sparsely developed landscape surrounding the M56, to the industrial areas of Stanlow and Ellesmere Port; The massive petrochemical industrial complex dominates many outward views in the north of the character area; An intrusive overhead power line also traverses this part of the character area introducing industrial scale infrastructure to a large swathe rural parts of the LCA; Views to the east are dominated by the Sandstone Ridge, which appears to be very well-wooded in contrast to this area, where woodland is scarce; There are distant views to the hills of North Wales to the west; Hedgerows and hedgerow trees, as well as limited coverts and woodlands associated with settlement and the halls, present a changing seasonal colour in contrast to the rich but improved pastoral fields; Field ponds are often inconspicuous in the landscape despite their number due to thick hedge enclosure of the fields they lie within and general absence of elevated viewpoints into them; In other cases pond-side vegetation and trees within a field belie their existence rather than any glimpse of surface water; In some areas where hedgerows have been lost but mature trees remain, a 'false parkland' character can pervade; The flatness of the landscape provides opportunities for long views to the Sandstone Ridge which forms a dominant backdrop and prominent skyline to |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
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| | | the east. Relatively open character of the plain means there is little opportunity for screening large scale elements, however the visual impact of low level elements could be mitigated using native planting that would not in itself be highly visible. |
| LCA15c: Lower Weaver Valley | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relatively shallow valley containing the natural meandering course of upper reaches of the River Weaver ○ Large flashes (formed by subsidence as a result of brine pumping) occupy the valley floor upstream of Winsford ○ Steeper valley sides and series of steep sided tributary valleys support distinctive clough woodland, much of which is ancient e.g. Wimboldsley Wood SSSI ○ Less steep valley sides support small/medium scale arable and pastoral fields, bounded by low gappy hedgerows ○ Alluvium on the valley floor gives rise to waterlogged soils which generally support permanent pasture including unimproved and semi-improved species rich grassland ○ The majority of the valley is inaccessible to the public, although there is some access on the edges of Winsford ○ Views are typically restricted to within the valley, for example there are views across the valley from either side, and from floodplains to the valley sides. The top of the valley side forms a skyline ○ Generally a quiet, tranquil landscape with a low settlement density. | <p><u>Perceptual/Visual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A low settlement density that results in a quiet, tranquil landscape along much of its length; ○ The landform of the valley means the floodplain is highly visible from the valley sides and, conversely, the valley sides are highly visible from the valley bottom; ○ The crests of the valley sides form a skyline from within the LCA; ○ The low settlement density means there are relatively few residential receptors for visual impacts – although the recreational opportunities presented by the valley mean there are likely to be a number of recreational receptors, particularly in the north of the valley; ○ Where clough woodland is present, it provides some visual screening and scope to mitigate visual impacts on the valley sides. However, the floodplain is open and provides extremely few opportunities for mitigating visual impacts; ○ The valley side crests that form skylines from within the valley and are visually sensitive; ○ Boating activity on the Flash can introduced movement and colour to the open water and waterside environment. |
| LCA16a: Stanlow and Ince Banks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A flat, open and expansive landscape of mudflats, sandflats and saltmarsh alongside the Mersey Estuary ○ Strong interconnection and intervisibility with LCT 4 Drained Marsh to the south ○ A naturalistic landscape with winding channels forming intricate patterns in the salt marsh | <p><u>Perceptual/Visual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The flat landform and long views contribute to the perception of a large scale, exposed landscape; ○ The natural patterns of sand and mud create an organic pattern that contributes to the sense of naturalness associated with this remote and windswept landscape; |

| LCA | Key Characteristics | Key Landscape Sensitivities, Qualities and Values |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excavation of the Manchester Ship Canal in the later 19th century resulted in the creation of the Stanlow and Ince Banks, an area of embanked land at the southern edge of the mudflats A dynamic landscape composed of rising and falling tides, constantly shifting sediments and flocks of over-wintering birds Recognised as an internationally important site for wildfowl (protected by SSSI, SPA and Ramsar designations) A remote and peaceful landscape relatively undisturbed by humans and of international importance for nature conservation. The area of saltmarsh between Stanlow Point in the west and Frodsham Score in the east is grazed No public access to this remote area, although there is a landing stage on the canal at Frodsham Score to the east of the area Devoid of settlement Long, uninterrupted views and large skies Industrial works at Ince Marshes, Halton and Rocksavage form a striking backdrop Panoramic views across the estuary from Helsby Hill (above Helsby) and Beacon Hill (above Frodsham). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The flat, low-lying area in itself is not visually prominent and it does not have a prominent skyline; The flat open nature of the landscape facilitates extensive views across the flats and estuary; Tides and light on the wet and dry mosaic of land and sea provide shifting visual appearance of the Banks; The embankment at Frodsham Score facilitates views over the Estuary. There are also panoramic views across the estuary from Helsby Hill Sandstone Ridge (above Helsby) and Beacon Hill (above Frodsham) on the Frodsham Sandstone Ridge; The open character means there is little opportunity for screening any large scale elements or for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves being highly visible - making it a visually sensitive landscape. The absence of settlement and lack of public access means there are few sensitive visual receptors within the area. However, adjacent landscapes overlook the estuary. |

4.0 HALTON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

4.1.1 The *Halton Landscape Character Assessment*^{iv} identifies LCAs within HBC. Those within the Study Area are set out below:

- i) 3: Moore Village and Keckwick Brook Valley;
- ii) 4: Upper Mersey Estuary;
- iii) 5: Norton Wooded Parkland;
- iv) 6: Runcorn Heath and Hill Parkland;
- v) 7: Hale Shore and Farmland.

4.1.2 The Table below summarises the key characteristics for each HBC LCA within the LVIA Study Area. Details of key trends and landscape guidelines are set out in the *Halton Landscape Character Assessment* but these relate to land within the LCA only and hence have little or no relevance to change that would occur outside their boundaries.

Table 3 – Halton Borough Council Landscape Character Areas

| LCA | Key Characteristics |
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| LCA3: Moore Village and Keckwick Brook Valley | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Narrow shallow river valley. o Informal open space and isolated pockets of farmland. o Frequent infrastructure routes such as railways, overhead lines and roads. o Long linear field pattern following watercourse; smaller fields closer to settlements. o Segmentation of the landscape through railways on embankments; watercourses and canals and roads which bisect the area. o Prominent wooded watercourse. o Two spurs of the Bridgewater Canal are features within the area. o Small pockets of woodland and clumps of trees. o Daresbury Firs is a prominent conifer woodland on high ground. o Large areas of informal open space and rough grassland on the fringes of Runcorn. o Frequent stone and brick bridges over canals. o Urban fringe and industrial development prominent within views. o Commercial/industrial development prominent on ridgeline |
| LAC4: Upper Mersey Estuary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o River Mersey Estuary exerts a strong influence on the area. o Areas of salt marsh and small tributaries along river are distinctive features. o Frequent pockets of woodland planting and informal open space occur on the fringes of the area. o Canals form the outer extents of urban development. o Mudflats and water change daily with tidal movements and often contain flocks of birds. o Recreation and nature conservation alongside industrial landfill are the predominant land uses o Expansive views along the River Mersey. o Sense of separation and seclusion from adjacent urban area. o Industry and new urban development prominent within views along the banks of the Mersey. o Silver Jubilee Bridge is prominent in views. o Very little built development within character area; where present it tends to be feature buildings as the Wigg Island Visitor Centre which is a landmark |
| LCA5: Norton Wooded Parkland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Linear strip of land between urban development on high ground. o High woodland cover within area. o Combination of blocks of woodland, avenues of trees and areas of grassland create a parkland character. o Remnant hedgerows and hedgerow trees indicate former agricultural land prior to New Town development in 1970s. o All managed for informal and formal recreation and nature conservation. |

| LCA | Key Characteristics |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Important green buffer within an urban area. o Housing on sloping ground set within a string woodland framework. o Network of small streams, man-made pools and lakes. o Wooded formal grounds of Norton Priory are a local feature. o Norton Water Tower is a feature on high ground. |
| LCA6: Runcorn Hill and Heath Parkland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Prominent sandstone hill which provides a feature and backdrop views from other parts of Halton. o Wide variety of land uses including Runcorn Hill Local Nature Reserve, pockets of farmland, a golf course and public open space. o Corridor of urban greenspace in the south-west of Runcorn. o Steep slopes and vertical rock faces below a rocky plateau characterises Runcorn hill, with remnant quarrying on the lower slopes. o Steeply sloping farmland leading down to industrial and wetland landscape along the banks of the Mersey. o Long views over the surrounding landscape and Mersey Estuary. o Heathland is a distinctive feature of Runcorn Hill with pockets of remnant heathland elsewhere. o Birch scrub woodland establishing on the slopes of Runcorn. o Frequent horse grazing paddocks. o The A577, a number of B roads and an overhead electricity line are notable infrastructure routes in the south of the area. o Industry and urban development along the fringes of the area are almost always visible |
| LCA7: Hale Shore and Farmland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Flat open farmland which gently slopes towards the River Mersey. o Long, open views over the character area, along the River Mersey to the bridges and the rising Welsh hills in the distance, particularly from the Trans Pennine Trail. o Large prominent blocks of geometric woodland. o Large fields sizes and irregular field pattern. o Estate village of Hale has a strong settlement character in the centre with thatched cottages and narrow roads. o Modern expansion has increased the village size and given the settlement a more defined urban edge and diluted the distinctive character slightly. o The area has a rural character, emphasised by farms scattered throughout the landscape. o Liverpool Airport is close and aircraft fly low across the landscape. o The urban fringe of Widnes is visible in northern parts of the area. o The southern part of the area has an increasingly remote character. o the River Mersey exerts a strong influence over the area. o Saltmarshes, mudflats and mud cliffs are a feature adjacent to the Mersey. o Hale Duck Decoy is a unique historic wooded feature (Also a Scheduled Monument). |

References

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- ⁱⁱⁱ Bayou Bluenvironment and The Planning & Environment Studio (2016). *Landscape Sensitivity Study and Guidance on Wind and Solar Photovoltaic Developments*. Cheshire West and Chester Council
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